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ABSTRACT

In recent times, technology has been developing rapidly producing new forms of literature. Consequently, a considerable debate concerning the nomenclature of these new phenomena has been initiated by some scholars. The flow of stories across media, such as television, computer or videogames is one of the consequences of this convergence between literature and technology which has been named transmediality. Building on the transmedia universe of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, the different changes undergone by the reader across this transmedia universe can be revealed in addition to the difference between the concepts of *adaptation* and Henry Jenkin's *Transmedia Storytelling*. In particular, this essay discloses the conversion of the passive reader into the active participant who contributes to the transmedia universe.

Palabras clave: Transmediality, Transmedia Storytelling, Adaptation, Intermediality, Reader, Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, Fanfiction.

RESUMEN

A medida que la tecnología se ha ido desarrollando, nuevas formas de producir literatura están emergiendo. Consecuentemente, hay una gran controversia acerca de los nuevos conceptos de estos fenómenos. El paso de las historias a través de nuevas plataformas como la televisión, el ordenador o el videojuego es una de las consecuencias de esta convergencia entre la literatura y la tecnología que se ha llamado *transmedialidad*. Basándonos en el mundo transmedia de *El Señor de los Anillos* de J.R.R. Tolkien se podrán demostrar las transformaciones realizadas por lector a través de este universo transmedia, además de la diferencia entre el concepto de *adaptación* y el de *narrativa transmedia* de Henry Jenkins. Así pues, se confirma que el lector pasa de tener un papel pasivo en la obra a tener un papel activo a través del cual este puede contribuir al universo transmedia.

Palabras clave: Transmedialidad, Narrativa Transmedia, Adaptación, Intermedialidad, Lector, Tolkien, *El Señor de los Anillos*, Fanfiction.

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1. Introduction

>   Let's face it: we have entered an era of media convergence that makes the flow of content across multiple media channels almost inevitable.

>   Henry Jenkins, "Transmedia Storytelling", 2003

As dwellers of the digital age, we have experienced many technological developments which have changed our modus operandi. Regarding literature, sophisticated technological devices have emerged in order to facilitate reading. In so doing, a wide variety of possibilities opened up to the reader who can currently opt to read a book, to listen to the radio, to watch a film or even to play in a fictional world set in a videogame. Jenkins argues that this transmedia phenomenon has just started since "younger consumers have become information hunters and gatherers, taking pleasure in tracking down character backgrounds and plot points and making connections between different texts within the same franchise" ("Transmedia Storytelling"). Thus, the limits of the novel are becoming wider to the extent that it is turning into a blurred notion. Indeed, the role of the reader of a novel has been transformed into an active agent in new media which often requires the consumer's interaction with the story. Jenkins explains this by affirming that we are moving to

>   a moment when spectatorial culture is giving way to participatorial culture where a society based on small numbered companies

controlling the storytelling apparatus is giving away to a much more complex media scope where average citizens have the ability to seize control over the media technology and tell their own stories in powerful new ways" ("Henry Jenkins on Transmedia").

Consequently, many scholars are attempting to create and explain new concepts which cover the emerging phenomena. Indeed, Scolari affirms in 2009 that "this semantic chaos is not new in digital communication conversations" (587). For example, he provides a list of concepts which have similar meanings to the transmedia phenomena:

'cross media' (Bechmann Petersen, 2006), 'multiple platforms' (Jeffery-Poulter, 2003), 'hybrid media' (Boumans, 2004), 'intertextual commodity' (Marshall, 2004), 'transmedial worlds' (Klastrup & Tosca, 2004), 'transmedial interactions' (Bardzell, Wu, Bardzell & Quagliara, 2007), 'multimodality' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), or 'intermedia' (Higgins, 1966) may be found orbiting in the same semantic galaxy. (Scolari 587-588).

However, most terms change their meaning depending on the author. Almost nobody has dared to make a clear classification of these new terms. Given this semantic confusion, in order to examine the transmedia universe of a work, the concepts used in this paper will be explained in detail subsequently.

