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TRANSTEXTUALITY IN THE BATMAN FRANCHISE ON
THE EXAMPLE OF *GOTHAM*:
A NARRATOLOGICAL STUDY

MA thesis

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ABSTRACT

Given that 2019 marked the 80th anniversary of the creation of Batman, there exists an extensive body of text surrounding the character and his storyworld. However, prior academic study has been mainly concerned with the external discourses of the franchise, giving little thought to the narratives contained within. As the Batman franchise is an example of character-centric worldbuilding, a logical choice is to access this body of text through character analysis even when taking a narratological approach.

Additionally, since prior scholarly attention on the characters of the franchise has also mainly concentrated on Batman, there exists a persistent research gap when it comes to the study of other major characters in the franchise. Thus, this thesis concerns the representations of the Riddler and the Penguin in the television series *Gotham*, examining them from the point of view of transtextuality in order to determine how different texts in the Batman franchise might interact with one another to create an interconnected textual network.

In the introduction, the reason for choosing both the Batman franchise as well as *Gotham* and the two characters is explained. In the theoretical framework, the notions of transtextuality, franchising, worldbuilding, and characters are examined. In the empirical section, the analysis of the Riddler and the Penguin in *Gotham* is conducted with regards to three categories of transtextuality: architextuality, metatextuality, and hypertextuality. The conclusion of the thesis summarizes the findings as well as their implications with regards to narratological study of franchised media.

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INTRODUCTION

In a world where franchising has become as omnipresent as content creation itself, it is no surprise that most mass media is produced in the context of media franchises, which are vast bodies of textual material connected by the appearance of various intellectual properties (IPs) that have been licensed out to create new texts and generate revenue. Indeed, IPs in the film industry are generated and licensed with the purpose of dispersion into as many mediums as possible to generate maximal profit (Langford 2010: 207). However, it is readily apparent that this type of for-profit logic in the dispersion of IPs is the backbone of every other aspect of the entertainment industry as well: in the modern cultural and economic landscape, popular culture is inherently tied to the economy.

Since texts produced from the licensing of a corporate-owned IP are designed to generate as much profit as possible, it is imperative that new installations into the franchises resulting from this licensing produce innovative narratives with the IPs to reach new audiences and increase their consumer base. As Meehan (2015: 70) puts it, “corporate imperatives operate as the primary constraints shaping the narratives and iconography of the text as well as the manufacture and licensing of the intertextual materials necessary for a ‘mania’ to sweep the country.” It is no surprise then that franchising is inherently transmedial: as the copyright holder aims to maximize the reach and prevalence of an IP, it is licensed to as many producers as possible for the creation of content both in narrative mediums such as films, television series, video games, and print media, as well as in non-narrative forms such as licensed merchandise and various themed paraphernalia. These licensed IPs can take many forms: this thesis focuses on IPs in the form of copyrighted characters.

More specifically, this thesis concerns comic book characters, specifically those originating from the Batman franchise as it is one of the best-known and influential franchises in today's popular culture landscape. Indeed, the most recent estimates put the Batman franchise into the top fifteen highest-grossing franchises of all time, and its characters have been adapted into media as diverse as films, video games, radio shows, and theme park attractions, not to mention both licensed as well as unlicensed merchandise.

The basic storyline of the Batman franchise is widely known. The orphaned child of a wealthy family, Bruce Wayne has donned the iconic bat-themed disguise to battle crime on the streets of his native Gotham City under the name Batman for more than 80 years both in the medium of comics as well as outside of it. Aided and opposed by a menagerie of heroes and villains, the tale of the Batman is as rich and complex as that of mythical heroes from classical antiquity. Yet while it is unquestionable that Batman and his supporting characters, much like the heroes and villains of old, have become characters who transcend the borders of a single text and a single medium, there is a marked difference in the way that transfer occurs when comparing these characters. This difference in the potential for textual transfer comes from the presence (or absence) of copyright – and the constraints of copyright, one might assume, have also created a far more systematic kind of textual transfer than that occurring with characters in the public domain.

When speaking of the Batman franchise as a cultural landmark, to date, there have been 18 theatrically released films featuring characters from the Batman franchise¹ with

¹ In chronological order, these films are: *Batman* (1943), *Batman and Robin* (1949), *Batman* (1966), *Batman* (1989), *Batman Returns* (1992), *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm* (1993), *Batman Forever* (1995), *Batman & Robin* (1997), *Batman Begins* (2005), *The Dark Knight* (2008), *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012), *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016), *Suicide Squad* (2016), *The LEGO Batman Movie* (2017), *Justice League* (2017), *Teen Titans GO! to the Movies* (2018), *Joker* (2019), and *Birds of Prey and the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn* (2020). At the time of the writing of this thesis, two other films, respectively titled *The Batman* and *The Suicide Squad* are scheduled for theatrical release in 2021.

two others currently in the works². While several of these films have been studied in an academic context (cf Durand 2011; Ní Fhlainn 2011; Smith 2011; Brooker 2012; Sanna 2015; Joye & Van de Walle 2015; Winstead 2015; Hassoun 2017; Born 2017; Nilsson 2018), scholarly attention has mostly focused on the most popular texts in the franchise. When speaking of existing character analysis in Batman scholarship, the most popular subject is, of course, Batman himself. Additionally, some attention has also been awarded to the Joker (Ní Fhlainn 2011; Peaslee & Weiner 2015) as well as Catwoman, Harley Quinn, and Poison Ivy (Whaley 2011; Taylor 2017; Austin 2015; Barba & Perrin 2017). However, with a few exceptions (Bernardo 1994; Johnson 1995; Drennig 2010; Joye & Van de Walle 2015), little attention, if any, has been given to other members of Batman's rogues' gallery; indeed, the exceptions cited above are by no means extensive character studies but rather a paragraph or two within a larger text concerned with other matters. Furthermore, scholarly attention has primarily centered on studying the franchise's external discourses, such as fan culture and reception, with little regard to the narratives themselves – and yet, narratives are undoubtedly at the core of franchising. Moreover, it is curious that, aside from the film medium, little scholarly attention so far has focused on the long-form storytelling that occurs in several media within the Batman franchise.

Certainly, while it is obvious that film narratives are quite different from the narratives found in comics, there is one medium that can, if given enough time (and funding), reach a similar kind of abundance of material and narrative complexity as comic book storytelling: television. To date, there have been five major live-action television series³ that feature characters from the Batman franchise. Of these, perhaps the most appealing for the purposes of a narratological approach to franchising is *Gotham* (FOX

² It should be noted here, of course, that this number does not include direct-to-video animated films, of which there are more than 50 titles.

³ Namely *Batman* (1966-1968), *Birds of Prey* (2002), *Gotham* (2014-2019), *Titans* (2018–), *Pennyworth* (2019–), and *Batwoman* (2019–). As is the case with films in the Batman franchise, there is a significantly larger amount of animated television series.

2014-2019), the live-action television series depicting the events in Gotham City after the deaths of Thomas and Martha Wayne that will eventually lead to their son Bruce taking on the mantle of Batman. Spanning a period of approximately six or seven years, the series ends with a final episode set ten years after the conclusion of the main storyline, where the main characters appear in their ‘final form’ as the iconic heroes and villains that they are. Totalling at one hundred episodes, each approximately forty to fifty minutes long, and divided into five seasons, the series’ narrative is as sprawling as it is ambitious, tackling the origins of many, if not most, of Batman’s best-known foes and allies by incorporating elements from their existing origin stories as well as recontextualizing and modifying them to create new approaches to beloved characters.

Indeed, one of the key curiosities of the series is its unusual approach to the IPs of the Batman franchise and its twisting of the traditional narrative structures found in most Batman franchise texts dealing with the origins of Batman and associated characters. It is almost paradigmatic for Batman to take up arms first, thus inciting the appearance of his classic enemies, collectively known as Batman’s rogues’ gallery. *Gotham*, however, reverses this structure, portraying the rogues’ gallery as the inciting event for the appearance of Batman. Considering all this, then, it is perplexing that, to date, *Gotham* has yet to be the focus of academic study.

Moreover, in light of the fact that franchises such as that of Batman function in a way that is both self-referential as well as self-interactive (Brooker 2012; Meehan 2015), with connections between any given narratives, it is noteworthy that these connections have thus far been only described as either the “Batman textual matrix” (Brooker 2012: 132–133) and as a “complex web of cross-references” that “creates an intertext” (Meehan 2015: 70) with no attention thus far to how this matrix/web is structured and how it might affect the narrative of a given text in the Batman franchise. This type of analysis would be

most productive in the case of an installment of the Batman franchise that incorporates a significant number of connections to other texts in the franchise and does it in a more complex way than simple referencing, i.e. by narrativizing them. As might be expected, the television medium is particularly responsive to this, as television storytelling invites significantly more specificity and depth when viewed in comparison to feature-length films. This is indeed the primary reason for the choice of *Gotham* as the object of study for this thesis.

Of the various heroes and villains depicted in *Gotham*, of particular interest for this thesis are Oswald Cobblepot / The Penguin (portrayed by Robin Lord Taylor) and Edward Nygma / The Riddler (portrayed by Cory Michael Smith): while both are iconic figures in Batman's rogues' gallery, they are given a narrative focus and weight in *Gotham* that they have rarely been awarded elsewhere outside the comics medium, being the only two members of Batman's rogues' gallery to be featured as main characters throughout the series. This, as might be expected, results in a significant amount of characterization and a lot of material to be examined. Moreover, little academic attention has been awarded to these characters to date, even though the first appearance of the Penguin was in *Detective Comics* #58 (1941) and the first appearance of the Riddler in *Detective Comics* #140 (1948), and both have appeared in several live-action film iterations⁴, not to mention appearances in other media. This makes their absence from academic study very noticeable indeed, especially considering that they are present in most of the best-known and culturally impactful texts of the Batman franchise. This, in turn, informs the central question of this thesis: how does the depiction of the Penguin and the Riddler in *Gotham* interact with earlier texts in the Batman franchise? How much of this interaction is systematic and traceable?

⁴ Most notably in the *Batman* (1966) film, with Frank Gorshin and Burgess Meredith portraying the Riddler and the Penguin respectively. Additionally, the Penguin also appears in *Batman Returns* (1992), portrayed by Danny DeVito, and the Riddler in *Batman Forever* (1995), portrayed by Jim Carrey.

The study of such narrativized connections also requires a theory explaining how the transfer of textual elements might occur in practice. For this purpose, this thesis will utilize Genette's (1997) theory of transtextuality, focusing primarily on the categories of architextuality, metatextuality, and hypertextuality. The primary reason for choosing Genette for this purpose is that his theory is both thorough as well as methodically tried and true, which makes it perfect for a narratological study of franchised media – and especially texts as intricately layered as comics franchise installations at their best can be. As there do not appear to be any previous studies using this specific methodology, the primary challenge is developing a theoretical approach, particularly since the question of characters who transcend the borders of a single text appears to be practically unexamined so far from a narratological standpoint, aside from acknowledgments that such characters exist (e.g. Richardson 2010; Bertetti 2014; Pearson 2017; et al.).

The thesis consists of a theoretical chapter and an empirical chapter. In the theoretical chapter, the notion of transtextuality is examined, after which a discussion of franchised media follows, where the notions of worldbuilding as well as massive, serialized, collaborative fictions (MSCFs) are addressed. That is followed by a discussion of characters who transcend the borders of a single text. The theoretical chapter ends with a brief examination of the framework within which comics characters operate in order to continue into the empirical chapter. There, after establishing a baseline for both *Gotham* as a component of the Batman franchise as well as the characters of the Riddler and the Penguin, the depictions of the characters in *Gotham* are analyzed comparatively with other texts in the franchise with a focus on their architextual, metatextual, and hypertextual qualities. Respectively, the first section of the empirical chapter will examine the way the particular characters in *Gotham* relate to the general characters of the Riddler and the Penguin, the second section the narratives connected to the particular characters that can

be construed mainly as a commentary on the general characters as well as the types of storytelling in the Batman franchise, and the final section the specific narrativized connections between *Gotham* and other texts in the Batman franchise.

FRANCHISING TEXTS

This chapter concerns the notions of transtextuality and franchising. The thesis proceeds from a structuralist narratological framework, in the belief that it can help us fill gaps in the abstract theoretical discussions in transmedial storytelling research within narratology. Due to the limitations of space, the discussion will be restricted to debates within narratology without branching out into other disciplines that have in recent decades also taken an interest in transmediality and transtextuality. The first section of this chapter gives an overview of transtextuality and related concepts, while the second section addresses the notions of franchising, worldbuilding, and MSCFs. The third section of the chapter completes the discussion by addressing characters who transcend the borders of text with a particular focus on comics characters.

1.1. On transtextuality

Given that most scholars of popular culture and new media approach their subjects, which are often either parts of or entire media franchises, from a poststructuralist viewpoint (cf Brooker 2012; Lomax 2018) or from the viewpoint of cultural studies (cf Johnson 2013; Meehan 2015; Pearson 2017), the precise way the IPs are transferred across media and texts has received little attention so far. Contemporary transmedia studies within narratology appear to prefer the term ‘transfictionality’, which is defined as “the migration of fictional entities across different texts” (Ryan 2015: 3). As can be seen, transfictionality is thus distinct from intertextuality, which is broadly defined as the presence of one text in another (Prince 2003: 46). Moreover, intertext in the Genettian sense is a far narrower term and will be discussed later.

