



Facultade de Filoloxía

Traballo de
fin de grao

The Walking Dead as a Transmedia Phenomenon

Autor: Christian Vázquez Nóvoa

Director: M^a Teresa Vilariño Picos

Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

Xullo 2016



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1. INTRODUCTION

I have chosen *The Walking Dead* as the subject to finish my degree due to a set of personal reasons. I read the comic series for the first time in my degree's third year and it influenced me in various ways for the next years. Talking about that work itself, the attempt to continue a zombie story beyond the known limits in its genre is unique. The outcome has been successfully exploring themes that anyone can identify with: failure, loss and then overcoming while we try to contribute to create a better future. These factors have always pushed humanity to discover a larger world than the one previously known, usually marking the end of an era, followed by a new beginning. These principles are suitable for both individuals and societies as a whole. The existence of the undead serves the purpose of increasing the idea that everything that is born must die, thus accelerating the cycles of destruction and recreation that have existed since the beginning of the world and of humankind.

All these ideas are the engine of this story and most of them can be put in relation with our “networked culture”. This term is used in Henry Jenkins' recent works such as *Spreadable Media: How to Create Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (2013).¹ This author is one of the pioneers in transmedia studies, his publications early highlighting the importance of fan communities.² The term transmedia storytelling was introduced by him in an article for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT),³ where Jenkins stated that “moving characters from books to films to video games can make them stronger and more compelling”. This idea was further developed in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006)⁴. Its third chapter, titled “Searching for the Origami Unicorn: *The Matrix* and Transmedia Storytelling”, is one of the models I followed in this essay. That is where Jenkins emphasizes not only the characters in *The Matrix* franchise, but the world they inhabit and how it can be explored by following all the traces across diverse media. Carlos A. Scolari offers a similar approach to the well known TV show *Lost* in his article “Lostology: Transmedia Storytelling and Expansion/Compression Strategies”. By commenting on all the “points of entry” into both franchises,⁵ these authors create a guide to these fictional worlds.

¹ Henceforth, referred to simply as *Spreadable Media*.

² An example is *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992).

³ From <<https://www.technologyreview.com/s/401760/transmedia-storytelling/>>

⁴ From this point onwards, simply mentioned as *Convergence Culture*.

⁵ Referenced in the beginning of chapter 2 of this essay.

“Transmedial Worlds - Rethinking Cyberworld Design” (2004) is an article written by Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca. They introduce the concept in the title as “abstract content systems from which a repertoire of fictional stories and characters can be actualized or derived across a variety of media forms” (Klastrup and Tosca, 2004: 1). As other authors, they mention the importance of “fan following across media as well.”

My purpose on this essay is creating a road map for this transmedial world that spans a variety of formats. There is no space available to explain all the views within it. However, I will make as much stops as possible during the trip in order to better explain what a story hiding behind tons of rotting flesh has to offer. Not only the creative minds associated with the franchise are given a voice in the next pages, but also my personal experience with their creations. Moreover, since *The Walking Dead* has invaded screens and shelves all over the world, some brief comments on the behavior of fans will also be provided. Many points that are apparently more appropriate for some chapters are distributed throughout the essay, which should be understandable if we accept the idea of transmedia being based in interconnection. As Jenkins claims in the closing paragraph of *Convergence Culture*:

Welcome to convergence culture, where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways. Convergence culture is the future, but it is taking shape now. (Jenkins, 2006: 259-60)

2. THE WALKING DEAD COMIC UNIVERSE

Each franchise entry needs to be self-contained so you don't need to have seen the film to enjoy the game, and vice versa. Any given product is a point of entry into the franchise as a whole. Reading across the media sustains a depth of experience that motivates more consumption. Redundancy burns up fan interest and causes franchises to fail. Offering new levels of insight refreshes the franchise and sustains consumer loyalty. (Jenkins, 2006: 96)

This is one of the statements by Jenkins that seems to be followed in transmedia environments even years after the publication of *Convergence Culture*. In the post-apocalyptic world created by Robert Kirkman, this rule seems to be applied as well. Thus, he created Skybound,⁶ in order to keep control over any products released under the label of his creations, according to an article published in the videogame website Polygon in 2015. In that article, he also mentions the importance of keeping quality in every entry point to the franchise, avoiding the more common fact of purchasing a license and subsequently look “at ways to milk money out of it”.⁷ In some interviews, he has addressed his different levels of involvement in the various *The Walking Dead* products.⁸ Comics—all of them featuring black and white art—, novels and videogames are the media building the comic universe so far. They feature different approaches to the zombie theme and its storytelling, but all of them are related to each other to different degrees within this fictional world.

2.1. THE WALKING DEAD COMIC SERIES

[U]na característica distintiva de los mundos transmedia es que su público y sus diseñadores comparten una imagen mental de su *worldness*, una idea del tiempo y el espacio del universo, de lo que se puede hacer en él y qué tipo de criaturas y seres humanos lo habitan. Dicho de una manera más simple, “lo que normalmente se siente” en ese mundo. Esta imagen mental está a menudo influida por la primera versión del mundo presentado. Llamamos a esta primera versión el *ur-universo* o *ur-actualización*. (Klastrup & Tosca, 2013: 180)

⁶ Skybound is a transmedia company founded by Robert Kirkman and David Alpert —AMC's *The Walking Dead* executive producer.

⁷ As an example, see chapter 3.3 of this essay, in which the same article is cited as well.

⁸ From <<http://www.adweek.com/adfreak/8-revelations-about-walking-dead-robert-kirkmans-reddit-ama-156423>>

Apart from the couple of terms mentioned above, these two authors also use the word ur-text or ur-world to refer to the first installment of a transmedia franchise or, as they prefer to call it, a transmedial world. Regarding our object of study, it is *The Walking Dead* comic series the one which fits this category. It started its publication in October 8, 2003, written by Robert Kirkman with Tony Moore providing its art until he was replaced by Charlie Adlard. It is published by Image Comics,⁹ a company that highlights the rights of comic creators, from which Kirkman was able to benefit. As the ur-text for this transmedial world, this comic is the core and/or origin for all the other media bearing its title. 156 issues have been released as of the date of this writing. Six issues together make a volume. Both formats will be cited throughout this essay.

The original story deals with Rick Grimes, a police officer from a little town in Kentucky, who is shot while pursuing a criminal and then left in a coma. He wakes up in a hospital some time later, finding the undead wandering everywhere. He travels to Atlanta looking for his wife Lori and their son Carl, finding them along with Rick's friend and job partner Shane. All of them belong to a heterogeneous group of people camping on the outskirts of the city. From this basic summary of the plot, there are some keys to understand how transmedia storytelling takes its part in this story. One of them is the time lapse during which Rick stays in a coma, vaguely determined and also overlapping with the beginning of the zombie outbreak. The other one is the city of Atlanta. Both elements constitute the onset for both the novels and the videogames.

Comments on the comic are scattered throughout this whole essay, since every franchise entry emanates from this ur-universe. However, there is a particular aspect that I would like to talk about in this chapter, even though it might be a bit abrupt to introduce it so early in my explanations. It happened very recently and it is closely related to fan phenomena, particularly to fan theories: so far, no major characters have appeared in a cover after having died, which fans have assumed as a unwritten rule.¹⁰ Covers usually mislead readers to believe that they can find relevant new information about the story on them. Thus, it might be consciously that Robert Kirkman has taken advantage of that situation—in a twisted way—for the first time. In order to contextualize, I have to explain that since the bloody events in issue 144 took place,¹¹ the story told in the comic series has seemingly been headed for a big conflict, which was confirmed when the cover for issue 157 was made public. We also have to take into account that

⁹ Image Comics is a comic publisher founded in 1992 by several former authors from Marvel. Robert Kirkman has become one of his partners on 2008.

¹⁰ The only exception up to issue 156 is Kal, a minor character who appeared in the cover for issue 124 despite having died on issue 123.

¹¹ *The Walking Dead* #144 was released on July, 2015. It is the 6th and last part of volume 24, titled *Life and Death*.

covers are released three months prior to the publication of its matching comic. The title of that issue is “The Whisperer War, Part 1 of 6”, in reference to the current antagonistic group: the Whisperers. These characters wear zombie-skin suits and move along with the undead herds, rejecting civilization. Their leader, Alpha, appears in the cover for issue 157, along with Rick Grimes and several inhabitants of Alexandria.¹² We have to add that the previous main villain, Negan, recently escaped his prison in Alexandria and joined the Whisperers, encouraging all kinds of theories by readers.^{13 14} Among these theories, Negan executing Alpha in order to gain Rick's trust was one of the most popular, but it lost strength as events went on. In straight relation to this, we have to add that the cover for issue 156, titled “Queen and King”,¹⁵ displays both villains very close to each other in an intimate pose. The release of the aforementioned cover for issue 157 with Alpha apparently confronting Rick and, one month later, the cover for issue 158 implying that Negan would be an ally of hers definitely set the new scenario from fans' perspective. However, and surprisingly, Alpha is not alive in issue 157: Negan has just decapitated her in issue 156. Of course, this starts multiple new theories about future events, since everyone's mindsets included Alpha still alive in order to, at least, begin the war. Unpredictability has been a constant in this franchise from its onset to its most recent issue, with comics leading the rest of the entries in this sense as well. In this case, the surprising part comes from the interaction between the covers and the story, as well as from what readers know about—and expect from—both of them.

2.1.1. THE WALKING DEAD SPECIAL COMICS

There are additional comics that expand the world of *The Walking Dead*. In the first place, there is a set of four six-page issues focusing on different characters' stories before their introduction in the main comic series. These brief issues are created by Robert Kirkman and Charlie Adlard, which guarantees their consistency with the ur-text. The first of them is dedicated to Morgan and was first featured at the end of *The Walking Dead* #34. Morgan had already been introduced in the debut issue of the comic series, along with his son Duane, but he decided to stay in Cynthiana when Rick left towards Atlanta. This special issue shows the quiet life of both father and son after they had met Rick. It also puts on display the characters' inaccuracy to locate themselves in

¹² Alexandria currently is the main setting in *The Walking Dead*.

¹³ Seen in *The Walking Dead* #152, published on March 2, 2016. It is the 2nd part of volume 26, *Call to Arms*.

¹⁴ More information on Negan in chapters 2.1.1 and 3.1 of this essay.

¹⁵ *The Walking Dead* #156 was published on July 7, 2016. It is the 6th and last part of volume 26: *Call to Arms*.

the calendar: Morgan delivers a Christmas present to Duane, claiming that “it could be two days past Christmas”. This parallels the main comic series, in which the characters have the same dilemma. Father and son are later found in the main series by Rick.¹⁶ Duane had turned into a zombie and Morgan had become mentally unstable due to his loneliness, henceforth joining the leading characters.

