1. Narrative, Media, and Modes

**Academic disciplines**, unlike people, usually don’t have birthdays, but if one could be given to narratology, it would fall on the publication date of issue 8 of the French journal *Communications* in 1966. The issue contained articles by Claude Bremond, Gérard Genette, A. J. Greimas, Tzvetan Todorov, and Roland Barthes. (One of Genette’s favorite stories is that Barthes’s invitation to contribute to this issue was the incentive that resulted in his lifelong dedication to narrative.) In his contribution, “L’Analyse structurale du récit,” Barthes wrote:

The narratives of the world are numberless... Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting (think of Carpaccio’s Saint Ursula), stained glass window, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every place, in every age, in every society... Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (1977, 79)

Two years earlier, in the same journal, Claude Bremond had made a similar point:

[Story] is independent of the techniques that bear it along. It may be transposed from one to another medium without losing its essential
properties: the subject of a story may serve as argument for a ballet, that of a novel can be transposed to stage or screen, one can recount in words a film to someone who has not seen it. These are words we read, images we see, gestures we decipher, but through them, it is a story that we follow; and it could be the same story.¹

As these two quotes demonstrate, narratology was conceived by two of its founding fathers as a field of study that transcends discipline and media. But the next thirty years would take it in another direction: under the influence of Genette, it developed as a project almost exclusively concerned with written literary fiction. The purpose of the present book is to correct this trend and to reposition the study of narrative on the transmedial and transdisciplinary track. But in the meantime, hopefully, our understanding of media has grown more sophisticated. We no longer believe that all media offer the same narrative resources and that all stories can be represented in media as different as literature, ballet, painting, and music. Nor do we believe that the migration of a story from one medium to another does not present cognitive consequences. A core of meaning may travel across media, but its narrative potential will be filled out, actualized differently when it reaches a new medium. When it comes to narrative abilities, media are not equally gifted; some are born storytellers, others suffer from serious handicaps. The concept of narrative offers a common denominator that allows a better apprehension of the strengths and limitations in the representational power of individual media. Conversely, the study of the realization of narrative meaning in various media provides an opportunity for a critical reexamination and expansion of the analytical vocabulary of narratology. The study of narrative across media is consequently beneficial to both media studies and narratology.

In this chapter I propose to explore the theoretical foundations of transmedial narratology in both their negative and positive components. The negative component describes the positions that are incompatible with transmedial narratology, while the positive component explores the concepts of narrative and of medium that are presupposed by the project.

**Positions Hostile to Transmedial Narratology**

The main obstacle to the transmedial study of narrative is a position that comes from within narratology itself, namely, what I call the language-based, or rather, speech-act approach to narrative. This position (represented by Prince, Genette, and Chatman) defines narrative as an act of storytelling addressed by a narrator to a narratee, or as the recounting by a narrator of a sequence of past events. In these definitions, the condition for being a narrative is the occurrence of the speech act of telling a story by an agent called a narrator. The semantic content of this speech act must be events that already occurred, either actually or in make-believe. This conception of narrative as a language-based phenomenon not only rejects the possibility of visual or musical forms of narrative; it also excludes texts with a language track that do not use an overt narrator, or texts that do not represent events retrospectively. For instance, Gerald Prince writes in the first edition of his *Dictionary of Narratology*: “A dramatic performance representing many fascinating events does not constitute a narrative, since these events, rather than being recounted, occur directly on stage” (1987, 58).

According to this view (which Prince abandons in the second edition of the *Dictionary*), the transmedial study of narrative is limited to the distinction between oral storytelling and written literary narrative. Some theorists endorse a milder form of this position that uses the speech-act based definition as a metaphorical model for the analysis of nonverbal texts. In contrast to the radical approach, the mild version accepts the possibility of visual or dramatic narratives, but only if these texts can be fitted into the verbal mold. This approach would analyze drama and movies as the utterance of a narratorial figure, even when the film or the play does not make use of voice-over narration. Its advocates include Christian Metz, Seymour Chatman, François Jost, and André Gaudrault, and its opponents David Bordwell.

Another position incompatible with the study of narrative across media is the doctrine of radical media relativism. A particularly forceful example of this position is Umberto Eco's claim that “there is no relationship at all between his book, *The Name of the Rose*, and Jean-Jacques Annaud’s film adaptation of it: they simply share the same name” (Elliott 2004, 221). Radical relativism is latent among theoreticians influenced by doctrines and schools that view the idea of a separation of form and content as heretical, such as Saussurian linguistics, deconstruction, and New Criticism. These theoreticians regard media as self-contained systems of signs, and their resources as incommensurable with the resources of other media. Just as two
languages cannot convey the same semantic values under the doctrine of linguistic relativism, two different media cannot convey similar meanings or use similar devices under the doctrine of medial relativism. This view comes in a strong and a weak form. In the strong form, the signified cannot be separated from the signifier. Since a transmedial concept of narrative presupposes a distinction between narrative meaning and the signs that encode it, the strong interpretation kills the egg the project of transmedial narratology. In its weaker form, medial relativism accepts common meanings but insists on the uniqueness of the expressive resources of each medium, thereby forcing the theorist to rebuild the analytical toolbox of narratology from scratch for every new medium. This position ignores the productivity of transmedial borrowings in narratology: for instance, theme comes from music, perspective from painting, and camera-eye narration from the cinema. In some cases borrowing seems inevitable: for instance when a medium tries to imitate the effects of another medium, or when two media share a common channel. The alternative to medial relativism is to recognize that theoretical concepts can be either medium-specific or applicable to several media. Examples of narratological concepts that apply across media are the distinction story/discourse, as well as the notions of character, event, and fictional world. On the other hand, montage is a technical concept native to film; but literary critics have borrowed it when language-based narrative began to imitate some of the techniques of the cinema.

