Narrative, Story, Intersubjectivity: 
Formulating a Continuum for 
Examining Transmedia Storytelling

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

__________________________
Seth Merlo
All things change in a dynamic environment

The Puppetmaster, GHOST IN THE SHELL (Oshii, 1995)
Abstract

This thesis begins with the premise that by challenging preconceptions about narrative and story as concepts that are in some way already determined, it becomes possible to open a space in which alternative understandings of them can be proposed. Such a space is considered necessary in order to account for the ways in which contemporary creative practices such as transmedia storytelling, in which the storytelling experience is distributed across multiple mediums and environments, may be said to require such alternatives in order to explain how they operate as fiction. Fiction, in this thesis, is considered a particular condition a work attempts to establish in which its own reality and organisation takes precedent over, or reduces, the “ultimate” reality of the real world.

It is proposed that creative practices such as transmedia storytelling are consistent with the conditions of the current historical moment, identified in this thesis as a convergence culture, or a culture which emerges at the nexus of various social, cultural, technological, political and economic forces without being reducible to any one of these. The chief characteristic of such a culture is the flow of content across its various instantiations; specifically, it is a culture in which the interlocutor, as someone engaged with the work, relates to mediums and the intentional objects held within them according to a contingent logic, which is conceptualised in this thesis as precariousness. This concept forms the basis for a model of relational aesthetics that could be located within the paradigm of convergence culture to explain how practices such as transmedia storytelling rely on the subjectivities of those engaged in them to resolve the precariousness inherent in their formation. Within this space, narrative and story are reconceptualised respectively as the formational and aesthetic planes of a fictional work, which are mediated by a process of intersubjective exchange. The aim of this thesis is therefore the formulation of a continuum of these three core concepts within the broad category of fiction which may be used to examine transmedia storytelling specifically, and fictional works in general. It is this continuum which forms the heart of the thesis, an examination of the fundamental concepts of narrative, story and intersubjectivity and their interdependence as a way to reconsider how we think about the possible richness and diversity the storytelling experience may bring.
The thesis takes up each of these concepts in turn before turning to an examination of transmedia storytelling directly. In applying the continuum to this creative practice, the model of a narrative arcology, or superstructure of possible linkages between mediums and nodes in transmedia work, is developed. Following this is a presentation of a substantial creative project which attempts to apply the theoretical concepts developed to a practical environment. The project takes the form of a conceptual document for a transmedia adaptation of William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, and is discussed from the perspective of a creator or project manager.
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INTRODUCTION

1. SCOPE AND AIMS OF THE THESIS

In this thesis, I seek to create a space within the broad category of fiction in which to locate alternative understandings of the concepts of narrative and story. The opportunity to reconsider these concepts comes from the emergence of transmedia storytelling, a creative practice which distributes the storytelling experience across multiple mediums and environments. Examples of the practice of transmedia storytelling range from multi-million dollar Hollywood franchises such as the Wachowski Brothers' The Matrix and the viral campaign Why So Serious? that accompanied Christopher Nolan's The Dark Knight, to smaller scale projects such as Perplex City, released by the entertainment company Mind Candy, and Google's Ingress. Successful early examples of transmedia storytelling include the alternative reality games The Beast and I Love Bees (released to accompany the film A.I. Artificial Intelligence and the video game Halo 2 respectively), and the 1999 film The Blair Witch Project.

The intentional “fracturing” of the act of storytelling in instances of transmedia often creates opportunities for participation, or socialised relations that open up an alternative sphere of engagement to other creative art forms. The complex ways in which it becomes possible to experience a story as a result of this are a striking feature of transmedia storytelling, and the questions it raises – not only about how we engage with a story, but how we conceptualise it and articulate its distinctive qualities – are the major concern of this thesis. These questions are formulated according to a continuum of narrative, story, and intersubjectivity – three concepts which I will bring together as one possible way of explaining this phenomenon.

Much excellent work has been done by researchers and practitioners on the design and production aspects of transmedia storytelling, and it is for this reason that these issues are not the primary focus of this thesis. As such, I have also bracketed off a detailed consideration of technology utilised in these productions, as well as the commercial and political imperatives that drive many of them. Rather, my aim is to understand transmedia storytelling through the prism of fiction as an intentionally
imaginative framework (this view of fiction is further explicated in Section 3). Furthermore, it is to take long-established concepts of narrative and story and treat them in new, or at least alternative, ways. This is based on a working principle that such a “new” creative practice of storytelling requires a correspondingly “new” theoretical framework to assist in explaining it. Broadly speaking, then, as opposed to providing a systematic analysis of current practice, my intention is to outline a paradigm, or knowledge base, that may serve to stand in the current moment as one attempt among many to explain the phenomenon in question. This is why I have chosen to draw on the notion of a continuum – something in a constant state of flux, existing in the knowledge that it will inevitably undergo change at some point.

In utilising transmedia storytelling to examine narrative and story, my aim is to demonstrate that a distinct difference can be made between these two concepts, to the extent that they should be seen respectively as separate formational and affective planes of a work. I will argue that, while theoretically distinct, these two planes are, in practice, interdependent and mediated by a condition of intersubjectivity based on a theory of relational aesthetics adapted from the work of French cultural theorist and art curator Nicolas Bourriaud. This theory provides a useful a model ‘of the inter-human relations which [works] represent, produce or prompt’ (Bourriaud 2002, 112) and the way in which intersubjectivity ‘not only represent[s] the social setting for the reception of art […] but also becomes the quintessence of artistic practice’ (ibid., 22). It is my contention that transmedia storytelling, as an example of this relational practice, is thus reliant on intersubjective relations to actualise it. These three concepts – narrative, story and intersubjectivity – work interdependently to resolve what I refer to as the paradox of fiction, a “problem” of self-reference that is resolved by those engaging with a work. The overarching aim of this thesis, therefore, is the formulation of a continuum within the broad category of fiction which may be used to examine transmedia storytelling specifically, and fictional works in general.

By work, I wish to denote a more or less neutral space that can be used to describe a range of creative productions. In this, I borrow from the British art philosopher Peter Lamarque, who describes works as, ‘a species of cultural objects, whose very existence rests on essential possession of fairly complex intentional and relational properties’ (2002, 141). Thus, the term will be used primarily as a device to refer to a concept of
“the work” to which a given discussion applies, though it will occasionally be used to refer to examples of individual works of film, games, comics and so on, as well as to the greater transmedia work in which these may be incorporated. In the main, though, I will refer to these as mediums, in reference to the French cultural theorist and media scholar Pierre Lévy's claim that '[t]he medium is the substrate or vehicle of the message' (2001, 43). This is done in order to gain some distance from the nomenclature of media studies, for whom the term media is a loaded one. I simply wish to refer to that which constitutes the 'material and mode of expression used in an artistic or creative activity' (OED). All other key terms used in this thesis will be defined in the first instance in which they are used, or as close to as is practical, while core concepts will continue to be indicated in italics throughout as a way of indicating that my own particular understanding is to be applied. In this I have settled on an approach to terminology which I hope adds to the readability of the thesis by locating definitions as close to the greater discussion with which they are most readily aligned. This is why there is no definitions section as part of my methodology outlined below, apart from an extended discussion to properly locate transmedia storytelling.

In creating this alternative space within the category of fiction, I advocate a more enriched and complex understanding of story than has previously been held by arguing that it is the aesthetic experience of engaging with a narrative. The term aesthetic is not used here in reference to a system of assigning or judging value or merit in a work, nor to a consideration of its beauty. It is instead informed by a phenomenological notion of subjective experience, which is experience that is always directed towards an object and framed by a given set of conditions. Thus, in my usage, aesthetic is used to indicate the subjective and affective qualities built up over the course of engaging with a work, as well as the techniques and processes its creator might utilise in its production: aesthetics as establishing parameters by which an object may be perceived and engaged with, and aesthetic experience as the product of that engagement.¹

In addition, my usage of aesthetic has a specific connection to pleasure. Certainly pleasure in the sense of ‘all the different sensations, thoughts, and feelings that make up our private subjective experience,’ (Johnston 2003, 167), is relevant, particularly to

¹ A definition of subjectivity is offered in the opening of Chapter 3, while affective is defined in Section 4 of Chapter 4.
a more enriched notion of story, but more precisely pleasure as ‘the manner in which we engage in [an] activity’ (Graham 2005, 12). It is in this sense that media and cultural scholar John Fiske (2010) relates pleasure to a combination of productivity, relevance and functionality, in light of the way in which it foregrounds the role of the individual as the instigator of a negotiation between a work, its meaning, and its eventual sociocultural significance. Thus, aesthetic can also be understood as a site of exchange (exchange as both convergence and interaction), which relates directly to Bourriaud’s conception of the work as a formal arrangement located in an ongoing intersubjective encounter between its creator and audience. ‘Artistic practice thus resides in the invention of relations between consciousness’ (Bourriaud 2002, 22), rendering intersubjectivity the basic nature of a relational aesthetics. When located specifically in a fictional space, aesthetic is thus rendered as the experience of reconstructing a narrative, a reconstruction which I am suggesting is story.

Like narrative and story, intersubjectivity is not a new concept, but it is one that offers new insights when these three are arranged into their own particular continuum where the relational condition that exists between subjects can be examined. In this thesis, these three concepts are organised in such a way that none is privileged over the other, and all are located within a proposed alternative theory of fiction. Briefly, this theory states that fiction is a particular method of semiotic representation (a sign system) that, in its creation, produces a paradox of self-reference that is only resolved in the relationship between a creator (the agent who produces a work) and an interlocutor (the agent engaging with a work). Thus, story can be located in the intersubjective field between creator and interlocutor, rather than as a structural component of narrative. However, all three concepts must, in practice, work in unison, as a continuum or connected set of ideas, in order for fiction to operate.

I consider my use of the term creator here to be fairly self-explanatory: a medium-neutral term to designate those agents who design, build, or otherwise produce a work by various means. However, this definition must come with one provision concerning the possibility of a reduced or shifted centre of authority in the context of the participatory activities an interlocutor may be involved in within the scope of transmedia storytelling, which British cultural critic Alan Kirby (2009) says may produce anonymous, multiple, or social authorship, amongst other conditions. Finding
a similarly medium-neutral term to describe those agents who engage with a work proved more problematic. I consider my use of the term interlocutor to fulfil this condition, in that it usefully captures the notion of ‘one who takes part’ (OED). Compared to alternatives such as user, spectator, or receiver, which do not denote neutral spaces, or reader and viewer, which are medium-specific, interlocutor suggests, at least in my usage, an agent who actively chooses to locate him or herself at the interstice of a work in order to engage with it in various ways. And since to “take part” is not a terminal condition, but a voluntary one, there is both an implied capability to move in and out of a work at will, as well an accompanying risk (Aarseth 1997, 4). Such risk is derived from what I will refer to as a condition of precariousness inherent in transmedia works.

By proposing the narrative-story-intersubjectivity continuum, my aim is not to dislodge or disprove any previous theories, or to necessarily redefine or claim any new understandings of the concepts under consideration. The space I hope to create should be seen as an adaptation and expansion of existing narrative and New Media theories that operates in parallel with other alternatives. That is to say, while the argument I propose concerning narrative could be located within, for example, literary theory, it was not developed primarily for it. This comes as a result of what cultural theorist Roland Barthes (1977, 155) described as an ‘unease in classification’ in the face of emerging areas of research. My aim in attempting a reconceptualisation of narrative, story and intersubjectivity within the broad category of fiction is the result of a similar sense of unease, and is undertaken to suit a particular set of historical circumstances. Those circumstances can themselves be located within the dynamic indeterminacy that often surrounds the emergence of a new phenomenon such as transmedia storytelling; however, it should be noted that this thesis is not about a general notion of transmedia. As transmedia researcher and practitioner Christy Dena (2009), amongst others, has ably pointed out, transmedia cannot be understood as a purely narrative or story-led phenomenon – its principles could be as readily applied to educational scenarios as to fiction. As such, the aim of this thesis is to reconceptualise the core concepts of narrative, story, and intersubjectivity under the auspices of a broad theory of fiction in such a way that they might have subsequent application to works of transmedia storytelling specifically. In other words, it is an attempt to theorise the fictionality of transmedia storytelling. That is, what are the principles
underpinning transmedia storytelling as a particular kind of creative act? From that perspective, it represents a rich terrain of study for two reasons: firstly, because a work structured in this manner can potentially include any medium that possesses the qualities of fiction I outline below in Section 3; and secondly, because it disrupts a traditional view of narrative and story by highlighting the inherent affective and intersubjective nature of fiction that has always been present, but not often treated directly in any previous body of theory.

It is with this application in mind that the proposed theory of fiction has been primarily developed. However, this does not mean it is also a specific theory of transmedia storytelling. Rather the reverse – the model of transmedia storytelling developed in this thesis must be located with the broader theory of fiction outlined below. In contrast to other approaches, then, I do not, for example, draw strongly on those media studies which emphasise commodification and consumption and which stress the interplay between corporate and individual goals in relation to the dissemination of media. Similarly, I am not concerned with the reorganisation of media interests that transmedia and other New Media practices in general have engendered (such as the establishment and subsequent reshuffling of the role of Multiplatform Commissioner at the BBC [Neilan 2011], or the establishment of a Department of Transmedia at Syracuse University), nor am I looking at how the technologies that are consideration throughout this thesis actually work, apart from where this directly impacts on their ability to present and maintain a fiction. In short, this thesis is not concerned with proving or disproving the reality of a convergence culture in which these other considerations might be said to occur. That is, convergence culture as a description of ‘technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes in the ways media circulates within our culture’ (Jenkins 2008, 322). I simply take this shift as a given – ‘transmedia 101’, as media scholar Geoffrey Long (2011, 3) might describe it. The reality that ‘we are already living in a convergence culture’ (Jenkins 2008, 223), a culture in which we function across media, can therefore be assumed as an underlying principle upon which this thesis is based. From this point, my aim is to present an articulation of this into the arena of fiction.

Media and cultural studies approaches have so far comprised the bulk of existing research into transmedia, and though it must be acknowledged that economic factors
have a tangible influence on many, if not all art forms, they are, as has been previously stated, by and large bracketed off for the purposes of this thesis. In essence, my aim is to move the study of transmedia storytelling 'beyond the fascination with communication and new technologies [...] being talked about incessantly' (Bourriaud 2010a, 8). Which is not to say that communication, new technologies, and their associated economics have not, or do not continue to, affect the phenomenon of transmedia storytelling; rather, my purpose in doing so is threefold: firstly, it is an acknowledgement of the wealth of material already available that addresses precisely these issues; secondly, it is a response to digital and transmedia producer Carrie Cutforth-Young’s argument that ‘[t]he emphasis on platforms in definitions [of transmedia storytelling] has ALWAYS been the crux of the problem’ (2012 – original emphasis); and thirdly, it is an application of anthropologist William Mazzarella’s argument that mediums are not neutral, because in engaging with them they reflect back on society. Mediation, itself a product of intersubjectivity, then becomes a process that subverts the notion that corporate interests ‘are merely “responding” to the already-constituted desires of audiences,’ (Mazzarella 2004, 354), which will be further explicated below.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 On thesis structure and research context

This thesis is structured in such a way that this Introduction is used to establish the foundational principles and paradigms upon which the thesis is based, while the three concepts of narrative, story and intersubjectivity are dealt with as an interconnected set of ideas (a continuum) before being synthesised with an examination of transmedia storytelling in particular. It should be noted that when discussing transmedia, I have chosen not to draw on any particular case studies, though several examples of transmedia works are cited throughout the thesis. The reason for this is that the creative project presented in Chapter 5 is intended to take the place of such case studies as a practical application of the concepts and theories raised in this thesis. While certain areas of inquiry have been bracketed off, I have also chosen not to read transmedia storytelling or fiction (and by extension the continuum) through any one

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2 As a starting point, one could point to Jenkins (2008), Ebert (2011), or Rose (2011).
theory or discourse. For example, if narrative and story are to be incorporated under the category fiction, it should not be assumed from this that the methodological perspective I adopt is derived solely from a tradition of narrative studies with which it could be said to be most readily associated. I adopt this approach for two reasons: firstly, the phenomenon of transmedia storytelling could be studied from the perspective of a number of disciplines, and to do so would necessitate a near-exhaustive familiarity with a range of theories the breadth of which are simply beyond my ability to engage within the restrictions of this thesis. Secondly, no one theory is capable of traversing the entire extent of the phenomenon it seeks to explain. Narrative theory, to continue the example, has traditionally bracketed off questions raised by the intersubjective nature of fiction, often in favour of focussing on a structuralist reduction to linguistic components – Gerald Prince’s A Grammar of Stories (1973) could be regarded as a culmination of this line of enquiry. Although Prince quite rightly points out that we seem to have an intuitive feel for what constitutes a story, he concludes that this is because we have all ‘internalised the same rules’ (ibid., 10). These rules, he argues (ibid., 13), can be extracted from a text and arranged into formulas that do not need to account for elements such as description, subject or theme; elements which, at least in written works, are precisely what constitute the intersubjective dimension of fiction that have, intentionally or not, been bracketed off.

This is not to suggest that structuralism as a theoretical discourse has nothing to offer. Indeed, a reconceptualisation of narrative and story must necessarily begin with an understanding of what narrative theory has so far achieved, and it was French literary theorist Roland Barthes (1975, 237), after all, who first suggested we encounter narrative (and by extension story) across a variety of mediums, thereby establishing a precedent from which ideas and theories can be developed not only about narrative and story, but practices such as transmedia storytelling as well. This will be further explicated in Chapter 1. The theoretical basis for this thesis could be said to exist at an interstice between narrative, phenomenological and sociological theories; while being beholden to none, it acknowledges the usefulness of drawing upon elements from all three, in a convergence of sorts. There is a rough equation here to the narrative-story-intersubjectivity continuum I seek to establish, but I take as points of departure ideas from all three of these bodies of theories. Furthermore, my methodology can be contextualised under an altermodern logic, a paradigm for understanding
contemporary culture proposed by Bourriaud, out of which it is possible to see a convergence culture arise. That is, altermodernism should be taken as the implicit, overarching paradigm in which this thesis is located, while convergence culture is seen as its explicit expression.

2.2 The altermodern as implicit methodological perspective

Bourriaud defines a paradigm as, ‘a flexible agency capable of operating on several levels and on differing planes of knowledge’ (2002, 95); however, the present historical moment seems poised to tackle what I have suggested are areas of knowledge that have traditionally been bracketed off. To fully take advantage of this, it seems reasonable to reject some traditional approaches in favour of one that attempts to foreground new or reconfigured perspectives on concepts and practices that are increasingly coming to dominant the academic and socio-cultural landscapes. Such a contemporary approach would also adopt a globalised perspective with a localised focus in the way it positions creators, their work, and interlocutors in a fluid social system, in order to address what Mazzarella has defined as a problem of mediation; that is, ‘the process by which a given social dispensation produces and reproduces itself in and through a particular set of media’ (2004, 346). Mediation, or facilitation, far from being a neutral term, becomes an increasingly important concern in a globalised landscape, since it refers to the way we make connections with, between, and through mediums in a process of intersubjective realisation that ‘make[s] society imaginable to itself’ (Mazzarella 2004, 357). That is to say, notions of culture and identity generally, and audience desires in a media context specifically, do not exist a priori. A view of ourselves as both a society and as individuals is, according to Mazzarella, a reflexive function of the mediums we utilise. This precariousness of mediums – at once seemingly fixed but also highly fluid – also constitutes the basis of what Bourriaud regards as an emerging altermodernism; a paradigm ‘constructed on a global scale, through cooperation among a multitude of cultural semes and through ongoing translation of singularities’ (2010b, 39 – original emphasis). I therefore seek to consolidate and synthesize a range of theories and perspectives under this rubric.

Altermodernism is a portmanteau term coined by Bourriaud, originally to describe and theorise the practices he saw informing the work of a particular set of artists.
Although he acknowledges that the conditions upon which he bases his formulation of the term have ‘not yet congealed in an original and identifiable form’ (2010b 15), it is nevertheless possible to posit a working methodology from the conditions as they currently stand in order to satisfy Bourriaud’s claim that in an altermodernist paradigm, ‘principles mingle and multiply by means of combinations’ (ibid, 83). Dena (2007) has devised a similar methodology that she terms an ‘ontological heterogeneity’ in which the disparate theories of a range of disciplines act as ‘portals that provide insight into the object of study.’ This latter, of course, presupposes the object of study is already predetermined, but Mazarella (2004) reminds us that such objects are co-constitutive, existing in a state of ongoing negotiation with their concomitant social formations. I take this to mean that though the reconceptualisation of narrative and story at the core of this thesis would seem to align it with the field of narrative studies, I reject such an assumption on the basis that their use here is in relation to a phenomenon which, as well as being considered “still emerging” in a kind of reified sense, is also as subject to this ongoing negotiation as any other media practice, and therefore cannot be accommodated solely by narrative studies itself.

To say, then, that media “impacts" society is to romanticise the site of negotiation by presuming society exists in a fixed state, which it does not (Mazzarella 2004, 353; see also Crossley 2011 and Donati 2011). It may be useful to accept altermodernism, therefore, as a paradigm in which the conditions upon which it is based should never congeal, so long as this state of mediation between social and technological forms is foregrounded. Indeed, altermodernism posits a relational aesthetic that must necessarily always be shifting – is precarious – not because it is decentred in a Postmodern sense of a ‘generalized flattening of differences’ (Bourriaud 2010b, 20), but because it is social and intersubjective, and therefore dynamic.

Altermodernism is, essentially, a rejection of this flattening effect, what Bourriaud refers to as a standardisation that came as a result of a postmodernist notion of hybridity (2010b 13). In places of such an approach, therefore, I adopt Bourriaud’s notion of translation, which locates itself at the site of mediation between mediums,

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1 The hope, of course, is that such conditions have been identified because they have already established themselves to some degree within the broader cultural matrix, to the extent that there is evidence for their continued significance.

2 ‘Technological forms,’ and my use of the term ‘technology’ in general, should be taken to mean any mechanical artifact developed under the pretence of addressing certain perceived problems.
rather than seeing them as being in some way complete. Eschewing an understanding of translation as a ‘basic ethical effort’ of mutual understanding (another instance of postmodernist flattening via ‘recognition’), Bourriaud’s notion ‘implies adapting the meaning of a proposition, enabling it to pass from one code to another, which implies a mastery of both languages but also implies that neither is self-evident’ (2010b 30) (‘codes’ here referring to the building blocks of a medium). Translation is, fundamentally, an act of presentation in which the work itself ‘functions as the temporary terminal of a network of interconnected elements’ (ibid.). In terms of fiction, this is an acknowledgement that the formational differences between mediums (the basic premise that “a film is not a comic book,” for example) do not mean that they cannot coexist within the context of a transmedia presentation, because each medium operates as a terminal – what I will refer to in this thesis as an arena of exchange. It is a methodology where practice (presentation) meets theory (translation).

Thus, an altermodernist perspective on transmedia storytelling eschews what I see to be the unnecessary application of a Wagnerian notion of the “total work of art” (or gesamtkunstwerk in the original German) that some researchers have utilised (Ascott 2003; Rose 2011). This is the ideal, proposed by the nineteenth-century composer Richard Wagner, that the best and most beautiful work of art will be the one that brings all artistic forms together into a single, unified work. This perspective has been adopted on the basis that the sum is greater than its parts; but the sum in transmedia storytelling cannot be known because of the nature of mediation (as outlined above) which impacts the nature of participation and the role of the interlocutor in making meaning. The use of the “total work of art” also strikes me as an attempt to endow the phenomenon of transmedia a historicity it cannot properly lay claim to. That is to say, while some researchers have attempted to trace the origins of transmedia phenomena back to the likes of Wagner and even The Bible (Bordwell 2009), transmedia as we understand it is a product of globalisation and digitisation reliant on the co-constitution of new technological forms and the shift in thinking needed to make use of them in this way – the factors which give rise to a convergence culture.
The act of translation is carried out by an entity Bourriaud dubs the semionaut. Originally conceived as the role of the artist in an altermodernist paradigm, the purpose of the semionaut was to ‘[imagine] the links, the likely relations between disparate sites’ (Bourriaud 2010a, 18) which their work would facilitate. The role could be expanded here, especially in light of artist and critic Marcel Duchamp’s (1975) notion of the creative act (a process which results in a gap, or “art coefficient” in the work that can only be resolved by the interlocutor – see Section 3.1 below), seeing it not just as the purview of the creator to devise trajectories between sites and signs, but also the role of the interlocutor to concretise them, even temporarily, at the site of negotiation. Thus, both the creator and interlocutor are complicit in making meaning and assigning significance – cultural and aesthetic – to the work. The semionaut presented an interesting way of conceptualising those engaged with a work, as creators of signs, and I could have utilised it in place of the interlocutor. However, I have refrained from designating the interlocutor as such only because in Bourriaud’s usage it is peculiar to those creators/artists whose work he considers examples of relational aesthetics, whereas I was interested in emphasising the nature of the interlocutor as an agent capable of moving in and out of a work at will, one who chooses to locate him or herself at the interstice of a work in order to engage and participate in it. I will refer to a “semionautic activity” on occasion, however, in order to emphasise this as a particular role of the interlocutor. The term is also useful because the practice of transmedia storytelling is not necessarily a linear progression from artist to interlocutor via the work, nor is it only an act of meaning-making on the part of the interlocutor. Cultural critic Alan Kirby makes this distinction clear when he argues that the break between the modernist and postmodernist work is not as sharp as the latter made it out to be, that only the ‘codes and conventions and the manner of their manipulation’ (2009, 50) changed, but not the basic premise of the creator producing a work that the interlocutor receives. The increasing use of interactive and participatory techniques breaks this pattern by inserting the interlocutor into the creative act at a stage in which their contribution is no longer simply in resolving a gap by performing an evaluative function, but in co-creating the work in order to bring it into a material existence. Thus, the co-constitution of social and media interests is played out in an analysis of transmedia storytelling.

According to Bourriaud (2010b, 53), the term is derived from the root words SEMIOS (sign) and NAUTOS (navigation).
Altermodernism does not represent a complete break from the postmodernism it so insistently rejects, however. Perhaps this is simply a case of it still disentangling itself from the influence of its predecessor, as seen in the range of labels researchers are auditioning to describe the current historical moment. For example, Kirby (2009) offers the term digimodernism,\(^6\) foregrounding the effect of digitisation, and computerisation in particular, on the creation and distribution of texts, while French philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky (2005) advocates a hypermodernism in the space vacated by postmodernism.

2.3 “Authoritative” knowledge in a convergence culture

As was referred to above in Section 2.1, this thesis makes use of a range of theories. In addition to the broad theoretical basis of narrative theory, phenomenology, and sociology, I also draw on specific literary, semiotic, ludological (game studies), film, and popular culture studies, with relevant ideas and concepts raised being consolidated under the rubric of altermodernism. This is done in order to develop an alternative theory of fiction that will be applied specifically to the phenomenon of transmedia storytelling (though I will demonstrate how it also has the potential to be broadly applied). I do not draw on these theories to test their validity against the object of study – many of them have already proven to be rewarding avenues of research in their own right, and to do so would also undermine the notion of mediation as co-constitution I have established above. I am also not unaware of the intricate nature of each, established over the course of many years of research and scholarship. I cite the ideas and concepts they raise not from a position as an authority on each, but as a points of departure as well as means of reinforcing, supporting, and, indeed, testing, the validity of my own argument.

I also argued that it was not possible for any one researcher to study transmedia storytelling from the perspective of all associated disciplines. I qualified that argument by bracketing off areas of economic and sociopolitical interest in order to focus on the fictionality of transmedia storytelling, but I further qualify it here by disclaiming that, while I am drawing on multiple theories to inform my own, I am in no way claiming an exhaustive knowledge of any of them. I see such a conjoining in Bourriaud’s terms of a

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\(^6\) Kirby originally posited the term ‘pseudo-modernism’ in a 2006 article for *Philosophy Now*. The term was quickly dropped in favour of the more specific Digimodernism.
mingling of principles as occurs in an altermodernist model, than as any kind of truly interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary approach. By doing so, I hope to circumvent a sense of clear disciplinary hierarchies that might be established in the study of fiction and transmedia storytelling, and emphasise an approach in which a convergence of theories might lead to alternative outcomes.

The vast bulk of ideas and concepts raised in this thesis are sourced from relevant scholarly publications and journals. However, much interesting practice-led research is being conducted in the area of transmedia storytelling, particularly as the practice itself embraces many new and recent mediums such as blogs, social media, wikis, and so on, as do those engaged in research. There are therefore instances throughout this thesis where information has been derived from these sources which may otherwise be deemed unconventional or non-traditional. Such avenues of research also could have been bracketed off in favour of adhering to a well-established academic approach. However, I consider the manner in which such sources problematise the very notion of textual authority and the validity in certain kinds of knowledge as an essential part of the methodology informing this thesis, as well as definitive evidence for the co-constitutive nature of mediation, and it is for this reason that I have eschewed the type of literature review that might be expected in a doctoral thesis. As Mazzarella (2004) notes, institutions, including the so-called knowledge economy, are not inviolable, merely naturalised, and one suspects that Bourriaud might even claim they are standardised to the point of a near-meaningless equivalence. This is certainly not to suggest that the pursuit of scholarly knowledge is without merit, but that there are a myriad of ways in which such knowledge may be acquired, arranged, and distributed.

Mazzarella’s position also finds a basis in American philosopher Marx W. Wartofsky’s argument that ‘the two fundamental forms of [human] activity are the making of things and social interaction,’ (1979, xvi). Wartofsky’s contention is that knowledge ‘changes historically; how we know changes with changes in our forms of social organization’ (1979, xiii – original emphasis). We are currently at such a point of change, in which what we understand by “authenticity” is itself undergoing a reconceptualisation mediated by our proximity to sociocultural and technological developments that actively disrupt the notion that, once a thing is known, its value is
established and quantified. Knowledge – both its contents and its form – is therefore mediated as it comes into contact not only with people, but with other forms of knowledge. Such a view is, of course, not entirely new: Wartofsky was writing in 1979, while political scientist Ithiel de Sola Pool wrote in 1983 that ‘the one-to-one relationship that used to exist between a medium and its use is eroding’ (quoted in Jenkins 2008, 10). Pool saw this erosion not as a postmodern standardisation of forms (an erosion to a flat media landscape), but as a ‘convergence of modes’ (ibid.), which Jenkins saw as the basis for what we later described as a convergence culture, ‘a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content’ (2008, 3). Here, we see the interlocutor as semionaut in action, establishing trajectories amongst a plurality of forms in ways that are meaningful to him or her. Where the altermodern paradigm creates a space for the eddying of knowledge and the ascendance of ideas considered to be mutually beneficial, a convergence culture provides the social, political, and technological mechanisms by which that may come about.

Jenkins draws heavily on the work of Pierre Lévy in applying the latter's concept of the knowledge space to the emergence of a convergence culture and the kind of works it produces. Lévy's (1999) contention is that such spaces, which he regards as having come about as a result of the increasing ubiquity of the Internet (and “cyberspace” in general), do not do away with previous formulations of knowledge so much as subsume them in contingent, precarious communities. Precarious here is a term borrowed from Bourriaud, who regards it as ‘a structure that has no symmetry or overarching form but abounds in little compositions’ (2010b, 86), one which is concerned more with the semionautic ‘trajectory between two places [in favour of] the place itself’ (2010a, 49). Indeed, a similar notion is developed further by Jenkins, albeit from a different perspective, when he argues that knowledge communities are defined ‘through voluntary, temporary, and tactical affiliations, reaffirmed through common intellectual enterprises and emotional investments [and] held together through the mutual production and reciprocal exchange of knowledge’ (2008, 27). So long as the trajectory remains a valid line of inquiry, the community is willing to grant it authority. Thus, knowledge is deterritorialised, no longer framed by ‘the limits of a work, its exhibition, reception, reproduction, distribution, interpretation, and the various forms of separation they imply,’ but a ‘genuine socialization of problem-
solving rather than its resolution by separate entities that are in danger of becoming competitive, swollen, outdated and isolated from real life (Lévy 1999, 122; 61). The likes of Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Wikipedia (which is discussed further in Chapter 4) and similar sources deemed unauthoritative in academic research are therefore regarded in this thesis as genuine instantiations of such knowledge communities, whose material retains its validity as an expression of that cultural convergence at a given historical moment.

2.4 Defining and locating transmedia storytelling

The other core concepts of this thesis, those that make up the continuum, will be explicated in their appropriate chapters; however, I wish to propose a working definition of transmedia storytelling here that will be of some use before arriving at a discussion of the phenomenon in Chapter 4. This is because the term transmedia, despite a widespread adoption since its popularisation, has come to have an unspecific, and hence problematic, usage. Part of the reason for this is because the practice readily crosses disciplinary boundaries, so that consensus remains elusive. In light of the methodological perspectives outlined above, then, I want to clarify my usage of the term here.

Though Henry Jenkins is arguably responsible for bringing the term to a wider audience, firstly via a 2003 article for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Technology Review website (simply titled ‘Transmedia Storytelling’) and secondly in his book Convergence Culture (first published in 2006), it appears to have been first used by cultural theorist Marsha Kinder in her book Playing with Power (1991). Kinder’s use of the term is essentially an expansion of the kind of intertextuality first proposed by cultural theorist Julia Kristeva in the 1960s, in which texts are produced and circulated within an encompassing cultural matrix which shapes, unconsciously, their meaning, interpretation and, ultimately, significance (Kristeva 2002). By referring to a ‘transmedia intertextuality,’ (ibid., 1) Kinder argues that as well as generating models for meaning and interpretation, we ‘gain entrance into a system of reading narrative’ (ibid., 41).
While Kinder’s position is useful as an entry point into a particular line of thinking about transmedia, the notion of a transmedia intertextuality itself is problematic. Kristeva argued that ‘the notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity’ (2002, 37), by which she meant that the content of a work mediates and regulates itself against the culture in which it is produced. There is no simple true/false binary to the semiotic nature of the content, but a plurality of meanings. So far, this appears to be in keeping with Bourriaud’s notion of precariousness, however, as transmedia scholar and professor of digital culture Jill Walker argues, ‘intertextuality doesn’t require links’ (2005, 93), or the necessary intersubjective trajectories, and operates more as a mosaic, as Kristeva described it. John Fiske says of intertextuality that it ‘exists [...] in the space between texts’ (1987, 108 – original emphasis), which suggests a relational quality that has direct links to a concept of intersubjectivity as I describe it in Chapter 3, but which Kristeva appeared to bracket off in favour of what were then emerging structuralist concerns with the functional characteristics of content. I regard this as a confusion of expression for experience which replaces the subjective with the mechanical. As an alternative, I propose transmedia can be read as a narrative arcology, where arcology is a term coined by Italian architect Paolo Soleri to designate a set of principles for designing massive superstructures in harmony with their surrounding environment. The narrative arcology functions as a nominally closed framework that exists within the broader cultural matrix, but which is expandable and alterable as interlocutors become aware of, and assimilate, each new narrative component. Fundamentally, it is a site of translation and presentation that multiple interlocutors may function in.\footnote{This model is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.}

There are, however, a number of alternatives that have been used to describe similar practices. Locating a general notion of transmedia within this context would, however, seem to make it preferable over alternatives such as crossmedia, which media producer Nicolletta Iacobacci (2008) has suggested retains stronger links to corporate interests in the way it has been typically used to indicate a repurposing of existing material for deployment in different mediums. This also makes transmedia distinct from closely related practices such as adaptation and multimedia. Dena points out a means of differentiating between the these and transmedia: “The key point to be garnered from this theory is that a new text may not attempt to tell the “same” story,
for instance, with a different mode of expression (adapt a play into a novel), but instead may explore other possibilities of the greater fictional world’ (2009, 116). Multiplatform, 360°, expansive narration, even deep media have been used to describe and emphasise certain characteristics of what are similar practices (Stratton 2011).

Jenkins locates transmedia as one of a number of products of a convergence culture, which he describes as ‘the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want’ (2008, 2). In this sense, transmedia is a term that explains a certain kind of practice exhibited by media producers to develop franchises, rather than a perspective or mentality one might adopt toward understanding the nature of the phenomenon within a convergence culture. However, both Iacobacci (2008) and Jenkins (2008) concur when they argue that what makes transmedia distinct is not the corporate dimension, but the focus on storytelling and the way different mediums can be configured as entry points ‘with a unique and independent lifespan but with a definite role in the big narrative scheme,’ (Iacobacci 2008). In employing the term transmedia, then, I am explicitly referring to a practice of storytelling, in which that experience is distributed, or flows, to borrow Jenkins’ term, across multiple mediums and environments. It is a specific focus on the “trans” as an explicit connection to several concepts already raised: to the semionautic activity of the interlocutor in creating trajectories between, across, through components, envisioning connections between mediums; to translation as an act of realising the means of engagement at these entry points; and to mediation as the co-constitutive process of between the interlocutor and the medium.

It should also be pointed out that a distinction has emerged recently between transmedia storytelling and transmedia branding, as a way of distinguishing when transmedia techniques and practices are used in the service of either storytelling or marketing. The Art of the Heist campaign commissioned by automobile manufacturer Audi USA in 2005 is a common point of reference in this regard (see Tanveer 2010), and an interesting example that blurs the line between story and marketing. Jenkins

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8 In an earlier article for Technology Review, Jenkins (2001) had posited five forms convergence could take: technological, economic, social, cultural, and global. It appears his ideas were refined somewhat by the time of writing Convergence Culture, as the definition offered above speaks to all five forms, though I intended to emphasis the cultural aspects of convergence in this thesis.
(2009) cites the *Star Wars* franchise as another example, in which we find both a franchise form of transmedia *storytelling* via novels, TV series, and comic books in what is known as the *Star Wars* Expanded Universe, and *branding* when a character’s image appears on a packet of breakfast cereal, for instance. Here, the distinction is on the basis of whether or not the object is considered to be contributing to our understanding of the *storyworld*. If it does, then it falls within the realm of storytelling, if not, then branding. This is a useful distinction, in that I argue in Chapter 4 that the *storyworld* is an *affectively charged* space, since it is located at the interstice between the interlocutor and his or her direct engagement with the work. The branding approach does not fulfil this condition. Dena (2004; 2009) however, further complicates the storytelling approach perspective by arguing that we can further divide it according to whether a single *story* is being told across mediums (what she feels is more accurately termed a *transfiction*), or operates as a world in which multiple *stories* may be told in multiple mediums (such as is the case with the *Star Wars* Expanded Universe). However, Dena argues that because the latter is a category in which information is simply “added” to an existing structure, it can too easily be misappropriated to justify virtually any franchise as an example of transmedia *storytelling* (2009, 107).

It may be that, given the wealth of terms that researchers and practitioners have employed, transmedia may also turn out to be only a place holder for a more inclusive and descriptive term yet to be devised. Media producer and CEO of GMD Studios, Brian Clark has stated that transmedia ‘is on the downward slide of usefulness as a term’ (2012). Clark made a series of statements in this Facebook note in which he attempted to provoke a frank discussion about the term and what it meant to practitioners. His statement, ‘transmedia is a lie’, was purposely polemical, and he ended the note by claiming he now believed no such term was necessary to describe the kind of work being done. However, I am not entirely convinced by Clark’s conclusion – whether a new label was necessary or not, *something* shifted in a way significant enough to cause researchers and practitioners to reconsider what it was they were doing and how they were doing it, and to begin designing works that were *intended* to be distributed for reasons that were not entirely commercial.
Nevertheless, in the interim I believe the reasoning laid out in this Section goes some way to decluttering the nomenclature surrounding this practice, especially when subsumed under an overarching theory of fiction which reads transmedia as a fundamentally non-medium specific storytelling practice and which sees the distinctiveness of the phenomenon as lying in the relations (trajectories) between and within mediums rather than an analysis of mediums themselves. That is, I am arguing for a focus on the aesthetic experience produced by intersubjective exchange, which is the distinction which is perhaps missing from Clark’s analysis. I would also cite media and cultural studies researcher Matt Hills, in quoting film theorist Kristin Thompson, who argues that transmedia ‘might indicate that narrative is becoming “so dispersed [across cultural sites] as to slip away from the possibility of traditional academic analysis”. I want to resist this idea, however. Narratives that are vaster than ever before, and more insistently distributed across different mediums and environments, call for analysis that does not equate narrative with a singular, symbolically bound artwork or media text’ (2009, 333).

3. TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE THEORY OF FICTION

My aim in this Section is to explicate the theory of fiction within which the narrative-story-intersubjectivity continuum can be located. Though the theory I propose will be much more fully explicated over the course of the following chapters, what follows is intended to serve as a guide to how I am applying these core concepts. I hope to demonstrate that such a theory is not situated solely within the domain of any one area of study, but may rather form the broad basis for explaining the way fiction operates across a variety of mediums. It can be read as a response to the Norwegian ludologist Espen Aarseth’s concern that the concept of fiction is ‘curiously underdefined in modern literary theory and barely mentioned in textbooks, in which one would expect it to undergo a thorough treatment’ (1997, 50).

My argument is that story, once located within such a theory of fiction, can be viewed as a process of mental reconstruction activated by engagement with a narrative, and this will be demonstrated by outlining three chief characteristics concerning the nature of fiction, which can be summarised as: Intention, Attributes, and Aesthetic. The focus therefore is not on what are traditionally referred to as the elements of fiction –
such as character, setting, plot etc. – which, it may be argued, are more precisely configured as elements of narrative, but rather on what literary theorist Richard van Oort (1998) calls the ‘paradox of fiction,’ which asserts that in fiction, signs work to defer reference to the real world in favour of self-reference. As the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann succinctly put it, ‘art observes itself by means of the distinction between a reality “out there” and a fictional reality’ (2000, 185). It is out of this paradox that we begin to understand something of the nature of fiction in the form of intersubjectivity, and subsequently the nature and function of story and narrative as its chief attributes.

3.1 Defining fiction

Fiction can be defined as a creative act of the kind originally proposed by artist and writer Marcel Duchamp and summarised by art historian Kim C. Smith (1986, 119) as ‘the product of an interaction between two creative poles, that of the artist who initiates the process [...] and that of the spectator who responds by interpreting it’. For Duchamp, the creation of a work is always intentional and always results in the eruption of a gap between that intention and the result, which he referred to as the art coefficient. This gap is only fulfilled by the interlocutor’s engagement with the work. The theory of fiction I propose rests on this specific notion of the creative act, as it orients us towards the view that while a fiction is created by an intentional act of a creator, it is only realised in the engagement of the interlocutor. This also implies that fiction as a creative act primarily involves the use of imagination, as van Oort (1998, 439) states, ‘to designate objects or states of affairs that do not or need not exist in the real world.’ This further implies that fiction, and more importantly the paradox of fiction, has to do with representation – the ability to create or utilise a semiotic system of one form or another and maintain it for the duration of the work. For van Oort, representation begins with the use of language as a means of socio-cultural interaction: simply put, a word stands in place of a verifiable object. For philosopher and literary theorist Gregory Currie (1990), any medium capable of representing allows for the possibility of fiction (though not every representation is ultimately fictional). The paradox of fiction, as both Currie and van Oort maintain, is this: that fiction is a particular way of representing that ‘is unverifiable in the pragmatic sense.
that it is not intended to lead us beyond its own performance to an [external] reality, but instead insists on its separation from the worldly referent’ (van Oort 1998, 439).

The concern here is what van Oort calls ‘the problem of reference’ and rests on the difference between actual and intended objects. The simplest form of representation is a word standing in place of an object – sign and signified – which forms the basis for much of our everyday communication. This is an instance of the sign referring to an actual, verifiable, object. Signs embedded in fiction, however, only ever refer to intended objects; that is, the object referred to is a representation of an actual object – the verifiable object has been deferred in favour of an imagined and unverifiable one. As literary theorist Wolfgang Iser puts it, fiction ‘possesses none of the criteria of reality and yet it pretends that it does’ (1978, 181).

Van Oort argues that signs, in this case fictional signs, emerge through designation, rather than appropriation, of an object. They point to an object rather than possess it, and this is how a sign comes to represent an object. The sign therefore is not referring to a reality outside of the fiction (that is, the “real” world), but to an imagined reality: a narrative formation. I define narrative in terms of a “formation” firstly to make my conception of it distinct from a structuralist one, which hinges upon narrative as a syntax or grammar that describes that order of presentation of a fixed level of events, and secondly because a formation evokes a process or state of becoming – something that speaks more readily to Duchamp’s notion of the art coefficient. The paradox arises because while representation allows us to defer to such a formation, that formation must also attempt to either deny the existence of the real world in order for its own reality to take precedence (the fiction, the creative act, must be self-contained), or fictionalise real world spaces which it intends utilise (I refer to this as progressive verisimilitude in Chapter 4). As van Oort argues, ‘self-reference is the insistence on the part of the sign of its own independence from the object’ (1998, 461). In denying the real, the sign refers only to itself. The paradox of fiction could therefore be viewed as the generative instance of the gap Duchamp describes, and could be summarised as: fictional signs represent intended objects in a self-referential system that denies or fictionalises reference to the real while requiring an active participant – the interlocutor – to complete it.
3.2 Fictional intent and deictic shift

The first of the three characteristics of fiction I want to outline then is an intention to knowingly enter into the paradox; that is, the intention to be fictional. This is in line with Duchamp's view of the creative act, where the creator 'goes from intention to realization' (1975, 139) and is the kind of intention put forward by Gregory Currie: intention as a relational quality. Currie's argument is that the creator of a work means for his or her audience to adopt a certain attitude towards the work for the time they are engaged with it; specifically, an attitude of 'make-believe' (1990, 18), or what I refer to later in Chapter 4 as the active creation of belief. Fictional intent is marked by a very specific kind of action; namely, the activating of this state of make-believe in the interlocutor, which is a process of reconstructing the semiotic system encoded in a narrative. The interlocutor does not simply suspend disbelief in these circumstances, but in decoding the system, is actively creating belief. Currie uses the term make-believe, however, to make explicit a connection to, and between, imagination and truth in fiction (truth not only as the purely factual, but also a sense of the genuine), which links back to the paradox as a system referring to itself without ultimate reference, but asserting its own fictional exigencies. Similar processes of mentally reconstructing a narrative have been described by narrative theorist David Herman (2001), who talks about 'cognitive mapping,' and phenomenologist Roman Ingarden (1973a; 1973b), who uses the term 'concretisation,' to describe the process by which interlocutors fill the gap in a creative act by generating cognitive artifacts; indeed, Ingarden calls this process an 'actualisation of this intention' (1973b, 32). In this way, fictional intent is framed by its narrative, or the formation in which it deploys its system of representation.

Currie concludes that 'anything that is true in the fiction [that is, corresponds to its established internal cohesion, or 'truth'] is available for the reader to make-believe [or concretise]' (1990, 70-71). This is what makes narrative formational; it is the particular way in which objects are arranged to facilitate this cohesion – and because as interlocutors we must be informed about the conditions for engaging with a fictional world, we defer to a “knowledgeable” source, such as a narrator, or more specifically a narratorial voice, ‘that agent which utters the linguistic signs which constitute the text, or the equivalent of that agent in other media,’ (Bal 2009, 17-18).
This agent communicates the cues the interlocutor takes to indicate a fictional intent, and initiates his or her shift to a fictional world, which is what Herman (2001) suggests occurs when a narrative is first engaged with, which he describes as a deictic shift.

Deixis is, simply put, ‘the function of pointing out’ (OED), of directly demonstrating or proving, and Herman’s argument is that narrative is a ‘cognitive strategy’ that involves granting context to signs within a system via a set of what he calls spatiotemporal coordinates or cues. Herman argues that we operate in deictic centres, with our ‘normal’ centre being the here-and-now physical world which we understand from van Oort as being coordinated by a verifiable semiotic system. When we engage with a fiction we shift centres from the here-and-now to a different set of coordinates encoded in the narrative, which Herman says ‘cue[s] readers to activate contextual frames,’ (2001, 520). This is actually a more practical concept than it first sounds, as such spatiotemporal cues are readily apparent in any fictional work – Herman provides a very simple example in ‘John ate; then he slept’, which involves a shift to a world in which a character, John, performs an action located in one set of space-time coordinates (he eats) – with ‘then’ indicating movement to another set of coordinates within this world (he sleeps), none of which has occurred in a verifiable here-and-now.

Deixis is principally what orients the interlocutor in the fictional world, from which point he or she begins to understand the rules of a given narrative. Furthermore, the interlocutor is also an active participant in the fiction in the sense that it must be engaged with in order to fill its creative gap, which renders this process fundamentally intersubjective. Deictic shift is also the primary means by which an interlocutor is able to establish fictional intent and recognise the need to adopt a certain attitude toward the work. In Chapter 4, this is explained in terms of the phenomenological attitude, which allows the interlocutor to disengage from one set of coordinates in order to take up another. Herman and Currie have pointed out, however, that neither deixis nor fictional intent alone is sufficient to indicate that a work is fiction. Currie, though, believes that in the majority of cases ‘we have sufficient collateral information’ (1990, 39) to make fictional intent clear and properly instigate a deictic shift to a fictional world.
3.3 Basics of narrative, story, and intersubjectivity in fiction

I have already outlined something of the nature and function of narrative in relation to fiction, making the claim that it is the formational plane of fiction – a way of organising and deploying a system of representation in a work. In defining narrative as such, I am channelling Bourriaud’s statement that, ‘I want to insist on the instability and the diversity of the concept of “form”’ (2002, 20). When viewed as the process of mentally reconstructing that system, story becomes a much richer concept than narrative theory has traditionally allowed, because it corresponds with a shift from the formational plane to an aesthetic one. It is a process that Herman describes as a ‘joint construction’ (2001, 535) between creator and interlocutor, and which philosopher and literary theorist Tzvetan Todorov (2005, 155) argues occurs across stages of transformation which he represents diagrammatically as follows:

For Herman, narrative acquires a privileged status over story because the latter results from engagement with the former – what Todorov describes here as ‘the reader’s account’ – and because narrative combines several properties such as the enabling of deitic shifts into a single structure. However, I would argue that what this position does not recognise is that these properties remain inert until they are engaged; the gap exists in the creative act because of the ‘difference between the intention and its realisation’ (Duchamp 1975, 139), which in fiction, is indicative of the paradox and suggests that narrative is unable, on its own, to overcome this condition without the cooperation of the interlocutor. The gap, the art coefficient, necessitates a joining
between creator and interlocutor that narrative facilitates and which brings about a particular result, which I claim is story. The process of cognitive mapping which Herman argues for, though, is in keeping with the basic stages outlined by Todorov. As Herman says: ‘Telling a story necessitates modelling, and enabling [facilitating] others to model, an emergent constellation of spatially related entities,’ (2001, 534). Todorov also argues that it is a process of symbolisation, or the subjective interpretation of certain cues, which links stages 2 and 3 of his diagram – an important point, since it reinforces that story is not simply the content or sequence of events, such as narrative theorists Seymour Chatman (1978) and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (1983) suggest, but is instead an experiential, subjective process of transforming narrative into aesthetic artifact, where an artifact, according to philosopher Marx W. Wartofsky (1979, xvii), represents ‘meanings, intentions, relations, and […] the modes of practice involved in their production and use.’

Story as a “mental artifact” the interlocutor has reconstructed from a work does not remain inert, as I argued narrative does. It is an active process: ‘symbolisation and interpretation,’ says Todorov, ‘imply the determinism of action’ (2005, 156). The third characteristic of fiction I want to outline stresses this sense of action, locating it in the intersubjective field which I have identified in terms of Duchamp’s creative gap between creator and interlocutor. I refer here to Bourriaud’s proposed relational aesthetic, a theory based on the view that formations facilitate intersubjective experience firstly between creator and interlocutor, and secondly between interlocutors themselves. In the case of the latter, Bourriaud uses the analogy of the art gallery as intersubjective space, but the same could be said for virtually all participatory activities that transmedia storytelling is able to facilitate, from simply discussing the work with others to creating new content within that space. This is because a formation, which Bourriaud (2002, 19) defines as ‘a coherent unit, a structure […] which shows the typical features of a world,’ produces possibilities for encounters and exchange. He goes on to argue that it is the interlocutor’s role to establish the conditions for this exchange and how we engage. This is the essence of what he calls transitivity – the potential for a relationship between creator, work, and interlocutor, which is also supported by Duchamp (1975, 140) when he argues that ‘the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in

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This view is based on the story/discourse distinction which is discussed in Chapter 2.
contact with the external world.' This occurs because the interlocutor exists within a social space, meaning that stories do indeed function as genuine artifacts that can be shared within that same social, *intersubjective* space. An aesthetic of transitivity not only addresses the issue of the gap, then, but also forms the basis for dialogue, sharing, and ultimately the development of community.

The paradox of *fiction*, its self-referential nature, is such that its reason for being is to be engaged with, for its existence to be validated, reflecting what Todorov has shown as ‘the essence of sociability [in] the need for acknowledgement’ (quoted in Bourriaud 2002, 23). *Narrative* may be inert, but this does not preclude the creator’s desire to show us something, nor our interlocutory desire to be shown and participate. *Intersubjectivity*, framed as transitivity, is a fundamental characteristic of *fiction* in which we as interlocutors intuitively seek to resolve the gap caused by the paradox by engaging with it, thereby granting the *fictional* world its legitimacy and bringing it into a social space.

### 3.4 Summary of the theory at present

As a creative act, *fiction* highlights, on the one hand, a deficiency in language, as seen in the paradox, and on the other our ability to overcome this deficiency via the creation of *stories* as concretised, affective artifacts – as aesthetic experience. My approach is predominantly theoretical; in practice much of this is, of course, intuitive and we do not normally make the kind of distinctions between *fiction, narrative, story*, and *intersubjectivity* that I have made here. What I believe this approach to *fiction* does reinforce is that the difference between mediums – for example, between a novel and a film – are not quite as fundamental as they first appear; that the paradox and the subsequent need to frame it underpins any work of *fiction*. Or put another way, there is a commonality that can be accessed via the co-constitutive process of mediation. Such a theory is necessary, I feel, for explaining the way transmedia storytelling operates, not at the level of corporate and economic concerns, but at the level of *intersubjective* relations between interlocutors who choose to engage with such distributed *fictions*. In his model of relational aesthetics, Bourriaud suggests three criteria which are necessary for creating an *arena of exchange*, or environment, in which *intersubjectivity* is able to mediate between *narrative* and *story*, and which could
be argued to correspond roughly to the narrative-story-intersubjectivity continuum. They therefore prove useful as a framing devise for discussing these concepts: ‘this “arena of exchange” must be judged on the basis of aesthetic criteria, in other words, by analysing the coherence of its form, and then the symbolic value of the “world” it suggests to us, and of the image of human relations reflected by it’ (Bourriaud 2002, 17-18). The remainder of this thesis therefore seeks to discuss the continuum and its implications, and to demonstrate how it can be applied to a creative practice such as transmedia storytelling.

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10 The concept of the arena of exchange is taken up in Chapter 3.
Chapter 1
NARRATIVE

In this chapter, I begin to detach the concepts of narrative and story from each other in order to examine them as two distinct characteristics of fiction. I will argue that if fiction is predicated on a paradox of self-reference, such as Richard van Oort (1998) suggests, then narrative can be seen as its organising principle, crucial for the mediation of story. In this I take narrative theorist Marie-Laure Ryan’s (2006) positing of narrative as a kind of organisational tool as a point of departure. Narrative is therefore viewed as a tool, or set of tools, for organising codes, conventions, and elements of fiction in ways which enable the interlocutor to make sense of, derive meaning from, or find pleasure in a work and which ‘evoke stories to the mind [in ways] that distinguishes narrative discourse from other text types’ (Ryan 2006, 7). It is not a random assemblage, since it must be seen to work towards a coherence (Toolan 2009), and a failure to do so would mean narrative would not meet the requirement that Bourriaud suggests is necessary for a work to be located within an intersubjective arena of exchange (Bourriaud 2002, 18). Narrative is therefore best seen as a discursive, or a logical, “designed”, formation that organises a work into a coherent whole, rather than the organ of meaning itself. Put another way, we do not find meaning in the formation, but rather see in it the potential for meaning to be derived through it. This is not to say that we cannot appreciate the narrative formation of a work – many postmodern works, after all, draw attention to their artifice in order to do just this – and neither does it mean that the existence of such works necessarily undermines this principle. In fact, they can be seen to reinforce it, since, as cultural critic Alan Kirby notes, ‘in their depth they rely on the same textual functioning,’ (2009, 50) which is to say, such works rely on the pre-existing condition that we are not normally conscious of the formation of narrative, and so their effect is all the more striking when we are made conscious of it.

Implicit in this premise is the assumption that all fictional works contain some sort of formation, system, structure that can be identified as narrative (I will adopt the term formation from this point on, with its implication of a process rather than a totality). In adopting this position, my aim is to demonstrate that differences between any two mediums exist mainly at a formation level, and can therefore be utilised in proximity
on the basis of a shared fictionality which prefigures their organisation into one medium or the other; that is, fictional intent always precedes the narrative in which it is located. In this, I take my cue from Bourriaud, who argues that mediums are 'more or less democratic' (2002, 109), a view which is supported by narrative theorist David Herman’s suggestion that 'medium-specific differences between narratives are nontrivial but only more or less firmly anchored in their respective media.' (2004, 50). This “synthesis” view of narrative is what I contend makes instances of adaptation, remediation and transmedia storytelling possible (though the last remains the focus of this thesis). However, Bourriaud also contends that works based on a relational aesthetic, as I suggest transmedia storytelling is, imply ‘the end of the medium-specific, the abandonment of any tendency to exclude certain fields from the realm of art’ (2010b, 53). When this perspective is understood, the result is quite profound: '[i]t is fiction, as it happens, that becomes the medium here, and comes to blur the boundaries between art and literature, narrative and form’ (ibid. 136).

Illustrated simply, we are able to enjoy a film adaptation of a novel, for instance, because what we are enjoying is firstly a work of fiction, consisting of non-medium specific characters, setting, events, themes, and so on, before it is understood in terms of either medium. However, the greater implication of Bourriaud’s argument is the resulting precariousness that necessitates intersubjective exchange.

A problem in demonstrating this alternative to medium-specificity is that much narrative theory has been, and continues to be, developed on the basis of literary works, particularly the novel. This seems to have occurred despite the claim for a universal grammar made by the likes of literary theorist Roland Barthes. Part of the reason for this might be that Barthes himself began with written works, reasoning that linguistics might serve ‘as a basic model for the structural analysis of narrative.’ (1975, 239) Over time, the perceived inability of this kind of narrative theory to speak to the nature of other mediums has given rise to narratologies developed to suit them specifically. Thus, while fictional mediums are all seen as containing narrative in some form or another, a universal grammar seems unlikely in light of their differing natures. Perhaps there is valid reason to believe this is the case – it is not my aim here to prove or disprove the existence of a universal grammar, in terms of the objective technical

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1 Synthesis is one of three positions on narrative Herman discusses, the others being thesis (aspects of narrative are medium-independent and thus translatable), and antithesis (narrative is medium specific, and a story is fundamentally changed each time its narrative is altered).
rules of narrative (though I do acknowledge their importance). What is vital to understand, however, is that part of the significance of transmedia storytelling is that it demonstrates, practically, that mediums can be integrated for the purposes of storytelling. Furthermore, if we are living in a period of convergence, which Ithiel de Sola Pool argues “‘operates as a constant force for unification,’” (quoted in Jenkins 2008, 11) then we are already developing the methods, even habits, necessary to establish trajectories between mediums, finding new or repurposed signs and ways of signification of the kind that suggest, if not an underlying universality, then a semionautic ability to make connections that traverse mediums.

There are also two underlying factors in this chapter which should be noted, as they will impact our understanding of narrative particularly in relation to transmedia storytelling. The first is medium specificity, including what I consider to be the related issue of narrative coherence. Here, two questions will be considered: if medium specificity as a concept holds and we do, in fact, require different narratologies to explain and analyse various mediums, how is it that phenomena such as transmedia storytelling can exist? And secondly, to what degree can the specific formational characteristics of a medium – the way the construction of a narrative might differ from one medium to the next – be said to impact both its relation to other mediums to which it might be brought into proximity? The second factor that will be explored is the concept of deixis, or the use of space and time as an orienting function in narrative. Space and time can never be experienced in isolation from each other – an action requires a certain duration in which to perform it, and will always occur within a given arena or in relation to a specific location. However, deixis was originally developed to explain and analyse spatiotemporal orientation within a single medium; I reasonably assume that it takes on expanded meanings or can be applied in alternative ways to transmedia storytelling, where, for example, narrative may be distributed across multiple mediums.²

My understanding of these dual concepts is influenced, mainly, by what is known as cognitive narratology, a recent trend that fuses narrative theory with elements of cognitive science to emphasise, in narrative theorist David Herman’s terms, ‘the mind-relevant aspects of storytelling practice.’ (2009b, 30) Part of the problem with

² Deixis will also be dealt with directly in Section 3.2 of Chapter 4 as a process facilitating immersion in transmedia works.
researching narrative as it relates to transmedia storytelling is that, as noted above, much of the theory has been developed based on written texts, so that it must be acknowledged that what I am doing in this chapter is attempting to reconfigure theory and concepts in such a way that they might offer a description of narrative that accounts for the peculiarities of transmedia storytelling. To this end, I will begin by locating cognitive narratology in its historical context, as a branch of the broader field of narrative theory, and from there propose readings of medium specificity and deixis that will then be applied to five particular mediums: comics, film, interactive environments, games, and theatre/performance. These were selected for examination here as they correspond to the five mediums utilised in my creative project (see Chapter 5). The chapter will conclude with my proposing a reconceptualisation of narrative in which it is positioned alongside story and intersubjectivity as an equal and integral characteristic of fiction.

1. LOCATING COGNITIVE NARRATOLOGY

Defined broadly, cognitive science considers the way information is processed and is 'the study of the thinking mind, its structures, and its activities.' (Margolin 2003, 272) As it impacts on narrative theory, scholars work from the assumption that the mind operates as a site of construction, or concretisation, understood in phenomenologist Ingarden’s terms as ‘the intentional reconstruction [...] of the objectivities portrayed in [a] work’ (1973b, 37). Put very simply, it is the study of how the mind comes to understand and make sense of a work. Concretisation is not a term commonly used in cognitive narratology, which derives the term ‘mental representations’ (Von Eckardt 1993; Gerrig & Egidi 2003, for example) from cognitive science for much the same phenomenon. Perhaps this is because concretisation implies a semantic rigidity in the interlocutor’s position towards a work, such that they are resistant to change in spite of shifts in the narrative. Such a view of the interlocutor’s role has not, to my knowledge, been readily, if ever, held by narratologists, and I make no claim to it here either. My use of the term, derived as it is from Ingarden’s, should be taken to mean that the interlocutor exists in a shifting semantic moment, one which is guided by the narrative, made complex by the broader sociocultural matrix, and which can be actualised, concretised, or otherwise made real by the interlocutor, for whom it

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3 These peculiarities are identified in Chapter 4 as four principles of transmedia storytelling.
constitutes an authentic experience within that moment. Ingarden refers to this as a process of ‘synthesising objectivities,’ (1973b, 49), but here establishes a notable connection to Herman’s position of synthesis, resting as it does with the interlocutor’s capacity to shift across mediums as the narrative indicates. Therefore, in preferring concretisation over alternative terms, I wish to emphasise that the intersubjective experience of engagement which narrative enables is a real and genuine one for the interlocutor.

Herman – arguably one of the leading scholars in the area of cognitive narratology – divides the field of narrative studies into ‘classical’ and ‘postclassical’ phases (Herman 1997; Herman 1999). For him our current postclassical phase needs to be seen in light of a reformation of foundational questions of classical narratology (Herman 1999, 14), not to dismiss classical approaches, but to extend those aspects which remain applicable, or where subsequent scholarship and emerging phenomena have opened alternative avenues for investigation, such as the insights derived from cognitive science provide. The question of a “universal theory of narrative,” such as narrative theorist Brian Richardson raises in his rebuttal to Herman's classical/postclassical divide, (Richardson & Herman 1998) is, for example, reformulated: Richardson criticises Herman for not accounting for radical narratives, arguing that a universal theory is impossible since they are ‘designed to frustrate all standard conventions of narrativity’ (ibid., 289). Herman’s response in the same paper is that we must first have an understanding of conventions before they can be manipulated in any way, so that by working out what can be assumed about a so-called conventional narrative – what it looks like and how it operates – a postclassical narratology will, by extension, explain radical narratives, even if only in terms of how they violate those conventions. The result of this is a set of shared assumptions about what constitutes a narrative, conventional or otherwise, that are flexible enough to be both usefully applied and re-evaluated as theory develops.

Herman’s point is that a universal theory is untenable, and a postclassical narratology should not be mistaken as an attempt at one. Rather, “postclassical narratology” should be seen as a general term for the various approaches currently employed in discussing and examining narrative, of which cognitive narratology is but one. Some of these assumptions are common to a number of mediums and the resulting approaches
can therefore be considered cross-disciplinary in nature (as cognitive narratology is), while others are specific narratologies that seek to explain only particular phenomena and are therefore less amenable to application outside of that practice. The synthesis approach I have adopted attempts to unpack those commonalities and identify mediums which share those characteristics, regarding these as the basis for an approach to narrative in instances of transmedia storytelling.

A postclassical narratology should also be viewed as one that does not seek to break with its predecessor. The `post' indicates a moment after, but not necessarily a break or discontinuation from what has gone before. Attempts at such a break should be viewed warily, as sociologist Matti Hyvärinen notes, `concepts change, but all possible changes should not be collapsed into a single level of “change of meaning’” (2006, 21). This thought can be seen to have its basis in French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault's organisation of human knowledge into discursive formations, which are sets of practices and principles `that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 1972, 49). The boundaries of these formations, along with the interpretive communities which give rise to them, `are themselves reflexive categories, principles of classification, normative rules, [and] institutionalized types.' (ibid., 22) It is problematic to see the boundaries placed around arrangements of human knowledge as fixed rather than continually open to inquiry. This has proven to be an issue for postmodernism in recent years, for example, since, as Alan Kirby notes, this discourse sought to position itself in terms of `an absolute break in all human experience between the disappeared past and the stranded present,’ (Kirby 2009, 2) instead of being seen, more accurately, as a subsequent phase in an ongoing project of modernity. As far as postclassical narratology is concerned, it is certainly not the case that we find no trace of the structuralist heritage of classical narratology embedded in it, a heritage which has, so far, been readily acknowledged by scholars.

Classical narratology is generally considered to consist of that body of work produced during the height of structuralism, primarily in the 10-15 years following the 1966

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1 Herman's edited volume Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis (1999) can be seen as an attempt to bridge this gap between specific and cross-disciplinary narratologies.

2 Modernity is understood here as the transition from an agrarian-based social system to an industrial/capitalist one, with a particular focus on the 18th century. Culturally, this period can be seen to mark the beginning of a shift that promised `limitless individualism, freedom from social obligations, emancipation from oppressive duties and structuring conventions, the pursuit of pleasure, and personal freedom’ (Kirby 2009, 42).
publication of issue 8 of the journal *Communications*. (Herman & Vervaeck 2005, 41; Meister 2009, 331) As described by Herman and Vervaeck, this issue ‘contained nine articles with proposals for concepts and methods to study narrative texts,’ among which were papers from the likes of Roland Barthes (this was where his ‘Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative’ first appeared), Tzvetan Todorov, Umberto Eco, and Claude Brémond. These scholars all tended to come from backgrounds in linguistics and semiotics, and based their work on predecessors such as Claude Levi-Strauss and Vladimir Propp, whose *Morphology of the Folktale* (published in Russia in 1928, but not translated into English until 1958 [1968]) was considerably influential for its presentation of a method for the systematic reduction of textual features to a series of characteristics common to a group of texts. In 1969, Todorov coined the term ‘narratology’ in his book *Grammar of the Decameron* to describe a similar deep systematic study of narrative he proposed to conduct. Like Barthes in his *Introduction*, Todorov also called for ‘a new type of generalizing theory that could be applied to all domains of narrative’ (Meister 2009, 331). ‘Narratology’ as a term was not immediately accepted, however, because of the proliferation of alternative approaches, research agendas, and related concepts during the same period (ibid., 332), and as with much of the work produced by the structuralists during this period, further grounded the project of classical narratology in literary texts. David Herman says of these developments that ‘the result was an approach that championed the study of narratives of all sorts, irrespective of origin, medium, theme, reputation, or genre, but lacked the conceptual and methodological resources to substantiate its own claims to generalizability’ (2004, 47). The study of narrative continued to develop into the 1980s almost exclusively in terms of printed literary texts, with those scholars of the period – such as Gerald Prince and Shlomith Rimmon-Kennan – making valuable contributions towards this end, but who were, according to narrative theorist Werner Wolf, seemingly not ‘interested in interrelations between narrativity and mediality as such except for postulating a narrator as a necessary transmitter of stories’ (2011, 146).

Postclassical narratology continues to champion the study of narrative of all sorts, and part of its project now is to explore the transmedial nature of certain types of narratives; that is, narrative’s function as a mediating and organising principle. Wolf

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6 Originally published as *Grammaire du Décaméron* (1969b) in France, with the term appearing as ‘narratologie’. This work of Todorov’s does not appear to have been translated into English.
argues for ‘a continuing allegiance to a unified narratology, although on the basis of a transmedial, cognitive and prototypical reconceptualization of narrativity and the use of a flexible concept of “medium”’ (2011, 145), which he claims is necessary to avoid dividing the study of narrative into too many distinct and (potentially) uncommunicative narratologies. This unified narratology should not be confused with the earlier calls for a generalised theory discussed above, but should be seen in terms of the synthesis approach, whereby mediums are acknowledged for their distinctiveness, while shared characteristics are examined and emphasised.

