Crucial Convergence: Scott Pilgrim as Transmedial Test Case

Kyle Eveleth

I hear the book was better than the movie.

—Comeau, Scott Pilgrim vs. The World

Henry Jenkins claims that the entertainment industry in the West these days is “horizontal” (Jenkins 1). Entertainment companies like Warner Brothers have begun to expand their holdings outside of their traditional fields, in this case cinema, to other media forms like comics and video games, creating a distribution network that can turn intellectual property from a single text into a sprawling franchise. In the case of Warner Brothers, concerted distribution through its holdings allowed for the systematic release of single-franchise offerings like Batman: before the film comes a backstory comic, a feature film release follows, and after the film comes a video game that expands on the story. This kind of cross-media entertainment goes by many names, but the first and perhaps most appropriate is Henry Jenkins’s transmedial storytelling. Carlos Alberto Scolari defines transmedia storytelling as “a particular narrative structure that expands through both different languages (verbal, iconic, etc.) and media (cinema, comics, television, video games, etc.),” but is careful to note that this storytelling is distinct from simple franchise merchandising in that

TS is not just an adaptation from one media to another. The story that the comics tell is not the same as that told on television or in cinema; the different media and languages participate and contribute to the construction of the transmedia narrative world. This textual dispersion is one of the most important sources of complexity in contemporary popular culture. (587)

Very different from the age-old practice of adapting a story from one narrative medium to another, transmedial stories “are stories told across multiple media” (Jenkins 2003, emphasis added). Instead of
attempting to retell stories as similarly as possible despite mediary differences, transmedial stories both rely and capitalize on the inherent differences between media forms, meaning that each medium does what it does best—so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics, and its world might be explored and experienced through game play. Each franchise entry needs to be self-contained enough to enable autonomous consumption. That is, you don’t need to have seen the film to enjoy the game and vice-versa. (Jenkins 3)

Transmedial stories represent a kind of ideal outcome for contemporary convergence culture. In part a logical extension of the Bakhtinian and Todorovian semiotic concept of intertextuality, now a buzzword in literary and cultural studies, and Kress and van Leeuwen’s educational concept of multimodality, a buzzword in pedagogical studies, the concept of transmediality—or the quality of a work of art of spanning multiple media platforms in a convergent manner—ties together issues of contemporary mass-media consumption, participation, and multimodal identity formation. By virtue of “bleeding over” the margins of their harnessed media forms, transmedial stories examine both these borders and the liminal spaces between media, such as the differences and similarities between scene creation for cinematic narrative and for graphic narrative. Their exploration exposes the limits of single media forms even as they celebrate the convergence of multiple media platforms to create cohesion in narrative, and their example leads a generation to similar participatory and performative gestures of exploration.

But not all texts created from (or in reaction to) contemporary convergence culture are transmedial. Jenkins notes that “not all stories flow across media” (3)—in fact, “most won’t” (3)—and not all stories that take up the reins of multiple media platforms are indeed “transmedial.” He explains that though a “good franchise” might be successfully generated from good characters, a transmedia franchise is spawned from a “good ‘world’” (3). Transmedia franchises encourage consumers to come to the stories through different physical access points (games, films, books) by utilizing each medium’s strengths to reach many different audiences, representing the pinnacle of convergence culture. For example, avid readers of the Harry Potter books who have never picked up a video game may be enticed by the possibility of taking a more active role in the world through the video game offerings. By focusing on these different mental states—observer and participant—the franchise subtly pushes fans to consume the media offerings that give them the best opportunities to realize those states.
However, times have changed since Marsha Kinder first proposed the concept of “transmedia” in 1991, and nearly a decade has passed since Jenkins first discussed depth of character based upon transmedia practices. Most significant of these changes is the accepted normalcy of multiple media platforms and multimodal consumption, to the point that folks born since 1984 are often called “digital natives,” accustomed more to digital forms and the Internet than their predecessors. These digitized individuals are beginning to craft texts in what we might call their “native tongue,” the transmedial format, and these texts must be reckoned with to more completely understand transmedial storytelling as well as the culture that now lives steeped in multimodal access to information. To that end, I examine the intensely “Millennial” text of Scott Pilgrim. Though Scott Pilgrim is an intellectual franchise that has indeed spanned multiple media platforms, it ostensibly falls short of achieving what Jenkins defines as “transmedia storytelling.” Where it falls short, however, illustrates not a failure to achieve transmediality but instead a necessity to re-examine the definition and current understanding of what it means to be transmedial. Simply stated, Scott Pilgrim is an example of transmedia storytelling, crafted by a Millennial culture that is native to these practices, but one that forces us to redefine what may be reckoned transmedial precisely because of this acculturation to transmedial practice.

