Feminine Storytelling in Transmedia Content: A Focus on Woman's Diary

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is primarily to analyze the narrative characteristics and study the feminine storytelling in transmedia content focused on woman's diary. Transmedia storytelling uses multiple media platforms to provide users with a big story experience. Particularly, it is composed of a rhizomatic structure which pursues trans-dimensional, non-hierarchical and multiplicitous characteristics as it uses a variety of media simultaneously. Users navigate through story blocks, select and combine them and connect to various media to solve the problem, to find the hidden clues and fill the blanks of the story. The formal characteristics of such transmedia content give significant effect on the theme of the content. Through the multiple channels of media, voices of subaltern such as youth, female, a person of color, etc. can be spoken out. In addition, a single event can be interpreted in various point-of-views. In this process, orality-literary interaction is pursued while restoring orality. 'Woman's diary' is a form and motif that reveals such intermediality, orality, polyphony, and hybridity. Woman's diary is a clue to the event and a puzzle to solve in transmedia content. This is also a private discourse that the Others are able to give their own voices. This study concludes that transmedia storytelling integrates binary oppositions between technology and art, orality and literacy, developer and user, and implements polyphony by practicing 'feminine writing' proposed by Hélène Cixous.

Keywords: *transmedia storytelling, feminine storytelling, collective narrative, polyphony*

1. Introduction

In the age of new media, the content has been created by using multiple media platforms, including mobile applications as smartphones are rapidly extended. [1] [2] With the universal access to multimedia content, [3] it is being developed from the time when 'a single story' was delivered in one medium to the time when 'a big story' is being created in various media. As the environment of storytelling changes, divergent media and narrative expansion such as crossmedia, media mix, and OSMU are emerging. Among these, 'transmedia storytelling' especially well reflects the alternative value of new media and participatory cultural paradigm in a networked age. The key concept of transmedia storytelling was suggested by Henry Jenkins. According to him, "transmedia stories unfold across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole." [4] Indeed, many works in new media era are expanding their narrative through divergent media and different platforms. Of course, OSMU and crossmedia are the same as transmedia in that they use various media platforms. However, they are different from transmedia in that the text is already completed and it is the media

format which is faithfully adapted and literally translated. Thus, OSMU and crossmedia release the very same and fixed content in turn, without any fundamental consideration of the possibility of changes in story resulting from utilization of different media platforms. On the contrary, the core of transmedia content is that all users including readers and viewers simultaneously participate in the story process. Therefore, the original text is important in OSMU, but the engaged-user participation and user-generated content are more important in transmedia storytelling. In transmedia storytelling, text can be self-reproduced according to the degree of user's participation and there is no boundary between the original and the duplicate.

Transmedia content represents the convergence culture of technology and art. Unlike single-centered mass media, transmedia content utilizes various plural media that users can participate in. Such changes of story environment influence the aesthetic value of storytelling. In other words, in the case of transmedia content, the Others' voices, which have been alienated from the existing linear media, can resonate polyphonically by the participation of a large number of users in the process of creation.

The transmedia content is divided into two types, which are 'asynchronous-big pieces' content and 'synchronous-tiny pieces' content, depending on the theme and purpose. [5] While 'asynchronous-big pieces' content pursues commercial success focusing on films in Hollywood Studio, 'synchronous-tiny pieces' pursues independent and alternative values centered on mobile or web. In addition, 'asynchronous-big pieces' takes advantage of the fan's desire to know more, or re-envision main characters or commercial material, while 'synchronous-tiny pieces' deals with social issues and themes. 'Asynchronous-big pieces' content such as Starwars, Doctor Who, Batman, Superman, etc. have been existed before the mobile paradigm. Therefore, it is 'synchronous-tiny pieces' content that new features and innovations of transmedia are more strongly revealed. Therefore, 'synchronous-tiny pieces' content is adopted as the subject of this study.