Another special comic, starring Michonne, was first released in the *Playboy* issue published on March 16, 2012. In this one-shot —or independent issue—, the reader is given account on how Michonne obtained her katana and the two mutilated zombies she was using to camouflage herself when she first appeared in *The Walking Dead*.¹⁷ This issue tells how, in the early days of the apocalypse, she manages to survive at home along with her boyfriend and a friend of his. When Michonne she is looking for supplies, she makes a stop at her neighbours' house, where she finds the katana. When she manages to return home, her boyfriend and his friend have already turned into zombies. Defending herself, Michonne cuts their arms and jaws, making the two of them unharmed and realizing that she could use them to move among all the other undead that populated Atlanta. Taking advantage of that fact, she achieves to run into the rest of the characters in the comic series. The concision of this short issue allows for even further development on the character's past story, which is explored in *The Walking Dead: Michonne*.¹⁸

The third of these short stories focuses on The Governor,¹⁹ the first prominent villain in the comic series and a leading character in the novel series.²⁰ Several times in the comics, a set of fish tanks with zombie heads in them were seen in The Governor's apartment. “The Governor Special” tells how this character gathered the fish tanks helped by a man, Scott, who was killed by the villain after completing the task. That is how he becomes the first victim in the The Governor's collection of heads. On the one hand, this issue explains why The Governor wants such a collection: he wants to look at horrors until he is not scared anymore. On the other hand, it also reveals the precise circumstances of the demise of Scott, who is a prominent character in the novel *The*

¹⁶ Seen in *The Walking Dead* #58, published on February 12, 2009, as the 4th part of volume 10: *What We Become*.

¹⁷ Seen in *The Walking Dead* #19, published on June 1, 2005. It is the 1st part of volume 4: *The Heart's Desire*.

¹⁸ See chapter 2.3.1 of this essay.

¹⁹ “The Governor Special” was released on February 13, 2013.

²⁰ *The Walking Dead* novel series is analysed in chapter 2.2 of this essay.

Road to Woodbury. In that book, Scott's head was found by Megan, which made her commit suicide without telling anyone what she had seen. Hence, this short story serves as a full closure for Scott, in a similar fashion to the solving of a murder in an investigation TV show. Thus, for a reader that only follows the comic series, including these special issues, Scott is not a known character, but simply another anonymous prey of The Governor. This exemplifies Jenkins' aforementioned idea that “reading across the media sustains a depth of experience that motivates more consumption” (Jenkins, 2006: 96). Readers of both media may quickly identify Scott due to details such as his numb face or his mention of Megan.

These three stories were compiled in *The Walking Dead Free Comic Book Day Special*.²¹ It included a fourth part starring Tyreese —a leading character from the comic series— along with his daughter Julie and her boyfriend Chris. The three of them manage to survive by staying at home during the early days of the apocalypse. Tyreese saves his life thanks to a hammer he casually finds in the streets. That hammer is seen in the comic series as his favourite weapon. In this issue, we also see how Julie is overprotected by Tyreese, who does not want leave her alone with her boyfriend Chris again. Moreover, the latter anxiously asks for a gun. All of this provides a note of irony to this short story, since Julie and Chris inevitably get some private time —along with two guns— in the main series. This results in Julie's death when both of them try to commit suicide.²² Thus, irony would be the most accurate word to define this story, instead of foreshadowing. In fact, this special issue was written and published much later than Julie's death.

“Here's Negan” (2016) is a twelve-part story also created by Robert Kirkman and Charlie Adlard. Four pages are released monthly in the *Image+* magazine.²³ The main character is obviously Negan, a character we have already mentioned. The first part was released on April 27, 2016, shortly after the airing of the TV show season 6 finale, where Negan was introduced for the first time to viewers. Moreover, the character also had an important moment in the comic series that month. April seemed to be the month of Negan, so it was a particularly accurate moment for readers to know

²¹ *The Walking Dead Free Comic Book Day Special* was released May 4, 2013. Tyreese's part was released on its own on October 9, 2013.

²² Seen in *The Walking Dead* #14, published on November 15, 2004. It is the 2nd part of volume 3: *Safety Behind Bars*.

²³ *Image+* is a magazine which includes previews and a catalog of upcoming issues for comics published by Image.

about his past. This is the first time that a story belonging to this transmedia world begins months prior to the apocalypse. Three parts have been published so far, revealing several details about the character such as his job, his wife and his mistress. His wife has cancer and when she seems to be in the last stages of her illness, the hospital alarms are activated for an evacuation: the apocalypse has arrived. Even though this is just the content of the first three parts, there are some elements that may be compared to the comic series. The fact that Negan —when established as a leader in the post-apocalypse— is a polygamist is not surprising, at least witnessing in “Here's Negan” that he had an affair when he was married. Also in the main series, when he first sees Alpha, he declares his love for her, later claiming that he likes “this bald thing” —in reference to Alpha's shaved head.²⁴ Obviously, his wife had gone bald as a result of her cancer therapy, which offers an interplay between both works and further contributes to enrich the character. Furthermore, in *The Walking Dead* #156, Negan made direct reference to the events of this short story, talking about how he had to become stronger. Thinking about future events in this mini-series, it is likely that we will see Negan getting his signature weapon. In fact, the first page consists of four panels of a lonely Negan sitting in a campfire with his baseball bat —named Lucille— and then the rest of the story is entered as a flashback. Speculating as a fan, as the name of his wife has not been revealed yet, probably the bat was named after the woman.

The last entry on this chapter is “The Alien” (2016). It was announced as an untitled comic related to the franchise, written by the reputed comic writer Brian K. Vaughan with art by Marcos Martín.²⁵ Vaughan is the first writer other than Robert Kirkman to write a comic embedded in this transmedia world. Released through the online platform Panel Syndicate, “The Alien” is set in Barcelona, where Jeff is rescued by a local woman named Claudia. She has a plan to reach America, where she thinks she will find a cure for the zombie infection. Jeff likes the idea, as he comes from that country and also confesses that he had received news about his brother being in a coma when Barcelona had already been quarantined for some days. Jeff also mentions that he has a little nephew. Fans have claimed to know who the character actually was when he first mentioned his name, ruining the surprise of the ending. For those not so excessively familiar with *The Walking Dead*, maybe it took longer. The fact is that

²⁴ Seen in *The Walking Dead* #154, published on May 4, 2016, and *The Walking Dead* #155, published on June 1, 2016. These are, respectively, the fourth and fifth parts of volume 26: *Call to Arms*.

²⁵ <<http://www.comicbookresources.com/article/brian-k-vaughan-announces-walking-dead-story-for-panel-syndicate-at-image-expo>>

when both protagonists reach the docks to sail to Ibiza —where they would get a better mean of transport— Jeff is bitten. His last request is that Claudia looks for his brother if she ever reaches America. She should search for someone called Richie, although in Jeff's words, probably nowadays “everybody calls him Rick”. Jeff dies with Claudia knowing no further details, which enhances the sense of hopelessness, a basic trait in the whole franchise. In the last pages, the writer of “The Alien” expresses his curiosity about Jeff since he was first named in the main series. Several times, Robert Kirkman had stated that Jeff would never appear in the comic storyline.²⁶ This has been kept true, since the narrative in this online comic never actually merges with the main series, apart from the kinship between characters.

2.2. THE WALKING DEAD NOVELS

GoldenEye: Rogue Agent (2004), a James Bond game where one gets to play the part of classic Bond villains like Dr. No or Goldfinger, restaging confronting 007 within digital re-creations of the original movie sets. Everything in the game is consistent with what viewers know from the Bond movies, but the events are seen from an alternative moral perspective. (Jenkins, 2006: 96)

This videogame mentioned in *Convergence Culture* has an essential plot similarity with this part of the franchise: villains are the stars. The Governor and other inhabitants of Woodbury, the town he rules, appear in the comic series as the first big human threat. These books develop these characters before, during and after their encounter with the protagonists of the ur-text. In the original medium, most of the Woodbury characters were no more than figures serving the villain's purposes. In these prose works, readers get to see that those 'figures' standing by The Governor's side own a background. Hence, we get to see a different perspective in some of the fictional events known from the comics, putting readers in the place of the antagonist. The novel series was originally conceived as a trilogy diegetically spanning until the moment that The Governor dies in the comics. However, the plans later changed and the series continued in a new and logical way. The basis for each novel is an eight-page outline by Robert Kirkman containing “basically the story arc, what he wants the novel to do, when and how people

²⁶ This was stated in the Letter Hacks section of *The Walking Dead* #107, where Kirkman and his editors answer mail from fans.

die, who survives, and locations”.²⁷ According to his own words, Bonansinga turns that outline “into 100,000 words of prose”.²⁸

About *Rise of the Governor* (2011), the first of these novels, Robert Kirkman recognises that despite The Governor's popularity as a villain among comic fans, “no one really knows what happened to him to make him the way he was”.²⁹ The writer uses what the readers know from the ur-text about this character's personal life to perform an interesting plot twist. For instance, comic readers know his name —Philip— and the existence of his zombified daughter Penny, apart from his brutal methods. The beginning of *Rise of the Governor* is set within the first days of the zombie outbreak, which locates the intradiegetic time while Rick is still in a coma. The protagonist group is constituted by Philip, his daughter Penny, his brother Brian and their friends Nick and Bobby. The action begins in Wiltshire Estates, a neighborhood near Atlanta, which is later visited by the characters in the ur-text. As the plot moves forward and the characters are forced to look for new safe places —resulting in Bobby's early death—, Philip shows increasing traces of the psychopath known in the comics. His brother Brian, shy, introverted and always taking care of Penny, is the main —but not the only— focalizer through whom the narrator tells the story. Philip protects his little group by following a dark moral path which reaches its climax after his daughter is shot and dies, keeping her as a zombie. Unexpectedly, Philip —always presumed by comic readers to be The Governor— is also killed shortly after reaching Woodbury. His friend Nick murders him after discovering that he sacrificed innocent people in order to feed Penny. It is then when Brian, whose mental fragility had been growing parallel to his brother's brutality, outrageously kills Nick. From that moment onwards, he adopts his sibling's name and identity, with no one from his group of friends still alive to tell the difference. He also takes control of the town and thus the psychopathic character —The Governor— known from the comics is established. There are other characters from the source material that are introduced in this novel, such as Caesar Martinez, Dr. Stevens and Alice Warren.

²⁷ From <<http://www.shockya.com/news/2013/03/19/interview-the-walking-dead-novels-writer-jay-bonansinga/>>

²⁸ From <<http://dailydead.com/exclusive-qa-jay-bonansinga-discusses-the-walking-dead-novels-including-the-fall-of-the-governor/>>

²⁹ From <<http://insidenewyork.com/2011/10/12/dead-man-walking-an-interview-with-robert-kirkman/>>

It is very interesting to see the level of details connecting both the comics and this novel. For instance, in chapter 4, Brian writes a sign and leaves it at the main entrance gate of Wiltshire States, the initial setting, in which his friend Bobby had just died eaten by zombies. The sign reads “Don't enter. All dead”. This object plays a part in issue 9 of the comic book,³⁰ when it is casually found by Rick Grimes, whose group had spent the night at the place. Rick fails to warn his partners on time and his friend Donna is devoured by the undead, which had been hidden up to that moment. This creates a parallelism between both comic and novel experiences and, therefore, between its characters. Another point to reflect upon is Philip torturing some people from the group that killed his daughter. It is one of the features later adopted by Brian when he swaps his identity and it is also well known by comic readers, as we will comment later.

