



MEDIA DIMENSIONS: COMPARING STORYTELLING ACROSS LITERATURE, CINEMA AND VIDEOGAME

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Abstract:

This study delves into the distinctive dimensions of storytelling across different media, focusing on literature, cinema, and videogames. It examines how users interact with each medium and how the nature of the medium shapes the relationship between the user and the narrative product. In literature, the reader engages in a process of imagination, constructing the narrative based on the author's cues. Cinema presents a visual and auditory spectacle to the spectator, offering a reception of the story unfolding on screen. On the other hand, videogames empower the player to control and interact with the digital environment, shaping the narrative through their actions. The analysis highlights the individual characteristics of each medium, from the linear narrative of literature to the interactive storytelling of videogames. It also explores the collaborative nature of filmmaking and the evolving nature of interactive videogame worlds. By understanding these dimensions and their impact on user engagement, this study provides insights into the diverse ways in which storytelling manifests across different media forms.

Keywords: storytelling, literature, cinema, videogames, media

1. Introduction

Due to the increasingly visible interference that the media are having in our daily lives, intermediality becomes the emphasis of research analyses that focus on the different relationships between the media, as well as on the historical evolution of this dialogue process. This phenomenon reflects the changing and dynamic nature of contemporary culture, where the boundaries between different forms of media are increasingly fluid. Nevertheless, the dialogue between literature and other media is complex and multifaceted, influencing both the creation and reception of works. Thus, it is important to understand the main characteristics of each medium in order to understand their possibilities of dialogue.

The main objective of my research is to investigate the interactions between literature, cinema and videogames. In this text, my objective is to analyse how these media manifest

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themselves in different dimensions and how their creative and structural processes differ. The central hypothesis is that each medium has unique characteristics that affect the way the message is expressed and received by the public. In this sense, literature is seen as a first-dimensional medium, while cinema represents the second-dimension and videogames, the third-dimension.

This dimensional approach allows for a deeper analysis of the specificities of each medium, highlighting not only their similarities but also their fundamental differences. While literature traditionally relies on the written word to convey its message, cinema explores the visual and narrative power of moving images, and videogames incorporate interactive elements that allow the player to actively participate in the narrative.

It is important to highlight that interactions between these media are not new, but have become more evident and significant with the advancement of digital technology. Nowadays, it is common to see adaptations of literary works for cinema and videogames, as well as the emergence of transmedia narratives that span multiple platforms and formats. Still, this media convergence also raises complex questions about authorship, originality and intellectual property. As the boundaries between different forms of media become more blurred, new legal and ethical challenges arise regarding the adaptation and reuse of creative content.

Furthermore, the rise of digital media has raised debates about the future of narrative and literature in a world increasingly dominated by technology. While some theorists argue that new digital media represents a radical break with traditional narrative forms, others see these changes as a natural continuation of the evolution of art and culture.

To better understand these complex issues, it is necessary to adopt an interdisciplinary approach that integrates insights from literary theory, film studies, game theory, and other related disciplines. Only then will we be able to fully explore the interactions between literature, cinema and videogames and their impact on contemporary culture.

Future studies will investigate how the different dimensions of media affect the narrative structure, time and space of works. By analysing these aspects, we can develop a deeper understanding of the peculiarities of each medium and the unique opportunities they offer for telling stories and expressing ideas. Therefore, it is important to recognize that this text and its analysis are far from exhaustive and that new perspectives and approaches continue to emerge as digital media continues to evolve. Therefore, this study should be seen as a starting point for a broader and ongoing investigation into the interactions between literature, cinema and videogames in the digital age.

2. Storytelling

Storytelling: a word whose origins are in the English language, storytelling refers to “telling a story”, that is, the act of telling stories. In itself, it refers to telling, narrating, and constructing plots, an attitude that has been common to human beings since the beginning and is common in everyday life:

Go to the doctor and try to tell your symptoms without reciting a little tale about how they emerged. The same thing happens when you go to court or take your car to a mechanic or

write a blog. Perhaps storytelling is part of human maturation, since it emerges quite early in human development. Children only two years old can grasp certain features of narrative, and there's evidence from "crib monologues" that the narrative ordering process is emerging even earlier. We share stories with each other, assuring others that we have experiences congruent with theirs (Bordwell, 2007, p. 85)

The act of telling stories is something that deeply permeates all cultures and societies, manifesting itself continuously. These narratives encompass accounts of the past and future, of deities and evil beings, providing communities with a common link to the past and a shared vision of destiny. Additionally, they serve as a record of the human experience, offering guidance on how to face challenges and avoid common pitfalls (vide Puchner, 2019).

If we consider oral literature, both from classical antiquity and today, the figure of the teller stands out in the process:

"There is no mystery about the first and most basic characteristic of oral literature—even though it is constantly overlooked in collections and analyses. This is the significance of the actual performance. Oral literature is by definition dependent on a performer who formulates it in words on a specific occasion—there is no other way in which it can be realized as a literary product." (Finnegan, 2012, p. 4)

The accountant holds the information and is the one who orders it when transmitting it (image 1). If there is a change of teller, the replacement may perform a new order for the story which may also contain new information. This oscillation is what gives myths many versions and causes difficulty for the classical literature teacher when the student asks which one would be the correct version.