Once immersed more deeply into this subject, the case of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (from now on TLOTR) transmedia universe will be studied in order to disclose the shifts undergone by readers in different media. As Brown and Waterhouse-Watson affirm, the transmedia universe of *TLOTR* has been expanding from the early 1955 BBC radio dramatization of the same novels, to current videogames and fanfictions produced at the present time due to the popularity of Tolkien's story (2). Additionally, *TLOTR* is an extraordinary example of a transmedia universe as it still keeps producing more content in new media, for example, a new television series, which is being produced by the international franchise of Amazon and is expected to be launched soon.

1.1. Semantic Debate

The convergence between literature and new media has created a vast nomenclature which has confronted most scholars who have tried to engage in this topic. While controversial new theories and terms emerged in order to explain this new phenomenon, more concepts have been appearing opposing the previous ones with the purpose of delimiting or clarifying them. Thus, in order to analyse a transmedia narrative work, it is necessary to differentiate and choose between the large number of concepts

surrounding literature and new media, as well as to clarify the meaning of the terms which will be used subsequently.

Beginning with the most general idea of the intersection between literature and different media, most scholars have agreed on Rajewskys's concept of *intermediality* as "a generic term for all those phenomena that . . . in some way take place between media, [and] therefore designates those configurations which have to do with a crossing of borders between media" (46). In Kattenbelt words, intermediality deals with "those co-relations between different media that result in a redefinition of the media that are influencing each other" (25). However, this conceptualization became more difficult due to the rise of new media and entertainment technology which have led the audience to perform an active role in the content of the story. Consequently, nowadays, the concept of intermediality has been used as an "umbrella-term" (Rajewsky 44), in which different ways of understanding the relation between content and media are included, including the concept of *transmediality* (Wolf 133). Likewise, in this paper, I will apply the more general concept of intermediality for the relation which occurs between media.

Furthermore, the concept of transmediality has proven particularly challenging as some scholars understood it as a concept which encompasses transmediality, transmedia storytelling, intermediation, cross-media, and others clearly define it as a term with a strict purpose. In this paper,

transmediality will be conceptualized as a notion which includes all the *narrative stories* or *fiction* which flow across media. Contrary to intermediality which is based on the co-relation of media, transmediality focuses on the change of stories across media. The difference lies on the prefixes. Inter- concerns a space in between, while trans- refers to the change from one state to another. Therefore, transmediality is a traditional meaning which implies the transference of fiction "from one medium to another medium" (Kattenbelt 20), and simultaneously, it approaches Scolari's concept used in order to explain transmedia stories at their most basic level, stories told across multiple media (Scolari 587). Similarly, the concept of *transmedia universe* encompasses all the works which shares the same fictional world across media.

The term which can better define the case of *TLOTR* would be *spreadable media.* Since Jenkins coined this term in 2013, it had an overwhelming importance around the semantic debate. It concerns market strategies which carry out a work from a medium to many. The spreadable media has different strategies, such as adaptation, new stories and a fragmented story in different media.

Therefore, spreadable media can be produced in multiple forms. Thus, on the one hand, the story which is told in other media can be an adaptation of the original work, or on the other hand, it can be what Jenkins defined as a *transmedia storytelling* phenomenon, which involves an extension of the

same former work. The most usual problem concerning spreadable media is this differentiation between adaptation and transmedia storytelling. Additionally, these two terms have been selected as central concepts for the study of *TLOTR* transmedia universe, as it contains Jackson's films, radio adaptations, and a transmedia storytelling universe which involves videogames, fanfiction and a forthcoming television series.

1.2. Adaptation versus Transmedia Storytelling

One of the most common debates in transmedia studies has been the difference between *adaptation* and *transmedia storytelling*. Adaptations are usually produced as the original literary work is transferred "with minimum changes into a new medium and is essentially redundant to the original work" (Jenkins 1). However, this concept cannot encompass all the new emerging events that are developing in the convergence of literature and new media which creates different ways of reading far from simple adaptations. For example, transmedia storytelling goes beyond adaptations as the reader is transformed. He is no longer a spectator of the story as in books, films or radio series, but a direct participant. Besides, these new phenomena emerged with the purpose of achieving more economic benefits exploiting an original narrative work by creating new stories, within the same world, which extend the hypotext.

