

TRANSMEDIA NARRATIVES IN THE **NETFLIX** ERA:

a case study of Marvel's *Daredevil*



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a case study of Marvel's Daredevil**

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ABSTRACT

This research is a case-study of the TV show *Daredevil* as a transmedia narrative. By means of qualitative and comparative analysis, the study shows the ways in which *Daredevil* fulfils the main theories in the field of transmedia studies. It explores how the narrative manages to unfold a coherent fictional world. The main addition of the TV show to this fictional world is that it provides significant psychological depth on the main characters' motives. With its box-set release on Netflix, the narrative has come under additional strain, as it requires that the show be interesting in its own right, as well as coherent with the related TV shows. An analysis of the versions dubbed and subtitled in Spanish shows that key elements have been left untranslated, presumably to avoid multiplying the artwork and covers in all languages in which Netflix is available.

Key words: Marvel, Daredevil, Netflix, case study, transmedia, audio-visual translation

RESUMEN

Esta investigación es un análisis de caso de la serie televisiva *Daredevil* como narrativa transmedia. Mediante un análisis cualitativo y comparativo, el estudio muestra cómo *Daredevil* cumple con las principales teorías en el ámbito de los estudios sobre transmedia. El estudio explora cómo la narrativa consigue desplegar un mundo ficticio coherente. La principal aportación de la serie a este mundo ficticio es que explora el trasfondo psicológico que motiva a cada uno de los personajes principales. El lanzamiento en Netflix supone un reto añadido para la narrativa, ya que la producción debe funcionar como una serie independiente sin perder la coherencia las series relacionadas. El análisis de las versiones dobladas y subtituladas en español muestra que algunos elementos clave no han sido traducidos, supuestamente para evitar la localización de las ilustraciones y portadas en todos los idiomas en los que Netflix está disponible.

Palabras clave: Marvel, Daredevil, Netflix, análisis de caso, transmedia, traducción audiovisual

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1 Introduction

This study examines the TV show *Daredevil*¹ (DeKnight (Showrunner), 2015; Petrie, D. Ramírez (Showrunners) & Ramírez, 2018; Zalben, 2016b) in connection with the theories on transmedia narratives. Transmedia narratives are a way of storytelling where the narrative is deployed over several platforms. *Daredevil* manifestly classifies as a transmedia narrative, since it stems from five decades of comic book history and it emanates from the Marvel franchise with over three decades of experience in cinematic storytelling. Notwithstanding, it constitutes an atypical example, particularly so within the Marvel franchise, as it is the first release of a comprehensive Marvel narrative on an I-DTV platform.

The reason for undertaking this case study is the assumption that an atypical study object might reveal new insights into how transmedia narratives function. The central question in this respect is whether the step-up to on-demand video platforms challenges the definition of transmedia storytelling. So, the main goal is to test the transmedia definition in the context of an I-DTV platform.

Also, given that this paper sets out as a master's thesis in the framework of translation studies, a secondary objective is to analyse whether transmedia storytelling has consequences for the audio-visual translation and the translational strategies used. Although transmedia narratives are receiving much deserved attention in the context of communication studies, it would appear that the translation and the cultural adaptations of transmedia franchises are yet to be explored from a scientific point of view. Therefore, it is the aim of this study to provide context-dependent knowledge to contribute to further exploration of transmedia localisation and adaptation.

This study will use qualitative and comparative analysis methods. It will first look into the large array of definitions of transmedia narratives that are currently being laid out by actors in the field of communication studies and in the media business. The result

¹ For clarity, this paper will refer to the TV show or film in italics (*Daredevil*) and to the character in normal print (Daredevil).

should be a minimum definition that can be used to analyse our case. Subsequently, this paper will show how the theory translates to practice by demonstrating the theory with practical examples. Lastly, the Spanish translation, based on both the subtitled and the dubbed versions available on Netflix, will be analysed with a view to making global observations regarding the link between the transmedial characteristics of the text and the translational strategies used.

2 Origin and development of the field of study

The turn of the millennium took place in a context where the new technologies had started to change dramatically many areas of our everyday life, a development that affected particularly the media (Pujol Tubau, 2015: 2). New technological means, such as the digitalisation of audio-visual contents, the emergence of the Internet and the invention videogames, had set into motion a new way of presenting narratives. Although the media started to diverge exponentially, the media industry invented soon a new way of converging narratives across these media. The result of these new practices was soon given the name of *transmedia narratives*, a term introduced by Henry Jenkins in his book *Convergence culture* (Jenkins, 2008).

Transmedia narrative is different from traditional storytelling in that it develops a story through more than one medium. Yet this is not its most defining trait: whereas traditional storytelling allows adaptations from one media to another, transmedia narratives not only adapt the story, but also expand it in each of the media it spreads to. As we will see further ahead in this paper, a direct result of this expansion is that it encourages audiences to become more implicated in the narrative, thus constituting a third main element of transmedia narratives.

As said, transmedia storytelling has only become an object of academic study as of the turn of the millennium, involving, in first instance, mainly scholars from the field of communication studies. Having connections to many other fields of study, such as economics, literature and arts, it has subsequently generated opinions from actors from many different angles. The current chapter will look into the origin and the defining traits of transmedia narratives, with a view to structuring all aspects involved into a global definition that will allow posterior analysis of the audio-visual product that is the focus of this paper.

2.1 The origins of transmedia narratives

Transmedia, as a concept, was addressed scientifically for the first time by Henry Jenkins in an article published in MIT Technology Review in 2003. This article, that turned out seminal for this field of study, advocated for a new model for the entertainment business; a model that would spread contents across media, rather than the linear model that the industry had widely exploited up to that point (Jenkins, 2003). According to Jenkins, the movement of content across media in an increasingly interconnected world had to be seen as a way of attracting and keeping audiences. The term he chose to describe this new model was *transmedia storytelling*.

Jenkins' article was readily embraced by the media industry, who had become growingly aware that the transition to multiplatform entertainment was inevitable but who still lacked the semantics for such development (Scolari, 2013: 33). The concept had been lingering but there were no words, nor models to apply to it. Jenkins opened up the debate and, by doing so, unknowingly and to his own surprise, also triggered a whole new development in communication science. What ensued from the publication of the article was nothing less than a new field of study within communication science, which, in its turn, opened up a whole series of links to other scientific fields, mainly economics and scenic arts.

However, far from pinpointing the coming into being of transmedia narratives, Jenkins' article merely put into words what already existed. There is an unmistakable modern ring to the term *transmedia*, easily associated with the technologic developments of the twenty-first century (Scolari, Bertetti, & Freeman, 2014: vii). However recent the semantics, the concept itself goes way further back. In fact, transmedia narratives can be said to have existed since the start of human oral tradition, with a clear example being the Bible with the innumerable adaptations and spin-offs that ensued from it in the course of the centuries (Scolari, 2013, 46). Another preconceptual example is Greek mythology that has also been widely adapted and spread since the Iliad and the Odyssey. What is more, a full understanding of the transmedia as a concept cannot be achieved, unless it is seen as a continuation of older storytelling practices (Scolari et al., 2014).

Thus, transmedia narratives have been around for a long time now, though in roughly the last two decades they have grown exponentially in numbers and sorts. It is not a

coincidence, of course, that this expansion started to take off right after computers and the Internet started to settle into our society and a causal relationship can most certainly not be excluded. The technical developments that have impacted our post-industrial society in so many ways – such as Internet, digital TV and social media – also modified the way stories are told, and sold, to the audience. Moreover, these changes allowed the audience to discuss the stories and to share their opinions on them. Before they knew it, the media industry found themselves dragged into a new setting where they could no longer profitably go their own way: interaction with the consumer had become an unavoidable variable in the business. As the existing business model became increasingly strained, the need for a renewed conceptual framework became pressing.

So, when Jenkins' article in MIT Technology Review in 2003 kickstarted the discussions, professionals from many branches immediately tuned into the debate, offering many different additions and supplementary points of view. The result is a framework that is able to describe and predict the functioning of transmedia storytelling in a complete and coherent way, covering not only the contemporary examples of this kind of narrative but also the preconceptual ones.

The following subchapters will go into the specific aspects of this theoretical framework, beginning with the semantical boundaries of the field of study. Subsequently, a framework definition of transmedia will be drawn out by grouping the main traits of the concept put forward by experts in the field in two main branches: the multiple platforms aspect and the audience aspect.

2.2 The semantical framework

When tackling the recent but vast literature on the subject of transmedia, the first impression that stands out is the myriad of terms used by the consolidated authors in the field. Some terms are adapted from adjacent fields, others are neologisms that intend to denote particularities of a yet largely uncoded field of knowledge. Such diversity in terminology is therefore not entirely surprising. As explained in the previous subchapters, transmedia is conceived as a crossroad between several fields of knowledge, including literature, arts, economics and communications. Such crossbreeding of expertise could well be expected to bring forth a variety of terms.

While there are unmistakable benefits to this richness of vocabulary, it seems convenient to sort out the semantics before moving on to a substantial definition of transmedia. After all, the significance and connotations of each term need to be clear in order for a description to be precise. On this matter, Miquel Pujol has found that, even though each term has its specificities, they can be categorised in three main groups (cited by Pujol Tubau, 2015: 16):

- Terms that express the link between media, including *intermedia*, *multiple platforms*, *hybrid media*, *cross-media*, *transmedial interactions* and *deep media*;
- Terms that highlight the narrative components, including *superfictions*, *screen bleed*, *cross-sited narratives*, *transfiction*, *distributed narratives* and *transmedia storytelling*;
- Terms that focus on practical aspects, including *intertextual commodity*, *ubiquitous games* and *networked narrative environments*, *transmedial narrative*, *transmedial worlds* or *worldness* (Scolari, 2013: 26).²

Notwithstanding this categorisation, the terminology referenced here is not easily pigeonholed and the many overlaps between them are evident. In their own right, they may be useful to highlight certain particularities of the object of study, but they can also confuse the reader if used indiscriminately or with a more general significance in mind. Clearly, one unifying term is required to centre the debate and, in this respect, the most recent publications seem to favour *transmedia narratives* as the unifying term (Pujol Tubau, 2015: 16-17).

Therefore, this paper will use the term *transmedia narratives* to refer to narratives that unfold via a number of different medias.

3 The minimum definition of transmedia narratives

Ever since Henry Jenkins broached the debate on transmedia, many scholars have joined the discussion. As is logical, one of the first objectives of the transmedia community was to find consensus on the boundaries of the field, by formulating a

² The source of each term is detailed in Pujol Tubau, 2015, 16.

definition that would be strict enough to set clear limits to the field of study, all the while remaining flexible enough to accommodate any aspects still in evolution.

It would be unrealistic to expect that a textbook definition of transmedia would result from these discussions in any early stage or perhaps even to believe that such consensus will ever be reached. However, the discussion has already succeeded in significantly furthering transmedia narratives in two main aspects.

In the first place, it has allowed transmedia studies to wiggle their way into the field of communication sciences and into the academic community, as increasingly more scholars – as opposed to stakeholders of the media industry – joined the discussion. Over the first decade after Henry Jenkins' incursion on the subject, it has become clear that the main players in the field not only include the media industry, but also the academic community. On the academic side of the debate, Henry Jenkins has certainly remained the main reference in the field but was joined by other prominent thinkers, such as Matthew Freeman and Carlos Scolari.

Secondly and most importantly, the discussion has offered many visions about the origins and nature of transmedia narratives and, as a result, the concept has started to take an increasingly clearer shape. Eventually it has started to become clear that the substance kept revolving around a couple of fixed subjects. Carlos Scolari makes a very fair point when he states that the sum of studies and debates up to date can be distilled into a minimum definition of transmedia (Scolari, 2013: 45).

According to Scolari, and as already hinted at in the introduction to this chapter, this minimum definition is the sum of two global characteristics that are inherent to transmedia narratives (Scolari, 2014). The first and foremost feature of transmedia is that the story is expanded through several media or platforms. These media may include – but are not limited to – books, comics, movies, television shows, social networks, webisodes and videogames. Moreover, the transmedia narrative does not occur merely when the story is presented on various platforms in an adapted form. More importantly, in order for a narrative to become transmedia, each of the platforms involved has to add a new viewpoint to the story, beyond merely adapting the main plot. Although some adaptations go a long way in filling in voids left by the

original narrative, they are generally³ not transmedia products, but rather semiotic translations of the same product. A typical example of such a semiotic translation would be the adaptation of a book into a film; such adaptation would not be considered transmedia as it doesn't add much to the original plot. Thus, the first global characteristic of transmedia narratives is not only that they spread to several media, but more importantly that each medium involved adds a new perspective to the story, rather than merely reproducing or adapting it.

The second component of Scolari's minimum definition of transmedia is the existence of interaction between the industry and the audience. A narrative becomes transmedia, not only when it webs out the story line through several platforms, but when it also engages the consumers in such a way that they are motivated to participate in the narrative. This participation becomes patent, for example, when these consumers start building Wikipedia entries around their favourite fictional character, when they participate in online debates on the story line or when they buy merchandising. Some even post their scripts for alternative or additional story lines on the Internet for other fans to read and comment. Thus, the audience evolves from consumer to prosumer and this is when a narrative truly becomes transmedia.

The following two subchapters will go deeper into each of these two key elements of Scolari's minimum definition, by adding and contrasting the views from two expectedly opposed views: that of the academic community, represented by Henry Jenkins (investigator, currently at the University of Southern California) and that of the media industry, represented by Jeff Gomez (CEO of Starlight Runner Entertainment). First, we will look into the specifics of the first component of the minimum definition, which this paper will refer to as the component of *multiple platforms*. Secondly, we will flesh out the second component of Scolari's minimum definition, here referred to as the component of *participatory culture*.

³ Although opinions among the specialists tend to differ, there is a consensus that the distinction between adaptations and transmedia is a fine line and that grey areas do exist, as happened for example with the Harry Potter adaptations.

3.1 The component of *multiple platforms*

As introduced above, the first attribute for a narrative to become transmedia is that it has to use various platforms, which can include comics, books, cinema, television, radio, websites and merchandising. Moreover, the dispersion through various media has to be deliberate, with the aim of adding new storylines and characters to the original narrative.

