Capturing Polymorphic Creations: Towards Ontological Heterogeneity and Transmodiology

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ABSTRACT
This paper addresses the vast practice encompassed under the placeholder term polymorphic creations: contemporary tie-ins, pervasive gaming, telematic arts and so on. A position is put forward where a heterogenous model is championed in favour of a shared ontology. This is contextualized according to polymorphic practices and larger cultural shifts. This paper is, therefore, a theoretical analysis of potential polymorphic-specific methodologies.

Keywords
Transmedia, cross-media, convergence, integration, ontology, narratology, ludology, schema, alternate reality games, transdisciplinarity, hypercomplexity.

1. INTRODUCTION
Over the past decade there has been a growing deployment of entertainment properties across media platforms. In particular, the approach has shifted from adaptation and repurposing (that is: remediating content into different media formats) to delivering unique information in different media platforms. These polymorphic practices have been implemented in mass entertainment, independent art, literature, gaming, marketing and journalism with varying degrees of aesthetic and economic motivation. They have been analysed from a wide range of theoretical foci: media [1-8], performance [9-13], art studies [14-16], education studies [17-20], semiotics [21, 22], narratology [23-29], ludology [30-33]. A reasonable response to this diversity of application and analysis is a call for a shared ontology. As game designers and researchers Staffan Björk and Jussi Holopainen explain in their case for game design patterns:

> "Although different research fields can provide different perspectives on a given research topic, these results are typically published within their own communities and the results found in one field can easily be overlooked by researchers in other fields. And because their frameworks and terminology also differ, even when researchers and practitioners meet in multidisciplinary environments, they run the risk of misunderstanding each other." ([34], p411).

Despite the breadth of the field I am examining I have nevertheless investigated whether there are design patterns that emerge. I have found patterns, and so initially developed a somewhat universal ontology to describe the patterns. My next step was to test these terms and call for collaboration in developing them. My assumptions were similar to those of Björk and Holopainen cited earlier: that if researchers shared terms then communication would improve and subsequently the theory and practice. The argument is echoed in research in many areas, such as business theorists Peter Swann and Tim Watts' contention, in the context of the virtual reality industry, that a common language is essential for the growth of trade [35]. The lack of a common vocabulary, they claim, is indicative of what they term a 'pre-paradigmatic' stage.

Although I appreciate the ideals and effects of collectively developed ontologies, I argue that due to the wide range of polymorphic creations in different sectors of mass and independent entertainment, marketing and journalism, the vast range of its implementations, its characteristics and cultural shifts that have taken place, a shared ontology is not possible or desirable. Indeed, rather than view a lack of a common language as pre-paradigmatic, as thwarting communication and therefore insight, I now argue for a paradigm in which polyphony is viewed as essential to growth. I am certainly not the first to make such claims. A key proponent of this approach is psychoanalyst and philosopher Félix Guattari's last book *Chaosmosis*, and his argument for subjectivity:

> Schizoanalysis, rather than moving in the direction of reductionist modelizations which simplify the complex, will work towards its complexification, its processual enrichment, towards the consistency of its virtual lines of bifurcation and differentiation, in short towards its ontological heterogeneity. (Guattari, Chaosmosis 61).

This paper presents a view that champions ontological heterogeneity. It is triggered by two factors: the nature of the object being studied and the benefits of a likewise characterized methodology. After exploring both of these factors in this essay, the final section will outline how this leads towards a 'transmodiology'. Before we delve into these arguments, though, I will briefly outline extant polymorphic practices.

2. PRIMER ON POLYMORPHIC CREATIONS
As I mentioned previously, the distinction between providing adapted or repurposed content in different media platforms and this polymorphic approach, is pivotal in understanding the scope of this research. An example media theorist Henry Jenkins provides in this theory of 'transmedia storytelling' [36] is the delivery of unique content across the feature films, anime short films, comics, digital and online games of the Wachowski Brothers' *The Matrix*. The franchise began in 1999, the penultimate year of the century when new genres of this form

emerged across many countries. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere [37], the emergence across a range of artforms, from mass and independent sources as well as cultures simultaneously, attests to the integrationist approach being a pervasive cultural and cognitive phenomenon.