In this context, Jenkins coined the term *transmedia storytelling* shedding light on the idea of the union of one functional story which is dispersed in media. Therefore, Jenkins defined transmedia storytelling as a representation of a "process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story" (1). It is important to highlight that this storytelling expects to achieve a narrative cohesion across media. Thus, contrary to adaptation, transmedia storytelling adds unique information to an original narrative work.

Harvey summarizes the crucial difference between these two phenomena considering that "adaptations [are] retelling existing stories, whereas transmedia storytelling tends to be characterised as telling new stories in different media but set within a consistent diegetic world" (3). However, at a later stage, he complicates this differentiation by suggesting that adaptations also have elements which extend or cut the story (Harvey, 3). This problem has created considerable debates about which work can be classified as adaptation or transmedia storytelling. Jenkins, in an attempt to clarify the controversy of this problem, affirms that "adaptations may be highly literal or deeply transformative. Any adaptation represents an interpretation of the work in question and not simply a reproduction, so

all adaptions to some degree add to the range of meanings attached to a story" (Jenkins, "Transmedia 202: Further Reflections"). Thus, on the one hand, it can be asserted that all adaptations can add to or shorten some parts of the original story as long as they do not transform the total sense of the former work. On the other hand, transmedia storytelling can be set in another place, with different characters inasmuch as it is based on the same universe of the original storytelling. Moreover, Jenkins recalls the concept of *additive comprehension* in order to clarify the possibilities and boundaries of such a new concept defined as "a term borrowed from game designer Neil Young, to refer to the degree that each new text adds to our understanding of the story as a whole" (Jenkins, "Further Reflections"). Thus, both concepts cannot be studied together for "while adaptations may bring new audiences to a story, and may serve as components of a branded franchise that stretches across multiple media forms, adaptations do not stand as distinct components of some larger shared narrative arc" (Long 24). Additionally, Mora affirms that the nomenclature often used in adaptations cannot be applied to the analysis of the transmedia storytelling theory (17). Therefore, transmedia storytelling is a wider concept which provides a more interactional aspect than adaptations (Brown and Waterhouse-Watson 2-3).

In the case of *TLOTR*, spreadable media is the pertinent term as it has both adaptations and a transmedia storytelling universe which enriches even

more the experience of the reader across the media. The whole transmedia storytelling universe of *TLOTR* allows the receiver to enjoy different perspectives and aspects of the original story across media allowing him or her to interact with the story by building new perspectives of the same universe in other media.

1.3. The phenomenon of Transmedia Storytelling

Focusing on the already stated concept of transmedia storytelling, the appearance of this new phenomenon occurred because of the fact that new platforms and devices afforded the possibility of altering content in the late 20th Century, concretely in 1999 (Long 25). Those years became the climax of the successful franchises due to the production of transmedia universes. Indeed, these franchises have been willing to exploit potential stories in order to increase their benefits through making the reader, viewer or player consume new complementing stories based on the original narrative universe. Thus, it can be asserted that Transmedia Storytelling is "a consequence of the main media producers being large corporations with investments in cinema, television, video games, etc." (Scolari, 590). However, there would not be the economic profit of transmedia storytelling without the interest of the consumers in these new stories. As Jenkins observes, "Reading across the media sustains a depth of experience that

motivates more consumption. In a world with many media options, consumers are choosing to invest deeply in a limited number of franchises rather than dip shallowly into a larger number" ("Transmedia Storytelling"). Thus, transmedia storytelling needs of a consumer who completes all the stories in his mind. As a result of this, the consumer can expand the story in a new fanfiction. Indeed, the story is in constant process of expansion because of the consumer who also wants to add other points of view. Jenkins observes that "consumers must assume the role of hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels . . . and collaborating to ensure that everyone who invests time and effort will come away with a richer entertainment experience" (Jenkins, *Convergence culture* 21).