We will now see how this aspect of transmedia narratives can be approached and described from different angles. There are several standards that are common to the multimedia aspect of transmedia narratives and these standards include *worldbuilding*, *continuity/multiplicity*, *immersion/extractability*, *seriality* and *subjectivity*. These aspects have in common that they are abstract, that they do not stand alone but that they hold a relation to each other and sometimes even partly overlap. By means of conceptual maps, this subchapter also intends to show the relations between them.

3.1.1 Worldbuilding

The shift from traditional, linear, storytelling to transmedia narrative has run parallel to the boom in technological evolution that started in the 1980's (Scolari, 2014: 72-73). First, the world of television started to expand from only a handful of channels to the myriad of channels that are available nowadays. This expansion, together with the popularization of the Internet and social networks, resulted in an unprecedented fragmentation, or even atomization, of audiences (Scolari, 2014: 73).

Transmedia narrative was the logical answer to these developments, as it allowed the industry to regroup audiences around one single narrative. The focus of the media industry started to shift from telling stories, to developing characters and from thereon to building worlds (Jenkins, 2009b). Simultaneously, and as a consequence of this shift, the audiences evolved from media-centred to narrative-centred (Scolari, 2014). Currently, the result of this evolution can be summarized in the following motto: "one world, many platforms" (Scolari, 2013: 43).

A perfect illustration of this shift, and an almost compulsory citation in this context, are the words of a screenwriter quoted by Jenkins (Jenkins, 2009a):

When I first started you would pitch a story because without a good story, you didn't really have a film. Later, once sequels started to take off, you pitched a character because a good character could support multiple stories. And now, you pitch a world because a world can support multiple characters and multiple stories across multiple media.

The concept of worldbuilding hints at the conception of a fictional setting, as if it were a real space with real characters. In line with the principle of the suspension of disbelief, the storyteller has to trigger the audience's willingness to believe something surreal (Wikipedia, 2019c). In order to maintain this willingness, the world may be utterly unrealistic, as long as it offers consistency in psychological and narrative terms (Flanagan, Livingstone, & McKenny, 2017: 4). For instance, if a story features a superhero that cannot fly but then suddenly takes off into the air, this needs to be explained and make sense within the story. In many ways, the notion of *possible world* contains parallels to its linguistic counterpart: it has to be seen as a structural representation of a series of possibilities, not as a world that could substantially exist (Eco, 1979: 178).⁴ The proposed world may not be realistic but the rules have to be clear and consistent, and its ontological elements have to be coherent and logical in respect of each other (Jenkins, 2009; Scolari, 2013: 17).

Once the world is built at a conceptual level, the producer is ready to start with the scattering of bits and pieces of the stories across the multiple platforms. Which platforms and how many will depend on the nature of the world envisaged. Depending on the specificity of the media chosen, a different audience will be attracted. The underlying principle is that each medium should add to the story that what it does best (Jenkins, 2003).

It has been brought up that a minimum number of platforms – apparently three platforms should mark the threshold – should be involved, in order for a product to become transmedia. It doesn't seem convenient, though, to keep restrict our

⁴ This notion of possible worlds is similar to the one applied in textual analysis in regard of conditional and subjective grammatical structures: the statement ensuing from a conditional or subjective verb may not be true in a substantial way, but it has to be imaginable.

definition too much, as this could leave out crucial parts of a narrative universe (Scolari, 2014, 49).

3.1.2 Continuity and multiplicity

Once the fictional world has been constructed, basic laws of profitability would point towards the need for the world to be sustained, or continued, for as long as it can yield benefits. However, one of the earlier definitions constructed by Henry Jenkins insisted on the necessity for continuity, coherence and plausibility between the expanded story lines. According to this initial definition, the purpose of transmedia storytelling is to offer “a unified and coordinated entertainment experience” (Jenkins, 2009b). In other words, Jenkins considered the aspect of *continuity* the qualitative essence of transmedia worlds. In line with this view, it cannot be denied that the larger part of the transmedia fans adheres great value to very strict continuity, as they see their collective reconstruction of the bits and pieces of the story line into one plausible whole as a reward for their investment in that particular story. Notwithstanding, Jenkins himself has developed towards challenging this view, by introducing the seemingly opposed, but actually complementary, principle of *multiplicity*.

Multiplicity can be seen as one step forward from continuity, as it refers to the expansion of transmedia characters into parallel worlds. As an example, Jenkins cites Spiderman-India, where the popular character was transported to an alternative universe. Thus, as a complement to the principle of continuity, the principle of multiplicity refers to “the possibility of alternative versions of characters or parallel universe versions of the stories – as an alternative set of rewards for our mastery over the source material” (Jenkins, 2009b). The sum of alternate universes is also referred to as a *multiverse*, indicating a structure of parallel but divergent worlds that interlock at certain aspect (Flanagan et al., 2017: 5-6). Multiverses allow extra stories to be introduced without changing the original canon.

3.1.3 Seriality

If we go one step further from continuity, we get to the concept of *seriality*. The traditional understanding of *seriality* refers to multiple instalments of a particular story that unfold the plot bit by bit from the first instalment to the last. This is where *cliff-hangers* come in, creating a suspenseful ending to each instalment so that the audience is compelled to await the next episode or book.

What happens when we cross traditional seriality with transmedia narrative is that the aspect of seriality becomes “hyperbolic”, as Henry Jenkins puts it (Jenkins, 2009b). Not only is suspense created from one instalment to the next on the same medium, the existence of material on other mediums acts as a cliff-hanger as well. In this way, the audience is motivated to explore the content of the narrative on other media, in order to quench their thirst for more information on the plot. In other words, transmedia storytelling is a hyperbolic or exponential version of the traditional serial storytelling.

The following mind map (Figure 1) shows how the concepts of *world*, *platforms*, *continuity* and *seriality* relate to each other:⁵

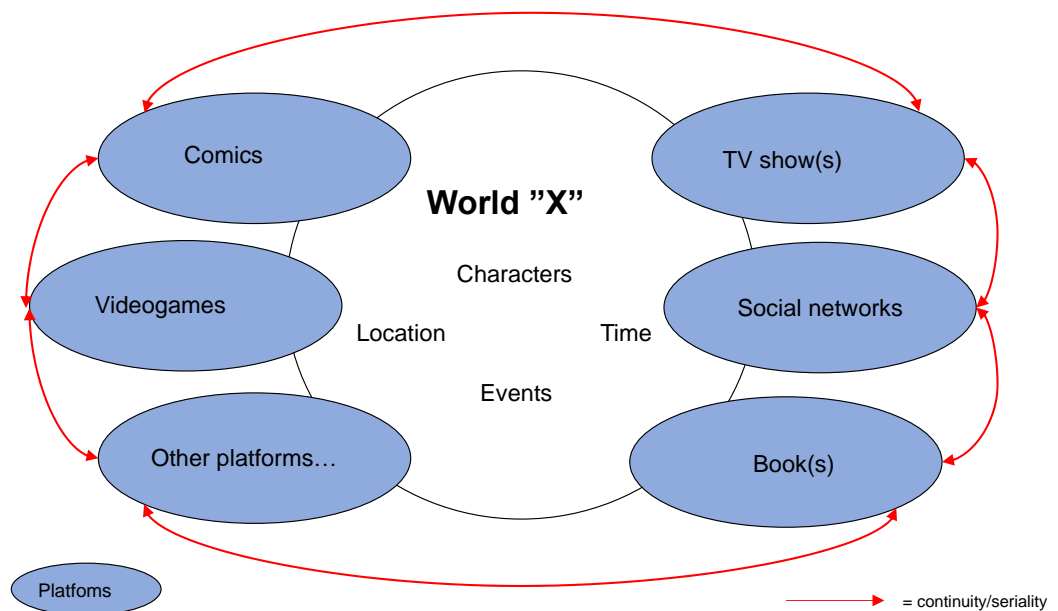


Figure 1. A mind map of worldbuilding, showing the relationship between narrative world, continuity and seriality.

3.1.4 Subjectivity

Up to this point we have outlined a transmedia product as a thematic world in which all elements are minimally coherent and that is expanded through various media and

⁵ The concept of multiplicity is left out here for practical reasons. If it were to be represented graphically, it should be represented by the exact same map in which one or two factors are altered (for instance the location or the time).

in periodical instalments that leave the audience wanting for more. So, the question arises as to what this coherence and seriality provide us with. This is where the aspect of *subjectivity* comes in.

Subjectivity refers to the ways in which transmedia narratives unfold and that make them stand out from traditional storytelling. As a result of their inherent characteristics, transmedia narratives tend to web out their fictional worlds by providing views from different angles on the same story. This way of extending the narrative is referred to as subjectivity, because it provides subjective views, i.e. from different perspective, on the same narrative.

In this way, an extension to a narrative world could, for instance, focus on a secondary character in the previous instalments of the narrative worlds. It can also focus on broadening the timeline by giving historical background (prequels) or by going fast-forward to a future period. An extension can fill in voids, whereas it can also purposefully leave new holes, to elicit the demand by the audience for subsequent extensions. Every extension adds another subjective perspective to the story and each extension echoes, in a way, the original storyline. In other words, transmedia narratives tend to cause myriad of characters and intertwined histories, often over a broad timeline.

If we take the element of subjectivity and add it to the other elements mentioned in this subchapter, the component of multiple platforms could be graphically represented as follows (Figure 2):

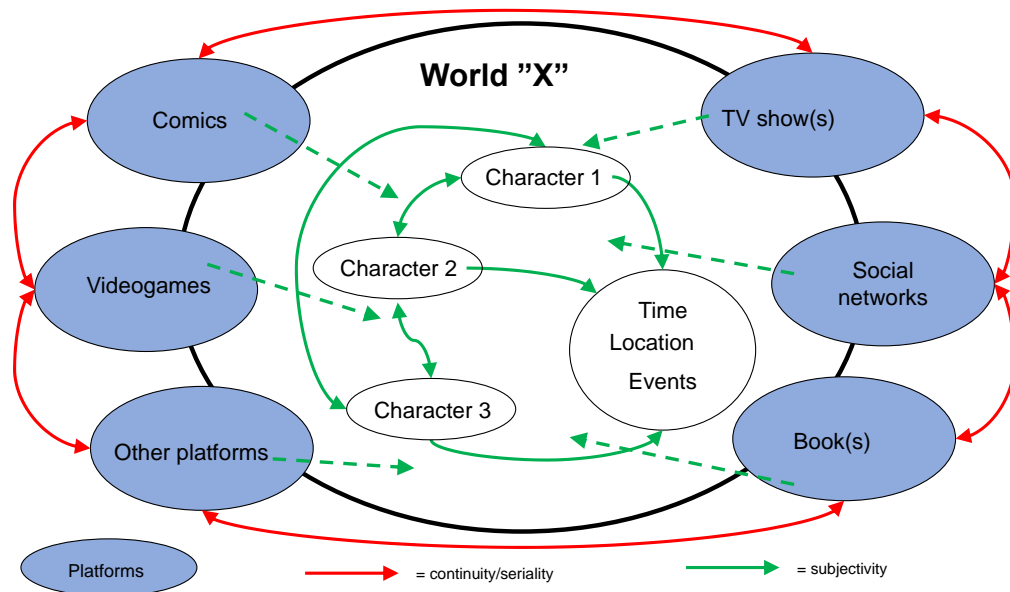


Figure 2. A mind map of worldbuilding, showing the relationship between narrative world, continuity, seriality and subjectivity.

3.2 The component of participatory culture

So, now we have arrived at the point where we have built a fictional world, that we are expanding through various media, with a set of fixed elements that are approached from different perspectives without losing coherence. Also, let's imagine we have woven sufficient attractors into our story for it to become a huge hit. The audience likes the characters and the plots and wants more of it. In other words, we have managed to engage our fans.

Fan engagement can be considered both the goal and the consequence of successfully crafted transmedia narratives (Richter, 2016). It is achieved by applying a series of narrative strategies on the primary material. Fan engagement ought not be seen as a random by-product of media franchises, but rather as a measure of their success.

In the context of transmedia storytelling, the expressions of fan engagement show certain particularities and are commonly referred to as *participatory culture*, which brings us to the second component of the transmedia definition according to Scolari (cf. chapter 2.3).

This subchapter will explore both the traits that define participatory culture in transmedia narratives, and some of the go-to strategies for building a participating fan base. The qualities that are inherent to this second component and that will be examined in the following paragraphs include *spreadability*, *drillability*, *immersion*, *extractability*, *fandoms*, *fanfiction*, *performance* and *convergence culture*. At the end of this subchapter, a mind map will be used to graphically represent the concepts and their relations to each other.

3.2.1 Spreadability and drillability

Spreadability refers to the capacity for viewers to engage in the sharing of the media contents and, as a consequence, to add to the economic and cultural worth of the product (Jenkins, 2009b; Scolari, 2013: 39). More concretely, spreadability refers, for example, to communities of fans commenting on a particular show and debating the plot. Some fans go a step further and construct fan pages and set up fan clubs. Surely there are many ways fans can help spread contents of a particular narrative and the examples given here are far from exhaustive.

When taken as a defining trait of transmedia narratives, spreadability means that, in order to become truly transmedia, a narrative has to have the capacity to incite fans into sharing and commenting contents with other fans. Expectedly, such sharing is bound to draw out new fans to join the community. From this point of view, spreadability entails free publicity of the product and will more than likely add to the market position of the product.

Some narratives go even further and have the capacity of creating such a suspense that they encourage fans to dig deeper into the narrative's complexity. Jason Mittell, cited by Miquel Pujol, has named this particular kind of expansion *drillability* (Pujol Tubau, 2015: 22). Drillability is about fans digging into the narrative and collectively dissecting every single detail with a view to filling the narrative gaps, while hoping that the next instalments will give them the satisfaction of confirming their conjectures (Jenkins, 2009b; Scolari, 2013: 39). Related terms frequently used in this context are *treasure hunting* or *Easter egg searches*, terms that hint at the satisfaction obtained when a clue that is hidden amidst the narrative and audio-visual elements is unveiled. Some fans go to great lengths in investigating their favourite shows and dissect each and every detail on it as if it were a criminal investigation. Examples of the latter include fans constructing maps and deciphering languages, in some sort of

conceptual treasure hunt (Jenkins, 2009b). Therefore, Jenkins' term "forensic fandom" seems particularly well-suited to describe this phenomenon.

