

# Transmedia narratives and binge experiences: Ricardo Piglia's *Los casos del comisario Croce* as a theoretical project

*Narrativas transmídia e experiências de maratona: Los casos del comisario Croce, de Ricardo Piglia, como projeto teórico*

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## ABSTRACT

From a narratological perspective this paper argues that Ricardo Piglia's posthumous book *Los casos del comisario Croce* offers readers a theoretical project on transmedia narratives and storytelling. The reading of *Los casos del comisario Croce* as a transmedial narrative centers in two aspects: 1) Piglia's use of a text written by Marx on productivity and the professions as a threshold for his transmedial narration; 2) binge engagement from the transmedial logic used for characterizations and the transmedial whodunit structure logic.

**Keywords:** Ricardo Piglia, *Los casos del comisario Croce*, transmedia narratives, detective fiction, Argentine literatura

## RESUMO

A partir de uma perspectiva narratológica, o artigo argumenta que o livro póstumo de Ricardo Piglia, *Los casos del comisario Croce*, oferece aos leitores um projeto teórico sobre as narrativas transmídia e *storytelling*. A leitura de *Los casos del comisario Croce* como narrativa transmedial centra-se em dois aspectos: 1) o uso de Piglia de um texto escrito por Marx sobre produtividade e as profissões como limiar para sua narração transmedial; 2) o envolvimento da lógica transmedial usada para caracterizações e da lógica da estrutura da unidade transmedial *whodunit*.

**Palavras-chave:** Ricardo Piglia, *Los casos del comisario Croce*, narrativas transmídia, ficção policial, literatura argentina

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<sup>1</sup>In original: “La literatura produce lectores, los grandes textos son los que hacen cambiar el modo de leer”.

*Literature produces readers, the great texts are what change the way of reading<sup>1</sup>.*

(Piglia, 2001, p. 17)

*The short story is a tale that encloses a secret tale. This is not a matter of a hidden meaning which depends on interpretation: the enigma is nothing other than a story which is told in an enigmatic way<sup>2</sup>.*

(Piglia, 2000, p. 67)

<sup>2</sup>In original: “El cuento es un relato que encierra un secreto. No se trata de un sentido oculto que depende de la interpretación: el enigma no es otra cosa que una historia que se cuenta de modo enigmático”.

### INTRODUCTION

A WIDE RANGE OF theories about transmedia narratives and transmedia storytelling has already been developed. From a narratological perspective, little has been added to this discussion since the comparative literature and Spanish film studies professor Marsha Kinder’s (1991) developed her theory on transmediality and transmedia intertextuality. Jenkin’s (2006, 2011) best-seller descriptions of transmedia dealt mainly with the production and distribution of audiovisual narratives and names the entire process as convergence culture. Discussions and problematizations of labor and productivity and the role played in their transformation by developments in digital information technologies, a process called by some authors as knowledge or cognitive capitalism (Fuchs, 2010; Moulier Boutang, 2012; Sennett, 1998), are absent from Jenkin’s convergence culture category. Scolari’s (2009) article on transmedia storytelling follow Kinder’s (1991) narratological perspective and shows that theories and discussions on transmedia narrations are topics, issues and problems that have already been dealt by semiotics and French critical theory during much of the twentieth century by theorists such as Bakhtin (1981), Propp (1968), Barthes (1974), Todorov (1978), Genette (1989) and Kristeva (1978).

In this paper, I follow a narratological perspective to argue that the Argentine writer Ricardo Piglia’s posthumous book *Los casos del comisario Croce* (2018) offers readers a theoretical project on transmedia narratives and storytelling. My reading of *Los casos del comisario Croce* as a transmedial narrative centers in two aspects. First, I discuss Piglia’s use of a text written by Marx on productivity and the professions as a threshold for his *alter ego*’s, Emilio Renzi, narrations on the adventures of a retired and probably missing or dead Peronist detective called Croce, Isidro Leiva o el Bagre. Marx’s text at the beginning of the book about the meaning of productivity, similar to Piglia’s commentary in his “Notas del autor”, passes from being written in an Olivetti Lettera 22 to a Macintosh and

finally, to a Tobii eye tracker. This is also similar to the role that the concept of knowledge has in the so-called convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006). Second, I explore what makes *Los casos del comisario Croce* a transmedia narrative for readers' bingeing engagement from two logic perspectives: 1) the transmedial logic used in Emilio Renzy and Comisario Croce characterizations; and, 2) the transmedial whodunit structure logic. Before I begin to discuss these two aspects, I would like to consider some definitions on transmedia narratives as it relates to Piglia's narrative universe.