Obviously, the different media used in a transmedia world attract a different kind of audience (Jenkins, "Transmedia Storytelling"). Therefore, transmedia narratives have achieved an overwhelming success as each medium has its particular audience allowing different people to engage with the story. This occurs, as Jenkins affirms, with *The Matrix* franchise (The Wachowski Sisters 1999-2009), but it also happens with many other stories such as Tolkien's *TLOTR,* which have been expanding over the years in many different media intriguing a vast number of consumers from around the world.

1.4. Reception Theory

In order to reveal the role of the receiver of the story across media, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of reception theory. This theory was developed by Iser, who studied the different ways in which a reader can receive a story. He stresses that reading is not a "one-way process" (107). However, he states that the interaction between the text and the reader lies in the readers' imagination where they can be productive. The text is then to be completed by the reader's imagination. In literature, different ways of proposing interaction to the reader have been developed. For example, on page 29 of Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759), the author leaves a blank page which provides time and space for thinking. Sterne breaks the expectation of the readers in order to interact with them. However, there are some limits to the reader's participation in the book. This interaction is passive as the reader cannot directly change the narrative. Books do not allow changing the course of the story. With respect to other media, such as radio and television, this imaginative interaction does not change. Nevertheless, in videogames, the player is allowed to change the course of the story by moving around the fictional world. Following this idea, it is obvious that new media offers a different way of reception. Readers usually change from a passive role in acquiring knowledge of a story, to becoming direct participants in it. The necessity of

this reader is central in the development of the argument. Thus, Mora argues that there are differences among intermedia texts:

> Las versiones de La Fura del Baus sobre óperas de Wagner, en las que son utilizadas pantallas, grabaciones y otras tecnologías, son multimedia e intermediales pero están destinadas a una recepción pasiva por parte del lectoespectador sentado en un teatro. *The Matrix*, por el contrario, requiere de diferentes plataformas incompatibles en el mismo soporte y de la participación activa del usuario, por ejemplo en el videojuego de la saga, que no puede jugarse solo. (22)

Likewise, Scolari distinguishes between the passive readers, listeners or viewers of books, films or radio series and the active players of videogames. In another perspective, readers become producers of the story in transmedia storytelling as they leave the passive reception of the story so common in intermedial productions. While the role of the reader in traditional adaptations has no function but the reception of the story, in the transmedial experience the role of the reader is more proactive or interactive; his function varies from putting together transmedial pieces to directly having an impact on the final result of the story (Mora 30).

Thus, readers interact with the story not only in videogames, but in transmedia storytelling which allows the readers to unify a story across media in their minds. In addition, the reader can produce their own parts to

incorporate to the transmedia narrative universe. Therefore, the concept of the author of the story turns into a blurred notion. Readers take the original story and become the author by expanding it. Through this view, Barthes' "the Death of the Author" can be applied. He does not give an author to the text as it implies to impose limits on it. With the author, the text is explained, but when there is no author, the readers interpret the text as they want, becoming the real authors of the story. The reader goes beyond mere freedom of interpretation; he or she can become a creator. Thus, the reader can be the one who owns the story as the author is unrelated to the text.

2. The Transmedia Universe of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*

The epic fantasy novel has always been the most trans-medialized genre across all the available media due to its success among readers. In this context, J. R. R. Tolkien's universe has been one of the first and most important works which have successfully explored the possibility of producing a transmedia universe, from radio dramatizations to current videogames. Indeed, Long asserts that "the Internet may have accelerated transmedia development, but it was not necessary for transmedia narratives to flourish, as evidenced by the 'Netless' development of complex narrative franchises like *Star Wars, The Lord of the Rings*" (29). Before the Internet, *TLOTR* started its transmedia universe with films, radio dramatizations and

some videogames. Since then, the potential of this novel to be adapted or extended in more media has been evident. It had all the ingredients to be a transmedia phenomenon.