The relationship between spreadability and drillability can be seen in different ways. Undeniably, they are closely linked principles, most probably like two sides of the same coin. Spreadability is about drawing out new fans, whereas drillability is about getting fans to explore the depths of a narrative. Spreadability can be expressed in the number of fans of a particular narrative, whereas drillability is about how much time these fans spent in drilling into the story (Jenkins, 2009b; Scolari, 2013, 39). So, the question arises as to whether both aspects be present in the same narrative. They can, according to Jenkins, whereas Mittell is of the opinion that a transmedia product has to opt for either one of them (Pujol Tubau, 2015; 22). This paper will consider that both of them can be right at the same time, as it is conceivable that a particular narrative is expandable to a certain degree and drillable to another degree, and vice versa. Spreadability and drillability are therefore not interpreted as absolute terms, but rather as fluctuating dots on two continuous and intersecting lines.

3.2.2 Immersion and extractability

Besides expanding on a narrative or dissecting it for hidden clues regarding the storyline, fan interaction can be taken to yet other levels, where fans aim to integrate the narrative in their everyday lives (Jenkins, 2009a). Jenkins distinguishes two principles that interact in this sense: *immersion* and *extractability*.

Immersion alludes to the expansion of the narrative to platforms like videogames and social media, which creates the possibility for the audience to immerse themselves in the fictional world of the transmedia narrative. Typical examples of immersion are videogames, alternate reality games and thematic parks; basically, any activity that allows the fan to dive physically into the fictional world and to add a personal dimension to it. The animator Hayao Miyazaki claims that the aspect of *immersion* feeds on the desire for the audience to travel to a different world – perhaps as a distraction from their real life preoccupations – and that this could fuel the demand for subsequent media (Jenkins, 2009a).

As a logical complement to immersion, *extractability* refers to the possibility for the audience to integrate elements of the story into their everyday life (Jenkins, 2009a). This aspect of transmedia includes, for example, cosplay and merchandising. Merchandising can transform any everyday object into a collector's item for a

particular set of fans. Coffee mugs, cell phone covers, bags and caps are a way for fans to feel part of the story and often allows them to identify themselves with a particular group of fans and even lifestyles.

In regards of merchandising, Jenkins points at the distinction between *transmedia storytelling* and *transmedia branding*. The difference lies in that the latter may publicise the transmedia product but that it doesn't contribute to the narrative (Jenkins, 2009b). This distinction could also be applied to the dichotomy between multiple platforms and participatory culture. Whereas the former expands the official narrative, the latter allows to personalise it, but it does not contribute to it.

3.2.3 Fandoms and fanfiction

One step forward from fan engagement and we get to the construction of fandoms. The emergence of fandoms is an already known sociological phenomenon. It refers to a community of fans that, in addition to their individual interest in the narrative, wish to participate in a larger community of fans. This kind of communities are known from as early as the 1930's, science fiction fans have organised clubs, associations and even conventions. However, the technological developments of the 2.0 era have globalised the way fandoms are organised and have facilitated the communication amongst members of the community. Nowadays, fandoms implicitly refers to Wikipedia, Facebook pages and Twitter (Jenkins, 2009b; Scolari, 2013: 39).

Climbing yet another level upward on the scale of fan engagement, we get to *fanfiction*. Fanfiction occurs when fans try to fill in the voids left by the narrative and produce written contents themselves, which they subsequently share on the Internet with the rest of the community. Rather than interpretation of the given narrative (which would be classified as drillable content of forensic fandom, as seen above), fanfiction includes scripts for scenes that may fit within the narrative but also alternative endings or storylines. These user-generated contents create a sort of non-authorized expansion of the narrative.

To sum up points a) to c), fan engagement can manifest itself in different forms and intensities. The following mind map (Figure 3) shows how the key elements of fan engagement mentioned here relate to each other:

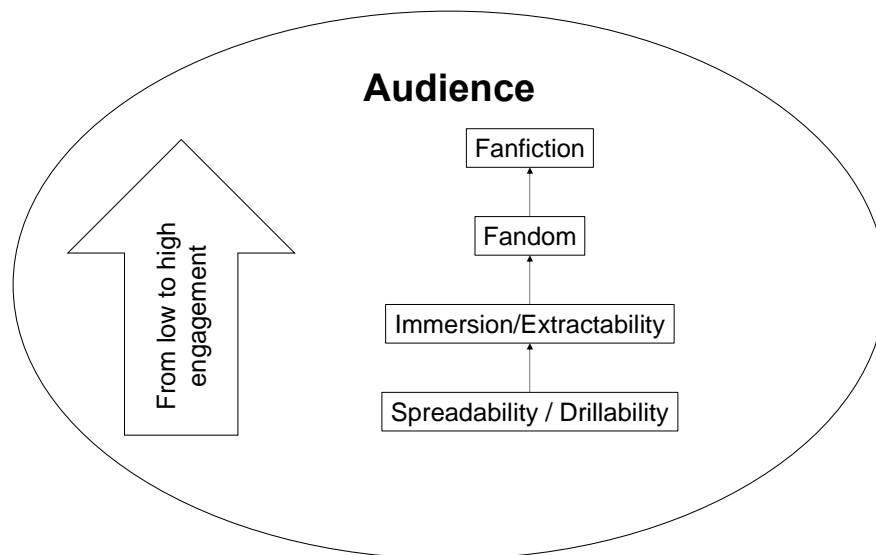


Figure 3. A mind map of fan engagement, showing the incremental degree of audience implication from spreadability to fanfiction.

3.2.4 Performance

From what we have seen until now, transmedia narratives are prone to activate audiences but that is only part of the cultural shift that transmedia has brought about. What is clear now is that not only does transmedia engage the audience, this engagement moreover benefits the industry. Producers have realized by now that interacting with fan communities is a way of managing customer loyalty that cannot be eluded and, as a result, their relationship with the audience has changed (Jenkins, 2009b; Scolari, 2013: 39).

The window that is now left open by producers to let in audience participation has produced a shift in the audience that have evolved from merely consuming to also interacting with the production of their favourite products. With the participation of the audience, on the one hand, and the acceptance of industry of this participation, on the other, the line between consumers and producers has faded. This didn't happen randomly: there is a direct pay-off for the audience, who feels rewarded for their investment in a story, and more so for the producers, who see their audience grow and their cash flow increase (Jenkins, 2008). Thus, consumers have become *prosumers*, a term that fuses *producers* with *consumers* (Pujol Tubau, 2015: 29).

In Jenkins' elaboration of the transmedia concept, the sum of all active participation by the audience, together with how the producers of transmedia products interact

with this participation, is referred to as *performance* (Jenkins, 2009b). In other words, *performance* is about the interaction between three components: the fans, the narrative and the producers. In this way, performance is not only about the fans: producers also perform when they interact with both the narrative and the audience through online presence or by offering director's commentary (Jenkins, 2009a).

Performance can be achieved in several ways. Transmedia narratives may deploy invitational strategies in order to attract or activate their fans and they may even provoke fan interaction. In this respect, Jenkins distinguishes between *cultural attractors* and *cultural activators*: attractors draw out a discussion among fans around a particularly speculative void in the narrative, whereas activators prompt activity from the community (Jenkins, 2009b).

Jenkins goes as far as to suggest that a truly full-fledged transmedia productions will most certainly exploit fan participation and even try to prompt it (cited by Scolari, 2019: 324). It has become clear that it pays off for producers to draw out the fan community and that they can deploy several strategies in order to achieve this. Cultural attractors and activators are accomplished by dispersing the information in the right proportion. The higher the degree of dispersion, the harder fans have to work to assemble them. Yet again, we find that participatory culture is about fans finding intrinsic satisfaction in piecing the parts together and in finding the implied messages in the narrative.

3.2.5 Convergence

While performance is about the measure in which audience participation is achieved, convergence is about how this performance comes together in the narrative.

On the one hand, *convergence* refers to narratives coming together on different platforms. On the other hand, it refers to the audience concentrating around a particular narrative through multiple points of entry (Pujol Tubau, 2015: 12). The concept of *convergence* describes accurately how the narrative flows between the industry and the audience (Jenkins, 2008).

Although transmedia studies have elaborated on the many concepts mentioned in this chapter, *convergence* seems an appropriate term to sum them all up. This journey through the transmedia definition started out with the notion of convergence and it now comes to a closed circle with the notion of performance. Both convergence

and performance are rooted at the centre of the very heart of the transmedia phenomenon. In this way, the concept of *convergence* brings us back to the beginning and closes the conceptual circle, as illustrated by the following mind map (Figure 4):

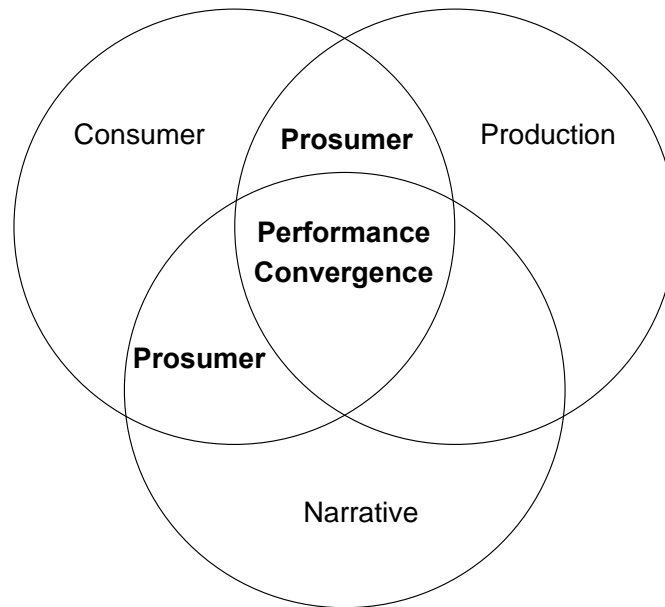


Figure 4. A mind map of performance and convergence, depicting the overlaps between audience and media industry.

Summing up the theoretical basis of transmedia narratives in very general terms, it can be said that the technical developments preceding the turn of the millennium and the ensuing new media platforms have taken narratives from a linear existence to a webbed structure, which has been termed as *transmedia*. Transmedia narratives display a number of characteristics that aren't present in linear narratives, as we have seen in the course of this chapter. At the same time, the divergence of platforms has in fact led to a convergence of producers and audience.

4 Production

Although an in-depth study of the economics of transmedia franchises would go beyond the scope of this paper, there are a couple of elements of the production process that are relevant to the analysis at hand and require a swift mention.

From what we have seen so far, it seems logical to assume that transmedia narratives run the risk of going on the loose, unless the content is controlled in

minimally centralised way. Centralised narrative management is, thus, a key success factor in transmedia narratives, as suggested by a review of transmedia franchises up to date suggests (Flanagan et al., 2017; Jenkins, 2008). There are painful examples of how stories went out of control and how drastic intervention was required to salvage the story (Scolari, 2013, 42).⁶ This coordination in directing the narrative can be called *collaborative authorship*, in Jenkin's model, or *studio authorship*, as would be the case of the Marvel Universe (Flanagan et al., 2017: 182).

In fact, the entertainment industry will need to start thinking in transmedia terms from the very start of new franchise. In practice, however, it is hard to find producers ready to invest in a large-scale transmedia narrative from the onset, as these require considerable financial investment, while it is difficult to foresee the success of a pitched story (Scolari, 2013: 43).

By trial and error, the transmedia industry has become well aware of the importance of a comprehensive and centralised planning and this awareness has translated into two strategies that are meant to steer the production process away from the disastrous consequences of letting a narrative run loose.

The first strategy is the creation of what is called the *Transmedia Bible of Mythology*, which is a document that sets out the characters, the time and place of the events and the main plot lines (Scolari, 2013: 105). The Transmedia Bible also has to contain items such as foreseen media platforms, design and branding, technological specifications and marketing strategies. The latter items are more economical of nature and will therefore remain out of the scope of this paper.

The second strategy introduced with a view to maintaining centralisation is the creation of a new organisational profile, the so-called Transmedia Producer, who is tasked with the project's long-term planning, development and production. As a response to the flight taken by the transmedia business, the Producers Guild of America (PGA) decided in 2010 to officially include the Transmedia Producer in their list of recognised profiles (Macaulay, 2010; Scolari, 2013: 69).

⁶ Here, the text-book example is DC Comics, where characters had eventually to be killed off in order to recover a minimal coherence.

According to the PGA's codes of credit⁷, a Transmedia Producer is also responsible for maintenance of narrative continuity across multiple platforms and for the engagement and interaction with the audience. In the codes of credit, the PGA also stipulates that it may well be that a Transmedia Producers is not involved from the beginning of a project but may be brought in at a later stage. This resonates with the consideration that it is difficult to predict from the start if a project will evolve into a transmedia narrative.

5 *Daredevil* as a transmedia narrative

For the last five decades, the Marvel franchise has unfolded a unique universe of characters and storylines that seems to know no bounds. In the early 1960s, Marvel wagered on the path of superhero fiction, starting with comic books and later on transitioning into audio-visual production. Under the leadership of iconic editor-writer Stan Lee, Marvel was the first publisher to coordinate their comic book heroes into a coalescent universe (Flanagan, Livingstone, & McKenny, 2017: 3). As early as the 1970s, Marvel, at the time under the umbrella of Marvel Studios (MS) achieved important commercial successes with TV shows such as *The Incredible Hulk* (Johnson (Producer), 1977) and *The Amazing Spider-Man* (Swackhamer (Director), 1977), which managed to expose and add new elements to the characters depicted in the comic books (Flanagan et al., 2017: 179).

Yet, Marvel's ambition to also suture several characters together in shared storylines encountered several set-backs before they eventually succeeded. The initial failures were due to restrictions imposed by the licensing agreements in place at the time. Given that the characters were licensed to external commercial interests, Marvel was mostly excluded from the creative process (Flanagan et al., 2017: 179). Thanks to the insight of a CBS executive that Marvel's ideas could pay off, the first successful cross-over was the apparition of Thor alongside the Hulk in the movie *The Incredible Hulk returns* (Bixby (Producer), 1988). The next instalment of the Hulk, *The Trial of the Incredible Hulk* (Bixby (Producer), 1989), brought in another character taken from the comics to aid the Hulk: the vigilante Daredevil. These TV films were at the very

⁷ See https://www.producersguild.org/page/coc_nm/Code-of-Credits---New-Media.htm

least moderate hits, but it would take major changes in Marvel's organisational strategy for its true transmedia ambition to flourish.