In 1999 another film property employed a polymorphic approach: Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez's *The Blair Witch Project*. The film was actually the third step in a lead up that included a diegetic website, a mockumentary on the Sci Fi Channel, *Curse of the Blair Witch*, and a book of the film's "evidence". In the same year viewers of the NBC television show *Homicide: Life on the Street*, were treated to a special "crossover episode". On the 3rd and 4th of February, detectives started investigating a webcast killing. These detectives were not those seen on air though, they were the second shift detectives who existed only on the Net. The Second Shift detectives deemed the case closed, but then the detectives on the television show reopened the case in the television episode called *Homicide.com*, which was broadcast on Feb 5th. The Net detectives then concluded the case on the 12th and 19th online.

Another television programme that included the Internet from the very beginning was Endemol's *Big Brother*, which began in 1999 in the Netherlands. After watching the edited television broadcast, viewers could go to the Internet and view live streaming from the house, as well as vote via SMS. Also in the Netherlands and still in 1999, a young (fictional) snowboarder named Sisu was injured. This character sparked players to traverse mobile phones, magazines and television advertisements to find out what happened to Sisu in the first *Nokia Game*. While this occurred, telematic artists Paul Serman and Andrea Zapp collaborated to create their installation: *A Body of Water*. The work was situated at two locations in Germany: Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum in Duisburg and a disused colliery at Herten. Through the use of a video-conference system, people at Duisburg pretended to shower with people at Herten. They saw the combined images of each other on televisions, and their joint performance was also projected onto a wall of water at Herten, where documentary footage of miners showering was also played.

Two years later in 2001 in the US and globally the first 'alternate reality game' (as it has been retrospectively termed) was launched. *The Beast,* a Microsoft and Dreamworks commissioned work, was a mystery deployed over so-called 'real world' media such as websites, emails, faxes and documents. Millions of players collaborated for months to solve puzzles, garner and influence the plot and help characters. In Sweden in 2001, It's Alive launched *BotFighters*, a locative mixed-reality game that with the use of a mobile phone, combined a virtual environment with the real world in a game of street-based combat. In the UK, the 2001 'cross media game' [38] by Blast Theory and Mixed Reality Lab, University of Nottingham *Can You See Me Now?* launched. Players online and players in the streets armed with satellite-tracked PDAs collaborated to compete against the Blast Theory runners. Also in the UK but the following year, people online and in a specially designed mutable bedroom in a gallery, collaborated, communicated and competed to create their ideal room in Andrea Zapp's *The Imaginary Hotel*.

Returning to the US in 2002 was Jeremy Hight, Jeff Knowlton and Naomi Spellman's *34 North 118 West*, a locative arts project that required participants to walk around the streets to trigger, through a GPS-enabled PDA, audio narratives of the space. We end our quick tour in 2003 with University of Minnesota The Design Institutes' *Big Urban Game*. Online and street players were involved again, but in this example the scale was a pivotal feature: players moved giant inflated playing pieces across a 200-square-mile city zone over five days.

All of these works are representative of the diverse use of multiple media platforms in mass, branded and independent entertainment that have since boomed in their respective sectors. They are now variously termed 'transmedia storytelling' [36], 360 content, synergistic storytelling, pervasive gaming, ubiquitous games, big games, locative arts, mixed reality games, telematic arts and 'networked narrative environments' [16] to name a few. The unifying characteristic of multiple media platforms creates a massive scope that renders the notion of a shared ontology a seemingly impossible task.