Defining Narrative

In the past ten years or so, the term “narrative” has enjoyed a popularity that has seriously diluted its meaning. Jerome Bruner speaks of narratives of identity, Jean-François Lyotard of the “Grand Narratives” of a capitalized History, Abbe Don of the narratives of interface in computer software, and everybody speaks of cultural narratives, meaning by this not a heritage of traditional stories but the collective values that define a culture, such as belief in free speech in Western societies, or latent stereotypes and prejudices, such as narratives of race, class, and gender. The dissolution of “narrative” into “belief,” “value,” “experience,” “interpretation,” or simply “content” can only be prevented by a definition that stresses precise semantic features, such as action, temporality, causality, and world-construction. A transmedial definition of narrative requires a broadening of the concept beyond the verbal, but this broadening should be compensated by a semantic narrowing down, otherwise all texts of all media will end up as narratives.2

As I have already mentioned, the main problem facing the transmedial study of narrative is to find an alternative to the language-based definitions that are common fare in classical narratology. As a point of departure (to be modified later) I will use a definition proposed by H. Porter Abbott. Representing a common view among narratologists, Abbott reserves the term “narrative” for the combination of story and discourse and defines its two components as follows: “story is an event or sequence of events (the action), and narrative discourse is those events as represented” (2002, 16). Narrative, in this view, is the textual actualization of story, while story is narrative in a virtual form. If we conceive representation as medium-free, this definition does not limit narrativity to verbal texts nor to narratorial speech acts. But the two components of narrative play asymmetrical roles, since discourse is defined in terms of its ability to represent that which constitutes story. This means that only story can be defined in autonomous terms. As we have seen, Abbott regards stories as sequences of events, but this characterization cursorially equates stories with events, when events are in fact the raw material out of which stories are made. So what is story if it is not a type of thing found in the world,3 as existents and events are, nor a textual representation of this type of thing (as discourse is)?

Story, like narrative discourse, is a representation, but unlike discourse it is not a representation encoded in material signs. Story is a mental image, a cognitive construct that concerns certain types of entities and relations between these entities. Narrative may be a combination of story and discourse, but it is its ability to evoke stories to the mind that distinguishes narrative discourse from other text types.

Following a proposal by Fotis Jannidis, I suggest regarding the set of all narratives as fuzzy, and narrativity (or “storiness”) as a scalar property rather than as a rigidly binary feature that divides mental representations into stories and nonstories. In a scalar conception of narrativity, definition becomes an open series of concentric circles that spell increasingly narrow conditions and that presuppose previously stated items, as we move from the outer to the inner circles, and from the marginal cases to the prototypes. The proposal below
organizes the conditions of narrativity into three semantic and one formal and pragmatic dimensions.

**Spatial dimension**
1. Narrative must be about a world populated by individuated existents.

**Temporal dimension**
2. This world must be situated in time and undergo significant transformations.
3. The transformations must be caused by nonhabitual physical events.

**Mental dimension**
4. Some of the participants in the events must be intelligent agents who have a mental life and react emotionally to the states of the world.
5. Some of the events must be purposeful actions by these agents, motivated by identifiable goals and plans.

**Formal and pragmatic dimension**
6. The sequence of events must form a unified causal chain and lead to closure.
7. The occurrence of at least some of the events must be asserted as fact for the story world.
8. The story must communicate something meaningful to the recipient.

Each of these conditions prevents a certain type of representation from forming the focus of interest, or macrostructure of a story (see list below). This does not mean that these representations cannot appear in a narrative text, but rather that they cannot, all by themselves, support its narrativity.

1. Eliminates representations of abstract entities and entire classes of concrete objects, scenarios involving “the human race,” “reason,” “the State,” “atoms,” “the brain,” etc.
2. Eliminates static descriptions.
3. Eliminates enumerations of repetitive events and changes caused by natural evolution (such as aging).
4. Eliminates one of a kind scenarios involving only natural forces and nonintelligent participants (weather reports, accounts of cosmic events).
5. (together with 3) Eliminates representations consisting exclusively of mental events (interior monologue fiction).
6. Eliminates lists of causally unconnected events, such as chronicles and diaries, as well as reports of problem-solving actions that stop before an outcome is reached.
7. Eliminates instructions, advice, hypotheses, and counterfactual statements.
8. Eliminates bad stories. This is the most controversial condition in the list, because it straddles the borderline between definition and poetics, and because it needs to be complemented by a full theory of the different ways in which narrative can achieve significance. If we accept 8 as part of the definition, then narrativity is not an intrinsic property of the text, but rather a dimension relative to the context and to the interests of the participants. A sequence of events like “Mary was poor, then Mary won the lottery, then Mary was rich” would not make the grade as the content of fictional story, but it becomes very tellable if it is presented as true fact and concerns an acquaintance of the listener.

The eight conditions listed above offer a toolkit for do-it-yourself definitions. When they are put to the question “Is this text a narrative?” some people will be satisfied with conditions 1 through 3 and will classify a text about evolution or the Big Bang as a story, while others will insist that narrative must be about human experience and will consider (4) and (5) obligatory. Some people will regard a chronicle listing a series of independent events with the same participant as a narrative while others will insist on (6). Those who accept recipes as narratives consider (3) and (7) optional; and there are scholars who draw the line below (8) (for instance, Bruner 1991, who claims that a story must have a point), while others may think that a pointless utterance or a boring account of events can still display a narrative structure (this is my own inclination: I regard the “Mary” story quoted above as narrative regardless of context). But if people differ in opinion as to where to draw the line, they basically agree about what requirements are relevant to narrativity and about their importance relative to each other. If we ask “Is Finnegans Wake more narrative than Little Red Riding Hood?” we will get much broader agreement than if we ask (mindless of the incompatibility of a yes-no question with a fuzzy set) “Is Finnegans Wake a narrative?”

Through its multiple conditions organized into distinct areas,
the above definition not only provides criteria for determining a text's degree of narrativity, it also suggests a basis for a semantic typology of narrative texts. While degree of narrativity depends on how many of the conditions are fulfilled, typology depends on the relative prominence of the four dimensions. The Grand Narratives of Lyotard breach the top condition, because they do not concern individuals and do not create a concrete world, while postmodern novels are often low in narrativity because they do not allow readers to reconstruct the network of mental representations that motivates the actions of characters and binds the events into an intelligible and determinate sequence. Through a structure that I call "proliferating narrativity" (Ryan 1992, 373–74), contemporary fiction (especially magical realism and postcolonial novels) may also shift condition (6) from the macro to the micro level, becoming a collection of little stories loosely connected through common participants.

Among narratives that fully satisfy all the conditions, some emphasize the spatial dimension, others the temporal, and still others the mental. With their detailed construction of an imaginary world, science fiction and fantasy locate interest in the spatial dimension, and these genres often treat the plot as a mere discovery path across the fictional world. The demand for action and changes of state that make up the temporal dimension is the dominant feature of thrillers and adventure stories, while the mental dimension, by insisting on the motivations and emotions of characters, rules over tragedy, sentimental romances, detective stories, comedies of errors, and, in the nonfictional domain, narratives of personal experience. In contrast to modernist novels that represent the mind for its own sake, these narrative genres evoke mental processes as a way to explain the behavior of characters.