Transfictionality occurs via three distinct mechanisms (Ryan 2015: 3): “**expansion** (such as prequels and sequels), **modification** (such as changing the ending of a story and consequently the fate of characters), and the **transposition** of plot into a new setting, such as a Greek myth being transported into the modern world [emphases mine]”. However, for the purposes of complex narrative analysis, these terms could easily become overly reductive, as Ryan (*ibid*) notes as well. Undoubtedly, some types of transmediation and textual transfer can take more complex forms than a change of setting or a change of a given narrative’s ending. This thesis would propose that, in certain contexts, these changes can be systematic and would thus require rigorous analysis. For this purpose, Genette’s (1997) theory of transtextuality has been selected.

At this juncture, it should be noted that, in the context of this thesis, the word ‘diegesis’ is solely used as the translation of the French word *diégèse*, and is not to be confused with *diégésis*, which is narration itself (Prince 2003: 20). Correspondingly, Genette’s (1997: 295) definition of *diégèse* is “the world wherein [the] story occurs”: in this context, then, diegesis can be considered equivalent to ‘narrative world’ / ‘storyworld’, which Ryan (2014: para 9) defines as “a coherent, unified, ontologically full and materially existing geographical entity, even when it is a fictional world”. Subsequently, this thesis uses the term ‘diegetic’ in the meaning defined by Prince (2003: 20): “pertaining to or part of a given diegesis (*diégèse*)”.

1.1.1. Categories of transtextuality

According to Genette (1997: 1–5), there are five categories of transtextuality: architextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, and intertextuality. Of course, these categories are not mutually exclusive and can overlap (*ibid*: 7) depending on context.

Of the five, architextuality appears to be the most abstract. It can be viewed as the implicit features of a given text, such as its genre, which “guide and determine /.../ the reception of the work” (Genette 1997: 5). Indeed, while the architext primarily affects the reception of a text, it can also influence the text itself. For example, the expectations of the narrative in a film, such as character development, differ greatly from those set to the narrative of a television series and especially in serialized storytelling: characters inevitably become more complex, narratives more intricate, because the architext demands it. Thus, we might infer that the architext supplies a framework for a given text where the text either subverts or conforms to different kinds of existing conventions.

Paratextuality refers to the secondary information of a given text, among which Genette (1997: 3) lists titles, prefaces, forewords, notes, and book covers. The paratext provides information that is not essential to the interpretation of a given text but that nevertheless can have an effect on it: for example, the title of a film or novel will inevitably create certain expectations and opinions in the audience, as will complementary materials such as author interviews, editor annotations, and so on. However, since intention and opinion are of little significance for the purposes of this thesis, in this context paratextuality becomes a supplementary rather than mandatory aspect of the text.

The third category of transtextuality, metatextuality, manifests in a connection between two texts where one engages another critically, usually in the form of commentary (Genette 1997: 4) and, so it might be inferred, analytically. This critical engagement can be either explicit or implicit. As Genette (*ibid*) states, metatext “unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it /.../, in fact sometimes even without naming it”. From this, we can see that metatextuality presumes the existence of a minimum of two independent texts. This is not the case with architextuality, which presumes the existence of a textual base, nor with paratextuality,

which requires only one text. Additionally, metatextuality can be approached as either text-oriented or discourse-oriented, depending on its context.

The fourth category of transtextuality, intertext, is perhaps the narrowest and the most salient in its inclusion of a text into another text in Genette's (1997: 1) system. Defined as "a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts" (*ibid*: 2), instances of intertextuality are further categorized as quotations, allusions, and plagiarism. This division is achieved according to how literal and explicit the intertext is in relation to the source text. To these, Bouillaguet (1989: 496) adds a fourth subdivision, the reference, defining it as the inclusion of the name of an author or of a book. The common denominator of all these instances of intertextuality, however, appears to be that intertext does not transform or interpret a source text but simply incorporates it.

The fifth, hypertext, is perhaps the most text-centric category of the five and refers to the existence of two interconnected texts where one is at least partially derived from the other. In other words, hypertextuality is "any relationship uniting a text B /.../ to an earlier text A /.../ upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" wherein the former is known as 'hypotext' and the latter as 'hypertext' (Genette 1997: 5). Simply put, then, the term indicates the existence of a source text (hypotext) and a derivative text (hypertext). Since a hypertext invokes the connection to its hypotext not by commentary but rather by transformation, this transformation, in turn, can be either direct, i.e. transformation proper, or indirect, i.e. imitation (*ibid*: 7). In the context of this thesis, the more significant of these is the former, since it is easier to objectively recognize.

In terms of tracking textual transfer, hypertextuality is perhaps the most useful in practical narrative analysis as it affords the possibility of drawing clear links between texts, which can then be interpreted in a systematic manner. Of the other categories,

architextuality and metatextuality are similarly indicative of an underlying system⁵: thus, they should not be discounted. Thus, this thesis would propose that these three textual categories are integral to the study of textual transformation in franchises. In order to study these textual categories, however, first we must examine how Genette has described the systematic change that occurs during the creation of a hypertext.

1.1.2. Mechanisms of hypertextual transfer

Hypertextuality tends to occur with the help of different mechanisms of transfer that can be characterized as either stylistic or thematic with the caveat that the two are not mutually exclusive. Given that Genette's theory was developed to analyze literary texts and this thesis will analyze the transfer of textual elements not only across texts but also across media, the mechanisms that this thesis will go on to use in its empirical section have been selected primarily because of their thematic properties.

1.1.2.1. Transposition and transformation

Simply put, transposition has to do with "serious transformation" (Genette 1997: 212) and thus does not concern humor genres such as parody or caricature. Genette speaks of transposition in connection to translation, saying that the act of translation is "the most visible form of transposition" (*ibid*: 214). Considering this, it is not unreasonable to say that adaptations also fall under stylistic transposition as they transpose a hypotext into a hypertext in another medium.

In the case of thematic transformations, which lead the hypertext to change or recontextualize the meaning of the hypotext, Genette (1997: 294) makes a primary distinction between diegetic and pragmatic transposition: the latter modifies the events and

⁵ An argument could be made that intertextuality can also be systematic: however, since intertextuality in the Genettian sense mainly concerns explicit linking without transformation proper, it has been omitted from this thesis.

actions of the hypotext while the former introduces change into the diegesis, as the name might imply. Diegetic transposition further yields homodiegetic or heterodiegetic transformations, which concern details of the diegesis and whether these details remain the same when comparing the hypotext and hypertext (homodiegetic) or have been changed (heterodiegetic). To illustrate: a modern retelling of the *Odyssey* with the characters and plot being transposed into the 21st century would be a case of diegetic transposition that remains homodiegetic if, for example, the characters still bear their original names. However, it would become heterodiegetic if the characters bore different names.

Consequently, pragmatic transposition becomes necessary precisely because of heterodiegetic transformation as “the action of a hypotext is usually modified only *because* its diegesis has been transposed or *in order* to transform its message” (Genette 1997: 312): a particular form of this is proximization, which is the act of modernizing the hypotext into a hypertext that is “closer to its own audience (in temporal, geographic, or social terms)” (*ibid*: 303) – thus, for example, the musical *Hadestown* is a proximated hypertext of the mythological story of Orpheus and Eurydice because it recontextualizes the original narrative into an American industrialist setting. Similarly, the hypothetical modern retelling of the *Odyssey* in the 21st century would be a case of proximization.

1.1.2.2. Augmentation and reduction

Intertwined with the notions of transformation and transposition are augmentation and reduction. Simply put, augmentation is the addition of information into the diegesis and reduction the omission of information provided in the original diegesis (Genette 1997: 238; *ibid*: 254). Augmentation is further divisible into extension, expansion, and amplification (Genette 1997: 254–262). The first of these, extension, is a massive addition to the narrative transferred from the hypotext to the hypertext. The second, expansion, is a stylistic addition where the hypotext is lengthened into the hypertext without changing its

narrative, and the third, amplification, is characterized by the hypotext becoming a summary of its hypertext. Since expansion is medium-specific and requires a stylistic dimension rather than a thematic one, it becomes irrelevant in the context of this thesis.

Reduction, on the other hand, is divisible into excision, concision, and condensation (*ibid*: 238), the first two being direct reduction because they derive from the hypotext – in excision, a textual element of the hypotext is omitted entirely in the hypertext, and in concision, a textual element of the hypotext is shortened in the hypertext. Condensation, on the other hand, is indirect reduction because it does not need to directly transform the hypotext, generally appearing as a digest, a summary, or an abridgement.

Additionally, augmentation and reduction are not necessarily mutually exclusive: as a hypertext adds elements to its hypotext, it can just as easily suppress other elements. This process, in turn, results in a substitution of textual elements (Genette 1997: 269). For example, if a character present in the hypotext is absent from the hypertext but no change occurs in the narrative because of that absence, that character has been substituted.

1.1.2.3. Transmotivation and transvaluation

For the study of characters, the mechanisms of transmotivation and transvaluation are perhaps the best suited. The former of the two, transmotivation, is defined as the psychological transformation of a character transferred across texts (Genette 1997: 325) which is divisible into three forms: pure motivation, i.e. the introduction of a motive into the character in the hypertext where in the hypotext none was clearly stated, demotivation, i.e. the removal of a motive that exists in the hypotext from the character in the hypertext, and transmotivation proper, i.e. the complete replacement of an existing motive.

On the other hand, transvaluation in Genette's (1997: 343–367) definition is primarily concerned with the morality of characters, divisible firstly into primary valuation, which concerns main characters, and secondary valuation, which concerns

supporting characters. Additionally, valuation occurs mainly in three forms: revaluation, or increasing the moral standing of a character as well as their narrative position (i.e. secondary), devaluation, or decreasing the moral standing of a character as well as their narrative position (i.e. primary), and transvaluation, or the complete substitution of the value system found in the hypotext.

Even though Genette's system is built primarily for the study of literary texts, it should be apparent by now that it can quite easily be adapted to the study of other kinds of texts, and perhaps even franchises as the system is primarily concerned with narratives rather than with specific media. Indeed, particularly in the case of thematic techniques of hypertextual transformation, the definitions Genette has given are not medium-specific and, hopefully, will prove to be easily adaptable.

Moreover, in the case of franchises, which deal with the same fiction and the same diegetic elements throughout, this thesis would propose that the notions of architextuality and metatextuality in particular can be used for franchise-internal analysis: in such an analysis, architextuality would then specifically concern the conventions within the franchise and metatextuality the franchise-internal commentary in texts on things such as storytelling techniques as well as franchise-internal architextual conventions. Hypertextuality, meanwhile, would retain its existing definition as the presence of a source text and a derivate text: however, in a franchise-internal analysis, both of these texts would need to be legally a part of the franchise. Thus, it is pertinent to discuss the structure and nature of franchises and the transfer of IPs.

1.2. Franchising media

This thesis uses the term 'franchise' in reference to media franchises, which are defined as collections of texts across media that are connected by their use of IPs which

are licensed out by the copyright holder (Johnson 2013; Fleury et al 2019). Indeed, Johnson (2013: 2–3) has argued that franchising is a particularly pervasive aspect of today’s cultural production which should be studied primarily with regards to its impact on the entertainment industry. Johnson highlights the negative attitude towards franchised media in media scholarship, in particular the repetitive nature of franchised texts, without discussing the other dimensions of franchises such as the narratives contained within or the dispersion of textual elements throughout these narratives. However, since IPs are dispersed across media in franchises, an explanation for the forms of these elements might take is still needed.

From the perspective of intermedia studies, Rajewsky (2005: 46) states that transmedial phenomena cover “the appearance of a certain motif, aesthetic, or discourse across a variety of different media” with the clarification that while this appearance is “media-specific”, it is also “not bound to a specific medium”. Through this, it can be inferred that transmediality manifests through the dispersion of textual elements across multiple media. However, there is also a specific way in which a narrative might be dispersed: transmedia storytelling.

Even though transmediality can be traced back to antiquity, the concept of transmedia storytelling is relatively recent. This, as might be expected, has resulted in multiple contending definitions, of which the first appears to be that of Jenkins (2006: 95–96), who has defined transmedia storytelling as a story which “unfolds across multiple media platforms with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole”. However, Jenkins (2007: para. 1) has later amended this initial definition, stating that transmedia storytelling is instead “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”. Thus, we can infer that the main

requirement for the presence of transmedia storytelling is the existence of textual elements which can be transferred across multiple media and this transfer must be systematic.

Indeed, the revised definition of transmedia storytelling informs the way that Ryan (2015: 4) uses the concept, stating that transmedia storytelling “does not tell a single story, but a variety of autonomous stories, or episodes, contained in various documents”, adding that the presence of transmedia storytelling requires the presence of connected narratives and narrativized content. Thus, we can see that there are at least two distinct approaches to the concept of transmedia storytelling, where one requires the controlled dispersion of a single story (‘story’ being the equivalent of ‘narrative’ here) across multiple media (cf Jenkins 2006), whereas the other asserts that it is the controlled dispersion of several stories which are connected to one another through shared narrative elements (cf Jenkins 2007; Ryan 2015). As might be expected, the relevant initial definition in the context of this thesis is the latter.

