Complex Serials and Episodic Flexi-Narratives: Narrative Extension in the Transmedia Storytelling of *Heroes* and *Supernatural.*

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Abstract

This thesis provides a comparative analysis of *Heroes* (2006-2010) and *Supernatural* (2005-Present) to argue that television narrative structure influences the transmedia narrative formed. Many television narratives use transmedia storytelling to develop plotlines and characters without intruding upon the television episodes. The interconnectivity of the transmedia texts with the main narrative determines which transmedia narrative is formed. Single-world transmedia narratives create complex, connected worlds like a television serial whilst possible-world transmedia narratives are constructed from self-contained stories like an episodic series.

Heroes and *Supernatural* exemplify the differences between narrative extension in single-world and possible-world transmedia narratives, both within the transmedia texts and the television episodes. I argue that world components, temporality and character development are extended differently in television serials and flexi-narratives, and can determine whether a transmedia text's relationship with the television narrative is consistent or implied. My ideas can be applied to narrative extension in other transmedia television narratives, creating a framework that identifies whether a single-world or possible-world is formed.

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Introduction

Television narratives are constructed from fragments. Each episode develops plotlines, characters or settings to form a narrative that evolves week by week, season by season. Many television narratives are further developed through transmedia storytelling, defined by Henry Jenkins as 'a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience.'[1] However, not all transmedia narratives are structured in the same way. Marie-Laure Ryan states that 'transmedial storytelling comes in two major kinds, or rather in a variety of shades situated between two poles.'[2] Television narratives can be created as transmedia stories that incorporate different media whilst others become transmedia after gaining popularity or forming a devoted fanbase.

Transmedia storytelling can be categorised based on the relationship between the transmedia texts and the main narrative. Ryan identifies single-world and possible-world transmedia narratives as two common transmedia structures.

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[1] Henry Jenkins, "Transmedia Storytelling 101," *Confessions of an Aca-Fan: The Official Weblog of Henry Jenkins* (March 22, 2007), accessed July 9, 2015. http://henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html.
[2] Marie-Laure Ryan, "Transmedia Storytelling and Transfictionality," *Poetics Today* 343 (2013): 363.

Single-world transmedia narratives are a complex, interconnected form of transmedia storytelling that are 'conceived from the very beginning as a project that develops over many different media platforms.'[3] Each transmedia text is closely connected to the main narrative and often develops a plotline or character from a specific television episode. Possible-world transmedia narratives share a weaker relationship with the main narrative, consisting of self-contained stories that are formed when a narrative 'enjoys so much popularity or becomes so prominent culturally.'[4] Possible-world transmedia texts contain stories that are based on the main narrative, incorporating standalone events that have no relation to the television episodes or to each other.

Television narratives exemplify a similar structural continuum to transmedia storytelling. Marc Dolan states that there were originally 'only two types of televised narrative forms: the episodic series and the continuous serial.'[5] Serials develop plotlines across episodes and series are structured from self-contained events. However, Roberta Pearson and Máire Messenger Davies identify that 'many American

[3] Ryan, 2013, 363.
[4] Ryan, 2013, 363.
[5] Marc Dolan, "The Peaks and Valleys of Serial Creativity: What Happened to/on *Twin Peaks,"* in *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks* ed. David Lavery (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 32.

television shows have adopted a hybrid narrative form'[6] coined by Robin Nelson as a flexi-narrative. Flexi-narratives combine 'new characters and narrative strands' like a series and 'unresolved narratives which give continuity across episodes'[7] like a serial, constructing a narrative that is both serialised and episodic. Similarities can be identified between television narrative structure and the transmedia narrative used. Serials develop interconnected plotlines and characters in a similar way to single-world transmedia narratives and episodic series consist of self-contained stories that are reminiscent of possible-world transmedia narratives, suggesting that flexi-narratives use a combination of single-world and possible-world transmedia texts to extend the episodes across media.

This thesis argues that television narrative structure influences the transmedia narrative used. Serialised television narratives are more likely to incorporate single-world transmedia texts and episodic television narratives more commonly use possible-worlds. *Heroes* (2006-2010) and *Supernatural* (2005-Present) exemplify narrative extension in two transmedia television narratives, both within the transmedia texts and the television episodes. *Heroes* aired on

[6] Roberta Pearson and Máire Messenger Davies, *Star Trek and American Television* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014), 129.
[7] Robin Nelson, *TV Drama in Transition: Forms, Values & Cultural Change* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), 34.

NBC for four seasons, using a serialised structure to explore the lives of evolved humans with superhuman abilities. The television episodes are supplemented by single-world transmedia texts that develop plotlines and characters at the same time as introducing new world components and events. The CW's *Supernatural* is structured as a flexi-narrative that focuses on demon-hunting brothers Sam and Dean. *Supernatural* has been extended by both single-world and possible-world transmedia texts since it first premiered in 2005, including an official spinoff and various tie-in novels.

Each chapter of this thesis focuses on a different form of narrative extension, using *Heroes* and *Supernatural* as illustrative case studies. Chapter One investigates the history of transmedia storytelling and the various factors that influence whether a transmedia text forms a single-world or possible-world. Media specific properties and authorship can impact upon a transmedia text's interconnectivity with the main narrative, although I argue that narrative extension is the primary factor that differentiates single-world and possible-world transmedia texts. World components, temporality and character development are extended differently in single-world and possible-world transmedia narratives and illustrate the structural differences between serials and flexi-narratives.

Chapter Two argues that world components influence whether a transmedia text forms a single-world or possible-world transmedia narrative. I discuss the different types of world components, such as settings, characters and fantasy elements, as well as the role world components play in narrative extension. Familiar world components connect transmedia texts to the main narrative and new world components contribute towards world-building, introducing places and populations that expand the narrative. A consistent world is formed when world components move between episodes and transmedia texts, developing across each medium. Other narratives create implied worlds in which familiar world components experience minimal development and new world components do not appear beyond their introductory transmedia text.

Chapter Three argues that a narrative's temporality can differentiate single-world and possible-world transmedia narratives. A narrative's temporality consists of the timeframe (the length of time between the events of the pilot and most recent episode) and chronology (the specific order of the events that occur). Transmedia texts can *enhance* a narrative's temporality through introducing new events that take place at the same time as the television episodes or *extend* the temporality through prequels and sequels that

occur before or after the main narrative's timeframe. Single-world transmedia texts have a specific chronological position within the narrative's timeframe whilst a possible-world transmedia text's position is implied, often forming an alternate timeline of events.

Chapter Four discusses character development. Characters are world components that populate settings and drive plotlines forward, constructing the narrative's timeframe through the events they experience. A common aim of transmedia storytelling is to explore a character's biography and identity, such as revealing elements of a main character's backstory or developing minor characters through new events within the narrative's timeframe. Single-world transmedia texts maintain a consistent identity for each character across the narrative, ensuring that any development that occurs in the transmedia texts does not contradict the television episodes. Possible-world transmedia texts are more likely to attribute inconsistent biographical details or behaviours, creating characters that differ from their television counterparts.

Transmedia storytelling extends television narratives by providing supplementary information or answering questions raised in the television episodes. New world components are explored, new events take place and new layers are added to

characters. Single-world transmedia texts form a narrative in which world components, temporality and character development remain consistent, with each transmedia text incorporating interconnected information and events. Possible-world transmedia texts are self-contained, forming a narrative constructed from stories and events that are implied to take place within the television narrative's world. This thesis provides a comparative analysis of *Heroes* and *Supernatural* to illustrate the differences between narrative extension in single-world and possible-world transmedia narratives, identifying similarities between single-world transmedia narratives and serials as well as between possible-world transmedia narratives and series. My ideas can be applied to narrative extension in other transmedia television narratives, creating a framework that identifies whether a single-world or possible-world is formed.

Chapter One
Narrative Extension & Transmedia Storytelling

Television storytelling has changed significantly since the first narratives were produced in the 1940s. The twenty-first century has seen developments in media, technology and audience behaviour, described by Henry Jenkins as a 'flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences.'[8] Subscription channels and services such as AMC, HBO, Amazon Prime and Netflix produce original content whilst portable devices enable television to be watched anywhere, anytime, taking television beyond the traditional television screen. Jenkins argues that one product of the changing television industry is transmedia storytelling in which a narrative 'unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole.'[9] A transmedia text's contribution can include 'fleshing out secondary characters, filling in back story, and providing "missing scenes" which round out the action depicted on the screen,'[10] each of which contributes

[8] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 2.
[9] Jenkins, 2006, 95-96.
[10] Henry Jenkins, "'We Had So Many Stories to Tell': The *Heroes* Comics as Transmedia Storytelling," *Confessions of an Aca-Fan: The Official Weblog of Henry Jenkins* (December 3, 2007), accessed May 1, 2015.

towards world-building, character-building or developing the television narrative's timeframe. Transmedia texts extend the main narrative through incorporating new information or answering a question raised in the television episodes, creating an expansive narrative that develops across media.

Single-world transmedia narratives are the most complex and interconnected form of transmedia storytelling and create what Elizabeth Evans describes as a 'wider, coherent fictional world' that is 'delivered to the audience in multiple formats.'[11] Coherence is integral to single-world transmedia narratives as each transmedia text contains information and development that is consistent with the main narrative. Carlos Scolari identifies that single-world transmedia texts can extend the narrative in various ways. 'Interstitial microstories' are transmedia texts that 'enrich the diegetic world by expanding the period between the seasons [or episodes]' and 'parallel worlds' create 'another story that unfolds at the same time' as the television narrative.[12] Scolari's categories are exemplified by *Heroes* which uses transmedia storytelling to extend plotlines, bridge narrative ellipses and incorporate new stories

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http://henryjenkins.org/2007/12/we_had_so_many_stories_to_tell.html.

[11] Elizabeth Evans, *Transmedia Television: Audiences, New Media, and Daily Life* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 20.

[12] Carlos Scolari, "Transmedia Storytelling: Implicit Consumers, Narrative's worlds, and Branding in Contemporary Media Production," *International Journal of Communication* 3 (2009): 598.

that take place within the narrative's timeframe but from an alternate point of view.

Single-world transmedia texts are structured and released to coincide with specific points in the main narrative, such as extending a subplot from a particular episode or providing backstory for a new minor character. Possible-world transmedia texts possess a weaker relationship with the main narrative, featuring self-contained stories that are implied to take place within the same world. Although possible-world transmedia texts are connected to the main narrative through familiar characters and settings, the transmedia texts' events and development are never referred to in the television episodes and instead form 'peripheral stories' that Scolari defines as 'more or less distant satellites'[13] of the main narrative. Neil Perryman states that many possible-world transmedia texts are 'riddled with contradictions and surreal interpretations.'[14] *Supernatural* exemplifies Perryman's claim as many of the transmedia texts feature events that are contradicted by later episodes of the television narrative, creating standalone stories that have no connection to wider plotlines or character development.

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[13] Scolari, 598.
[14] Neil Perryman, "*Doctor Who* and the Convergence of Media: A Case Study in Transmedia Storytelling," *Convergence* 14 (2008): 23.

Heroes and *Supernatural* provide illustrative examples of a single-world and possible-world transmedia narrative. However, my case studies are also representative of different television narrative structures. Single-world transmedia narratives use a structure that is highly similar to a serial, described by Robin Nelson as 'sustaining through its episodes a single, complete (though complex) story, based on a group of key, regular characters, and seeks to draw an audience by the power of a sustained narrative.'[15] Serials such as *Heroes* move the plot forward with each episode, focusing on characters that develop quickly and often change roles within the narrative. A hero can descend into the role of a villain and a minor character can be foregrounded as the protagonist. Marc Dolan states that a serial's episodes have 'a linear feel, leading regular viewers to believe they could not miss an episode'[16] which Michael Hammond and Lucy Mazdon argue creates a 'relationship between establishing 'loyals' and the serial format.'[17] Every episode needs to be watched to ensure that integral elements of plot and character development are not missed.

[15] Nelson p. 34.
[16] Dolan, 33.
[17] Michael Hammond and Lucy Mazdon, *The Contemporary Television Series* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 80.

Possible-world transmedia texts construct episodic narratives that are similar to a television series' episodes. Dolan identifies that a series' episodes have 'a circular feel to them, always returning back to their given comedic or dramatic "situation" [by the end of the episode].'[18] Any significant plot or character development is contained within the episode and does not impact upon the season as a whole. Television series have developed over time to become more serialised, creating a hybrid structure which Nelson coins as a flexi-narrative. Television narratives such as *Supernatural* combine 'the joint advantage of an unresolved narrative strand – a cliff-hanger to draw the audience to watch the next episode – and a new group of characters and self-contained stories in each episode.'[19] Jason Mittell states that a flexi-narrative's complexity provides 'an alternative to the conventional episodic and serial forms that have typified most American television since its inception.'[20] Indeed, it could be argued that the traditional series no longer exists as episodic narratives are now ingrained with narrative arcs that develop across episodes.

[18] Dolan, 33.
[19] Nelson, 34.
[20] Jason Mittell, "Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television," *The Velvet Light Trap* 58 (Fall 2006): 29-30.

Transmedia narratives can be categorised as single-worlds or possible-worlds through the relationship between the transmedia texts and the main narrative. However, there are other factors that can influence a narrative's interconnectivity. Transmedia storytelling uses different media to extend the narrative, with each medium possessing specific properties that depict the narrative in a particular way. Television uses video to visualise settings, although the same setting would be represented differently in another medium, such as a comic book illustration or paragraphs of text in a book. Marie-Laure Ryan argues that transferring a narrative from one medium to another forms a possible-world transmedia text as it is 'virtually impossible for two different media [to depict the same world].'[21] Paolo Bertetti takes a different approach to Ryan, arguing that 'the passage from one medium to another […] does not necessarily compromise the recognition of the character and the perception of the coherence of the diegetic world.'[22] Visual changes are to be expected if a narrative is presented in a different medium and thus extending a narrative across media does not necessarily determine that a possible-world is formed.

[21] Ryan, 2013, 368.
[22] Paolo Bertetti, "Toward a Typology of Transmedia Characters," *International Journal of Communication* 8 (2014): 10.

Authorship provides a further distinction between single-world and possible-world transmedia narratives. Single-world transmedia narratives are typically created by a team of transmedia writers who are closely involved with the television narrative, ensuring that a consistent world is maintained across each medium. Michel Foucault argues that a writer's name can impact upon a narrative's interconnectivity, stating that a 'name can group together a number of texts and thus differentiate them from others.'[23] Several of *Heroes'* television writers contributed towards the transmedia texts, using transmedia storytelling to develop subplots and characters from the episodes they wrote. Authorship within a transmedia narrative is often complex as Matthew Freeman identifies that the 'governing role played by a central author figure over the extensions of a story across media [can be] a sole writer or a company.'[24] *Heroes'* creator Tim Kring served as showrunner for all four seasons and the 2015 sequel but the narrative was also created by the television writers, transmedia writers and NBC which produced *Heroes* and its transmedia texts.

[23] Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 123.
[24] Matthew Freeman, *Wizards, Jungles & Men of Steel: The Industrial History of Transmedia Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 17.

Supernatural's authorship is more varied. Creator Eric Kripke stepped down as showrunner after five seasons and a majority of the transmedia texts are independently written and produced, creating a distinction between the television episodes and the transmedia texts. Perryman's claim that a lack of coordination between producers creates transmedia texts that contain 'contradictions and surreal interpretations'[25] likens possible-world transmedia texts to fan-produced content, which is the fourth of Scolari's narrative extension categories. Scolari states that 'user-generated content platforms' consist of fan-made content that is 'usually outside the copyright owner's control.'[26] Audience members write fanfiction and produce videos that are based on the main narrative, similarly to the implied continuity between a possible-world transmedia text and the television narrative. It could be argued that possible-world transmedia texts are only differentiated from fan-produced material due to the television network's financial gain. *Supernatural's* possible-world transmedia texts must be purchased whilst the single-world transmedia texts, such as the webseries *Ghostfacers* and the official website, are free and easily accessible.

[25] Perryman, 23.
[26] Scolari, 598.

Although media specific properties and authorship can influence a transmedia text's relationship with the main narrative, this thesis argues that narrative extension determines whether a single-world or possible-world transmedia narrative is formed, using world components, temporality and character development as examples. World components are the settings and characters that make a narrative instantly recognisable, such as Monica's apartment in *Friends* (1994-2004) and Jack Bauer in *24* (2001-2010). A television narrative's world is complex and detailed, incorporating settings and characters that are specific to that particular narrative. Ryan describes world components as 'an inventory of existents comprising (a) the kinds of species, objects, and social institutions that populate the storyworld and (b) the cast of individual characters who act as protagonists,'[27] each populating and exploring the settings that construct the narrative's world. Telefantasy narratives incorporate additional world components in the form of fantasy elements, such as *Heroes'* superhuman abilities and *Supernatural's* creatures. Fantasy elements create the narrative's mythology and lore, differentiating the narrative's world from reality.

[27] Ryan, 2013, 364.

Many world components appear frequently within a narrative and become familiar through their repeated use, such as the main characters and central settings. Within a transmedia narrative, Ryan identifies that familiar world components often experience 'transfictionality' which refers to the 'migration of fictional entities across different texts.'[28] Settings, characters and fantasy elements develop across media, connecting the transmedia texts to the television episodes. Matthew Freeman identifies characters as integral in 'hold[ing] transmedia storyworlds together and point[ing] audiences from one medium to another,'[29] particularly within single-world transmedia narratives in which each transmedia text is connected to the main narrative. Familiar world components link transmedia texts to the television narrative in a similar way to their frequent use within the television episodes, providing familiarity in spite of any new events or world components that are introduced. Possible-world transmedia texts use familiar world components to construct a more episodic narrative. Characters and settings move between transmedia texts, although any development is self-contained. Instead of transfictionality, Anthony N. Smith identifies that a possible-world transmedia narrative's familiar

[28] Ryan, 2013, 365.
[29] Freeman, 26.

world components acknowledge 'a wider narrative framework via techniques of implied continuity,'[30] forming an implied relationship with the main narrative instead of depicting consistent development and events.

Familiar world components connect parts of a narrative. However, the aim of transmedia storytelling is to offer new information, described by Matthew Freeman as a 'system of building variation on sameness.'[31] Many transmedia texts introduce new world components that further explore the narrative's world, such as setting an event in a new location or through the eyes of a new character. Colin Harvey argues that 'science fiction and fantasy boast generic characteristics which make them particularly suited to storytelling across different media platforms'[32] as the detailed world and complex fantasy elements can be further explored. Matt Hills also identifies a relationship between the telefantasy genre and transmedia storytelling, stating that 'only a fraction [of a narrative's world] is directly seen or encountered within the text'[33] and can instead be explored through transmedia storytelling.

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[30] Anthony N. Smith, "History Left Unsaid: Implied Continuity in *Batman's* Contemporary Comic-Book Narratives," in *The Many More Lives of the Batman: Critical Approaches to a Superhero and his Media,* ed. Roberta Pearson, William Uricchio and Will Brooker, (London: BFI Publishing, 2015), 58.
[31] Freeman, 14.
[32] Colin Harvey, *Fantastic Transmedia: Narrative, Play and Memory Across Science Fiction and Fantasy Storyworlds* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1.
[33] Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2002), 104.