2.1 NATURE OF POLYMORPHIC CREATIONS

"As information levels rise, fixed point of view yields
to inclusive multi-dimensional awareness."
(Marshall McLuhan, [39], p24)

In psychoanalyst and philosopher Félix Guattari's last book *Chaosmosis*, 'complex compositions' were argued to need a likewise complex methodology (more on this later). This 'transdisciplinary metamethodology', as sociologist and semiotician Gary Genosko has expanded, is needed to match the compositions that are 'defined by the globality of its object of study, combined with the complex, emergent, and changing nature of that object' ([40], p26). The traits of the complex compositions discussed here, heteromedial and tiered, thwart any attempt at a shared ontology.

2.2 Heteromedial

The issue with polymorphic creations is not just that they are a phenomena that attracts an inter-, multi- or transdisciplinary approach. The object of study transgresses artforms in ways different to genre diversity and hybrid practices. They are differentiated from hybrid arts, intermedia or interarts by the fact that each media platform retains its integrity. There are rhetorical shifts that take place in the implementation, but the medium retains independence. They are not preassembled for an audience, which means the audience has to attend to each platform on their desk, in another room or down the street. Creators, therefore, design a work with the knowledge that their audience/player/interactor will be experiencing it in different media platforms and in most cases shifting between interaction modes. The variety of these hetermomedial instantiations can be illuminated through observing segmentation relations between units. Due to the lack of treatment of these segmentations they are provided here.

As I cited earlier, Jenkins describes 'transmedia storytelling' as a 'franchise entry [that] needs to be self-contained so you don't need to have seen the film to enjoy the game and vice-versa' ([36], p139). This self-containment is only one type of expansion of 'content' across media platforms. To elaborate the various dependencies between units I will invoke theories of narrative segmentation from narratological approaches to print, television, film and games.

Three types of segmentation have been identified and developed in the context of television narratives: 1) series; 2) serial; 3) flexi-narrative. The first, a series, is described in the 'episode' entry in the *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Narrative Theory* as:

> "A bounded internally coherent sequence of situations and events that can be chained together with other such narrative units to form larger narrative structures." ([41], p140)

A serial differs from a series because of the increased dependency between units. In a serial each unit is not self-contained, instead, they are 'part of a continuing narrative that is not concluded until the end of the series' ([42], p527). This condition of the narrative concluding at the end of the series has been tempered by television theorist Robin Nelson's 'flexi-narratives' [43]. Flexi-narratives combine both series and serial narrative dependencies across the units. Nelson explains the motivation behind the implementation of such narratives in television:

> "The blurring of distinction between the series and serial affords schedulers the joint advantage of an unresolved narrative strand — a cliff-hanger to draw the audience to watch the next episode — and a new group of characters and self-contained stories in each episode." (Nelson, 1997, 34)

Game designers and educators Andrew Rollings and Ernest Adams likewise describe what they term 'multi-part stories' in the context of episodic delivery of games [44]. Their 'series' and 'serial' definitions correlate with those cited previously, but the 'flexi' form is called 'episodic delivery':

> "An *episodic delivery* is a cross between serial and the series. Like the series, the episodic delivery contains a limited number of episodes, with an overall story line that is followed across the entirety. Unlike the series, however, there is often fairly tight integration between episodes and significant overlap of plot threads." ([44], p117)

All of these examples capture a dependency between two or more units but they are reliant on each unit being substantial. One episode is an entire digital game, for instance, and another a feature film. What if units in each media platform have a small volume but are nevertheless critical? A single email, for instance, or an SMS or moment in a street game. To address this extreme modularity I introduce the notion of a segmentation volume/coherence ratio. A segment may have a small volume but a high degree of importance for the coherence of a work. This is the case with most pervasive games. Each component is the volume equivalent of chapters or paragraphs in a book or what semiotician Michael O'Toole calls a 'figure' unit in his 'systemic-functional semiotics of art' [45]. They also have a coherence relation equivalent to what narratologist Seymour Chatman terms a 'kernal':

> "Kernals are narrative moments that give rise to cruxes in the direction taken by events. They are nodes or hinges in the structure, branching points which force a movement into one of two (or more) possible paths. […] Kernals cannot be deleted without destroying the narrative logic." ([46], p53)

