Collectively, cinematic modular narratives represent encounters between linearity and non-linearity, narrative and database, memory and forgetting, temporal anchoring and temporal drift, simultaneity and succession and chaos and order. The terms in this list are not simple opposites, and the negotiations between them take different forms. All of these films attempt to reconcile different ways of structuring time. In this sense they serve as a collective referendum on the status and value of narrative in the digital era. Each film suggests a limit to narrative’s ability to mediate our experience of the world, although each also recuperates narrative in one way or another. Meanwhile, the popular embrace of modular narrative structures suggests, on the one hand, that audiences are now comfortable with complex articulations of time; indeed, they take pleasure in them. On the other, the fraught temporality of these narratives suggests a residual anxiety regarding the effects of temporal mediation, which is traceable across a variety of genres and national cinemas.

How, then, do the thematics of modular time extend beyond these works and into the surrounding mediascape? After all, the syntagmatic modularity of these films is arguably exceeded by a much more literal intertextual modularity that extends across media platforms and genres. Even if we confine ourselves to cinema’s immediate network of ancillary texts, the varieties of formal modularity are overwhelming. Firstly, DVD releases allow viewers to browse deleted scenes and alternative endings, so that secondary narrative possibilities open up alongside the ‘official’ story. As Carol O’Sullivan notes, alternative endings can ‘alter the film on a molecular level, activating the “failed stories” lying behind the apparently monolithic film artefact’ (2006). Secondly, media producers are increasingly making use of what Henry Jenkins calls ‘transmedia
storytelling’ (2006). Thus, fans of *The Matrix* (1999–2003) can not only watch the three movies, but also play the video game or watch *The Animatrix* (2003), a DVD containing several short films by different directors based in the same narrative world. They can also engage with the world of *The Matrix* through a host of merchandise including toys, music and books. Thirdly, fan culture itself produces a network of related texts including fan videos and fiction, much of which generates supplementary or contradictory narrative paths based upon the original franchise.

Fourthly, interactive media allow for enhanced modular encounters with narrative content. This includes video games that are based upon existing stories (*Scarface*, 2006) and those that draw upon cinematic iconography and generic plotlines (the *Grand Theft Auto* series, 1998–). It can also include experimental interactive works like *Tracing the Decay of Fiction* (2002), in which elements of filmic narrative surface intermittently as users explore virtual spaces. Furthermore, promotional websites for films will sometimes provide puzzles or ‘experiences’ that supplement or explore the film narrative, or provide alternatives to it. This can even become the basis for entirely web-based ‘remix’ projects such as *Stray Cinema* (2006), which offers users a collection of video assets with which to create their own films; these are then displayed on the *Stray Cinema* site. Peter Greenaway’s *Tulse Luper Journey* (2005) is a web-based work in which users play games in order to unlock brief video sequences, gradually piecing together the story of the main character’s life. This project is another example of transmedia storytelling because it is accompanied by a series of feature films and by Greenaway’s own ‘VJ’ performances in which he remixes images and sounds from the films for a live audience.³

Fifthly, gallery installations can foster a modular approach to cinema, either by offering different entry-points to the films, or by linking them with ancillary materials. For example, a 2007 exhibition of Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s 15-hour opus *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980) in New York allowed visitors to view the film in its entirety, or to ‘browse’ the film via a video installation showing segments from each of the film’s episodes on 14 separate screens. In Pierre Huyghe’s *The Third Memory* (2000), a large split-screen projection shows extracts from the bank heist drama *Dog Day Afternoon* (Sidney Lumet, 1975), juxtaposed with a present-day staged re-enactment featuring the real bank robber, John Wojtowicz (who was played in the film by Al Pacino). An adjacent room maps out the real events through newspaper clippings and TV shows from the time.