It wasn't until Marvel decided to independently produce films that they started to become the quintessential media franchise they are today (Flanagan et al., 2017: 19). By the hand of COO David Maisel, the franchise Marvel Studios steered towards independent film production by obtaining funds from Wall Street investors and creating Marvel Cinematographic Universe (MCU) in 2004, a franchise entirely focused on the creation of movies for the large screen. As Marvel's creative team took charge again of its characters' fates, and started working on a long-term plan to reintroduce some of the lost-glory comic book heroes, box office hits started to rain in.

The first wave of movies, also referred to as *Phase One*, started with *Iron Man* (Favreau (Director), 2008) and then went on to introduce the audience to each one of the heroes that would subsequently come together in *The Avengers* (Whedon (Director), 2012). The latter marked a pivotal, transmedial, moment in the MCU, as this was the first film that featured a group of previously introduced superheroes (Iron Man, Captain America, the Hulk, Thor, the Black Widow and Hawkeye) in one convergent storyline (Lagi, 2018: 26). *The Avengers* ended with an epic battle for the city of New York, that would become a key event in the Marvel Universe, often referred to in subsequent movies as "the incident".

The subsequent wave, *Phase Two*, focused on the post-Battle of New York scenery and introduced still some more superheroes (Quicksilver, Scarlet Witch, Vision and Falcon), culminating in *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (Whedon (Director), 2015). The story lines of the third phase worked out the fragmentation of the Avengers and ends with *Avengers: Endgame* (Russo & Russo, 2019). The fourth phase is said to be planned but details remain yet undisclosed.

In hindsight, it seemed an obvious path to take, with one success triggering the next, but in fact the MCU was a big gamble. Where the DC cinematographic universe failed and led to Warner Bros' decision to turn back to standalone films, MCU cashed in 17 billion dollars with its repeated hits (and counting). The key success factor in these organisational transformations was that Marvel recovered control over its narratives (Flanagan et al., 2017: 19).

While cashing in cinematographic hits, Marvel started to work simultaneously on its expansion to television. In 2010, a deal was closed with Disney Studios and Marvel Television was created (Lagi, 2018: 21). In the subsequent years, Marvel started to develop several TV shows, some of which were inspired on the MCU, such as the TV show *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* (Whedon (Showrunner), 2013).

In April 2015, Marvel took another decisive step forward in its transmedia strategy by teaming up with on-demand streaming service Netflix (Flanagan et al., 2017: 190). It was on this platform that the first season of *Daredevil* (DeKnight (Showrunner), 2015) was launched as a box-set, meaning that the complete season was made available in one go. Subsequent to the first season's success, a second season and a third season were released successively (Petrie, D. Ramírez (Showrunners), 2016; Petrie, D. Ramírez (Showrunners) & Ramírez, 2018).

This paper will focus on the TV show *Daredevil* as a transmedia narrative and sets out to show how it complies in practice with the minimum definition set out in chapter 3.

5.1 The expansion of *Daredevil* onto multiple platforms

Daredevil as a character first appeared in comic book in April 1964, written by Stan Lee and pencilled by Bill Everett (Lee & Everett, 1964). The first issue introduces us to the character of Matthew Murdock (also referred to as Matt Murdock) and his background. Having lost his mother as a little boy, he is the only son to a boxer past his prime, known by the name *Battlin' Jack Murdock*. Jack pushes Matthew from a very young age to disregard his talent for athletics and instead to focus on his academic career, so to escape the poverty and violence of Hell's Kitchen, the run-down, mostly Irish, neighbourhood of Manhattan where they live. This issue then goes on to explain how Matt Murdock gets his superpowers and becomes *Daredevil*, after he gets blinded by a chemical substance, presumably radioactive, spilled from a truck in a traffic accident, when he heroically saves a blind man (note the irony) from being overrun by a car. Not shortly afterwards, Matt becomes aware that his remaining senses, including his intellectual skills, are sharpened to the extent that they amply compensate the loss of his eyesight. Thus, he eases his way through law school, where he gets befriended with classmate Franklin "Foggy" Nelson. It is with Foggy that he will share his first a law practice and where he meets Karen Page, who they hire as a legal assistant. This comic book debut also introduces us to the first

villain Daredevil will take on, known as the Fixer, who is responsible for murdering Matt's father and who will fuel Matt's quest for justice. And so, this first publication developed the character's back story, upon which the Daredevil story world would subsequently be elaborated.



Figure 5. Cover page of the first issue of Daredevil comic book series
Source: (Lee & Everett, 1964)

Over the following decades, Lee and other writers, including Frank Miller, Joe Quesada and Brian Michael Bendis, continued the comic book series and developed an intricate story world around the daytime lawyer and night-time vigilante. (Roach, 2019). The subsequent series included crossovers from other Marvel characters, such as Captain America, and introduced yet others that would get their own spin-offs, such as Elektra and Bullseye.

The first time Daredevil would appear on a media form other than comic books would be 1989, in *The Trial of the Incredible Hulk* (Johnson (Producer), 1977) as mentioned above. This movie made for television was the second instalment of a three-part series about the Hulk. In this movie, an overwhelmed David Banner, on the run for his own superpowers, makes his way to a large city that remains unnamed in the movie and that is under the control of crime boss Wilson Fisk but also protected by the intrepid vigilante known as Daredevil. In the course of events of the movie, the Hulk and Daredevil team up and discover each other's alter egos. The film was

intended as a backdoor pilot⁸ for a television show on Daredevil, which was never produced, although the film itself was well-received by the public (Marvel Wiki, n.d.-b).

With respect to the comics, the TV film preserves the continuity of Daredevil's back story almost perfectly in the way it portrays his father's story, the traffic accident with nuclear waste, Daredevil's amplified senses and the secondary characters Wilson Fisk and Turk. There are, however, some adaptations with respect to the semiotics, since the colour red – the devil's colour – loses prominence. Daredevil no longer is a redhead, and his costume isn't red, nor does it carry the Daredevil logo or devil's horns. In a way, these alterations add realism to the story, as the black outfit seems to make it more evident that Daredevil is blind (Marvel Wiki, n.d.-b). In fact, in several instances in the film, Daredevil refers to the fact that he cannot perceive colour.

It wasn't until 2003 that a new attempt was made to portray Daredevil in audio-visual format, this time in the form of a cinematographic movie, titled *Daredevil* (Johnson (Director), 2003). Again, the original back story was respected, albeit with slight modifications regarding secondary aspects. For example, in the accident with the empowering chemical substance, Matthew is running away in shock after seeing his father doing dirty work for a mobster, rather than jumping into traffic to heroically save a blind man. His father's nickname in the ring has now become Jack "The Devil" Murdock and his boxing rope is red with little horns on the hood. Another novelty is that this movie brings other Marvel comic characters into the fold, namely Elektra and Bullseye. The truly original addition of this movie, though, is that it sets out to convey, for the first time, with the aid of audio-visual effects, the way Daredevil is thought to perceive his surroundings. Here we see an example of Jenkins' paradigm that each medium should do what it does best (Jenkins, 2003), on which we will elaborate further below.

The film *Daredevil* (Johnson (Director), 2003) was a mixed success and critical reviews were only mildly positive (Flanagan et al., 2017: 71). When the movie came out, Marvel had been facing bankruptcy for a couple of years and the cinematic rights

⁸ A backdoor pilot is an episode of a TV show focusing on a different aspect or secondary character as an attempt to determine whether it could work as a spin-off series (Collins English Dictionary).

over the character had been sold to producer New Regency. It is hard to determine whether the lack of success is related with the management of the character by New Regency. Still, it seems safe to state that, from the transmedial point of view, the movie does not add much to the narrative, while it merely adapts the back story.

The next venture after the 2003 Daredevil motion picture was the release of the TV show on Netflix as a box-set in April 2015. The decision by Marvel to reinvent already cinematically fitted characters was a calculated risk but recovering control over their characters turned out positively (Flanagan et al., 2017: 26). As a result of this success, *Daredevil* ran for three seasons, alternated and followed by other box-sets TV shows that focused each on superheroes with similar traits. These series included *Jessica Jones* (Rosenberg (Showrunner), 2015), , *Luke Cage* (Coker (Showrunner), 2016), *Iron Fist* (Buck (Showrunner), 2017) and *The Punisher* (Lightfoot (Showrunner), 2017).

Before introducing the character of The Punisher in its stand-alone version, Marvel released the miniseries *The Defenders* (Ramírez (Showrunner), 2017). This TV show did for the TV shows what *The Avengers* had already done for the cinematographic heroes: it brought all heroes together into one converging storyline. Thus, *The Defenders* completed what is often referred to as a TV-verse, i.e. a universe created for television. So, the characters have their own worlds, while jointly these worlds create a bigger universe.

Currently, new expansions to the TV-verse are not foreseen. However, further development of the TV-verse cannot be ruled out either, as the producers clearly left loose ends that seemed leave room for new spin-offs, such as the closing scene of *The Defenders* (Ramírez (Showrunner), 2017), where Bullseye is receiving surgery to get his spine repaired with a fictitious, indestructible steel alloy. Thus, Bullseye could be the moving forward at some point and add a new expansion to the TV-verse (Owen, 2018).

5.2 The narrative in Netflix' Daredevil

As the Daredevil TV show is the object of our present case-study, the following paragraphs set out to give a synopsis of the storylines and the structure of the three series. This synopsis will allow to describe how worldbuilding takes place in the Marvel TV-verse.

Unavoidably, the first season shows Daredevil's back story in a way that stays very close to the original comic book, but does not dwell too much on it, presumably in order not to bore away fans already familiar with the character. So, the first episode expeditiously lays the foundation of what will become the plot of the first season. While each of the classic Daredevil characters (such as Karen Page, Claire Temple, Madame Gao, Wilson Fisk) get assigned their respective roles, the story centres on the control of Hell's Kitchen by organised crime. Ever since "the incident" (see page 27), various crime syndicates are trying to take advantage of the circumstances and have expanded their criminal activities to real estate speculation, arms and drug dealings. Wilson Fisk, the villain amongst villains, is slowly taking control of the neighbourhood. Daredevil is obviously going to fix it and does so at great personal cost, both physically and morally. The first season ends with Daredevil handing over Fisk to the police and sending him to prison.

The second season introduces new enemies and goes further into the key plotline behind the Daredevil character: the constant pondering as to what true justice is and as to where to draw the line between justice and revenge. The season starts off with the Irish mob setting out to fill the void left by Fisk's downfall. They do not get the chance to do so, as they are taken out by an apparent army, who turns out to be one single man, Frank Castle, who will later on become the Punisher. Being a catholic and a lawyer, Daredevil does not abide by killing and sets out to stop the Punisher from having his way. The same controversy also surfaces with the appearance of Elektra, back in New York to fight the Japanese mob. Not only doesn't she back away from killing her opponents, she seems to take some wicked satisfaction in it. The contention between Daredevil's views on violence and those held by the Punisher and Elektra allow for interesting dialogues, as will be seen in the chapter on subjectivity. The season ends with Elektra dying at the hands of an army of ninja's, the Punisher embracing his own darkness and Daredevil revealing his true identity to Karen Page.

The third season takes place after the show *The Defenders* (Ramírez (Showrunner), 2017), where Daredevil ends up having a building collapsing on him, leaving him seriously injured. The new season goes on to reveal that, although seriously injured, he miraculously survived and went on to live in hiding. During his recovery, Daredevil goes through a severe crisis of faith – in line with the key plotline of the previous series – and decides not to return to his civilian life, as he feels his alter ego Matthew

Murdock is dead to him. In the meanwhile, Fisk has returned to his criminal side of life after coming out of prison. This is where another Marvel character gets woven into the story line: Benjamin Poindexter, a.k.a. Bullseye, a sharpshooter with psychopathic tendencies, features as an ally to Fisk. While Daredevil continues his spiritual retreat, Foggy Nelson and Karen Page intend to expose Fisk's criminal dealings. The series end with Fisk returning to prison, right after leaving Bullseye paralysed, and with Matt, Foggy and Karen agreeing to work together again.

The development of the Daredevil character from a comic book figure to a TV show superhero, as described in this chapter, is a clear example as to how a narrative can flow onto a number of platforms. In this particular case, the narrative started out as a comic book series, which currently is still running, and which contains the most elaborated version of the narrative on the superhero character. It has also been featured in cinematographic outlets and, as shown here, it has now been elaborated upon for on-demand television show. With the transition from paper to the audio-visual format, it has become clear that the latter is better equipped to put across the action and Daredevil's sensory superpowers.

What is also clear is that the narrative is not only adapted to new media outlets but that is also expanded upon. Characters were added and crossed over from other narratives (Elektra, the Punisher and Bullseye) and the narrative was supplemented with new storylines (e.g. the quest against the crime syndicate known as The Hand). Moreover, this expansion was a deliberate choice by the producers. Aside from the 2003 cinematographic botch, Marvel has continued succeeding in capturing new audiences. Particularly the latest venture by releasing the TV show *Daredevil* on Netflix, has allowed the character to become known by the mainstream public, similar to other better-known Marvel superheroes.

When reviewing the expansion of the narrative in the Netflix shows, it also stands out that Daredevil as a character has gained considerably in psychological depth during the years. This latter aspect will be the centre of our next chapter, which will review Daredevil's story world.

5.3 Daredevil's world

Before going into how Daredevil's world is built, it seems adequate to take a momentary step aside and consider the genre in which it operates and how it relates to transmedial narratives. The comic book form generated the Daredevil character and many other typical North American comic-book superheroes, of which Superman and Batman are the textbook examples. As shown by Scolari, Bertetti and Freeman, the comic book as a medium evolved in the late 1930s from pulp fiction, by adding comic art to the existing pulp narratives (Scolari et al., 2014). As such, it employed similar narrative traits as pulp magazines, by centring on serial action-packed incidents. This type of narratives was generally deemed vulgar and unrefined. The characters were flat, the narrative was shallow, and the focus was rather on serialising the narrative, so to gain and nurture loyal customers.