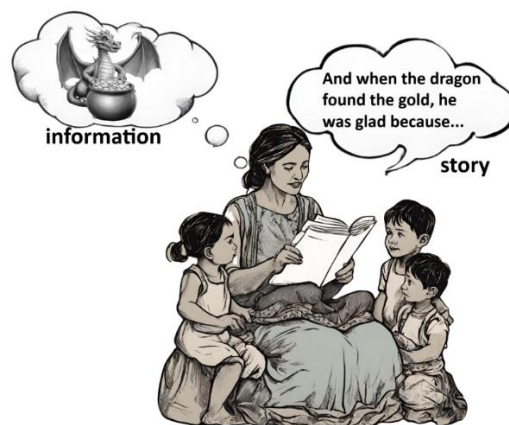


Image 1: Telling stories

Having gained proficiency in the traditions of oral storytelling and stored them in their memory, bards were specially assigned to tell narratives relating to the creation of the world or the founding of cities of significant importance. In the social structure of ancient civilizations, oral tradition occupied a position of considerable prominence. As highlighted by Martin Puchner (2019), even after long periods following the introduction of writing, the bards' stories

were not transposed into the written medium. Although the introduction of writing represented a substantial structural change in the way stories were told, it is pertinent to highlight that the formalization of writing was not necessarily linked to fiction. In fact, writing would have had its origins in Mesopotamia approximately five thousand years ago, with different purposes. According to Puchner (2019), a narrative about the origin of writing tells the story of a king of Úruk who conceived the idea of sending a threatening message, printed in clay, to a rival. When faced with the incomprehensible characters that represented the words spoken by the king of Úruk, the rival monarch declared his loyalty, impressed by the miraculous method of making the clay “speak”.

Still, for several other cultures, writing was developed to facilitate commerce – as observed in Greece, whose first forms of writing, subsequently called Line A and Line B, were used to record commercial transactions of buying, selling and exchanging of goods – or to perpetuate power and political and religious ideals – as in Egypt, where hieroglyphs, initially indecipherable until the discovery of the Rosetta Stone, were used in the transmission of official decrees and the narration of the deeds and glories of gods and pharaohs.

With the transition to written history, there was a change in the narrator's characteristic as the exclusive holder of information. Bards no longer needed to look for successors to transmit the stories to preserve them throughout the generations and, when they were recorded in written form, there was a need to select just one (or a few) versions.

The first written narrative discovered so far was rediscovered by archaeologist Austen Henry Layard during an excavation that began in 1845, in northern Iraq. Only in 1872, the Assyriologist George Smith managed to translate it, identifying it as the text of Gilgamesh. The epic encouraged readers not only to admire urban civilization and be moved by its destruction but also to take pride in the tablets that recorded history. Puchner (2019) explains that, unlike many other epics, such as the Homeric ones, which were assumed to be recited orally, *Gilgamesh* incorporated writing. The fact that it was written transformed *Gilgamesh*, the hero, into the author of his own story. Gilgamesh was a writer-king, and his epic boasted written history as the most significant achievement of his culture.

It has been noticed, since *Gilgamesh*, that the act of telling and consuming stories starts to lose its immediacy and a distance is created between the one who tells the story and the one who reads it. In the case of the aforementioned work, there is also an exaltation of media support, clay tablets, and literary activity through writing.

In general terms, little by little, the storyteller is dichotomised. The figure of the narrator appears who, being an entity linked to the written text as the muses were in oral epics, is a creation of the writings just as the characters and the plot are. Therefore, the writer also distances himself from the text, not just from his reader, after finishing writing. Likewise, “*the invention of writing divides human evolution between a time that is almost inaccessible to us and another in which we have access to the minds of others*” (Puchner, 2019).

With the lack of the need for the accountant to use memory, the text moves towards new structures and gradually moves away from the epic genre. With the novel, the split between the mythical and the fictional real emerges, and the narrative moves away from meter and rhyme, as was the case in ancient epics. The plot, previously told to a large audience that could make

interventions and suggestions, loses its continuum, starting to have a beginning and an end like that of theatre. The Muse loses her power to the writer, the narrative becoming composed of stories born in one's imagination and for others' imagination. In this sense, writer Ursula K. Le Guin observes in the introduction to her book *The Left Hand of the Darkness*:

"In reading a novel, any novel, we have to know perfectly well that the whole thing is nonsense, and then, while reading, believe every word of it. (...) The artist deals with what cannot be said in words. The artist whose medium is fiction does this in words. The novelist says in words what cannot be said in words. Words can be used thus paradoxically because they have (...) a symbolical or metaphorical usage. (They also have a sound (...)). A sentence or paragraph is like a chord or harmonic sequence in music: its meaning may be more clearly understood in silence, than by the attentive intellect." (Le Guin, 1987)

The act of reading becomes an increasingly introverted act. With the advent of the creation of books, reading becomes a practice that targets the individual. The themes are also individualized. If, in the epics, the characters symbolized the saga of a nation, now the characters represent themselves in their particular sagas. From the 13th century onwards and especially in the 19th century, the novel acquired "a new character" and book culture developed various literary forms, such as essays, articles, travel reports and memoirs. The epistolary format allows for detailed descriptions of mental life, observed landscapes, and characters, among other aspects "(as exemplified by Richardson)". The literary technique of notes and memories allows even more detail in the descriptions of customs, nature, traditions, and so on (vide Eichenbaum, 2013, p. 228).

The type of literature I refer to in the following analyses is literature as a written medium and whose medium object is the book. I will work on the romance genre based on arbitrary sample choices, certainly, as they make up empirical knowledge. In the same way, the arbitrariness of how other media will be exemplified expands.