The definition proposed above presents narrative as a type of text able to evoke a certain type of image in the mind of a cognizing subject. But it does not take a text to inspire the construction of such an image: we may construe stories as a response to life itself, and keep them in memory until we get an opportunity to tell them to an audience. According to cognitive scientists (for instance, Schank and Abelson), most if not all memories are indeed stored in the form of stories. I am not saying that life "is" a narrative, but it can in certain circumstances suggest a quality that we may call "narrativity." The property of "being a narrative" can be predicated of any semi-

otic object produced with the intent to evoke a story to the mind of the audience. To be more precise, it is the receiver's recognition of this intent that leads to the judgment: this text is a narrative, though we can never be sure that sender and receiver have the same story in mind. "Having narrativity," on the other hand, means being able to evoke such a script, whether or not there is a text, and if there is one, whether or not the author intended to convey a specific story. The concept of "having narrativity," as opposed to "being a narrative," offers a fitting description of the particular narrative quality of music, which remains a theoretical enigma to many scholars (see Nattiez 1990).

My endorsement of a cognitively rather than verbally based definition of narrative should not be taken as an unconditional adherence to a position that has recently taken cognitive science, the social sciences, and the humanities by storm. This position proclaims the fundamentally narrative nature of thought, knowledge and memory, and it equates our never-ending efforts to make sense of the world and of our lives with a process of "emplotting" or "storying." Without denying that storytelling (to oneself or to others) is an efficient way to make life and the world more intelligible, and that the formation of narrative scripts plays an important role in mental life, I believe that there are sense-making operations that do not take narrative form: capturing the laws of physics through an equation such as $E = MC^2$ fails, for instance, the top conditions of my definition, since it produces a timeless law rather than a historical scenario involving particular individuals and one-of-a-kind transformations. Sense making can also result from the drawing of analogies and contrasts between phenomena, rather than from the chronological and causal ordering of individual events. The mental construct that I regard as constitutive of narrative admittedly puts into play cognitive processes that we also use in everyday life, such as focusing thought on certain objects cut out from the flux of perception, a process that also enables us to distinguish discrete states and events; inferring causal relations between these states and events; thinking of events as situated in time; and reconstructing the content of other peoples' minds as an explanation of their behavior. We resort to these mental operations when we drive a nail with a hammer (acting on the basis of inferred causal relations), when we plan our schedules (temporal ordering), when we make grocery lists (focusing on certain items selected from the
wide range of available products), and when we participate in social interaction, especially conversation (reading other people’s minds). The activation of one or the other of these cognitive processes is not sufficient to produce narratives, because they can operate independently of each other, as my examples suggest. It is only when they all come together and form a reasonably stable mental image that they generate representations that fulfill all the conditions of my definition. Narratives are more than temporary drafts in the theater of the mind, more than transitory firings of neurons in the brain along individual pathways; they are solidified, conscious representations produced by the convergence of many different mental processes that operate both within and outside stories.

**Narrative Modes**

If narratology is to expand into a medium-free theory, the first step to be taken is to recognize other narrative modes than the standard way of evoking narrative scripts: telling somebody else that something happened. I do not take this term of mode in the traditional narratological sense defined by Genette (1972) (who uses it as a rather vague umbrella term for concepts such as frequency, direct and indirect discourse, perspective, and focalization), but in a personal sense, to mean a distinct way to bring to mind the cognitive construct that defines narrativity. The best way to explain this concept of modality is through a list of concrete examples. This list, which I regard as open-ended, is organized for convenience’s sake into ten binary pairs and one triple. In each group the left-hand term can be regarded as the unmarked case, because the texts that present this feature will be much more widely accepted as narrative than the texts that implement the right-hand category. The conjunction of all the left-side categories yields the prototypical narrative situation, while the actualization of one (or more) of the right-hand categories leads to marginal forms. If the set of all narratives were the bird family, the left-hand elements would correspond to robins and nightingales, its most exemplary members, and the right-hand terms to penguins, kiwis, and ostriches. The terms of the oppositions described below are not freely combinable and I do not claim that my “system” can generate $2^{10} \times 3$ types of narrative. Some modes presuppose or exclude others, and the list could be organized differently.

**External/Internal.** In the external mode, narrative meaning is encoded in material signs; it is textualized. In the internal mode, it does not involve a textualization: we can tell ourselves stories in the privacy of our minds (see Jahn 2003).

**Fictional/Nonfictional.** Of all the pairs of modes listed here, this is the most widely recognized and the most extensively theorized, but also the hardest to define. I will not discuss it here, since it forms the subject matter of chapter 2. I do not personally regard fiction as a more prototypical form of narrative than nonfiction, but some scholars do (Wolf, Fludernik, Jannidis), presumably because of the greater variety of its discourse. Moreover, as we will see in chapter 2, some scholars deny the possibility of a nonfictional form of narration.

**Representational/Simulative.** This distinction is based on the idea that a given process may be actualized in many different ways, or that a given action may have many different consequences depending on the global state of the world. A representation is an image of one of these possibilities, while a simulation is a productive engine that generates many different courses of events through a combination of fixed and variable parameters. A narrative mode specific to digital media, simulation is found in story-generating programs and in computer games. (Simulation will be further discussed in chapter 8.)

**Diegetic/Mimetic.** An expansion of the representational category of the preceding pair, this distinction goes back to Plato. A diegetic narration is the verbal storytelling act of a narrator. As the definition indicates, diegetic narration presupposes language, either oral or written; it is therefore the mode typical of the novel and of oral storytelling. A mimetic narration is an act of showing, a visual or acoustic display. In forming a narrative interpretation the recipient works under the guidance of an authorial consciousness, but there is no narratorial figure. Mimetic narration is exemplified by all the dramatic arts: movies, theater, dance, and the opera. But each of these two modes can intrude into a narration dominated by the other. The dialogues of a novel are islands of mimetic narration, since in direct quote the voice of the narrator disappears behind the voice of the characters; and conversely, the phenomenon of voiced-over narration in cinema reintroduces a diegetic element in a basically mimetic medium.