In *The Road to Woodbury* (2012), the second novel, the focalizer and main character is Lilly Caul, who had only appeared in the climax sequence of a certain comic issue. In Bonansinga's words: “she just pops up in the comic book from nowhere and does something huge and epochal to the story and you have no idea who she is and where she came from”.³¹ In this second book, we witness Lilly's group wandering until they find Woodbury, already ruled by The Governor. Lilly tries to overthrow the town leader, since she doesn't agree with his methods, but she is stopped and slowly begins to trust him. In her group is also included Bob Stookey, another character first seen in a few scenes of the comic. Bonansinga explains how he tried to look for inspiration in order to develop him. He states that he “constantly went back and looked at the comics and got a lot out of that one picture of Bob, kind of slumped, and having the Governor walk by and go, ‘Bob, eat something’”.³² Scott and Megan,³³ were also a part of her original group. This is the novel from the original trilogy with the least connections to the comic, but it is essential in order to set a basis for many of its characters.

The third novel, *The Fall of the Governor*, was divided in two parts. The first one opens when the people from Woodbury sight a helicopter flying over the surrounding area and crashing shortly afterwards. This leads to the events happening in

³⁰ *The Walking Dead* #9 was published on June 15, 2004. It is the 3rd part of volume 2: *Miles Behind Us*.

³¹ See footnote 27.

³² From <<http://www.mtv.com/news/2601395/walking-dead-road-to-woodbury-robert-kirkman-jay-bonansinga/>>

³³ See the comments on “The Governor Special” in chapter 2.1.1 of this essay.

issues 27-33 of the source material,³⁴ since the helicopter is also seen by the characters in that medium, who are living in a nearby prison.³⁵ In those comic issues, Rick, Michonne and Glenn arrive to Woodbury after following the tracks from the helicopter crashing place. Then, they are secretly kept hostage and tortured by The Governor and some of his men, who try to get information about their home and the resources they can provide Woodbury. Rick and his two friends manage to escape with the help of Caesar Martínez, Alice and Dr. Stevens, who decide to leave the town. Michonne, in the first place, prefers to get her revenge on The Governor, who had raped and hit her several times. These events are seen from the perspective of the inhabitants of Woodbury in *The Fall of The Governor, Part One* (2013). The sequence of chapters in which Michonne tortures The Governor, now told from his point of view, constitutes the climax of the novel: he suffers hallucinations because of the pain, which reveals some scenes from his childhood through psycho-narration. Lilly, who remains the protagonist and main focalizer since *The Road to Woodbury*, moves from her initial lack of confidence on The Governor towards total commitment to his cause. The fact that she never gets to see what actually happens to the visitors, as well as the abortion she suffers due to stress, make her advance in that way. However, a reader who has not experienced the comics can tell The Governor is not innocent, since he is a focalizer in the book as well. Even though some sections are omitted, the reader—unlike Lilly—is able to see the damage caused by him to Rick Grimes and company.

Talking once more about the comic, *The Walking Dead* #43 is a flashback of The Governor from the moment he is found badly wounded in issue 33 up to his at the doors at the prison to get his revenge. The first chapters of *The Fall of the Governor, Part Two* (2013) expand the events told in that comic issue, particularly focusing on Lilly's perspective. She notices how The Governor manipulates information to instigate an attack against their new enemies. Thus, doubts about the leader cross her mind again. In both media is seen that after making some research miles around, the location of Rick's group is confirmed. Shortly after this, the assault begins. The victims among comic protagonists amount to eight.³⁶ Thanks to the novel, we also have names for the

³⁴ *The Walking Dead* #27-30 are included in *The Best Defense*. *The Walking Dead* #31-33 are included in *This Sorrowful Life*.

³⁵ *The Walking Dead* #25, published on January 15, 2006, as the first part of volume 5: *The Best Defense*.

³⁶ As it is also seen in *The Walking Dead* #44-48, which along with the aforementioned issue 43 complete the 8th volume: *Made to Suffer*.

Woodbury soldiers fallen in that battle. It is in this whole sequence when we realise that Lilly also featured in the comic: she is the murderer of Lori and Judith —Rick's wife and their new born baby—, which is the “something huge and epochal to the story” referred to by Bonansinga when he describes the character. Following this moment, the text puts on display Lilly's stream of consciousness: finding out that she had just killed a baby is even more shocking for her after her recent abortion. Thus, her true reasons to suddenly murder the Governor, are made clear. In Lilly's only scene in the comics, she just follows The Governor's orders to kill the enemy. When the task is completed, and in deep regret for her actions, she immediately puts down her leader. The team formed by Kirkman and Bonansinga has built a whole story based on a character that only appeared in some vignettes. Lilly's story since her introduction in the second novel was meant to lead readers to this event, bonding both mediums even more strongly. Furthermore, we also get to read that she, along with some other Woodbury survivors, managed to survive. As a matter of fact, they had not been featured in the comic ever since The Governor's death. Another connection worth mentioning is Lilly's remorse while her group, during the aftermath of the slaughter, is trapped inside the prison. In those hours, her repentance is unbearable when she sees the bedroom of a child named Sophia and its childish decoration. Sophia is, indeed, one of the children among the comic protagonists. This is also a chance for comic readers to revisit one of the most emblematic settings in the series. After they manage to escape, Lilly's first deed as the new leader of Woodbury is killing zombie Penny and burying her, thus giving a full closure to the Blake family not seen in the comics. She also destroys the fish tanks in which The Governor collected undead heads, hence she finds out what happened to her friend Scott.

Some instances of scenes featuring The Governor and Lilly's stream of consciousness narration have already been mentioned. Nevertheless, those are not the only times that this kind of storytelling appears in the novel series. Speaking the truth, it is the main device for character development and the distinctive trait for this branch of *The Walking Dead* transmedial world. In the comic series, the characters reject talking very much about their previous lives, since it is pointless for who they are in the apocalypse. This idea is also true for the novels, but with the insight obtained through the omniscient narrator, readers learn much more details about these characters' inner struggles than they will ever do with the comic protagonists. This literally confirms

Henry Jenkins' thought about different "levels of insight" (Jenkins, 2006: 96) that should be offered in each entry point to any franchise. Other authors support the novel format to "introduce your audience to the voice of your main character or characters" (Bernardo, 2014: 67). About these particular works, Jay Bonansinga asserts:

I think the books are an opportunity for fans to go deeper into the psychology. With the others you can't really get internal monologue, you can't really get thought and feeling. It's all visual. With a book you get to look at where these people came from and see their trauma, their childhood, their loves, their losses, their grief, who they are. You can find out more about settings too. Woodbury is a real place, you can go visit it. The book gives you a deeper texture of the town and what's beyond the borders and the frames of the comic book. It also can provide a more vivid, visceral gross out.³⁷

We can find more examples of comic-novel connections within the first chapters of *The Fall of the Governor, Part One*. For instance, when Lilly and some of her colleagues are scouting the areas surrounding Woodbury, they find a zombie whose description perfectly matches Andrew's. He was one of the inmates of the prison in the comics, who had ran away from the place after a failed rebellion against Rick's group.³⁸ This novel is the only source in which his fate is confirmed, since he was never seen in the comics after his getaway. Moreover, from this book onwards we get to know Gloria, one of the citizens of Woodbury. She is initially vaguely described as a woman wearing a cap who takes part in Tyreese's capture. This is a very important turn of events in the ur-text, where Tyreese is a prominent character. His capture is followed by his traumatic death. With his demise, comic readers were once sent a message that had not been so striking until that moment: no one is safe. As it was stated before, the comic did not provide an actual approach to many members of the Woodbury attacking force, Gloria among them. Indeed, if we read comic issues 45 and 46, in which Tyreese is captured, among his capturers there is a woman who wears a cap. The emphasis here relays on the fact that the novels present a new notable character for their storyline in the same sequence of events that results in the death of one of the main comic characters. This fact is also consistent with the source story: the introduction of new prominent characters has been followed by the death of some of the leading veterans more than

³⁷ See footnote 27.

³⁸ Seen in *The Walking Dead* #19, published on June 1, 2005. It is the first part of volume 4: *The Heart's Desire*.

once. Furthermore, another remarkable trait is the description of comic protagonists, even those who never got into direct touch with the novel characters. Let us pick, for instance, Andrea. She is an outstanding sniper in Rick's group who manages to greatly diminish Woodbury's forces. She has also become one of the longest surviving characters in the comic and a fan favourite. Hence, seeing a distant description of her, mixing both hatred, fear and fascination, is an added value to comic readers.

After this novel, in which the overlapping with the comic storyline ends, Robert Kirkman leaves Lilly and her surviving colleagues to Jay Bonasinga's complete will. With this, the novel series definitely runs separate ways from the ur-text. Thus, Bonasinga has written *Descent* (2014) and *Invasion* (2015). In both cases, the antagonist is Jeremiah James Garlitz, a preacher willing to fulfill "God's will" to erase mankind. In *Descent*, he manages to severely damage the walls of Woodbury. As a result, many of its remaining inhabitants die devoured by zombies or caught in the gunfire, including most of Jeremiah's allies. He gets to escape with two of his comrades and in the first chapters of *Invasion* they find a new group whose leader is killed by the preacher. Then, he persuades the rest of the members in that new group to attack the survivors from Woodbury. If you swap Jeremiah for The Governor in the TV show, this is an almost exact transcription from the first episodes of season 4.³⁹ However, the TV show has also made its borrowings from this book series, as it will be later commented on.

About the future of this series, a new novel has been announced to be launched on October, 2016. Its title will be *The Walking Dead: Search and Destroy*. Its official synopsis displays that "Lilly and her plague-weary band of survivors" are the protagonists again. It goes on by saying that "banding together with other small town settlements, they begin a massive project to refurbish the railroad between Woodbury and Atlanta".⁴⁰ This seems like an approach to the current situation in the comics, where a net of communities has been established and communications improved. Concluding this chapter, some details in the novel contradict parts of the comic, even though these are minor parts. The passage of time has always been confusing in the franchise, but the omniscient narrator in the book series usually sets the time of the global outbreak in an unlikely time: two years before *The Fall of the Governor*. That would conflict the comic

³⁹ "Live Bait", the 6th episode of season 4, aired on November 17, 2013. "Dead Weight", the 7th episode of season 4, aired on November 24, 2013.

⁴⁰ From <<http://us.macmillan.com/robertkirkmanstthewalkingdeadsearchanddestroy/robertkirkman>>

storyline, since barely a year has passed up until that moment in the timeline. Whether it is an unreliable narrator what is faced in this case or a lack coherence between both mediums is unknown. What is for sure is that the retelling of the story changing perspectives is, generally speaking, quite solid.