1.1 Cognitive narratology, schemata, and representation

Cognitive narratology, as one of a number of approaches to the study of narrative that can be subsumed under the ‘postclassical’ banner, tends to be primarily concerned with the concept of representation. The German literary theorist Wolfgang Iser (1987) views representation not as a re-presentation, or duplication, of an already-existing object, but as a performative act that brings an object into a certain kind of existence. That is, a representation constitutes the conditions for the concretisation of its object. In theory, anything can constitute an object, so long as it contains what cognitive scientist Barbara Von Eckardt calls ‘representational properties’ (1993, 164) which she variously labels as entities, structures, devices, states, nodes, patterns – what we might broadly refer to as codes and conventions – that activate and delineate the boundaries of the performative act of representation. That is, we as interlocutors are not only implicated in, but necessary to, resolving the cognitive gap (or art coefficient in Marcel Duchamp’s terms) endemic to fiction since, as I argued in the Introduction, narrative, being the organising principle for the mediation of story, is unable to resolve this on its own. In these terms, representation can also be seen as the basis for redefining story, a notion which will be further developed in the next chapter.

Schema is another term used in cognitive narratology, and which is roughly equivalent to what I have termed an organising principle. A schema can be understood on two levels, both of which must be present for it to operate: first, on the level of narrative, understood as a framework that builds up both formational and semantic patterns within a work (Herman 1997, 1047), and secondly, on the level of the interlocutor, who draws on the array of previously-experienced schemata when engaging with the
narrative. This previously-experienced schemata can be further divided into ‘static’ and ‘dynamic’ repertoires, the former relating to basic assumptions we can make about mundane aspects of life which Herman explains as what ‘allow[s] me to distinguish a chair from a table or a cat from a bread box’ (ibid.). Cognitive psychologists Terence Horgan and John Tienson (2006, 148) also refer to these as ‘beliefs’ about objects and locations which we are not generally consciously aware of. The latter ‘dynamic’ repertoire, however, is a kind of mapping tool for more complex sequences of events; to borrow Herman’s example, we carry around models of what to expect at birthday parties, so we are able to distinguish them from other types of social gatherings (Herman, 1997). These beliefs and sequences are arranged into scripts which we draw on in both the creation of, and engagement with, narrative.

This is, admittedly, a very simplified overview of what is, in practice, a complex cognitive activity. This is because, particularly in terms of narrative, a schema must account for a huge variety of events, not all of which are of equal significance and some of which are never even realised in the work itself. This is not a new development – narratologist Seymour Chatman, writing in 1978, put forward the notions of kernels and satellites to distinguish between events upon which the narrative hinges (kernels) and those which could be removed without disrupting the greater organising principle (satellites). The distinction between the two has nothing to do with the perceived “size” of the event, either; Chatman describes kernels as ‘nodes or hinges in the structure, branching points which force a movement into one of two (or more) possible paths’ (1978, 53). For example, the moment when the character Neo, played by Keanu Reeves, agrees to swallow the red pill in The Matrix (Wachowski Brothers 1999) demands little of the film’s spatiotemporal formation, but can be read as the event upon which the narrative of not only that film, but the entire franchise, rests – if Neo had instead chosen the blue pill, and returned to his life as Thomas Anderson, everything we see following this moment would arguably not have taken place, or at least, would have taken place differently. This moment is, of course, subject to other issues at play, such as the semantic weight of the scene which helps to render it as a significant moment in our minds. But the ability to recognise the significance of this event to the narrative relies on the schemata – the array of codes and conventions – we bring to bear.
Having introduced the term, I must admit to being wary of it for two reasons. Firstly, as cognitive psychologist Richard Gerrig notes, schemata are often 'taken to be bounded, static, and reasonably similar' (2010, 22) from one interlocutor to the next, and only really refer to general knowledge already in the individual's possession. Secondly, the ease with which it can be appropriated towards establishing hierarchies within narratives must be noted. Without denying the legitimacy of psychological research which indicates that this is indeed how humans generally arrange and process knowledge, I believe a less rigid application to *narrative*, one in which we are not too eager to classify and categorise, may prove as useful. Thinking of schemata as a non-static *array*, a flexible, contingent arrangement, is useful in this regard and supports my preference for *organising principle* as a term which suggests the schema's ability to arrange and systematise, but also speaks to the mediating nature of *narrative*, which must see such systems as intersubjective and contingent on the consent of those engaged with it to regard the schema as useful and valid.

The term is not cancelled out by my preference for *organising principle*, either; rather, it is subsumed by it and, where appropriate, *schema* will be employed. This is further justified, I believe, when the concept is placed in proximity to that of *representation*. In regards to Iser and Von Eckardt, referenced above, I have assumed a connection between Iser's theory of representation, developed for, and applied to, literary works, and Von Eckardt's cognitive science perspective of the same/similar concept. The leap is supported, I believe, by Marx W. Wartofsky's succinct observation that 'the function of a representation is to stand for something beyond itself' (1979, xxi). In the sense that the concept is applied in cognitive narratology, it can often be viewed in conjunction with a concomitant notion of process, such as that offered by Gerrig and Egidi (2003). Process describes the kind of codes and conventions suggested by Von Eckardt that enable the interlocutor to move towards concretisation, while what is represented is the range of objects to be concretised, to be made to point to something beyond, or in place of, themselves. What makes *representation* a useful tool for examining the potential transmediality of certain types of *narratives* is that it is not necessarily tied to any given medium, so long as what is generated 'presents meanings, intentions, relations and come to represent to us the modes of practice involved in their production and use' (Wartofsky 1979, xvii; see also Ryan 2006).
I am not suggesting that in fiction ‘anything goes’ because any ‘thing’ can theoretically be represented and potentially mediated from one medium to another. Such an argument would be another untenable, not to mention weak, attempt at a universal theory. Instead, my understanding of representation and schema should be seen in terms of Herman’s argument that a logic of synthesis be seen at work, based on ‘different kinds of narrative preferring different blends of states, actions, and events, different proportions of stereotypic and non-stereotypic knowledge, different strategies for distributing participant roles among individuals and entities in the storyworld, and so on’ (2002, 22-23), and which is also, importantly, ‘an unreplaceable resource for structuring and comprehending experience’ (ibid. 23). Thus, the discussion and analysis of the five mediums that follows seeks to establish what medium-specific qualities might be deployed that work to maintain their internal cohesion – effectively, what are the primary characteristics of each medium that allow it to function as an organising principle of comics, of theatre, and so on – while making a case for an arcological narrative formation, based on the metaphor of the architectural arcology (see Introduction), which is non-medium specific in its nature but demonstrates ‘the capacity to keep track of items in the environment’ by way of ‘compositional structure’ (Horgan & Tienson 2006, 148); in other words, a macro-level organising principle facilitating the formation of trajectories between the various constituent narratives of the arcology.

2. FIVE MEDIUMS EXAMINED

2.1 Comics

As a serious academic discipline, Comics Studies has arguably only recently come into its own, despite having ‘a history at least as long as cinema’ (Jenkins 2012, 2). As such, a significant portion of research published so far has been focussed on marking out the boundaries of the medium and its areas of study. Advancing a suitable definition has also, perhaps unsurprisingly, been problematic, since the medium appears well-suited to franchised transmedia and crossmedia (remediated) applications on the one hand, while on the other ‘retain[s] a style, an approach to narrative and “reading,” and a

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7 Consider the multitude of films and, increasingly, television shows that draw on comics as their source material, particularly within the last decade.
history that is medium-specific’ (Ndalianis 2011, 115). The field is further complicated by the presence of three major regional traditions that should be acknowledged in any overview, these being the American comic, Franco-Belgian bandes dessinée (BD), and Japanese manga traditions. Each have influenced the other in various ways, but, particularly in the case of manga, have developed along quite different sociocultural and political lines, and produced their own sets of conventions as a result. Without denying the uniqueness of these traditions they are subsumed in this Section under the broad banner of “comics,” so that the understanding of narrative in comics I will propose can be seen as broadly applicable. Also, despite art aesthetician Aaron Meskin’s (2007) arguments to the contrary, I am here assuming a basic definition of comics as sequences of semantically related static images, often juxtaposed with text, to construct a narrative. Meskin, who fails to offer a definition of narrative even while he criticizes his four examples for similar errors, takes a broad view of the concept that ranges far outside the purview of fiction. Many of his counterexamples, therefore, also fall outside the scope of this thesis. While there are always exceptions to rules, for my purposes the above definition remains useful.

This definition establishes that there are two planes of narrative seen to be at work within comics – the pictorial and the literary. As such, narrative in comics has often been directly linked to the question of how reading them differs from other mediums, since it involves both written verbal and visual codes and the interlocutor’s ability to elide between them. To this end, narratologist Karin Kukkonen (2011) argues for comics to be read as multimodal works, a term used to described how multiple ‘semiotic resources,’ such as colour, image, text, sound, and so on are combined within a medium. She sees this, as I do, as the basis for a transmedial theory of narrative. Moreover, the relationship between verbal and visual codes cannot be said to be fixed; it is problematic to think of comics merely as images illustrating written text, since, firstly, a comic need not always be accompanied by written text, and secondly, this could encompass a whole range of practices without noting anything specific about the comics medium itself. Thus, an organising principle relevant to comics might lie in Russian literary and cultural critic Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism. Indeed, dialogism is useful to most mediums, since, as Bakhtin argues, ‘[t]he dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of any discourse’ (1994, 279), and discourse, as was discussed above in relation to Foucault,
is a way of organising knowledge about an object while recognising that such organisation is always in the act of becoming, always, ‘directed toward its object’ (ibid., 276).

I expand on dialogism in section 1.2 of the following chapter, but I use the concept here to help demonstrate the relationship between verbal and visual narratives in comics as a site of continual exchange, since ‘comics are a key instance of the cooperation between different modes of narrative’ (Kukkoenen 2011, 36). To this end, Franco-Belgian comics scholar Thierry Groensteen suggests that one characteristic of comics which makes them unique is the presence and use of the *panel* – simply, the “boxes” on a page, each often containing a single image, and each separated by a blank space referred to as the “gutter”. Indeed, Groensteen argues that ‘it does not seem profitable to me to approach the study of comics beginning from units smaller than the panel’ (2007, 24), because this is the level at which dialogic exchange takes place.

Groensteen’s emphasis on the panel is also useful because it displays the transmedial nature of the verbal and visual narratives to synthesise a macro-narrative. The panel must, primarily, contain an image, but it may also contain written text in the form of speech balloons, captions, sound effects, or diegetic utterances (such as street signs, book titles, a newspaper extract and so on) (Pratt 2009). These two organising principles operate in various symbiotic – or what cultural critic Hillary L. Chute terms ‘cross-discursive’ (2006, 769) – ways to create a work that can be read as a unified whole. Artist and comics theorist8 Scott McCloud (1993) notes at least seven ways that comics synthesise verbal and visual narratives, all of which depend on some kind of mediation between the two to achieve their effect. Already, then, we see within the organising principle of comics a tendency towards synthesis of multiple narratives as well as evidence for a macro-level of narrative which must be present to coordinate.

A study of the comic panel also reveals how deixis and coherence function as part of the macro-level narrative to coordinate our reading of the verbal and visual narratives. Where deixis is the use of space and time to orient us within a narrative, the visual,

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8 McCloud’s status as a theorist of comics would probably be rejected by most academics, since he has no formal academic training in this regard and his major works ‘have been criticized for their lack of theoretical sophistication’ (Beaty & Nguyen 2007, vii). However, those same works continue to be widely referenced and have helped lay the groundwork for the discipline of Comics Studies. Furthermore, unlike most academics working in the discipline, McCloud brings the perspective of a skilled and experienced practitioner to bear. I see no reason why he should be denied the status of ‘theorist’ merely on the grounds of a lack of academic qualifications or sophistication when his work is grounded in practice.
which includes shape, colour and so on, ‘releases its reader from the strictures of experiencing a work in time’ (Chute 2006, 770), while the verbal, which also includes the use of silence, helps to ‘determine the duration of a single panel’ (Pratt 2009, 109). The panel occupies space, both physically on the page, and narratively within the greater sequence of events of which it is a part. The verbal narrative also occupies part of that physical space in the form of speech balloons, captions and sound effects that intrude upon the image, but they are not read as part of the dimensions of the narrative space. Narrative coherence is achieved because we read these textual intrusions as artifacts representing spoken, non-spoken (thought), or expository narration, and concretise them in conjunction with the image. In other words, we understand that they are narrative in nature and intended as fictional because previous experience has established this as a narrative norm. We have performed a process of synthesis based on the logic that such artifacts are abstract in nature; the speech balloon, as a representation, ‘indicates the presence of the inaccessible’ (Iser 1987, 227) and does not actually occupy any physical space, therefore allowing the interlocutor to elide between them.

In the same way that the verbal can interrupt the visual, so too the visual can interrupt the verbal in its capacity to determine duration. While a sequence of panels depicting successive actions suggests movement through time, a single panel, as comics scholar and historian Pascal Lefèvre says, ‘interrupts this progressive reading process and requires us to consider the scene’ (2010, 44); that is, given its static nature, the visual can serve to arrest the passage of time. The reader has the ability to halt the reading process in order to linger on an image, to skip over images, or to revisit them, as they choose. Our ‘attention is constantly adjusting as it elides from one sign system to another’ (Tampalini 2007, 338). Time is always present in narrative, because as cognitive narratologist Erwin M. Segal notes, ‘[w]hatever experience readers have in response to a narrative occurs over time’ (1995b, 65), but it is possible to say that, in a very practical sense, space is emphasised in comics.

What I have attempted here is to situate narrative in comics as a dialogic between two organising principles operating within a single medium, noting how they do not operate in isolation but must mediate between one other in order to create a unified work. Far from being a confusion of representational actions that reduces comics to a
“war of signs” (W. J. T. Mitchell, quoted in Lefèvre 2010, 36) between verbal and visual cues, the eliding or mediation between them should be seen as reinforcing the reading of comics as a complex cognitive activity that speaks to the sophistication which is perhaps required for engaging in transmedial works. Indeed, Henry Jenkins argues that the discipline of comics studies ought to be one in which ‘transmedia perspectives’ (2012, 10) are utilised, while communications scholar Jan Baetens, in referring to the work of colleague Phillipe Marion, notes that, ‘the specificity of the medium has less to do with a set of fixed features used exclusively in the comics, than with a larger set of elements it shares with other media.’ (2001, 146). Tellingly, Baetens goes on to say that ‘[s]uch non-specific elements as narrative and communicative strategies, for instance, play as important a role in comics as specific elements like balloons or facial expressions’ (ibid.: emphasis mine).

While the combination of verbal and visual narratives in comics has been a central issue in their study, the assumption has been that visual methodologies must be brought to bear on the reading of comics that we might not otherwise bring to the reading of, for instance, a novel. While it is true that comics art has its own set of conventions, such as the speed line to indicate action, the sweat bead to indicate panic, or the bleeding nose used in manga to indicate lust, it can be argued that this overlooks that all reading is, firstly, a visual activity. For example, in the novel, we process marks on a page that we understand will form images we can recognise as words, and yet they are not the words themselves, only artifacts of a system of communication that is external to the novel itself (the words necessarily pre-existing their being written down). The images in comics are a similar system of communication. At this level there is nothing medium-specific about either – for Bakhtin, they are ‘anonymous and social’ (1981, 272) – but both have in common the requirement to communicate a certain set of artifacts. The specifics of either system only become of importance when the question of which will most effectively represent those artifacts is considered. As communications scholar Rolf T. Wigand notes, ‘[t]he total meaning of a particular portion of a communication is not conveyed by its content alone. It is affected by the context in which it is positioned’ (1986, 33: emphasis mine). It can be argued, then, that the question of medium specificity should not be framed so much in terms of “what can this medium do that others cannot,” but rather “what might be the effect of using this medium, instead of another.” The answer
to such a question, I would suggest, needs to be informed by the creator's *fictional intent*: what is the most effective way of telling the *story* I want to tell?

### 2.2 Film

Film is often compared and contrasted to comics because both are seen as primarily visual mediums (Christiansen 2000; Gardner 2011; Lefèvre 2007; Pratt 2009). The two do share many similar conventions: point of view, framing, composition, editing for continuity – generally what is termed "cinematographic style" – so that Lefèvre argues that '[s]howing is already narrating in cinema and comics' (2007, 2). Comics scholar Hans-Christian Christiansen describes this as ‘a natural relationship’ (2000, 107) between the two mediums, based ‘primarily in motifs, and in the structure and function of the plot’ (ibid.). However, film narratologist Peter Verstraten (2009) points out the particular problem that the concept of narration poses in film, where this can be understood simply as a process ‘in which an agent or subject conveys to an addressee [...] a story in a particular medium (Bal 2009, 5). Verstraten argues that narration in works which contain a verbal narrative, as comics do, is comparatively easy to resolve. For him, the filmic narrator does not simply ‘tell’ the viewer what is happening, but must instead synthesise the two narrative streams present in film: the visual and the auditory. Verstraten concludes that this is what distinguishes film from other mediums, but such a mediating process is, as we have already seen in the case of comics and, to a lesser extent, with the novel, at the heart of most fictional narratives. Thus, film also presents us with a certain dialogism that can be used as the basis for a transmedial theory of *narrative*.

One difference between film and comics that is worth noting is that the interlocutor tends to experience the visual and auditory narratives of film simultaneously, as though they were one, whereas in comics, the verbal and visual have the ability to interrupt one another, and the interlocutor generally must give his or her attention to one before the other as it is read. What this means is only that the process of synthesis necessary to mediate between the various narratives is more obvious in the comic, while it is somewhat more hidden within the artifice of film. Ingarden argues that something similar happens in regards to the way the interlocutor concretises verbal (written) narratives: ‘Simultaneous with and inseparable from the described
apprehension of the verbal sounds is the understanding of the meaning of the word [...] One does not apprehend the verbal sound first and then the verbal meaning. Both things occur at once’ (1973b, 22). This is to say, it may be problematic to overemphasise medium specificity, at least within the boundaries of fiction I have established in this thesis, since to do so would ignore the art coefficient that the interlocutor is required to resolve. And as Verstraten acknowledges, (film) narrative ‘is based on an interaction between the text and its reader or viewer’ (2009, 8). Thus, the particular function of narration in film as a potential organising principle becomes evident.

In this regard, Christiansen’s point, raised above, that similarities between mediums exist based on the functions of motifs and plot structures is a telling one. Medium specificity only arises out of the techniques and conventions of a medium, not necessarily out of the elements of fiction informing it; that is, plot, character, setting, and so on are not elements which are unique to any one medium. The filmic narrator – actually a gestalt of visual and auditory narrators – is, according to film and media scholar Edward Branigan, ‘a role or function – a particular relationship with respect to the symbolic process of the text’ (1984, 40). That is, the function of the narrator is to enable the interlocutor’s own synthesising processes so that he or she is able to concretise them into a “whole” work. This does not at all mean that the narrator-function is neutral; on a purely mechanical level alone, shot composition and editing ‘guide us through the events by directing our attention to what is important’ (Christiansen 2000, 108), that is, to what the director deems important, to say nothing of the aesthetic effect that music, sound, and acting might have. It is because these appear to us as spontaneous that they have such an effect. However, it is problematic to say that the synthesis of visual and auditory creates a unified, totalised work as it is impossible for the interlocutor to give his or her attention to both auditory and visual narratives at the same time, as they represent two semiotic systems, each with their own unique codes, that are brought into proximity. The director’s job, as with the comics creator, is to set up a viewing itinerary, so that the interlocutor is cued at each moment as to where his or her attention should, ideally, be. This means that while the interlocutor receives both audio and visual simultaneously (or so closely that there is no apparent discrepancy), he or she is processing that information via cues
established in the work. The process of editing from a wide shot to a close-up on a certain feature is a basic example of this.

Narration, especially as it relates to fiction, has long been a central concern of narratology (Bal 2009, 18), and the question of where visual narration in film begins has been open to some debate. Verstraten, on the one hand, suggests that narration begins with the establishing shot, a technique in which a shot of (usually) extended duration is placed ‘at the beginning of a scene to establish the interrelationship of details to be shown subsequently in nearer shots’ (Lindgren 1963, 223). Verstraten’s argument is that because ‘every shot always already has a subjectified content’ (2009, 122) – is never neutral – our attention is likewise always already oriented in a certain way, and since films usually open with some form of establishing shot, we are thus positioned in relation to the visuals from the outset. On the other hand, Seymour Chatman links narration with description, because ‘a narrative without an agent performing actions is impossible’ (1978, 34), and at least a minimal amount of description is necessary to achieve this. Elsewhere, he argues that ‘in its essential visual mode, film does not describe at all but merely presents; or better, it depicts’ (1980, 128). Description tends to arrest the temporal advancement of the plot, which is seen regularly in novels when, for example, plot is halted in order for the writer to describe what characters are doing, seeing, or thinking. In Chatman’s view, because film can only show, it must be in constant motion, giving it the illusion of an equally constant flow of time which cannot be broken. Therefore, the establishing shot, to return to our example, is descriptive only to the extent that it is ‘at least evocative of place’ (ibid., 129). Its function as a narrating device is limited because it can only depict and often lacks agents performing the type of kernel actions which are central to the plot. Chatman does concede that ‘point of view in film is always there: it is fixed and determined precisely because the camera always needs to be placed somewhere’ (ibid., 132), which leads us back to Verstraten’s position of the never-neutral visual narrator.

The auditive narrator, to borrow Verstraten’s term, assists in resolving this issue. This is the narrator-function that controls sound in a film, including dialogue, voice-overs, sound effects, and music. Ernest Lindgren, the first curator of Britain’s National Film Archive, noted that ‘with the addition of sound, the scope of the observer’s power of
apprehension, and the range and complexity of what the imaginative director can reveal to him, is greatly increased, for he now becomes a listener as well’ (1963, 103). Although it is not simply a case of ‘adding’ sound to visual narrative; indeed, quite the opposite: film sound theorist Michel Chion notes how a film loses ‘its rhythm and unity’ (1994, 4) when its audio is removed. Such rhythm and unity can be found in film theorist David Bordwell’s (1985) assertion that film sound functions as a way of determining the duration of visuals, and, depending on the type of sound, also assists in defining space; for example, dialogue generally occupies the foreground of a scene, while other sounds are located in the background.

In this way, sound also increases the sense of realism in film (realism in terms of an authentic experience, not the naturalistic portrayal of reality), particularly in terms of dialogue where the synchronisation between auditive and visual narratives increases the probability that what we are seeing can – and ‘is’ – taking place. However, it is with asynchronous sound – that is, sound whose point of origin lies somewhere outside the immediate visuals, such as a voiceover – that the auditive narrator is most expressive. Whereas synchronised sound is highly context-dependent, asynchronous ‘allows filmmakers to contrast sound and image, substitute a sound for an image, or juxtapose sounds and images that would not normally occur at the same time’ (Dick 2010, 40). I have not discussed music as part of the auditive narrator’s functions, but its pivotal role in ‘the channelling and/or heightening of emotions’ (Verstraten 2008, 160), its evocation of mood and atmosphere, should not be understated, nor should its ability to dictate the rhythm of a scene. The use of music clearly demonstrates the narrative capabilities of sound in film; as media scholar Helen Fulton argues, sound ‘contributes to field, tenor and mode as a powerful creator of meaning, mood and textuality [and] is also significant as an element of narrative cohesion’ (2005, 108, 109). It positions us spatiotemporally and in doing so enables shifts from one scene to another.

However, not all scholars agree that there is such a role or function as the filmic narrator. Bordwell (1985), drawing on cognitive science perspectives, argues that while there are visual and auditive tracks that contain narrative qualities, they are not mediated by a third narrator-function but are instead realised by viewers in their relation to, and engagement with, the film as a whole: ‘The narrative film is so made as to encourage the spectator to execute story-constructing activities. The film presents
cues, patterns, and gaps that shape the viewer’s application of schemata and the testing of hypotheses’ (ibid., 33). The auditive and visual narratives become dynamic contexts for each other. Ingarden argued that ‘[b]y utilizing all the data that a given film provides by means of reconstructed [ie. concretised] aspects, we can attempt to understand everything that occurs in the presented world’ (1989, 321). Film scholar Warren Buckland summarises Bordwell’s position by stating that ‘he argued that the narrative film’s logical form is incomplete, but is enriched, or completed, by the spectator’s activity of inference generation’ (2000, 29), which corresponds directly with the notion of narrative as an organising principle setting up the mediation of story.

2.3 Interactive environments

There is already an issue that presents itself in titling this Section ‘Interactive Environments,’ namely that it does not explicitly describe a medium (the material and mode of expression) in the same way that “Comics” or “Film” does. This is due to the fact that interactivity/interaction primarily describes a mechanical activity (Beech 2008), and not an intersubjective experience, a distinction which will be more fully explicated in Chapter 4. I therefore include here those environments which might be usefully thought of as being in some way participatory and are generally engaged with via computing devices (I do not include video games here – they will be discussed separately in Section 5 below). They are environments which, according to narrative theorist Marie-Laure Ryan, ‘modify themselves dynamically’ (2011, 35) in response to manual input from an interlocutor, meaning they are not so much medium-specific as context-specific, or as transmedia researcher Elizabeth Jane Evans puts it, as occurring along ‘a spectrum, encompassing not only different media forms but also different forms of interactivity itself’ (2008, 200). To participate interactively, then, is to be involved in a specific type of physical activity, what transmedia practitioner Robert Pratten describes as, ‘a spectrum of activity that starts with doing something with your limbs [ie. a mechanical activity]’ (2012a), which is distinct from the act of cognitive

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1 I am aware that Aarseth makes a distinction between participation and interaction on the basis of the degree to which the interlocutor ‘can contribute discursive elements to the effect that the “theme” of the “discourse itself” is unknown in advance or is subject to change’ (1997, 49). Aarseth’s notion of participation here is conceptually different to that which I take up in Chapter 4 in regards to participatory culture. What is interesting to note, though, is that ultimately he does away with this distinction altogether, finding the whole concept of an interactive fiction meaningless in the context of what he calls ergodic literature (a kind of precursor to transmedia storytelling derived from hypertext) because such interactivity can be assumed as an operating principle.
concretisation already discussed. However, it should be noted that the terms “open” and “closed” participation, or “selective” and “productive” (Ryan 2001b) have recently come into usage amongst transmedia practitioners, with open/selective participation describing the implementation of a narrative “skeleton” which interlocutors are given more or less free rein to flesh out, and closed/productive participation most often referring to the “sandbox” concept, in which much of the narrative is fixed, while specific sections are opened up to interlocutors (Staffans 2012).

In terms of interactivity, it is possible to make a connection to Ingarden’s concept of places of indeterminacy, of which he noted that ‘the aspect or part of the portrayed object which is not specifically determined by the text’ (1975, 50) is not the result of flawed practice on the part of a work’s creator, but rather evidence of the impossibility of establishing ‘clearly and exhaustively the infinite multiplicity of determinacies of the individual object portrayed in the work’ (ibid.). Though Ingarden was referring to written works and the difficulty of realising the totality of even the smallest of portrayed objects, the principle informing his notion of places of indeterminacy can be seen as fundamental to interactive environments, if we also accept that within these environments ‘objects’ are still realised by processes of representation, just as they are in other mediums. Interactive environments could potentially take advantage of indeterminacy by positioning interlocutors in ways that allow them to actualise certain objects/representations that are suited to mechanical input – ‘syntactically structured representations’ (Horgan & Tienson 2006, 147) which consist of rules that apply only in particular circumstances. In this, we again see evidence of Wolfgang Iser’s claim for representation as a performative act, which ‘brings about something that hitherto did not exist as a given object’ (1987, 217).

The concept of interactivity is often seen as synonymous with video games, hypertext, and other computerised texts that require mechanical input, but it has a range of applications outside of such environments. Game designer and theorist Chris Crawford, though undeniably approaching the subject with a view to computer applications, still defines it as ‘a cyclical process in which two actors alternately listen, think, and speak to each other’ (2003a, 5), while communications scholar P. David Pratten (2012b) has suggested a third type of participation, which he calls “layered”, as a blend of open and closed systems. However, the model he proposes appears to be little different to the sandbox model of closed systems, in which much more obvious limitations are placed on interlocutors.
Marshall argues that ‘[i]t is important [...] to read the concept of interactivity as emerging very directly from the value of interpersonal communication’ (2004, 14), or as ‘a property of the technology’ (Jenkins et al, 8), thereby de-emphasising the role of technology in order to favour a position that more readily evokes a mediative process. These are broader observations which include face-to-face and other relational interactions, and therefore move us away from the view of interaction solely as a mechanical activity (though in transmedia practice, as we have seen in reference to Pratten and Staffan, mechanical interactivity is never far removed). Bourriaud might consider such definitions as the basis of a relational theory of art, seeing ‘a culture of interactivity which posits the transitivity of the cultural object as a fait accompli’ (2002, 25). *Interactivity*, in this sense, can be regarded as an extension of the mediative function of *narrative* as an organising principle, in which the work is purposely left ‘open’ to the interlocutor. The seven features summarised in Figure 1.1 below are derived from Alan Kirby (2009, 52-53), who posited them in relation to what he calls digimodernist works.\(^{11}\) Though Kirby’s concept is much more inclusive and wide-ranging than the singular concept of interactivity under discussion here, these neatly encapsulate many of the qualities often attributed to interactivity. They therefore seem useful to include at this point, given the understanding of interactivity I have suggested so far:

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\(^{11}\) Kirby’s term has previously been noted in the Introduction for emphasising the effects of digitisation and computerisation on mediums. He locates digimodernism in both a global context, and as the next phase of a continuing project of modernity that *displaces* but does not necessarily *replace* postmodernism as the dominant cultural paradigm: ‘Muted and mutating, its traces and echoes linger on in the culture’ (Kirby 2010). Kirby supports this claim by suggesting it is but one of a number of sociocultural theories emerging in the wake of postmodernism; theories that, in general, attempt to work through some of the anxieties postmodernism raised with its emphasis on the ‘elusiveness of meaning and knowledge’ (Kirby 2006) while retaining, for instance, its notions of plurality and hybridity.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Onwardness</strong></td>
<td>The work is in a constant state of becoming, is incomplete and ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Haphazardness</strong></td>
<td>The shape of the work is unknowable. Refers to the potential multiplicity inherent in interactive environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evanesence</strong></td>
<td>It raises questions of durability and reproducibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reformulation and intermediation of textual roles</strong></td>
<td>Roles are not static, but mediated within the context of each new work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anonymous, multiple and social authorship</strong></td>
<td>In particular, questions of authorship and ownership are foregrounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The fluid-bound text</strong></td>
<td>The material limits of the work are not fixed, as they are for other mediums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electronic-digitality</strong></td>
<td>Recent applications of interactivity highlight a technological bias towards the computer and digitisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.1 – Summary of Kirby’s seven dominant features of digimodernist works

Note, however, that a quality of *immersion* is not assumed as synonymous or even necessarily congruent with interactivity here, though it has been cited by scholars such as Janet Murray (2000) as a major product of interactivity. Ryan argues that, from the perspective of classical narratology, the openness of interactivity ‘does not facilitate storytelling’ (2006, 99) because its cyclical nature disrupts how we traditionally view the temporal (linear) dimension of narrative by fracturing the normal progression of events and their causal relations. To resolve this, she firstly suggests that *story* must be regarded as ‘a cognitive structure that transcends media, disciplines, and historical as well as cultural boundaries’ (ibid., 102), and secondly, that ‘a certain type of textual architecture’ (ibid., 99) is required (Ryan has elsewhere referred to this architecture in terms of the ‘presentational strategies’ [2004, 333] a narrative might deploy). To argue that this architecture invariably revolves around a relational aesthetic is to return us to Crawford’s definition, with its emphasis on *process* as a site of exchange. However, Crawford complicates this by insisting that
‘[e]very interactive application must give its user a reasonable amount of choice. No choice, no interactivity. This is not a rule of thumb, it is an absolute, uncompromising principle’ (Crawford 2003a, 191). It is problematic to think of interactivity simply in these terms, though, because this kind of pre-programmed choice represents not freedom for the interlocutor, but control: ‘Control is at the very core of how computers developed as a technology’ (Marshall 2004, 18).

Perhaps a degree of this kind of top-down control is necessary in order to allow interactive narratives to successfully function – it is, after all, an aspect of their nature that narratives frame and position us. But Crawford's view is rather reductive and perhaps too fixed on its parameters, so that it ultimately regards interactivity almost entirely as a physical exchange and has difficulty dealing with places of indeterminacy. New media scholar Lev Manovich notes how 'the psychological processes of filling-in, hypothesis formation, recall, and identification, which are required for us to comprehend any text or image at all, are mistakenly identified with an objectively existing structure of interactive links' (2001, 57). The value of interactive works does not seem to lie so much with the interlocutor’s perceived ability to influence the outcome of events, as novel and as immersive as this might be, but more in what Bourriaud describes as the 'exchange value' (2002, 42) the process of interaction accrues over time. If the interactive work is one which is in a constant state of becoming, then 'it is devoted, right away, to the world of exchange and communication' (ibid.). In interactive works, or even interactive elements of larger projects, concretisation remains a fundamental cognitive process, necessary to resolving the places of indeterminacy which are foregrounded in these instances, and since interactivity is context–rather than medium-specific, seeing narrative primarily as an organising principle, rather than a prescriptive grammar, remains useful.

2.4 Games

The youngest formal academic discipline to be discussed here, Games Studies, or ludology, can be said to have come into its own around 2001. Aarseth has written that, historically, ‘2001 can be seen as the Year One of Computer Game Studies as an emerging, viable, international, academic field’ (2001). The Computer Games and

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12 I am bracketing off Bourriaud's concerns with the commercial aspect of art he concurrently raises in this passage.
Digital Textualities conference – the first international academic conference of its kind, according to Aarseth – was hosted in Copenhagen in March of the same year, while the inaugural issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Game Studies*, in which Aarseth’s editorial appears, followed in July. Though the ground work had arguably been laid a number of years earlier – ludologist Gonzalo Frasca (2003b) cites research conducted by colleague Jesper Juul that the term ‘ludology’ was in use as early as 1982 – these activities reinforced ludology as a vital and relevant discipline within the Humanities.

Here, I treat games and gameplay separately from interactive environments primarily because of what has become known as the ‘ludology-narratology debate’ (Frasca 2003b, Mäyrä 2008, 8). For Frasca, ludology is simply a ‘discipline that studies game and play activities’ (1999) and an accompanying set of theoretical tools developed towards that end. However, since its establishment, the discipline has had to deal with the question of narrative in games: do games contain elements that can be identified as narrative in nature, and if so, to what degree can narrative theories be usefully employed in analysing and explaining games? If narrative theories can be employed, what does this say about the status of ludology as a discipline? Aarseth, for example, initially advocated informing a study of games with principles of classical narratology, but ‘turned his back on narratology and forcefully rejected the idea that computer games, and by implication interactive fiction, form a species of narrative’ (Ryan 2006, 97). However, the debate surrounding such questions was, it appears, never truly resolved, since media scholar Frans Mäyrä suggests that, ‘[n]o one actually seems to be willing to reduce games either into stories, or claim that they are only interaction, or gameplay, pure and simple, without any potential for storytelling’ (2008, 10). This ambivalence towards the status of the game is seen by Marie-Laure Ryan as partly due to the limitations of classical narratology ‘to account for the experience of games’ (2001a). Lacking, as it does, a phenomenological perspective – that is, a perspective in which ‘one must take into account not only the actual text but also, and in equal measure, the actions involved in responding to that text’ (Iser 1972, 279) – Ryan suggests narratology, rather than divided into distinct ‘classical’ and ‘postclassical’ periods, ought to be expanded in this direction. This is not such a radical call to make, if one looks at the successful adoption of phenomenological perspectives in film studies since the early 1990s, for example. Film and media researcher Jane Stadler summarises some of the more notable attempts in her 2011 review essay, noting in
particular the ways in which phenomenology has proven to be a productive alternative to ‘neo-formalist, cognitivist, ideological, and psychoanalytic interpretations of film narrative, spectatorship, and screen aesthetics’ (87, 2011).

A phenomenological perspective already infuses much of the thinking behind this thesis, since it foregrounds the way in which a work facilitates intersubjective relations, and Ingarden’s work, though based in the main on literary works, ultimately tends to transcend the boundaries of mediums in order to focus on the aesthetics of experience and response. In their Translator’s Note to Ingarden’s *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* (1973b), Ruth Ann Crowley and Kenneth R. Olsen note two major aspects of phenomenology that may be usefully applied to the question of narrative in games. Firstly, it is concerned with experience; phenomenology ‘is non-empirical in that it brackets the real existence of its object in order to arrive at the type of which any really existing object is the token’ (Ingarden 1973b, xiii). This is achieved by what philosopher David Woodruff Smith describes as a kind of intentionality which is not unlike that which I have argued guides our understanding of fiction (see Introduction Section 3). This is the idea of ‘being directed toward something […] by virtue of its content or meaning […] together with appropriate enabling conditions’ (Smith 2013). The experience of an object is as much realised in the mind, via cognition, as it is in actually engaging with it. Indeed, Marx W. Wartofsky argues that objects are ‘already invested with cognitive and affective content’ (Wartofsky 1979, 204), which is to say, objects are realised by an interlocutor in the moment in which they are experienced. Secondly, Crowley and Olsen describe phenomenology as reflective, or as Smith succinctly puts it, ‘[w]e reflect on various types of experiences just as we experience them’ (2013). Reflection, in phenomenological terms, is an analytical activity whereby we augment previously-established schemata with new knowledge derived from these recent experiences. Experience playing games therefore impacts our schemata in much the same way as most other mediums do. Crowley and Olsen say of this knowledge that it is ‘its own criterion of adequacy’ (1973, xiii), that because we have experienced it, it is therefore valid. This can be likened to Bourriaud’s concept of *translation*, which ‘sets in motion an object of thought by inserting it into a chain’ (2010b, 131).
Playing a game is readily identifiable as an experiential activity along phenomenological lines (Salen & Zimmerman 2004, 314; Ermi & Mäyrä 2005; Krzywinska 2005; Simons 2007; Mäyrä 2008, 6). Yet, for many games researchers and ludologists, experience is the condition that sets gameplay apart from narrative. Game designers Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman argue that ‘experience is participation’ (2004, 314 – original emphasis), participation understood here as combining physical, sensory, and cognitive activities into a general activity of play. Indeed, textual studies scholar Steven E. Jones locates gameplay firmly within a socialised dynamic, arguing that ludologists ought to ‘stop treating games as formal, self-contained objects (even if “interactive” ones) and start recognizing that they are always played within dynamic material and social circumstances’ (Jones, quoted in Dena 2009, 102). However, play itself can be understood in terms of how it simulates past experiences, particularly real-life social interactions, and facilitates ‘the relationship between meaning and action’ (Talamo, Pozzi & Mellini 2009). Aarseth defines simulation as ‘dynamic models that mimic some aspects of a complex process’ (1997, 30), and based on this, Frasca (2003a) proposes that the issue is one of simulation versus (narrative) representation. He argues that while a simulation models the behaviours of an object, a representation can only describe it and, at best, locate it within a sequence of events (the basic definition of narrative which Frasca appears to be working with). For Frasca (2002), simulation and representation are only usefully thought of in combination when one accepts the outcome of a simulation as appearing to have narrative characteristics – namely, sequences of events, which are linked temporally and causally.

However, Frasca's view of simulation is rather broad – ‘I removed any references to the computer, since simulation can exist in nonelectronic devices’ (2003a) – while his view of representation is comparatively narrow, limited, as it is, to ‘sequences of events’. If representation is granted an equally broad view, it must be acknowledged that, rather than being located in opposition to simulation, it is in fact its foundation, based on Wartofsky's observation that representations are ‘perceptual artifacts which we do not perceive, but by means of which we perceive real objects (or processes)’ (1979, 194 – original emphasis). The mimetic nature of simulation does not actually put the interlocutor any closer to the objects or processes it depicts, and it is as impossible for the simulation to specify everything about an object or behaviour as it is for any other medium. In a simulation, the actions an interlocutor performs have no
actual repercussions outside of the simulating act, but rather mimic actions that might be ‘naturalized as the solving of a familiar type of problem’ (Ryan 2001).13

Furthermore, Salen and Zimmerman understand simulations as ‘a very particular type of representation’ (2004, 423 emphasis mine) in which ‘formal and experiential elements of the game work to create a representation that emerges out of the procedures of game play’ (ibid., 427). This brand of procedural representation was further developed by game designer and researcher Ian Bogost when he argued that, 'games create complex relations between the player, the work, and the world via unit operations that simultaneously embed material, functional, and discursive modes of representation' (Bogost 2006, 105). The major difference between simulation and representation therefore seems to be only that the simulation allows for 'actions that will modify the behaviour of the system' (Frasca 2003a 224), in a similar kind of interaction as was dealt with in Section 4. Even then, the simulation is not an exhaustive model of the behaviour(s) of an object or process: New Media theorist Andrew Darley argues that the “active” participation of simulation and games, as opposed to the so-called “passive” participation of film, ‘should not be confused with increased semantic engagement’ (2000, 164), by which he means that simulation does not provide an adequate model for meaning-making. He goes on to say that ‘the kinds of mental processes that games solicit are largely instrumental and/or reactive in character' [...] [T]he space for reading or meaning-making in the traditional sense is radically reduced in computer games and simulation rides. In this sense the much maligned “passive” spectators of conventional cinema might be said to be far more active than their counterparts in the newer forms’ (ibid.). In addition, Bogost argues that 'the system doesn’t allow any other model of the source system [...] because they offer only a simplified representation of the source system' (Bogost 2006, 107). Bogost notes the presence of places of indeterminacy (what he refers to as 'gaps') embedded in video games, which serve as their semantic foundation. Indeed, he goes so far as to suggest that what simulations are is, in fact, a realisation of this gap: 'A simulation is the gap between the rule-based representation of a source system and a user’s subjectivity' (ibid.). Thus, in engaging with a simulation, the interlocutor, in his or her

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13 One must be careful here, as any number of actions could be simulated which are not familiar (i.e. not previously experienced) and which we never intend to perform: as Ryan wryly remarks in conjunction with video games, ‘few of us have actually hunted and shot bad guys’ (2001a).
role as a player, is concretising the places of indeterminacy embedded in the game, bringing it into a kind of existence.

Part of the issue ludologists have with understanding games in terms of narrative is that they see this as the imposition of one of a number of ‘existing paradigms’ (Juul 2001) onto a discipline which should be developing its own methodologies and tools. It is this view of narrative as a prescriptive grammar, along with the assumption that its boundaries are fixed, that Ryan takes issue with, seeing it instead ‘as an unfinished project’ (2006, 98). I concur with her reasoning here: classical narratology’s inability to fully account for the narrative elements of emergent phenomena such as video games should not be seen as a reason to reject it, but rather as an opportunity to renew or reconceptualise it. A step towards this might lie in understanding narrative not as a prescriptive grammar or ‘an external necessity’ which definitively prescribes the organization of the work in hand’ (Eco 1989, 4), but as an organising principle that is fundamentally transmedial in nature. Interestingly, Juul has argued that games are indeed transmedial in nature, citing their procedural, rule-based logic as a basis for translation from one medium to another, while also noting that games require ‘a specific sort of immaterial support’ (2003, 41 – original emphasis) which can be read in relation to the interlocutor’s experience of the game. Similarly, Bogost notes the ‘subjectivity of simulated experiences’ (2006, 106), so that games are understood not only as procedural, but as semantic activities also, based on his concept of unit operations or ‘modes of meaning-making that privilege discrete, disconnected actions over deterministic, progressive systems’ (ibid., 3), and which he argues are found, or at least can be read, in any medium.

In this Section, I have not attempted to resolve the ludology-narratology debate, though at a glance, more recent research seems to suggest that the debate has been abandoned in favour of questions about the social and educational use of games. Instead, I have argued that the project of narratology could be expanded to include the phenomenological perspective necessary to better deal with narrative in games. Jenkins argues that ‘[t]he experience of playing games can never be simply reduced to the experience of a story’ (2004, 120), which is entirely true, particularly if we accept Ryan’s suggestion that we view story as ‘a cognitive structure that transcends media,'

14 System has a specific usage for Bogost – units are dynamic and functional, ‘deriving meaning from the interrelations of their components,’ (2006, 4) whereas systems are static and ‘regulate meaning for their constituents’ (ibid.).
disciplines, and historical as well as cultural boundaries’ (2006, 102). If story is to be somehow seen as transcendent, it cannot also be reducible. But this confuses the status of narrative and story by seeming to conflate the two, and as Chapter 2 will demonstrate, this is not the case. Suffice to say at this point that such an understanding of story can only be achieved by first understanding narrative as an organising principle that establishes parameters for mediation.

2.5 Theatre

Of all the mediums discussed here, theatre by far has the longest tradition of practice and scholarship, being able to trace a lineage back to the theatre of ancient Greece and certain writings of the philosopher Plato and his student, Aristotle. Though he acknowledged that the theatre could be a source of pleasure and recognised its centrality to Greek life, Plato was highly critical of what he perceived as its moral ambiguity, ‘for it appeals to an inferior element of the soul, and encourages us to indulge in emotions which ought to be kept firmly in check by the control of reason’ (Murray 2004, xxv). It was theatre’s capacity for imitation, or mimesis, that troubled Plato, seeing it as a removal from engaging with the real and the reasonable. Conversely, Aristotle saw mimesis in more positive terms, firstly as a natural and instinctive activity common to all, and secondly, as it relates to the theatre, as the representation of ‘men in action’ (ibid., 59) towards various ends. In tragedy in particular, these were people ‘who are better than ourselves’ (ibid. 77) and therefore worth emulating.

Also worth noting, particularly in the current context, is Aristotle’s insistence on representation as central to theatre, and he discusses this in terms ofunities of time and action. There is a third unity, commonly referred to as the unity of place, but this is not actually mentioned by Aristotle in his Poetics at all (see Chapter 5, Section 2.1 for a discussion of this). I mention them here because the concept has informed much thinking in regards to theatre, as well as classical narratology.

There are many approaches one might take to theatre practice and scholarship, but few have refuted the centrality of representation. It can thus be said that the organising principle of theatre consists of particular systems of representation within
which elements of fiction can be established. Theatre and drama scholars Elaine Aston and George Savona discuss this in terms of a theatre semiology, an approach which they maintain ‘make[s] us more aware of how drama and theatre are made’ (1991, 5 – original emphasis). The semiotic sign, as defined by Italian semiotician Umberto Eco (1979), is a function that correlates a representation with its artifact, with the proviso that this correlation is both provisional and transitory. That is, a sign only remains valid so long as this correlation can be seen to be usefully generating meaning. In the theatre, ‘objects placed on stage acquire greater significance than in the everyday world’ (Aston & Savona 1991, 8) precisely because the sign-function is evidence of representation in action.

The specificity of theatre as a medium lies in how it utilises particular systems of representation to render space and time, in the concept of performance, and in the immediacy and transience of the theatrical experience. In considering these we come to recognise the validity of narratologist Monika Fludernik’s argument that ‘drama is a bona fide narrative genre,’ (2008, 377) since its narrativity is established in ways comparable to other mediums. However, the specificity of theatre as a medium can also be summarised by alluding to its ‘liveness’. This means that if we were to only consider concepts of time and space from the perspective of classical narratology alone, we would miss the vital dual functions they perform in theatre (as well being at risk of making a mistake similar to that which was noted in relation to Games Studies). In all the mediums discussed here, time and space comprise a set of deictic coordinates that shift the interlocutor, cognitively, to the storyworld of the work and assist in orienting him or her there. Along with this, the theatre dictates that a performance must also occur in real time (its duration), and occupy a physical space (the stage). Thus, there is a contradiction at the heart of theatre, between the actuality of what an audience witnesses, and the potentiality of the stage and performance. It is within this space that the theatrical event takes place: an interaction – actually a mutual dependency – between performer and interlocutor, that brings the work into a social(ised) existence by mediating the dichotomy of the actual and potential. It is, in effect, another instance of synthesis. Theatre scholar James R. Hamilton describes it as ‘the creation of an active observation space’ (2007, 123 – emphasis mine), while theatre director and researcher Serge Tampalini conceptualises it as affective space, which usefully describes the way in which the dichotomy of the theatrical event is
always semantically charged: ‘Affective space has what might be called an excessive condition; one that participates in the conventions of space and time, but that seems to be full of them – an excessive condition of time and space. It is not that affective space has lost all meaning but that it seems to be full of meaning’ (2007, 210 – original emphasis).\(^{15}\)

This excessive condition can be seen to have its origin in the work of Czech theoreticians out of the Prague School of the 1930s and 1940 who, according to Aston and Savona, ‘established the premise that everything in the theatrical frame is a sign’ (1991, 8).\(^{16}\) Furthermore, they cite early twentieth century Russian ethnographer and theatre theorist Petr Borgatyrev’s observation that “on the stage things that play the part of theatrical signs can in the course of the play acquire special features, qualities, and attributes that they do not have in real life” (ibid.). Because the entire stage-space is therefore charged in this way, affective space also must perform a rationalising function via its own internal logic, in order to grant interlocutors a position from which to begin decoding the complex array of signs presented to them. tampalini notes the necessary reflexive quality of such a logic – there must be a looking back, an opportunity to negotiate the theatrical event, ‘to assimilate this “other” space, as it were, into our familiar subjective reality’ (2007, 208 – original emphasis). The opportunity to negotiate lies in the act of concretisation: theatre scholar Anne Ubersfeld notes that in the theatre, a representation is ‘a presence which stands for an absence’ (1982, 129), a sign standing in for something that cannot otherwise be realised within the space-time of the stage, the concretisation of which ‘is the very source of theatrical pleasure’ (ibid.).

If there is a dichotomy present in the space-time relations of theatre, it is only made more complex by the concept of performing. Where Ubersfeld says that ‘the performance is ever in flight’ (ibid., 131), and theatre scholar Peggy Phelan says that

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\(^{15}\) The concept of affective space is raised again in Chapter 4 in relation to the storyworld.

\(^{16}\) The Prague School began as a group of linguistics scholars in the late 1920s, and included the Russian linguist and literary theorist Roman Jakobson among its number. Aston and Savona cite the this group and subsequent Czech scholars such as Otakar Zich, Jindřich Honzl, and František Deák as pioneering the application of semiotics to a range of creative practices, including theatre, particularly the notion that the theatrical spaces serves to frame and contextualise its contents as a series of interconnected semiotic systems.
‘performance’s only life is in the present’ (1993, 146), these both allude to the transient nature of performing as a series of subjective choices made in the moment, resulting in no two performances of the same work ever being identical. A distinction needs to be made here between performing, in the sense of the kind of subjective process outlined above, and performance as the act occurring in linear time, ‘the presentation of the work’ (Dufrenne 1973, 15-16) in the ‘sense of “bringing to completion” or “accomplishing”’ (Victor Turner, quote in Tampalini 2007, 154).

Performing itself is always in a state of becoming, never completed, with ‘[t]he figure of the actor is the dynamic unity of an entire set of signs’ (Veltruský, quoted in Aston & Savona 1991, 102), meaning that performing functions as perhaps the most prominent site of organisation within a theatrical work to which the interlocutor has access. The actor’s relationship to the stage-space, how he or she moves about it and interacts with it, along with their relationship to other actors onstage prompts the interlocutor on how he or she is to interpret what is being represented, though this is not merely a set of cues on how a written theatrical text has been interpreted. Theatre scholar David Osipovich (2006) argues that this view of the theatrical script is, taken on its own, inadequate in explaining the complexity of performance, and Aston and Savona take pains to note that the script is only a ‘blueprint’ (1991, 2), or recipe, for production – a collection of ingredients which may or may not be used in their entirety, or where some may be substituted for others or omitted entirely. The totality of the experience, to paraphrase Ubersfeld, is the union of all affective elements in combination with a logic of reflection.

This is not unlike David Herman’s story logic cited earlier, which, as a resource for organising and comprehending experience, also demands a certain reflective distance of its own. The presence of the interlocutor is essential in this regard. As Osipovich argues, the theatrical performance is characterised by the fact that the ‘audiences and performers share the same space at the same time’ (2006, 466), so that each affects the other – the performance becomes a site of exchange. Theatre, from the viewpoint of classical narratology, has been regarded as a non-narrative genre, as it is seen to be lacking an obvious narrator-function and the capacity for description, such as was discussed above in relation to film. To overcome this, Fludernik (1996) first points out

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17 A performance may, of course, be recorded in a number of ways (on film, for instance). However, Phelan is argues that once this recording is done, what is captured becomes something other than a theatre performance (a victim of ‘the economy of reproduction’ [1993, 146]).
the obvious – that Aristotle was referring to the theatre when discussing plot, character, and action, three elements now seen as being fundamental to narrative – before moving on to propose that the criteria for narrative should not lie so much in sequences of events, narration, description (“telling”) and so on, but in experientiality, a condition which narratologists Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer have summarised as, ‘a mode of naturalising a text or performance in the reception process [...]. According to Fludernik, narrativity does not consist in a set of properties that characterise narratives, but can rather be conceptualised as a sort of measure of how readily a given text can be processed as a story’ (2008, 334). This understanding of narrative relies on the presence at least two parties in order to enact an exchange – Fludernik argues that theatre meets this minimal requirement by the presence of performers (2008, 360), but, as I have outlined, performing does not occur in isolation and requires an interlocutor so that representation can be achieved.

3. SUMMARY: NARRATIVE AND TRANSMEDIA

'[N]arratives are like forks in that they are designed to fulfil certain purposes. These purposes can largely be conceived as aiming at certain effects – effects registered by a perceiver prepared to grasp a narrative' (Bordwell 2004, 204). In this chapter, narrative has been understood as a non-medium specific organising principle utilised by a variety of mediums for the purposes of creating fiction. However, an organising principle is only of use so long as there are interlocutors to engage with it, and this chapter also established the importance of the function of narrative as facilitating the establishment of trajectories both within a medium, and across them. The specificity of mediums was therefore found to reside in the material and mode of expression of those trajectories; that is, while the function of narrative as an organising principle remains constant, it is shaped by the distinctiveness of the medium in which it is located; for example, film and television scholar Elizabeth Evans argues that, in terms of film-based narratives, '[t]he computer or mobile phone can be transformed into “television” or stand as technologies in their own right, depending on how the user engages with them. As a result the “medium” of television has become complex and multiple’ (2011, 175). In other words, we approach what Bourriaud refers to in altermodernist terms as the possible ‘end of the medium-specific, the abandonment of any tendency to exclude certain fields from the realm of art’ (2010b, 53). If narrative
can be understood in this way – context-rather than medium-specific – then it may serve as a useful basis for a transmedial theory of narrative, or as Marie-Laure Ryan puts it, ‘[t]he concept of narrative offers a common denominator that allows a better apprehension of the strengths and limitations in the representational power of individual media’ (2005, 1). Though it is not my intention to do so here, an argument for developing a specific transmedial theory of narrative only seems most useful when it is coupled with the intention to traverse mediums, rather than simply wanting to observe a set of shared characteristics (which would, after all, constitute the project of classical narratology). Thus, I would limit this to those narratives intended as fiction, since the elements of fiction, already existing in a paradoxical, and transient, state seem predisposed to translation across multiple mediums. As Seymour Chatman points out, ‘[n]o individual work is a perfect specimen of a genre – novel or comic, epic or whatever. All works are more or less mixed in generic character’ (1978, 18).

My discussion of the five mediums in this chapter has in no way been exhaustive, and was intended only as foundational in order to establish a set of pre-existing conditions that might allow for a practice of transmedia storytelling. Each medium retains its own set of nontrivial discursive practices – I have not suggested that in adopting a transmedial theory of narrative, a medium loses those characteristics which make it unique, or that translation between mediums always occurs effortlessly, only that all mediums capable of supporting fiction retain a transmedial functionality because they must fundamentally be involved in a process of representation. Central to my conceptualisation of narrative, therefore, were the concepts of representation and concretisation. These should be seen as two sides of the same coin, in the sense that while ways of representing may differ from one medium to another, the requirement for representation remains constant and unifying, and so a process of concretisation is always a baseline activity which an interlocutor must perform.
Chapter 2
STORY

In this chapter, I propose a reconceptualisation of story, advocating a more enriched and complex understanding of the concept than narratology, particularly in its classical mode, has previously been able to achieve. I take issue with narratology’s acceptance of story ‘as a synonym of narrative’ (Herman & Vercaecck 2005, 13), and utilise Marie-Laure Ryan’s suggestion that the discipline ought to be expanded, particularly in the direction of phenomenology, as a point of departure. Also informing this reconceptualisation is the second of what I suggest are Bourriaud’s three requirements for a relational aesthetic, which he refers to as ‘the symbolic value of the “world” suggested to us’ (2002, 18). I link this to a cognitive process of concretisation as the means by which the interlocutor is able to (re)construct the story of a work, including the assignation of semantic value on both individual and intersubjective levels. It is my argument that story is the product of concretisation, the aesthetic experience of engaging with a narrative – or put differently, it is the aesthetic function of fiction which is facilitated by narrative. In this, I refer to aesthetics, generally, not as a system of judging the artistic merit of a work, but as a way of responding to it, and specifically to Ingarden’s notion of the aesthetic object as an intentional concretisation of the artistic work. It should also be understood that my use of the term work, particularly in this chapter, is likewise derived from Ingarden’s concept of the work of art as a schemata of purely intentional objects. It is the aim of this chapter to further explicate this understanding in order to demonstrate the validity of this reconceptualisation of story.

Story has often been devalued by narratologists, who have tended to view it only in terms of (sequences of) events. Not only does this confuse exactly what is meant by story, since, as the previous chapter showed, narrative has also been defined in these terms, but it suggests that story is also somehow embedded in a narrative, always already determined. Simply put, story is simply assumed to be an element of narrative. Because of this, there has been little attempt to isolate it as a concept in its own right, as distinct from narrative, beyond the story/discourse distinction originally proposed by Russian Formalists such as Viktor Shklovsky (whose Theory of Prose was originally published in 1925). For Shklovsky, story was ‘nothing more than material for plot
formation’ (1998, 170), or structure. David Herman summarises it as ‘the distinction between the what and the how, or what is being told versus the manner in which it is told’ (2009a, 94). Classical narratologists such as Gérard Genette (1980) later expanded this concept into a more complex hierarchy of levels.

Despite this, the story/discourse distinction does serve as a useful point of departure for three reasons: firstly, it recognises the need for something like a process of concretisation to occur; secondly, it emphasises plot as a possible organising principle; and thirdly, it prioritises a temporal condition of story. These points will be further explicated throughout this chapter, and they may serve as minimal requirements for narrativity, or ‘how readily a narrative can be processed as a narrative’ (Herman 2002, 86). It is worth expanding on narrativity at this point, so that it is not seen as relating only to narrative. Narrative theorist Shlomith Rimmon-Kennan regards it as ‘an immanent story structure’ (1985, 7), which would be useful if it were not based on the story/discourse distinction. However, though I am critical of this distinction for the way it suppresses what I see to be the main characteristics of a concept of story, it must be acknowledged that it does highlight other characteristics by which we can judge the narrativity of a work. Since I am locating both narrative and story within the broad category of fiction, narrativity should therefore be seen as those characteristic of a narrative which cue an interlocutor to recognise the fictional intent informing a work. The nature of events and the manner in which they are portrayed are one such set of cues, and are usually foregrounded by the story/discourse distinction, but these can also be described in terms of tellability, which will be discussed in Section 2.2 below. The problem arises when story is understood only in terms of events.

However, the story/discourse distinction operates as a hierarchy, and apart from temporality, the importance of concretisation and the presence of an organising principle are diminished when this hierarchy privileges narrative because it is seen to ‘[combine] all these properties and more’ (Herman 2001, 517). My contention is that while narrative enables story, story in turn validates narrative.1 No such hierarchy therefore exists because these two characteristics of fiction must operate interdependently. To be fair, structuralist-based classical narratology was primarily

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1 By validate I am referring to the reflexive capacity of story; and consequently of the interlocutor, to “make sense” of the work. Story necessitates a looking back (Tampalini 2007) which charges the narrative with significance. Such reflexivity will be discussed throughout this chapter, and is taken up again in relation to the concept of the storyworld in Chapter 4.
concerned with objective textual analysis. But narrative theorist Thomas M. Leitch makes a valid point when he says that ‘[t]heorists have found it virtually impossible to define story (as against discourse) as a constitutive feature of narrative without either arguing in a circle, by defining narratives as works which imply stories, or by becoming impractically vague, by defining all diegesis as narrative’ (1986, 12). One can then assume that the lack of direct engagement with story must be due to its subjective nature, an existence which places it outside of the objective narrative, rather than embedded within it. As narratologist Paul Wake (2006) notes, though the story/discourse distinction is well-established in narrative theory, it has not gone entirely unchallenged. In fact, it is possible to trace a path from classical narratology to the present moment in which the importance of a concept of story is increasingly recognised. Section 1 is concerned with outlining that path, citing what I see as some of its major steps, before arriving at my own understanding of story.

1. CHARTING A PATH TOWARDS STORY

1.1 The story/discourse distinction

Early classical narratology, expanding on previous work done by the Russian Formalists, posited the story/discourse distinction as the basic pattern of narrative, a division between the content of a work, and the way in which it is communicated. It has also been used to distinguish between story-time and discourse-time, where the latter refers to the arrangement of events as portrayed in the work, and the former to their chronological sequence as abstracted by the interlocutor. From this, narratologists inferred that content can be arranged ‘in a variety of predictable and stable ways within the acceptable limits of a narrative syntax or grammar’ (Castle 2007, 117). Part of the project of classical narratology was therefore taken up in analysing the ways in which these two levels related to one another. For Roland Barthes (1975), this occurred on a semantic level: how a discourse arranges content should be understood in terms of the functions enabled by means of that distribution. Functions are content reduced to measurable, examinable units and ‘include all elements of narrative’ (Allen 2003, 58), meaning that within a work, ‘everything, in one way or another, is significant (Barthes 1975, 244).
This is not because content retains a semantic quality of its own, but because it acquires significance when located within a greater sequence of events. Indeed, Barthes argued that, ‘a function has a meaning only insofar as it takes its place in the general line of action [...] and this action in turn receives its ultimate meaning from the fact that it is being told, that is, entrusted to a discourse’ (1975, 243). This means that the interlocutor can only access the story-level by means of a privileged discourse-level, because narrative is not seen as performing a mediating function of the kind described in the previous chapter. Narratologist Jonathan Culler (1981) finds this position problematic, arguing that it must see story as fixed to allow the discourse-level to operate; that is, it must prioritise one level over another. He puts it this way: ‘Since the distinction between story and discourse can function only if there is determination of one by the other, the analyst must always choose which will be treated as the given and which as the product’ (ibid., 186). Such a prioritising fails to properly account for the interdependency of story and narrative.

Culler identifies this as an issue in Gérard Genette’s (1980) contribution to the story/discourse distinction, which Genette refined in terms of the levels of narration in a work. In addition to story- and discourse-levels, he identified a third level, that of narrating, which designated spatiotemporal actions he called narrating instances and situations which the text performed in order to bring it into an existence. The narrating-level was to be seen in terms of the relations it established between the story- and discourse-levels, how it moved an interlocutor from one level to another. In Genette’s terms, it is ‘the real or fictive act that produces that discourse’ (1988, 13), usually performed by characters in the work, with its primary function being to establish ‘the relation between the moment of narration and the moment at which the narrated events take place’ (Herman & Vervaeck 2005, 86); that is, to make the embedded story detectable to the interlocutor. For Genette, ‘the embedded narrative [i.e. story] is structurally subordinate to the embedding narrative [i.e. discourse], since the former owes its existence to the latter and is based on it’ (1988, 90). It is here that Culler takes up his criticism, arguing that ‘[Genette] must assume that events of the récit occurred in some order [...] Then he can describe the narrative presentation as a transformation of the true or original order of events’ (1980, 28) (récit being

\footnote{I have bracketed off Barthes’ reference to the actant in this quote only in an attempt to streamline my argument. It is a term devised by the semiotician A. J. Greimas (1983) to describe an agent that fulfills one of a number of roles Greimas identified as commonly occurring in narratives. As it seems reasonable to assume all actions must be performed by some kind of agent, I have taken the actant to be a specific application of a concept of action.}
translated from the French as *narrative* and understood in Genette’s sense as the order of presentation of events, as opposed to their actual chronological sequence). Culler is not suggesting that it is unreasonable to assume events have happened in a certain order, because this forms a basis for judging narrativity, or ‘the effect of narratives’ (Culler 1981, 172). Rather, the problem with the assumption of an embedded *story* is that it ‘becomes a discursive product’ (Leitch 1986, 16) with no qualities of its own and entirely reliant on the discourse for its semantic significance.

Narratologist Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan describes *story* in terms of ‘a construct and an abstraction from the set of observable signifiers’ (1985, 13), and this is certainly true if one accepts it as a description of concretisation. However, it is difficult to see such a construct *only* as a chronology of events, even if those events are understood in terms of their relation both to other events (causality) and to performative, conscious agents such as characters. It remains only an academic appreciation of the *story*, ‘abstract’ in the formal sense of having to apply strategies to realise what Rimmon-Kenan sees as the ‘intangibility’ of the story-level (ibid.) (corresponding to the broader classical trend of regarding the story-level as directly inaccessible). She suggests the only way *story* can be comprehended is by means of a notion of *paraphrasing*, which constitutes a reduction of the *story* to essential components along homogenous lines, such as when one might summarise a character’s arc. This represents a series of value judgments on the part of the interlocutor, who must decide what material is essential. It also links in with the notion of *schemata* raised in the previous chapter, in the sense that paraphrasing represents a level of organising information derived from a work. However, literary and cultural critic Samuel R. Delany argues that ‘[a] story is not a replacement of one set of words by another – 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’ (2009, 4). Here, Delany firstly identifies the necessary cognitive process through which *story* is realised – that it happens in the interlocutor’s mind – and secondly suggests that *story* is the *cumulative effect* of engaging with a *narrative*, a progression through a sequence of events, and not necessarily the events themselves: ‘it is the process, not the synopsis, that produces the story’ (ibid., 39). While a paraphrase is not the equivalent of a synopsis, both are concerned with extracting quantitative information.
from the work and therefore lose a degree of the qualitative nature of story in the process.

As Herman and Vervaeck suggest, a major problem with the story/discourse distinction is that it constructs ‘a so-called deep structure [i.e., the embedded story] that ideally remains so abstract that it only consists of symbolic and formal elements’ (2005, 42). This seems at odds with the interlocutor’s actual experience of a story, and questioning the concept of a deep structure is one method by which we can formulate story as a concept. As Culler demonstrates, it is problematic to assume the story is a given, that it simply requires unpacking from a narrative. He saw the story/discourse distinction as useful only when it was viewed as a ‘logic by which event is a product of discursive forces rather than a given reported by discourse’ (1981, 175), from which it is possible to extrapolate the function of narrative as facilitating the construction of story, rather than being its custodian. Another criticism of the distinction comes from Mikhail Bakhtin, who argued for the dialogic nature of story, that it is a plurality that only comes into focus when placed in a context external to the narrative itself. It is to this concept that I will turn to next.

1.2 The dialogic story

If it is problematic to see story as existing in a fixed state embedded in the discourse-level, perhaps this is because ‘it is always found in a state of movement and oscillation that is more or less alive’ (Bakhtin 1994, 302). This is not to say that story has some kind of life of its own, but a reiteration that by engaging with it, the interlocutor brings it into existence, into a relationship with his or her own schemata, that organisation of prior knowledge and experience into useful arrangements. Bakhtin is also referring here to a kind of intertextuality, in which the work is seen to facilitate what he called a polyphony, ‘[a] plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses’ (1984, 6). Bakhtin was also referring to the medium of the novel, and to the work of Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky in particular, but this must be seen in context – Bakhtin himself was writing in the first half of the twentieth century (before being translated into English and coming to greater prominence), so that the novel should be seen in its role as the dominant mode of fiction of the time, a role which is somewhat supplanted by transmedia storytelling and other emergent forms of fiction. I am not
attempting to dismiss the novel here, only to point out that when Bakhtin talks about the polyphonic nature of Dostoevsky’s novels, he is, in fact, uncovering something fundamental about the nature of story that is non-medium specific.