**Autotelic/Utilitarian.** In the autotelic mode, the story is displayed for its own sake; in the utilitarian mode, it is subordinated
to another goal, such as making a point in a speech or sermon, explaining a situation through an example, or motivating people to adopt certain behaviors.

**Autonomous/Illustrative.** In the autonomous mode, the text transmits a story that is new to the receiver; this means that the logical armature of the story must be retrievable from the text. In the illustrative mode, the text retells and completes a story, relying on the receiver's previous knowledge of the plot. The illustrative mode is typical of pictorial narratives, for instance, medieval paintings of biblical scenes. Halfway between these two poles are texts that offer a new, significantly altered version of a familiar plot, such as a modern retelling of a classical myth.

**Scripted/Emergent.** In the scripted mode story and discourse are entirely determined by a permanently inscribed text. Examples include both print narratives and dramatic performance relying on memorized text. In the emergent mode, discourse, and at least some aspects of story, are created live through improvisation by the narrator (oral storytelling), by the actors (commedia dell'arte), by the recipient (see participatory), or through computer programming (see simulation).

**Receptive/Participatory.** In the receptive mode the recipient plays no active role in the events presented by the narrative nor in their presentation; she merely receives the account of a narrative action, imagining herself as an external witness. In the participatory mode (a subcategory of emergent), the performance of the recipient actualizes the narrative and completes it on the level of either discourse or story. In discourse-level participation (hypertext fiction), the recipient-participant determines the order of presentation of the text, while in story-level participation (pencil and paper role-playing games [Dungeons and Dragons], interactive drama, and computer games) she impersonates an active character who influences the evolution of the storyworld.

**Determinate/Indeterminate.** As the image of a world that undergoes metamorphoses, a story traces an arc, or a trajectory, that traverses many points in time. In the determinate mode the text specifies a sufficient number of points on the narrative arc to project a reasonably definite script. In the indeterminate mode, only one or two points are specified, and it is up to the interpreter to imagine one (or more) of the virtual curves that traverse these coordinates. The indeterminate mode is typical of narrative paintings that tell original stories through the representation of what Lessing calls a pregnant moment. The pregnant moment opens a small temporal window that lets the spectator imagine what immediately preceded and what will immediately follow the represented scene. But a full-blown story normally covers an extended stretch of time, and every spectator will probably imagine the remote past and the remote future in a different way.

**Retrospective/Simultaneous/Prospective.** In the retrospective mode, narrative recounts past events; in the simultaneous mode (TV and radio commentaries of live broadcasts), it recounts events almost as they happen; in the prospective (prophecies and political speeches), it focuses on future events. Setting events in what is from our historical point of view the future does not necessarily result in a prospective narrative: science fiction stories are usually told in the retrospective mode.

**Literal/Metaphorical.** What constitutes a literal or metaphorical narration depends on the particular definition given to narrative. While literal narration fully satisfies the definition, the metaphorical brand uses only some of its features. The degree of metaphoricity of a narrative thus depends on how many features are retained, and on how important they are to the definition. The great advantage of recognizing a metaphorical mode is that it enables narratology to acknowledge many of the contemporary extensions of the term "narrative" without sacrificing the precision of its core definition.

Here are some examples of what I consider metaphorical types of narrative. If we define narrative as the representation of a world populated by individuated characters, and if characters are intelligent agents, the following relaxations of the definitions should be regarded as metaphorical: scenarios about collective entities rather than individuals (for example, the "Grand Narratives" of Lyotard, as well as their heirs, the "narratives of class, gender and race" of contemporary cultural studies); narratives about entities deprived of consciousness (for example, Richard Dawkins's exposition of biology as the story of "selfish genes"); and dramatizations that attribute agency to abstract concepts (Hegel's "ruses of Reason").

If we want to stretch the metaphor to its limits, we can apply it to art forms deprived of semantic content, such as music and architecture. In the case of music, the metaphor can be invoked to analyze the structure of the work in terms of narrative effects or narrative
functions. Narrative terminology is indeed common in music theory: relations between chords are described as exposition, complication, and resolution. Given a specific exposition and complication, only certain chords will provide a satisfactory resolution. In this metaphorical interpretation, all music becomes narrative, while if we use an illustrative interpretation, narrativity is a feature that occurs in only some compositions—those that allude to a narrative through their title, such as the Don Quixote Suite, by Telemann, or the Sorcerer's Apprentice, by Paul Dukas. In the case of architecture, a metaphorical interpretation would draw an analogy between the temporality of plot and the experience of walking through a building. In a narratively conceived architecture, the visitor's discovery tour is plotted as a meaningful succession of events. This occurs in Baroque churches, where the visitor's tour is supposed to reenact the life of Christ.

Some of the modes listed above have strong affinities for certain media, while others can appear in several physical supports, but no mode is totally medium-independent. For instance, the distinction fictional-nonfictional appears in written and oral language, film, and television, but it is questionable in other media, as we will see in chapter 2. The diegetic mode presupposes language, illustrative occurs mainly in visual media, and the participatory mode is most common in digital environments, though not entirely limited to them. It is precisely this dependency of certain modes on certain media that makes the concept useful for transmedial narratology.

What Are Media?

The concept of medium is no less problematic than the concept of narrative. As Joshua Meyerowitz observes, "it is a glaring problem for media studies" that "we have no common understanding of what the subject matter of the field is" (1993, 55). This may seem a strange problem for the layman: don't we all instinctively know what media are? And yet, if we ask specialists of different disciplines to propose a list of media, we will receive a bewildering variety of answers. A sociologist or cultural critic will answer TV, radio, cinema, the Internet. An art critic may list music, painting, sculpture, literature, drama, the opera, photography, architecture. An artist's list would begin with clay, bronze, oil, watercolor, fabrics, and it may end with exotic items used in so-called mixed-media works, such as grasses, feathers, and beer cans. An information theorist or hist-
torian of writing will think of sound waves, papyrus scrolls, codex books, embossed surfaces (for Braille texts), and silicon chips. A philosopher of the phenomenologist school would divide media into visual, aural, verbal, and perhaps tactile, gustatory, and olfactory. In media theory, as in other fields, what constitutes an object of investigation depends on the purpose of the investigator.