Single-world transmedia narratives introduce new world components that appear again within the narrative, creating a consistent world between the television episodes and transmedia texts. Possible-world transmedia texts use new world components in the same way as a flexi-narratives' self-contained episodes, introducing characters and settings that are rarely revisited.

World components connect episodes and transmedia texts to the main narrative. However, a narrative is organised and unified through its temporality. Elizabeth Evans identifies that the television medium creates a narrative that continuously develops. Each new episode becomes 'the current segment in a narrative before being replaced by the next episode,'[34] forming a narrative that develops week by week. A narrative's temporality can be further developed through transmedia storytelling, incorporating transmedia texts that enhance and extend the timeframe. Temporal enhancements incorporate new events that take place within the narrative's timeframe to 'bridge between events,'[35] which Jenkins states is a common aim of transmedia storytelling. Other transmedia texts extend the narrative's temporality by adding events before and after the first and most recent episode. Many temporal extensions

[34] Evans, p. 37.
[35] Jenkins, 2007.

provide prequels or sequels to the main narrative, described by Tom Dowd as 'a sequential series of additions to the mythology, themes, conflicts and universe.'[36] Temporal extensions incorporate events that take place before or after the narrative's timeframe, contributing towards the narrative's linear chronology.

Both single-world and possible-world transmedia narratives incorporate transmedia texts that enhance and extend the timeframe. However, it is chronological position of the transmedia texts that determines whether the narrative's temporality is consistent or implied. Robert C. Allen identifies the different temporal relationships a transmedia text can have with the main narrative, differentiating thematic narratives that enhance the timeframe from sequential narratives that extend it. Allen defines thematic narratives as adopting a 'paradigmatic axis of narrative' which Anthony N. Smith identifies as 'distinct storylines [that] are not tied to a chronology of depicted events, but are instead dependent on an inferred thematic parallelism.'[37] Possible-world transmedia narratives use familiar world components to connect the transmedia texts to the main narrative through implied

[36] Tom Dowd, *Transmedia: One Story – Many Media* (Oxon: Focal Press, 2013), p. 7.
[37] Robert. C. Allen, *Speaking of Soap Operas* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 69-71.

continuity, incorporating new events that do not have a specified chronological position. Sequential narratives use a 'syntagmatic axis of narrative,'[38] described by Smith as extending 'the seriality of the overarching storyworld'[39] through new events that occur before or after the narrative's timeframe. A transmedia text can be set in a different time period or can introduce flashbacks (or in the case of telefantasy narratives, time travel) to construct a consistent series of events that take place across media.

A transmedia text's temporality is further influenced by production times and release dates. Evans states that 'within specific moments of transmedia storytelling, the various production schedules are aligned to ensure a coherent temporality across the various platforms involved.'[40] Indeed, single-world transmedia narratives are structured and released in a particular order to ensure that plotlines and character development remain consistent across the narrative. Possible-world transmedia texts are typically produced as a response to a particular television episode's events, often released after their implied position within the narrative's timeframe. A transmedia text's chronological position is often determined by the progression of events within the television episodes. Roger

[38] Allen, 69-71.
[39] Smith, A. N., 59.
[40] Evans, 36.

Luckhurst states that serials 'at once slow down and open out narrative time,'[41] combining events that are resolved in a single episode with those that are extended across an entire season. Single-world transmedia texts have a specified chronological position within the episodes' interconnected plotlines and events, creating a consistent temporality across the narrative's timeframe. Pearson and Messenger Davies identify that episodic narratives are more likely to incorporate 'a chain of cause and effect resolved at the text's conclusion,'[42] which is applicable to flexi-narratives' standalone episodes and to possible-world transmedia texts. Self-contained stories can be moved around without disrupting the season's narrative arc, in spite of the implied chronological position of the events that take place.

Extending a narrative's temporality can impact upon character development. Each event that a character experiences can be positioned on the character's arc, revealing events that shaped the character before the pilot episode alongside new events that stimulate further development within the narrative's timeframe. Freeman identifies 'interactions with secondary characters, appearance, and

[41] Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 199.
[42] Pearson and Messenger Davies, p. 142.

indeed backstory'[43] as two forms of character development, both of which can provide additional layers to a character's identity. Stefan Rank and Paolo Petta define backstory as 'individual and joint histories that motivate [a character's] behaviours,'[44] bringing layers to characters through revealing new information. Transmedia storytelling is often used to incorporate backstory that is not integral to the television narrative and instead provides supplementary information on a character's past. The transmedia texts can be set during a specific event in a character's life or can incorporate flashbacks and time travel that send the character into an earlier moment in time. Characters can be further developed within the narrative's timeframe, conforming to Scolari's categories of interstitial microstories and parallel stories.[45] Transmedia texts that extend episodes or bridge narrative ellipses incorporate new events that are not included in the television narrative, revealing a character's actions and interactions between episodes.

Single-world transmedia narratives maintain consistent character development across the narrative. Each transmedia

[43] Freeman, p. 29.
[44] Stefan Rank and Paolo Petta, "Backstory Authoring for Affective Agents," in *Interactive Storytelling* eds. David Oyarzun, Federico Peinado, R. Michael Young, Ane Elizalde and Gonzalo Mendez (Berlin: Springer, 2012), 145.
[45] Scolari, 598.

text has a specific chronological position within the narrative's timeframe and on the character's arc. However, single-world transmedia narratives also maintain consistent character identities. Ajit K. Maan argues that a character's identity consists of 'permanent defining characteristics'[46] that often experience development over time. Paolo Bertetti identifies the different traits that construct a character's identity, including an 'existential identity' which involves the character's physical appearance, biography and narrative function, as well as a 'fictional identity,' such as the character's actions, motivations, skills and values.[47] Characters in single-world transmedia narratives maintain a consistent identity across each transmedia text whilst possible-world transmedia texts are more likely to create inconsistent identities, attributing biographies and behaviours that differ from the television narrative.

Characters are identified through their appearance, behaviour and relationships, although an equally integral aspect of a character's identity is narrative function. M. J. Clarke argues that episodic series feature 'classically "whole" and clearly motivated characters' and serials use 'inconsistent characters whose open nature and unclear psychology allow

[46] Ajit K. Maan, *Internarrative Identity: Placing the Self: Second Edition* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2010), 5.
[47] Bertetti, 6.

for the near constant rearticulation of motivation'[48] which are distinctions that are further applicable to characters in single-world and possible-world transmedia narratives. Many single-world transmedia texts portray characters in different narrative roles to the television episodes, such as villains who become heroes or minor characters who become protagonists. Ryan identifies that transmedia texts often focus on minor characters from the main narrative, momentarily turning 'secondary characters into the heroes of the story they experience'[49] to learn more about their backstory, relationships and motivations. Possible-world transmedia texts are more likely to position characters in their narrative functions, similarly to a flexi-narrative's standalone episodes. Dolan states that within episodic narratives, character development is 'reversed by the end of the episode and the characters would end up in the same general narrative situation that they began in,'[50] returning characters to their primary narrative functions to ensure that any character development does not impact upon the wider narrative.

Single-world and possible-world transmedia narratives are formed depending on whether the narrative's world,

[48] M. J. Clarke, *Transmedia Television: New Trends in Network Serial Production* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 188.
[49] Ryan, 36.
[50] Dolan, 33.

chronology and characters are consistent or implied across each television episode and transmedia text. Single-world transmedia texts construct a complex interconnected narrative that develops plotlines and characters across media, similarly to storytelling within a television serial. Possible-world transmedia texts construct a narrative that is highly episodic, incorporating self-contained stories that are connected through implied continuity and familiar world components.

Transmedia storytelling contributes towards world-building, character-building and plot development, developing the television narrative beyond the information provided in the television episodes. New events are incorporated into the narrative's timeframe. Characters' backstories and relationships are revealed. However, it is the narrative's use of world components that provides the foundation for whether a consistent or implied world is formed.

Chapter Two
World Components: Places & Populations

World components bring narratives to life. Detailed landscapes, diverse populations and a catalogue of fantasy elements contribute towards world-building, creating the world in which plotlines unfold. Matt Hills identifies that many television narratives feature 'stable yet unfinished world[s]'[51] that can be further explored, often within later episodes of the television narrative or through transmedia storytelling. New settings can be visited, unfamiliar characters can be introduced and, in the case of telefantasy narratives, the mythology and lore can be developed.

World components demonstrate a balance between novelty and familiarity. Familiar world components are the settings and characters that appear frequently in a narrative and develop across episodes and transmedia texts. Many familiar world components contribute towards a narrative's format, defined by Catherine Johnson as the 'generic expectations [which are] combined to create a set of expectations particular to a specific series.'[52] *Heroes'* characters and superhuman abilities appear in almost every episode, similarly to Sam, Dean and the various creatures in

[51] Hills, 3.
[52] Catherine Johnson, *Telefantasy* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005), p. 5.

Supernatural. Episodes and transmedia texts often introduce new world components that further explore the narrative's world, many of which are revisited elsewhere in the narrative. Other new world components perform basic narrative functions and are self-contained within their introductory story, such as settings that provide the backdrop for events or characters that are nothing more than plot devices.

This chapter argues that world components determine whether a single-world or possible-world transmedia narrative is formed, constructing a consistent or implied world across media. Familiar settings and characters are developed through transmedia storytelling, identifying the origins of a specific building or exploring a character's hometown. New world components contribute towards world-building, adding new places and populations that have not been previously seen. Transmedia storytelling develops a narrative beyond the information accessible within the television episodes, reinforcing the fact that the narrative's world is detailed, complex and has the potential to be further explored.

Buildings, Cities & Countries

Settings construct a narrative's world. Bedrooms and bars provide small, intimate settings whilst the narrative's world itself is a setting, creating the landscape in which the other world components exist. Jeremy G. Butler states that many

settings 'recur over and over again and acquire meaning from this repetition,'[53] often appearing in multiple television episodes and transmedia texts. Within any television narrative, a majority of settings are nothing more than the backdrop for events. However, some settings, particularly in a serial, use settings that stimulate plot or character development and develop themselves as world components. *Heroes* features many familiar settings that are important to the narrative, ranging from houses and workplaces to cities and countries. The two most revisited settings are Primatech Paper and the Pinehearst Research Facility: two research companies with opposing attitudes towards people with superhuman abilities. Primatech and Pinehearst are often the backdrop for plotlines and are the workplace for several main characters, creating settings where plotlines converge and characters interact.

Single-world transmedia narratives use familiar settings in a similar way to a serial, creating a world that is connected through shared world components. Anthony N. Smith states that familiar world components act as 'motifs that establish links'[54] between different parts of a narrative, connecting the transmedia texts to the main narrative. New characters and events can be linked to the television episodes through

[53] Jeremy G. Butler*, Television: Critical Methods and Applications: Fourth Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 238.
[54] Smith, A. N., 61.

situating the transmedia text in a familiar setting. *Heroes'* transmedia texts use settings to contribute towards a consistent world, incorporating familiar settings from the television narrative that are further explored through transmedia storytelling. Characters are depicted in their homes, schools and workplaces whilst settings that are central to the plot, such as Primatech and Pinehearst, are used frequently, similarly to their repeated use within the television narrative. Table 1.1 identifies the frequent inclusion of Primatech and Pinehearst within the transmedia texts.

Transmedia Text	Description	Familiar Setting(s)
The Recruit	Webseries	Pinehearst, Primatech
Nowhere Man	Webseries	Primatech
Friend or Foe	iStory[55]	Pinehearst
Pinehearst website	Website	Pinehearst
Primatech website	Website	Primatech
Heroes Reborn	Television	Primatech
Multiple webcomic issues	Webcomic	Pinehearst, Primatech

Table 1.1. Primatech and Pinehearst in Heroes' transmedia texts.

Primatech and Pinehearst are repeatedly developed and explored in *Heroes'* transmedia texts. However, a setting is not extended from one text to another to form a single-world. The events that take place and the development that the

[55] The iStories (interactive stories) are online stories that are divided into short sections. At the end of each section, the audience choose the characters' next actions by selecting an option, thus influencing the story's progression.

setting experiences within the transmedia text have to be consistent with the other transmedia texts and main narrative. One example is the webseries *The Recruit* which explores the aftermath of an explosion at Pinehearst, thus depicting the destruction of a familiar setting. *The Recruit* is perceived through the eyes of minor character Rachel Mills and tells a new story, making Pinehearst the main point of familiarity with the television narrative. *The Recruit* incorporates flashbacks to the episode 'Dual' (Season 3, Episode 13), extending what Roberta Pearson and Sara Gwenllian-Jones describe as 'non-linear narratives that can go backward and sideways as well as forward' to 'create a potentially large metatext.'[56] As per many single-world transmedia texts, the webseries was released on the same day that 'Dual' aired and features the same actors and sets from the television narrative, forming a transmedia text that is a direct continuation of the episode's events. *The Recruit* develops familiar world components from the television narrative, although the development and new information is not integral to an understanding of the television episodes.

The Recruit's release date forms a close relationship between the transmedia text and the main narrative. However, it is the setting's development and the events that

[56] Roberta E. Pearson and Sara Gwenllian-Jones, *Cult Television* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), xii.

take place within the webseries that determines that *The Recruit* is a single-world transmedia text. Pinehearst's development is consistent with the television episodes, forming a sequential series of events. The building is destroyed in 'Dual,' explored through flashbacks in *The Recruit* and is reminisced about in the remainder of the narrative. There is no spontaneous moment where the building is suddenly rebuilt as if *The Recruit* did not take place. Transmedia storytelling allows Pinehearst to be further explored even though the setting no longer exists within the television narrative, enabling new areas of the building to be discovered and new events to be revealed. Matthew Freeman argues that 'world-building is in some sense a much larger category of character-building – developing the fictional settings of the storyworld so that new characters may populate it.'[57] Characters experience settings based on their aims and actions, enabling Pinehearst to be explored through Rachel's perspective. *The Recruit* develops Rachel from a minor character to the transmedia text's protagonist, creating consistent character development between the transmedia texts and the television narrative.

The Recruit's familiar world components and events create a consistent world with the television narrative,

[57] Freeman, 17.

although the medium in which *The Recruit* is told further contributes towards creating a single-world transmedia text. *Heroes'* transmedia texts depict Pinehearst in different media, including comic book illustrations and written text. *The Recruit* is a webseries that is composed of several short online episodes made available on NBC's website. Pinehearst is depicted through video to create a setting that is visually identical to the Pinehearst that appears in the television narrative. Paolo Bertetti argues that 'the passage from one medium to another […] does not necessarily compromise the recognition of the character and the perception of the coherence of the diegetic world.'[58] However, as *The Recruit* is officially produced by NBC, the transmedia texts are filmed on the same sets and feature the same actors as the television narrative, creating a visual consistency that contributes towards the consistent development and events.

Serials and single-world transmedia narratives use familiar settings to create a consistent world across episodes and transmedia texts. Flexi-narratives use familiar world components in a similar way, although the centrality of the setting to the plot depends upon the type of episode. Robin Nelson's description of a flexi-narrative as 'involving the closure of one story arc within an episode (like a series) but

[58] Bertetti, 10.

with other, ongoing story arcs involving the regular characters (like a serial)'[59] can be applied to a flexi-narrative's use of familiar settings as some settings are integral to the narrative arc, as per a serial, whilst others are nothing more than the backdrop for standalone episodes.

Supernatural does not include many familiar settings as the narrative travels across small towns in the USA. However, it could be argued that Dean's car is a familiar setting as the Season Five finale, 'Swan Song' (Season 5, Episode 22), states that the car ensures the brothers are 'never really homeless.' The car functions in a similar way to *Heroes'* familiar settings as it is integral to plotlines, stimulates character development and connects the standalone episodes to the main narrative, both figuratively through providing a familiar setting and literally by transporting Sam and Dean from town to town. The car itself is developed across seasons, including a crash in 'Devil's Trap' (Season 1, Episode 22) and an episode told from its point of view in 'Baby' (Season 11, Episode 4).

Familiar settings have a similar narrative function in possible-world transmedia narratives to single-worlds. The settings establish connections between the transmedia texts and the main narrative, often providing the backdrop for new events. Derek Schilling argues that settings can identify

[59] Nelson, 82.

'contradictions in the diegesis,' making it important that 'the story world fully cohere[s].'[60] The contradictions can range from the description of the setting itself (attributing an additional bedroom to a house that is much smaller in the television narrative) or the events that take place (the house burns down in a transmedia text but does not in the television narrative). Many possible-world transmedia texts use familiar settings as nothing more than the backdrop for the events, ensuring that the setting does not experience any form of development that would be inconsistent with the main narrative. *Supernatural* uses other techniques to create a consistent world. The transmedia texts in Table 1.2 are chronologically positioned before the narrative's timeframe or experienced through a secondary character's point of view, thus distancing any development from the main narrative.

Transmedia Text	Description	Familiar Setting(s)
John Winchester's Journal	Novel	Lawrence, Kansas
Bobby Singer's Guide to Hunting	Novel	Sioux Falls, South Dakota
Origins	Graphic novel	Lawrence, Kansas
Rising Son	Graphic novel	Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Table 1.2. Familiar settings in Supernatural's transmedia texts.

[60] Derek Schilling, "On and Off the Map: Literary Narrative as Critique of Cartographic Reason," in *Literary Cartographies: Spatiality, Representation, and Narrative,* ed. Robert T. Tally Jr., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 216.

A majority of *Supernatural's* transmedia texts were released before Sam and Dean find a more permanent home at a bunker in Season Eight, making familiar settings infrequent in the transmedia texts. Table 1.2 identifies that the Winchesters' hometown in Lawrence, as well as secondary character Bobby Singer's home and workplace in Sioux Falls, are the most commonly used familiar settings. Both Lawrence and Sioux Falls provide the setting for various episodes. However, the settings are also integral to plot and character development. Christine Piepiorka argues that within *Lost* (2004-2010), the island is more than a setting and became a 'marker for flashbacks' that took place off the island.[61] *Supernatural's* familiar settings function in a similar way to *Lost's* island. Lawrence is the place where Sam and Dean's mother was killed and Sam was infected with demonic blood whilst Sioux Falls is the setting for a majority of the narrative arc episodes in the first seven seasons up until Bobby's death, ingraining the settings within plotlines and character development.

Although Lawrence and Sioux Falls are familiar settings, the events and development that take place in *Supernatural's*

[61] Christine Piepiorka, "You're Supposed to Be Confused! (Dis)Orienting Narrative Mazes in Televisual Complex Narrations" in *(Dis)Orienting Media and Narrative Mazes,* ed. Julia Eckel, Bernd Leiendecker, Daniela Olek, Christine Piepiorka, (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2013), 192.

transmedia texts are inconsistent with the television narrative. *John Winchester's Journal* and *Origins* are both set in Lawrence and focus on the events that occur after Sam and Dean's mother, Mary, is killed in a house fire caused by a demon. *Supernatural's* pilot episode begins with Mary's death before the narrative moves forward in time to the present day, twenty-two years later. The transmedia texts enable the immediate aftermath of Mary's death to be documented and allow the Winchesters' house and neighbourhood to be further explored. However, several of *Supernatural's* episodes have the same aim. Time travel and magic send Sam and Dean into the past, forming a sequential series of events that occur before and immediately after Mary's death. Although the transmedia texts explore Lawrence and the Winchesters' childhoods, the graphic novels depict an implied version of events that contradict the television episodes, forming possible-world transmedia texts in spite of the familiar setting.