Tolkien's work has been adapted into radio dramatizations and Jackson's films from 1955 to 2003. Despite the fact that these adaptations do not expand the universe of these books, they are part of this intermedial or spreadable world across media. Besides, it is debatable whether the stories of the transmedia universe are being trans-medialized from the book or from the successful adapted films. Then, the original piece of the transmedia storytelling is an adaptation of another work. However, the transmedia storytelling is based on Tolkien's work in most cases.

Most scholars studying the transmedia storytelling phenomenon try to solve the question of which elements make a piece of literature turn into transmedia storytelling. Indeed, most transmedia storytelling, such as *Star Wars*, *Games of Thrones* or *TLOTR*, involve fairy-tale, chivalric and mythical elements which can afford the expansion of the novel. Dena stresses Klastrup and Tosca's concept of transmedia universes in which all the parts have to share the same mythos, which is the backstory; a topos, which is the setting; and an ethos, which is the codex of behaviour (144-145). *TLOTR* has all these requirements to be a transmedia world as it provides the creation of the middle earth, the history of its people and the

fight of Good against Evil (Dena 144-145). Moreover, Harvey explains that this piece of fiction had been successfully trans-medialized because Tolkien's world had a "mammoth project in subcreation: a collective series of works which spans a colossal time period of thousands of years, and which includes both *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955)" (67). It can be seen from different points of view, such as Mordor's view in Kirill Yeskov's *The Last Ring Bearer* (1999), or set in another era of the universe as occurs in the videogame *Middle-earth: Shadow of War* (2017). Thus, the novel can be explored in different ways as Tolkien produced a vast background for *TLOTR* in different books such as the *Silmarillion*, *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* or *The Children of Húrin*. As these expansions go further the Tolkien's original world, they are not adaptations, but pieces of works which spread the story.

Focusing on the role of the reader, Tolkien's *TLOTR* has produced a spreadable universe, including adaptations as well as transmedia storytelling, in which the reader changes completely from being a passive agent of the story to perform an active role in the videogame or even writing more stories which expand the transmedia universe. In previous adaptations the reader changed from reading a book in its linear sequence into a viewer of a film. Both were spectators of the story who are now transformed into players of a videogame who can be principal agents of the story carrying out

missions in order to end the story. Thus, subsequent sections will chronologically trace the transmedia universe of *TLOTR* in order to explore the changeability of the role of the reader in different media.

2.1. Reading Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*

The primary consideration must be the original narrative pieces of Tolkien's *TLOTR* universe. It is composed of many books, being the most important and popular *The Hobbit* (1937), the *TLOTR* trilogy (1954-1955) and the *Silmarillion* (1997). However, the focus is intended to be on *TLOTR* as it is the best known story. The first book, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, is a sequel of *The Hobbit*. It begins with a description of the hobbits and the 111th birthday of the hobbit Bilbo who had encountered the one ring of the Dark Lord Sauron, which has an overwhelming power. Bilbo had to give the ring to his nephew Frodo who is chosen to destroy it on Mont Doom with the help of the Fellowship of the Ring formed by Frodo, Sam, Gandalf, Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, Boromir, Pippin and Merry. However, this Fellowship is shattered as Frodo and Sam decide to continue the mission by themselves in the falls of Rauros. In the second book, Boromir dies defending the departure of Frodo and Sam, who with the help of Gollum arrives to Minas Morghul in Mordor. Meanwhile, the rest of the company tries to gain victories against the forces of Saruman and Sauron in Rohan

and Gondor. Finally, in the last book, Tolkien narrates how the horde of Mordor is also defeated in Minas Tirith with the help of Théoden and the Company of Aragorn. Then, the soldiers remaining from these battles went to Mordor with the purpose of providing time for Frodo and Sam to destroy the Ring. Finally, the one ring is destroyed by Gollum who stole it from Frodo on Mont Doom, falling into the lava and ending with Sauron and the war of the Ring in the Middle Earth. As the audience is reading the book, they realise the vast universe which Tolkien has created. However, they could not participate in the narration, as the book does not allow interacting with it as other media do. This is one of the causes why *TLOTR* gives rise to spreadable media.

