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## Transmedial Creation of Text Worlds. Pictorial Narration in Response to Verbal Texts

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**Abstract:** With the narrative and visual turn engaging research in several scholarly disciplines over the last decades, the author of this article intends to approach the issue of *world-formation* in such pictorial representations that have originated in response to verbal texts, mostly literary. The study assumes a semiotic vantage point, with *text* understood broadly as any meaningful

sequence or network of signs. It draws also from Intermedial Studies, following in particular the idea of *media transformation* (*transmediation*) as proposed by Lars Elleström (2014), especially in application to “qualified” media such as artistic forms.

An analysis will be carried on the set of images (mostly Western paintings and one instance of Oriental sculpture) produced by 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century artists, all induced by well-known verbal narratives that represent three categories: a) Greek mythology, b) religious and literary-religious texts (*The New Testament*, the *Rāmāyana*) and c) English-language literature (drama and poetry). As such, these visual renditions – a reversal of traditionally conceived ekphrasis in which verbal descriptions commented on visual artefacts – qualify as transmedial phenomena.

The author’s main concern is to what extent storytelling static visual works, the instances of *secondary narrativity* (Stampoulidis, 2019), are capable of creating *text worlds* (partly) similar to *storyworlds* postulated for verbal narratives. Starting with her own taxonomy of picturing endowed with a narratorial potential (inspired by several typologies proposed for narrative images), the author will discuss the formation by pictorial means of two world-building units, namely: 1) *scenes* and 2) *small worlds/sub-worlds*, both of them only parts of full-blown text worlds. Temporality emerges as a foundational but not exclusive property of text worlds in the verbal and pictorial arts. This study is a continuation of the author’s previous research (Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2009, 2016, 2019) that points to an incremental growth of possible worlds into text worlds into discourse worlds in verbal and visual media.

**Key words:** transmediality, possible worlds/text worlds/discourse worlds, pictorial narrativity, scenes, small worlds/sub-worlds

“The construction of fictional possible worlds occurs, primarily, in cultural activities – poetry and music composition, mythology and storytelling, painting and sculpting, theatre and dance performance, film making, etc.”

(Doležel, 1989, p. 236)

## Introduction

The quotation from Lubomir Doležel that serves as an opening motto subsumes three concepts crucial for our considerations in this short study, namely *possible worlds*, *culture* and *transmediality*. The last notion is not yet explicitly voiced as Doležel’s article appeared before the advent of contemporary Intermedial Studies, which is roughly traceable to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, among others to Werner Wolf’s (1999, 2005a), Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin’s (1999) and Iryna O. Rajewsky’s (2005) studies on intermediality and remediation, yet the idea of crossing borders between various media, modes and modalities of artistic representation is clearly recognizable in the citation.

Soon after, Umberto Eco (1990, p. 66) states that possible worlds of literary fiction “can be viewed [...] as cultural constructs, matter of stipulation or semiotic products,” thereby highlighting not only their imaginary mode of existence but also their embeddedness in a specific culture as well as their semiotic nature. The last-mentioned quality is important insofar as the present article assumes a semiotic perspective on *text*, understood broadly in accordance with Boris Uspensky’s definition (cf. Uspensky, 1973/1977, p. 211) as *any meaningful sequence of signs*, inclusive of verbal, non-verbal and mixed modes of expression. This idea remains in consonance with the Tartu-Moscow school’s belief in “the semiotic essence of culture,” itself conceived as a system or network of signs (Lotman & Uspensky, 1978, p. 211).

In *Transmediality defined* the phenomenon of *transmediality* will be discussed in more detail, pointing to what I call a 'narrow' and 'broad' understanding of this term and its relationship to the superordinate idea of *intermediality*. *Transmediality* will then be extended to cover text worlds of literary and pictorial representations.

*Text worlds and narrativity* takes up the issue of transmedial character of narrativity and text worlds in the situation when literary texts find their reflection in pictorial representations. Its first part is devoted to a brief description of three incrementally growing types of worlds – from logically constructed possible worlds of analytical philosophers and modal logicians (Kripke, 1963/1971; Hintikka, 1989; Rescher, 1975, 1999) to their applications to literary fictions in the garb of *text worlds* (Doležel, 1989, 1995; Werth, 1999; Stockwell, 2002) and, ultimately, to cognitively and pragmatically enriched *discourse worlds* (Werth, 1999; Stockwell, 2002; Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2009). In particular, the focus of our attention will go to the building blocks of such imaginary worlds postulated for literary fiction. Of special interest is *temporality (timeline)*, taken to be an indispensable feature of text/discourse worlds on condition they support narrative texts.

The second part of this section is devoted to instances of narrativity in the visual arts, which albeit treated as basically atemporal and non-anecdotal, boast several genres endowed with a *narrative potential*. Here, I propose my own detailed taxonomy of paintings and sculptures according to their narrative load, drawn on the basis of several typologies forwarded by art historians, theoreticians and semioticians of art.<sup>1</sup>

In *Transmediality exemplified*, with the above-mentioned methodological instruments in hand, an analysis of narrativity in modern (19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century) painting and sculpture will be conducted on a selection of such artworks that have originated in response to well-known verbal texts, mostly literary. Such *pre-texts* (underlying stories) will be grouped

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<sup>1</sup> All instances of artworks described in this article belong to Static Visual Narratives (SVN), postulated as a sub-genre of Visual Narratives (VN) by Sherline Pimenta and Ravi Poovaiah (2010, p. 25).

into three classes: a) Greek myths, b) religious texts (*The New Testament* and the *Rāmāyana* as representatives of Western scriptures and an Eastern moralizing epic, respectively) and c) English-language literary texts (Shakespearian drama, modern American poetry). Sometimes classified as *history paintings* (Pimenta & Poovaiah, 2010, p. 26), the visual images in this guise illustrate a traditionally conceived ekphrasis in reverse, in which pictorial renditions comment on verbal works. According to Georgios Stampoulidis's (2019, pp. 34–35) nomenclature, applied also by Wenjing Li and Jordan Zlatev (2022), such visual reflections of verbal *storyworlds* constitute cases of *secondary narrativity*. *The construction of visual-conceptual text worlds* is an attempt at answering the main query: How do the visual artworks under analysis, with a limited choice of the building blocks of *worldness* and an irregular chronology, project two *world-building units*, expanding from *simple scenes* into *small worlds* (*sub-worlds*), namely fragments of full-blown *text* and *discourse worlds*?