Ricardo Piglia tells readers in his postscript to *Los casos del comisario Croce* that he wrote the book using a Tobii eye tracker hardware. This computer technology allows the monitor to follow the user's point of gaze and helps him perform various tasks such as gaming or writing in an eye-control keyboard. The hardware seems to work like a machine capable of reproducing reality as in Adolfo Bioy Casares' novel *La invención de Morel*. However, Piglia defines it instead as a telepathic machine, a device that matches thoughts and feelings to the computer's screen. This is like the character Elena, Macedonio Fernández's deceased wife in *La ciudad ausente*, whose consciousness, Brown (2009) describes, "is . . . installed in a machine that gives physical form to the textual mechanisms designed by Macedonio in texts like *El museo de la novela de la eternidad*" (p. 319).

Diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, the eye tracker allowed Piglia (2018) to exercise his scriptural occupation and to wonder about the idea that: "I was always interested to know if technical instruments left their mark on writing. What changes and how? I leave the question open"<sup>3</sup> (p. 175). In *Crítica y ficción* (2001) he had reminded readers that: "fiction literature is always installed in the future; it works with what has not yet become"<sup>4</sup> (Piglia 2001, p. 14).

Piglia's narrative and its portrayal of technology and technological worlds and characters have been the subject of various readings. Brown (2006, 2009) sees in *La ciudad ausente* an articulation of cyborg and posthuman identity, and a neo-baroque text that serves as a vehicle to theorize Piglia's cyborg figure and to navigate cyberpunk aesthetics. For Rojas (2013), *La ciudad ausente* interrelates madness, machines, and literature. Moreover, Piglia's self-reference, parody, and intertextuality have been the subject of various studies. Fernández Cobo (2015, 2016) analyses Piglia's self-conscious intertextuality and affirms the multimodal hypertext capacity of *La ciudad ausente*. Meanwhile, Oliva Abarca (2017) examines the intertextual overload in Piglia's *Respiración artificial* and concludes that the novel is a combinatorial text and calls it transtextual. Furthermore, Hernández Peñalosa (2011) studies Piglia's first novel as a fragmentary book, made of reading-scrap which depends on genre deviations.

<sup>3</sup> In original: "Siempre me interesó saber si los instrumentos técnicos dejaban su marca en la literatura. ¿Qué cambia y cómo? Dejo abierta la cuestión".

<sup>4</sup> In original: "la escritura de ficción se instala siempre en el futuro, trabaja con lo que todavía no es".

<sup>5</sup> In original: “no creo que existan escritores sin teoría”.

The ongoing readings of Piglia’s work emphasize how his narrations reframe technology, narrative genres and new media experiences. The way he highlights that “I don’t think there are writers without theory”<sup>5</sup> (Piglia 2001, p. 10) and the opening and closing texts to *Los casos del comisario Croce* lead me to argue that this collection of twelve narrations offer a theoretical consideration on the transmedial structure of detective narratives. From the perspective of transmedia narratives and audience bingeing, these narrations provide diverse elements of narrative and readers’ engagement techniques and clues for interactions.

