

Up All Night: Home Media Formats in the Age of Transmedia Storytelling

Matthew Freeman and William Proctor

Introduction

Tim Kring, creator of *Heroes* (2006-2010), *Touch* (2012-2013) and *Heroes Reborn* (2015), believes that the true meaning of such television stories lies not exclusively within the actual episodes of the series themselves but rather extends across multiple media platforms, including DVDs and online materials (Kushner 2008). Such materials actively serve to build the fictional storyworld and steer audiences across multiple media, functioning as what Henry Jenkins famously called transmedia storytelling – ‘the telling of stories that unfold across multiple media platforms’ (2006: 336). For as Tim Kring explains: ‘Transmedia storytelling lures the audience into buying more and more stuff – today, DVDs; tomorrow, who knows what?’ (Kushner 2008). In building a storyworld across multiple media, transmedia storytelling is a way to increase appetite for further consumption of that storyworld, adding new narrative content with new points of entry for the audience. In the contemporary convergence era, where media platforms and their industries are now connected and intertwined, transmedia storytelling has in turn become a buzzword that scholars and industry alike have come to perceive as the media production strategy of the future. Audiences now follow the adventures of *Doctor Who* from television to the Web, exploring aspects of the *Batman* universe across cinema, television, comics, etc., with each media iteration just one piece in a larger marketing assault.

However, what is the role of DVDs and Blu-Rays in this contemporary transmedia marketing assault? When scholars theorise transmedia storytelling, they typically prioritise film, television, videogames and the Internet, while DVDs and Blu-Rays – physical formats that occupy a vital role in extending and repurposing media content across new terrains – are often overlooked, despite the likes of Kring emphasising these formats in his understanding of transmedia storytelling. In his initial theorisation of transmedia storytelling, too, Jenkins drew attention to the roles played by ‘DVD extras and web-based encyclopaedias’ (2016). It is thus a useful time to re-examine these formats, analysing their function as additional by-products of contemporary media brands, franchises and fictional storyworlds, and in turn to question what specific roles they play in extending stories across media platforms, how the entertainment industry sees DVDs and Blu-Rays in this converged transmedia landscape, and how audiences consume such products as fans of a brand, franchise, or storyworld.

What, then, do DVDs and Blu-Rays really offer here? And how might we begin to characterise the changing roles of DVDs and Blu-Rays in our transmedia landscape? This chapter aims to explore such questions in relation to particular case studies that illuminate the different modes, forms and functions of physical home media formats as contemporary transmedia storytelling. We begin with a brief discussion of *The Matrix* and *Watchmen* to establish the commodity value of DVDs and Blu-Rays as transmedia storytelling, before the basis for the chapter draws on *Doctor Who* and the Marvel Cinematic Universe so to explore the multifaceted aesthetics, modes and values of transmedia home formats. Specifically, we theorise DVDs and Blu-Rays as digital interfaces that reflect and enhance the storytelling strategies of particular media examples, and as complex adaptations of different media forms. Altogether, then, we assess the ways in which DVDs and Blu-Rays have come to embody a complex, sometimes problematic but always shifting role in the way that audiences now engage with stories across multiple media in the age of convergence.

Conceptualising Home Media as Transmedia

Understanding the changing roles of DVDs and Blu-Rays in our contemporary transmedia landscape first means conceptualising these home media formats *as* transmedia. In turn, this means situating our argument inside the contemporary context of media convergence, itself ‘the coming together of things that were previously separate’ (Meikle and Young 2012: 2). Media convergence has now come to dominate contemporary understandings of the models through which culture is produced industrially. Entire media industries, along with their technologies and formats, have become increasingly aligned and networked. As Henry Jenkins (2006: 2) writes, media convergence, emerging as a concept around the start of the Internet era in the early 1990s, is ‘the flow of content across multiple media [...], the co-operation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of audience.’ Media convergence has therefore accelerated the ways in which fictional media creations are developed as commodified products that invite repeat consumption across different formats. For as Benjamin W. L. Derhy Kurtz notes, ‘the rise of new digital transmedia platforms – including alternative reality games, websites, mobile games, e-books, e-comics, web-series, etc.’ all provide a new range of possibilities to invite sustained consumption (2014: 5-6).