The traditional role of the reader can only control the reading in terms of organization as he can read the book on the page he wants, but he cannot participate in the story. Burn exemplifies this with the case of *Harry Potter*:

> So the book of Harry Potter will be read sequentially, insofar as reading is a time-based activity and print follows a linear progression. However, as it is also a spatial medium, and as the reader has control over the time and spatial dimensions of the book, the story can be skipped, read out of sequence (the end before the beginning, for instance), and so on (Burn 10).

According to the reception theory provided in the introduction, the only interaction between the text and the reader occurs in the imagination of the reader, where he or she can expand the story. However, these original works did not provide the interaction which consumers expected. Consequently, the story has been adapted and extended in new media allowing audience, who was willing to participate in the creation of this story, to participate in the story in a videogame or to provide a feedback by creating fan fictions.

2.2. Radio series

A radio dramatization of twelve episodes adapting *TLOTR* was produced by BBC Radio from 1955 to 1956, when Tolkien was still alive. It is considered an adaptation since it tells the same story in addition to containing the same characters and setting. However, Tolkien himself denied the success of such adaptation, since he thought

> The book quite unsuitable for 'dramatization', and [he has] not enjoyed the broadcasts - though they have improved. [He] thought Tom Bombadil dreadful - but worse still was the announcer's preliminary remarks that Goldberry was his daughter (!), and that Willowman was an ally of Mordor (!!). (Tolkien 228)

Despite Tolkien not approving it, the radio was the dominant media at that time, implying that a vast part of the English population may have listened to it, therefore extending its popularity.

In 1979, another dramatization of *TLOTR* written by Bernard Mayes was carried out by the US National Public Radio. Two years later, BBC radio 4 launched another dramatization. These three dramatizations were the first cases of spreadable media of the original novel. They were based on the struggle between the force of the allies against the evil forces of Sauron and the mission of the little hobbit Frodo to end with the war by throwing the ring into the Mont Doom.

This new media through which *TLOTR* was launched, allowed the consumer to listen to another's interpretation of the book. In this case the reader is turned into a listener without much change. Listeners cannot participate in the story, nor change the structure of the argument. In general terms, they have the same role of the reader of the story. The only aspect which changes is the facility of hearing the story instead of reading it.

2.3. Jackson's Films

There have been three different adaptations of *TLOTR*. The first one is the animated film *The Lord of the Rings* (1978). Two years later *The Return*

of the King (1980) was released. The last adaptation is Peter Jackson's film trilogy (2001-2014). The most controversial matter in relation to Jackson's *TLOTR* is whether his films are adaptations or part of a transmedia storytelling universe which expands the story. However, as has been stated in the introduction, the answer has become clearer. Long considers that "retelling a story in a different media type is *adaptation,* while using multiple media types to craft a single story is *transmediation.* For example, Peter Jackson's film versions of *The Lord of the Rings* are adaptations of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* novels" (22). However, some scholars argue that in the process of this adaptation some extensions and eliminations are carried out in order to produce a more aesthetic film. Harvey gives two different views of this event:

> The adapting writer is transmedially expanding the storyworld, and the distinctions between adaptation and transmedia storytelling suddenly become less easy to discern. However, what's self-evidently different is the extent to which new narrative material is created during the process of adaptation. Another way of conceiving this is that the structure of the original story is more or less remembered with fidelity, with some changes. It's more repetition that difference. (Harvey 72)

This problem is solved as Jenkins assures that any adaptation has some differences with the original story, but it still has the same focus. The case

of Jackson's *TLOTR* is not an exception concerning this matter. Long reaffirms that it is an adaptation, since they have the same "genetic link; the same characters are depicted doing essentially the same things, speaking essentially the same dialogue in essentially the same places, although they are deformed by the varying inherent characteristics of each form" (Long 23).

Obviously, Peter Jackson made many changes to the original story as it is produced in a new medium. Additionally, any adaptation is a new interpretation of the story. Jackson's final scene in the first film can be found in the second book of Tolkien instead of the first. He did not include any allusion to Tom Bombadil or Glorfindel who played an important role in the first book. Similarly, Jackson's films expands some aspects of the story as the plot of Aragorn and Arwen. In addition, the character of Arwen is more largely depicted in the films than in the books. Indeed, Arwen replace other characters such as Glorfindel in Bruinen. In spite of those changes, the film has the same character, storyline and setting. Thus, these interpretations of the books in the new medium of the cinema are adaptations.