The publication of the Superman comic in the late 1930s triggered a superhero boom (Scolari et al., 2014) and added the element of fantasy and science fiction to the pulp narratives that would become crucial to their worldbuilding potential. The following decades a myriad of typical North American comic book superheroes would emerge. Their stories constructed fictional spaces that challenged realism but also triggered curiosity and marvel as to the narrative possibilities they opened. Thus, the genres of fantasy and science fiction seem particularly suited for accommodating transmedial storytelling, as the nature of world creating is much more evident than in realistic genres (Scolari et al., 2014: 45).

Even today, science fiction and fantasy continue to be favoured genres for transmedia storytelling, of which Netflix's *Daredevil* is just one of many examples. Structurally and thematically, these genres provide ample world-creation possibilities, as they require detailed references and explanations, yet can be moulded to the needs of the narrative. As described in chapter 3.1.1 above, worldbuilding is about designing a fictional universe capable of supporting different stories to emerge, while remaining coherent so that each piece fits with the other (Scolari et al., 2014; 43).

If we apply the previous to *Daredevil*, we can clearly define the premises on which this story world is built. To begin with, the narrative takes place in a clearly delimited geographical space: Hell's Kitchen, a presumably crime-ridden neighbourhood of Manhattan. The apparent poetry of the name could suggest that it is a fictitious

territory, particularly when found in the context of Marvel screenwriting where names never seem unintentionally attributed. Yet, Hell's Kitchen actually exists as a Manhattan neighbourhood (see Figure 6). It got its name in the late 1800s when it was a gang-controlled, mainly Irish and German neighbourhood (Amell, 2010; Sokol, 2015).



Figure 6. Location of Hell's Kitchen (a.k.a. Clinton) - Delimited by 34th (south), 59th street (north), the Hudson River (west) and Eighth Avenue
Source: (Wikipedia, 2019a)

The location of Hell's Kitchen is of such importance to Daredevil and to the story that it practically counts as one more character of the cast (The insightful Panda, 2015). The semantic links between the names of the main character and the neighbourhood would preclude any other neighbourhood to be eligible as an alternative landmark. So, the premise of Hell's Kitchen still being a mainly crime-controlled, unsafe area like it was when Daredevil was first presented to the public in the 1960s is essential for Daredevil's *raison d'être* as a neighbourhood vigilante.

At the same time, the temporal setting of the TV show has been stretched from the 1960s of the original Daredevil comic books to the 2010s. Where the aesthetics and social conventions in the first comic book edition clearly situated the story in the 1960s, which is when the first comics came out, the Netflix TV show features computers, mobile phones and contemporary cars and subways. The show includes specific temporal references that places the action's timeline in our current decade, such as the semiotic reference to Foggy Nelson's course list that dates both his and Matthew's enrolment in Law school in 2010 (S1:E10).

So, how does the TV show solve the time leap from the 1960s to the 2010s, while maintaining Hell's Kitchen as a dark neighbourhood? The contradiction of Hell's Kitchen needing to be portrayed as a dark neighbourhood and the action taking place in current times, when the neighbourhood is no longer ruled by crime and mob

warfare, obviously required an explanation in order to keep up the suspension of disbelief. As the landmark could not be changed for obvious reasons, the story required a reason for Hell's Kitchen still needing to be saved. The answer provided by Marvel was to link Daredevil's story with the Avengers', which is a prodigious example of how worldbuilding takes place (The insightful Panda, 2015).

As stated above, *The Avengers* had ended with a large-scale devastation of New York called "the Battle of New York" or "the incident", which refers to the epic battle where the Avengers stop extra-terrestrial archenemy Loki from taking control over Earth and in the process cause mayor destruction to most of Manhattan. The *Daredevil* TV-verse was made to start right where *The Avengers* left off and there are plenty textual and semiotic indications in the show that establish and confirm this link with this film.

In *Daredevil*, "the incident" is mentioned textually several times in the first episode of the first season with a view to setting the background to the story. The first mention occurs when a real estate agent shows Foggy and Matt a potential office space for their joint legal practice. The agent specifies that "this office was barely touched by the incident, which is why it is on the market already". In order to clarify what is meant by the incident, she ironizes that it sounds better than "death and destruction raining from the sky", which would be a pretty accurate summary of what happened in *The Avengers*. Foggy then complains about the view on construction sites, thus underlining that the city is being rebuilt, which the agent then uses to rebut that that is exactly the reason that real estate prices have plummeted ever since the incident.

Fast forward a couple of scenes, still in the first episode of the first season, the show introduces us to the villains, the heads of the four crime syndicates that operate in Hell's Kitchen, who make a second mention to the incident. As they discuss how an unknown superhero (Daredevil) thwarted a recent business deal, the bookkeeper states that he's glad that:

[...] there's some new blood running around out there. Heroes and their consequences are why we have our current opportunities [as] every time one of these guys punches someone through a building, our margins go up 3%. (DeKnight (Showrunner), 2015)

Throughout the rest of the series, there are semiotic references that only the more avid fans are likely to pick up. A recurring example of such semiotic references are the framed newspaper covers displayed at the offices of the New York Bulletin, that

refer mainly to the incident, but also to other superheroes (see Figure 7). We will go further into these semiotic references in the section on drillability in the context of the so-called Easter eggs.



Figure 7. Still image from Netflix's Daredevil (S1:E10) – Semiotic references to “the incident”.
Source: (Pham, 2018)

So, barely halfway through the first episode the importance of the incident to Daredevil's story world is already decidedly manifest: Daredevil would not exist if it weren't for the events occurred with the Avengers. The Battle of New York and the extra-terrestrial substances it brought with it are responsible for the emergence of special-powered people, whereas the destruction caused by battle has left a void that is happily occupied by real estate speculation and organised crime, which the superheroes are meant to take down.

In transmedial terms, the incident serves as a strategy that links together the world of the Avengers with Daredevil's, while it also explains why Hell's Kitchen is portrayed as an unsafe neighbourhood needing to be saved. This kind of strategy is referred to as *retroactive linkage*, as two worlds are joined that already existed independently (Scolari et al., 2014: 49). In worldbuilding terms, it gives us important clues on the paradigms on which Daredevil's world is built.

As outlined above, there are well-defined elements that structure Daredevil's fictional world. The action is set in contemporary New York where organised crime is clearly out of control, with the added fantasy element of the existence of superheroes. It is precisely this element of fantasy that will allow the story world to support additional superheroes and supervillains, linking them together through events that might stretch our credibility to some extent, all the while remaining coherent to each other.

The main characters in this fictional world are taken from the comic books and previous audio-visual representations and, despite minor deviations, they remain true to their respective back stories and psychological profiles. The central theme of the narrative is already suggested by the name and central traits of the main character: as a convinced catholic, lawyer by day and vigilante by night, Daredevil is conflicted about the limitations of the law as opposed to the idea of divine justice.

Before concluding this chapter on worldbuilding, one last illustration of this narratological attribute in Daredevil seems in place. Marvel's screen writers being counted among the best, it seems safe to state that it was not unintentional that they included a poetic intratext reference to the concept itself in the script. On this account, Father Lantom includes in his sermon at Grotto's funeral the following words (Petrie, D. Ramírez (Showrunners), 2016; episode 4):

And so, we might say "one life gone." One sinful life. But one person is not just one person. In each of us there is a world, webbing out, reaching others. Creating reactions. Sometimes equal, sometimes opposite. We rush to say "one life gone" but each of us is a world. And today a world has been lost.

This quote sustains the idea that Daredevil's world was carefully and intentionally constructed and that the writers were well aware of the transmedial implications of the script. But if anything at all, it depicts very precisely and eloquently how worldbuilding takes place in transmedia narratives in general, and in the Marvel Universe in particular.

5.3.1 Continuity and multiplicity

As set out in the theoretical basis, continuity refers to the narrative coherence that binds a narrative across media platforms to create a unified world. As we have seen in the previous two subchapters, Daredevil's world is a comprehensive one. Now only does it draw back on almost five decades of comic books releases, it intersects with five other Marvel characters into a so-called TV-verse. Yet, the narrative coherence has remained practically flawless. As this chapter intends to show, Netflix's Daredevil has taken continuity to a next level and has succeeded in binding together the narrative with comic books, on the one hand, and with the other Netflix/Marvel shows, on the other hand.

As shown in the previous chapter, the TV-verse takes its characters and core plot from the comic book series. However, what is more interesting is how it introduces

significant changes to some of the storylines without affecting coherence. The characters' main attributes have been respected and the TV-verse builds on storylines already set out in the comics, but certain key events differ significantly from the source material.

A clear example of plot divergence is how Karen Page's intervention in the story line is adapted in the TV-verse. In the comics, Karen Page does not overcome her drug habit and, as a direct result of her drug abuse, she ends up revealing Daredevil's true identity to Fisk in exchange for drugs. Her guilt over this betrayal presumably motivates her to jump in front of Daredevil and save him from one of Bullseye's projectiles, leading to her demise. In the TV-verse Karen Page also reveals Daredevil's identity to Fisk but in this case unintentionally. The scene where Karen sacrifices herself for Daredevil is mimicked in very similar terms, only this time it is Father Lantom who takes Bullseye's throw to save Karen (Figure 8 and Figure 9).



*Figure 8. Karen Page saves Daredevil from Bullseye – Panel from Guardian Devil, Vol.2, Issue 5 (1998)
Source: (Bacon, 2018)*



*Figure 9. Father Lantom saves Karen Page from Bullseye – still image from Daredevil, season 3, episode 11
Source: (Petrie, D. Ramirez (Showrunners) & Ramirez, 2018)*

Despite the clear divergence from the comic book narrative, a couple of scenes later in the same episode we find a quite opposite clue when the composition of the scene where Karen holds injured Daredevil copies nearly perfectly the comic panel where Daredevil embraces Karen Page's dead body. Here we see a coherent story line shift between comics as illustrated by the following images (Figure 10 and Figure 11):



Figure 10. Daredevil holds Karen Page's dead body under a crucifix Bullseye – Panel from *Guardian Devil*, Vol.2, Issue 5 (1998)
Source: (Ginocchio, 2017)



Figure 11. Karen Page holds injured Daredevil under a crucifix – still image from *Daredevil*, season 3, episode 11
Source: (Petrie, D. Ramírez (Showrunners) & Ramírez, 2018)

This example confronts us with a paradoxical divergence between the same narrative on two different platforms. On the one hand, a major detail is changed in regards of the comics, as one of the main characters is allowed to survive. On the other hand, we find semiotic clues that are identical to the same comic book story line. Coincidentally, the plot twist does not seem to impair coherence. While Karen's sacrifice in the comic books was in line with her carrying the blame over giving up Daredevil's identity, in the TV-verse, with a redeemed Karen Page, such sacrifice would no longer make sense (Schedeen, 2018). Yet, placing this divergence in a setting similar to the corresponding comic book story line is a clear eyewink intended for the audience familiar with the comics.

What is clear here is that coherence does not require a flawless alignment between the different platforms, particularly if there is a significant time lapse between the releases and some details of the story require revamping. By introducing a meaningful change with respect to the comic books, while still closely mirroring the context of the event, Marvel is in fact reassuring the comic book audience that the adaptation in the TV-verse is intentional and the canon text has not been left aside. The twist can even benefit fan engagement by giving the audience material to debate on, as will be seen in the chapter on audience participation. At the same time, continuity revisions, such as the updated timeline, disposes of an important barrier for casual viewers, who are not familiar with years of preceding history (Taylor, 2014).

Building further on the continuity between the comics and TV-verse, there is another type of continuity that stands out: a more subtle continuity that goes beyond the narrative and lies hidden in the photographic composition of the scenes. The first –

rather obvious – semiotic link with the comics is revealed in the opening logo⁹, where an animated sequence of comic book pages being flipped concludes with the well-known Marvel logo. Yet, there are other semiotic links with the Marvel comics that seem to evoke the feel of the comics without being quite tangible. It requires semiotic analysis to establish that, indeed, the composition of the scenes and the camera angles are unmistakably Marvel-styled, resulting in a reminiscence of the comic books aesthetics.

First, it is clear that a Marvel style does exist. Marvel's comic art has certain characteristics that makes it stand apart from other art works. This was outlined by Stan Lee and John Buscema in their video tutorial on how to draw comics "the Marvel way" (Lee & Buscema, 1986). One of the main points made in the video is that composition is key to getting the message across. That is why certain physical traits of the characters are slightly exaggerated, while extreme angles and tilted perspectives are used to stress the dramatic quality of the action and to convey the heroes as large and as heroically as possible.

The dramatic camera angles and compositions have clearly been taken to heart in the filming of the Marvel TV-verse. Extremely low or unusually high angle shots are used throughout the episodes to add drama to a pose or to an action scene. Some comic book scenes have even been mimicked on the screen, recognizable for the comic fans, while for the viewer unfamiliar with the comics they will still feel natural (Cronin, 2018). A clear example of the composition of movie scenes mimicking the comics is the iconic shot of the comic book cover page, where Daredevil is holding on to a crucifix on the top of a church, as shown below (Figure 12 and Figure 13):

⁹ A production logo in movies and television productions is a short sequence of images and sounds that is used by studios and producers to brand their products. Production logos are usually seen at the beginning of a movie (an "opening logo"), or at the end (a "closing logo"). Production logos can include motion and sound and almost always do. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Production_logo)



Figure 12. Daredevil holding onto a crucifix on top of a church – panel from Daredevil Vol.2, Issue 3
Source: (Quesada & Smith, 1999)



Figure 13. Daredevil holding onto crucifix on top of a church– still image from Daredevil, season 3, episode 11
Source: (Petrie & Ramírez, 2018: episode 11)

A closer look at the photographic attributes of the TV-verse reveal plenty of examples of semiotic continuity between the comics and the TV-verse. Not only the composition, but also the set dressing preserves the aesthetics of the comic books. The panoramic shots of New York, not showing too much detail, could well be taken a couple of decades ago, in line with the original timeline of the narrative. The interiors, the cars on the street and the clothing donned by the characters all have a timeless feel to them, in a way that seems to mitigate the time lapse from the comics to the post-Avengers era.

It follows from the above that the continuity between the comics and the TV-verse is not absolute, yet functionally sound. In some instances, the narrative slightly steps away from the canon text – presumably due to the updated timeline – but these adaptations are amply compensated by the semiotic continuity.

As is to be expected, the continuity within the TV-verse is of a stricter nature, as it does not involve a change in platform nor in timeline. Clearly, the narrative control over a series of TV shows being produced in a relative short interval and on the same platform is much easier to maintain. Notwithstanding, it deserves a brief analysis in its own right.