However, the most important aspect of transmedia storytelling for the purposes of this thesis is the “deliberate decision by an authority to distribute narrative content across different media” (Ryan 2015: 2). This, in turn, necessitates the presence of an authority figure who decides the course of transfer of the textual elements that are involved in a given instance of transmedia storytelling. Depending on the type of copyright and licensing, this authority can either be a person, such as the author or their estate, or a corporation such as Time Warner, Lucasfilm, or Disney (cf Pearson 2017). Indeed, when speaking of franchises, it is notable that most use transmedia storytelling in its second definition, creating several narratives across multiple media that are connected to one another through shared textual elements rather than through telling a singular, cohesive story.

Indeed, even when leaving aside non-narrative forms of transmediality such as licensed merchandise, most massive franchises use transmedia storytelling as a tool for dispersing the valuable IPs at the core of the franchise across multiple media platforms to as many consumers as possible in order to maximize financial yield. In most cases, franchised media that does not use transmedia storytelling still generates new narratives which are bound to one another (Mittell 2014) through common textual elements. These elements, in turn, can be useful in the study of franchises. Furthermore, the precise nature of these elements depends on the type of worldbuilding utilized in franchises.

1.2.1. Worldbuilding

As shorthand for the process of creating the diegesis, the notion of ‘worldbuilding’ is necessary for the development of any given narrative, but especially for narratives in franchised media. Ryan (2004) has identified several types of worldbuilding, of which the most common are setting-based⁶ and character-based worldbuilding. In setting-based worldbuilding, all narratives in a given franchise center around a single storyworld and its inhabitants (e.g. the *Star Wars* franchise). Individual texts in setting-centric transmedial franchises need not feature the same characters throughout, although reappearances of (fan-favorite) characters are not uncommon. Using Mittell’s (2014: 215) distinction between “What Is?” storytelling, which seeks to develop an existing narrative universe, and “What If?” storytelling, which offers possibilities for complete reinvention of an existing narrative universe, it is the former which provides the primary logic for the creation of new narratives in setting-based worldbuilding.

In contrast to this, character-centric worldbuilding often indicates that the fiction is generally not tied to a single storyworld but, rather, can support several storyworlds that

⁶ ‘Setting’ being used in the meaning of ‘storyworld’ and not narrative space.

are connected by shared characters. As opposed to setting-based worldbuilding, then, character-based worldbuilding thus tends to focus on “What If?” storytelling, which allows for the possibility of significant variation in both spatial and temporal setting as well as within characters.

To illustrate: the Sherlock Holmes stories were relocated from Victorian London into the modern world thrice in the 2010s in serialized live-action television: in *Sherlock* (BBC 2010-2017), *Elementary* (CBS 2012-2019), and *Miss Sherlock* (HBO Asia 2018). While all three rework the original stories, *Sherlock* is simply a live-action television adaptation set in the modern day and thus offers minimal “What If?” when compared to *Elementary* and *Miss Sherlock*, which feature significant reinterpretations of their base text, not in the least because of the change from Victorian to modern and the change from London to New York City and Tokyo respectively but also because they rework the characters. In a similar vein, the 1986 animated film *The Great Mouse Detective* derives its material also from the stories of Sherlock Holmes, even as it is an adaptation of a children’s book series. Speaking in strict terms, *The Great Mouse Detective* is about new characters, Basil⁷ and Dawson, who are mice: however, these mice are demonstrably based on the characters of Holmes and Watson. Thus, the animated film can also be considered a “What If?” approach to the Sherlock Holmes fiction: what if Holmes and Watson, as well as everyone else, were mice? Even if it is a particularly extreme example, one can clearly see that character-centric worldbuilding allows for a great degree of flexibility in interpreting existing characters to create new narratives.

However, in the case of both Sherlock Holmes as well as other IPs that are in the public domain (such as Dracula, Greek epic poetry, the works of Jane Austen, etc.), there is a cohesive body of work by an author that provides textual elements for any subsequent

⁷ Named after the actor Basil Rathbone, who famously portrayed Holmes in the 1939-1946 film series.

transmediation. This, in turn, means that despite the IPs appearing across various media, these texts have not generated franchises because the original IP is no longer applicable for licensing as copyright either does not exist or has expired. Matters become more complicated, however, if copyright is not only still applicable but also owned by a company rather than by the author(s): this type of copyright makes any and all subsequent derivative works created by producers employed by the company the property of the company rather than the producers. This, in turn, gives more opportunities for the creation of new narratives both in the original medium of the IPs as well as in other media.

The most visible example of this is, of course, the comics industry, where the IPs are characters. Thus, it is no surprise that the two industry giants, DC Comics (DC) and Marvel Comics (Marvel), have both mainly used character-centric worldbuilding in the transmediation of their franchises: as shown above, character-centric worldbuilding allows a high degree of flexibility in content creation. Unlike transmediated fictions which derive their textual elements from a traceable source and are adaptational in nature, comics franchises are broadly unconnected bodies of works across different media that are tied together by featuring the same trademarked characters: such are the Spider-Man franchise (Marvel), the Superman franchise (DC), the X-Men franchise (Marvel), and the Batman franchise (DC).

Moreover, there is also the additional feature of narrative layering which characterizes these franchises: when considering the *Fast and Furious* franchise, for example, one does not generally expect a layered narrative. In the case of comics franchises, however, the source material from which the various film, television, and other transmedial adaptations draw their inspiration and content is significantly more complex, not only because they are particularly suitable for “What If?” type storytelling.

1.2.2. Massive, serialized, collaborative fiction (MSCF) franchises

Indeed, while supporting a multiplicity of storyworlds is not the norm in most franchises, the comics industry is an exception. As Pearson (2017: 121) puts it, “[t]oday, multiplicity is the comic industry’s prime directive, as the two superpowers, DC and Marvel, frequently reboot their universes and re-configure their heroes in their ongoing effort to retain old readers and attract new ones as well as to extend their valuable IP across multiple platforms”. From this, it might be inferred that comics-originated franchises can quickly become self-contradictory regarding their storyworld continuity the longer they are actively produced. This is primarily due to the nature of the comics genre as massive, serialized, collaborative fiction (MSCF).

Cook (2013: 272) defines MSCFs as “fictions that (i) have proper parts that are ordered by nonarbitrary sequences, both in terms of production and reception, and in terms of the diegetic ordering of the events portrayed within these fictions; (ii) are too large to be ‘absorbed’ as a unified whole; and (iii) are authored by more than one individual”. Although not all comics are parts of an MSCF and not all MSCFs are strictly tied to the comics industry, MSCFs are, quite understandably, primarily originated from either DC or Marvel. To illustrate: according to Voiles (2020), DC published 2132 comic book issues in the year 2018 alone. As the company was founded in 1934 and has, over its long existence, published more than 57 000 issues of comic books (*ibid*), it is no surprise that the sub-franchises in this vast body of material have the properties of MSCFs in themselves as different texts are published in different storyworld continuities both within the comics medium as well as across other media.

Consequently, Cook (2013: 272) makes a distinction between the maximal fictional world, i.e. the MSCF in its entirety regardless of the canonicity of individual works, and

the canonical fictional world, i.e. the “set of truths” of the MSCF that forms a given diegesis. Moreover, canonicity practices are more than a decision by the producer. Rather, they are the collaborative effort of the audience and the producer to reach an “ideal canon” which is “maximally coherent” as well as “maximally aesthetically, artistically, or socially valuable” (Cook 2013: 273). Through this, a multiplicity of distinct storyworlds is created as the production of new works is adjusted according to the reception of previous works. This, in turn, creates a constant fluctuation within the canonical fictional world as texts are canonized and uncanonized in response to audience reception⁸, with the deciding factor being, of course, the copyright holder.

Hyperdiegesis is a similar concept to the maximal fictional world, defined by Hills (2002: 137–138) as “a vast and detailed narrative space, only a fraction of which is ever directly seen /.../ within the text, but which /.../ appears to operate according to principles of internal logic”. While Hills utilizes the concept primarily to study fan engagement, it retains its usefulness in the study of texts themselves: as franchised texts are connected to one another as a “complex web of cross-references” (Meehan 2011: 70), we can infer that they are both self-referential in that they refer back to other texts in the franchise as well as self-interactive in that they exist in relation to one another and influence each other. Thus, we can infer that the hyperdiegesis of a franchise both creates and is created by individual diegeses. Moreover, the canonical fiction world of the MSCF acts as one of the pillars of the hyperdiegesis to which other independent diegeses exist in relation, forming a textual network.

⁸ An example of this would be the 1988 graphic novel *Batman: The Killing Joke* by Alan Moore and Brian Bolland. While the book was conceived and published as a self-contained, stand-alone story, and disconnected from the central continuity of the Batman MSCF, its critical and commercial impact was such that, in the intervening years, memorable elements of the story, such as the assault of Barbara Gordon / Batgirl that left her paralyzed from the waist down, have been incorporated into the central comics storyworld continuity.

When combining the various texts and constructs that constitute the text base of franchises, then, a simplified interpretation of the resulting textual network might look like this:

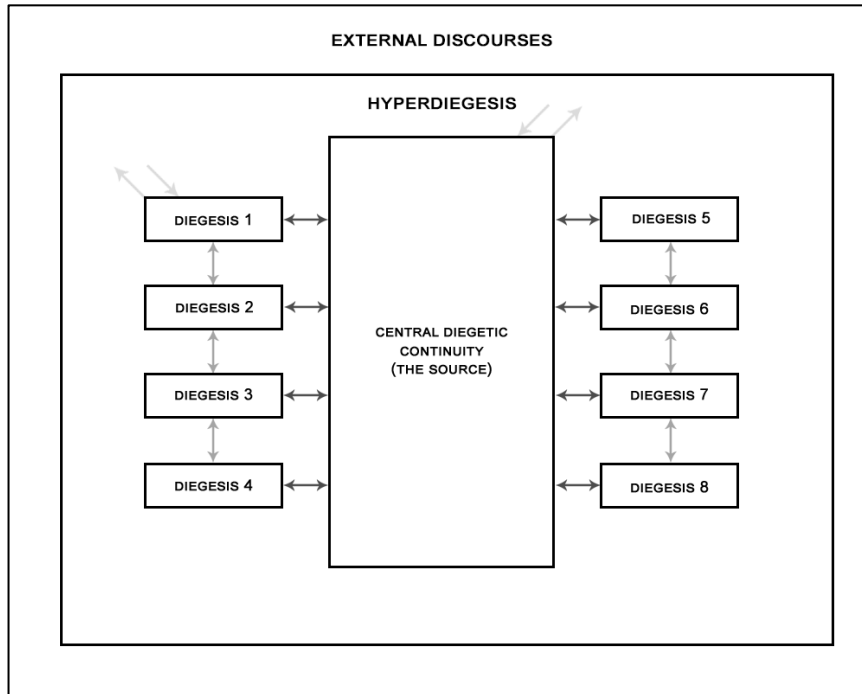


Fig. 1: The textual network is comprised of the hyperdiegesis, which subsumes the central diegetic continuity as well as individual diegeses. As can be seen on the diagram, these individual units can have varying degrees of relations to one another. Additionally, external discourses can also, over time, affect the hyperdiegesis.

It should also be noted here, however, that the central diegetic continuity of comics-originated franchises is heavily policed by the copyright-holding corporations with declarations on which, if any, texts in the multiplicity of storyworlds are canonical to the central comics continuity (Pearson 2017: 122). Indeed, within the hyperdiegesis of a comics franchise, the diegeses exist either in the center or in the periphery. As can be seen on the diagram above, the central diegetic continuity forms the canonical fictional world and is developed mainly via the “What Is?” storytelling technique, whereas the peripheral diegeses are generally developed via the “What If?” storytelling technique and can be published independently from the comics publisher’s main label.

From this, we can infer that peripheral storyworld continuities are not automatically canonical; however, they can become canonized over time⁹. The reason appears to lie mainly in marketability: while companies attempt to retain the existing fanbase by either limiting significant changes in derivative works or incorporating change in creating an entirely new storyworld, they are also trying to entice new readers and increase profits by closely monitoring both the reception and the sales figures connected to any changes that do occur, adjusting production accordingly.

Indeed, when speaking of transmediation with regards to comics, it should be apparent by now that the classic dyadic relationship of source and derivation, of original and adaptation, is not always clear-cut as it might be in other cases where licensing and copyright are no obstacle for innovation. If, in the case of transmediated fictions such as Sherlock Holmes, there is a definitive baseline from which to derive textual elements for transfer, in the case of MSCFs such a parallel cannot be easily drawn since a cohesive, easily accessible, single-author body of work from which to produce derivatives does not exist. As Pearson and Uricchio (2015: 208) put it, “[n]either author, nor medium, nor primary text, nor time period defines the Batman” – nor, indeed, any other comics MSCF character of similar caliber. However, it is also important to note that adaptation as a process is still significant and requires definition.

Therefore, it might be pertinent to decide how the term adaptation can be utilized in relation to the transmediation of comics franchises. While there has been some debate over the specific nature of the term ‘adaptation’ (Cartmell & Whelehan 1999; Elliott 2003; Stam & Raengo 2004; Hutcheon & O’Flynn 2013; et al.), here the term signifies the process as well as the end result of adapting a text from one medium to another, with one text being the source and the other being the derivative. This, broadly speaking, does not

⁹ Cf the previous footnote.

necessarily add a new text to the franchise but, rather, an interpretation of an existing text in a new medium: thus, it can be approached as a form of translation. Moreover, when speaking specifically of adaptation in comics-originated franchises, there is also the question of full and partial adaptation. In this context, full adaptation would mean the transfer of an entire text from one medium to another whereas partial adaptation would be the transfer of selected diegetic elements within a text in one medium into a text in another medium without the entire text being present. This, as might be expected, is not necessarily unique to comics-originated franchises, but partial adaptation is a widely used technique in the expansion of such franchises.