## Transmediality defined

Before producing a workable definition of one of our pivotal concepts, a brief explanation of three terms basic for Intermedial Studies should be provided. Unfortunately, the terminology in this field has been far from consistent; therefore, for the purposes of this article I offer the following explanation (after Chrzanowska-Kluczewska, 2019, p. 288, 2022, p. 11; cf. also Ryan, 2005a, 2014/2019):

- 1) *Medium* can refer to three phenomena (from the most general to the most specific):
  - a *channel of transmission/means of communication*, e.g. verbal (written or spoken), the press, radio, TV, Internet;
  - *artistic medium/art form* (included by Elleström, 2014, p. 19 within the class of “historically and communicatively situated” *qualified media*), e.g. literature, painting, sculpture, installation (as representatives of the visual arts), architecture, music, dance,

photography, as well as *composite media* such as theatre, opera, ballet, film, video, etc., which are hybrid – verbal and non-verbal – in their make-up;

- *technical support/carrier*, e.g. stone, wood, canvas, paper, cardboard, gypsum, metal, screen, light, etc.
- 2) *Mode* (often identified with *medium*, cf. Wolf, 2005a) denotes a *semiotic system/code*, e.g. natural language, static image (two- or three-dimensional), moving image, sound, gesture, dance, architectonic structure, design (interior, garden, urban, fashion, etc.), computer games, etc.
  - 3) *Modality*, best understood as a perceptual platform of delivery, described as sensory experience coming from sight (visual), sound (aural/acoustic), touch (tactile/haptic), smell (olfactory), taste (gustatory), movement (kinaesthetic), also the feeling of space (spatial) and of temperature, awareness of time (temporal), etc.<sup>2</sup>

*Intermediality*, then, in line with its most capacious understanding, emerges as any kind of interrelationships between various media/modes (Elleström, 2014, p. 3), with modalities being involved automatically in such relations. Initially, the term (coined by Aage A. Hansen-Löwe in 1983) was meant to refer to correspondences between literature and visual art but soon became extrapolated onto an ever-growing area of human creativity in representation and communication.

*Transmediality*, in turn, is a subtype of intermediality but with a different scope assigned to it by various researchers. In what I dub the *narrow*

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<sup>2</sup> Over the last decades, the list of human senses has been enlarged by neuroscientists beyond the traditional ‘Big Five’ as a reflection of multiplicity of distinct groups of sensory cell types in the brain, with their number raised to 21 or even 53 (Francis, 2020, IS). Ellen Spolsky (1993, p. 27) brought to our attention the fact that Peter Brooks, citing Louis Mink, postulated that “the production and understanding of plot or narrative is the human way of knowing how one fits into the dimension of time,” while Daniel Dennett perceived the narrative ability as “the source of the sense of self.” Albeit located beyond purely neurological classifications, these ideas are worth quoting in the context of our ponderings on verbal and non-verbal narrativity.

approach, transmediality (the term itself comes from Iryna O. Rajewsky, 2002) is a subcategory of *extracompositional intermediality*<sup>3</sup> that obtains between various works and/or media and refers to “phenomena that are non-specific to individual media” (Wolf, 2005a, p. 253). This means that transmediality so conceived denotes ‘medium-independent’ phenomena (Wolf, 2005b, p. 431), in which there is no transgression of borders between media/modes and no transfer of properties between them. Wolf mentions two groups of such phenomena: a) motifs and thematic variations, and b) narrativity and metalepsis, that is the blurring of narrative levels. My own proposal, voiced in several publications (cf. Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2022) has been to add to this list c) figuration<sup>4</sup> and d) text worlds. The claim that the last-mentioned category qualifies to be included in the list will, hopefully, find support in our discussion devoted to text world theories.

In contrast, the *broad* scope of transmedial phenomena as proposed by Elleström emerges from the following quotation:

Whereas I use the term *intermedial* to broadly refer to all types of relations among different types of media, the term *transmedial* should be understood to refer to intermedial relations that are characterized by actual or potential transfers (Elleström, 2014, p. 3, italics original).

By *transfer* Elleström (2014, pp. 9, 14) denotes the carrying-over of media characteristics across their borders, the idea absent in Wolf’s definition, referring to it also as *media transformation*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Wolf (2005a) and Chrzanowska-Kluczevska (2019) for more details on the distinction between intra- and extracompositional intermediality.

<sup>4</sup> The term *figuration* is ambiguous. It can refer either to a topological structure of a given (art)work or to the main feature of the non-abstract visual arts. I apply it (and the adjective *figurative*) in the first sense, using *figural* for the latter.

<sup>5</sup> Ryan (2014/2019) refers to both versions of transmediality without, however, giving them specific names. In Chrzanowska-Kluczevska (2022) I apply the broad notion of transmediality to describe the phenomena of transgressing textual frames in the visual arts and theatre.

Subsequently, Elleström proposes two types of this transformation, namely:

- *transmediation of media characteristics*, in other words *transmedial remediation* (typically, an adaptation, like in a filmic adaptation of a literary work, reminiscent of Jakobsonian *intersemiotic translation*);
- *transmedial media representation (reference)*, in which one medium represents another (typically, ekphrasis) (cf. Elleström, 2014, p. 15).

Type b) is of main import for our discussion further on, devoted to an analysis of pictorial works that refer to verbal texts.

The term *remediation* deserves a brief comment at this point. Introduced by Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin (1999) on the wave of excitement and fascination with the spread of the new media, it originally carried an evaluative overtone, the belief that the transformative power offered by new technological affordances would lead to improved renditions of original works in different media or modes. With time, the realization came that transmediation did not necessarily result in ameliorated versions. Elleström (2014, p. 5), while pondering on the nature of changes in the cognitive structure of works (texts) during intermedial transfers, points to the possibility of even corrupting the original product.

Since the two artistic media on which this article is focused are by no means new, we do not have to raise axiological questions about the effects of their transmediation. Rather, we can safely treat the term *remediation* according to the sense normally ascribed to the prefix *re-* in English, namely “to do something anew,” “to repeat something in a novel way.” Such is also the objective interpretation of this term by Elleström (2014, p. 90), who describes “remediation in general” as “repeated mediation of sensory configurations leading to a new representation of any media characteristics.” Worth noting is the fact that this definition aptly points to a concurrent transformation of modalities that obligatorily accompanies alterations of media/modes.

Finally, a word of caution comes from Elleström himself (2014, pp. 15–16): “Although the two types of media transformation – transmediation and media



representation – are possible to distinguish theoretically in a rather clear-cut way, they are evidently intricately interrelated.” For this reason, I will henceforth apply *transmediation* as a cover term for the two types of media transformation.<sup>6</sup>

## Text worlds and narrativity – transmediation from verbal to pictorial works

### *Possible worlds – text worlds – discourse worlds*

The ‘story’ of the concept of possible worlds in contemporary linguistic and literary theorizing begins with the onset of *possible-worlds semantics*, developed since the turn of the 1950<sup>s</sup> by modal logicians and analytic philosophers, although its roots lie all the way back in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz’s *possible universes*. A limited scope of this article allows for only a very succinct summary of the development of this theory (cf. Ryan, 1991, 2005b; Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2009 for more details).