Scott Pilgrim (2005-2010), Bryan Lee O’Malley’s six-volume graphic “chronicle,” interweaves classic manga style with popular culture references thick enough to raise a blush in Joss Whedon, a sort of ersatz oracle and touchstone of whatever it is that is considered the Millennial identity, at least in terms of popular culture—Whedon goes so far as to call Scott Pilgrim “the chronicle of our time” (back cover of volume one, emphasis added). Readers follow Canadian twentysomething Scott, a representative of the new generation of slacker kids raised on videogames and Toonami, through his romantic struggle to win the heart of “American delivery ninja” Ramona Flowers [age: unknown]. Struggle here is not metaphorical but literal: to win Ramona’s affections, Scott must defeat her Seven Evil Exes, who formed a league after a drunken rant on Craigslist by the head of the League, Gideon Graves. Along the way on his (mock) heroic epic, Scott faces the expected trials and tribulations that should help him mature and grow into a likeable character. But, as we shall soon see, growing up is hard to do and Scott dislikes trials (unless they come in quest form). Things get complicated when Scott must tackle such issues as taking responsibility for past mistakes and maybe not lying for once in his life. Equal parts heroic epic, videogame tribute, musical lexicon, film and television trivia game, slice of life narrative, and failed-bildungsroman, Scott Pilgrim exemplifies the hypertextual, inter-relational media consciousness.
that largely defines contemporary life for the Millennial generation; it goes so far as to proclaim its graphic representation is the late Millennial generation reader’s life.

To understand how this text redefines the contemporary idea of transmedial storytelling, we must examine transmedial storytelling in the terms that its greatest proponent, Henry Jenkins, lays out. Examining and applying this definition is the first step in identifying how *Scott Pilgrim* initially falls short but later redefines the transmedial phenomenon. Transmedial storytelling “represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience” (Jenkins 2007 np). That is, there are three essential components of transmedial storytelling: that the elements be “dispersed systematically” and that this dispersal take place “across multiple delivery channels” (which I will call condition A), that the dispersed elements must be “integral” to the story (condition B), and that the elements create “a unified and coordinated entertainment experience” (condition C). Thus, for example, a film adaptation of a book may not be transmedial because it may not meet condition B, though it meets condition A and partially satisfies condition C. Furthermore, Jenkins notes a fourth “ideal” condition (D), that “each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story” (ibid.). Though not necessary—and indeed one of the trickier parts of the process of transmediation—awareness of medium limitations and exploration of them as part of the story can make a transmedial storytelling act even more compelling. Jenkins offers *The Matrix* franchise as a notable example of a transmedial act that meets all four conditions (ibid.). I argue that the *Scott Pilgrim* franchise does not meet all of these criteria (namely, it has difficulty reaching conditions B, C, and D even as it approaches them), but further examination of the other criteria will shed light on how and why the franchise misses these marks and what this means for transmedia in general.