In the heteromedial context they do not need to be narrative moments at all, they can be challenges that are crucial to progression in a game. What does one call this single abstract yet heteromedial unit? Traditionally, a single work is described according to its medium and arts type: a story, book, film, game, DVD, performance and so on. In the interest of developing a heteromedial-specific ontology which will contribute to a transmodal methodology, I have elsewhere translated this abstract boundary of small volume units that are needed for coherence as an 'EventRealm' [27]. The following are examples of how these four segmentation models can be applied to the heteromedial context:

2.2.1 Heteromedial Series

Self-contained narrative units that can be chained together with other units to form a larger narrative structure; and at least one unit is in a different media platform than the first. An example is *24: The Game* (published by 2K Games, developed by SCEE), a digital game that was released in the US and Europe early 2006, during season five of the television broadcast of *24* (Fox Broadcasting Company) in the US. The narrative of the game is not an adaptation of a TV episode but a unique story in itself. It was set six months after season two and two and a half years before season three.

2.2.2 Heteromedial Serial

Each unit continues a narrative, they are not self-contained; and at least one unit is in a different media platform than the first. An example is 'See What Happens', a television commercial (TVC) for Mitsubishi. In 2004 Mitsubishi broadcast a thirty second advertisement during the Super Bowl. The TVC features two cars in an accident avoidance test. The cars speed along a highway, chasing two trucks that have men hurtling objects out the back of them. The objects increase in size from bowling balls, to barbeques and finally to two cars. The cars tumble out and just as they are about to hit the competing cars the screen cuts to black and shows the text: 'seewhathappens.com'. At the website viewers could then watch the twenty second ending of the clip.

2.2.3 Heteromedial Flexi

Each unit has self-contained and continuing narrative strands; and at least one unit is in a different media platform than the first. An example is the path of the Osiris message Jenkins provides from *The Matrix.* In 2003, the Wachowski Brothers released three units in different media: a short anime (Japanese animation), digital game and feature film. Each of these had their own self-containment but also a continuing narrative that ran through all of them. In the short anime, 'The Last Flight of Osiris', the character Jue and her crew discover the machines are drilling to Zion. Their aim is to warn Zion of the impending danger by sending a message to the Nebuchadnezzar crew. At the end of the story Jue just manages to post the letter (thus ending a narrative thread), but we do not know what happens to the letter (a continuing thread). What happens is dealt with in the digital game, *Enter the Matrix*. Indeed, the first mission for the player is to retrieve the letter from the post office. The player succeeds in continuing the narrative but we still do not know of the consequences of our actions. Then finally, at the beginning of the second film, *The Matrix Reloaded*, Niobe (who is one of two characters in the game) reports on the "last transmissions of the Osiris". The transmissions posted in the anime and retrieved by players in the digital game. The feature film has its own narrative that is indeed continuing in a monomedia thread too, but the heteromedial flexi thread highlighted here has closed.

2.2.4 Heteromedial EventRealm

A single entity that has many small volume units with unique information in different media platforms and artforms. It can be a single, non-continued work or employed to denote an episode. A single work example is the *Big Urban Game* mentioned earlier. An episodic example is alternate reality games (ARGs). ARGs are usually updated on a weekly basis with game and narrative information experienced over a range of media platforms. This means each weekly episode is a heteromedial EventRealm. Since many ARGs have also been commissioned to coincide with other traditional media properties like a television show, feature film or digital game, they would also exhibit heteromedial series relations with each respectively.

