THE EVOLUTION OF STORY II

The Evolution of Story is an annual symposium dedicated to an exploration of the experiential in storytelling, design, technology, marketing, architecture, entertainment, retail, and other fields of practice where the user experience is of paramount importance to creative practitioners. It aims to explore the ways in which story has evolved beyond the linear, the stage and the boundaries of the screen. It will take the lid off new forms of storytelling and offer a snapshot of current practices.

https://evolutionofstory.info/

KEYNOTE

Beyond Drama: multiperspectival approaches to narrative and story | Prof Judith Aston, University of West of England, UK

"We lack ready narratives not only for the future, but even for a concrete now, for the ultra-rapid transformations of today's world" – Olga Tokarczuk What's to be done about this within film and television? How can we bring dramatic narrative into dialogue with other approaches and forms? What role might the Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction play in this? Where do platforms like YouTube fit into in this process?

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https://youtu.be/xXMAlcxIcX0

PAPERS

Going in circles: How and why are particular theoretical, literary and film-based attempts to resist, subvert or unravel the Hero's Journey still problematic, problematised or only partial in their success? | Dr Adam Dalton, Middlesex University, UK

Dr Adam Dalton of Middlesex University (aka science fiction and fantasy author A J Dalton) discusses how and why there have been various theoretical (the Heroine's Journey, and the Queeroe's Journey), literary (Jemisin's The Fifth Season, and the work of Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman) and film-based (The Hunger Games, Brave, Snow White and the Huntsman, Frozen and Maleficent) attempts to challenge, subvert and/or unravel the Hero's Journey identified by Joseph Campbell as "Mankind's one great story". Dalton then considers how and why these attempts have only been partially successful at best, concluding with a reflection upon how the Hero's Journey ultimately sees the socially-dependent individual conforming to/with norms as per Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

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https://youtu.be/IS_pGXujigI

**Our House: Digital performance and community building in socially distanced times |
Adisti Regar, University of South Australia, Australia**

COPY: This presentation is a case study of Our House, a recent digital performance by Q Theatre, a community -focused performing arts organization in Western Sydney, Australia. Our House was the 2021 iteration of Originate, Q Theatre's development workshop involving young Western Sydney artists and theatre-makers. With the city plunged into the Delta variant lockdown one week before the workshop, the artists shifted their focus to creating a digital performance, working through strict stay-at-home rules. The case study contextualizes Our House within the emergent forms of digital performance arising during the pandemic, from "Zoom theatre" to online scavenger hunts. In constructing Our House, the artists and production team pondered the matter of form and platform, grappling with the dramaturgical, technological and logistical challenges facing a small-scale theatre performance with a shortened pre-production time. One central question remained: how could these young artists connect with the community they belong to while reaffirming their identities as theatre-makers and performers? Our House is a study of how story and technology can go hand-in-hand in bringing together a close-knit yet socially-distanced community in new, unexpected ways.

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https://youtu.be/MUck7v9vG3k

From mimesis to being: role-playing as a way to unravel the hero's journey | Dr Alessandro Giovannucci, Chaos League

Humans are storytelling animals, they love stories and they need it. In this perspective the hero's journey has acted as a narrative koiné for the western culture. It served as a shared storage of stories, characters and tropes for storytellers who wanted to engage their audience. But starting from the sixties, as Umberto Eco pointed out in The Open Work, a new participatory culture has developed.

Avant-garde artists, writers and performers asked more and more of the public to be active and co-creators. But there is a potential clash between narrative and participation, between storytelling and experience. Are the participatory narratives killing storytelling? Or is it rather reinforcing it?

In pop culture, too, this shift is strong and still ongoing, mainly inside the game sector. Role-playing games, in particular, are structured about blurring the separation between performer and audience.

This is particularly true in the case of Live Action Roleplay (LARP), where participants actually embody their fictional character, wearing costumes and acting for days in fictional worlds designed and crafted as playable movie sets. This simple change of perspective shifts values and roles in unexpected ways. Role-playing is a tool that inertly pushes towards rethinking identities and negotiation. As a cooperative activity based on the elimination of the individual heroes, it's a challenge to the traditional hero's journey and linear narratives.

In this talk we will present the main theories about larp and collective storytelling, show how it can work as an instrument for inclusion and experimental approaches.