Balderston (2001) describes Piglia’s participation as a “fascinating rewriting of a series of major texts from Argentine literature, *La Argentina en pedazos* (1993, *Argentine in pieces*) in comic book, with introductory texts by Piglia and comics by a series of avant-garde Argentine artists in the medium” (p. 408). Balderston also reminds readers of Piglia’s “profound engagement with a great variety of media of popular culture” (p. 408). However, transmedia narratives are not adaptations from one media to another, as the film adaptation of his awarded bestseller *Plata quemada* or the comic and opera adaptations of *La ciudad ausente*. “Retelling a story in a different media type is adaptation, while using multiple media types to craft a single story is transmediation” (Long, 2007, p. 22). In other words, the transmedia narrative is a particular narrative structure that expands through both different languages (verbal or iconic) and media (books, cinema, comics, television, video games, etc.). It is not an adaptation from one media to another, since the different media and languages participate and contribute to the construction of the transmedia narrative world (Scolari, 2009, p. 588). Scolari (2009) comments that: “This textual dispersion is one of the most important sources of complexity in contemporary popular culture” (p. 588). For example, Piglia’s dispersion and expansion of Roberto Arlt as a non-fiction/fiction character in *Nombre falso*, *Respiración artificial* and *Homenaje a Roberto Arlt* could be read as a transmedia narrative.

Definitions of popular culture’s transmedia narratives help us locate Piglia’s, *Los casos del comisario Croce* under the realm of the transmedial. According to the definition given by Marsha Kinder in 1991 in her book *Playing with power movies, television, and video games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, when we talk about transmedia narratives and narrators, we refer to intertextual systems. Kinder defined transmediality as the capacity all narratives have to expand through intertextuality, design and production, while generating transmedial involvement of audience reception. Transmedia storytelling aims a 360° experience that allows the user-reader-spectator-listener to be part of the narrative process by finding the clues that will advance the story, just like

experienced gamers do. Transmedia audiences and readers experience follow forms of engagement with texts that highlight interactivity. Binge or binging, a category once used to describe various forms of addiction, recently has been added to the vocabulary of popular culture and mass media to signify the time spent by audiences engaging and interacting with audiovisual narrations. Conscious of what reading is for text engagement, Piglia (2001) comments in *Crítica y ficción*: “The ideal reader is the one produced by the work itself. Writing also produces readers and this is how literature evolves. Great texts are the ones that change the forms of reading”<sup>6</sup> (p. 55).

Besides Kristeva’s (1978) intertextuality, Hutcheon’s (1985, 1988) postmodern parody, Bakhtinian (1989) dialogism or Genette’s (1989) hypertexts-hypotexts, transmedia narratives’ computer-hypertext structure comes closer to Brian McHale (1987) detective story – epistemological text where knowledge is always questioned, as in the Wachowski’s *The Matrix* transmedia experience: “What is there to be known?; Who knows it?; How do they know it?; and with what degree of certainty?; how is knowledge transmitted from one knower to another, and with what degree of reliability?” (p. 9). In addition, as I will discuss later, transmedia narrative structure resembles Todorov’s (1978) *whodunit* detective tradition. Moreover, Long’s (2007) study shows how to guide audiences across multiple media platforms transmedia narratives use a combination of the hermeneutic codes described by Roland Barthes’ in his 1970 text *S/Z*, where the critic attempts to describe what is actually happening when readers experience Balzac’s “readerly” short story “Sarrasine”.

Let me proceed now with my reading of *Los casos del comisario Croce* as a transmedial narrative. First, I discuss Piglia’s use of a text written by Marx on productivity and the professions and second, I explore what makes *Los casos del comisario Croce* a transmedia narrative for readers’ binge engagement from two logical perspectives: 1) the transmedial logic used in Emilio Renzi and Comisario Croce characterizations; and, 2) the transmedial whodunit structure logic.

### READING PIGLIA’S MARX

Piglia’s opening text, titled “Liminar”, an adjective of multiple origins, partly a borrowing from French *liminaire* and partly Latin, *līmināris*, is a provocative entrance or threshold to the Croce narratives. Piglia selects this specific adjective instead of nouns such as *nota preliminar* or *prefacio*, to serve as the inception, as in Christopher Nolan homonym film, of a political economy text within a literary text, whose narrator immerses itself into a transmedial world of

<sup>6</sup>In original: “el lector ideal es aquél producido por la propia obra. Una escritura también produce lectores y es así como evoluciona la literatura. Los grandes textos son los que cambian el modo de leer”.

narrative relations and processes. Unless you are a reader of Marx's *Theory of surplus value* you will have to wait until the end of the "Liminar" narration to learn that the text's author is Karl Marx and not Ricardo Piglia or Emilio Renzi. Readers must follow the path Piglia opens with Marx's "Apologist conception of the productivity of all professions", published as an appendix in his 1863 *Theory of surplus value*, to understand the ways this text functions as a *liminar* and expands through *Los casos del comisario Croce*.