What this upholding of the integrity of media platforms means is that researchers have to be fluent in all of them. If a heteromedial work starts in a television episode, continues in a digital game and then into a book for instance, the researcher needs to understand the peculiar media affordances, artform poetics and related theory of each, and perceive their combined polymorphic effect. A somewhat recent notion related to this requirement is being interrogated by the PART (Production and Research in Transliteracy) Group at De Montfort University. Sue Thomas, Howard Rheingold, Kate Pullinger, Bruce Mason and others are developing their concept of 'transliteracy', which is described on their website as:

> "[T]he ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools and media from signing and orality through handwriting, print, TV, radio and film, to digital social networks." [47]

Beyond a multi-modal literacy, I employ transliteracy to denote the peculiar skills needed to perceive and participate in polymorphic works. The skills and knowledge needed to attend to all of the media platforms and artforms utilized in these works is a horrendously high and seemingly impossible requirement for a single researcher. But, as Genosko observes, it is an intuitive and appropriate response:

> "Guattari and Vilar supposed that researchers will be predisposed towards a transdisciplinary perspective on the basis of their grasp, even at first from within their own disciplines, of the character of emerging and quickly changing multidimensional complex objects such as data processing systems, and their value for elaborating a transdisciplinary perspective. This openness means that researchers will have to familiarize themselves with concepts from other disciplines and learn how to work with them." ([40], p137)

2.3 Tiered

As I argue elsewhere in the context of alternate reality games, an important characteristic of contemporary entertainment is tiering [29]. Tiering describes the production and experience of 'work' through different 'content', facilitating a different experience. Each tier provides a different point-of-entry into the work and in most cases access to the tier is unidirectional (as opposed to being accessible after some linear traversal) and heterarchical. Tiers can be observed at the 'World' and 'Work' levels. At the world level a person may experience a world through the book, feature film or digital game. In most cases, it is only a fan that actually traverses all the components. At the work level tiering takes place according to a variety of factors: medium, geography or skills for instance. Geographic tiering is evident in Sermon and Zapp's *A Body of Water* (1999), where interactors were situated in different locations. Medium tiering is evident in Blast Theory's *Can You See Me Now?* (2001), where there were players who participated online and others in the streets. Tiers are also created by producers according to skills and interests, as is the case with alternate reality games, where a player may experience the work through their puzzle-solving activity, another through their plot study and another through character interactions.

What these individualized experiences mean for researchers, is that it is not possible for a single researcher to experience an 'entire' work, indeed there is no shared work to analyse.

3. ACADEMIC BENEFITS

The observation that there is not shared work to analyse facilitates, I argue, a paradigm in which ontologies are likewise not shared but polyphonic. Beyond echoing the cultural state of entertainment, there are compelling benefits to the heterogenous approach. The championing of individual and discipline-specific interpretation of polymorphic creations reinstates the contextual, dynamic and personalized nature of analysis as well as facilitates specificity and transdisciplinarity.

3.1 On Dynamic, Contextual and Subjective Ontologies

> "The unity of an ongoing philosophy of experience and humanity is a product of a plurality of perspectives focused on common experience rather than a consensus of opinions stated in a common belief."
> (Richard McKeon, [48])

The premise of a shared ontology is that language has to be static, pervasive and collectively agreed upon for effective communication to occur. This is not necessarily the case. Linguist Roy Harris' 'integrationist theory' argues that language is dynamic and contextual [49]. Harris claims that people do not garner meaning from a 'sign' (form of communication) that is independent of the situation it occurs. Rather than accept signs, words or terms as having an agreed meaning, they are assembled at the moment of communication.

In this context, rather than create ontologies and terms that have pervasive potential, terms maintain their subjectivity. They are contextual, specific to the understanding and awareness of the researcher(s) and reader(s) at a certain point in time. This means that terms do not have to be justified over long periods of time, beyond their applicability. Terms retain their value as dynamic semantic portals to understanding, relevant to the extant knowledge of the culture at large. Signs transform with the researchers and readers. This approach thrusts the subjectivity of the researcher and the dynamic and inter-dependent nature of the focus of their study into the foreground.

