

***Transmedial Narration: Narratives and Stories in
Different Media*, Lars Elleström, Springer
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Lars Elleström teaches Comparative Literature at Linnaeus University, Sweden. He conducts the Linnaeus University Center for Intermedial and Multimodal Studies, and chairs the board of the International Society for Intermedial Studies. He has written and edited several books: *Divine Madness* (2002), *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality* (2010), *Media Transformation* (2014), and *Transmedial Narration: Narratives and Stories in Different Media* (2019) – the subject of review. He has also signed and published various articles on poetry, gender, irony in different art forms, such as music, film, literature, semiotics, and intermediality.

There is little reason to expect that narratives and stories may still be subject to innovative practices, considering the road so many times taken by this process of conveying forms of discourse to audience in different media formats. Let us remember that transmedial narration - also known as multiplatform storytelling or transmedia narrative - is the arguable technique of telling a story across various forms of media. Why arguable? Because, on the one hand, semiotically analysing this process, the same piece of creation may induce different perceptions to different audiences (consumers); on the other hand, narratively speaking, communication does not maintain its unique structural

layout while being dispersed, even though the theme of the message rests the same.

It goes without saying that this cultural phenomenon is highly commercial due to its entertaining and engaging features, where comics, films, radio, print media, social media are the vehicles which transport the story to the masses. In other words, it is no longer regarded as individual or personal, it belongs to the community or to the world. Who has actually read all the book series of *Harry Potter* and how many of you have enjoyed their fantasy scenery on a screen? The answer is predictable. Consequently, this example shows that the story must be self-contained, a characteristic which conveys the fact that it should fulfil the consumers' needs and be satisfying enough. Of course, our intention here is not to trespass on medical property and discuss the cortical areas when processing language, but to showcase Elleström's studies on how narratives reach destination across multiple forms of media.

The first to have coined and outlined a definition for transmedia storytelling is the American researcher Henry Jenkins in 2003, claiming in his book *Convergence Culture* that *transmedia* means *across media*, where "every important story gets told, every brand gets sold, and every consumer gets courted across multiple media platforms [emphasis added] (p. 3)." This courtship proves nothing but the importance of the reader, listener or viewer who needs to decode the narrative structure with a profitable, yet substantial retention. Moreover, modern linguists recognise the constructivist importance of this device in educational contexts, highlighting its engaging and entertaining features.

Elleström's treatise, in its three parts – "Drawing the Frame", "Scrutinizing the Essentials", "Demonstrating the Principles" – gradually indulges in explaining key terms and

theoretical concepts, continues with media types analysis which are relevant to narrative creation and dissemination, and finally applies the theoretical gains to different media narratives. To be noted the abundance of references and cited works pertaining to each chapter, which clearly suggest the author's affiliation to the domain chosen to theorise. Besides referential coordinates, each chapter contains an abstract and specific key words, thus preparing and introducing the reader to the topic.

The daily "communicative occurrences" (p. 4) from Elleström's viewpoint are connected narratives which find meaning by means of our cognitive system. The hybrid characteristic of media is perceived through *transmediation*, the process which enables to "find the relations between email and movie and between speech and music meaningful" (p. 5). Consequently, narratives must possess the ability of being *transmediated* so that *transmedia storytelling* can occur. Lutas' arguing point that narration is not to be "found in all media" (2016, p. 33) is perfectly agreed on, considering that many types of media have released and are releasing non-narrative material, instead being focused on engaging the message receiver on multiple sensory levels.

Further on, readers recognise the process of mediation (pre-semiotic) and representation (semiotic), two interrelated devices allowing for interpretation, evidence of the fact that the message has reached the audience. Moreover, these interpretations rely on perceptions of the surrounding world due to meaningful stimuli, as Elleström supports his theory based on thorough cognitive, neurological, together with gestalt psychology research and knowledge. It is obvious that narrating through different types of media is rather mischievous, considering the operational elements, i.e. words (either written or spoken, pertaining to semiotics), and visuals (relating to sense), adding to this the other

sensorial modalities which play a pivotal role in human communication: hearing, touch and smell, all having a well-defined position in this study.

Persons, environments, ideas, events which form *le récit* are all active elements in present occurrences, but they may have been part of a framework in the past, and they may be part of a future framework as well. Gérard Genette's structural analysis is employed here to support the "temporal divergence in narratives regarding order, duration, and frequency" (p. 92), just like Bakhtin used the *chronotope*, a narrative asset underlining that time cannot exist without a spatial referent. The professor's voice is distinguishable and supported with a plethora of examples which help readers synthesise the theoretical approach to understand the narrative processes.

Apart from theories, concepts, taxonomies and new findings encompassed in the first two parts, the third part prioritises "qualified media types" (p. 115) which the author analyses by beginning with painting and instrumental music and ending with "non-artistic" media domains, such as "mathematical equation and guided [city] tours" (p. 116). If, for instance, one wishes to understand the narratological status of a guided city tour where the guide (narrator) indulges in a multimodal communication with the narratees (participants in the tour) or how to investigate the media modalities of mathematical equations, the answer will be found in this book. Special mention must be made as well of the author's minute research and exposure of results in a comprehensive manner.

Throughout the treatise, the reader will rediscover many sustained theories or explained hypotheses being reiterated many times in the book, perhaps an appanage of tutors who need to be assured that the information provided has reached his or her tutees, in view of the amount of information and terminology used

which is, at a certain point, rather overwhelming. Whatever the *trans* media used to reach this publication, professor Elleström's readership will find in his methodical treatise either a scientific springboard for new conceptualisations or the cultural mechanism for detecting narratives.

References

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