Piglia's emphasis on asking readers to look for the marks digital technology might have left in his text suggests that new writing technologies bring new forms of reading, perhaps new kinds of literacy, new sets of social practices, and new types of texts. There is no doubt that computers have become a ubiquitous tool for creating and editing all sorts of texts, verbal and non-verbal. The reading of *Los casos del comisario Croce* from the perspective of media, languages, and formats convergence in contemporary media systems, positions Piglia's text within the realm of multimodal narrative structures and worlds, used by contemporary popular culture audiovisual narratives in the process of creating new audiences for bingeing.

Narratives that we call transmedia, like the rest of mass media popular culture narratives during the neoliberal era, uses procedures and devices for production, circulation (commodification) and consumption (reading and viewership) that allow audiences and readers to build discursively their identities and common sense (as in Gramsci's [1981] notion of common sense), in order to assume their role as historical subjects. We are faced with narrations and narratives whose elaboration and creation are characteristic of a system where, as Walter Benjamin (1999) pointed out when describing *flânerie* as the social base of journalism, their actual relation

to social existence is determined by the dependence of the information industry on financial interests and its alignment with these interests. – As the information industry comes into its own, intellectual labor fastens parasitically on every material labor, just as capital more and more brings every material labor into a relation of dependency. (p. 447)

Various names are used to describe the intellectual production of contemporary narratives: Web 2.0 or 3.0, convergence culture, fandom culture, participatory culture, among others. These categories refer to the current intellectual activity of computer-mediated narrative productions as a continuous semiotic circulation of working experiences whose purpose is the production of capital, just as Piglia's Tobii hardware writing practice.

Piglia's point in letting readers know that the book was written using Tobii eye tracker hardware signals his awareness of the ever-changing relationship between storytelling, technology, and readers. It is as if we were currently experiencing something similar to what Stéphane Mallarmé, at the core of the liberal modernity's cultural explosion, described in May 1897 in the Prologue to his poem "Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hazard" (A throw of the dice will never abolish chance), published in the French edition of *Cosmopolis International Monthly Review*. A longtime reader of Edgar Allan Poe, Mallarmé recognized in this Prologue the role of new technologies in the transformation of the ways of seeing and feeling space, and in the capacity of printing technologies and photography to enhance the hypertextual structure and the transmedial possibilities of narratives to create worlds and universes.

Transmedia narratives follow Marx (1857/1973) idea that "production, distribution, exchange, and consumption form a regular syllogism; production is the generality, distribution and exchange the particularity, and consumption the singularity in which the whole is joined together" (p. 23). From this perspective, Transmedia narratives refer to the distinctive cultural productions of the neoliberal economy known as knowledge capitalism, just as Marx (1973) envisioned knowledge in his Grundrisse for political economy when he said:

The development of fixed capital indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a direct force of production, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it. To what degree the powers of social production have been produced, not only in the form of knowledge, but also as immediate organs of social practice, of the real-life process. (p. 626)

Transmedia narratives are products/merchandise of the complex system of knowledge production characteristic of a capitalism "where the cognitive is increasingly imposed, since it is where the maximum value can be materialized" (Moulier Boutang, 2012, p. 174), and whose work organization structures and labor relations have been defined as a culture of convergence.

The passage from an Olivetti Lettera 22 to a Macintosh and finally, a Tobii eye tracker, places Piglia's *Los casos del comisario Croce* in the domain of convergence knowledge and technology. In this sense, convergence culture meant for Piglia's *alter ego*, Emilio Renzi, to produce a narration defined by Marx's "Apologist conception of the productivity of all professions" as a commodity for the general market and the stimulus of the productive forces. Piglia and his *alter ego* Emilio Renzi join as storytellers, becoming one of Marx's list of knowledge-oriented

professions: philosophers, poets, clergymen, professors, and criminals. The storyteller becomes one of the many categories of the social division of labor for producing knowledge, as he narrates inspector Croce's deeds and develops reader engagement and ways of satisfying that reader through active bingeing experience.