To illustrate: the 2018 animated film *Batman: Gotham by Gaslight* is a full adaptation of the 1989 graphic novel of the same name. In this case, the film version utilizes the original comic book's concept, plot, characters, and spatiotemporal setting. In contrast, the 2005 live-action film *Batman Begins* is a partial adaptation because it draws its material from "a particular aesthetic, a particular set of authors, and a particular period" (Brooker 2012: 60). The film does not adapt a single, standalone graphic novel or storyline: rather, it adapts only a select few of the textual elements present in the Batman franchise hyperdiegesis, deriving its material from an ideal canon created specifically for the purpose of its storyworld. As might be expected, both kinds of adaptations require the presence of transferable textual elements: as has been established, in the context of comics franchises, these elements most often take the form of characters.

1.3. Characters

While there are plenty of theories on characters who exist across multiple texts, scholars often utilize different terminologies and refer to this type of character alternately as 'transfictional' (Jeffries 2017; Haugtvedt 2017), 'transmedial' (Bertetti 2014; Bech

Albertsen 2019), ‘transnarrative’ (Wolf 2013: 99), a ‘serial figure’ (Denson 2011), or ‘transtextual’ (Richardson 2010). However, they all maintain that characters are transferable textual elements and which can thus appear across various fictions, narratives, media, and texts. Thus, this thesis will simply use the term ‘character’ from here on.

Richardson (2010: 540) offers perhaps the most pertinent definition of what characters are for the purposes of this thesis, stating that they are “both clusters of human-like attributes and collective functions within narrative economies, even when they move beyond the text that engendered them”. Similarly, Bertetti (2014: 2348-2349) states that characters can be divided into “existential identity” and “fictional identity”, with the first being the properties of the character that concern the character’s personality and the latter the properties of the character that concern their function in a given narrative. Thus, it can be inferred that characters are both entities as well as narrative roles.

However, as might be expected, this can lead to wildly different characters who have been developed from ostensibly the same source: as Bech Albertsen (2019: 255) puts it, “if /.../ characters are considered organic parts of their originating storyworlds, the perception of them necessarily changes, when circumstances, events and character constellations are different in their new fictional contexts even though they might still be recognizable to some extent”. From this, we might infer that as a character is shifted from their original text, the character inevitably undergoes a change as an entity even when their function in the narrative might remain the same. Paradoxically, then, a character who exists across multiple texts both is and is not that character in every one of these texts.

Richardson (2010), using the example of James Bond, comes to the same conclusion:

According to the mimetic component of characterization, the two Bonds do not share the same psychological makeup /.../, so they are different individuals. But according to a semiotic or functional analysis, the actant called Bond performs the same functions in each work and is therefore the same character. In the light of one aspect of character theory, the Bonds are different; in another, they are the same individual. **We may legitimately conclude that the Bond of most of the movies both is and is not the same character as the one in the novels.** [emphasis mine] (538)

If, depending on the analytical approach, a character both is and is not that character, then, we must consider how multiple versions of a character can exist simultaneously and independently of texts. One explanation for this might be that there is a component in the character that is unaffected by variations in the diegesis – “an independent essence”, as Richardson (*ibid*: 539) puts it – which allows for them to be transferred across texts and storyworlds.

Indeed, Voltolini (2012) makes a distinction between the “particular character”, i.e. the character in a given narrative with both a personality as well as a narrative role, and the “general character”, i.e. an abstract, prototypical construct of the character that provides a baseline for any derivative particular characters. However, the notion of a general character becomes problematic as soon as it is conceived: how much of a connection is necessary between two particular characters to say that they share a general character? What exactly constitutes a general character? In the narratological sense, it depends entirely on the character: as Voltolini (*ibid*: 575) puts it, “general characters are always /.../ under construction” as an increasingly larger number of particular characters becomes integrated into a general character, thus creating general characters which function as archetypes. As might be expected, though, the notion can also be used in a narrower sense.

A compelling starting point in the search for the general character could then be the name. Indeed, Orilia (2012: 580) defines naming as a denoting concept that solidifies the connection between an entity and a proper name that refers to it and it alone, regardless of the fictionality of the entity. Therefore, we might say that a name is the key to a particular character being subsumed by the general character. This notion, however, soon becomes problematic as well since not all particular characters who belong under a general character share a name. For example, we might consider the particular character Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* to be subsumable by the general character Odysseus of the *Iliad* and the

Odyssey – and yet, they do not share a name, so they cannot be connected. On the other hand, not all particular characters who share a name with a general character belong under the general character: for example, the Joker of the Batman franchise and the Joker of the *Mass Effect* franchise are two ontologically distinct entities and have little in common aside from their names. Thus, we might infer that a particular character requires a context first and foremost to be subsumable into the general character (Voltolini 2012: 573). However, there is one type of content creation where naming is in fact one of the key requirements for the equivalence between a particular character and the general character: comics franchises.

1.3.1. Comics characters

As has been established in section 1.2. of this thesis, comics characters function both similarly to as well as differently from other characters who transcend the borders of a single text. Indeed, while names are generally not an ironclad way to connect a particular character to the general character, in the case of characters who are copyrighted IPs, the name is, in fact, one of the major components required to recognize a particular character as being a part of the general character.

In order to support the vast multiplicity of storyworlds in comics character franchises, the aspects derived from the general character to create a particular character tend to be somewhat more specific than the narrative role. Additionally, in order to have a particular character correspond to their general character, context is needed. In order to explain the various versions of Batman that exist, Pearson and Uricchio (2015: 209–210) devised a checklist of aspects by which any version of Batman (or any other comics character) can be recognized as such, with the aspects being 1) traits/attributes, 2) events

(fixed and accruing/iterative)¹⁰, 3) recurrent supporting characters, 4) setting, and 5) iconography. In the case of Batman, the most basic fulfillment of the first category could simply be ‘strong’, ‘smart’, ‘rich’, and ‘obsessive’, as these apply to most if not all particular versions of Batman: as might be expected, of course, these traits can also apply to many other characters. Therefore, we must infer that using only one aspect of the checklist is not enough as most of the aspects, apart perhaps from iconography, are not definitive.

This thesis would propose that there are in fact two key qualities that are necessary for a particular character to be initially recognized as belonging to a general character in the context of a comics franchise: primarily, iconography, and, secondarily, appellation. After all, since comics are first and foremost a visual medium, it is the physical appearance of the character and its concurrent visual characteristics such as iconic clothing/costume, colors, insignia, etc. that render the character recognizable on first glance. Thus, a particular Batman is attributed to the general Batman because he is dressed in a dark-colored costume with a cape and a cowl, because he has the Bat-symbol emblazoned on his chest – in short, because he looks like Batman. On the other hand, when it comes to supervillain characters, the more abstract these iconographic attributes are, the better: compared to superheroes, supervillains tend to have a higher mutability in appearance and a variety of different costumes and props.

As the visual cues of the character can differ significantly between texts, then, appellation becomes the second key feature. In the context of this thesis, the term ‘appellation’ refers to the act of naming: if a particular character shares the name of a general character, they are subsumed into the general character in the context of the comics

¹⁰ The former of these being the character’s ‘origin story’ and the latter their habitual activities. It is, of course, important to note that no actual rule imposes the inclusion and unchangeability of fixed events in each text involving the character: origin stories will inevitably change, especially in different canons. However, it is also important to note that, much like the other character aspects, events too are highly abstract and generally supply only the inciting actions in a longer, more variable plot.

franchise. However, in the context of comics storytelling, it should be noted that there is a distinction between the regular identity (functionally the legal name) and the super-identity (functionally the ‘stage name’) of any given character: by this logic, the names ‘Bruce Wayne’ and ‘Batman’ would, if one did not know that they mostly refer to the same entity, be construed as separate entities, or, conversely, as the exact same entity.

Neither option, as might be expected, is entirely accurate: while ‘Bruce Wayne’, in this sense, is an exclusive denoting concept tied to a single character, ‘Batman’ is not. Indeed, even if one ignores the diegetic DC Multiverse¹¹, there are several other characters who have taken on the mantle of ‘Batman’ within the MSCF central storyworld continuity, the most notable being Dick Grayson and Azrael, both of whom have their own additional identities. Thus, the identity of ‘Batman’ becomes a legacy identity, i.e. one that is transferable between different characters¹². When speaking specifically of super-villains, though, it becomes readily apparent that there is a stronger link between the regular identity and the super-identity, with legacy identities being relatively rare¹³. Moreover, there are more instances of the super-identity being the primary identity of a given character with the character’s regular identity being unknown. This is the case with

¹¹ I.e. the multiplicity of storyworlds that are diegetically acknowledged in DC as a set of alternate universes that exist simultaneously within the narrative universe.

¹² Of the various legacy identities in the Batman franchise, ‘Robin’ might perhaps be the most transferable on the heroes’ side. Over the course of 80+ years, there have been five distinct Robins in the central comics continuity: Dick Grayson / Robin I, Jason Todd / Robin II, Tim Drake / Robin III, Stephanie Brown / Robin IV, and Damian Wayne / Robin V.

¹³ On the villains’ side, however, that title belongs to Clayface, of whom there are eight: Basil Karlo / Clayface I, Matt Hagen / Clayface II, Preston Payne / Clayface III, Sondra Fuller / Clayface IV (Lady Clay), Cassius ‘Clay’ Payne / Clayface V (Claything), Dr. Peter Malley / Clayface VI (Claything II), Todd Russell / Clayface VII, and Johnny Williams / Clayface VIII. There is also the Clayface of Japan, who brings the total to **nine** different entities who use the same super-identity in the central comics continuity. Beside Clayface, there are three other particularly notable legacy villain identities in the Batman franchise, being Black Mask (Roman Sionis | Jeremiah Arkham | Richard Sionis / The Mask), Ventriloquist (Arnold Wesker | Peyton Riley | Shauna Belzer), and Firefly (Garfield Lynns | Ted Carson | Bridgit Pike / Lady Firefly). It should be noted here that the first regular identities listed are also the ones primarily associated with these super-identities.

characters such as the Joker and Bane, whose regular identities are more often a mystery than not in the general character¹⁴.

However, the unaccompanied super-identities of the Joker and Bane are exceptions rather than the rule, as most of Batman's central rogues' gallery has both a regular as well as a super-identity. Moreover, if one disregards the exceptions, the classic rogues' super-identities are generally associated with a single regular identity. Such is the case with, to name a few, Selina Kyle / Catwoman, Harvey Dent / Two-Face, Dr. Jonathan Crane / the Scarecrow, Edward Nygma / the Riddler, and Oswald Cobblepot / the Penguin – in these cases, we can speak of both the characters' regular as well as super-identities as denoting concepts which refer back to the general characters they represent.

Thus, when speaking of these characters as general characters, a distinction between the regular identity and the super-identity is generally not necessary. However, it should also be noted that in the case of particular characters, such a distinction may become necessary depending on whether the particular character appears with a fully formed super-identity. Such is the case with *Gotham* in particular, as the series primarily focuses on retelling and recontextualizing characters' origin stories – indeed, one cannot escape the distinction between the Riddler and Edward Nygma that emerges in the series.

¹⁴ This is not to say that particular versions of these characters that have both regular as well as super-identities do not exist at all: for example, in *Batman* (1989), the Joker's regular identity is 'Jack Napier'. Similarly, in *Gotham*, both the Joker and proto-Bane have regular identities, with the former being 'Jeremiah Valeska' and the latter being 'Eduardo Torrance'.

TRANSTEXTUALITY IN *GOTHAM*

This chapter concerns the empirical analysis of the characters Oswald Cobblepot / The Penguin and Edward Nygma / The Riddler in *Gotham*. Preceding the empirical analysis is an overview of the analytical method as well as the research question and the hypotheses of the thesis. The analysis begins with an introduction to the position of *Gotham* within the Batman franchise as well as the characters of the Riddler and the Penguin in order to proceed to the first category of transtextuality that will be examined: architextuality. Following the discussion on the architextual features of the depiction of the Riddler and the Penguin in *Gotham* is the analysis of metatextuality connected to these characters, which is followed by a discussion of the hypertextual features of their characters.

2.1. Methodology

In order to conduct the analysis of transtextuality in the Batman franchise, the television series *Gotham* has been chosen as the subject of study for two reasons: firstly, because it offers a significant body of material (approximately 100 hours of canonical footage), and secondly, because it gives the position of the focalizer to characters who have thus far not been that in the transmediated texts. This makes them a suitable focus of the analysis that aims to determine the possible applications of Genette's (1997) for a character-focused analysis.

The analysis is structured into four subsections. The first subsection will analyze the position of *Gotham* in the Batman franchise to point out the baseline texts that have inspired it both stylistically as well as thematically, as well as establishing a hyperdiegetic baseline for the characters of the Riddler and the Penguin. The second subsection concerns

the instances of architextuality in *Gotham* regarding the Riddler and the Penguin as well as how the term might be applicable to narratives in the context of a character-centric franchise. The third subsection approaches metatextuality in *Gotham* in the same manner, with a focus on instances of commentary on the hyperdiegesis of the Batman franchise that appear in the series in connection to the Riddler and the Penguin. The final subsection examines instances of hypertextuality in *Gotham*, analyzing the narrativized connections to other Batman franchise texts that are readily apparent in the series. The goal of the analytical section is to answer the following questions: how does the depiction of the Riddler and the Penguin in *Gotham* interact with earlier texts in the Batman franchise and how much of this interaction is systematic and traceable?