These various answers reflect the ambiguity of the term. The entry for "medium" in Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (11th ed., 2003) includes, among other meanings, these two definitions: (1) a channel or system of communication, information, or entertainment; (2) material or technical means of artistic expression. Type 1 regards media as conduits, or methods of transmitting information; and type 2 regards them as languages. (I am borrowing these terms of comparison from Joshua Meyerowitz.) Media of type 1 include TV, radio, the Internet, the gramophone, the telephone—all distinct types of technologies—as well as cultural channels, such as books and newspapers. Media of type 2 would be language, sound, image, or more narrowly, paper, bronze, or the human body.

In the conduit, or transmissive conception of medium represented by type 1, ready-made messages are encoded in a particular way, sent over the channel, and decoded on the other end. Before they are encoded in the mode specific to the medium in sense 1, some of these messages are realized through a medium in sense 2. A painting must be done in oil before it can be digitized and sent over the Internet. A musical composition must be performed on instruments in order to be recorded and played on a gramophone. Medium in sense 1 thus involves the translation of objects supported by media in sense 2 into a secondary code.

Some media theorists (Ong 1982, 176) have objected to the transmissive conception of medium, arguing that it reduces them to hollow pipelines, through which information passes without being affected by the shape of the pipe. It is almost an axiom of contemporary media theory that the materiality of the medium—what we may call its affordances, or possibilities—matters for the type of meanings that can be encoded. On the other hand, if we regard meaning as inextricable from its medial support, medium-free definitions of narrative become untenable and we fall back into the doctrine of radical medial relativism. This doctrine, as we have seen, makes it illegitimate to compare messages embodied in different media and to view them as manifestations of a common
narrative structure. To maintain the possibility of studying narrative across media we must find a compromise between the hollow pipe interpretation and the unconditional rejection of the conduit metaphor. This means recognizing that the shape and size of the pipeline imposes conditions on what kind of stories can be transmitted, but also admitting that narrative messages possess a conceptual core which can be isolated from their material support.

Insofar as they present their own configuring properties, channel-type media can be simultaneously conduits and languages. Take, for instance, the case of television. As a transmissive medium it can play any kind of movie, but as a means of expression it possesses its own idiosyncrasies, which have led to the development of new forms of narrative, such as the soap opera or the reality show. Moreover, the experience of watching a movie is significantly different when it is shown on a small screen in the home and on a large screen in a dark theater that holds spectators prisoner for a couple of hours.

Media may or may not be conduits, but they must be languages to present interest for transmedial narratology. This leads to another question: what do these medium-specific languages consist of, and what kind of features distinguish them from each other? The answers of the imaginary informants quoted above suggest three possible approaches to media: semiotic, material/technological, and cultural.

**Media as Semiotic Phenomena**

The semiotic approach looks at the codes and sensory channels that support various media. It tends to distinguish three broad media families: verbal, visual, and aural. It is only our habit of not ranking cuisine and perfume among media—probably because they do not transmit the proper kind of information—that prevents this list from including olfactory and gustatory categories. The groupings yielded by the semiotic approach correspond broadly to art types, namely, literature, painting, and music, but the three classes extend beyond the aesthetic use of signs; language, for instance, has both literary and nonliterary uses; pictures can be artistic or utilitarian. In its narratological application, the semiotic approach investigates the narrative affordances and limitations of a given type of signs or stimuli. The following list of narrative can do and can’t do for language, static images, and instrumental music illustrates the scope and concerns of the semiotic approach. (Moving pictures without sound track can be considered a fourth semiotic type, but I leave it to the reader to figure out their narrative properties.)

**Language**

*Can easily do:* Represent temporality, change, causality, thought, and dialogue. Make determinate propositions by referring to specific objects and properties. Represent the difference between actuality and virtuality or counterfactuality. Evaluate what it narrates and pass judgments on characters.

*Can do only with difficulty:* Represent spatial relations and induce the reader to create a precise cognitive map of the storyworld.

*Cannot do:* Show what characters or setting look like; display beauty (language can only tell the reader that a character is beautiful; the reader cannot judge for herself and must believe the narrator). Represent continuous processes. (Language can tell us: Little Red Riding Hood took two hours to reach her grandmother’s house, but it cannot show her progression. It usually segments time into discrete moments.)

**Images**


Makes up for its limitations through these strategies: Use intertextual or intermedial reference through title to suggest narrative connection. Represent objects within the storyworld that bear verbal inscriptions. Use multiple frames or divide picture into distinct scenes to suggest passing of time, change, and causal relations between scenes. Use graphic conventions (thought bubbles) to suggest thoughts and other modes of nonfactuality.

**Music**

*Can easily do:* Capture flow of time in pure form. Suggest narrative pattern of exposition-complication-resolution through relations

Cannot do: Represent thought, dialogue, causality, virtuality. Single out distinct objects, characters, or events in a storyworld. Tell a specific story, since its stimuli have no fixed meaning.

Makes up for its limitations through these strategies: Use titles and subtitles to suggest a “narrative program.” Individuate characters though musical motifs or distinct instruments (Peter as the strings in Prokofiev’s Peter and the Wolf).

The relative narrative importance of the items on the “can do” and “can’t do” lists for the three semiotic types confirms Werner Wolf’s (2002) ranking of the three major media families, or art types, in this decreasing order of storytelling ability: verbal, visual, and musical. Whereas verbal signs can implement the strongest narrative modes—autonomous and determinate—pictures are either illustrative or indeterminate, and music is either illustrative or metaphorical. Because only language can explicatively the relations that turn individual events into a story, such as “x caused y” or “a did p because she wanted q,” it is the medium of choice of narrative. In pictures and music, motivations and causal relations can be only be suggested indirectly, and as Wolf observes, these media require a far more extensive gap-filling activity than verbal texts to be interpreted narratively, though they can usually be appreciated aesthetically without paying attention to their narrative message. It seems safe to assume that narrative competence developed concurrently, and in intimate relationship with language, a semiotic code that enables users to extend topics of communication to entities not situated in the immediate context, such as third parties and past events. If language is indeed the native tongue of narrative, the narrativity of pictures and music is not a feature original to these media but a relatively late attempt on their part to emulate the cognitive template that language activates so efficiently. The limited storytelling ability of pictures and music doesn’t mean, however, that they cannot make original contributions to the formation of narrative meaning. The affordances of language, pictures, and music complement each other, and when they are used together in multichannel media, each of them builds a different facet of the total imaginative experience: language through its logic and its ability to model the human mind, pictures through their im-

mersive spatiality, and music through its atmosphere-creating and emotional power.