The reader in this medium is transformed into the viewer who, alongside with the listener of the radio, cannot participate in the story. According to Burn, "the film is more resolutely time-based in ways that, at least in the cinema, the spectator cannot vary; although viewers of the DVD can fast

forward, freeze frame, and select 'chapters' in ways closely analogous to the book" (10) Thus, it can be asserted that in books, radio productions and films the reader shares the same static role. The dynamic aspect of the transmedia universes is produced in the videogames, in which the reader becomes a secondary author, and in the mind and memory of the reader who has to unify all the works of the different media in the way he/she wants in order to complete the story. Additionally, the reader can expand the story in fanfiction, as will be stated subsequently.

2.4. Videogames

Since 1982, an extensive number of videogames have been made in order to expand the world of *TLOTR* and give a new experience to the former reader. The first videogame was produced by Melbourne House, which began a series of licensed *TLOTR* graphical interactive fiction (text adventure) games with *The Hobbit*, based on the book of the same name. Since then, an extensive number of *TLOTR* videogames have appeared. There are different types of electronic games which directly affects the player. Strategic videogames set players in a fictional world where they can pick a certain race and control their different units from a third-person view, such as *The Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle-earth* (2004). In others videogames, for instance, *The Lord of the Rings: Conquest* (2009), players

have to choose a certain soldier and accomplish different quests from first-person view.

This new platform has been the focus of a vast controversy among scholars. The question is whether a videogame can have a part of storytelling or not. It seems more obvious in some videogames than in others, but "videogames are textual in nature. After all, even the rules on which they are based are conceived of and articulated semiotically – verbally and audio-visually" (Ensslin 41). In addition, Jenkins in one of his blogs asserted that "many of our best authors, from William Faulkner to J.R.R. Tolkien, understood their art in terms of world-creation and developed rich environments which could, indeed, support a variety of different characters" (Jenkins 1). Transmedia storytelling can then possess "both artistic and nonartistic as well as narrative and nonnarrative texts which allows firmer incorporation of the subtexts of games as the game theorists often neglect the narrative theoretic approaches" (Ibrus and Scolari 29).

Needless to say, this new device offers different and more interactional ways of telling a story. Scolari argues that the videogame can be evaluated as a transmedial phenomenon "no solo desde el punto de vista de la creación, sino también desde la teoría de la recepción. Sabemos de la importancia que han adquirido los consumidores en las experiencias

narradas que se les ofrecen hoy, donde los usuarios son los protagonistas de las nuevas narraciones" (Scolari, *Narrativas transmedia* 201).

Consumers are transformed into avatars in fictional worlds where they are allowed to interact with the story. It is the reader who becomes a player and, consequently, an active agent of the story contributing to the development of it. According to Escandell, "la estructura narrativa real está transferida al lector, que sería concebido como un escritor secundario en la ejecución de su lectura. La potenciación de la interactividad en esa línea está vinculada al videojuego como nueva forma de textualidad electrónica" (271). The unclosed world of the videogame is conceived as the player, who becomes a secondary author of the narration, advances the story. The same author, following this idea, defends that "el receptor principal (pues siempre podrá haber receptores secundarios) adopta el papel activo (típicamente, el protagonista) como medio para poder ejecutar la recepción de la obra" ("Interacción hipermedia", 710). Building on this, Barthes' idea of the "The Death of the author" comes to mind because the reader is creating the story. The author is irrelevant in this context. The reader or player becomes the authority or controller of the story.

Nevertheless, there are 'rules' or barriers which delimit the game. Burn asserts that "in ideal terms, it might seem that the player has the power to 'write' the story – but of course, there are limits" (11). In spite of having some freedom to explore the world of the videogame, the player has to

follow some rules in order to progress in the story, as is the case in *Middle-Earth: Shadows of War.* In this videogame the player has a first-person view in the world of the videogame. Players can fulfil some secondary quests or move around the world as they want. However, players cannot progress in the story if they do not accomplish the main quests. Thus, although the player can participate and somehow write his own story around the fictional world, he has to follow the rules of the videogame in order to complete the main story.