The continuity within the TV-verse lies in the character development and their intersections, rather than in the narrative. Over the three series, the characters are shaped far beyond their comic book personas. They each go through their particular crises and evolve accordingly. Daredevil starts out as an idealistic, part-time vigilante, then becomes a more conventional superhero and subsequently evolves into a deeply conflicted hermit, only to end up embracing his inner darkness. Karen Page goes through a similar evolution and learns how to accept her past, which makes her a stronger person who is capable of standing up for her beliefs. Even the arch nemesis of the story, a figure prone to be portrayed as pure evil, grows into a round character. Wilson Fisk starts out as the stereotypical villain but the flashbacks on his abusive childhood and his love affair with Vanessa Mariana show that he has vulnerable sides too and makes him more credible as a character.

The psychological development of the characters is also what sets Daredevil and the rest of the TV-verse apart from the Avengers. They have in common that they are packed with impressively choreographed fight scenes, action being the core Marvel trademark (Lee & Buscema, 1986). Daredevil and the related shows, however, have a more mature undertone and even the action scenes are grittier and more realistic than the ones in the Avengers movies. In fact, the TV-verse gravitates around the psychologically dark side of vigilante justice (Dockterman, 2015). Not surprisingly, Netflix sets the shows age rating at 18+, whereas movies such as Iron Man (2008) and Spiderman (2018) are rated 7+. This is also logical considering that it will take a more mature audience to understand the underlying conflicts the characters are struggling with.

Back to the question of continuity within the TV-verse, it is the coherence of the characters' developments that binds together the narrative and that lends it credibility. Yet again, we find that the continuity in the narrative is mirrored by continuity in the semiotic attributes of the characters. A closer semiotic analysis of the colour work in Daredevil's cinematography reveals the elaborate and intentional colour-coding of the characters and the evolutions they go through (Hicks, 2019). The association of Daredevil himself with the colour red is a semiotic link that is hard to miss, and which already stems from the comics. Red symbolizes the way Daredevil sees the world – a world "on fire", filled with danger and blood –, as well as the "devil" he carries inside of him. Evidently, his superhero suit couldn't be any other colour, even though it didn't start out that way in the comics (see Figure 5 for Daredevil's

first costume in black and yellow). The intro of the TV show consists of a sequence of settings in Hell's Kitchen and of catholic symbols covered in what seems to be blood¹⁰ (Radford, 2015). The scenes where Daredevil truly comes into being are mostly lit in shades of red and decorated with props in the same colour scheme. Thus, we see that at the onset of the season 1 the colour red becomes increasingly present, coinciding with Matt Murdock's transitioning into Daredevil and culminating in his iconic red suit, which doesn't make its appearance until the last episode, where he dons it for the first time in full glory. Season 2 has Frank Castle consistently referring to Daredevil as "Red", like a nickname. Coincidentally, in the third series, where Matt Murdock suffers a severe crisis of faith, he goes back to his black outfit and the colour red loses prominence (Figure 14), only to resurface as Daredevil recovers his inner strength.



Figure 14. Promotion artwork for series 3 of Daredevil TV show – Daredevil sheds his red suit and becomes dark
Source: (Hicks, 2019)

The rest of the key characters and their evolutions are similarly colour-coded (Hicks, 2019). Foggy and Karen are consistently depicted in blended hues of greens and yellows, reflecting their friendship and similar outlook on the events of the narrative. The police are surrounded by blue tones, either on the walls or in the objects they use. Fisk's colours are white and gold, which are associated with his strength and splendour as a mobster. When his power peaks in the third series, where he comes to run Hell's Kitchen's underworld from a luxurious white and gold decorated hotel suite, his closet is filled with a collection of identical, shiny white suits, which were his

¹⁰ The following video shows All Marvel Netflix Intros and Opening Credits (Daredevil, Jessica Jones, Luke Cage, Iron Fist) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHr7SkOVkBO>

trademark in the comics as well. The series closes with Fisk's suit covered in blood, as he is beaten by Daredevil, thus expressing the conquer of red over white.

Taking into account the examples given in this chapter, it seems safe to state that the Daredevil TV show keeps continuity in check with respect to the comics, as well as with the rest of the TV-verse. Moreover, the coherence is preserved not only at narrative level, but also at semiotic level, which results in a well-rounded and credible world.

Going back to the thematical framework of this paper, which explains how continuity can be replicated, or multiplied, in parallel universes, the subsequent question is whether the worldbuilding-strategy of multiplicity has been used with regards to the Daredevil TV show as well. In this regard, the assertion that Marvel's strict policy on fictional coherence doesn't leave much space for multiplicity seems to hold true (Richter, 2016). As a matter of fact, the only examples of multiplicity of Daredevil are to be found in the comic book history, where Daredevil has made occasional appearances in parallel universes. This is the case of the Marvel 1602 comic book series that takes versions of Marvel superheroes to sixteenth-century Elizabethan England (Gaiman, 2003). Similar multiplications of the TV show are not known yet, although its recent release might still leave room for future productions. It does seem improbable that Daredevil would go through yet another timeline shift, as has already been done. What is imaginable, however, are multiverses in other geographical locations. Perhaps Daredevil could expand to India or to parallel universes, as Spiderman did. Such expansion of the TV-verse could work, and it will be interesting to see if the franchise will ever go that way.

5.3.2 Seriality

As we already touched upon in the context of genres, pulp fiction was the prime example of seriality, preceding the arrival of television series, (Scolari et al., 2014). As an heir to this tradition, comic books are built almost exclusively on seriality and the exploit similar technique of episodic narration. The Daredevil comic books fit completely in this genre, as is shown by the fact that they are sold by series rather than single issues (Figure 15).

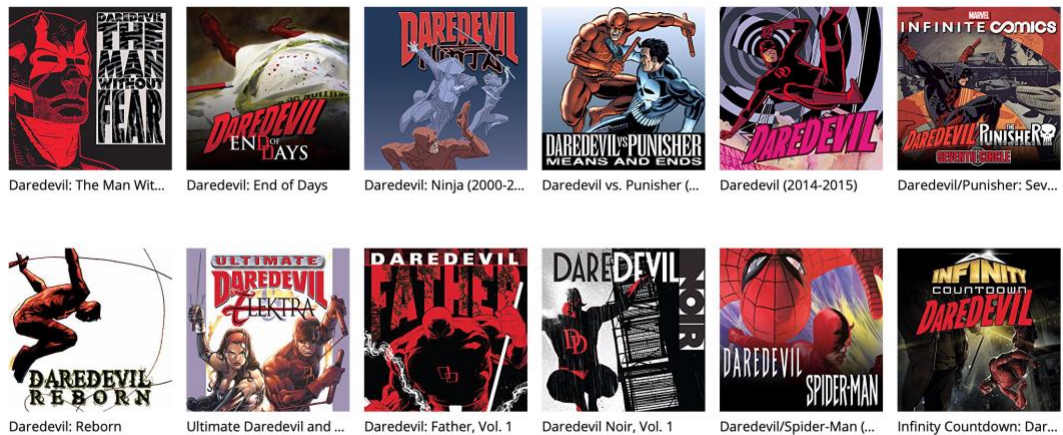


Figure 15. Screenshot of a selection of Daredevil series in comic book form available on for online sale
Source: Marvel Digital Comics Shop

The subsequent instalments of Daredevil narratives in the form of television and cinematographic movies seemed to break with the tradition of seriality, in the sense that they are stand-alone additions to the narrative, which do not succeed nor seek to capture the audience for subsequent instalments.

Now, with the shift from the television and cinematic platform to Netflix, the concept of seriality has become under serious strain. The rise of Internet-delivered television (I-DTV) has challenged the existing models of broadcasting television contents (Radošinská, 2017). Rather than having contents pushed to them, viewers now can pull the contents they want to see and when they want to see it. As a result, the original concept of seriality has to be redefined, as viewers are now able to view the series in an order different to the one in which they were released. This means that each series has to be interesting for the viewer in its own right, without the need to have seen the previous or related series in order to understand the plot at hand, without prejudice to the continuity among the story lines. As is clear, this is a new and unprecedented challenge for any transmedia project, as seriality and continuity are now potentially in conflict with each.

Let's see how this works out in *Daredevil*. As shown above, *Daredevil* consists of three series. Each series is built upon interconnected plotlines and they do not require stories to be resolved in each single episode (Radošinská, 2017). However, these series were alternated with releases of the other Marvel TV-verse characters, as shown in the table below (Figure 16).

Title	Season
Daredevil	Season 1
Jessica Jones	Season 1
Daredevil	Season 2
Luke Cage	Season 1
Iron Fist	Season 1
The Defenders	Limited Series
The Punisher	Season 1
Jessica Jones	Season 2
Luke Cage	Season 2
Iron Fist	Season 2
Daredevil	Season 3
The Punisher	Season 2
Jessica Jones	Season 3

Figure 16. Marvel TV-verse watch order based on release order
Source: (Robinson, 2019)

Particularly between the second and the third series a lot happened with the other TV-verse characters that could potentially impact on Daredevil's story world. Of particular importance are the events in the miniseries *The Defenders* (Ramírez (Showrunner), 2017), detailed in the synopsis above, where Daredevil stars as one of the four main characters, sacrifices himself to save his fellow-superheroes and ends up presumably injured beyond salvation. The third series then very cleverly uses these events to elaborate on Daredevil's recovery, both physically and morally, providing new psychological depth to the character, while preserving both seriality and continuity.

Now that several series of the TV-verse are already available on demand, new viewers can pull the series in whichever order they prefer, and not necessarily in the order they were released. Now, here is where the true transmedial quality of the Marvel TV-verse comes into play: every serial has narrative worth in its own right, meaning they can be enjoyed even if the viewer hasn't seen the other serials. Admittedly, the haphazard viewer will most certainly miss the references to the other serials (the so-called *Easter eggs*) and the intratextual puns, but they will still be able to enjoy the serial of their choice. Moreover, they may be teased to watch the other series, or to browse for back stories on the Internet. In this way, seriality is not only a key factor in the *Daredevil* TV show, but it even propagates hyperbolically if applied to the whole TV-verse.

Another implication of using I-DTV services and having multiple entrances into a narrative world is that the franchises need to find strategies to entice the audience's continued consumption of their products. The most common strategy in transmedia

narratives is using narrative implication, meaning that narrative taking place hints at untold stories that develop characters or storylines beyond the current story world (Scolari et al., 2014; 42). As to the Daredevil show, the clearest example is the appearance of Frank Castle in season 2 as a secondary character. His interesting but incomplete backstory creates the possibility for a new story world to be developed and the more perceptive audience is likely to take the hint and expect the corresponding spin-off. In the case of Frank Castle, this became the TV show *The Punisher* (Lightfoot (Showrunner), 2017), consisting of two seasons, where indeed Frank's backstory is fully explained. A similar example is the appearance of Ben Poindexter in season 3, who the comic book fans will surely recognise as Bullseye. The last episode of the series ends with a teaser, as Poindexter gets the spinal surgery which will turn him into Bullseye. It seems that a Bullseye spin-off is off the table now that Netflix has cancelled the series of the Marvel TV-verse, but for now the possibility remains open.

5.3.3 Subjectivity

While narrative implication implies opening doors for the audience to enter a particular narrative world, transmedial subjectivity refers to the way the expansion in question adds new perspectives to the story. Looking at the TV-verse as whole, the principle of subjectivity is very clear. In an almost identical fashion as the MCU, the solo-series focus on the individual characters, their origin stories, superpowers and enemies, whereas *The Defenders*, where they all come together, centres more on the action and the story (Richter, 2016).

This subjectivity penetrates also into the stand-alone series via character cross-overs. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Frank Castle provides an interesting perspective on Daredevil's beliefs regarding self-imparted justice. Being a lawyer and a catholic, Daredevil logically struggles with the use of violence to fight evil. To the Punisher, on the other hand, killing is second nature. So, while they agree on the end – to fight crime –, they have contested views on the methods. This opposition gives occasion to philosophical dialogues, which lead a better understanding of Daredevil motives.

A key moment in this respect is the rooftop conversation between them both in the third episode of Season 2 (Petrie, D. Ramírez (Showrunners), 2016). Frank Castle exerts that by killing mobsters he prevents them from killing others and he considers

Daredevil a coward for leaving the job half-done. This allows Daredevil to argue his point of view and to explain why he believes that it is not up to him, nor anyone, to take another person's life. The extended dialogue between Frank and Matt on this matter is key to the show's central theme and takes up larger part of the episode, alternated with other scenes.

The conflict between fighting injustice and exerting violence regarding the limits of violence is indeed a Daredevil trademark. As a result of a growing awareness of the shortcomings of the legal system Daredevil starts to seriously question his beliefs. Frank Castle is a key character to the show because he mirrors Daredevil's moral dilemma and puts it into a different perspective.

There are many other supporting characters that add perspective. Karen Page stands for redemption and atonement. She becomes the platonic love interest of Matt Murdock and is portrayed as an essentially good person. It isn't until season 3 that we get the full scope of her darker past of her more frightful actions, through flashbacks to her childhood home in Vermont. By then, her kinder sides have gained the upper hand and Karen Page comes to stand for atonement, proving right Daredevil's theory that everyone deserves a second chance.

A special mention needs to be made of Claire Temple, the go-to nurse when Daredevil is injured. Claire is not a random secondary character but fulfils an important transmedial role. The character is loosely based on the main character in *Night Nurse*, a four-issues Marvel comic book series originally published in the 1970s (J. Thomas, 1972). In the TV-verse, Claire Temple is a nurse who ends up aiding vigilantes, with whom she shares the calling to help people. In the words of Madame Chao, Claire finds herself often fraternizing with people with gifts and she secretly hopes that "the thing that makes them special will rub off" on her (Buck, 2017: S1E9). In many ways, Claire Temple is an audience surrogate character and, as a stand-in for the viewer, she often points out the crazy side of the situation and lays ties to our real-world conventions (Dockterman, 2015). When she starts to realize that Matt Murdock has certain abilities, her sceptic question "You can smell a man on the *third floor?*" sums up the reaction of any of us viewers would think in such an unconventional situation (White, 2015). In transmedial terms, the character also links together the *Defenders*, given that crosses over to the *Iron Fist* and *Luke Cage* shows, where she also plays significant secondary roles.