The elements of condition A are essentially cultural and economic in nature. Jenkins explains that transmedial storytelling is made possible in part because it is “the ideal aesthetic form” for a time marked by what Pierre Levy calls “collective intelligence,” or “new social structures that enable the production and circulation of knowledge within a networked society.” Additionally, transmedial production “reflects the economics of media consolidation or what industry observers call ‘synergy’” (Jenkins), a “configuration of the entertainment industry [that] makes transmedia expansion an economic imperative” even while it allows “the most gifted transmedia artists [to] also surf these marketplace pressures to
create a more expansive and immersive story than would have been possible otherwise.” Furthermore, franchises are often most successful in coordinating synergistic releases when the same author oversees their production and especially when divisions of the same parent company (rather than licensing agreements to other companies) are utilized in the production and release of the property.

In the case of *Scott Pilgrim*, Bryan Lee O’Malley began working on the film (*Scott Pilgrim vs. the World*, 2010) just after the first volume was released. He explained via interview that his “publisher [Oni Press] has a sort of Hollywood arm” that passed his idea on to producer Marc Platt in 2004 (Winning 1), noting that the time between conception and release was due to director Edgar Wright’s intervening work on *Hot Fuzz* (2007), “so [the delay was] just the natural cycle of his work or whatnot” (Winning 1). In addition, production of the Ubisoft-designed game *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World: The Game* (2010) was announced at the San Diego Comic Convention in July of 2009, sometime after the fifth book but before the sixth (Ubisoft np). The synergistic effect of layered releases drives media hype (as the book concludes, the movie is released and the game is released shortly thereafter) even as it increases modes of access for potential readers. This synergistic release model reflects a systematic dispersal of products across media for both cultural reasons (building readership, encouraging fan communities and participation) and economic reasons (building on the success of previous installments, increasing markets). In this way, the franchising of *Scott Pilgrim* into a film and game as well as a book series satisfies condition A of transmediality.

To effectively achieve transmediation as Jenkins defines it, a given franchise is released episodically (in line with the systematic nature of transmedia) with each episode “accessible on its own terms even as it makes a unique contribution to the narrative system as a whole.” That is to say that consumers do not necessarily need to have read the book to enjoy the movie and vice-versa, but that doing so will enhance enjoyment or in some way alter their comprehension of the story. To that end, transmedial extensions “serve a variety of different functions,” such as providing insight into characters’ lives, building the fictional world of the story, retelling glossed-over events in between installments in other media forms, or increasing the realism of the fictional world by providing or building historical documentation. These practices expand the marketability of the product by “creating different points of entry for different audience segments,” which may in turn lead to these consumers accessing the product on other media platforms: gamers may become moviegoers and moviegoers may buy books. More important than
the systematic and episodic manner of distribution—an extension of condition A—these products must form a cohesive product-construct in order to be viably transmedial. Referring to Neil Young’s concept of “additive comprehension,” Jenkins explains that new texts should add a “piece of information which forces us to revise our understanding of the fiction as a whole,” rather than simply rehashing the same story in essentially the same manner (para. 8). Some of these new pieces of information exist because of the addition of new modalities to the product, such as the inclusion of music or sound effects, the casting of certain actors to portray characters, and enlightened level design that mimics themes and motifs found in other texts. Other pieces of new information might include dramatic reinterpretations or additions to the series, such as the reinterpretation of the titular character of Beowulf in Robert Zemeckis’ adaptation.