Media as Technologies

Left by itself, the semiotic approach yields only broad families. To bring further refinement to media theory, we must ask about the raw materials (such as clay for pottery, stone for sculpture, the human body for dance, or the human vocal apparatus for music) and the technologies that support the various semiotic types. It is further necessary to distinguish technologies of pure reproduction, such as sound recording or xerox copying, from technologies that create new media objects and open new expressive possibilities. Only the latter present interest for transmedial narratology. Moreover, not all technologies that bring expressive diversity in a media family do so in a narratively significant way. In the sound category, for instance, diversity is created by the various musical instruments developed through the ages, but none of them has significantly increased the limited narrative potential of music. Much more consequential for narrative are the technologies that affect language-based and visual media. In the language category, these technologies correspond to the various ways to inscribe verbal signs (manuscript writing, print, and digital encoding), as well as to the various methods of encoding and transmitting spoken language (radio and telephone). In the visual domain, the most narratively significant technologies correspond to methods of capture, such as photography, film, and television. The digital encoding of images has also brought new expressive possibilities, but their narrative impact is questionable.

The technological approach not only refines semiotic categories; it also cuts across them and reorganizes media into different families: media of long-distance communication, media of the moving image, and above all, “old media” versus “new media.” This label of “new media” may be used in a narrow sense to cover media or submedia that only perform through the computer (VR installations, video games, e-mail, Internet chat, hypertext), and in a wide sense, to describe media that use digital technology as mode of production but end up being taken out of the computer (digital photography, digital recordings, and films with computer-generated scenes). Technology also regroups semiotic families into multiple-channel media (or “multimedia media”) that affect several senses.
The classic example of an approach to transmedial narratology based on technological categories is the work of Walter Ong on the influence of writing on narrative form. The enormous impact of writing technology on thought, and, by extension, on narrative, can be captured in one brief formula: a permanent inscription serves as a prosthetic memory. In oral cultures, narrative was used as a mnemonic device for the transmission of knowledge; its memorization was facilitated by prosodic features, fixed formulae, and standardized images; and the limitations of memory were compensated by a relatively free episodic structure which allowed, within reasonable limits, permutation of its units. The development of manuscript writing transformed this open epic structure into the tightly knotted dramatic plot described in Aristotle’s Poetics. Though drama was meant for oral performance, Ong regards it as the first narrative form controlled by writing. With its organization of events into an exposition, complication, crisis, and resolution, its symmetrical, carefully controlled rise and fall of tension (known as the Freytag triangle), and its climactic reversal of situation at the apex of the triangle, the dramatic plot exploits the significance of the sequential ordering of events to an extent that would not be possible in oral improvisation. But as Ong observes, the chirographic age remained a basically oral culture, and its written texts were mainly used for reading aloud or memorization. Its longer narratives retained consequently the episodic structure and the prosodic features of ancient oral epics.

The invention of print, by encouraging silent reading, made mnemonic features obsolete and led to the birth of the novel, a relatively unconstrained narrative form that took plot to unprecedented levels of complexity: framing, embedding, branching, digressions, disruptions of temporal sequence, and multiple plot lines. But it wasn’t until the nineteenth century that the novel developed an alternative to the episodic structure of its epic forbearers. This alternative, according to Ong, is the “perfect pyramid” of the detective story, a plot type heavily indebted to the dramatic structure: “In the ideal detective story, ascending action builds relentlessly to all but unbearable tension, the climactic recognition and reversal releases the tension with explosive suddenness, and the dénouement disentangles everything totally—every single detail in the story turns out to have been crucial—and, until the climax and dénouement, effectively misleading” (1982, 149). By making reading a solitary activity, print also encouraged an inward turn that favored the creation of psychologically complex characters—what E. M. Forster called “round characters,” as opposed to the flat character of oral narratives who delight the reader by “fulfilling expectations copiously” (Ong, 151). In high modernism, the representation of mental processes becomes indeed so invasive that it threatens to expel narrative action from literary fiction. The last major feature that Ong attributes to print is self-reflexivity, a feature most dominant in the early and late stages of the novel: “The very reflectiveness of writing—enforced by the slowness of the writing process as compared to oral delivery as well as by the isolation of the writer as compared to the oral performer—encourages growth of consciousness out of the unconscious” (150).

Writing technology has recently taken a new leap forward with the development of digital media, and a whole new chapter in the technological history of narrative remains to be written. Theorists such as Jay David Bolter, George Landow, and N. Katherine Hayles have prepared the ground by investigating the differences between print and digital writing, but we are still waiting for a comprehensive study of the more narrowly narrative applications of digital encoding, such as hypertext, blogs, or computer games. The second part of this book initiates such a study; but as Terry Harpold observes (2005, 108), we are still in the incunabula phase of digital narrative, and we lack the temporal distance needed for the assessment of the long-term viability of the current attempts to put computer technology in the service of narrative. The understanding and exploitation of the properties of a new medium are often slow to develop. Ong observes, for instance, that chirographic and early typographic cultures retained a “residual orality” that delayed the development of the narrative features typical of writing technology. Similarly, we have just entered the digital age, and our first attempts with digital narrative may be more indebted to the print tradition than we would like to think.

Media as Cultural Practices

The third important dimension of media is their cultural use. This dimension is not entirely predictable from semiotic type and technological support. In fact, some ways of disseminating information are regarded as distinct media from a cultural point of view, despite their lack of a distinct semiotic or technological identity.
Newspapers, for instance, rely on the same semiotic channels and printing technology as books, but “the press” is widely regarded by sociologists as a medium in its own right, on par with the other so-called mass media of TV, film, radio, and the Internet. Drama, similarly, is a well-recognized cultural institution, but as a live performance using multiple sensory channels, it cannot be distinguished from ballet or the opera on strictly semiotic or technological grounds. Yet we traditionally call drama, ballet, and the opera media rather than genres.

By far the majority of media studies have been devoted to cultural use. These studies will ask, for instance, about the social impact of film violence, Internet pornography, television news reporting, or multiusers computer games. In a study of cultural use, consideration must also be given to the network of relations among media, a network commonly described through the metaphor of media ecology (Heise 2002). For instance, the cultural role of the cinema shifted after the invention of television, though the technology itself did not undergo significant changes. In the pretelevision days, movie theaters showed a variety of features: newsreels, documentaries, cartoons, and a feature film. They combined reality-based and fiction films in a continuously running show. This diversity and continuous running has been taken over by television, and nowadays movies deal mainly with the fictional, with a distinct preference for the fantastic, while TV favors reality (or reality effects), in the form of news, documentaries, and fictional representations of everyday life. It has even turned the real into a spectacle in the increasingly popular genre of reality TV.