Transmedia storytelling, in particular, has been defined as ‘a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple [media] channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience’ (Jenkins, 2011). In other words, transmedia storytelling has become a means and a source of exemplifying the flow of content across media. Or, as Tim Kring asserts, to put it another way, transmedia storytelling is ‘rather like building your Transformer and putting little rocket ships on the side’ (Kushner 2008). Adding more and more to a story, dispersing those story additions across media, is itself a strategy for ‘appealing to migratory audiences’ (Jenkins, 2008).

This transmedia phenomenon may have much in common with the networked nature of contemporary media convergence, but it is also characteristically epitomised by the home media formats of DVDs and Blu-Rays. Jonathan Wroot argues that while DVDs are often ‘compared to online media, [they are] seen as a separate medium that offers unique ways of interacting with films and other media texts’ (2015: 91). Echoing Wroot, Barlow (2005) claims that the wide range of interactions offered by DVDs and Blu-Rays create diverse meanings and pleasures for viewers. In other words, home media formats are additional media platforms on which new pieces of a given transmedia story can be published. Part of the conceptual breakthrough of theorising transmedia storytelling has been to comprehend it simultaneously as storytelling in and of itself and equally as promotion for further storytelling. **DVDs or Blu-Rays provide the storytelling experience of a film or television series. Equally, they are** sources of promotion that invite audiences to purchase said storytelling via the promise of additional content, be it new textual content such as prequels or paratextual content like behind-the-scenes footage and director’s commentaries. As will be explored throughout this chapter, such content plays a vital role in the building of transmedia storyworlds today.

When the DVD format first emerged on the market around 1997, indeed, it was sold to audiences on the basis that it offered *more*. As a seminal advert known as ‘This Is DVD’, often found on VHS cassettes during the late-1990s, claimed: ‘The picture is twice as sharp as VHS’; ‘the sound is infinitely clearer’; ‘it sounds like you’re at the movies, but you can experience at home’; ‘not to mention, you can watch it in widescreen.’ And beyond the technical advantages of DVD, this same advert emphasised the additional features exclusive to DVDs as the secondary selling point: ‘Choose from features, like director’s notes, behind the scenes footage, trailers, and more’. At this stage the extra features available on DVDs occupied the status of ‘*paratexts*’ – a term that can be traced to Gerard Genette (1997) who first used it to discuss the variety of materials that surround a literary text. Jonathan Gray

adds that the term paratexts comes from ‘the prefix “para-” (2010: 6), defined by *OED* both as “beside, adjacent to” and “beyond or distinct from, but analogous to.” In today’s media landscape, for example, media paratexts might include posters, promos, podcasts, reviews, merchandise, etc., while media texts would remain the actual film or television series. As Gray elaborates, ‘a “paratexts” is both distinct from and alike the text. [...] They are not simply add-ons, spinoffs, and also-rans; they create texts, they manage them, and they fill them with many of the meanings that we associate with them’ (2010: 6). In the context of DVDs, one might claim that if the film itself is the text, then the extra features – director’s notes, behind the scenes footage, trailers, etc. – are all paratexts that can shape the meaning.

But as we will demonstrate later, DVDs have evolved substantially since 1997, and now the extra features on home media formats cannot be demarcated as paratexts quite so clearly. These features may at once be textual and paratextual components – storytelling in and of themselves and simultaneously promotions for further storytelling. Moreover, other features of home media formats also lend themselves to discussions of transmedia. As well as the idea that both DVDs and transmedia storytelling are about adding something more to the storytelling experience, Craig Hight (2005) also demonstrates how the former create opportunities for interaction with audiences, epitomising the participatory quality of today’s digital transmedia platforms. Furthermore, exploring the sense of value audiences expressed towards the extended-edition DVDs of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001-2003), Martin Barker and Kate Egan found that both the readers of the books and the viewers of the films valued the DVDs and their extra content, since it allowed for reflection on the filmmakers’ adaptation of a well-known story (Egan and Barker, 2008). Interestingly, Wroot observes that these findings ‘show that viewers with interests in both film and literature find the DVD format to be the most rewarding, because these various contexts can be addressed within the discs’ extra material’ (2015: 91). In other words, DVDs and Blu-Rays can be understood as an optimal case of media convergence, here quite literally blending multiple media and their audiences together while concurrently extending those multiple media onto a new platform.