Now that we have briefly covered the first trajectory taken by storytelling, it is up to me to explain how literature and other media can be reasoned as dimensions. To do so, I will return in time once more.

3. Dimensions

It is from ancient Alexandria that many of the theorems that served as the basis for modern mathematics emerged. Euclid was responsible for organizing theorems of "Pythagoras (and his school), Hippocrates of Chios, Theaetetus of Athens and Eudoxus of Cnidos" and demonstrating how they follow five axioms (Euclids *et al.*, 2007, p. 4). In *Elementa*, he observed that the dimension of a mathematical space can be understood from a minimum of coordinates necessary to distinguish any point within it. Thus, based on his writings, we now agree that a straight line, as it only needs one coordinate to be specified, is considered a first-dimensional space; a flat surface, as it only needs two coordinates to be specified, is considered a second-dimensional

space, and the cube, as it needs three coordinates to be specified, is considered a third-dimensional space (image 2).

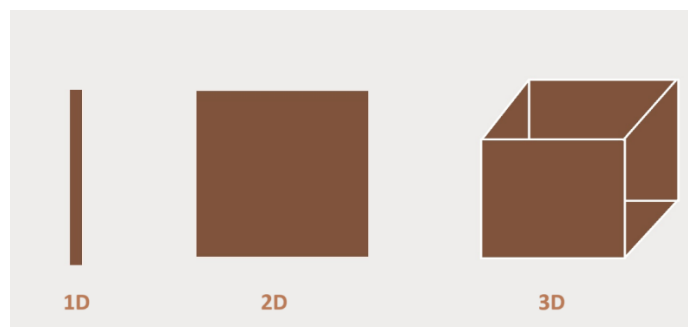


Image 2: Three dimensions

In physics, the application of the concept of dimension is not limited to material objects but is commonly applied to spaces designed and independent of the physical space we share daily. As one of the objectives of my research, I seek, based on the elements analysed in future texts, to highlight mediality and transmediality from a vision that attributes the understanding of the dimensionality of an object to the chosen media. In other words, I seek to propose that each of the media analysed exists as a mathematical space in a specific dimension (be it the first, second or third dimension) and that this factor drives its action or, even, its essential mediality and its performance (creation, structure, message and reception).

Literature operates through words. As said by the fictional writer/narrator/character created by Clarice Lispector, Rodrigo S. M.: “*don't forget that to write, it doesn't matter what, my basic material is the word. This is how this story will be made up of words that are grouped into phrases and from these, a secret meaning emerges that goes beyond words and phrases*” (Lispector, 1998, p. 24).

Literature acts in our mind as a guiding thread, just like a verb that offers or alters meanings to loose and disordered particles and creates a sentence. In the act of literary creation, writers use words to express ideas, draw worlds in the reader's imagination, give voice and personality to their characters and evoke sensations. Therefore, composition is a process that demands awareness and care. As Calvino (2002, p. 63) explains, we

“(...) cannot be considered a literary result unless this impulse of the imagination is transformed into words. The success of the writer, both in prose and in verse, lies in the happiness of verbal expression, which in some cases can be achieved through an unpredictable outburst, but which as a general rule implies a patient search for the most juste, the phrase in question. that all elements are irreplaceable, from the encounter of sounds and concepts that are the most effective and dense with meaning. (...) it is about the search for a necessary, unique, dense, concise, memorable expression.” (Calvino, 2002, p. 63)

As “*the Promised Land in which language becomes what it actually should be*” (Calvino, 2002, p. 74), it is through the unique expression referred to by Italo Calvino, which I have been calling a “thread” or a “line”, that literature captivates and leads its user. If at any point along the way the writer is not able to reproduce a text that maintains its logical meaning, the thread breaks,

the particles become loose and the reader is lost. The thread should never be broken, nor should words become detached from each other or present inconsistencies. The structure can be altered, it can have several nodes or textures or finished or unfinished forks, but the user cannot be allowed to fall from it due to lack of understanding. C. S. Lewis explains that “*the reader, we must remember, does not start by knowing what we mean. If our words are ambiguous, our meaning will escape him. I sometimes think that writing is like driving sheep down a road. If there is any gate open to the left or the right the reader will most certainly go into it*” (Lewis, 2000).

Literature is, therefore, like a straight line of stitches that weaves together words and has a beginning, middle and end (image 3). This is a phenomenon resulting from the linguistic sign:

“(...) in discourse, terms establish relationships between themselves, due to their chaining, relationships based on the linear character of the language, which excludes the possibility of pronouncing two elements at the same time. These are allied one after the other in the chain of speech. Such combinations, which rely on extension, can be called syntagms. The syntagma is always composed of two or more consecutive units (for example: re-read, against everyone; human life; god is good; if the weather is good, we will go out, etc.)” (Saussure, 2006, p. 142)

However, this does not compromise the temporal realization of the plot, since we have texts that begin *in medias res*, that present flashbacks or, even, that play with possible “scientific” or magical time travel, as in *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962), by Madeleine L'Engle. Thus, I consider literature as a first-dimensional medium in which many points are connected in order to create certain meanings. It has only one Euclidean coordinate, the word, to guide its user.