### PIGLIA'S ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM: TRANSMEDIAL CHARACTERIZATION LOGIC

As mentioned previously, Piglia tells readers in the book's *Nota del Autor* or Postscript about his interest in knowing if mechanical instruments left their imprints in their literary production ["I was always interested to know if technical instruments left their mark on writing" (Piglia, 2018, p. 175)]. Michael Jon Anderson (2011) has described this interest in contemporary literature the following way:

Transmedia novels have emerged as a reaction to the destabilizing force of digital convergence, which refers to the process of unifying different types of media into a single device. The introduction of the Internet and mobile devices to the media landscape have caused more traditional media like print and television to seek new models of relevance that blend these new technologies into existing models of content creation. Digital convergence enables transmedia storytelling by making it easier to switch seamlessly from one medium to another, allowing individuals to interact with a variety of texts across platforms. (p. 49)

By the realization that different elements of *Los casos del comisario Croce's* fiction are dispersed systematically across multiple narratives, Piglia invites readers to follow the events narrated by Emilio, the storyteller, and move across narrations to fill-in the narrative gaps. Events surrounding *Los casos del comisario* exist in more than one medium, whether in newspapers, oral history, literary works, gossip magazines or films, just like in many contemporary mass media narratives. Examples include the film *The Matrix* and its comics and video games versions, the television series *Lost* and its *Lost experience alternative reality game*, or *Ikea's: Another letter*, a continuous web content generating advertising campaign.

Umberto Eco in his *Postscript to The name of the rose* (1984) tells readers that story-worlds, similar to those in transmedia narratives, can be fiction, non-fiction, or a hybrid of both. Piglia (2018) in his postscript comments something similar while showing his interest in the relationship between literature and technology.

The other feature of this volume is that I followed (or tried to be faithful to) the realistic tradition of the police genre. In this sense, most of the stories are based on real events. For example, “La música” is based on the story of the Yugoslav sailor Pesic, who was accused of murdering a prostitute in a murky coffee house in the port of Quequén and sentenced to ten years in prison. “La película” was inspired by an urban myth that was told in 1955 on the eve of the fall of Perón<sup>7</sup>. (p. 175)

Piglia transmedia references create different implicit readers that operate on the structure of the narrative, telling them that they can look for the same story from different narrative sources, as in a multipath or multilane text. Or, as in transmedia narratives where “elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels to create a unified and coordinated entertainment experience” (Jenkins, 2011, para. 4). Piglia (2010) tells his readers that to find out more about detective Croce they must go to his novel *Blanco nocturno*, and learn that:

Croce was born and raised in the area, he had become a policeman at the time of the first Peronism, and since then he kept his position - except for the power vacuum period after General Valle’s revolution in 56. The days before the uprising Croce was rebelling at the police stations of the region, but when he learned that the rebellion had failed, he walked exhausted in the fields talking to himself and without sleep and when they found him, he seemed like another person. The commissioner’s hair turned white overnight in 1956, upon learning that the military had shot the workers who had risen to ask for Peron’s return. With the hair white, ruffled head, he locked himself in his house and he did not leave for months. At that time, he lost his job, but was reinstated during Frondizi’s presidency in 1958, keeping it since then, despite all the political changes<sup>8</sup>. (pp. 30-31)

As in transmedia stories spiderweb model (Phillips, 2010), Piglia’s readers are compelled to piece together Croce’s cases through Emilio, the storyteller in *Los casos del comisario Croce*, and the journalist, Emilio Renzi *Blanco nocturno*. Just like detectives’ or lawyers’ conception of productivity, Piglia’s transmedia narratives piece together a story by assembling fragments of evidence from disperse media.

Emilio Renzi, *Los casos del comisario Croce*’s storyteller, becomes the typical transmedia character whose characterization develops through his interactions in each new narrative media. Each narration provides new character

<sup>7</sup>In original: “El otro rasgo de este volumen es que seguí (o traté de ser fiel a) la tradición realista del género policial. En este sentido, la mayoría de los relatos se basan en hechos reales. Por ejemplo, ‘La música’ está basado en la historia del marinero yugoslavo Pesic, que fue acusado de haber asesinado a una alternadora en un turbio cafetín del puerto de Quequén y condenado a diez años de cárcel. ‘La película’ está inspirado en un mito urbano que se contaba en 1955 en las vísperas de la caída de Perón”.