Home media formats may epitomise the very concept of media convergence, then – bringing multiple stories and media pieces together on the same disc, in the same product, and on the same platform. But transmedia storytelling is also about selling DVDs, with DVDs selling transmedia stories, garnering a commodity form. Film studios and home media distributors have long produced DVD and Blu-Rays editions of films that extend the story. ‘Extended Editions’ and ‘Unedited Versions’ typify this trend – exemplified by the likes of *Terminator 2: Judgment Day Ultimate Edition* and *Taken 2: Extended Harder Cut*. But the role of the commodity form, i.e. the status of this additional story as a product in its own right, one that is packaged, promoted and sold as a distinct product, remains important to this process of encouraging audiences to follow a story across media. Such was the case for the transmedia stories emerging from *The Matrix* franchise (1999-2003), a case study that Jenkins selected as his transmedia storytelling exemplar. This case consists of three films, a comic book, a videogame titled *Enter the Matrix* and a collection of animated shorts called *The Animatrix*, all of which contained storylines that weaved in and out of the narratives of the films. In ‘Final Flight of the Osiris,’ for example, one of *The Animatrix* shorts released on DVD around the same time as *The Matrix Reloaded* appeared in cinemas, a protagonist called Jue sacrifices herself in order to send a message to the crew of the Nebuchadnezzar, an event that is referred to throughout the course of *The Matrix Reloaded*.

It is no coincidence that Jenkins’ exemplar of transmedia storytelling made use of transmedia story extensions that were all commodified as individual products in their own right. *The Animatrix*, for instance – a collection of nine animated shorts set in and around *The Matrix* – was released on DVD; not as extra features available on the film’s DVD, but rather as their own standalone DVD. Commodifying these stories in this way lent a sense of credence to these transmedia tales, elevating their status as pieces of story to much the same

level as the blockbuster films themselves. As William Thomas (2003) wrote in his review for *Empire* magazine, '*The Animatrix* arrives with a weight of expectation similar to *Reloaded*.' For *DVD Talk* writer Jason Bovberg (2003), similarly, *The Animatrix* represents a 'full-on second helping of *The Matrix*' for those who 'just cannot get enough of the sci-fi noir.' As has been established, transmedia storytelling is as much about 'appealing to migratory audiences' as it is about narrative (Jenkins, 2006). And commodifying media – packaging it as a distinct product with a price tag – is important to imposing a sense of value onto a media text, which helps sell audiences on the value of additional pieces of the story.

A similar function of the commodification of DVD and Blu-Ray formats can be said of *Watchmen: Tales of the Black Freighter*, a DVD released in 2009 to extend the story of the *Watchmen* film released in the same year. Following Jenkins' model of transmedia storytelling, the story of *Watchmen: Tales of the Black Freighter* relates directly to the events that unfold in the film. Its story is set inside the story of the film, with one of the film's characters reading the comic book that is itself the events of *Tales of the Black Freighter*. In her review for *IGN*, Cindy White wrote that 'while "Black Freighter" is a story that can stand on its own, it is reliant on a deeper familiarity with the world of *Watchmen*, and it rewards those who play attention' (2009). White characterises these 'rewards' as 'Easter eggs for fans to spot', i.e. hidden messages, features or secret 'goodies' (Wolf, 2012: 177). In essence, the concept of the 'Easter egg' – typically associated with the interactive interface of DVD menu screens – shares considerable DNA with transmedia storytelling, with both defined in terms of enriching the story experience by asking audiences to 'act like hunters and gathers', chasing down extra pieces of the larger story (Jenkins, 2006: 21). But in the case of *Watchmen: Tales of the Black Freighter*, Easter eggs were perceived as crucial to the storytelling of *Watchmen*. Says White: 'This DVD feels not only relevant to the overall story, but essential viewing for fans' (2009).