2.3. THE WALKING DEAD VIDEOGAMES

Under licensing, the central media company —most often the film producers— sells the rights to manufacture products using its assets to an often unaffiliated third party; the license limits what can be done with the characters or concepts to protect the original property. Soon, licensing will give way to what industry insiders are calling “co-creation.” In co-creation, the companies collaborate from the beginning to create content they know plays well in each of their sectors, allowing each medium to generate new experiences for the consumer and expand points of entry into the franchise. (Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 2006: 105)

Proving this statement by Henry Jenkins to be true, Robert Kirkman's company Skybound has taken control over every product related to the comic branch of this intellectual property. *The Walking Dead* (2012), developed by Telltale Games, was supervised by the comic writer and its company. To achieve this, Skybound has hired Dan Murray as a Transmedia Producer,⁴¹ who leads the videogame projects of the company. Its episodic structure keeps it even closer to the source material, by following a bimonthly schedule that keeps players guessing about the future development of the plot. Moreover, every episode is followed by a preview of the next one and preceded by a recapitulation of previous events, thus mirroring a TV series. Its continuity through seasons also contributes to that similarity. Two seasons, each containing five episodes, have been released so far, besides the interstitial downloadable content “400 Days” (2013). A third season is already in the works.

In the first videogame —or the first season— the main character is Lee Everett, a man who is being carried from Atlanta to prison for having killed his wife and her lover. However, the vehicle in which he is being transported has an accident when the driver tries to evade a zombie in the road, which he got confused with a living person. This is how Lee becomes conscious of the existence of zombies. Shortly after that, he

⁴¹ Recognized as a standard job by the Producers Guild of America in 2010, according to Henry Jenkins and his co-writing partners in *Spreadable Media*.

finds Clementine, a little girl whose parents were in a trip for some days. He immediately feels protective towards her, helping her to be a stronger survivor. As usual in the franchise, they search for a safe place along with other people who is found on the way. Since we get to see the beginning of the apocalypse, it is clear that the videogame's storyline starts while the comic protagonist is in a coma. One of the first places Lee and Clementine visit is the Greene farm, one of the flagship locations in the franchise. They are led there by a young man called Shawn. Probably, many players who had also read the comics did not notice at first sight that they had already met Shawn in its pages, but he was quite different. He appeared in issue 11 of the comic book,⁴² being Hershel's older son turned into a zombie. He was kept in the farm barn as his father waited for a possible cure to the infection. In the videogame, when the player visits the place while controlling Lee, they also get to meet Hershel and witness Shawn's death, thus setting the basis for both characters as they are later—intradiegetically speaking—seen in the comics. Shawn's death is inevitable regardless of our decision to help him or to help Duck, the other character who was in danger in that scene. Duck is the little son of Katjaa and Kenny, who is one of the most prominent characters in the videogame. The three of them were introduced in the Greene Farm. Whereas Shawn's death was inevitable regardless of the player's choice on whom to help, Duck will survive anyway. However, the developers consider that “it doesn't mean that the choice is meaningless because everybody remembers that choice, and that ripples through the entire game”.⁴³ That means that Kenny has different attitudes towards Lee later, depending on what the player decides in that critical instant. Commenting on parallelisms with the source material, we can see that Hershel follows a similar behavior in both entries. In *The Walking Dead* #11, after the zombies in the barn—including Shawn—kill two more of his children, he expels Rick's group from the farm. That is exactly what he does with the characters in the videogame after Shawn's death. This parallelism, apart from the obvious reminiscence for comic readers, provides consistency for the character in both mediums.

In the videogame, not all deaths are always unavoidable, which creates more differences in the story according to the player's decisions. This causes optional deaths to exist: the player is usually forced to “pick between a terrible thing and a different

⁴² *The Walking Dead* #11 was released August 15, 2004, as the fifth part of volume 2: *Miles Behind Us*.

⁴³ From this interview: <<http://www.giantbomb.com/articles/the-walking-deads-faces-of-death-part-1/1100-4335/>>

terrible thing”, according to the co-writer and co-project leader Jake Rodkin. This is how the story progresses, offering players alternatives to make their experience with the game somewhat different everytime they replay it. Later in the same episode, you have the choice to save Carley or Doug, with the decision immediately resulting in the death of the character you did not choose. The story will have some differences involving dialogue and character interaction depending on the surviving character, but the main storyline will keep the same path. For instance, the reaction of both characters towards the death of the other one has slight differences: Doug wishes Lee had saved Carley, whereas Carley, despite feeling terrible, understands Lee's decision. However, no matter who of them survives in the first episode, they will die shortly after the beginning of episode three. Moreover, as the players gathered experience through their progress in the videogame and its sequel, they realized that optional death or survival just buys the surviving character some more time. Knowing about this became even quicker thanks to the internet, where players share their experience. Even though there are some variations in the story regarding those determinant events, many players criticised Telltale Games for not developing a more ambitious project. They wanted bigger differences to happen following their choices.

Shortly after their brief visit to Hershel's farm and still in episode one, the videogame characters visit Lee's hometown Macon. In that place, they meet a group that includes Glenn, one of the main characters from the comics. He features the same set of skills that he displays in the comic: he is stealthy and agile, which allows him to reach and gather all kinds of objects. At the end of the episode, Glenn departs towards the Atlanta with the hope to find some friends. Being provided some background to the character and that being cohesive to the ur-text is an appreciated detail for fans. This first episode is the only one that has a direct connection to the comic characters.

Beyond plot connections, videogames and comics in this franchise obviously have more common traits. It is natural that they develop the same themes and motifs, but each one delivers different approaches to them. For instance, cannibalism is addressed in the videogame's second episode, “Starved for Help”, in quite a different manner than *Fear the Hunters*.⁴⁴ The latter first introduced this theme to the comic series by means of a stealthy gang that kidnaps the weakest members of other groups when they are distracted. However, those people had the bad luck to come across Rick's

⁴⁴ *Fear the Hunters* (2011) is the 11th volume of *The Walking Dead* comic. It includes issues 60-66.

group when they were already hardened survivors, so the cannibals were immediately dealt with after being found. In the videogame, the cannibals seem peaceful people living in a farm. The protagonists arrive to the place after one of them —Mark— is wounded. The people in the farm offer to cure Mark's wounds and to feed the whole group. However, after a nice afternoon, the meal they serve is not other than Mark's legs turned into steaks, cooked and served in a plate. The intrigue is kept for a long time in both cases, but in the ur-text the human eating becomes evident the first time we get to see the villains telling tell their victim how tasty his leg is. On the other hand, the videogame takes advantage of its interactivity and it is the player who gathers several hints that lead to discover the secret in the farm. Moreover, the victim in the comics —Dale— is a leading character in his medium, whereas Mark had just been introduced in the videogame at the beginning of the episode. The storytelling characteristic of each media and the consideration put towards both victim characters makes these different approaches accurate and refreshing. In fact, as stated before, the game was entirely written by Telltale Games and supervised by Robert Kirkman. He immediately recognised the “tone and feel” of his comic series in the script, with no further intervention on the writing and development. Telltale's work was highly praised by its powerful and moving story, winning the 2012 Game of the Year Award from many media. Unlike what happened with the harshly criticised TV-related videogame,⁴⁵ the comic writer was in direct contact with the developers of this videogame. He states that through Skybound they are “trying to make sure that all these games exist because they're good games, as opposed to because it's a popular license”. This assertion confirms Jenkins' theory cited at the beginning of this chapter: co-working is becoming more popular than licensing.

The downloadable content for this first videogame was “400 Days”, a series of five short stories featuring different characters who visit the same place in different moments. It serves as a link between the first two seasons of the videogame, introducing new characters. Moreover, a safe spot called Howe's Hardware, which is an important setting in *The Walking Dead: Season Two*, is first mentioned here. Depending on the player's decisions during these short stories, some characters may or may not be gathered in the epilogue and then head towards that place.

⁴⁵ The TV-related videogame is *The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct*. See chapter 3.3 of this essay to know more.

The five episodes of *Season Two* follow the surviving characters from the first game: little Clementine, Christa and Omid. This can be seen as a way to illustrate that both stories present more differences. Let us take the common theme of hopelessness as the next topic. From the beginning, this group has been smaller and has had worse luck than the comic protagonists at finding safe places. Even though in both mediums survival is dramatically difficult at some moments, Rick's group has never been so small as Clementine's. She becomes the protagonist of the game series after Lee's death, having been its deuteragonist up until that moment. The fact of controlling a little girl also contributes to that increased sense of hopelessness, not to mention the death of the first protagonist. That sensation is even more intense after Clementine's caretakers are out of the story: Omid dies at the beginning of *Season Two*, whereas Christa disappears after an attack by bandits. After some difficulties, Clementine manages to find another group, but they do not accept her easily. What is achieved is providing a new approach to the same theme of survival.

After reuniting with Kenny, whose death was assumed in the last episode of the first videogame, Clementine's group becomes larger. They are almost immediately attacked and captured by another group lead by Carver. He is the leader of Howe's Hardware, the safe spot mentioned in "400 Days". This section of the game has several similarities with The Governor's plotline in the comics: the main characters are kept prisoners and have to find their way out of the place using violent measures. The characters from "400 Days" that the player had managed to recruit for this community now appear in *Season Two*. Bonnie, who was the only of them joining regardless of the player's actions, becomes a new member of Clementine's group after they manage to escape. This settles another parallelism with The Governor's storyline: a character first placed in the villain's side becomes a new partner for the protagonist group. In this second videogame, there is no possible connection with the ur-text due to geographical distance between both storylines. Furthermore, there is an almost total lack of gaps in the comic to make both of them coincide without breaking coherence on the original story. Kirkman gave the Telltale Games' staff some hints of what he intended to write for the comic series and hence some points that should be avoided in *Season Two*, but he described the developers' work as "a great success". This second game ends in five possible ways, all of them very different from each other. Clementine and baby Alvin Jr. remaining alive is the only common point in the five of them. It would be difficult to

start a new game taking into account all the possible endings, since it should feature a variety of different beginnings. Nevertheless, it seems that Telltale Games has found a solution for this.

Robert Kirkman recently revealed that *Season Three* will “be getting pretty close to where we are in the comics currently”.⁴⁶ *The Walking Dead* #127 featured a time skip spanning two years,⁴⁷ so that implies that the videogame will also make an important time ellipsis. When the first teaser trailer for the videogame was released, a teenage Clementine —clearly older than in the previous videogame— appeared in it, which confirms the earlier statement. According to Telltale Games' staff, this season will show that, “depending on the paths players may have taken with her in the past, she may or may not be exactly the same person we knew back then”⁴⁸. That would probably mean that the game will portray the same storyline independently from the ending achieved in *Season Two* by each player. However, since the data saved will still be important, it is likely that her mindset and conversations will vary regarding that ending. Javier, the character introduced along with Clementine in the trailer, will also be a playable protagonist. This will be the first time in the series that players will be able to control two characters. Robert Kirkman also confirmed that *Season Three* will be more connected to the comic storyline than *Season Two*. That is not difficult due to the size that the network of communities in the ur-text is achieving and the existence of the time gap in both storylines, which opens numerous possibilities to explore.

2.3.1. THE WALKING DEAD: MICHONNE

The Walking Dead: Michonne (2016) is also developed by Telltale Games. This videogame is directly related to the comic storyline. In fact, her protagonist is Michonne, one of the leading survivors in the ur-text. Clementine and the rest of the characters from previous videogames do not take part at all in these events. Anyway, the gameplay style is the same, making the story change according to the player's decisions. After the aforementioned time skip in *The Walking Dead* #127, her situation was

⁴⁶ From <<http://www.ign.com/articles/2016/04/25/telltale-the-walking-dead-season-3-will-be-checking-in-on-clementine>>

⁴⁷ *The Walking Dead* #127 was published in 2014, as the first part of volume 22: *A New Beginning*.