<sup>8</sup>In original: “Croce había nacido y se había criado en la zona, se había hecho policía en la época del primer peronismo, y desde entonces estaba en el cargo –salvo el interregno después de la revolución del general Valle en el 56–. Los días previos al levantamiento Croce había estado alzando las comisarías de la zona, pero cuando supo que la rebelión había fracasado anduvo como muerto por los campos hablando solo y sin dormir y cuando lo encontraron ya era otro. El comisario había encanecido de la noche a la mañana en 1956, al enterarse de que los militares habían fusilado a los obreros que se habían alzado para pedir el regreso de Perón. El pelo blanco, la cabeza alborotada, se encerró en su casa y no salió en meses. Perdió el cargo esa vez, pero lo reincorporaron cuando la presidencia de Frondizi en 1958 y desde entonces siguió a pesar de todos los cambios políticos”.

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## Transmedia narratives and bingeing experiences

background, allows the introduction of entirely new character interactions, allows new plot development, and does not duplicate his experiences while showing consistency across all story-worlds. Readers have followed Emilio Renzi footsteps before the publication of *Respiración artificial* as Piglia's pseudonym in the essays he wrote for *Punto de Vista*, the literary magazine published in Argentina by Beatriz Sarlo and Carlos Altamirano. Afterwards, in a transmedial way, Renzi became Piglia's *alter ego*, a character-narrator present in, among other narrations, *Respiración artificial*, *Prisión perpétua* short stories, the three volumes of *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi*, *La ciudad ausente* and *Blanco nocturno*. If the process of signing one's name brings the self to mind, then Piglia's signature, Emilio Renzi (the author's second name and last name), reveals what Maria Giovana Arcamone maintains in her discussion of names and identities in the Italian detective story. For Arcamone (2012) the authors "reveal with linguistic reflections that they appreciate the inherent power of proper names" (p. 18). Arcamone adds that "proper names in fiction should be strong carriers of clues (to the character's personality) and in detective stories . . . they should be so to a higher degree compared with other literary genres, since it is precisely clues that detective stories are based on" (p. 18).

In transmedia narratives, characters do not need to be introduced, instead they are reintroduced since they are known from other sources (Jenkins, 2006, p. 120). Both Emilio Renzi and detective Croce are known to Piglia's fans and readers, however, just like in all transmedia narratives their role change with the medium in which the characters appear. Emilio Renzi is a historian, a journalist, a narrator, and a storyteller while Croce is a policeman, a detective, a "baqueano", a rural laborer called Isidro Leiva or el Bagre, an ugly aquatic rodents hunter and trader. By dispersing character and story information across multiple narrative platforms in the service of creating a single narrative text, Piglia promotes reader engagement and fosters collaboration among audiences as they struggle to master the characters' worlds. In "La conferencia", Emilio, the narrator, describes the conference given by a blind writer on the subject of detective stories. Readers are told that at the end of the conference the writer meets Croce and describes him as "a reincarnation from the Pampas, the philosopher as a policeman"<sup>9</sup> (Piglia, 2018, p. 122), perhaps refereeing to Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce. However, the blind, Borgesian writer adds the following words to Croce's description: "But Croce in Castilian is Cruz, Sergeant Cruz, who, as we know, gambled everything for the tough deserter Martín Fierro"<sup>10</sup> (p. 122). Placing Croce in a universe parallel to his own, the writer adds:

<sup>9</sup>In original: "una reencarnación pampeana, el filósofo como policía".

<sup>10</sup>In original: "Pero Croce en castellano es Cruz, el sargento Cruz, que, como sabemos, se jugó por el matrero y desertor Martín Fierro".