In fact, in the 'synchronous-tiny pieces' transmedia content female protagonists appear as a protagonist, which appeared only as peripheral characters in formal media such as TV, novel, etc. Of course, although female characters appear in 'asynchronous-big pieces' content, they appear as motives of 'vanished woman' which are used as clues to detective plot. [6] The motif of 'vanished woman' or 'woman as a reward' is clichés, which has been frequently employed to attract views' interest in TV and film.
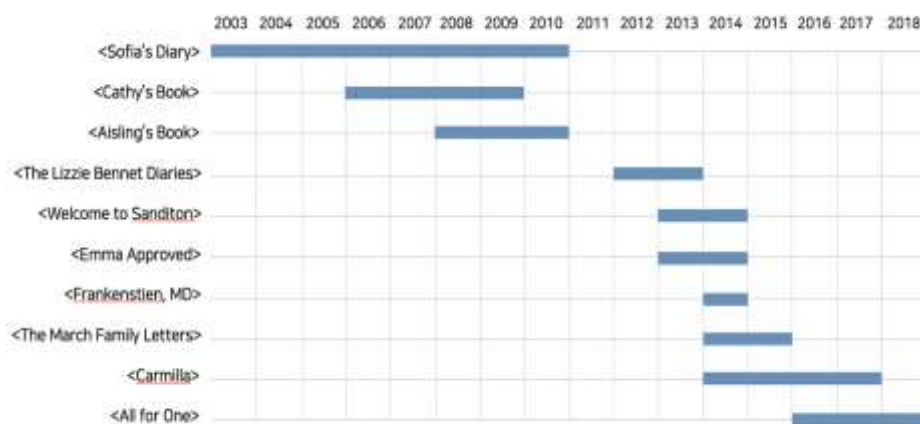

Figure 1. Synchronous-small Pieces Transmedia Content with 'Woman's Diary' Motif

Interestingly, it is 'woman's Diary' which is frequently employed as a motif in 'synchronous-tiny pieces' as shown in [Figure 1]. In this content, woman's diary is the critical clue and theme that leads to users' participation. Essentially, the diary is a private discourse, playing a role to expose the hidden truth. In particular, the woman's diary is a format that can combine orality and literacy without following the logic of masculine literal order. In addition, the narrative structure is not monolithic or organic but pursues a multi-faceted radial structure. In this respect, woman's diary is a motif that reflects the multi-variant feature of transmedia. Therefore, this study focuses on the discourse of woman's diaries and their voices in contemporary transmedia content.

For analysis, this study applies 'feminine writing', the concept of Hélèn Cixous to transmedia content. According to Hélèn Cixous, 'feminine writing' allows women to talk about themselves who have been repressed, denied under the logocentric and phallocentric order. Hélène Cixous suggests feminine writing's strategy as two steps, "to destroy" and "to foresee the unforeseeable" [7]. Specifically, if the former means dismantling of the existing solemn order through "laugh", the latter means a new rhetoric for the alienated as "writing". If the former is Jacques Derridean deconstruction extended to feminism [8], the latter is the reconstruction process of feminine writing. Transmedia changeover from passive audience to active user, extends the single-centered media into multi-centered medium and switches from the monophony to polyphony. Likewise, this study assumes that this storytelling format is closely related to feminine storytelling which pursues the various sensibilities and divergent voices, modified the concept of 'feminine writing'.

Since the Jenkins' contribution, researches on the transmedia content have been steadily performed in North America and Europe. Representatively, Henry Jenkins, who had first introduced the concept of transmedia storytelling, proposed the concept of 'spreadable media' and analyzed transmedia storytelling, focusing on viral media. [9] Carlos Alberto Scolari, Paolo Bertetti, and Matthew Freeman studied archeology of transmedia content in Europe such as Spain, Italy, and UK respectively. Louisa Ellen Stein and Kristina Busse focused on the transmedia fandom centering with BBC's series Sherlock and the world of Sherlokians. The transmedia writer and designer Andrea Phillips suggested the method for creating transmedia experiences. She defined transmedia is "telling a story through multiple communication channels at once, particularly such as the social media." [10] However unfortunately prior contemporary media researches and academic discussions have limitations in that they mainly focused on the media technology, in that most of them are specific approaches in the field of traditional media studies, [11] and in that they are heavily focused on business commercials in Hollywood or marketing campaigns, [12] such as Harry Potter, Doctor Who, Marvel&D.C., and Sherlock.