For Bakhtin, the novel was the only medium available to him that could potentially manage this polyphony, but literary critic Wayne C. Booth, in his Introduction to *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, also sees Bakhtin’s position extending beyond the novel to encompass ‘the essential, irreducible multi-centeredness, or “polyphony,” of human life’ (Bakhtin 1984, xx), or what we might regard as the *intersubjective* potential of a work. *Story* cannot be seen separate to its purpose of developing relations established by its *narrative*. This moves us towards the concept of the dialogic *story*, one which ‘cannot be measured by purely linguistic criteria’ (ibid., 182). There is some conflict here with Barthes’ notion of *functions* as the basic linguistic unit of discourse, since this positions discourse as a more or less fixed rhetorical structure, while Bakhtin considers discourse itself to be dialogic. In this way, a *narrative-story* dynamic is established in which polyphony can be contextualised; as Michel Foucault argues, ‘[b]ehind the visible façade of the system, one posits the rich uncertainty of disorder; and beneath the thin surface of discourse, the whole mass of a largely silent development’ (1972, 76). Not all voices are equally valid within a given discourse, so that the dialogic *story* does not simply regard the polyphony as ‘see[ing] all sides of an argument’ (Shepherd 2009, 77), but as a range of possibilities. *Story* originates within this ‘rich uncertainty,’ while *narrative* should be seen as the ‘thin surface,’ rejecting embedment in favour of facilitation and mediation. In *fiction*, therefore, the polyphony exists as an example of this ‘silent development,’ so that what is portrayed in a work is, in effect, *recovered* from the polyphony.³ The dialogic imperative reinforces that, while *story* might originate from some point within the polyphony, it does not find its conclusion there, but rather ‘is actually settled at the moment of utterance’ (Bakhtin 1994, 426), if we accept that an *utterance* – an ‘active participation’ (ibid., 272) – is

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³ I borrow the term *recovery* here from J. R. R. Tolkien (2008), in his capacity as a philologist and literary critic, who used it to describe the way something familiar can be made to appear ‘new’ by the relationships in which it is placed. I am using the term broadly to illustrate how the polyphony might be seen to operate. For Tolkien, *recovery* has certain other connotations, namely ‘the regaining of clear view’ (ibid., 67), or a certain idealism, towards an object. The fantasy story is, for him, best suited to achieve this because its *raison d’être* is ‘trying to do something else (make something new)’ (ibid., 68).
only possible at the moment in which it is engaged and brought into an existence by the interlocutor.4

By drawing on Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism, story can be seen as distinct from narrative. Once it is detached in this manner, story also becomes transposable. This is a characteristic the classical narratologists also saw, and which many postclassical narratologists have taken as their point of departure, especially when working towards a transmedial narratology. However, it is based on the problematic story/discourse distinction, in which story is translatable because it is a sequence of events, the basic nature of which do not change from one medium to another. Before moving onto a discussion of the translatable story, though, I will turn to the work of Claude Bremond and Seymour Chatman and the important notion of possibilities that they raise.

1.3 The transposable story

Bremond, a French semiotician and one of the early structuralists who published in the 1966 issue of Communication (see the previous chapter), is notable for favouring a logic of narrative, or what can be reasonably inferred from a certain set of conditions, rather than the structural-systematic approach of others such as Barthes or Todorov. Todorov, for instance, proposed that ‘works of literature appear as particular instances that have been realized’ (1969a, 71), so that while some classical narratologists saw the functions of narrative as fixed in the discourse-level, Bremond regarded them as possibilities. While the story/discourse distinction remained fundamental to him, with functions therefore remaining, ‘the basic unit, the narrative atom’ (Bremond 1980, 387), Bremond saw the study of narrative as being usefully divided in two: a focus on techniques on the one hand, and the laws governing it on the other. Sequences of events must be arranged according to such laws, which proceed on a logic of minimal narrativity. For Bremond, narrativity – how we might judge a narrative to be narrative – rested on the integration of a sequence of events into the

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4 The German philosopher and cultural historian Wilhelm Dilthey argued that experience is only “completed” after it has been expressed or shared (see Tampalini 2007, 226). Philosopher and Dilthey scholar Rudolf Makkreel (2012) explains Dilthey’s points as being that true comprehension of experience can only come from an external source: ‘inner intelligibility of lived experience does not yet constitute understanding [...] the way we express ourselves is a crucial intermediary in defining ourselves.’ While I agree with the notion that entering into a discourse about one’s experience with an external party can often lead to a greater or enhanced understanding of that experience, I take issue with the suggestion that this in some way completes or validates that experience.
greater organising principle of *plot*, which would unify events by granting them causality: ‘it is only in relation to a plan conceived by man that events gain meaning and can be organized into a structured temporal sequence’ (ibid., 390). A *narrative* therefore consisted of *elementary sequences*, which were themselves composed of *triads*, groupings of three *functions* which opened, actualised, and closed an event. The transposable story is one in which the same/similar events can appear in a number of mediums ‘without losing its essential properties’ (Bremond, quoted in Chatman 1978, 20).

*Possibilities* in *narrative* arise because these relations are unknown until they have been engaged. It is the effect of one *function* on another, in terms of each *function’s* impact on the progression of the sequence. According to Jonathan Culler, Bremond ‘argues that every function should open a set of alternative consequences’ (Culler 1976, 208), the effect of which, says Culler, is that the emphasis shifts from an analysis of structure, to that of *actions*, from which it is possible to say that *story* becomes separated from *narrative* (though neither Culler nor Bremond make this claim).

Bremond argued that with a sequence of events, there is a process instigated by one *function*, realised by another, and closed by a third. How it is realised or closed is open to a (limited) number of *possibilities*, based on the logic of the instigating *function*. Barthes talks about *functions* that occur later in the sequence as growing from the “seeds” of previous ones, because all *functions* must correlate to other *functions* due to a teleological “purpose” informing the work (Barthes 1975; Culler 1976). Teleology, as employed by structuralists such as Barthes and Culler, explained *narrative* as an end or totality: ‘certain things happen in order that the *récit* may develop as it does’ (Culler 1976, 209). The formal structure of narrative was therefore seen to operate as ‘a configuration which contributes to this end’ (ibid., 243).

Bremond effectively problematises this conclusion, however, since his theory, though based on the structure of literary works, ultimately does not hinge upon them, but rather on a process of creation that begins with the creator and ends (if it can be said to end at all) with the interlocutor. It is a process that requires concretisation and the ability to either ‘modify’ or ‘preserve’ the situation, in Bremond’s terms (1980, 407), and it is this which Samuel R. Delany argues produces *story* (2009, 39). The teleological position must deny this, however, since it assumes a work is always
complete in and of itself, denies the role of the creator in its production (beyond acknowledging that material has been selected and arranged into a *narrative*), and must reject the notion of the art coefficient Marcel Duchamp (1975) argues is present in every work. Teleology suggests design in the service of a final outcome, rather than coincidence, and while it would be impossible to deny that there is evidence of design in *narrative*, a much more useful way of approaching *narrative* may be in understanding it as *purposive*; that is, as recognising the *intentionality* informing a work.

Delany also talks about ‘ranges of possibility’ that are latent in a work (2009, 3), while Seymour Chatman took Bremond's lead, citing the latter's insistence that *story* is “independent of the techniques that bear it along” (Bremond, quoted in Chatman 1978, 20). But this creates the issue of having to make a case for this independence, while acknowledging that ‘a narrative without an agent performing actions is impossible’ (ibid., 34). Chatman relies on the story/discourse distinction to resolve this, arguing that ‘below irrelevant biological and physical considerations, diverse characters – say an old woman, a bear, a forest spirit, or a mare’s head – could perform the “same” action in different but related tales’ (ibid., 90). The *story* – as a sequence of events – does not require the identity of the agent performing the necessary actions, only that they are being performed. This addresses the issue from a structural point of view, in that the progression of events can continue, but it only holds that a change in the agent has no effect on the story if we fail to consider the relationship between agent and action. What is missing, according to narrative theorist Ross Chambers, ‘is recognition of the significance of situational phenomena – of the social fact that narrative mediates human relationships and derives its “meaning” from them’ (1984, 4).

The transposable story ultimately only suggests that a minimal movement is possible between mediums, a shift in the arrangement of events and their performing agents relative to their previous positions. However, by allowing for *possibilities* within a *narrative*, Bremond made a distinction between it and *story* that is quite useful, namely that it is problematic to regard narrative as ‘complete’ because, as narrative theorist Horst Ruthrof puts it, ‘we project, at any given moment [...] possible future courses which the action could take as well as their possible implications’ (1981, 70-
71. We concretise the range of possibilities, modifying the concretisation accordingly as we discover more, but the narrative cannot, ultimately, realise all possibilities. There is, therefore, a marked semantic difference between whether the agent performing an action is an old woman, a mare’s head, or whatever, which complicates Chatman’s reduction. As Delany argues, no ‘analysis of the symbolic structure [can] replace the reading experience’ (2009, 38), where ‘reading experience’ can be expanded to include any act of engagement with a narrative. Classical narratology struggled with a concept of story because it was facilitated by, but did not objectively exist in, the narrative. Sequences of events, or more correctly, their function, are indeed a basis for judging narrativity, but could also be said to be cues by which the interlocutor begins to concretise the story.

1.4 The translatable story

Dialogism suggests that a story is something constantly in the act of becoming, fixed to narrative only because it requires a discursive structure (as opposed to a discourse-level) to facilitate it. Bremond notes a means by which that facilitation takes place, via the logic of possibilities, but this only accounts for the polyphony in a limited sense, since in this model a function only opens up two alternatives: either it is actualised, or it is not. Culler finds Bremond’s implicit rejection of a teleological determination in narrative problematic, on the grounds that ‘we will find that relationships of implication among parts of a structure work in both directions’ (1976, 209); in other words, we cannot deny that some narratives are encountered in a predetermined state – the interlocutor cannot normally alter the sequence of images in a comic, the words printed on a page, or the juxtaposition of sound and image that constitutes a film, for example. As Chatman says, ‘[u]nlke a random agglomerate of events, they manifest a discernible organisation’ (1978, 21). But we also cannot deny that as interlocutors we are unaware of how that narrative will play out until we have engaged with it, until it has come to some sort of conclusion for us. We may not see totality, but we do see intentionality. The possibilities implied by any one function are not determined until it has been actualised, or, as David Herman says, ‘[p]art of the interest and complexity of narrative depends on the merely probabilistic, not deterministic, links between some actions and events’ (2002, 94).
Culler, among many others, maintains the privileged status of the discourse-level in his work, but if we reject it, or at least problematise it, we move closer to an understanding of the nature of *story*. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, in discussing Bremond’s logic of *possibilities*, notes how ‘[t]he notion of bifurcation preserves a measure of freedom’ (1985, 22), while Fludernik sees in it, as I do, nascent evidence for experientiality in the act of engaging with a *narrative*: ‘What I would like to preserve from Bremond’s model is the acknowledgment of *dynamic movement*, even if that movement, in Bremond, ends up reverting to a sequential mode, with alternative choices always propelling one new stage of sequentiality at a time […]. [H]e makes an important contribution by incorporating in his sequential model the crucial experience of unresolved direction’ (1996, 21 emphasis mine).

However, Bremond was unable to move his model beyond the story/discourse distinction and therefore limited *story* to a transposable function. It is a logic of *narrative*, so that issues of concretisation or aesthetics ultimately have little impact. While the concept of the interlocutor being a necessary component in bringing a work into an existence is not a new one – Rimmon-Kenan suggests something similar when she discusses the “abstracted” *story* (1985, 3), for example – it seems that if we are overly dependent on a structuralist perspective we will not gain a clearer picture of the nature or function of *story*. As noted earlier, this can be explained by the emphasis on analysing the objective, structural aspects of a work, and much insight into *narrative* has been gained by this approach. What is missing, I believe, is an understanding of *story* as *translatable*, which I base on a concept derived from Nicolas Bourriaud. If we understand *transposition* as the movement of an object from one location to another, then *translation* is the presentation and re-presentation of an object in any location.

In a certain sense, this is an extension of dialogism, in that it acknowledges the polyphony as a potential origin of *story*, ‘rejecting any source code that would seek to assign a single origin to works and texts’ (Bourriaud 2010b, 131). *Translation* also recognises the interlocutor as, if not an end point, then a provisional point of convergence, since it has to do with the setting in motion of a work (something it cannot achieve on its own). It therefore requires a phenomenological *consciousness*, ‘neither a condition nor a faculty but an act’ (Detweiler 1978, 8). In terms of an
application to transmedia storytelling, it describes a method of moving a *story* from one medium to another, but it does not deny medium specificity – the unique characteristics of a given medium and how they contour a *narrative*. Rather, it acknowledges a problem with this practice when Bourriaud notes that, ‘every translation is inevitably incomplete and leaves behind an irreducible remainder’ (2010b, 30). It is the move from a predominantly structuralist perspective to a phenomenological one, which was suggested above as a necessary move, which I will now take up.

2. **THE IMPORTANCE OF A CONCEPT OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE TO STORY**

2.1 **Consciousness and the intended object**

Cultural theorist Robert Detweiler suggests that a significant distinction between a structuralist and a phenomenological perspective is the status each attributes to *consciousness*: for the phenomenologist, consciousness represents *intentionality*, an act that ‘always necessarily “apprehends” its objects’ (1978, 9), or as the philosopher and phenomenologist Dermot Moran puts it, intentionality is ‘characterised by “aboutness”’ (2002, 16). Conversely, ‘[c]onsciousness moves to the periphery in structuralist thought and exists only as a phenomenon among others that can be configured and transformed’ (ibid., 17). While it is true that cognitive narratology attributes greater significance to consciousness than other iterations of narratology, it must be remembered that, as a way of studying *narrative* it still relies on a structuralist foundation, and derives much of its methodology from cognitive science. It is, therefore, primarily concerned with mental *processes* rather than phenomenological *experience*. It may be useful to think of *narrative* in terms of the former (processes), and *story* in terms of the latter (experience), with the understanding that both work interdependently and are always fulfilled in each other. Fludernik’s definition of consciousness is particularly useful in this regard: it ‘comprises both lived experientiality and intellectual attempts to deal with experience, and it includes the comprehension of actancy just as it necessarily embraces an understanding of mental processes’ (1996, 49-50). In my usage, then, *consciousness*, or more specifically, the *act of consciousness*, is the intention to bring an object into a
certain cognitive existence. Objects brought into such an existence become representations (Wartofsky 1979, xxi). Consciousness, in the phenomenological sense of conscious acts, is therefore foundational to an understanding of story: ‘it must forever deny an essential fulfilment […] for consciousness to imagine an object it must deny the real’ (Detweiler 1978, 40). It contextualises the paradox of fiction as a problem of unresolved self-reference – an art coefficient – and thus forms the basis for concretisation.

The existence consciousness enacts is characteristic of what Ingarden refers to as the intentional object, or the directing of consciousness towards an object to be concretised. More precisely, an intentional object is comprised of acts of consciousness which delimit, or “draw,” as the phenomenologist Jeff Mitscherling (1997, 101) puts it, the object to be concretised. These acts of consciousness attribute certain qualities or characteristics to the object. Phenomenology thus assumes the presence of at least two conscious, subjective agents – one who initiates the directing, and one to whom the intentional object is directed, which we may think of in terms of a creator and an interlocutor. The object itself has no physicality, but is rather a chain of semantic units, the arrangement of which help to determine how the object is to be received (Ingarden 1973b, 29). Tellingly, Ingarden says these objects may also be referred to as fictive: ‘a result of the particular activity of the creative acts producing them, [which] attain the character of an independent reality’ (ibid., 40). Story events, for example, are independent not because they are embedded in a discourse-level, but because they are constituted externally to the work itself. This is because, for Ingarden, a work is only a formal structure, a means by which a creator’s intentions can be organised. When we refer to the work, then, we mean not only the materials and mode of expression that describes its medium, but also to the intentions informing its creation and permeating it which are ultimately concretised, ‘the interplay between the transmitting artist and the receiving beholder or listener’ (Brunius 1970, 591). In other words, we refer to the “actuality” of the work.

Referring to the “physicality” or even “materiality” of the work here would be problematic. What do we mean by these terms, particularly in a digital age? The philosopher Ned Markosian (2000) argues that a physical object is one that exists in both time and space, as opposed to non-physical objects which may exist only in time.
Likewise, materiality assumes that ‘only physical objects exist’ (ibid., 388), which is clearly opposed to a phenomenological position that prioritises the purely intentional act of consciousness. The distinction between the physical and non-physical is problematised, for example, by Nuno Bernardo’s claim that ‘the device no longer defines the content’ (2011, 8) which is particularly evident in works which are ‘born-digital’ (Kirschenbaum et al 2009, 105). These are works which are created, distributed, and engaged with entirely via computer technologies, and therefore never acquire a physicality outside of the device itself. Content is defined, according to Bernardo, primarily by experience rather than medium. This is not an entirely new idea, since Ingarden also argued that the physicality of a work is only a tool for granting it a relatively stable foundation through which it can be engaged (1973b, 176). To that end, I have employed the term actuality, which is derived from the Aristotelian distinction between ‘possibility’ and ‘actuality’ in which the latter is a setting in motion of the former, a change of state affected by an external agent (Bechler 1995, 9). This is similar to the process of translation proposed by Bourriaud, and which I have previously employed: ‘all signs must be translated or translatable [...] in order to really exist’ (Bourriaud 2010b, 131).

There is evidence of dialogism at the heart of the phenomenological experience, then, what Richard van Oort describes as a ‘movement [...] from subjective consciousness to intersubjective self-consciousness’ (1998, 450) which is facilitated by the work, rendering it constantly in the act of becoming. However, van Oort also argues that because intentional acts of consciousness are subjective, they are also entirely private: ‘Only I am aware of the objects I imagine to myself’ (ibid., 448). Unlike my understanding of the work, van Oort’s contention here is that its purpose is to take the private, subjective intentions of the creator and objectify them in order for them to be communicated: ‘Subjective experience becomes objectified through language’ (ibid., 451). It is, for him, a public display of private experiences. He is correct here on two counts: firstly, in the sense that only the interlocutor can concretise a work for him or herself, and secondly, in that the work, on its own, is an inert and objective artifact. As it stands, this position denies acts of consciousness, or more specifically, their translation from intentional to aesthetic objects (discussed further below) because it

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5 Some of the characteristics of born-digital works also appear in Figure 1.1 in the previous chapter.

6 Or through whichever medium happens to be employed. We need not be limited to language only in this case.
does not regard the work as facilitating translation. Where van Oort regards subjective experience to be private, however, Ingarden considers it to originate in the dialogic polyphony: 'It is simply not true that each of us forms the meanings of words for himself alone, in complete isolation, “privately.” On the contrary, almost every instance of forming words or conferring meaning represents the common work of two or more people who finds themselves confronted with the same object (a thing or a concrete process) or in a common situation’ (1973b, 28). The two people referred to here are equivalent to the subjective agents referred to above, who represent a minimal requirement for acts of consciousness (that is, intersubjectivity). This is not an argument for authorial intention – the interlocutor is not concerned with discovering ‘what the author had in mind to do and say, his design or purpose in a particular work’ (Polletta 1973, 185) – but is instead an argument for the processes of translation and concretisation which are instigated by the creator. The work stands inert, these possibilities unresolved, until the interlocutor engages with them – in a very real sense, its ‘existence is contingent upon the intentional acts of [its] creators and observers’ (Tampalini 2007, 27). Or put another way, the inertia of the work is overcome by the experiencing consciousness of the interlocutor.

If intentionality is, in the phenomenological sense, a directing towards an intended object, then there are parallels here to the notion of fictional intent that I outlined in the Introduction. There, it was established that fictional intent is ‘not the activity of the imagination but the attitude we adopt toward the content’ (Currie 1990, 21); that is, before concretisation can occur, the interlocutor must perceive that what he or she is being directed to is intended to be taken as part of the reality of a particular storyworld. This is not, however, a straightforward assimilation of signs – Ingarden speaks of the intended object as a ‘carrier of properties’ in which (fictive) intent is concealed and therefore can only indirectly manifest itself (1973a, 139-140). According to art historian Teddy Brunius, in his study of Ingarden’s approach to aesthetics, this makes it ‘difficult to find one single point where we can conceptualize a quality or entity of awareness of the meaning or significance of the artistic object’ (1970, 593). As a result, places of indeterminacy arise in the work. Nevertheless, as Gregory Currie (1990, 26) points out, it is not that the interlocutor is necessarily required to believe, unequivocally, in the ‘reality’ of any given intended object. After all, indeterminacy means an inability to realise the absolute extent of an object, and it
cannot be guaranteed that it will always be concretised as intended, or in the same way by two or more interlocutors. It is enough, Currie argues, that the interlocutor recognises the intention embedded within it. The work arrives already infused with fictional intent, as a substratum of phenomenological intention, or to paraphrase Detweiler (1978, 199), it is always already an interpretation proposed by a creator that merely awaits a secondary interpretation by an interlocutor.

Places of indeterminacy arise because the intentional object is one which is removed from any possible tangible reality and positioned, semiotically as well as semantically, in relation to other objects. Its significance lies in the way it refers itself to other objects, rather than to an external, ultimate reality, thus creating ‘an ontologically independent reality’ (van Oort 1998, 440) that is essentially paradoxical. As Ingarden argues, ‘however many determinations of a given object are apprehended up to a given moment, there are always other determinations still to be apprehended’ (1973a, 247 – original emphasis), so that there are aspects of the intended object that are always left indeterminate, meaning it can only be understood in relation to other objects. Wolfgang Iser, in critiquing Ingarden’s concept, argues that ‘[t]he most that can be said of the indeterminacies is that they may stimulate, but not that they demand completion’ (1978, 177). Part of the purpose of narrative is, therefore, to ‘develop determinate states of affairs in which objectivities are represented and constituted’ (ibid. 248); that is, to organise intended objects. This is where van Oort might contend that the purpose of narrative is to objectify, but it must be pointed out that the determinate state of affairs to which Ingarden is referring is based almost entirely on the subjectivity of the creator and his or her understanding of the polyphony – that is, the schemata – from which they draw their objects. It is only a representation of objectivities, and not the objectivities themselves, and the work remains inert and incomplete without the interlocutor because places of indeterminacy are resolved, or at least stimulated, in the act of concretisation. What is missing from this discussion so far, then, is an understanding of the necessary translation of the intended object into an aesthetic object. It is this process which I will also now argue most effectively explains story.

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7 This is, I would argue, a similar mistake to the one I identified in Frasca’s distinction between simulation and representation, which was discussed in Section 5 of the previous chapter.
2.2 Aesthetic experience and the aesthetic object

A creator’s conscious act is the directing towards an intended object; it is the intention to represent an object in a certain way. Intended objects are not, however, static, because their purpose is to hold in readiness the conditions for their own representation as aesthetic objects (Ingarden 1973a, 286). To say that the intended object is dynamic in this way is not a contradiction with my earlier claim that the work remains inert until it is engaged. On the contrary, that claim was intended as a direct reference to the work’s art coefficient, understood in terms of the tension between creative expression and interlocutory evaluation (Smith 1986, 164), and it should be understood that, in normal circumstances, the interlocutor will encounter a work in a social existence, meaning the work has already acquired a degree of intersubjectivity. This will be discussed further in the next chapter, but suffice to say at this point that the work, always already in a state of becoming, requires that the conditions it holds in readiness be set in motion, or, put another way, is perpetually open to instances of closure.

What is held in readiness in the work forms the basis for what can be termed aesthetic experience, or what philosopher David E. W. Fenner (2003) describes as the “raw data” with which an interlocutor has to work. Indeed, as the French philosopher and aesthetician Mikel Dufrenne defines it, aesthetic experience is most usefully understood as ‘the experience of the spectator and not that of the artist’ (1973, xlv). While Fenner suggests such experience merely involves the content of a work, for Ingarden it encompasses the range of values and attitudes the interlocutor is positioned to adopt, and which they also bring to bear, on the object, in addition to the object itself (1973a, 286).

The concept of aesthetic experience is interesting for the way in which it emphasises a discontinuity between creator and interlocutor. The movement from the former to the latter constitutes the setting in motion of the work, by which it acquires a social existence that removes it from the original act of creation and recontextualises it in the cultural matrix in which it is received. Setting in motion is not an end point but a journey form, which Bourriaud (2010b) describes as a way of looking at a work from the perspective of its precariousness as a sociocultural artifact. This is why the work
always retains an art coefficient, because it is constantly in motion. Fludernik’s concept of *experientiality* proves useful here, which she refers to as ‘the evocation of consciousness’ (1996, 13) in a dynamic and evaluative capacity. In Fludernik’s usage, our ability to judge the narrativity of a work of fiction is not due to any particular structural characteristics, such as plot, but the presence of an experiencing consciousness – narrativity as a function which actualises experience. To resolve the discontinuity between creator and interlocutor, Fludernik suggests that what was previously thought to constitute the narrativity of a work is more correctly thought of as tellability, or the capacity of a sequence of events to be reported, which is precisely the function of plot. David Herman describes tellability as what is ‘narratable [...] in a given communicative situation’ (2009a, 135), which is important to note, since experience is not necessarily what is narratable, but what is mediated. Tellability could therefore be thought of as referring to the objective, and experience to the subjective, qualities of the same situation. Furthermore, Fludernik (1996) argues that the interlocutor relies on the presence of consciousness within the work – textual agents including, but not limited to, the narrator-function, characters, performers, and so on – with which he or she can interact in a reflexive capacity.

From this, it is possible to conclude that in fiction, both tellability and experience are necessary and correlated, because one describes something about the mechanics of narrative, and the other the actuality of story. Since experience refers mainly to the sensuous encounter, it is not, Fludernik argues, entirely determined by temporality (1996, 28-29), or the chronological progression of events that defined the story-level discussed earlier, but is instead constituted by the actual process of engagement with the work. Thus, the story/discourse distinction, which has been viewed by many narrative theorists as foundational to narratology, is revealed to be problematic, particularly in a transmedial narratology, because narrative can no longer be seen as ‘either communicating a story or signifying a story’ (ibid., 335 – original emphasis). Admittedly, Fludernik does allow for the usefulness of the story/discourse distinction, but only in reference to works intended as genuinely mimetic, since these must presume, and foreground, a shared reality and the story can be readily seen as originating from an observable (ultimate) reality. Such an allowance seems to me to be problematic for at least two reasons, though: firstly, it would still account for the majority of works, and therefore seems an unnecessary allowance to make; and
secondly, it reinforces the notion that story is a sequence of events embedded in a narrative, and thus undermines the individual’s experience. Though it is good to be wary of binaries when one takes a theoretical stance, it seems to me that either the story/discourse distinction holds for all kinds of (fictional) works, or it is problematic and an alternative must be allowed for. Characteristics such as tellability and plot speak to narrative’s structural imperative without having to resort to the story/discourse distinction, for example. On top of which, if we allow for a concept of experientiality to help explain the nature of story, then we must accept that story is complex and turbid, or as narrative theorist Marco Caracciolo puts it, we must accept that stories are ‘entangled in an experiential network that comprises their producers, their recipients, and the events and existents that they semiotically represent’ (2012).

But is it productive to regard story as entangled? After all, Ingarden (1973a; 1973b) goes to considerable length to point out the limitations of aesthetic experience, while Dufrenne (1973) quite rightly asks whether the object being apprehended is at all reduced during this process, and I have already made mention, citing Samuel R. Delany’s position, of the problems encountered when we attempt to reduce story. While the structuralist tends to presuppose anything derived from the work is already reduced in some way, such a position presents a problem for the phenomenologist, for whom awareness of its irreducibility ‘is to take in the total intention – not only what these things are for representation […] but the unique mode of existing expressed in [their] properties’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002, xx). In this, I lean towards the phenomenological perspective, and would argue that the object is not reduced – indeed, cannot be reduced – and it is this irreducibility that makes a concept of story problematic for structuralism. Dufrenne, in answering his own question, concludes that ‘the object of consciousness can itself be treated as separate […] every object is revealed and articulated in accordance with the attitude which consciousness adopts toward it and in terms of consciousness’s experience of it’ (1973, xlxi). It is not that the object cannot be analysed, but rather that, instead of being reduced, every object thus rendered by the interlocutor is affectively charged, beyond its “mere” representation in the work, for precisely the same reason that Elaine Aston and George Savona (1991) argue every item placed on the theatre stage takes on significance. Neither the creator’s intention, nor the object alone, causes this, but rather the point of exchange

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8 Phenomenology grapples with its own problem of reduction, but not for the same reasons as structuralism. I address this towards the end of this Section, and in greater detail in Chapter 3.
of both with the interlocutor. It is this point of exchange which enables the reflexive look back, the recognition that objects have been intentionally positioned by a creator-consciousness and are affectively charged as a result. To return to Caracciolo’s statement, I suggest this is how entanglement within an experiential network might appear – story is not confusion, but complexity, and the aesthetic object is a reflexive response to the conditions established by the creator in the work’s schematic array of intended objects.

Our response is facilitated towards this end because it is the nature of narrative – the principle on which works of fiction are schematically organised – to make the objects embedded within it semantically and affectively “real” to the interlocutor; that is, to see to their actualisation. As Dufrenne argues, ‘the consciousness which is directed toward the object is constitutive, yet only on the condition that the object lend itself to the constituting’ (1973, xlviii). Likewise, in Ingarden’s conception, aesthetic objects are ‘purely fictitious objects, which are devised by ourselves’ (1961, 290), but until the interlocutor engages the narrative, story remains a mere abstraction, at best a synopsis, as Delany argues. In this sense, story is the interlocutor appropriately oriented to the work, because, to paraphrase Brunius (1970), to construct an aesthetic object constitutes adopting a perspective towards it and its position in the narrative, something which can only be acquired via an experience of it. In other words, to translate an intended object into an aesthetic one, there must be engagement – aesthetic experience is not a passive activity.

It is therefore possible to conclude that in works of fiction, aesthetic experience results from the constitution of story as an aesthetic object, a ‘creative behaviour, which is not only stimulated and guided by what has already been apprehended in a work of art, but also demands the observer’s creative initiative’ (Ingarden 1975a, 261). This means that there are levels of experience and concretisation – what Ingarden, along with cognitive narratologists, refer to as schemata. As explained in Section 1.1 of the previous chapter, there are at least two levels of schema at play while an interlocutor

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9 Not, it must be noted, what the creator intended or meant by arranging them thus. While the concept of fictional intent demonstrates that the interlocutor can appreciate the creative act required to produce the work, it does not suggest that he or she can also unequivocally ‘know’ the meaning(s) informing that act. Besides which, Marcel Duchamp (1975) reminds us that even when immersed in that process, creators themselves are often unaware of the significance of all their acts.

10 This understanding of complexity should not be confused with the concept I take up in relation to transmedia storytelling in Chapter 4. Here, I am simply making the point that story is irreducible and exists along a continuum of experience.
is engaged with a work: firstly, there is the level of *narrative*, which contains the array of intended objects arranged by the creator according to whichever principles and techniques he or she deems appropriate (I am trying not to limit either the creator or the scope of the work here). Taken together, these objects constitute the purely intentional work of art, which is ‘the product of an artist’s creative acts’ (ibid., 260). Secondly, there is the level of the interlocutor, whose *aesthetic experience* translates individual intended objects – characters, settings, actions and so on – into individual aesthetic objects, which in turn are concretised into a unified impression of the work which is the *story*. I would refer to these respectively as *lesser* and *greater aesthetic objects* (and similarly for *intended objects*), but I would not wish this to be misunderstood as an attempt to establish any sort of hierarchy between them – it is simply a matter of scope.

Therefore, when I argued at the beginning of this chapter that *story* constitutes the *aesthetic experience* of the work, it is to this process of translation from *intended to aesthetic object* to which I am referring. It does not, as I see it, limit *story* to sequences of events, as the story/discourse distinction does, but encompasses all aspects of the work, since each aspect of it is affectively charged. Though the degree to which each aspect is charged may differ, and will differ from one interlocutor to the next, this does not undermine the argument, because the work is never closed to the interlocutor, who may revisit it, where possible, or otherwise reflect and participate in conversation about it, thus augmenting or otherwise adjusting his or her concretisation. However, I do not wish to suggest that *translation* is a flawless process. It is, as Bourriaud points out, ‘an act of displacement’ (2010b, 54), which on the one hand ‘permits it to engage in productive dialogue with a variety of different contexts’ (ibid., 106), but on the other in no way guarantees the conditions of its reception: its status is, to use his terms, precarious and revocable. For a *translation* to be effective, its objects must be adapted and recontextualised, which Bourriaud likens to a performance. Thus, it is unavoidable that something is always lost: ‘every translation is inevitably incomplete and leaves behind an irreducible remainder’ (ibid., 30) because the circumstances surrounding each performance are always different.

Ingarden’s perspective is not dissimilar: he argues that the process ‘does not achieve complete self-presence and does not bring about either an honest fulfilment of desires
or peace’ (1975a, 264). This should be understood in the context of the phenomenological problem of reduction, which the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002) explains in terms of the limitations of the individual human consciousness to perceive the world, from which all experience is derived, in its entirety, and thus our perception is always reduced to what we each alone can experience. Likewise, the interlocutor cannot be expected to retain every nuance of the fictional work, and certainly could not do so in the context of transmedia storytelling. However, neither Bourriaud nor Ingarden regard these as anything less than the factors energising the process of translation.

2.3 Concretisation

*Story* does not conclude with the creation of aesthetic objects, however. It also requires concretisation, a cognitive act to which I have already often referred to, but which should not be confused with the subjectivity of aesthetic experience. It is perhaps the term most closely aligned with ideas put forward under the rubric of cognitive narratology, such as contextual frame theory, for example, which proposes the necessity of contextual frames for storing and retrieving spatiotemporal information about a work, particularly as it relates to characters and other conscious agents. Narratologist Catherine Emmott, who initially developed the theory, notes the presence of what she calls ‘fragments of a context’ (2003, 303) within a work, which interlocutors are required to fill in. These may be seen as a useful alternative to Ingarden’s notion of places of indeterminacy, both in the way in which they foreground the importance of the work-as-context to concretisation, and the role of the interlocutor. Emmott (1997) argues for the centrality of representation – which I maintain constitutes the range of artifacts/aesthetic objects produced as a result of concretisation – because representations contain the information an interlocutor has concretised from the work which is necessary for its navigation. As David Herman puts it, ‘[i]nformation about contexts attaches itself to mental representations’ (2002, 21), so that contextual frames are linked directly to narrative, as this is where the cues which activate them are located.

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11 This is a very simplified understanding of what is a highly complex concept. Phenomenological reduction was originally devised by Edmund Husserl as a way to deal with these limitations of perception in order to approach a transcendental ‘pure consciousness’. I deal with the concept in more depth in Chapter 3 (as it relates to intersubjectivity), but I would point readers either to Husserl’s *General Introduction* (2012) for an overview, or to *Ideas: First Book* (1998) for more information.
What is important to note about contextual frame theory is that it is a dynamic model, so that frames are not seen as rigid, but are able to be augmented as new information is added. It also assumes that some form of what I am calling aesthetic experience has taken place, because it relies entirely on interlocutors ‘using [their] memory and making inferences in order to transform the fragment of contextual information [...] into a fuller construction’ (Emmott 2003, 304). However, contextual frames are, at least in Emmott’s usage, limited and tend to function only in relation to conscious agents within a work. She notes their particular social dimension when she argues that they are a means by which an interlocutor may keep track of the movements and relations of characters and actions across the milieu of the work, but in general the theory does not seek to explain engagement across all facets of a work. In that regard, Ingarden’s notion of concretisation does not seem as limited in scope, since it is an act that attempts to take in the entirety of the objects portrayed. Like the contextual frame, concretisation is concerned with what is observable or can be logically inferred from the narrative, turning it into information the interlocutor can use, as opposed to his or her experience. The division is hardly inflexible, though, since an ability to judge the relative importance of knowledge relies on the conditions in which it is experienced.

With this in mind, Ingarden explores how the subjectivity of aesthetic experience differs from the relative objectivity of concretisation by referring to the latter in terms of the reflexive turn back towards the work (1973a, 337). The purpose of this is twofold: firstly, it presents an opportunity to consider how concretisations which the interlocutor makes are related to one another in the context of the work – causality might be an example of this – and secondly it positions concretisation as the fulfilment of the original act of consciousness in the way it organises knowledge derived from a work. In other words, concretisation provides a sense of closure: ‘the internal connection of the work of art with its creator and its observer who is fulfilling the aesthetic experience [becomes] manifest’ (Ingarden 1975a, 260). For Ingarden, the distinction is ultimately necessary because he argues that aesthetic experience is not a conscious activity – we are not normally aware of our thought processes or state of mind when we engage with a work, outside of perhaps academic or critical purposes.

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12 In fact, one of Emmott’s primary concerns is how contextual frames provide ‘orientational information which may not be explicitly stated in the text at that particular point’ (1997, 103) such as the use of pronouns in a novel.
13 The concept of information referred to here is borrowed from the Italian semiotician Umberto Eco and is discussed in more detail in Section 3.1.2 of Chapter 3.
(ibid., 336). It should be noted, though, that the philosopher Edmund Husserl, of whom Ingarden was a student, suggested that the ‘immanent experience’ – that is, experience in the moment – is itself a kind of reflexive activity which ‘can be grasped and analysed in the light of its own evidence’ (2012, 152). While I do not disagree with the principle of Ingarden’s contention, Husserl’s concept, in this instance, seems the more accurate in practice. The interlocutor must be aware of other factors beyond his or her thought processes as they are engaged – pleasure, I would suggest, is a state of mind we will often adopt towards the work, and is one which we are aware of in the moment.

What should be understood about the distinction between concretisation and aesthetic experience is the emphasis it places on objectivity and subjectivity respectively. Because fiction is attempting to resolve the paradox of self-reference by maintaining the legitimacy of its own fictional world, the work must contain both dimensions and be able to shift between them. For example, philosopher David E. W. Fenner (2003) argues that aesthetic experience, while not unconscious, is pre-theoretical “raw data” that has not yet been subject to any kind of analysis. He then explains how our comprehension of the objective qualities of a work – for example, lines, colours, proportions, and so on – shape our view of its aesthetics qualities: this is reflexion, translation as a dialogue, instead of linear communication. In relation to aesthetic experience, concretisation is a ‘complementing determination’ (Ingarden 1973b, 53), the two cannot be separated, and both are necessary for closure, which is not an end point or finalisation, but simply ‘the phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole’ (McCloud 1993, 63).

3. FURTHER APPLICATIONS IN A CONCEPT OF STORY

What has been proposed so far is an alternative conception of story as a setting in motion of an arrangement of objects; an interchange between a creator and interlocutor in which the focus is on the translation of those objects into something that the interlocutor can reflect on as his or her experience of a work. This reconceptualisation attempts to recover the concept of story from the story/discourse distinction, which was seen as problematic for the way in which it prioritised narrative while reducing story to a static sequence of events. In so doing, such a distinction denies the subjective reality of engaging with a work, when in fact both narrative and
story are of equal importance to a work of fiction as each is a response to the other. Such complexity has always resided within fiction, and I would argue that the reconceptualisation I have proposed has a general applicability in that regard, but it becomes increasingly evident when oriented towards instances of transmedia storytelling, which requires structural coherence across multiple mediums, but also has the unique problem of maintaining a coherence of experience across those same mediums. I will pick up that discussion in Chapter 4, but in the Sections below I wish to work through two issues in particular that arise when this alternative understanding is applied. The first of these arises out of the bifurcation my distinction between narrative and story might be seen to produce and my belief that it is necessary at this point to reinforce their interdependency, while the second addresses the status of plot in this new configuration, as a concept that has often been tied to story.

3.1 Narrative sense and story sense

I have suggested that narrative and story represent, respectively, the objective and subjective poles of a work. If this is the case, then it should also hold that the ways in which we make sense of a work can likewise be divided into corresponding categories. These I have termed narrative sense and story sense, though I would emphasise that while the binary is useful, it is only theoretical and, as we shall see in the next chapter, always complicated by the ebb and flow of intersubjective exchange. I have also very loosely based these two senses on David Herman’s (2002; 2004) notion of story logic that was raised in the previous chapter. Though Herman bases this on his own understanding of the story/discourse distinction, I find his argument that stories both have a logic, and constitute a logic in their own right to be very useful.

The logic that stories have I align with my conception of narrative. That is, the work has a formational imperative which encompasses the range of techniques, strategies, and rules a creator might employ. Medium-specific qualities occur at this level, for example – techniques of editing a film or laying out comic book panels, strategies for interactivity and immersion, the semiotic rules informing a theatre production, and so on. None of these constitute narrative in their own right, but are logics it may possess. As I argued in the previous chapter, this means that narrative is not, in itself, medium-
specific, but has the capacity to take on an array of such logics, or, to use Herman’s
terms, to configure preferences, proportions, and properties (2002, 22; 23). These
connote the range of spatiotemporal cues that can be encoded, and which he argues
are intended to ‘prompt shifts into and out of narratively organised discourse’ (2004,
59). Thus narrative sense is formational, and is concerned with the degree to which an
interlocutor is able to account for the arrangement and association of objects in terms
of relevant schemata. For example, within the context of the story being told, is there
consistency and coherency? Is there a logical progression to events, to a character’s
development, and so on? What are the effects of events that are disruptive or contrary
to the established narrative sense? Because it provides the resources necessary for its
own decoding, narrative sense activates an interlocutor’s recognition of a creator’s
fictional intent and allows for judgments to subsequently be made about the work.
Narrative sense is the first move towards resolving the paradox by authenticating the
storyworld as a location in which aesthetic experience can legitimately take place.

Story sense, on the other hand, is much less rigorous than its counterpart. It is, to
follow through on Herman’s reasoning, the logic that stories are: namely, that they are
‘an unreplaceable resource for structuring and comprehending experience’ (2002, 23).
This logic is primarily concerned with process, though Herman locates it within a
concept of communication rather than motion, as I have done. The purpose of story
sense within the model of fiction I have proposed is to translate narrative knowledge
about a storyworld into aesthetic experience that can be concretised. If we return to
Richard van Oort’s argument, since fiction does not make reference to an ultimate
reality, but rather to its own authenticity, it must deploy a system of self-reference, or
signs as objects removed from their referents, which ‘thus becomes an intended object,
irrevocably divorced from the original appropriative gesture’ (1998, 460). The system
pretends to (a) reality. Story sense instigates the translation of objects removed in this
way by allowing an interlocutor to see them in their held-in-readiness.

Narrative sense and story sense operate in tandem, satisfying the objective and
subjective conditions necessary for resolving the paradox of self-reference in fiction by
‘communicating a reality which it has organized itself’ (Iser 1978, 181). One grants
shape, the other imbues purpose – though it must be reiterated that the interlocutor
never concludes his or her engagement with a complete, fully realised concretisation.
Just as there is an art coefficient present which the creator cannot resolve, so too is there a kind of relational coefficient, what philosopher Brian Rosebury calls ‘the emotional unfulfilledness that arises from the gap between the idea and the reality’ (1988, 11). The notion of these two senses is an attempt to address the view that story is only ever abstract – knowledge acquired from an embedded level. By suggesting a means by which narrative and story might be synthesised and seen in their interdependency, I hope it becomes evident that story is an energising ingredient of fiction. Abstract not because it is inaccessible, but because it is experiential. If such an argument can be accepted, then it is possible to return to Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan’s conception of narrativity as an ‘immanent story structure’ (1985, 7) and see evidence for this synthesis: how readily a narrative can be processed as a narrative is dependent on regarding story not as a static field of content, but as a constantly becoming aesthetic experience, facilitated by narrative’s presentation of intended objects.

3.2 The status of plot

Plot has always maintained a somewhat ambiguous status and has not often been favoured in narratology. This is mainly due to the perception that it relies on the conventional and is, according to literary scholar Peter Brooks, so basic to our experience of a work ‘that criticism has often passed it over in silence, as too obvious to bear discussion’ (1984, xi). Aristotle regarded plot as the first in a hierarchy of five essential aspects of tragedy, claiming it to be the ‘soul’ of a work (2004, 65), but it was writer and critic E. M. Forster who popularised a linkage between plot and story in his critical work Aspects of the Novel and thereby set a new direction for debate about this concept. Forster maintained the notion that story was only a chronological sequence of events, and therefore ‘the lowest and simplest of literary organisms’ (1971, 35). Plot, on the other hand, constituted that which granted the sequence a sense of causality and readability (his focus being, of course, the novel). He famously demonstrated his distinction in the following way: “The king died and then the queen,” is a story. “The king died, and then the queen died of grief,” is a plot (ibid., 93). By granting the sequence of events causality via the phrase “of grief,” Forster argued there is now something that can be developed, a quality to the work which instils the desire to discover more, or as he put it “[i]f it is in a story we say “and then?” If it is in a plot we
ask “why?” (ibid., 94). It is the difference between base curiosity and a demand for intelligence.

However, I find the redundancy of story in Forster’s distinction problematic. There seems little reason to describe a sequence of events as a story, and then be required to add causality in the form of plot, particularly if it is accepted that the mere fact of a sequence of events having taken place is in itself evidence of cause-and-effect. Events are never spontaneous or self-generating, and this is certainly true in fiction where I have argued every element of a work is affectively charged. In this, I am reminded of Samuel R. Delany’s stated distrust of the term plot for very similar reasons, and who preferred instead to think in terms of the story process, or the ‘continuous, developing interchange between imagination and notation [read: creation]’ (2009, 38).

Forster’s distinction is very much in keeping with a general narratological perspective, which can be traced to Viktor Shklovsky’s rejection of what he identified as the formal characteristics of plot as being in any way synonymous with the material/content of story. This provided a basis for the story/discourse distinction, with plot traditionally falling on the discourse end of the distinction. As such, it refers to ‘the sequence in which events are ordered in the narrative representation itself’ (Herman 2009a, 94), that is, chronologically ordered, events occur in the sequence A > B > C, whereas narratively they might appear as B > A > C, when, for instance, a flashback or flash forward is employed. This conceptualisation of plot has not gone unchallenged, however. Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck (2005) take issue with it, for example, since it relies on a reordering of temporality that cannot, in itself, account for causality. They cite the activity of the interlocutor in making sense in this regard: plot ‘depends not on causal connections but rather on a wealth of relevant connections that transcend mere chronology and are always introduced by the reader’ (ibid., 13). However, perhaps their use of the term “always” ought to be further qualified, since Herman and Vervaeck’s conclusion that plot is ‘an event sequence meaningful to the reader’ (ibid.) requires understanding on two levels.14

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14 To be fair, Herman and Vervaeck spend little time on plot itself as they see structuralist understandings of narrative and narrating as usefully replacing the term. I disagree with this position, however, to the extent that I find their definition of narrative too broad. However, I concur with their assessment that meaning results ‘from the interaction between reader and text’ (2005, 13).
Firstly, it refers to the fact that the interlocutor brings relevant schemata to bear on his or her engagement with a work, and that this engagement occurs within a greater sociocultural context that impacts the how and why of engagement. Secondly, the event sequence exists as an intended object, or, to acknowledge its complexity, as a string of intended objects. Aside from the factual information pertaining to it, the conditions which the intended object holds in readiness include the range of what Ingarden refers to as the values and attitudes the interlocutor is encouraged to adopt towards it. These aesthetic qualities ‘belong by their very essence to represented objects’ (1973a, 286-287 – original emphasis), so that it is problematic to say that it is the interlocutor who ‘always’ brings meaning to a work. While there are multiple ways in which a given object could be comprehended, it is usually only represented as a limited set. This argument does not deny the “openness” of a work, such as the artistic use of ambiguity or similar techniques to hold an object in tension in order to generate multiple interpretations, and it certainly does not suggest that meaning is solely derived from the creator.

Fundamentally, the sum total of the conscious acts of the creator serves to shape ‘the ontological foundation of the work of art’ (Ingarden 1975a, 261) which demonstrates intention and design. The above mentioned B > A > C sequence is, after all, evidence of a manipulation of events. It must be acknowledge, then, that the work of fiction sits in the midst of a purposive (as opposed to teleological) process that begins with a creator and, for the interlocutor, exhibits evidence of purpose in its intent to be fictional. By rejecting the implication of totality which teleology (and by extension some structuralists demand), I am not seeking to explain the work as a whole by reducing it to constituent functions; instead, I am granting it a quality of purposiveness which frees it from such deterministic constraints by locating fictional intent as an orienting principle.

If there is such a principle of intent and purpose informing the creation of fiction – and it seems impossible to deny there is – this does not strike me as causality so much as a way of organising the manner in which events will be received by an interlocutor, with the intention that they bring about certain effects or be comprehended in certain ways. I therefore propose that plot be understood as an organising principle of narrative. Indeed, this is not an entirely new notion: Brooks urged for a conception of
plot as ‘the organizing dynamic of a specific mode of human understanding’ (1984, 7) which is based on ‘the principle of interconnectedness and intention which we cannot do without in moving through the discrete elements – incidents, episodes, actions – of a narrative’ (ibid., 5). As a way in which narrative may be organised, it would not be limited to a temporal dimension, but would necessarily encompass the organisation of both spatial and temporal coordinates in a work. It would, in fact, be another kind of logic the work possesses, and one which would not be wholly reliant on action and event to achieve narrativity, as was Fludernik’s concern.

In what appears to be a similar line of thinking to Herman and Vervaeck, Fludernik argues that plot as a device for reorganising the temporality of a work ‘increases narrative’s static quality since all stages of the development have to be viewed simultaneously as a kind of mosaic or puzzle before one can start to establish the vital (relative) chronology’ (1996, 21 – emphasis mine). Temporality becomes a gnawing issue for Fludernik, as she sees it as having more to do with the progression of the interlocutor’s engagement than with the context of the story being told. This is why she draws on Bremond’s model, discussed above in Section 1.3, because she finds it is open to experientiality rather than being restrained by temporality. Conversely, Werner Wolf argues that even with temporal movement from one event to another, experience is not diminished if we accept that ‘the perception of both dynamic change and temporal and spatial states and situations’ (2011, 163) are evidence of an experiencing conscience. I believe a conception of plot as an organising principle has the capacity to accommodate both perspectives, so that if narrative is seen as facilitating the translation of objects, then plot is a map of intentionality.

4. SUMMARY: AN AESTHETICS OF STORY

When a writer, for example, speaks about how, during the writing process, a character seems to take on a life of its own, they do not (and cannot) mean that the character actually has a life outside of the work. Rather, such a statement is evidence of Marcel Duchamp’s contention that the writer is engaged in a process that ‘cannot and must not be fully self-conscious, at least on the esthetic [sic] plane’ (1975, 139), and is in fact the result of ‘a difference between the intention and its realization, a difference which the artist is not aware of’ (ibid.). We might also think of this in terms of Ingarden’s
distinction between ‘pure’ and ‘derived’ intentional objects, the latter of which refer to a borrowed, or near-unconscious intentionality as opposed to the conscious act of creating a pure intended object (1973a, 117-118). I have described story in terms that might suggest it also takes on a life of its own. I am not entirely averse to such a notion, as it speaks to something about the nature of pleasure and satisfaction in story that goes beyond the confines of the work, and even beyond the relationship between creator and interlocutor I have alluded to. In my attempt to distinguish story as a concept that encompasses, but is ultimately distinct from, sequences of events, some issues that might be seen as relevant have not been dealt with. Character, for example, has only been referred to very briefly, when in fact there is a complex relationship that exists between it and action.

It is not that I regard such issues as unimportant to my reconceptualisation of story; on the contrary, if my reconceptualisation holds at all, it will be because just such issues can be suitably accommodated by it as well, each in the form of their own distinct array of intended objects. However, I also emphasised that story, since it is a type of translation, belongs to the interlocutor as his or her aesthetic experience of narrative. An aesthetics of story might therefore begin with an attempt to describe something about the nature of that experience in relation to the range of elements commonly associated with fiction. While my aim was to establish story as a concept that might, particularly in light of chapters to follow, prove useful to an understanding of transmedia storytelling, I believe I have made a necessary preliminary move towards such an aesthetics of story by making a case for story itself as the result of a complex process of translation, a kind of critical mass a work strives to achieve.
In chapters one and two, I took narrative and story and, on the grounds that their current understanding is largely derived from a structuralist-based narrative theory, attempted to reconfigure them in order to account for what I consider to be their vital organisational, experiential, and aesthetic characteristics. I proposed an understanding of narrative as an organising principle, and argued for story as an aesthetic function of fiction which is facilitated by narrative. However, these are processes and phenomena which do not occur on their own – are not self-actualising – and in this chapter I will argue that intersubjectivity can be seen as their energising ingredient, an affective state which unifies the formational plane of narrative with the aesthetic plane of story.1 Applying intersubjectivity to creative practice is entirely consistent with the argument of this thesis, which regards the work as ‘more than a synergy of its parts; it is a subjective and creative condition that exists as an additional quality or connectivity that is not apparent in any of the individual parts’ (Tampalini 2007, 25). Or more precisely, it is not the work itself that contains these qualities per se, but that it is located within an arena in which it facilitates exchanges between the subjectivities it comes into proximity with. For Bourriaud, the work is at the centre of a ‘social interstice,’ and, in the third of his aesthetic criteria, presents to us an ‘image of human relations’ (2002, 18).

Since acts of consciousness are the intention to bring objects into a certain kind of existence, and if, as Fludernik (1996) argues, we are to see consciousness as comprising both experience and the comprehension of that experience, then the importance of intersubjectivity to consolidating narrative and story ought to be apparent. This is because intersubjectivity should be thought of as possessing two core characteristics. Firstly, it is ‘a phenomenon of the organization of a social group’ (Vaitkus 1991, 11), which posits a condition of mediation between two or more conscious subjects, or as Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes it, an ‘interlocking of intentionalities’ (2002, 386).2 Secondly, it must be understood in terms of the spaces

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1 My use of the term affective is defined in Section 4 of the following chapter.
2 Merleau-Ponty equates intentionality with consciousness – to be intentional is to exercise consciousness. His statement here should be read in this light.
within which such mediations occur: ‘intersubjectivity does not only represent the social setting for the reception of art, which is its “environment,” its “field” [...] but also becomes the quintessence of artistic practice’ (Bourriaud 2002, 22). Any such space becomes affectively charged, because it is a point of exchange. However, it should not be presumed from this that individual subjectivities are a fixed category and pre-exist their union into a social category of intersubjectivity. Rather, subjectivity should be seen as a reflexive mode, brought about when one conscious subject is placed in relation to, and experiences, another. That is, a process of inter-subjectivity is one that brings individual subjectivities into existence.³ This reinforces sociologist Nick Crossley's (1996) claim that the concept of intersubjectivity is an inherently complex and multilayered one, whose boundaries are fluid due to the nature of subjectivity. In addition, Crossley argues that the concept is capable of supporting a variety of perspectives and is often used as an interdisciplinary tool to connect wide-ranging theories.

To this end, he notes the difficulty in trying to synthesise a single theory of intersubjectivity from the surrounding discourse (Crossley 1996, 1), but he does suggest a useful distinction between what he calls egological (self-reflexive) and radical (socialised) intersubjectivities which interlocutors are constantly shifting between. My aim is to explore this shifting state further in the current chapter, relating it to the arguments for narrative and story proposed in the previous chapters, while laying a foundation for an approach to transmedia storytelling in the following chapter. To achieve this, I will take Crossley's reflexive and socialised intersubjectivities as points of departure, discussing them in terms of phenomenological and sociological perspectives in Section 1, before connecting them to an examination of Bourriaud's model of relational aesthetics in Section 2. This is an attempt to contextualise the model outside of the domain of the art world in which he originally developed it by locating it as a development of phenomenological and sociological (relational) theories. I utilise relational aesthetics therefore not as a way of talking about the work of a specific group of artists (as Bourriaud does), but as a criterion for ‘producing and reflecting upon the interrelations between people and the extent to which such relations [...] need to be considered as an aesthetic form’

³ There are, of course, questions of genuinely private experience and individual response. Space does not allow me to deal with them extensively, but they are touched on throughout this chapter. At this point, it is enough to say that the sense of self these questions rest upon is predominantly located within the intersubjective act.
Relations are therefore understood in Crossley's terms as 'lived trajectories of iterated interaction' (2011, 28), though with one condition: it cannot be assumed as a kind of rule informing relational works that trajectories can be iterated or repeated ad infinitum. In the sense in which I am using the term, trajectories are better thought of as gestures or actions which build and reflect upon one another – lived, or “experienced,” relations. What this definition emphasises is that relations are not merely psychological constructs, but empirical realities (in the sense of being derived or informed by lived experience).

It is not that Bourriaud’s claim for the intersubjective, relational nature of art and artistic practice is in itself new – as has already been pointed out, Marcel Duchamp, originally speaking at a meeting of the American Federation of the Arts in April, 1957, said 'the creative act is not performed by the artist alone' (1975, 140), and his conception of the art coefficient, or 'gap' inherent in all creative works, hinges entirely upon intersubjective acts to resolve it. Rather, it is Bourriaud's argument that '[r]elational aesthetics does not represent a theory of art [...] but a theory of form' (2002, 19), or as art scholar and critic Anthony Downey more precisely puts it, 'a theory of formations' (2007, 268). It is a theory that recognises the dual-nature of intersubjectivity as it applies to creative practice. When applied to fiction, and particularly to transmedia storytelling, Bourriaud’s work raises the possibility that intersubjective relations can actually contribute to the shape of the work and to an interlocutor’s aesthetic experience of it. How this might be achieved, and to what extent is it actually possible, are questions this chapter seeks to answer.

1. CONTEXTUALISING RELATIONAL AESTHETICS

1.1 Intersubjectivity as a reflexive operation

In order to understand intersubjectivity as a reflexive operation, one should first have an understanding of the phenomenological concept of reduction, in particular the way it brings about objectification (comprehension of experience) through subjectification (immanent or lived experience). The reduction was raised briefly in the previous

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4 Where aesthetics is understood as a way to establish parameters by which works may be perceived and engaged with. See the Introduction for the reasons informing this usage of aesthetics.
chapter in relation to translation, or the process which gives story its momentum, and I described the reduction as stemming from the interlocutor’s inability to experience the world as a totality: perception is always regulated by what can be directly experienced, and experience is organised according to schemata that can be drawn on when needed (I also referred to Catherine Emmott’s notion of contextual frames, as a way of organising experience that maintains a direct link to the narrative which activated them). The reduction was a concept originally developed by the Austrian philosopher Edmund Husserl as a way of addressing the limitations of perception that would allow ‘the true structure of intentionality to be understood’ (Moran 2002, 160). Subjectivity, as an expression of consciousness, is always directed towards some aspect of “the world” while necessarily bracketing others off. The world, as Merleau-Ponty points out, remains present ‘as a familiar setting of our life’ (2002, 61), but should be understood not only in terms of the physical, but also the metaphysical, or that which is intangible – a field that sets up ‘where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people’s intersect and engage each other like gears’ (ibid., xxii), or what could be summarised as the conditions for intersubjectivity.

Philosopher and Husserl scholar Dermot Moran (2002) points out that many scholars now reject the reduction, at least as Husserl conceived of it, on the grounds that a complete reduction is impossible, and that Husserl himself seemed unable to resolve the ambiguities inherent in the concept. In utilising the concept, then, I have adopted two perspectives: the first is Merleau-Ponty’s (2002) view that the reduction should be used to “step back” from the world in order to see it better; that is, to regard the reduction as a reflexive operation. The second is to ground any use of the concept in Ingarden’s so-called realist phenomenology, which rejects the transcendental idealism to which his mentor Husserl subscribed; namely, the notion that the physical world is constituted by, and for, consciousness (the experiencing subject) (Thomasson 2012). According to philosopher Jeff Mitscherling, Husserl’s position was one that ’make[s] the world, or “being”, or “reality”, dependent upon the activity of some mind or consciousness’ (Mitscherling 1997, 6). This is not a question of whether or not there is a physical world, but rather the manner of its existence and how it relates to

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1 Space does not permit me to discuss Husserl’s concept more fully, apart from saying that it is a hugely complex concept which came to occupy much of Husserl’s time, and that I have only borrowed one minute aspect of it here. Many phenomenologists include a discussion of it their work, but I have found Dermot Moran (2002) and Robert Sokolowski (2006) useful in unpacking the concept. Though I lean towards their interpretations, Suzanne Cunningham’s Language and the Phenomenological Reductions of Edmund Husserl (1976) is also valuable for providing a more positive reading of the reduction.
consciousness (and how consciousness, in turn, relates to it) (see Ingarden 1975b, 5). The *reduction*, in Husserl’s original conception, always left a remainder of pure consciousness that existed *outside* of that relationship, while for Ingarden, it was more useful as an epistemological operation which did not need to lead to transcendental idealism.

Furthermore, Ingarden was clear in his criticism of Husserl that intentionality and (aesthetic) experience, even though they are intangible qualities, do not automatically lead to transcendental idealism: ‘It is not idealism to assert that phenomena, revealing to us certain objects and constituted in certain processes of cognitive acts, are dependent on intentions contained in these acts and in synthetic connections among them and that they are co-conditioned by the existence of these acts’ (Ingarden 1975b, 37). Such processes were, to Ingarden, sufficiently explained in terms of human cognition, a view that, it seems to me, produces many strong linkages to the cognitive sciences employed by postclassical narratologies and the various framework theories developed to account for the way an interlocutor is able to substantiate relations between objects experienced. For example, there is no need to resort to a transcendental pure consciousness when, as Terence Horgan and John Tienson have demonstrated, human cognition has the capacity to maintain a system in which the ‘vast supply of potential representations about [the world]’ (2006, 149) can be produced when needed. It is therefore important to understand the *reduction* as a reflexive operation, or to put it differently, as a way of seeing and of being seen – ‘a dynamic searching for the best interpretation of available data’ (Gregory 1966, 11) – as opposed to a transcendence.6

Husserl (1998; 2012) explained the *reduction* as a necessary reflexive operation that rendered subjective experience into shareable, objective knowledge by processes of *suspension* and *bracketing*.7 Its reflexivity is derived from the *suspension* of the so-called natural attitude, which is the ‘taking for granted’ of the world. According to philosopher and Husserl scholar Dermot Moran, by *suspending* assumptions and

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6 Transcendental idealism is the position developed by Husserl (by way of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant). Another position that is also largely in opposition to Ingardean’s view (and coincidentally to Merleau-Ponty’s), is that of French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre, who conceived of the reduction as a nothingness, or ‘existence without essence’ (Detweiler 1978, 9), a position which arguably leads to an unproductive existential anxiety.

7 These have also been rendered as *exclusion* and *parenthesis* respectively in F. Kersten’s 1998 translation of Husserl’s *Ideen: First Book*. I have chosen the more commonly used, and, I think, descriptive, translations of *suspension* and *bracketing* from W. R. Boyce Gibson’s translation of the *General Introduction*. 
practices that can distort or conceal the essence of conscious acts, Husserl hoped to circumvent 'our normal unquestioning faith in the reality of what we experience' (2002, 147) and bring about a 'return' that, as Mitscherling says, 'places us at the level of the immanent' (1997, 56), or experience in the moment. Whatever falls outside of this direct experience should be bracketed off, since the only knowledge the interlocutor can be certain of is that which he or she has directly experienced. All that remains is intentionality and immanent experience. This literal reduction of scope places the interlocutor in what Husserl called the 'phenomenological attitude,' the distance required to properly contemplate intentional objects and to 'simply [target] the intentionalities themselves,' (Sokolowski 2006, 49). It was Husserl's subsequent move towards viewing this remainder as pure (non-empirical) consciousness – 'the essence of consciousness removed from all reference to factual reality' (Moran 2012, xvi) – with which Ingarden took issue.

Initially, it seemed to me that Husserl's view might actually resolve the paradox of fiction. Moran maintains that the reduction can be thought of as 'the move from the natural psychic life of an empirical individual ego to the self-certain domain of inner perception [...]. The reduction moves from mere empirical judgments to ones which by their nature are self-certain and are grasped “adequately”' (2000, 151). Since in fiction the interlocutor only ever encounters intended objects (as opposed to actual, or physical, objects), it could be argued that, as a pure act of consciousness, the fictional world is located in the remainder and is therefore self-certain, in Moran's sense. If that were so, there would be no requirement to defer an ultimate reference in favour of self-reference, as Richard van Oort (1998) argues is the basic state of all fiction, because any such self-referencing would no longer be paradoxical; the self to which it refers would now also fulfil the function of ultimate reference. But on further analysis, this position proves untenable as it would have to ignore, and not merely bracket off, the reality of the art coefficient – the difference between intention and realisation – which requires an intersubjective act to resolve it; that is, an act that can only be achieved outside of the reduction. Furthermore, it is an act which can only ever be momentary, given that the nature of the work is to be unsettled, as referred to above, that it is continually shifting between subjective and objective planes. Not to mention that such a hypothesis would also have to grant fiction a transcendental status outside its scope as an imaginative and creative activity, which the evidence does not support.
Husserl’s reduction, dependent as it is on suspension and bracketing, cannot escape the co-dependent and co-constitutive nature of subjectivity-objectivity; it can only defer it.

For Ingarden, there is an ambiguity about the role of the reduction. It was for this reason that, according to Moran, ‘[b]oth [Martin] Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty denied the possibility of carrying out a complete reduction, insisting that we can only think back to our being-in-the-world, and attempting to go behind this phenomenon makes no sense’ (2002, 161). This parallels philosopher Robert Sokolowski’s (2006, 152) contention that, far from tending towards solipsism, as some critics argue, the reduction can be seen as the basis for intersubjectivity. The reflexion that the reduction brings about ‘does not withdraw from the world towards the unity of consciousness,’ but rather ‘brings [intentionalities] to our notice’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002, xv). Reflexion is consciousness of the world, and fundamentally intersubjective because ‘we are through and through compounded of relationships with the world’ (ibid., xiv). Ingarden saw it as a ‘holding open’ of an affective space ‘to prevent prejudging in a positive manner the cognitive validity of the investigated cognition in the moment when this validity is still to be disclosed or evaluated’ (Ingarden 1975b, 39 – emphasis mine). Such immanent experience cannot be shared and belongs to the private world of the individual, but objectified experience, which is the result of the reduction, can be. The reduction, as I have described it, should be seen as a methodology for reflexion, one which ‘leave[s] open the possibility of achieving any solution of the problem’ (ibid.), but without the need to resort to a pure, or transcendental, consciousness. In this way, it resolves the limitation of perception by concretising experience. Subjectivity and objectivity are co-constituted in the same reflexive action, since, as sociologist Anthony Giddens argues, the ‘seeming opposition of perspectives actually disguises a complementarity which they display’ (Giddens 1987, 161). Given that such co-constitution is a fundamental aspect of the nature of intersubjectivity, it should not be surprising that this is likewise found at the heart of the relationship between narrative and story, which has been described in the previous chapters. It is this self-same reflexive capacity that energises story, and which in turn charges narrative; the ‘holding open’ which Ingarden described is Tampalini’s affective space, ‘a condition which appears to be more than the sum of the elements responsible for the sign’s construction’ (Tampalini 2007, 114).
As a reflexive operation, therefore, *intersubjectivity* is that process which mediates such conditions, and is the means by which interlocutors shift between subjective and objective states; a process which also correspond to the notions of intentionality and concretisation raised in the previous chapter. It is concerned with shifting the interlocutor into a position from which the *narrativity* of the work of fiction – the evidence of consciousness which actualises experience (Fludernik 1996) – may be encountered. This encounter is the reflexive turn, ‘made possible through the interaction of the subject with others’ (Crossley 1996, 55). As a sociologist, Crossley is here referring to interactions between two or more human beings in the physical world, but in taking up Fludernik’s position, we note that these exchanges also occur between the conscious agents of the work (primarily characters, but in whichever form they take), and between the interlocutor and those same agents (which is also in essence an interaction with the creator, albeit one removed several steps by a range of factors). The centrality of consciousness to this shift is paramount, as ‘experience only becomes a concrete experience (and not just the notion or semblance of such a thing), inasmuch as I thereby apprehend an individual self in it, or as it becomes a symbol to me for the presence of such an individual’ (Scheler 2004, 123 – original emphasis).

The interlocutor as an experiencing subject is here presumed, bringing him or her into an awareness not only of the other, but the self as well. The phenomenologist Max Scheler argues that the process of *intersubjectivity* is one in which *experience* is not so much constituted by the interlocking of two consciousnesses, but by the flow of experiences between them gradually taking on ‘ever more stable vortices’ (ibid., 125) as the encounter progresses. This means that the concretisations which result are secured for the individual as a representation of that moment, but cannot be thought of as genuinely private since they have been constituted *intersubjectively*. However, to return to a point raised in the previous chapter, those concretisations are no less valid to the individual for only having the *appearance* of being private. To paraphrase an argument of Tzvetan Todorov’s (2001), I can appropriate an experience without it lessening either myself or the object appropriated.
1.2 Intersubjectivity and the concept of relational sociology

What these issues highlight is Crossley’s (1996) argument that reflexive intersubjectivity has as its underlying foundation a socialised intersubjectivity. In other words, the appropriation of experience and the awareness of another consciousness in the process implies a pre-existing social(ised) space in which that exchange can take place. This is because subjectivity is best understood as evidence for a consciousness that is always-already directed towards something – ‘the world,’ as Merleau-Ponty puts it (2002, xx), or alterity in Crossley’s terms, which he describes as a construction of self via perception of the other, or ‘an opening onto otherness’ (1996, 29). Rather than referring to a private, inner world of understanding, perception speaks to the creation of a shared, intersubjective space into which I and the other “gaze” (at one another). This term is borrowed from the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan to refer to the moment in which we become aware that we are being observed, that I have become an object of the other’s perception. That is, a concept of I-as-self is constituted in the moment the interlocutor recognises that he or she is not the other. The relationship between any two consciousnesses, or the relationship between a consciousness and a perceived object, can only be understood in terms of the arena in which this recognition takes place. ‘Consciousness is not a private theatre, an inner simulation of an outer world. It arises in the interaction between the organism and its environment and comprises the grasp which the former achieves upon the latter’ (Crossley 2011, 3).