Though the Scott Pilgrim franchise takes part in many of these transmedial actions, its enactment of transmedia storytelling lacks the differentiation that Jenkins requires in his definition. In a way, Scott Pilgrim has difficulty using its multimedia platforms to reinterpret the story or add distinct but cohesive parts to the whole tale. Unlike The Matrix, a franchise that Jenkins explains has no “ur-text where one can turn to gain all of the information needed to comprehend the Matrix universe” (para. 3), the Scott Pilgrim books are arguably the only place one need go to get the entire story. The film’s addition of new modalities and languages, namely audio- and movement-based, indeed adds new layers of meaning to the reading experience of the books. The partially-honorific, partially-parodic relationship between Scott Pilgrim and The Legend of Zelda that is set up and explored verbally and visually in the books is further explored by the inclusion of the iconic Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past introduction music in the opening scene of the film. This trope is maintained throughout the film through the use of sound effects like the flute song from the same game and a version of Zelda’s widely-used “Faerie Grotto” song. The added layer of the auditory mode to the narrative gestures widely at the same kind of tropes in the books in a way that other viewers or readers—perhaps those most interested in the musical aspect of games—will access readily. In much the same way, the design of the video game, a side-scrolling beat-em-up, plays on kinesthetic modalities through its retrospective gameplay and the visceral act of controlling Scott through his battles. The nature of “avatardom” that he takes on in the reading becomes literalized as the player controls him in the game, thus realizing in a manner the books’ various admissions that Scott Pilgrim is in part the life of the reader who controls it. These modal inclusions in media adaptations, while useful in constructing meaning and changing the way the reader experiences each text,
are not strictly transmedial. The problem lies in the story being told, which is essentially the same in each offering (whether condensed for time and ease, as in the film, or changed to suit simplistic and accessible gameplay) and which adds very little in terms of content to the understanding of the story. No backstories are explored here, and the world of *Scott Pilgrim* is rather static between media forms.

This lack of narrative differentiation and world exploration seems to spoil *Scott Pilgrim*’s claim to transmedial storytelling. As I noted earlier, Jenkins argues that transmedial storytelling is the ideal aesthetic for a culture of collective intelligence, where ideas and concepts converge and are exchanged freely and openly between intellects and media. Levy has previously argued that art in the age of collective intelligence functions as a “cultural attractor” that pulls like-minded individuals together to form new knowledge communities—something Jenkins has studied at great length in his work on fan communities like those centered around *Star Trek* and *Twin Peaks*—and Jenkins extends this argument to say that transmedia storytelling is likewise a “textual activator,” a catalyst for “setting into motion the production, assessment, and archiving information” of a given product (para. 8). The actions set into motion by the text—production, assessment, and archiving—are a few of the roles generated by transmedial storytelling. Transmedial storytelling incentivizes readerly participation, especially where generation is concerned, and it is in this respect—in its ability to mobilize readers and reposition the traditional roles of writer and reader—that *Scott Pilgrim* alters transmediation in an intriguing way. This important shift in focus from literal world-building (filling out the parts of the world left open by the creators) to metaphorical world-building (applying the rules of the fictional world to make inferences about that world) harnesses the kind of nuanced and subversive treatment of tradition and convention rampant in *Scott Pilgrim*. The difference, like the awareness that *Scott Pilgrim* applies, is best shown by difference.

Jenkins maintains that the most successful transmedia stories are “based not on individual characters or specific plots but rather complex fictional worlds which can sustain multiple interrelated characters and their stories” (para. 5). A classic example of Jenkins’s kind of transmedia world is the *Dungeons and Dragons* franchise, one that has widely embraced transmediality in its world-building focus. One of the transmedial stories that is told via *D&D* is that of dark elf Drizzt Do’Urden. Created as a secondary character by R.A. Salvatore in the *Forgotten Realms* campaign setting, Drizzt has starred outside of the tabletop roleplaying genre in a series of novels, graphic narratives, and video games. Though Drizzt’s story is iconic and provides a focal point for the series, the setting is rich
enough that the media accessories to his story, like the game *Baldur’s Gate: Dark Alliance*, which explores parts of Drizzt’s underground home and the culture of his native people, or the D&D supplement *Hall of Heroes*, which examines his fellow heroes and adventuring companions, allow for greater access to the world around Drizzt while they simultaneously improve focus on him as a protagonist.

In a somewhat different way than the drive to build the stories that take place in the multimedia *Forgotten Realms* setting—of which Drizzt’s story is but one example—*Scott Pilgrim* builds a story that includes the rules of the world in which it occurs. Rather than making characters and building stories about how they fit into the world, readers of *Scott Pilgrim* are encouraged to build connections between the stories shown in the works by building the world around them. Instead of a world-centric view of the fiction, *Scott Pilgrim* embraces a character-centric view of the fiction. Though the differences in execution could be drawn out and made more complex, it seems more prudent to state that the processes—at least in terms of how fans partake in them—are functionally similar. That is to say that, though *Scott Pilgrim*’s world-building is sparked by a character and not a world, the end result is the same: a complex, participation-driven fictional world that is made stronger by the fans it attracts.