As we suggested, the transmedia content is an interdisciplinary object that can be studied from both media studies and narratology. Fundamentally, media technology and storytelling, creation and participation, formal characteristics and thematic values should be syntagmatically considered to study the transmedia content. Thus, this study will be centered on both media environment and the story itself. The main contention in chapter two is introducing the core concept of transmedia content, analyzing story-external environment and structure. In chapter three this paper considers and analyzes discourse and story-internal characteristics of transmedia storytelling. Finally, this study expects to identify the distinct features and it also aims to identify the alternative values that underlie transmedia storytelling.

2. Story Environment of Transmedia Content

2.1. Media Expansion for Rhizomatic Structure

According to Walter J. Ong, the orality-literacy dynamics enter into the electronic age which he called "an age of secondary orality." He studies contrasts between oral and literate culture and new awaking of orality in recent years. [13] New media essentially utilizes orality-literacy interaction. In this process, the conservative power of writing and printing, which have been overemphasized, is dispersed and revives the flexible and polyvalent orality. In the era of printing and writing, the hierarchy and system of the characters were the most emphasized. On the other hand, transmedia uses not only book, newspaper, and magazine but also various media such as radio, mobile, website, TV, game, *etc*. Therefore, it is possible to simultaneously express both orality and literacy. In this process, a synchronic and cooperative relationship between media is established rather than a vertical relation.

The transmedia content like <Sofia's Diary>, <Cathy's Book>, <The Lizzie Bennet Diaries> utilizes various media including book, TV, radio, website, mobile, and movie. How various media has been utilized in each content is expressed as below in [Table 1].

Table 1. Utilization of Multiple Media in Transmedia Content

	<Sofia's Diary>	<Cathy's Book>	<The Lizzie Bennet Diaries>	<Carmilla>
Book	O	O	O	X
Radio	O	X	X	X
TV	O	X	X	X
Film	X	X	X	O
Telephone	X	O	X	X
Mobile App	O	O	X	X
Website	O	O	O	O
Youtube	X	X	O	O
Podcast	X	X	X	O
SNS	X	X	O	O

Each medium is connected to other media and cooperate to make a big story experience. Their related network shapes the rhizomatic image. According to Gille Deleuze and Felix Guatarri, the term the rhizome is the contrast against tree image, its important structure is trans-dimensional, non-hierarchical and multiplicitous. [14] Transmedia content does not have a single center when connecting various media and the boundary between media is blurred and deterritorialized. Thus, transmedia content can be analyzed as the rhizomatic structure and further classified regarding the relations between media.

As mentioned above, basically the structure of transmedia content pursues a rhizomatic structure. According to how to set the media center, this is again divided into three types, which are the single-centered, multi-centered and decentralized type. The first one, the single-centered structure has the most powerful center, but is distinguished from the plainly tree structure, such as the film-centric crossmedia or OSMU. Here, the story expands from one media to another. For instance, <Cathy's Book> sets a 'book' as the central media, and the media is extended to the website and application. The second and third, the multi-centered and the decentralized structure, is the case of a better implementation of the advantages of transmedia content. The representative example of the second type, <Sofia's Diary> pursues 'interactive TV drama' by utilizing both TV drama and the website, respectively for story progress and user participation. [15] In addition, it is extended to radio, mobile,

book and so on. In the case of The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, which is a decentralized structure, interactive media such as SNS, website, and mobile are concurrently extended while maintaining the equal relation. As such, the transmedia content is aimed at a rhizomatic structure in which the tree structure of the existing mass media is disassembled and the various values coexist.