Home media formats may be crucial to transmedia storytelling, then – bringing weight to different pieces of a story via commodification. But DVDs and Blu-Rays are also commodities for carrying complex pieces of a story puzzle, layering plot information within the labyrinthine interface of the DVD format, as will be further explored in the next section.

The Convergence Puzzle: *Doctor Who*

The labyrinthine digital interfaces of home media formats are increasingly important to encouraging audience to follow transmedia stories, largely because the innate ephemerality of online media is valued by audiences in a different way to physical media. Even the act of watching television on a computer screen, which exemplifies the changes brought about by digital media such as the Internet, comes with a lack of physicality and commodification that tends to impact on how audiences consume stories across media. Indeed, today may mark what Jenkins sees as a time where old and new media collide, but media collision is far from the end of the story – divides between old and new media are still very much visible. And that distinction brings barriers for transmedia storytelling. For instance, take the perceived distinction that stands between analogue media, such as television, and digital media, such as the Internet. Despite digital convergence meaning that so much television is now watched online, many would still distinguish between television and the Internet. Those distinctions mean that online episodes of something like *Doctor Who* are perceived as less 'important' than the television episodes broadcast on BBC One on Saturday nights.

Consider *The Night of the Doctor*, a minisode available online in 2013. Story-wise, this online episode typifies transmedia storytelling, telling the tale of the previously unseen last moments of the eighth Doctor whilst serving as an introduction to the next television episode. But distribution-wise, *The Night of the Doctor* was not broadcast on television, but was instead only made available on the BBC's Red Button service and on its iPlayer. The

viewing figures reflect this television/Internet distinction: While the overnight ratings of the *Doctor Who* television episodes in 2013 averaged between 6.47 million and 8.44 million, *The Night of the Doctor* was watched by only 2.5 million during its entire week online.

Distributing story content online, then, often comes with a perceived demotion of cultural worth, with those additional story components published on traditional media forms somehow perceived as more 'integral' to the storytelling experience than those published online. As *Doctor Who* showrunner Steven Moffat asks, 'when will we stop calling [online episodes] "webisodes" or "prequels" or "minisodes" or whatever else? When will we just call them *Doctor Who*?' (Eames 2014). It is ironic, but digital media – often celebrated for its connectedness – is perhaps the marginal home of transmedia storytelling right now.

In some sense, moreover, and to address Moffat's above question, categorising an instance where the likes of prequels and minisodes are *not* labeled as inferior to their film and television counterparts means turning to the unique role of the DVD or Blu-Ray format. Aaron Barlow argues that the affordances of the DVD and Blu-Ray platform uniquely and fundamentally change the film-watching experience (2005: 27). Part of this change stems from the digital and interactive interface of the DVD menu screen, which allows audiences to maneuver their way across different features, select particular options, watch extras, and thus participate more deeply in the textual and paratextual narrative of the film or television series. As has been indicated already, the DVD and Blu-Ray menu screen epitomises the concept of convergence, bringing together as it does multiple stories and multiple pieces of different types of media content – text, audio, comics, video, etc. – within the same disc.

This innate convergence of multiple media forms afforded by the interactive DVD menu format enables for additional story content to be buried within the DVD disc. Most typically this takes the form of the extra feature, but sometimes manifests in the form of the previously discussed Easter egg, or even as story-within-story formats. The *Inception* Blu-Ray (2010) is a case in point. Audiences that chose to hunt and gather additional pieces of the narrative experience of *Inception*, i.e. following the narrative from cinema to Blu-Ray to the Web, might have found a password; if 528491 is typed on the Blu-Ray remote control whilst perusing the special features then a comic hidden deep within the digital interface of the disc's menus appears, one that added further narrative insight into the events of the film.