⁴⁸ From <<https://telltale.com/community/discussion/106884/sneak-peek-at-telltale-next-season-of-the-walking-dead-revealed-at-e3>>

unknown for readers up until issue 139.⁴⁹ Then, she returns from the sea, being a member of the fishing boat *The Companion's* crew. Rick tells her about everyone's concerns about her sudden disappearance, to which she answers explaining her remorse for having abandoned her children in the past. She has decided that she does not deserve to be happy because of that. Fans only reading the comic have not been provided with further information on this part of Michonne's past, but they can get it from this interactive story. It starts with Michonne, lonely in the middle of the forest, where she is having hallucinations in which two little girls cry for her help. She tries to commit suicide and is quickly stopped by Pete, both of them meeting in that scene. That is when Michonne joins *The Companion's* crew, who provide the communities in the comic with fish. Thus, the time represented in the game is set during the time gap between comic issues 126 and 127. The game is always coherent with the storyline written by Robert Kirkman. For instance, Michonne does not have her trademark katana with her, since she left it in her former home before suddenly disappearing. The weapon is kept by her former boyfriend Ezekiel, who tries to give it back to her when she returns in issue 139. The dialogue lines selectable by the player also fit the character known from the comics, the player just choosing the mood with them. Moreover, her hallucinations are also consistent with her former customs: she "talked to" her deceased boyfriend Mike for a long time in the comic.

After hearing a call for help on the radio, Pete and Michonne investigate the surrounding area, finding Samantha and Greg, two young siblings. The four of them are made prisoners by a large community of pirates. The conflict between groups is a trademark in the series and in zombie narratives overall. Once more in the videogames, there are parallelisms with *The Governor* storyline, as it had already been seen in *Season Two*. Greg is accidentally killed, triggering a violent escape by Michonne and Samantha. They shelter in the latter's house, inhabited by the rest of her still living family, whereas Pete may remain captive or escape with them regarding the player's actions. As *The Governor* did in *Made to Suffer*, the villain group in this videogame plans on taking revenge. Randall, one of the enemy leaders, is held hostage after a first attack and his sister Norma tries a rescue along with her comrades. In the meantime before her arrival, the player has several options on what to do with Randall. Probably, a player who has read Michonne's experiences with the Governor in the comics might

⁴⁹ *The Walking Dead* #139 was published on March 25, 2015, as the first part of volume 24: *Life and Death*.

give this whole sequence a second thought. This parallelism enriches the experience: players can either control the situation taking into account their personal perspective only from the game storytelling or they might try to put themselves in the place of Michonne regarding her past. However, being conscious of the character's past or not, each player is free to interpret Michonne in a different way, ordering different actions for her to perform. When Norma arrives, she has The Companion's crew taken hostage—Pete included or not depending on actions in the beginning of the second episode—and there is a hostage exchange. Randall can be returned either alive or zombified, but the exchange is never successful and a bloody battle begins. Michonne has been seeing hallucinations involving her daughters all along, which ultimately puts her in danger when she enters Samantha's burning house. If the player decides to leave Michonne's mind projection of her daughters, she is able to save herself. Otherwise, Samantha pulls her out the window, saving Michonne but sacrificing herself when she is immediately trapped by the crumbling house. The members of Samantha's family who are saved—including her or not—are sent to Oceanside, one of the communities in the comics, putting an end to the game. In the source story, Oceanside was discovered by the previously known settlements sometime between the time skip and so far has only been mentioned, remaining unseen.

The details following the events in *The Walking Dead: Michonne* are not told, but Siddiq—who was among The Companion's staff—was the one to establish the first contact between Oceanside and the other communities.⁵⁰ Siddiq was already known to readers, among the population of Rick's settlement, Alexandria, from *The Walking Dead* #127 onwards. He already showed clear signs of confidence and integration in that community, so we can take for granted that he had been living there for a while. Pete had also been seen in the comics in issue 139, when Michonne arrives on board of the ship. In issue 151, curiously released on the same month than the first episode of this videogame,⁵¹ Michonne mentioned that she owed Pete a lot, hence teasing comic readers to explore her adventure. Some details in that past shared by both characters may vary due to the videogame's nature. However, that Pete rescued Michonne and allowed her to join his crew is an unvariable fact in that story. Michonne's hallucinations may as well serve as flashbacks, complementing the story of her first

⁵⁰ This is revealed in *The Walking Dead* #142, released on June 10, 2015. It is the 3rd part of volume 24: *Life and Death*.

⁵¹ *The Walking Dead* #151 was released February 3, 2016, as the first part of volume 26: *Call to Arms*. “In Too Deep”, the 1st episode of *The Walking Dead: Michonne* was released on February 23, 2016.

days in the apocalypse as told in “Michonne Special”. If that comic told how she got her katana and the two zombies that served her as a camouflage, these flashbacks show how she was not able to find her daughters after the beginning of the outbreak. Nevertheless, it is unknown which of these two stories happened first.

Probably showing some signs of pattern reiteration regarding the rest of the franchise, this videogame results in an interesting experience on its own. Michonne's identification with Samantha is curious, since the latter has to take care of her youngest brothers James and Alex. The protagonist's hallucinations occasionally make her see her daughters instead of Samantha's brothers. That might ultimately lead to Samantha's demise if the player decides Michonne not to be stronger than her past. Since all the story with her daughters is only revealed in this videogame, it is not necessary to know the comics to fully enjoy it. However, not breaking the transmedia rules, knowing about this character from other media will provide the experience with an extra sense of reward. It is still unknown if Samantha and some other characters from this videogame will ever appear in the comic franchise, but they may well appear in the videogame's *Season Three*. It would be a great way to make both comic and videogame storylines come tightly close to each other.

3. THE WALKING DEAD TV UNIVERSE

Es como si los guionistas hubiesen desarmado esos tres libros, descartando algunas páginas y rearmado las viñetas para conformar un único relato cinematográfico. Estas transformaciones también trajeron aparejados cambios en la estructura narrativa y los personajes ... ¿Podemos seguir hablando en este caso de adaptación? Yo creo que sí, aunque se trata de una adaptación muy libre de tres obras originalmente publicadas en la década de 1940. ¿Estamos en presencia de un fenómeno transmedia? Sí. En la gran pantalla aparecen nuevas situaciones ... y ciertos personajes desempeñan un rol diferente en la historia. (Scolari, *Narrativas Transmedia*, 2013: 48)

Through this comment on the film *The Adventures of Tintin* (2011), Scolari states that it is sometimes difficult to establish a clear limit between adaptations—which are very common since the origins of cinema and TV—and transmedia experiences. However, instead of confronting this as a problem, he accepts the possibility of both approaches happening at the same time in a given work. In some ways, AMC's *The Walking Dead* presents aspects that could be considered an expansion of the comic storyline, thus offering a transmedia experience. However, as seasons go on, there is an accumulation of major changes, additions and omissions in plot and style that make this categorization difficult to accept without giving it some thought. Nevertheless, it is important to notice that the TV show opened its own path to explore transmedia storytelling through webisodes and videogames, establishing a kind of alternative universe to the world presented in the comic. Speaking in other words, the TV show has become some kind of second ur-text, and the only one to many people. It takes the structure, the settings and some basic features of every character from the comics to develop them following different treatments, but it involves essentially the same milestones regarding the overall plot.

3.1. THE WALKING DEAD TV SERIES

As TV is a different medium, some of the changes between the comic and the show are easily explained. The first reason for these changes is that Robert Kirkman is the only writer in the comic since the first issue, so every writing decision within its plot belongs to him. Despite being one of the executive producers and writers in the TV show, he has to share responsibility with his partners. This results in several deviations from the source material, with Kirkman agreeing to perform many of them. The final purpose for him is not telling the exact same story twice. The writing team also has to respond to certain demands from the broadcaster—AMC—to have the show aired for young audiences, which is the reason to language restrictions, making

a contrast with the comic, where cursing is treated as a common feature of language. A character who will be drastically affected by this is the villain Negan, about whom we talked before. He was first introduced in comic issue 100.⁵² He is remarkable for his use of black humour and his constant uttering of the word “fuck” and all kinds of derivatives from it, which adds alliteration—and with it, rhythm—to his speech. Negan was presented in the show during the last minutes of the season 6 finale,⁵³ delivering an introductory discourse very similar to his comic counterpart, although all the cursing is omitted. Thus, it is still to be seen how the essence of this character will be portrayed on screen.

Tightly related to Negan, we can also comment on how season 6 ended. As a TV series, it is aired in seasons—weekly for some months a year—instead of monthly, like the comic does. The discontinuity between seasons, apart from the weekly gap between episodes, allows the writers to play with the most intriguing plot elements. Thus, they create cliffhangers, which are placed in a certain point of the season to increase audience expectations. The arrival of Negan in issue 100 of the comic was a huge turning of events in the plot. The impact of his introduction is enhanced by the murder of fan-favourite Glenn in one of the most cruel scenes of the whole series. As such, it was a highly anticipated moment in the TV show, since its memory is still present for comic readers and it also made its way to the ears of those who only watch AMC's version. The broadcaster announced the well known actor Jeffrey Dean Morgan to play the role of Negan months before the airing of the episode. There were also frequent mentions of the character's name within the fictional world during the second half of the sixth season. This notes that the writers know how to motivate their audience to keep watching. However, they wanted to keep mystery for viewers even longer. Both media present many of the main characters forced to get on their knees after being surrounded by a group called the Saviors, led by Negan. Introducing himself, he explains how he is going to punish them for their insubordination: using his baseball bat, he will smash one of the main characters' head while the others are forced to watch. If the situation was not tense enough, Negan tries to choose his victim between all the characters while he makes fun of them. Not being able to pick one, he decides to play 'eeny-meeny-miny-moe' with them and he immediately kills the chosen one with no mercy. Up to this point, the scene is almost identical, but beyond the amount of possible victims, there is a critical difference. Whereas in the comic, the reader gets to see Glenn's death with every gory detail, the victim remains unrevealed in the show by the use of cinematographic language: the point of view of the camera is put in the eyes of the chosen one, who receives multiple hits in the head as the screen fades to black, putting an end to season six and condemning every member of the audience to seven months of waiting.

⁵² *The Walking Dead* #100 was released on July 11, 2012. It is the 4th part of volume 17: *Something to Fear*.

⁵³ “Last Day On Earth”, the season 6 finale, was aired on April 3rd, 2016.