In the literal order centered on printed texts, the importance was weighed more on vision than any other senses. [16] In the meantime, transmedia content evokes a variety of senses such as user's vision and hearing. For instance, in the book titled "Cathy's Book: If Found Call (650) 266-8233", the readers are induced to call from the title. The reader can hear outgoing voice messages of various characters through the mobile or telephone while reading the book. Walter J. Ong has pointed out that 'verbose or multilateral' is one of the characteristics of oral literature. [17] A variety of media in transmedia content are inter-connected with other media while retaining their own unique format.

2.2. User-Generated Participation with Multimedia

Transmedia content is oriented towards the rhizomatic structure, which is the opposite of the tree structure. According to Vilém Flusser, human beings became oriented to linear thinking after the letters were introduced. Because the text is a sequence of sentences, no logic other than letters can cut in. [18] However, transmedia content incorporates not only letters but also various kinds of logic due to various media formats such as voice, image, and video. The narrative scholar Seymour Chatman structured a narrative discourse of single medium such as a novel, and film through his narrative model. In this theory, he divides the story of the discourse into 'Kernel' and 'Satellite'. [19] According to his theory, discourse is consistently developed except anticipation and retrospect in novel and film. The discourse model by Seymour Chatman is applied to transmedia content as below in [Figure 2].
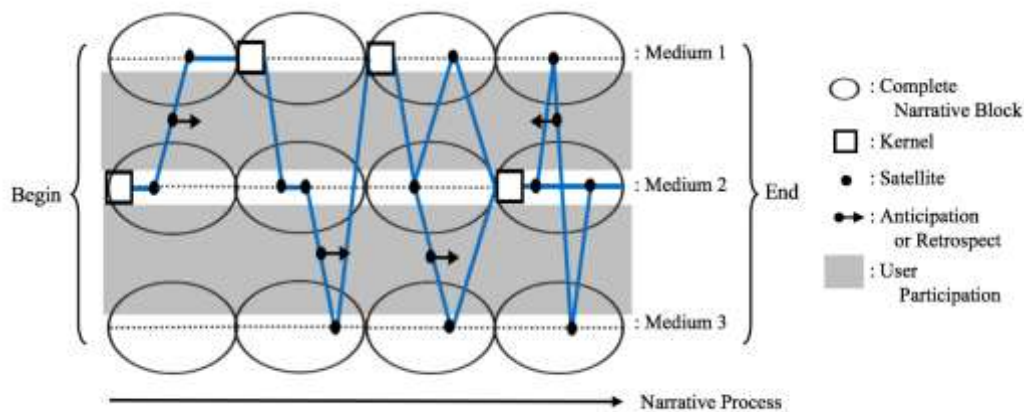

Figure 2. Narrative Model of Transmedia Content Modified Chatman's Model

This study modified the discourse model of Chatman by applying it to transmedia storytelling. In transmedia content, users move from one medium to another, and this change of media generates a gap or a blank. For example, the book of <Cathy's Book> does not reveal all significant events about the main character Cathy and some are presented as blank or puzzle. To fill in these blanks, users try to discover story pieces from phones, applications, website sites, and match up with big story puzzles. In this process, the users choose which media they would utilize, how they would combine the pieces they gathered, and in which order to make their own story

path. As such, transmedia allows users to "transit from a linear and unique history to a universe of multiple possibilities." [20] Thus, in transmedia content, users are transformed into active producers inside of the content, not as consumers of mass media content. In this process, some highly-engaged users create user-generated content. In the case of Aisling's Diary, for example, users shared their fan fiction on Wattpad, which was later included as an extra chapter when Aisling's Summer Diary was published as a book.