While it is questionable whether such hidden comics on a Blu-Ray disc occupy the status of text or paratext, what they do represent is a mode of transmedia storytelling that is entirely specific to the format of DVDs and Blu-Rays – one that invites audiences to follow the storytelling experience not *across* media platforms, but rather *within* media platforms. Warren Buckland's *Puzzle Films* edited collection examines this kind of inward, intricate storytelling more closely, here categorised more broadly as 'complex storytelling'. Buckland (2009) argues that complex stories which create puzzles out of their own narratives are quite specific to our contemporary media culture and tend to embrace a form of storytelling that is non-linear or labyrinthine in structure and makes use of features such as multiple time-lines, narrative ellipses, and fragmented spatio-temporal space. For Buckland (2009: 17-18), such complex storytelling is designed to present a story of concealment and discovery.

While Buckland's claims are directed at film specifically – pointing to the narratives of *Lost Highway* (1997), *The Sixth Sense* (1999) and *Memento* (2000) as primary examples – they could just as easily be used to characterise the kind of complex, intricate, story-inside-a-story style of transmedia storytelling that is made possible by DVD and Blu-Ray formats. Consider, for instance, the home media packages of the earlier discussed *Doctor Who*. Many transmedia story extensions surround the *Doctor Who* television series, including the likes of webisodes and games. But *Doctor Who* also makes use of its DVDs and Blu-Rays to extend the storytelling experience in ways that are both narratively and thematically linked to the themes of the series. For example, *Night and the Doctor* is a series of five made-for-DVD mini-episodes of *Doctor Who*, written by head writer Steven Moffat. They were released as

bonus features in the *Complete Sixth Series* DVD and Blu-ray box sets in November 2011. Across these five vignettes – described by *Cult Box* reviewer Malcolm Stewart (2011) as ‘the unique selling points’ of the DVD – audiences were given additional pieces of story and character development that deepened their understanding of particular story events from the television series, explaining how and why certain story events occurred as they did, while giving extra breathing room for certain characters to reflect on previously occurred events.

Importantly, the *Night and the Doctor* DVD episodes were far more than a collection of mere deleted scenes; rather, they extend the larger *Doctor Who* narrative in ways entirely reflective of its time-travelling mysteries. One short, *Last Night*, for example, explores the Doctor’s foreknowledge of River Song’s death; *Good Night* sees Amy Pond lament the fact that her life and timeline do not make sense; and *Up All Night* is a prelude to the penultimate episode of Series Six. Most of these stories are non-linear and labyrinthine in structure, and the innate format of the DVD feature – buried inside the interface of a menu screen – works to fragment the spatio-temporality of the story-space, thus echoing the fragmentation of the characters’ own time-travelling timelines. Moreover, the multiplication of these mini-stories – scattered across various DVD and Blu-Ray discs – reflects the multiple narrative timelines being depicted in the series itself, with the shorts filling in narrative ellipses left necessarily incomplete by the very non-linearity of the Doctor’s time-travelling adventures. As Malcolm Stewart wrote for *Cult Box*, ‘the mini-episodes penned by Steven Moffat showcase his trademark wit and interest in the non-linear complexities of time travel’ (2011). In some ways, the audiences of transmedia stories are nothing if not time travellers across the borders of media, migrating across media from one point in the storyworld to another (Freeman 2014). And when that timeline is as innately labyrinthine, non-linear and scattered as the narrative of *Doctor Who*, DVDs and Blu-Rays become an effective means of bringing things together that were previously separate – networking and re-aligning different puzzle pieces of the story in ways that also embody the complex storytelling at the heart of the series itself. At the same time, audiences become ‘bricoleurs’ (Collins, 1992) who delight in playing with the narrative pieces to build a sensible order as if the storyworld were a jigsaw puzzle. Still, the transmediality of DVDs is about more than complex storytelling; in other cases, too, they represent an adaptation of form across media, as will now be explored.