Following the comics, the evident answer is that the victim in the show should be Glenn. However, the TV version usually makes drastic changes in the characters' fates regarding their comic counterparts —an aspect which will be commented on more in depth later. On the other hand, the adaptation of comic issue 100 and the way walked by the show up to that point has more details to analyse. Since the middle point of season four, broadcasted in 2013-2014, Glenn's has been put in serious danger more times than his partners'. On several occasions, the doubt about his continuity was solved within the same episode, but in season six, the fate of Glenn was unknown for several episodes. In episode 3, titled “Thank You”,⁵⁴ Glenn and his mate Nicholas manage to climb over a dumpster right before being surrounded by zombies. Then, Nicholas decides to commit suicide by a self-inflicted headshot. Glenn tries to stop his partner's corpse falling over the zombie-infested ground, which makes him lose balance and fall along with the body. Immediately, a close-up of Glenn screaming and his face being splashed by blood as zombie hands rip —presumably— his flesh put an end to the episode and the beginning of anguish for the character's fans. As happened later in the season finale, cinematographic language —in this case, the close-up frame— is the instrument to keep viewers guessing. Four weeks later, the scene is broadcasted again, this time following a different point of view which shows that the one being eaten and torn apart is actually Nicholas.⁵⁵ His body had fallen over Glenn, showing once more the possibility to trick the audience by means of cinematographic direction. This kind of situations created more doubts towards Glenn's fate being fulfilled in the season finale. Moreover, storytelling in the show usually interacts with events from the comics in a playful way, taking advantage of being the rewriting of an already written material. In “No Sanctuary”,⁵⁶ season 5 premiere, a helpless Glenn is about to be hit in the head by a man wielding a baseball bat. Even though Glenn was finally saved, the viewing of the scene might be reminiscent to Glenn's death in the comics. Later, the ninth episode of the same season shows some of the main characters searching for useful goods in a neighbourhood, where Glenn thoughtfully stares at a baseball bat. Moving to season 6 again, in the episode titled “Not Tomorrow Yet”, Glenn finds some photographs of smashed heads when he and other main characters are attacking one of the Saviors' facilities.⁵⁷ The reference is caught, again, by those audience members who had knowledge of the comic version, since in the show Negan had not been seen yet, nor his killing methods revealed.

As mentioned earlier, Robert Kirkman has to adapt from being the only writer in the comic to being just one more member of the show staff, which means that many decisions are beyond him to make. Frank Darabont was the developer and the first showrunner for the

⁵⁴ “Thank You”, the 3rd episode of *season 6*, was aired on October 25, 2015.

⁵⁵ This happened in “Heads Up”, the 7th episode of *season 6*, aired on November 22, 2015.

⁵⁶ “No Sanctuary”, the premiere of *season 5*, was aired on October 12, 2014.

⁵⁷ “Not Tomorrow Yet”, the 12th episode of *season 6*, was aired on March 6, 2016.

television version of this story.⁵⁸ He was fired by AMC shortly after shooting the premiere of the second season due to disagreements involving a budget cut. In 2013, he revealed several details about that decision and how it affected the show later, having harsh words towards the producers, who prioritised “money, greed and power mongering”.⁵⁹ In the diegetic level, maybe the most noticeable consequence was Dale's death, played by Jeffrey DeMunn. This actor had worked several times before with Darabont and was not comfortable with the producers' move, so he decided to leave the show. This resulted, evidently, in his character's death in season 2 and,⁶⁰ therefore, some serious alterations for other characters, mainly Andrea. Performed by Laurie Holden, Andrea's role is essential in the comic storyline. Regarding the show, the character might be seen as one of the most prominent signs of instability in its earlier seasons. Despite having some differences with her comic counterpart from the beginning, the earliest interviews with Laurie Holden about Andrea revealed the intention to keep “the arc and the journey of the character ... pretty much exactly the same”. However, this kind of statements were not fulfilled. Dale and Andrea had a romantic relationship which turns out to be essential for both characters' development in the comics. Despite that, Jeffrey DeMunn —Dale— decided to leave the show, hence Andrea's path drastically changed. She was accidentally separated from Rick's group at the end of season 2 and,⁶¹ after reaching Woodbury, she was romantically involved with The Governor during season 3, trying to reconcile the differences between him and Rick. This turned out to be an impossible task and, finally, the cause of Andrea's death in “Welcome to the Tombs”,⁶² the season 3 finale. Robert Kirkman stated that it was a difficult decision and a cause of division among the writing team members. According to Kirkman, the idea of Andrea's death was introduced by the second showrunner of the show, Glen Mazzara, who was immediately substituted after season 3. Nevertheless, in spite of being difficult for the creator of the story, he ended up liking the idea of such big differences existing between the original comic and the television series.⁶³ It is this kind of unfulfilled promises and mind changes what may have disappointed some of the active fans, those who look for information about the series and try to keep up to date with every new piece of information.

⁵⁸ Frank Darabont is the director of movies such as the Stephen King novel adaptations *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994), *The Green Mile* (1999) and *The Mist* (2007).

⁵⁹ From <<http://www.ign.com/articles/2013/11/21/frank-darabont-many-on-the-walking-dead-felt-abused>>

⁶⁰ “Judge, Jury, Executioner”, the 11th episode of season 2. It was aired on March 4, 2012.

⁶¹ “Beside the Dying Fire”, the season 2 finale, was aired on March 12, 2012.

⁶² “Welcome to the Tombs”, the season 3 finale, was aired on March 31, 2013.

⁶³ From: <<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/walking-dead-season-3-finale-interview-robert-kirkman-431968>>

Another character who experienced huge changes between the original story and the TV version is Carol, played by Melissa McBride. Whereas in the comic, Carol follows a path in which she does not manage to overcome her affective dependence and thus commits suicide,⁶⁴ in the show she has to cope with her husband's and her daughter Sophia's deaths. Thus, she finally becomes the group's roughest warrior from season 4 onwards. She gets rid of many of the threats which her partners are not able to deal with, which makes her a perfect substitute for Andrea as she is known in the comics. Moreover, she also presents some specific features, such as her stealthy killing methods and,⁶⁵ in the last episodes of season 6, even trickery.⁶⁶ Her daughter Sophia, on the other hand, is still alive in the comics and has always been a great support for Rick's son Carl, apart from a point for comparison and contrast for him from an analytic point of view. However, she died in season 2 of the show, which later led the writers to introduce Enid—an original character—in season 5 to fill that role. Moreover, time outside the story has affected these younger characters' portrayal. Carl is played by Chandler Riggs, who was 10 years old when he was cast to play the role. Even though barely two years have passed in the intradiegetical level, the six years transpired from the beginning of the show to the end of season 6 have made the actor change noticeably. This translates into different approaches to Carl and also to the characters directly related to him, such as Enid.

Much like Scolari commented on *The Adventures of Tintin*, the TV series usually switches what character performs one action or function regarding the comics, or even creates new ones to make up for the absence of an already dead character. Some cases, such as Carol being the savior of the group instead of Andrea and Enid being the best support for Carl instead of Sophia, have already been mentioned. Some more instances are Michonne becoming Rick's girlfriend instead of Andrea,⁶⁷ or Sasha being the emotionally disturbed woman after all her losses instead of Michonne.⁶⁸ The list could actually get as long as this essay. The case of Allen and Donna is also interesting. They were a prominent part of the original group of survivors, as well as the parents of two

⁶⁴ *The Walking Dead* #41 was published August 29, 2007. It is the fifth part of volume 7, titled *The Calm Before*.

⁶⁵ Seen on "JSS", 2nd episode of season 6, *aired* October 18, 2015.

⁶⁶ Seen in several episodes of seasons 5 and 6, prominently on "The Same Boat", the 13th episode of season 6, *aired* on March 13, 2016.

⁶⁷ As seen in "The Next World", the 10th episode of season 6, *aired* on February 21, 2016. It partially adapts the events from comic volumes 15 (*We Find Ourselves*) and 16 (*A Larger World*).

⁶⁸ As an example, Michonne's outrageous yelling during a welcome party in Alexandria (comic issue 72) is paralleled by that of Sasha in "Forget", the 13th episode of season 5, *aired* on March 8, 2015.

little children —Ben and Billy— in the comics. However, they were not included in the Atlanta camp of survivors in the show. Instead, they were replaced by the Morales family, who left the group looking for a safer place in episode 5 not to be seen again. However, the third season featured Allen, Donna and their son Ben —in this case, a teenager— as secondary characters. After Donna's almost immediate death, Allen and Ben remained as recurring characters for the rest of the season, but they had nothing in common with their comic counterparts beyond their kinship. In fact, they did not even join the protagonists' group. To finish with the comment on characters, one of the most beloved ones from the show is Daryl Dixon, played by Norman Reedus. He was originally created for this version and initially planned to appear only as a recurring character. Later, Reedus became one of the main cast members and is still on board after season 6 finale. His popularity triggered a videogame which will be talked about later in the essay.

Going back to the change of tone mentioned in the first paragraphs of this chapter, there are many moments that the show has not dared to portray. It is worthy of mention that when the TV adaptation was still a project, it was refused by HBO — which nowadays broadcasts a TV show as *Game of Thrones* (2011)— for its violent content.⁶⁹ However, even though it was chosen by AMC, who has managed to deliver adult shows such as *Breaking Bad* (2008), they decided to target a widest audience on the demographics. Apart from language, and even though producers deny whichever reason behind it, the softening of some violent scenes from the comic is evident. One of them was referenced in the previous chapters concerning the comic universe: Michonne being tortured and raped by The Governor. That series of grotesque actions that took several days was replaced on the screen by intimidating another female character — Maggie— with harassing manners for some minutes, which had not the same impact on the viewer. However, it was Michonne who took revenge on the villain anyway, but again in a much softer way: the brutal torture portrayed in the comics was substituted by a simple plain fight. In common, both versions perform this moment in the same setting: The Governor's apartment in Woodbury. The Governor loses an eye in the show, compared to the eyeball as well, along with an arm and —implied— his sexual organ in the comics, apart from other painful injuries. What the reader was supposed to feel in this scene in the original story was deep pleasure from the revenge of one of the main

⁶⁹ From <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-hill/walking-dead-amc_b_1968726.html>

characters. On the other hand, what the TV version intended was probably some kind of identification with the villain, since Michonne also kills Penny, his zombified daughter. The TV show tried to portray this villain as somehow more human than his comic counterpart, who was plain evil and eager to obtain power. However, The Governor is also humanized through transmedia means in the novels belonging to the comic transmedial world. Moreover, some of the content of the novels was also translated into the show. In season 4, The Governor meets the Chambleres —inspired by the Chalmers from *Rise of the Governor*— with one of them, Lilly, being a mixture of the roles of April Chalmers and Lilly Caul, who appears in next novels. Another aspect related to the violence issue is that show writers do not kill a big amount of important characters as easily as Robert Kirkman does in the source story. Comparing the end of the prison arc, in the comics, the death toll of veteran characters raises to eight, whereas in its televised adaptation only one of them dies.⁷⁰ Other deaths are left for characters from Woodbury that had been recently added and barely had development nor interventions in the plot. It is likely that the writers and producers prefer to separate deaths in several episodes to keep the audience interested.

To what extent many of these differences are a result of commercial or economic reasons or truly the outcome of the writers' creative intentions is unknown. However, the show is a goldmine for transmedia studies and its success will allow for larger and more in depth analysis.