The most widely accepted *conceptual theory* of possible worlds (Kripke, 1963/1971; Hintikka, 1969, 1989; Rescher, 1975, 1999) defines them as situations in which speakers might possibly find themselves, if only in their imagination. This approach clearly points to a dual nature of possible worlds – they come to life as *entia imaginationis*, artefacts of our mental activities, intellectual projections that can but do not have to be translated into natural language and offered to public scrutiny. This cognitive-linguistic character of possible worlds becomes reversed in the process of reading/listening, when the verbal description of such an alternative reality becomes reconceptualized by the receiver. The *actual world* (*aw*), the model of reality and the point of

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<sup>6</sup> On similar grounds, the distinction between *intermediality* and *transmediality* may be difficult to observe as transfer of media characteristics is ubiquitous. Hence *transmediality* is sometimes levelled with *intermediality* and becomes its near-synonym.

departure for the creation and interpretation of *possible worlds* (*pw's*), constitutes the central and most prominent element in the set of possible worlds, which are related to it through the relation called *accessibility*. Possible worlds are thus more or less proximate to or distant from our reality (cf. Kripke, 1971; Ryan, 1991).

What matters for our discussion are components of *pw's*, their *building blocks*. Logicians and philosophers have provided us with the following list:

- collections of possible individuals (entities),
- configurations that mutually relate possible individuals,
- states of affairs that act as subparts of more inclusive *pw's*,
- properties out of which individuals are constructed,
- a temporal setting, a 'history' (cf. Hintikka's, 1989, p. 55).

The last-mentioned constituent of a possible world, that is its *timeline*, seems in many respects fundamental in its creation, although it was sometimes not mentioned explicitly but rather taken for granted in the vast formally-oriented literature on the subject. It was Eco (1979/1994, p. 226) who emphatically claimed that "A fabula is a possible world," thus equating the timeline with a possible world of narrative fiction.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, Eco (1990, p. 65) soon came up with the criticism of possible worlds as envisaged by logicians and maintained that they had never been satisfactory as an analytical tool for literary scholars. Despite the fact that the metaphor of *world* had been borrowed by logicians from literary studies, as a formal construction it lacked a psycholinguistic credibility. The second accusation raised by Eco was the *emptiness* of *pw's* in terms of contextual details missing from their model-theoretic set-up. Consequently, Eco's (1994, p. 183) program was to build fuller *furnished possible worlds* more adequate for coping with

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<sup>7</sup> In the introduction to his book *Lector in fabula*, Eco (1994, p. 14) states that – in line with a semiotic conception of text he espouses – the theoretical findings he forwards for narrative fiction are extendable to non-literary and non-verbal texts, in particular painting, film and theatre.

fictional creations. This line of thought found its realization in the course taken by several researchers who decided to enrich the concept of possible world and make it. Within the current of linguistic stylistics, Nils Erik Enkvist (1989) introduces two interrelated terms: *text world* and *universe of discourse*. The former is a possible world that prototypically supports a work of narrative fiction, the latter – a semantic model of the real world without which the interpretation of the text world would be difficult to achieve.

In a similar vein, Lubomir Doležel lists the necessary components of literary text worlds:

⋮ Literature deals with concrete fictional persons in specific spatial and  
 ⋮ temporal settings, bound by peculiar relationships and engaged in unique  
 ⋮ struggles, quests, frustrations (Doležel, 1989, p. 228).

The “peculiar relationships” correspond to configurations of possible individuals mentioned above, but the spatiotemporal setting is an obvious widening of the original list of constituents of pw’s. Importantly, the components missing in the formal description appear now as propositional attitudes, emotions and feelings of literary characters, a highly subjective dimension, partly to be inferred by text receivers.

A cognitivist, Paul Werth (1999) launches the *Text World Theory*, later developed by Peter Stockwell and Joanna Gavins (cf. also Semino, 1997), within the framework of cognitive stylistics and poetics. Stockwell (2002, pp. 137, 140) offers the following list of *world-builders*: a) time, b) location, c) characters, d) objects, complemented with e) function advancing propositions (scene- and plot-advancing), which boil down to a narrative structure “enriched by our ongoing knowledge of the previous text and the inferences that we make” (Stockwell, 2002, p. 139). Apart from an active participation of the receiver in the construal of a text world on the basis of text-internal inferences, worth noting is an important position ascribed to temporality, with flashback and flashforwards seen as deictic sub-worlds of a text world.

From a philosophical vantage point, Carl H. Hausman (1989/1991, p. 191) provides the definition of *world* as a totality of *identities*. *Identity* appears

to be an all-inclusive term that “carries the idea of whatever is or could be”; it covers natural and physical entities (individuals, objects, events, etc.) as well as mental phenomena, including “consciousness itself.” Although Hausman refers basically to the real world, in my view his description can be extrapolated to cover possible worlds of verbal and non-verbal art. In fact, it comes close to the ‘rich’ understanding of the text world provided above.

Finally, developing the ideas of Werth (1999), Stockwell (2002, p. 93) postulates the third, expanded type called *discourse worlds* and defined as “dynamic readerly interactions with possible worlds: possible worlds with a cognitive dimension” (Stockwell, 2002, p. 93). Actually, we can claim that these are text worlds enlarged with the real world experience of both their authors and their interpreters (including critics and translators). So understood, discourse worlds become “dialogic machines” that link the knowledge and imagination of the text creator(s) with the same quality displayed by text receivers (Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2009).<sup>8</sup>

It is time now to compare the constituents of text worlds with the defining components of *storyworlds* and *narrativity* itself. According to Marie-Laure Ryan and Jan-Noël Thon (2014, p. 4), these are: a) characters, b) events, c) setting, d) time, e) space, f) causality and f) narrator (for some media only). It is easily noticeable that the list largely overlaps with the building blocks of a text world. No wonder then that the distinction between text worlds and

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<sup>8</sup> Text world theories form a set of proposals that originated in various academic milieus and developed in slightly different directions. One of early definitions of a *textual world* (Ger. *Textwelt*) came from the current called *Textlinguistik*, practiced in German-speaking environments throughout the 1970<sup>s</sup>. Robert-Alain de Beaugrande and Wolfgang Ulrich Dressler (1990, p. 21) define a textual world as a configuration of ideas and relationships that lie at the foundation of the surface text and can be equated with the mechanisms of coherence. This definition is capacious and assumes that every coherent verbal text is based on a corresponding conceptual textual world. Elaborating on this idea, other researchers in this tradition proposed a *discourse-world model*, an integrated configuration of all textual worlds within a specific discourse (de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1990, pp. 257–258). This conception is not very distinct from the cognitively formed discourse worlds described above. It seems also extendable to include texts produced in non-verbal media/modes.

storyworlds/narration becomes easily obliterated. This is particularly well-visible in application to the pictorial arts, where an extensive literature treats about narrativity in visual representations but few works (cf. Sonesson, 1997; Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2016, 2019) inquire about the creation of text worlds in such art forms, for all practical purposes levelling a *story* (whether conceived as *fabula* or *plot*) with a text world it (re)creates and (re)construes.