The Adaptation of Form: *Marvel One-Shots*

The Marvel Cinematic Universe effectively demonstrates this combination of using DVD formats to craft complex storytelling experiences across media in ways that also make use of media-adapted forms. The contemporary Hollywood landscape is replete with adaptations of superhero comics and a key part of the industrial logics of franchising (Johnson, 2014). As Tyron asserts, ‘production is now driven by the desire to build and sustain media franchises’ (2009: 30). Bought by The Walt Disney Corporation in 2009 for \$4 billion, Marvel Studios is now a sub-group of Marvel Entertainment that oversees the production and promotion of a range of transmedia artefacts, including film, television, videogames and comics.

The first films produced for what would become described as the ‘Marvel Cinematic Universe’ (MCU) were *Iron Man* (2008) and *The Incredible Hulk* (2008), the latter of which began suturing individual films as ‘episodes’ within a vast narrative network of continuity and worldbuilding. As Harvey explains: ‘At the conclusion of *The Incredible Hulk*, Tony Stark, played by Robert Downey Jr., meets with the Hulk’s adversary to discuss what will become *The Avengers*’ (2015: 85). A narrative moment such as this functions as a linchpin with which to build a cinematic universe populated by Marvel’s superheroes. In narrative terms, each transmedia expression acts as a mini-installment, episode, or ‘micro-narrative’ (Ryan, 1992: 373) – sutured constituents of the hyperdiegetic ‘macro-structure’ (ibid).

In many ways, this narrative strategy is one built by, not only adapting superhero

characters and storylines cribbed from ‘classic’ comics (like *Iron Man* arc, ‘Extremis,’ or Mark Millar’s *Civil War*), but by adapting the superhero comics’ principle of continuity and the shared universe model wherein characters ‘crossover’ stories between texts. Such a grand scheme of worldbuilding as a sequentially interlocking ‘hyperdiegesis’ (Hills, 2002) is growing into an industry template and one which entertainment franchises like *Star Wars* (also Disney-owned) are utilising as a blueprint for narrative, as well as corporate synergies.

However, the Marvel Cinematic Universe is a disingenuous label given that the worldbuilding exercise has since migrated to other media compartments, which includes a series of short films dubbed ‘Marvel One-Shots.’ The development of Marvel One-Shots initially started as a way to maintain interest in the storyworld by exploiting the temporal lag between films, while simultaneously extending the shared universe. Like the principle of continuity, the term, ‘one-shot,’ is also borrowed from comic books. Typically, a one-shot is a single issue of a comic that is self-contained and does not spill across into successive installments as an arc. But for the MCU, one-shots provide back-story and further character development. Rather than simply being self-contained like its comic book counterpart, then, the MCU version of the one-shot is integral to the overarching continuity system.

There have been five one-shots released between 2011 and 2014 as ‘extras’ on Blu-Rays: ‘The Consultant’ (on *Thor* Blu-Ray (2011)), ‘A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Thor’s Hammer’ (on *Captain America: The First Avenger* Blu-ray (2011)), ‘Item 47’ (on *Marvel’s The Avengers* Blu-ray (2013)), ‘Agent Carter’ (on *Iron Man 3* Blu-ray (2013)), and ‘All Hail the King’ (on *Thor: The Dark World* Blu-ray (2014)). In economic terms:

Extras are designed to discourage piracy and thus protect industry profits that are presumed to be lost to home viewers downloading movies illegally [...] It is worth thinking about the role of the DVD in creating new regimes of cinematic knowledge, as the DVD itself offers an important challenge to traditional modes of film consumption (Tryon, 20: 23).

As Graser explains, Marvel Studios ‘has figured out a clever way to tell more stories featuring its heroes, while also giving consumers more of a reason to buy its films when they are released on home video’ (2014). There is thus no need for audiences to act like hunter and gatherers in this case, since Marvel Studios have taken over that role by providing a central site where transmedia storytelling occurs *intramedially*. Moreover, Marvel’s decision to include the one-shot narratives on Blu-ray only, and not DVD, encourages consumers to migrate towards the more expensive format which devalues the DVD as a ‘dying’ medium, much in the same way that video became an endangered entertainment species.