Supernatural's transmedia texts not only use familiar settings to foreground plot and character development but also to develop the setting itself, although once again the development is inconsistent with the main narrative. *Origins* details the Winchesters' house and neighbourhood, including illustrations of the house after it burned down (an image only seen briefly in the television narrative) as well as introducing

several neighbours. *Origins* was released in 2007, several weeks before the episode 'What is and What Should Never Be' (Season 2, Episode 20) in which Dean encounters an alternate reality where he explores the house and neighbourhood. Inconsistencies form between *Origins'* version of Lawrence and the Lawrence depicted in the television narrative as *Origins* is based on the writer and illustrator's interpretations of how the town looks. Authorship and media specific properties thus contribute towards *Origins'* possible-world status as Marie-Laure Ryan argues that it is 'virtually impossible for two different media'[62] to refer to the same world and Matthew Freeman identifies that a lack of familiarity with the primary narrative creates 'contradictory versions of the same fiction rather than affording regulated, authored extensions'[63] of the television narrative's world. The familiar setting connects *Origins* to *Supernatural's* episodes, although the inconsistent events and development are independent from the main narrative, similarly to a flexi-narrative's standalone episodes.

A defining feature of transmedia storytelling is the repeated juxtaposition of novelty with familiarity. Freeman identifies the 'balance between variation and sameness [that] typifies transmedia storytelling'[64] as each transmedia text

[62] Ryan, 2013, 368.
[63] Freeman, 60.
[64] Freeman, 15.

incorporates familiar elements from the main narrative alongside new events, characters or settings. Telefantasy worlds are often complex and detailed as Colin Harvey states that the genre encourages 'the creation of transmedia storyworlds [and] the experimentation associated with playfulness,' including the repeated creation of new settings.[65] New settings move plotlines and characters to a different location, stimulating development within the narrative whilst contributing towards world-building by extending the narrative's world beyond the settings that appear in the television episodes. New settings can provide the backdrop for standalone events whilst others, particularly those connected to the narrative arc, are revisited and often develop to become familiar settings that appear elsewhere in the narrative.

Heroes and *Supernatural* introduce new settings frequently, often to introduce new characters or stimulate plot development. Ryan argues that television narratives have an 'accessibility relation'[66] with the real world that is influenced by how closely the narrative's world resembles reality. Both *Heroes* and *Supernatural* are set in worlds which are similar to reality in regards to the geography and topography. The cities

[65] Harvey, 1.
[65] Luckhurst, 8.
[66] Marie-Laure Ryan, "Possible-Worlds Theory," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory,* ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan, (London: Routledge, 2005), 446.

and countries have the same names and appearance as those in the real world, whilst the world components within the settings (such as smaller settings like houses and bars or the characters and species that populate the settings) become the narratives' unique world components. Other telefantasy narratives are set in fictional settings, such as the planets explored in *Star Trek* (1966-1969) and the fictional town of Mystic Falls in *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-Present). Pearson and Messenger Davies state that 'telefantasy writers can build an almost infinite number of fictional possible-worlds, while those working in more realist genres have their possibilities limited.'[67] Although *Heroes* and *Supernatural* are telefantasy narratives set in worlds that visually resembles our own, *Heroes'* alternate timelines and *Supernatural's* heaven, hell and purgatory create settings that differ from reality.

Heroes' narrative includes global locations that span every part of the world. Characters and plotlines move from city to city, country to country and cover every continent. *Heroes'* transmedia texts are equally global with their world components and events. Several of the transmedia texts incorporate new settings to introduce new characters with new superhuman abilities, maintaining a sense of familiarity with the television narrative through replicating the structure of

[67] Pearson and Messenger Davies, 138.

Heroes' early episodes (in which a new character from a new setting with a new ability is introduced). The new setting enables the narrative's world to be further explored, introducing new locations that have not been previously seen in the television narrative. Many of the new settings listed in Table 1.3 are revisited within other transmedia texts (or television episodes), creating a consistent world across media.

Transmedia Text	Description	New Setting(s)
Going Postal	Webseries	San Diego
Destiny	Webseries	Peru
The Private	iStory	Iraq & Afghanistan
Heroes Reborn	Television	Various, including the Arctic Circle
Multiple webcomic issues	Webcomic	Various, including Mexico

Table 1.3. New settings in Heroes' transmedia texts.

Table 1.3 identifies a correlation between the introduction of new settings and the introduction of new characters, providing introductory stories for new characters with superhuman abilities. Other transmedia texts, particularly several of the webcomics, transport existing characters to new settings, often to reveal their backstory or to develop a subplot. Jason Mittell states that character development is central to a serial in which 'characters grow and develop over time'[68] which Elizabeth Evans also assigns to single-world transmedia narratives where events create a 'wider, coherent

[68] Mittell, 2015, 133.

fictional world' that is 'delivered to the audience in multiple formats.'[69] Placing a character in a challenging environment can develop their traits and relationships whilst revisiting an important place from a character's past provides the opportunity for backstory to be explored.

New settings inevitably introduce the new populations that reside within that location, bringing further detail to the narrative's world by populating the settings. Two transmedia texts which use new settings to introduce new characters are the webseries *Going Postal* and *Destiny* which are set in the characters' place of residence. *Going Postal's* Echo lives in San Diego, a city not previously seen in *Heroes'* world, whilst *Destiny's* Santiago lives in Peru, extending the narrative to South America. Santiago was created through an online poll, 'Create Your Hero,' in which the audience voted for a new hero. Different elements of the character were chosen each week, including gender, age, appearance and place of birth. A majority of voters chose South America as the setting, enabling a South American character to be added to a predominantly North American and European cast.

Complex fictional worlds, particularly those in the telefantasy genre, are explored and organised through transmedia texts that function as maps. Robert T. Tally

[69] Evans, 20.

describes fictional maps as 'literary cartography' in which the writer 'invents or discovers the world presented in the narrative,'[70] visually depicting where the settings are in relation to one another. Maps are common in transmedia storytelling as Jason Mittell states that 'both viewers and the industry do invest energy in creating spatially orienting paratexts for television series [because] orientation maps are helpful to ground viewers in a show's mythology,'[71] specifically within narratives that depict complex, expansive worlds. Although *Heroes'* geography is the same as reality (and thus audience members are aware of where each city and country is situated), the use of maps identifies the location of each event, character and superhuman ability.

An implicit aim of *Heroes'* new settings is to develop the evolved human phenomena by highlighting the fact that people with abilities live across the world, not just in the USA where a majority of the narrative takes place. *Heroes'* use of literary cartography is illustrated by the Assignment Tracker Map which unifies each setting referenced within *Heroes'* narrative. The Assignment Tracker uses a map that contains blue and green dots to represent the current location of every

[70] Robert T. Tally, Spatiality (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 49.
[71] Jason Mittell, "Serial Orientations: Paratexts and Contemporary Television," *(Dis)Orienting Media and Narrative Mazes,* ed. Julia Eckel, Bernd Leindecker, Daniela Olek and Christine Pleporka, (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2013), 173.

known evolved human, including those from the television narrative and the transmedia texts. The transmedia texts' settings are placed alongside the settings from the television episodes, encouraging the audience to orientate from one text to another to piece the narrative's world together. Not only does the Assignment Tracker Map give audiences a definitive guide to each of *Heroes'* settings, the map also provides the audience with the opportunity to add red dots for the locations of evolved humans they have created themselves. Characters created in fanfiction or in the audience's minds can be placed alongside significant characters from the television narrative. The map thus unifies *Heroes,* its transmedia texts and the fanfiction created by the audience, reinforcing the fact that the narrative's world exists beyond the television episodes.

Supernatural illustrates a similar balance between familiar and new settings. Kristi McDuffie states that many 'episodic series use the same characters and setting each week for their fully contained stories,'[72] such as the Winchesters' car and bunker which appear repeatedly in the television episodes. New settings momentarily remove characters from familiar places, transporting the focus to a different area of the

[72] Krisi McDuffie, "The Discourse of Medium: Time as a Narrative Device," in *Time in Television Narrative: Exploring Temporality in Twenty-First-Century Television,* ed. Melissa Ames, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 192.

narrative's world. Aaron C. Burnell identifies the travel element of *Supernatural's* narrative in which Sam and Dean 'travel between towns while belonging to none,'[73] incorporating new settings in almost every episode. New settings are often revisited if they are relevant to the narrative arc or character development, although a majority of new settings are nothing more than plot devices that function as the backdrop for the episode's events. *Supernatural* provides an example as each episode introduces a new setting, forming a setting-of-the-week structure. Sam and Dean visit a new setting, encounter a new supernatural creature and save the lives of a new group of potential victims. The events and world-components are specific to the episode's plotline and themes, making it unlikely for the setting to be revisited in later episodes.

Each of *Supernatural's* tie-in novels function in a similar way to an episode of the television narrative, employing the setting-of-the-week format in which new events, characters and creatures are introduced within a new setting. The self-contained structure forms a transmedia text that does not intrude upon the main narrative, creating a story that is

[73] Aaron C. Burnell, "Rebels, Rogues, and Sworn Brothers: *Supernatural* and the Shift in "White Trash" from Monster to Hero," in *TV Goes to Hell: An Unofficial Road Map of Supernatural,* ed. Stacey Abbott and David Lavery, (Toronto: ECW Press, 2011), 55.

geographically distanced from the television episodes. Anthony N. Smith states that such texts rely on an 'implied continuity [in which the] explicit referencing of a wider narrative continuity is often reduced,'[74] using familiar elements such as Sam and Dean, or the underlying structure of a typical episode, to maintain a sense of familiarity. *Supernatural's* novels incorporate settings that are highly similar to the settings used in the television narrative (typically small towns and rural locations) as well as settings that are representative of a specific theme or urban legend. The novel *One Year Gone* is set in Salem, Massachusetts, which is a town that is famous for its connection to witches, providing the primarily plotline for the transmedia text.

Supernatural's transmedia texts use settings in a similar way to the television episodes. However, several of the settings are less typical of *Supernatural's* format. Possible-world transmedia texts and implied continuity provide the opportunity for non-canonical creativity in which the television narrative's format is experimented with. For a narrative set primarily in rural America, Table 1.4 identifies that many of *Supernatural's* transmedia texts incorporate stories based in famous US landmarks and cities, such as the Grand Canyon and New York City, as well as transmedia texts that are set in

[74] Smith, A. N., 57.

different counties. Although the transmedia texts are not consistent with *Supernatural's* format, they are reminiscent of 'stunt episodes' which Stacey Abbott describes as episodes that 'undermine […] the conventions of the series.'[75] Stunt episodes are associated with flexi-narratives, particularly those that have been running for several seasons, as a means to bring novelty to the familiar format. *Supernatural* uses stunt episodes frequently, incorporating episodes that experiment with other genres or use self-referentiality to comment on *Supernatural* as a television show.

Transmedia Text	Description	Familiar Setting(s)
Witch's Canyon	Novel	The Grand Canyon
Fresh Meat	Novel	Tahoe National Forest
Nevermore	Novel	New York City
Bone Key	Novel	Key West, Florida
Heart of the Dragon	Novel	San Francisco
Coyote's Kiss	Novel	Mexican Border
Beginning's End	Graphic novel	New York City
The Dogs of Edinburgh	Graphic novel	Scotland
'Bloodlines'	Television	Chicago

Table 1.4. Unusual settings in Supernatural's transmedia texts.

An example of unusual settings in *Supernatural's* transmedia texts is the graphic novel *The Dogs of Edinburgh* which is set in Scotland, moving the narrative across the

[75] Stacey Abbott, *The Cult TV Book* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2010), 94.

Atlantic to a new country. Tom Dowd argues that 'when building the storyworld itself it is vital to keep in mind that every choice has to enable storytelling in some manner'[76] and thus *The Dogs of Edinburgh* relates a story that Pearson and Messenger Davies refer to as 'the "what if?" of the alternate possible-world.'[77] *The Dogs of Edinburgh* explores 'what if' eventualities that are alluded to in the television narrative but are never fully answered within the television episodes. *Supernatural's* episodes briefly make reference to creatures that exist outside of the USA and that Sam and Dean have infrequently hunted whilst abroad, although the television narrative primarily situates Sam and Dean in the USA. *The Dogs of Edinburgh* explores both of these eventualities in detail. The transmedia text discusses Scotland's mythology, lore and supernatural creatures whilst Sam and Dean are shown hunting a creature outside of the USA. Introducing a new setting not only moves the focus to a different area of *Supernatural's* world but also answers questions raised in the television episodes.

Although *The Dogs of Edinburgh* uses world components and themes from the television episodes as the motivation for its plotlines, the graphic novel is a possible-world transmedia

[76] Dowd, 43.
[77] Pearson and Messenger Davies, 141.

text. *The Dogs of Edinburgh* is set during Sam's time at university, prior to the pilot episode, and incorporates plotlines and character development that are never referred to in *Supernatural's* episodes. Paolo Bertetti discusses the role of character development in determining whether a transmedia text forms a possible-world, stating that 'different texts, moving from one media to another, attribute profiles and life histories to the characters that contrast with one another.'[78] *The Dogs of Edinburgh* is implied to take place within the main narrative's world, similarly to *Supernatural's* other possible-world transmedia texts, which enables independent writers to be more flexible and creative with their use of settings. Furthermore, the graphic novel medium encourages further creativity as text and illustrations do not have the same filming restrictions as the television narrative (Scotland is ever-so-briefly depicted in the episode 'Weekend at Bobby's' (Season 6, Episode 4), although the set is confined to a small graveyard). Scotland expands *Supernatural's* world beyond the plotlines and fantasy elements in the USA. However, the inconsistent events and character development that Sam experiences form a standalone story that is independent from the main narrative.

[78] Bertetti, 4.

Characters, Species & Fantasy Elements

Settings are explored and populated by characters. A character visits new settings, interacts with other characters and experiences the events that drive the plot forward. Many characters recur throughout the narrative, including the primary protagonists who appear in almost every episode and the recurring regulars who make multiple appearances during each season. Other characters have minor roles and are never revisited or referred to beyond their introductory episode. Jonathan Nichols-Pethick identifies a trend between serialised narratives and ensemble casts, stating that the use of multiple perspectives 'disperse[s] the narrative emphasis across a range of characters, providing diversity in the storytelling.'[79] Although some serials have smaller primary casts, each character is equally integral to the narrative, resulting in a point of view that shifts from character to character.

Characters contribute towards the interconnected structure of serials and single-world transmedia narratives, appearing across episodes and transmedia texts. Greg Smith identifies that 'a prime-time serial narrative elaborates the continuing ebb-and-flow of relations among a core group of

[79] Jonathan Nichols-Pethick, *TV Cops: The Contemporary American Television Police Drama* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 71.

characters'[80] which is exemplified by *Heroes'* ensemble cast. *Heroes'* episodes alternate the point of view among each character, focusing on heroes and villains, protagonists and minor characters. New characters are added frequently, each of which has a specific role to play in the narrative, such as interacting with a main character, developing a plotline or introducing a new superhuman ability. *Heroes'* transmedia texts develop characters in a similar way to the television narrative, alternating between main, minor and new characters' points of view. Many of the transmedia texts feature familiar characters such as Claire, Hiro and Rachel whilst others introduce new characters who have not previously appeared in the television episodes. Matthew Freeman states that characters 'hold transmedia storyworlds together and point audiences from one medium to another,'[81] introducing new characters that are revisited elsewhere in the narrative. *Heroes'* new characters appear in other transmedia texts, and often television episodes, experiencing consistent development throughout the narrative.

Moving a new character to a different part of the narrative enables the character to interact with established characters,

[80] Greg Smith, "Serial Narrative and Guest Stars: *Ally McBeal's* Eccentrics," in T*he Contemporary Television Series*, ed. Michael Hammond and Lucy Mazdon, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2005), 102.
[81] Freeman, 26.

visit familiar settings or become involved in important plotlines. Sonia Livingstone argues that 'the interpretation of character and of narrative is inextricably related, for viewers use their knowledge of characters to create coherent and consistent meanings for the events they perceive'[82] and thus *Heroes'* new characters move from one transmedia text to another as a way to become ingrained in the wider plot and character relationships. Each character is part of a single, consistent world. Transmedia texts such as the Assignment Tracker Profiles provide a means for the characters to appear alongside one another. The Profiles are styled like confidential documents that detail the backstory, biography and superhuman ability of every character. Whenever new characters are introduced to the television episodes or transmedia texts, they are attributed an Assignment Tracker Profile, reinforcing the fact that each character exists within the same world.

Transmedia storytelling introduces new plotlines and character arcs that have do not appear in the television episodes, expanding the narrative's world through the introduction of new characters and their conflicts. *Heroes'* transmedia texts introduce several new characters that extend

[82] Sonia Livingstone, *Making Sense of Television: The Psychology of Audience Interpretation: Second Edition* (Hove: Routledge, 1998), 161.

the narrative beyond the television characters' points of view, such as Hana Gitelman who frequently moves between television episodes and transmedia texts. Hana is introduced in the webcomic 'Wireless Part One' before she is extended to other texts, including her own blog, as well as the episode 'Unexpected' (Season 1, Episode 16) in which she transitions from a transmedia character to a member of the television cast. Greg Smith states that 'the prime-time serial cannot take care of all of its narrative business by staying solely within the tightly bound world of core characters'[83] which results in various transmedia texts foregrounding the point of view of new characters. Hana appears in various media, including several written texts like her blog and MySpace profile as well as an episode of the television narrative in which she is portrayed by an actor. Hana functions as a navigator who guides the audience across texts. Hidden clues in Hana's blogposts and messages orientate the audience to a different transmedia text, creating a character that could be defined as the primary protagonist of *Heroes'* transmedia material.

Flexi-narratives illustrate a similar balance between main, minor and new characters. *Supernatural's* primary protagonists are Sam and Dean, although minor characters such as Castiel and Crowley experience their own character

[83] Smith, G., 102.

arcs and plotlines. Other flexi-narratives have much larger primary casts, such as *Once Upon a Time* (2011-Present) and *Friends* (1994-2004) which foreground a different character's plotlines in each episode. Despite the differences between the number of main characters, flexi-narratives introduce new characters in the same way. Greg Smith states that 'although individual characters may come and go (as the series exhausts its need for them, or as actors move on to other opportunities), the primary group of characters remains fairly stable,'[84] suggesting that new and minor characters are disposable and can be replaced in the next episode. Standalone episodes introduce new characters that are often nothing more than plot devices that drive each individual story forward: the victims or witnesses, for example. Narrative arc episodes also introduce episode-specific characters, although these episodes are more likely to incorporate new characters who are connected to the narrative arc.

Possible-world transmedia narratives introduce new characters in the same way as flexi-narratives' standalone episodes, often functioning as plot devices that rarely appear again in the narrative. It would be a futile task to list the numerous characters introduced in *Supernatural's* transmedia texts as each story incorporates various plot devices relevant

[84] Smith, G., 102.

to that self-contained plot, including the single-world transmedia texts. The webseries *Ghostfacers* is one of *Supernatural's* few officially-produced transmedia texts and is the only story that does not feature Sam, Dean or a recurring character. Instead, *Ghostfacers'* protagonists are Ed Zeddmore and Harry Spangler who previously appeared in two episodes of *Supernatural. Ghostfacers* documents Ed and Harry's experiences between their appearances in the television narrative, incorporating new world components that are specific to the webseries events.