- We are two Argentinean countrymen – said the writer, two criollos.
- Two baqueanos.
- Yes, two trackers. We read clues, traces.
- We look for the visible.
- On the surface.
- There is nothing hidden.
- We look for what you see.
- Exactly – said Croce<sup>11</sup>. (p. 122)

Following this description, Emilio, the storyteller, describes Croce's proposition to the blind writer. Croce requests the blind writer to help him solve a case, an enigma with a rich intertextual network of cinematographic references from Antonioni's *Blow-up* and Blake Edwards' 1963 version of *The pink panther*. The emphasis given by *Los casos del comisario Croce's* narrator to Croce's and the blind writer's parallel lives and the intertextual network description for solving the enigma brings relations at the fictional level to alter the logic of Croce's detective identity described in *Blanco nocturno*. A characteristic of transmedia narratives character portrayal, Piglia's process of altering a character's identity logic helps foster audience/reader identification with those characters, increasing the audience's knowledge about them and therefore intensifying binge-reading engagement. The character build-up in transmedia narratives is based on identities as an orienting procedure, and they provide a meaning-making lens and focus one's attention on some, but not other features of the immediate context (Oyserman, 2007, 2009a, 2009b). Like in transmedia alternative reality gaming, Piglia's readers must unlock clues and decipher codes across various narrative platforms to construct Emilio Renzi's and Croce's fictional worlds and their identity logics, while their lives are caught up in the events portrayed in the story. They share story-worlds in *Blanco Nocturno* and *Los casos del comisario Croce* and become part of the same narrative universe, with shared arrangements, characters, objects, events, and actions.

Instead of the in-depth character development that occurs in a novel, characters in a transmedia narrative are typically fleshed out by adding back-story and motivation via story elements across narratives. Following Todorov's (1978) typology of the detective novel, characters in transmedia narratives belong to what popular culture and mass media have referred to the *whodunit* tradition, focusing on the crime to drive the reader's curiosity. Readers binge to *Los casos del comisario Croce* to find out the way Emilio, the storyteller, retells Croce's handling of the cases, as they continue to search for additional insights

<sup>11</sup>In original:

“- Somos dos paisanos argentinos – dijo el escritor, dos criollos.  
- Dos baqueanos.  
- Sí, dos rastreadores. Leemos pistas, rastros.  
- Buscamos lo visible.  
- En la superficie.  
- No hay nada oculto.  
- Buscamos lo que se ve.  
- Exacto – dijo Croce”.

into Croce's stories. This takes us to discuss another side of Piglia's entertainment system, the transmedia whodunit structure in *Los casos del comisario Croce*.

### PIGLIA'S ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM: THE TRANSMEDIAL WHODUNIT STRUCTURE

*Los casos del comisario Croce* invites readers to follow Croce's steps to solve his cases. The storyteller wants to drive the reader's curiosity, making the story of the case prevalent by focusing on it. Todorov's (1978) description of detective stories establishes the difference between enigma literature and suspense literature. Croce's cases belong to the former with its complex double narrative in which an absent story, the one of a crime, is gradually reconstructed. Transmedia narratives are the product of extensions where readers want to learn more and follow their characters in different story-worlds and narratives. Todorov's enigma story suits the mysteries, paradoxes, puzzles, unanswered questions, perplexity twists, and riddles that make up the narrative structure of transmedia narratives.

However, in *Los casos del comisario Croce*, the storyteller, Piglia's *alter ego*, Emilio Renzi, introduces intertextual irony and literary drifts, and he is less focused on solving the riddles by a strict logic than on recreating episodes, relating ideas and pointing out research procedures. In many ways, Renzi's retelling of Croce's cases sounds like the narrator's voice in the mysteriously found manuscript of Umberto Eco's *The name of the rose*. Adso de Melk is the smart and curious Austrian monk, eager to learn the logic and research procedures used by his mentor William of Baskerville, a student of Roger Bacon and William of Occam, in solving the crimes committed in the abbey. William's logic and research detective techniques unmasked the blind librarian, Jorge de Burgos, as the murderer. On the other hand, in "La conferencia" it is Rosa Estévez, the town's librarian and Croce's platonic girlfriend, who plays an important role introducing Croce to the blind writer and helping decipher the enigma. A rose is a rose, and roses have served to homage Jorge Luis Borges in two distinct ways, in two narratives. Nevertheless, in both narratives, Eco's and Piglia's, the logic and research procedures to untangle the murders follow Charles Sanders Peirce's synthetic reasoning called abduction.