The evolution of narrative forms depends as much on cultural pressures as on the semiotic or technological properties of the medium. What Ong writes of the oral-written distinction is valid for all contrasts between media: “Obviously, other developments in society besides the orality-literacy shift help determine the development of narrative over the ages—changing political organization, religious development, intercultural exchanges, and much else, including the development of other verbal genres” (1982, 139). Ong observes, for instance, that in recent decades the tightly knotted dramatic plot, a product of writing, has “fallen out of favor as too ‘easy’ (that is, too easily controlled by consciousness) for author and reader” (151). This development was a cultural reaction against the well-constructed plots of realism, though it cannot be entirely dis-

connected from writing technology: it would be hard to imagine an audience being held entranced by the oral presentation of a plotless text, unless it is a multichannel dramatic preformance. Culturally conditioned developments sometimes involve a return to a previous medium, or an attempt to imitate another medium. An example of this situation is the recent emergence of what I call the “novel of proliferating narrativity,” a narrative type that replaces the overarching climactic plot with multiple “little stories.” Particularly prominent in fantastic realism and postcolonialism, this narrative type developed both as a reaction to the deploitation of the New Novel and as an attempt to reconnect narrative with its oral origins.

Defining Media from the Perspective of Transmedial Narratology

For students of narrative, what counts as a medium is a category that truly makes a difference as to what stories can be evoked or told, how they are presented, why they are communicated, and how they are experienced. Narrative differences may concern three different semiotic domains: semantics, syntax, and pragmatics. In narrative theory, semantics becomes the study of plot, or story; syntax becomes the study of discourse, or narrative techniques; and pragmatics becomes the study of the uses of narrative. On the semantic level, different media favor different variations of the basic cognitive template: for instance, film prefers dramatic narratives shaped according to the Freytag triangle, TV prefers episodic narratives with multiple plot lines, and computer games prefer quest narratives with one plot line but several autonomous episodes corresponding to the levels to be passed. On the discourse level, media may produce different ways to present stories, which will necessitate different interpretive strategies on the part of the user. For instance, narrative is broken up into distinct frames in comic strips, while it is represented by an image that seems to evolve continuously in film, at least until the next camera take. On the pragmatic level, finally, different media may offer different modes of user involvement and different “things to do” with narrative. An example of these new things to do is the posting of private diaries on the Internet, a phenomenon known as “blogging.” With digital media, it is now possible to share narrative of personal experience with millions of strangers.

In summary, a medium will be considered narratively relevant if it makes an impact on either story, discourse, or social and personal
use of narrative. This approach implies a standard of comparison: to say, for instance, that “radio is a distinct narrative medium” means that radio as a medium offers different narrative possibilities from those of television, film, or oral conversation. “Mediality” (or mediumhood) is thus a relational rather than an absolute property.

For a type of information support to qualify as a distinct narrative medium, it must also offer a unique combination of features. An overview of the kind of media features that affect the experience of narrative follows.

**Spatiotemporal extension.** Media fall into three broad categories: purely temporal ones, supported by language or music exclusively; purely spatial media, such as painting and photography; and spatiotemporal media, such as the cinema, dance, image-language combinations, and digital texts. A temporal medium is not merely one that requires time to be processed—don’t they all?—but one that imposes an order and a directionality on the act of processing. A painting, for instance, may be scanned by the eye, one region after another, rather than being perceived instantly in its totality, but it is not a temporal medium, because the eye remains free to wander on its own paths, even when the work tries to direct it along certain lines.

**Kinetic properties.** By this I mean whether a medium is static or dynamic, that is, whether the texts of this medium stand still or change over time. With a static medium, appreciators can process the text at their own pace, but with a dynamic medium, the text imposes a tempo, and consequently time limits, on the act of perception. Spatial media should in principle be static, and media with a temporal dimension should be dynamic, but the distinctions static/dynamic and spatial/temporal do not always correspond, because language, a temporal medium which is scanned one word at a time, can be immobilized by writing, so that all its signs will coexist in space. We can have media that are spatial and static—painting, sculpture—media that are temporal and static—printed texts and combinations of image and texts, such as comics and illustrated books—and media that are temporal and dynamic, for instance, dance, movies, TV, oral storytelling, and digital media. The only combination not represented is media that are purely spatial and dynamic, because dynamism presupposes evolution in a time frame.

**Number of semiotic channels.** In the spatial category there is only one channel, unless one considers that sculpture and architecture have a tactile and kinesthetic dimension. In the temporal category we have either one-channel media (language or music), or combinations of the two temporal media, language and music, in songs and sung forms of poetry. Most spatiotemporal media have multiple channels, but mime and silent films use only visual data. The channel combinations of the spatiotemporal group include still pictures-language (in illustrated books); moving pictures-music (in silent films accompanied by a pianist); moving pictures-music-language (in film, drama, and the opera); and touch, moving pictures, language, and music in certain digital installations and VR technology.

**Priority of sensory channels.** The opera should be considered distinct from a theater production that makes use of music, even though the two media include the same sensory dimensions and semiotic codes, because the opera gives the sound channel higher priority than the theater. In the opera the plot serves as a support for music, while in drama it forms the focus of interest.

Another important issue for transmedial narratology is the delimitation of medium with respect to genre. Both medium and genre exercise constraints on what kinds of stories can be told, but while genre is defined by more or less freely adopted conventions chosen for both personal and cultural reasons, medium imposes its possibilities and limitations on the user. It is true that we choose both the genre and the medium we work in. But we select media for their affordances, and we work around their limitations, trying to overcome them or to make them irrelevant. For instance, painters introduced perspective to add a third dimension to the flat canvas. Genre by contrast deliberately uses limitations to optimize expression, to channel expectations, and to facilitate communication: for instance, tragedy must be about the downfall of a hero and use the mimetic mode of narrativity; and sonnets must consist of fourteen lines, organized in two quatrains and two tercets with a certain rhyming pattern. These conventions are imposed as what Jurij Lotman has called a second-order semiotic system on the primary mode of signification. Genre conventions are genuine rules specified by humans, whereas the constraints and possibilities offered by media are dictated by their material substance and mode of encoding.