The chapter on subjectivity would not be complete without mention of another element that adds perspective on the characters and the narrative and that is easily overlooked: the soundtrack. The songs in the show are perfectly aligned with the narrative and give extra cues as to what is really going on in the scene (Medel, 2015). For instance, in the finale of season 1, when Fisk's organisation is taken down, the sound track featuring *Nessum Dorma* gives away two important clues to what is actually happening. The lyrics of *Nessum Dorma* express the moment when one knows that their defeat is unescapable and it also refers to the revelation of a secret identity. So, as it happens, the song is assuring us that Fisk is defeated and that the name of Daredevil will not be revealed.

In other instances modern pop and rock songs are played to accompany the plot, such as *Many Rivers to Cross* by Jimmy Cliff plays during Ben Urich's funeral or *No matter what you're told* by Broken Bells when Foggy explains to Karen that the people in Hell's Kitchen are not as rough as they seem.

As shown in this chapter, the elements that reveal subjectivity are more often than not subtle cues that may not be obvious at first sight. The crossovers and the references the characters make to each other allow for great Easter eggs, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

5.4 Daredevil's culture

The thematic framework of this paper explained how a successful transmedia narrative is bound to result in fan engagement. Thus, fan engagement is both a goal and a consequence of successful transmedia franchises. This chapter sets out to show how this theory translates to practice in the case of Daredevil

5.4.1 Spreadability and drillability

According to the theoretic framework, spreadability and drillability could be considered indicators of success. Spreadability would be measured in number of fans and drillability in terms of time spent on the narrative by the fans. For the purpose of this paper, the empiric study on the economics of the TV show will be left aside. A basic assumption here is that the presence of both spreadability and drillability in the TV show are assumed proven in light of the acclaimed success of the TV show and of the fact that related fan material available on the Internet is too numerous to list.

Instead, the focus of this chapter will be on the strategies applied with a direct aim at the fan community.

An essential tactic to engage fans in drilling into the narrative is the use of Easter eggs, which have been mentioned in chapter 5.3 in the context of the retroactive linkage with the Avengers universe. Easter eggs can be hidden in the non-linguistic signs, as is the case with the framed news articles in Figure 7 above, in the music or in the dialogues. Some of them connect the show with the rest of the TV-verse and MCU, others link up with the comic books and yet others point towards the MCU. Let's see some examples.

The most obvious Easter eggs are the mentions – indirect references or in passing – of characters of other Marvel shows or films TV shows. Jessica Jones comes up a couple of times, first when District Attorney Reyes from the Jessica Jones shows makes her appearance as the prosecutor in Frank Castle's case. Later on, we find out that she is looking into a "lady by the name of Jessica Jones" (Zalben, 2016a). Claire Temple mentions a big strong guy who got her in trouble at work, clearly referring to Luke Cage. The appearance of Stick in season 2 of the show links Daredevil to the Iron Fist TV show, where Stick plays the same role as a member of the Chaste, a mysterious ninja organisation. The final moments of the series see Matt, Karen and Foggy agreeing to finally become the tripartite legal partnership of Nelson, Murdock and Page, with Murdock hilariously declaring that Karen is "way more stable than Jessica Jones" in the investigative reporter stakes (Pooley, 2018).

The references to the comic books are less conspicuous for the accidental viewer, as they require previous knowledge of the comic book universe, but there are plenty of hard-core fans prepared and willing to point them out. In the TV show, Wilson Fisk and Daredevil get their suits made by Melvin Potter, who is known in the comic book universe as the Gladiator. He is shown in his work shop working a circular saw, which is his iconic weapon as the Gladiator in the comics and, less noticeably, there are blueprints for a circular saw suit on his table. As has come up earlier, Benjamin Poindexter is actually Bullseye and this can be deduced from the bullseye target on his baseball cap, which is also his logo in the comics. Poindexter lives in an apartment with number 113 and it cannot be random fact that Bullseye made his debut in the comic books in Daredevil issue 131 in March (Pooley, 2018).

Several references are made to the show *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* (Whedon (Showrunner), 2013). One of the characters in S.H.I.E.L.D., Carl "Crusher" Creel, is shown as a boxer on one of the advertisement posters at the gym where Matt Murdock practices (L. M. Thomas, 2018). Furthermore, one of the headlines on the wall at the New York Bulletin mentions *Cybertek*, which is the corporation that developed the Deathlok technology in *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* Another highly inconspicuous reference to the Marvel franchise is the company Atlas Investments at the office in front of Nelson&Murdock; only the long-time Marvel fans will know that Atlas was the name Marvel used in the 1950s.

Even references to Marvel executive personnel can be found. In Fogwell's Gym, there are posters on the wall with the names "*The Dish*" Petrie and "*Soldier*" Pokaski. These refer to co-executive producers Joe Pokaski and Douglas Petrie (Marvel Wiki, n.d.-a).

Easter eggs aren't only visual or textual, though. As pointed out in the context of subjectivity, the audio tracks may also contain complementary information on the characters and the narratives. Since the show revolves around a main character that is blind, it is fair to assume that Marvel wants us to pay attention to the non-visual cues as well. Thus, the references contained in the audio may certainly count as Easter eggs too, purposely hidden by the screen writers. Insofar the music is usually a background element, it may take some digging to identify the songs and the relation to the narrative. Admittedly, the sound tracks in *Daredevil* do not refer to the other shows or comics but they do add information that complements the visual and linguistic cues, as illustrated in the previous chapter, and they are not always easy to spot. Such occurs in series 3, where *Daredevil* suffers hearing loss in his right ear following the Midland Circle collapse. Matt Murdock's auditive impairment is reflected in the audio that is fully outputted in the left speaker, although this is hardly noticeable with generic speakers (Pooley, 2018).

A particularly fun type of Easter egg, and one that is unique to the Marvel universes, is that Stan Lee has made it a tradition to make cameo appearances in all Marvel productions. In the MCU he appears in person, always as a bystander or an extra, and sometimes he even has a line. He also appears in each and every show of Marvel's TV-verse, albeit in a different way, as he appears in indirect ways and not in person. This way he is more of a challenge to spot, which lines up perfectly with

the more mature audience the series is targeted at. In *Daredevil*, Stan Lee appears on a poster at the Fifteenth Precinct, as show below (Figure 17):



Figure 17. Cameo by Stan Lee in *Daredevil*, season 1
Source: (Zamora, 2015)

In fewer words, the Easter eggs in *Daredevil* are numerous and can be found in any of the three semiotic levels – verbal, visual and auditive. Moreover, they can refer to any element related to the Marvel franchises: characters, storylines and even staff. Finding them is an enjoyable and sometimes demanding exercise. Insofar some of the clues require considerable research and digging, it seems adequate to conclude that the principle of drillability has been taken very seriously in the production of the TV show. Notwithstanding, there are fans that keep looking for additional input. The following chapter will go into additional ways fan can engage in a transmedia narrative.

5.4.2 Immersion and extractability

As we have mentioned in chapter 3.2.2, immersion occurs when fans are given the change to plunge themselves into the narrative worlds. Investments in parks and videogames are an unavoidable strategy for media producers and this is also true for Marvel. Ever since Marvel's merger with Disney, the inclusion of Marvel superheroes in Disney's theme parks has been a matter of time. Currently, several Marvel-themed areas are available in several Disneyland park.

Yet, these themed areas are focused on the Avengers and do not include characters from *Daredevil* or any of the Defenders. This seems logical, given the mature tone the narrative has acquired ever since the TV shows were released. Unlike the Avengers, the TV shows of the Defenders team include explicit violence and sexual

innuendo and are thus not age-appropriate for a family-oriented thematic park such as Disneyland. However, there is a second reason why the Marvel heroes do not fit well with Disney thematic parks. The MCU takes place in a mirror version of New York and creating an area in a thematic park would mean merely recreating New York, which would not provide the same immersive experience as is the case with science fiction stories, such as Star Wars or fantasy like Harry Potter (Bishop, 2017).

Luckily, another kind of immersion into Daredevil is available, as the character has been successfully featured in several videogames (Farrell, 2015). From the mid-90s Daredevil has made occasional cameo appearances in other Marvel games as a support figure in Spiderman games. In these games, Daredevil can be summoned to fight enemies by using his versatile cane or by using his internal lie detector. In convergence with the release of the in 2003 Daredevil film, the character finally got his own stand-alone game on the Game Boy Advance, a mediocre action game which did little to raise the characters awareness outside of the comics circles. From there on, Daredevil would only appear in other Marvel games, both for PC and video consoles.

The question as to whether a stand-alone Daredevil game will be developed in the near future is still open. Although, it has been hinted that such a game would most likely not be successful, as it would come across as a downsize after the Spider-Man games. Spiderman already covers New York and most of the villains that Daredevil fights, and so Daredevil videogame is unlikely to be attractive for gamers (Chapman, 2018).

As a complement to immersion, extractability is about fans introducing elements of the fictional world into their daily lives. A visit to any comic conference (comic con for short) reveals the seemingly endless variety of items available in regards of comic book characters, including Daredevil, as well as the diversity of the designs. In terms of the transmedia theory, comic cons are, in fact, a grey area between immersion and extraction. On the one hand they provide excellent occasions for fans to immerse in the fictional world of choice by participating in the programmed activities, while on the other they are also outstanding opportunities for fans to take aspects away from the fictional world and deploy them in their daily lives. An important element of extractability that becomes particularly manifest at comic cons is cosplay. Cosplay

stands for costume play and it involves fans dressing up as their favourite fictional characters (Figure 18).



Figure 18. Example of cosplay – a fan dressing up as Matt Murdock and Daredevil
Source: Reddit
(https://www.reddit.com/r/Daredevil/comments/5fqghv/my_matt_murdock_daredevil_cosplay/)

Now, adults dressing as fictional characters may seem an odd concept (adjectives such as “geek” and “nerdy” are also commonly associated with it) and it certainly is not a mainstream activity. The motivations behind cosplaying can vary but include the creative process of the assembling of the costume and identification with the character represented (Rosenberg & Letamendi, 2015; Weisberger, 2016). Cosplay can help people to gain insight in their own psychology and the choice of the costume is often based on aspects of the character that they can identify with. Another aspect of cosplay is that it creates a sense of community and provides a common ground to build relationships with other like-minded people. This is also the aspect of cosplay that relates most to the concept of extractability, as it is often a starting point for fans to establish friendships and enrichen their own lives.

Hence, cosplay is a way of establishing a community of fans, that are also referred to as fandoms, as we will be explored in the following chapter.

5.4.3 Fandoms and fanfiction

The previous chapter has shown how fans come together at conventions, which are one way of building a fandom. However, conventions are only episodic events and a genuinely dedicated fandom requires more regular means of expression. As pointed out in the theoretical framework, the Internet has globalised the way fandoms work.

In fact, there is a significant demand for fandoms, which is illustrated by the fact that enterprises are built on hosting fandom pages (see <https://www.fandom.com/about>).

Daredevil gets his own due attention on the fan sites, such as the Marvel Cinematic Universe Wiki (see https://marvelcinematicuniverse.fandom.com/wiki/Marvel_Cinematic_Universe_Wiki). A distinctive attribute of these pages is that they are almost solely driven by fans. These fans make sure to build entire wiki's with facts and interpretations of the characters, with a very high level of detail. These wiki's include synopsis of each and every episode and endless transcripts of dialogues. Hyperlinks help navigate through the numerous wiki entries and it is difficult not to get overwhelmed by the innumerable amount of well-organised facts and tidbits (see Figure 19 for an example).

"I'm Daredevil. Not even God can stop that now."
—Matt Murdock^[src]

Matthew Michael "Matt" Murdock is a man who had been blinded as a young boy by a radioactive substance that fell into his eyes from a [crashed vehicle](#), and even though he lost his sight, his other four remaining senses were heightened to superhuman levels. After his [father](#) was killed by mobsters, Murdock was trained by [Stick](#) to become a warrior, using his disability as an advantage to fight for the [Chaste](#). However Murdock's compassion with [Elektra](#) led him to be rejected by Stick, as he then returned to [Columbia University](#) with [Foggy Nelson](#) to gain his law degree and dedicated his life to fight injustice where he could find it in [New York City](#) as a lawyer by day with his law firm [Nelson and Murdock](#), and by night as a vigilante known as **Daredevil**. Murdock's actions as a crime fighter had eventually put him into conflict with a crime lord named [Wilson Fisk](#). Murdock used his skills to expose Fisk's criminal activities and then have him taken to prison.

Daredevil's actions in [New York City](#) and his strict moral code soon put him into conflict with the [Punisher](#), a vigilante who believed that death was the only punishment for crime as he caused chaos across the city. While dealing with the Punisher, Daredevil was also thrown into more personal turmoil by the sudden return of [Elektra](#) as well as [Stick](#), who had both attempted to recruit Daredevil to join into their conflict against the [Hand](#). Murdock eventually managed to find a middle

Daredevil

Real Name	Matthew Michael Murdock
Alias(es)	Matt Murdock Daredevil Matty Doc

Figure 19. Entry in MCU Wiki on Matt Murdock/Daredevil – example of a wiki entry on a fan page
Source: <https://marvelcinematicuniverse.fandom.com/wiki/Daredevil>

These fan sites also include blog posts on related subjects and forums to discuss story lines and such. The bigger fan sites are written in English, while local fan sites

in other languages include much less entries and details. This is logical because it concerns an English-spoken show but globalisation and the assumption of English as the lingua franca on the Internet surely have their impact as well.

There is yet another type of online fan engagement that stands apart because, unlike the expressions of fandom we have seen so far, it aims at expanding the narrative. It concerns the phenomenon of fanfiction, where fans engage in writing fiction that elaborates upon the canon texts. Fans may write scripts for alternative endings, of storylines for what-if parallel worlds (multiplicity) or they can fill in gaps left by the original story (narrative implication).