It should be noted, of course, that this thesis cannot present an exhaustive analysis of all transtextuality in *Gotham*: indeed, the categories of paratextuality and intertextuality have been omitted entirely as they would require a significantly larger amount of space to fully address. Moreover, since the main body of reference for this thesis is a franchise based on a comics MSCF, the author cannot presume to be aware of every relevant text. Thus, wherever possible, the analysis will rely on better known texts in the Batman franchise. Indeed, a working hypothesis of the thesis is that connections are both more prominent as well as more likely to occur between *Gotham* and dominant texts in the Batman franchise.

Additionally, the following analysis poses that it might be possible to use the category of architextuality as relations between the *Gotham* diegesis and the hyperdiegesis of the Batman franchise. The category of metatextuality could be approached as relations between the *Gotham* diegesis and the hyperdiegesis wherein *Gotham* highlights an aspect of the hyperdiegesis and comments on that, and the category of hypertextuality would be apparent in the relationships between the *Gotham* diegesis and individual texts in the

franchise that have been adapted into the *Gotham* diegesis. Since this thesis looks only at franchise-internal transtextuality, then, an additional hypothesis is that some mechanisms of hypertextual transfer can also apply in the cases of architextuality, particularly motivation and valuation.

Furthermore, in the following analysis, specific episodes are referenced by their season (S01/02/03/etc) and episode (E01/02/03/etc) numeration, followed by the episode title: for example, a reference to the first episode of the first season would thus be written as ‘S01E01 “Pilot”’.

2.2. Batman MSCF and characters

As might be expected from a superhero fiction that has existed for over 80 years, the Batman franchise features many characters on both sides of the law. While scholarly attention has primarily focused on the characters of Batman and the Joker, other characters of the franchise have thus far been examined relatively little. Moreover, as the franchise is based on the Batman comics MSCF, it is prudent to first explain the structure of the worldbuilding inherent to this comics MSCF before any analysis of transmediated content can begin.

When speaking of the central canonical fictional world of the Batman MSCF, there appear to be four periods that could be considered particularly significant, being 1) the pre-*Crisis on Infinite Earths* diegetic period¹⁵, 2) the post-*Crisis on Infinite Earths* diegetic period¹⁶, 3) the *New 52* diegetic period¹⁷, and 4) the *Rebirth* diegetic period¹⁸. These are by

¹⁵ Tentatively counted from the beginning of with DC Comics’ original conception as National Allied Publications in 1934 and ending with the *Crisis on Infinite Earths* crossover event in 1985–1986, subsuming three eras (Golden, Silver, Bronze) and spanning 46 years.

¹⁶ The period after the *Crisis on Infinite Earths* crossover event, spanning 25 years from 1986 to the *Flashpoint* crossover event in 2011. This crossover event was one of the first company-wide storyworld overhauls in the comics industry, and attempted to cull the sprawling storyworld of the preceding diegetic period down to a manageable size.

no means the only significant periods and are not necessarily cohesive or coherent in themselves¹⁹, but rather provide a loose timeline for the development of the central canonical fictional world in the DC comics MSCF. In addition to the central canonical fictional world, there are also various standalone narratives as well as serialized titles that use “What If?” type storytelling, reimagining familiar characters in various alternate universes and alternate scenarios. To illustrate: *Batman: White Knight* and its sequel *Batman: Curse of the White Knight* reimagine the characters of the Batman MSCF in a world where the Joker is positioned as the protagonist and Batman as the antagonist. Indeed, considering that the Batman franchise is built around the interactions between Batman and his allies as well as his enemies, it is prudent here to speak of the latter not only because they form the main focus of the analysis that will be presented in this thesis.

When discussing the villain characters collectively known as Batman’s rogues’ gallery, they can broadly be divided into three main groups. The first of these groups would be teams and/or organizations without mob affiliations such as the League of Assassins and the Court of Owls. The second would be teams and/or organizations affiliated with the mob such as the Falcone and Maroni crime families. The third, and perhaps the most memorable, of these groups would be the costumed criminals: those of Batman’s enemies who have their own gangs and affiliates but are generally self-governing (if such a word can be used). While some of these characters, such as the Joker and the Penguin, have existed nigh as long as Batman himself²⁰, some characters who are today known as classic rogues’ gallery members were created significantly later and do not exist in all the aforementioned diegetic periods.

¹⁷ Prompted by the *Flashpoint* crossover event in 2011 and effectively ended with the *Convergence* crossover event in 2015, lasting 4 years.

¹⁸ Prompted by the *DC Universe: Rebirth Special* in 2016 and while the rebranding initiative ended in December 2017, the continuity established with *Rebirth* is, as of May 2020, still ongoing and rebranded as DC Universe.

¹⁹ As might be expected, particularly problematic here is the 46-year-long pre-*Crisis* continuity.

²⁰ The characters made their first appearances in 1940 and 1941, respectively.

Indeed, the case of Dr. Harleen Quinzel / Harley Quinn is perhaps the best-known example when considering transmedial textual transfer in the context of the Batman franchise. First created as a character exclusive to the *Batman: The Animated Series* (BTAS) in 1992, she proved to be so popular that she was adopted into the Batman comics MSCF only a year later in *The Batman Adventures* #12, and has appeared in most of the subsequent transmediated texts in the franchise²¹, even getting her own animated series in 2019. From this, then, we might infer that while transmediated instances of the Batman MSCF derive their material from the comics, they can also influence the central comics diegesis. In short, there is potential for reciprocal transfer and interaction in the franchise between its central source texts in the comics medium and its derivative texts in other media.

Of course, there are instances of transfer in relation to other characters as well, albeit on a smaller scale. For the purposes of this thesis, perhaps the most pertinent example is that of the Penguin's physical appearance shift in the early 1990s: after Burton's second Batman film, *Batman Returns* (1992), the unprecedentedly rotund, grimy, and rough-mannered Penguin of the film was incorporated into the comics, resulting in a significant shift of the Penguin's depiction in the comics MSCF, which had previously been a somewhat portly, well-mannered 'gentleman of crime' – such was the depiction of the Penguin, for example, in the 1966 film *Batman*, which, for obvious reasons, based its character design on early comics. On the other hand, later transmediated texts in the franchise, such as the *Batman: Arkham* video games, have derived their character designs from comics created after the shift.

This contradiction, however, is not necessarily a problem. If one considers the general character of the Penguin, it is simply to be noted that any subsequent particular version of the character will, by and large, utilize a character design from either before or

²¹ Such as the *Batman: Arkham* videogames as well as the *Suicide Squad* (2017) and *Birds of Prey* (2020) films.

after the 1990s shift: both versions are, after all, viable and precedented. Indeed, when speaking of the general character, one might, in this context, consider it a form of architextuality: the convergence of sometimes radically different particular characters that are nevertheless iterations of the same general character creates a framework which affects a new particular character much like expectations of genre conventions affect a work of literature, thus encouraging both compliance as well as subversion.

2.2.1. The Penguin

Oswald Cobblepot / the Penguin first appeared in *Detective Comics* #58 (1941). Created by Bob Kane and Bill Finger, the character is particularly notable for walking the line between the two types of criminals typical to Gotham City: while he is affiliated with the mob, he is also a costumed criminal who runs a nightclub called the Iceberg Lounge both for lawful as well as unlawful business dealings. Iconographic features of the Penguin include dark-colored formal suits, complete with a top hat and monocle, as well as trick umbrellas and various similar gadgets – interestingly enough, though, it is a far more subdued look than one might expect from a costumed criminal. From this, we can see the fulfillment of three of the five component categories proposed by Pearson and Uricchio (2015): we know the character’s setting is Gotham City, his iconographic features are formalwear and umbrellas, and his most important supporting character is Batman, although, it should be noted, his relationship with Batman can, on occasion, also be collaborative rather than antagonistic.

Concerning the Penguin’s baseline personality, DC’s official webpage of the character describes him as follows:

This is a villain fueled by a pathological rage that compels him to turn his odd physique, bird-like profile and awkward waddle into a well-dressed force for fear. No one knows more about what the evil forces of Gotham are up to at any given moment than he and he uses that information to blackmail, intimidate and corrupt anyone he can, especially when it’s in the service of bringing

down Batman. /.../ A master manipulator, the Penguin is usually surrounded by violent henchmen who do his bidding without question. /.../ (*Penguin*: para. 2–3)

From this, a few core features of the Penguin can be gleaned: firstly, that he has a violent temper; secondly, that he deals in information as much as anything else; finally, that he is sociable to some degree but not necessarily empathetic. Thus, the traits/attributes category is fulfilled.

Concerning the events tied to the character, however, it is apparent that the built-in narrative due to the Penguin's positioning as Batman's enemy gives a basic outline of the iterative events category: the Penguin fights Batman. Regarding the fixed events or the origin story, on the other hand, there appear to be several contesting origins, all of which share the assertion that Cobblepot was bullied as a child (cf *Secret Origins Special* #1, 1986), which contributed to his later turn to a life of crime. However, whether the character is from an aristocratic family or not depends on the particular character as both options are present in the hyperdiegesis.

2.2.2. The Riddler

Edward Nygma²² / the Riddler first appeared in *Detective Comics* #140 (1948). Created by Bill Finger and Dick Sprang, the character has become one of Batman's most famous foes. Iconographic features of the Riddler are undoubtedly an abundance of question marks, green clothing with purple accents, as well as a bowler hat and a custom cane. Much as with the Penguin, then, three key features are established: the character's most significant supporting character is Batman, the character operates in Gotham City, and his iconographic features are the colors green and purple as well as question marks.

²² There is a noteworthy discrepancy in the character's regular identity in the general character: there are two spelling variants as well as a completely different form, being 'Nigma', 'Nygma', and 'Nashton'. Of the three, 'Nashton' is generally superfluous as it is either diegetically treated as the character's birthname with either 'Nigma' or 'Nygma' replacing it as the character's chosen name, or displaced into the position of the middle name since the character does not have a canonical one. As *Gotham* uses the 'Nygma' spelling variant, so does this thesis.

Perhaps the most salient features of the Riddler, however, are his brilliant mind and his penchant for overcomplicated criminal plots. Indeed, DC's official webpage of the character gives the following description:

One of the Dark Knight's most infamous villains, Edward Nygma enjoys flaunting his intellectual superiority by conducting crimes and leaving clues for Batman to piece together. While this habit constantly leads to the aptly named Riddler failing in his criminal endeavors, his puzzle-problem actually stems not only from his own narcissism and ego, but also from a deep-seeded psychological compulsion. /.../ Possessing a genius-level intellect, the Riddler creates elaborate, sometimes Rube Goldberg-esque traps, and is even willing to use innocent civilians as bait. Although not physically imposing, the Riddler's brilliance, neurosis and lack of empathy make him an incredibly dangerous foe. (*Riddler*: para. 2–3)

From this, a few additional traits of the Riddler can be gleaned: firstly, that he loves attention; secondly, that his involvement in criminal endeavors is identifiable by the clues he compulsively leaves behind; finally, that, much like the Penguin, he possess little empathy for those he deems inferior to himself. Thus, the traits category is fulfilled.

When speaking of the events connected to the Riddler, as might be expected, the accruing/iterative events follow the same baseline as those connected to the Penguin: the Riddler fights Batman. Indeed, the characters' relationship is decidedly more vitriolic than that of the Penguin and Batman – this appears to be due to the Riddler's desire to prove himself intellectually superior at all costs. However, in speaking of the character's origin story, the current consensus appears to be that his turn to villainy is largely due to abuse endured when he was a child (cf *Detective Comics Annual #8*, 1995) with little other details available.