This process of world-building encourages the “encyclopedic impulse” to know everything there is to know about the fictional world. We might think, for example, of those *Star Wars* fans who pondered the ecology of Tatooine based on its extraordinary solar radiation—a decidedly extratextual concept, but one that is supported by the narrative nonetheless—or those who explored the tension between Wookies and Imperial forces following enslavement. These encyclopedic ambitions “often result in what might be seen as gaps or excesses in the unfolding of the story,” opening the way for fans to become “unauthorized” authors of untold stories within the universe (para. 12). To keep track of the world’s “rules”—the understandings that drive and regulate these unauthorized stories and underpin the authorized ones—many fans have taken to creating encyclopedias of information. Jenkins notes that the expansive and inclusive nature of transmedia storytelling “provides a set of roles and goals which readers can assume as they enact aspects of the story through their everyday life,”, making transmedia storytelling a deeply fan-centric and participatory endeavor (para. 11).

Perhaps the most compelling evidence, then, of *Scott Pilgrim*’s transmedial nature lies in its ability to create the encyclopedic impulse for its readers because of its ability to incentivize participation and provide these everyday roles and goals. However, rather than
building a *Scott Pilgrim* world in which the readers can frolic and create, the *Scott Pilgrim* franchise evokes many of the always-already participatory forms of engagement that exist in the culture that not only allows but perhaps demands transmedia storytelling. Because (as I argued in the previous chapter) *Scott Pilgrim* is a pastiche crafted from a web of references and allusions that both parody and pay homage to their sources, the impulse for many serious readers becomes the drive to collect and know all of these potential references. The development of a *Scott Pilgrim* wiki to attempt to catalogue all the nuances and references surrounding the work, as well as the exhaustive fan-submitted trivia section of the Scott Pilgrim vs. the World Internet Movie Database page, exemplifies this drive to encyclopedic knowledge. The drive to collect this *Scott Pilgrim* trivia is extraordinary: actress Anna Kendrick, who portrays Stacy Pilgrim in the film, mentions in the commentary that her name badge is the actual name badge of the “real world Stacy Pilgrim,” a fact that she notes needs to be put on IMDB right away. The encyclopedic desire must be enormous when the actors of the film—actors who are all part of the millennial generation that *Scott Pilgrim* depicts—are aware of the depth of the fan base and the urge to know everything there is to know about the *Scott Pilgrim* world.

However, *Scott Pilgrim* is not a traditionally transmedial case because of its lack of traditional world-building, as explained earlier in relation to *Dungeons and Dragons*. In fact, the *Scott Pilgrim* franchise, with its devoted focus on Scott, appears initially not to open the door for much exploration of the world around him. As I noted earlier, the lack of narrative differentiation hinders the act of world-building in some ways, but it is in *Scott Pilgrim*’s generally subversive treatment of tradition, narration, and participation that its distinctive brand of transmediality becomes more clear. *Scott Pilgrim* questions the validity of narrative focus through its language by tearing Scott down as a protagonist and revealing his faults. In addition, it questions narrative focus not only by suggesting that other stories are going on around Scott—that, by virtue of being elevated to the level of pseudo-Grand-Narrative, the narrative also ignores or silences other stories—but also by drawing attention to these “side narratives” constantly. *Scott Pilgrim* reminds readers that Scott’s friends have lives that do not revolve around Scott, even though it initially seems as though he is their universe. Looking just at the titles of the book series, the focus wavers: Scott is always present, always foregrounded, but the backdrop of each volume shifts to encompass or exclude others, and even the titles reflect this narrative focus. We begin with his *Precious Little Life*, focusing entirely on Scott (indeed, the first words of the volume hammer this focus home: “Scott Pilgrim is dating a high schooler” is deemed worthy of opening the entire work). Volume
two raises the adversarial stakes by pitting Scott against the world. Interestingly, the two middle volumes feature much of the side-character building in the series—this is where readers learn more about Kim’s past, discovering that she has a life outside of Scott, and also where readers begin to see the cracks in Stephen’s relationship with Julie and his newfound happiness with Joseph. Despite all this, the books focus unwaveringly on Scott: on his *Infinite Sadness* and how he *Gets It Together*. Yet we never return to these important side stories: in volume five, it is Scott *Versus the Universe*, and our final view of the series is Scott’s *Finest Hour*. There is literally no room for others in this series except when Scott is fighting against them (whether “they” are the world or the entire universe). These titles, however, are undermined by the content they contain: in each additional volume, Scott’s worth as a protagonist is more profoundly questioned until it becomes clear that his story is just one of many, and perhaps not the most compelling (though it does make for good action). The juxtaposition of absolute endearment to Scott on the outside with constant questioning and critique on the inside serves as yet another clue that readers of *Scott Pilgrim* should also question appearances and traditions as they consume the series.