In his postscript, Piglia tells readers that "La resolución" is inspired by Conan Doyle's, *The sign of the four*, or rather, Piglia adds, in the analysis of the story made by Massimo A. Bonfantini and Giampaolo Proni (1983). Bonfantini and Proni's article was published in Umberto Eco and Thomas Sebeok's anthology

*The sign of the three, Dupin, Holmes, Peirce*, and offers a classification of the various types of Peirce's abductive reasoning. A close reading of "La resolución", "El método" and "La conferencia" shows the influence of Peirce's description of the abductive hypothesis. Peirce's (1965) description reads as follows:

Suppose I enter a room and there find a number of bags, containing different kinds of beans. On the table there is a handful of white beans: and, after some searching, I find one of the bags contains white beans only. I at once infer as a probability, or as a fair guess, that this handful was taken out of that bags. This sort of inference is called making an hypothesis. It is the inference of a case from a rule and a result. (p. 623)

The crucial thing here is that Peirce took both inference (induction and deduction) and hypothesis to be formal argument patterns, which characterize "synthetic" reasoning, and thus making a hypothesis to fall under an inferential pattern.

Then again, Croce's reasoning adds another of Peirce's theoretical insights not found in Bonfantini and Proni's (1983) article, the notion of chance which Peirce introduces later in his work.

Hypothetical inference, Croce said, increases its veracity as its security or approach to certainty decreases. Reasoning depends on our hope to guess, sooner or later, the conditions under which the solution will appear. As the certainty of a conjecture decreases, its value of evidence increases proportionally<sup>12</sup>. (Piglia, 2018, p. 173)

Piglia finds it important to show Croce's case-solving techniques that are developing from Peirce's logical principles of abduction and chance, where an assertion enunciates a rule of inference and whose form of logical investigation operates on syllogistic forms and logical principles. This type of dynamic evolution of the assertion as an algorithmic logical principle is described by Peirce (1968) through a set of categories that point to a random evolutionary sense of a nonlinear triad process governed by chance, necessity, and habit (pp. 35-64).

Peirce's logic, theorized through Renzi's narration of Croce's techniques, summarizes Piglia's transmedial story-worlds. This logic provides Piglia and transmedia narratives, particularly in the gaming narrative experience: parallel stories, almost always scattered throughout the past, present and future, and that sometimes collide or become entangled; plot twists that deliver

<sup>12</sup>In original: "La inferencia hipotética, dijo Croce, aumenta su veracidad a medida que su seguridad o aproximación a la certitud disminuye. El razonamiento depende de nuestra esperanza de adivinar, tarde o temprano, las condiciones bajo las cuales aparecerá la solución. En la medida en que decrece la certeza de una conjetura, aumenta proporcionalmente su valor de evidencia".

new audiences the opportunity to be interested in the story worlds, as they reiterate the intention of closure several times and across texts; narrative gaps that arise from failed endings, leading the public to speculation and interest in knowing more; and, finally, offer the mechanisms for narrative extensions and the whodunit structure.

### CRIME IN SOLVING PROCESS

The Tobii eye-tracker hardware used by Piglia to write *Los casos del comisario Croce* turns the pupils of the human eye into a mouse, where blinking becomes the writer's productive force, turning knowledge into a form of surplus value. However, as it turns out, Piglia's ironic beginning reproducing Marx's text gets entangled into Croce's spiderweb stories through a storyteller, Emilio, who theorizes transmedial narrative structure through the logics of Charles Sanders Peirce synthetic reasoning for the discovery of worlds and crime-solving techniques. Piglia's posthumous book opens ways of connecting his literary world to recent mass-media transmedial experiences. As I have described, *Los casos del comisario Croce* is built around two types of transmedial logics: characterization through intertextuality's enunciative duplicity and the search for an ideal reader guided by Peirce's reasoning for the development of story-worlds. In *Los casos del comisario Croce*, Piglia-Emilio Renzi created a story-world with the capacity of expansions in design and production, as well as the theoretical bases of his whodunit detective research logic, providing readers of *the Piglia-bingeing narrative experience* the necessary transmedial extensions for the development of films, games, and comics, as Transmedia narrations, based on his characters and stories. ■

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