Image 3: Literature 1D

In cinema, the number of descriptive words used to outline a place, a world, a context or a character can be replaced by just one image. The characters' personality and voice are influenced by the actresses' and actors' body language and the way they pronounce their lines. Among other elements, the location is also influenced by the climate and the incidence of light. Above all, all aspects are influenced by the act of filming itself and the editing of scenes.

The image gives cinema another dimension beyond the thread of words. The cinematographic product, the film, operates under a surface formed by these two lines, between which, the sound permeates and refracts, collaborating in the game of senses. On this surface (image 4), not just one thread will be at play, but two with image and sound. In the cinema, the user can see and hear.



Image 4: Cinema 2D

The videogame adds interaction to these lines. It adds the possibility of expressing “*homo ludens*” (vide Huizinga, 2019). In it, interactivity is expressed as a *conditio sine qua non*. The user has the power to manipulate the medium, not the power to imagine, as in literature, but the power to venture into it, receiving sound and visual stimuli, as in cinema and without necessarily being guided by the lens of a camera that chooses what should be reported and when. According to Lewis *et al.* (2008), videogames provide a relationship beyond the unidirectional relationship provided by other media to/with the user.

In Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games, the genre that I have been focusing my analyses throughout my research, the player also has the possibility of projecting herself/himself into the game in the form of an avatar. The avatar is, then, the representation of the user's self in the fictional digital world (vide Banks & Bowman, 2016; Jin, 2009; Meadows, 2008).

Interactivity, therefore, is depth. Hence, I consider videogames to be a third-dimensional medium, like a cube that can be entered and explored (image 5).



Image 5: Videogame 3D

David Bordwell (2007) was correct in speculating that different media activate distinct domains of storytelling. This occurs because the dimensional form of the media is directly reflected in the way the user and author relate to it and in the final expression of the media product. In other words, the motivator for cinema would be to produce films and not books, CDs or statues.

In literature, the user, called reader, when reading, deciphers the message. The whole proposed by the message is imagined individually by the reader based on clues (words) chosen by the author. For Bakhtin (2003), the relationship established between writer and reader is a human psychic organization as it is a creation capable of solidifying consciousness and transposing psychological formation through social signs. In other words, a relationship between what is imagined by the writer and what is (re)imagined by the reader.

As for the production of meaning, in which the simply phrasal state is supplanted by the semantic state, Bakhtin believes this to be the artist's greatest merit. According to Bakhtin (2003, p. 178), *"the artist works with language, but not as language: as language he overcomes it... (the word must stop being felt as a word). The writer does not create in the world of language, he just uses the language"*. Concerning the material, the artist's design, conditioned by the fundamental artistic task, can be expressed as overcoming the material.

Bakhtin's thought seems to be entirely related to that expressed by Ursula K. Le Guin regarding literary work and words, mentioned previously. As it is a medium that operates through a construct of sequenced ideas, *"understanding the relationships between time-space in literature is also trying to understand the forms of organization of psychological processes in their contextual and situational characteristics"* (Macedo; Vieira, 2015, p. 122).

Umberto Eco (1985) states that the novel *"is a machine for generating interpretations"*. Thus, description is a fundamental element for the literary narrative, as it helps to guide the user's imaginary construction. In the words of Rodrigo S. M.: *"But when writing – let the name be given to things. Each thing is a word. And when you don't have it, you invent it. This God of yours who ordered you to be invented"* (Lispector, 1998, p. 26).

It is, therefore, that, known or completely new, the object from the moment it is expressed in words and appears in a description,

"(...) it is charged with a special force, it becomes like the pole of a magnetic field, the node of a network of invisible correlations. The symbolism of an object can be more or less explicit, but it always exists. We can say that in a narrative an object is always a magical object." (Calvino, 2002, p. 49)

The object – also understood as context, character, world, etc. – is obviously magical and unique to each reader's imagination. Being a media in the first dimension and with no other resource than words, literature, Tolkien (2006, p. 89) would say, is content to create a Secondary World in the mind. In other words, the reader's imagination is an important tool for literature. The description is the text apparatus that allows the user to know spaces, characters (personality, appearance, emotions, etc.), and time. In a way, it is a didactic position that the writer needs to exercise in his text so that the reader can understand the message. Stephen King (2000) believes that to create a description coherent with the plot's proposal, the writer needs to first visualize what he wants to be experienced by the reader and, only after this first step, seek to translate the result of his visualization into words. As a creator, you should aim to be able to describe a scene that produces an "itch of recognition", avoiding "poor description" that "leaves the reader confused and myopic" or "exaggerated description" that "buries you in details and images"

and, thus, find a position that helps the act of telling a story (King, 2015). Consequently, Stephen King reaffirms the need to use words well so that, when aligned, they guide the user well during their reading experience.

Nevertheless, even within the book's descriptive process, the user has the freedom to imagine and this imagination is not collective, each user will create a different shape for the described object. As Regina Zilberman (1987) explains, reading is a deciphering task that implies an interpretation of the text and the elements found in it outside the literal and, consequently, in the revitalization of the fictional world. There is, therefore, non-passive production of meaning on the part of the reader, because she/he *"also consumes and produces in the act of reading: she/he consumes a text (the writer's creation) and produces meanings for it, creating another text through reading. The reader produces a text proceeding by selection, when choosing between possible meanings according to some values"* (Bastos, 1998, p. 3). The meaning,

"(...) is not, therefore, inherent to the text, 'a thing of the text'. There is a relationship between production and reading and the meanings are given through the comparison of the historical dimension of the reader with the writer. There is a dialectical process between the text and the reading, making it sometimes difficult for a reader to develop meanings close to those imagined by the writer, given the different types of personal and social experiences." (Bastos, 1998, p. 3)

It is then up to the reader to signify and recreate imaginary images for themselves, i.e., contexts, scenarios, characters and objects. According to Luis Filipe Ribeiro (1990), the literary text is the result of a meandering system of paths established by principles that guide the production of discourse and that are based on experiences, emotions, language and memory that the writer experiences and are prior to the writing and act as motivators.