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https://youtu.be/35hhPB3AA48

Heroes in the Gutter - The Halcyon, Batuu and the Rise of the Immersive Protagonist | Alke Groppell-Wegener, Staffordshire University, UK

This presentation considers how the prolonged immersive story-telling experiences that theme parks provide have developed over time, with a particular focus on the role the individual guest can choose to take. Using examples from the Star Wars Intellectual Property developed for Disney Parks, I consider how the role and agency of the individual participant/guest has changed over time and opened up from rather passive, to much more engaged. I argue that recent developments in theme park land, attraction and experience design have opened up active play, allowing guests the option to become protagonists in a story they have agency over, significantly extending the notion of the templated 'hero' Joseph Campbell introduced as part of the Hero's Journey.

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https://youtu.be/mrxKiNmvpKI

Heroes in the Gutter - The Halcyon, Batuu and the Rise of the Immersive Protagonist | Alke Groppell-Wegener, Staffordshire University, UK

You are the story: Personalisation and audience in amplified publishing | Amy Spencer, Bath Spa University, UK

This talk explores how emerging technologies enable new immersive and experiential stories, across genre and form, and questions how they are changing the way content is created, how it is discovered, and consumed and what this means for audiences. It examines this evolution of storytelling through looking at personalisation and explores how it can be used as a tool through which an audience is able to see themselves reflected in immersive and experiential creative works. It questions how audiences experience innovative forms and how their experiences can be mediated and guided by writers, producers and technologists. It considers the audience's active role as agent in constructing meaning and how this evolves the understanding of author and audience and the position of the hero within a story.

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https://youtu.be/rmlN9aI1X3M

**Role of audience as active agent in constructing meaning via negotiated narratives |
Anna Zaluczkowska, Leeds Beckett University, UK**

The Hero's Journey very much supports a traditional and universal understanding of narrative and has been applied to games and interactive work as much as screenwriting. Tracy Fullerton writes: '[...] the tension in a story gets worse before it gets better, resulting in a classic dramatic arc [...] This arc is the backbone of all dramatic media, including games' (Fullerton et al. 2008). This chapter will challenge such a narrow version of 'traditional storytelling' and suggest that many alternative models, such as cyclical African oral storytelling forms, Asian structures with different tension arcs, and forms of participatory theatre as advocated by Boal could better be applied as paradigms for transmedia, interactive and immersive work. After becoming disillusioned with interactive practices I developed a prototype interactive online web-series, Red Branch Heroes http://www.redbranchheroes.com/phd/ (2015), which was quickly followed up by a further project Secret Story Network (2019) https://www.secretstorynetwork.com to investigate participation and interactivity in online writing and design via negotiated narratives and I will reference these in the work and present new ideas to investigate the synergies between models of Caribbean Carnival and possible relationship with narrative structures for interactive forms.

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https://youtu.be/joKyXarGnCc

The Lost Arcs: Liberating character arcs from Campbell's 'Monomyth' | Anthony Mullins, Griffith University, Australia

Does a character arc always describe emotional transformation? If so, how do we discuss characters who do not emotionally change? If they don't have an arc, who the hell are they? In this video Anthony Mullins discusses how Joseph Campbell's "monomyth" not only flattens the differences between the storytelling traditions of non-Western cultures, but also limits many of the storytelling concepts commonly employed by Western storytellers, in particular the concept of character arcs. He argues that liberating character arcs from the monomyth creates the opportunity to recover a wide range of "lost" arcs which do not conform to the strict requirements of the Hero's Journey, thus broadening the storytelling landscape available for research, discussion and creative practice. This presentation draws on Anthony's recently released book "Beyond the Hero's Journey".

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https://youtu.be/7A8jYTjYfno

Is mythology the original mode of transmedia storytelling: the case for the transmediality of the itihāsic (epic) narrative traditions | Anupriy Kanti, India

Stories have roots in mythology. There is enough literature already on the content of mythical stories and their inspiration in modern narratives. However, there is a case for transmedial characteristics of mythology by looking at their transmission. One only needs to look at the last couple of millennia and perhaps to a culture that has managed to sustain one of the oldest living religion and literary assets.
This essay aims to explain why mythology is the original mode of transmedia storytelling by exploring the (South Asian) Indian Epics - or the Itihaasic narrative traditions of Ramayana & Mahabharata. I shall first highlight the commonalities between mythology and contemporary media franchises (such as Star Wars & Marvel Cinematic Universe). I will then show how mythology has been cultivating the need for transmedia storytelling by creating a deep blueprint in our collective psyche for a transmedia experience.