Ghostfacers introduces Ambyr as a member of Ed and Harry's ghost-hunting team, alongside Maggie and Spruce who previously appeared in the episode 'Ghostfacers' (Season 3, Episode 13). However, when Ed and Harry return to *Supernatural* in the episode '#thinman' (Season 9, Episode 15), Ambyr is the only character who is not mentioned. Neil Perryman argues that although transmedia texts 'can complement the parent programme they can never be integrated into the over-arching narrative to such an extent that [the plot] impacts directly upon it.'[85] *Ghostfacers'* events are not directly referenced in *Supernatural* to prevent the transmedia text from disrupting an understanding of the television episodes. As a result, the new world components

[85] Perryman, 34.

introduced in *Ghostfacers,* including Ambyr, are not referred to in the television episodes, making *Ghostfacers'* inclusion of new characters similar to a possible-world transmedia text.

Beyond their centrality to plotlines or character development, characters introduced in telefantasy narratives have a further role in narrative extension. New characters can expand upon the narrative's fantasy elements, exemplifying a different superhuman ability in *Heroes* or coming from a different species of supernatural creature in *Supernatural.* The prominence of fantasy elements within a narrative is influenced by the structure of the television narrative as Stacey Abbott argues that serials avoid 'overt science-fiction/fantasy credentials' and instead foreground character development as a way to engage both a 'mainstream and cult audience.'[86] Serials foreground plot and character development, often reducing the fantasy elements to more implicit roles in the narrative. *Heroes* exemplifies Abbott's claim as drama arises from the characters' personal lives and their superhuman abilities, such as Claire Bennet whose plotlines range from her relationship with her adoptive father, Noah, as well as the consequences of her regenerative ability.

[86] Stacey Abbott, "How *Lost* Found its Audience: The Making of a Cult Blockbuster," in *Reading Lost: Perspectives on a Hit Television Show,* ed. Roberta Pearson, (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2008), 17.

Table 1.5 features the new characters and abilities added to *Heroes'* narrative through transmedia storytelling. Each new character not only possesses a unique superhuman ability but also a detailed backstory, personal relationships and internal conflicts that foreground the character against the fantasy element. *Heroes'* world highly resembles reality in regards to the appearance of the settings and characters. However, Robert T. Tally states that 'mythic or fantastic cartography thus weaves together a world that is both strangely familiar and utterly novel,'[87] balancing a visual familiarity against the fantasy elements. The fantasy elements become just another part of the characters' identities, exploring how the characters balance their abilities with their everyday lives.

Transmedia Text	Description	New Character & Ability
Going Postal	Webseries	Echo (the ability to control sound)
Destiny	Webseries	Santiago (the ability to predict events)
Purpose	iStory	John Mulligan (the ability to rewind time)
Heroes Reborn	Television	An entire new cast of characters and abilities
Various transmedia texts	Webcomics, online material, television	Hana Gitelman (the ability to control technology)

Table 1.5. New significant characters and abilities in Heroes' transmedia texts.

[87] Tally, 150.

Although character development is foregrounded in *Heroes'* narrative, the fantasy elements are still an integral part of *Heroes'* world. Telefantasy narratives incorporate various fantasy elements that distance the narrative from reality, such as *Heroes'* evolved humans, superhuman abilities and the genetic modification serum that stimulates abilities in ordinary humans, conforming to Matt Hills' claim that 'each textual world [has] distinctive and characteristic rules for its operation.'[88] *Heroes'* new characters each possess their own unique abilities that differ from the abilities of the other characters, both within the transmedia texts and the television episodes. Transmedia storytelling enables fantasy elements to be introduced that are not integral to the television narrative, reinforcing the fact that the narrative's world extends beyond the television episodes. The Assignment Tracker Profiles unify the abilities within one transmedia text, enabling each ability to be explained in more detail. Characters with similar abilities can be identified and families who each possess an ability can be explored, creating a narrative in which the fantasy elements remain consistent across media.

Supernatural introduces new fantasy elements frequently, adopting a monster-of-the-week format in which at least one new fantasy element is introduced in each episode. Creatures

[88] Hills, 511.

made famous through popular culture, such as vampires, werewolves and shapeshifters, exist in a world alongside angels, demons and Biblical lore. Tom Dowd states that 'worlds have their own set of physical and metaphysical rules and mythologies that govern the characters and the environment,'[89] using fantasy elements to create detailed, distinct narratives. *Supernatural's* fantasy elements construct a complex lore that develops across episodes. Each new fantasy element must fit into *Supernatural's* fictional world as Stan Beeler argues that 'the mythology that underpins the characters and stories stretches back across the course of the show, lending in its varied adventures a compelling internal coherence.'[90] New creatures are assigned hunting patterns, a specific hierarchal relationship with other creatures and a means to be killed (vampires should be beheaded, as a stake through the heart is useless), forming a consistent world populated by consistent fantasy elements.

Many of *Supernatural's* transmedia texts replicate the structure of the television episodes, introducing new creatures to the narrative. Matt Hill argues that '[telefantasy] varieties of cult TV often render the fantastic diegetically commonplace by

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[89] Dowd, 43.
[90] Stan Beeler, "*Stargate SG-1* and the Quest for the Perfect Science Fiction Premise," in *The Essential Science Fiction Television Reader*, ed. J. P. Telotte, (Lexington: The University Press Kentucky, 2008), 273-4.

virtue of defining and developing fantastic beings and worlds over a lengthy period of time and in great amounts of detail,'[91] creating a world with fantasy elements that develop week by week, text by text. Several of *Supernatural's* transmedia texts introduce new supernatural creatures that have not appeared in the television narrative, such as the shapeshifting aswang in the novel *Fresh Meat,* whilst other transmedia texts bring an innovative twist to a familiar creature, such as the inclusion of a new angel or demon. New fantasy elements achieve what Pearson and Messenger Davies define as the 'mix of the atypical and the typical'[92] as novelty is brought to the familiar monster-of-the-week format, thus developing and expanding *Supernatural's* complex mythology and lore beyond the creatures that appear in the television episodes.

Supernatural's transmedia texts introduce fantasy elements that are independent from the television narrative, similarly to the inclusion of new settings and characters. The creatures and lore that are introduced in the transmedia texts are never referred to elsewhere in the narrative, including the ghost that appears in the single-world transmedia text *Ghostfacers.* Matthew Freeman states that many transmedia texts create 'multiple, contradictory versions of the same

[91] Hills, 511.
[92] Pearson and Messenger Davies, 137.

fiction'[93] as possible-world transmedia texts are based on the main narrative, featuring an implied version of the main narrative's world. An example is provided by the novel *War of the Sons* which introduces an angel named Abaddon. The novel was published in August 2010 and features an editor's note that places the novel shortly after the episode 'My Bloody Valentine' (Season 5, Episode 14). However, in Season Eight of *Supernatural,* a Knight of Hell called Abaddon is introduced as a recurring character with no relation to the Abaddon mentioned in the transmedia text. Stan Beeler identifies that 'science fiction depends heavily upon the creation of a coherent and internally consistent parallel universe; worlds, no matter how outlandish the fictional deviations from the "real world," these deviations must logically fit together.'[94] Although *War of the Sons* introduces Abaddon first chronologically, the demonic Knight of Hell depicted in the television narrative differs from the novel's rogue angel, creating two world components that contradict one another.

Many transmedia texts focus on familiar world components from the main narrative to reveal supplementary details and development that are not integral to the television episodes. New world components are introduced, expanding

[93] Freeman, 60.
[94] Beeler, 272.

the narrative's world beyond the places and populations that appear in the main narrative. World components contribute towards world-building, incorporating new settings, characters and fantasy elements that influence whether a transmedia text is a single-world or possible-world. Single-world transmedia narratives incorporate interconnected world components, similarly to a serial, with each world component experiencing consistent development to connect different parts of the narrative. Possible-world transmedia narratives use world components that are more episodic, confining any development within a specific transmedia text and rarely moving new world components to a different part of the narrative. A consistent or implied connection to the television episodes is formed, constructing a world that expands across media.

Chapter Three
Temporality: Timeframes & Chronology

Television narratives consist of a succession of plotlines and subplots. Each episode incorporates new events, including self-contained plotlines that are resolved within a single episode and events that develop across the entire season to form the narrative arc. Television narrative structure influences how events progress and conclude. Serials, and the narrative arc episodes of flexi-narratives, construct plotlines that develop across episodes. Flexi-narratives' standalone episodes are self-contained, depicting events that are resolved by the episode's conclusion.

A narrative's temporality consists of the timeframe (the length of time that passes between the events of the pilot and the most recent episode) and the chronology (the sequential order of the events that take place). A majority of episodes are set after the previous episode, be it minutes or weeks later, whilst others provide an insight into the characters' pasts, using flashbacks or time travel to add earlier events onto the narrative's timeframe. Jeffrey Sconce states that television narratives, particularly those that have been on air for a longer duration, possess 'depth and duration of character relations, diegetic expansion, and audience investment' which can create 'an often quite sophisticated and complex

elaboration of character and story world.'[95] Sconce's ideas are particularly relevant to telefantasy narratives in which time travel and alternate timelines create complex temporalities, although the events can still be arranged chronologically.

Narrative temporality is further influenced by the relationship between the episode's events and the real time in which the episode airs. In a discussion of temporality in novels, Monika Fludernik states that 'discourse time is measured in words or pages of text or in the hours of reading time, whereas story time represents the temporal duration and chronology of the underlying plot'[96] which can be applied to television. The duration of time within an episode can vary, ranging from an hour's worth of events that reflect the episode's airtime to episodes that incorporate a longer timeframe, such as days or weeks. *24* demonstrates a close relationship between the in-story events and real time. Each episode incorporates events that span an hour, constructing a twenty-four-episode season that details every second of one specific day. Flexi-narratives reflect real time in a different way as one season often equates to a year's worth of events.

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[95] Jeffrey Sconce, "What If?: Charting Television's New Textual Boundaries," in *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition,* ed. Lynn Spiegel and Jan Olsson, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 95.
[96] Monika Fludernik, "Time in Narrative," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan, (London: Routledge, 2005), 608.

Many of *Supernatural's* episodes feature events that take place on the same date that the episode airs, incorporating real time events into the narrative, such as Christmas episodes in December. Serials are often distanced from real time events, extending plotlines across episodes instead of self-contained events. *Heroes* provides an example as the events of Season One have a timeframe of just over one month (October 1st 2006 – November 8th 2006) but aired across twenty-three episodes from September 2006 to May 2007. Table 2.1 compares *Heroes* and *Supernatural's* temporalities.

	Heroes	***Supernatural***
First Episode	'Genesis' aired on 25/09/06	'Pilot' aired on 13/09/05
First Episode's Events	The eclipse occurs on 01/10/06	Mary dies on 02/11/1983 Sam reunites with Dean on 30/10/05
Final Episode	'Brave New World' aired on 08/02/10	N/A
Final Episode's events	Claire reveals her abilities to the world in late 2007	N/A
Number of Seasons	4 seasons that air over 4 years	11 seasons over 11 years
Narrative's Timeframe	Just over a year	Eleven years (or thirteen) [97]

Table 2.1. Heroes and Supernatural's temporality.

[97] A year passed between the events of *Supernatural's* Season Five finale and the Season Six premier and again during the hiatus between Season Seven and Eight, thus placing the narrative two years ahead of real time. Despite this, the two missing years are never referenced in *Supernatural* as the episodes continue to coincide with real time dates and events.

This chapter explores narrative temporality, both within the television episodes and the transmedia texts, to argue that chronologies and timeframes are extended differently for single-world and possible-world transmedia narratives. Transmedia storytelling develops a narrative's temporality to incorporate events that take place in between the television episodes or occur simultaneously, incorporating new plotlines and events that do not feature in the main narrative. Prequels and sequels enable the narrative to be explored during a different period of time, revealing how the world appeared before and after the narrative's timeframe. A consistent or implied temporality is formed, creating a sequential series of events or an alternate timeline that deviates from the television episodes.

Enhancing Temporality

A television narrative's temporality can be extended without lengthening the timeframe. There are various narrative ellipses within a narrative's chronology, such as the gaps between episodes and seasons or the time jumps within an episode that eliminate the need for explanatory backstory and mundane everyday events. Characters' journeys from one city to the next or their morning routine need not be incorporated into the narrative unless the events enhance a plotline or character development, even within a flexi-narrative's self-

contained episodes. Serials have a complex temporality that Roger Luckhurt states can 'at once slow down and open out narrative time.'[98] A specific day may develop across multiple episodes or the narrative could move forward in time by several weeks. Narrative ellipses are also used to omit elements of a character's backstory or the events that take place between two particular episodes, raising questions that can be answered in a later episode. If the narrative ellipsis contains information that is not required for an understanding of the main narrative, the events are often explored through transmedia storytelling.

Heroes is a fast-moving narrative in which each episode drives the plot forward and stimulates character development, creating narrative ellipses between the significant events. Michael Fuchs states that 'one of the most widely found types of narrative experimentation is connected to questions of temporality'[99] as different elements of a narrative's chronology and timeframe can be further explored, often through transmedia storytelling. A transmedia text can bridge narrative ellipses or incorporate new events, developing the television narrative's temporality without intruding upon the television

[98] Luckhurst, 199.
[99] Michael Fuchs, "Play it Again. Sam...and Dean: Temporality and Meta-Textuality in *Supernatural,*" in *Time in Television Narrative: Exploring Temporality in Twenty-First-Century Programming,* ed. Melissa Ames, (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2012), 82.

episodes. Scolari refers to such transmedia texts as 'interstitial microstories [that] enrich the diegetic world by expanding the period between the seasons [or episodes],'[100] adding layers to characters and contributing towards world-building by visiting new settings. Secondary information, such as a minor character's backstory or the resolution of a subplot, are not integral to an understanding of the main narrative and can thus be resolved within the transmedia texts. Table 2.2 identifies the different transmedia texts that bridge narrative ellipses in *Heroes'* narrative.

Transmedia Text	Episode Extended	Length of Time Between Episode's Airdate and Transmedia Text's Release
Saving Charlie	'Seven Minutes to Midnight' (Season 1, Episode 8)	1 year
The Recruit	'Dual'	Immediate
Nowhere Man	'Shades of Gray' (Season 3, Episode 19)	Weeks
Faction Zero	'An Invisible Thread' (Season Three, Episode Twenty-Five)	Several months
The Civilian	'An Invisible Thread'	Several months
The Puppet Master	Season Four's early episodes	2 months

Table 2.2. Episodes extended by Heroes' transmedia texts.

[100] Scolari, 598.

Heroes' narrative uses different media to bridge the gaps between episodes or events, such as the webcomics which are used to extend specific episodes. Whilst the new information is not needed to move the television narrative forward, the transmedia texts illustrate the 'level of commitment from the audience'[101] that Roberta Pearson and Sara Gwenllian-Jones state is typical of a serial, revealing new pieces of information that enhance characters and the narrative's world. All television narratives use a 'code of sequence' which Justin Lewis defines as the 'way a story proceeds, developmentally, from one scene to the next' and that each episode must contribute towards 'a precise and logical order.'[102] An example is provided by *Heroes'* tie-in novel, *Saving Charlie,* which bridges a narrative ellipsis and illustrates the complex temporality associated with the telefantasy genre. The novel explores Hiro's experiences when he travels back in time to save the titular character after she is killed by Sylar in the episode 'Seven Minutes to Midnight.' *Saving Charlie* continues from the events of 'Seven Minutes to Midnight' but also provides a prequel to the episode through Hiro's time travel, creating a complex chronology of events that can be placed sequentially alongside one another. The aim of transmedia

[101] Pearson and Gwenllian-Jones, 10.
[102] Justin Lewis, *The Ideological Octopus: An Exploration of Television and its Audience* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 126.

storytelling is to provide supplementary information that enhances the television narrative without intruding directly upon it, and thus *Saving Charlie* enables questions raised in the television narrative to be answered in a way that does not affect the progression of the television episodes.

Saving Charlie's temporality is further complicated by the novel's release date. The novel was written by independent author Aury Wellington and released over a year after 'Seven Minutes to Midnight' first aired, causing several months to pass in which the television narrative developed to a point where the Hiro and Charlie subplot became a distant memory. Despite this, the novel was later adapted into the episode 'Once Upon a Time in Texas' (Season 4, Episode 7) and was co-written by Wellington, allowing the transmedia text's events to form a consistent chronology with the main narrative. *Saving Charlie* initially resembles a possible-world transmedia text as the novel was released a year after the episode aired. However, the novel's events are later adapted into a television episode, using the notion of time travel to account for the passage of time between the Season Four episode and the introduction of the subplot in Season One.

The duration of time between a transmedia text's release to its position within the narrative's chronology can determine whether a single-world or possible-world transmedia narrative

is formed. Many of *Heroes'* transmedia texts are released closely to the narrative ellipsis that the events bridge, forming a consistent chronology that develops across media. Transmedia texts such as the webseries *The Recruit* are released on the same day that the episode airs to provide a direct continuation of the episode's events. Other transmedia texts are released after a specific episode to reflect the progression of time, such as the iStory 'Faction Zero' which was released several weeks after the episode 'An Invisible Thread' to correspond with the weeks that passed between both texts' events. The close relationship between single-world transmedia texts and the television episodes conforms to Will Brooker's notion of 'overflow' in which the television narrative's 'borders are protected from and isolated from other television [but are] threatened by – even invaded by' screens of online transmedia material.[103] A majority of single-world transmedia texts are accessible online such as *Heroes'* webseries, blogs and official website, enabling screens of supplementary material to be engaged with alongside the television episode.

Heroes' transmedia texts have a specific chronological position within the main narrative's timeframe, extending

[103] Will Brooker, "Television out of Time: Watching Cult Shows on Download," *Reading Lost: Perspectives on a Hit Television Show,* ed. by Roberta Pearson, (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2008), 52.

subplots and developing characters from specific episodes. *Supernatural* bridges narrative ellipses in a more episodic way, relating standalone events that have no relation to the television narrative's chronology. A majority of *Supernatural's* narrative ellipses are bridged by tie-in novels that use a similar structure to the television narrative's standalone episodes, using the self-contained monster-of-the-week format to include a new story. Daniele Barbieri states that an independence from the wider narrative creates a 'completely interchangeable [chronology in which] there is no temporal link between an episode and the other'[104] which is common in flexi-narratives' standalone episodes. The standalone episodes can be moved around without disrupting the wider narrative or character development, as long as the narrative arc episodes remain in the same place.

Supernatural's transmedia texts illustrate a similar flexibility to the television episodes as they can be repositioned throughout the narrative's chronology without impacting upon the main narrative, often creating an alternate timeline that conflicts with the television episodes. Self-contained events and implied chronologies create possible-world transmedia texts. However, many of *Supernatural's*

[104] Daniele Barbieri, *Time, Image, Rhythm and Narrative: Toward a Semiotics of Temporality in Comics Text* (PhD diss., University of Bononia, 1992), 46.

transmedia texts in Table 2.3, specifically the novels, feature a historian's note that locates the novel's events within *Supernatural's* chronology. *Carved in Flesh* and *Nevermore* depict events that take place between two specific episodes whilst other novels, such as *Witch's Canyon,* have no specified chronological position, although clues about the novel's chronology can be drawn from the story itself, such as references to secondary characters from the television narrative or the Winchesters' familiarity with specific supernatural creatures. Robert C. Allen refers to a narrative's chronology as having a 'syntagmatic axis of the narrative'[105] in which each transmedia text has a specific chronological position in the wider narrative. Allen's axis of narrative can be applied to *Supernatural* as the tie-in novels and television episodes can be arranged chronologically, despite the different media used.