Emphasising this shared space is a fundamental basis for what is known as relational sociology, a branch of sociology which ‘puts intersubjectivity at the centre’ (Crossley 2011, 79) and rejects so-called holistic approaches to understanding society and explaining individual agency on the basis that they assume the unchanging nature of things. Many of the ideas informing this are not new – the sociologist Barry Smart, for example, pointed out that a phenomenological perspective has always tended to treat the social world ‘as the product of human activity, interpretation and intention, as a subject world’ (1976, 75) – but I draw on it because in a relational sociology, one can see the broad theoretical basis from which a relational aesthetics may be drawn, and though there antecedents for both, I also do not regard it as a coincidence that both a relational aesthetics and a relational sociology come into their own at corresponding
historical moments. For example, sociologist Mustafa Emirbayer's 'Manifesto for a Relational Sociology' was published in 1997, a year before Bourriaud's Relational Aesthetics was first published in France. I am not suggesting either author knew of the other's work, or that they were involved in a greater agenda, but the emphasis on relational qualities, to similar result, and during the same historical period, should not be ignored, particularly as evidence in favour of a broader shift away from structuralist thought.8

The holistic perspective that relational sociology rejects is the notion that society is a system largely seen as fixed and relatively unchanging (or at least, changes are so gradual as to be generally imperceptible). Such systems are viewed teleologically, and can therefore be explained by breaking them down to their constituent parts, or functions, a reduction (in the literal sense) which Crossley points out establishes a hierarchy, since 'we can only understand and explain the “parts” of the social world by reference to their fit within the whole' (2011, 7). According to Italian sociologist Pierpaolo Donati, function replaces purpose in the holistic view, because the relations between social entities are considered only in terms of how ‘they performed in and for society’ (2011b, 139). The emphasis was on determining “whether there is a correspondence between the fact being considered and the general needs of the social organism, and in what this correspondence consists, without seeking to know whether it was intentional or not” (Durkheim, quoted in Donati 2011, 139). No function of society can therefore be viewed as autonomous, not because society is seen as fundamentally intersubjective, but because each part is only seen in relation to a greater system: exchanges occur because of “functional prerequisites” (Parsons, quoted in Crossley 2011, 8) inherent in the system.9 Since functions are parts reduced to measurable, examinable units, it should not be surprising that the majority of holistic theories are derived from a structuralist perspective, as sociologist Mustafa Emirbayer points out when he argues that the holistic perspective is ‘beholden to the idea that it is entities that come first and relations among them only subsequently’ (1997, 281).

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8 To be sure, by the 1990s, it was postmodernism that arguably dominated the academic landscape. Anecdotally, though, structuralism was alive and well when I began undergraduate studies in 2005. In retrospect, I would now argue that both were well in decline by that stage and academia was firmly entrenched in the so-called post theory period. It is during this period, which has been incredibly fertile as far as new ideas are concerned, that the likes of relational sociology, relational aesthetics, postclassical narratology, and other currently prominent theories came into their own.

9 A more suitable view of systems can be derived from complexity theory and is taken up in Chapter 4.
A relational sociology, on the other hand, is based on the notion that exchanges occur in a dynamic environment, and that they ‘derive their meaning, significance, and identity from the (changing) functional roles they play within that transaction’ (ibid., 287). Thus, while it does not deny the need for some kind of structure, or format, within which an exchange may take place, it does not prioritise the structure itself as containing the meaning or significance of the exchange; it is merely a framework which is necessary in supporting the exchange. The interlocutor is then freed from the rigors of a teleological system to act *purposively* (see Chapter 2). In the sociological sense, this means the interlocutor is seen as performing goal-oriented actions, where a goal is understood to be a ‘mobilizing force’ (Crossley 2011, 12) rather than an end in itself. Crossley maintains that goals should be understood as meaning simply that interlocutors have intentions ‘which direct their actions in an environment’ (ibid., 11). This is effectively an argument for the centrality of an orienting principle to any relational theory, since without it we fall back to a radical, atomised individualism. In point of fact, it is not only a matter of orientation, but ongoing *re*-orientation as well. Perception is always from the perspective of the individual, but it does not precede the subject of perception, as both Merleau-Ponty (2002) and Crossley (1996; 2011) point out. A reflexivity capacity is therefore implied in a relational condition, granting it ‘a capability for reorientation and redirection’ (Donati 2011, 192). *Intersubjectivity*, based as it is on the premise that consciousness is directed by, and towards, *intentionalities*, is fundamental to any such orienting principle. This is because *intentionality* is an act of apprehension (Detweiler 1978, 9), and as such should be thought of as ‘not only a matter of the way in which I perceive and think about objects in the world but also the meaningful and knowledgeable way in which I handle and use them’ (Crossley 2011, 74-75).

The literary theorist Charles Altieri (1994) once asked how it was that the interlocutor makes sense of a work both as a physical (and therefore inert) presence in the world and its potential (charged) status as art. He suggested that *intentionality* actually places the work at a *tilt*, a position which is ‘already a way of being in the world’ (ibid., 34). To apply the relational argument, in terms of apprehending the work, such a *tilt*

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10 That is, a goal is not meant here in the usual way as ‘the object to which effort or ambition is directed’ (OED), as an end result or something to be attained. There is no sense here which suggests goal-oriented actions are markers against which “success” can be measured.
could be seen as part of the orienting function of consciousness, a goal-action with the work located at its nexus, facilitating exchange. To modify Altieri’s idea slightly, it is not the work which is at a tilt, so much as it is the perspective from which it is viewed since, as Crossley asserts, consciousness acts like a lens as opposed to a direct connection to ‘self’ (2011). The notion of a tilt also feeds back into the corresponding notion of the art coefficient, since the work is always encountered by the interlocutor in an unresolved state. This explains why the interlocutor’s perspective is skewed, tilted, because the work represents a schemata, or array, of intentional objects the significance of which the interlocutor can only anticipate (Merleau-Ponty 2002, xix) but cannot know until the encounter is resolved. This is also due, in part, to the fact that the intentional objects arrayed are the product of the creative acts performed by the creator in designing and organising the work, and thus represent his or her anticipated significances. It is the creation of a temporary circuit which is the activity the interlocutor is therefore involved in; a circuit which is simultaneously an action and reaction, a call and response – to borrow a term from the sociologist and philosopher George Herbert Mead, a ‘conversation of gestures’ on a cognitive-intersubjective level that has been instigated by the work.

2. BOURRIAUD AND RELATIONAL AESTHETICS

In Section 1, I borrowed characteristics from a branch of sociology that regards relations between two (or more) consciousnesses as the energising ingredient of intersubjective exchange. Many features of sociological enquiry were therefore bracketed off in order to emphasise the importance of this fundamental idea in such a way that the underlying argument should serve to link the specific world of fiction that is under consideration here with the wider social world in which it might be located. I would suggest Mead’s ‘conversation of gestures’ serves as an apt analogy in either instance, since a gesture is both an action and a response, and only acquires meaning and significance within the space in which it is performed. To quote Mead more fully, ‘objects are constituted in terms of meanings within the social process of experience and behavior through the mutual adjustment to one another of the responses or actions of the various individual organisms involved in that process, an adjustment made possible by means of a communication which takes the form of a conversation of gestures’ (Mead 1967, 77). It is just these kinds of adjustments, effectively a series of
orientations and re-orientations towards the work, which are fundamental to Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics.

The book *Relational Aesthetics*, first published in France in 1998, was written by Bourriaud as a treatise on what he saw as the common denominator amongst the artists he had been working with in his capacity as curator during that decade. The term itself had appeared earlier, though, in the catalogue for the 1996 exhibition *Traffic*, held February-March at the CAPC Musée d’art contemporain in Bordeaux, France.11 Bourriaud’s guiding principle in curating *Traffic* had been one of “interactivity,” but he found retrospectively that many of the works exhibited shared a common theme, and that the framework each artist had established for engaging with their respective works dealt almost exclusively ‘with the interhuman sphere: relationships between people, communities, individuals, groups, social networks, interactivity, and so on’ (Bourriaud 2010a, 7). Some reviews of the exhibition (Freedman 1996; Tsingou 1996, for example) found the concept vague and interpreted it as an extension of a general fascination with the notion of “interactivity” prevalent at the time, a fascination no doubt born of the ubiquity of home computers and the widespread adoption of the Internet in the home by the mid-1990s.

However, Bourriaud contends that what distinguished relational art from previous movements such as Fluxus and Intermedia (to which it is often compared) was the step beyond this fascination with the technology itself, how it could be manipulated, and the new mediums and combinations of mediums it made possible, in order to examine the space of intersubjective relations the resulting works might facilitate. As far as Bourriaud was concerned, interactivity was firmly entrenched as an artistic practice – could almost be considered a given – by the time of *Traffic*, precisely because Fluxus and Intermedia now represented ‘predetermined grids of reading [...] into which these artists’ works were being placed’ (Bourriaud 2010a, 8). What was most interesting to Bourriaud about the artists whose work was exhibited at *Traffic* was that each were working independently, without any common agenda, and yet were producing works that he felt not only shared similar tendencies, but presented a new kind of intersubjective aesthetic that warranted consideration. *Relational Aesthetics* was therefore an attempt to generate a discussion that was largely denied

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11 In the preface to the second edition of *Postproduction* (2010a), Bourriaud notes that he had begun writing *Relational Aesthetics* in 1995, presumably while drafting the *Traffic* catalogue.
by Traffic audiences whom Bourriaud saw as ‘reluctant to come to grips with contemporary practices’ (2002, 7), by laying some of the theoretical groundwork that one might use in the study of relational art.

2.1 Principles of a relational aesthetics

I am primarily interested in those principles of relational aesthetics which have to do with Bourriaud’s notion of the intersubjective exchange as contributing not only to the creation and reception of the work, but also to its shape. The significance of the three major principles I identify here should therefore become apparent in the following chapter in which I examine transmedia storytelling. Before progressing any further, however, two disclaimers ought to be made. Firstly, relational aesthetics was developed as a response to a specific set of artists and to a specific way of exhibiting their work, and Bourriaud’s book represents the culmination of ‘a process of critical distancing by the author’ (Gillick 2006). I am not interested so much in these artists or a direct analysis of their work as I am in the principles of a relational aesthetics Bourriaud identifies in their work.

Secondly, Bourriaud conflates a political discourse with his discussion of relational aesthetics as an art practice, and while I have attempted to bracket off some of the political inferences he makes in order to focus on the nature of a relational aesthetic, I also acknowledge the impossibility of making any kind of definitive separation between the two. This is to say that the political implications and criticisms Bourriaud has fielded in this regard are unavoidable; I simply wish to reinforce that, beyond their applicability to the concept of intersubjectivity with which this chapter is concerned, it is not my aim to engage with a political discourse. If anything, what follows is an attempt to outline a possible theoretical framework for explaining something about the nature of transmedia storytelling as a narrative arcology. It should also be noted that scholarly criticism of Bourriaud tends to begin and end with Relational Aesthetics, when in fact he extends the project of relational aesthetics considerably in his later books Postproduction (2010a) and, importantly, The Radicant (2010b). It is, however, the relational which remains a consistent factor across all three works, and I intended to draw on that here.
2.1.1 Precariousness and the work as partial object

If a relational aesthetic is characterised by *intersubjective* exchange, then its defining principle is one of *precariousness*. Broadly, this is the notion of ‘an immediate environment that is constantly being updated and reformatted, in which the short-lived is overtaking the long-term and access is overtaking ownership, the stability of things, signs, and conditions is becoming the exception rather than the rule’ (Bourriaud 2010b, 80). *Precariousness* is therefore that condition in which the work is neither purely intentional, nor entirely ontic, while being irreducible to either state – relational places of indeterminacy that are inscribed in the work. Bourriaud does not employ *precariousness* as a significant term until *The Radicant*, but introduces the principle behind it in *Relational Aesthetics* via a discussion of the work as a partial object, grounding it in several related concepts among which is Marcel Duchamp’s art coefficient and the notion that ‘the beholder is the joint creator of the work’ (Bourriaud 2002, 99). In order for a relational aesthetics to operate it must regard this joint creation as a literal ‘act of creation’ (to momentarily invert Duchamp’s words), and the art coefficient – the gap between ‘intention and its realization’ (Duchamp 1975, 139) – as a reality of the condition of the work. Duchamp goes on to refer to the gap as a mechanism which produces the work in a raw state, and Fenner (2003) also proposed that the work held in readiness what he called the “raw data” of intentionality. In both cases, it is part of the role of the interlocutor to refine this raw data into meaningful information, and since *meaning* itself is constituted within a continuum of action and response (Mead 1967), a relational aesthetic must foreground a process of concretisation if the coefficient is to be resolved in any meaningful way.

The notion of the work as partial object is derived from French philosopher and semiologist Félix Guattari, for whom the work is a partial object because it operates as a detachment from the surrounding polyphony as an ‘existential territory,’ or an assemblage of potential semiotic trajectories (Bourriaud 2002, 100; Guattari 1995). Guattari argues this detachment is a process of autonomisation, or empowering, of the

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12 Another concept Bourriaud takes up in this regard is Manist theorist, writer, and filmmaker Guy Debord’s concept of *constructed situations*; but he is critical of it on the basis that a *situation* in Debord’s sense does not necessarily equate an *intersubjective exchange* (2002, 85). The former is an intervention in which one side is always diminished in favour of a (usually revolutionary) other (Debord 1957), while the latter ‘resides in the invention of relations between consciousness’ (Bourriaud 2002, 22).
work, granting it the status of ‘partial enunciator’. The partial enunciator is itself a function of orientation, which art historian and Guattari scholar Simon O’Sullivan interprets as ‘a point of entry into a different incorporeal universe’ (2012, 198). From this, I propose that it is also usefully understood as the generative instance of the illusion of self-reference required by the paradox of fiction (van Oort 1998), since the resulting ‘assumption of autonomy makes it possible to “foster new fields of reference”’ (Bourriaud 2002, 100 – original emphasis). The partial object/enunciator dynamic also reinforces the mediating function of the work, since as Guattari says, ‘the autonomisation of cognitive or ethical content and the realisation of this content in an aesthetic object’ (1995, 13) is the essence of the enunciative function.

Precariousness, as Bourriaud employs the term, describes the nature of a relational aesthetic and can be understood as an extension of the notion of the work as partial object; in this case, the work is seen not only as detached, but mobile and impermanent as well (Bourriaud 2010a, 49). Precariousness thus refers to a key formational characteristic of the work, which Bourriaud alternately refers to as the ‘journey,’ ‘expedition,’ or ‘wandering’ form (Bourriaud 2010b). Such forms are ways of delineating an arena of exchange and are therefore not aimless, but derive their direction and momentum from what initially propels them, namely an emphasis, as Guattari puts it, ‘on the founding instance of intentionality’ (1995, 22) and its subsequent movement along a trajectory from one subjectivity to another. Bourriaud argues that precariousness, understood in this way, subsists on instances of translation, or the presentation and re-presentation of intentionalities across locations, since the emphasis of the journey form is the trajectory rather than the coordinate “start” and “end” points (though these, of course, are not done away with completely). He emphasises that ‘the finding of forms takes place through the composition of a line of flight, or even a program of translation’ (Bourriaud 2010b, 114-115).

13 Lines of flight is a term derived from French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in conjunction with their concept of the rhizome, which was the name given to the cultural model they constructed to account for infinite multiplicity. While non-hierarchical, the rhizome also lacks any sense of spatial centredness and resists temporal arrangements; ‘[i]t has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle’ (Deleuze & Guattari 2000, 111). It operates by a principle of rupture, by which nodes may erupt at any point and be joined to any other point. In part, Bourriaud bases his notion of trajectories on this principle, as Deleuze and Guattari saw meaning and significance as contained in the line of flight, and not the nodal points. However, Bourriaud ultimately discards the flatness and detachment of the rhizome, ‘which brackets out the question of the subject’ (Bourriaud 2010b, 55) as in any way self-determining. In its place, he proposes a radicant model, which emphasises ‘the itinerary, the path, as a dialogical or intersubjective narrative that unfolds between the subject and the surfaces it traverses, to which it attaches its roots’ (ibid., 55-56).
It is this emphasis on the relations *between*, rather than any coordinate points as *fixed*, that renders the work *precarious*; that is, *precariousness* is not a position of relative authority – the sociocultural status of the coordinates – that may be revoked at any time, but a qualitative judgment of what passes between (Bourriaud 2010b, 105). In other words, *precariousness* emphasises the relational imperative of places of indeterminacy within the space of the creative act. It is this position which art historian and critic Claire Bishop fails to accommodate in her critique of Bourriaud and relational aesthetics. For Bishop, *precariousness* is problematic because it is ‘wilfully unstable’ (2004, 52), with the reliance on *intersubjective* exchange reducing the work, in her view, to a ‘semifunctional’ (ibid., 53), or compromised status. By embracing contingency, she argues, relational works cannot transcend their context to take on lasting significance, because it is impossible to impose aesthetic judgments on transitory or ephemeral qualities such as an interlocutor’s relation with a work. This is because, beyond the journey form, a relational aesthetics refuses to demarcate a clear notion of structure against which the work may be judged (in a traditional sense); that is, it refuses to prioritise coordinates over trajectories (where coordinates can be seen as markers by which the work may be closed off). Artist and critic Liam Gillick argues that there is nothing about this inability to fix on durable elements within such works which renders them semifunctional in a negative sense, so long as one appreciates that the whole situation, including the unstable, *precarious* elements, is seen as comprising the work (Gillick 2006, 102).

Bourriaud argues that it is this problematic notion of *durability* as an essential criterion for judging the cultural value and significance of a work that an argument such as Bishop’s rests upon. The result of it is that *precariousness* becomes confused with immateriality. The former therefore shares no direct correlation to the latter: *precariousness* ‘represents a fundamental instability, not a longer or shorter material duration: it inscribes itself into the structure of the work itself and reflects a general state of aesthetics’ (Bourriaud nd). This is expressed by Espen Aarseth in his response to similar criticism as a ‘spatiodynamic fallacy’ (1997, 3), the perception of ‘an objective level beyond the text’ which simply does not exist outside the critic’s need to quantify the work. Bishop argues that, because of its wilful *precariousness* and open-endedness, the relational work is unable to maintain a tension, an affective charge, or
at least that such a charge dissipates too quickly; in other words, the durable work must also be seen to be “closed”. What Bourriaud is describing, however, echoes a thought from Donati (2011b, 73) who, in referring to intersubjective exchanges in general, reminds us that relational situations (and by extension, relational works) have a complexity all of their own which renders them irreducible to anything outside of themselves.

There is also a political dimension to Bishop’s argument; firstly in the art market’s need to capitalise on those creative artifacts (as opposed to creative acts) that are deemed to have cultural merit, and secondly, in her criticism of Bourriaud’s use of the term democratic to describe relations. Both of these must be acknowledged, but in doing so (particularly in the case of the latter), Bishop omits Bourriaud’s drawing on Duchamp and the art coefficient, which is itself another tension that the work must hold in readiness. The art coefficient operates as ‘a point of resistance’ (Smith 1986, 164) between creator and interlocutor, or as Aarseth puts it, ‘a struggle not merely for interpretive insight but also for narrative control’ (1997, 4). In either case, the relational work is capable of maintaining a tension which is only made more complex by the degree of precariousness in the work.

In her subsequent studies of relational and participatory art practices, Bishop acknowledges that what underpins them is a desire to ‘overturn the traditional relationship between the art object, the artist and the audience,’ but maintains that such desires ‘are often more powerful as ideals than as actualised realities’ (2012, 2). However, this perpetuates an error in her original critique of Bourriaud, namely in mistaking his conception of relational aesthetics primarily as a type of audience reception at the expense of creator intention, when in fact Bourriaud is quite clear in his model of relational form that the intersubjective exchange is one between creator and interlocutor facilitated by the work. Bourriaud’s notion actually emphasises the importance of intentionality as a basis for subsequent relations. Furthermore, since an aesthetic is evidence of subjectivity given shape, in applying a relational aesthetics to fiction, as I am attempting, the notion of intentionality is actually extended in the direction of the intersubjective space, rendering it a site of reflexive exchange and not merely reception.
2.1.2 Arenas of exchange

The second major principle of relational aesthetics I wish to draw attention to is that of the arena of exchange. Originally, this was a way for Bourriaud, in his capacity as curator, to describe the potential function of the art gallery itself as a relational space. An arena of exchange is thus an environment established upon conditions already present within the work; namely, the intentional objects which point towards the “world” of the work. The arena of exchange can thus be seen as largely synonymous with the phenomenological/sociological intersubjective space, since each arena is established to facilitate an immediate need, ‘different for every type of relation’ (Donati 2011, 154); this being a purposive manifestation of relations which ‘creates a new entity or situation in which the relation also involves discovery, building and elaboration’ (ibid., 73). The arena of exchange in Bourriaud’s usage is therefore a particular substantiation between subjectivities as they engage and relate to the work.

The principle informing such an intersubjective space is not unique: sociologist Niklas Luhmann argues that within the bounds of such a process, ‘the work of art opens up the possibility of a compact communication’ (2000, 35), while cultural theorist Pierre Lévy also draws attention to an artistic practice which, ‘[r]ather than distribute a message to recipients who are outside the process of creation and invited to give meaning to a work of art belatedly, the artist now attempts to construct an environment, a system of communication and production, a collective event that implies its recipients, transforms interpreters into actors, enables interpretation to enter the loop with collective action’ (1999, 123).

Lévy refers to this as an ‘art of implication’ (ibid.), where implication refers to the way in which the arena appears to produce itself – is implied as a given or pre-existing condition – but is in fact contingent on a reflexive action; what Lévy refers to as a ‘self-movement’ which ‘expresses itself through ontological and conceptual productivity’ (ibid., 222). What Lévy is describing is the fundamentally relational nature of the arena of exchange, which cannot be reduced to the subjectivities which activate it or the factors which maintain it, because the space ‘is always exposed to alterity’ (ibid.); that is, there must always be a gaze to complete the reflexive activity (the intentional object must be concretised). This position clearly feeds back into the precariousness of the work and its contingent nature, but what the arena of exchange represents is a
moment in which that precariousness appears authoritative, is reified, on the basis of an act of exchange: ‘[p]roducing a form is to invent possible encounters; receiving the form is to create the conditions of exchange’ (Bourriaud 2002, 23). In other words, the arena of exchange is a negotiable space, with the work acquiring cultural value and significance not on the basis of its durability, but on its exchange value (to return to an earlier point). This negotiation – in effect, an analogy for the necessary reflexive activity – establishes the limits of exchange, allowing an affective charge (which is itself another kind of tension) to be maintained throughout the act of exchange itself.

The act of exchange is not dissimilar to the creative act, as conceived independently by both Duchamp and Mead. Duchamp’s perspective has been raised already, while the philosopher and semiotician Charles Morris provides a summary of Mead’s theory which is useful in this regard: ‘The act is a response to the problematic situation which arises in the world that is there. It is solved by reflection wherein the organism finds a way to reformulate the terms of the problem so as to carry on its active process. It reads the terms of the solution back into the world that is there, and that world becomes a different world. It now contains the form or structure or meaning that permits ongoing activity’ (Morris 1990, 56). Mead’s act has broad applicability here – for him, “the world that is there” is the immediate context in which the act is being performed, in this case an arena of exchange, while the “problem” itself has to do with the parameters of exchange. The “reformulation” Morris speaks of is both orientation and reflexive response; the same activity Duchamp proposes as necessary to resolving the art coefficient, which is itself a “problem” presented by the places of indeterminacy inherent in intended objects, which cannot demarcate the totality of the objects they represent, but only point to them.

The reformulation is, very much so, an exchange, a dialogue, based on certain parameters the arena establishes since ‘[i]t is true that the act of relating is nothing if divorced from the spectacle of the world in which relations are found’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002, x). The idea of the storyworld, which is discussed in the following chapter as a specific iteration of the fictional world a work evokes (Herman 2009a, 105), is in this

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14. I acknowledge that this is a misreading of exchange value here. At this point in Relational Aesthetics, Bourriaud turns to the German philosopher Karl Marx’s view of exchange as a commercial undertaking and the subsequent status of the work as a commodity. These ideas are bracketed off here; I am primarily interested in the relational characteristics of exchange and view their value here in subjective and semantic terms.

15. The concept of an affective space is taken up in Section 4 of Chapter 4.
way a vivid manifestation of the concept of an arena of exchange, exemplifying Giddens’ argument that ‘[s]tructure is both the medium and the outcome of the human activities which it recursively organizes’ (1987, 163); this is to adopt a relational perspective in the way we understand the work as facilitating intersubjective exchange. Giddens’ point here is that the interlocutor may act freely, purposively, within certain bounds, which is not an argument for a rigid structure which dictates movement across an arena, but rather a foregrounding of its contingent nature, of precariousness inscribed in the formation (Bourriaud nd). The arena is recurved – to skew Giddens’ term slightly – self-reflexive, folding back in on itself, as Morris pointed out, in order to establish parameters in the moment of engagement that manifest as self-reference, a self-contained and coherent storyworld in keeping with van Oort’s (1998) notion of the paradox of fiction. Such an understanding also supports the view of narrative as an organising principle I have proposed: a manifestation on the level of medium of the parameters within which engagement might occur, or as David Herman puts it in narrative terms, the ‘use of textual cues to build up representations of the worlds evoked by stories’ (2009a, 106). It is within this intersubjective field that story – the aesthetic experience facilitated by narrative – is located. Thus we see the arena of exchange as a fundamental principle of relational aesthetics, in which the intersubjective exchange becomes a contributing factor to the interlocutor’s aesthetic experience of the work.

### 2.1.3 Engineering of Intersubjectivity

Given the above, it may appear incongruent to make a case for the “engineering” of intersubjectivity. On the surface at least, it would seem to insinuate a removal of agency from the interlocutor. However, the phrase operates as a useful point of entry into a larger theoretical space, one which is of vital importance to understanding relational aesthetics and speaks directly to the way a creator purposely designs a work to rely on the participation of the interlocutor. Bourriaud uses it to describe the historical moment when, as he sees it, a number of technological and sociological advances instigated a turn towards a relational aesthetic in artistic practice; in particular, he cites the popularisation of the Internet and the adoption of the related concept of the network as an analogy for, and in some cases as a reality of the production of, the kind of works being created. The network, which Crossley argues
always embeds relations (2011, 22), becomes a manifestation of a sociocultural drive towards a collectivised intelligence, the “anarchic”, or non-ordered cooperation of subjectivities, to paraphrase Lévy (1999). For Bourriaud, what emerged during this historical moment was an alternative model of artistic practice – not one which did away with other models, but one which was much more directly a product of its moment, ‘more expressive of our era than any other’ (Bourriaud 2010b, 134). We are arguably, therefore, still operating within this moment: Lévy highlighted at the time that ‘[n]etwork culture has not yet stabilized, its technical infrastructure is still in its infancy, its growth far from complete’ (ibid., xxi), while more recently Henry Jenkins (2008) locates his notion of convergence culture as a shift along this same trajectory. The engineering of intersubjectivity in a relational environment can be understood in the context of this ongoing moment.

As Marx W. Wartofsky argued, ‘[n]othing is, intrinsically, referential, nor do any two things stand in the relation of referring apart from our constitution of the relation as intending the reference’ (1979, xxi). This is to point out that a degree of engineering is already a basic operating principle of intersubjectivity and that, like narrative, such arrangements are almost entirely artificial – to refer to something is to engineer a trajectory between sign and signified that did not previously exist, and in this way Bourriaud again turns to Guattari’s notion of producing subjectivity, which he summarises as ‘the set of relations that are created between the individual and the vehicles of subjectivity he comes across’ (2002, 91). What Bourriaud later variously refers to as translations, transformations, and transcodings, then, are ways in which intersubjectivity may be engineered in a relational manner. Guattari refers to similar processes as ‘pragmatic interventions oriented towards the construction of subjectivities’ (1995, 18). All of these examples are fundamentally precarious because they are primarily concerned not with what is transferred, but how and why it is transferred – the nature of the trajectory. ‘Instead of producing an object, the artist works to develop a ribbon of significations [...] on which his propositions will be deciphered by an audience’ (Bourriaud 2010b, 134).

There is a certain antecedent for Bourriaud’s thinking here: Umberto Eco, writing in 1962, claimed that what he referred to as ‘open works’ operated as ‘artistic structures that demand a particular involvement on the part of the audience’ (Eco 1989, 44). All
works, he pointed out, are open, to the extent that they are all exposed to ‘a virtually unlimited range of possible readings’ (ibid., 21), each of which may energise the work in unique ways. For a work to be considered “open” in this sense, it must not close off the ways in which it can be read. Eco cites the work of the German writer Franz Kafka in this regard, arguing that Kafka’s symbolism rejects literal interpretations and therefore cannot be mapped to readily-known, universal paradigms – there is a greater degree of ambiguity present compared to “closed” works. Within this spectrum of openness, however, Eco marked out a space for what he called works in movement, works which ‘characteristically consist of unplanned or physically incomplete structural units [...] artist products which display an intrinsic mobility’ (ibid., 12 – emphasis mine). His primary example here was that of the musical score, which is not only open to interpretation by conductors and musicians, but stands precarious unless performed. It is worth noting that the musical work, along with the picture, architecture, and film, also stood for Ingarden as precarious objects for quite similar reasons, ‘an intentional correlate of appropriate acts of consciousness; [an] ideal limit’ (Ingarden 1989, 92).

In order to differentiate between open works and works in movement, though, one must look to whether a work is governed by determinate or indeterminate orientations within the arena of exchange, ‘an explicit or implicit poetics of necessity’ (Eco 1989, 21) that determine whether the work is received and understood as a totality or as a contingency. Eco describes the work in movement as deliberately disordered, or more precisely as a non-order which is not chaotic but simply excludes the work from being engaged via a conventional logic (ibid., 54-55), an argument which can be compared to Lévy’s “anarchic” order, and to Crossley’s notion of networks as comprising patterns of connection and non-connection (2011, 40). As Eco puts it, the work in movement ‘does not mean complete chaos in its internal relations. What it does imply is an organizing rule which governs these relations’ (ibid., 19). He therefore proposes that such works are organised and engineered according to an alternative logic of information, which he defines as ‘an additive quantity, something that is added to what one already knows as if it were an original acquisition’ (ibid., 45 – original emphasis). I would contend that narrative, which I have previously defined as an organising principle, fulfils the condition for an organising “rule” Eco raises here, where information is arranged as schemata. Eco also makes a distinction between
information and meaning which corresponds to my argument for narrative as enabling meaning, but not containing it. Meaning, for Eco, is an expected outcome of the information carried by the work, a situation which ‘depends on its organisation according to certain laws of probability’ (ibid., 50). This is supported by Mead’s conception of meaning as found in response, constituted within a conversation of gestures.

In non-relational works, this information/meaning dynamic operates according to a principle of structural necessity (Eco’s term), or top-down control such as is seen in the story/discourse distinction. However, Eco sets up this premise in order to demonstrate how an intersubjective exchange in relational works in movement is engineered when the work ‘deliberately frustrates our expectations in order to arouse our natural craving for completion’ (ibid., 74); that is, acts of exchange may be engineered by disrupting what is perceived to be probable, orthodox, or conventional in order to create an alternative perception of a “problem” that the interlocutor is compelled to resolve. The work in movement, what we may now legitimately see as congruent with the relational work, actively inscribes such gaps into the formation of the work, to the extent that the interlocutor is now in a position to provide and/or produce information in such a way that he or she is actively contributing to the shape of the work. The places of indeterminacy may subsequently be concretised so long as that information, the interlocutor’s participation, can be seen to add to what is already known about the shape of the work, a state of play ‘in which the history and projected future of a stream of interaction affect its present’ (Crossley 2011, 35).

In addition, this means that any “solution” (information) offered to a so-called problem ‘can only be a partial, provisional and indefinite affair, with uncertain and indeterminate outcomes’ (Ang 2011, 780); in other words, a solution is only valid while the trajectory is maintained. Not only does this explain precariousness, but it also explains the irreducibility of either relations, or the formation in which they operate, to functions. A relation is thus engineered in the processing and outcome of this information, and made possible by trajectories operating within the arena of exchange. Accordingly, trajectories are, by nature, ‘a medium of experience’ (Bourriaud 2010a, 32) in the way that they are both additive and bidirectional paths along which information and meaning are translated: gestures and actions building upon one
another (Jenkins 2007, 2) in reflexive orientations. ‘It is thus of the essence of the thing
and of the world to present themselves as “open”, to send us beyond their determinate
manifestations, to promise us always “something else to see”’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002,
388).

3. SUMMARY: AN OPERATION OF RELATIONS

A relational model such as has been described in this chapter ‘is not an amorphous
invitation to indiscriminate participation [but] an oriented insertion’ (Eco 1989, 19 –
emphasis mine). In other words, while the interlocutor may anticipate the (fictional)
world, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, it is only actualised under the auspices of a given
set of circumstances, by the schemata of intentional objects the creator arrays, and by
the trajectories the interlocutor establishes between them. This view attempts to
ground the concepts raised in this chapter within a realist perspective along
Ingarden’s lines, without resorting to a holistic reduction of the work to mere
functions. It is, in accordance with Bourriaud’s conception of relational aesthetics as a
model of artistic practice, to emphasise ‘the inter-human relations which [works]
represent, produce or prompt’ (Bourriaud 2002, 112). To borrow Donati’s sociological
parlance, it is to see the inscribed precariousness of such works as a ‘norm or defining
principle [.....] a theoretical and applied vision of social reality sufficiently open to itself
and about itself to think relationally’ (Donati 2011, 121 – original emphasis).

On the other hand, Claire Bishop’s question, ‘[i]f relational art produces human
relations, then the next logical question to ask is what types of relations are being
produced and for whom?’ (2004, 65) is valid and deserves a response. Firstly, it is not
clear whether Bishop here intends type to be taken taxonomically or representatively,
though I suspect the latter as a taxonomy of relations seems inadvisable given their
irreducibility. Secondly, Bishop’s contention that Bourriaud tends to see all relations
that permit exchange as intrinsically “good” is accurate: the role of relational art, he
claims, is to be a kind of realised utopia (Bourriaud 2002, 13), and a response to the
general flattening effect of postmodernism brought about by decentredness and
hybridity (Bourriaud 2010b, 20; 83). The noted cultural critic Frederic Jameson
(1991) referred to this as the ‘waning of affect,’ a condition of the individual
subjectivity’s detachment from its cultural context with the results that affect becomes
less visible; in other words, the depth of the connection is subsumed by the surface of the discourse. Eco, too, refers to this tendency towards depthlessness: ‘[h]ere are no privileged points of view, and all available perspectives are equally valid and rich in potential’ (1989, 18).

On the one hand, as an attempt to move beyond a condition of anxiety and ‘a mode of thought based on mourning’ (Bourriaud 2010b, 182) brought about by these postmodern tendencies, Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics aims to turn the spotlight back onto the affective and subjective. There is a certain positiveness – an intrinsic goodness – in the reversal from surface to depth, and it is not limited to Bourriaud alone; the same positiveness is intrinsic to the so-called gift economy, which artist and curator Ted Purves, among others, has written about (see Purves 2005). But on the other hand, just as Jameson argued that it would be ‘inaccurate to suggest that all affect [...] has vanished’ (1991, 61), so too it cannot be assumed that the utopian ideal will be borne out in the reality of the work based solely on the sociality of relational works. Exchange may be purely functional as much as it is affective, and trajectories may fail or simply be unproductive as often as they may be rich and additive.

However, none of this actually prohibits the operation of a relational aesthetics, despite Bishop’s claim that relations must overlap with the context in which they are established (2004, 65). This is because it cannot be assumed that all types of relations produced will be politicised, or even if they are, that those relations will have any applicability outside the context of the work and the community which establishes them. This brings us to a third point in answering her question: limiting relational aesthetics solely to the production of real-world human relations is problematic. Bourriaud himself limits his model to the realm of inter-human relations, but not because he makes an argument that it is not otherwise applicable. It simply does not come within the scope of his work to make claims for a notion of consciousness and conscious agents within the work such as Fludernik does.

This could seem to imply an inability to open Bourriaud’s model up to spheres other than the political, as I am attempting to by including the fictional and, by extension, the affective. However, if fiction is a creative act after the kind established by Duchamp, and expanded in this chapter via Mead, then it is always intentional, oriented towards
*intersubjective exchange*, and concerned with resolving a “problem”. These are characteristics which I have argued here are the fundamental principles upon which relational aesthetics operates. If we accept this position, then the types of relations that may be produced depend on the range of conscious agents with whom those relations might be established, and what is considered by the interlocutor to be a solution to the “problem” within the context of the work. But this suggests that a more important question than *what* are the types of relations being produced, is *how* they operate, and how this operation of relations facilitates an interlocutor’s movement and response across a relational work. The operation of relations is therefore a mediation between the conditions established within a *narrative* and their concretisation as *story* and is achieved via a series of *intersubjective* exchanges between the creator, interlocutor, and conscious agents apparent in the work.
Chapter 4

TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING

This chapter is arranged somewhat differently to those previous, being divided into two parts in order to fulfil a dual role. In Part A, I discuss and analyse a number of principles that may be considered fundamental to transmedia storytelling. Part B then serves to synthesise the arguments presented into a model of transmedia storytelling, in order to demonstrate this phenomenon as a particular way of organising aesthetic experience across and within correlated mediums by facilitating the creation of trajectories. Within the rubric of fiction, this can be understood as operating according to a narrative-story-intersubjectivity dynamic. Establishing such a dynamic in the preceding chapters was necessary in order to open a space now in which transmedia storytelling might be understood in terms of how it operates as an example of fiction, and for the way in which it problematises traditional understandings of each core concept. The principles of transmedia storytelling discussed in Part A are therefore those that I consider to have a direct bearing on, or can be understood as an extension of, the reconceptualisations of narrative, story, and intersubjectivity already offered. Part B attempts to make some core linkages between these reconceptualisations and the principles of transmedia storytelling discussed below.

As a result of these reconceptualisations, narrative and story were positioned in an interdependent relationship facilitated and energised by a model of intersubjective exchange, and I argued that this continuum could be based on the kind of relational aesthetics proposed by Bourriaud. My purpose in doing so was to arrive at transmedia storytelling from a direction other than the one derived from a media/cultural studies route, which has provided the overwhelming majority of scholarly work on the phenomenon of transmedia in general. I chose this approach in order to emphasise a theory of aesthetic and cultural formations over technology and practice, a theory which might help to expand the territory for discussion of the narrative and story characteristics of transmedia storytelling. This is only possible if, as I stated in the Introduction, the reality of a convergence culture out of which a phenomenon such as transmedia storytelling could reasonably emerge is assumed as a given. Thus, a necessary basis for understanding the nature of transmedia storytelling as a creative act of fiction lies in the synthesis of the three core concepts of narrative, story, and

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intersubjectivity previously dealt with. My aim in unpacking transmedia storytelling in this way is to offer it as an answer to Bourriaud’s question: ‘What is a form that is essentially relational?’ (2002, 21 – original emphasis).

Part A – PRINCIPLES OF TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING

1. RE-LOCATING TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING

Espen Aarseth argues that it is problematic to see the cybertext, the object of his 1997 study, as a “new” or “revolutionary” form that marks ‘a radical break with old-fashioned textuality,’ or as one whose emergence can be directly correlated to the invention of computer technologies (1997, 18). Instead, he argues that what the cybertext represents is the adoption of a certain perspective, a way of scholarly thinking that allows for the study of works that might otherwise fall outside the purview of traditional conceptions of the nature of the work of art and what it “should” look like. In other words, the cybertext is located as a logical extension of pre-existing historical circumstances. Similarly, transmedia practitioner and researcher Christy Dena notes that what is required to properly understand transmedia ‘is a particular attitude, a transmedia mentality’ (2012a) that goes against what she terms the monological perspective that informs current thinking. And while Bourriaud (2002; 2010a) and, in particular, Alan Kirby (2009; 2010) argue that their respective notions of relational and digimodernist works are the product of quite specific technological trends, both are also quite clear that understanding the nature of such works requires adopting a certain theoretical perspective towards them: ‘not so much a breakthrough as a strategic attempt to change the terms of cultural debate’ (Kirby 2009, 33). In order to understand the nature of transmedia storytelling as a creative act, therefore, it is necessary to re-locate not just it, but our approach to it as well.

Whereas in the Introduction I located transmedia in Henry Jenkins’ terms as a product of a convergence culture – and therefore locating transmedia as a term that explains a certain kind of creative practice – here I am aiming to expand this into a frame of reference for understanding something about the nature of transmedia and, by implication, something about the nature of the cultural debate surrounding it. To achieve this, it is first necessary to qualify Aarseth’s claim that such phenomena are
not “new”. This is certainly the case when transmedia is located historically as a product of other, related, circumstances such as those Jenkins identifies in relation to a convergence culture. But this should be seen in light of anthropologist William Mazzarella’s (2004) persuasive argument that it is the naturalisation of such circumstances that feeds the perception of their inviolability. There is no “new”, only ‘something continuously made and remade through constantly shifting relations, practices, and technologies of mediation’ (ibid., 355).

Thus, transmedia as it is currently understood could only have emerged given certain historical conditions. The resulting transmedia mentality – the ability to think transmedia–can therefore be considered “new” in relation to previous conditions which gave rise to “old” perspectives only if it is understood that both perspectives are only possible when their respective conditions have become naturalised. Thus, it is problematic to make direct historicised connections between a convergence culture in which ‘not every member must contribute, but all must believe they are free to contribute and that what they contribute will be appropriately valued’ (Jenkins et al 2006, 7), and past, seemingly related, socio-cultural circumstances, because this is to forget that these are products of specific historical moments existing along a continuum.

For instance, the use of German opera composer Richard Wagner’s concept of the gesamtkunstwerk, or total work of art, to explain transmedia phenomena is highly problematic, even though several of the principles underlying it seem apparent in transmedia. In Wagner’s conception, the total work of art remained more a philosophy of art than a true practice, though Wagner was able to move towards implementing his ideas in composing The Ring of the Nibelung cycle of operas by integrating music and drama more closely than had previously been achieved in opera (Tanner 1997). The total work of art sought to incorporate a number of mediums into a single, ideal, and fundamentally totalised work in a way that would transcend the limitations of what the contemporary culture considered art could achieve; the ‘unnational universal,’ as Wagner called it (nd [1895], 23). However, the current convergence culture demonstrates the unlikeliness of a total work of art in that the integration of multiple mediums is an ongoing, fluid process and ‘not an end state’ (Jenkins 2001). In terms of the recent application of Wagner’s concept, such as that by transmedia practitioner
Stephen Dinehart (2010) or cultural critic Frank Rose (2011), it only tends to extend so far as to demonstrate how multiple art forms can retain their own qualities while operating in an integrated way – a precursor of sorts to multimedia (Packer & Jordan 2002; Dena 2009, 91). The problem with this is that it cannot be assumed that multimedia works are also multiply-mediated; that is, where engagement with a work is mediated not only by the interlocutor who engages with it, but also by the mediums themselves, with the result being that some fundamental aspect of the work alters with each exchange. Without multiple mediation, the resulting work lacks the precariousness characteristic of complex systems, because those systems allow for multiple mediators and, importantly, mediation in the complex spaces between mediums which give rise to emergent characteristics (which will be discussed further below). Multimedia works lack the precariousness of multiple mediation because their various components are functioning to augment a static core text. That is, the core text is not changed by the action of additional components and the core text can be repeated with minimal alterations.¹ Because of this, multimedia works are already aware of their outcomes and the trajectories needed to achieve them, meaning that they are able to be viewed as totalities. In terms of complexity theory, such systems can be regarded complicated, as opposed to complex; aggregate rather than emergent.

In contrast, the four principles I have identified below in relation to transmedia storytelling – complexity, immersion, storyworld, and community – speak directly to the nature of works created under this rubric as collective entities, or articulations, rather than totalities, and should be considered in context as the products of the prevailing convergence culture out of which they have emerged. None of these four terms are unique to the vocabulary of transmedia and are all drawn from pre-existing theories, but each offer a unique perspective when applied to this particular creative practice. They should therefore be regarded as contested spaces whose meaning and significance, particularly in relation to transmedia storytelling, are far from fixed. It should also be noted that the terms transmedia and transmedia storytelling will be used interchangeably throughout this chapter – for a discussion of terminology in this regard, please refer to the Introduction.

¹ I say minimal here because there are obvious examples of multimedia works, such as performance-based works (theatre, concerts, etc.), in which no two performances are the same. However, this does not alter the fact that these performances, however fluid, operate from a core text, such as a script, which is intended to be repeatable. This is a case where outlying examples cannot be considered to constitute the norm.
2. **TRANSMEDIA AS COMPLEX OBJECT**

Dena makes a persuasive case that any study of transmedia should account for its complex nature, pointing to the delivery of ‘unique information in different media platforms’ (2007) and the subsequent demands this places on interlocutors to traverse these mediums as evidence of its complexity. She draws on Félix Guattari’s notion of *complexification*, which can be thought of as ‘singular points of view on being, with their precariousness, uncertainty and creative aspects tak[ing] precedence over the fixity of structures [...] to postulate the existence of a deterministic chaos animated by infinite velocities’ (Guattari 1995, 59). Out of this chaos – which can be understood as an interpretation of Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1984) notion of polyphony discussed in Chapter 3 – ‘complex compositions’ (Guattari 1995, 59) arise. *Complexification* therefore describes a condition in which an object that could not otherwise exist arises out of heterogeneous, unrelated, or dis-ordered material, and Guattari notes that there must be a spectrum of *subjectivities* at work to maintain such objects (ibid. 18). There are echoes here of an earlier thought from Niklas Luhmann, who argued that ‘[b]y *complexity*, we would like to understand that there are always more possibilities than can be actualised’ (2014, 25 – original emphasis).

Tellingly, Luhmann contrasted this with a corresponding notion of *contingency*, which he defined as the necessary risk taken in exploring possible trajectories, and which included the danger of their failing to be productive. What this means in the present context is that *complex* objects are irreducible to their components due to the fact that it is not the object alone which is *complex*, but the range and scope of trajectories necessary to bring it into an existence. As philosopher and complexity theorist Paul Cilliers argues, ‘[a] complex system cannot be reduced to a collection of its basic constituents, not because the system is not constituted by them, but because too much of the *relational information* gets lost in the process’ (2000, 10 – emphasis mine). In other words, *complexity* is the natural opposite of a reductionist approach that would seek to break it down to constitutive parts or *functions*. Luhmann (2014) goes on to suggest that this introduces a vital element of uncertainty not dissimilar to Guattari’s notion of chaos, so that the existence of such objects, as with any *precarious* object, relies upon ‘acquiring consistence and persistence’ (Guattari 1995, 19); that is, the
perception of the trajectories as being (semantically) valid solutions to “problems”, or as Luhmann puts it, ‘finally constitut[ing] full complexity and contingency’ (2014, 25).

This notion of objects whose existence is contingent upon the organisation of polyphonic, or chaotic, elements is at the heart of what is known as complexity theory, a body of theory initially developed by researchers in the physical and computational sciences to explain complex, as opposed to merely complicated, phenomena (the difference between the two resting upon whether or not the object of study exhibits emergent, or contingent, properties). I draw on complexity theory here in order to demonstrate that transmedia storytelling exhibits just such properties, and that as a result the interlocutor is unable to see such works as totalities and must therefore adopt, as Dena argues, appropriate transmedial thinking.

According to cultural critic and scholar Ien Ang, complexity theory starts from the premise that society and culture are in a constant state of becoming, and therefore ‘problem-solving can only be a partial, provisional and indefinite affair, with uncertain and indeterminate outcomes’ (2011, 780). Complexity itself is therefore, according to Cilliers, manifested in the moment of engagement, as the product of ‘the interaction between the components of a system’ (2000, 2), and can only exist where such systems exhibit characteristics not already evident, or not as yet “complete”, in any of its components. This notion of systems does not follow the kind of holistic reductionism I have previously rejected, but rather, as described by complexity theory, stands in opposition to reduction ‘as a whole [that] cannot be fully understood simply by analysing its components’ (Cilliers 2000, viii). Likewise, Cilliers’ notion of interactivity can be understood quite readily in terms of the principles of relational aesthetics established in the previous chapter. Fundamentally, though, what Cilliers is describing here is the principle of emergence, about which two aspects must be understood: firstly, that the characteristics that emerge within a complex system are ones which did not, and could not, have previously existed; and secondly that they are also ones which ‘could not be forced upon the system from a top-down model or by external intervention’ (Badcock 2007, 88). In other words, emergent characteristics are those which are generated by the relations of components interacting within an

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2 By way of comparison, Cilliers’ interaction does not have to be limited to physical actions, includes a transference of information, is nonlinear (kernels of information may have large results and vice versa), is established between coordinate points that are already within proximity (an arena of exchange), and exhibits reflexive qualities in a ‘feedback loop’ (2000, 3-4).
environment; they must be established during engagement, from within the work. Emergence can therefore be understood as a reflexive ‘self-organization’ which computer scientist Melanie Mitchell (2009) suggests displays tendencies of ‘goal-directedness’ not unlike those Nick Crossley proposed as a mobilizing force of relational sociology – intentions which direct an interlocutor’s actions within, and in response to, a given environment. As such, Cilliers concludes that rather than being described as emergent properties, these characteristics might be better understood as relational properties (2000, 143).

Complex systems are generally accepted as being arranged in either organised or disorganised ways. These two categories were first proposed in 1948 by the American scientist and mathematician Warren Weaver (2004). The primary characteristic of any complex system is not only the significant number of components operating within it, but, just as importantly, how those components relate and interact with one another. Weaver therefore argued that, based on how components interacted with one another, two main types of complex systems could be identified. He classed a disorganised system as one in which components operated erratically, individually, or according to otherwise unknown behaviours, so that the relationships between them are not readily apparent. They are ‘unpredictable’ (Heylighen, Cilliers, & Gershenson 2007), since their organising principle remains obscure. Making sense of disorganised systems can therefore only be achieved via statistical averages of probable outcomes (Weaver 2004). In contrast, an organised system is one in which the components ‘obey strict rules or constraints that specify how each component depends on the others’ (Heylighen, Cilliers, & Gershenson 2007, 124); though the fundamental point of difference for Weaver was that the organised system displayed a tendency towards an organic unity that the disorganised did not, in the sense that the relationships established between components appear logical and, on that basis, predictable. Thus, according to Weaver, organised systems, as opposed to disorganised systems, open up the possibility of a much richer middle region. How this region operates can be understood via an argument of Luhmann’s that ‘such complexity presupposes both familiar and unexpected elements. If, upon performing operations on the other side, one returns to the side from which one started, then one finds it altered’ (2000, 35-36). Luhmann here could be understood as referring to a kind of traversal of the complex object, a traversal not dissimilar to the one Dena argues is the ‘unifying
concern' in understanding transmedia: namely, the concern ‘with any traversal and transformation that takes place at the level of the object of study and the analysis of it’ (2007). This middle region, and the richness which is potentially contains, consists of the implied and enacted relations between components.

I therefore propose that transmedia storytelling displays characteristics of that middle region. It would be difficult to demonstrate an instance of transmedia storytelling as firmly falling within the disorganised category, since these works are always planned, even if they are not ‘preassembled’ (Dena 2007), and as such it cannot be said that each component is behaving entirely unpredictably. Likewise, we cannot wholly claim transmedia works behave as organised systems either, though they clearly lean more in this direction. Though such works are ‘constrained’ (to use Heylighen, Cilliers, & Gershenson’s term) by their narrative world, as will be demonstrated in Section 4 below, the presence of relational places of indeterminacy – what was described in the previous chapter as precariousness – ensures that it cannot be understood as operating according to strict (and, importantly, replicable) rules or guidelines. However, a strong case could be made for locating it within the middle region, which displays characteristics of organisation and unity which account for narrative as an organising principle – that is, a formational level that does away with the need for a ‘central control or leader’ (Mitchell 2009, 12) – while intentionally leaving the work open to unexpected elements (to use Luhmann’s term), such as might be achieved with user-generated content, for example.

This view is in keeping with Umberto Eco’s (1989) concept of the work in movement discussed in the previous chapter – works which are characterised by unplanned or incomplete components and organised by a logic of information that draws out emergent qualities. Luhmann’s use of the term unexpected must therefore be seen as a condition of traversing the complex system, as it denotes the entirely reflexive series of relations the interlocutor establishes with the work; relations which are realised via a logic of story as a behaviour that takes place within the limits of the arena of exchange as a moment of aesthetic experience (in other words, the moment at which the complex system is manifested). What is unexpected is therefore a retrospective assessment or a reflexive looking back of what was perceived as unpredictable – changeable, precarious – in the moment of engagement; a result of the interlocutor’s inability to perceive the
*complex object as totality. It is important therefore not to confuse these two terms and see all complex systems as unpredictable in a way that suggests they are simply unknowable, since it must be remembered that ‘[c]omplex effects often look quite different to the observer and to the actant, to the speaker and to the spoken to’ (Letiche, Lissack, & Schultz 2011, 12) and that what is under consideration are the emergent (relational) properties that engagement with the work reveals.

2.1 Managing complexity in transmedia works

However, though the above suggests the means by which we can regard transmedia stories as complex objects, it does not in itself describe a method for analysing them. Any such method will be constrained, firstly, by the inability to traverse complex objects in their totality – a practical limitation about which transmedia producer Brooke Thompson says, ‘the commitment required to fully experience a transmedia project [...] would require far more time than would be profitable’ (2010). Secondly, analysis of complex objects is constrained by the inability to apply a reduction in order to produce neutral, shareable, functions that can be studied; as Dena contends, ‘[i]ndeed, there is no shared work to analyse’ (2007). She goes on to explain that the complex system of transmedia does not allow for reduction because of the diversity of mediums that may be utilised in any given work, and the range of theoretical material that would normally be deployed to deal with those mediums.

Even if a reduction were possible, it would still omit an analysis of the relations between mediums, or the lived trajectories of reflexive interaction that shape the interlocutor’s transmedia experience. In order to avoid a focus on medium (or coordinate points, to use Bourriaud’s terminology) at the expense of trajectory, Dena (2009) proposes that transmedia works may be divided into inter- and intra-compositional categories based on the direction in which relations between components can be observed to flow (“composition” is used loosely by Dena in this instance as a way to denote anything from a single compositional unit within a medium to a whole work). Inter-compositional works are those where the relations are directed outward, or across, several mediums – what is typically referred to as a ‘spreadable’ (Jenkins 2009) or ‘cross-sited’ model in which ‘the interplay between media platforms is unified through a sequential and causal distribution of story
information’ (Ruppel 2009, 283). In *intra-compositional* works, relations are directed inwards, focussing on trajectories between compositional units rather than the relation between multiple, and often larger-scale, compositions. Dena cites Augmented or Alternative Reality Games (ARGs) as a primary example of *intra-compositional* phenomena – games that often play out in real life, as opposed to a virtual environment, and which tend to utilise everyday activities and collaborative problem-solving as gameplay triggers. In order to create the game – seen as a medium in itself – multiple units may be utilised, such as email, text messaging, phone calls, websites, photos, recorded voices messages and so on, and the interlocutor engages with each in order to play the game. The transmedia experience has occurred within a single “game” medium, and thus creates a depth of experience, rather than a spread. Media scholar Jason Mittell’s (2009) model of ‘drillability’ operates on a similar principle of achieving depth by “drilling” down through layers.

The addition of the terms spreadability and drillability to the vocabulary of transmedia research and practice proved extremely useful for a period of time, particularly in generating discussion about ways of examining and analysing transmedia works.3 Jenkins in particular, as probably the most prominent exponent of transmedia storytelling, discussed spreadability in some detail in regards to *The Matrix* franchise in order to demonstrate the way in which the story was spread across multiple mediums. Jenkins’ underlying argument was that in spreadable works, component mediums, such as the animated shorts or comics in the case of *The Matrix*, could function as distinct entry points into the larger narrative, while still maintaining a degree of independence. However, the pool of available examples to analyse that tested Jenkins’ theory on a similarly large scale quickly dried up when Hollywood studios appeared reluctant to implement spreadable strategies in the mould of *The Matrix*. So when Jenkins’ line of thinking was pushed further by other researchers and practitioners, it became apparent that spreadability, at least in practice, functioned as little more than a reconceptualised franchise model. Drillability fared somewhat better, as the success of shows like writer and producer David Simon’s crime drama *The Wire* and writer and producer Ron Moore’s 2004 reimagining of *Battlestar Galactica* coincided with a revitalisation of television programming that granted creators licence to take greater risks with long-form works. However, the way in

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3 These concepts were foundational to my own thinking about transmedia storytelling, and were discussed as part of an early formulation of my research (see Merlo 2011).
which drillability was conceived meant it lacked the ability to incorporate multiple mediums into its *narrative* formation, something that, it must be acknowledged, is probably what drew most creators to experiment with transmedia storytelling in the first place since it opens up a wealth of creative and collaborative options that do not limit the creator to a single medium.

Nevertheless, *complexity* is inherent and maintained in either model, and allows the trajectory of experience to be readily observed. Additionally, since these models are based on *dependency*, or how one medium may relate to another, they can also be understood as a form of *precariousness*. However, because the relationship under consideration in both models is fundamentally that between the coordinate start/end points of structural components, there is a hierarchical dynamic unintentionally imposed between *inter* and *intra*, breadth and depth, that suggests works fall into one category or the other and that transmedia works are primarily understood by the way components are structured to relate to one another. Structural relations are largely a (authorial) by-product of the creative act, if we take Bourriaud’s (2002) argument that creation invents *possible* encounters, while engagement creates *conditions* of exchange. The problem that arises, then, is that transmedial relations between *components* are emphasised, rather than trajectories the interlocutor creates.

### 2.2 Simplification as methodological tool

A much more category-neutral alternative to analysing interlocutor-created trajectories in complex, transmedia phenomena comes via Ang’s proposition of *simplification* as a methodological tool for unpacking complex systems. This is not, as Ang puts it, a *reduction* ‘to some underlying simplicity,’ but rather the ability to ‘plot a course *through* complexity’ (2011, 780 – original emphasis). In theoretical terms, it is possible to understand *simplification* as a description of the reflexive capacity of a trajectory in motion, since it only requires a recognition of complexity, as opposed to a direct engagement with it. The interlocutor is thus free to focus on the moment of *intersubjective* experience. In practical terms, *simplification* is evident in the participatory activities of affiliation, expression, collaborative problem-solving and circulations which an interlocutor may be involved in (these are discussed in Section 5.2 below). Ang refers to this as an utilisation of what she calls *cultural intelligence*, or
'the calculated pursuit of knowledge required to act in circumscribed, tricky and precarious contexts' (ibid., 790). Knowledge here is not dissimilar to Eco's notion of information as an additive quality of intersubjective exchange – ‘highly selective and contextualised’ (ibid.), and always adding to what is already known because it is operating within a prescribed arena of exchange. Tension is maintained during the exchange because the interlocutor is selecting and acting on information (which is, in fact, the active combination of intentional objects and aesthetic experience) that cannot be resolved into a convenient reductive solution to complexity. Or put another way, local behaviours (an interlocutor’s engagement) are not an indicator of system outcomes (storyworld – see Section 7.2 below), but they can be used by the interlocutor to help recognise the boundaries of the arena of exchange and the norms for operating within them. Simplification is therefore a method for the interlocutor to maintain coherence within the complex system. To quote Letiche, Lissack and Schultz: ‘When one enacts within the environment, one constructs, rearranges, singles out, and demolishes many objective features of the surroundings [...] one unrandomizes variables, inserts vestiges of orderliness, and literally creates one’s own constraints’ (2011, 49).

Simplification should therefore be understood as a temporary creation of “order” within the complex system from the perspective of the interlocutor. Performing a simplification is not, as Ang states, a method of critique, but a way of describing a path through an arena of exchange that ‘always involves modes of strategic simplification, in that the knowledge produced must provide pointers for action’ (Ang 2011, 790). That is, the simplification relies on the presence of nodes within the system/work that imply directions from which trajectories may advance; however, these same nodes cannot be assumed to constitute coordinate start/end points. As Italian media scholar Giovanni Boccia Artieri puts it, ‘[y]ou do not develop formal and hierarchical links between nodes, but connections that are established from the practices and cultures that these nodes incorporate’ (2012, 460). Simplification marks out a possible path through the complex system, not a definitive one, because the actions and vantage of the interlocutor are always limited to the local. Not only does this highlight the importance of community in transmedia storytelling, which will be discussed in Section 5 below, but it evokes Pierre Lévy’s notion of an art of implication, discussed in

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*Prescribed* here simply refers to the fact that, as with all complex systems, the interlocutor will always encounter elements of the arena of exchange already in motion, in the form of intentional objects.
the previous chapter, which acknowledges that action within an arena of exchange is always of a reflexive and contingent nature, even as it gives an appearance of inevitability or predictability, because ‘[i]t brings forth a process [and] places us within a creative cycle’ (Lévy 1999, 123) that builds upon what is already known or can be reasonably associated with the arena.

Lévy (ibid., 183) refers to this cycle as a knowledge space, as opposed to a structured, hierarchical territory, which, because it is a process contingent on the interaction between the interlocutor as subject and the (intentional) object, is always in an emergent state. That is, performing a simplification is to be implicated in, and simultaneously give (an) existence to, objects within the arena, and establishes the interlocutor as a semionaut, an ‘inventor of pathways’ (Bourriaud 2010b, 39) who ‘imagines the links, the likely relations between disparate sites’ (ibid. 2010a, 18). In this way, the concept of simplification as a tool for navigating complexity is linked directly to the creation of trajectories within relational, transmedia, works – in both instances, the interlocutor performs a series of reflexive orientations that shift in response to knowledge each exchange produces, while being ‘fully cognizant that the complexity of the world will persist irrespective of the simplifications imposed on it’ (Ang 2011, 790). Establishing complexity and simplification in this way offers a unique position from which to consider how immersion operates as a major principle of transmedia storytelling.

3. IMMERSION

There are two implications of simplification, or the creation of trajectories within complex systems, that now need to be considered. The first is that the creation of trajectories always occurs from within the arena of exchange; or to be more specific, such creative acts can only occur from within the arena of exchange. This is due to the intersubjective exchanges the interlocutor is required to perform to navigate that space. These exchanges provide information, in Umberto Eco’s sense of something being added to what is already known, which in turn may give rise to emergent characteristics within that system. This is a reasonable assumption if it is accepted that simplification, which, as an act of the interlocutor’s, is facilitated by intersubjective exchange, always works to resolve perceived “problems” of coherence and completion.
within the work. This notion was raised in the previous chapter to explain how transmedia works operate on a principle of exchange as opposed to structural necessity. Exchange creates links between components that may eventually, but are not reliant on, being revealed to comprise a greater system; exchange allows for emergence, whereas the top-down control of structural necessity assumes a totality and breaks the system down accordingly. Thus, in works based on principles of exchange, trajectories can only be created as components are experienced.

The second implication of simplification is that, if trajectories can only be created from within the arena of exchange, and if this is an activity which is normally performed by an interlocutor, then the interlocutor is also already implicated – is immersed – in the arena of exchange. This is particularly true when simplification is viewed as a means of navigating complex systems, since trajectories cannot be imposed from without, as that would imply a totality that can be mapped, whereas the interlocutor only makes orientations in response to objects encountered within the arena. Each orientation forms the basis for subsequent actions, so that the interlocutor is operating cognitively, and perhaps even physically (depending on the activity), from a position which is already located within the arena of exchange. The interlocutor is making orientations and creating trajectories based on a framework that is other to the real world in which he or she is normally located; in other words, a suspension of the real has taken place in order for the fictional other to be realised in a meaningful way. I suggest that it is the exploration of this boundary between real and fictional worlds, its differences and permutations, that is the fundamental basis for a principle of immersion as it relates to storytelling in general, and to transmedia storytelling specifically.5

This understanding of immersion also helps us to move away from considering the arena of exchange, as I have done so far, solely as a system for organising information narratively (that is, as an organising principle), and towards understanding the arena as a storyworld, or something which is purely aesthetic. Such immersion can be understood as the product of the interlocutor’s deep engagement with a storyworld. It should be noted that in the discussion that follows, I have purposely avoided making

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5 The term fictional world as used here is intended to be understood in general terms, as a reference to a nonspecific global entity that serves as a fictional counterpoint to the real world. It should not be confused with the related terms narrative world and storyworld, which have specific applications that I will explicate in §4.1 below.
an explicit connection between *immersion* and particular practices such as interactivity that are often cited as initiating the kind of deep-level *immersion* which is under consideration (see Miller 2008, for example). The reason for this is that *immersion* is not necessarily synonymous with interactivity – it cannot be assumed that the latter will always lead to the former since interaction is a mechanical activity that is technologically determined (Jenkins 2008, 328) and therefore only retains the possibility of stimulating a cognitive (as opposed to aesthetic) reaction, while *immersion* can, in fact, be generated by a broad range of devices and conventions in any work capable of organising represented objects (Wolf 2009, 149), meaning that it is non-medium specific, and therefore potentially transmedial in nature. My aim is to conceptualise *immersion* in a way that maintains this broader transmedial sense. In other words, it cannot be assumed that immersion is simply as a “product” of the interlocutor’s active involvement, but should be seen as a particular attitude adopted, or acquired, during engagement.

### 3.1 Immersion and the phenomenological attitude

This position could be considered an approximation of what Edmund Husserl called the phenomenological attitude, a condition that, put simply, allows the interlocutor to locate directly experienced objects within a broader conceptual framework, without having had direct, or even prior, experience of that framework. Phenomenologists such as Husserl and Merleau-Ponty typically refer to this framework as “the world,” which provides the conditions upon which *intersubjective* exchange will take place, even though the totality of the world remains unobservable. *Immersion* can be understood theoretically as a product of adopting this phenomenological attitude. Husserl, for example, argued that the interlocutor does not need to directly experience something in order to make a reasonable judgment about it, which he referred to simply as *intuition*, or that which ‘is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being’ (Husserl 1998, 44) and which is in itself ‘a legitimizing source of cognition’ (ibid.). Fundamentally, this is a description of the *bracketing* that takes place as part of the phenomenological reduction, which was discussed in the previous chapter; however, *bracketing* is not a dismissal of what is unobservable, but rather forms an attitude that what is unobservable will eventually be verified – made complete, or

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6 For more detailed analysis of the intersection between *immersion* and interactivity, see Ryan (2001b), or Walker (2003).
concretised – by creating certain trajectories instead of others based on the interlocutor’s intuition of what is experienced now.

Husserl also identified a corresponding attitude which he labelled the natural attitude, or ‘our normal, taken for granted way of approaching the world’ (Moran 2002, 144). The phenomenological attitude operates in contrast to this: according to the American theatre critic and scholar Bert O. States, it is one ‘that uninhibitedly accepts everything it sees’ (1992, 373), or as the philosopher Robert Sokolowski puts it, is an “all or nothing” kind of move’ (2006, 47). Either the interlocutor assumes that, based on intuition, the trajectories he or she creates are correct in the moment they are established, or the arena becomes untraversable. It also means that the phenomenological attitude can conceivably encompass the entire range of possible experiences (mental, physical, emotion, social, subjective, objective, and so on).

Intuition of this kind allows the interlocutor to ‘attend only to the phenomena in the manner of their being given to us, in their modes of givenness’ (Moran 2002, 11 – original emphasis), which is a form of judging what is experienced within the arena according to the formational cues it provides, or to put it in phenomenological terms, according to the schemata of purely intentional objects. I am arguing here that the difference between the natural and phenomenological attitudes can be likened to the difference in the way the interlocutor perceives the real and fictional worlds. The phenomenological attitude is therefore what allows the interlocutor to cognitively disengage from the real world in order to engage with the fictional world in a way that makes it concrete. As a consequence, this process resolves the paradox of fiction – deference of the real in favour of self-reference – by requiring the immersion of the interlocutor within the arena of exchange in order to achieve it.

By virtue of the fact that the phenomenological attitude does not rely on what the interlocutor has previously experienced, but on what is experienced now and how that information relates to the formational cues established by the arena of exchange, it differs to other types of schematas previously considered, such as the contextual frames developed by Catherine Emmott and discussed in Chapter 2. These schemata are primarily concerned with the interlocutor’s ability to link what is experienced now with something that has been experienced previously. The difference is that the trajectories created from within the phenomenological attitude are fundamentally
forwards-looking and therefore more open to precariousness, as well as being more reliant on reflexivity as ‘not only a reactive process, leading people from one condition of uncertainty to another, [but also] a capability for reorientation and redirection’ (Donati, 2011, 192). This means the concept of immersion is able to be divided into a process of “being immersed,” which is facilitated by the work, and immersion itself as a product of the interlocutor’s engagement with the work.

3.2 Immersion as spatiotemporal orientation

The creation of trajectories can be likened to a process of mapping, which is what Bourriaud alludes to when he describes the interlocutor as a semionaut, or navigator of signs (2010b). The interlocutor may not be fully cognisant of the shape of the environment he or she is traversing, but is nonetheless able to proceed through that environment in a logical progression by anchoring one nodal point to another. Above, I argued that this means that the interlocutor is already immersed within the arena of exchange, but it also means that the arena itself, as an environment in which a series of intentional objects have been arrayed, must be seen fundamentally as a set of spatiotemporal coordinates which the interlocutor is moving through, as Ang (2011) argues. If the arena is comprised of these coordinates, then it follows that the trajectories required to navigate such an environment must also comprise of both spatial and temporal dimensions in order for the interlocutor to orient him or herself between them.

The use of space and time in this way as orienting functions, particularly in relation to fiction, is what is referred to as deixis. This has been dealt with already in the Introduction and in Chapter 1 as the process responsible for orienting the interlocutor in a fictional world, and scholars of narrative theory have made tacit links between it and immersion in the past. The cognitive narratologist Erwin M. Segal, for example, suggests that ‘when we enjoy a narrative, we activate or create a mental model which represents the story […] [R]eaders and authors represent themselves at a spacetime location within the mental model, and from there they vicariously witness the events of the story’ (1995b, 63). Although Segal tends to emphasise the interlocutor’s role as being that of a detached observer over how he or she is able to concretise a story, the
point is that by creating a representative model, the interlocutor is locating him or herself at some point within the *arena of exchange*.