Furthermore, Tryon positions the DVD as a ‘process of incompleteness’, suggesting ‘that the narratively contained world of the feature film is now the exception, as target audiences are encouraged to extend their consumption into other outlets beyond the initial theatrical screening’ (2009: 30). Says Tryon:

The process of incompleteness suggested by DVDs has helped to reconceptualise film narrative in ways that tie together the fictional world of a film with the economic goals of a studio [...] and cannot be separated from its place within an advertising and promotional chain designed to sustain interest in a narrow range of media franchises (ibid).

Tryon goes on to argue that DVD formats, through the expansion of a film text ‘beyond the theatre,’ invites the audience into a ‘new form of spectatorship,’ one that discursively produces “‘the movie geek’” or ‘the domestic cinephile’ as cinematic connoisseur (2009: 22). Yet such industrial motives share parallels with devout comic book readers who play

with the ‘heterochronic’ (Uricchio, 2010) temporalities of the vast storyworlds of superhero narratives to re-arrange the chronological dissonance into a causal, unilinear continuity. Given that the Marvel One-Shots are produced ‘out-of-sync,’ such chronological departures encourage audiences to conduct cognitive labour to construct the MCU meta-text. As Booth explains, ‘what we see on screen [or read in a book, comic, etc.] represents one time frame, while our mental reconstruction of that discourse into a chronological order represents another’ (2012: 119). Blu-Rays may pull a range of transmedia satellites into an intramedial constellation, but not repealing the capacity for ludic, narrative play at the point of reception.

Consider the One-Shot, ‘A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Thor’s Hammer’. Here, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D Phil Coulson arrives at a gas station and tackles two robbers. For many viewers, this would be the first time that they would see Coulson cast off his staid bureaucratic persona and transform into an action hero. Forgoing the generic shifts, the One-Shot micro-narrative occurs in parallel with the events of *Iron Man 2* (2010) where Coulson departs the film’s diegesis to explore an event in New Mexico, an event that extends into the film *Thor* and the appearance of Mjolnir, Thor’s hammer. The One-Shot’s title, however, indicates that something else – that ‘funny thing’ – occurred in the interstices between the diegetic elements of both *Iron Man 2* and *Thor*. Not only does this mean that the events of *Iron Man 2* and *Thor* occur simultaneously, providing a significant challenge to sequential models of linearity and continuity, but that the One-Shot needs to be placed between the narrative sequence of the two films despite the text being released on the *Captain America: The First Avenger* Blu-ray, five months after the cinema release of *Thor*. In this way, then, ‘A Funny Thing’ can be conceptualised as a ‘paraquel’, which, as Wolf explains, is a ‘narrative sequence element which runs parallel, that is, simultaneously, with an already-existing narrative sequence element or elements’ (2012: 179). At the same time, however, the One-Shot is an ‘interquel’ and ‘fits chronologically in between two already-existing narrative elements in the same sequence’ (2012: 377) – between *Iron Man 2* and *Thor*.

Again, drawing on Wolf, Harvey describes Coulson as a ‘transnarrative character’ – that is, a character that operates as a binding agent between texts. By crossing over textual borders – and, also, traversing the borders between various media – the Coulson character is a kind of narrative cement, and is utilised as ‘a means of linking together the disparate elements of the franchise’ (2015: 83). So, continuing with the One-Shot, ‘A Funny Thing’ – and presuming that viewers have sutured the sequence cognitively and chronologically – Coulson departs *Iron Man 2*, arrives in ‘A Funny Thing,’ and, then, crosses over into *Thor*’s world. By travelling between three textual compartments, Coulson collapses a triumvirate of diegeses into a unified, transmedia *hyperdiegesis*, with the Blu-Ray format in the middle.

Similarly, following a key role in *Captain America: The First Avenger*, the ‘Agent Carter’ One-Shot provides the conditions from which the television series based on the same character emerges. In this case, it is not only media and texts that such travelling between occurs but, also, history and time. Like the events of *Captain America: The First Avenger*, both the ‘Agent Carter’ One-Shot and the *Agent Carter* television series are set in the 1940s but, unlike *Captain America*, Carter does not defeat the ravages of time by being cocooned in a cryogenic sleep. Thus, the MCU is transmedia, transnarrative and, also, *transtemporal*.