To illustrate, Jenkins argues that in the ideal form of 'transmedia storytelling': '[e]ach franchise entry needs to be self-contained so you don't need to have seen the film to enjoy the game and vice-versa' [36], p139). This recommendation for a self-containment relation between units is representative of at least three contextual issues. One: that the object of Jenkins' study is massive franchises designed for massive audiences. Each unit in a franchise has a large volume: a two-hour feature film, digital game that takes

forty-hours to play and so on. They are so large and require such a range of media and artform literacies that audiences are not expected to traverse all of them. And so, each unit needs to be coherent and address different audiences. Two, a transmedia approach to franchises is somewhat new to audiences. Many do not expect nor are inclined to traverse many platforms and artforms in order to experience a work. Three, the self-containment approach to unit relations is a transmedia transposition of a culturally mature episodic logic. There are, as I have outlined in the heteromedial segmentations section, other approaches that render each unit highly dependent and not self-contained. It could be said therefore that as audiences and creators develop a literacy and preference for the transmedia form, that other relations will emerge.

A heterogenous approach also frees up the researcher to alter their terminology according to their audiences. This applies at the inter-discipline level: where different terms are employed according to the research area being addressed; and also at the academic and general audience level: where terms are employed according to the expert, non-expert and industry-specific sector being addressed. An example of the former is the various terms that are employed to describe the multi-platform approach, for example: multi-channel, multi-platform, transmedia, cross-media, synergistic, integrated media and 360 content or planning. The 'multi-channel' term is from marketing and advertising nomenclature, a term that would not be appropriate in a media studies context as a 'channel' implies a medium is a neutral transmission device. On this latter point about the transportability of a term between academia and industry: in the context of academia being guided by the need to measure 'impact' of research, researchers are assessed according to both their academic and public status. This has the unintended effect of academics attempting to create terms and ontologies that are accessible to both academia and industry. Such an approach can thwart, I believe, specificity and appropriateness. What is needed, therefore, is a shift to 'transjunctional operations'. As internet theorist Lars Qvortrup explains in the context of his 'hypercomplexity,' which will be expanded soon:

> "This means that the concept of universal "truth" or consensus is replaced by the need for transjunctional operations, which make it possible to switch codes and to decide which code is appropriate for specific social operation." ([50], p7)

3.2 On Specificity

Another possible effect of a heterogenous ontological approach is that it facilitates specificity. Specificity is a trope of academic discourse. Although the revision of concepts and the emergence of constructive neologisms are remunerations of the pursuit of shared ontologies, they also breed generalizations. In an effort to address multiple audiences with one set of signs, the terms that are employed are often diluted to ensure neutrality. Due to the diversity of media platforms and artforms employed in polymorphic works and the corresponding range of theories, any attempt to create a discipline-neutral ontology would produce insubstantial terms. For instance, terms that I readily employ — 'form' and 'work' — are somewhat neutral compared to 'game' and 'story', but they also do not provide any insight to the nature of the object referred to. They are taxonomical, referring to an instance and boundary, rather than descriptive.

3.3 On Transdisciplinarity

I also argue that the spirit of a heterogenous ontology approach would be open to include non-academic ontologies as equal contributions to understanding. Although non-academic research may not be rigorous or peer-reviewed, the highly subjective and representative nature of the discourses will add another layer of insight and complexity to understanding the object of study. This inclusion of practitioners accords with the growing call for 'transdisciplinarity': 'Transdisciplinarity is a new form of learning and problem solving involving cooperation among different parts of society and academia in order to meet complex challenges in society' ([51], p7). Transdisciplinarity is the academic infrastructure equivalent of what digital culture theorist Pierre Lévy terms 'collective intelligence'. In *Convergence Culture*, Jenkins elaborates on Lévy's term and holds it as a defining feature of contemporary culture:

> "Lévy draws a distinction between shared knowledge, information that is believed to be true and held in common by the entire group, and collective intelligence, the sum total of information held individually by the members of the group that can be accessed in response to a specific question." ([36], p27)

Indeed, 'collective intelligence' has been identified by researchers as a distinguishing activity of players in alternate reality games [13, 36]. Collective intelligence is a cultural shift observable at both artistic and methodological levels.