[105] Allen, 69.

Transmedia Text	Narrative Ellipses	Length of Time Between Episode's Airdate and Transmedia Text's Release
Nevermore	Between 'Crossroad Blues' (Season 2, Episode 9) and 'Croatoan' (Season 2, Episode 9)	8 months
Bone Key	A week after 'A Very Supernatural Christmas' (Season 3, Episode 8), which was the midseason finale	8 months
Heart of the Dragon	Shortly after 'Changing Channels' (Season 5, Episode 8)	3 months
War of the Sons	Shortly after 'My Bloody Valentine' (Season 5, Episode 14)	6 months
One Year Gone	Between the Season Five finale 'Swan Song' (Season Five, Episode 22) and the Season Six premiere 'Exile on Main St' (Season Six, Episode 1)	1 year
Coyote's Kiss	Between 'Caged Heat' (Season 6, Episode 10) and 'Appointment in Samarra' (Season 6, Episode 11)	7 months
Night Terror	Between 'Frontierland' (Season 6, Episode 18) and 'Mommy Dearest' (Season 6, Episode 19)	5 months
Rite of Passage	Between 'Season Seven, Time for a Wedding!' (Season 7, Episode 8) and 'How to	9 months

	Win Friends and Influence Monsters' (Season 7, Episode 9)	
Fresh Meat	Between 'Shut Up, Dr Phil' (Season 7, Episode 6) and 'Slash Fiction' (Season 7, Episode 7)	16 months
Carved in Flesh	Between 'Time After Time' (Season 7, Episode 12) and 'The Slice Girls' (Season 7, Episode 13)	15 months
Cold Fire	Between 'About a Boy' (Season 10, Episode 12) and 'Halt and Catch Fire' (Season 10, Episode 13)	13 months
Mythmaker	Between 'Hibbing 911' (Season 10, Episode 8) and 'The Things We Left Behind' (Season 10, Episode 9)	19 months
Ghostfacers	After 'Ghostfacers' (Season 3, Episode 13)	2 years

Table 2.3. Narrative ellipses bridged by Supernatural's transmedia texts

Although many of *Supernatural's* transmedia texts have a specified chronological position, the events that take place within each transmedia text are inconsistent with the wider narrative, creating a duality between a specified chronological position and self-contained events. One example is the novel *Fresh Meat* which contains a historian's note that positions the events between the Season Seven episodes 'Shut up, Dr Phil' and 'Slash Fiction,' both of which aired in October 2011. In

spite of a specified chronological position, the novel was released in February 2013, fifteen months after the episodes aired. Elizabeth Evans states that 'episodes have fixed lifespans in which they are released and exist as the 'current' segment of narrative before being replaced by the next episode,'[106] resulting in a narrative that develops each week. The passage of time between the Season Seven narrative ellipsis and *Fresh Meat's* release in the middle of Season Eight enables the television narrative to develop to a point that barely resembles Season Seven's world. Showrunner Sera Gamble was replaced by Jeremy Carver, the main characters experienced significant development after the finale's events (Dean spent a year trapped in purgatory whilst Sam experienced a normal life and fell in love), and one of *Fresh Meat's* main characters, Bobby, was killed off in the midseason finale. The novel becomes distanced from the television episodes, depicting a period of time that is no longer relevant to the main narrative.

The progression of time from a transmedia text's release to its position with the narrative's chronology differs depending on the medium used. Monika Fludernik identifies the complexity of a narrative's temporality and real time, stating 'what complicates matters in fictional narrative is the

[106] Evans, 37.

determination of a focal point of reference'[107] as the present moment changes with the release of each new episode. *Heroes'* transmedia texts are instantly accessible, particularly to audience members who actively engage with the transmedia material and sign up to *Heroes Evolutions* to receive messages about when new content becomes available. *Supernatural* predominantly uses tie-in novels to bridge narrative ellipses, resulting in a progression of time whilst the novel is written and published. Many of *Heroes'* transmedia texts bridge narrative ellipses with online content, such as the iStories and webseries that were written and filmed prior to the episode's airdate to ensure the transmedia content is released to coincide with the events' chronological position. However, *Heroes'* webseries and interactive stories take time to write, produce and edit, similarly to *Supernatural's* novels. Single-world's transmedia texts are released at strategic moments in the television narrative and develop plotlines or characters whereas possible-world transmedia texts are often written as a response to an event in the television narrative, often released after their implied chronological position has passed.

A television narrative's temporality can be further enhanced by events that take place at the same time as the

[107] Fludernik, 611.

television episodes. Scolari identifies 'parallel stories' as episodes or transmedia texts that are chronologically positioned 'at the same time as the macrostory,'[108] incorporating an alternate setting or point of view to move the narrative elsewhere. Parallel stories are common in serials in which each episode features interconnected plotlines and subplots that occur simultaneously. The early episodes of *Heroes'* first season take place in different settings, focusing on different characters, experiencing different events. Each episode moves from character to character and plotline to plotline whilst unifying the events through the characters' shared motivation: the 'save the cheerleader, save the world' plotline in which Claire Bennet must be saved from Sylar to prevent the villain from taking her regenerative abilities. As the episodes progress, the plotlines converge and characters interact, reducing the initial distance experienced in the early episodes. Parallel stories are also evident in later seasons due to the multiple points of view of the ensemble cast, enabling different plots and subplots to develop at the same time.

Single-world transmedia narratives use a similar structure to serials, incorporating transmedia texts that foreground subplots and secondary characters to relate new events that occur at the same time as the television narrative. Justin Lewis

[108] Scolari, 598.

states that a narrative's 'sequential code implies more than an alphabetical or numerical order; it incorporates the idea of sequential development. Scenes are not discrete; they are linked by ideas, themes, or characters'[109] and thus whilst many of the transmedia texts do not have a specific chronological position within *Heroes'* timeframe, the events can be roughly mapped against particular plotlines and character development from the television narrative. Parallel stories such as the webseries *Going Postal* and *Destiny* are distanced from the television narrative through incorporating new points of view. The webseries provide introductory stories for Echo and Santiago in a similar way to *Heroes'* first season and are chronologically positioned during the same period of time, expanding the narrative's plotlines beyond the television episodes' events.

Transmedia texts can further enhance a narrative's temporality without including new events. *Heroes'* transmedia texts are primarily made available through *Heroes Evolutions,* an online composition of transmedia texts across media. The webcomics, iStories and webseries are accessed through *Evolutions* (accessible on NBC's official website) as well as transmedia texts that do not feature new stories and instead offer further detail on the settings and characters. There are

[109] Lewis, 126.

hyper-realistic company websites for both Primatech and Pinehearst that discuss the companies' aims and provide fake job applications that the audience can complete. Other transmedia texts are social media accounts for the characters, including a MySpace profile for Claire which was made available several months before the pilot episode aired, making it the first part of *Heroes'* narrative to be released. Each transmedia text contributes towards the façade that *Heroes'* world is real, documenting real companies and real people. The websites and social media pages are frequently updated to coincide with the events of a particular episode, enhancing the episodes through additional details on the plotlines, characters and settings.

One of the most frequently updated transmedia texts is Hiro's blog. The blog features several posts that are implied to have been written by Hiro alongside messages that are sent to registered audience members via email or SMS. Audience members can register their email address or mobile number to receive updates about filming, backstage photographs or, on occasion, messages that are styled to appear as if Hiro has sent them, often during the airing of an episode. A consequence of sending real-time messages is that the target audience for the blog is restricted to US viewers. Individuals watching *Heroes* on a catch-up service, through downloads or

from a different country do not receive Hiro's messages at the relevant point within the narrative. Alessandro Catania identifies that a dual audience forms in many single-world transmedia narratives, stating that 'viewers within one territory are frequently unable to explore these universes as fully as viewers in another territory' and that 'the broadcast schedule didn't synchronise with the timed release of narrative clues disseminated across multiple media.'[110] *Heroes* provides a different interactive experience for audience members who engage with the transmedia content simultaneously to those who engage with the transmedia texts after the episode has concluded, providing information that enhances the episode during the first viewing or afterwards during a rewatch.

Flexi-narratives use parallel stories in a similar way to serials. Episodes alternate between different characters and events, often foregrounding minor characters to introduce subplots that take place at the same time as the primary plotlines. Parallel stories are infrequent in *Supernatural's* narrative as the episodes and transmedia texts focus on Sam and Dean. Instead, *Supernatural's* parallel stories are more common in narrative arc or stunt episodes, splitting up Sam

[110] Alessandro Catania, "Serial Narrative Exports: US Television Drama in Europe," in *Storytelling in the Media Convergence Age: Exploring Screen Narratives,* ed. Roberta Pearson and Anthony N. Smith, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 206.

and Dean to achieve separate goals. *Supernatural's* narrative is illustrative of a specific type of parallel world in the form of a spinoff. *Supernatural* inspired two spinoffs: the webseries *Ghostfacers* as well as the backdoor pilot episode 'Bloodlines' (Season 9, Episode 20), although the spinoff was not picked up for a full series. Scolari states that parallel stories have the potential to 'evolve and transform into spin-offs'[111] in which events that are independent from the main narrative take place within the same fictional world. Characters cross over, settings are revisited and fantasy elements obey the same rules as the television narrative, contributing towards a consistent world.

Spinoffs are typically single-world transmedia texts that are produced by the same company as the television narrative and are structured to create a consistent world and temporality with the television episodes. *Ghostfacers* and 'Bloodlines' are officially produced by The CW, although both spinoffs share different temporal relationships with the television episodes. *Ghostfacers* foregrounds Ed and Harry, two minor characters who appear in a handful of television episodes. The webseries was made available through The CW's website and was promoted within *Supernatural* itself, including the pilot-esque Season Three episode 'Ghostfacers' that

[111] Scolari, 598.

introduces the Ghostfacers' team and their dynamics as well as the episode 'It's a Terrible Life' (Season 4, Episode 19) which contains a brief cutaway to Ed and Harry. The webseries premiered to coincide with the final episodes of *Supernatural's* fifth season, although no references are made to Sam and Dean's attempts to prevent the apocalypse. Within a single-world transmedia narrative, Elizabeth Evans states that 'the various production schedules are aligned to ensure a coherent temporality across the various platforms involved,'[112] which can be applied to the relationship between *Ghostfacers* and *Supernatural. Ghostfacers* was released at the same time that *Supernatural's* five-season arc came to an end. Creator Eric Kripke stepped down as showrunner after Season Five and thus the finale concluded various plotlines and character developments. Through introducing a parallel story that occurs when *Supernatural's* narrative arc is heightened and resolved, *Ghostfacers* reminds the audience that *Supernatural's* world exists beyond Sam and Dean's experiences.

Single-world transmedia texts are released to coincide with specific points in a narrative's chronology. *Ghostfacers* was released to expand upon *Supernatural's* world at the end of Season Five and 'Bloodlines' was introduced within an episode of the television narrative itself. Evans states that 'an

[112] Evans, 36.

authorial coherence and creation of [a transmedia text] from the point of commissioning is necessary in order for a transmedia element to appear within the appropriate moment of an episode's lifespan'[113] and as such 'Bloodlines' is incorporated into *Supernatural's* narrative not only to identify the events' chronological position but also to reinforce the fact that the proposed spinoff would exist within Sam and Dean's world. 'Bloodlines' is the twentieth episode of Season Nine, introducing protagonist Ennis and the complex monster hierarchy in Chicago to familiarise the audience with the main world components should the pilot have been picked up for a series. The episode uses a monster-of-the-week format and aired prior to three narrative arc episodes at the end of the season, making 'Bloodlines' the final standalone episode of Season Nine. However, the combination of new world components, self-contained events and the fact that the pilot had minimal promotion within *Supernatural's* narrative prior to the episode's air date makes 'Bloodlines' more typical of a possible-world transmedia text. 'Bloodlines' enhances *Supernatural's* timeframe and chronology, although the events do not impact upon the television episodes' progression and are never referred to again in the narrative.

[113] Evans, 38.

Extending Temporality

Television narratives are constructed from an ever-changing chronology of events. A majority of new episodes incorporate events that are chronologically positioned after the previous episode, forming a timeframe that develops week by week. However, episodes can extend the timeframe in the opposite direction, revealing events that occurred prior to the pilot episode. Characters may reminisce about earlier moments in their lives, either through dialogue or flashback scenes that visualise the characters' memories. *Heroes* and *Supernatural* use fantasy elements as a further means to incorporate previous events, using time travel to send characters and objects from the current timeframe into the past. *Heroes'* Hiro is an evolved human who can time travel and *Supernatural's* angels have the ability to send humans back and forth through time. Although episodes that incorporate time travel can appear to be prequels (or sequels) to the main narrative, the events often form alternate timelines or possible futures that can be influenced by the current timeframe, instead of creating a sequential series of events.

An aim of many transmedia texts is to explore the history of the narrative's world, settings and characters, revealing elements of a character's childhood or the events that set the narrative's plotlines into motion. Serials and flexi-narratives

use prequels in the same way, relating events that occur pre-series. However, the consistency of the events with the narrative's timeframe creates a further distinction between single-world and possible-world transmedia narratives. Frida Beckman states 'in serial television, it is especially important that the viewer comprehend the logic of diegetic time across its various temporal-formal disruptions'[114] as each episode and transmedia text constructs a chronological sequence of events. Prequels are chronologically positioned prior to the pilot episode's events and thus the events that take place should create a consistent timeframe, as well as a consistent world.

Backstory or the origins of an event are incorporated into the television episodes if the information is relevant to the plot, particularly within a serial that uses interconnected plotlines. Supplementary information is usually revealed through prequels, bringing further detail to the narrative's world without affecting the television episodes. Matthew Freeman identifies that prequels can develop characters in different ways, such as 'build[ing] characters across media, expanding on traits such as appearance, backstory, and

[114] Frida Beckman, "Freaks of Time: Reevaluating Memory and Identity through Daniel Knauf's *Carnivàle*," in *Time in Television Narrative: Exploring Temporality in Twenty-First-Century Programming,* ed. Melissa Ames, (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2012), 181.

interactions with other characters.'[115] New events are added to characters' arcs, information is revealed about characters' earlier lives and the origins of characters' relationships are explored, providing details and development that are not revealed in the television episodes.

Single-world transmedia narratives release prequels at specific moments to create a consistent chronology with the main narrative. Each time a new character is added to *Heroes'* narrative, a webcomic is released that provides a snapshot of the character's earlier life and an Assignment Tracker profile is published that details the character's biography. Other characters are further developed through transmedia texts that foreground a character's backstory, such as the iStories *The Private* and *The Agent* which provide backstory for minor character Rachel Mills. Rachel's first appearance in *Heroes'* narrative is in the episode 'Dual' before she is then further developed in the webseries *The Recruit* which functions as a continuation of the episode's events. The iStories depict events that occur prior to Rachel's initial integration into the television episodes and transmedia texts through foregrounding her time spent in the army. Anthony N. Smith states that some narratives have 'a single chronological

[115] Freeman, 29.

sequence of fictional events'[116] in which the character's experiences can be placed in a specific, chronological order. Rachel's life is documented across media but the events can be ordered chronologically, beginning with her time as a soldier as explored in *The Private* to her experiences working for Primatech in *The Agent.*

The primary aim of *Heroes'* prequels is to develop characters (which I discuss in detail in Chapter Four). Rachel is developed across each episode and transmedia text, providing backstory and additional layers to her character. However, *Heroes'* prequels have a secondary purpose of enabling the narrative's world to be explored at an earlier moment in time. *The Private* documents Rachel's time as a soldier in the Iraq war, not only revealing information about Rachel's experiences as a soldier but also informing the audience of significant events that took place in *Heroes'* history. The primary drama in *The Private* is generated by wars and human conflict as opposed to the fantasy elements which take a more secondary role within the iStory. Rachel's first encounter with evolved humans occurs towards the end of the iStory, conforming to Stacey Abbott's claim that many telefantasy narratives focus on a 'character-driven plot' instead of including 'overt science-

[116] Smith, A. N., 58.

fiction/fantasy credentials.'[117] *The Private* explores *Heroes'* world at a specific point in the narrative's history, revealing the events and conflicts that shaped the narrative prior to the pilot episode.

Prequels contribute towards world-building and character-building through exploring earlier moments in the narrative's timeframe. Marie-Laure Ryan defines a prequel as a transmedia text that 'extends the scope of the original storyworld by adding more existents to it' and 'prolong[s] the time covered by the original story,'[118] extending the main narrative's timeframe through introducing new world components and events. However, prequels share different relationships with the main narrative depending on whether a single-world or possible-world transmedia narrative is formed. A prequel's relationship with the television episodes can be consistent like a flashback or implied like the multiple timelines that arise from time travel. Single-world transmedia narratives use prequels that have a similar narrative function to flashbacks. The transmedia texts create a consistent temporality with the main narrative, incorporating earlier events that do not impact upon plotlines or character development in the television episodes. A possible-world

[117] Abbott, 2008, 17.
[118] Ryan, 2013, 366.

transmedia narrative's prequels are reminiscent of the effect that time travel has on a narrative, introducing contradictory information that forms alternate timelines of events.

Possible-world transmedia narratives use implied continuity to connect prequels to the main narrative. Anthony N. Smith identifies the importance of using familiar world components to signify that a transmedia text is part of a wider narrative, stating that 'writers utilise the storyworld ingredients of props, settings and character dialogue to discreetly establish connections between their story arcs and earlier storylines.'[119] Many prequels use younger versions of familiar characters, informing the audience that the transmedia texts are connected to the main narrative at the same time as incorporating new, earlier events. *Supernatural's* prequels in Table 2.4 focus on events that take place in Sam and Dean's childhood, such as the immediate aftermath of their mother's death, their father's descent into a need for revenge and the brothers' early experiences hunting supernatural creatures. The themes are closely mirrored by another of *Supernatural's* prequels, Jo's blog, in which secondary character Jo Harvelle posts about her father's death and hunting experiences before she is introduced to *Supernatural* in Season Two.

[119] Smith, A. N., 58.

Transmedia Text	Timeframe of Transmedia Text's Events	Length of Time Between Episode's Airdate and Transmedia Text's Release
John Winchester's Journal	2/11/1983 – 28/10/2005	4 years
Origins	1989	2 years
Rising Son	1990	3 years
Beginning's End	2000	5 years
The Dogs of Edinburgh	2002	7 years
Jo's blog	1993-2006	None - Immediate

Table 2.4. Supernatural's prequels.

The events that take place within a prequel should contribute towards a sequential series of events or, in the case of possible-world transmedia narratives, incorporate events that do not intrude upon the main narrative's timeframe. M. J. Clarke identifies that prequels can avoid creating an alternate timeline of events by 'crafting a plot that affiliated networked characters without direct interaction [which] serves a clever way of utilizing all the license's characters (the most valued property in the deal) in what is a very consequential prequel without tampering with on-air story information.'[120] One of *Supernatural's* transmedia texts, *John Winchester's Journal,* exemplifies Clarke's claim as the novel not only provides backstory for the Winchesters but also bridges the narrative

[120] M. J. Clarke, 60.

ellipsis between the events that take place within the pilot episode, thus attempting to avoid 'tampering with on-air story information.'[121] *Supernatural's* pilot episode opens with the death of the Winchesters' mother, Mary, who is killed in front of a baby Sam. The narrative then jumps forward in time to 2005 where Sam is a twenty-two-year-old college student. *John Winchester's Journal* is structured as a succession of journal entries written by John, documenting his emotions and reactions in the immediate aftermath of his wife's death. The first journal entry takes place on November 2nd 1983, immediately after Mary is killed, and the final journal entry is written on October 28th 2005, three days before the events of the pilot episode.