In December 2015, all of the One-Shots were included in a 13-disc Blu-ray box set, ‘Marvel Cinematic Universe Phase Two Collection,’ which was released exclusively on Amazon. The box set includes Blu-ray/Blu-ray 3D and digital copies of each of the Phase Two films and includes commentary, production features and deleted scenes focusing on the One-Shots. The box set supplementary features also include a first glimpse of Phase Three films, *Captain America: Civil War*, *Doctor Strange* and *Guardians of the Galaxy 2*. Such a ‘packaged commodity’ (Tryon, 2009: 32) becomes a transmedia site where demarcations between storytelling and promotion fall flat. Like the ABC documentary, *Marvel Studios: Assembling a Universe* (2014) – also included within the *Marvel’s Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D*

Season One box set – the additional features, especially the One-Shots, encourage continued consumption of official products and aim to close off the attraction for illegal downloads.

Through the DVD's 'process of incompleteness' that Tryon emphasises, too, the re-packaging of the film that also extends the hyperdiegesis promotes a brand of *completeness*. That is, in order to stay in alignment with the MCU continuity, consumers are encouraged to purchase further commodity elements in order to fully understand the imaginary world. As we have argued elsewhere, the industrial logics of franchising coalesce within a 'transmedia economy,' an economy that disturbs the commodity/content binary into a dialectic between the economics and the art of worldbuilding (Proctor and Freeman, 2017).

One final point and, we believe, an important one. The Marvel One-Shots have since found their way onto Web 2.0 and can currently be viewed via an array of 'free' services, such as YouTube, Vimeo and Daily Motion. So, in their attempt to shut down transmedia circulation through the provision of intramedial containment, Marvel has not been able to prevent materials crossing textual, media and legal boundaries beyond the packaged format.

Conclusion

Jeff Gomez, president of Starlight Runner Entertainment, a company that prepares media for extension across multiple platforms, insists that transmedia storytelling is 'something that the new Digital Age is now demanding of us all' (2013). That demand is true, but the impact of digital media on how stories are produced and consumed across media is itself multifaceted. And home media formats have a complex role within convergence culture.

Most importantly, and despite the absence of home media formats in many scholarly discussions of convergence culture and transmedia storytelling, this chapter has reiterated the conceptual overlap between the affordances of the DVD and Blu-Ray format and the aim of transmedia storytelling. Both epitomise convergence, bringing multiple stories and pieces of media together on the same disc. Both, too, are like jigsaw puzzles: In the same way that a jigsaw has audiences piecing together individual components of a larger whole, seeing each piece add more to the experience, transmedia storytelling is defined as the 'integration' of 'multiple forms,' as Jenkins puts it (2011), wherein 'elements' of a larger story function as 'components' of a 'unified experience'. And if transmedia storytelling is, as Marie-Laure Ryan (2008) elaborates, like 'imagining various media eagerly reaching towards a fixed content to grab a piece of it,' then those pieces can be dispersed, relocated or even hidden within the digital architecture of the DVD menu screen as additional story or 'Easter eggs'.

This chapter, then, has explored just some of the forms and functions of home media as transmedia storytelling – namely, the DVD's power to legitimise transmedia extensions, the DVD's digital archive as narrative, and indeed its ability to structure 'master-narratives'. According to Aaron Barlow, it is unlikely that DVDs will disappear as a discrete item: 'This is a technology where the medium is certainly changing the message it conveys' (2005: 27). The DVD technology is indeed a platform that is both changing and driving much of today's transmedia storytelling, especially at a time when culturally imposed demarcations between online and offline media continues to impact how transmedia storytelling is consumed. At a time when the innate connectivity and shareability of the Internet is perhaps making certain strands of transmedia stories ironically fleeting and inconsequential, it seems that the older home media formats of DVDs and Blu-Rays – valued as commodities and layered with new narrative intricacies – are keeping audiences engaged for longer. Keeping them up all night.

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