![Figure 4.1 – Basic visualisation of a process of immersion via spatiotemporal coordinates](image)

*Deixis* was originally developed as a way to explain how certain words or phrases in literary works, such as pronouns or other referential signs, are able to force the interlocutor to adopt a certain perspective towards events.\(^7\) While this is a basic operating principle of virtually all written *fiction* and offers a basic level of *immersion*, it does not explain the depth of *immersion* typically referred to in transmedia works.

To achieve that, it is necessary to expand on a point made by narratologist Marie-Laure Ryan – that greater *immersion* is achieved when deictic cues are detached from linguistic, or any other, signs that exist on the surface of the *arena*, and are attached to intentional objects located *within* the *arena*, such as characters, locations, and, importantly, unique qualities of the storyworld itself (Ryan 2001b). This is because intentional objects are designed to be experienced in a much more direct manner by the interlocutor, whereas other types of cues, such as linguistics ones, will always be part of the artifice of the work, regardless of whether or not they are designed to draw attention to themselves.\(^8\) The process of *concretisation* is vital in this regard – Ingarden refers to a ‘special act of consciousness’ and argues that as the interlocutor experiences intentional objects within a work, ‘they attain the character of an

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\(^7\) See Section 3.2.2 of the Introduction for an example provided by narratologist David Herman.

\(^8\) Postmodern works, for example, consciously draw attention to their artifice and are clearly not designed to produce the kind of *immersion* being discussed here.
independent reality. Once the creative intentionality has thus been actualized, it becomes to a certain degree binding for us’ (1973b, 40).

This independent reality is precisely the kind of self-reference that is fundamental to all fiction, while attaining it strongly indicates a resolution of the paradox of fiction. Furthermore, narratologist Monica Fludernik (1996), in linking experience of intentional objects to the evoking of consciousness within a work, lends further credence to Ryan’s argument that deictic cues which are able to anchor the interlocutor to a position in the storyworld beyond its narrative artifice are the most effective for immersion. What is under consideration here is the reflexive capacity of the array of intentional objects, where that capacity can be “measured” by the degree to which immersion directs the interlocutor towards those intentional objects that will anchor him or her within the arena of exchange. The argument for utilising deixis in relation to immersion is therefore based on the interlocutor’s ability to locate and engage with intentional objects within the spatiotemporal boundaries of the arena of exchange, with conscious agents being seen as a particular type of intentional object that functions as an anchor.

3.3 Two metaphors for illustrating immersion

Despite the presence of anchor-objects within a work, immersion remains fundamentally a product of the interlocutor’s aesthetic experience – a metaphor of engagement, as media researcher Janet Murray (2000, 98) points out. The cognitive and linguistic psychologist Richard Gerrig (1998) also alludes to this connection between immersion and aesthetic experience when he makes the important distinction between the narrative itself – that is, the organising principle employed – and the experience of engaging with that narrative which leads to the aesthetic experience of the story(world). The former, however complex, serves only as a framework; it is the latter which leads to immersion (though Gerrig points out that the interlocutor can never be forced to experience a storyworld [1998, 5]). As a result, it is difficult to develop a systematic process that explains immersion; instead, scholars such as Gerrig have resorted to developing a number of different metaphors to help illustrate how anchor-objects might enable the interlocutor to adopt the kind of phenomenological

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9 See Chapter 2 for a more detailed explanation of Fludernik’s argument.
attitude that will shift him or her from the deictic centre of the “real” or “normal” world to that of the storyworld, and to subsequently make connections with the array of intentional and conscious objects within that arena. There are two metaphors in particular – transportation and performance – which are worth considering, though they should not be seen as two alternatives for making sense of immersion, but rather as operating in tandem to bring immersion about.

3.3.1 The transportation metaphor

The transportation metaphor as it is currently understood serves to describe something about the sensation of being immersed and, importantly, highlights that a major characteristic of immersion must be the ability to move through a deictic space. Our current understanding of it as a metaphor for unpacking immersion was primarily developed by Gerrig (1998), though Marie-Laure Ryan (2001b) also cites studies in virtual reality as a complementary development. Simply put, the argument is that immersion can be strongly linked to the illusion within a work of what Ryan describes as a ‘penetrable’ deictic space. This perception of space is what gives the interlocutor a sense of being “transported” from one deictic centre to another, which Gerrig explains is the result of the interlocutor developing schemata which ‘integrate information from the text with broader real-world knowledge’ (1998, 6) as they are engaged. These schemata provide empirical evidence about the space which then allows it to be negotiated, but, to paraphrase the Russian linguist Valentin Vološinov, it is perhaps more useful to think of it as the interlocutor accepting intentional objects in the work as sufficiently explaining the context in which they are encountered (quoted in Herman 2002, 346). The emphasis in either case is on the process taking place in the interlocutor’s mind – translating cognitive into aesthetic, rather than on the narrative. However, it would be incorrect to surmise from this that immersion is simply the ability of intentional objects to hold the attention of the interlocutor’s imagination, since the opposite – context sufficiently explaining the presence of certain intentional objects – must also hold true for the schemata to be sustainable. This premise must be true for two reasons: firstly, not all deictic spaces are illusion – some are genuinely penetrable and it is therefore entirely possible for boundaries between deictic centres to be blurred. For example, the transmedia work Murder on Beacon Hill blends known history about the Parkman-Webster murder case of 1849 in Boston, Massachusetts
with real-time location-based mapping in order to guide interlocutors through the story. In this case, it could be argued that immersion is a product of the ‘mixed-reality’ (Untravel Media 2009) nature of the work, with interlocutors asked to walk almost two kilometres around Boston while viewing videos via an iPhone app that explained various locations that featured in the murder.

Secondly, if the schemata were not sustainable, the interlocutor could not maintain what Gerrig refers to as the “distance” which the interlocutor is transported. “Distance” in this sense refers to the disparity between real and fictional worlds and the degree to which propositional content between the two may overlap. The interlocutor will always be transported a certain distance, as this is the nature of the paradox of fiction in deferring reference to the real in favour of self-reference and as Gerrig suggests, ‘immersion in narratives brings about partial isolation from the facts of the real world’ (1998, 16). However, Gerrig also argues that the greater the distance, the more the interlocutor relies on intuition and the more cognitive adjustments need to be made in order to accommodate it. Extra-ordinary genres of fiction – Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Fiction – not only raise problems for this argument, but alternative narrative formations, particularly ones based on complexity such as transmedia, also do. To a degree, Gerrig explains it by employing the so-called principle of minimal departure (Ryan 1980), which states that alternate worlds encountered in fiction, particularly those that lack a strong propositional overlap with the real world, can be accommodated by re-construing them as closely as possible with the interlocutor’s known reality. But this is to effectively impose an order upon the work where a complex, non-conventional, or dis-order is most likely present. It would therefore make sense to again apply Umberto Eco’s (1989) notion of information from Chapter 3 when accounting for distance, as information is additive more than it is interpretive, and in Eco’s conception is not purely empirical since the value of information, regardless of its quantity, is directly correlated to contextual circumstances. The schemata itself will be of more value where information is added to, rather than correlated with, what is already known, because it is this that the interlocutor will be able act on, as we shall see below. For information to be a genuine addition, then, it must be contingent, unpredictable, and emerge out of the space between narrative context and aesthetic experience, which is the deictic space the

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10 This is not limited to textual examples – all fiction incorporates propositional content of some form or another, which is evidence of what Gerrig says is ‘the common core at the heart of the various experiences of narrative’ (1998, 1).
interlocutor is being asked to move through. While it is therefore impossible to argue as a general rule that distance has any tangible impact on the immersive potential of a work, it is possible to argue that greater potential for immersion exists in those narrative formations where emergent properties are most in evidence, such as complex, unpredictable, or in some way non-conventional systems.

3.3.2 The performance metaphor

A major issue with the transportation metaphor is that it is unable, on its own, to transport meaning along with any empirical information. It simply facilitates shifting the interlocutor from one deictic centre. It therefore cannot be cited in isolation to explain immersion. The performance metaphor effectively extends the transportation metaphor, however, as Gerrig points out, in being transported there are always ‘discontinuities of experience’ (1998, 157) that need to be filled. In Chapter 2, I borrowed the phrase places of indeterminacy from Ingarden to describe much the same phenomenon, with the subtle difference being that discontinuities of experience exist solely in the mind of the interlocutor, even if they have their origin in places of indeterminacy found within the work (where the indeterminacy arises out of the creator’s inability to realise the absolute extent of an object). It is also worth pointing out that the use of the term “place” implicitly alludes to transportation between any two points (from one centre/place to another), so that an indeterminacy could be said to arise when the place the interlocutor arrives at is removed from, or does not readily correlate to, information already held in the interlocutor’s schemata. Performance, then, is the action the interlocutor takes in an attempt to resolve the tension held within the indeterminacy – as orientations in response to objects encountered. It would, however, be more accurate to think of it as performing; that is, as a series of ongoing actions carried out by the interlocutor in the moment of engagement; the notion of bringing objects within a work into a cognitive, concretised experience (Iser 1978; 1987), rather than a performance with its implication of a start and end point. Here, we must refer to a point already made in Chapter 2, which is that indeterminacy, by its nature, can only stimulate the interlocutor into a performance and cannot force

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11 That is, the interlocutor will move through ‘reference to persons, places, and objects within a text as it unfolds’ (Hanks 2005, 100).
12 An explanation of the difference between the terms performance and performing is offered in Section 6 of Chapter 2.
it, in the same way that Gerrig points out that the interlocutor cannot be forced to experience anything about the *storyworld*.

According to Gerrig, performance brings coherence to the interlocutor’s experience of *narrative*. It is evidence that he or she is making sense of, and concretising, the objects arrayed so that while *information* itself may not be interpretive, the act of performing it is. It need not be assumed from this that all performative acts lead to a total unity, however, which is what is typically assumed in narrative theory. If the *information* is truly additive and emergent, cohesion as a result of performative acts should be seen as providing continuity between trajectories rather than unity. Janet Murray suggests that the performative impetus of a work requires the interlocutor to discover or learn about the environment into which he or she has been transported; if immersion is akin to being submerged in water, she argues, then participating in the *narrative* is akin to learning to swim (Murray 2000, 98-99) (Murray is here expanding the notion of *immersion* beyond a purely cognitive dimension to include performance as physical participation, if not interaction). Murray’s argument here establishes two important points about the performance metaphor. The first is that *immersion* should be more like ‘being surrounded by a completely other reality’ (ibid., 99) than aligning it with a corresponding, already-existing one. This relates to how the *fictional* reality is realised as a creative act and is not a suggestion that it is only extra-ordinary *fictions* that have the potential for *immersion*. Gerrig notes how even the mere mention of a place – he uses the example “Texas” – is enough to transport an interlocutor to his or her cognitive approximation of that place, even if there is little in the way of genuine *immersion* taking place. The scope for performance then can be directly correlated to the kind and quality of places of indeterminacy within the work (though this is hardly a conclusion that could be reduced to a usable formula).

Ryan argues, in discussing performing at the level of interaction in particular, that in order to reconcile it with a concept of *immersion*, the performative component ‘must be stripped of any self-reflexive dimension’ (2001b, 284), and this leads to the second point to make about the performance metaphor: namely that performing involves the ‘active creation of belief’ (Murray 2000, 110) which is vital to sustaining *immersion*. As such, reflexivity cannot be stripped out as to perform is to make subjective choices

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about the information available and, as was discussed in the previous chapter, subjectivity is an entirely reflexive mode that, by definition, assumes the presence of another subjective agent against which it is experienced. Each performative act, and any subsequent immersion, needs to remain firmly in the realm of the interlocutor’s aesthetic experience if it is to have value and significance as an immersive aesthetic experience. When Murray discusses the active creation of belief, therefore, it is in order to ‘focus our attention on the enveloping world and [to] use our intelligence to reinforce rather than to question the reality of the experience’ (ibid.). Performing – that is, concretising the places of indeterminacy within a work – ‘endows the imaginary [intentional] objects with life’ (ibid., 112).

The value of the two metaphors of performance and transportation in understanding immersion is that, taken together, they highlight that the fundamental concern of the concept must be the interlocutor’s direct experience of deictic space and time. Or in other words, the experience of being oriented by ‘devices expressing information about the participant structure, object structure, spatial structure, and temporal structure of the narrated events’ (Herman 2002, 271). Transportation correlates to space, in that the metaphor describes, in broad terms, the interlocutor’s movement from one deictic centre to another, and in specific terms, the movement between trajectories. Performance correlates most strongly to time, in that it ‘is a “lived” or “human” experience of time’ (Ryan 2001b, 141), by which Ryan means that all performative acts are carried out in an ever-shifting moment so that the performance ultimately becomes ‘not a mere accumulation of time particles’ – that is, the linear passage of time – ‘but a process of disclosure’ (ibid.) – or the generation of emergent information that directs subsequent trajectories. Transportation is achieved by those narrative codes and conventions that enable the interlocutor to concretise – that is, to intentionally reconstruct – artifacts encountered within the work, while performance describes the act of concretisation itself.

Simply put, as the interlocutor performs each act of concretisation, he or she is transported deeper into the work. This grants us, at least theoretically, an understanding of the process of immersion, though there is an obvious issue regarding quality that I have not raised. While “Texas” may be a sufficient deictic code to initiate transport, it is only minimally effective as a code as it is either too broad or too narrow
in scope to offer any information of value to the interlocutor – information that the interlocutor is able to act upon. Ryan (2001b) argues that minimal codes such as this are built into any work and are unavoidable, offering little in the way of genuine immersion even if they are a necessary component of the work (such as propositional content), precisely because they are codes and conventions of narrative. Aesthetically richer forms of information – information that is emergent or unexpected, for example – will ‘resonate’ more strongly in the interlocutor’s mind, however. It is to this idea of resonance that I will now turn.

3.4 Resonance and aesthetic experience

Though admittedly Ryan does not use the term in a conceptual sense, the notion that certain intentional objects resonate for an interlocutor more strongly than others ought to be considered an important aspect to an understanding of immersion. I have therefore chosen to employ the term in order to more firmly illustrate the link between immersion and aesthetic experience,14 or what Wolfgang Iser describes as ‘placing our thoughts and feelings at the disposal of an unreality, bestowing on it a semblance of reality in proportion to a reducing of our own reality’ (Iser, quoted in Gerrig 1998, 21). Typically, resonance is thought of as a quality where two frequencies, vibrating sympathetically, reinforce and amplify one another, the result of which ‘is not attributable to either of the objects; it materialises as something additional’ (Tampalini 2007, 114). With its explicit reference to emergence, this definition is not far removed from the current discussion, particularly if a paraphrase of a subsequent OED definition is added: resonance as an instance in which a corresponding or sympathetic response has the power or quality to evoke or suggest images, memories, or emotions. What this demonstrates is the way in which information reinforces and amplifies, which is the necessary action for concretising intentional objects into aesthetic objects, and carries within it the potential for emergence which allows for the exploration of the boundary between real and fictional worlds.

A concept such as this is necessary because places of indeterminacy within a work are never truly resolved with any finality; the interlocutor’s concretisations, however

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14 I discuss aesthetic experience at greater length in Section 2.2 of Chapter 2.
well-realised and vivid in the moment of engagement, are only ever a temporary solution to the art coefficient – the ‘gap’ Marcel Duchamp (1975) argues is present in any creative work. Concretisations only exist, therefore, in the mind of the interlocutor in the form of aesthetic objects (or purely imagined reconstructions of intentional objects). The French aesthetician Mikel Dufrenne argues that ‘on the one hand, there is a being of the aesthetic object which forbids its reduction to the being of a representation. On the other hand, this being is dependent on perception and is attained in it, for the being at stake here is an appearance’ (1973, 223-224) or an experience of the object in question. The irreducibility of the aesthetic object that Dufrenne refers to is a result of its amplification in the mind of the interlocutor as he or she has performed the associated concretisation.

Information is thus received by the interlocutor via the work, who, in turn, through a reflexive process of concretisation, acts upon it. This process is necessarily reflexive since, as was discussed in Chapter 3, it is this reflexivity which grants the interlocutor the ability to suspend the natural world and its corresponding natural attitude in order to move into a phenomenological attitude. The resulting reflexive exchange is what locates the interlocutor within the arena of exchange, in which he or she ‘attends only to the phenomena in the manner of their being given [...] in their mode of giveness’ (Moran 2002, 11 – original emphasis). As Herman also notes, ‘[i]nterpreters of narrative do not merely reconstruct a sequence of events and a set of existents but imaginatively (emotionally, viscerally) inhabit a world’ (2002, 16). Interestingly, Herman is here describing the limitations of a Structuralist notion of story as the content plane of a work, arguing that it cannot account for immersion as it removes from consideration the actions an interlocutor performs in bringing the storyworld into existence. Immersion therefore requires the reflexive exchange of performative acts, without which there is no potential for a correspondingly deep immersion, because without this “folding back” quality, the intersubjectiveness of the exchange, there is no potential for resonance, for the objects concretised to be amplified and fed back so that the interlocutor’s real world diminishes in favour of the fictional world.

Why is it that some aesthetic experiences will resonate more strongly than others, though? A number of factors may contribute to this, including the quality of the work itself, though this has less to do with any distinctions between so-called high and low
cultures and more to do with the fact that immersion is more closely linked to story and aesthetic experience than with narrative. Since there are minimal forms of immersion that are common to any discursive formation (that is, “Texas” could be referred to in narrative or non-narrative situations to much the same effect), then it stands to reason that a work comprised only of minimal forms will not be a rewarding immersive experience. In this sense it is not the quality of the work, but the transportation metaphor itself which is limited, in that it is able to describe movement, but not engagement.

On the other hand, while the performance metaphor describes engagement, it says nothing in and of itself about the interlocutor’s satisfaction with his or her performance, or with any pleasure derived from it. These are factors which are linked more closely with the active creation of belief that the act of performing stimulates, so that it is possible to argue that some aesthetic experiences resonate more strongly than others because, instead of suspending disbelief, ‘which eviscerates the effects of fiction’ (Gerrig 1998, 17), the interlocutor is actively creating belief in the storyworld. Something else, according to Niklas Luhmann, must stand in the place of the real world, as it is ‘only when a reality “out there” is distinguished from fictional reality [that one can] observe one side from the perspective of the other’ (2000, 142). In order for the fictional world to manifest itself, it is therefore impossible to suspend disbelief (at least completely), as this would result in there being nothing against which to compare the otherness of the fictional (this will be discussed in greater detail in the following Section). In a very real sense then, the question should not be “why do some aesthetic experiences resonate more strongly that others,” but “what is the significance of the difference between the real and fictional worlds?” Exploring that difference constitutes the fundamental act of immersion and is the first step in charting the boundaries of the storyworld.

4. STORYWORLD

In terms of the two questions asked above, the former is highly idiosyncratic and depends to a large degree on what the interlocutor’s expectations of the work are and the ‘different evaluative criteria’ (Herman 2002, 16) he or she will bring to bear, making it problematic to suggest a definitive answer. The latter, however, involves the
series of judgments and corresponding orientations in response to the fictional world that will be made once the interlocutor is engaged, and which can be used as a basis for examining the concept of the storyworld. These judgments and orientations (which can be collectively referred to as concretisations) are predicated on a recognition of fictional intent, a concept that was discussed in the Introduction in which the interlocutor recognises the need to adopt a certain attitude toward the work, which should now be recognised as the need to participate in the active creation of belief in order to make the storyworld of the work manifest. In this sense the conception of the storyworld that I will be arguing for is more than just ‘the surrounding context or environment’ (ibid., 13) in which characters, events and so on are embedded – the storyworld defined as ‘the world evoked by narratives’ (Herman 2009a, 105) – it is the arena of exchange itself, the site to which the interlocutor has been transported and at which he or she performs concretisations on the array of intentional objects represented there.

This view attempts to extend the basic premise put forward by cognitive narratology (in particular) which posits the storyworld as a kind of metaphor of the interlocutor’s deictic shift to the fictional world based on the interpretation of spatiotemporal cues and a resulting ‘cognitive stance within the world of the narrative’ (Segal 1995a, 15). My aim here is to emphasise the aesthetic experience of such a shift and argue that, beyond interpretation, the storyworld is an affectively charged space which is held in readiness by the narrative, and activated by a process of translation, or a setting in motion that ‘is in essence an act of displacement’ (Bourriaud 2010b, 54). I have referred to this process of translation in previous chapters to describe the conversion of intended objects into aesthetic objects, and am suggesting here that this process also occurs at the level of storyworld as well. With this approach in mind, I will not be drawing heavily on what is known as possible worlds theory, which narratologists such as Ryan and Herman often refer to in relation to storyworlds, and from which the principle of minimal departure referred to above is derived. Nor will this be a

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15 Possible worlds theory was originally developed in philosophical studies but, since being adopted by narrative theorists, has been used to explain the relationship between the real world and fictional worlds. It is the premise that, if known reality comprises ‘the sum total of the imaginable’ (Ryan 2001b, 99), then a fictional world is a model constructed from a set of objects that can be assumed to be drawn from, or based upon, real-world counterparts, are made to relate in specific ways, and will always maintain some form of relationship with the real world (paraphrased from Ronen 1994). Possible worlds theory has been linked to the interlocutor’s creation of mental models, schemata, contextual frames, and similar theories in cognitive narratology, all of which have been referred to in some form or another in this thesis. By not drawing upon them in the current Section I am not denying their validity in discussions of the concept of storyworlds, which should be assumed as part of the interlocutor’s process of translation and concretisation, but simply wish to emphasise the phenomenological dimension of their
discussion of theories pertaining to the creation of secondary and tertiary worlds, such as those encountered in works of Fantasy or Science Fiction. Elements of these two bodies of theories will be apparent throughout, however, as they offer stimulating points of departure, but the focus will be on presenting the storyworld as an affective translation of the arena of exchange.

The term affective, as I shall be using it, is also not meant to be taken synonymously with emotion, or even with pleasure. Theatre researcher Serge Tampalini (2007) explains how what is affective in a work is a measure of its intensity in suspending normative expectations in order to engage the interlocutor with what is new and as yet undiscovered in the work, while emotion is a product of this engagement, a “qualified intensity [...] which is from that point onward defined as personal” (Brian Massumi, quoted in Tampalini 2007, 223). The affective is held in readiness in the work, while emotion is owned by the interlocutor. Cultural critic Lawrence Grossberg argues that ‘affect cannot be “found” in the text or read off its surfaces (any more than meaning can), it is also the case that affect is not something that individuals put into it. Affect is itself articulated in the relations between practices’ (Grossberg, quoted in Hills 2002, 60). Pleasure, on the other hand, ‘can be considered as something that cannot be made the object of rational analysis’ (Übersfeld 1982, 127), because it is ‘impossible to speak of pleasure outside of the experience of it’ (Tampalini 2007, 225). However, what can be said about pleasure is that it too can be measured according to the intensity of the objects stimulating it, that is, pleasure in the discovery of the new and a satisfaction of knowing, particularly ‘the possibility of discovering something that no one, not even the artist, has seen before’ (Luhmann 2000, 70).

4.1 The storyworld as affective space

The concept of affective space was raised in Chapter 1 and is derived from theatre practice to describe the tension between actual and potential spatiotemporal relations during the theatrical event. There is the actual spatial dimension of the stage and temporal dimension of the performance (its linear duration), which are disrupted by the potential dimensions of the space as acted upon and of the act of performing itself (subjective choices occurring in the moment). Tampalini likens the interlocutor’s creation and maintenance. For a more thorough discussion of possible worlds theory, see Ronen (1994). Doležel (1998), and Ryan (1991).
encounter with an affective space to awakening from a deep sleep, where, at least for a moment, the ‘immediate surroundings appear strange and unfamiliar to us [...] For an instant our normally stable world/reality collapses’ (2007, 204-205). It is the aim of fiction to keep this interstitial space open for as long as possible in order to achieve the necessary “collapse” of known reality in favour of its own. A possible worlds theory might refer to this as recentering, where ‘the realm of possibilities is thus recentered around the sphere which the narrator presents as the actual world. This recentering pushes the reader into a new system of actuality and possibility’ (Ryan 1991, 22 – emphasis mine). The assimilation of the fictional “other” space by the interlocutor describes ‘the experiential nature of the “affective”’ (Tampalini 2007, 208 – original emphasis), and is effectively the point at which engagement with the work commences.

An affective space is one that operates as an intervention upon the kind of rationalising processes the interlocutor would normally go through to resolve the tension between familiar and unfamiliar states (Tampalini 2007), or in this case, real and fictional worlds. This intervention is necessary in order to foreground the alternate (pseudo) reality of the storyworld, detaching ‘what one sees from what one knows’ (ibid., 209), whereas the principle of minimal departure is one such rationalising process that attempts to inscribe what one knows onto what one sees (an explanation of seeing is offered below). This principle, which Ryan argues ‘every text is placed under the authority of’ (1991, 57), posits three rules which are worth considering in order to understand how rational processes operate: the first is that intentional objects arrayed in the work may operate as counterfactual conditions that, by running contrary to known reality, will reveal more or less objective “truths” about the storyworld. The second rule is that regardless of how normal or abstract the counterfactual condition is, its adherence or deviation from known reality can be taken as a measure of the boundaries of the storyworld. The third rule is that, where places of indeterminacy in the work do not readily correlate to known reality, it is assumed that these can be resolved with information drawn from known reality, at least until proven otherwise. By these rules the storyworld is thus rationalised according to its relationship to the real world by analytical judgments that lack a sufficient affective dimension.
This is not to suggest that these judgments are unnecessary, as it is undeniable that the interlocutor is able to derive knowledge about the *storyworld* that the creator intends to be taken as absolute from them. However, by rationalising the *storyworld* according to such rules, the information gained is deprived of meaning and value, and Ryan suggests that the principle is most effective when it is allowed to be frustrated or subverted by the work, rather than rigidly applied (ibid.). However, a principle such as this imposes evaluative criteria on the work that reduce the ability of the *affective space* to intervene in rationalising processes. Or put another way, *affective space* is itself a process that suspends normal evaluative criteria, which is particularly useful in instances of transmedia storytelling, for example, where the work in question is *precarious* and does not necessarily operate according to a mono-medium logic. Rationalising processes should therefore be utilised to judge how truth is to be evaluated in the *storyworld*, rather than *reveal* truths about it.

*Affective space* is not an intervention at the level of *narrative*. As was argued in Chapter 2, *narrative* stands inert until it is engaged with. Though it organises the conditions upon which the work will be experienced (its formational cues) and can therefore, to a degree, anticipate probable responses, it cannot reveal the interlocutor’s aesthetic experience or the manner in which it will be engaged with, but only facilitate the process of *translation* from one state to the other. The interlocutor does not concretise formational cues, codes and conventions, but rather the effect they have on his or her experience of the work, facilitating how the intentional objects are presented and are to be perceived. This effect is the aesthetic experience of the work, the *story*, made manifest in the mind of the interlocutor. However, *affective space* is also not an intervention at the level of *story*. This is because the emerging reality of the *storyworld* ‘refuses to yield any immediate sense’ (Tampalini 2007, 206) so that the affectiveness it inscribes does not belong to the interlocutor alone, but is the result of *intersubjective* exchanges between the interlocutor and conscious agents within the work.16 Since *story* is the aesthetic experience of engagement with *narrative*, it is only the experience of these exchanges that reside with the interlocutor, so that the *affective space* itself exists in the interstice between *narrative* and *story*, as a deictic threshold.

16 See Chapter 3 for an explanation of *intersubjective* exchange. The concept of conscious agents operating within a *fictional* work is derived from Monika Fludernik and is referred to in Chapters 1 and 2.
In order for the affective space to intervene with, and diminish, known reality, Tampalini argues that there must be a looking back, a reflexive operation of seeing requiring the adoption of the phenomenological attitude by the interlocutor in order to become consciously aware of the objects arrayed (contrasted against the “taken for granted” perspective of the natural attitude). Once the interlocutor becomes conscious of objects in the work, these objects ‘appear as if they have been there all the time waiting for us to see them’ (Tampalini 2007, 207). This process of seeing is the phenomenological gaining of perspective within the affective space that orients the interlocutor towards the storyworld, or as Maurice Merleau-Ponty points out, ‘[t]he positing of the object therefore makes us go beyond the limits of our actual experience […] with the result that finally experience believes that it extracts all its own teaching from the object’ (2002, 81). In other words, knowledge about the storyworld is gained via experience of it over how it relates to known reality, with an additional order inscribed in place of the interlocutor’s known reality. The affective space thus becomes charged with an excess of potential semantic value, ‘a logic that is the sense of something outside of our rationalising vision’ (Tampalini 2007, 212), because the recognition of order implies a consciousness that devised it. This consciousness is not necessarily that of the creator – this is not an argument for creative agency or the primacy of the author – but of the conscious agencies activated during the interlocutor’s engagement with the work, since narrative experientiality always implies other consciousnesses (Fludernik 1996). Referred to here is the phenomenological notion of intentionality, ‘that every mental act [performed by the interlocutor] is related to some object’ (Moran 2002, 47). These conscious agencies direct the interlocutor towards those objects which are intended to be translated and concretised into aesthetic objects, so that the interlocutor is able to create trajectories within the excess of the affective space.

This means that the storyworld should be understood as a level of intersubjective exchange beyond that required ‘for the purposes of narrative comprehension’ (Herman 2002, 16), or narrative sense, as was referred to in Chapter 2, which is the interlocutor’s accounting of formational characteristics of narrative against relevant schemata; the objective attempt ‘to reconstruct the (series of) incidents recounted by

17 Fludernik’s complete thought here is ‘(narrative) experientiality always implies – and sometimes emphatically foregrounds – the protagonist’s consciousness’ (1996, 22). I simply did not wish to limit this to the protagonist alone, since Fludernik’s argument is that narrativity – how a narrative is judged to be a narrative – is linked to consciousness rather than event sequences as is traditionally accepted in narrative theory.
the narrator’ (ibid., 222) and as the schematic accumulation of ‘knowledge that is specific to the fictional world, such as facts about particular characters and the situations they are placed in’ (Emmott 1997, 4). Narrative sense manifests a narrative world; for there to be a storyworld, there must be a corresponding story sense which should include processes of immersion (including transportation), performative acts, the active creation of belief, translation, and concretisation culminating in a lived aesthetic experience. While narrative sense would initiate immersion at a basic level of transportation this could not, as was seen earlier, be assumed to lead to any genuinely significant discoveries about the storyworld, and it would only manifest in its basic deictic dimensions. The storyworld is not a reduction of narrative cues to an embedded story level, but is rather an expansion of them into the sphere of the experiential because the affective space, that territory which exists as the site of translation between narrative and story, is most potent when it ‘is not determined by its literal connection to conventional meaning’ (Tampalini 2007, 221).

Because the affective space is the point at which narrative and story converge and the process of translation between them is fluid and precarious, a constant tension between ontic and phenomenal, narrative and story senses. The tension held within the affective space, therefore, is not reconciled with the manifestation of the storyworld; it is instead its energising ingredient, the purpose of which is to suggest possible trajectories that may be set in motion. Consequently, affective space shows, rather than tells, how the immersive quality of any given storyworld is the product of a lived experientiality at least as much, if not more, than it is a product of narratorial provocation. This also implies that the excessive condition of affective space is proportional to the scope of the work, since there is not one constant level of excess applied to all works, but instead it appears as a condition which, in the moment of its manifestation, seems ‘to be more than the sum of the elements responsible for the its construction’ (Tampalini 2007, 114), which is the apparent excess of signs/objects already present in the work. It exists mainly because of the interlocutor’s (and, by extension, the creator’s) inability to perceive the world as totality, even while objects point to this possibility. The excessive condition of affective space, then, is the

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18 As an aside, and to clarify terminology used early, my use of the term fictional world is meant as a general reference, while narrative world and storyworld have the specific applications described here.
remainder of a totality that appears, but which was never originally, present. The active creation of belief, referred to above in relation to immersion, is equally as important here as a means for dealing with this remainder.

4.2 The active creation of belief in manifesting the storyworld

The active creation of belief is a phrase used by Janet Murray as a counterpoint to that of the suspension of disbelief, the phrase coined by the English poet and literary critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1817. For Murray, the suspension ‘is too passive a formulation even for traditional media’ (2000, 110). Coleridge conceived of it as a ‘transfer from our inward nature [of] a human interest and a semblance of truth’ (2013) into an appreciation of the work, and was particularly interested in ways in which the unfamiliar could be reconciled with the familiar in poetry (specifically, though the thought had general application to fiction even for him). Importantly, Coleridge intended that the suspension be maintained only ‘for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith’ (ibid.), which is to say, the duration of the interlocutor’s engagement; there was no sense that the interlocutor would ‘lose touch with reality’ as philosopher Kendall Walton (1990, 241) suggests. However, Murray argues that when the interlocutor engages with fiction, it is with the desire to experience the work and the intention to focus on the various developments taking place within that fictional world. This occurs despite the reality that ‘[w]e cannot get rid of the immediately given world’ (Luhmann 2000, 55).

The issue that Murray identifies is that, if the suspension of disbelief is the suspension of a critical, enquiring faculty (2000, 110), then this is difficult to reconcile with a genuine experience of a fictional world. There must be an accounting for a level of participation on the interlocutor’s part in order to fiction to operate. Coleridge argued that the suspension allowed the interlocutor to take pleasure in the work by bracketing out the implausibility of any truth claims it may make about its world, but

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19 A remainder that is almost uncanny-in the way it appears to be ‘nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old-established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression’ (Freud 2004, 90). Space does not permit a fuller exploration of the links between affective space and the uncanny, but the way in which objects in the storyworld appear to have been there all the time, waiting to be seen, as a result of their reflexive looking back echoes Sigmund Freud’s argument about repression (at least in an abstract sense), while his subsequent suggestion is also telling: ‘an uncanny effect is often and easily produced by effacing the distinction between imagination and reality, such as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions and significance of the thing it symbolizes’ (ibid., 93 – emphasis mine).
this assumes that truth in fiction operates the same way, and has the same implications, as it does in the real world. The literary critic J. R. R. Tolkien argues that fictional truth need only be true for that storyworld: ‘it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken [...] [D]isbelief must be suspended (or stifled), otherwise listening and looking would become intolerable’ (Tolkien 2008, 52). Consequently, it could be argued that the suspension of disbelief operates more like a rationalising process for resolving familiar/unfamiliar tension into a ‘spirit of unity’ (Coleridge 2013) than it does in allowing the interlocutor to make sense of the storyworld.

Coleridge emphasised the importance of pleasure and of imagination in the suspension of disbelief, which narrative theorist Werner Wolf takes up in his notion of aesthetic illusion, a term which he borrows from earlier research by the art historian Ernst H. Gombrich (1960), among others, and which he defines as a ‘pleasurable mental state that emerges during the reception of many representational texts, artifacts or performances’ (Wolf 2009, 144). This state is referred to as illusion not because it is an untruth, but because it is provoked by objects whose presence is ‘triggered by a representation’ (ibid., 149) – that is, are non-natural – but which may nevertheless exert a genuine influence on the interlocutor. Wolf’s purpose is to emphasise this non-natural character of fiction (specifically, of representation), which he feels is missing from similar concepts such as recentering as utilised in possible worlds theory. By failing to account for such non-naturalness, he argues, there is a risk of misunderstanding how the verisimilitude of the fictional world is maintained. Therefore, because a rational awareness of the storyworld as fiction is always unavoidably present, engagement with a work must be based upon what he refers to as a “reception contract,” at the core of which is the suspension of disbelief. The interlocutor must balance engagement between the two poles of ‘total rational distance [...] and complete immersion’ (Wolf 2009, 144); there must be some immersion, but not so little that there is no pleasure, and not so much that it becomes delusion (a cognitive error).

While it is true that the interlocutor will maintain ‘a latent, rational awareness’ (ibid., 145) of the real, Wolf only accedes to the affective dimension of engagement when he says that such awareness may be ‘bracketed out in favour of an imaginary experience’
This argument speaks to narrative sense more than it does to story sense and does not sufficiently explain how schemata might be used to authenticate and set the storyworld in motion. For Wolf, illusion, and, by extension, suspension of disbelief, is a rationalising process ‘between a representation and essential culturally and historically induced concepts of reality and schemata of perception’ (ibid., 147), but while suspension of disbelief occurs as part of narrative sense, active creation occurs as part of story sense. There must be a point at which a translation occurs from one state to the other if the storyworld is to be manifested – the formational cues of the former must be set in motion in order to actualise the latter. As Bourriaud argues, while the form of a work ‘shows the typical features of a world [it] does not have an exclusive hold on it [...] In order to create a world, this encounter must be a lasting one: the elements forming it must be joined together in a form, in other words, there must have been “a setting of elements on one another (the way ice ‘sets’)” (2002, 19).

Thus, disbelief should be understood not as incredulity at the implausible or impossible, but as another kind of rationalising process that attempts to make narrative sense of a work. The interlocutor does not so much suspend disbelief, therefore, as actively build belief upon it, suspending not incredulity, but those normative expectations which disbelief would otherwise attempt to transfer into the storyworld. In contrast to processes of rationalisation, the affective space ‘triggers [...] alternative ways of responding to what we see’ (Tampalini 2007, 202). By engaging in active creation, the interlocutor holds open the affective space of the work in such a way that it will be resolved only by a lived experience of the storyworld – a temporary solution to the precariousness of the affective space. Each concretised experience creates ‘a little feedback loop that urges us on to more engagement, which leads to more belief’ (Murray 2000, 112). It is possible for resonance to be produced as a result of these feedback loops, as well as the intensity of any pleasure experienced. Thus, the storyworld can be seen as the product of the interlocutor’s aesthetic experience of story, enabled by narrative even while it is distinct from it and therefore able to operate transmedially.
5. COMMUNITY, COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE, AND PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

The three principles discussed so far have been productive in describing a phenomenon that answers Bourriaud's question, 'What is a form that is essentially relational?' (2002, 21). However, the final principle of transmedia storytelling I wish to discuss demonstrates this relationality in ways that are perhaps more tangible than complexity, immersion and storyworlds otherwise allow. This is the principle of community as it has been developed in transmedia phenomena, and which in my conception subsumes the notions of collective intelligence and participatory culture. By combining these two subsets into an overarching concept of community, another facet of the arena of exchange is revealed, one which Bourriaud calls the “co-existence criterion,” or ‘a model of sociability’ that all works possess (ibid., 109). This criterion, which could be included with the three criteria for a relational aesthetics previously utilised, is concerned with the accessibility of the work in the real world – what political and social scholar Jules Boykoff says is the foregrounding of ‘sociability, encounter, interactivity, and open-endedness in the name of building transitory micro-communities, a “social interstice” [that] transforms viewers into participants’ (Boykoff 2013, 226). Essentially, the criterion asks: "What manner of relationship does the interlocutor have with the work, and how, or in what ways, is this relationship made meaningful or significant?" When that work is based on a relational formation, as is the case with transmedia, then the question is not merely asked of the individual interlocutor's relationship to the work, but the interlocutor's relationship to the knowledge community surrounding it as well. Though in a certain sense transmedia works need not rely on community at all, the best examples of the phenomenon, such as The Matrix, television series Lost, or Augmented Reality Games (ARGs) such as The Beast, have taken advantage of what Henry Jenkins calls 'the social process of acquiring knowledge, which is dynamic and participatory' (2008, 54). Community in this sense foregrounds the way in which transmedia works, more than most other artistic mediums, are able to incorporate the interlocutor directly in their actualisation.

Before discussing collective intelligence and participatory culture specifically, I want to return to one of the foundational principles of this thesis and reiterate some key
points about convergence culture. This is because any contemporary notion of community, particularly as it relates to the arts, ought to acknowledge the cultural shifts which have potentially impacted it, such as the move away from understanding community as an entity fixed in space, to one associated in time, a move away from ‘hypostatized communities’ (Lévy 1999, 13) to what Bourriaud refers to as a precariousness inscribed in culture that produces the wandering, nomadic art form (2010b, 84). This is a reflection of anthropologist Nick Crossley’s conception of relational sociology, discussed in the previous chapter, as a rejection of holistic views of community that see it as fixed and unchanging. In the same way, by not being fixed, precarious, relational works are not aimless, but are created according to parameters and processes other than the normative parameters other works might possess. These parameters and processes might reasonably be understood as a product of a convergence culture, ‘a shift in the ways we think about our relations to media’ (Jenkins 2008, 22-23) that ‘highlight[s] the cultural component that is structured around practices of consumption and production and both material and conversational forms of sharing’ (Artieri 2012, 460), that is, processes of creation, engagement, and distribution along community lines. However, convergence itself must be seen as an emergent quality of that which occurs at the intersection of a range of societal forces (Jenkins 2001), the product of ‘the emerging reality of networked and productive publics in the increasingly complex environment of the transmediality of the production, distribution and consumption of digital contents related to entertainment and information’ (Artieri 2012, 448). Jenkins characterises it primarily as ‘a situation in which multiple media systems coexist and where media content flows fluidly across them’ (2008, 322), while communications scholar Judd Ethan Ruggill (2009) identifies three qualities of convergence which he labels kinetic, synergistic, and primal. These can be interpreted as meaning that convergence: is always in motion, altering dynamically in accordance with its environment; constitutes a synergy of cultural, technological, and economic forces mediated, in part, by the demands of the community; and always tends to bring to the surface those conditions and innovations which seem most relevant to the community at a particular historical moment. It is upon this notion of convergence as a fundamental principle that the following discussions of collective intelligence and participatory culture are based.
5.1 Collective intelligence at the intersection of convergence and exchange

In the previous chapter I discussed the French philosopher Pierre Lévy's notion of an art of implication, in which the *arena of exchange* gives the appearance of having always existed, when in fact it is contingent upon reflexive acts of exchange. This notion, which is related in kind to Tampalini's notion of a *looking back*, is part of a greater theory of Lévy's termed *collective intelligence*. As the name suggests, *collective intelligence* is concerned with the ability of a group to produce and distribute new, emergent knowledge in ways that would have otherwise been impossible for its individual members, and is useful insofar as it describes a mode for the formation of knowledge communities and the creation and distribution of knowledge within them – a model of *intersubjective* exchange based on a principle of convergence. Lévy's defining characteristic of such groups 'is the mutual recognition and enrichment of individuals' (1999, 13), which makes it distinct from seemingly related terms such as group or collaborative intelligences, the former of which is concerned with the probability of outcomes based on group consensus and the latter with the management and distribution of power in a group more so than the creation of knowledge or problem solving, and of knowledge sharing, or the way in which knowledge is managed and distributed.

Though Lévy does not use the term convergence culture to describe the prevailing social, economic, technological and political factors impacting on *communities* – referring instead to a “fusion” between them – for him it is the creation of emergent knowledge that the collective makes possible which presents the most interesting development of a convergence culture. Emergent knowledge is also necessarily a deterritorialised knowledge, since it does not belong to any one individual but to the collective, and Lévy cites the rise of cyberspace (the Internet/online environments) as the chief instigator in this process of deterritorialisation. This process occurs because cyberspace organises, reorganises, breaks down, and reconstructs knowledge ‘in a shifting space of interaction among knowledge and knowers’ (Lévy 1999, 15). In this way, the deterritorialisation of knowledge that the *collective intelligence* produces potentially reflects complexities pre-existing in society that, according to Bourriaud, can be navigated by ‘reasoned, intuitive, or aleatory’ means (2010b, 159-160). Though
Lévy’s model of *collective intelligence* is largely indebted to the advent of cyberspace as its energising ingredient, it is not a theory of cyberspace or of virtual communities *per se*. Lévy instead sees these as evidence of a shift towards what he refers to as the *knowledge space*, a kind of ur-space in which, and out of which, knowledge flows in a constant act of becoming. This conception of knowledge is not entirely new: the French philosopher Michel Foucault conceived of knowledge as ruptures and discontinuities, displacements and transformations ‘that serve as new foundations [and] the rebuilding of foundations’ (1972, 5).

While in Foucault’s conception, knowledge ultimately took the form of *discursive formations*, or a kind of grammar of knowledge, Lévy regards a *knowledge space* as a societal organising principle, around which temporary micro-communities, or what Lévy calls “intelligent collectives,” might develop.20 ‘Any human group can form a virtual community. Such communities are valuable to the extent that they approach the ideal of an intelligent collective, one that is more imaginative, responsive, and capable of learning and creating than an intelligently directed collective’ (Lévy 2001, 111). These micro-communities occupy the interstices between convergent mediums, converting what appears to be null space into the boundaries of the *arena of exchange* implied by their proximity. What develops is a *knowledge space* bounded by the trajectories the collective creates in order to correlate and translate knowledge across the *arena*, from one nodal point to the other. Though the *arena* contains within it the preconditions for its establishment in the form of intentional objects, it is nonetheless the collective that activates those conditions by acting upon them. How those conditions are acted upon, and the semantic value they ultimately possess, is contingent on the community.

Thus the co-existence criterion is fulfilled since the establishment of an *arena of exchange* is a manifestation of relations amongst the micro-community for the purpose of comprehending and actualising the work. The transformation of the interlocutor

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20 Lévy has claimed elsewhere, ‘I foretell the coming of one planet-wide civilisation based on the practice of collective intelligence in Cyberspace’ (2005, 189). To say, then, that *knowledge spaces* only result in “micro” communities does not seem to accurately represent Lévy’s ideas; however, aside from the idealistic, utopian tone he strikes in this article, Lévy does not equate collective intelligence with a collective consciousness, since the former must be allowed to be diffuse if it is to be effective. If a progression towards a collective consciousness is what Lévy means, however, I am not convinced that *collective intelligence* as a model has the capacity to maintain such a universality, and nor would it offer a solution to the issues of war, misery, and ecological disaster that Lévy raises in his article – it is not a panacea, and I would be hesitant to apply the concept of *collective intelligence* beyond the aforementioned formation of knowledge communities and the creation and distribution of knowledge within them.
from inert viewer to active participant is based on ‘the social process of acquiring knowledge, which is dynamic and participatory,’ as opposed to ‘the possession of knowledge, which is relatively static’ (Jenkins 2008, 54). It is the possession of knowledge, its territorialisation, that keeps it from being receptive to innovation, experimented with, and put to new uses: ‘The members of a thinking [active, participatory] community search, inscribe, connect, consult, explore’ (Lévy 1999, 217) in an effort to incorporate, as arts and media scholar Ginette Verstraete puts it, ‘the possibilities of convergence to exchange information, collaborate together and thus expand their knowledge’ (2011, 537). Within this space, Lévy’s ideal is that each interlocutor will be recognised for his or her contributions to the knowledge space in a ‘mutual recognition and enrichment of individuals’ (Lévy 1999, 13), but the degree to which this occurs and is actually mutually beneficial is perhaps not so fully realised at present, as Jenkins (2008) demonstrates in several examples of micro-communities the prevalence of the so-called expert paradigm, which introduces aspects of territorialisation and specialisation to the community, and at the other end of the spectrum those members who are content to more or less passively receive knowledge generated by others. What is interesting to note is that despite this spectrum of participation in the community, the experience of having engaged with the arena of exchange nevertheless remains that of the individual interlocutor.

Nevertheless, the important point to make about collective intelligence in the current context is that it provides a framework within which a lived experientiality of relational, transmedia works is made possible: ‘Our interactions produce, transform, and continuously develop heterogeneous and interlinked spaces’ (Lévy 1999, 143). These lived spaces are rendered precarious by their fluidity, able to ‘bend and shape themselves around objects they contain and which organize them’ (ibid.); are affective, in that the ‘primary goal should be to prevent closure from occurring too quickly, before the possible has an opportunity to deploy the variety of its richness’ (ibid., 122); and are participatory, requiring for their existence the very acts of engagement used to delineate the community. The operation of intersubjective exchange in works produced within a paradigm of convergence can therefore be illustrated by a model of collective intelligence.

21 And where closure indicates a cessation of engagement (Lévy 1999, 103), presumably at the interlocutor’s discretion.
5.2 Participatory culture: inscribing socialised relations

Lévy argues that the form of art best suited to collective intelligences ‘will experiment with different modalities of communication and creation’ (1999, 122), as one which operates at an intersection of collective intelligence and convergence culture. It is at this intersection that Henry Jenkins in particular has developed his thinking of participatory culture over a number of years and several publications. Participation is a level removed from the intersubjective exchange I argued above was characteristic of collective intelligence. Where intersubjectivity is mainly a process of mediation between objective and subjective states, the product of which is ‘the organisation of a social group’ (Vaitkus 1991, 11) capable of exchange, participation describes the range of activities that may take place within that arena of exchange and the necessary ‘set of cultural competencies and social skills’ (Jenkins et al 2006, 4) required to operate, and not merely consume content, within the arena. It inscribes a model of socialised relations into the activities of interlocutors. This, of course, means that participation itself is not a new phenomenon, as it can be understood as a product of the sociocultural demands of a given historical period, but as with Lévy’s notion of collective intelligence, it is the potentialities offered by digital technologies, online environments and the Internet in general that have foregrounded the emergence of new modes of participation and reshaped the way in which, for example, fictional narratives may be formulated and stories engaged with. Where culture can be understood generally as ‘a living, active process’ (Fiske 2010, 19), and a popular culture as ‘the active process of generating and circulating meanings and pleasures within a social system’ (ibid.), a participatory culture is therefore one where the barriers of entry into that process are lowered or otherwise removed for the purpose of inviting the interlocutor ‘to actively participate in the creation and circulation of new content’ (Jenkins 2008, 331), or what, in a nascent form, cultural theorist John Fiske could be said to regard as ‘popular involvement with the art form’ (2010, 110).²²

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²² There are, of course, political and economic implications that Jenkins and Fiske, amongst others, associate with participation, such as the possibility of a greater democratisation and distribution of power, the issue of the participation gap (unequal access to resources, skills and knowledge), and so on. While I do not want to dismiss the importance of these issues, they are also not the focus of this thesis and have been bracketed out of the current discussion. For a more complete definition of participatory culture that incorporates these, see Jenkins et al 2006, 3.
In a 2006 white paper produced as part of the MacArthur Foundation’s series of reports on digital media and learning, Jenkins, in collaboration with media and education scholars Ravi Purushotma, Katherine Clinton, Margaret Weigel, and Alica J. Robison, identify four forms of participation which I will draw on here to demonstrate how a principle of participation operates. What is most apparent about these forms is that they operate as tools of simplification, ways of negotiating complex systems that allow the interlocutor, either individually or in a community scenario, to engage with and make sense of the work in meaningful ways. They also largely describe what Jenkins and others refer to as “grassroots participation,” which is a way of describing the creation and distribution of knowledge at the interlocutor’s level as well as the ambiguous power relations that are often at play between this non-commercial and the overarching commercial aspects of a work. The four forms to be considered are: affiliations, expressions, collaborative problem-solving, and circulations.

5.2.1 Affiliations

Affiliations are the interlocutor’s various memberships with communities, either formal or informal (Jenkins et al 2006, 8). Though the examples Jenkins cites are primarily those of online social media such as Facebook and message boards, affiliations are not limited to these, as he has elsewhere argued that fandoms operate as cultures of membership in which ‘having control and mastery over art by pulling it close and integrating it into your sense of self’ (2006, 23) becomes the primary objective. As media and cultural studies researcher Matt Hills argues, ‘claiming the status of “fan” may, in certain contexts, provide a cultural space for types of knowledge and attachment’ (2002, xi). That is, the community, as a collective intelligence, creates and maintains a knowledge space that is of specific value to its members. Thus, the knowledge space is at the same time an affiliative space, bringing interlocutors into proximity with one another along the trajectories each has previously established which indicate his or her attachment to the community. Such an affiliative space will, at some point in its existence, also include the other three forms of participation, with these participatory acts functioning as what media and education scholar Rebecca W. Black terms, ‘public symbols of affiliation’ (2005, 121), since access into and association with a participatory culture is confirmed by the activities of creation and

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23 The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation is an American philanthropic institution involved in awarding grants and loans to individuals and groups involved in various humanitarian programs and initiatives.
circulation of content (or specifically, of knowledge as content and content as knowledge).

The desire for affiliations addresses an individual need for social inclusion in the form of recognition, what cultural critic Tzvetan Todorov says, ‘marks the entrance of the individual into specifically human [social; relational] existence’ (2001, 77). Recognition is typically thought of as occurring as either a need for distinction or conformity – ‘either I want to be perceived as being different from others or as being like them’ (ibid., 79), the interlocutor wants to know that what he or she contributes ‘will be appropriately valued’ (Jenkins et al. 2006, 7) – though Todorov points out a third way in which the need for recognition can manifest itself as an alignment with, but not a conformity to, the customs and norms of a given community. This third way seems more in keeping with the reality of how interlocutors choose to affiliate themselves with a community, as it describes a satisfaction of proximity, rather than an “all or nothing” commitment, which is flexible enough that the interlocutor may move in and out of the community at will without feeling a pressure to contribute. In a certain sense, this satisfaction of proximity can be viewed as a defence mechanism to help offset the possibility of rejection, what the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman describes as ‘shifting the threat of exclusion away from oneself and towards the others’ (2008, 21 – original emphasis). However, if a characteristic of participatory culture is that ‘not every member must contribute, but all must believe they are free to’ (Jenkins et al. 2006, 7), then concerns about individual rejection can be answered, at least in part, by cultural anthropologist Mizuko Ito’s argument that, ‘some of the key ingredients of open and distributed innovation are the voluntary nature of participation and the diversity of motivations that contributors bring to the activity, varying from skills development, a sense of mission, competency display, and the desire for social connection’ (Ito 2012, 182 – emphasis mine). This is to say that the interlocutor is free to test the limits of his or her affiliation with a community, having arrived at it for any number of reasons.
5.2.2 Expressions

The kind of innovations to which Ito refers are the range of new and reshaped forms that may emerge as a result of participation. Jenkins et al refer to these innovations as expressions of a collective creativity (2006, 8) based on the way in which convergence culture ‘reaffirms the right of everyday people to actively contribute to their culture’ (Jenkins 2008, 136). He cites such examples as fan fiction and video making, remix culture, mash-ups, and other creative extensions which are produced by the interlocutor and/or community rather than whatever commercial interests lie behind the work, making this particular form of participation contentious for the way it blurs boundaries between commercial and social ownership, since ‘the dominant understanding [...] emphasizes the commercial aspects of innovation’ (Jensen, Phillips & Strand 2012, 4) rather than the participatory and creative. It also requires a distinction to be made between participation and collaboration: the latter may refer to Jenkins’ (2008) notion of an open narrative world which interlocutors are free to occupy and expand, subject to a centralised authorial figure; it may also refer to ideas of co-ownership and/or co-authorship which grant ‘configurative power over not merely content but also over a work’s genre and form’ (Aarseth 1997, 164. See also Beech 2008). For a concept of participation as involvement in the creation and dissemination of new content to run in conjunction with these notions of collaboration, particularly in the current transitional phase towards a convergence culture, it must be seen to operate at the sociocultural level of the interlocutor and the communities in which he or she is involved.

However, this distinction does not dismiss the immediate creative and affective aspects of expression. In fact, expressions speak to the way in which a community will consciously augment the codes and conventions a work seeks to establish towards its own ends, generally as a manifestation of its enthusiasm for the work (Ito 2012). The critical element of creativity, according to cognitive psychologist Robert Weisberg, is that the act should produce something “new,” ‘at least for the person who produces it’ (Weisberg 2010, 236), and since creativity is ‘a particular type of decision-making process involved in the solution of problems’ (Tampalini 2007, 6) then it is possible to

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24 Ito, for example, discusses the practice of fan subtitling known as fansubbing in her article. This is the practice of translating and subtitling anime (Japanese animation) by amateur (unpaid, nonprofessional) fans. Though generally done for Western, English-speaking audiences, fansubbing has been used to bring a wealth of content to places that would otherwise never have had access.
understands any given example of expression as a series of semantically charged appropriations of the work as received. Because the interlocutor (and by extension the community he or she is involved in) does not concretise codes and conventions, but rather the effect they have on his or her experience of the work, participation in the form of expressions grants the freedom to reject, reconfigure or reimagine those conventions where this effect is deemed unsatisfactory. As Jenkins has elsewhere argued, ‘it is the attraction to works that are in some ways mismatched to our needs that encourages fans to rework and rewrite them’ (Jenkins 2007). Where normally the interlocutor would utilise codes and conventions for the comprehension of the work, expressions identifies a form of participation in which those expectations may, at least temporarily, be suspended, in favour of a process of ‘taking culture apart and putting it back together’ (Jenkins et al 2006, 32). Fansubbing is one instance of this, which ‘arose to fill an unmet consumer demand not being served by commercial industries’ (Ito 2012, 183). Such freedom of appropriation and expression has always existed as an energising ingredient of popular culture, since an interlocutor’s pleasure is derived from the ‘mix of productivity, relevance, and functionality, which is to say that the meanings I make from a text are pleasurable when I feel they are my meanings’ (Fiske 2010, 46); it is simply that the nature of convergence and the resulting scope for participation pushes what was formally a ‘hidden layer of cultural activity into the foreground’ (Jenkins 2008, 137).

5.2.3 Collaborative problem-solving

As the term suggests, this form of participation is concerned with the ability of the community to work together ‘to complete tasks and develop new knowledge’ (Jenkins et al 2006, 8). Alternative Reality Games (ARGs), the activity of “spoiling,” and even aspects of cosplay (see Okabe 2012) can be considered examples of this form where the emphasis is on learning and a ‘collaborationist logic’ (Jenkins 2008, 177). While the use of the term collaboration in this regard does retain aspects of the distinctions made above, the activities of learning and problem-solving under consideration here occur at the level of community and how it responds to problems, which in general are intentionally integrated into the formation of the work in the form of puzzles to be solved, information to be gathered, and so on, or may include unintentional knowledge gaps that need to be resolved. Perhaps the most visible form of collaborative problem-
solving which Jenkins cites is that of the online encyclopedia Wikipedia. By its own
definition, Wikipedia is ‘a collaboratively edited, multilingual, free Internet
encyclopedia’ that departs from ‘the expert-driven style of encyclopedia-building’
Lévy’s premise that ‘[n]o one knows everything, everyone knows something’ (1999,
13-14), with Wikipedia representing a deterritorialisation of knowledge by way of the
dispersed capabilities of its community of contributors. Cultural critic Alan Kirby
refers to this as a shift in the ‘right to contribute’ (2009, 113), which previously had to
be earned and conferred, but is now based on a fluid notion of competence.25

Collaborative problem-solving also incorporates a wide range of skills necessary for
engaging with the work, including play, performance, simulation, judgment,
networking, negotiation, and transmedia navigation, amongst others (Jenkins et al
2006). These are tools which allow the community to manage and filter pertinent
information, make connections (both objective and subjective), and orient members
‘within the flux of information’ (Lévy 1997, 9). Participation within the collaborative
problem-solving space is most often of an informal kind, ‘sustained by common
endeavours [...] and because people can participate in various ways according to their
skills and interests’ (Jenkins et al 2006, 9). These spaces are much more precarious in
nature than their formal, educational counterparts, being shaped by ‘cultural and
social protocols’ as opposed to institutional protocols and contingent upon the needs,
interests and skills of their community for their existence, and therefore reflective of
popular culture’s concern with ‘how people cope with the system, how they read its
texts, [and] how they make popular culture out of its resources’ (Fiske 2010, 85).

5.2.4 Circulations

The overarching social aspects of both community and participation could be said to
derive from the ways in which knowledge and meaning about a work are transmitted
and re-transmitted throughout the culture of which they are a part. Participatory
culture provides a community with the ability to shape how that knowledge is
distributed and received amongst its own members, as well as any overlapping

25 Kirby acknowledges that competence raises a range of issues about quality, capability and truth, but responds by arguing
that the point of Wikipedia is not so much the expertise of its contributors, but its onwardness (2009, 117), its nature as a work
constantly in the state of becoming, which renders it precarious, but also open and accessible.
communities, via what Jenkins et al refers to as circulations (2006, 8). This final form of participation is concerned with how blogs, podcasts, fanzines, and other types of expressions not immediately associated with the fictional aspects of a work may be used for the purposes of discussing, analysing, critiquing and sharing knowledge about a given work, with Jenkins linking it to a notion of citizenship as an embodied cultural practice of taking responsibility for one’s actions. Political implications aside, citizenship as expressed within forms of circulation demonstrates the interlocutor’s cultural competency: ‘a basic understanding of the ways media representations structure our perceptions of the world; the economic and cultural contexts within which mass media is produced and circulated; the motives and goals that shape the media they consume; and alternative practices that operate outside the commercial mainstream’ (Jenkins et al 2006, 20). Circulations are therefore not commodities, but ‘knowledge-claims’ (Kirby 2009, 115) made by those whom the community regards as its experts based on bottom-up displays of competence rather than top-down demands for trust.

As opposed to expressions, circulations tend to be serialised and therefore accessible to the community according to a more or less regular schedule. Once it has been published, a mash-up, for example, will shift to a concretised, socialised existence of its own, distinct from the content appropriated for its creation – it does not require further qualification or adding to – while a blog, podcast or fanzine ‘that is not being added to is complete [and] in that state is textually dead’ (Kirby 2009, 111). This imperative to continually create is a reflection both of the cultural excess associated with fans – ‘their fandom spurs them into producing their own texts’ (Fiske 2010, 116) – and of a shift away from a consumerist logic to a participatory one, where the interlocutor-as-community-member joins an ongoing conversation about the work, either as a creator of content (writing a blog post, for example), or as a contributor to its reception and further circulation (by leaving a comment, sharing a link, “liking” a post, and so on). The necessity of forms of circulation therefore lies in the fact that ‘some meanings and pleasures are deferred, put on ice as it were, until they can be activated in later conversation’ (Fiske 2010, 138). The civic component of this, the development of cultural competency, lies in the way circulations facilitate ‘learning to participate through participation’ (Jenkins & Carpentier 2013, 282); that is, the way in which blog posts, podcasts, fanzine articles and so on implicitly, or explicitly, establish
the boundaries of conversation, so that cultural competency is an education in the limitations and freedoms of exchange which are socially acceptable in the current moment.

### 5.3 Participation that matters

What these four forms reveal is the breadth of possibilities when discussing participation. As anthropologist S. Elizabeth Bird argues, however, it is problematic to group all participatory activity together and claim it as evidence of ‘a revolutionary change in our relationship with media’ (Bird 2011, 505), since not all activities have the same outcome, are intended to have the same impact, or can be weighted equally. And while the Internet has provided ‘the open architect’ (Couldry 2011, 488) for developing many useful participatory activities, as well as facilitating the emergence of collective intelligence, it must be remembered that it is not the only site at which participation can occur – participation has a history that extends well beyond the advent of cyberspace and includes a vast range of popular and folk activities that contribute towards generating and circulating meanings and pleasures within a social system. Bird’s point is that participatory culture, when properly understood, is not about producing ‘more media’ (Bird, 506) but the cultural, social, and affective relations established as a result of participation. Since ‘we cannot really hope to understand culture unless we begin to see it in the context of these objects and infrastructures’ (Beer 2013, 13), Bird’s argument can be summarised as a general attempt ‘to understand and foster participation that matters’ (Knight & Weedon 2013, 258 – original emphasis).

Whether the four forms of affiliations, expressions, collaborative problem-solving, and circulations adequately capture this attempt is perhaps up for debate – they do admittedly skew towards online activities, if not for their creation, then for their distribution. However, they are perhaps sufficient as something approaching a typology of participation which, in analysing its various activities, reveals a fundamentally relational nature. This positions participation within the broader logic of convergence as culturally, rather than technologically, determined (Couldry 2011; 2013).

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26 Folk culture is a term used by Fiske to describe a traditional, nonindustrial culture ‘characterized by social consensus rather than social conflict’ (2010, 134). Folk cultures tend to identify their own membership, rather than individuals identifying with the culture.
Jenkins 2008; Jenkins 2013a), though these technological aspects ‘cannot be extricated from the social fabric’ (Mikula 2008, 1). The confluence of cultural and technological imperatives at first appears paradoxical: does technology determine culture, or vice versa? Is it ‘entities that come first and relations among them only subsequently’ (Emirbayer 1997, 281)? The argument of anthropologist William Mazzarella for utilising a concept of mediation in this regard was raised in the Introduction – where ‘the process by which a given social dispensation produces and reproduces itself through a particular set of media’ (2004, 346) is seen as a fundamentally intersubjective, and thus constantly renegotiated, one. Mediation becomes a process of what Bourriaud calls transitivity, ‘the invention of models of sociability’ (Bourriaud 2002, 28), or the potential for dialogue and relationship according to contingent, temporarily valid, trajectories. Participation that matters must therefore be participation that attempts to make sense of the often ambivalent, always negotiable relationship between cultural activity and its material formations in ways which permit the interlocutor to determine why, where, and how he or she will participate.

**Part B – TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING: A FORM THAT IS ESSENTIALLY RELATIONAL**

Anita Ondine, Creative Director of the teaching and learning institution Transmedia Next says, ‘we’ve had tremendous change over the last few years in terms of technology development; it has significantly shifted the way we create content, the way we distribute stories, and the way the audience is enjoying the story experience’ (Ondine nd). However, as has been demonstrated, these shifts are only of value when they can be inserted into a model that facilitates the creation of relational, semantic-charged trajectories. This need not refer only to transmedia storytelling – as Bourriaud points out, ‘art has always been relational in varying degrees’ (2002, 15) with relations and participation having been ideals at least since the Renaissance’s concern with exploring the question ‘“What is our relationship to the physical world?”’ (ibid., 28). However, a model which emerges out of a contemporary culture of convergence, and which is therefore fundamentally precarious in nature, is one whose concern has shifted from the relationship of the interlocutor to the world, to the relationship of interlocutors with each other, and with other conscious agents. Such a concern of art gives rise to works which are both actualised and realised as a
consequence of the actions and *intersubjective* exchanges of interlocutors. I propose in this light, and in response to Bourriaud’s question “What is a form that is essentially relational?”, that transmedia storytelling operates in such a way that this contemporary concern may be explored, and can be understood from the perspective of a relational aesthetic (though strictly speaking it is not a single, identifiable form, but a way of organising forms).

The four principles of *complexity, immersion, storyworld* and *community* which I have discussed in this chapter cut across the range of mediums capable of facilitating *story*, while having the flexibility to be shaped by the distinctiveness of various *narrative* formations. This means that while they may be evident to varying degrees in any work of *fiction*, they combine in unique ways in instances of transmedia storytelling.

*Storyworld* and *immersion* are commonly understood as basic principles of engaging with *fiction* in general – I highlight them here because of the way in which they locate the interlocutor as central in the concretisation of the work (are dependent on *intersubjectivity*). *Community*, meanwhile, is often evident in the form of the fandoms that will evolve around particular works, which Hills (2002) argues is not a “thing” or an “object” but a performative quality. Likewise, *complexity*, particularly as a way of thinking about *precariousness* and the inability to think of a work as a totality, is evident in much theatre practice because it retains the ‘ability to draw on a number of sign-systems which do not operate in a linear mode but in a complex and simultaneous operating network unfolding in time and space’ (Aston & Savona 1991, 99). That is, a theatre performance is a network which is polysemous in nature and therefore concretised only in the performative moment. Such *complexity* is multiplied in the transmedia work, not only because the theatre may be one of many mediums utilised, but because the polysemous network *itself* is expanded and establishes a requirement for traversal, or *intersubjective* exchange not just within the confines of a given medium, but between and across mediums too. This creates additional avenues for *participation* and as a consequence renders *community* a much more visible component in the process of concretising the work.

It is my contention that one way in which transmedia storytelling might therefore be better understood, particularly as an apparatus of *fiction*, is via a model which expands the core *narrative-story-intersubjectivity* continuum I have sought to establish with at
least these four principles as conceptualised above. It is my aim in the following Sections to synthesis these core ideas into a model of transmedia storytelling that I will refer to as a narrative arcology, or a superstructure of possible relations that inform the interlocutor’s traversal, and I will discuss what I regard to be some of the key features of this model. However, it should be noted that while I have identified complexity, immersion, storyworld, and participation as four core principles of transmedia storytelling, they will be evident in varying degrees from one transmedia work to the next. For example, Christy Dena (2009) raises the concern that tying transmedia too closely with participation may overshadow those examples which do not rely on it.

While acknowledging Dena’s concern, it is also apparent that the parallel development of participatory culture and transmedia storytelling during the same historical moment is not a coincidence, and there will certainly be plenty of crossover between these two areas. I am also attempting in the Sections that follow to avoid the possible trap of making explicit connections between “distinct” concepts of narrative, story, and intersubjectivity in relation to transmedia storytelling, because these should be seen as operating along a continuum. Whilst it could be argued that such connections can be made, they are perhaps less useful than their being synthesising into a model that more specifically suits the transmedia phenomena. This way, the narrative-story-intersubjectivity continuum remains neutral and can be applied in other circumstances.

6. TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING AND THE NARRATIVE ARCLOGY AS MODEL

In Chapter 1, I argued for narrative to be understood as the formational plane of a work, operating as an organising principle of fiction. This frees narrative from rigid structural imperatives in order to grant it a necessary flexibility when applied to a range of mediums. This establishes narrative as a concern with ‘a theory of formations’ (Downey 2007, 268), or the distinction that narratives are not the elements of fiction, what might be referred to simply as “content”, contained within them, but are the way

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27 The term arcology is found in architectural nomenclature and is a portmanteau of architecture and ecology. It is discussed further in Section 6.2 below.
in which these elements are organised into a cohesive frameworks. That is, I am arguing for a theory of narrative that explains traversal as well as integration, and therefore accounts for its inability to realise its own totality. This inability is, in fact, a recognition of the potential complexity arising from multiple distinct mediums operating within the work, which can be organised into what I describe below as a narrative arcology. It is founded on an understanding of how a transmedia work, given this complexity, is able to maintain coherence and, if not structural unity, then an ongoing sense of unity as interlocutors traverse its formation, and this will be established before discussing the arcology proper.

6.1 Coherence and unity in narrative

A key feature of narrative is the way in which it organises representations, or non-medium specific signifiers of objects, into an arena of exchange from which the interlocutor is able to concretise them. The way these representations are organised, and the manner in which they are received, tends to be taken as a measure of the coherence of a work, or the degree to which interlocutors ‘judge that “everything fits”’ (Toolan 2009, 44) (though narrative theorist Michael Toolan suggests that, beyond this common sense definition, ‘norms concerning narrative coherence can vary considerably’ [ibid., 46]). Usually, this is achieved via an implicit understanding of the codes and conventions of a given medium, but it becomes problematised in transmedia works where the mediums utilised contain additional codes that describe their relationships to other mediums and to the arcology in general. Since the narrative formations of transmedia works are precarious, it is difficult to know the conventions upon which those relations are based before they are experienced. This is not to suggest that if conventions were more “predictable” in transmedia works then coherence would be more easily attained (Bal 2009, 125-126), as this would place them in opposition with their convergence logic. It is rather to claim that coherence in transmedia works is as much a product of the interlocutor’s lived experience as it is of narrative imperative, since it is derived from the trajectories created between mediums, and is therefore less of a “judgment” that everything fits and more of a “discovery” of a way in which they might fit. Such a process of discovery could be said to be based on assumptions made from the proximity of objects as they are experienced and the manner of their reception.
In a transmedia framework such as this, *narrative unity* cannot be taken as a measure of wholeness. Transmedia researcher Jill Walker (2005), for example, argues that the way in which *narrative* in transmedia is distributed across mediums results in *disunity*, ‘because it is hard to describe and locate things that are not *things* but connections’ (Walker 2005, 91 – original emphasis). This concept of *unity* is based on the three unities of time, place, and action commonly attributed to Aristotle, which have been previously referred to. In Appendix 1, I take up a more detailed discussion of these unities in the form of a critique of their usefulness as dramatic conventions in relation to William Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest*, but here Dena, using Walker’s *disunity* as a point of departure, finds them helpful in explaining how *unity* is derived ‘from the relationship between the fictional world and its representation’ (Dena 2009, 267).

Unities of time and place are rendered unstable when they distributed across mediums – for example, an interlocutor may be required to visit different physical locations as part of an ARG, so that ‘there is no single place in which all of the narrative can be experienced’ (Walker 2005, 94), and some mediums may only be accessed at particular times according to a *narratively*-organised schedule of distribution, so that ‘the narrative cannot be experienced in one consecutive period of time’ (ibid., 93).

Works such as *The Beast, I Love Bees, Year Zero* and, most recently, Google’s *Ingress* ably demonstrate this spatiotemporal distribution.\(^{28}\) While *narrative* has been distributed in this regard – that is, forms have been organised in a ways that rupture place and time – *story* has not; to paraphrase Dena, the *fictional* world continues even while distributed mediums rupture an ongoing sense of *narrative unity*: ‘the space between media becomes a necessary part of the meaning-making process’ (Dena 2009, 262). This is because such spaces are never neutral, but *affective*, held in readiness until trajectories are created that negotiate the aesthetic relevance of place and time. Thus, it is action which provides *unity* in transmedia works; both the actions taken by creators in designing and organising the *narrative* and how it will present its *arena of exchange*, and the actions taken by interlocutors culminating in a lived aesthetic experience.

\(^{28}\) *Murder on Beacon Hill* has been cited previously, while Wikipedia’s entries for the other works referred to offer much greater detail than I am able to provide here:

*Year Zero* – http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Year_Zero_(game)
6.2 Narrative arcologies

Arcology is an architectural term denoting a set of principles for designing enormous habitats or superstructures, and which I suggest may serve as a useful metaphor for dealing with the inability to perceive from any one vantage point the totality of narrative formations in transmedia works. The term is a portmanteau of architecture and ecology coined by the Italian-American architect Paolo Soleri in his 1969 book Arcology: The City in the Image of Man, and speaks to the way in which such structures are designed to be in harmony with the environment around them. I prefer the term over simply referring to an ecology, as Dena (2009) does, as it speaks to the artificial, constructed nature of fiction even while it seeks to set to present itself as naturally occurring, and is a framework which ‘supports the complex activities that sustain human culture’ (Soleri 2012). A narrative arcology should be understood as the arena of exchange manifested at the level of narrative, which requires an architecture, or framework, through which the creative process can be facilitated. However, while transmedia typically ‘enlarges the possibility of what may be covered in a fictional world’ (Dena 2009, 268 – original emphasis) by taking in a range of mediums and, as discussed above, by being organised across space and time, this does not mean that anything which is not intended as part of the narrative arcology can be included – there are principles of design and composition that can be applied, as there are with any creative work and which Dena (2009), Nuno Bernado (2011), and Gary P. Hayes (2011), amongst others, have ably demonstrated.

The narrative arcology (I will refer to this simply as the arcology from this point on) is the framework embedded between the compositional forms incorporated in the work as a superstructure (this being in the sense of an extension of an existing formation). The arcology sketches how these principles might be implemented in order to enable the interlocutor to traverse them, and as such suggests relationships and possible trajectories between mediums which may have been intended by its creator or which may emerge from a process of engagement. This assists in delimiting the scope of the narrative world by circumventing the notion that the interlocutor is engaged in a totalised notion of “the world”. The phenomenological notion of perception stipulates that experience is only ever from the interlocutor’s singular point of view, even while schematic knowledge grants the sense of something larger which contextualises that
point of view. Because the interlocutor cannot experience one thing without turning away from another, there is a need to be able to chart progress through an arena – the metaphor of the arcology provides the tools for this traversal in the ‘ribbon of significations’ (Bourriaud 2010b, 134) it inscribes; just as a built arcology would contain pathways, stairs, elevators and various other linkages between its assorted buildings and facilities, so too there are pathways and nodes within the work that imply directions from which trajectories may be set in motion, according to a ‘logic of connections [in which] every element used is valued for its ability to modify the form of another’ (ibid., 135).\(^\text{29}\)

![Figure 4.2 – 3D design of the New Orleans Arcology Habitat (NOAH), proposed as part of the rebuilding program following Hurricane Katrina (Image: Schopfer & Bergeron, 2009)](image)

However, it must be remembered that the ways in which mediums and content may be distributed in transmedia works means that they can appear in a variety of otherwise unrelated spatiotemporal locations – the metaphor of the arcology is not one of an

\(^{29}\) In the following chapter, I draw on this notion of pathways and nodes in this work to discuss my creative project.
enclosed, self-contained location, but a pervasive, precarious space that nevertheless operates in harmony with the environment in which it is inscribed.

The arcology is readily apparent in transmedia productions “bibles” which are developed in order to maintain both the internal coherence of individual mediums and the continuity of relationships between them; and it is evident in the interlocutor’s ability to traverse the transmedial narrative. The various activities of participation outlined above are also evidence of a functioning arcology, since they are not products of narrative, but of the greater organising principle which allows them to be included as part of the experience of the work. The arcology may therefore be described as an interpretive framework which ‘brings heterogeneous units together on a coherent level, in order to create a relationship to the world’ (Bourriaud 2002, 111), and which serves the dual functions of framing, or sketching the limits of the narrative world and establishing the codes and conventions that the work will draw upon, and facilitating interpretation, or the presentation of intentional objects for the purpose of their translation into aesthetic experience.

6.3 Translation and storytelling across the arcology

Though story and narrative must operate interdependently, story remains distinct for its aesthetic potential. It relies on the affectivity of the arena of exchange to facilitate the translation of intentional objects, or significations of consciousness and acts of consciousness within the work that hold in readiness the conditions for their representation, into aesthetic objects – creative acts of concretising those conditions. In Chapter 2 I argued that an aesthetics of story might be possible as a way to explain the nature of the relationship between the interlocutor and his or her experience of the work. This was based on an understanding of what is aesthetic as that which enables subjective and affective qualities to be experienced. The presence of elements of fiction within the work, such as character or plot which are assembled at the level of narrative, or of participatory activities in which the interlocutor is involved, do not enable these qualities in and of themselves; it is how the relationship between the interlocutor and these elements and activities develops and is maintained across the arcology which constitutes the fundamental storytelling experience of transmedia. I suggest that the nature of the relationship between the interlocutor and his or her
experience of the work, the characteristics or qualities of that relationship, are translation and storytelling. The process of translation is the fundamental mediation between narrative and story, which is the factor necessary to set the interlocutor in motion across the arcology, while storytelling is the in-the-moment experience of translation, the rawest expression of the relationship between interlocutor and experience which results in story.

6.3.1 Translation across the arcology

To reiterate on translation, it is the setting in motion of the objects of a work. If the arcology provides in its frame a ribbon of signification, then translation inserts objects into a corresponding ribbon of the signified by displacing and re-presenting them — terms Bourriaud (2010b) uses to describe this process, but which must be couched in his contention that ‘it is fiction which becomes the medium here’ (ibid., 136); that is, fiction as the space through which translations flow. This is because translation must occur across an affective space, because displacement is not simply the movement of an object from one state to another, but the aesthetic object taking the place of the intentional object – its actualisation. This is the imperative of translation: the original object is not meaningful in the form it is currently in, so the aim is to have what is being translated be more meaningful in its reception than what it was translated from. Languages, for example, are translated because the interlocutor has no other point of reference for making meaning out of what is being said, other than the act of being spoken to. In the lived experience of the interlocutor, it is not what is intentional that it is taken from the work, but what has been translated and concretised.

While this understanding of translation is applicable to transmedia works, there is the additional concern of how translations occurs across the arcology. Bourriaud argues that ‘the artwork is no longer a terminal object but merely one moment in a chain, the “quilting point” [...] that more or less solidly connects the various episodes of a trajectory’ (2010b, 106). While clearly not referring to transmedia works specifically, he is discussing relational works in general, so that the notion of translation becomes one of re-presenting intentionality across mediums in order ‘to engage in productive dialogue with a variety of different contexts’ (ibid.). This is what Bourriaud refers to as the journey form, which was discussed in the previous chapter as a way of thinking.
about the relationships which are created to move from one point to another. The journey form is propelled by a founding instance of intentionality, from which point it is set in motion – displaced, translated – across the mediums contained within an arcology. This founding instance should not be misconstrued as also being a defining one, as once it is set in motion it is open to interpretation and re-presentation in other mediums: ‘translation always implies adapting the meaning of a proposition, enabling it to pass from one code to another’ (ibid., 30). Translation may be thought of as the semantic context in which trajectories arrive and depart, the meaning and significance that set that trajectory in motion, enabling a form of adaptation between one semiotic system and another. This is evident at the narrative level, in the ways connections between mediums are cued, but also accounts for the interlocutor’s various participatory activities, which connote an additional layer of translation that enables story to move into the sphere of the community. This allows interlocutors to retain the autonomy of their participatory acts, as they can therefore be located within the boundaries of the arcology by way of their association with other components of the work without being misappropriated as conventions established by its narrative. This autonomy is a recognition of the limits of narrative within the arcology and a means of accounting for the experience of interlocutors by way of the range of activities from aesthetic to participatory that they perform.

6.3.2 Storytelling as precarious experience: expanding the concept of the storyworld

Where the experience of the interlocutor is understood as the product of a translation from narrative to story, it is possible to identify storytelling itself as an emergent characteristic of the process of translation, evolving as the interlocutor traverses the arcology. Thus, while story is concretised as aesthetic experience, storytelling is a precarious, ambivalent series of movements across the arcology. (I do not mean to suggest that the interlocutor’s aesthetic experience is rendered inflexible, only that once concretised it takes on a significance that is peculiar to that interlocutor). In the context of transmedia, this is partly due to storytelling not being limited to the creation of aesthetic trajectories alone, but the possibility of having to account for the participatory activities of the interlocutor in the moment they are performed. However, it is primarily due to the complex nature of the arcology, which Matt Hills
refers to as a *hyperdiegetic* space: ‘the creation of a vast and detailed narrative space, only a fraction of which is ever directly seen or encountered within the text, but which nonetheless appears to operate according to principles of internal logic and extension’ (2002, 104). Due to the inability to perceive the *arcology* as totality, it presents a multiplicity of possibilities, not all of which can be acted upon. As Niklas Luhmann (2014) argues, this creates a tension between the range of possibilities, and the risk in acting upon unproductive ones. And since the framing provided by the *arcology* is only incremental due to components being distributed in space and time, the nature of *storytelling* in transmedia is *precarious*, an uncompleted process that is only temporarily resolved in the interlocutor's lived experience of a work.

As a result of this, a brief addendum is required to the concept of the *storyworld* as presented earlier: it must in some way be able to sustain the experience of itself across the *arcology*. I do not propose this as a way of limiting the potential of the interlocutor’s aesthetic experience by imposing structure upon it – I maintain that a distinction needs to be made between the framing provided by a *narrative world* and the concretisation of a *storyworld* via an *affective space* – but as a way of providing a possible “internal logic” by which *storytelling* is able to channel experience in a way that actualises the *fiction* it presents. Bourriaud argues that the work must be framed in a way that provides a *lasting encounter*, which it achieves by ‘show[ing] the typical features of a world’ (2002, 19). This can be achieved via the framing action of the *arcology* and the *narrative* organisation of content which provides boundaries to the *narrative world*; that is, the typical features of a world constitute the codes and conventions by which it governs itself and how content will unfold. This in turn will charge the *affective space* in those specific ways that will grant the *storyworld* its uniqueness and particular flavour or character. In Section 2.1 above, I referred to Dena’s categories of *inter- and intra-composition* as ways of managing this *complexity* in a work. These categories identified the flow of relations across an *arcology* in ways that could be used to indicate whether the work was organised according to spreadable or drillable principles accordingly. Dena further refines these categories by introducing the notion of *tiering*, or ways of ‘addressing different audiences with different content in different media and environments’ (2009, 239). Elsewhere (2008), Dena summarises these as two *tier levels* with one operating at the “world level,” where different mediums constitute different entry points (the interlocutor may be

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introduced to the work via a film or a comic, for instance), and the other at a “work level” at which different content constitutes different entry points (for instance, the interlocutor may only be involved in solving a particular puzzle as part of an ARG). Which tier level is appropriate is determined by whether the work is organised intra- or inter-compositionally.

While the purpose of narrative is to provide the kind of organisation described above in any fictional work, tiering accounts for the multiplicity of possible trajectories in transmedia works by providing multiple points of entry into, and ways of engaging with, a correspondingly complex work, including ARGs where the narrative world may only act as a synopsis to catalyse game play. Once the interlocutor has entered and engaged with the work via one of these tiers levels, the present-tense act of storytelling shifts the operation of the remainder from points of entry on the surface of the arcology to nodes within its superstructure in an act of displacement, as the interlocutor is already operating from a location within the arena of exchange of the arcology. This, of course, is as applicable to the individual interlocutor as to any community he or she may be involved in that is related to the work. As an uncompleted process, storytelling continually facilitates the translation of the narrative world into the storyworld and thus provides an encounter that survives the duration of the interlocutor’s engagement, as well as remaining with the interlocutor as his or her lived experience of the transmedia work.

6.4 Progressive verisimilitude: the arcology fictionalising real-world spaces

How relations operate in a complex system such as transmedia can be demonstrated via a process of intersubjective exchange. Intersubjectivity itself is not a characteristic or quality either of the work or of the interlocutor, but is the affective state generated by their proximity. It is, specifically, that which mediates between them, feeding the process of translation and the creation of trajectories via the establishment of a phenomenological arena of exchange, or an environment in which the interlocutor’s subjective experience of the intentionalities within the work is the energising ingredient for reconciling narrative and story. Fundamentally, intersubjectivity is the process of creating relations across, within, and through this arena. In this
arrangement, the purpose of the work is to provoke an encounter, to engineer intersubjective exchanges with the interlocutor in order to set in motion the conditions for its concretisation. The arcology provides multiple opportunities for provoking such encounters, but in order to do so Dena (2009) argues that there must be an alignment between form and content that corresponds to the work's distribution in space and time, and because this distribution can often occur in real space and in real time, the arcology tends to map itself onto real-world conditions in a series of 'probable connections' (ibid., 273). Dena refers to these connections in terms of the work achieving a certain kind of verisimilitude that is 'true in life' as opposed to simply being 'true to life' (ibid., 274 – original emphasis) via shifts in deictic centres, a concept which has been referred to at length throughout this thesis. Aspects of possible worlds theory are also utilised by Dena to argue that these shifts recentre the fictional world with the real; I would like to develop this a step further and suggest that what is occurring is a temporary fictionalisation of the real-world location, a progressive verisimilitude which attempts to resolve the paradox of fiction in transmedia works not by self-reference alone, but by modifying the real to operate, at least momentarily, according to its own logic.

In 2012, Latitudeº, a media and technology research and marketing company, conducted a survey in which they found that ‘52% of participants treated the real world as another “platform,” incorporating networked real-world objects, augmented reality, 3D projected environments, and other technologies that bridge the divide between digital and physical’ (2012, 6). Likewise when Dena discusses verisimilitude in transmedia works, she is referring to the way in which ‘[p]arks, streets, shops, offices, homes, forests, computers, the Internet, books, food, clothing and so on’ (2009, 275) may be utilised within the arcology. When an interlocutor is required to make a phone call or send a text message to advance his or her traversal, sign up to receive email notifications from a fictional company, be at a certain location at a certain time, and so on, these activities and devices are drawn into the true in life verisimilitude of the work and serve to extend his or her aesthetic experience to include not only the concretisation of comparatively abstract intentional objects, but the actuality of the activity as well. There are several points to be made about this. Firstly, by engaging with the work in this way, the interlocutor actively creates the belief that the fictional world extends to this real-world spatiotemporal location, even while he or she always
retains a latent awareness of the *fictional* basis of such activities. As such, verisimilitude is always achieved progressively, or put differently, it is achieved iteratively in an ongoing experience across the *arcology*. Its primary purpose could therefore be considered to be the way it accounts for the interlocutor’s movement in space and time. Secondly, the *arcology* does not include the entirety of the real world; it only maps itself to those aspects of it to which it may reasonably make a connection. Dena refers to this as a ‘diegetic rationale’ (2009, 273), which may be thought of as a certain perspective which the interlocutor is cued to see his or her position within the *arcology* from. When invoked, it enables the interlocutor's activities in the real world to be taken as valid in the *fictional* world, and explains how he or she is able to elide between real and *fictional*. In this sense, it does not connote a complete deictic shift, but a navigation of the *affective space* between real and *fictional*. A diegetic rationale may also be invoked to explain why a particular medium is used, or how it is a *fictional* character is able to interact directly with the interlocutor.

Thirdly, the mapping of *fictional* content onto real-world locations serves to incorporate the real-world space within the *storyworld*. This could be considered a secondary purpose of progressive verisimilitude. Since the paradox of *fiction* is the intention of the *fictional* world to establish itself in place of the real, a progressive verisimilitude does not aim to make the *fictional* appear real, to give it a semblance of likelihood or truth, but to render the real as *fictional*. To paraphrase American transmedia researcher Geoffrey Long (2007), the value of all components located within the *arcology* is proportionate to the extent to which they serve the *story*. As such, real-world spatiotemporal locations which are incorporated into the work are *affectively* charged, their normative expectations substituted for an alternate intentionality by their inclusion within the framework of the *arcology*. This alternate intentionality places it within the array of intentional objects presented to the interlocutor, and can therefore be concretised along with them as part of the interlocutor’s aesthetic experience. The *storyworld* is thus able to accommodate those real-world components that are mapped into the *arcology* via a progressive verisimilitude.
7. SUMMARY: THE NARRATIVE ARCOLOGY

The model of the *narrative arcology* provides a way to think about how the interlocutor engages with a transmedia work and is able to navigate its inherent *complexity*. When he developed the concept, Paolo Soleri was concerned with reducing the excesses and ‘wasteful consumption’ (Cosanti Foundation 2012) associated with urban sprawls. Though he envisaged his arcoologies as integrated systems, the idea informing them was one of a self-sustaining, highly traversable city; likewise, a *narrative arcology* ‘enlarges’ the possibilities of what may be covered in the fictional world’ (Dena 2009, 268 – original emphasis), while retaining the ability to navigate that world. Many transmedia researchers refer to this as ‘the art of world building’ (Jenkins 2008, 116; see also Long 2007; Smith 2009). I am wary of this conceptualisation as it is often symptomatic of an economically-informed franchise approach that rests on the promise of seemingly endless consumption, rather than relating to the aesthetic potential of the *fictional world*.\(^{30}\) As an alternative, the *narrative arcology* offers the following conditions for considering the nature of transmedia works and the interlocutor’s ability to meaningfully traverse them: it provides a framework for cohesion and brings a sense of unity to the work by engineering possible trajectories, or actions the interlocutor might take; it inscribes the cues necessary to set objects in motion; it locates *storytelling* as an ongoing process, the aim of which is to provide direction to the interlocutor; and it accounts for the interlocutor’s movements across space and time in relation to the distribution of mediums. While this list by no means aims to exhaustively describe the ways in which the interlocutor is able to make sense, and find pleasure in the experience, of engaging with a transmedia work, they do show how the *narrative-story-intersubjectivity* dialectic might be implemented to examine such new kinds of storytelling that derive their richness from their inherent *precariousness* and the active creation of relations, works which, as Bourriaud argues, are less concerned with forming ‘imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real’ (2002, 13).

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\(^{30}\) Long’s thesis, for example, is directly concerned with the business of transmedia storytelling, and cites the ability of a fictional world to sustain multiple stories as a key to a ‘truly successful transmedia narrative’ (2007, 164). To be fair, there is nothing particularly wrong with this approach as it provides a solid model for large-scale projects aiming to establish a viable franchise. I am simply concerned with the interlocutor’s own experience of the transmedia work.
Chapter 5
THEORY IN PRACTICE

The creative project discussed in this chapter represents an attempt to apply the interdependent narrative-story-intersubjectivity continuum formulated in this thesis and the theory of fiction upon which it is based. Specifically, it is intended to demonstrate their application in the context of transmedia storytelling, where this is understood as a particular creative practice for distributing a story experience across multiple mediums and environments. Locating transmedia storytelling within the broad category of fiction, as I have done, has served as a useful basis for reconceptualising the three concepts found in the continuum, in that the emergence of a “new” phenomenon can be seen as an opportunity for presenting alternatives to prevailing thinking. In taking on a creative project as part of my research, I am attempting to ground this theory in practice, and to practice the theory I have discussed so far. I cannot say that I have adhered strictly to either a practice-led or theory-led approach in this regard, nor would I maintain that one is necessarily “better” than the other; what is important in this regard is that evidence for both approaches should be seen in the final project.

It should also be reiterated here that this project stands in place of offering selected case studies of transmedia storytelling: it is utilised as a way of re-reading the theoretical component of this thesis through a practical lens.¹ The decision to do so was based largely on a personal desire to attempt a creative project of my own, and as I am dealing with an emerging creative practice, the codes and conventions of which are far from fixed, it seemed only appropriate to attempt a creative piece and be guided by a principle of finding the theory in the doing. I suspect the end result betrays my enthusiasm at the expense of a strong skill set as a practitioner; nevertheless, the process of developing this project has critically informed the theoretical terrain covered in this thesis in ways that would not otherwise have been possible via alternative approaches. This is not to say that a creative project is the only means of critically examining theory, but that I found it to be a particularly illuminating approach in this instance.

¹ For a discussion of a wide range of transmedia works, refer to Dena (2009), as her thesis deals primarily with design and practice.
The project takes the form of a transmedia adaptation of William Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest* (Shakespeare 2007). Below, I provide the background to the project, outlining the reasons for using Shakespeare and *The Tempest* as source material, the project’s aims and objectives, and the methodology I employed in my creative practice. I then reflect on the process of adaptation, which was not formal in any particular way, relying instead on close readings of the play and other adaptations, and on process of selecting the various mediums used. Appendix 1 provides my own reading of the play which informed the creative process. This reading begins by locating the play historically in both its original conception and in the various critical analyses Shakespearean scholars have offered over the years, before moving onto an analysis of my own based on British science fiction and fantasy scholar Farah Mendlesohn’s (2008) category of liminal fantasy. In addition to the terrain already covered in this thesis, this reading of *The Tempest* should be seen as an important basis for the resulting project and includes a discussion of two other adaptations that were particularly influential on the development of the project. I have included this as an Appendix as it introduces supplementary theory not directly related to the aims of this thesis, but which nevertheless shaped my approach to adapting *The Tempest*, and I did not want to draw attention away from what has gone before. Appendix 2 contains the various examples developed for my version of *The Tempest*.

In this chapter, the way I have chosen to present the project is largely due to the fact that, compared to most other transmedia works, it is not large in scope, and therefore does not aim to utilise a vast range of design and compositional strategies. The narrow scope of the project was, in some ways, intentional: firstly, it reflects transmedia practitioner Gary P. Hayes’ assertion that such projects require ‘specialist members of the project team to be responsible for its development’ (2011, 2), members who I did not have access to; and secondly, it serves to more readily illustrate the basic nature of transmedia storytelling as a practice that distributes a storytelling experience across mediums, as well as how a narrative arcology might work in practice by providing an example of how an “ideal” interlocutor might traverse it. By “ideal” I simply mean the way in which I, as the project’s creator, have organised the narrative in ways that anticipate, or “engineer”, certain relations.

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2 By design and compositional strategies, I simply mean the creative process of organising and arranging a work – the utilisation of the various codes and conventions from the perspective of the creator and the decision-making process involved.
between mediums, a kind of “optimisation” of the work in order to be able to follow the flow of trajectories along the pathways created. This is not intended to demonstrate an authorialism on my part, but rather highlights how the creator’s intentionality may be inscribed in a work. I have also drawn on elements of the “transmedia production bible” templates developed by Gary P. Hayes (2011) and Nuno Bernardo (2011). A “bible” in this sense is a document used to break down a project in order ‘take a look at it in its more manageable component form’ (Bernardo 2011, 21). I do not utilise these templates in their entirety, but draw on aspects of them to provide a framing device to the discussion.

1. THE CHOICE OF SHAKESPEARE AND THE TEMPEST

The choice of a source text for the project was not an arbitrary decision. The opportunity to develop an original property was certainly an option, and one that would have allowed me to develop a project from the moment of conception that would take advantage of transmedia strategies and principles. However, upon further consideration this seemed counterintuitive to the greater purpose of this research, which prioritises deepening an understanding of story by way of narrative and intersubjectivity. To that end, it seemed more appropriate to take an existing story, one that could be said to have held up to rigorous academic and popular scrutiny, and reconstruct it using principles and strategies of transmedia storytelling. With such a story serving as the source material of the project, achieving more useful results when analysing the effectiveness of the various transmedia strategies employed becomes more certain. Had I pursued an original property, and had it not been successful, the question of whether it was the transmedia strategies employed, or the property itself that was lacking, could very well have clouded my analysis.

Another reason for choosing a Shakespearean work as source material came out of my desire to explore transmedia principles in a theatre context, as there seemed to be little creative work being done in this particular area. To be sure, there have been many examples of using New Media technologies and other strategies for digital storytelling in producing Shakespeare for contemporary audiences – one thinks of

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3 I am referring here to a particular tradition of theatrical practice, as opposed to the kind of performance aspect included in some ARGs. The two may be said to be informed by similar principles, but come with vastly different expectations and experiences for interlocutors.
Such Tweet Sorrow (sometimes rendered as Suchtweetsorrow) (Wikipedia 2013), an adaptation of Romeo and Juliet produced by the Mudlark digital production company and the Royal Shakespeare Company and staged entirely via Twitter, not to mention the whole history of interactive performance⁴ – but transmedia storytelling is not confined to digital mediums only, and the concept of a truly transmedia theatre comes with its own set of stimulating challenges to be solved.⁵ The Tempest itself is one of Shakespeare’s most enduring plays, having been the subject of much academic analysis and dramatic interpretation, and offers unique opportunities when adapted for transmedia. However, while my reading of the play as offered below is based on the narrative-story-intersubjectivity model at the core of this thesis, I have not drawn heavily on the principles of transmedia that I have discussed, simply because this is a reading of the original play and not the resulting transmedia project.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Project aims and objectives

The aim of the project is to deepen an understanding of the nature of story as an experiential, rather than structural, characteristic of fiction, a distinction which is made clear by a focus on the project’s creative development and on the pathways created for the interlocutor to traverse as opposed to the specifics of the content developed. What is discussed in the remainder of this chapter is, however, only the first phase of what is potentially a much larger project. Phase 1, which is what I have developed and discuss below, moves the interlocutor through a series of mediums and culminates in a theatre performance of The Tempest. The groundwork is thus laid for a possible Phase 2, which turns over the narrative world of the project to the community in order for them to develop in ways that they see fit. I discuss this below in Section 13, but at this point what should be noted is that this Phase 2 does not fall within the scope of the project as I developed it, apart from that it is intended to provide its necessary foundation.


⁵ A distinction should be made here between a transmedia theatre practice and a performance practice, the latter being readily seen in many Augmented Reality Games (ARGs) which involve actors performing roles in order to move players through a narrative, but which are not commonly seen as theatrical. A transmedia theatre must be recognised as being based on the conventions and practices of traditional theatre practice, even while it might attempt to do something ‘new’ with them.
The Tempest was conceived with a target audience of between 18-50 years of age in mind, of equal gender representation, but with the provision that this audience ideally own smartphones which they are comfortable using. It is also assumed that the project will be staged as part of an arts festival, such as the Perth International Arts Festival (PIAF). While I do not regard myself as a creator or designer of any note (this was my first time working in some of the mediums used), my aim in developing this project was to experience the creative act of producing a transmedia work for myself in order to develop an understanding of what that process might entail. For this reason, as well as for reasons of time and available funds, it was decided to only develop the project to a conceptual stage. This meant that decisions about the scope of the project and which mediums would be used were impacted, but I have attempted to provide examples of each component of the project to the extent these limitations allowed. For example, I was able to work with a comics artist to produce the six pages required to a significant level, but the complications of designing and building the online game meant this could only be developed in the form of a concept document. Developing the project to a conceptual stage also meant that typical issues of a pre-production phase in the lifecycle of a project have been bracketed off, including budgets, production schedules, the assembling of cast and crew, locations, and so on. The limitations placed upon the project have actually allowed for a stronger focus on examining how one might approach an adaptation of The Tempest that uses a certain combination of transmedia strategies, and to evaluate the integrity of the resulting narrative as it pertains to how the narrative anticipates potential audience responses. That is, as a transmedia work, the objective is to facilitate the interlocutor's traversal of its arcology and the subsequent concretisation of its storyworld. It must therefore achieve a kind of progressive verisimilitude, an organic and logical series of relationships between the particular combinations of mediums used which actualises the storyworld in ways that diminish the real world. I believe that what I have been able to produce, and which is discussed below, provides a clear indication of what The Tempest attempts to achieve in terms of designing a transmedia project, along with how it will achieve it.

A major purpose in pursuing a creative project is to provide what might reasonably be considered the initial steps towards a model for staging similar projects. The model upon which this project is based is that of the narrative arcology as established in Chapter 4, in which I described it as a map of the superstructure of intended relations.
embedded in a transmedia work. The concept of the *arcology*, especially as a metaphor of *complexity* in transmedia storytelling (enormous, unable to see its limits from any one vantage, yet ultimately bounded by *narrative* considerations), has been very useful as a device for visualising and managing possible trajectories between the mediums I have used in this project. The *arcology* is a framework within which any medium may be housed, though proximity alone does not ensure meaningful pathways can be made between them. The ability to use such a model to engineer possible trajectories is useful in organising a *narrative* and has been demonstrated as a key feature of *fiction* (Zunshine 2006). The *arcology* therefore serves as a useful mapping tool, and will be expanded upon throughout the discussion of the project.

The objective of the project was to synthesise theory and practice in a way I felt was compatible with my desire to "discover" a process of adapting and developing a transmedia project for myself. By this I mean that my creative practice has been largely intuitive, though it has been informed by research and the theories developed in this thesis, and although I have made use of several guides, "how to" books, and articles on producing transmedia projects, I have allowed for what I believe is a more organic process of how it seemed to me a transmedia *story* should look and feel and be engaged with. The justification for this lies in two main thoughts: first, in American journalist and communications consultant David Bloom’s very pertinent question, ‘how do you evaluate a transmedia project’s success?’ (Bloom 2010) – a question fraught with considerations of artistic merit versus financial success and what kind of rubrics might one use to evaluate a project – and secondly in media practitioner Brian Clark’s claim that “Transmedia” is on the downward slide of usefulness as a term’ (Clark 2012), mainly because, as the general tone of Clark’s note suggests, it has been misappropriated to describe activities it was never meant to in the time since Henry Jenkins popularised it.
2.2 A process of discovery as project methodology

In researching the methods of other practitioners, Bloom's and Clark's concerns became increasingly evident in that there is currently little in the way of “transmedia conventions” that one might use, at least as a starting point, to manage and shape a successful project. Transmedia writer and producer Nuno Bernardo notes that 'there are very many different techniques and approaches that all come under the Transmedia umbrella' (2011, 3). This too became another reason for pursuing an intuitive approach in my creative practice as a process of “discovery”. Indeed, the debate about what constitutes a successful project is partly due to shifts in the way audiences are engaging with content, as Bernardo notes: 'The trend is that this content will be increasingly consumed when the audience wants to consume it' (ibid., 7) and not necessarily when creators and producers wish to release it. The practice of transmedia storytelling involves a degree of anticipating not only how, but where audiences might engage with your content, bringing with it a new dynamic to the development of projects. It is important to note that what is emphasised here is the role of the creator/producer, and how they come to terms with such social shifts, because audiences are already operating within this sphere, and have done for some time without any knowledge of a label or official term for their habits.

Thus, I reasoned that since the phenomenon can still be considered as emerging, and there is certainly no “right” way of doing things, I would try my own approach in order to realise what it is I believe transmedia storytelling is and has to offer. Though certainly my creative process has been led by my definition of transmedia and the subsequent discussion of what I see as its core principles in Chapter 4, that discussion was never intended as an end point or a definitive answer to the question of how to develop a transmedia project. My methodology has therefore been based on the premise that so long as a strategy is in service of the story, so long as it allows for the story to flow naturally back and forth between mediums, that strategy is a valid one to use. I am using the term strategy here in reference to the process of creativity as a series of decisions about the ways in which the creator's intentions may be deployed in the work. As such, I have not felt beholden to the form and function of other projects, drawing on them, sometimes, in only the broadest strokes since those that could be considered successful in terms of storytelling have also employed this same.
methodology of discovery. An approach which draws on past projects in this way, while not consciously seeking to emulate any particular examples, should potentially produce its own unique set of conventions and practices. I believe this is useful in addressing Bernardo’s concern outlined above, as well as concerns raised by Christy Dena (2012) about attitudes towards transmedia practice, and Geoffrey Long (2011) on the development of a transmedia criticism. The more arcologies there are to study – that is, the more unique combinations of mediums are tried and tested in telling a story – the more likely it is that an inclusive useful model can be developed. I offer this project in that spirit, as one among a growing number of projects that might be of some benefit in moving towards a more thorough understanding of this particular phenomenon.

3. PROCESS OF ADAPTATION

Shakespeare has often been one of the first sources creators turn to for material when testing an emerging medium, and I am not alone in utilising The Tempest as a part of that trend. Two versions were attempted during the silent film era, for example: one in 1905 remains lost (Hopkins 2008, 37), but we still have the version the Clarendon Picture Company released in 1908. This twelve minute silent film, directed by Percy Stow and re-released by the British Film Institute in 1999, is a more linear retelling, beginning with many of the events Prospero recounts in 1.2 before jumping ten years ahead. What is notable about the film is the way it bears much of the enthusiasm for what was then still an emerging, experimental medium; perhaps not of a calibre to place it alongside the work of someone such as the French filmmaker and special effects pioneer Georges Méliès, for example (Stow’s adaptation is simply too short to do the play any justice, an unfortunate technical and economic restriction of the time, and his 1903 adaptation of Alice in Wonderland arguably demonstrates a greater imagination in realising special effects), but it does serve to demonstrate how Stow’s adaptation can be considered one of a number of “transitional films” that demonstrate what film and literature scholar John P. McCombe describes as ‘the significant role that literary adaptation played in the early cinema’s normalization of narrative and stylistic techniques that were later codified [in] the “narrator system”’ (2005, 142).
New Media strategies have also been brought to bear when adapting Shakespeare for contemporary audiences, as seen in Such Tweet Sorrow referred to above, an adaptation of Romeo and Juliet produced by Mudlark and The Royal Shakespeare Company in 2010. Over the course of five weeks, the events of the play were relayed by six actors to audiences using the social media platform Twitter. The actors had Twitter accounts set up in their characters’ names and were provided with a new outline each morning for how the story would develop that day. The language was suitably contemporised in order to meet Twitter’s restriction of 140 characters per post, and video diary entries were also posted by the actors in-character, that those following the play could read and view online. The result, when one views Juliet’s account @Julietcap16, for example, is entirely believable: here is a teenager in love, writing bad poetry to her Romeo (@romeo_mo). All of the material produced was improvised by the actors, with the production designed to take advantage of the Internet generation’s unreservedness in sharing their day-to-day experiences with whoever is willing to engage with them. Not surprisingly, Such Tweet Sorrow was built
on an aesthetic of sincere amateurism that one might expect to see in such a scenario. The result was something that looked and felt like a pair of teenagers in love, secretly sharing together to avoid the ire of their parents, and full of teen angst and longing. It demonstrated that adapting Shakespeare using emerging technologies was possible.

Figure 5.2 – Screenshot of Juliet’s Twitter page (@Julietcap16)

It is with these kinds of precedents in mind, and the potential they represent for taking advantage of emerging social and technological trends, that have informed my own process of adapting *The Tempest*.

I began the process by familiarising myself with the original play. My focus, particularly in re-reads, was on the plot and pacing of events, noting what I felt were the major beats of the play, as well as how characters interacted, including moments of particular emotional or dramatic resonance. These were then supplemented with viewings of other adaptations: as well as those discussed above, these included: Julie Taymor’s *The Tempest* (2010), Derek Jarman’s *The Tempest* (1979), Stanislav Sokolov’s claymation version broadcast as part of the BBC’s *Shakespeare: The Animated Tales* (1992), and Per Åhlin’s *Resan till Melonia* (1989), an animated Swedish production that is only very loosely based on *The Tempest*. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend Shakespeare WA’s production in early 2012, meaning the only stage production of the play I have been able to see was that staged by The Revellers Theatre Company in September 2012, whose strength was in its a minimalist design
strategy and a strong portrayal of Caliban which emphasised the comedic aspects of
the character.  

These various readings and interpretations of the play all had something to offer,
particularly in terms of judging what events seemed to be accepted as being necessary
to an adaptation of The Tempest, and, importantly, how these were staged and to what
overall effect (that is, how they affected my aesthetic experience of the story).
However, all of these versions were produced and made to function in a single
medium – film, stage, comic, and so on. The philosophy informing my adaptation had
to be fundamentally different, since the aim was not to simply remediate the story in
multiple mediums (and run the risk of one or more of those retellings being made
redundant in the process), but to tell the story across multiple mediums. Importantly,
in addition to studying the play and its various adaptations, I also paid attention to
natural lacunae in the play's narrative, gaps that could be utilised to break it into a
number of components. In this, The Tempest lent itself readily to a division along plot
lines, rather than character. This is not to say that character is in some way less
significant, only that the play tends to group characters together in order to fulfil a
certain function – Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo is one such group, for example, who
fulfil the play's comedic functions, while Alonso and the other nobles fulfil the tragic
function as the focus of Prospero's revenge.

This led me back to reconsidering just what kind of story I thought The Tempest was
telling, and what kind of world would it be that could contain that story (I was not, at
this early stage, thinking in terms of arcologies). The features that had stood out to me
in my various readings had included:

- The island, particularly as an abstract space whose boundaries are, ultimately,
  unknown;
- The Prospero-Miranda relationship, namely a certain delicateness in the
  father-daughter bond within a patriarchal dynamic, and the added complexity
  that Ferdinand represents;
- Caliban and Ariel, seen as opposite poles in the play's representation of the
  fantastic;

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6 Remembering that this so-called problem play was collected with Shakespeare's comedies in the First Folio.
The lingering presence of Sycorax, which affects the Prospero-Caliban, and Prospero-Ariel relationships.

What struck me about these features is that Alonso’s story did not figure strongly for me. This sequence of events is ultimately circuitous: Sebastian and Antonio's assassination plot seems to be included only to demonstrate that these are, indeed, bad people. I came to regard it as a foil for Prospero’s need to retaliate, which could be channelled in any number of directions. Likewise, the addition to Caliban’s story of Trinculo and Stephano proved less interesting to me than Caliban's own backstory, which had the potential to be reworked in order to extract it for another use. What also struck me about these features is their apparent focus on character over plot, seemingly in contradiction to my previous view of dividing the play along plot lines, though this is reconciled when character is regarded as a response to events and incidents, something to be discovered in a dynamic tension between events and how an individual responds to them.

I kept returning to the theme of control and manipulation, but saw it held in tension with a series of relationships that explored different facets of this theme, and which all, ultimately, met in Prospero. And yet, the question remained: what was our entry point into this world? In Shakespeare's time, the alchemist, the conjuror, the sorcerer, and the witch were all seen to possess arcane knowledge and, to varying degrees, access to a spiritual realm beyond normal human existence. If this is the kind of social order that could give rise to a “Prospero,” what, then, might a contemporary equivalent be? In 1986, directors Serge Tampalini and David George staged a version of The Tempest in Bali in which Prospero was reimagined as a Balinese shaman (George 1989). The production incorporated wayang (Balinese shadow puppet theatre), gamalang music and topeng du (Balinese dance). Though it made use of artistic forms which, such as in the case of wayang, go back hundreds of years, this particular production freed up my thinking enough to allow me to consider Prospero in other lights, to trace different trajectories from the Shakespearean sorcerer to a modern equivalent.
Through subsequent discussions, the idea was suggested to me that a contemporary equivalent might be found in the video game designer, someone who controls and manipulates others, like Prospero does, but also has the ability to create and destroy “life”, much like Greenaway's Prospero is clearly seen to do. Here, then, was the entry point I needed. It captured the essence of Prospero as a character, in whom the play, and every notable adaptation besides, arguably finds its thematic core.

Even though the final project bears little evidence that it began with this concept, it nonetheless proved to be an extremely fruitful starting point. Because I felt it was vital that Prospero be able to interact directly with the virtual characters and world he would create, rather than be continually on the outside looking in, I conceived of a construct he might use to create them, a piece of technology so advanced that it had the ability to generate an avatar of Prospero that could coexist alongside the virtual characters. This construct would represent extraordinary possibilities, but be firmly under Prospero’s control. Within it, the island could be realised as a virtual environment, unlimited by any physical constraints and populated by all manner of characters and creatures. Thus, the LavaPool was born, and Prospero developed from being a video game designer to the world’s leading artificial intelligence engineer. In
the Sections that follow I will discuss how this concept was developed in order to take advantage of transmedia strategies, in which the emphasis is on creating an *arcology* that facilitates the creation of trajectories between its multiple mediums, and how these trajectories might be anticipated in order to develop the greatest potential for a strongly-experienced *story*. To reiterate how the project is presented, I have combined elements of two transmedia production bibles with an example of a progression through the project’s *arcology* from the perspective of an “ideal” interlocutor in order to demonstrate one way in which a transmedia work might be modelled on this concept. In doing so, the alternative theory of *fiction* I have proposed should also become apparent. It should be noted, though, that while part of the purpose of a production bible is to facilitate the thinking and planning of a project, it is largely a document intended for producers and is often used to help pitch a project. Christy Dena has also noted that while there is a need for consistency, not every project requires ‘a huge lengthy transmedia bible’ (2012b), and goes on to note that the nature of the project will dictate the kind of documentation required. With my intention being to focus on the *narrative* and *story* aspects of the project, I have therefore only drawn on those elements of the two bibles that I have found most useful in conceptualising the project. What I have produced below offers a glimpse into a process for creating a transmedia work.

4. **THE SELECTION OF MEDIUMS**

Some of the strategies used in this project have been drawn from those developed by practitioners such as Nuno Bernardo, Gary P. Hayes, and Christy Dena in their own practices, and are used in combination with my own ideas and approaches. I also received valuable input from my principal supervisor, and with Murdoch University undergraduate students with whom I was able to work on various aspects of the project. The contributions of these people helped push the project into areas I had not considered, including the type of mediums ultimately utilised and the ways in which they connect. In selecting the various mediums used, I have followed a fundamental premise of *fiction* established in my thesis, namely that, in the creative act, the creator selects and presents an array of intentional objects which he or she considers to be the most semantically and aesthetically productive for that work. With this as a basis, I then turned to Bernardo’s point on the selection of mediums: ‘you have to make sure
you choose the media best suited towards the content’ (2011, 54); that is, the medium should be appropriate to the content (intentional objects) it carries. Where a medium proved to be contributing little in this regard, that is, where possible avenues for meaning-making and the creation of trajectories proved limited or lacking, or the nature of the content did not align with the expectations associated with a medium, that medium was rejected.

In the project, for example, I had considered having the resistance group OpenAIR publish a comic strip as part of their ongoing protests against Prospero. However, this raised issues of the progressive verisimilitude of such an approach – I had to ask, as Dena (2009) suggests, whether or not a probable connection existed between the real and fictional world upon which this could be based; that is, would the interlocutor expect an equivalent group in the real world to publish such a thing? I concluded that since they would not, the comic strips would be better used elsewhere, and they were subsequently reconceptualised as a result. Thus, the selection of mediums followed Dena’s argument that, given that the distinguishing trait of transmedia is that it is designed from the outset to encompass multiple mediums, then those mediums should be selected with the intention that ‘all of the elements are constructed to be part of the meaning-making process’ (2009, 123). Using the online virtual world of Second Life as a site at/through which to stage the theatre performance was also briefly considered, but discarded for similar reasons. Where a medium, or the way in which a medium was originally conceived, was seen to negatively impact this process, it was either discarded or reconsidered. The main mediums used in the final project include:

- Theatre performance
- Comics
- Online – websites and game
- Flash fiction
- Audiovisual
- Fan fiction
While social media will be embedded into the appropriate mediums, I did not end up utilising this as a narrative medium in the ways other projects have done but merely to grant interlocutors the ability to share and promote the project. In not providing this, I do not believe I am closing off the potential for community. On the contrary, one of the benefits of telling a story via transmedia is that it in no way closes off the possibility of interlocutors using social media as a participatory expression in various ways, such as creating their own dedicated pages for aspects of the project which they can then use to discuss what they have each discovered.

What should also be noted is that because this project was not put into production, I have only been able to develop concepts, or at best test cases, of how I intend these mediums to operate according to the limited resources available. For example, I was able to achieve quite well-developed examples of the posters, transition effects, and comics, but only a conceptual document of the online game component. Though the project contains a theatre performance as a significant component, I chose to focus on the design and development of the theatre space and how the narrative would be organised to culminate in this, rather than developing a script for it. Shakespeare’s play always remained central, but the focus in my creative practice was on how the story could be distributed across mediums. In the case of fan fiction, there are no examples included in this project as they are fundamentally ‘derivative works’ (Azuma 2012, 32) and without the project being produced, there is therefore nothing to be derived, and no interlocutors engaged with it to participate in such an activity. In Section 13 I will therefore describe my intentions in regards to fan fiction and how the project is organised to facilitate this. My intention with this medium is that interlocutors would be enabled to continue the story where the theatre performance ends, ultimately expanding this fictional world well beyond what this project is able to cover.

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7 I refer to the production *Such Tweet Sorrow* in Chapter 5, which utilises Twitter. The television series *Heroes*, created by Tim Kring, is another example of the way social media can be included as a narrative component. Media and technology blogger Martin Kliehm provides a useful overview in this regard (2010).
5. SYNOPSIS

THE TEMPEST

Prospero is a renowned computer science engineer and CEO of the multi-billion dollar corporation Prosorax Dynamics. Responsible for developing the LavaPool construct – a state-of-the-art system for coding high grade artificial intelligence (AI) – Prospero is driven more than ever by success at any cost. But as he prepares to demonstrate his revolutionary technology to the world, his former companion and business partner, Sycorax, who has been missing for some time, prepares to launch an attack on the LavaPool. If she succeeds, the AI will be released from their virtual world into our own, with Prospero’s adopted daughter Miranda and the failed Ariel experiment among them.

If she fails, it could mean the end for this strange new species.
How will you help Sycorax in her struggle against Prospero?

Bernardo argues that the purpose of a synopsis is so that anyone reading it ‘will immediately know what the core concept of the story is’ (2011, 21). The above was developed initially as a framing device when student work was exhibited as part of the EGL215 unit run at Murdoch University during first semester, 2012. This unit ‘investigates design from outside its decorative role [and] looks at the function of design in the fields of graphic design and theatre stage design […] and allows the participants to demonstrate their understanding of the theoretical perspectives raised in the unit through a series of practical tasks’ (Murdoch University, 2013). The exhibition was held in the gallery space of the Murdoch University Library during the mid-semester holidays, 2012.

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8 I am very grateful to all students whose worked is shown here. All work is used with permission of their creators.
The final line of the synopsis was a later addition and is based on Hayes’ recommendation that the best taglines for transmedia projects are those that ‘include the user as “you”’ (2011, 4). This additional line can be used to conclude the synopsis and could also be used in isolation as tagline. In addition, six character-specific taglines were developed to link with the six main characters of the project. These will be discussed in Section 10.2 below.

Hayes also calls for a synopsis to also include ‘how and why the different platforms work with different aspects of the story or utility’ (2011, 4). Included with the synopsis above, the overview that accompanied the exhibition offered the following explanation:

*The works exhibited here represent an attempt to conceptualise an approach to adapting The Tempest using transmedia strategies. A narrative through-line exists between the several mediums utilised – theatre, comics, online content, and new media technologies among them – offering an impression of how the story might be encountered as well as pointing to some of the potentialities (and limitations) of transmedia storytelling in creating rich, immersive experiences.*
Figure 5.5 – Theatre stage models and costume design exhibited in the Murdoch Library space

Figure 5.6 – Close up of Miranda’s costume
(Design: May Yin Goh 2012)

Figure 5.7 – Miranda’s costume
(Model: Arty Valentine)
While this does not strictly meet Hayes’ requirement, it suited the purpose of the exhibition, which was, to my knowledge, the first time a transmedia project had been attempted at Murdoch University. As well as exhibiting the students’ work, therefore, the exhibition also needed to provide a conceptual framework which viewers of the exhibition could use to locate that work. This did not require going into detail about how and why the theatre, comics, online and other mediums were to be utilised.

6. WORLD AND TONE

A key feature of many transmedia works is the emphasis on creating large-scale fictional worlds that are easily distributed across mediums. As Henry Jenkins argues, ‘more and more, storytelling has become the art of world building, as artists create compelling environments that cannot be fully explored or exhausted within a single work or even a single medium’ (2008, 116). The arcology presents a model of such fictional worlds in their capacity as traversable objects, which is to say, the fictional world will always present possibilities to facilitate its traversal. American transmedia researcher Geoffrey Long argues that because ‘transmedia narratives are often the story of a world’ (2007, 48), then there is a corresponding need for consistency to be maintained – ‘canon and continuity’ as Long calls it (ibid.). Bernardo (2011) refers to this as a process of defining the fictional world, with an emphasis on how the timeframe in which the story takes place impacts on the way the world is presented, along with a need for ‘instructional clarity’. Below is the outline of the world in which The Tempest takes place, of which there are two components: the “material” world which is the extension of our own, and in which the events unfolding provide the context for the second “virtual” world in which the main narrative action of the work take place.9

6.1 The material world

The Tempest is set in a “not too distant future” version of our current world. Contemporary issues such as climate change have been extrapolated, so that this future is much warmer, sea levels are higher, and some diseases such as malaria are

9 I use “material” here in place of “real” to avoid confusion with my usage of the latter in previous chapters as a phenomenological distinction between tangible and intangible experience.
more prevalent as a result, all of which are logical extrapolations of climate change (World Health Organisation 2013). In some countries, such as China, India and some parts of Eastern Europe, it is impossible to go outdoors without a breathing apparatus due to the health risks associated with the ever-present smog cover caused by pollution. Financially, though, these countries have also emerged as the economic powerhouses of the world. These are the countries to which many of the Ai who escape the LavaPool will flee.

6.1.1 Artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been developed to the point where many global and national systems – everything from financial markets, medical networks, transportation and communications – are now operated by AI constructs. Several companies now also build and sell androids for commercial and domestic use (a market which has proven extremely lucrative). These androids are essentially an empty shell, most often humanoid in appearance, into which an AI of severely reduced intellectual capacity is downloaded in a process now referred to colloquially as “crippling”. Neither these androids, nor the AI constructs are sentient – see Section 4.1.2 below about the restrictions placed on AI sentience – though there have been cases of some achieving this. An AI is considered to have achieved sentience when it exhibits free thinking, or the capability for independent thought and development, as well as the capacity to experience and process emotions. Otherwise AIs, and the android versions in particular, operate in a numbed, pre-programmed state. In known cases, the achieving of sentience has been typically indicated by behaviours outside the AIs standard operating routine, and has included the collecting and hiding of small objects, a desire to be outdoors more often than required, or a strong attachment to a human (particularly to children).

The first company to produce a marketable android was Prosorax Dynamics, who were, until then, best known for their simulation engine called MonolIsland. Prosorax's Dyn Series of domestic-use androids were a massive success, and there were soon many copycat companies producing inferior versions. However, when the first android to exhibit sentience was swiftly dismantled, concern grew about the crippling process, which began to be seen as a potential abuse of AIs. Out of this a movement grew which
regarded the AIs as slaves to humanity and began lobbying to have them legally recognised as citizens whenever they achieved sentience. Initially, this movement was kept to the fringes of society, as people had grown so accustomed to having an android in their homes that the decisive actions taken by what became known as the AIR Summit, the peak body charged with devising and enforcing the international laws the prohibit the intellectual capacities of AI and the supposed safety and security of humanity, allayed most concerns. But now, with each advance in AI technologies, and increasing instances of AIs gaining sentience, public favour is beginning to turn in favour of citizenship.

Figure 5.8 - A Proxorax Dyn Series 9 android shown positively interacting with a human. Part of a campaign run by OpenAIR to show that humans and AIs can co-exist (All images: Franz Steiner – Personal Robot series, 2007).

6.1.2 The AIR Accord

Five years after the release of the Dyn Series, geneticists, unrelated to the work being done at Proxorax Dynamics, finally mapped the human brain. Fearing the use of this research in the development of significantly more advanced AI, governments of many nations convened to sign the Artificial Intelligence Restrictions (AIR) Accord to the United Nations Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence. Signatories to the Accord were committed to restricting access of AIs to data networks, and
implementing limitations on their problem-solving capabilities in the hope of staving off the advent of a singularity (the moment when AI intelligence exceeds that of humans, denying humanity the ability to direct its own future because it is impossible to predict the actions of an intelligence greater than your own. It is also the point at which an artificial intelligence gains the ability to create even greater intelligences than itself: humanity becomes redundant). The main features of the Accord were:

- Its distinction between low-grade AI (non-sentient, commercially available), and high grade AI (fully sentient, capable of independent thought and development);
- Its implicit condoning of the practice of crippling as a means of limiting the sentience of an android;
- Its funding model based on a registration fee to be paid for each android produced;
- The establishment of a policing body of AIR Inspectors to investigate cases of AI sentience;
- Its stipulation that any AIs found in breach of the Accord are to be immediately destroyed.

These features of the Accord also provide some of the core rules governing this narrative world. All in all, the Accord was largely reactionary and did not properly account for future developments such as bio-synthetic technologies which were considered to still be decades away. It was not until a major leak from Prosorax hinted that the company had fully-functioning bio-synthetic technology that the Summit was reconvened and the Accord amended to include this advancement and tighten up its policing of the restrictions.

6.1.3 Prosorax Dynamics

This is a start-up company founded by Prospero and Sycorax after they had completed their joint PhD. In the play, Prospero had a dukedom, albeit one he was exiled from. Here, he owns the most successful applied computer science corporation in the world. Initially, the company made its money licensing its patented MonolIsland engine primarily to the video game industry. The engine allowed developers to code low-
grade AI from within the gaming architecture which allowed characters in the game to think, react and adapt within the confines of the game’s environment – characters that actually grew in the gameplay. This lead to a lucrative military contract to adapt the MonolIsland engine for training simulations, a move which Sycorax vocally disapproved of, but which Prospero nevertheless pushed for. MonolIsland continued to be adapted for various uses and Prosorax grew very quickly. Flush with funds, the company relocated internationally to a much bigger purpose-built location on the outskirts of Seoul, Korea, where, primarily under Propsero’s direction, it began construction on what would be known as the LavaPool. This was done with much secrecy as the purpose of the LavaPool was to code high-grade (fully sentient) AI and be able to download them into newly-developed bio-synthetic shells, both of which contravened the AIR Accord. Despite a rather draconian approach to public relations and the non-disclosure agreements employees are required to sign, information pertaining to Prosorax's various projects has filtered out over the years. Of chief interest to groups such as OpenAIR is any reference to research and development (R&D) projects on high grade AI and bio-synthetic technologies, as research in these fields is not prohibited by the Accord, only their commercial application. However, the most prevalent rumours are those that hint at Prospero coding dozens of such AI and keeping them sealed in the LavaPool.

Prosorax's headquarters is equipped with a state-of-the-art AI construct known as IRIS (Information Retrieval and Internal Security) who maintains the facility’s datahub, security, communications, and other systems. Iris is a character that appears in Act 4.1 of Shakespeare’s play, as Juno's messenger during the masque Prospero calls for. In Greek mythology she often delivers messages from the gods and is considered the link between them and humanity. This seemed an apt basis for an artificial intelligence who maintains information and communication, and so the character was retained. Prosorax Dynamics remains the leader in the fields of applied computer science and artificial intelligence design and production, largely because it makes considerable efforts to be seen complying with the Accord, in spite of rumours to the contrary.
6.1.4 OpenAIR

The founding members of this group came together in protest at the first AIR Summit, from which the group derives its name. The group’s stated aim is to “stand beside those artificial intelligences and sentient robots who identify as individuals comprising a minority community, and consider their current circumstances under the Accord to be no better than slavery”. When the Accord was ratified, those who did not see it as just the sort of safeguards the world needed fell into two camps: those who saw it as symptomatic of a society where freedoms were constantly being curbed and governments took more control, but remained largely passive; and those who argued that co-existence with artificial intelligences was possible if they could be allowed the freedom to take part in society. Though vocal and active, those who felt this way were very much the minority, and to begin with many paid them little attention. It was this segment that coalesced into OpenAIR. Not long after the AIR Accord was passed, however, rumours began to surface that Prosorax were already working on a new, more advanced AI that might contravene the Accord. The nascent group, who had previously published some materials to little effect, was suddenly thrust into the spotlight as these were published on their website via an anonymous source. Their membership grew quickly and they were soon seen as the pre-eminent body for counter-arguments to the Accord.

During this period, the group’s main claim was that the Accord kept those AIs who displayed sentience, and therefore the ability to think and feel, as hostages, and it was a crime to destroy them. They were also instrumental in assisting a number of AIs in breach of the Accord to escape capture and destruction by AIR Inspectors via the creation of an “underground railroad”. This was made possible by covert funding provided by Sycorax, who had made contact with OpenAIR in the year following its establishment. With this funding, and some oversight provided by Sycorax, OpenAIR
became a well-organised group who always seemed to have access to information no other group could boast. They were careful to protect Sycorax’s identity, though, to the point of taking her in after she was attacked. Two years have passed since this incident, though the details of Sycorax’s disappearance from the public eye have remained concealed, and OpenAIR’s rhetoric has shifted from broadly protesting the Accord to attacking Prosorax Dynamics directly and accusing Prospero specifically of keeping sentient life forms prisoner in the LavaPool. OpenAIR have agreed to assist Sycorax in her plan to free these AI.

6.2 The LavaPool

This is the “virtual” world in which the major characters of the project are most often seen. It reimagines the island of the play as a virtual environment, taking into account my analysis of it as a liminal space in which the nature and extent of the island remains a mystery, at least to those inhabiting it. Interlocutors first see the LavaPool and learn something about how it operates in the comics. It is a next-generation iteration of the MonolIsland engine originally developed by Prospero and Sycorax, in the form of a large-scale machine capable of generating its own fully immersive virtual reality. Being many times more powerful than MonolIsland, the LavaPool allows Prospero and Sycorax to transport themselves directly into the virtual space in order to engineer high grade artificial intelligence. Access to the LavaPool construct is severely restricted and is limited to Propsero, Sycorax, Daedalus and a small R&D team.

The virtual world of the LavaPool has been designed to appear as an island, set in a vast ocean constantly shrouded in fog. The rumours claimed that there were dozens of AIs living in this space, but there are, in fact, thousands, comprising ongoing, completed, failed, or future experiments of Prospero’s, while others have been “born” as a result of the ability of high grade AIs to self-replicate. All AIs live on the island in a conscious state, though they are unaware that it is virtual and not real, and are unaware of their existence as artificial intelligences. Prospero uses this as one of a number of containment measures: an island was chosen for its visual representation of containment, allowing the AIs to develop as naturally as possible while under the impression that they could never leave, and Prospero maintains the ability to change
the configuration of the island at will, playing on the fear and ignorance of the AIs as the shape and size of the island can never be known. The inhabitants of the LavaPool therefore have no choice but to trust in Prospero.

![Image](image_url)

While it generally takes the form of a mist-shrouded island in the middle of a vast ocean, the island itself is a neon-bright paradise filled with all manner of highly stylised creatures and spirits. Now and then, glimpses of the underlying code can be seen. The machinery of the LavaPool is located in the very heart of the Prosorax Dynamics headquarters, but its virtual space is potentially limitless. It operates by projecting avatars of users into the virtual space, who are capable of interacting with the inhabitants just as they would in the real world. Though the research on high
grade AI itself does not contravene the AIR Accord, the capability of the LavaPool to fuse an AI with a bio-synthetic shell does, and it is this that is a heavily-guarded secret. This is done by “pulse technology,” which, rather than downloading the AI into a piece of hardware, as with the Dyn Series, the AI is transferred via an electrical pulse that mimics the human body's electrical signals and infuses the shell. The existence of the LavaPool was leaked by OpenAIR after they took Sycorax in. However, they kept the bio-synthetic technology secret known only to certain members as they were assisting Sycorax with building the Firmament. If they were discovered to be contravening the Accord as well, then what they were attempting in freeing the AIs would be for nothing. Around the same time that OpenAIR took in Sycorax, however, Prospero’s containments began to show signs of failure. He has been trying to shore up these measures, though the signs increasingly indicate that a system-wide collapse could be imminent.

Figure 5.11 – Mood board showing the “virtual space” of the LavaPool, as used by EGL215 students.

Images clockwise from top left: Hela Le – *The Rose of Memories* (DeviantArt 2012); Cristina Tamas – *Tree Of…* (Saatchi Art 2014); Abstract colour spectrum (Wallcoo.net); Stephen Martiniere – *Price of Spring* (2009); Denise Bunye – *Neon* (DeviantArt 2010); Jaison Cianelli – *Mother Earth* (Fine Art America 2010); Still from *The Fountain*, dir. Darren Aronofsky (2006)
6.2.1 The Firmament

The Firmament is Sycorax's version of the LavaPool, built in secret at an undisclosed location after she goes into hiding with OpenAIR. The purpose of the Firmament is to enable Sycorax to create a team of AIs that can be used to infiltrate the LavaPool. The Firmament, though smaller in scale, operates according to the same principles as the LavaPool, but where the LavaPool design focussed on containment, the Firmament's emphases freedom, and where the LavaPool is chaotic and enigmatic, the Firmament is ordered and open. Sycorax plans to hack into the LavaPool remotely from the Firmament, via backdoors she coded in herself during her time at Prosorax.

6.3 Timeline of events

The timeline below presents what is known about the history of Prospero and Sycorax. It is presented as if it were compiled by members of OpenAIR and is made available to users once they have completed a certain level of the online game component. Some gaps in the chronology are therefore intentional and are meant to indicate periods of time during which OpenAIR did not have access to information on events at Prosorax. Some of these gaps are slowly being filled as Sycorax gradually opens up to OpenAIR's leader Caireen. Rather than choosing a precise date in which the project is set, I opted to begin the timeline at "Year Zero" and trace it via Prospero's assumed age as a way to keep from being locked into dates. (Late) or (Early) are used to indicate whether the event occurs towards the beginning or end of the year. The timeline has also been divided into two sections – the first covers events that have previously taken place. This is the timeline that interlocutors discover as they begin traversing the various mediums and enables them to put together the backstory that informs their actions and the events that will be happening from this point on. Interlocutors enter the story just prior to the events of Year 17, which cover what happens during and after the theatre component. Year 17 is therefore not included in the document made available to them in order to avoid spoiling the story.
Year 0

Assumed age of Prospero – 25 yrs

- Prospero and Sycorax finish at university, develop MonolIsland as their joint research project.
- They go into business for themselves – Prosorax Dynamics is established.

Year 1 (Late)

- Prosorax signs military contract for MonoIsland to be adapted for training simulations.

Year 3

Assumed age of Prospero – 28 yrs

- Prosorax moves into current purpose-built headquarters.
- Construction of the LavaPool commences.

Year 5

- Prosorax has been in business for five years, adapting MonolIsland for various applications.
- LavaPool is activated. The Ariel Project is actioned, but fails. Several attempts made over Years 5/6 to correct, but all fail. Ariel is shelved and Prospero and Sycorax go back to the drawing board.
- Dyn Series is developed out of these failures – announced late in the year and shipping the following year.

Year 6

Assumed age of Prospero – 31 yrs

- Original Dyn Series is released. World’s first domestic-use AI. A stripped-down, low-grade AI in an android shell, not comparable to original intentions of LavaPool applications.

Year 7

- Sycorax assigned a research team to recommence R&D of high grade AIs.
Year 12

*Assumed age of Prospero – 38 yrs*

- Geneticists map the human brain
- G25 summit is convened, later known as the first AIR Summit. Signatories sign the Artificial Intelligence Restrictions (AIR) Accord. More signatories come on board in following months. The Accord is ratified by the United Nations.
- OpenAIR is founded at first AIR Summit.
- Sycorax continues high-grade research project.

Year 12 (Late)

- An anonymous source claiming to be a Prosorax employee publishes information about high-grade projects at Prosorax. They are largely dismissed as rumours.
- Prospero sidelines Sycorax by taking over high grade research project. Sycorax stops attending meetings of the Prosorax Board of Directors.

Year 13

- Sycorax makes first contact with members of OpenAIR, begins providing funding.

Year 14

*Assumed age of Prospero – 40 yrs*

- Rumours continue about secret projects at Prosorax. Prospero denies them and the AIR Summit does nothing as it considers these to be popular conspiracy theories.
- Prospero continues high-grade research project.

Year 15 (Early)

- Sycorax completes the Caliban Protocol.
- Major leak of Prosorax materials concerning bio-synthetic shell and pulse transfer technology. Prospero condemns the rumours, citing his company's record of stringent compliance with the Accord.
Year 15 (Mid)
- Sycorax disappears.
- AIR Summit reconvenes to amend Accord – tighter policing of restrictions, which now outlaws the use of bio-synthetic technologies in AI applications (some allowances are made for medical uses).

Year 15 (Late)
- Second leak of Prosorax materials reveals codename of the high-grade project – “Miranda”.
- Prospero stages a press conference, appearing alone. Again denies his company has contravened the Accord in any way. Formally announces Sycorax’s “retirement” for personal reasons.
- Caliban Protocol is activated, and attacks Prospero in the LavaPool. Prospero finds a hack for Caliban, placing him in a semi-crippled state.
- Prospero reactivates Ariel, establishes the AI as sentinel in the LavaPool.
- Sycorax begins work on the Firmament.

Year 16
- Sycorax completes work on the Firmament, begins coding a team to infiltrate the LavaPool (inc. Ferdinand)

Year 17 (Early)
Assumed age of Prospero – 43 yrs
- Prospero announces LavaPool will be opened for a once-off demonstration. This creates increased speculation about the high-grade project and what the LavaPool actually is. Prospero spends first half of the year attempting to negotiate with AIR Summit representatives.
- Second leak of Prosorax materials reveals codename of the high-grade project – “Miranda”.
- Prosorax holds press conference denying all allegations.
Year 17 (Late)

- OpenAIR claim to have recordings of Sycorax talking about Ariel, Miranda and "something monstrous".
- Day of the LavaPool demonstration arrives. Sycorax attacks during the event.
- Prospero frees all high-grade AI into the real world (including Miranda, Ferdinand, and Ariel).
- Caliban escapes.
- LavaPool is destroyed, killing Prospero.
- AIR Inspectors attempt to round up the thousands of high-grade AIs now free in the world. In the confusion caused by the LavaPool exploding, many AIs manage to escape.
- Later, AIR Inspectors formally declare all AI who escaped are considered criminals.