In case of <Sofia's Diary>, users are induced to utilize various media, according to time for 24 hours. The story progress is set based on the actual day of the users not on the time of the fictional character, Sofia. Target teenagers were planned to access radio drama at the time of attending school, mobile after school, and TV and website at home after school. In addition, the phone service summarizes the episode every time, and the mobile SMS plays a role as the teaser of the episode to be developed in the future. Sometimes the same story is redundantly delivered through various media.

The plot of transmedia storytelling pursues the problem-based structure. Therefore, users are too connected and interact with each other by using media such as SNS, podcast, and Youtube. Mobile and website are essentially participatory media platforms which are adaptable to multiple users. Using them, users can connect to alternative ideas and make personal social networks. Thus, while sharing information through the process of social networking, effective communities or networks for political issues such as youth issues and women's issues can be built. In the case of The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, for instance, users shared their own experiences of dating violence and formed a discourse about the episode of revenge pornography through the comment on Youtube. [21] According to Henry Jenkins, the participatory cultures might lead to democratic participation or help the youth find their personal and collective voices. [22] Indeed, in the case of <Cathy's Book>, a space for user interaction is provided in the website as 'Forum'. Here, users share clues and build their own database to solve problems. [23] In <Sofia's Diary>, Sofia's diary is posted on the website blog, which allows the user to vote on any day-to-day worries and what choice Sofia should make in this situation.

According to Max Giovagnoli, 'Doing Transmedia' means to give a part of the authorship to the audience in order to create participatory and synergistic story world. [24] In this way, the transmedia content generates a surplus on purpose through the retelling of the story and overlapping, blank and pause. As such, transmedia content provides a field where users can combine their content and plan their own story journey through multimedia.

3. Discourse of Transmedia Content

3.1. Feminine Storytelling with Polyphony

According to Andrea Phillips, a transmedia content designer, the story world can change depending on user interaction. She suggested that 'voice' is the most important and potential element in social media storytelling. [25] Multiple users extend content through a variety of forms of participation. In this process, a variety of views and voices are being brought naturally, rather than a fixed single view. The coexistence of multiple perspectives in transmedia content is well shown in <The Lizzie Bennet Diaries>. Various perspectives of characters depending according to multiple media are suggested below in [Figure 3].
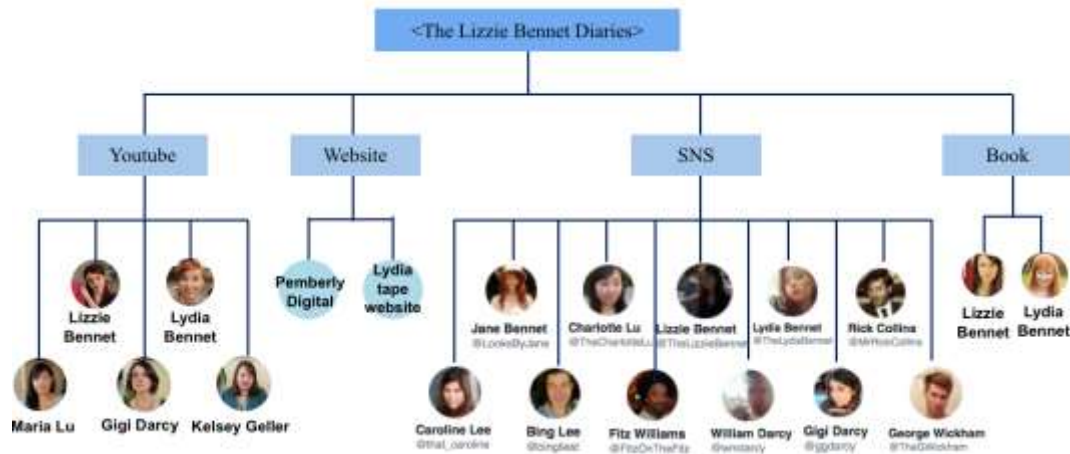
Figure 3. Multiple Perspectives in <The Lizzie Bennet Diaries>

For instance, The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, adapted from "Pride and Prejudice" written by Jane Austen, provides not only the main characters but also the various peripheral characters appearing in the original with an opportunity to tell the event from their own perspectives. In this case, the main story progresses centering on a protagonist, Lizzie's Youtube. However, at the same time, a variety of perspectives and interpretations of one event are suggested by providing Youtube channels and SNS accounts for the all the marginal characters. Likewise, in <Sofia's Diary>, the narrative is developed in Sofia's viewpoint in the book 『Sofia's Diary (O Diário de Sofia)』 and her website blog, and in her sister's viewpoint in the book 『Mariana's Diary (O Diário de Mariana) 』.