2.5. Fanfictions

The Hunt for Gollum (2009) is the best known fan film of *TLOTR.* Indeed, it was awarded Best Live Action at the Balticon Film Festival. It expands the story as it narrates a passage of *TLOTR* and carries it beyond the original books. It tells how seventeen years after the birthday of Bilbo, Gandalf orders Aragorn to capture Gollum. He manages to catch Gollum until a horde of orcs attacks him with the purpose of bringing Gollum to Sauron. With the help of some elves, he fulfils the mission repealing the orcs and a nazgûl. This fanfiction represents the feedback between the story and the fan. The fan reads the original story, assimilates it and then in his imagination, he can expand a certain part of *TLOTR*. Then, he decides to

create it in a piece of work becoming another author of the story expanding it and creating a transmedia storytelling universe.

The fanfiction phenomenon is largely produced on the Internet. In some cases, they are found in forums in which each reader of *TLOTR* gives their own contribution to the universe. There are numberless fanfictions produced on the Internet. Web pages such as, www.lotrfanfiction.com or www.fanfiction.net, have a large number of fanfictions, which expands *TLOTR* story by giving a fuller version of a certain character within the story. The importance of fan fictions have currently increased to the extent that Gwyonne studied how the fans daily interacted and shared new theories or ideas of extending Tolkien's original creation in the popular fan site of TheOneRing.net (Barton and Lampley 7). This process allows other fans to read this and create more content. Besides, big franchises are aware of the scope of the transmedia universes of the story through fanfiction. Conseqently, they continue expanding the story inasmuch as the audience keep involved in the storytelling.

2.6. Other TLOTR Projects

The transmedia universe of Tolkien's original work keeps expanding to other media, such as television series. Amazon bought Tolkien's rights in order to make a new series which will not be an adaptation, but a new story

which expands the universe of the Middle Earth. The series will be a prequel of Jackson's *TLOTR* films. Indeed, the web made for fans of Tolkien, TheOneRing.net, has announced that the first season will be focused on the adventures of a young Aragorn.

Additionally, new mobile games are experiencing an overwhelming success in the commercial sector as they achieve to keep the audience involved with new ways of enjoying the story. In general terms, mobile games are videogames in a smaller and more portable media which try to improve their playability. Usually, these mobile games are adaptations of other videogames, but as their value is increasing, they are creating new stories. In the case of *TLOTR*, many mobile games for the android system have emerged, such as *Shadows of Mordor* (2017), which narrates and adapts the events included in the videogame. However, it adds a few things to the story. In addition, in order to include a multiplayer mode, it alters many chapters of the game, focusing instead on improving its playability.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the chaos of the semantic debate concerning transmediality has been clarified by providing definitions of the concepts employed in this paper, and thus contributing to the current discussion in the field. The difference between adaptation and transmedia storytelling has

been emphasized, since they are the most controversial concepts and they have been used in *TLOTR* universe. Transmedia storytelling is a concept created by Henry Jenkins which encompasses a wider space than adaptation. It extends the storytelling across media encouraging the audience to contribute to the creation of a transmedia narrative. Having established this introduction, the steps of the reader across media can be analysed in the case of Tolkien's *TLOTR*. Thus, the transformation of the reader from a passive role to an active participation in the storyline has been revealed. While the reader, listener or viewer of Tolkien's or Jackson's *TLOTR* cannot change or participate in the course of the events, the players of the videogames based on the same story are allowed to move around the universe of this story. Additionally, the readers of Tolkien's works can contribute in a transmedia universe by creating their own stories based on the same world. Therefore, through the feedback between the story and readers in fanfiction, Jenkins' concept of transmedia storytelling can be applied to *TLOTR,* which composes a universe where the reader is no longer passive, but a direct participant and producer of the story.

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