It is not always easy to distinguish genre from medium; but I would like to suggest a criterion based on the old question: what comes first: the chicken or the egg. Let the text be the chicken and genres and media be the egg. With genres, the chicken comes first. Genres originate in innovative texts that create a desire to duplicate
their generative formula. With media, on the other hand, the egg comes first, since a text can only come into existence when the material support for its signs and the technology for their transmission are already in place. But if media and genre are distinct categories, this does not mean that the development of new media has no impact on the development of genres. Insofar as media are sets of affordances, or possibilities, new media give birth to new forms of text and to new forms of narrative, which in turn may be codified into genres.

Let's test this idea on the case of computer (video) games: are they a genre within the medium of digital technology, or are they a medium in their own right? Many people call computer games a medium, but the two-part label “computer games” tells us that they lie at the intersection of two categories: they are a certain type of activity that uses a certain technological platform, namely, the computer. As games they belong to a family that includes chess, Monopoly, football, roulette, and playing house, while as uses of computer technology, they are on par with e-mail, hypertext, and Internet chat. Computer games thus owe some of their features to being games, and some others to their being supported by the digital medium. But genre also intervenes within this hybrid notion of computer games in the form of categories such as adventure games, shooters, horror, and god games (or simulations). So what are computer games? A subset of a broader type of activity characterized by its reliance on a specific technological medium, and itself divided into genres.

The difficulty of categorizing computer games points to the ambiguous status of digital technology: is it a medium with its own language, a medium family divided into submedia, or a metamedium that synthesizes and transmits all other media? It is now fashionable to regard digital technology as the end of distinct media. The art critic Rosalind Krauss speaks of a “post-medium condition,” and the media theorist Friedrich Kittler of a blending of all media into a universal coding system:

When films, music, phone calls, and texts are able to reach the individual household via optical fiber cables, the previously separate media of television, radio, telephone, and mail will become a single medium, standardized according to transmission frequency and bit format... The general digitalization of information and channels erases the differences between individual media. Sound and image, voice and text have become mere effects on the surface, or, to put it better, the interface for the consumer... In computers everything becomes numbers: imageless, soundless, and wordless quantity. And if the optical fiber network reduces all formerly separate data flows to one standardized digital series of numbers, any medium can be translated into another. With numbers, nothing is impossible. Modulations, transformations, synchronization; delay, memory, transposition; scrambling, scanning, mapping—a total connection of all media on a digital base erases the notion of the medium itself. (1997, 31–32)

But if inside the computer all data are represented as zeros and ones, the execution of the code, which outputs a sensory manifestation of the data, restores the differences between media. Though critics have argued that an analog text and its digital version are no longer the same text (Hayles 2003), the digitized version preserves the major semiotic and cultural features of the original. For the human user, an online version of a daily newspaper or a DVD version of a TV show played on a computer retain their identity as “daily newspaper” or “TV serial,” despite their new encoding. It is only from the nonhuman point of view of the machine, of course, that the differences between media disappear. But the transmission of other media is not the only function of the computer; it has also developed original uses that turn digital technology into a medium in the language sense of the word. These original uses stand halfway between medium and genre. What are we going to call e-mail, hypertext, and Internet chat within media theory? My suggestion is to regard them as submedia—just as oil or watercolor are the submedia of the visual arts—and to view the supporting software as the differentiating factor within the technological family of digital media, just as raw material supports such as pastel, ink, marble, or bronze is the differentiating factor within the semiotic family of visual media.

Playing with the Medium
As the study of the configuring effect of media on narrative, transmedial narratology cannot avoid some degree of medial determinism. But it should also recognize the limits of this determinism. Far from being narrowly conditioned by the properties of its supporting
medium, narrative has developed various relations to these properties. First, narrative may go with its medium and take, if not full, at least significant advantage of its affordances. But, as I observe above, it may take a while to understand what can be done with a medium: the history of the novel, of film, television, and digital narrative could be written as the gradual emancipation of these media from their respective predecessors: the novel from oral narrative, film from the theater, television from film, and digital narrative from all of the above, especially from print novels. Second, narrative can ignore the idiosyncrasies of the medium and use it purely as a transmission channel. This is what happened when Stephen King posted one of his novels on the Internet. The text was meant to be printed, and it took no advantage whatsoever of the artistic resources of a digital support. Third, narrative can actively fight some of the properties of the medium for expressive purposes. For instance, a print narrative with multiple branches subverts the linear reading protocols typical of novels distributed in book form, and it anticipates the possibilities of electronic textuality. Here we can say that the text yearns for another medium—one that will “remediate” (in Bolter’s and Grusin’s term) the limitations of its own medium. And fourth, a text may expose latent properties in its medium, properties that expand its expressive potential beyond current practice. This happened when postmodern print novels began playing with graphic layout and made us aware of the spatiality of the print medium, a spatiality that is forgotten when print is considered to be nothing more than the translation of spoken language. The diversity of games that narrative can play with the resources of its medium is one of the many reasons that make the study of the relations between media and narrative, an area still largely unexplored, one of the most promising new fields of narratological investigation.

2. Drawing and Transgressing Fictional Boundaries

Fiction lies at the intersection of two fundamental modes of thinking. One is narrative, the set of cognitive operations that organizes and explains human agency and experience. Fiction does not necessarily fulfill all the conditions of narrativity that I have spelled out in chapter 1, but it must create a world by means of singular existential propositions, and it must offer, to the very least, an embryonic story. The other mode of thinking is what we may variously call “off-line thinking,” “virtual thinking,” or “nonfactual thinking”: the ability to detach thought from what exists and to conduct mental experiments about what could be or what could have been. Most instances of virtual thinking are practical, in the sense that they subordinate the virtual to the actual; for instance, an engineer will imagine all sorts of possible catastrophes—floods, earthquakes, terrorist attacks—in designing a bridge that will resist these situations, while a historian will examine all the possibilities that faced a certain individual in order to evaluate his actual decisions. Because action involves planning, and planning is about what could be, all narratives, whether fictional or not, presuppose some amount of thinking about virtual situations. But fiction differs from other modes of virtual thinking in that it contemplates the virtual for its own sake, rather than using it as an instrument to shape the real.

Fiction as Philosophical Issue
The earliest attempts to capture the phenomenon that came to be known in the twentieth century as fiction are formulae coined by