2.3. Architextuality

When considering the Batman franchise hyperdiegesis, some texts and periods have historically been more influential than others and are thus considered to be more valuable when the transmediation of diegetic elements begins. As has been mentioned before, this is the case with the 2005-2012 *Dark Knight* trilogy, which derives its

influences from a relatively small textual base: as Brooker (2012: 60) puts it, “not a free-ranging and diverse myth, but the more consistent and inevitably limited /.../ ‘dark’, modern tradition”. In contrast to this, *Gotham* treats the hyperdiegesis of the Batman comics MSCF and indeed the entire franchise as equally valuable, adopting diegetic elements from many sources. To illustrate these connections, an abstracted and simplified ‘map’ of *Gotham*’s position in the Batman franchise might look something like this:

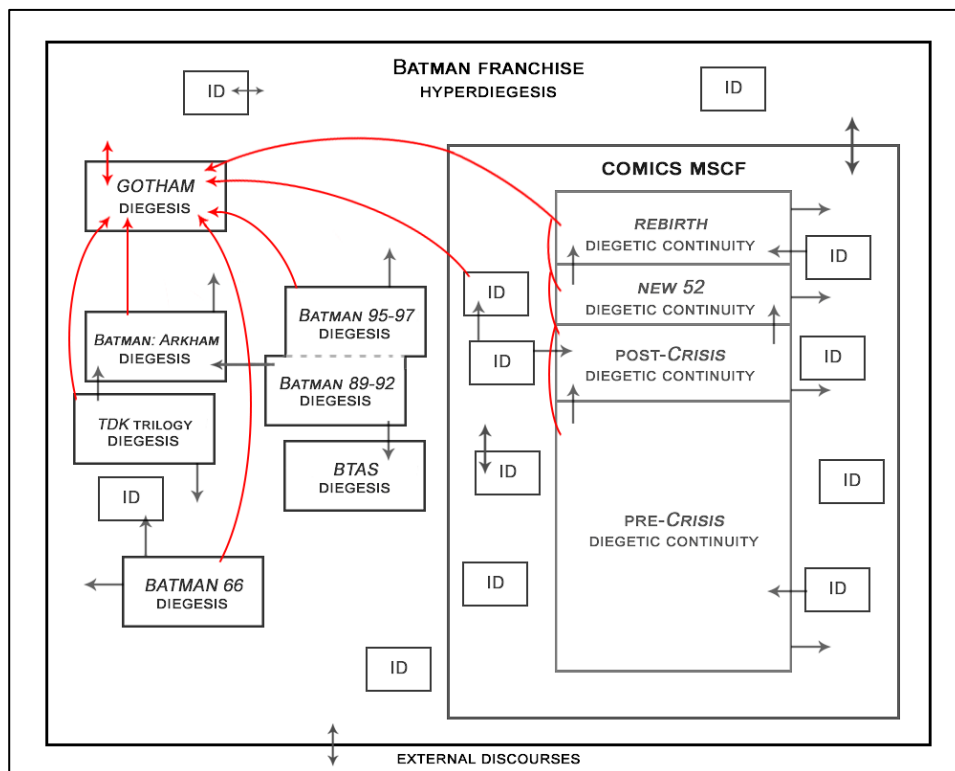


Fig. 2: The connections between *Gotham* and the rest of the Batman franchise are marked in red. Moreover, the connections between other texts have been greatly simplified and are marked in gray. Additionally, ‘ID’ signifies a nonspecific ‘independent diegesis’: stand-alone narratives, “What If?” narratives, etc.

Indeed, the series’ visuals and cinematographic composition immediately brings to mind the noir aesthetic of the Burton *Batman* films (1989; 1992) and *BTAS* – and yet, its plotlines fluctuate between the serious, dark realism of the *Dark Knight* trilogy and the *Batman: Arkham* videogames, and the humorous, campy surrealism of the Schumacher *Batman* films (1995; 1997) and the 1960s *Batman* television series. Thus, *Gotham* itself becomes a celebration of the diversity of aesthetics and styles that characterize the Batman

franchise, showing the progression of Gotham City from a relatively normal metropolis to the kind of place that would need a masked vigilante.

Indeed, the first season of the series offers a markedly more grounded narrative than the later seasons: following the deaths of Thomas and Martha Wayne, newly appointed detective Jim Gordon must tackle the rising crime and corruption in Gotham City. The season primarily deals with the power struggles in the criminal underworld of Gotham, focusing on mob-affiliated groups, which primarily fall under the influences of either the dominant Falcone crime family or the opposing Maroni crime family, ending in the Penguin's takeover of the mob. The second season is divided roughly into two parts, the first of which follows a similar line to the first in that it deals with mob affiliations. The main antagonist is Theo Galavan, a corrupt politician and cult member. In the second part of the season, the first outright costumed criminals begin appearing in earnest, headlined by Professor Strange and his menagerie of monstrous creations. The third and fourth season combine the two types of Batman's rogues' gallery members and add into the mix organizations unaffiliated with the mob, the Court of Owls as well as the League of Shadows headed by Ra's Al Ghul, with the fourth beginning with the mob in that Sofia Falcone serves as its main antagonist for the first half, and shifting focus to costumed criminals in its second half with the activities of Jerome and Jeremiah Valeska, both of whom constitute the series' proto-Joker. The fifth season, a loose and recontextualized adaptation of the *No Man's Land* crossover comics storyline²³ focuses completely on costumed criminals, with the two main antagonists being Jeremiah Valeska and the team of Eduardo Torrance / Bane and Nyssa Al Ghul. The season ends with a final episode set

²³ Published across fourteen Batman franchise comics titles in 1999, the storyline spanned 80 issues total. In it, following a cataclysmic earthquake, the city of Gotham becomes separated from the mainland by the destruction of its bridges and becomes a lawless no-man's-land where criminals run rampant and fight over territory and resources as the few remaining civilians try to survive and what is left of the law enforcement in the city attempts to regain control.

ten years in the future, featuring, among others, the first appearance of Batman in his iconic costume.

From this, several things become clear. Firstly, that *Gotham* subverts the usual story structures found in the Batman franchise, where Bruce Wayne first takes on the mantle of Batman to fight relatively grounded crimes such as muggings and robberies perpetrated by regular criminals, and only after Batman appears does the costumed criminals category of his rogues' gallery begin forming²⁴. In *Gotham*, the obverse is true: first, costumed criminals begin appearing, which is one of the catalysts for Bruce Wayne becoming Batman. Secondly, it is also apparent that *Gotham* changes the inciting event to the appearance of costumed criminals in Gotham City: it is the deaths of Thomas and Martha Wayne which act as the catalyst for Gotham's eventual transformation into a city impossible to control for the local law enforcement. Moreover, in the cases of villains such as Victor Fries / Mr. Freeze, Brigit Pike / Firefly, and Basil Karlo / Clayface, the freak accidents that created them in most incarnations have been subsumed into the illegal lab experiments conducted by Hugo Strange / Professor Strange, which creates a more unified and somewhat more realistic reasoning for why there are people with abnormal abilities in Gotham City.

Of course, there are other characters who end up becoming costumed criminals without outside interference – rather, they simply follow the preset 'destiny' given to them by virtue of being iconic characters in the Batman franchise. Of these, this thesis focuses on Oswald Cobblepot / the Penguin and Edward Nygma / the Riddler, as they are major members of Batman's rogues' gallery as well as main characters²⁵ in the series. Speaking in terms of textual transfer, this can be interpreted as both a case of partial secondary reevaluation in that supporting characters obtain the position of main characters, as well as a

²⁴ Noting that organizations, mob-affiliated or otherwise, already exist.

²⁵ There is, of course, also Selina Kyle / Catwoman in *Gotham*: however, she is also approximately 12 or 13 years old when *Gotham*'s narrative begins.

case of transvaluation, because the notion of the villain becomes relative in regards to these characters in *Gotham* as they take the position of protagonists on more than one occasion (cf S05E11 “They Did What?” in which both fight against Bane and Nyssa Al Ghul on the side of the heroes). Supporting this is the transmotation that occurs in both characters as well: due to the absence of Batman in the series, they must find other enemies.

2.3.1. The Penguin and The Riddler in *Gotham*

When speaking specifically of the enemies of Batman, it could be said that the members of the classic rogues’ gallery tend to bring into a given narrative the conventions of a certain genre²⁶. In the case of the Penguin and the Riddler, the former evokes primarily the conventions of the gangster film genre and the latter the detective story genre. In *Gotham*, too, these conventions are readily utilized: Cobblepot’s story begins when he is a lowly lackey to a minor mob boss named Fish Mooney and Nygma’s when he is working for the Gotham City Police Department (GCPD) as a forensic scientist. This is perhaps the most traditional kind of architextuality that exists in the series since it is specific to genre conventions.

Indeed, throughout the series’ main narrative, Cobblepot alternately gains and loses control of the city’s underworld, and Nygma goes from being a key figure in solving crimes to a key figure in committing them, with both men being apprehended and sentenced to Arkham Asylum several times over the years. Since the series serves as a prequel and ends with the appearance of Batman in Gotham City, the storylines of both the Riddler and the Penguin end in suspended animation with the implication that the cycle of

²⁶ One of the best examples of this is Dr. Jonathan Crane / the Scarecrow, whose *modus operandi* relies upon evoking terror in his victims and thus necessitates the use of horror genre conventions, particularly of the southern gothic variety, with themes such as decay, grotesque, and madness being common throughout stories involving the character: as might be expected from a supervillain who uses a “fear toxin” in order to terrify his victims and drive them to madness.

capture and escape will continue forever, as is customary in the comics where the cyclical nature of storytelling means that no ending is set in stone²⁷.

Moreover, the origin stories of the characters, such as they are, appear to also be influenced by the hyperdiegesis of the Batman franchise. Paradoxically enough, though, they also differ from the hyperdiegesis quite significantly in some respects. Indeed, when speaking of the Penguin's origins in *Gotham*, while he has grown up as the son of a single mother in relative poverty and has, according to himself, endured at least some sort of ostracizing from his peers as a child (S02E09 "A Bitter Pill to Swallow"), he is later revealed to be the illegitimate child of the only surviving member of one of Gotham's most prestigious families, the Van Dahls (S02E15 "Mad Grey Dawn"). This, in turn, is noteworthy because it fuses together two fundamentally different origin stories that are present in the general Penguin: the *Gotham* Penguin both is and is not from an upper-class family.

With the Riddler, however, an obvious connection to the origin stories that already exist in the general Riddler is difficult to find: the character's life before the narrative time of *Gotham* is never addressed in the series. Indeed, while one might assume that it follows the same general baseline as the general Riddler's, it is impossible to tell for certain due to the absence of textual evidence. What can be determined is that he has gotten a degree that allows him to work as a forensic scientist in the GCPD: however, anything prior to that remains unknown. Moreover, it is important to note that, in the absence of Batman, the transformation of Edward Nygma to the Riddler, which traditionally depends on Batman (cf *Detective Comics* #140), becomes dependent on a different character altogether: in *Gotham*, it depends on the Penguin. Predictably, this completely disrupts the architext of the general Riddler, and will be examined further later on.

²⁷ This will be discussed further in section 2.4.

Indeed, while an obvious influence of the hyperdiegesis can be traced in connection to character arcs as outlined above, it is also significant that this influence also exists within the characters themselves on the simplest level: visual character design. In speaking of this, the primary concern is with the characters' costuming in their first and last appearances in the series. Indeed, the final appearance of the characters is exemplary for this: the Penguin's purple tailcoat, monocle, and black top hat are perfectly in line with the character's prior depictions and the general Penguin, save perhaps for the color of the tailcoat as it is usually dark; similarly, the Riddler's green overcoat, emblazoned with question marks, black bowler hat, and green suit are indeed indicative of the general Riddler.

However, the first appearances of the characters as Edward Nygma and Oswald Cobblepot also incorporate aspects of the general characters, hinting at the future of these particular versions. Indeed, Cobblepot's first appearance in the series in S01E01 "Pilot" features the character in a dark suit with purple accents, holding an umbrella. Interestingly enough, though, Nygma's first line in the series in the same episode is a question, followed by two attempts at posing riddles, but the character appears in a grey checkered suit jacket rather than the customary palette of green and purple. Indeed, Nygma dons an emerald green suit from S03E15 "How the Riddler Got His Name" onwards, after he finally adopts the moniker of the Riddler. Thus, there appears to be a discrepancy present between the importance of the iconographic component of the characters with regards to their recognizability in *Gotham*: while first appearance of the Penguin affords the moment of recognition through the visual component of the character, the first appearance of the Riddler does so through speech pattern.

These differences might, in a way, be explained by the general characters: while the Penguin's customary outfit is not particularly specific in its color scheme, the Riddler's

is unquestionably so. Due to the performative nature of the characters' super-identities, then, it is noteworthy that the particular theatrical flair of their iconic outfits is only adopted in the final episode, when the characters are finally 'ready' to face their most iconic enemy after completing their origin stories through the series' main storyline. Thus, we might infer that *Gotham* both does and does not contradict the general Riddler and Penguin: while their characters adopt textual elements from the hyperdiegesis, they also suppress others, thus resulting in a zero-sum. However, this does not mean that the changes introduced in *Gotham* are insignificant: on the contrary.

When speaking of the characters' personalities in *Gotham*, the basic traits outlined in sections 2.2.1. and 2.2.2. of this thesis are fulfilled. In accordance to the general Penguin, the *Gotham* Penguin has an explosive temper, he is charming but ultimately callous, and his initial rise to power depends entirely on possessing more information than any of his rivals. However, despite a lack of empathy when it comes to people in general, the Penguin does care about some: indeed, the second season of the series revolves around his relationship to his family, and the theme continues to be present in subsequent seasons as well, particularly in his relationships with the Riddler as well as the orphan boy Martin as he seeks to reclaim the unconditional love he lost after the deaths of his parents. On the side of the Riddler, we can note that the *Gotham* Riddler desires to be noticed, incorporates riddles and clues into his crimes (once he starts committing them, that is), and has little patience for those he deems inferior to himself. Indeed, with regards to the Riddler, it can be said that the character's personality falls rather well into line with the generic features present in the general character, whereas the Penguin has acquired additional traits in the series.

Considering the supporting characters, though, there is a clear aberration from the architext which has already been partially examined: in the absence of Batman, the

characters are dependent on others. Indeed, it is Fish Mooney that fuels Cobblepot's drive in the first season and leads to him accepting the mocking nickname of the Penguin and building his empire around it: and, in turn, it is the Penguin who ends up unwittingly causing Nygma's renaissance as the Riddler. This is somewhat curious on multiple levels, but mainly in that, while there indeed exists a brief period in the comics MSCF when the characters are demonstrably close friends²⁸, they are generally not considered to be particularly intertwined characters. In *Gotham*, however, the Riddler's entire existence depends on the existence of the Penguin, and even though the obverse is not necessarily a perfect equivalence, it is clear enough that the Penguin is at least somewhat fond of the Riddler for most of their acquaintance in the series.