3.1.1. FEAR THE WALKING DEAD

Your audience will find it very difficult to relate to an abstract idea or a product. Characters, on the other hand, give them a guiding persona to experience your storyworld, however fantastic. (Bernardo, 2014: 46)

This statement by Brazilian author Nuno Bernardo might serve as the perfect example of what is happening with the so-called “companion series” *Fear The Walking Dead*. Even though it started in summer 2015 with an outstanding audience rate, numbers started falling episode after episode. One of the main reasons exposed by viewers is that the characters are not half as compelling as the protagonists of the main show. As a

⁷⁰ “Too Far Gone” is the 8th episode of season 4. It was aired on December 1, 2013.

matter of fact, the charm of this second series was giving the audience some insight in the zombie apocalypse to the other side of the country: Los Angeles. This made it quite difficult to share any of protagonists from the main show, who live in the area surrounding Atlanta. Moreover, the other big promise for this series was showing the first steps into the new world order, since *The Walking Dead* started with Rick waking up from a coma and finding the situation already established, as it happened in the comics as well. Due to these traits, the use of the term “companion series” instead of spin-off and prequel is very accurate, even though there was confusion among media and audience regarding this issue. For Robert Kirkman, also totally involved in this work, the companion series is seen as a chance to work more creatively on TV, since it “isn't tethered by the events of the comic book, and is truly a blank page”.⁷¹

In this occasion, the main group is composed by a family that was already disfunctional prior to the zombie crisis. Travis is a divorced man now in a relationship with Madison, who has two teenage children: Alicia and Nick, who is a drug-addict. Travis' ex-wife, Liza, and their son Chris, will also make a part of the group. During the six-episode season 1, other members join: the Salazar family and the mysterious Victor Strand, making up for a cast diverse in its background, both racial and social, a feature not so emphasized in *The Walking Dead*. The main theme is, once more, the threat posed by humankind over themselves. As Nuno Bernardo notes, “it is the conflicts that play out between characters, their alliances and antagonisms, that establish storylines and plot” (Bernardo, 2014: 50); which is true for this and the rest of media involving the franchise. However, this time it is given a different approach, which would be: the initial chaos and confusion, the military establishing and protecting camps of civilians and the unsustainability of control. All of these situations were mentioned both in the comic and the main series, but not actually put on display to the audience. With *Fear The Walking Dead*, apart from being witness of that onset, we can infer that the situation is given, at least, countrywide. In the second season, the group abandoned Los Angeles to sail the seas towards Mexico, now facing the dilemma of helping other groups that could be dangerous. Thus, several parallelisms with other entries to this franchise are established. For instance, the theme of exploring the waters was first introduced in *The Walking Dead* universe in comic issue #139, as it is explained in chapter 2.3.1 of this essay. Within that game, apart from exploring a little further the mentioned topic, we

⁷¹ Article on the announcement of Fear the Walking Dead: <<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/walking-dead-companion-series-works-629848>>

can find an almost exact and simultaneous—in terms of release/airing dates—correspondence with the episode “Captive”.⁷² In both cases, there is an exchange of hostages between the antagonistic group and the protagonists, who return their hostage as a zombie with the head covered in order to make an ambush. Nevertheless, we have to notice an antecedent: in comic issue 119,⁷³ antagonist Negan returned his hostage Holly to the protagonist group in a much similar fashion. Another parallelism that should be highlighted is the topic of being respectful to the dead, first seen in the comics as a trait of the Greene family and their farm. That family kept zombies in the barn as an act of faith to God and hope for a cure, which was also seen when adapted to the screen in season 2 of the main show. The same practice was seen once more, in episodes 6 and 7 of *Fear The Walking Dead* season 2;⁷⁴ this time with different characters but in a quite similar setting—a Mexican *hacienda*.

Taking into account the main show, this series is not transmedia. In fact, both of them are aired through traditional TV by the same broadcaster. However, *Fear The Walking Dead* is indeed interesting from a transmedia approach if we bear in mind all the other media involved in the franchise. Its influence on this work is crystal clear, as well as the new point of view that it provides to the undead world created by Robert Kirkman. It is also appealing to try and find a reason why *Fear The Walking Dead* is on TV show format and not on any other media. Citing Bernardo again, he states that media creators “need to produce very different types of content and ask audience to move back and forth between lean forward and lean back experiences”. He also highlights that they “risk losing a portion of audience who are unwilling to make the jump” (Bernardo, 2014: 115). Thus, television is among what the writer calls “lean back experiences”, since they involve a minimum degree of participation. Indeed, television audience is used to turn on their TV sets at the time marked by the broadcaster. Moreover, *The Walking Dead* already had an established record-breaking audience for cable TV, and as television viewers, they are not very used to explore other media. So, it seems logical to think that Kirkman and the rest of the show's producers did not want to risk and lose part of their potential audience. That happened anyway when the ratings

⁷² “Captive”, the 5th episode of season 2, was aired May 8, 2016. “What We Deserve”, 3rd episode of *The Walking Dead: Michonne* videogame was released April 26, 2016.

⁷³ *The Walking Dead* # 119 was released January 8, 2014, as the 5th part of volume 21, *All Out War, Part 1*.

⁷⁴ “Sicut Cervus”—season 2, episode 6— and “Shiva”—season 2, episode 7— we aired, respectively, May 15, 2016 and May 22, 2016.

began to drop, although they keep steady. Even regarding that fact, it remains the 2nd highest rated show on AMC.

3.2. THE WALKING DEAD WEBISODES

In these mobisodes the TV characters interact in situations that complement what has already been seen on the small screen. This type of content can be called interstitial ... because it fills narrative gaps that in the original story had disappeared into the logical ellipses of the plot. As a “fill in the blanks” grammar exercise, the producers created these mobisodes to fill those little empty spaces and contribute to the construction of the general sense of the story (Scolari, *Lostology*, 2015: 8)

In the article above cited, the author refers to short-length episodes released exclusively for mobile devices, belonging to the “transmedia fictional world of Lost” (Scolari, 2015: 5). In the case of *The Walking Dead*, there is a very similar format: short-length episodes released in the web known as webisodes or webseries. They are also interstitial, since they fill gaps, not only in the plot but in the fictional world as well. There are three webseries, each one released between each of the first four seasons of the TV show. As happens with many of the entries to the franchise, the gap covered by these is Rick's months in a coma, told within the first minutes of the series premiere episode. Moreover, they are all somehow connected to Rick.

“Torn Apart” is the first webseries, whose release was placed shortly before the main series' season 2 premiere.⁷⁵ The plot is quite simple: Hannah is trying to take their children to a safe place. The name of the protagonist was not known among *The Walking Dead* viewers, but after the six webisodes, that character dies and becomes a familiar face. In fact, she was one of the most popular zombies in the main series, seen in the first episode. Half her body was missing and while she crawled towards Rick, who killed her out of mercy. As the story in the webisodes happens while Rick is in a coma, it belongs to the early apocalypse days, which is proved on the screen. A helicopter hovers over the neighbourhood suggesting people to gather in a given place, which fits Shane's report of the situation to Rick in season 1. Moreover, it also fits what

⁷⁵ “The Walking Dead: Torn Apart” was released October 3, 2011. *The Walking Dead* season 2 premiere was aired October 16, 2011.

was later seen in the first season of *Fear the Walking Dead*, when the situation with the undead seemed manageable. However, there is also an inconsistency regarding the TV series universe. While Hannah and her children are staying at her ex-husband Andrew's house, they have to shoot his zombified girlfriend. The incoherence is evidently, since they seemingly killed the zombie by a shot in the stomach. Moreover, that actually left her unconscious for a while, something never seen in the show. In fact, one of the mainstays for zombie related fiction—including every member of *The Walking Dead* corpus—is that no matter how much you hurt a zombie's body, they keep moving unless you hurt their brain. Nevertheless, what is appreciated about *Torn Apart* is the approach to the identity of an anonymous zombie was when it was alive. This is an attempt to match the undead populating the show with its protagonists, who sooner or later become—walking or not—dead as well.

“Cold Storage” is the second installment of the webseries. This time, in words of Greg Nicotero,⁷⁶ the director, it has “a clear nod to the 'show' but our story could definitely exist on it's own”.⁷⁷ The only link to the main series is found in the setting, a storage facility. Chase, the protagonist, finds some of Rick Grimes' personal belongings, which included a family photo. However, there is a relation of parallelism in the plot. Chase is trying to find his sister, as Rick tries to find his wife and son at the beginning of his story. This includes a subtle reference to the comics: Chase's sister lives in Cynthiana, Rick Grimes' hometown in the comic version.⁷⁸ Apart from that, the plot in this webseries involves conflict between Chase and one of the employees of the facility who has taken control of the place. The most intriguing part comes when the protagonist finds another employee—Kelly—imprisoned. All four webisodes were available at AMC's website prior to the season 3 premiere.⁷⁹

“The Oath” is the third and last of these webseries, released before the start of the fourth season.⁸⁰ It is more directly linked to the TV show storyline, revealing the origin of a certain element from the TV series. The main characters, Paul and Karina,

⁷⁶ Greg Nicotero is a mainstay part in *The Walking Dead* as a supervisor and designer for make-up effects, apart from other roles such as Executive Producer in *Fear the Walking Dead*. He is also the director of all three webseries.

⁷⁷ From <<https://web.archive.org/web/20121002223953/http://blogs.amctv.com/the-walking-dead/2012/10/season-3-webisodes.php>>

⁷⁸ In the TV show, Rick and his family come from King County, a fictional place in the state of Georgia.

⁷⁹ “The Walking Dead: Cold Storage” was released October 1, 2012. *The Walking Dead* season 3 premiere was aired on October 14, 2012.

⁸⁰ “The Walking Dead: The Oath” was released October 1, 2013. *The Walking Dead* season 4 premiere was aired on October 13, 2013.

escape from their camp, which has been overrun by zombies. When they reach a medical facility to treat Paul's injuries, they meet Dr. Gale Macones. After some intriguing situations, Karina decides to die and Paul abandons the place, painting the words “DON'T ENTER, DEAD INSIDE” in the cafeteria doors. This detail makes audience realize that this is the same hospital where Rick is kept during his coma, later waking up and finding the spray paint that leads to his first encounter with the undead. This also provides a likely explanation on who took care of him during that time: Dr. Macones.

These webseries offer brief but enjoyable expansions of the fictional world for fans. Maybe the main objection against them is that each one of these webseries was released all at once, not really taking an advantage of its serialised nature to keep viewers intrigued.

3.2.1. “FEAR THE WALKING DEAD: FLIGHT 462”

After the first season of *Fear The Walking Dead*, AMC began airing these 16 webisodes online. They released a webisode a week from October 4, 2015 to March 26, 2016, with a hiatus after the eighth one.⁸¹ *Flight 462* was also announced to introduce one of its characters into the second season of *Fear The Walking Dead*. The story begins with teenage Jake taking a plane as the situation with the undead begins to get out of control. There is a case of turning during the flight and an unnamed girl seems to know more than anyone about the dangerous creatures: she knows how the bites work and the only way to kill zombies. She does not reveal her name or the source of her knowledge, even though Jake explicitly asks during the webseries, which ends without a clear resolution. However, during the last seconds, there is a fragment of *Fear The Walking Dead* season 1 in which Nick sees a plane flying low near his house.⁸²

Both Jake and the mysterious girl —her name finally revealed as Alex— appear in the beginning of “Ouroboros”,⁸³ the boy seriously burnt from the plane crash. They later meet the main characters, but they are rejected to join the group, who was sailing

⁸¹ The second season of *Fear The Walking Dead* premiered on April 10, 2016, shortly after the last episode of “Fear The Walking Dead: Flight 462”.

