

## **Transmediations of Deep Temporalities in Narrative Video Games**

*Anna Ishchenko, PhD student in English, Department of Languages, Linnaeus University, Sweden*

### **Abstract**

This paper aims to examine the intermedial phenomenon of transmediation in the context of award-winning video games *Kentucky Route Zero* (2013-20) and *Disco Elysium* (2019). The question under consideration is how video games through narrative and medium-specific means transmediate—transport and aesthetically transform—scientific concepts related to the ecological crisis; more specifically, “geologic time”. While this paper does not suggest conceptualizing transmediation as a phenomenon exclusive to the media type of video games, it will strive to analyze the ways transmediation of ecocritical concepts acquires its idiosyncratic realization in video games. On the one hand, I will argue that video games employ narrative strategies to construct temporalities that become congruent with the temporalities of the ecological crisis. On the other hand, bringing to the fore the digital and multimodal nature of video games, I will investigate how these narrative strategies come into being via video games’ distinctive use of media modalities.

This paper will build on the previous research in intermedial studies that conceptualized ecological crisis as a discourse that can be transmediated in artistic and non-artistic media. However, I will complement the intermedial approach with the experientialist strand in postclassical narratology to develop a more nuanced and medium-specific understanding of video games’ capacity to construct temporalities that are consistent with Anthropocene temporalities, as well as to account for cognitive effects and interpretative strategies that are evoked by such transmediations. The paper will thus explore the transmedial affordances of video games and their ecological agency—how, as narrative eco-media, they can foster awareness of the ongoing ecological crises through these transmediations and, here quoting the theme of the conference, comment on the present and encourage us to look beyond.

## References

- Bruhn, Jørgen. “‘We’re Doomed – Now What?’ Transmediating Temporality Into Narrative Forms”. *Transmediations: Communication Across Media Borders*, edited by Niklas Salmose, and Lars Elleström, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/linne-ebooks/detail.action?docID=5983606>.
- Caracciolo, Marco. *Contemporary Fiction and Climate Uncertainty: Narrating Unstable Futures*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350233928>.
- . *Narrating the Mesh: Form and Story in the Anthropocene*. University of Virginia Press, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1fqvm5p>.
- Salmose, Niklas, and Jørgen Bruhn. *Intermedial Ecocriticism: The Climate Crisis Through Art and Media*. Lexington Books, 2024.
- Salmose, Niklas. “Three Transmediations of the Anthropocene: An Intermedial Ecocritical Reading of Facts, Sci-Fi, PopSci and Eco-Horror”. *Transmediations: Communication Across Media Borders*, edited by Niklas Salmose, and Lars Elleström, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/linne-ebooks/detail.action?docID=5983606>.

## Keywords

Video games, ecocriticism, transmediation, postclassical narratology, intermediality

## Bio

Anna Ishchenko is a first-year PhD student in English literature at the Department of Languages, also affiliated with MID-world graduate school and IMS Green research cluster. Anna’s interests encompass the application of intermedial studies, and postclassical narratology to ecocritical reading of narrative video games. Anna has presented her research internationally; most recently—she presented her paper online at the Intermedial Workshop in Edinburgh (“The Poetics of Gameplay and the Poetics of Ambience in the Video Game *Kentucky Route Zero*”, March 2024), as well as at the Narrative Conference in Newcastle (“Poetic Gameplay and Narrative Experience” in the video game *Kentucky Route Zero*, April 2024). Anna has also been involved in research projects related to intermediality and ecocriticism conducted at the Linnaeus University Research Center for Intermedial and Multimodal Studies.