For additional updated information accompanying the video, check out the link:
Follow me for more mythology and storytelling content.

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https://youtu.be/8IyUqUlRABg

The heroic character, the neo-liberal productive citizen, and the feminist filmmaker | Dr. Catherine Gough-Brady, JMC Academy, Australia.

I recut an observational documentary that used a diurnal structure into a more conventional storytelling mode for a broadcaster. The broadcaster wanted something to be at stake, and for the main character, Bekti, to overcome challenges to bring about change. They wanted a type of hero's journey. This change was designed to create a 'stronger story'. I contend that the preferencing of Bekti's work to make the story stronger is aligned with wider social structural narratives of power that value work over domestic life. The new narrative corresponds to hegemonic norms of neoliberal values and these values are re-enforced by the hero's journey narrative structure that establishes what is considered to be 'action'. To explore this, I turn to the work of Ursula Le Guin (1986) and Donna Haraway (2016) who provide a feminist critique of the influence of the hero's journey narrative structure and character creation, especially via the carrier basket/bag theory of fiction. This critique adds to the current debates around heroic characters and story structures in non-fiction films.

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https://youtu.be/nFJC9xhOAH0

Table for Two - **An exploration of a multi-genre Parallel Interactive Narratives in Virtual Reality | Delwyn Jude Remedios, Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad; Prof. Deepak John Mathew, Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad; Prof. Max Schleser, Swinburne University of Technology.**

Table for Two is a Cinematic Virtual Reality (CVR) experience that investigates parallel narratives and defines the concept of Parallel Interactive Narratives in Virtual Reality (PIN VR). This study explores the design and development of PIN VR using screen production enquiry (Kerrigan and Callaghan 2016) as a practice-based research method. The artefact of the research is *Table for Two,* a one shot CVR experience, captured simultaneously with three 360-degree cameras. This experience portrays selected genres such as romance, supernatural fiction and drama in a café. Each genre has interconnections to the overall plot. The user of such an experience is addressed as a navigator as she is expected to teleport between genres through gaze selection of pinpoint areas in the 360-degree environment. The experience timeline for each navigator remains the same; however, each navigator customizes the sequence of events in the café. This experiment extends Aronson's (2010) research on parallel narratives in cinema. This study further details the application of multiple genres in *Table for Two* and the navigator's selection of which character/characters journey to follow as they customize the experience with teleportation.

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https://youtu.be/V-mAzoLI0aI

**Beyond Lip Service: Design Thinking as a Blueprint for More Inclusive Storytelling |
Dr. Emilia King, Ontario Tech University & Ass. Prof Ramona Pringle, Toronto
Metropolitan University, Canada**

Although Web 2.0 has enabled audiences to have more control and input into the content they consume than ever before, the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of traditionally marginalized groups including women, people of colour, the LGBTQ2S+ community, those with disabilities, and the Indigenous, continues both on and off-screen across mainstream media. How do we move beyond lip service with a view toward authentically inclusive storytelling? Dominant and existing storytelling tools, templates and models miss the mark. What if we attempted to solve the problem of crappy storytelling by adapting a tool that attempts to solve the problem of crappy design? Join us as we present our preliminary ideas around how we might adapt Design Thinking to storytelling based on our reflection on a decade of storytelling experimentation at Toronto Metropolitan University's cutting edge Transmedia Zone media innovation incubator.

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https://youtu.be/cluy3f2pCXs

A Metaphorical Reading of *The Never Ending Story* (Wolfgang Petersen, 1984): Notes on Experiential Metaphors and Embodied Simulation in Film | Luis Antunes, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, USA

