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Forward

Narrative is a universal phenomenon that shapes and influences virtually every aspect of human life. It exists across time and culture – from the cave narratives of Lascaux, to the hypertext narratives of contemporary cyberspace. What is more, narrative exists across media, and it is in this transmedial context that narrative is investigated in this issue of “Tekstualia”.

Marie-Laure Ryan defines narrative as: ‘a mental construct, which can be activated by different types of signs’. Defined in this way, narrative is both a mental and a textual entity and its final shape relies on the specificity of applied media, various medial affordances and limitations, and the human cognitive mechanisms of emotion, imagination, and memory. Accordingly, when researching narrative, it is important to account both for its medium-independent and its medium-specific aspects. The medium-independent aspects of narrative include event sequencing, causality, temporality, as well as the role of affect in the function of characters, the motivation of narrative events, and the engagement of the reader/viewer/participant in the narrative. Conversely, an investigation of medium-specific aspects places emphasis upon the techniques and qualities specific to particular media, such as the representation of characters’ speech through dialogue balloons in comics, or the techniques involved in the gestural languages of drama and dance. Also significant is a consideration of the relations between the different forms, modes, and methods of narrative, including remediation, parodic revision, and the shared properties and artistic techniques used in and across various media (including interactivity, framing, and re-appropriation).

The current issue represents the work of several participants involved in a grant project entitled, “Narrative as a transmedial construct – semiotic and cognitive contexts”. This project brings together a group of Polish, Japanese and Swedish scholars from fields such as media studies, literature, art history, and beyond, whose work relates to various aspects of narrative and the narrative potential of different media. These articles present the preliminary results of the group’s research and discussions of the usefulness of the theoretical frame that transmedial narratology provides. Each author looked at one specific medium, but in the course of the research several common topics emerged, and these commonalities are visible in the contributions to this issue. They include, among others, the topics of interactivity, immersion, materiality and affect.

A reader interested in narratology will find in this issue discussions of media quite well represented in narratological discourse, such as the study of comics and video games, alongside presentations of research on media whose place within the boundaries of narratology continues to be debated, such as architecture, music, and collage. The choice of this research material was dictated by the need to both deepen the inquiry into particular media by applying narratological tools to further analysis, and – at the same time – to test the capacity of narratological theories against a range of new and emerging media. How capacious are these narratological theories? That is for each reader to decide.

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