A clear illustration of fanfiction that fills in a gap left by the TV show is an entry on the moment that Frank Castle realises that Matt Murdock's alter ego is Daredevil (Saltaire, 2018). The scene takes place in the courtroom where Matt Murdock interrogates Frank Castle on the stand (Petrie & Ramírez, 2016: S2E8). The fanfiction starts where Matt Murdock asks Frank if he can call him by his first name: "Frank... May I call you Frank?". Apparently, this question triggers Frank's memory of the rooftop dialogue detailed in chapter 5.3.3 and makes him realise that Murdock is, in fact, Daredevil. This realisation not expressed verbally but what follows is a series of superb acting, a series of subtle facial expressions that transmit perplexity, unbelief and finally amusement over the irony of it all. Thus, what we see here is that fanfiction translates non-verbal signs into words. In a way, it also fills a gap left by the show, as not all fans may have inferred what lied behind Frank's facial gestures. The following excerpt show what fanfiction looks like (Saltaire, 2018):

"Frank, may I call you Frank?"

Frank stares at him. The sentence is like a trigger pulling in his mind, and the bullet ricochets, suddenly connecting all the little idiosyncrasies he's been noticing about Murdock since the first hospital visit, when, with eyes closed, he heard Murdock's voice and thought he was someone else. The half-formed syllogisms that have been welling in his subconscious break forward like waves, slamming into place one after the other. His first reaction is bewilderment. It is a little surprising, after all, to find the vigilante he's been scrapping with turn out to be a blind lawyer.

His second reaction is incredulity. A blind lawyer representing him. More than that, representing him. After all their disagreements. After all that shit on the rooftop.

Fandoms are meaningful in that they illustrate how a transmedia franchise manages to appeal to a certain fan base. It allows the franchise to keep a finger on the pulse as to what appeals to their fan base and what doesn't.

This link between fans and industry leads us to the concept of performance, which is the focus of the following paragraphs.

5.4.4 Performance and convergence

According to Jenkins' theory transmedia narratives work both as cultural attractors and as cultural activators, and that certainly goes up for *Daredevil*.

As the previous chapters have shown, *Daredevil* has proven to be a cultural attractor. It has succeeded in drawing in an audience from different origins: readers of the comic books, followers of other superheroes, or of the MCU in general, and haphazard viewers attracted by the sophisticated art work. Marvel furthermore managed to keep the audience engaged by applying the transmedial strategies already covered in this paper, such as seriality, continuity and narrative implication. As is evidenced by the extensive fan participation outlined in the previous chapter, the show has also worked as a cultural activator in that it has encouraged the audience to decipher and speculate on the texts as is illustrated in chapters 5.4.2 and 5.4.3.

Hence, the principle of performance is fulfilled, as the *Daredevil* show has successfully elicited the audience to perform, i.e. to be more than merely passive consumers. Producers and audience converge, while the narrative expands. *Daredevil* converges the narrative by linking up its comic book past with a rebooted story, as well as with related superheroes. These relations with the other members of the Defenders team diverge the narrative in such a way that the audience can access it from different points of entry. At the same time, the narrative crossovers and gaps draws out a particular audience, one that is interested in presuming, rather than consuming. And so, the web closes, with producers, narratives, and audiences coming together.

6 Audio-visual translation: the Spanish subtitled and dubbed versions

Given that this paper is conceived in the context of translation studies, it would not be complete without a mention of the implications of the transmedial aspects for the audio-visual translation of the TV show.

The TV show is a Netflix co-product and, as such, it is subtitled and dubbed in accordance with Netflix's style guide, to which Netflix translators are bound and which centres more on technical requirements than on contents (Netflix Inc., 2019). On the Spanish Netflix platform, audio is available in English (the original, un-dubbed version), Spanish, German, French and Italian, although the credits indicate that other language versions exist such as Japanese, Korean and Brazilian-Portuguese and Turkish. Subtitles are available in Spanish, Arab, French and Romanian. Audio description is available only in English. For the purpose of this paper, only the English and Spanish versions will be considered.

The previous chapters have shown that transmedia stories rely heavily on coherence to make their point. At the same time, they purposely leave narrative gaps, and in the case of audio-visual releases clues can be hidden in the non-linguistic semiotic signs, either in the images or in the audio. It would follow that an optimal audio-visual translation – be it subtitling, audio description or dubbing – will require special precaution with regards to these transmedial qualities.

Given that Netflix' guidelines for translators focus on technical issues, they do not include too much specific guidance as to coherence and semiotic translation. As to coherence, Netflix requires KNP (Key Names and Phrases) or formality tables to be created in order to ensure consistency across episodes and seasons, but it is unclear to which extent the Quality Control process will detect inconsistencies beyond names and phrases. Regarding semiotic translation, Netflix' guidelines find that songs should only be translated if they are plot-pertinent.

When accessing the show from the Spanish platform, the first thing to notice is that the title of the show is not translated, neither in the case of the Iron Fist or the Punisher shows. It can be presumed that it would be extremely costly to craft covers

and artwork in all the languages in which Netflix operates, not to mention in case of countries with more than one official language. Therefore, the choice to leave the titles untranslated seems fair and, to some extent, unavoidable. In the comics, the translation strategies are mixed. From the first edition, the name Daredevil was maintained, and this was acceptable because the subtitle clarified the name (*¡el hombre sin miedo!*). As to Iron Fist and the Punisher, the earlier comic book versions tended to translate the names and this was logical, since in those cases a fitting literal translation was available, whereas this was not the case with Daredevil. It would seem, though, that through the years the English names have increasingly gained popularity and have come to co-exist with the translated names. Globalisation and the influence of the English language in Spain and Latin-American countries have undoubtedly influenced the way the audience refers to North-American concepts. This assumption would back up the decision to leave the titles of the show untranslated despite perfectly fitting translations are available.

The following images illustrate the translation strategy regarding the names Daredevil, Iron Fist and the Punisher in the Spanish edition of the comics (Figure 20, Figure 21 and Figure 22):



Figure 20. Cover of the Spanish edition of the Daredevil comics
Source: (Cabra, 2016)

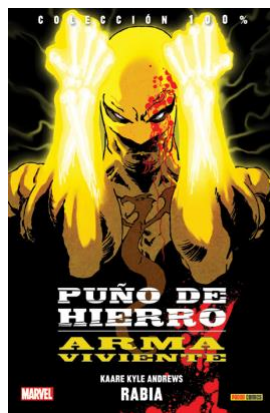


Figure 21. Cover of the Spanish edition of the Iron Fist comics
Source: (de Andrés, 2015)



Figure 22. Cover of the Spanish edition of the Punisher comics
Source: (Álvarez, 2018)

Back to the TV show: both subtitling and the dubbing leave the code names Daredevil and Punisher untranslated, with the added inconvenience of an awkward pronunciation in case of the dubbed version. From the translational point of view, these code names could easily have been translated as *el hombre sin miedo* and *el*

castigador, given that the meaning would be fully preserved, and the text would flow better, particularly in the case of the dubbed voices. However, from the transmedial point of view, and given that the names have not been translated in the titles of the shows, it is imperative that they remain untranslated. If we count in that audiences are increasingly globalised, this strategy is valid and well-grounded in regards of the transmedial qualities of the show. It also explains why other terms, where the translation is not limited by transmedial factors, such as Hell's Kitchen, have been localised (*Cocina del Infierno*).

The non-linguistic transmedial clues have not been translated at all, neither in the dubbed and subtitled version, nor in the English audio description. Taking as a reference the scene in Figure 7, the headlines on the wall containing specific references to other events affecting the story world, we see that neither the subtitles nor the audio description takes them into account. It is not uncommon for subtitles to include occasional translation of on-screen text, situated commonly on the top of the screen and in brackets. In the case at hand, it would have been nearly impossible to render the amount of information on the wall in the subtitling. Moreover, taking into account the large number of non-linguistic references in the show as a whole, the subtitles would have become unmanageable. Thus, the fact that non-linguistic clues have been left aside in the translation is a consequence of the limitations inherent to subtitling and dubbing, rather than a disregard to the transmedial qualities of the narrative. Another consideration in this respect is that, by making visually implied information explicit, the translation would significantly alter the experience of the viewer and take away the fun of the treasure hunt.

The music is neither referred to, not even in the English audio description. According to Netflix guidelines, music should be translated if plot-pertinent. The decision as to whether the music is plot-pertinent or not is bound to vary from one translator to another, as the links to the plot are mostly subliminal and open to interpretation. Furthermore, the same consideration should be made as with regards to visual Easter eggs: explicitly stating the lyrics could significantly corrupt the intended treasure hunt. However, in order to make the correct translational decision, the translator will have to be aware of the semiotic information in the first place.

It is the point of view of this paper that the audio-visual translation of transmedia narratives would benefit from a tailor-made approach, one that considers possible

semiotic translations in the case of non-linguistic plot-relevant information. Although the lack of such an approach would not result in incorrect translations, awareness of the transmedial characteristics would most likely add to the quality of the translation. Ideally, the translator would have to be familiar with the franchise, so to have basic knowledge of the naming conventions of recurring characters, locations or events. Alternatively, it would undoubtedly help if the translator were to have a basic knowledge of transmedial strategies and be aware of the importance of a sound semiotic analysis previous to undertaking the translation. Admittedly, the limitations inherent to audio-visual translation prevent translators from rendering all visual clues in the translation, but a previous semiotic analysis would help to understand the context and is therefore likely to result in a more accurate translation. On the plus side, the extensive information available on the Internet thanks to the fandoms is bound to facilitate the translator's acquaintance with the source material.

Without a further look behind the curtains of transmedia franchises, it remains unclear whether the localisation of the product is taken into account on beforehand. Presumably, in the case of Marvel there is no need to, as they are focused on the English-speaking population and the initial target audience is wide enough to preclude such strategies to be necessary. It could be, however, that smaller franchises, or franchises with minority-based language, would benefit from foreseeing going abroad in case of success.

7 Conclusions

Transmedia storytelling occurs when a narrative expands across multiple media platforms, with each addition making a contribution to the whole. The intention of this paper was to analyse how transmedia narratives unfold in practice. The TV show *Daredevil* is a transmedia narrative that builds on the Marvel comic book character. It counts several cinematographic releases and was recently released as a box-set on Netflix. The show was chosen as a case study for this paper from the assumption that it might reveal new insights on transmedia narratives on I-DTV services. A subsidiary interest of this paper was to look into the translation and localisation of the product, as Netflix is available in a large array of countries and languages.

By analysing how transmedial strategies have been deployed in *Daredevil*, this paper shows how both components of the transmedia minimum definition are present in

Daredevil. Rather than a stand-alone TV show, it builds a comprehensive world that continues from the comics and has even been retroactively connected with Marvel's Avengers. The TV show is not merely adapted from the comics but adds new storylines and it goes in considerably more depth into the psychological motivations of the main characters. It features multiple character cross-overs with the related Netflix/Marvel TV-productions, that have culminated in the TV show *The Defenders*.

The links between the comic books and the related TV shows are explicit in the story lines but are also implied in multiple non-linguistic elements, such as the photography and the audio tracks. Identifying these elements provides a true challenge to the fans, who transition from consumer to prosumers, as they try to piece the story lines together, drawing on the dialogues and the implicit references in the TV show. Such fan engagement has led to a comprehensive fandom being built around the character and the TV show.

Daredevil is the first TV show of the Marvel Television Universe, also called TV-verse, to be released on a video-on-demand streaming service. Furthermore, the three series were released as box-sets, in the same way as the related Defender shows. With viewers being able to pull up contents in any preferred order, seriality has come under serious strain. Marvel has tackled this issue by making each of the TV shows interesting in their own right, while providing step-ins to the complete TV-verse, or even the Marvel Universe, for newly arrived fans.

By looking at the translation strategies applied to the subtitling and dubbing, it is deduced that Netflix' world-wide presence requires a simplification of the translations, by preserving certain elements in the source language. Concurrently, fans have also become more globalised and familiarised with the English terms. Furthermore, as makes sense, the semiotic translation is minimised in order not to spoil the treasure hunt that so specifically attracts an important segment of the views.

Yet, it would seem preferable that translators dealing with transmedial franchises are aware of the hidden layers in the narrative and that they carry out a previous semiotic analysis accordingly. In order to make decisions on plot-pertinency, first they need to be aware of all semiotic implications.

For the purposes of this study, carried out within the confines of a master's thesis, several related areas have been left aside that could provide valid starting points for

subsequent research. The conclusions regarding the localisation of the TV show would lead to assume that viewers that do not have a profound knowledge of the English language will miss out on the non-linguistic clues. Consequently, the question arises if the enjoyment of the show and further implication in the fandom is related to the knowledge of the English language. Similarly, it could be of interest to compare the impact of North-American transmedia franchises from others that stem from less expanded languages.

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9 Glossary

Daredevil: Daredevil is a Marvel character created in the 1960s, around which a set of narratives have evolved, including films and a TV show with the same name. This paper will refer to the TV show or film in italics (*Daredevil*) and to the character in normal print (Daredevil).

I-DTV: Internet-delivered television, which means the distribution of audiovisual content via the Internet, such as Netflix, HBO and Amazon Prime.

Marvel: Marvel is used as a brand name that covers the conglomerate products of all Marvel companies and franchises together, including Marvel Entertainment (Marvel's worldwide parent company), Marvel Comics, Marvel Worldwide Inc. (formerly Marvel Publishing, Inc.) and Marvel Comics Group. In this paper, Marvel refers to the creators of the Marvel characters and stories in general.

Showrunner: While TV shows may be produced by different persons for each episode, the showrunner has supervising responsibilities and can be said be author-producer. In television, the showrunner outranks the episodic directors (Wikipedia, 2019b).

TV show: Although it is hardly used anymore in full, the unabbreviated term is *television show*. It refers to entertainment programmes with narrative structures that are produced to be viewed on a television. A TV show is usually released in episodes and these episodes may be grouped into one or more *series* (British term) or *seasons* (American term). Although the paper favours the use of British English, in this case the American term *season* is preferred, considered that the audio-visual products under scrutiny here are all produced in the United States and the larger part of the reference material uses this term.

Transmedia narrative: In this paper, transmedia narrative or storytelling is used to denote any storytelling that takes place across multiple platforms and

TV-verse: A TV-verse is a universe, as referred in worldbuilding, created for television. The term denotes the creation of a universe dependent solely on shows made for television, as is the case of the Marvel-Netflix TV-shows.

10 List of abbreviations

MCU: Marvel Cinematic Universe

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

COO: Chief Operating Officer

DC comics: Detective Comics, Inc.

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Master's thesis, Master in Specialised Transation
Universitat de Vic-Universitat Central de Catalunya
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