### *Narrativity and temporality in the pictorial arts*<sup>9</sup>

Before delving into an analysis of storytelling representations in figural art,<sup>10</sup> it seems proper to cite some definitions/descriptions of a narrative text. The opening definition I propose comes from Michael Toolan's study devoted to narrativity from a literary-linguistic perspective:

⋮ A narrative is a perceived sequence of non-randomly connected events,  
 ⋮ typically involving, as the experiencing agonist, humans or quasi-humans,  
 ⋮ or other sentient beings, from whose experience we humans can learn  
 ⋮ (Toolan, 2001, p. 8).

This definition is valuable in that it does not commit itself to specifying the number of events expected to realize a minimal story. On the logical grounds, a sequence implies at least two events, although the traditional Aristotelian formula that a story should possess a beginning, middle and end, would point to at least three events connected via a *complication-resolution schema* (cf. 4.1). Ryan (2014/2019, p. 14) mentions a more general qualification in this respect, namely that a narration requires “a succession of events that brings transformation to the state of the storyworld.” In turn, Klaus Speidel

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<sup>9</sup> The pictorial arts include several sub-genres apart from painting and sculpture, to which our discussion is limited, for instance wall-paintings, stained-glass windows, mosaics, drawings, illuminations, embroidery, etc.

<sup>10</sup> The assumption made for the purposes of this article is that non-figural art is hardly, if at all, capable of creating narrative pieces in accordance with the elements claimed above as necessary for *storification*.

(2018, pp. 17, 19) reminds us that Gérard Genette (1966, p. 152) in his description of verbal narration mentions the possibility of basing it on a single event. Such was also the stance assumed initially by Gerald Prince (1987/2003) for deploying a minimal narrative, later abandoned.

One more crucial quality of *storification*, present already in the Aristotelian formula, is *tellability* of a narrative – the newsworthiness and attractiveness of the story matter (cf. Fludernik, 1996; Ryan, 2005c; Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2019). In a word, a story should be a “good story” (Sonesson, 1997, p. 246), cognitively exciting for the receiver, based on suspense and a resolution through deduction, falsification and verification of the receiver’s expectations.

However, narrativity/*storification* may come *in degrees* for not all texts (produced in any kind of medium) are supported by fully developed stories. This is not only the case of lyric poetry, for which *scenes* with their *scripts* (Schank, 1982, p. 86, quoted in Semino, 1997, pp. 142–143), rather than *worlds* can be claimed to serve as a support,<sup>11</sup> but of several visual artworks, apparently featuring only one scene or one moment in time yet able to trigger a story in the eyes of the beholder. Single *monochronic static pictures*<sup>12</sup> in Ryan’s (2014/2019, p. 9) opinion pose a real interpretative challenge for they “compress the narrative arc into a single scene.” Such scenes possess what I call a *narrative trigger*, Gotthold E. Lessing’s (1766/2012, pp. 16, 60) famed “pregnant moment” or “frozen action,” endowed with a narrative potential.

<sup>11</sup> It is worth mentioning here a prose work by Czesław Miłosz titled *The Issa Valley* (1955/1981). This genealogical conundrum, a partly autobiographical rendition of the poet’s happy childhood in a Lithuanian scenery in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., to which the translator into English, Louis Iribarne, added the subtitle *A novel*, despite presenting a chronological sequence of events, does not possess a consistent storyline. The critic Alan Sheridan (1981, n. pag.) maintains that this work lacks a plot but displays the linear movement from one stage to another. We can also claim that it projects a powerful and intricate text world.

<sup>12</sup> Different terms appear in the visual research to describe single static pictorial representations – *monoscenic* (Weitzman, Kibedy Varga), *monophase* (Wolf, 2005b, pp. 431–432; Ryan, 2014/2019, p. 9) or *monochronic* (Speidel, 2018, p. 27). Speidel argues that *monoscenic* is equivocal since one scene may contain several moment. Henceforth, I will apply Speidel’s nomenclature concerning single pictures.

Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Franz Wickhoff proposed the first modern taxonomy of narrative images, several typologies have been forwarded by art historians, theoreticians of art, archaeologists, narratologists and semioticians, to mention only Kurt Weitzmann (1947), Marilyn Aronberg Lavin (1990), Áron Kibedi Varga (1993), Göran Sonesson (1997), Wolf (2005b), Ryan (2014), Speidel (2018). I refer the reader to a comprehensive overview of taxonomies proposed across various disciplines before 2016, presented in an article by Gyöngyvér Horváth (2016). Speidel (2018, pp. 26–29), additionally, has the following distinction for single static images: a) *achrony* (no specific moment in time indicated, e.g. symbolic representations), b) *monochrony* (one moment), c) *polychrony* (several moments), d) *eonochny* (ever-recurring events, eternal states).

However, in the face of terminological overlap and ambiguity, I propose below my own typology of temporality in *picturing*, that is in painting and sculpture (cf. also Sonesson, 1997). This taxonomy is applied in an analysis forthcoming in Section 4, where the main question to be raised is: What kind of text world (or its subpart) can be projected by particular types of narrative imagery?

#### **Types of static (still) pictures according to their temporality:**

- 1) A *single picture, achronic/monochronic but non-narrative*, e.g. still lifes, landscapes with no animate agents, some genre scenes.
- 2) A *single monochronic picture with implied narrativity*, e.g. a famous Paleolithic hunting scene from Lascaux (Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2019, p. 292; Speidel, 2018, pp. 10–11). Several such instances will be described in Section 4.
- 3) A *single polychronic picture with a minimal narration*, e.g. the opening panel in Veit Stoss's sculpted pentaptych (1477–1489) in St. Mary's church in Krakow, which combines two events: Annunciation to St. Joachim and the subsequent meeting of St. Joachim and St. Anne at the Golden Gate (cf. Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2019, p. 294).
- 4) A *temporal sequence in a single work*, e.g. hagiographical, Passion or Last Judgement icons, with one central picture and the story in smaller pictures placed around in different arrangements; Veit Stoss's sculpted altar with the stories of Mary and Jesus intertwined,

presented in several panels (cf. Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2016, 2019 for more details).