6.4 Tone

Bernardo (2011) refers to tone as a setting of standards and the expectation that those standards will be consistently applied throughout the work. For example, he suggests clearly indicating the degree to which sex and violence will be used in a project aimed at teenagers. With this in mind, The Tempest is conceived to be comparable to other contemporary science fiction and fantasy works in terms of an audience’s expectations of standards. However, apart from the tempest that serves to open the theatre component, it is not characterised by multiple or extended periods of violence, but rather by brief, highly-stylised, yet vicious incidents mainly perpetrated by the character Caliban. However, this speaks only to the tone of content in the mediums used in this project; where the project to be extended in some form – via fan fiction, for instance – I would not be adverse to seeing the tone experimented with, as there would be a reasonable basis for doing so.10 I consider this project relies more on the dynamic between material and virtual worlds to establish Bernardo’s notion of tone, however. Consistency across mediums is to be achieved by managing the contrasting

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10 My reasonable basis here is that the material world would be a very different place after the events of The Tempest, and would no longer simply resemble a future version of our world. A sizeable portion of the AIs would retain their flamboyant appearance as a mark of honour, and the material world would, over time, become a weird version of itself. This will be further explicated in Section 11 below.
visual identities of the material and virtual worlds. In the real world, the interlocutor is engaged in what is a fairly straightforward science fiction story about how a future society deals with the wide-spread adoption of artificial intelligence. In many ways, the material world is operating according to standard mimetic conventions of representation. In the virtual world, the interlocutor is confronted with liminality, or the inability to resolve opposing or ironically positioned cues by conventional means. I refer to this condition as weird. ¹¹

Those events taking place in and around the LavaPool have a decidedly weird tone, realised by a highly-stylised, mixed-media approach. I consider weird in this case to be a specific blending of fantasy and science fiction that gives rise to a sense of anxiety or unease. Generally, when encountered in creative works, this feeling of anxiety is actually pleasurable and can be a powerful catalyst for engagement with a work ¹² (Barlow 1988, 69). This will be achieved by foregrounding the supernatural elements already contained within the original play – Ariel, Caliban, even the tempest itself, which is caused by Prospero – and re-imagining them either as AIs or as manipulations of technological systems such as the LavaPool, so that while they may appear as supernatural, and therefore unquantifiable, beings, they have a basis in “reality” as technological extensions, causing them to be at once familiar and unfamiliar, and thereby generating a sense of (pleasurable) anxiety.

See the mood boards included in Figures 5.7 and 5.8, as well the character outlines in Section 7 below for some indications of how the weird can be visually represented. British director Peter Greenaway’s film Prospero’s Books, critiqued in Appendix 1, is also another important touchstone in terms of tone, as are the following:

- The art of Kent Williams and Dave McKean (the latter’s mixed-media art in particular).

¹¹ Space does not permit a more detailed analysis of the weird here. However, should the reader be interested, developing a theory of the weird was the topic of my Honours thesis (Merlo 2008).

It should be noted that three of the four films cited above are organised around shifts between two or more very different, though interconnected, worlds. In each case, it is the juxtaposition between a world which is mimetically very close to our own and one which is markedly different which renders this other world strange. Therefore, in *The Tempest*, there is no one tone that is applied throughout, but two that must be managed simultaneously and come with different expectations. Tone is thus more a measure of how characters might be expected, or not expected, to react to the world they are located in, rather than any expectations set upon the world itself. As *The Tempest* progresses, though, the *weird* tone established in the virtual world, which allows much more scope for unpredictable/unexpected behaviour from characters, gradually emerges as the dominant one. The merging of the material and virtual worlds that occurs towards the end of Year 17 necessitates this, and my aim in this was to experiment with the limits of progressive verisimilitude.

7. **CHARACTERS**

Both Hayes (2011) and Bernardo (2011) stipulate a section which describes ‘specific characters or key personalities’ (Hayes 2011, 5) in an effort to incorporate ‘the human element’ (ibid.) into the work. This can be understood as providing the conscious agents necessary to make *intersubjective* exchange possible, as characters provide the primary means by the interlocutor will establish the limits of the *arena of exchange*. In practice, this reveals that the concept of the *arena of exchange* is not only a theoretical consideration, but a reality of the experience of engaging with *fiction* – just as one human being engages with another within an *arena* of implied social conventions, so too the interlocutor engages with *fictional* characters; it is only that the parameters of exchange are based on *fictional*, rather than social, conventions. It is not surprising therefore that Bernardo notes the way in which interlocutors connect with characters on an emotional level to be of critical importance, and stresses that ‘you will need to be expansive in your view of the people you are creating’ (2011, 23). By this he means that because these characters will be active across multiple mediums, they must be conceived of as multi-faceted. What are the aspects of a character that are revealed in the various mediums used? Interlocutors first encounter each of the six main characters in the comics, from which point how they are encountered is a matter of where in the Year 17 timeline that character currently is. Accompanying each
character description is a mood board similar to those included above, which I provided to EGL215 students as part of the documentation they required for their work.

Ultimately, this version of *The Tempest* included six main characters, who are described below. In the earlier discussion regarding my process of adaptation, I noted how the character of Alonso and those in his party – Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo, Adrian, and Francisco – resonated less for me than the other characters. Initially I considered this an opportunity to cut Alonso's *story* from the main *narrative* (which culminates in the theatre performance) and tell it in a different medium. But when I began considering ways to reimagine the remaining characters, my focus shifted towards them, while Alonso's *story* became increasingly superfluous to the one I wanted to tell about Prospero's more intimate relationships and the ways in which he abuses them. Even if transmedia provides the means to be able to tell Alonso's *story*, this does not mean that it *needs* to be told, and the *fictional* world I was creating did not seem to require telling this particular *story*, at least as part of the project's canon. There is actually a very interesting precedent for excising Alonso and his party from the play, found in a 1778 German opera libretto originally written by F. H. von Einsiedel and later reworked by the German poet and dramatist Friederich Wilhelm Gotter, in which the characters do not appear at all and Prospero’s appearance on the island is explained by his having simply 'been rejected by his country' (Dean 1964, 811). I therefore decided that Alonso’s party would comprise the group of AIs that Sycorax creates in the Firmament, comprising a “strike team” to infiltrate the LavaPool. These characters are therefore seen briefly in the comics, and are, just as they were in Shakespeare’s play, present on the ship that approaches the island, but are otherwise not seen or have a speaking part. This is intentional, as again, I am not interested in closing down the possibility of these characters being utilised in fan fiction, because their ultimate fate is never revealed after their ship is wrecked in the storm Prospero creates.
A final note on characters: had I had the opportunity to put this project into production, the actors playing the characters described below would have been required to have a complete profile created for them, including photos, videos, and other content that would have enabled them to be searchable online by the interlocutor. This would have been used to flesh out each character, granting each a progressive verisimilitude that would have been used to create more well-rounded characters.

7.1 Prospero

Prospero is a genius computer scientist who specialises in engineering code for the creation and development of advanced AI. Born into a wealthy, if disinterested family in Milan, and educated both there and in the United States, his rigidly objective, scientific mind, coupled with an overwhelming desire to leave his mark on the world, has helped Prospero achieve incredible things. His long-term relationship with Sycorax, established when they met as undergraduates, remains an oddity; she seemingly being the only force capable of curbing his ego. Since Sycorax’s recent disappearance, however, one can notice a change in his demeanour: a loneliness in the
eyes, possibly at the realisation he has nothing outside of the AIs inhabiting the LavaPool. Perhaps he wants something more for his adopted daughter Miranda than a life restricted to a virtual environment?

In the material world, which interlocutors experience primarily via the online and beginning of the theatre components, Prospero is the very image of the corporate executive, having long since made the shift from researcher to managerial and financial roles as Chief Executive Officer of Prosorax Dynamics. He is often seen in suit and tie at various functions worldwide. He was not always like this though – while at university, and in the years immediately following, Prospero was a keen, if not overly vocal, advocate for the benefits of sentient AI for humanity. But it was Prospero who pushed hard for the military contracts that put Prosorax on the map, and it was at about this time that he began criticising Sycorax for what he had come to see as her idealistic views towards the AI. While controlling and manipulative, Prospero is not prone to physical violence, and defers any strongarming to his second in commander, Daedalus. This is what made it all the more shocking when he did assault Sycorax.

In the LavaPool, Prospero's avatar manifests as a tall, imposing sorcerer garbed in robes and carrying a staff, portraying himself as one in whom all knowledge resides. Interlocutors experience this via the comics, and then the bulk of the theatre performance. He also uses his ability to appear anywhere in the LavaPool to create the illusion of his omnipresence, so that while he has the respect of all the LavaPool's inhabitants, it is a respect born of fear, not trust. His desire to control is most apparent when he is in the LavaPool, though it is also at its most vulnerable, as he has adopted his most advanced creation yet, the super high-grade AI Miranda, as his daughter.

Recently, Prospero has grown concerned that Miranda’s curiosity about her existence will force him to reveal the truth to her, that she is an AI. He is terrified not only of losing her to the world at large, and the possibility of her capture by AIR Inspectors, but that the transfer process will backfire like it did with Ariel, and he’ll have effectively killed her. He raises Miranda to believe that the island is all there is, and he will provide everything she could ever need. Though he has come to love her as a father, Prospero can sometimes seem aloof to Miranda. This is the result of the ambivalence he feels towards her – on the one hand, he loves her deeply, so much so
that he would sacrifice the other AIs if it meant he could bring her to the material
world; on the other hand, he must keep her a prisoner in the LavaPool for fear of AIR
Inspectors finally discovering what he has created. In a cruel twist of fate, Prospero
makes the decision to openly contravene the AIR Accord by demonstrating the
LavaPool and fusing Miranda with a bio-synthetic shell, but Sycorax chooses the same
moment to attack. Freeing Miranda from the collapsing LavaPool will cost Prospero
his life.

Of all the characters adapted for this project, I consider Prospero to have retained the
most qualities from Shakespeare's play. As previously noted, it is Prospero's various
'theatrical coups' (Bate & Rasmussen 2007, 1), that is, the way he controls and
manipulates characters and situations, that is the trait most often associated with him.
However, this should be seen as being offset by his love for Miranda specifically, and
generally by his being suspended 'between evil and good,' as the Shakespeare scholar
Cosmo Corfield (1985, 34) suggests. This is to imply that Prospero is inherently
conflicted about, and therefore reflexively aware of, how his manipulations affect
those around him. Corfield argues that the reason Prospero ultimately rejects his
magic is because of a recognition of how it has tainted his humanity; the thing that has
given him the ability to control has also 'undernourished his humanity' (ibid., 45). For
me, this recognition is a vital ingredient in Prospero's subsequent decision to forget
his plans for revenge, and to see that Miranda's future is secured. Although the
revenge plot has been excised from this project, Prospero's turn from self-interest to
selflessness remains. Though strictly speaking in Shakespeare's play it is not a
completely altruistic turn, as Prospero will return to take up his dukedom in Milan
once again and no doubt have considerable political influence with his daughter
married to the prince. However, in this project, it is a turn from selfishness to a single
selfless act as Prospero works to hold the tear open long enough for Miranda,
Ferdinand and the other AI to escape.
Figure 5.1 – Prospero in the material word.
Images from clockwise top left:
• gizelmo – Kenneth Branagh (DeviantArt 2013)
• Unknown artist (Last accessed 11 January 2014)
• TalentedTiger – Joseph Fiennes DeviantArt 2008)
• Kent Williams – Jose at Window (2009)
• Unknown artist (Last accessed 11 January 2014)
• Unknown artist (Last accessed 11 January 2014)

Figure 5.14 – Prospero in the LavaPool.
Images from clockwise top left:
• Still from Prospero’s Books (dir. Peter Greenaway 1991)
• İpek Tanyaş – Carnevale di Venezia 20 (DeviantArt 2010)
• EidolonChaos – Mayan Headdress (DeviantArt, 2010)
• Vladdyboy – Priest-King (DeviantArt 2008)
• Still from Prospero’s Books (dir. Peter Greenaway 1991)
7.2 Sycorax

Sycorax is the idealist, the opposite side of the coin to Prospero. Born in Algiers of mixed French/Turkish descent, but raised primarily in England by her father, a civil liberties lawyer, and mother, a school teacher, she is brilliant in her own right. She inherited her father’s extensive legal library after his death some years previous and, while not an expert, is familiar with it. Her gentle temperament has meant Sycorax has always been content to let Prospero be the business face of Prosorax Dynamics, but her strong misgivings about the company’s military contracts cemented her belief that their work could, and should, be of benefit to humanity, and made public a long-held philanthropic urge. However, she remains ambivalent regarding the construction of the LavaPool, as on the one hand she sees humanity’s ability to create a new life form as something to be valued, while on the other she is conflicted about the ethics and morality of knowingly contravening the AIR Accord. Though the failure of the Ariel Project troubled her deeply, her later success with Miranda, achieved while she was still head of the research team on the high-grade AI project, rekindled her passion for advocating for AI rights even while it put her into direct conflict with Prospero. From this point on, Sycorax begins to feel increasingly threatened by Prospero and, particularly, his second in command, Daedalus, who has made threats of physical violence if she does not stop speaking out on behalf the AIs. It was at this point that she made her initial contact with OpenAIR as a back door she might use, should the need arise. In an effort to protect both herself and the AIs in the LavaPool, she also made the decision to begin secretly working on a protocol that would be activated in the event that something should happen to her.

In the material world, Prospero used to expect Sycorax to accompany him to the various functions he would attend, and there was talk that the two were more than just business partners (though neither would confirm nor deny such rumours). She always hated attending such events, as it was impossible to find anyone who shared her views about AIs, and she managed to gradually reduce her appearance at them until her sudden disappearance altogether, which caused some speculation. When Prospero took over the high-grade research project, this also began a decline in her involvement at a business level at Prosorax, and the Board, under Prospero’s manipulation, relegated her further into the background. She has maintained a low
profile at Prosorax for a number of years and prefers to spend much of her personal
time either alone at her modestly-appointed country home, from which she
occasionally writes about AI civil rights, or in the LavaPool amongst the AI, whom she
has come to know well (though out of fear of Prospero she reluctantly helps to
maintain his hegemony). In contrast to Prospero’s flamboyant dress, Sycorax appears
in a simple, but elegant gown of vaguely Renaissance design.

Sycorax's decision to attack the LavaPool directly and free the AI is a result of her
having been assaulted and left bloodied and bruised outside her home one evening, a
“tragic accident” arranged by Daedalus and tacitly approved by Prospero. Where
before this incident Sycorax was perhaps too willing to maintain harmony at the
expense of her own views, that side has now been replaced by a determination to
follow through on what she feels is right – to free the AI and help them in any way she
can to make a place for themselves in the material world. Another catalyst to this
change of heart was the realisation that Caliban, her insurance policy, had failed in his
attack on Prospero, and had been neutralised. She sees no other choice but to take
advantage of the press conference Prospero has called to demonstrate the LavaPool.
Backed by OpenAIR, Sycorax launches her attack, hacking into the LavaPool in order to
forcibly free the AI inhabitants.

In Shakespeare’s play, Sycorax has been dead for many years before the action begins,
and yet the memory of her lingers on as a foil for Prospero and a means of
manipulating Ariel. She is popularly conceived of as ‘the foul witch Sycorax,’ following
Prospero’s description of her in I.II.304 (2007), and has sometimes appeared in
versions of the play via flashbacks, as she does in director Peter Greenaway’s 1991
film Prospero’s Books. An interesting precedent for resurrecting her can be found in
the same 1778 opera libretto that removed Alonso and his party from the play.
Though still portrayed as a foul witch, Sycorax ruled the night, while Prospero ruled
the day (Dean 1964). However, she has never really been given the opportunity to
speak for herself in a fair way. As such, I have attempted to flesh out the character in
such a way that she is the intellectual equal to Prospero, but his opposite in
temperament, which continues the tradition of seeing her as a foil, but provides a
justification for doing so. Interlocutors only encounter Sycorax indirectly via the
comics, online, and audiovisual content, as by Year 17 she has disappeared and is
working from an undisclosed location, having been taken in by OpenAIR on the night she was assaulted. In response to Prospero's announcement of Sycorax's early "retirement," OpenAIR have claimed to have recordings Sycorax discussing the truth about what happened between her and Prospero. These are accessible to interlocutors in the form of the audiovisual material discussed below and reveal that Sycorax has become more bold in her decisions, more willing to take risks than she was in the comic as it shows the hurt and frustration caused by Prospero.

Figure 5.15 – Sycorax, as she would appear in both the material world and the LavaPool.

Images clockwise from top left: RLKarnes – Extract from 27 Minute Sketchdump (DeviantArt 2011); Kent Williams – Devon Leaning Forward (nd); Jeff Faerber – Ms. Maggie Magma2 (2011); RLKarnes – On Earth Without Maps (DeviantArt 2011); Jeff Faerber – Ms. Big-Teeth (2011)
7.3 The Ariel Project

The work being done in the LavaPool does, indeed, contravene the AIR Accord. Ariel was the first project Prospero and Sycorax undertook once the LavaPool went live, a test for placing a high-grade AI into a prototype bio-synthetic shell. Ariel was originally designed with no specific purpose in mind other than to test the LavaPool and its pulse transfer technology, so Sycorax had designed the AI to appear on the island as a well-built, mid-20s man. During the development cycle, Ariel cultivated an easy-going, friendly personality, and Prospero and Sycorax had not kept his nature as an artificial intelligence a secret; indeed, they tried to prepare him by showing videos and images of the material world, talking to him about what to expect, and so on. Overly confident in what they achieved, Prospero and Sycorax saw no reason to assume anything would go wrong and Ariel could be “born” into the real world (remembering that at this stage the Accord provided a loophole in that it did not make any specific restrictions against the use of bio-synthetic technology). A media release was even prepared in anticipation of the project’s success.

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The test failed utterly, and Ariel suffered the AI equivalent of a psychotic break as Prospero and Sycorax tried to rescue its code. Despite their best efforts, Ariel reappeared in the LavaPool fused with a giant, twisted oak tree. Hugely disappointed, Prospero only saw a useless, broken string of code; but Sycorax saw a broken man, or what had been in appearance a man. Hanging limply from the tree, Ariel now lacked any gender-specific characteristics, hair and muscle hanging limply from “its” body. Jet black eyes stared imploringly towards Sycorax, the skin around them red and inflamed. Prospero blamed Sycorax for the test’s failure, driving the wedge further into their slowly disintegrating relationship. Prosorax has since buried all files regarding the Ariel Project deep in the IRIS datahub as top-secret in an effort to keep the truth of the project concealed from AIR Inspectors. After Sycorax’s disappearance and Caliban’s attack on him, Prospero was able to free Ariel from the tree with significant recoding. He promised Ariel, who retained some knowledge of the material world, that he would release it, if it would assist Prospero in maintaining his control over the other AI. Ariel was also sworn never to reveal the existence of the material
world to any other AI in the LavaPool, otherwise Prospero would trap him once again in the tree.

As noted above, Ariel is first encountered in the comic strip. However, fragments of Prosorax’s files regarding the project can be retrieved by interlocutors as rewards in the online game. This version of Ariel retains many familiar aspects of the character: the waif-like appearance, ability to traverse the island at will, and, importantly, the arrangement between Prospero makes with him to act as a sentinel, to keep watch over the happenings on the island and report back to Prospero in return for the promise of freedom. Ariel is often portrayed as a mischievous, yet ultimately sympathetic character, with the description as an ‘airy spirit’ in the dramatis personae resulting in the character being represented as beautiful in some way. However, I regarded the character’s motivations as quite self-centred, even if Ariel and Prospero appear to have an amicable relationship. What interested me in reimagining Ariel therefore was the ways in which his standard portrayal could be subverted or corrupted, as a reflection of his motivations for agreeing to help Prospero. The visual representation of Ariel as weakened and physically damaged contributes towards this, and he might be expected to be somewhat two-faced, suggesting in one medium a willingness to cross Prospero if it meant his freedom by offering information to the interlocutor, while in another pleading that he or she go away before Prospero finds out and blames him/it.

Figure 5.16 – Ariel, before the experiment. A perfect specimen.
Images: Kent Williams – Pilot [L]; Bao Pham – Narcissus (DeviantArt 2011) [R]
With Prospero blaming her for the failure of Ariel, it became clear to Sycorax that Prospero was changing, becoming more prone to angry outbursts and more absorbed on the bottom line than on the work. She was afraid, and so decided to protect herself by designing a protocol that would be activated in the event of something happening to her. Caliban was assembled from pieces of code left floating around the LavaPool, the results of previous experiments existing unchecked in the LavaPool’s datahub, and resembles a huge, muscular beast with slick black skin, razor-sharp claws, and a killer instinct. Sycorax interspersed her work on the protocol while working on Miranda, taking two years to complete it. Instilled in Caliban is the overwhelming instinct to protect his “mother,” Sycorax, but the feeling is not reciprocated and Caliban is perhaps the only AI in the LavaPool whom Sycorax has no affection for. He is her insurance, but he is also unpredictable as he has interpreted the hate he feels towards Prospero as a need to revenge his mother. Caliban is therefore not completely aware that the feelings he has towards Sycorax are artificial, a state made even more ambiguous by Sycroax having coded within him knowledge of the material world.
He attacks Prospero ferociously when he is activated about a week after Sycorax’s disappearance, but Prospero manages to fight him off and brings him under control with the lie that it is Sycorax who has abandoned him. Prospero promises to grant him the freedom to track down his mother, if he will cease his attacks, but this is another lie, and as Caliban warily agrees, Prospero takes advantage of the situation to rewrite portions of his code, crippling him and thus keeping him contained to the LavaPool. He is unable to erase Caliban altogether, though, and the monster is left to roam the island. Caliban had possessed a keen intellect until this point, but now he is little more than a brute who uses his size and appearance to intimidate the other inhabitants, and is frustrated by the knowledge he retains of the material world and the thought that his mother is out there somewhere. He took to living deep in the jungles of the island, but is regularly seen lingering at its edges, particularly from a vantage where he can view Miranda’s house in order to track Prospero’s movements.

Sycorax becomes aware that Caliban has been neutralised via the dozens of back doors she had coded into the LavaPool. When her attack is launched, however, it causes a rupture in the fabric of the LavaPool, a tear that provides access to the material world without having to go through a pulse transfer process. The rupture also severely compromises the LavaPool, and in doing so corrupts the patch Prospero had coded to cripple Caliban, restoring Caliban’s intelligence to higher levels even than he originally had. In the wake of the attack, Caliban is also the first to encounter any survivors of the wrecked ship – two AI who are too dazed and confused to be of any threat to the renewed Caliban. These AI were, in the original play, the characters of Stephano and Trinculo, Alonso’s butler and steward respectively. As discussed in Section 3 above, these particular characters proved of to be of less interest to me than the possibilities of re-imagining Caliban himself when he is separated from what I consider to be his lesser comedic function. Caliban destroys these two AI in an act of considerable violence, consuming their code and in doing so learning that they were created by his mother, and that the tear provides access to the material world. He abandons his mission to destroy Prospero in a bid to access the tear and escape to track down Sycorax.

This version of Caliban is considerably different, and darker, to most other incarnations, which tend to portray the character as a comically pitiable creature,
‘awkward, often impeded by fins, or a hunched back’ (Vaughan & Vaughan 2011, 29). Caliban also embodies the comedic aspects of Shakespeare’s play, along with Stephano and Trinculo. I was interested in seeing Caliban realised as a true monster, however, a genuine ‘thing of darkness’ (5.1.309), reflecting an interpretation of the name “Caliban” as an anagram of cannibal (ibid., 31).¹³ I found that in taking this approach he becomes a wild card; not ‘Prospero’s “other”’ as Shakespeare scholars Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (2007, 1) argue, but an outsider, dwelling on the fringes and not according to established norms. Following the comics, the interlocutor next encounters Caliban at the theatre performance, where they witness first-hand how savage he can be as he destroys Stephano and Trinculo.

By the end of the performance, it will be clear to the interlocutor that Miranda and Ferdinand have escaped the collapsing LavaPool, but the fate of Caliban will remain ambiguous until he or she next logs into the online game, assuming they have engaged with this component. This game has commenced up to nine weeks prior to the theatre performance, depending on when the interlocutor began to play, with players accessing an OpenAIR “hacking console” with which they hack into Prosorax’s datahub. With the collapse of the LavaPool, the game is ending, but the last thing the interlocutor will see on his or her screen is an image of Caliban, roaming the alleyways around where the press conference was held, having already made his escape. With Caliban also free in the material world, the interlocutor has him at his or her disposal as a possible fan fiction character. If there is anything predictable about Caliban, it is that he will always do the thing that will, in the end, produce the greatest hurt. It is how he goes about that which is unknown and causes the most fear.

¹³ Vaughan & Vaughan list several possible etymologies for the origin of the name, but it is as an anagram that held the most appeal for me.
7.5 The Miranda Coding

Miranda is Prospero and Sycorax’s most advanced creation yet – a fully intuitive, independent and self-aware consciousness, whose super high-grade code has the ability to self-replicate. Prospero has grown very close to Miranda and considers her to be the daughter he never had. She appears as an eighteen-year-old girl and, in designing her, Prospero and Sycorax did not model Miranda after any particular race, though Asian traits seem the most apparent. She is insatiably curious about almost everything, and in the lessons she takes with Prospero and Sycorax, will often challenge them with her deep and considered thinking. However, like all the inhabitants of the island (apart from Ariel and Caliban), Miranda is unaware she is an artificial intelligence. Prospero fears that of all the Als, Miranda would be the first to
leave if she had the chance. Recently, Miranda has been frustrated with her father’s inability to sate her desire for knowledge, particularly of what lies beyond the island, on the other side of the ocean, and he will only tell her that there is nothing else, only the island. As a result, Miranda can at times appear somewhat naïve, but this is only due to a lack of having experienced things for herself, as her father keeps her well-sheltered on the island with any comfort she could imagine. She is far from naïve, however, as her advanced intelligence allows her to compute and process things at a far greater speed than any other AI has ever been capable of. In fact, she has a far-ranging skill set; she has simply never been able to put them to much use. These talents will prove life-saving once she and the other AI escape the LavaPool following Sycorax’s attack.

Nevertheless, Miranda finds herself comfortable with her existence, as she truly does want for nothing. She is “beautiful,” extremely well educated, but also curious as to why Sycorax no longer visits with her, especially since her father refuses to talk about it. However, after she sees a strange metal craft emerging out of the fogs surrounding the island, and subsequently witnesses her father conjure a violent tempest to take it down, she confronts him and demands the truth. Prospero tells her the truth about her existence as an AI, the material world, and that it appears as though Sycorax is still alive (in a way that mirrors his exposition in Act 1.2 of Shakespeare’s play). Following these revelations, Ariel brings a survivor of the wreck, a young man named Ferdinand, to Prospero, and Miranda feels instantly and irresistibly connected to him. She has read about such intense feelings between two people and interprets the emotions as love. In reality, however, it is a result of the tempest as a defensive measure of Prospero’s, combined with the tear in the LavaPool caused by Sycorax’s attack – yet it feels no less real to Miranda for all that. The hack Sycorax used to attack the LavaPool, and its resulting destabilisation, have caused portions of her code to have been copied over Ferdinand’s, and vice versa. She and Ferdinand are inextricably linked, much to Prospero’s shock, and they cannot be separated without him killing Miranda in the process. Miranda, however, now that she knows about her existence as an AI and about the material world, and learning from Ferdinand that Sycorax is alive, sees a chance for a new life beyond the LavaPool. Prospero makes the decision to help Miranda and Ferdinand escape into the material world.
This version of Miranda is a reaction to those readings of the character that see her as an embodiment of womanly subjection. It is simple to see Miranda as a possession of Prospero’s, something he could do with as he wished and in the end “barters” away for the hand of Ferdinand. She rarely warrants much scholarly discussion, particularly compared to Caliban, and yet she is arguably the reason why Prospero has a change of heart and decides to not go through with his plan for revenge. My aim with this version of Miranda was to create a much stronger-willed and independent character that not only reflected this reading of the character, but foregrounded it in such a way that Prospero’s change of heart is a realisation that he has manipulated her as much as anyone, perhaps more so, and in fact is unable to control her. It is not as though attributing these traits to Miranda fundamentally alters the characters; Vaughan and Vaughan point out a handful of instances, including her reproach of Caliban in 1.2.411-422, which ‘reveals an assertive young woman’ (2011, 27), while Early Modern drama and feminist theorist Jessica Slights argues that Miranda can be understood ‘as a bravely independent but always embedded self’ (2001, 376); that is, capable of operating autonomously, but having to deal with the realities of a patriarchal society in which she found herself. In the First Folio editions of the script, the lines in 1.2.411-422, in which Caliban is referred to as ‘Abhorred slave,’ are attributed to Miranda. In later editions, they are attributed to Prospero as it was deemed too ‘indecorous for a young lady to speak so frankly’ (Vaughan & Vaughan 2011, 135). This is precisely the portrayal of Miranda I aim to supplant in this project (which still appears to be the prevailing one in the examples I researched), with the aim of setting up Miranda as a possible future leader of the freed AI as she has the intelligence and strength of character to fulfil such a role.

In the project, interlocutors first encounter Miranda only as a rumour of the high-grade project being conducted at Prosorax. They are given a glimpse of her intelligence and curiosity with her world in the comic, but will not see her fully realised until the theatre project.
Figure 5.19 – Miranda, young ambiguous ethnicity, beautiful, curious, intuitive, compelling. Images clockwise from top left: Dave McKean – Cover art from *The Particle Tarot* (2000); Kristamas Klousch – *Little Strawberry* (2011); Hakan Photography – *The Romance of Crime 4* (DeviantArt 2010); Still from *The Cell*, dir. Tarsem Singh (2000); Resonance83 – *Fuusen Girl I* (DeviantArt 2011); Jayce – *Lights* (DeviantArt nd); Maria J. Williams – *Sketchbook 14* (DeviantArt 2011)
7.6 Ferdinand

Ferdinand is a creation of Sycorax’s, one of the AI crew who infiltrate the island in order to free Miranda and the others. In appearance he resembles a young man in his mid-20s, of Hispanic descent, muscular, as one might expect a soldier to appear, as this is his role in Sycorax’s attack. Unfortunately, he is also the last of the AI that Sycorax creates, and was hastily finished because she wanted to take advantage of Prospero’s demonstration of the LavaPool. There is therefore a weak line in his code that is irreparably damaged during her attack and Prospero’s subsequent attempts to stop her. Ferdinand is, at heart, a caring personality, as Sycorax felt this was necessary to the success of the mission, but because he and the other AI in her attack were only created for one purpose, he lacks a fully-formed personality. He has not had the education that Miranda was afforded, nor the experience with other AI, but he does have a full working knowledge of combat and tactics and is privy to information about the material world and in particular the OpenAIR underground railroad, since the mission would require Sycorax’s team to bring the AI out and help them to safety from AIR Inspectors. There is also the fact that “Ferdinand” is a proper name, and not a codename designating a project as with Ariel, Miranda and Caliban, which reflects Sycorax’s view of the AI as a life form worthy of its own existence. Ferdinand can often appear as though preoccupied, as if continually trying to figure something out. This is a result of Sycorax having to finish him quickly, a glitch in his code that he can sense like being able to see something on the edge of peripheral vision, but never make out.

He is found by Ariel in a somewhat dazed state after the tempest, and is brought before Prospero. Miranda is already acting differently, claiming that something is hurting inside, but when this pain is only intensified by Ferdinand’s proximity to Miranda, he quickly analyses the latter’s code and sees the done damage to Ferdinand’s coding. The LavaPool has tried to compensate by copying parts of Miranda’s advanced code onto Ferdinand, and parts of his damaged code onto Miranda to take advantage of her ability to self-replicate. Had the LavaPool not been on the brink of collapse, this process could have been reversed, but Prospero realises that what is happening to Miranda and Ferdinand is his own doing. After he comes to, Ferdinand knows that something has changed inside him. He cannot explain it until he sees Miranda and knows he is drawn to her as the cause of it. Ferdinand is forced to
run several tests that Prospero sets in an attempt to separate their codes and rescue Miranda. Yet Ferdinand and Miranda clearly feel no ill effects from their bonding of their codes, which only grows stronger. However, the damaged lines of code that remain in Ferdinand cause a glitch that appears sporadically. With the collapse of the LavaPool imminent, Prospero cannot repair the damage and separate their codes so that he can rescue Miranda in time. He realises the crosshatching of their codes will therefore be permanent and decides to help the pair to escape through the tear.

If Miranda has featured little in scholarly discourse about the play, then Ferdinand has featured even less. Though he arrives on the island as part of Alonso's party, being the prince of Naples, he is distinguished from amongst them in that he goes some way towards earning Miranda's affections and seems to have no ulterior motive other than to win her hand in marriage. He fulfils the role of the noble prince, in contrast to his scheming uncle Sebastian, which establishes Ferdinand as someone whom Prospero can trust with Miranda's safety and well-being. Perhaps there remain some patriarchal overtones to this reading, but it is important both to ensure Prospero's change of heart that he is confident his only daughter will be safe and in an environment in which she can thrive, and to push Miranda to the next stage of her life, as there is no future for her should she remain on the island. Likewise, in the LavaPool, Ferdinand acts as the catalyst for change, the final push that Prospero needs to do the right thing by his adopted daughter. In a way, this establishes Ferdinand as a cypher, a character of little intrinsic value but for the impact he has on the characters around him. A cypher in this sense is not an insignificant character, as he provides a cause for change in that the person Prospero most values has now found someone else she values just as highly. I am intrigued with the notion of Ferdinand as a companion, as much as a lover, for Miranda, a man who, particularly as I have conceived of him, fills those gaps that make Miranda a stronger character – physical strength, knowledge of the material world and so on that Miranda lacks. I am also intrigued by the possibilities that open up with Ferdinand after the escape from the LavaPool – does the glitch in his code grow to corrupt him, or does it cause him to become more and more brooding? Either option (and I am sure there are more) would present an interesting dynamic to his relationship with Miranda as they make a life for themselves in the material world.
7.7 New characters: Daedalus and Caireen

Daedalus and Caireen are two characters created specifically for this project – they do not exist in Shakespeare's original play.

Daedalus: This character is Prospero's second in command and has access to everything at Prosorax Dynamics, apart from Prospero's own personal and most encrypted files. He is never seen, but his presence is felt throughout the project and IRIS has logged telephone conversations, email correspondence and so on in the Prosorax datahub that the interlocutor has access to as part of the online game. It is he...
who planned the attack on Sycorax that forced her into hiding, with Prospero's implied approval. Daedalus is an ambitious and cruel man, who thinks nothing of using any means necessary to secure his own ends. He sees himself as Prospero's successor, though this has never been confirmed either by Prospero or the Prosorax Board of Directors, who see him as a necessary evil, using his talents for intimidation and coercion as useful tools for the company. The need to grant him clearances they would never otherwise grant such a man is simply a distasteful necessity. I created this character as it seemed necessary to put some distance between Prospero and such repellent actions as arranging the attack on Sycorax. Daedalus is, fundamentally, a bully who has been given too much tether. Had I not created such a character, it would have been Prospero performing these actions, making him much too unsympathetic for the interlocutor to believe, and care about, the change of heart the story requires. It should also be noted that there is no particular significance in choosing the name Daedalus, and certainly no allusions to Greek mythology are intended. Perhaps his parents simply had other aspirations for their son?

**Caireen:** This character is the leader of OpenAIR, having brought the original group of protesters together at the first AIR Summit. In the first two years of OpenAIR's existence, Caireen could be readily seen at most public events the organisation was involved in, but since then has maintained a low profile, running things from a property in the country she inherited from her parents. Though the location of this property is not completely a secret, as Caireen's parents maintained a medium-sized farm there while they were alive, she has tried to have it expunged from as many databases and geolocation servers as possible, and uses it as part of the underground railroad. It is to this location that Caireen brings Sycorax to recuperate after her attack. Caireen's step back from the public eye was a conscious choice to allow her greater freedom to pursue those areas she wishes OpenAIR to focus on, including surveillance of Prosorax Dynamics and the activities of Prospero. She is passionate about OpenAIR's cause to achieve equal rights for AI, and to assist those AI who achieve sentience to avoid detection from AIR Inspectors. However, she has also been known to use various underhanded methods to get the information needed for later leverage, such as when she hid a tiny recording device in Sycorax's room while she recuperated, to have evidence of what Prospero was doing inside Prosorax Dynamics.
In Chapter 2 I argued that plot could be understood as an organisational strategy a narrative commonly employs. As plot relates to an aspect of the work which is pre-arranged by a creator – plot as the way content and the elements of fiction are arranged to produce certain effects in the interlocutor – regarding it in such a way is particularly important in a transmedia context, where it can only represent a portion of the overall work and, while being a force that compels the interlocutor to move from one medium to another, does not completely account for the range of participatory activities an interlocutor might be involved in. While collaborative problem-solving and most forms of affiliations can be intentionally incorporated into the work by the creator, circulations and most forms of expressions tend to reject this as they are expressions of the interlocutor’s right to actively contribute, and operate as satellites to the work itself. This is perhaps why Bernardo (2011) suggests conceiving of plot in a much narrower way, as a central pillar around which the narrative is set in motion in the form of a compelling tension. His chief example in this regard is an unresolved romance between two characters, where various circumstances might keep them apart and which provides a certain thrill until the moment when the two finally come together and the tension dissipates.

With Bernardo’s suggestion in mind, plot in this project is the tension between control, manipulation, and freedom which is articulated in the dynamic that exists between Prospero and Sycorax, where these characters represent control and freedom respectively. This is not a simple binary, however, as both characters remain conflicted about the best way to achieve their goals, and the narrative has been organised in a way that tries to maintain this tension by allowing the interlocutor to move back and forth between OpenAIR and Prosorax as the two entities maintaining this tension. The purpose in doing so is to foment community in the middle ground between these poles, in the affective space this tension creates. Both Bernardo and Hayes suggest listing key plot points as they occur in the timeline, what characters are include, and in what mediums, while Long (2007) argues that such a chart can be used to indicate both explicit and implicit connections between mediums. The plot chart on the following page attempts to provide this information.
Figure 5.21 - Plot chart, showing plot points and corresponding mediums aligned to actual and scaled time. (See Appendix 2 for full-size chart.)
9. WORLDBUILDING

In the previous Sections I provided details regarding the narrative world, characters, tone and plot of the project. These elements are non-medium specific, in that they are not unique to any one medium, but may constitute the work's arena of exchange and therefore provide the ‘founding instance of intentionality' (Guattari 1995, 22) necessary for traversing the arcoLOGY. There is a temptation, as Christy Dena (2012b) notes, to refer to this process as “worldbuilding,” which tends to be totalising in its attempt at consistency and internal logic. British science fiction and fantasy writer M. John Harrison famously decried the process as an attempt 'to rationalise the fiction by exhaustive grounding, or by making it “logical in its own terms”, so that it becomes less an act of imagination than the literalisation of one' (Harrison 2007). This is not to suggest that supplying an internal logic or establishing a pattern for the narrative world that creates certain expectations in the interlocutor is in some way erroneous; it is simply to argue that in a transmedia work, these elements are necessarily polysemic, open to multiple semantic positions which are not closed down simply by being distributed across mediums. This creates affective spaces, aesthetic-semantic gaps, in the work from which it derives much of its richness.

Fundamentally, I am arguing for a degree of inconsistency, of precariousness, to be inscribed in the world, primarily as a reflection of the interlocutor's inability to see the real world as totality and which amounts to “explorable moments” in the story (I am here inverting Dena’s critique of an excess of worldbuilding in which ‘there are no unexplored moments' left [2012b]). It is also because the principles of transmedia storytelling problematise conventional notions of narrative formation – such as the typical beginning, middle, and end structure – and in this project I wanted to emphasise the gaps as a way of exploring how transmedia techniques might be used to traverse them. This could be taken as a basic operating principle of the arcoLOGY – while it points to possible, anticipated trajectories, it does not close down any. One method for achieving this was to conceive of the project as episodic, consisting of a number of more or less self-contained narratives that could be chained together (Dena 2008; 2012). My interest, however, was in exploring the possibilities of an ongoing narrative, such as Henry Jenkins describes – a spreadable, expandable world – to the degree to which a comparatively small project such as this would allow. What follows
are the two pathways, or means of simplification by which an interlocutor may traverse the arcology, which were developed for this project, with a focus on how the various mediums were designed to facilitate this. These two pathways are referred to as arcs and nodes, and I have presented them in a way that hopefully gives the sense of the interlocutor in the act of traversal. The results tended to be much more context-specific than medium-specific, which is what one would expect in a precarious environment.

10. PATHWAY 1: ARCS

This pathway allows the interlocutor to follow the six main characters described above as they appear throughout the arcology. Technically, it is not a single pathway, but six, as the design has allowed for the interlocutor to follow each character in their own specific arc. This was done in order to firmly establish the characters in the interlocutor’s emerging concretisation of the storyworld of The Tempest, so that he or she is already invested in them when presented with the opportunities for participation provided by the node pathways, and is concerned about the outcome of events to be portrayed in the theatre performance.

10.1 Posters

Based upon the assumption that, as noted in Section 1.1 above, The Tempest is part of a larger festival program which it is able to take advantage of, the arc pathways begins with the advertising posters designed for the project, which are displayed in the usual places used for advertising for an upcoming theatrical production are, as well any relevant arts and theatre email lists, Facebook groups, or websites such as PIAF’s.
At first glance, the posters appear like any other. The interlocutor may recognise the title *The Tempest* as a Shakespearean play, and with the Nexus Theatre logo, it is reasonable to assume he or she would conclude this is an upcoming theatre performance, albeit one with a science fiction twist, perhaps, given the design. But then the interlocutor realises that there is no other information provided – dates, times, contacts and so on are missing. There is only a Quick Response or Quick Recognition (QR) code somewhere on the poster. This approach attempts to expand the usefulness of the traditional advertising poster in a new direction and aims to establish from the beginning that this will not be a conventional theatre production. Rather than using the poster simply to advertise the project, it is now incorporated as an entry point into the *arcology*, and one commonly used by the target audience. The delivery of the poster via electronic means would also assist in reaching as large an audience as possible. The series consists of six posters altogether, one for each of the main characters Prospero, Sycorax, Miranda, Ferdinand, Ariel, and Caliban. The full range of posters, which were developed by EGL215 students, can be viewed in Appendix 2. They retain the science fiction trappings stipulated by the project brief, but are otherwise not linked thematically or by any particular design features apart
from the use of the QR code. This is simply a result of the Unit requiring students to produce their own work based off a project brief.

However, it was a student who made the suggestion to use QR codes, which can be recognised by smartphones with an appropriate QR reader application, as a way to move the interlocutor from the poster to the following medium. He had used them, for different reasons, in a previous project, but noted the way the QR could be encoded with almost any digital information. This opened up a range of possibilities as it meant the interlocutor could be directed to any number of points in the arcology, depending on where it was I wanted him or her to arrive next. Most students found clever ways to incorporate the QR code into their poster design, whether it was integrated into a wider code-like deconstruction, as shown in the Miranda poster above, or whether it was placed centrally, as in the Sycorax poster, where it is clear that the QR replaces the sort of information usually provided by an advertising poster. Not only is there a practical element to this in that it moves the interlocutor into the *arcology*, but the notion of using a code provides a useful visual and thematic link to the use of codes, encoding, programming and building in relation to the LavaPool and artificial intelligences in the play. The posters are thus used to begin the interlocutor’s aesthetic experience.

10.2 Transition effects

Using his or her smartphone equipped with a QR reader application, the interlocutor then scans the code found on the poster, which triggers what I call a transition effect, or a component that does not simply move the interlocutor from one node to another, but in itself is able to produce an effect that adds to the aesthetic experience. A transition marks a change from one state or position to another, and this particular transition achieves this on two levels: firstly, it shifts the interlocutor, cognitively, from the real world to the *storyworld of The Tempest*. This is not, strictly speaking, a complete deictic shift, or movement from one cognitive centre to another, as the transition is not the change itself, only that which facilitates it. However, the transition does serve to cue the interlocutor that such as shift is taking place. Secondly, the transition sets the interlocutor in motion across the *arcology* from the posters to the comics.
Figure 5.23 - Screenshot of the transition effect for Miranda. Cascading code forms the quote “O brave new world” (Design: Philip Walker)

The transition effect triggered by scanning the QR code appears as strings of code cascading down the screen. The QR code on each character poster is unique, so that there are six unique transition effects used in *The Tempest*. Each last approximately thirty seconds and within that span of time, the cascading code will form a readable phrase, a particular quote attributed to the character whose QR code the interlocutor scanned. Each quote is divided in half, so that the first half appears out of the cascading code, and then a crossfade is used to accentuate the second half. Each quote was selected for the way it encapsulated a core quality of that character (the ellipses indicate where the crossfade occurs):
All six of the transition effects are available for viewing in Appendix 2.

Following the crossfade to the second half of each quote, there is one final fade to a digital comic that introduces that particular character (discussed below). In terms of development, I worked with Philip Walker, a student of EGL215 who had considerable experience in web design and took a particular interest in the project beyond what was required for the unit. However, these effects still took some time to achieve and were, in their original form, overly complicated for the role they were designed to perform. It was necessary, firstly, to find a style of effect that suited this version of *The Tempest*. Like the use of the QR, the cascading code has similar connotations for the way the project draws on coding and artificial intelligence technologies, and was ultimately carried through to the Prosorax Dynamics website, where a similar effect was used to help give some personality to IRIS, the AI controlling the Prosorax datahub. Secondly, these transition effects had to take into consideration the potential range of smartphones interlocutors could be using, and had to be able to work as seamlessly as possible despite variations in mobile data usage rates from one person to another. The first version of the transition took too long to load and the cascade appeared jerkily, rather than as a constant flow. Philip was eventually able to
overcome these technical challenges and we were able to test various combinations of effects, font and colour choices, length of quotes, and durations. The final version serves well as a unique, interesting method for bringing the interlocutor into the *storyworld* of *The Tempest*.

### 10.3 Comics

The transition effects fade out to reveal a digital, single-page comic strip that presents one of the six main characters. Each comic was scripted in a way that aims to provide the interlocutor with a snapshot of that character, a moment that is clearly part of an ongoing *narrative*. In conjunction with the quote provided during the transition effect, the comic provides information not only about the character, but alludes to the world in which this *story* takes place in a way described by Geoffrey Long as *negative capability*, or ‘the art of building strategic gaps into a narrative to evoke a delicious sense of “uncertainty, Mystery [sic] or doubt”’ (Long 2007, 53). I raise this point here as it is the first instance in *The Tempest* in which the interlocutor encounters such allusions to the *storyworld*. Long argues that references to people, places, or events as yet unexperienced by the interlocutor create gaps that he or she is able to imaginatively fill. I would suggest this be understood as an intentional creation of places of indeterminacy in the work, for the purpose of stimulating deeper engagement. This is partly why it is necessary to go through the process outlined above in Sections 5 through 7, even if much of this information does not end up in the final production, because it is only with this knowledge that the creator is able to be strategic in the places of indeterminacy he or she creates.

The use of comics serves a valuable dual purpose, given their nature as synthesising visual and verbal *narratives*, and thus their use in this instance helps to actualise the *storyworld* of *The Tempest* in ways other mediums could not. Within the visual narrative – the series of images portrayed in one panel to the next (see Chapter 2) – the interlocutor is presented with the LavaPool, both its exterior control room and interior virtual reality, Prospero’s own office in the Prosorax Dynamics headquarters, and to Sycorax and the Firmament. This is important, as it is the comics that provide the clearest representation of these locations and how they might operate. The LavaPool, for instance, remains a closely-guarded secret until revealed later during the
theatre performance, and is open to speculation during that period based upon what is seen in the comics. Likewise, the comics provide the only visual representation of Sycorax offered, as by this stage she has gone into hiding. In the verbal narrative, as conveyed by the speech balloons and text effects, the interlocutor continues to discover more about each character and the plot driving this particular narrative. Miranda’s curiosity is apparent, as is Sycorax’s attempts at subverting Prospero’s control; the familial connection Sycorax builds into Caliban is established, as is the reason why Prospero frees Ariel; and finally Sycorax discloses her plan to attack the LavaPool even while Prospero plans to open it up. As this medium worked so well, it would be worthwhile exploring possibilities for including additional pages, perhaps in the form of a mini-comic distributed when interlocutors purchase their tickets for the theatre performance.

The process of creating the comics was less complicated than I had anticipated. I had scripted the six pages and only had to find a suitable artist. I had hoped to find a Murdoch student, but when this did not eventuate, I sourced a semi-professional artist, Paul Abstruse, who quickly understood how the comics were intended to fit into the overall project and was willing to offer valuable advice and input on the six pages. For example, my scripts tended to follow the characters very closely, with many panels featuring tight close ups that did not reveal much about the locations the characters were in. Paul wisely suggested a number of alternative angles that opened up the view, such as the first panel of Ariel’s comic, showing Prospero walking towards the clearing in the distance, and the almost bird’s eye view that reveals Ariel’s tree as a sort of devastated “ground zero” at which the Ariel Experiment failed, something that was only suggested in my script. Perhaps the biggest issue with the comics was that, due to my relative inexperience in writing for the medium, characters had much more dialogue than would be ideal, with the result being that speech balloons either took up more space than intended, or Paul was forced to reduce the font size. Had an additional revision been possible, I would have given substantial attention to reworking this aspect. The small budget available for this medium did not stretch to having the pages coloured, however, and should the project have gone into production, this would have been done, particularly to give a greater visual consistency to the LavaPool interior as a setting. In having access to a semi-professional artist, I was able
to better understand Hayes’ argument for the need to work with specialists in each area that a project aims to cover.

High-resolution versions of the six comics pages are available in Appendix 2, and also by using the transition effects previously discussed.

10.4 Websites

After reading through the comic, a button appears at the bottom of the page which, depending on the character, takes the interlocutor to one of two websites. In the case of Prospero, Miranda and Ariel, this will be the Prosorax website – prosoraxdynamics.com – and in the case of Sycorax, Ferdinand and Caliban, it will be OpenAIR’s website – openairprotest.org. The reason for these divisions is because of the associations that become apparent as the interlocutor discovers more. Prospero, for example, is CEO of Prosorax, and Miranda and Ariel, who are both artificial intelligences, were created in the LavaPool, so their arc leads back to Prosorax Dynamics, and Prosorax is associated with control, manipulation, and power. Sycorax, by this stage, has disappeared and has taken up with OpenAIR, so her arc leads back to the OpenAIR site. Caliban and Ferdinand are her creations, so they too lead back to OpenAIR, which is associated with freedom and equality. These association are not absolute, however. Miranda, for example, is still at this point unaware of her existence as an AI, but she is under Prospero’s control. Conversely, Caliban does not represent freedom and equality, but Sycorax does, and as he is part of her plan for freedom, he has been associated with OpenAIR. Tapping the button at the end of the comic does not take the interlocutor to the front pages of these sites, however, but to a very important announcement: Prospero is planning to demonstrate a state-of-the-art technology known as the LavaPool, and the details for this demonstration – which is, in fact, the basis for the theatre performance – are all provided on the page the interlocutor is directed to. In the case of Prosorax, it is in the form of a press release, which the interlocutor has glimpsed if he or she has read Prospero’s comic, while for OpenAIR it is presented as a blog post that cites this press release and offers some additional commentary. The interlocutor now has all the information needed to attend the theatre performance, including facilities to book tickets, but just as importantly he or she has entered into the arcology.
The idea of creating real websites for fictional organisations has become something of a basic convention of transmedia storytelling and is an example of a progressive verisimilitude. For example, Encom (www.encominternational.com), the corporation which is a major part of the narrative world of Tron, has a web presence that describes the company’s catalogue of products, its upper management, and future directions, much like a real-world company would present itself. At its simplest, this is a reflection of contemporary society in which it is assumed that any business that hopes to be productive and profitable will maintain an online presence of some form. The use of websites in this way is also one of the clearest examples of progressive verisimilitude, or not just being true to life, but true in life, both in transmedia works in general, and The Tempest specifically. However, what must be accounted for is the fact that The Tempest takes place in a future which very probably does not grant its citizens online access in the same ways the current iteration of the Internet does. What is assumed, therefore, is that a form of online access will be available, which creates the probable connection Dena (2009) argues is necessary for verisimilitude.
The two websites also fulfil another function which is evident in transmedia projects – one operates as a “closed system” to be discovered, while the other is an “open system” which acts as a repository. Prosorax, in this case, is the closed system, in that its datahub remains secure from the interlocutor unless he or she chooses to play the online game (see below). OpenAIR, as part of their mission to achieve freedom and equality for AI, aims to provide useful and revealing information about Prosorax and the artificial intelligence industry, which has the dual effect of providing multiple trajectories for the interlocutor as well as gradually building up the storyworld over the lifespan of the project. Browsing the sites reveals more about the plot by way of unpacking the relationship between Prosorax and OpenAIR, and, importantly, provides a “call to action,” or invitation to the interlocutor to sign-up with OpenAIR, which is another transition between the websites and online game.

![Figure 5.25 – Screenshot of the OpenAIR homepage (Design: Philip Walker and the author)](image)

It is at this point, once the interlocutor has begun browsing one of the two websites, that the intended arc for that character is completed. The intention is that, after experiencing one these arcs, it will foster enough interest in The Tempest for the interlocutor to go back and discover the remaining five, the posters for which will ideally be located in close proximity. From these arcs the interlocutor learns
something about each main character, begins to concretise the *storyworld*, and is, perhaps, experiencing a sense of *immersion* from having integrated information from these first glimpses of the world. What is important to note here is that these arcs are not formally structured as beginnings, but as trajectories already in motion. For example, after going through all six, the interlocutor will have been introduced to this version of Sycorax, but will have also learned that sometime between creating Caliban and Prospero’s announcement of the demonstration, she has gone missing. The interlocutor’s traversal of the arcology is set in motion by the already-established motion of the *narrative*. This is designed to reflect the argument that *storytelling* is the in-the-moment experience of traversing the arcology.

11. **PATHWAY 2: NODES**

The second type of pathway developed for *The Tempest* is what I have labelled nodes. A node is a point of intersection, a method of transition, or an activity of translating a *story* experience either from one medium to another or from one medium to the greater context of the *storyworld* itself. Though they may appear small structurally they are carry in them what Dena calls a ‘segmentation volume/coherence ratio’ (2008), which dictates that their aesthetic importance is in inverse proportion to their perceived size. Dena draws on the narrative theorist Seymour Chatman in this regard, citing his notion of the *kernel*, or *narrative* actions that have a ‘logic of connection’ (Chatman 1978, 53). Kernels, already referred to in Chapter 1, operate as ‘nodes or hinges in the structure, branching points’ (ibid.) upon which other actions depend. Chatman must not be misunderstood here – for him, kernels constituted major *narrative* events, while satellites could be removed with only minimal impact. However, by combining the notion of kernels with a volume/coherence ratio, Dena opens a valuable space in which seemingly minor actions are noted for their impact as nodes. It is in this space that I locate the remaining audiovisual components of the project, particularly as they allow the interlocutor to move back and forth between plot points, as shown in Figure 5.18.

The cascading code effect discussed above is an example of a transitional node. As a technical component, the transition effect is required in order to move the interlocutor from the poster to the comic, but it also fulfils a vital aesthetic function in that it
provides the instance from which the *story* is set in motion. The quotes relate directly to one of the six major character, while the overall design evokes a secondary character, IRIS. It is this aesthetic function which is its energising ingredient – if the transition did not contribute in this way, if, for instance, scanning the QR code only took the interlocutor directly to the performance information, there would be little point in asking the interlocutor to go to the effort of scanning a QR. Nodes proved an important way of traversing the project's *arcology*, as they are primarily concerned with the motion of aesthetic experience across a *storyworld*. Because the theatre performance is highly context-specific and dependent on associations made prior to the performance, this meant that aspects of the *storyworld* had to be discoverable beforehand. A range of audiovisual components were therefore developed to fill this requirement, with plans to distribute them in various ways. Apart from publishing content on the OpenAIR website, the primary method of distributing these was via the online game. I will first describe the concept behind this game before moving on to discuss the audiovisual components themselves.

11.1 Online game

Once the interlocutor has visited the two websites, they will be asked to complete a registration form, which would include a request for an email address. Following his or her registration, the interlocutor would receive a follow up email – if this is from Prosorax Dynamics, it will be an invitation to help test a new part of the site; if it is from OpenAIR, it will be a request asking for volunteers to help hack Prosorax's IRIS archives for information pertaining to the LavaPool. If the interlocutor accepts this request, he or she is then set up with a terminal. Regardless of which site the interlocutor signed up at, OpenAIR then supplies the interlocutor with a password that they have been assured will grant access to secure parts of the Prosorax site. The game itself is comprised of a series of code breaking puzzles of increasing difficulty. I was able to work with developers Kai Ashford-Hatherly and Georgie Yacopettit from Meteorite Games, a Perth-based startup company made up of students from Murdoch University's various games art, technology and digital media courses. Meteorite were able to provide a framework for the game mechanics and noted the importance of breaking gameplay down into a number of stages separated by certain timeframes.
The game is designed to give a more or less unique experience to each player, in that the information they receive as rewards for completing stages is shared out amongst them. No two players should receive the same combination of information. The game opens at the end of the first week, allowing some time for a subscriber list to be created before sending out the email requesting registration, and registrations close at the end of the theatre performance season. In all, the game takes seven days to complete, which is calculated from the time the interlocutor sets up his or her terminal, and games can be played up to and including during the theatre performance. This simply means that should an interlocutor have attended the performance first, they still have the opportunity to go back and find the information for themselves.

![Screenshot from the game Deus Ex: Human Revolution](image)

*Figure 5.26 – Screenshot from the game Deus Ex: Human Revolution, used in Meteorite’s concept document as an example of the mechanics to be employed*

This was perhaps the most complicated medium to develop, since unlike the other mediums used, video games operate according to a very particular set of rules. Even though they are primarily experiential, as was argued in Chapter 2, there must still be a logical progression, with outcomes clearly linked to actions performed by the interlocutor in what ludologist Jesper Juul defines as an intersection of ‘a rule-based formal system with a variable and quantifiable outcome’ (2003, 35) in which ‘the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome [and] feels attached to the
outcome’ (ibid.). In other words, one of the assumptions of game design is that there is an expectation on the interlocutor’s part that his or her effort spent in play will be met with suitable rewards. In this case, it was assumed that the interlocutor would expect that new information concerning one of the six main characters will be revealed as each stage of the game is completed, and not only that, but that the information rewarded is able to be offered or presented in various community settings that enable a collective to discuss and understand its significance. The reason, then, for including a game component in The Tempest was to facilitate the distribution of narratively-relevant information in such a way that the interlocutor feels a sense of having discovered it for him or herself, and then has the opportunity to share that knowledge via various affiliations. The OpenAIR site also features a discussion forum, set up with the intention that interlocutors could use this space as well to share, discuss, and interpret new knowledge. There might also have been opportunities for the interlocutor to meet Ariel directly, since the game play simulates “hacking” into the Prosorax datahub, which is connected to the LavaPool. Ariel could appear to players on-screen, agitated that the LavaPool has been hacked into and anxious about Prospero finding out and blaming him. Ariel could then appear at a later stage of the game, helping the interlocutor because he thinks it might be in his best interests to have someone “on the outside”. For more details on how the mechanics of the online game are intended to work, refer to Meteorite’s concept document found in Appendix 2.

Originally, I had also planned for a second game to take place during the theatre performance, in which the audience would have the opportunity to help Ferdinand with the test Prospero sets for him. Using their smartphones, interlocutors would be required to access a dedicated website during the performance, which would include additional puzzle games as described above. As they played, the results were to be projected live onto the stage. The game was to be linked with Ferdinand’s ability to escape the island, with players helping to repair the glitches to his code long enough for him to escape. However, while Meteorite made several attempts to provide a model for how this could work, the idea did not translate well into practice. It has hampered mainly by the fact that the gameplay was linked to an important narrative outcome, and there was no means to deploy it that could guarantee that outcome would be met without severely limiting the enjoyment of playing the game. If the
audience failed to participate, or did not meet a certain goal, then it required a circuitous alternative route to bring Ferdinand back to a point where he could still escape with Miranda. For these reasons, this second game was discarded, though the idea of incorporating gameplay into a theatre performance remains an intriguing one.

11.2 Sycorax: unauthorised interview

There are a number of information packets rewarded to the interlocutor for completing various stages of the game, including logs of emails and telephone conversations such as this, for example (a high resolution version is available in Appendix 2):

![Figure 5.27 – A telephone conversation between Prospero and Daedalus, as logged by IRIS. This is one packet of information the interlocutor may receive as a reward for completing a stage of the game. See Appendix 2 for a high resolution version (Design and script by the author)](image)

The other major component used as a reward during later stages of the game is a series of extracts from an interview with Sycorax secretly recorded by Caireen while she was convalescing. Sycorax believes she is among friends and is unaware she is being recorded, and this helps to reveal how underhanded Caireen can be. As a reward for a job well done in hacking the Prosorax datahub, and as proof that OpenAIR can trust the interlocutor with sensitive information, the interlocutor receives two or three segments sliced from this eight minute interview, and is directed to go the OpenAIR message boards where others are discussing their interview extracts. The
pieces he or she receives are randomly selected and only a few seconds in duration. This way, the interlocutor becomes involved in a *community* established for the purpose of recovering the information contained in the interview, which further develops the character of Sycorax, formally introduces Caireen, and sheds light on events that will directly impact the theatre performance. The *community* could achieve this either by transcribing what can be gleaned from each piece into a written version, or if there is a member of the community skilled in audio manipulation, pieces could be sent to this member for reconstructing. How the community achieves this is not as important as much as ensuring that the activity they are being set is, indeed, achievable. It would be interesting to observe if the community finds alternatives to doing so.

Originally, this component was intended to be a short film. The premise remained the same: Caireen would hide a small camera somewhere in the room and film Sycorax without her knowledge. The move to an audio-only component was primarily one of logistics and scale - I did not have the time or resources required to film with a crew in a way that would achieve the gritty, found-footage look I was after. However, the audio version allowed me to rethink how this information could be distributed to interlocutors. Where previously I had imagined OpenAIR simply publishing the footage on their website, this approach allowed me to add a new dimension to the game and include a purposefully-integrated *community* experience beyond simply giving interlocutors the ability to share information via social media. It could also be produced much more efficiently than a film – we were able to record the interview over a single morning, with Jo-Ann Whalley playing Sycorax and Sarah Courtis playing Caireen. I then drew on my own experience with sound design and editing, with assistance from Philip Walker, to create the final product, which retains a gritty, badly-recorded feel to add to the sense that this is an amateur recording, and to add to the challenge of re-creating the entire interview. It is planned that the final pieces of the interview will be rewarded to interlocutors in the two weeks before the theatre performance. When completed, the interview will constitute a "leak" published by OpenAIR that reveals the truth about Sycorax's disappearance. The aim with this is to manipulate the tension build the interlocutor's and expectations for the theatre performance. The complete interview can be heard on Appendix 2.
11.3 News Network 1

In order to give the storyworld of *The Tempest* a sense of scope, I decided to incorporate a fictional news service into the arcology called News Network 1 (NN1), which has become the most-watched news service in the world thanks to its near-ubiquitous presence. This component is not linked to the online game or any other particular medium, but is rather located between mediums and is regarded as a node in that it operates as a point of intersection in the arcology that ‘trigger[s] a search for meaning’ (Jenkins 2008, 126). Each broadcast, of which there are three planned, serves to crystallise a particular moment in the narrative, giving it particular resonance in the interlocutor’s aesthetic experience. In Appendix 2, the London Transnet (TRANSportation NETwork) broadcast acts as an example of how these nodes are designed to achieve this. In this example, the AI who operates London’s transportation network has achieved sentience and has opted to go on strike until its case is heard. Narratively, this constitutes a side plot, an event taking place tangentially to the main plot concerning Prospero, Sycorax and the LavaPool. However, it serves to illustrate the wide-spread use of artificial intelligence in the world of *The Tempest*, how these AI are treated, the kind of powers AIR Inspectors wield, how OpenAIR works to assist these AI, and so on. Given the emphasis in this project on character arcs as a main pathway across the arcology, these nodes are relied upon to provide the experience of what living in this world might be like.

![The News Network 1 title screen](image)

Figure 5.28 – The News Network 1 title screen
The news videos also offer an example of how transmedia works are multiply-mediated. In the previous chapter I explained how multimedia works lack precarity because their various components are augmenting a static core text, which is received more or less as a unified “whole” and can therefore be understood as presenting a single perspective. In this case, precarity is inscribed in the work in the way in which these nodes are allowed to float, rather than being grounded, in the arcology due to their lack of attachment to any particular medium, in a way that characterizes the pervasiveness of “news” in contemporary culture. Their status in the arcology is a product of a socially-accepted, and therefore revocable, contract that “the News” provides reliable and unbiased information about events. Whether the interlocutor chooses to engage with each of the planned news stories (of which I was able to have one produced to provide an example), will determine the degree to which they impact his or her aesthetic experience of *The Tempest*. They are intended to be launched at specific intervals, as per the plot chart in Figure 5.18, with the London Transnet story scheduled first as it provides the broadest scope of the three planned, while the remaining two focus specifically on the events surrounding the theatre performance and its aftermath. The interlocutor becomes aware of the first news story by visiting OpenAIR’s website, where a copy of the broadcast has been archived, or by its circulation amongst the arcology’s community. From that point on, the project assumes interlocutors can follow the source for themselves, as the node triggers a search for meaning in which they ‘assume the role of hunters and gatherers’ (ibid., 21). Though this does not fully capture Jenkins’ thoughts here – he refers to the way the interlocutor is able to engage in a whole variety of participatory activities to acquire pieces of information – it is a move towards the type of hunter-gatherer activity the interlocutor could be expected to participate in within the scope of a transmedia work.

We recorded with another pair of highly experienced actors – Steve Capener in the role of the Studio Reporter, and Mikala Westall in the role of NN1’s London Correspondent – with the intention that their dialogue would be dubbed over footage showing scenes of civil unrest in London as the transportation network comes to a halt (these were actually compiled from various news reports on similar incidents, including parts of the 2011 London Riots). The broadcast also features a scrolling banner along the bottom, commonly referred to as a crawler or ticker, that shows other headlines, stock prices, weather updates and so on. These have also been
designed to reveal other conditions of the storyworld, such as were referred to in Section 6.1 above. As with the Sycorax interview, the intention was to film with the actors, this time against a green screen that could be replaced later with appropriate backgrounds. Again, though, capturing the audio only meant for a much less complicated production process, and while it would have been good on the one hand to feature characters other than the six main ones to help “populate” the storyworld, on the other, it allowed for a greater focus on the footage coming out of London, and the headlines noted in the crawler. Though I believe this assists greatly in granting a sense of scope to the storyworld, I would certainly take advantage of an opportunity to create more news stories that are perhaps even less immediately related to the events The Tempest, but which create further nodal points from which the interlocutor can explore this particular storyworld.

12. THEATRE PERFORMANCE

All of the interlocutor’s efforts in traversing the arcology have been designed to lead up to the theatre performance. His or her journey began with an announcement of a demonstration of a state-of-the-art technology known as the LavaPool, and it has been the interlocutor’s mission to discover what this is, the people involved, and something about the kind of world which might give rise to such a development. Though the interlocutor could very well purchase him or herself a ticket to the performance and not engage in either of the pathways discussed above, he or she would miss out on much of the context necessary for making the greatest possible meaning out of this theatre component, and the greatest possible pleasure out of The Tempest (where pleasure is a measured according to the intensity of objects stimulating it and the discovery of something new). This is because the theatre performance has been designed to be substantially dependent on the two pathways and the aesthetic experience concretised from having traversed them. This offers a counterpoint to Jenkins’ (2008) argument for self-contained components in a transmedia work, components which the interlocutor can enjoy independently without any particular need to engage with any others. However, it was this very notion of the interlocutor’s aesthetic experience being distributed, perhaps even fractured, across an arcology that was of primary interest to me and which informed the decision to locate the theatre component at what might be considered the “conclusion” of this project. This suited
the project’s stated aim of deepening an understanding of the experiential nature of story and to discover ways in which the interlocutor’s traversal of the arcology may be facilitated.