The treatment of participation in *Scott Pilgrim* further opens the door for questions and critiques of propriety and tradition. Though *Scott Pilgrim* makes all of the traditional moves to encourage participation, it breaks many of its own rules for guiding or controlling that participation by allowing the reader to regain agency. If gameplay is a willing surrender of agency—at least in that one must follow the rules to finish the game—then *Scott Pilgrim* is a game whose first rule is to argue about the rules. Similar games exist: Steve Jackson’s *Munchkin* is a card game that parodies many of the conventions of tabletop roleplaying games, and many of its rules and regulations are ambiguous or purposefully misleading. For example, to begin the game, players “decide who goes first by rolling the dice and arguing about the results and the meaning of this sentence and whether the fact that a word seems to be missing any effect” (1). Further, other disputes “should be settled by loud arguments, with the owner of the game having the last word,” or looked up online, “unless it’s more fun to argue” (1). Part of a game’s effectiveness at enforcing rules is that these rules are unambiguous and outside of the play experience—that they cannot be questioned. When they can be questioned, the validity of the rules, or at the very least the formality of the game, becomes a topic of questioning. Indeed, in *Munchkin*, being too serious almost always results in losing the game. In *Scott Pilgrim*, similar proceedings occur, and readers who give too much agency away are rewarded with a boring experience. A key example of this phenomenon in *Scott Pilgrim* is when the book
offers guides on how to read comics, eventually breaking down into “read it freestyle,” a rule that lies directly at odds with both convention (language is read directionally) and Wallace’s demands to the contrary (“this is the back of the book! Go to the front!”).

By offering readers these two important clues and means to examine and dismantle the story of *Scott Pilgrim*, the series enables a very subtle kind of world-building in the negative sense: readers may take it apart and question its pieces. Rather than functioning as a kind of gestalt consciousness that is beyond the realm of critique, *Scott Pilgrim* opens itself for deconstruction and allows readers to see its moving parts. It does this by harnessing the already-participatory elements that it uses to make up its pastiche. Readers come to the books already from a transmedial position: they bring to the narrative the bits (and bytes) of other media knowledge and apply them freely and openly to a narrative that is built to harness these parts and grow because of them. In essence, *Scott Pilgrim* hinges upon the reader’s transmedial skill to be unlocked. Built into its framework is a network of possible layers waiting to be accessed. Similar to how *Super Mario World* features colored outlines of blocks and platforms that correspond to colored switches the player can hit, *Scott Pilgrim* suggests alternate pathways and readings with clues: movie references, gaming homages, television tropes, musical numbers. A reader not possessing these keys can still get through the series and enjoy the experience, but the presence of these alternate paths “just out of reach” creates an impetus to come back and try again with the keys in hand, to search for the switches that will open these pathways.