Although the timeframe of *John Winchester's Journal* fits neatly with *Supernatural's* chronology, the events that take place are inconsistent with the television narrative, creating an alternate timeline and thus a possible-world. Paolo Bertetti states that some narratives feature 'temporal discontinuity' in which 'the different narratives are not placed in chronological order,'[122] specifically within telefantasy narratives where time travel and alternate realities can create multiple timelines. *Supernatural's* prequels explore the origins of *Supernatural's*

[121] M. J. Clarke, 60.
[122] Bertetti, 9.

first narrative arc in which the brothers search for the demon that killed their mother. However, the transmedia texts contradict episodes of the television narrative in which Sam and Dean travel back in time to revisit their childhood. The Winchesters' car provides an example. In the television narrative, the car is purchased by John after Dean travels back in time and recommends he should buy it. However, in the *Origins* graphic novel, John purchases the car after Mary's death, several years after he bought it in the main narrative. Such contradictions are common in possible-world transmedia texts, creating a transmedia text that is disruptive of the television episodes.

A television narrative's timeframe can be further extended through transmedia texts that revisit the fictional world after the main narrative has concluded. Television narratives feature complex temporalities as each new episode enhances or extends the narrative in some way, particularly within the telefantasy genre in which time travel can set the narrative during a specific point in the future. Monika Fludernik identifies the specific complexity of a telefantasy narrative's temporality, stating that 'empirical time is conceived of as a continuum with each point of reference yielding a view both back into the past and forward into the future.'[123] Both *Heroes* and

[123] Fludernik, 611.

Supernatural incorporate episodes that are set in the future, sending characters through time to meet their future selves or to witness how the world appears after an apocalyptic event. However, such episodes depict possible futures as the characters are able to change the future upon their return to the current timeframe.

Sequels have a different narrative function to time travel, revealing events that take place after the main narrative instead of depicting a possible future. *Heroes* is the only one of my case studies to be extended by sequels as the television narrative's final episode aired in 2010 after four seasons. At the time of writing, *Supernatural* has been renewed for a twelfth season, making it more complicated for a sequel to be successfully integrated into the narrative whilst new episodes continue to air. Sequels can be connected to the main narrative in different ways, with one of the most commonly used connections consisting of transmedia texts that feature familiar characters. Jason Scott states that a sequel can 'continu[e] the story of the protagonist(s) [through] a second generation of related characters,'[124] maintaining familiarity with the main narrative at the same time as incorporating new

[124] Jason Scott, "The Character-Orientated Franchise: Promotion and Exploitation of Pre-Sold Characters in American Film, 1913–1950," *Scope: An Online Journal of Film and Television Studies* (November 2009), 3.

world components. Main characters from the original narrative can appear in the sequel as older versions of their former selves, shifting the narrative's focus to their children or grandchildren. Other sequels share a weaker relationship with the main narrative to focus on a new group of characters or a new setting in the narrative's world, enabling the narrative to be further explored without relying upon the original narrative's plotlines and characters.

Heroes' transmedia texts use a combination of new and familiar elements. The 2015 television sequel, *Heroes Reborn,* features older versions of several main characters from the original narrative as well as a whole new generation of evolved humans. The combination of familiar and new characters gave *Reborn* a dual target audience, appealing to viewers who had watched the original narrative at the same time as incorporating a new, independent story. *Heroes Reborn* aired for thirteen episodes, using a serialised structure similar to the original television narrative. The passage of time between *Heroes* and *Reborn* enables a new story to form that is separate from the original narrative, although of course there are references to events that took place within *Heroes'* four seasons. Table 2.5 lists the other sequels to *Heroes'* narrative, as *Reborn* is supplemented by a graphic novel series, two first person games, five novels and two webseries that introduce

new characters and bridge the narrative ellipses between *Heroes'* conclusion and *Reborn's* first episode.

Transmedia Text	Timeframe of Transmedia Text's Events	Length of Time Between Episode's Airdate and Transmedia Text's Release
Heroes	December 2008	Two years' prior
Dark Matters webseries	June 2014	One year later
Reborn	2014/2015	None - immediate
Series of five novels	2014 (with some flashbacks)	Immediate (with some flashbacks)
Multiple webcomic issues	7 issues - origin stories of new characters	Several years
Enigma	2008	Several years
Gemini	2008 – 2014	Several years

***Table 2.5. Heroes'* sequels.**

The webseries *Dark Matters* has a complex temporal relationship with the main narrative as it was the only transmedia text to be released during the five-year hiatus between *Heroes* and *Reborn.* The other transmedia texts were released after *Reborn* first aired, detailing events that bridge narrative ellipses and provide backstory for the characters. *Dark Matters* was released in July 2015, two months prior to *Heroes'* first episodes, and relates events that take place one year after the Season Four finale. The webseries focuses on Phoebe and her brother Quentin who are later integrated into *Reborn's* television episodes. Single-world transmedia texts

use a 'syntagmatic axis of narrative'[125] which Robert C. Allen applies to narratives that depict a chronological sequence of events. *Dark Matters* takes place after *Heroes'* final episode but before *Reborn's* pilot, creating a consistent chronology across media. The webseries begins with Phoebe watching a video of Claire Bennet that is taken from *Heroes'* final episode, 'Brave New World,' in which Claire reveals her regenerative ability to the world, thus providing a direct reference to the original narrative. Phoebe wants to replicate Claire's actions and expose her own ability, creating thematic similarities between both characters. *Dark Matters* combines familiar themes with new world components, conforming to Allen's 'paradigmatic axis of narrative' in which 'distinct storylines are not tied to a chronology of depicted events, but are instead dependent on an inferred thematic parallelism.'[126] Although there is a temporal relationship between *Heroes* and *Reborn,* both television narratives are also connected thematically. *Dark Matters'* syntagmatic axis of narrative bridges the narrative ellipsis for audience members who are familiar with the original narrative and the paradigmatic axis of narrative alludes to *Heroes'* primary themes for audience members who

[125] Allen, 69-71.
[126] Allen, 69-71.

are unfamiliar with *Heroes'* events, enabling *Dark Matters* to function as a sequel to *Heroes* and a prequel to *Reborn.*

Sequels are primarily aimed at audience members who are familiar with the original narrative, enabling characters, settings or events to be further developed. However, not all sequels are single-world transmedia texts. *Heroes'* sequels are officially-produced by NBC or written by writers from the television narrative, contributing towards a consistent world across media. Other television narratives are extended by sequels that are possible-world transmedia texts, depicting events that are implied to take place after the television narrative's resolution. *Supernatural* is not extended by a sequel but *The X-Files* (1993-2002), one of *Supernatural's* predecessors and influences, is extended by sequels that revisit the original characters at a later point in their lives. Although Robert Neupert states that some narratives were 'not originally made with a sequel inscribed in their story,'[127] the telefantasy genre, as well as television narratives with extensive casts, creates various possibilities for a sequel to explore, revisiting the narrative's world at a future point in time. *The X-Files'* narrative includes officially-produced films and a television sequel alongside independently-written

[127] Robert Neupert, *The End: Narration and Closure in the Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 108.

graphic novels, creating a narrative that combines single-world and possible-world transmedia texts. Many of the transmedia texts incorporate consistent events that take place after the main narrative's timeframe, extending the narrative beyond the original episodes. Possible-world transmedia texts relate future events that are implied to take place within the television narrative's world, using implied continuity to imagine how the world might look.

Transmedia texts enhance and extend the narrative without disrupting the television narrative's timeframe, bridging narrative ellipses, foregrounding simultaneous events and incorporating prequels and sequels that do not impact upon the episodes' chronology. A narrative's temporality is often complex, particularly within the telefantasy genre in which time travel and magic can disrupt the natural progression of time. Narratives can share a close relationship with real time such as flexi-narratives' episodes which often coincide with real time events and single-world transmedia texts which are released to complement specific points in the television narrative. However, it is the consistency of the timeframe and chronology that determines whether a single-world or possible-world transmedia narrative is formed, creating a sequential series of chronological events or an alternate timeline that deviates from the television episodes.

Chapter Four
Character Arcs: Elaboration & Development

Characters play various roles in a narrative. A character can visit new settings to further explore the narrative's world, experience the events that move plotlines forward and personify themes specific to a particular episode. A character's actions, interactions and aspirations can influence plotlines whilst the plot can impact upon the character, stimulating development that brings new layers to the character's identity or shifts the character into a different narrative role. M. J. Clarke identifies the differences between character development in episodic and serialised television narratives, stating that episodic series feature 'classically "whole" and clearly motivated characters' and serials 'more frequently use inconsistent characters whose open nature and unclear psychology allow for the near constant rearticulation of motivation.'[128] Serials incorporate complex characters whom develop frequently and often change roles within the narrative. Episodic series, and indeed the standalone episodes of flexi-narratives, feature characters that perform basic narrative functions, restricting any significant development to the narrative arc episodes.

[128] Clarke, 188.

Characters are enhanced through the revelation of backstory. Prequels, flashbacks and time travel integrate elements of characters' earlier lives, providing new layers to their biography and identity. Characters are further developed through new events that occur within the narrative's timeframe, impacting upon their motivations, relationships and goals. Not all character development is relevant to the main narrative and is thus incorporated through transmedia storytelling, enabling characters to be developed without disrupting the television plotlines. Supplementary information can be revealed and minor characters can become the protagonists of their transmedia texts, developing the characters beyond the television episodes.

A character's development and identity influences whether a single-world or possible-world transmedia narrative is formed. Characters are often extended from one transmedia text to another, which Paolo Bertetti attributes to the fact that characters 'lose contact with the text (and the author) to become living objects in the mind of the reader.'[129] Familiar characters connect the transmedia texts to the main narrative, contributing towards a consistent world across media. However, the character's development and identity can become consistent or implied. Single-world transmedia

[129] Bertetti, 2.

narratives create consistent identities for each character, maintaining the same relationships, biography and motivations across each transmedia text. Possible-world transmedia texts attribute biographical details that are contradicted by other transmedia texts or television episodes, forming implied identities that change throughout the narrative.

Character Elaboration

Characters are a specific age when they are first introduced to a television narrative but have been constructed from years of events, relationships and conflicts, regardless of whether the biographical details are incorporated into the television episodes. Backstory is revealed if the information is relevant to plot or character development and is thus incorporated into the narrative at specific moments, such as a flashback to a character's first love if the former lover is introduced as a new character. The aim of backstory is to provide additional layers to a character, often taking characters with specific narrative roles beyond their two-dimensional stereotype. Jason Mittell argues that backstory does not constitute character development and instead is an example of 'character elaboration' in which 'characters rarely shift significantly, but our understanding of them often does.'[130] Backstory does not

[130] Mittell, 136.

change the character within the current timeframe but instead provides layers to the character that can alter the audience's perception, generating sympathy for a villain who has a troubled past or accounting for a character's specific behaviours.

Backstory is often revealed through flashbacks, momentarily transferring the narrative's temporality to an earlier period in time. A flashback can be as simple as two characters sharing dialogue about a specific event or can constitute a scene that is set entirely in the past, visually depicting the memory that the characters are thinking about. Telefantasy narratives can incorporate backstory in a different way, using time travel to transfer a character into the past. Time travel enables characters to witness specific events first hand, such as watching the moment their parents first meet, but can impact upon the current timeframe if the character does more than observe the past (think the butterfly effect). Stefan Rank and Paolo Petta identify backstory as the 'individual and joint histories that motivate [a character's] behaviours,'[131] accounting for a character's aims and motivations within the narrative. Minor characters benefit from character elaboration as their secondary role in the narrative means that less is known about their pasts. Within a serial,

[131] Rank and Petta, 145.

minor characters are elaborated upon if the information is relevant to the plot, with a common example concerning character elaboration that takes place before a character's death. Minor characters are often killed off to further the plot or to develop another character through grief or guilt, thus incorporating backstory to create a greater emotional response from the main characters and from the audience.

Heroes reveals minor characters' backstory during episodes that foreground the characters' importance to the plot, such as their death episode, or when a new minor character is introduced. However, not all minor characters have backstory that is relevant to the main narrative. Transmedia storytelling enables character backstory to be introduced without affecting the main narrative, providing supplementary information that enhances the characters. In a single-world transmedia narrative, it is vital that the character maintains a consistent identity across each transmedia text, possessing biographical details, behaviours and aspirations that are not contradicted by other transmedia texts. Paolo Bertetti argues that characters 'based on a single course of events' like those depicted in a serial (or indeed a single-world transmedia narrative) depict 'no variations in the fictional

identity of the character,'[132] such as the characters' actions, motivations and morals.

Heroes' transmedia texts incorporate backstory frequently, foregrounding minor characters from the television narrative in a way that maintains a consistent identity. *Heroes'* primary medium for character elaboration is the webcomics. Each character (main, minor and new) has his or her own origins story, often released to coincide with a television episode in which the character has an important role. The final two webcomics, 'From the Files of Primatech, Part 7' and 'From the Files of Primatech, Part 8' offer snapshots into several events that occurred pre-series, including the childhood experiences of minor character Elle Bishop. Elle has an antagonistic role in the television narrative, firstly as an agent for The Company who monitor evolved humans and secondly as arch-villain Sylar's love interest. Elle appears in twelve episodes between 'Fight or Flight' (Season 2, Episode 5) up until her death in 'The Eclipse Part Two' (Season 3, Episode 11), repeatedly alternating her role between helping the protagonists and working against them. Elle is foregrounded in the webcomics beyond her role in the television narrative as Marie-Laure Ryan states that many transmedia texts turn 'secondary characters into the heroes of the story they

[132] Bertetti, 6-9.

experience.'[133] Elle's backstory enables the audience to learn more about her character and what motivates her actions in the television narrative, portraying her as an innocent child who is experimented upon by her scientist father.

Elle's traumatic childhood is first alluded to in 'Cautionary Tales' (Season 2, Episode 9) in which she tells Noah Bennet about her father's experiments, although she has minimal recollection of what happened. The memories are visually explored through the webcomics in which the audience witness Elle's experiences and the relationship she had with her father, creating a consistent identity across the narrative that accounts for Elle's antagonistic behaviours and motivations in the television narrative. The medium further enhances Elle's character as Ryan states that written media 'allow a much more complete description of ideas, of emotions, and of the scientific background of the series than does the TV series, because the readers can parse the information at their own pace.'[134] The webcomics foreground the characters' points of view, including access into their thoughts which are presented in thought bubbles, achieving a first person narration that does not occur in the television narrative (of course, other than Matt Parkman's mind-reading ability). Through depicting

[133] Ryan, 2013, 366.
[134] Ryan, 2013, 373-4.

Elle as a child and using a first person narration, the experiments conducted by her father become more horrific.

A transmedia text's temporality further contributes towards creating characters with consistent identities. Jonathan Nichols-Pethick states that 'from the perspective of production, these backstories, while secondary to the flow of the plots of each episode, are established early on for the sake of continuity in the writing,'[135] making it common for the most integral elements of a character's backstory to be revealed close to the character's introduction to the narrative, be it within a television episode or a transmedia text. Single-world transmedia narratives release transmedia texts to coincide with a specific moment in the television narrative's chronology, such as extending a subplot or theme from a particular episode.

Character backstory is revealed in transmedia texts that are chronological positioned before the pilot episode on the narrative's timeframe. However, the events are often connected to a specific moment in the current timeframe where the character reflects on past experiences. Jason Mittell identifies the use of backstory in episodic narratives, stating that the episodes 'use intermittent flashbacks or moments of recounting to fill in crucial backstory contexts to elaborate a

[135] Nichols-Pethick, 137.

character.'[136] Minor characters' backstory is usually incorporated into an episode if the information is relevant to the narrative arc or the self-contained plotline of a standalone episode. *Supernatural* predominantly uses backstory to elaborate upon a minor character in the build up to their death, with various characters such as Kevin and Charlie foregrounded in episodes that reveal their former lives and relationships to bring additional layers to the characters before they are killed off.

Supernatural's transmedia texts reveal minor characters' backstory infrequently, primarily because a majority of the narrative focuses on Sam and Dean. The graphic novels provide an exception as the protagonist of *Origins, Rising Son* and *Beginning's End* is the Winchesters' father, John, whose early hunting experiences and relationship with his sons provides the basis for the plot. The graphic novels foreground a character who is integral to *Supernatural's* narrative arc at the same time as providing backstory for Sam and Dean through exploring their childhoods. John's decision to avenge his wife's death and train himself and his sons as hunters is the primary motivating factor throughout Season One and Two, creating a link between the graphic novels' events and the main narrative.

[136] Mittell, 136.

Possible-world transmedia texts create less consistent character identities, using non-specific release dates which often reveal backstory that does not correspond with the television narrative. Inconsistent biographies and identities are formed, creating characters that are implied versions of their television counterparts. Bertetti identifies that changes in a character's actions, motivations and beliefs can 'identify a tension between coherence and incoherence, or between continuity and discontinuity.'[137] Change in *Supernatural's* continuity are reflected in the transmedia texts listed in Table 3.1, not only because televisual characters have been depicted in another medium, but because the texts are produced independently and contain content that is inconsistent with the television narrative.

Transmedia Text	Description	Character(s)
Origins	Graphic novel	Sam and Dean's father, John
Rising Son	Graphic novel	Sam and Dean's father, John
Beginning's End	Graphic novel	Sam and Dean's father, John
John Winchester's Journal	Novel	Sam and Dean's father, John
Jo's Blog	Blog	Dean's love interest, Jo

Table 3.1. Minor characters' backstory in Supernatural's transmedia texts.

[137] Bertetti, 6.

The graphic novels *Origins, Rising Son* and *Beginning's End* were released several years after the pilot episode as a means to explore Sam, Dean and their father John's life before the television narrative began. However, John was killed off in the Season Two premier, long before the first of the graphic novels were published. Nancy Holder states that tie-in novels attempt to replicate 'the reality the creators/producers are trying to present'[138] as many possible-world transmedia texts are written to have a specific chronological position in the wider narrative, even if discrepancies form in regards to the content. As a result, each graphic novel functions as a standalone story with self-contained events, despite the inferences to John's on-screen character arc.

The graphic novels are set at different points within Sam and Dean's childhood and document John's progression from a doting father to a hunter of supernatural creatures. *Origins* depicts John as seeking support from relatives in the immediate aftermath of Mary's death whereas the television narrative reveals that John often left Sam and Dean in motels whilst he went in search of his wife's killer. Each transmedia text highlights an emotive side to John who appears as a harsh, battle-hardened character in the television narrative.

[138] Nancy Holder, "Writing Tie-ins," in *The Cult TV Book,* ed. Stacey Abbott, (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2010), 191.