- 5) *A temporal set, built of separate pictures united by a common theme*, e.g. William Hogarth's eight-item *A Rake's Progress* (1735, cf. Wolf, 2005b, p. 433), Jerzy Duda-Gracz's Passion set *The Jasna Góra Golgotha of the Third Millennium* (2001, cf. Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2019, pp. 292–293) or Robert Devriendt's "condensed painted narratives" (2015–2016) (cf. Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2019, pp. 294–295). Such discrete pictures show a narration with unspecified breaks in-between particular images.
- 6) *A temporal series, a continuous train of images, not separated by distinct frames*, e.g. the sculpted *Rāmāyana* story in the Batu Caves, near Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, discussed in Section 4; also Marc Chagall's *White Crucifixion* (1938), with a chaotic narration occurring within one composition (Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2019, pp. 293–294).
- 7) *A cycle or a pictorial network, a set of distinct pictures united by a common theme, either with a cyclical temporality or with no particular chronology implied (network of relations), like in Chagall's entire oeuvre* (Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2016, pp. 60–65).<sup>13</sup>

## Transmediality exemplified – pictorial narration and the creation of text worlds

### *Pictorial works in response to literary texts*

Equipped with the descriptive apparatus presented above, we can now turn to a practical analysis of selected instances of plastic arts. Our examples are

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<sup>13</sup> In both Chrzanowska-Kluczevska (2016) and (2019) I used the term *cycle* with reference to Chagall's oeuvre. Speidel (2018, p. 26) rightly points out that the *cyclical method* should be limited to representations of recurring events, like the four seasons of the year. Consequently, I have changed my terminology and propose *network* for events that do not iterate regularly.



predominantly modern paintings, with two exceptions of sculptural works – a medieval representation and a product of contemporary popular art. Since all of them function as illustrations to well-known verbal texts of culture (myths, scriptures, literature), I refer to them as the *traditional ekphrasis* (in the spirit of Leo Spitzer) *in reverse*. However, Siglind Bruhn (2000, p. 8) can be credited with an opening of the scope of ekphrasis to subsume all media, in a word, making it “a representation in one medium of a text composed in another medium,” which is also fully satisfactory from the semiotic perspective.

All examples of pictures described below exemplify what Georgios Stampoulidis (2019, pp. 34–35) calls *secondary narrativity*<sup>14</sup> as they draw from *pre-texts* (*primary narratives*). Weijing Li and Jordan Zlatev (2022, pp. 318, 320) treat secondary narrativity as an instance of *intersemiotic translation* and introduce, parallelly, the notion of *polysemiotic narrative*, in our case realized as a combination of a verbal story (source) and pictorial expression (target). Both these phenomena instantiate transmediation.

The verbal pre-texts in our examples are strongly anchored in culture (Western for the paintings and Eastern for the sculpted series), which should make the interpretation of their visual counterparts easier on condition the spectator is well-acquainted with the primary narration. Hence, the *cultural background* and the *verbal co-text* guarantee a successful ‘reading’ of the image and the subsequent construal of the text world (or its fragment) by the receiver. The knowledge of the pre-texts helps also to fill in textual *gaps* – Ingardenian *spots of indeterminacy*, that is epistemic lacunae, of necessity present in visual narration as they are in every text composed in any kind of medium.

The illustrations have been selected mostly from Jon Thompson’s (2006) compendium of modern Western art and will be grouped into three categories, according to the source verbal text: 1) Greek mythology, 2) religious texts and 3) works of English and American literature. Before looking at particular

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<sup>14</sup> Ryan (2014/2019, p. 9), citing Kibédy-Varga (1988), refers to pictorial narratives as “parasitic” on the original verbal text. I consider this epithet a pejoration, preferring to use the objective concept of “secondary” narrativity.

pictures, let us list the most important stages of a prototypical verbal narrative. In line with Gustav Freytag's well-known pyramid that shows the structure of a tragedy, these are: 1) *exposition*, 2) *complication*, 3) *climax*, 4) *resolution*, 5) *catastrophe*. The last stage can be generalized to *closure* (cf. Jahn, 2005, pp. 189–190), to fit other genres as well. Tzvetan Todorov (1971, quoted also in Stampoulidis, 2019, pp. 35–36) proposed a more general schema: 1) *initial equilibrium*, 2) *disturbance/disruption*, 3) *recognition of disruption*, 4) *attempts to repair the disturbance*, 5) *restoration of the equilibrium*. Still, some stories may lack a certain stage. Importantly, Freytag's original schema possesses no happy ending, while Todorov and Jahn make an allowance for such a resolution, so an overlap of the two postulated sequences is also possible.

### Paintings related to Greek myths

A) Probably one of the best-known instances of such transmedial relation is *The fall of Icarus* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (ca. 1557). This single monochronic picture with implied narrativity (type 2 in our taxonomy) is a landscape/genre scene which at first sight does not seem to contain any mythological references. Only after a careful scrutiny will the viewer notice the legs of a drowning person and feathers falling into the water around. The pre-text is thus the myth of Icarus to be found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Still, if it were not for the title (*paratext*), the narration implied in a very discreet, even hardly noticeable way, could be entirely lost. The “frozen moment” shows the very catastrophe of the storyline and the temporal reconstruction of the plot has to work backwards.

Wystan H. Auden's poem *Musée des Beaux-Arts* (1938), a commentary on Bruegel's work, highlights the painter's message about human indifference to tragedies happening daily around us. It also closes a double ekphrasis: myth→painting→poem, in which the source and the final target are verbal texts.

B) The second of our examples (type 2), *A young girl carrying Orpheus's head* by the French painter Gustave Moreau (1865) (Thompson, 2006, p. 19), owing to its title, directs the spectator's

attention to the source narration. However, instead of focusing on a “pregnant moment” from the myth of Orpheus that would arouse our curiosity and make us speculate about or recreate in our memory the development of the action, the painter chose the post-climactic and even the post-catastrophic event, indeed the closure of the storyline. Orpheus has failed to keep his vow to Persephone, his beloved Eurydice will stay in Hades forever, his body has been already dismembered by furious Menads. According to the legend, his head and the lyre, carried by water, eventually reaches Lesbos. It is here that a young woman, the painting’s protagonist, picks up his head and his instrument. Her face shows sadness and resignation – most certainly, she has recognized Orpheus, a famed Thracian poet and musician. The scene looks like an attempt at restoring equilibrium and the plot has to be deployed in a reverse order, assuming the viewer knows not only the dramatic story of Orpheus trying to regain his dead wife but also the sequel about the fate of his remnants. The picture, owing to its melancholy ambience implies a tragical course of events, even though the painter decided to show only the final episode. The reconstruction of the story is facilitated by Thompson, who appends pre-texts to the paintings presented in his book if need arises.

- C) *The Argonauts*, a triptych painted by the German artist Max Beckmann (1949–1950) (Thompson, 2006, pp. 228–229), constitutes a strange combination of a medieval form filled with an ancient content. The central part of the composition (type 4 – a temporal sequence in a single work) shows the ‘pregnant’ moment of the narration, the beginning of the fabula located on board the ship ‘Argo’ that triggers the story of Jason’s expedition to Colchis in search of the Golden Fleece. The knowledge of the myth is obligatory to identify Jason, Orpheus and the sea-god Glaukos, as well as the cruel Medea (left wing) and the treacherous Sirens (right wing). The story has been modernized and recontextualized, especially in the wings. Originally, the title of this work was *Artists*, no

wonder than that the triptych alludes to contemporary painters and musicians. Medea, brandishing a sword, is actually a model posing to the painter and the Sirens have been transformed into ladies singers and instrumentalists. The representation has assumed the shape of a grotesque, ironical commentary on the life of professional artists. Moreover, the central panel is an intertextual allusion to several paintings that feature male nudes, a theme that fascinated Beckmann. The timeline has to be inferred on the basis of three moments only.