It is also important to remember that not only is the process of reading a novel an individual practice but also the act of writing fiction itself is *"difficult and solitary work; It's something like crossing the Atlantic Ocean in a bathtub"* (King, 2000). The whole, in general, is proposed by a single creator, with works that have more than one person as author being rare. Paulo Honório, fictional writer/narrator/character created by Graciliano Ramos, tell us about the unsuccessful attempt to write a book with co-writers:

"Before starting this book, I imagined building it through the division of labour. I approached some friends, and almost all of them willingly agreed to contribute to the development of national letters. Padre Silvestre would take the moral part and the Latin quotations; João Nogueira accepted the punctuation, spelling and syntax; I promised Archimedes the typographic composition; for the literary composition, I invited Lúcio Gomes de Azevedo Gondim, editor and director of Cruzeiro. I would draw up the plan, introduce the rudiments of agriculture and livestock into the story, cover the expenses and put my name on the cover. I was very excited for a week, at conferences with the main collaborators, (...) But the optimism boiled over, and I realized that we didn't understand each other. (...) At first, everything went well, there were no differences between us. The conversation was long, but everyone paid attention to their own words, paying no attention

to what the other said. (...) The result was a disaster. (...) The porridge turned to water. Three failed attempts in one month!" (Ramos, 2009)

In addition to the individual character of writing, Stephen King suggests solitude, isolation from the world, as a principle for creative activity:

"Your writing room doesn't have to sport a Playboy Philosophy decor (...) The space can be humble (...), and it really needs only one thing: a door which you are willing to shut. The closed door is your way of telling the world and yourself that you mean business; you have made a serious commitment to write and intend to walk the walk as well as talk the talk." (King, 2000)

"The great thing about writing with the door shut is that you find yourself forced to concentrate on the story to the exclusion of practically everything else. No one can ask you "What were you trying to express with Garfield's dying words?" or "What's the significance of the green dress?" You may not have been trying to express anything with Garfield's dying words, and Maura could be wearing green only because that's what you saw when she came into sight in your mind's eye." (King, 2015)

However, this intimate relationship between the creator and the text is broken. As Maurice Blanchot observes in filigreed words,

"...no one who wrote the work can live in it or remain with it. This is the very decision that dismisses the writer, that exonerates the writer, that separates her/him, that makes the writer the survivor, the idle, the unoccupied, the inert on whom art does not depend. The writer cannot remain close to the work: she/he can only write it, she/he can, when it is written, only discern in it the abrupt approach (...) that moves the writer away or that forces she/he to return to that situation of 'distance' in which the writer put herself/himself to start, to convert into the understanding of what she/he had to write. So, she/he now finds her/him again (...) wandering outside (...)." (Blanchot, 2011, p. 14-15)

The writer writes the work, it is published and she/he loses his power of influence over what has already been written. Conversely, it is worth noting that the author loses control over the book, and the published text, but not over her/his work project. In the case of fantasy writers who create their worlds, such as J. R. R. Tolkien, J. K. Rowling and George R. R. Martin, there is no loss of control over their fictional universe. Consequently, writers can, in another work, continue a plot, recreate the imaginary about a character, weigh up past actions or introduce a yet unexplored historical past. Barthes killed the writer, but he didn't count on the fact that writers of fantasy literature are wizards, immortal until their natural death in our world. This, however, is not to say that the writer can act as a critic of her/his own work, as Tolkien risked when trying to establish that *The Lord of the Rings* was not an allegorical novel, as the creator is doomed to "*Noli me legere*", as postulated by Blanchot (2011). In other words, they can never be a reader of their work, their relationship with it being parental.

Still, we can establish a clear distinction in the role of authorship between interactive video and literatureⁱⁱ. Contrary to what happens to videogames in the Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game genre, the book cannot undergo hotfixes or changes after its completion. A great defender of the immutability and freedom of the product after publication, Umberto Eco states:

“Nothing consoles the author of a novel more than discovering readings in it that he hadn't thought of and that readers suggest to him. (...) I am not saying that the author cannot discover a reading that seems aberrant to him, but he should always remain silent (...) The vast majority of readings reveal effects of meaning that had not been thought of (...). The text is there and produces its own effects. The author should die after writing. So as not to disturb the text path.” (Eco, 1985)

Despite being in a book, written literature is not far from oral literature in terms of user reception. The way I understand and locate literature as a first-dimension medium, the reader's point of reception is the same as that of someone who is told an event or a story. As Katini Nsambe explained to Rosi, Mia Couto's characters in *Mulheres de Cinza*:

“- To read these papers, Rosi, you need to stay still. Completely still, eyes, body, soul. You stay like that for a while, like a hunter in an ambush. If she remained motionless for a while (...) the letters would begin to look at her. And they would tell her stories. They all look like drawings, but inside the letters there are voices. Each page is an infinite box of voices. When we read, we are not the eye; we are the ear.” (Couto, 2015, p. 229)

No matter how much you are reading, and using your eyes to do so, the act would be the same as listening to past events experienced by third parties and retold by others, just as was done with bards and epics (image 7). Therefore, some intimate relationships are created: between reader and author, as only the writer is aware of the existence of this external element to the world of fictionⁱⁱⁱ, the reader; between writer and the text, as the writer has the possibility of choosing to weave and re-weave it until, being satisfied, they publish it; and, finally, between text and reader, as it is only through the text that the reader has access to the proposed fictional world and its storytelling.

