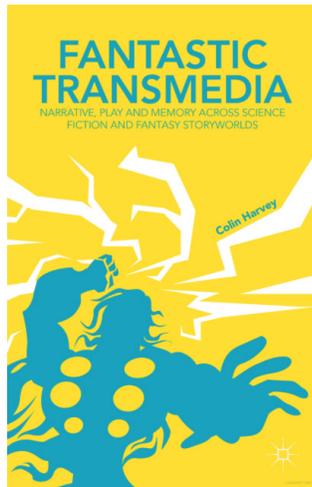


Book Review: *Fantastic Transmedia* by Colin B. Harvey

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Harvey, Colin B. (2015) *Fantastic Transmedia: Narrative, Play and Memory Across Science Fiction and Fantasy Storyworlds*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. 252 pp. ISBN: 978-1137306036.

Fantastic Transmedia is an extensive analysis of transmedia across science fiction and fantasy worlds. Colin B. Harvey examines the more well-known franchises, such as *Star Wars* and *Halo* alongside independent producers who are creating content unconnected to franchises, and the result is a fresh understanding of contemporary transmedia. Definitions of transmedia have been contested in scholarship, as Harvey notes: 'for some commentators, it's a new phenomenon [...] particular to the digital age [...]. For other commentators, it's the continuation of an existing mode of storytelling' (2015: 16). Harvey opens the book by discussing the origins and uses of the term, and the ways in which it is used in both industrial and academic contexts. Chapters One and Two explore the concept of transmedia storytelling and the role of the fantastic, with particular emphasis on Henry Jenkins' argument that 'transmedia storytelling is the art of world making' (2008: 21). Chapter Three examines the tensions between transmedia storytelling and adaptation, using Tolkien's worlds of *The Hobbit* and *The Lords of the Rings* and Marvel's Cinematic Universe as examples.

Chapter Four marks the first of three chapters looking at specific franchises, exploring the relation between canon and the transmedia storyworld of *Halo*. Chapters Five and Six focus on the range of ways in which audiences may engage with storyworlds that cross multiple platforms, examining *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Star Wars* respectively. Harvey draws on his own fandom in both of these chapters, seamlessly integrating the academic with the fan to create a unique approach to the examination of transmedia storytelling. Chapter Seven switches the focus from large franchises to independent producers and examines the issue of control in relation to transmedia storyworlds. Harvey's interviews with creators in this chapter prove particularly useful in assessing different kinds of transmedia storytelling and the issues these create. Finally, in Chapter Eight, Harvey develops a new definition and taxonomy of transmedia storytelling and speculates on where it might be heading.

Harvey's experience as a licensed tie-in creator as well as an academic is evident in *Fantastic*

Transmedia, and provides a unique approach to the understanding of transmedia storytelling. This dual identity enables Harvey to straddle the divides between the spheres of industry and academic, and draw on his knowledge of both to allow the different perspectives to work in concert with each other. One of the key insights for me in *Fantastic Transmedia*, however, is the role that memory is found to play in transmedia storytelling. The book is peppered with Harvey's own experiences of transmedia play. He opens the preface by detailing his early memories of reading *Doctor Who Weekly*, watching *Blakes 7* and playing with *Star Wars* toys. These memories are clearly strong, affective ones, and they help to form Harvey's concept of transmedia memory. Writing about *Star Wars* in Chapter Six, for example, Harvey remembers sending off for a Boba Fett toy and playing the *Star Wars* arcade game. He suggests that these memories seem – at first glance – to demonstrate two different kinds of play, but argues that the disparities between them lie in the affective intensities produced, and that the nostalgia-play fans engage with is a powerful means through which franchises can ensure loyalty to a brand. Harvey argues that 'ideas drawn from the field of collective memory can help us understand the network of relations at play in the phenomenon of transmedia storytelling' (2015: 34), and uses examples from industry, franchises and fans to develop the new definition of transmedia storytelling expounded in the final chapter.

Fantastic Transmedia is an excellent and insightful analysis into transmedia storytelling. Harvey details the debates that have taken place surrounding the term and its application to the fantastic, and examines multiple modes of transmedia storytelling within science fiction and fantasy. Harvey's analysis offers new insights into what transmedia storytelling is, and what it might become. This book will certainly be of interest to an academic audience interested in the fantastic, transmedia and the role of memory.

References

Jenkins, H. (2008) *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. London: New York University Press.

Bethan Jones is a PhD candidate at Aberystwyth University, examining fan culture, antifandom and fan/producer relationships. Her work has been published in *Sexualities*, *Transformative Works and Cultures* and the *Journal of Film and Television*. Her co-edited collection *Crowdfunding The Future: Media Industries, Ethics and Digital Society* was published by Peter Lang in 2015.