### Pictorial illustrations to religious texts

In the Western artistic tradition, the biblical motifs hold the place of pride among innumerable religious visual representations, abundantly produced over the centuries, well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when a growing secularization started to impress itself on art.

- D) Narrative picturing had its heyday in the Middle Ages, to which the famous high altar by Veit Stoss in St. Mary's basilica in Krakow bears a powerful witness. The narration, executed on richly colored and gilded panels carved in linden wood, exemplifies a temporal sequence of events (type 4) based on the *New Testament* and Apocrypha. When open, the central panel and the wings, consisting of nine separate scenes, relate the so-called Mary's Joys; while closed, the altar shows 12 scenes with Mary's Sorrows (three scenes from Mary's life and nine taken from Jesus' life and Passion). The storyline is deployed irregularly, non-sequentially, so the basic knowledge of the Scriptures is required to follow the chronological path in the panels. Time gaps between particular scenes are of varying length but the general rule is unsurprisingly *synecdochical* – only the most salient events have been chosen for presentation. For the open altar, the climax coincides with the largest, central scene of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, above which two vertically arranged smaller scenes with the Assumption and Coronation of Mary lead the viewer's eyes to the glorious closure.

- E) Let us now make a big jump in time, to consider an important event from Christ's life, missing from Veit Stoss's altar, namely his entry into Jerusalem. James Ensor, a Belgian painter, produced a large-scale drawing *Christ entering Jerusalem* (1885), yet our attention will go to a travesty of this subject titled *Christ entering Brussels in 1889* (Thompson, 2006, pp. 54-55, type 2). As an atheist, the painter allowed himself of a religious provocation. Jesus, riding a donkey, placed centrally but in a peculiar perspective that moves him to the background, is surrounded by a throng of ugly faces, many of them wearing strange carnivalesque masks. To the right, on the foregrounded stage some apparently important personages appear. Ensor himself impersonates Jesus and his usurping blessings, in Thompson's opinion meant to present him as a savior of Belgian art and popular culture, are supported by social and political slogans inscribed on banners. We can claim the narrative moment to be climactic – the last situation from Jesus' earthly life when he is received with honors by the volatile crowd that will soon demand his death. In fact, the above-mentioned podium with a military, a clergyman, a lay dignitary and a clown can be seen as an absurdly looking foreboding of Christ's judgement by the High Priests and Pilate. Like in example C above, Jesus' story has been recontextualized and placed in the setting co-temporary with the artist's life. We may wonder to what extent Ensor, simultaneously poking fun of Jesus entering the capital city and seeing himself in Christ's role, realized that – narratively speaking – the glory of this very moment is a sad forecast of the imminent tragedy on the cross.
- F) Christ's life remained a source of inspiration for the visual arts also in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1909, Emil (Hansen) Nolde, a German painter born into a deeply religious family, produced three religious compositions (type 5, a temporal set of separate images) titled *The Last Supper*, *Christ mocked* and *The descent of the Holy Ghost*. The middle work is our focus of attention (Thompson, 2006, pp. 100-101), featuring an incident that precedes the Way of the Cross. It is expressionistic in

style – painted in loud colors which Thompson describes as dissonant juxtapositions of yellow, orange, green and red hues. In Jesus' face and clothing the color green dominates, to distinguish him from five ugly scoffers – some soldiers, some elderly men. Thompson (p. 100) points out that “on the narrative plane,” the focal points are the sneering mouths of the grotesquely rendered personages baring their teeth as well as their eyes, piercing like daggers. We can add that from the temporal viewpoint, this highly dramatic “frozen moment” is a part of the climactic sequence of Jesus' Passion that ends in Crucifixion, which to the real witnesses of this event denoted a total catastrophe. The second climax of the empty tomb is still far removed in time.

- G) In 1984, another German artist, Georg Baselitz, creates one of his ‘reversed’ pictures, a deeply emotional and somber *Abgar's head* (Thompson, 2006, pp. 364–365). Seemingly, it is a composition that wavers between type 1 (non-narrative) and type 2 (with a ‘seed’ of narrativity present). It portrays an upturned face, executed predominantly in black, with one green eye and the other navy-blue and black, the mouth half-red, half-green. Yet, the pinkish crown of thorns above the eyes points unequivocally to the image of Christ. As such, it locates us in the midst of the Passion, similarly to F above. However, the paratextual information contained in the title directs us to an apocryphal legend, summarized by Thompson to help the viewers not acquainted with its content. The pre-text, then, is a story of King Abgar from Edessa (Mesopotamia), who – tormented by an illness – sends a letter to Jesus, imploring him to restore his health. The event happens shortly before Jesus' entering Jerusalem. Jesus dictates a letter to the King's scribe, foretelling his own death and resurrection. At the same time, he removes sweat from his face, which becomes imprinted on a piece of cloth and taken to Abgar as a “picture not made by a human hand.” Later, it will pass in history as the Holy Face of Edessa. As a result, this seemingly static portrait of a suffering human being triggers two distinct yet interwoven narratives. Hence, the degree of *storification* it contains is quite high.

**Figure 1. The Ramayana scene. Batu Caves**

Phot. by the author

- H) We now move to an example of Eastern modern popular art. The eponymous Rāmāyana Cave (in the Batu Caves complex near Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) houses a sculptured reflection on one of the major epics of Hinduism, composed in Sanskrit between 8<sup>th</sup> BCE and 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. The narration covers the ups and downs in the life of a legendary Prince Rama from the city of Ayodhya and his beloved wife Sita, the Princess of Janakpur. With time, the figure of Rama, an exemplar of a brave and virtuous ruler and husband, became deified. The colorfully illuminated, realistically rendered story (type 6 – a temporal series in a continuous sequence that resembles a cinematic mode, with particular scenes acting as film stills, Figure 1) has been exquisitely located in a natural limestone cave, within the complex of a well-known Tamil Hindu shrine dedicated to the Lord Murugan. Labels in Tamil and English aid visitors, especially

the non-Hindu tourists, to identify particular events from a long and involved storyline, but some familiarity with the underlying literary-moralizing text conditions a proper flow of narration. The pre-text belongs to the genre of *Itihasa*, a story of past events combined with ethical instructions on how to live according to the ideals set for particular social positions. It is thus a regular epic, with elements of philosophical and religious teachings (cf. *Ramayana*, IS). The story has some climactic moments, like the exile of Rama to the forest for 14 years, or winning his wife's hand by stringing a famous bow. The abduction of Sita by Ravana, the King of Demons, a catastrophic episode, sets in motion the successful war waged by Rama and his brother Lakshmana against Ravana. Hanuman, the Monkey-Hero, also deified, plays a prominent role in saving Sita, so the presence of his huge sculpted figure placed at the entrance to the cave can be seen as one of the "seeds" of the narration that develops inside. The popular art aesthetics of this sculpted series, enriched with the mysterious backdrop of the cave formations and of the surrounding darkness, calls to life an exotic tourist attraction and a *religious and cultural landscape* fit for the taste of worshippers.