2.4. Metatextuality

Indeed, it is notable that the characters' last, somewhat vestigial connection to humanity and empathy lies in each other especially at the end of the series, when both have fully embraced their futures as villains. Indeed, in S05E11 "They Did What?", the two make one final attempt to kill the other, as has been their custom for the past two and a half seasons, but neither can manage to actually go through with it. That particular scene is, in fact, an emblematic representation of the nature of their relationship in the series, strained though it may be at times: in the end, there is no other who understands them quite the way they understand one another. From this, two connections can be drawn: firstly, that their need for understanding and acceptance is in line with their established personalities in the series, and, secondly, that especially in their obsessive and cyclical animosity, the characters' relationship with one another is highly reminiscent of that

²⁸ Cf *Gotham Underground* #9, where the Penguin gives the Riddler the keys to the Iceberg Lounge, saying that, should anything happen to him, the Riddler will be the only person capable of running the club in line with the Penguin's high standards.

between Batman and his enemies – no clear victory is ever achieved as the cyclical nature of comics storytelling requires an open ending.

Indeed, as mentioned in the previous section of this thesis, the character arcs of the Riddler and the Penguin end in suspended animation as the series ends at the brink of Batman's arrival in Gotham City. From this, quite a few significant threads of franchise-internal commentary can be derived. The most obvious of these, as might be expected, would be the circular nature of the events surrounding the Penguin's storylines: the first season begins with him attempting to take control of the criminal underworld in Gotham City and ends with his success, the second season sees him lose that control and fight to regain it, ending with him retaking his position as the leader of the criminal underworld, the third season sees him become the mayor of Gotham, finally legitimizing his hold on the city, after which he loses the position but nevertheless manages to regain at least a portion of what he lost. The fourth season begins with him in power and losing power by the mid-point of the season, barely managing to regain it by the end of the season, and the fifth season sees him as one of the major players in the now decimated city.

As might be inferred, the cyclical nature of the Penguin's rise to and fall from power is indicative of more than the particular character in *Gotham*: rather, it can also be approached as another form of commentary on the cyclical nature of comics storytelling. Indeed, since these characters have existed for decades, they generally tend to go through the same events again and again with little resolution available as even death is not permanent in the comics medium. The *Gotham* Penguin also has his share of near-death experiences – and yet, despite coming close to the brink a number of times, he never actually dies.

Where *Gotham* entirely deviates from the general character, though, is in the relationship between Cobblepot and his parents: the parents of the *Gotham* Penguin love

him unconditionally. However, given that both his mother and his father end up murdered in the second season (S02E07 “Mommy’s Little Monster” and S02E16 “Prisoners”, respectively), the memory of his parents only ends up fueling his criminal tendencies and worsening his temper towards those he considers beneath him: of particular significance is the death of his father, which leads Cobblepot to readopt the moniker of the Penguin and return to the power struggle between the major players of the local criminal underworld once more with renewed vigor. Here, the parallel with the path that leads Bruce Wayne to taking up the mantle of Batman is striking. Indeed, when considering the theory that Batman’s enemies, as Brooker (2012: 137) puts it, “invert and caricature aspects of his persona in diverse and inventive ways, reflecting them in distorting mirrors and showing them as grotesque or ridiculous”, *Gotham* appears to abide by this logic even in the absence of the actual Batman, instead drawing parallels between the young Bruce Wayne and the Penguin. Furthermore, young Bruce’s desire to track down his parents’ killer and his eventual decision to let the killer go is mirrored in Cobblepot, who exacts gruesome revenge on his parents’ killers.

When speaking of metatextuality connected to the character of the Riddler, on the other hand, it becomes easily apparent that, unlike the Penguin whose metatextual properties generally affect his character through events and interactions with other characters, the Riddler’s metatextual properties built into the character primarily through traits as well as through his relationships with others. Moreover, where the Penguin’s regular identity and super-identity are generally treated as equivalent in *Gotham*, the identities of the Riddler are somewhat more complicated. Indeed, throughout the course of the series, there are three ‘versions’ of the character: first, there is Edward Nygma, the mild-mannered forensic scientist of the first season, who becomes the second, the proto-

Riddler, in the second season, followed by an eventual turn into the Riddler proper as the act of self-appellation occurs in the third season²⁹.

Indeed, one of the most striking pieces of imagery connected to both Edward Nygma as well as the Riddler in *Gotham* is the mirror. This manifests primarily in two ways, the first being literal mirrors and the distorted reflections of his own psyche the character interacts with, with a tendency towards a different version of himself alternately recognized as the so-called ‘Dark Ed’³⁰ or Riddler, depending on where within the storyline of the series the encounter takes place; the former appears on occasions taking place before the moment of Nygma’s self-appellation as the Riddler and the second in those after. Moreover, these visions always appear in times of internal turmoil, generally whenever Nygma is feeling conflicted about himself and his identity. This fracturing of identity, it should be noted, is interpreted in the context of this thesis merely as a stylistic device to denote the darker impulses that the character initially struggles with but eventually comes to accept rather than a manifestation of mental illness.

However, mirrors are also connected to the Riddler in a metaphorical sense. While the theme of mirrors/reflection is evident throughout the episode that functions as Nygma’s final transformation into the Riddler, namely S03E15 “How the Riddler Got His Name”, there is a marked shift from the literal mirror to the metaphorical one. Indeed, Nygma’s storyline in the episode concerns his search for someone new to oppose: in the preceding episode, the one-sided animosity between him and the Penguin had come to a head and ended in the Penguin’s death. This, in turn, highlights a significant aspect of not only Nygma’s character in *Gotham* but also offers metatextual commentary on the general

²⁹ It should, of course, be noted that the actual situation is somewhat more complicated, particularly in the first half of the fourth season, where the character flits between the regular and super-identity.

³⁰ This is not a term used in the series itself but rather simply shorthand for ‘the darker impulses of Edward Nygma’ for brevity.

modus operandi of the rogues' gallery across every text: for them to be defined – and to define themselves – an opposing force is required.

In the case of *Gotham*, however, that opposition cannot be Batman – thus, the Penguin takes his place both as Nygma's enemy, particularly in the third season, as well as the role of the driving force for Nygma's transformation into the Riddler. The episode ends with Nygma realizing he does not need an archenemy to define himself and naming himself the Riddler regardless, basing the decision on the memory of a defeated enemy rather than the presence of a living one. Soon after, though, the Penguin turns up alive, and Nygma, quite predictably, refocuses his attentions on his nemesis and demands his self-appellation to be acknowledged. This, in turn, further highlights the cyclical nature of not only their interpersonal relationship in the series going forward but of the protagonist-antagonist dynamic common in the Batman franchise, much like the Penguin's rise and fall to power offers a form of commentary on the nature of comics storytelling: in this context, as mentioned above, self-definition requires external validation. Indeed, it is only once the Penguin concedes and calls Nygma the Riddler in S04E15 "The Sinking Ship, The Grand Applause" that the conflict between Nygma's regular identity and super-identity ends.

However, this dependence on others for a validation of himself is not exclusive to the Riddler's interactions with the Penguin. Indeed, there are several storylines in the series where he models himself after what he thinks others want him to be, in particular with regards to romantic partners: his relationship with Kristen Kringle at the beginning of the second season, his relationship with Isabella in the beginning of the third, and his relationship with Lee Thompkins in the final episodes of the fourth season. As might be expected, all these relationships end badly³¹.

³¹ This will be discussed further in section 2.5.

Moreover, there is another particular moment that acts as a metatextual key to both Nygma's character arc as well as the arcs of other comics-originated characters in the series: in S05E12 "The Beginning...", there is a rather illuminating conversation between the Riddler and one of the series' original characters, Barbara Kean. The relevant section of the conversation goes as follows:

RIDDLER: Barbara... Do you even remember how amazing you used to be?

KEAN: Honey, I'm still amazing. [laughs] I just made a choice.

RIDDLER: You made a choice. **Some of us don't get to make choices.** [emphasis mine]

(transcribed from S05E12 "The Beginning...")

This, if one thinks back to the series as a whole, retroactively points out the inevitability of the Riddler's path: since Kean is an original character, her character arc has been significantly more pliable, allowing her to go from a side character to a villain to a legitimate businesswoman with little personal – or, indeed, narrative – consequence. In contrast, the Riddler cannot be anything other than the Riddler. Indeed, despite the three attempts at a modicum of normalcy as Edward Nygma through romantic relationships with women, the character still ends up returning to the life of the Riddler after the inevitable implosion of these relationships: in losing them, he loses the final tethers to the regular life that he can never have but desperately desires up until the point when he finally gives in to himself.

2.5. Hypertextuality

Indeed, when speaking more in depth of the Riddler's failed attempts at a normal life as well as his tendency to modify himself in accordance to what he thinks someone else wants from him, there is a clear line to be drawn between *Gotham* and another text in the Batman franchise. This text is the 2010 comic *Joker's Asylum II: The Riddler #1*, subtitled "The House That Cards Built". In the story, the Riddler meets a young art student

named Jessica Duchamp during a robbery and falls madly in love with her; however, he is continually rejected by her regardless of what he does. To win her affections, he studies her life obsessively and transforms himself into the type of good man he thinks she could love: thus, he attempts to solve the riddle of her. Additionally, there is a mystery at the heart of the story: a mysterious visitor keeps appearing at the Riddler's door, asking him to be a part of a crime. The visitor, whose true identity is never revealed, ends up threatening to kill Jessica's father to prompt her to lie to the Riddler and tell him that she loves him back. The story ends with Nygma realizing that he was never in love with Jessica the person, but rather Jessica the riddle, which prompts his return to villainy.

Regarding the visitor's identity, there are two main possibilities: the first being the Joker, who acts as the narrator and is central in the framing narrative, and the second being the Riddler himself. The latter of these would indicate a separation between the character's regular identity and his super-identity as it is the former who invariably receives these visits. Given that in the foreground of the last panel of the embedded story, a partial view of a figure in a green suit and purple gloves holding the gun is seen (*BAR* 2015: 237), it would appear that the second interpretation has textual backing: indeed, as has been established, green and purple in this ratio signal the presence of the Riddler. The implication then being that, despite hearing what he wanted from Jessica, Nygma resented her both because of his own falsehoods as well as hers.

If one thinks of the *Gotham* Riddler, parallels become immediately clear between this interpretation of the comics' narrative and the character arc of the Riddler in *Gotham*: not only is there a divide between the regular and the super-identity of the character present in the *Gotham* Riddler, it has been established that he mirrors others' expectations of him, particularly those of potential romantic partners, and yet cannot endure a permanent change to his self. Thus, one would reasonably presume that a similar

resentment builds in him towards those whose expectations he is trying to meet, and the relationships end with an inevitable implosion once he grows tired of the charade.

Indeed, the character's true journey into villainy begins when he accidentally suffocates his girlfriend Kristen Kringle in S02E06 "Scarification" after she finds out that he murdered her previous boyfriend Tom Dougherty: thus, she finds out he is not who he has pretended to be, and he finds out that she is incapable of accepting him for who he truly is. Similarly, his relationship with Lee Thompkins ends in assured mutual destruction as their differences prove to be insurmountable and the two decide to solve this disagreement by stabbing one another.

As might be expected, this displays almost all the mechanisms of hypertextuality that have been outlined in this thesis. Primarily, we are dealing with both diegetic as well as pragmatic transposition in that both events as well as the diegesis itself is modified in order to adapt the hypotext of *Joker's Asylum II: The Riddler* into the hypertext of *Gotham*. Moreover, there is also a significant amount of augmentation and reduction in the hypertext: there is extension and amplification in that the singular event of the hypotext becomes a traceable pattern of behavior in the hypertext, as well as concision through the complete omission of the character Jessica in the hypotext, whose role in the hypertext is substituted with several other characters due to the augmentation outlined above. In this case, then, the hypertext is generated through a heterodiegetic transformation of the hypotext.

Additionally, there is another instance of hypertextuality that is tied to the Riddler and is particularly noticeable: the fact that he works for the GCPD for a season and a half at the beginning of the series. This has a precedent in the video game *Batman: Arkham Origins*, where Nygma works for the police as well: however, there is a distinct difference in that the *Batman: Arkham* Nygma works in the cybercrimes division of the GCPD

whereas the *Gotham* Nygma is a forensic scientist. Furthermore, the *Batman: Arkham Nygma* has an additional super-identity that was not present in the general Riddler beforehand: in the *Batman: Arkham Origins* videogame, he uses the alias ‘Enigma’³² and thinks himself something of a vigilante, disregarding Batman’s arguments to the contrary. As for the mechanisms of textual transfer in this case, significant changes are apparent when comparing the hypotext of *Batman: Arkham Origins* and the hypertext of *Gotham*: diegetic and pragmatic transposition are immediately noticeable due to recontextualization and the change of event sequence – fittingly enough, though, both Nygmans lose their jobs in the end because their criminal proclivities become public knowledge. As might be expected due to the presence of pragmatic transposition, we are once more dealing with heterodiegetic transformation. Moreover, there is also extension present in the hypertext because the role of Nygma in the GCPD is significantly more plot-relevant and elaborated in *Gotham* than it is in the hypotext, where the identity of Enigma is only revealed at the very end of the video game and has no bearing on the main storyline of the game.