The version of events that take place in *Origins, Rising Son* and *Beginning's End* are each writer's interpretation of the source text, creating different versions of John's identity. Rhonda Wilcox identifies that there are 'degrees of canonicity'[139] and that some transmedia texts can be considered as more canonical than others. Possible-world transmedia texts (and indeed fanfiction) are often the result of a writer's reaction to a specific question raised within the television narrative, such as the origins of a specific minor character, resulting in the writer incorporating their own ideas and interpretations, regardless of whether these events are consistent with the television narrative. Although John is killed in Season Two (signalling the end of this character arc), there are various later episodes in which Sam and Dean experience flashbacks to their childhood. The telefantasy genre enables John's character to be further explored as a handful of episodes use time travel to transport Sam and Dean into John's past. The transmedia texts relate a different version of events to the television narrative and were released during the same timeframe as the time travel episodes, making the distinction between John's character arc more evident. A television narrative's temporality means that the world and

[139] Rhonda V. Wilcox, "The Aesthetics of Cult Television," in *The Cult TV Book,* ed. Stacey Abbott, (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2010), 39.

characters are ever-changing, making it complicated for independent writers to produce a text that fits in neatly with the wider narrative.

Origins creates an implied backstory for John as well as for Sam and Dean, thus enabling the main characters' backstory to be alluded to. As illustrated by *Origins,* character backstory is not just limited to minor characters as many episodes and transmedia texts focus on the main characters' pasts. The main characters' biographies, relationships and previous experiences are often revealed across multiple episodes of the television narrative, either within episodes that are set in the past or through a succession of flashbacks. *Heroes* integrates backstory often, including flashbacks and time travel to enhance each member of the ensemble cast. Mittell identifies that serials 'gradually reveal aspects of a character over time'[140] as no character is introduced fully-developed and explored. Serials develop plotlines and characters in each episode and thus backstory is only revealed if the information is relevant to the narrative. Elements of a character's past are often omitted from the narrative to create suspense and to raise questions that can be explored later in

[140] Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 136.

the narrative when the information becomes relevant to the plot.

Main characters' motivations within the narrative can be accounted for through their backstory. A loss of a loved one can affect a character's aspirations or can turn a protagonist into an antagonist whom seeks revenge. Nichols-Pethick states that many narratives build characters gradually by 'slowing down the speed with which personal information is disclosed, then, is firstly a matter of crafting a more realistic sense of human relationship development,'[141] revealing elements of a character's backstory piece by piece. Backstory may be revealed within the episodes or transmedia texts, creating a biography that is constructed over time. The aim of many transmedia texts is to incorporate information that can be pieced together which Henry Jenkins identifies as a key component of transmedia storytelling. Jenkins states that transmedia storytelling 'recognizing our pleasure in backstory, in-jokes, foreshadowing, and encrypted information,'[142] forming a jigsaw-like structure that requires the audience to move between transmedia texts. Questions about a character's past may be raised in a specific episode and not answered until several episodes later. Other information is

[141] Nichols-Pethick, 137.
[142] Jenkins, 2007, xvii.

only accessible through the transmedia texts, encouraging the audience to engage with a different medium.

A balance between important and supplementary information is evident in all transmedia texts. Transmedia storytelling provides additional information to audience members who engage with the transmedia texts without disrupting plotlines or character development for the audience members who only watch the television episodes. Integration of backstory is achieved in a way that complements the television narrative, often coinciding with a specific episode. Rachel Ballon notes that 'information must be presented in a natural progression and as an integral part of the story,'[143] creating a sequential series of events that can be positioned chronologically on the character's arc. Roberta Pearson supports this claim, stating that backstory is often incorporated through flashbacks that contain 'past events [that] are directly tied to present events.'[144] The main characters in *Heroes'* first season have their own origins webcomics that detail their everyday life, childhood or the development of their superhuman abilities, maintaining a consistent identity with the television narrative.

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[143] Rachel Ballon, *Breathing Life into Your Characters* (Cincinnati: Writers Digest Books, 2003), 29.
[144] Roberta Pearson, *Reading Lost: Perspectives on a Hit Television Show* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2010), 149.

Consistent identities are more complex for main characters as the characters have a more prominent role in the television narrative. Main characters appear in more episodes and often have backstory revealed within the main narrative, thus making it likely for contradictions to arise in the transmedia texts. Single-world transmedia narratives reduce the likelihood for inconsistent characters not only because they are produced by a team of individuals who are closely involved with the television narrative, but also by reducing the references made to the television narrative. The transmedia texts become snapshots of a character's former life, using implied continuity which Anthony N. Smith states 'neither threaten[s] the apparent narrative independence of the story arc nor alert[s] new and/or casual consumers to their ignorance of prior events.'[145] An example is provided by the Bennet family whose backstory is repeatedly revealed in the transmedia texts. Backstory that is relevant to the television narrative's plot is incorporated into the television episodes, such as Claire's adoption and her relationship with her adoptive father, Noah. Transmedia storytelling enables supplementary information to be revealed, such as snapshots of the Bennet family's average day or further detail on Claire's friendship with Zach. Although each webcomic adds events

[145] Smith, A. N., 58.

onto Claire's character arc, the information is not essential for an understanding of Claire's character.

Flexi-narratives predominantly reveal main characters' backstory in the narrative arc episodes in which the focus is on character development and the wider plot, temporarily removing the characters from their narrative functions. Butler identifies the differences between backstory in serialised and episodic television narratives, stating that 'serial characters carry a specific, significant past – much more so than do the series characters.'[146] Butler's distinctions between a serial and series' use of backstory can be applied to the different episodes of a flexi-narrative. Within the narrative arc episodes, backstory is often relevant to the plot and character development is foregrounded. The standalone episodes are more episodic, making the inclusion of backstory infrequent unless the information is relevant to the episode's plotlines or themes.

Possible-world transmedia texts often attribute inconsistent biographical details to main characters. As previously mentioned, Sam and Dean's backstory is repeatedly revealed through the characters' dialogue, flashbacks or time travel in the television episodes, creating a sequential series of events that took place pre-series. *Supernatural's* possible-

[146] Butler, 44.

world transmedia texts depict inconsistencies with the television episodes, forming an alternate timeline of events. However, if the transmedia texts feature versions of the characters and depict an alternate timeline of events, then the transmedia text's role in the narrative initially appears redundant. Anthony N. Smith states that transmedia texts which have an implied continuity with the main narrative 'address dedicated readers familiar with [...] events, rewarding them for their investment of time and money.'[147] The transmedia texts incorporate events that are implied to have taken place, creating self-contained stories that place familiar characters in new adventures. The transmedia texts in Table 3.2 are distanced from the main narrative in some way (such as through a different point of view, setting or timeframe) in an attempt to avoid inconsistencies with the television episodes.

Transmedia Text	Medium	Character(s)
Origins	Graphic novel	Sam and Dean
Rising Son	Graphic novel	Sam and Dean
Beginning's End	Graphic novel	Sam and Dean
Dogs of Edinburgh	Graphic novel	Sam and Dean
John Winchester's Journal	Novel	Sam and Dean

Table 3.2. Main characters' backstory in Supernatural's transmedia texts.

[147] Smith, A. N., 58.

Supernatural's narrative is extended by five transmedia texts that incorporate backstory for Sam and Dean. Each transmedia text is a possible-world and depicts an inconsistent biography and identity for both characters. Such inconsistencies are best illustrated by Sam's trip to Scotland in *The Dogs of Edinburgh.* The graphic novel is set during Sam's time at university and features a standalone story, set in a new setting with a new supernatural creature, typical of any monster-of-the-week episode of the television narrative. However, the transmedia text also foregrounds the strained relationship between Sam and his brother who have not spoken for a couple of years prior to the graphic novel's events. In the television narrative, Sam has no contact with his family for four years but *The Dogs of Edinburgh* contradicts the television narrative's chronology by placing Sam and Dean in a story together. Furthermore, in the television narrative, Sam left for university to get away from hunting supernatural creatures whilst the graphic novel features Sam investigating a paranormal occurrence. Paolo Bertetti attributes such contradictions to the fact that 'in many character-oriented franchises in which different texts, moving from one media to another, attribute profiles and life histories to the characters that contrast with one another.'[148] The transmedia text omits

[148] Bertetti, 4.

the plotline of Sam and Dean spending time apart (a plotline that is central to the television narrative and is brought up frequently by Dean to illustrate Sam's abandonment of his family) as well as ignoring Sam's motivating factor for leaving his family to lead a normal life.

Transferring a world component from one medium to another can result in other inconsistencies. Bertetti states that a character's appearance can change between one transmedia text and another because of 'graphic realization, in the passage from one medium to another, or due to the interpretation by different actors.'[149] *The Dogs of Edinburgh* uses illustrations and text to depict actor Jared Padalecki's interpretation of the television character. However, visual inconsistencies are to be expected when a character is extended from one medium. Instead, Sam's inconsistent identity is a consequence of changes to his 'fictional identity,' which Bertetti states can create 'a time line ascribed to a character in a medium [that] is not the same in another medium.'[150] Sam never discusses his trip to Scotland at any point in the television narrative, nor his encounter with the characters and supernatural creatures he meets. However, most importantly, Sam's identity is inconsistent with the two

[149] Bertetti, 10.
[150] Bertetti, 6.

events that define his relationships and aspirations throughout each of *Supernatural's* seasons. Sam desires a normal life away from hunting supernatural creatures and was willing to abandon his family to do so. The graphic novel imagines Sam in a new, unfamiliar situation, creating a story that has no relation to the television episodes but provides audience members with a new adventure for a familiar character. It is the television narrative that brings consistent layers to Sam's identity, forming the foundation for a character who can be further developed within the current timeframe.

Character Development

Backstory reveals the past experiences that account for characters' behaviours, relationships and motivations, forming a series of events that lead from the characters' birth to their first appearance in the television narrative. However, character development does not end when the television narrative begins. Rachel Ballon states 'when you introduce a character for the first time, what your audience sees is the tip of the iceberg' and that 'as you slowly reveal information about your character's past your audience will grow to care about and identify with that character.'[151] Various events take place within the narrative's timeframe that stimulate character

[151] Ballon, 26.

development, each of which can impact upon a character's behaviours and motivations. Transmedia storytelling can add depth to characters through unveiling layers, relationships and emotions that take the character beyond their typical narrative function, enabling characters to develop without disrupting the primary plotlines.

Within a serial such as *Heroes,* the aim of each episode is to develop plotlines and characters, requiring significant character development to take place within the television narrative. *Heroes'* television narrative alternates between different characters' points of view, including the minor characters. Greg Smith argues that 'the prime-time serial cannot take care of all of its narrative business by staying solely within the tightly bound world of core characters' as many episodes foreground 'the more targeted rhetoric provided by guest stars.'[152] Each character experiences development between the season premier and finale, including the minor characters who can become integrated within specific plotlines or can develop from minor characters to more recurring roles. Pearson and Messenger Davies argue that 'all fictional characters are partially defined by other characters with whom they interact'[153] and as such characters can

[152] Greg Smith, 102.
[153] Pearson and Messenger Davies, 156.

stimulate development for other characters. The interactions between a minor character and a major character, the relationships that form between the characters and the decisions that the characters make can change the way a character develops and send plotlines in different directions.

Single-world transmedia narratives construct a character's identity from the events that occur in each episode and transmedia text. Paolo Bertetti states that transmedia characters are formed by 'the whole of texts that contribute to their definition'[154] and not just from a single text or medium, creating characters that can develop and change throughout the narrative. Although each episode contributes towards the characters' identities, Ryan states that 'the description comes piece by piece, and it leaves many gaps to be filled in'[155] which can be addressed by the transmedia texts. Developing characters through transmedia storytelling brings layers to minor characters whose secondary role within the television narrative means that the characters develop less frequently than the protagonists. Table 3.3 documents the transmedia texts which are used to develop minor characters from *Heroes* television episodes.

[154] Bertetti, 2.
[155] Ryan, 2013, 368.

Transmedia Text	Medium	Character(s)
The Recruit	Webseries	Primatech agent, Rachel Mills
Nowhere Man	Webseries	Reformed villain, Eric Doyle
Slow Burn	Webseries	The O'Sullivan family
The Agent	iStory	Primatech agent, Rachel Mills
The Civilian	iStory	Primatech agent, Rachel Mills
Slow Burn	iStory	The O'Sullivan family
Puppet Master	iStory	Reformed villain, Eric Doyle

Table 3.3. Transmedia texts that develop Heroes' minor characters.

Many of *Heroes'* transmedia texts feature minor characters from the television narrative as the protagonists. *Heroes* uses various transmedia texts to develop minor characters, such as the iStory and accompanying webseries *Slow Burn* which relate the relationships and interactions of a new family added in *Heroes'* fourth season and the webseries *Nowhere Man* which reveals what happened to one-time villain Eric Doyle after his departure from the television narrative. Within a single-world transmedia narrative, it is important that characters maintain consistent identities across each episode and transmedia text, particularly if the characters return to the television narrative in a later episode. Single-world transmedia narratives often develop minor characters through bridging a narrative ellipsis between two episodes or events. The transmedia text relates the character's experiences during this period of time with any character development referenced

upon the character's return to the main narrative. Ajit K. Maan identifies a character's identity as 'permanent defining characteristics'[156] such as the traits, behaviours and biographies that create a consistent character, each of which must remain consistent across media. The events and development that a character experiences within the transmedia texts can be chronologically positioned in the narrative's timeframe and on the character's arc without affecting the television episodes.

The aim of many transmedia texts is to answer specific questions raised but not answered within the television narrative, such as further exploring minor characters whom little is known about in the television episodes. Ryan identifies that some transmedia texts use secondary characters to relate events that 'take place at the same time as the original story,'[157] developing minor characters into more prominent narrative roles. Rachel Mills once again provides an illustrative example in *Heroes'* narrative as two webseries document Rachel's experiences beyond the television episodes. *The Agent* focuses on Rachel's time working for main character Nathan Petrelli whilst *The Civilian* depicts Rachel's attempts to live a normal life after the explosion at Pinehearst. Jenkins

[156] Maan, 5.
[157] Ryan, 2013, 369.

states that transmedia storytelling 'provid[es] missing scenes which round out the action depicted on the screen,'[158] bridging the narrative ellipses between a character's appearances in the television narrative and adding new events onto a character's arc. *Heroes'* transmedia texts foreground Rachel as a protagonist and shift her narrative role frequently, using the titles of the transmedia texts to identify the new role she has been attributed. *The Private* functions as Rachel's origins story, before the current timeframe depicts Rachel as an agent, recruit and civilian. Once Rachel develops from a minor character to a protagonist, other elements of her character, such as her relationships and her new life, are incorporated into the narrative, accounting for her motivations and behaviours within the television episodes.

Possible-world transmedia narratives do not construct consistent timeframes or chronologies, often relating stories that take place at the same time as the main narrative but from a different setting or point of view. Carlos Scolari refers to such transmedia texts as 'parallel worlds'[159] which depict simultaneous events that do not interfere with the main narrative's plotlines. *Supernatural* incorporates several episodes, predominantly narrative arc episodes, in which

[158] Jenkins, 2007.
[159] Scolari, 598.

minor characters are foregrounded in subplots that occur at the same time as the events experienced by Sam and Dean. Many of the minor characters have their own character arcs, such as Castiel and Crowley who initially had small roles before they developed to become main characters in later seasons.

Supernatural's transmedia texts use parallel stories to develop minor characters, forming transmedia texts that are distanced from the television episodes. *Supernatural* uses both single-world and possible-world transmedia texts to develop minor characters, including the officially-produced webseries *Ghostfacers* and the independently written tie-in novels. The events that occur within the transmedia texts in Table 3.4 are implied to take place within *Supernatural's* world, but by focusing on minor characters, the events do not interfere with *Supernatural's* plotlines and development.

Transmedia Text	Medium	Character(s)
Bobby Singer's Guide to Hunting	Novel	Protagonists' surrogate father, Bobby
Ghostfacers	Webseries	Ed and Harry, who appeared in two episodes

Table 3.4. Transmedia texts that develop Supernatural's minor characters.

Possible-world transmedia texts such as *Bobby Singer's Guide to Hunting* feature character development that is never referred to in the television narrative, such as Bobby's

imminent memory loss and the diary he writes in order to preserve his memories. However, even the single-world transmedia text *Ghostfacers* is referred to implicitly in *Supernatural,* despite the fact that Ed and Harry have experienced significant character development since their last appearance in the television narrative. Neil Perryman argues that a transmedia narrative 'allows passive audiences to simply sit back and enjoy the parent show in blissful isolation, while at the same time it gives active, migratory and participatory audiences opportunities to engage in a rich, and extended multimedia experience.'[160] Indeed, *Ghostfacers'* events are only implicitly alluded to in the television narrative although their character development is foregrounded, informing the audience that Ed and Harry have experienced challenges and conflicts since their last appearance in the television narrative.

Ghostfacers foregrounds Ed and Harry as the main characters, taking them beyond their minor role in the television narrative. The webseries follows Ed and Harry as the lead members of a paranormal investigation team, alongside a handful of other characters, such as Ed's sister and Harry's love interest, Maggie. The characters' relationships and interactions are explored alongside their motivations and

[160] Perryman, 37.

reactions to the events they experience, providing the characters with the conflicts and challenges associated with their new role as protagonists. The defining moment of *Ghostfacers* is when a member of the team, Ambyr, is injured during the investigation, affecting Ed and Harry's confidence and riddling both characters with guilt. *Ghostfacers'* events are briefly referred to in the episode '#thinman' in which Ed tells Harry that they need to continue investigating paranormal occurrences even though the rest of the group have disbanded. No reasons are given as to why the group split up, as the events are implied for the audience members who did not watch *Ghostfacers,* although the audience members who did engage with the transmedia texts will be aware of the events that took place. Anthony N. Smith's notion of implied continuity is once again integral to the audience's understanding of the narrative as *Ghostfacers* 'unobtrusively connects new story arcs to the larger structure of the overarching storyworld.'[161] Ed and Harry's loss of confidence due to Ambyr's injury and the disbandment of the group is consistent with the characters' behaviours upon their return to the television narrative in Season Nine. However, only audience members who engage with the transmedia texts will be aware of the specific events that took place beyond the

[161] Smith, A. N., 58.

television episodes' plotlines as Ed and Harry's character development is not integral to *Supernatural's* narrative.

Developing main characters through transmedia storytelling is more complex. Minor characters can be developed through parallel worlds that take place at the same time as the television episodes or through bridging the narrative ellipsis between the character's appearances in two specific episodes. Main characters appear in almost every episode and integral character development is incorporated into the main narrative, making it more complex to develop a main character through transmedia storytelling. Main characters can be developed in various ways, such as through their interactions and relationships with other characters, their reactions to events or their shifting motivations and goals. Character development often affects the plotlines as Jeremy G. Butler states that within a serial, 'the multiplicity of protagonists permits a variety of simultaneous storylines,'[162] especially if the development is ingrained within the narrative arc. *Heroes* has a large cast of characters that is continuously added to or reduced, introducing new evolved humans who become ingrained in the plotlines and killing off major characters to further the plot.

[162] Butler, 42.

The transmedia texts listed in Table 3.5 foreground specific main characters from the television narrative, including new events that the character experiences beyond the television episodes. *Heroes* frequently alternates between the perspectives of its ensemble cast which Sharon Marie Ross states is because 'viewers can take great pleasure in the ability to take up with ease multiple points of identification, and serial stories tend to promote exactly this.'[163] With any single-world transmedia narrative, the aim is to create a consistent world, timeline and character across each transmedia text. *Heroes'* transmedia text achieves consistency in different ways, such as adapting the novel *Saving Charlie* into a television episode and creating the webseries *Hard Knox* from various deleted scenes from the episode 'Villains' (Season 3, Episode 8).