In summary, the acknowledgement of a polyglot consciousness [52], to use Bakhtin's terminology, facilitates or demands awareness of the function of ontologies as dynamic semantic portals; portals that provide insight into the object of study through a bidirectional analysis of the constructor and object. These portals are also changeable according to an audience and so retain their specificity. One can also ensure that ontologies of those inside and outside of the academy are included. In other words, they are not engineered for mass communication (which is bundled with consensus).

4. TOWARDS TRANSMODIOLOGY

"Here is a principle of chorography:
do not choose between different meanings of key terms,
but compose by using all meanings
(write the paradigm)."
(Gregory Ulmer, [53], p48)

The characteristics of the ontological heterogeneity approach offered here resituates or acknowledges the role of an ontology as providing information about the object of study through a meta analysis of the ontology rather than the ontology itself. This correlates with what Qvortrup posits: that complexity, a fundamental trait of contemporary society, is best addressed with 'hypercomplexity' [50]. Qvortrup elaborates citing Niklas Luhmann: "We term *hypercomplex* a system that is orientated to its own complexity and seeks to grasp it as complexity" ([50], p35).

Building on the hypercomplex paradigm of self- and society-conscious research, I bravely propose the notion of transmodiology. The portmanteau of 'trans' and 'mode' is intentionally polysemous. As defined in the *Australian Concise English Dictionary*, 'trans' denotes '1. across, beyond. 2. on or to the other side of. 3. through. 4. into another state or place. 5.

surpassing, transcending' ([54], p1450). Mode is invoked to denote medial (media platforms and different expressive modes within a medium); presentation (narrativization and dramatization in narratologist Gérard Genette parlance [55]); phases (Björk and Holopainen define a change of mode in a game as phases or turns where the interface, actions and information changes drastically [34]); genre; artform and theoretical methodologies (eg: narratological and ludological). It is concerned with any traversal and transformation that takes place at the level of the object of study and the analysis of it.

It is my contention that the study of polymorphic creations will facilitate the development of a discipline that is a synthesis of many disciplines. Polymorphic works have stories, games and art present in their traditional form but are also developing their own rhetoric that transcends them. A television show, for instance, that requires you to traverse a website as part of the work (not as a paratext) employs both narrative and ludic or ergodic qualities in that a person has to act to actuate meaning [56]. Artform poetics are observable in each text or unit (a graphic novel or performance for instance) but also at the global level in combinatory rhetoric (a polymorphic poetics). Transmodiology gathers these insights to form new rhetorical understandings but also new methodological approaches.

As has been argued, transmodiology would champion the development of contextual, dynamic and subjective schemas for those that wish to interrogate patterns across a wide range of polymorphic objects. It is the study of relationships between things: between media platforms, between ontologies, and so on. Akin to the spirit of Guattari's metamethodology as espoused by Gensoko: it is 'a theorization of the character of the relations between its diverse components and their development,' he continues:

> Guattari's preferred term of transdisciplinary research was a call to rethink relations between science, society, politics, ethics and aesthetics through the development of a metamethodology adequate to this new field of relations.' ([40], p.134)

But beyond the relations, transmodiology also seeks to map the connections to produce a new level of insight and understanding. Transdisciplinary research, based on Guattari's reinstatement of the subjective and the academic/industry model popularized recently, is considered to be one method within the methodology of transmodiology. Complex relations, and the insights the observation and modeling of them produce, are perceived and conceived through the strategy of ontological heterogeneity.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

'[W]e must deal with life and behavior of discourse in a contradictory and multi-languaged world.'
(Mikhail Bakhtin ,[52], p275)

At the beginning of this paper I claimed that a shared ontology is not appropriate for research into polymorphic creations. I have outlined ways in which these forms demand heterogenous ontologies, the remunerations of such an approach and some costs in not instituting one. Transmodiology was introduced as a potential emerging methodology where traversal across modes in artefacts and analysis is the unifying concern. Fundamentally, this paper explores the rationale for a methodology that is appropriate to researching polymorphic creations: one that is at least heterogenous, dynamic and tiered. It is these approaches that are the subject of my thesis and will therefore be illuminated in the not-too-distant future.

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