When speaking of hypertextuality in *Gotham* that relates mainly to the Penguin, however, the most salient instance of it is his mayoral campaign. As the phrase implies, the Penguin’s mayoral campaign consists of his vying for the position of Gotham’s mayor throughout the first four episodes³³ of the series’ third season. A clear hypotext for this is in the 1992 film *Batman Returns*, in which the Penguin does the same. A notable difference, though, is that the *Batman Returns* Penguin does not obtain the position as his derisive attitude towards the city’s people is revealed and it turns them against him. In the case of the *Gotham* Penguin, however, the campaign ends in victory as the people are

³² This, of course, highlights the fact that the character’s regular identity of Edward Nigma/Nygma is a pun on the word ‘enigma’.

³³ S03E01 “Better to Reign in Hell...”, S03E02 “Burn the Witch”, S03E03 “Look Into My Eyes”, and S03E04 “Anything for You”.

genuinely supportive of his campaign and believe in him, voting for him even without being coerced (cf S03E04 “Anything for You”).

Concerning the mechanisms of hypertextuality in this case, we are once more faced with several different kinds of textual transfer, the most significant of which are once again extension and amplification simply due to the contrast in the length of the storyline in the hypotext of *Batman Returns* and the hypertext of *Gotham*: simply put, the campaign is significantly more detailed in the hypertext. At the same time, we are also dealing with reduction in that the character of Max Shreck, who acts as the Penguin’s campaign manager in the hypotext and incentivizes him to run for mayor, is removed entirely from the hypertext and partially substituted by Nygma, who acts as the Penguin’s campaign manager for the majority of the campaign in the hypertext but does not make Cobblepot run for mayor like Shreck does; indeed, Nygma only takes the position because Cobblepot asks him to. When speaking of the type of transfer this might constitute, then, it can be interpreted as a case of diegetic and pragmatic transposition, much like the previous example of hypertextuality, as it changes the context of the adapted storyline and introduces significant change into both events as well as to the diegesis in which they occur. Thus, we are once again seeing a heterodiegetic transformation of the hypotext.

The most visible example of hypertextuality that is connected to both characters, however, is undoubtedly the submarine storyline in the final season of *Gotham*. In order to escape the decimated city, the Riddler and the Penguin work together to build a submarine from the scant resources available in order to navigate the mined waters of the Gotham river, as it is the only way out of the city after the destruction of the bridges that occurred at the end of the series’ fourth season (S04E22 “No Man’s Land”). The hypotext of this storyline would be the 1966 *Batman* film, in which the Penguin owns and operates a submarine. This submarine ends up serving as the getaway vehicle in the third act of the

film for all four villains³⁴ appearing in the film. However, in the film, it is never explained where exactly the submarine came from or how the Penguin managed to acquire it: from this, we can infer that the submarine in the film does not have an origin story. In *Gotham*, however, as mentioned before, the submarine is the joint creation of the Penguin and the Riddler, with the latter doing most of the actual work (cf S05E08 “Nothing’s Shocking”).

Speaking in terms of textual transfer, then, there are once again several mechanisms at work. Primarily, it is a case of amplification since the submarine goes from a simple vehicle to having its own plotline. Additionally, both diegetic as well as pragmatic transposition are at work: the circumstances in the diegesis that require the existence of the submarine are changed in the hypertext, as are the events connected to it. Moreover, there is also pure motivation in that both the Riddler and the Penguin have a reason for building the submarine in the hypertext, as well as demotivation in that, in contrast to the hypotext where the motivation for using the submarine is to escape Gotham City and evade Batman, in the hypertext the motivation is simply escaping Gotham City.

Regarding the Riddler and the Penguin, then, there are indeed traceable connections apparent between *Gotham* and the rest of the Batman franchise, and the hypothesis that these connections could be studied by combining the theory of transtextuality with character analysis is confirmed. Moreover, the analysis has shown that the same mechanisms of hypertextual transfer are used throughout with regard to both characters, with the focus being mainly on heterodiegetic transformation and pragmatic transposition (which are interdependent) as well as on simultaneous uses of augmentation and reduction that create a new narrative that remains recognizable enough to retain connections to other texts within the Batman franchise.

³⁴ i.e. the Joker, Catwoman, the Riddler, and the Penguin.

CONCLUSION

In the thesis, the characters of Oswald Cobblepot / the Penguin and Edward Nygma / the Riddler were examined in the television series *Gotham* with the help of the notion of transtextuality to determine how the series relates to other texts in the Batman franchise present in *Gotham* and whether these relations could be approached as a system. The selection of transtextuality as the investigative method was made due to its proven usefulness as an analytical method for the study of literary texts. The primary hypothesis of this thesis was that it could also be used on franchised fiction regardless of medium. Moreover, transtextuality presumes the use of narratological methods, which are particularly useful for studying a textual base that has not been studied from the perspective of structuralist narratology yet. This, then, was the research gap that this thesis strived to fill.

Indeed, particularly in the case of comics-originated franchises, scholarly attention thus far has had little regard for the narratives within individual texts of the franchises, focusing primarily on the external discourses of these franchises such as fan studies, reception theory, and cultural studies. However, franchises built around MSCFs rely heavily on narrative construction as well as textual transfer, which, in turn, can give valuable insight into how storytelling in franchised media functions. Moreover, in the case of franchised media that involves significant transmediation, the importance of diegetic elements which can be transferred is paramount. These factors, in turn, should inform a narratological analysis of such a franchise but should not dominate it: after all, different theories, much like augmentation and reduction, are not mutually exclusive. Thus, this thesis has incorporated several theoretical viewpoints in the production of its analysis.

The decision to approach the transtextuality in *Gotham* through character analysis was made due to the series' as well as its parent franchise's method of character-centric worldbuilding, where individual diegeses in the franchise share common characters, through whom the connection to the hyperdiegesis, i.e. the franchise in its entirety, is created regardless of features such as medium, author, and time period. The methodology used in the thesis derives primarily from Genette's, i.e. comparative analysis combined with the theory of transtextuality, with an added focus on characters. This was used in order to test the secondary hypothesis of the thesis, which was that character analysis could supply a solid baseline to assist the comparative analysis of both the *Gotham* diegesis and the Batman franchise hyperdiegesis as well as the *Gotham* diegesis and other independent diegeses of the Batman franchise to elucidate franchise-internal textual transfer.

The analysis produced appears to confirm this hypothesis. The particular characters of the Riddler and the Penguin in *Gotham* were found to correspond to the general characters of the Riddler and the Penguin in the Batman franchise hyperdiegesis through several character aspects originally outlined by Pearson and Uricchio (2015). It was immediately apparent that the more abstracted the components were, the more applicable they became. In the case of the *Gotham* Riddler and the *Gotham* Penguin, a near-perfect equivalence was thus found with regards to the characters' traits, iconography, and setting in relation to the same categories in their general characters. In the cases of the characters' relationships with other characters, it was found that the characters in *Gotham*, due to the absence of Batman, required other characters to be put into the position of the main enemy. However, while the Riddler replaced the main enemy with the Penguin for the bulk of the series' main narrative, the Penguin did not require such a singular enemy. This might be explained by the differences in the general characters' relations with Batman: while the Riddler undoubtedly has a particularly vitriolic relationship with Batman, the Penguin does

not. Thus, the characters' relationships in the narrow aspect would still be considered as correspondent to the hyperdiegesis.

What proved to be particularly divergent, however, were the events category of the character components: while there were some parallels to established fixed events in the general character, i.e. broad narrative of the origin story, there were also significant amounts of recontextualization as well as various modifications, particularly in the characters' valuation as well as motivation. Indeed, much like the differences in the characters' relationships were explicable by considering the omission of Batman from *Gotham* and its implications for both the diegesis as well as the narrative of the series, it appeared that the origin stories as portrayed in the series followed the general story of the fixed event if not a specific plot, with caveats made to make up for the absence of Batman.

The metatextuality in *Gotham* was found to be primarily tied to long-term narrative arcs and was found to primarily comment on comic book narrative techniques. Similarly, architextuality was found to be primarily tied to long-term narrative arcs with hyperdiegetic conventions both supported as well as subverted in the series, depending on which occasion of these conventions' appearance was examined. Hypertextuality, however, appeared to occur in shorter narrative arcs but, on one occasion examined by this thesis, did appear in connection to an overarching character theme. Moreover, these textual categories, as Genette (1997: 7) pointed out as well in his original publication, were found to occur not as strictly separable categories but, rather, as interwoven and layered structures that could be interpreted in several ways.

Furthermore, it was found that the mechanisms of hypertextual transfer were, particularly in the case of motivation and valuation, applicable to architextuality as well as hypertextuality. A significantly broader scope of research would be required in order to determine whether this was due to the specific nature of the study conducted in this thesis

or if this might be a feature of transtextuality in franchises overall. Additionally, it was found that the systematic linking that was expected proved to be there particularly in the instances of hypertextuality examined in the thesis: indeed, all instances featured similar techniques, among which heterodiegetic transformation and the pragmatic transposition necessitated by the former were particularly salient. This could be explained by the “What If?”, i.e. transformative, type of storytelling that *Gotham* was found to use: due to the series’ nature as an origin story which incorporates modifies significant amounts of the Batman franchise hyperdiegesis, it would be reasonable to expect this to also be noticeable in narratological analysis.

Overall, the use of transtextuality as an analytical tool appeared to be successful in that it allowed the analysis of textual links between *Gotham* and the Batman franchise hyperdiegesis to be conducted in a systematic way. The various connections found could then be categorized and examined not as isolated events but as manifestations of a franchise-internal logic of textual transfer. Moreover, it was found that this method was particularly useful for the study of narratives themselves in a way that allowed them to be considered by their similarities rather than their differences, particularly in the case of mediums.

However, it should also be noted that the analysis presented in the thesis cannot be considered comprehensive, as the selection of material was but a small percentage of the whole picture both in the cases of the characters as well as the texts. Moreover, since the study concerned a transmedial franchise whose central text is a massive, serialized, collaborative fiction, it cannot be said whether the kind of analysis conducted in this thesis can be transposed to other franchises that are similar but not identical. Indeed, other massive comics-originated franchises might be approachable in the manner utilized by this thesis, but in the case of transmediated fictions that are in the public domain, clear parallels

cannot be drawn as the requirements for the identification of characters who transcend the borders of a single text would need to be re-evaluated.

Furthermore, other research into a similar topic might benefit from the inclusion of media-conscious analytical techniques, as these might provide a different perspective. This would also allow for the inclusion of the stylistic mechanisms of hypertextual transfer which were omitted in this thesis. However, as different media have specific techniques for the construction of narratives which can but do not always overlap, a media-conscious perspective could prove to be valuable.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Helen Roostma

Transtextuality in the Batman franchise on the example of *Gotham*: a narratological study

Transtekstuaalsus Batmani frantsiisis telesarja *Gotham* näitel: narratoloogiline uurimus

(magistritöö)

2020

Lehekülgede arv: 74

Annotatsioon:

Magistritöö eesmärgiks on leida meetod strukturalistliku narratoloogia kasutamiseks frantsiisianalüüsis. Kasutades põhitekstina frantsiisi kuuluvat telesarja uurib käesolev magistritöö seda, kuidas valitud tekst suhestub teiste tekstidega sama frantsiisi lõikes. Uurimuse läbiviimisel keskenduti karakterianalüüsile, kuna valitud frantsiisi tekstiülesed elemendid on karakterid ning hüpoteesiks oli, et karakterianalüüsi abil on valitud analüütilise meetodika kasutamine kõige tõhusam selleks, et näidata, kuidas karakterite liikumine tekstide vahel frantsiisis toimuda võib.

Sissejuhatus annab ülevaate nii olemasolevast akadeemilisest tööst Batmani frantsiisi kohta kui ka tekstielementide leviku mehhanismide uurimise kohta. Töö esimene peatükk esitab ülevaate transtekstuaalsusest, frantsiisidest ja karakteritest, keskendudes töö jaoks olulistele aspektidele nagu temaatiline tekstielementide ülekanne transtekstuaalsuses, maailmaloo frantsiisides ja koomiksikarakterite peamised tunnusjooned. Töö teoreetiline raamistik on interdistsiplinaarne ning toetub peamiselt klassikalisele narratoloogiale (Gérard Genette), transmeedia uuringutele (Marie-Laure Ryan, Henry Jenkins) ning populaarkultuuriuuringutele (Will Brooker, Matt Hills, Roy Cook, Eileen Meehan, Roberta Pearson).

Töö empiirilises osas tutvustatakse nii Batmani frantsiisi kui uuritavaid karaktereid ning analüüsitakse nende kujutamist telesarjas *Gotham* kasutades kolme transtekstuaalsuse kategooriat, milleks on arhitektuaalsus, metatekstuaalsus ning hüpertekstuaalsus. Kasutades narratoloogia meetodeid ning luues paralleele terve Batmani frantsiisi ning *Gothami* aga ka *Gothami* ja üksikute tekstide vahel, üritab töö välja selgitada, kas seosed on süstemaatilised. Analüüs näitas, et süstemaatilisus on seoste puhul selgelt nähtav individuaalsete tekstide ja *Gothami* võrdluses, s.t hüpertekstuaalsuse tasandil. Arhitektuaalsuse ja metatekstuaalsuse puhul on samuti diegeetiliste elementide ülekandes mõlema karakteri puhul kasutatud karakteriaspektide ülekandeks sarnaseid võtteid.

Märksõnad: narratoloogia, karakter, frantsiis, transtekstuaalsus, populaarkultuur, Batman.

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