Transmedia Text	Medium	Character(s)
Hard Knox	Webseries	Matt Parkman
Saving Charlie	Novel	Hiro Nakamora
Faction Zero	iStory	Claire Bennet
Hiro's Blog	Blog	Hiro Nakamora
Heroes Reborn	Television	Several, including Noah Bennet and Hiro.

Table 3.5. Transmedia texts that develop Heroes' main characters.

[163] Sharon Marie Ross, *Beyond the Box: Television and the Internet* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 130.

Heroes' creates consistent characters across the narrative through incorporating minimal development within the transmedia texts. Aside from *Saving Charlie* (whose events contain so much character development for Hiro that the plotline is adapted into a television episode), each transmedia text places the character in a new situation that has little impact upon his or her development. Claire appears no differently in the television narrative before and after the events of *Faction Zero* in a similar way to Matt in *Hard Knox.* That is not to say that the events are independent from the wider narrative. Each transmedia text has a specific chronological position, often extending a plotline from a television episode or bridging a narrative ellipsis. However, minimal character development takes place within the transmedia text, ensuring that the character maintains a consistent identity throughout the television episodes where a majority of the audience engage with the narrative. Rachel Ballon states 'when you begin your story, your characters should already have inner conflicts to resolve'[164] and thus the character has the same motivations in the transmedia text as the television narrative, aside from the story-specific motivations that stimulate the transmedia text's plot.

[164] Ballon, 26.

Through reducing significant character development for main characters, the transmedia texts maintain consistent character identities across the narrative. If a character experienced a significant event within a transmedia text, the consequential character development would only make sense to audience members who engage with the transmedia texts, thus disrupting the television narrative for the wider audience. An example is provided by the novel *Saving Charlie* which is the only transmedia text to incorporate significant character development for a primary cast member. Hiro falls in love with Charlie in the episode 'Seven Minutes to Midnight' but she is killed, prompting Hiro to travel back in time to save her. *Saving Charlie* explores the subplot in detail three years prior to 'Once Upon a Time in Texas' which incorporates the subplot into a television episode. The subplot develops Hiro as he falls in love, although the development is not integral to Season One's plotlines and thus is not incorporated into the television narrative until Season Four. Instead, the subplot is foregrounded through transmedia storytelling as Pearson and Messenger Davies argue that 'the writer's choice of alter ego and actions within the alternate possible-world seems to give clues to the usually repressed aspects of the character.'[165] Author Aury Wallington foregrounds Hiro's emotions as the

[165] Pearson and Messenger Davies, 168.

motivating factor for the novel, incorporating new events that develop Hiro's character but do not impact upon the television narrative's plotlines.

Single-world transmedia narratives incorporate character development that has a specific chronological position in the narrative's timeframe. However, possible-world transmedia narratives create an implied timeline, often depicting standalone stories. Marc Dolan states that within episodic narratives, 'routine viewers watched in the secure knowledge that, whenever something drastic happened to a regular character [...] it would be reversed by the end of the episode and the characters would end up in the same general situation that they began in.'[166] Dolan's claim is applicable to *Supernatural's* standalone episodes and transmedia texts which feature self-contained character development that does not impact upon the wider narrative. Character development takes place in the narrative arc episodes, reducing main characters to their primary narrative roles for the remainder of the episodes.

Character development within possible-world transmedia narratives is confined within each transmedia text. Pearson and Messenger Davies identify the fact that 'television series' characters can undergo a degree of psychological trauma but

[166] Dolan, 33.

must return at some point to relative stability in order to perform their central narrative functions'[167] which is also applicable to character development in possible-world transmedia texts. In a similar way to single-world transmedia texts, significant character development occurs in the television episodes as this is where a majority of the audience engages with the narrative. Many of *Supernatural's* transmedia texts feature Sam and Dean as the protagonists, relating new experiences that develop the characters in some way. However, the development is self-contained within the transmedia texts and restores the characters to their narrative functions by the end of the story. Sam is returned to the smart, logical younger brother and Dean becomes the humorous, protective older brother to reduce the likelihood for inconsistencies to form with the television episodes, even if the transmedia text reverses the characters' roles within the story.

Possible-world transmedia texts maintain consistent identities in a similar way to *Heroes'* transmedia texts, ensuring that no significant events are experienced away from the television narrative. A majority of *Supernatural's* transmedia texts achieve a distance with the main narrative through adopting the monster-of-the-week format in which the

[167] Pearson and Messenger Davies, 160.

events are self-contained and not alluded to elsewhere in the narrative. However, when transmedia texts incorporate information that is connected to the narrative arc, inconsistencies can arise with the character's identity due to contradictory television episodes. One example is the novel *One Year Gone* which is set during the year-long narrative ellipsis between Season Five and Season Six, in which Dean believes Sam is dead and tries to forge a normal life with former love Lisa and her son Ben. Hillary Robson states that a common aim of fanfiction is to add 'depth to the characters or to character development'[168] which can also be applied to the aim of many possible-world transmedia texts. *One Year Gone* imagines how Dean coped with his brother's death, the development of his relationship with Lisa and how he became a surrogate father to Ben by the time of the Season Six premier, 'Exile on Main Street' (Season 6, Episode 1). Although the episode makes references to Dean's time living a normal life, such as his newfound love for golf or his strained relationship with his neighbour, the novel's events are never mentioned, forming a transmedia text that imagines Dean's experiences through an implied connection to the television episodes.

[168] Hillary Robson, "Television and the Cult Audience: A Primer," in *The Cult TV Book,* ed. Stacey Abbott (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2010), 217.

Although *One Year Gone* is a possible-world transmedia text written by independent writers in a different medium to the television narrative, Sam and Dean are still recognisable as Sam and Dean. Paolo Bertetti states that 'in a character-centered franchise, transmedial fictional coherency and consistency are less central than the recognizability of the character and his identity. However, the character's features, in passing from one text to another and from one medium to another, are not always univocally defined.'[169] Their physical appearance, behaviour and narrative functions are highly similar to their television counterparts, in spite of the inevitable inconsistencies that arise from possible-world transmedia texts. As a result, audience members can engage with additional stories involving Sam and Dean, particularly during the hiatus between seasons in which many transmedia texts are released. *One Year Gone* was released four days after the Season Six premiere, incorporating a story with a chronological position of over a year earlier. Despite the inconsistencies with the characters' identities and the duration of time between the transmedia text's release and its position with the narrative's chronology, *One Year Gone* provides the audience with a new story during the four-month hiatus before

[169] Bertetti, 15.

the Season Seven premiere, even if the character development is implied and self-contained.

Transmedia storytelling enhances characters through backstory and develops characters through new events. Supplementary biographical details and layers are added to main characters' arcs whilst the narrative ellipses between minor characters' appearances in the television episodes are bridged with new conflicts and events, foregrounding their experiences beyond the television narrative. Serials and single-world transmedia narratives enhance and develop characters frequently, creating a consistent identity throughout the wider narrative. Possible-worlds are highly reminiscent of a flexi-narratives standalone events, relating character development that is not referred to elsewhere within the narrative. An implied identity is often formed, constructing a character arc that differs from the character's experiences in the main narrative.

Conclusion

Television narratives strive to gain and maintain audience interest. A simple click of the remote takes the audience elsewhere, often to a rival narrative on a rival channel. In an era where television narratives are easily accessible on portable devices and a seemingly infinite supply of new content is produced by television networks, subscription channels and online media, television storytelling can struggle to find originality. Experimenting with plot, character and genre can bring innovation to a familiar format. However, the narrative's structure can also be experimented with, both within the television episodes and beyond.

Transmedia storytelling enables television narratives to stand out amidst a competitive crowd. Almost all television narratives are extended by some form of transmedia storytelling, ranging from an official website that provides supplementary information on the main characters to an interconnected narrative that develops plotlines and characters across media. Jason Mittell identifies the increasing popularity of transmedia storytelling, stating that 'as television series have become more complex in their narrative strategies, television itself has expanded its scope across a number of screens and platforms, complicating notions of medium specificity at the very same time that television seems to have

established a clearer sense of distinct narrative form.'[170] Television narratives can be extended by one additional medium or be developed across various different media, expanding the plotlines beyond the television screen. Consistent or implied worlds, temporalities and character development are formed, influenced by the interconnectivity of the transmedia texts with the main narrative. No two television narratives use transmedia storytelling in the same way.

This thesis has used *Heroes* and *Supernatural* to exemplify television narrative structures and the different forms of transmedia storytelling. The episodes and transmedia texts are structured in different ways, identifying distinctions between serials and flexi-narratives as well as between single-world and possible-world transmedia texts. However, *Heroes* and *Supernatural* provide an additional commentary on transmedia storytelling as both of my case studies incorporate transmedia narratives into the episodes' plotlines.

In *Heroes'* pilot episode, Micah Sanders reads an edition of a comic book series called *9th Wonders!* The comics appear frequently throughout *Heroes'* four seasons and are written by another of the main characters, Isaac Mendez, who turns his precognitions into plotlines. Each issue of *9th Wonders!*

[170] Mittell, 2015, 15.

incorporates the same characters and develops interconnected plotlines, similarly to the complex structure of a television serial. As *Heroes'* episodes progress, it is revealed that *9th Wonders!* is not confined to a single medium. Isaac produces various paintings that provide snapshots of the main characters and capture poignant scenes from the comics' plotlines. The paintings provide further detail on specific moments from the comic books, creating a single-world transmedia narrative that Isaac extends across two media.

Supernatural's fourth season introduces a character called Chuck who writes a series of books about two demon-hunting brothers who closely resemble the Winchesters. Sam and Dean encounter the books' fanbase in several of *Supernatural's* episodes, discovering that the books have provided inspiration for a fanfiction writer named Becky who creates various works based on the books and attends fan conventions where people dress up as the characters. In Season Ten, Sam and Dean attend a high school musical production that is based on the books, adapting Chuck's plotlines and characters into songs. The fanfiction and musical adapt Chuck's scenes and characters at the same time as introducing new plotlines and world components that are specific to the writers' interpretations, forming a possible-world transmedia narrative inspired by Chuck's storyworld.

Heroes and *Supernatural* use Isaac and Chuck's work to provide a self-referential commentary on the television narrative, its plotlines and the characters. Isaac is an evolved human who experiences premonitions about *Heroes'* other characters, such as Hiro, Claire and Sylar, and turns these premonitions into plotlines for *9th Wonders!,* creating a series of comics that mirror the television narrative's plotlines. Isaac's comics and paintings create a consistent world across media, similarly to *Heroes'* narrative which extends the television narrative beyond a single medium. The books in *Supernatural* have the same function as *9th Wonders!.* Chuck is a prophet (later revealed to be God) who turns his visions of Sam and Dean into the plotlines for his books. Each book has the same title as one of *Supernatural's* episodes and tells a story that is identical to the episodes' plotlines. The books enable *Supernatural's* writers to comment on the fanfiction, conventions and other works inspired by the television narrative, acknowledging the fact that *Supernatural* is extended by both possible-world transmedia texts and fan-produced works.

Single-world and possible-world transmedia narratives are created through a combination of authorship, medium specific properties and narrative extension. However, the aim of this thesis has been to present narrative structure as a continuum

and not as a binary of two opposites. Television narratives are not simply serialised or episodic. Serials incorporate episodic features, such as self-contained subplots or new characters that perform basic narrative functions. Series are often structured through a combination of standalone episodes and ongoing narrative arcs, some of which are subtly ingrained within the narrative whereas others are foregrounded in narrative arc episodes. Transmedia storytelling illustrates a similar structural continuum, forming single-world or possible-world transmedia texts depending on the relationship between each transmedia text and the main narrative. All transmedia narratives are structured differently, illustrating varying levels of serialised and episodic structures.

Of course, different transmedia television narratives exemplify different levels of interconnectivity. Some single-world transmedia narratives are more serialised than others, such as *Lost* which is renowned for creating a complex, interconnected single-world transmedia narrative. Hidden clues are embedded throughout *Lost's* episodes and transmedia texts that could be used to unlock a different part of the narrative, encouraging the audience to engage with each medium. Other single-world transmedia narratives are less serialised, such as *The Walking Dead* (2010-Present) in which the television episodes are extended by transmedia

texts that predominantly focus on minor characters or reveal elements of the characters' backstories, thus incorporating minimal information that is relevant to the current timeframe. The structural continuum further suggests that serials are not exclusively extended by single-world transmedia texts, as illustrated by *Heroes* and the tie-in novel *Saving Charlie.* A further example is provided by *24* which is extended by several tie-in novels that are independently produced by Titan Books. The novels depict Jack Bauer in new, self-contained situations that are never referred to in the television narrative or other transmedia texts, instead imagining Jack's experiences beyond the television episodes.

Possible-world transmedia narratives are not always entirely episodic. The final episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) aired in 2003 after seven seasons. However, creator Joss Whedon went on to produce four comic book series, entitled *Buffy the Vampire Slayer Season Eight* through to the final series called *Buffy the Vampire Slayer Season Eleven.* The comic book series functioned as later seasons of the television narrative but used a different medium to continue the story. Flexi-narratives often incorporate single-world transmedia texts, as demonstrated by *Supernatural* and its officially-produced webseries, *Ghostfacers.* Indeed, many of the television narratives that air on The CW are supplemented

by their own spinoff series, such as *The Vampire Diaries* and *The Originals* (2013-Present) or *Arrow* (2012-Present) and *The Flash* (2014-Present), each of which also has an official website that provides additional information on the characters and the narrative's world.

Despite these instances, I argue that the more serialised that the episodes are, the more likely that a single-world transmedia narrative will be formed. Transmedia flexi-narratives such as *Supernatural* best illustrate a television narrative's structural continuum. The television episodes combine serialised and episodic plotlines and character development that are further extended by single-world and possible-world transmedia texts, confirming my initial theory that flexi-narratives are supplemented by a combination of different transmedia texts. Although a continuum is evident in transmedia television narratives' structures, this thesis identifies a clear relationship between television narrative structure and the transmedia narrative formed. Serialised television narratives are more likely to use single-world transmedia narratives, using consistent world components, temporality and character development to create an interconnected structure. Episodic narratives are typically extended by possible-world transmedia texts that share an implied continuity with the narrative's world, chronology and

characters, forming self-contained stories that are based on the main narrative.

Transmedia storytelling is not limited to the telefantasy genre. *24* is a serialised action thriller that focuses on Agent Jack Bauer. The television episodes are extended by various media, including television spinoffs, tie-in novels and a videogame, developing the plotlines through single-world and possible-world transmedia texts. *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013) is another serialised drama set in a world that closely resembles reality. The episodes focus on Walter White, a chemistry teacher, and Jesse Pinkman, his former student, as they descend into a life of crime and drugs. *Breaking Bad* is extended by transmedia texts, including a television spinoff and a webcomic series. Transmedia flexi-narratives are not limited to the telefantasy genre. The *CSI* procedural drama franchise began with *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (2010-2015) has since been extended by different television spinoffs, comics, books and games.

Transmedia storytelling is often associated with television narratives in the telefantasy genres of science-fiction, fantasy and horror. Colin Harvey identifies that that 'the genres of fantasy and science fiction […] have become the dominant modes of transmedia storytelling' which is because the genres 'boast generic characteristics which make them particularly

suited to storytelling across different media platforms,'[171] such as the detailed worlds and complex fantasy elements that have the potential to be further explored beyond the television episodes. However, this thesis does not take a genre-specific approach. Although *Heroes* and *Supernatural* are both telefantasy narratives, I have discussed alternate realities, fantasy elements and time travel in regards to narrative extension, providing further distinctions between the structure of a single-world and possible-world transmedia narrative. Fantasy elements are extended in the same way as other world components, such as settings and characters, whilst I have focused on the temporalities of flashbacks, prequels and sequels as well as time travel. I previously stated that my findings produce a framework that can be applied to other transmedia television narratives to determine whether a single-world or possible-world transmedia narrative is formed. An area for further research would be to exemplify this claim, providing a comparative analysis of transmedia television narratives in a different genre.

A final example of transmedia storytelling is provided by an analysis of *Supernatural's* Season Five episode, 'Changing Channels.' In the episode, the archangel Gabriel sends Sam and Dean into TV land in an attempt to teach them about

[171] Harvey, 1.

fulfilling their narrative roles. Season Five's narrative arc concerns an impending apocalypse in which Sam and Dean are prophesised to take opposing sides, prompting Gabriel to inform the brothers how easy it is for them to perform specific narrative functions. Sam and Dean are initially transported to a medical drama where they must play the roles of doctors. When Dean is shot, Sam must adapt to the new environment and fulfil his narrative role as a doctor in order to save his brother's life. Gabriel then forces the brothers to play contestants on a Japanese game show, agents in a procedural cop show and parodies of themselves in a sitcom. The brothers must adapt to each genre in a similar way to how world components, temporality and characters are moved across media in a transmedia text. The brothers experience visual and behavioural changes in each medium but are still recognisable as Sam and Dean, similarly to narrative extension in single-world and possible-world transmedia texts.

'Changing Channels' combines serialised and episodic features, depicting a succession of self-contained stories that contribute towards the narrative arc. Sam and Dean are familiar world components that link each self-contained story to the main narrative and encounter various character and settings that are specific to each genre. The episode's temporality is structured through serialised and episodic

events, combining self-contained stories with a consistent narrative arc. Character development is also incorporated as each genre presents Sam and Dean in different narrative roles, restoring the characters to their basic narrative functions when they move to the next genre. Transmedia storytelling is similar, creating a consistent or implied world, temporality and character across each medium.

Television narratives will continue to evolve to accommodate further advancements in technology and changes in audience behaviour. New modes of storytelling will inevitably be introduced, moving television even further away from the traditional television screen. However, for many transmedia television narratives, it is the television episodes that provide the main source of content. The episodes are where the primary plotlines and character development take place, and where a majority of the audience engage with the narrative. Transmedia storytelling may extend the narrative in different directions, but the television narrative will always be home. In the words of Dean Winchester, 'Right now I wish I was back in a TV show.'

Appendices

Appendix A: *Heroes'* transmedia texts[172]

Year	Television	Webseries	Webcomics	Novels	*Heroes Evolutions*
2006	***Heroes*** **(4 seasons)**		**173 webcomic issues**		**Blogs, quizzes, maps, iStories etc.**
2007				***Saving Charlie***	
2008		**6 webseries**			
2009					
2010					
2011					
2012					
2013					
2014					
2015	***Reborn***	**2 webseries**	**9 webcomic issues**	**5 books**	**2 games**
2016					

[172] Accurate up to September 24th 2016.

Appendix B: *Supernatural's* transmedia texts[173]

<table>
<tr><th>Year</th><th>Television</th><th>Webseries</th><th>Graphic Novels</th><th>Novels</th><th>Official Website</th></tr>
<tr><td>2005</td><td rowspan="12">11 seasons</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td rowspan="2">Websites and character blogs</td></tr>
<tr><td>2006</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>2007</td><td></td><td rowspan="3">2 graphic novels</td><td rowspan="9">16 novels</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>2008</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>2009</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>2010</td><td>Ghostfacers</td><td rowspan="4">2 graphic novels</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>2011</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>2012</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>2013</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>2014</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>2015</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>2016</td><td></td><td></td><td>2 novels</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

[173] Accurate up to September 24th 2016.

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