This presentation will offer an analysis and discussion of experiential film metaphors used in *The Never Ending Story* (Wolfgang Petersen, 1984) that address the concept of *nothingness*. These experiential metaphors present themselves as mechanisms for meaning-making through the viewers' sensory experiences of the film, especially children viewers for whom direct sensory experiences might be more meaningful than intricated thought processes. Addressing the concept of *nothingness* as experiential metaphors is a way to make meaning intelligible for children as they learn to navigate a world of villains, traps, and mysteries in real life. My metaphorical readings of *The Never Ending Story* are based on George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's frame of conceptual metaphor theory. In *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), Lakoff & Johnson redefined the traditional concept of metaphor as strictly verbal, proposing that metaphor operates within a cognitive framework and is a matter of thought and action. This understanding of metaphor became known as the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and paved the way to understanding metaphor not only as a figure of speech within the context of verbal language but also with regard to its role in everyday life in shaping aspects of human perception, embodiment, and motor action. This has paved the way for a deeper understanding of metaphorical constructions in film across a range of perceptual modalities. The presentation will offer a metaphorical reading of *The Never Ending Story* not only in terms of visual superimposition, as it is more traditionally used in film scholarship, but also in terms of actions that can signify other layers of references in an experiential fashion. My analysis focuses on the metaphors of THE MEANING OF LIFE IS A SENSORY EXPERIENCE and THE FILM IS THE VIEWER constructed through the experiences of the characters of Atreyu (Noah Hathaway) and Bastian (Barret Oliver). The two experiential metaphors of THE MEANING OF LIFE IS A SENSORY EXPERIENCE and THE FILM IS THE VIEWER speak to the idea of cinema as Embodied Simulation (Gallese and Guerra) and allow me to argue that our experiences of film as not merely imagined but are real (even if not realistic), direct and physical experiences that the film's world and the characters actions cue in the viewers. Even though it is commonly held that film requires a willingness of the viewer to suspend disbelief in order to engage in a film's world without cognitive dissonance with our understanding of reality outside that film, my analysis of *The Never Ending Story* points in the direction that a film can be experienced with a certain degree of naiveté by children-viewers without that need of suspension of disbelief. In this case or hypothesis, a film like *The Never Ending Story* could be considered to function as a cinematic simulation rather than an imaginative, disembodied experience.

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https://youtu.be/dMrrOb0GPiU

The Player's Journey: alternative paradigms of structure through audience agency | Maurice Suckling, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, USA

Player agency fundamentally alters the nature of narrative structure itself by facilitating a relationship with conceptual space. The way we approach interactivity and agency - in many respects - really *is* the story, and really is the meaning of the space. Space is not merely the container for a story. The medium is the message, we might say. But narrative structure isn't merely two-dimensional, in the sense that it's about the placement of key elements along a linear X axis towards the Return with the Elixir. The Hero's Journey template tells us that each structural element is held in place by its relationship to the other elements preceding and following it. Narrative structure in interactive space may better be thought of as three-dimensional. This brief paper highlights several case studies - Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective, Elite, Fiasco, Sleep No More, Her Story - which in various ways demonstrate the impact interactivity has on structure. The paper argues that when a player does something within an interactive storyworld that storyworld may provide them with experiences that alter the sequence of a narrative structure. Further, the nature of the interactivity available can also significantly influence the meaning a storyworld evokes for a player, and since meaning isn't a static quality, but is dynamically aligned with a player's linear engagement through time with a storyworld, we can also suggest there are significant implications on a narrative's structure.

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https://youtu.be/ccxY1qN2wA8

Cafflogion: Interactive Adaptation in Cymru and Aotearoa | Dr Roger Owen, Aberystwyth University, Wales UK; Dr Dafydd Sills-Jones, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

This presentation discusses some of issues raised during the adaptation of Cafflogion (1979), a dystopian science-fiction novella in the Welsh language by R. Gerallt Jones. It will reflect on the reworking of the novella as interactive text, noting how the creation of multiple alternative pathways for the characters within the basic schema of the novel radically disrupts the implicit linearity of the original and challenges monomythic conceptions of the characters as heroes. Cafflogion portrays the ultimately disastrous encounter between Garth, an urban filmmaker, and the inhabitants of a previously unknown, unlicensed settlement in the fringes of the state. Whilst preparing and shooting his film, Garth becomes deeply implicated in the lives of his subjects; but he loses his resolve to defend their interests when his work is denounced by The City authorities. They subsequently destroy Cafflogion in a military strike. Whilst the main narrative thrust of the novel concerns the betrayal and cognitive dissonance of the filmmaker, there are also some disturbing suggestions that the destructive consequences of the interaction may have been foreseen and accepted by Ieuan, Cafflogion's elder, from the outset. This presentation is part of wider project, conducted by co-investigators working separately in Wales and New Zealand, which seeks to treat adaptation as an evolving dialogic process resulting in numerous interrelated outputs, including translations of the original text, interactive and linear film script, documentary exhibition and a live multimedia performance.