ⁱⁱ We know that sometimes writers make changes to their final product, as Tolkien did in *The Hobbit*, but this is not a common action and tends to be frowned upon by critics and the receiving public.

ⁱⁱⁱ We know that, sometimes, characters can also be aware of the reader's existence, but this begins by positioning the character in the writer's locus, as in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Only by having usurped that place they are aware that they write and, therefore, narrate themselves to be read by others.



Image 7: The reader

In cinema, the user, called spectator, receives the part imagined, created and performed by others. While in literature description performs an important function in constructing spaces and building characters, in film everything must be shown on the screen. As Mcsill & Schuck (2016) point out, the reader can immerse themselves in the characters, following their deepest feelings described in as many pages as the writer deems necessary, but the spectator in a movie theatre must interpret everything relating to the characters from facial expressions, gestures, speech and actions. The possibility of a complex description allows, according to Mcsill and Schuck, a closer relationship between the reader and a character in order to create empathy and make them more believable. However, the same does not happen with cinema, as it is not uncommon for a book with a large volume of pages to end up being reduced to a maximum of two hours of film time. Mcsill & Schuck (2016) remember that the cutting process does not allow the same depth of immersion into the character as the literary description.

By replacing description with image, the film is created as a complete work that is watched by the viewer and does not allow for many imaginative spaces of an imagistic nature. This means that the user as a spectator is not asked to imagine places, characters and events, as they all occur before their eyes. However, the film is still subject to interpretation and is therefore not an airtight product. In fact, cinema uses images to provoke interpretations:

"The filmmakers are practical psychologists. They have been viewers themselves, and they are more or less accomplished practitioners of their craft, so they have many ideas about how to shape the cues to provide experiences of a particular sort. They can fail, or succeed beyond their initial hopes, but they organize the film so as to solicit a range of effects. Like all humans, filmmakers can't anticipate, let alone determine, all the effects that may arise from their endeavours. Particularly in the domain of appropriation, the viewer has a freedom to seize upon certain cues and not others, pull them into a range of projects, and use the film in ways that couldn't be foreseen by the filmmakers." (Bordwell, 2007, p. 123)

In the creation process, many decisions need to be deliberated. They range from more obvious issues such as the choice of actors and actresses to issues that often do not affect spectators' imagination such as legal arrangements, rental contracts and production planning. When in an adaptation of a literary work, for example, the viewer receives only a part, only what was chosen to be adapted and, at the same time, receives it as imagined by third parties. The

film product is the result of subjectivities and reading interpretations other than that of the spectator.

Mcsill & Schuck (2016, p.101) explain that books and scripts “*have the same objective, to take you by the arm and take you on a long journey*”, but, when talking about the process of creating a script from a literary work, it must be remembered that both are distinct media forms. Therefore, such a process can turn into an extremely distressing act, as there are many situations in which writers are not happy to see the outcome of their adapted work. Although they may have given the go-ahead to the initial script, cinema is a collaborative artistic expression. The roadmap represents just the starting point in a complex process. With the director's entry, everything could undergo significant changes (Mcsill; Schuck, 2016, p. 104).

Furthermore, external factors – such as time, the specific and commercial interests of the producers, accidents, etc. – can be decisive for the final product and “removing or mixing characters often occurs for budget reasons” (Mcsill; Schuck, 2016, p. 105). While, in the late 1990s, Peter Jackson recreated J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle Earth from landscapes he chose in New Zealand and had a good budget and new image processing and editing technologies, MGM found, in 1939, several setbacks in adapting *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), by Lyman Frank Baum:

“Unlike the book and the film as a final product, the recording process for The Wizard of Oz was nothing fantastic. Although the script, which includes songs as well as lines, was ready just nine months after MGM bought the rights to adapt the book to film, the filming process went through several interruptions due to casting problems. Even though most of these problems were due to the dissatisfaction of actors who switched roles, there is a memorable incident in the world of cinema that occurred during the filming of the musical. When he was changed roles with Ray Bolger, Buddy Ebsen, who would play the Scarecrow, did not complain, but he did not know that days after the start of filming he would suffer terrible poisoning from the lead-based paint used in his Tin Man makeup and he would be admitted to the hospital in serious condition and would have to be replaced by another actor, Jack Haley. The makeup composition was changed and all scenes were filmed again. (...) Fleming was also a hostage of Technicolor. The specific technical reason is not very clear, there is speculation about difficulty in tone and also about aesthetics, but the director had to choose to change the colour of the magical shoes that accompany Dorothy on her journey. In The Wizard of Oz, the magic shoes are made of ruby and not silver as in the original work.”
(Martinez; Lopes, 2019, p. 93-94)

As for cinematographic creation, the screenwriter writes the work, which is directed by the director, produced by the producers, staged by the actors and edited by the post-production team. Peter Jackson, when asked in an interview on the Charlie Rose Show, after receiving Oscar nominations for *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), whether the film had turned out as he wished, responded:

“That’s really interesting because as a director I kind of... I have a good ability... from the beginning, when we started writing the script, I have a good ability to imagine the film in my head. You know, from the first page of the script, as we were writing, I could already imagine the camera

angle, the music. I can start to feel the film forming and I, in a way, have this imaginary film starting to take shape and that from the beginning. (...) In this case, we started the process about five or six years ago... and then what happens during the film process is that this film, what was in my head, was always modified... because when you perform the scenarios... you know... then the scenarios you have performed replace the ones you originally imagined. Then, the actors enter the game, their faces bring to life characters I had imagined. So, my little inner movie was always being changed, being improved. So, I mean, you know... everything was getting better all the time. The movie in my head was being changed and improved all the time. There were always other people joining the game and making their contribution (...). That's exciting. From a creative standpoint, it's exciting because you always have these new things happening when everyone and everyone else gets involved." (Charlie Rose Show, 2002, Peter Jackson interview (00:01:29 – 00:01:35)

In cinema everyone involved, just like the writer in literature, loses power over the work after release and does not have the possibility of making hotfixes. Still, Jackson's speech exposes cinema as a production system. Films are works of shared authorship and usually have shared reception, such as in movie theatres.

Even receiving the part imagined by third parties, it would be inconsistent to claim that the user has a passive connection with the medium. It would also be inconsistent to claim that each viewer's understanding of the film is completely unique. When receiving cinematographic medium, the viewer processes and elaborates the content,

"(...) on the basis of schemas she or he has to handle. These schemas aren't necessarily codes in the strict sense, because many are loosely structured, semantically vague, and open-ended. Still, the elaboration isn't wholly a matter of individual taste either. If you and I see a driver swigging out of a bottle and swerving his car along the road, we'll probably both suspect that he's under the influence. The conclusion isn't guaranteed: The bottle might contain iced tea, and he might be avoiding roadkill we can't see. But our inference (...) is more plausible. Films rely centrally on just such garden-variety inferences (...)." (Bordwell, 2007, p. 93)

Thus, the cognitive paradigm indicates that it is unlikely that, when watching a film, the user needs to apply a set of "codes" to understand it. Instead, *"viewers participate in a complex process of actively elaborating what the film establishes. They "go beyond the information provided," in Jerome Bruner's phrase.*" (Bordwell, 2007, p. 136) However, going further means making use of creativity in the potential gaps left by the film. Still, this is not a broad and careless freedom for any type of interpretation, as the viewer who deciphers the message differently may not understand the film correctly and may become lost in the plot. Furthermore, the difference in reception is the individual meaning for each of the elements belonging to the message and not the message as a whole.

In short, cinema puts its user a little closer to the facts. The spectator, whose Latin etymology spectator means "one who observes", is like an eyewitness to the events that occur

to third parties, as he witnesses them. Therefore, there is often no need for a narrator to describe the events (image 7).

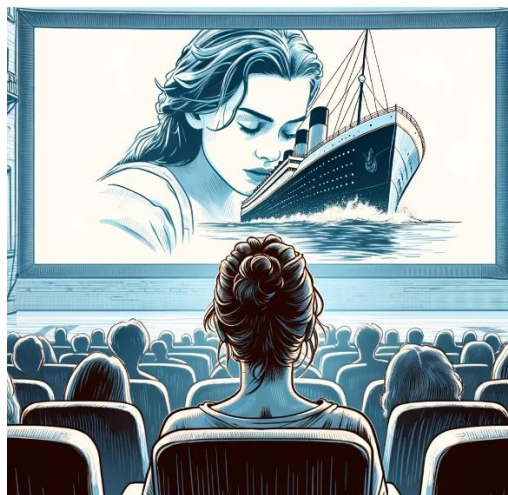


Image 7: The spectator

In videogames, the user, called the player, is the one who receives everything imagined and created by others and which is simply played by the player. The videointeractive product is created by many hands – including scriptwriters, designers, programmers, etc. – and its characteristic feature is interactivity.

According to Adrienne Shaw, the users are always active when interacting with the medium, but in videogames, interaction is essential for the functioning of their medium structure (Shaw, 2010, p. 8). Arthur Bobany (2008) observes interactivity as an attribute and argues that this is the element that differentiates games from other media as it is at the core of the development of any game. Likewise, videointeractive medium is also the most dependent on technology, even though technological evolution has allowed it a certain, almost unlimited, freedom in the process of creating universes, plots and characters.

Videointeractive medium is made up of several genres and subgenres. The genre that has received special emphasis in my analyses is the Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG), whose characteristic groups “(...) *high-resolution videogames, played online by individuals with their characters created to represent them and to interact not only with the software (the game context and the characters in this context and controlled by that software), but also with other players*” (Martinez, 2017, p. 20). MMORPGs equalize RPG games with the possibility of large-scale interaction and produce works that are in a constant process of renewal and improvement. MMORPG works are alive and their authors, even after their release, have constant power over them. From time to time, the game is changed to introduce new effects, characters, maps, etc. or to carry out corrections, hotfixes. There is, therefore, the possibility of interaction between authors and recipients, which is a novelty brought by the videogame.