The obvious basis for including a theatre component is that Shakespeare’s original work was written as such: The Tempest was a work written with the intention that it would be performed and in a way that took advantage of the particular codes and conventions of its medium. From the beginning of development on this project, I had intended to maintain the interlocutor’s familiarity with Shakespeare in general and The Tempest specifically by retaining the theatrical nature of the original work. This would create a familiar basis around which the various transmedia components would be developed, and is also why the project would ideally be part of an arts festival program. I appreciated that, particularly in Perth where the project would have been staged, there would be those in the audience who were unfamiliar with the concept of transmedia and had perhaps never encountered a project that attempted to distribute the storytelling experience in ways quite like this. This was not done to be condescending to the audience, and it may even reveal a misjudgement of them on my part, but the aim in doing so was to take something familiar and be able to experiment with some of its boundaries. As a medium, the theatre has an incredibly long and rich history of being able to accommodate such experimentation; theatre and drama scholar Willmar Sauter refers to a notion of contextual theatricality, or ‘the conditions under which a theatrical event takes place’ (2007, 21), which may be usefully applied to illustrate how I have conceived of the theatre performance in this regard. The theatrical event, in this conception, is a particular kind of “doing” that can be distinguished from everyday life, and Sauter has elsewhere argued that this doing takes the form of what is fundamentally an intersubjective exchange – a ‘playful relationship’ (2004, 11), as he calls it – between the performer and the interlocutor. Importantly, the theatrical event is not bound by any particular overarching methodologies, apart from those it chooses to bring to bear in its own formation: ‘The artistic, organizational and structural conventions in which a theatrical event takes place’ (ibid., 9). This particular understanding of theatre as an event constituted in an intersubjective moment, rather than as a discrete set of conventions, proved very useful in conceptualising the theatre component of The Tempest.
Originally, the other components were to be much more integrated into the performance, and the project lacked the twelve-week schedule for distributing components. Most components were to be accessible prior to, and following the performance in the foyer of the theatre space. However, the results were unnecessarily complicated, did not create opportunities for genuine participation, and did not allow the time necessary to build towards the climactic narrative moment in which the AI are freed from the LavaPool. Components were to be more or less “exhibited” in the foyer rather than being integrated into an *arcology* that distributed them in space and time. I suspect this was partly due to my own eagerness to experiment with too large a range of mediums, coupled with what was, at that early stage in my research, only a partial understanding about how precariousness feeds and empowers intersubjective exchange in relational works. The theatre performance was intended to represent a demonstration of the LavaPool from very early on, but it was not until I had the idea that Prospero would previously announce it via another medium (ultimately achieved via Prospero’s comic strip), that I came to appreciate how the other mediums could be distributed and used to build up to this performance. Once this became apparent, the performance itself became quite sharply focussed on the relationships between Prospero, Miranda, Ariel, and, by extension, Sycorax (though she remains unseen).

Prospero would be introduced and take the stage, explaining briefly what the LavaPool is, and would be about to commence his demonstration when Sycorax attacks. The challenge at this point became how to shift between the material world and the LavaPool, as Prospero begins in the material before transporting himself into the LavaPool to defend against Sycorax’s attack, and is, in fact, the only “real” character to appear on stage. I was able to work the four EGL215 students on theatre stage designs to help resolve this issue. In subsequent discussions, it was suggested to use a scrim, or semi-transparent piece of material, mounted towards the front of the stage and extending its whole width. The scrim, when lit from in front, does not reveal what is behind it, but when lit from behind will reveal what is there. It could then be raised to signal a transition from the material world to the virtual. With this in mind, the students built four very different stage models, each emphasising different aspects of the LavaPool. As each model developed, we were able to simulate various lighting
effects and projected images and photograph the models in order to see how they appear.

Figure 5.29 – Stage model by Kaitlyn Barry (unlit)

Kaitlyn Barry's model took a more fanciful approach in realising the LavaPool, though it include a literal “pool” in the centre of the set. The overgrowth in the foreground spills out over the edge of the stage and into the first row of seats, and through it could be seen pieces of the LavaPool's code, as a result of it breaking down after the attack.
With lighting and projected effects added, Kaitlyn’s model captures something of the overwhelmingly denseness I imagined the LavaPool to have. Here, Ariel is featured still trapped in his tree. This model presents an issue with the amount of available stage space for actors to move about in, however.

In contrast to Kaitlyn's, Rachel Doulton's model emphasised an extremely minimal approach, with the centrepiece of the design being a reconstruction of Ariel's tree as an abstract wireframe. This design relies heavily on lighting, the strategic use of shadow, and projections to achieve its effect, but has the benefit of having scene changes indicated relatively simply by changes in lighting and frees the stage space for the movement of the performers.
Figure 5.31 – Stage model by Rachel Doulton (unlit)

Figure 5.32 – Two versions of Rachel Doulton’s stage model with various lighting and projected effects
Selena Nemeth, on the other hand, chose to show the LavaPool’s external control room, constructing a circular set piece that could be entered from the back and which could be moved around the stage or taken away completely, depending on the scene. The set would then be left with the three red columns and blue background representing the sky.

Selena also made good use of the colour palettes indicated in the mood boards included above for the LavaPool, particularly in the neon of the circular device. The wires threaded throughout also help to emphasis a technological aspect to the design and projected effects can be used to give the impression of holographs being used. The intention with this design was that a majority of scenes in the LavaPool would be realised with projections and perhaps some pre-recorded film elements in conjunction with the live performance.
Figure 5.34 – Two versions of Selena Nemeth’s stage model with various projected effects
One stage model I felt had great potential and which captured the LavaPool particularly well, was constructed by Leah Toyne. Her design also made good use of the available stage space, and focussed on four columns, three of which featured forest imagery while the third is a river (ostensibly of lava, though I believe Leah intended for this to be taken figuratively). As with Kaitlyn's design, Leah's likewise captures the sense of a dense, overgrown forest, particularly when lit. Leah also provides two objects which appear as built structures within the otherwise natural-appearing environment, which can be used by the actors in their performance.

What Leah's model achieved that the others perhaps did not was that it allowed for the tear in the LavaPool caused by Sycorax's attack to be visualised in quite a striking way.
This is important, as it is the tear that Prospero holds open and through which the AI ultimately escape.

Figure 5.37 – Leah Toyne’s stage model, with projected effect showing the tear

Here, the tear is realised with the use of projected effects, which is actually an image of a galaxy and speaks of the potential for new life beyond. Below, the tear is achieved with lighting, with the idea being that a white light is set up to shine out onto the audience. Following the attack, the light is only small, but as the performance progresses, it becomes more powerful until the final moment in which Prospero sacrifices himself for Miranda and Ferdinand’s freedom and the set is engulfed in light. It would then cut sharply to black and signal the conclusion of the performance. I would anticipate such an approach having quite dramatic impact on the audience.
In working with the students on their stage models, I came to appreciate how the representation of objects is able to shift across various contexts, which reflects how important it is that the medium is appropriate to the content it carries. Where the LavaPool could be drawn more or less as I had imagined it in the comics, the same could not be achieved in the theatre, where it is conceived in more abstract, symbolic ways. A kind of aesthetic itinerary may therefore be set up in which the initial viewing of the LavaPool in the comics may act as a basis for unpacking its representation in the theatre performance, and such an itinerary may be extended to other mediums as well. This revealed how the peculiarities of a given medium are able to shape the story in unique ways. The tear, for example, can be represented metaphorically with the use of lighting effects; it is an existential anomaly rather than a demonstrable reality and is
much more readily represented abstractly in the theatrical space, in which all elements are affectively charged, than it is in the other mediums used in this project.† The theatre performance is able to be incorporated into the arcology, therefore, because it is conceived of as a theatrical event, along Sauter’s terms, in which the event itself is not bound by ‘the implicit determinisms of the medium it employs’ (Bourriaud 2010b, 138), but the intersubjective exchanges it facilitates. In the case of this project, those exchanges are ongoing, having been set in motion prior to the interlocutor arriving at the theatre performance. The theatre as a medium also brings a vital live element to the project, an immediacy to the narrative that is perhaps lacking in the other mediums utilised.

13. POST-PERFORMANCE COMMUNITY AND EXPANSION OF THE STORYWORLD

The theatre performance serves as the conclusion to Phase 1 of the project as I have developed it. As discussed above in Section 1.1, however, this Phase serves as a foundation for a subsequent one in which the storyworld of The Tempest is opened up to expansion by its community. It would perhaps be more accurate therefore to say that Phase 1 does not “conclude” so much as what has been set in motion is temporarily arrested. Sycorax’s attack has caused a tear in the LavaPool that allows the thousands of inhabitants trapped on the virtual island to escape to the material world. The theatre performance concludes with Miranda and Ferdinand as the last to flee through the tear while Prospero attempts to keep it open for them. The final news story, referred to as NN1: Air announcement in the plot chart, takes place after the two-week theatre performance season has concluded. All those AI who have escaped are declared to be in violation of the AIR Accord and are therefore criminals, and this serves to set Phase 2 in motion – the stories of these thousands of strange creatures who have been set free, and how the material world deals with this. Up until this point the storyworld has been relatively contained by the overarching Prospero-Sycorax plot and, as the creator, I have retained a sizeable degree of control over how mediums are distributed and the pathways to traverse them. However, I felt it important to recognise at this point the huge potential for this world to be more fully explored in ways that I could not manage – with thousands of characters loose, there are

† The argument that everything within the theatrical space is charged is discussed in Section 2.5 of Chapter 1.
potentially thousands of stories to tell. This provides a reasonable basis for a shift in
tone, as referred to in Section 4.4 above, as the material world would be a very
different place after the events of the theatre performance and would no longer
resemble a future version of our contemporary world. Over time, the material world
would become a weird version of itself.

I anticipate the primary expression to be used would be fan fiction, though as discussed
in the previous chapter there are a number of ways interlocutors can actively
contribute. As the name suggests, fan fiction is an activity of the interlocutor in which
stories are written based on pre-existing sources or intellectual properties, that either
continue plot threads left open, or reimagine characters and events in new, alternative
ways. Jenkins (2013b) has proposed at least ten ways that interlocutors can go about
constructing these fictions, including approaches such as moral realignment, where
the interlocutor inverts a character's previously-established roles as either a
protagonist or antagonist, and cross overs, where the interlocutor actively transgresses
the boundaries between different works in order to bring otherwise unrelated
characters together. Literature and cultural studies researcher Suzanne Passmore, in
her study of Harry Potter fan fiction, argues that these creations should be seen as
works in themselves, though ones that maintain a 'responsive relationship' with their
sources (2007, 11), while Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson regard fan fiction as
works in progress, in that they provide an array of 'potential meanings, directions, and
outcomes' (2006, 7). Both perspectives have merit, I would suggest, and what interests
me in this regard is the potential for creative and unconventional thinking that can
take what has been previously established into new directions.²

I believe the manner in which The Tempest has been designed allows for this – the
storyworld provides an inbuilt tension between humans and AIs in which the
previously-established plot of control vs. freedom could be explored further, while the
interlocutor would be free to either follow an established character such as Miranda,
Ferdinand, or Caliban, or create any sort of character they might imagine, as it has
been established that Prospero and Sycorax used the LavaPool for all kinds of
experiments. The world of The Tempest is purposely left open-ended in order to

² FanFicition.net (https://www.fanfiction.net/) provides over 2 million examples of fan fiction and features a very active
community based around this practice, while Harry Potter Fanfiction (http://harrypotterfanfiction.com/) caters specifically to the
Harry Potter community and boast over 80,000 works. Fanlore.org (http://fanlore.org/) also provides a fascinating overview of
various fan activities and communities.
facilitate this: OpenAIR’s underground railroad may offer ways in which the AI population could spread throughout the world, while the existence of the Firmament and Sycorax still remaining alive could provide the motivation a character needs to track them down. And Caliban remains at large. However, the events that have taken place and the establishment of the world, tone, characters and so on are able to function as canon, or a point of reference that interlocutors accept as a legitimate source of information. Indeed, Geoffrey Long argues that ‘each component of a transmedia story is designed as canonical from the outset’ (2007, 40) because of the way in which components in these works do not stand alone. What would be very interesting to see develop is a community-sourced canon, so that future directions are determined by interlocutors and not imposed by me as the creator. As imaginatively rich as such a development could be, though, it must be remembered that it would be entirely up to the discretion of the community as to whether it continued to provide a stimulating aesthetic experience: novelist and TIME Magazine lead technology writer Lev Grossman notes how ‘[t]he writers write it and put it up online just for the satisfaction’ (2011). To reiterate a point made in the previous chapter, though the opportunity to participate is available and interlocutors are free to contribute, not every interlocutor will want to, nor should be expected to. This is simply part of the risk taken on in developing precarious works.

14. POTENTIALITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING

I wish to conclude my presentation of this creative project with an overview of some of the potentialities and limitations that may arise when developing a transmedia project. These are certainly not exhaustive by any means, but are simply those which presented themselves as particular challenges to be solved or discoveries I made in the “doing” of developing the project. As I discovered in this project, one significant potential of transmedia storytelling, which is also a quality that makes it distinct from other forms of storytelling, is the capacity held within the arcology to tell the stories of thousands of characters. Transmedia accounts for this with the formation of community, as it is beyond what can be reasonably expected of a creator, or even a team of creators, to produce. However, the key here is that interlocutors feel they have the freedom to contribute in ways they find satisfactory and that their contributions
are valued – Jenkins (2008) cites the infamous case of FanLib.com (now closed), a startup company that promised interlocutors a free venue for fan activities, but which in practice shut down many of the avenues normally pursued in such activities for commercial reason.

Another potentiality of transmedia storytelling is its ability to engage the interlocutor deeply in a rich, varied storyworld. The identifying characteristic of convergence culture is that it allows interlocutors to access content via a number of different platforms, and in many cases simultaneously (such as the ability to be watching an episode of a television show while browsing an accompanying app or online component on a laptop or tablet). By developing content that can be accessed on different devices, the interlocutor's attention can be attracted and retained more readily. However, by developing unique content as part of a greater story, which is accessed via multiple devices, the interlocutor is more likely to be engaged in storyworld. The way in which this content flows across mediums reflects its arrangement in the arcology, which is designed to provoke a translation from the intentional (narrative) to the experienced (story).

In terms of the limitations I encountered, the major one would be the need for a transmedia work to be planned as such from the beginning. This is not simply the intention to distribute the telling of a story across multiple mediums, but also the intention to render the work precarious by purposefully building unexplored moments and other significant places of indeterminacy into the work. Dena notes the difficulty in trying to add transmedia expansions to a work which is already conceived of as ‘a comprehensive whole’ (2012b). Though my project adapted an already-existing work, the process of adaptation was ultimately one in which I stripped Shakespeare’s play to its essentials and built it back up again with this principle in mind. In a way, two approaches that Dena (2011) has elsewhere referred to were employed: an expansion analysis, in which the original play was analysed for possible points of departure, and the subsequent re-formation of the work according to transmedia principles. What I learnt during this process is that while transmedia has the ability to bring a range of mediums and their accompanying semiotic systems to bear, it does not mean that the creator must make complete use of these systems. Rather, these codes and conventions ought to be used to trigger ways of making meaning that can be translated across the
arcology, and not just reside in any single medium, such as what was discussed above in relation to representing the LavaPool between the comics and theatre performance. This limitation also impacts the creation of nodes, particularly as I have conceived of them as devices for facilitating transitions or translating story experience from one medium to another. In this capacity, nodes cannot be overly complicated, as I found with the original version of the transition effects discussed above, which were much too long and large in size to render properly on the average smartphone. In fact, the duration of these effects as they currently are could still stand to be reduced a little, particularly with the cascading letters. The point here is to not have the interlocutor consider the node as little more than padding or “fluff”, but to regard it as canonical, as Long says – legitimately contributing to his or her aesthetic experience. Long argues that in doing so, interlocutors ‘gain some sense as to where each component falls in relation to the others’ (2007, 41), that is, the nodes fulfil their function as facilitating movement across the arcology.

There are also the limitations imposed by the project’s intended audience. In this case, the target audience of 18-50 year olds is rather broad, even though the use of smartphones as an initial point of entry would narrow this to a degree. I also assume that this audience is weighted equally between males and females, but how this would be reflected amongst the segment of audience that chooses to participate could be weighted very differently, as Jenkins (2013b), and Busse and Hellekson (2006) both provide statistical evidence that woman are more likely to participate in some activities than others. In Section 12 above, I noted another assumption about this audience’s familiarity with the devices necessary to engage with The Tempest and its general familiarity with transmedia storytelling. Fundamentally, it was a concern about whether or not it could be assumed that the audience would see themselves as operating within a convergence culture, or according to traditional linear forms of engagement. Bernardo (2011) answers this concern by pointing out that interlocutors are now more likely to access only the content they are interested in, on the devices they are most comfortable using, at a time that suits them – a trend which is also evident in Australia, as Screen Australia’s Beyond the Box Office report shows. Though focussed on television and film, this report reveals that the overwhelming trend of the period between October 2005 and October 2010 was ‘the addition of new activities to old ones, with established distribution access points proving to be resilient’ (Screen
Australia 2011, 2). Those new activities included, amongst others, online access via mobile phones, increased participation in online games, and increased engagement with social media on both desktop and mobile computing devices. From this, it can be reasonably assumed that the audience for The Tempest will have the competency to engage with the project. It also reveals the importance of having at least some knowledge about the intended audience when designing a transmedia project, as it can help inform creative decisions, assist in overcoming possible limitations, and may even reveal opportunities that were not previously considered.

15. SUMMARY: THE TEMPEST – A TRANSMEDIA PROJECT

In developing this project, I came to appreciate Hayes' (2011) argument for the need to work with specialists in each area that the project aims to incorporate. As the project creator, or its "transmedia producer" as Hayes describes the role, I did not have to have all the various skill sets necessary to realise the project; indeed, it would be impossible for an individual to acquire all those skills and be competent in them. What was required of me was to have the necessary vision for realising the project in a particular way, and to understand why the various mediums were chosen and how they would be used to reveal different aspects of characters or locations. Dena (2011) describes this as a knowledge of interactivity and thematics, or the understanding of how experiences can be facilitated and the various ways in which meaning can be communicated across the *arcology*. I feel I was able to achieve a firm grounding in this, to the extent that I could readily build on this knowledge in subsequent projects.

This was not necessarily the case when I began the project, however. While fascinated with the possibilities of telling a *story* across multiple mediums, I was also frustrated by the inability of transmedia works to be duplicated, for that rich experience to be repeatable in the same way the interlocutor can revisit a novel or film. Fundamentally, I lacked the necessary transmedia mentality (Dena 2012a) and still regarded the project as durable, as something that could be closed and therefore reduced to a replicable totality. As I noted above, this was largely due to an incomplete appreciation for *precariousness* and how it is *intersubjective* exchange which provides this richness, more so than any particular strength of its *narrative*. The Tempest could therefore be seen as an exploration of what these concepts mean to the creative process of
storytelling. As I have argued throughout this thesis, the emphasis must be on creating and maintaining relationships between the work and interlocutor and ‘the passage of signs from one format to another’ (Bourriaud 2010b, 138). From the creator’s perspective, this is to ask the question, “What are the ways in which this particular organisation of content can be expected to impact the experience of the interlocutor?” In other words, it is important to consider the engineering of intersubjectivity, or the relations that might be embedded which can be used to concretise experience. The rich experiences transmedia stories are capable of depend on how the above question is answered. This facilitation of experience is brought about by the interdependence of narrative and story.
CONCLUSION

This thesis began with the premise that by challenging preconceptions about *narrative* and *story* as being concepts that are in some way already determined, it becomes possible to open a space in which an alternative understanding of them can be proposed. Such a space was considered necessary in order to account for the ways in which emerging phenomena such as transmedia storytelling require such alternatives in order to explain how they operate as *fiction*, and it was proposed that such creative practices are consistent with the conditions of the current historical moment. This moment was identified as a convergence culture, or a culture which emerges at the nexus of various social, cultural, technological, political and economic forces without being reducible to any one of these, and it was discussed how convergence is characterised chiefly by the flow of content across the various instantiations of this culture. Specifically, it is a culture in which the interlocutor relates to mediums and the intentional objects held within them according to a contingent logic, which was conceptualised as *precariousness*.

*Precariousness* formed the basis for a model of relational aesthetics that could be located within the paradigm of convergence culture to explain how phenomena such as transmedia storytelling relied on the subjectivities of interlocutors to resolve the *precariousness* inherent in their formation. With this, *narrative* and *story* could be reconceptualised as the formational and aesthetic planes of a work respectively, mediated by a process of *intersubjective* exchange. Together these three concepts were formulated into a theoretical continuum which could then be applied to transmedia storytelling. It is this continuum which forms the heart of this thesis, an examination of the fundamental concepts of *narrative*, *story* and *intersubjectivity* and their interdependence as a way to reconsider how we think about the possible richness and diversity of the experience of engaging with *stories*.

The thesis then took up each of these concepts in turn, locating them in their historical context before moving on to expand or re-locate them in ways congruent with the continuum I sought to establish. In Chapter 1, I took up the concept of *narrative*, arguing that it could be regarded as an organising principle within the broad category of *fiction* in the way in which it brings certain sets of semiotic codes and conventions.
to bear on the intentional objects held within it. This problematised the notion of medium-specificity, particularly where this is seen as explicitly connected to narrative, or in other words, where the medium itself is seen as constituting the narrative. In place of medium-specificity, I proposed a context-specificity, in which the medium is seen to be shaped by the narrative, and vice versa, according to the set of circumstances for which it is intended, such as inclusion in a transmedia work. This chapter also established the representation of objects as a primary concern of narrative.

As an organising principle, narrative presents an array of intentional, represented objects to the interlocutor. This is not a static arrangement of objects within the work which are passively received by the interlocutor – representations stand in the place of objects as a set of conditions for their concretisation, and it was noted that because of this, a vital performative act must take place to grant these objects a certain kind of existence, whether that be purely cognitive or physical in some way. The performative act of representation in narrative provided a necessary foundation for my subsequent discussion of intersubjectivity, and also reinforced my argument for narrative as context-specific in that the requirement for representation, as opposed to the ways in which it might achieve this, is consistent across all mediums. Narrative is therefore that organisation (of fictional content – characters, settings, events and so on – and of codes and conventions) which establishes the parameters for, or enables, the interlocutor to engage with the work.

Chapter 2 then moved to a consideration of story, with the aim of demonstrating how this could be understood as a concept related to, though distinct from, narrative, rather than as a fixed “sequence of events” embedded within narrative. I began with a discussion of the story/discourse distinction that forms the basis for most narratological understandings of story, as it is this distinction which sets story up simply as the “what” of a work and prioritises narrative as a result. Following this, I proposed that a concept of story could be one based on the assumption that it is fundamentally that which is experienced when the interlocutor engages with a work, and from this I argued that story constitutes the interlocutor’s aesthetic experience of a work. To demonstrate this, I firstly drew on the concept of narrativity, a quality by which the fictional intent of a work can be identified, and expanded it via narrative
theorist Monika Fludernik’s work regarding consciousness in narrative and the phenomenological notion of acts of consciousness. Consciousness was therefore established as the intention to bring an object into existence, to concretise it. This is achieved via an experience of the object, where experience includes both a lived element and an intellectual, or reflexive, one. Consciousness was found to exist not only between the interlocutor and the creator of a work, but amongst the various conscious agents within the work as well (characters and so on), while experience is what is mediated between narrative and the interlocutor engaged with it, a recognition of the intentionalities informing the formation of the narrative. The objects the interlocutor encounters as part of his or her experience are translated from their intentional state to an aesthetic one, and it is this aesthetic state which I claimed constituted story. In making this argument, I attempted to add a vital subjective quality to our understanding of what story is, in which the interlocutor’s experience serves to bridge a gap opened up by the intentionalities of narrative, but which it cannot on its own resolve.

*Intersubjectivity* was then proposed in Chapter 3 as a way to explain the process of mediation between narrative and story. I argued that *intersubjectivity* was not a quality either found in the work (as inscribed by its creator) or brought to it by the interlocutor, but is the arena of exchange, or intersubjective space, established between such poles. The conditions upon which this arena is established are derived from the work, however; specifically, its narrative. I based this largely on a model of relational aesthetics as proposed by cultural critic Nicolas Bourriaud, which maintains that these intersubjective relations are fundamental to understanding how certain kinds of contemporary creative practices, such as transmedia storytelling, might operate. *Intersubjectivity* was firstly presented as a reflexive operation: individual subjectivities are directed towards intentional objects in the work – the consciousness referred to above – and in that encounter there is a looking back, a recognition. Reflexion is the term given to the awareness of that recognition, and in bringing intentionalities to the interlocutor’s notice, it renders the object as shareable or exchangeable.

I then took this central premise and expanded it via a theory of relational sociology, which, in contrast to holistic theories which regard social formations as fixed, assumes instead that these are a product of the various relationships its members establish and
find meaningful and is therefore dynamic in nature. Relational aesthetics was then used to provide a framework in which these ideas could be brought to bear more readily on creative practices. I identified three principles of Bourriaud’s theory which foreground intersubjectivity as critical to the creation and reception of the work. Firstly, the arena of exchange, as noted above, is the environment which facilitates intersubjective exchange, or mediation between narrative and story, intentionality and aesthetic experience, and therefore implicates the interlocutor by its very nature. Secondly, precariousness was argued to be the basic condition upon which intersubjectivity operates and was used to describe the way in which transmedia works may be seen as organised according to a contingent “journey form”. The importance of understanding precariousness is that it emphasises the creation of trajectories, or lived experiences that did not otherwise exist, rather than fixed coordinates “prescribed” in a narrative. Thirdly, I argued that intersubjectivity could be “engineered,” which was a way of saying the creator intentionally inscribes precariousness in the work in the same way he or she would inscribe fictional intent. The activity of the interlocutor in creating trajectories was therefore seen as contributing to the shape of the work and as fundamentally experiential and actively contributing to his or her aesthetic experience, or story.

Transmedia storytelling itself was dealt with in Chapter 4, firstly according to four principles I suggested could make a direct contribution to our understanding of the nature of this particular phenomenon, and secondly by synthesising these with the narrative-story-intersubjectivity continuum. This was done in order to develop a model of transmedia storytelling I called a narrative arcology, a superstructure that inscribes possible linkages between mediums and nodes used in a transmedia work. Complexity was the first of the four principles identified. This was described as a system in which its various components interact in ways that produce emergent characteristics, or characteristics that were not previously present in the system, but which are produced as a result of the relations between components within that particular environment. I also argued that complexity emphasised the precarious nature of transmedia works in that such systems are unable to be regarded as totalities, or fixed formations whose boundaries are clearly defined and “knowable”. Instead, complex systems must be traversed, or navigated, and simplification was proposed as a tool in this regard.
The second principle identified was immersion, which is often referred to in conjunction with transmedia storytelling as it assumed that the interlocutor’s active involvement will lead to deeper engagement. I argued for immersion to be seen as a particular “phenomenological attitude” which allows the interlocutor to experience fiction in an ongoing ever-present moment. The storyworld was seen as an extension of this, the fictional world as evoked by aesthetic experience. I argued that, given a conceptualisation of story as aesthetic experience, a storyworld would be a location that is affectively charged, a space that suspends the real world in order for the fictional world to take precedence. I then turned to community as the fourth principle of transmedia storytelling, locating within this the concepts of collective intelligence and participatory culture. Where a complex system produces emergent characteristics, collective intelligence produces emergent knowledge.

Collective intelligence was linked to complexity in that the collective retains the ability to produce and manage knowledge that no one member could articulate on his or her own – emergent knowledge. These collectives constitute community and evolve organically around shared concerns and problems to be solved. Participatory culture, on the other hand, was seen as the range of activities these collectives could utilise or be involved in to create, share, or otherwise be involved in their culture. Part B of this chapter then proposed the narrative arcology as a model to help understand how transmedia storytelling operates, a metaphor of the superstructure in which components of a work are located. It suggested that while precariousness was inscribed in the work, as a fiction it is nevertheless organised around certain codes and conventions that will facilitate its traversal and provide a sense of unity to the interlocutor’s aesthetic experience.

Chapter 5 turned to the creative project I developed as a way of applying these concepts. By choosing this route instead of presenting case studies of transmedia projects, the continuum and the arcology could be read from a practical perspective, and though the project was only developed to a conceptual stage, I discussed how it achieved its aim by helping me to think through and develop the various concepts raised in this thesis. Precariousness and intersubjective exchange in particular greatly benefitted from this process, while the practicalities of moving the interlocutor from one medium to another were able to be examined. This gave rise to the
volume/coherence ratio, which I adopted from transmedia researcher and practitioner Christy Dena’s (2008) work to explain how a component perceived as relatively small in size may still carry considerable aesthetic, or story importance. Developing the project also granted me an alternative perspective on transmedia storytelling from the point of view of the creator, whereas the bulk of this thesis has been concerned with the interlocutor. I was thus able to demonstrate how engineering intersubjectivity becomes a main concern of the creator. Though not put into production, which would certainly have been a more decisive test of the project’s potentials and limits, it nevertheless served its purpose in grounding theory in practice.

Our understanding of narrative and story is far from fixed and determined – the emergence of phenomena such as transmedia storytelling demonstrates that. I regard the three concepts of narrative, story, and intersubjectivity as a continuum, or a connected set of ideas that can be used to explain certain types of fiction. Synthesising these three theoretical positions creates a general theory of fiction that is based much more firmly on a phenomenological perspective than a structuralist one, which this thesis has attempted to move away from in order to emphasis the subjective and aesthetic qualities that come into play when engaging with a work. This is the alternative space created when narrative and story are challenged as determined concepts and the interlocutor’s experience accounted for. However, it should be noted that this continuum, at least as it currently stands, is not intended to be applied outside the fictional space in which I have located it. In taking this approach, what becomes readily apparent is the centrality of the interlocutor in making sense of the work and bringing it in a socialised existence where it can be shared, discussed, and appropriated as part of a larger culture of convergence. This thesis is certainly not the first to draw on phenomenology in conjunction with narrative studies – Marie-Laure Ryan (2001a; 2001b), for example, has argued for a phenomenological dimension to be incorporated, if only to account for the experience of engaging with a work (specifically, in her case, with games), while a clear precedent can be found in the work of Polish phenomenologist Roman Ingarden, who linked a phenomenological perspective not only to literary works, but to music, architecture, film, and painting (1973b; 1989). As such, it is possible to account for the paradox of fiction, in which fiction establishes itself via self-reference rather than an externalised, ultimate
reference, by arguing for the interlocutor’s willing and active engagement in the reality of that fiction.

While I have argued for a conception of story and of the storytelling experience that I believe is a much richer one, this should not be taken to mean that every story is inherently “good”. Story as aesthetic experience does not mean there will be no such thing as poor or ill-conceived narratives that translate into dissatisfactory stories. Nor does precariousness as a formational characteristic of a work mean that it cannot fail to maintain relations. These are concepts which must be seen as operating in various involved interactions which will differ from one work to the next, and it is this which makes transmedia an exciting opportunity to explore new ways of storytelling, but one that presents unique challenges and problems to be solved. As Screen Australia’s (2011) research showed, transmedia and associated cross-media formations do not signal the death or even, necessarily, the decline of any particular medium. It is, however, a creative practice consistent with the conditions of our current historical moment. Whether or not transmedia storytelling continues to grow and develop and its principles be utilised in innovative new ways as that historical moment continues to shift remains to be seen.

“All things change in a dynamic environment”
– The Puppetmaster, GHOST IN THE SHELL (Oshii, 1995)
Appendix 1
READING THE TEMPEST

As was noted in Chapter 5, the reading of The Tempest offered here was one which informed the project's creative process. It was written in the early stages of the project as a way to consolidate my thinking on the play and to provide a creative direction for the adaptation that followed. I would therefore request that it be read as an "historical" document – an important step along the path to realising this version of The Tempest. The reading is based on a nascent version of the narrative-story-intersubjectivity continuum, and introduces additional theory not contained within the thesis proper, particularly Farah Mendlesohn's category of liminal fantasy, along with various scholarly analyses of Shakespeare and The Tempest. I am aware that any such new theory would not normally be introduced so late in an appendix, but I trust my reasoning will justify its inclusion, and the continuum, being less developed here than in the thesis, will also be seen in the same light.

1. READING SHAKESPEARE’S THE TEMPEST AS LIMINAL FANTASY

There is, of course, ample precedent for adapting, changing, and repurposing Shakespeare, and The Tempest has certainly not been immune in this regard: ‘Few plays have been more frequently or more extensively adapted than The Tempest’ (Hopkins 2008, 27). Lisa Hopkins, a noted Shakespeare scholar, goes on to describe the history of the play’s manipulation and positioning, particularly since the nineteenth century, as a site of debate and discussion of colonialism and the nature and function of empire. Many critics and scholars point to England’s early establishment of the Jamestown colony in Virginia, in 1607, the wreck of the ship Sea Venture off the coast of Bermuda in 1609, and the 1610 publication of True Repertory of the Wrack, a pamphlet written by William Strachey, a writer and report who survived the Sea Venture wreck, as evidence of Shakespeare’s interest in the so-called New World and, by extension, the colonial aspirations of Europe’s major powers as a

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1 The full title of Strachey’s published pamphlet was True Repertory of the Wrack, and redemption of Sir Thomas Gates Knight, upon and from the islands of the Bermudas, his coming to Virginia, and the estate of that colony (Hopkins 2005, 165).
Such a view would seem to support the evidence of *The Tempest* being written sometime between 1610-1611, and first performed on 1 November, 1611 (Vaughan and Vaughan 2011, 6).

While this history is insightful as what might be considered, in Henry Jenkins’ (2006) conception, an early example of appropriation on Shakespeare’s part, my interest stems not from a specific historical or political reading of the play, but from Martin Butler’s description of *The Tempest* as ‘not just Shakespeare’s travel play, but his pioneering work of science fiction’ (Butler 2007, xxiv). A scholar of Renaissance drama, Butler’s use of ‘science fiction’ here is rather loose, but by stressing the play’s “fantastic” elements, a wide-ranging set of possibilities inherent in this particular *narrative world* are foregrounded, and worth noting is that none of the above-mentioned historical or political readings are dismissed by doing so. On the contrary, as I will demonstrate, it is Shakespeare’s use of what might be described as proto-fantasy tropes that allows him to embed these potential readings in the play. For Butler, chief among these is the play’s ability to problematise the familiar – whether it be the body, language, relationships, environments, or ideologies – via the foregrounding of the play’s supernatural and magical elements, and to hold them in tension in ‘a space which runs so entirely according to its own laws’ (Butler 2007, xxiii). Though this was not the first time Shakespeare had incorporated supernatural or magical elements into his work – the last attempt on such a scale being *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* some fifteen years previous (see Brooks 2004) – the effect is markedly different and works, as I will argue, to demonstrate Shakespeare’s mastery over his craft, and in particular the three unities of time, place, and action commonly attributed to the Greek philosopher Aristotle (but developed extensively by Renaissance thinkers), to the point where Shakespeare is able to subvert these without destroying the play’s overall structure. It should be noted, however, that Aristotle almost certainly intended his work to be taken ‘as descriptions rather than normative rules’ (Walker 2005, 93), and the three unities have been employed in varying degrees and to various effects in a whole range of works. The unities should therefore be seen as one organising principle among many, even if Shakespeare only utilises them in order to subvert them.

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2 Spain, Portugal, France, and the Netherlands had all established colonies well before England made significant moves towards empire.
If *The Tempest* is to be read as fantasy, then, what is understood by that term? Rather than offering a definition, I will assume a degree of reader understanding and rely on Brian Attebery’s observation that ‘the fantastic always seems larger than any theory that tries to encompass it’ (Attebery 1992, 5). However, two guiding remarks are in order that will lead into the kind of reading of *The Tempest* that has informed this project. The first of these is that the premise of fiction as a paradox of self-reference followed in this thesis is readily evident in fantasy fiction, which, if it cannot be defined, can at least be said ‘to express a conscious departure from, even a rebellion against, the principle of mimesis’ (Petzold 1986, 15). This foregrounds the condition in which the principle of fictional intent on the part of the creator, and its recognition and adoption on the part of the interlocutor, must be established in order to function. The second guiding remark is that fantasy should be viewed as a mode, that is, the manner in which the qualitative features of a work are expressed. Mode is therefore distinct from form, the formal, technical, or quantitative aspects of a work (though the two must blend in practice). Genre, I suggest, is a tool for categorising works based on shared combinations of qualitative and quantitative features.

In constructing a reading of *The Tempest*, I have found scholar Farah Mendlesohn’s (2008) categories a useful starting point; in particular her category of liminal fantasy. There is, as with any taxonomy, some overlap with her neighbouring category of immersive fantasy, but when Butler makes his case that the chief characteristic of *The Tempest* is ambivalence and an overwhelming sense of ‘infinite opportunity meeting infinite uncertainty’ (2007, xxiii), a stronger case can be made for reading the play in terms of Mendlesohn’s liminal fantasy, ‘that form of fantasy which estranges the reader from the fantastic as seen and described by the protagonist’ (2008, 182).

Ambivalence and anxiety are key elements in the liminal fantasy. Irresolution, not in the sense of the open-ended narrative (a potential function of plot), but between opposing or ironically positioned cues balanced within the narrative, is the means by which it achieves its effect. For the interlocutor, the inability to resolve these cues causes a cognitive rupture, a space that becomes affectively charged because it is held open in such a way that it cannot be closed by conventional means. This provides the basis for story in (liminal) fantasy fiction. Modes of fiction predicated on principles of

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3 For an overview of the debate surrounding a definition of fantasy fiction, see Pertzold (1986) and Kincaid (2003).
mimesis tend to avoid such ruptures – the more closely the representation imitates
the interlocutor’s lived experience and understanding of the ‘real’, the less risk there is
in such ruptures occurring. On the other hand, as cultural scholar Clemens Ruthner
argues, the liminal fantasy ‘reacts against the principle of mimesis as a leading
aesthetic discourse of Western cultures’ (Ruthner 2012, 50). That reaction can take a
number of forms, but Mendlesohn argues that the most common is when the presence
of the fantastic is taken as a given by the protagonist, as it is by Prospero in The
Tempest, but the interlocutor is displaced by its seeming intrusion (2008, 182).

This is markedly different from the view of the fantastic put forward in 1975 by
Tzvetan Todorov, and which has come to dominant much thinking on the subject.
Todorov talks about a ‘hesitation’ the interlocutor feels when presented with
something outside his or her lived experience: ‘The person who experiences the event
must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the
senses, of a product of the imagination – and the laws of the world then remain what
they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality – but
then the reality is controlled by laws unknown to us. Either the devil is an illusion, an
imaginary being; or else he really exists, precisely like other living beings.’ (1975, 25)
Todorov is here leaning towards a logic that states a proposition is either true, or its
negation is true, which is effectively an extension of the suspension of disbelief
discussed in the previous chapter. The liminal fantasy, however, exists in the
unresolvable middle space, and Mendlesohn quite rightly categorises the kind of
works that Todorov cites – the gothic tradition, ghost stories, and the like – under the
heading of “intrusive” fantasies, in which the fantastic does not belong to the reality of
the storyworld and is in some fashion expunged by the end of the story. In 5.1.54-57 of
The Tempest, Prospero states “I’ll break my staff, / Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
/ And deeper than did ever plummet sound / I’ll drown my book,” yet he is never seen
following through with this claim – instead of the fantastic being expunged by the end
of the play, the rupture remains open, and there is every possibility that Prospero does
not intend to keep to his word, which is made possible by the fact that he has already
manipulated the entirety of the play.

According to Shakespeare scholar Lisa Hopkins, many of Shakespeare’s ‘last plays’ –
The Winter’s Tale, Cymbeline, Pericles, along with The Tempest – move away from, if not
an outright mimetic aesthetic, at least a more realistic one, towards what she calls ‘fantastic narratives’ (2008, 21). How is this achieved? According to Ruthner (2012, 53), the liminal fantasy is encountered in terms of incidents, encounters with the fantastic that operate on both a narrative and story level in order to push interlocutors towards ‘a threshold state in which individuals or groups find themselves after they have [...] dissociated themselves from the reigning social order’. Butler (2007, xxiv) talks about ‘mysterious symmetries’ in the play, while Mendlesohn discusses the need for liminal fantasies to be very carefully constructed upon such symmetries, or as she calls them, ironies.

_The Tempest_ is littered with such ironies. I will consider three here which establish an impression of strict adherence to the three Aristotelian unities of time, action, and place, only to subvert them in various ways. Before going further, it should be noted that in _The Poetics_, Aristotle only really develops the unity of action to any significant degree. The unity of time is suggested in a passing thought that the action of a work should not exceed ‘a single revolution of the sun’ (Aristotle 2004, 63), or twenty-four hours, while the unity of place is not mentioned by Aristotle at all. This latter concept was, in fact, develop during the sixteenth century primarily by Italian and French scholars and dramatists. It was the likes of Italian Neoclassicist critic Lodovico Castelvetro (1505-1571), and French dramatist and poet Jean de La Taille (1540-1607) who, taking Aristotle as their starting point, developed a much more rigid conception of all three unities as the basis for the dramatic arts. It is not difficult to imagine how the unity of place could have been conceived: given the firm stance Aristotle seems to take on action and time, imposing similar limitations on place – in this case, the physical limitations of the stage representing a single geographic location – is a logical extension. The effect of this on Renaissance theatre was that, according to Shakespeare and theatre criticism scholar and Lawrence Danson, the likes of Ben Jonson and others were considered ‘rule-bound auditors’ (2011, 114) who firmly adhered to Aristotelian conventions. The degree to which Shakespeare was actually influenced by, or even aware of, these conventions, critiques of which did not appear amongst English scholars and dramatist until well into the seventeenth century,⁴ is unknown, but the evidence of _The Tempest_ seems clear: Shakespeare was, by the early

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⁴ A major piece of evidence for this is John Dryden’s _Essay of Dramatick Poesie_, published in 1668. The essay is one of the first examples of English scholars and dramatists critiquing their native theatre, something the French and Italians had been doing for some time, as evidenced by La Taille and Castelvetro.
seventeenth century, a master of his art and, whether intentionally or not, subverts the conventions of his day in the very structure of his play.

The first is Shakespeare's subversion of the unity of time, which states that the action of a play should not exceed 'a single revolution of the sun' (Aristotle 2004, 63) in order that the action might appear plausible, to the point where the unity of time was sometimes reduced from twenty-four hours to twelve (Secretan 1973, 17). In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare takes this even further when, in 1.2.240-241, Prospero informs us that it is about the second hour after noon, and that his scheme will not take more than four hours, which is later confirmed in 5.1.4-5 when Ariel says 'On the sixth hour, at which time, my lord, / You said our work should cease'. Likewise Alonso, noting the affection between his son Ferdinand and Miranda, remarks that 'Your eld'st acquaintance cannot be three hours' (5.1.186).

This timeframe of three to four hours roughly corresponds to the time required to perform the play in full, but as Danson describes, extreme adherence to the unity of time does not seem to be Shakespeare's motive. Plausibility, in the Aristotelian sense of mimetic representations grounded in experiences of the real, is undermined by the presence of 'drolleries, a sprite, a fishy monster, and spirits of all sorts' (Danson 2011, 114) for whom time may very well function differently. Most importantly, some of those sprites, along with Prospero himself, possess the ability to manipulate time: Alonso and his companions are charmed for a period in 5.1– line 61 says specifically they are 'spell-stopped'. This is a liminal state that Prospero, in 5.1.65-66, likens to the way in which 'the morning steals upon the night, / Melting the darkness,' a period of time that is neither day, nor night. Those caught in Prospero's spell exist, for this moment, outside a normal measure of time, their minds '[lie] foul and muddy' (5.2.82).

Though 'magical thinking was universal in the age of Shakespeare,' (Bate & Rasmussen 2007, 2) and a belief in the spirit world much more widely accepted than it is today, 'Shakespeare seems to use the supernatural for its very indefinable and perplexing nature [...] as a dramatic tool to portray uncertainty, ambiguity and doubt' (Randell 1976, 2). It should not be presumed, therefore, that the Elizabethan acceptance of a spirit world and the practice of magic meant that its society was entirely comfortable with these things; their presence disturbed them as much as it does for us today, even if the reasons for this disquiet might be different. Wherever it is encountered, the
supernatural is always a disturbing, unusual presence that we never know quite how to approach or control.

The supernatural is also responsible for disrupting the play's unity of action. There are two aspects to this unity: the first is that action in a work should be 'serious, complete, and of some magnitude' (Aristotle 2004, 64); the second is that actions 'should develop out of the very structure of the plot, so that they are the inevitable or probable consequence of what has gone before' (ibid., 70). The retrospective labelling of *The Tempest* as a tragicomedy suggests how Shakespeare subverts the first of these two aspects. Notable British Shakespeare scholar Stanley Wells suggests that *The Tempest* is a romance containing built-in criticism of romance; not a rejection of it, but an appreciation of both its glories and its limitations' (Wells, quoted in Vaughan & Vaughan 2011, 17); similarly, the tragicomedy is combinatory form, 'complete in itself,' as Kenneth J. Semon describes it, yet also fundamentally ambivalent as a result, since it 'expresses neither an essentially comic nor an essentially tragic point of view' (1974, 89).

Consider how this affects the unity of action as 'serious, complete, and of some magnitude': Prospero's plan for revenge bears all the hallmarks of tragedy as a serious, cathartic experience, with the beautiful, innocent Miranda and the charming, naïve Ferdinand seemingly poised to fall on the point of Prospero's hubris. And yet catharsis, only understood as an 'opportunity to develop our emotional responses correctly, without our having to undergo the sufferings that tragic drama represents' (Murray 2004, xxxiv), never arrives. Prospero’s hubris never manifests itself in a way that we, the audience, are actually forced to confront pity and fear, the two emotions Aristotle believed were vital to tragedy – by the time Prospero charms Alonso and his companions in his spell circle, he is ready to forgive. The example of Caliban may be used as a counterargument here, since we tend to feel pity and fear towards him, but because Shakespeare locates this thread of action within a comedic context, our reading of Caliban as a tragic figure is again subverted.

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5 Only one reference to catharsis survives in *The Poetics*. Aristotle did apparently intend to study the phenomenon more closely, but whether he did or not, that work remains lost to us. The popular conception of catharsis as a purging of unpleasant emotions comes primarily from an essay by Jacob Bernays, published in 1857, in which he expounds on another minor reference to the term found in Aristotle’s *Politics* (Murray 2004, xxxiv).
Aristotle also calls for action to be complete within the duration of the performance, but this is certainly not the case in *The Tempest*. In *The Poetics*, Aristotle identifies six constituent elements, of which he says plot is 'the most important' (Aristotle 2004, 65), yet Prospero’s closing soliloquy, though appearing as a natural and suitably theatrical close to the play, comes at the expense of resolving several plot points. Another notable Shakespeare scholar, Lynne Magnusson, discusses these unresolved incidents in terms of a motif of interruption that runs throughout *The Tempest*, 'breaking off dramatic actions in the play [and] resisting our educated expectations of plot' (1986, 52). That we do not see Prospero following through on his claim to drown his book has been noted, but there other interruptions in these final scenes: Miranda and Ferdinand’s union is interrupted, and many have commented on the suggestion that Ferdinand is cheating at their chess game in 5.1.172; Prospero acknowledges Caliban as ‘mine’ (5.1.276), but promptly sends him, Stephano and Trinculo are away (5.1.299), to what fate is never revealed, though it seems they would be unwelcome on ship back to Italy; Magnusson notes how the 'shapelessness' of Prospero's description of his usurpation from Milan in 1.2.15-186 underpins the notion that 'there is no one clear pattern in the actions of the past' (1986, 56; 57). These examples work towards demonstrating that although the action of the play seems unified on its surface and plot incidents are moving towards a cathartic confrontation, almost everything driving the play succumbs to an unresolvable conclusion; that despite Prospero forgiving those who have wronged him and establishing a place for Miranda in the world outside the island in her proposed marriage to Ferdinand, we are left in a liminal space that 'questions epistemological standards' (Ruthner 2012, 59).

The second aspect of the unity of action – that action should develop organically from the plot – is subverted from the beginning of the play, and is, as described above, never fully resolved. The play opens on a ship, in the middle of a raging storm that threatens the lives of everyone on board. The storm itself, as well as the plight of the ship and its crew, is not uncommon; indeed, this entire first scene of Act 1 ‘does all it can to promote an impression of realism’ (Butler 2007, xxxiv), and is certainly within an audience’s expectations concerning such mundane concepts as the weather at sea and the possible dangers of sailing. It is not until the following scene, in which it is revealed that Prospero has conjured the storm and sent Ariel to distress the crew, that we understand its fantastic nature. Butler (ibid., xxxv) argues that those productions
which bring Prospero, and especially Ariel, on stage during this scene undermine the (liminal) fantastic from the beginning by positioning them clearly as the instigators of the tempest. It is the play's ambiguity in understanding the source of the fantastic – what Butler describes as ‘a hidden controlling pattern [that] is suddenly revealed beneath the random events’ (ibid., xxxii) – that disrupts the organic development of plot and primarily establishes The Tempest as a liminal fantasy. ‘Prospero’s magic raises questions about his intentions and power, but what it particularly does to the play’s design is prevent us from taking anything for the reality that it purports to be’ (ibid., xxxiv). If we are unable to know the origin of the supernatural, and by extension of Prospero’s powers, we are unable to recognise whether current actions are an ‘inevitable or probable consequence of what has gone before’ (Aristotle 2004, 70), or the result of manipulations by entities we cannot see and do not know the nature of.

The last of the unities is that of place, which states that “the stage should alwaies [sic] represent but one place” (Sir Philip Sidney, quoted in Danson 2011, 112). As outlined earlier, and which this quote from sixteenth century English poet Sir Philip Sidney reveals, this unity was not developed by Aristotle at all, but rather during Shakespeare’s time as an extension of Aristotle’s position on time and action. The unity of place attempts to limit the geographic scope of a play by confining the action to a single location, particularly one that can be easily represented within the physical confines of the stage. As with the other unities, this too is subverted by Shakespeare in his choice of setting for The Tempest.

The island location would seem perfectly suited to this requirement; it is, after all, a single, location, and despite the play shifting between three plot threads that take place at various points of the island, Prospero always seems to know what is happening and where, and is even directing the paths of other characters. Yet all we know of the island is that it is located somewhere in the Mediterranean, most likely between Tunis and Naples as the most direct route home from the wedding of Alonso’s daughter Claribel to the King of Tunis. Although even this we cannot know for certain, since the only authorial statement of setting from Shakespeare is ‘an vn-inhabited [sic] Island’ (Vaughan & Vaughan 2011, 162), and the only textual clues are confounded when, in the same passage that Ariel refers to Alonso’s fleet being reformed ‘upon the Mediterranean’ (1.2.234), he also mentions that the king’s ship is hidden in ‘the still-
vexed Bermudas’ (1.2.229). Admittedly, this may simply be an attempt by Shakespeare to imbue his island with a sense of the same exotic mystery that surrounded the actual Bermudas at the time, but whether or not that was the case, the result is the same: the island is to be viewed as unlike any audiences have heretofore encountered.

Further, Caliban is the only inhabitant said to know anything about the extent of the island: ‘And then I loved thee / And showed thee all the qualities o’th’ isle’ (1.2.337-338). But he, being counted amongst the extraordinary, if not outright supernatural, inhabitants of the island cannot be wholly trusted. If Prospero’s story is true, and Caliban is part devil, then we cannot know what he is capable of, other than whatever that may be, Prospero’s magic is able to restrain him, at least for the time being. In reading The Tempest as a liminal fantasy, and arguing that the island functions as a liminal space that disrupts the unity of place, the question must be asked: For what reason does Caliban want to secure the island as his own? His only claim to it is that his mother Sycorax dwelt there before Prospero’s arrival, and he is Sycorax’s heir. But Sycorax’s right to sovereignty is as much based on her ability to dominate the island’s only truly native inhabitants – its spirits, nymphs, reapers and demi-gods – as Prospero’s; both are well-versed in the use of magic and have often been said to be mirror images of each other. In a place which is marked more by what cannot be seen than by what is, it does not seem too implausible to suggest that it is the desire to control and manipulate the island’s true native inhabitants, who represent powers and knowledge beyond human understanding and exist in a space outside normal human existence, that motivates these characters, and not the attempt to control a geographical territory.

The nature and extent of the island therefore remains a mystery. Indeed, there seems to be little about the geography of the island that inspires Prospero to explore it for himself. Here we find further evidence of The Tempest as a liminal fantasy in which the storyworld is made strange for the audience by the way we relate to the protagonist’s ready acceptance of the fantastic as normal: ‘It is not that we see more […] but rather that we see different dissonances to the ones he perceives. We are positioned ironically.’ (Mendlesohn 2008, 185). Or as Nicolas Bourriaud puts it, ‘a transitive ethic

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6 ‘The uninhabited Bermuda islands were first brought to Europe’s attention by a Spaniard, Juan de Bermúdez, in 1515 but were dreaded for the hidden reefs and ferocious storms that, nearly a century later, still vexed the island […] Strachey, with a touch of hyperbole, called Bermuda “the dangerous and dread […] Ilands”’ (Vaughan & Vaughan 2011, 187).
which places [the] work between the “look-at-me” and the “look-at-that”” (2002, 23). Where Prospero previously deferred to Caliban’s expertise, he is now, during the action of the play, deferring to Ariel, who has knowledge of certain nooks and bays in which he can conceal things like the king’s ship, and on whom Prospero relies to bring everyone to his cell at the appointed time. Outside of the wanderings of the other characters, Prospero’s cell is unique in that it is the only repeated location. The play diffuses the regular kinds of spatial coordinates we would normally use to orient ourselves in a *narrative world*, since we rely entirely on how the island is represented on stage. We cannot even rely on characters’ reports, since, as Shakespeare and feminism scholar L. T. Fitz points out, general descriptions of the island are ‘ambivalent, showing that one’s view of the island really depends on whether one is disposed towards optimism or pessimism’ (1975, 44). Fitz highlights divergences between the descriptions of the island as a physical environment, such as those found in 3.3.80 (‘desolate’), Epilogue 8 (‘bare’) and 5.1.106 (‘this fearful country’), and the island as the location of the supernatural masque of 4.1, with its evocative harvest imagery and depictions of plenty. Clearly, whatever else it may be, the island functions as a focal point for supernatural phenomena of an order that could not rightly be considered normal even at a time when ‘everyone was brought up to believe that there was another realm beyond that of nature.’ (Bate & Rasmussen 2007, 2). It lies outside the bounds of known geography; evidence, perhaps, of Shakespeare tapping into the burgeoning colonial outlook of the time. For Butler, ‘the island setting [...] makes its world *seem* isolated and self-sufficient, an autonomous theatrical laboratory with its own internal logic,’ (2007, xxiii – emphasis mine) but in practice it does little to confine the action of the play to any normal understanding of a geographic location. Instead, the island is rendered as an abstract place that ‘depends on where you stand to look at it’ (ibid., xxvi).

Because of the kind of ambivalence that arises out of the ironies I have described above, *The Tempest* is able to be read in a variety of ways, and to a variety of ends. The reading of the play offered here is just one of those ways, though it is the one that has shaped my perspective on the project and informed its development. This reading is also not particularly isolated, either. Shakespeare’s pronounced use of the fantastic here, compared to his other plays, has been noted by a number of scholars: Kenneth J. Semon sums it up when he says that ‘for all Shakespeare’s plays, the world
represented [in The Tempest] is at once the most fantastic and profound’ (1974, 100). I wish to focus on two particular adaptations of the play that offer different interpretations of the fantastic, and which have been of some influence on my project. This could easily have extended to three adaptations, with an additional reference to Neil Gaiman’s usage of The Tempest as part of “The Wake” storyline in his seminal comics series The Sandman. While there is an immediate connection between Gaiman’s comic and the use of comics in my creative project, the scope of this thesis prohibited its inclusion here. I focus instead on Fred M. Wilcox’s 1956 film Forbidden Planet, which is useful for its process of adaptation and re-imaging of The Tempest as science fiction, while Peter Greenaway’s 1998 film Prospero’s Books is likewise useful for its thematic tendencies which provide ample evidence for the kind of liminality described here.

2. TWO ADAPTATIONS OF NOTE

2.1 Forbidden Planet

As demonstrated above, The Tempest can already be located firmly within a fantasy mode. Fred M. Wilcox’s Forbidden Planet (1956), however, represents a precedent for reimagining it in a science fiction (SF) mode. Although ‘there is not a simple one-to-one correspondence’ (Hopkins 2008, 65) between the film and the play, and indeed the film’s position as an adaptation of The Tempest has been called into question by some,7 it is commonly accepted that The Tempest formed the basis for the film’s script (which was confirmed, retrospectively, by co-screenwriter Irving Block in 1975 [see Buchanen 2001, 152]). It is the film’s ability to at once adapt and reimagine The Tempest while emerging as an independent piece in its own right that makes it worth considering. The lack of a one-to-one correspondence should not be grounds for automatically disqualifying Forbidden Planet from being considered as an adaptation, however; Shakespeare has, of course, not been immune to having more extreme liberties taken with his work than what one might find in Wilcox’s film. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the studio producing the film, regarded it as “a high budget film aiming at making science fiction respectable” (Sara Martin, quoted in Hopkins 2008, 72), and considering the film’s high production values, tight narrative structure, and

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7 See Buchanan (2001) and Miller (1997).
its own reputation as a ‘classic’ SF film, *Forbidden Planet* does not seek to undermine Shakespeare’s text in any way, but rather reimagines and reworks its source material with respect.

Indeed, it is possible to imagine that some of those who argue against the film as an adaptation take issue with what is ‘a very particular version of *The Tempest*’ (Campos 1998, 285); not merely an attempt to dress a set with SF trappings and perform the play verbatim, but to truly *reimagine* it. Much of this particularity stems from the film’s *nature* as SF, which literary critic Samuel R. Delany has argued is itself a very particular mode that ‘uses the future as a narrative convention to present significant distortions of the present’ (1984, 47). By using such a convention, the text is opened up to a different, if not expanded, range of epistemological and semiotic possibilities by way of reversing perspectival norms: we can no longer look at our present moment in the same way when those conventions are reconfigured. The id monster in *Forbidden Planet* is a perfect example of this, in which a psychoanalytical concept used to explain base human nature is given form as a rampaging beast. The reversal here is found in the externalisation of something fundamentally internal, even repressed; our subsequent ability to observe that reversal in an anthropomorphised form such as the id monster is achievable precisely because it is established, as science fiction scholar Darko Suvin (1976, 60) argues, in confrontation to a ‘normative’ semiotic system (what Richard van Oort [1998, 440] refers to as an ‘ultimate reference’ to the real). That is, we are positioned to read the id monster not as metaphor, but that it *is* the id of Morbius, the main protagonist and Prospero re-imagined, made real. Suvin suggests the presence of such monsters act as a mirror, where the mirror ‘is not only a reflecting one, it is also a transforming one’ (1976, 59). It is telling that Dr. Morbius, whose id it is we see personified, earlier warns the stalwart Captain Adams that ‘One cannot behold the face of the Gorgon and live’ (Wilcox 2010).
The usefulness of *Forbidden Planet* to my project is that it represents a similar process of adapting and reimagining a well-known and respected work as the one I have taken. It reworks the play beyond the simple one-to-one correspondences of standard theatrical productions, and does so in an unashamedly science fiction mode.

I am not prepared to dismiss Block's claim to basing the film's script on *The Tempest*, because so much of Shakespeare's work is recognisable within that context. Anthony Miller opened his paper dealing with the modernising of Shakespeare on film with the claim that ‘*The Tempest* has tended to resist direct translation to film’ (Miller 1997, 24), but I would suggest that this is not a problem of medium specificity, but of the nature of *The Tempest* itself, which is due to Shakespeare's subversion of the so-called unities, causing it to be as prone to resisting direct translation from script to stage as it is to any other medium. When we cannot know the true nature of something, it will always problematise any attempt to translate and understand it.

This is the case with all fiction to a greater or lesser degree (due to the paradox), but it is the peculiar source of appeal in fantasy and SF, which depend on a heightened sense of abstraction and estrangement to achieve their effect. Since *The Tempest* can be read in this light, adapting it becomes a process of deciding how its particular set of liminal characteristics will be rendered. Depending on those decisions, some will remain
liminal, while others will necessarily be literalised. For example, the island, as demonstrated above, exists in a liminal state, but is literalised as the colony world Altair IV in *Forbidden Planet*, whose boundaries are known via its appearance on the view screen of Captain Adams’ ship as they approach. Another liminality might be that of Caliban’s nature, certainly one which has been dealt with in numerous ways and in service of various political and socio-cultural ends. In the film, it could be argued he takes the form of the id monster, the primitive, ‘dark’ side of Morbius-as-Prospero, so that Prospero’s line ‘[T]his thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine’ (5.1.275-276) corresponds to Morbius’ own acknowledgment of ‘Guilty! Guilty! My evil self is at that door, and I have no power to stop it!’ (Wilcox 2010). Neither *The Tempest* nor *Forbidden Planet* are made any less for these literalisations; on the contrary, by doing so, an alternative reading of the play, and of specific characters, is created where perhaps they did not exist before. In this way, an adaptation such as *Forbidden Planet*, which bears no simple linear correspondences with its source material and does, indeed, rework, omit, and even occlude aspects of the play as Shakespeare wrote it, contributes to what Nicolas Bourriaud calls a ‘culture of activity’ (2010a, 19; 45), where such activity disrupts the notion that received culture (of which Shakespeare is very much a part) comprises part of an unassailable social structure.

2.2 Prospero’s Books

On the one hand, director Peter Greenaway’s 1991 version of *The Tempest* (2012) could be seen as rather traditional, especially compared to Wilcox's film. The dialogue is, in the main, taken directly from the play, its characters and sets recreate a version of Renaissance Italy, and aside from some minor additional scenes, it largely follows the same plot. Yet the film is strikingly different on many levels. My interest in it here it is chiefly for its treatment of three “essays”, as Greenaway refers to them, or ways of reading the work which are embedded in his particular version of *The Tempest*.

The first of these begins with the conceit that what we are viewing is Prospero planning and acting out his revenge against those who wronged him in Milan. In his exile, and consumed by the desire for revenge, he has taken to writing down how these reprisals and how he will execute them, which, metafictionally, becomes the script we know as *The Tempest*, by ‘WS’. Further layers are added to the metafiction, when
Greenaway suggests that Prospero ‘invents characters to flesh out his imaginary fantasy to steer his enemies into his power’ (1991, 9), which has the effect of enhancing the liminality of the film by demonstrating that, in this realm, we truly cannot know what is happening. In Shakespeare’s play, it is possible to have little reason to doubt Prospero’s version of events. An innocuous reading of the play would accept them as a true account of what transpired in Milan and how Prospero came to be on the island, and would, in fact, position us to sympathise somewhat with Prospero and see his desire for revenge as justified. Greenaway problematises any such reading of the play by interpreting it as Prospero’s strategy for revenge and positioning Prospero himself ‘not just as the master manipulator of people and events but as their prime originator’ (1991, 9). To say, then, as film scholar Amy Lawrence does, that the characters we see ‘are not fictional variations but the actual figures upon whom Prospero wants revenge’ (1997, 147), is not entirely accurate. They are metafictional representations, versions of characters who Prospero holds in his mind, but which we, as the audience, have never met.

What, then, are we to make of Caliban’s version of Prospero’s arrival on the island, since it can be read as a contrasting view of those events? Because we are viewing events almost exclusively from Prospero’s psyche in this case, it is possible to view the exchange of 38:08-41:17 as an instance of Prospero’s own guilt at his prior treatment of Caliban manifesting as a dialogue between himself and this simulated Caliban. Notice at 00:39:05 how Prospero comforts himself, and simultaneously reaffirms his own sense of control, by a patriarchal embrace of the distressed Miranda. The self-doubt that sparks the exchange ends with Prospero reasserting the rightness of his position as master of the island with ‘Though most lying slave’ (from 00:39:45). ‘Prospero’s language and threats betray his unquestioning assumption of authority as well as his irascible temper’ (Bate & Rasmussen 2008, 88). He is master, but he is also conflicted and plagued by doubt, which Ariel will eventually use to sway him. If the characters and events we see depicted do indeed have their origin in the imagination of Prospero (who is himself a fictional, imagined character), then we cannot accept them or the version of events unfolding as definitive – it is even possible they never occurred at all – and thus Prospero becomes a much more ambivalent character.
The second of Greenaway’s essays in *Prospero’s Books* that has influenced the project concerns the nature of the fantastic. Butler argued that those productions that reveal Prospero to be the originator of the storm before 1.2 undermine the fantastic, to the play’s detriment; *Prospero’s Books* represents an exception to that rule, because the film’s conceit renders this precaution moot. Film theoretician Bill Nicolas reminds us that in classically-constructed narratives, ‘the fiction or diegesis appears to unfold to itself, naturally, in compliance with our desire to know and to see’ (1981, 82-83); that is, according to the unity of action, current events should appear to arise organically out of previous ones, in such a way that we are unaware of any artifice. By showing us that Prospero is writing his script moments before those actions occur, we are made aware not only of the artifice, but of the power Prospero wields in manipulating and shaping events.

This has implications for the rest of the film because it speaks to themes of knowledge and control. Prospero is unequivocally the master of the island – the decision to have actor Sir John Gielgud speak almost all the lines settles that. But as well as that, the island in Greenaway’s film is densely populated and covered in architecture, evidence that Prospero ‘has gained the knowledge necessary to control his world’ (Semon 1974, 101). It is not the bare or desolate place Alonso and his followers encounter, but the rich, bountiful land of the masque, images of which pervade the film from the opening credits sequence until the event itself begins at 1:19:08 – consider the continual dancing and general festive nature of the island’s inhabitants, or the bounty surrounding Miranda and Ferdinand as they meet for the first time at 42:50. In *Prospero’s Books*, the supernatural does not exist out of sight on another plane, but here, embodied, on the island. All of this speaks of a setting that is not only a focal point for supernatural activity, but which is firmly located within the realm of the fantastic and cut off from the ‘real’, meaning that the fantastic here is not literalised so much as made still more strange: the island as a self-contained space.

If Prospero is its master and responsible for conjuring up these many characters, then he has done so only by the knowledge he has gained from his books, and this forms the third of Greenaway’s essays in the film. Greenaway uses the books as a framing device, and so the film is imbued with a theme of control derived through an obsession for knowledge: not just knowledge as a *knowing* (of phenomena, of facts, and so on), but
as an ability to manipulate that knowledge towards certain ends. Barbara A. Mowat (2001) is critical of what appears to be a lapse on Greenaway’s part in not including a specific book of magic, seeing as such a book is called for in the play, and they were apparently considered an essential part of the conjurer’s toolkit (along with cloaks and staves, and especially in stage representations of sorcerers). Yet, magic is its own kind of knowledge and while Prospero might not have a single Book of Magic to which he refers in order to manipulate the elements and spirits, it is clear that at least some of the twenty-four books in his possession contain magical knowledge: for example, Prospero is seen at 00:01:15-00:05:38 referring to the Book of Water in order to conjure the tempest (including the water elemental incarnation of Ariel, whose urinating becomes the waters of the storm), and to the Book of Mirrors which seem to realise his imaginings. The emphasis the film places on Prospero’s power being derived from the knowledge contained in his books also gives greater importance to Caliban’s warning to Stephano to ‘Remember first to possess his books; for without them / He’s but a sot, as I am, nor hath not / One spirit to command’ (01:06:30).

As well as his subjugation of Caliban, Prospero’s ability to control and master the forces on the island is also seen primarily in his relationship with Ariel. Greenaway retains Shakespeare’s original notion that Prospero’s control of Ariel is largely based on ensuring the spirit maintains a healthy respect for Prospero’s ability to return him to captivity; indeed, according to Greenaway’s design sketch for the island, ‘Ariel’s knotty pine’ (1991, 6-7) is a prominent feature on the island, a constant reminder to Ariel of what awaits should he prove disloyal.

This is another instance of how adapting The Tempest is so reliant on the director’s decisions, because although the threat is there in Shakespeare, the play never specifically calls for Prospero to hold it over Ariel in any way. However, the film medium allows Greenaway to move towards just this end, firstly via a flashback at 00:34:43 which, amongst all the flashbacks concerned with this event, emphasises the pain of Ariel’s torment under Sycorax, and secondly by an empowering of Ariel that allows him to confront Prospero with the lines ‘Your charm so strongly works ‘em, / That if you now beheld them, your affections / Would become tender’ (01:33:25). But here, Ariel audaciously writes the words in Prospero’s script book, tempting his ire in

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8 References to a specific book occur in 3.1.94 and 5.1.57. Other references are to books in the plural.
a selfless act that has a tangible effect on Prospero’s plan for revenge, by forcing him to reflect and reconsider which is the nobler virtue: revenge or forgiveness. The words are now there, in the book. They cannot be undone, and Prospero is struck by their rightness. The same moment in Shakespeare’s play has more in common with what scholar J. R. R. Tolkien describes as ‘the sudden joyous “turn”’ (2008, 75), a moment which we can never be sure will happen again, but which operates in the face of potential suffering or tragedy. Each in their own way is no less intense, presenting as they do two kinds of reversals for justifying Prospero’s sudden change of heart. The character arcs remain similar – Prospero is moved by something more than just the words Ariel speaks – however, in Prospero’s Books they are contextualised in a more complex relationship between Prospero and Ariel that is framed much more directly by ‘the tension between the desire to control the world [...] and the reality of our own vulnerability’ (Rodgers & Greenaway 1991, 18).

Greenaway’s film is visually resplendent, almost to the point of being overwhelming. But it is this abundance of life, the constant movement and shifting of bodies and images, that gives the film its vivacity despite the pervading sombreness and strangeness. Or rather, it is the combination of these, of finding (virtual) life in the strangeness, such that film and literature scholar Richard Dragan can say that ‘the heightened artifice of Greenaway’s films in general and Prospero’s Books in particular would seem to challenge a notion of realism in cinema in every way’ (2011, 101). It is this concept of Prospero’s world being so far removed from the normative system of the ‘real’ that makes it an important influence on my project. Within such a cognitively intensive storyworld, the obsession with control, power, and manipulation can almost be taken as a priori. If one of the characteristics of the fantastic in fiction is its ability to engender a reversal of norms, such that we are presented with those norms in an abstracted or distorted light, then Prospero’s Books thoroughly achieves that goal.

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While Tolkien’s conception of the joyous turn explains Prospero’s reversal, his motivations for forgiving his enemies remain somewhat obscure in Shakespeare’s play, relying wholly on the combination of a director’s interpretation and staging of the scene, and an actor’s ability to convincingly portray the necessary internal conflict Prospero is experiencing.
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