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https://youtu.be/OV_bENjd0MY

Finding the Self in Role-playing Games: Weaving Myth, Narrative, and Identity | Dr Sarah Lynne Bowman, Uppsala University, Sweden

Campbell's hero's journey (1973) mythically represents the awakening of consciousness and the development of the individual to maturity after confrontation with their unconscious shadow side. While this trajectory reflects human experience, it emphasizes an idealized male hero who becomes singularly important to saving the world from a villainized monstrous Other. Thus, to call the hero's journey the "monomyth" invalidates many other important archetypal characters such as the Trickster (Turner 2021), the Witch (Rusch and Phelps 2021), and the Heroine (Frankel 2010; Murdock 2020). These characters are relegated to assisting the hero or opposing him, eliminating much of the diversity and cooperation inherent and necessary to life.

Role-playing games allow players a larger range of characters, many of whom represent alternative archetypes to the hero in various relationship configurations (Beltrán 2021). While the "leveling up" of the hero's journey has infused RPG narratives, influencing systems such as Dungeons & Dragons and Vampire: the Masquerade (Bowman 2010), other RPGs tell alternative mythic stories from marginalized perspectives, including Bluebeard's Bride and Dream Askew. However, any analog RPG narrative can offer more general benefits of active (Jung 1976, Bowman 2017), mythic (Larsen 1990; Beltrán 2012) and ironic imagination (Saler 2012). Players can use these experiences to shape their own narrative identity (McAdams 2011) into more empowering structures of belief. Unlike the prescriptive nature of the hero's journey, players can enact any archetype, using game narratives as roadmaps for their lives, whether as cautionary tales, aspirational narratives, or other meaningful forms of ritual symbolic enactment (Rusch and Phelps 2020).

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https://youtu.be/UKgcwJWMKjY

Queering heroes' journeys and heteronormative timelines: screenwriting methods for not getting your story straight | Stayci Taylor, RMIT University, Australia

Using queer theory and, in particular, notions of queer temporalities, Stayci Taylor deploys her screenwriting practice as a methodology through which to unravel linear paradigms such as the hero's journey. Informed by queer theory's critiques of the 8 steps of the heteronormative life journey (McCann and Monaghan 2019) and 'chrononormativity' (Freeman 2010), Taylor uses playful methods drawing on critical autoethnography, creative practice and Google images to develop queered story structures that disrupt linearity in favour of 'lateral connection' (Bond Stockton 2009). The 'coming out' story becomes a testing ground for developing non-linear narrative structures and script development approaches.

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https://youtu.be/_rtt_VXvVMc

Who owns the vernacular? The structures and infrastructures of storytelling as hegemonic forms | Wendy Bevan-Mogg, University of the West of England, UK; Dr Carina Westling, Bournemouth University, UK

Entertainment companies such as Disney often adapt and develop stories based on folk tales and, in doing so, claim cultural ownership of them (de Vos 2017, Mjolsness 2019, Menise 2019). Versions of these stories, distributed internationally and intergenerationally, have informed the popular consciousness to the extent that to think of Snow White, for example, is for many people to immediately conjure images from the 1937 animated Disney film. The merging of collective imagination and corporate intellectual property through appropriation of folk tales and other cultural narratives, and their subsequent exhaustive commodification, is a rich subject for academic discourse. (e.g. Rose 2012, Frosio 2018, Quintairos-Soliño 2019, Lantange 2021)

But as these studio-owned storyworlds are now seminal to the collective story consciousness and multinational distribution campaigns and infrastructures bring images and merchandise into our personal lives, schools and public spaces, important questions emerge around the ethical validity of corporate ownership of the public imagination. What does it mean for the moral vernacular when the collective story consciousness becomes privately owned? What limitations are placed on local interpretation and adaptation of such an inescapable story world when the Western mono-myth is so fiercely, globally policed?

Through a case study of the unproduced film FINDING YODA (wr./dir Rhys Davies), which takes as its subject matter the British urban myth of a buried stash of Star Wars toys and whose development was curtailed by the Disney legal team, we will interrogate the impact of corporate IP ownership on international contemporary storytelling, and ask at what point does a franchise such as Star Wars itself become a folk tale that might be appropriated and reworked?

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