In transmedia content, the same event can be represented in various ways depending on media, character, and user. For instance, in <The Lizzie Bennet Diaries>, the literal text in Twitter explains the event mainly at the viewpoint of the male characters, whereas the voice and the video such as Youtube and the radio interpret the event from the female characters' perspective. Here, when revealing the private and subjective truth of a character, 'diary', especially 'woman's diary' format is generally used.

Hélène Cixous does not confine writing in one form but tries to embrace diverse forms ranging from diary to operatic writing. [26] In other words, writing from the viewpoint of Hélène Cixous corresponds to storytelling in terms of transmedia. This is related to transmedia utilizing various media formats and utterance of various voices of the Other. According to Hélène Cixous, feminine writing is a writing that "does not annul the differences." [27] Rather feminine writing allows private experience and various voices. According to Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, polyphony means a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and their own worlds enter into the unity of any event while retaining non-convergence. [28]

The truth is not one and absolute, but might be multiple and intersubjective depending on the perspectives. In the representative example of <The Lizzie Bennet Diaries>, a misunderstanding between two sisters, Lizzie and Lidia, is a major conflict at the end of the story. Both characters describe the same situation subjectively on Youtube. Because two opposing characters describe their own view of an event, this may be inconsistent, even generating a dissonance. However, as soon as Lizzie watches Lidia's video diary and understands the position of the Other, two characters get to start a new conversation, leading users to participate in. In this process, each user can find the subjectivity in an unpredictable sense and interpret it in various ways. Of course, there might be dissonance or conversation in this

process. As such, transmedia content realizes polyphony through feminine storytelling, by taking various viewpoints and tones to fit the various senses" in both content and form in developing the story. [29]

3.2. Otherness in Woman's Diary

'Diary' is a narrative form that can encompass both binary characteristics such as literacy and orality, and public records and private discourse. Modern literature, however, has sub-sequenced diaries, autobiographies, memoirs, and soliloquies. [30] Public records described in masculine language are systematic, objective, and fixed. In the meantime, the private discourse in the female language is fragmentary, subjective and ambiguous. For instance, in Netflix original series <13 Reasons Why>, the story begins with seven cassettes left by Hanna Baker, a high school girl who committed suicide. Baker delivers thirteen reasons for her suicide to others through a voice diary instead of writing. The reason for suicide is not one, but many, and the character related to it is not one person but several people. Even though she is dead, the voice diary reveals the truth that the newspaper or police announcement conceals or omits. A diary in transmedia content also performs a similar function. The diary is a narrative form that can well present the voices of a variety of the Others. Just as the voice of each person is different from others, the style of a diary is also different from person to person. In addition, from the readers' point of view, the diary is a kind of puzzle of signs, and entrance to the truth.

Table 2. Characteristics of Female Character and Role of Diary in Transmedia Content

Title of Content	Characteristics	Role of Diary
<Sofia's Diary>	Teenager/Female	Counseling of a teenage girl
<Cathy's Book>	Teenager/Female	Solving a mystery of a teenage girl
<Aisling's Diary>	Teenager/Female	Counseling of a teenage girl
<The Lizzie Bennet Diaries>	Female/Ethnicity/Homosexuality	Recording everyday life of a graduate student
<Welcome to Sanditon>	Female	Recording everyday life of a girl
<Emma Approved>	Female	Recording business progress of a match-making business woman
<Frankenstein, MD>	Female/Non-human	Experiment records of a medical student
<The March Family Letters>	Female/Homosexuality/Bisexuality/ Asexuality/Ethnicity	Letters to the mother at a distance from daughters
<Carmilla>	Female/Homosexuality/ Non-human	Solving a mystery of teenage girls
<All for One>	Female/Homosexuality/Bisexuality/ Pansexuality/Ethnicity	Recording university life of a undergraduate student