From the interaction between players, we can observe that,

"(...) the environment of social life finds development in the virtual world (...). With the telecommunications revolution and the global community, virtual gaming spaces become conducive to a complete social experience. It is interesting to note how virtual spaces follow patterns established by real social spaces. It is not difficult to find large open areas in the virtual world designed for socialization and gatherings of large groups." (Bobany, 2007, p.13)

The social interactivity that MMOs enable creates a powerful connection between the players. Equally powerful is the interaction between the player and the avatar. In videointeractive games we see the emergence of Aristotelian mimetic art; through actors, *"representing the characters, the action and acting themselves"* (De Sousa, 1986, p. 36). Just as in theatre, there are characters and actors who develop actions in a given scenario so that a plot is played out, in MMORPG, the actor would be the player himself and the avatar would be the character whose actions develop the plot in the world created by the producers, the scenario.

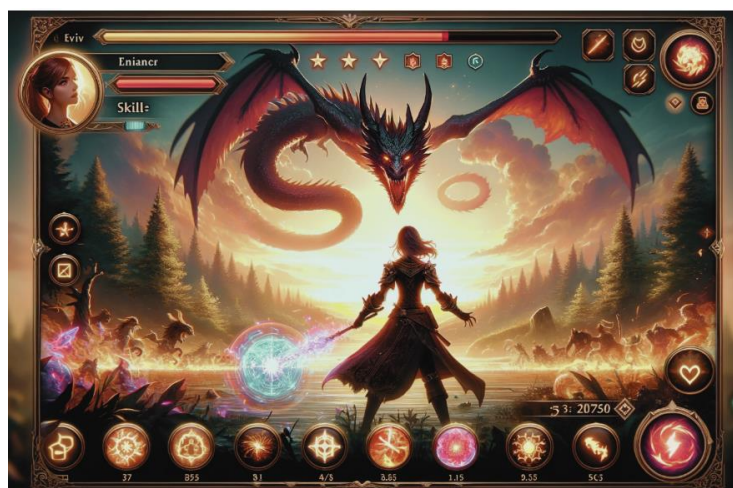


Image 8: The player

Furthermore, according to Lewis *et al.* (2008), the players create an attachment to the character projected as their digital representation due to the establishment of an effective interaction that is not allowed by other media: *"the gamer controls the avatar, reacts to and with the avatar, and responds to changes in the avatar's conditions and environment"* (Hart, 2017). The player's perception is corporeal, with him or her always being the centre of their own story, the protagonist (image 8).

Just as Aeschylus, through the insertion of the second person into the tragedy, created the effect of emancipating the first person from the responsory choir and made dialogue the protagonist of the plot, and like Gilgamesh, who enhanced the importance of writing in his epic, the possibility of manipulating the avatar and other aspects within an interactive video world established interaction as the main characteristic of this medium. Then, the link between dramatic action and movement is restored, since, as Eudoro de Sousa states, *"(...) in Poetics, the theory of dramatic action is closer than one might inadvertently assume to the theory of movement, exposed in Physics"* (1986, p. 38).

The dramatic action of theatre, with features easily recognizable in cinema in different tones, is, therefore, taken up in videogames, especially and essentially in MMORPGs. However, evidently, the process of catharsis is discarded because it is not the observation of a third party, but the observation of oneself, with the avatar being part of the player's identity. Also, as indirectly inferred by Thabet (2015), the encounter between narrative and action contradicts the theoretical thought of an inevitable inheritance of the supposedly definitive separation of both made by Aristotle.

By positioning the user as its protagonist, the video game allows for at least two narratives: the “background” one (vide Mukherjee, 2015) and the one that emerges from the player’s experience. Background narratives are context narratives, such as Sauron's direct or indirect threat to Middle Earth in *The Lord of the Rings Online*, for example.

Media	User	Relationship with the Product	Key Characteristics
Literature	Reader	Imagines the text based on clues provided by the author	Linear narrative, imagination-driven
Cinema	Spectator	Observes the visual and auditory elements presented on screen	Visual storytelling
Video Games	Player	Controls and interacts with the digital environment and avatar	Interactive storytelling, player agency

Table 1: A comparison of the media

The table above was composed in order to summarize the ideas presented here which will be better analysed and exemplified throughout future texts. In general, up until now, I have intended that both the *modus operandi* of the media and the way its product relates to its user confirm its dimensions. Here, I also intend to highlight the differences that occur in a collective creation process in comparison to the individual literary process, as well as point out that videointeractive medium has the ability to create an editable and collaborative product.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this examination of storytelling across literature, cinema, and videogames underscores the nuanced relationship between medium creation and experience. Each medium offers a unique mode of engagement, from the immersive imagination of literature to the visual spectacle of cinema and the interactive agency of videogames.

Literature, with its linear progression of words, invites readers to co-create the narrative in their minds, forging a personal connection with the text. Cinema, through its visual and auditory elements, provides a captivating sensory experience for spectators. Conversely,

videogames empower players to become active participants in the narrative, shaping outcomes through their choices and interactions within the digital world.

Furthermore, the collaborative nature of filmmaking and the ongoing evolution of interactive videogame worlds highlight the dynamic interplay between creators and users in shaping narrative experiences. While literature and cinema offer finalized products for consumption, videointeractive products present mutable environments that continue to evolve through ongoing interaction and iteration.

Ultimately, this exploration underscores the richness and diversity of storytelling across different media forms, each offering its own distinct dimensionality and mode of user engagement. By recognizing and understanding these differences, storytellers and creators can leverage the strengths of each medium to craft compelling narratives that resonate with audiences in unique and meaningful ways.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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