Many of these themes are explored more explicitly in the film and video game, which offer stronger incentives to go back through each part of the franchise with a closer eye for detail. The repetition of the popular gaming trope “Continue?” in the film harmonizes with its brief appearance in the book series and is built upon even more strongly by the game, which features it as a part of the medium. Similarly, the focus on doors (an inherently unstable, liminal space) and knowledge of secret pathways through them finds resonance in the film, which focuses thematically on doors and what might lie behind them. Ramona, the American Delivery Ninja, is the greatest representative of the common theme of liminality and instability with a focus on movement ever forward. This theme, treated powerfully in the books and film, is built up concretely in the games: moving toward many doors in the game opens them, revealing a secret path through Subspace or a shop where powerups can be attained. More importantly, the game is a side-scrolling beat-‘em-up, in which players may only advance forward in a level—there is no looking back. The urge that Scott has to live constantly in his
past is denied, and the player, taking the role of Scott, is swept up in the same inexorable movement he experiences in his tumultuous relationship with Ramona. Finally, the participatory and peer-to-peer community-building facet of the series is teased out through the franchise’s systematic release. The book encourages readers to find friends to read along to help unlock parts of the narrative they may not have the prior knowledge to access. The film does the same on another level by adding both audio and live actors, whose relationships to one another and their previous acting engagements provide fodder for the viewer’s musically inclined or movie buff friends. What these films suggest—that there is strength in numbers, so to speak—the game makes explicit: playing *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World: The Game* solo is harder than playing it cooperatively with friends, as the number of enemies on-screen and their relative strength increases with difficulty and progression but not with the number of players. As these examples show, though each media offering may not add additional information to the Scott Pilgrim ur-text (that Scott must defeat Ramona’s Seven Evil Exes), it does add integral openings and intersections where readers/viewers/players can apply their own flair or knowledge to the story, increasing their comprehension of the franchise as a whole in ways that other media did not allow. In this way, the *Scott Pilgrim* franchise enacts “additive comprehension” while functioning as a cultural attractor for fan communities.

While it may not appear initially to be a fully-formed example of transmedia storytelling, the *Scott Pilgrim* franchise does take part in “a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience.” That *Scott Pilgrim* does this both through internal measures built into the graphic narratives and through external marketing measures like the film, game, and other products (like posters or the animated short *Scott Pilgrim vs. The Animation*, an animated adaptation of the Benvie Tech incident from volume two that appeared on Cartoon Network’s *Adult Swim*) shows a keen awareness of the influences of multimedia platforms on cultural production in the twenty-first century. More importantly, that *Scott Pilgrim* harnesses transmedial storytelling in such a totalizing manner demonstrates a deeper understanding of the cultural and generational roots of transmedia art franchises. As much as Millennial consciousness is built on ambiguity and subtlety in language and on the premise of the world as a series of participatory opportunities, so too is Millennials built on its members’ “native” relationships to multiple hyperlinked media forms and their all-encompassing consumption of these forms. To this end, *Scott Pilgrim* looks at transmedia storytelling as a native method instead of a new development. That position allows
for innovation in the form as well as intriguing and previously unseen methods of access or kinds of implementation, such as the formal structuring of a work to be always-already transmedial. In its purest sense—harnessing multiple media platforms to cohesively and uniquely tell a story—the *Scott Pilgrim* franchise is absolutely transmedial. It is, however, a permutation of transmedia storytelling that incorporates transmedia models intuitively into its structure in ways that have yet to be examined fully. To better understand both Millennial culture, which embraces and innovates on these forms, and to understand the growing complexity of artistic production by Millennials who have grown up with transmedia storytelling practices, we must continue to examine and alter our perceptions of what makes transmedia storytelling both compelling and unique—especially when it has been crafted so expertly to “live inside” of transmediality, as *Scott Pilgrim* has. Here, as ever before, *Scott Pilgrim* shows that it is a work from a culture of incredulity and doubt: growth demands the interrogation of the definitive, and *Scott Pilgrim* enacts this interrogation powerfully in style (language), form (participation), and dispersal (transmediality).
Works Cited