Linear mass media deliver single voice to the unspecified audiences. Therefore, it deals mainly with male protagonist situated in the center of society, and major events surrounding him. The strengthening of the center naturally leads to the alienation of the surroundings. The protagonist may be male in novel, TV or film, whereas the characters with femininity is set as peripheral characters. In contrast, in

case of transmedia content, the center of the media is multiple or disassembled so that the characters also vary. As shown in [Table 2], protagonists of transmedia content are set as subaltern such as youth, female, a homosexual, and a person of color. According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the question of woman is most problematic. [31] In <Sofia's Diary> and <Cathy's Book>, particularly, the protagonists are youth who are agonizing with family conflicts and peer group problems. Carmilla in <Carmilla> is set as a homosexual but also a non-human being vampire. Likewise, the protagonists in transmedia content are the characters at the boundary and the characters that symbolize alienation and the otherness.

Hélène Cixous argues that women who could not even make soft mutter of voices under male-dominant order should speak out their voices through alternative 'feminine writing'. [32] That is to say, in order for women to express themselves properly, they must express it in a woman's voice rather than man's words. The female characters of transmedia content mainly deliver messages through voice. For example, in the case of <The Lizzie Bennet Diaries>, <Carmilla> and <The March Family Letters>, characters record the video diary and share it on Youtube, while actively utilizing voice modulation, orally narrated children's story or dramatic directing. For instance, in <The Lizzie Bennet Diaries> regarding the episode about an issue such as Lydia's revenge pornography, the truth can be accessed only through the video diary. It is because when talking about sexual crimes against women, SNS which is the public, literal-text-based space becomes inactivated, while the private voice-based diary becomes more activated. According to Carlos Scolari, transmedia storytelling offers a set of environment, characters and stories that have emotional power for political discourse. [33] Especially, the diary for transmedia is a writing that explores individual identities and a micro narrative that focuses on femininity. The personal micro narrative of the Others suggests alternative perspectives beyond the universal logic of the dominant group. [34] Therefore, transmedia storytelling, aiming at a rhizome structure and polyphony, utilizes the woman's diary not only as a motif but also as a broad narrative strategy.

4. Conclusion

Transmedia storytelling involves a technological and cultural dimension. As story-external environment changes, story internal logic also changes. While the existing story environment focuses on the uni-directional mass media of the tree structure, the story environment of the transmedia focuses on the interactive personal media. In transmedia content, the strong pivot of the media and a single message are disassembled, and the content is extended to the rhizome type. Above all, it provides passive audiences with an opportunity and blanks to be filled in order to be active participants.

An event can be interpreted from various perspectives, and truth and answer can be plural, not one. Transmedia storytelling embraces both orality and literacy, utilizes vision and auditory, and thus provides multiple story paths. It is the 'woman's diary', suggested as an entrance and a clue to these story worlds. This is an informal private discourse and a micro narrative, containing both orality and literacy. Therefore, it is a narrative format suitable for the alienated 'the Others' to make pluralistic voices.

Marie Laure-Ryan, who claims a media-conscious narratoloy, says that "it is something projected by individual texts, so that every story has its own story world" [35] which is not the "world of one author" but "world of users". In this regard, transmedia storytelling has its significance in that transmedia content fuses binary oppositions such as technology and art, story and expression, orality and literacy, private discourse and public record, and

in that it realizes the value of polyphony through the feminine storytelling, and in that users and author co-construct the transmedial storyworlds altogether.

Acknowledgments

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