### Pictorial narration to literary texts

If it is true that without the familiarity with Greek and Roman mythology, the Bible and Shakespeare's oeuvre, the reception of British literature and culture would be severely impaired, then the image below will certainly corroborate this claim.

- 1) In 1885, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, a renowned Dutch painter who had moved to Great Britain, created the composition *The meeting of Antony and Cleopatra* (private collection; Figure 2, *The meeting of Antony and Cleopatra*, IS) inspired by a well-known excerpt from Shakespeare's Roman tragedy *Anthony and Cleopatra* (Act I. Scene II, cf. Shakespeare, 1947, p. 934). The first lines set the framework for the painting: "The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne, / Burnt



on the water [...]". The image features a pre-arranged meeting of Cleopatra VII, the last queen of the Hellenistic Egypt (ruling 51–30 BC), with the Roman general Marcus Antonius, known to the readers from Shakespeare's earlier drama *Julius Caesar*. The great playwright, in turn, had drawn from Plutarch's description of Cleopatra's barge. The painting is primarily a portraiture of the woman famous for her beauty and the splendor that surrounded her:

For her own person,  
It beggar'd all description: she did lie  
In her pavilion [...]  
Over-picturing that Venus where we see  
The fancy outwork nature.

**Figure 2. Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema – *The Meeting of Antony and Cleopatra***



Source: [meisterdrucke.uk/the-art-prints/Lawrence-Alma-Tadema/30809/the-Meeting-of-Antony-and-Cleopatra](https://meisterdrucke.uk/the-art-prints/Lawrence-Alma-Tadema/30809/the-Meeting-of-Antony-and-Cleopatra). Accessed 17 March 2023

- J) Yet, the painting is not a faithful rendition of the play, according to which Antony, enthroned, is waiting for Cleopatra in a market-place. Instead, the artist shows him standing on a boat and peeping into the pavilion with great curiosity. In this way a narrative trigger has been added to the otherwise static scene, which without Antony's presence would qualify as type 1 rather than 2. We face an exposition and the climax following in close succession – the moment that will ignite one of the most ardent romances in history and one of the most tragic, ending in an ultimate catastrophe – the suicidal death of both lovers in 30 BC. A critical commentary appended to this work, Oriental in style and very much to the liking of Victorian audiences, signals some cues of the future sad development of the story: “signs of decay” – the petals fallen from the garland and the skin of a leopard – “a useless remnant of the noble wildcat.” Hence, an “unhappy ending” is already indirectly inscribed into this apparently quiet scene, with Cleopatra reclining dreamily inside her floating shelter.
- K) The last image to be examined transports us to New York of the 1920<sup>s</sup>. In 1920, William Carlos Williams, excited by the view of a fire engine passing him at high speed on 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, on the spur of the moment composes his “imagistic” 31-word-long poem *The great figure* (Williams, IS):

Among the rain  
 and lights  
 I saw the figure 5  
 in gold  
 on a red  
 firetruck  
 moving  
 tense  
 unheeded  
 to gong clangs  
 siren howls  
 and wheels rumbling  
 through the dark city.

**Figure 3.** Charles Demuth. *I saw the figure 5 in gold*, 1928



Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I\\_Saw\\_the\\_Figure\\_5\\_in\\_Gold](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Saw_the_Figure_5_in_Gold).

Accessed 21 April 2021

Eight years later, the American painter Charles Demuth, inspired by the poem, composes a Precisionist painting entitled *I saw the figure 5 in gold* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Figure 3), a direct citation from its primary source. The scene presented to us is a nocturnal cityscape, with high-rise buildings on both sides and street lamps. Precisionism was a combination of Cubism with Futurism and such is this picture. Its protagonist is not an animate being, like in all the previous examples, but the rushing fire engine, geometrically rendered. The painter recreates the kinesthetic perception of this event in a masterly way – the number five is repeated four times in diminishing sizes, to show the back of the truck disappearing quickly in the tunnel of the street. Judith H. Dobrzynski summarized the image's message as follows: "It's a witty homage to his close friend, the poet William Carlos

Williams, and a *transliteration into paint* of his poem (*I saw the figure 5 in gold*, IS, emphasis mine). The italicized phrase refers metaphorically to *ekphrasis* and to its superordinate term *transmediation*. The painting instantiates type 2, for its inner dynamics makes us speculate about the development of this action – a fire brigade in a hurry to save human lives, although the pre-text itself is descriptive and non-anecdotal, as several non-epic poems tend to be.

With this selection of ten works of the pictorial arts that comment ekphrastically on their verbal sources, each one in its own distinct way, it is time to move to the last query about the make-up of the text worlds thus projected.

## The construction of visual-conceptual text worlds as a transmedial operation

I cannot think of a better way to start this section than to quote Joan Miró: “Painting must be fertile. It must give birth to a world... It must fertilize the imagination” (*Top 25 quotes...*, IS). In Miró’s words I find support for my own initial claim (Section 2) that text worlds are transmedial phenomena in the ‘narrow’ sense, i.e. they are projected by all kinds of media, including the visual arts. The problem lies only in the specificity of their construction by the receiver, which for all the works analyzed above turns out to be transmedial also in the second, ‘broad’ sense of *transmediation (remediation)* – a transformative crossing of the boundaries between media/modes. The commentaries on the visual works A–J above clearly demonstrate that in the case of secondary narratives, the role played by the primary stories, their underlying verbal texts, is essential.

A prototypical order in which the beholders construct a visual-conceptual world for ekphrastic picturing is as follows. The initial trigger is the *paratextual information*<sup>15</sup> contained in the title that streamlines the viewers’ expectations

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<sup>15</sup> It should be borne in mind that titles of artworks, more often than not, come not from their creators but from art collectors, museum curators, art dealers, sometimes even artists’ friends, etc.

and directs them to the source message. Next, this *verbal pre-text* should help the viewers to recreate the initial text world called to life by its author. This *primary text world* will, subsequently, guide the viewers in their interpretation of a visual work and in the construction of the *secondary text world* that will overlap to a certain degree with the ideas formed on the basis of the verbal text. The two cognitive operations will ultimately coincide, so that the ultimate product emerges as a cognitive blend, a *transmedial visual-conceptual world*.

The things are not that smooth in all situations, however, so at this point let us group the visual works we described in 4.1. into two distinct categories.

- A) Type 2, a *single monochronic picture with 'seeds' of temporality and narrativity*, is well-exemplified in our material (A, B, E, F, G, I, J), but it should be remembered that from a narrative viewpoint, it is the most controversial group of works. Enlarging on my previous proposals (Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2019), which stand in agreement with Speidel's (2013, 2018) extensive argumentation on this subject, I have assumed that all these works are endowed with a narrative potential. Yet, the narration in them is only *implied*, not shown in a direct way as it happens in the pre-texts that underlie them. Although they all possess *narrative triggers* (Lessing's "fertile" or "frozen moments"), from a formal viewpoint they are deficient, which does not allow them to become a basis for the construction of a full text world. Having in mind the list of the *building blocks* necessary to create a possible world, we can notice that the works in this group are *skeletal* – they do not show all the possible individuals that inhabit the primary text world, neither can they illustrate all the configurations among the denizens of this world and the ensuing states of affairs, for the simple reason that they present to us only one stage of this world.

They also lack a history, for the timeline is non-existent in them, only alluded to. If the measure of being a full-blown world is the possession of a fabula/plot, then they fail in this respect for the fabula implied is not the fabula presented. Example B constitutes the most extreme case – the heroine of the picture is an anonymous

person and almost all the protagonists of the primary narrative are missing, unless we count the decapitated Orpheus as somehow present in the visual world. What's more, the moment of action marks its very closure and the entire *narrative arc* is recoverable only on the basis of the myth. Despite its considerable emotional load, the visual text world comes out as a *truncated world*, for which reason I postulate that narrative images of Types 2 and 3 endowed with an *implied (folded) narration* (sometimes referred to as *minimal* or *micro-narration*) are capable by themselves of projecting only *scenes*, the smallest units of *worldness*, close to a single state of affairs.

Example E, in addition, violates one of conditions imposed on narrativity by Toolan, namely it does not feature any "sentient being" as an agent, for its protagonist is a machine, one of greatest fascinations of Futurists.

- B) In contrast, Types 4 (C, D), 5 (F, if three works are considered as a unity) and 6 (H), that is *temporal sequences, sets and series*, respectively, fare much better in their world-building potential. They depict a progressive increase in the number of individuals, configurations and states of affairs. Even more importantly, they boast an in-built storyline, albeit rather gappy in sequences and sets. While visual temporal sets and sequences project only *small worlds (subworlds)*, the *Rāmāyana* series comes closest to evoking a *bigger visual-conceptual subworld*, although still only a selection of the events drawn from the very rich primary storyworld.

The construal of the text world for a visual artwork that possesses its underlying verbal source is a complex process. The pictorial representation alone is not enough to project the world intended by its author. In this sense the construction of such secondary text worlds, obligatorily conditioned by their verbal substratum, turns *ekphrastic visual-conceptual worlds* into genuinely *transmedial artefacts* – a joint enterprise between the verbal and the pictorial medium. To what extent such remediation of a text world based on the verbal source into a visual target world results in an amelioration or

deterioration of the original is an involved issue that lies beyond the scope of our discussion.

It should be realized that viewers will build their transmedial worlds depending on their individual degree of familiarity with the primary narrative, their individual cultural encyclopedia and artistic literacy. Some of our examples, like C and E, call for the creation of a *hybrid text world*, half-fictional and half-real, in which the source message has been recontextualized to fit into the actual world of the painter. Such recontextualizations may become parodistic and grotesque, like in Beckmann's or Ensor's travesties, but do not necessarily have to be ironical or absurd.

In any case, such transmediations emphatically point to the fact that we often need a larger modelling unit, a *discourse world*, to describe the complexity of interpretative operations performed by the viewers. This time, they will bring into the reconstruction of the fictional primary (verbal) and secondary (visual) text worlds their own *extra-textual* knowledge of the actual world in its inexhaustible richness and variability, in which cultural frames will play a fundamental role. It is in this sense that the viewers, with their imagination fertilized by both texts will become also "explorers who, in turn, become world-builders" (Boni, 2017, p. 10).

## Conclusions

This short excursion into the intricacies of transmedial operations between two groups of semiotic artefacts – literary and visual artworks – opens only a small window on the vastness of the topic. In particular, the issue of the creation, remediation and recreation of text worlds that simultaneously belong to two distinct artistic media/modes is open to further research. Both storyworlds in literary creations and the issue of narrativity in visual art boast an extensive scholarly coverage – not so the ekphrastic text- and discourse worlds whose source lies in language and target in pictorial renderings.

My paper argues for the transmedial character of such text worlds on the narrow and broad approach to transmediality. As to the former, all semiotic

systems seem capable of calling to life imaginary worlds, whether totally fictitious or hybrid (real-fictional); as to the latter, the polysemiotic narratives, like the combination of the verbal with the visual storytelling, rely on complicated crossings of the boundaries between the relevant media, modes and accompanying perceptual modalities.

The text worlds of so-called history paintings and sculptures briefly analyzed in the preceding sections emerge as cognitive blends of the primary worlds projected by their verbal pre-texts with the secondary visual-conceptual worlds created by their spectators. They become also automatically expandable into discourse worlds whenever the interpretative practices of the viewers draw on their individual encyclopedic knowledge of the actual world, their ability to travel across various collectively constructed cultural frames and their openness to distinct artistic sensibilities.

Our discussion has been limited to the formation of two categories of *worldness* in picturing, namely:

- 1) *scenes*, evoked by single monochronic images endowed with narrative seeds/triggers;
- 2) *small worlds/subworlds*, evoked by temporal sequences, sets and series.

Both these world-forming types build only fragments of full-blown visual text worlds, rather infrequent in the pictorial arts and realized as complex networks of numerous images related by several common motifs and subjects (like Chagall's entire oeuvre, cf. Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2019).

Temporality has often been presented as a foundational characteristic of a storyworld in literature. However, it cannot be identified with the text world itself, which requires a whole set of building blocks to achieve its worldness. Apart from a timeline, these are: a set of the world's inhabitants, with all their properties, propositional attitudes cherished, feelings and emotions plus the configurations (states of affairs) into which they enter. The pictorial scenes, sequences, sets and series form incrementally growing units of worldness, with scenes being the most deficient in terms of the required



constituents and lacking a full narrative arc, with only an irregular selection of moments on which to deploy a proper chronology of events.

A problem to be considered in further research is the manner of constructing visual-conceptual text worlds for secondary narrativity in non-ideal situations in which the beholder has no clear memory of or no familiarity whatsoever with the verbal pre-text of the visual work under scrutiny. Human imagination is capable of overcoming such hindrances but the risk of under- or over-interpretation when no recourse to the verbal substratum can be made appears to be considerable. Marta Boni (2017, p. 10), in her discussion of transmedia worlds, refers to them as “immersive realms.” This also holds true of the process of ‘reading’ images and entering the worlds they open to us. The degree of immersion depends, nonetheless, on several factors – the structure of the text worlds or their subparts, recollection or knowledge of pre-texts (for secondary, tertiary, etc. narratives), the scope and character of individual imagination, the cultural background and, last but not least, the aesthetic competence of the beholder.

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