⁸² This scene belongs to “The Dog”, the 3rd episode of season 1, was aired on September 13, 2015.

⁸³ “Ouroboros”, the 3rd episode of season 2, was aired on April 24, 2016.

the nearby waters. She is later seen in “Captive” as a part of Connor's crew, a group of pirates that have problems with the protagonists of the show. In this episode, Alex reveals that Jake died from his injuries and that she was welcomed by her new group, now positioning herself as an enemy of the show stars. She is expected to be seen again in the second half of season 2.

3.3. THE WALKING DEAD: SURVIVAL INSTINCT

The current licensing system typically generates works that are redundant (...), watered down (...), or riddled with sloppy contradictions (...). These failures account for why sequels and franchises have a bad reputation. Franchise products are governed too much by economic logic and not enough by artistic vision. (Jenkins, 2006, 105)

What Henry Jenkins mentions here has been a paradigmatic feature of intellectual properties. *The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct* is, perhaps, the biggest example of that view in the overall *The Walking Dead* franchise. It is a videogame released for several systems in 2013 developed and released by Activision. It fits into the first-person shooter genre. As Bran Crecente states in the videogame website Polygon, the difference in quality between *Survival Instinct* and the Telltale Games Series “can serve as a perfect case study for the importance of creator ownership”.⁸⁴ AMC is the entity that manages licensing issues regarding the TV show. Thus, they do not involve Robert Kirkman, who is in charge of the rights of comic branch of the franchise along with his company, Skybound. As previously stated, the Telltale Games installments — set in the comic universe— got very positive reviews and were a commercial success. However, *Survival Instinct* achieved exactly the opposite in both areas, receiving an average score of 32 out of 100 in Metacritic.⁸⁵ Robert Kirkman usually mentions his concerns about this videogame, usually joking about it.

⁸⁴ From: <<http://www.polygon.com/features/2015/3/30/8311735/the-walking-dead-invincible-outcast-fear-the-walking-dead-interview-robert-kirkman>>

⁸⁵ Metacritic is a website in which scores from relevant reviews for different media are aggregated, obtaining an average score.

If we analyse its story —as we did with every other entry to the franchise—, there are several aspects to analyse. It is a prequel for the TV series starred by Daryl Dixon, its most popular character. His reputation among fans is probably the reason for choosing him as the protagonist. Daryl's father —referenced in the TV series— is the pseudoprotagonist, whose death serves as an introduction for Daryl. The player's mission is to look for Merle, Daryl's conflictive brother, who is in jail. This objective is fulfilled at the end of act 1 (out of 4). Then, the focus is reaching the safe haven in Atlanta. During the adventure, Daryl finds a crossbow, his trademark weapon in the show. There are also several references to the TV series. The first one is seen during the prologue, when Daryl's father is fatally bitten and his brother shoots him after saying “Sorry, brother.” The same sentence was uttered by Daryl in “Judge, Jury, Executioner”, right before shooting Dale out of mercy after a zombie severely wounded him. During the game, Daryl meets the Harrisons a couple who are looking for their daughters Amy and Andrea, both of them from the TV series. Mrs. Harrison is bitten and resting in bed, so Mr. Harrison asks the player to get some antibiotics. Unfortunately, when Daryl is returning with the medicines, a gunshot is heard: Mrs. Harrison had already turned into a zombie. Daryl witnesses how the man lovingly says to her dead wife “I'm sorry. I thought there would be more time. I love you”. These are the same words with which Andrea addresses Amy, right before shooting her when she turned into a walker.⁸⁶ The interplay between both media is stronger, since Amy and Andrea nostalgically talked in the show about her father and how he had raised them in different ways.⁸⁷ Mr. Harrison joins Daryl's group, but he later dies either devoured by zombies or in a helicopter crash, depending on some of the player's previous choices.

In the article by Polygon previously cited, Robert Kirkman acknowledges a “soulless corporate idea of transmedia”. That would be a good description for the situation with this videogame, which was launched with a mediocre level of development. It features “bland settings, broken mechanics and terrible writing”, according to the author of the article, besides to most of the reviewers and users as well. Citing Jenkins once more, we could conclude that this game somehow fails to “offer new insights and new experiences” (Jenkins, 2006: 105) due to its doubtful quality in

⁸⁶ This scene is seen in “Wildfire”, the 5th episode of season 1, aired November 28, 2010.

⁸⁷ Seen in the opening scene of “Vatos”, the 4th episode of season 1, aired November 21, 2010. During the last scene of this episode, Amy dies due to a fatal bite in her neck.

many aspects. *Survival Instinct* could be placed more in line with “Happy Meal toys, (...) pretty lame and easily forgotten” (Jenkins, 2006: 104).

4. FAN PHENOMENA

[W]e believe that there are still people who are primarily *just* “listening to” and “watching” media produced by others. However, (...) we argue that even those who are “just” reading, listening, or watching do so differently in a world where they recognize their potential to contribute to broader conversations about that content than in a world where they are locked out of meaningful participation. (Jenkins, Ford, Green, 2013: 154-5)

In the era of the networked culture which these and other authors refer to, culture consumers have earned a voice thanks to the Internet. There are forums devoted exclusively to *The Walking Dead* where all kinds of discussion topics can be found. Fans have a wide variety of conversations in these forums, from commenting on the latest episode of the TV show to predicting events in future issues of the comic led by the release of a cover. Quite frequently, fans are divided and confronted, which is not uncommon in any successful franchise's fandom, but this one presents some particularities. As commented in the previous chapter, the differences between the ur-text and its TV version are plentiful. In the Roamers and Lurkers forum, there are sections for every entry in *The Walking Dead* franchise. In the TV show section, there is a recent conversation thread called “Anyone here who loves the TV show but hates the comics?” in which many opinions are reflected.⁸⁸ One of the first comments was written by the user SpaceBum. He states that his “particular beef is with comic fans coming over to the TV show forums to complain about a show that they obviously hate”. Whichever the platform of discussion is, this statement is proved to be true and will be later analysed. Many times, show fans misinterpret opinions from comic fans, thinking that they just want to see the same story in both mediums. Pointing in that direction, an interesting answer to SpaceBum's comment is provided by the user JESUSMONROE:

The frustration more comes from “Wow, this season is so fucking bad. Why didn't they just follow the comics here instead of doing this pointless filler arc?” When the show gets bad, viewers understandably get frustrated. Comic readers will get frustrated because they know it COULD HAVE been good.

⁸⁸ From <<http://www.roamersandlurkers.com/topic/13204-anyone-here-who-loves-the-tv-show-but-hates-the-comics/>>

With this, the concept of active fans is introduced in the debate. Comic readers who also watch the TV show have obviously a wider perspective regarding the potential of *The Walking Dead*. Thus, it is natural that they are a more demanding audience. However, there are more moderate opinions than the previous one. For instance, the user Backwoodsroamer states that “direct translation is impossible, nor is it entertaining to me. I look at it as having two different stories to enjoy”. Furthermore, there are fans of the show who do not consider comics to be a medium to tell a satisfying story, so they do not explore that option. Some of them effortlessly assert that what they have heard about the comics is too far-fetched. However, there is also space for more elaborated explanations. In the first place, I have to explain that the idea to create the discussion thread referred to so far is original from the comic section of the forum. The thread “Any fans of the comic hate the TV show?” can be found there and it is permanently kept as one of the most user-gathering threads, where each episode of the TV show is commented scene by scene. These users notice every detail on the portrayal of each character and plotline. One of the most developed comments is written by the user FeedThemStrangers14, who performed an in-depth analysis of the show's main concerns. He states that “the show went through so much of the core themes that the comic focused on in its early stages way too quickly”. He illustrates it with season 2 early developing elements that should have come later, which made the next storylines lack character development and hence creating a less satisfying experience. There is also a place for anger. Another user, bdizzle1686, harshly criticizes season 6 finale of the show and the decision to keep Negan's victim unknown. His statement against the writers is that they “MANAGE TO PISS OFF COMIC FANS AS WELL AS THE GENERAL AUDIENCE ALIKE”. Notice the capital letters that he used to express his anger. On the other hand, his sentence is not wrong at all.

If we take a look at social networks, considerably more crowded than forums, we can confirm the previous allegation to be true. When the season 6 finale was aired, the official Facebook fanpage for *The Walking Dead* published the discussion thread for that episode, where many outrageous comments were sent. Facebook discussions are also the audience's way to communicate with creators and producers. It is not uncommon to find desperate messages asking for the survival of certain characters, followed by threats of not watching the show otherwise. Much paralleling Nuno Bernardo's advice, the official page takes “advantage of the human love for discussion

and controversy” (Bernardo, 2014: 89). They offer comic and show comparatives for the episodes that directly adapt material from the original story, as well as articles about comic characters when they are introduced in the TV version. Social networks are also a way to share video analysis made by users, or even fan reaction clips, recorded when they are watching the show. Some instances of user generated contents come when fans transform the original story. Bad Lip Reading is a Youtube channel that parodies many audiovisual works. They released some videos containing clips from the TV show dubbed by them, creating absurd storylines and unexpected details such as zombies speaking with funny voices. What works here is that they perform the new dialogue while they totally respect the moves of the actors' lips. This results in a very natural and flowing, although absurd, set of dialogues. The most known of these videos is the song “Carl Poppa”, featuring Carl Grimes from several scenes of the show. It became so popular that it has even had its mention through official channels, such as the Letter Hacks section in the comics. In fact, after Carl loses his virginity in that medium, the editor answers a letter in issue 151 asking in a humorous way “[i]s ‘Carl Poppa’ soon to be a real thing?” Nevertheless, fan creations may follow different paths. Carlos A. Scolari has already commented on the existence of online crossovers that intertwine *The Walking Dead* with other stories such as *Resident Evil*.⁸⁹ Other kinds of “fan-made media” may “feature interactions between characters that rarely share the screen” (Jenkins, Ford, Green, 2013: 177), according to the writers of *Spreadable Media*. They also state that they involve “themes of romance, friendship and community”. Moreover, in his article about *Lost*, Carlos A. Scolari mentions that the most recognized forms of user-generated contents are given in audiovisual format (Scolari, *Lostology*, 2015: 10). However, other media can also serve that purpose, such as photomontage in the following case, which sums up these last assertions. Many fans were waiting for the show to feature Rick and Andrea's love relationship as it happens in the comics, but Andrea's death at the end of season 3 made that impossible. Hence, in some websites such as Spoil The Dead, there are threads vindicating that relationship by means of photomontages and gifs of both characters together.

There are more elements to mention in this chapter, such as the effort put by fans in crafting the The Walking Dead Wiki, a webpage that compiles information on every element in the franchise. There are also events involving Skybound and special

⁸⁹ Mentioned in *Narrativas Transmedia: Cuando todos los medios cuentan*, page 140.

merchandising related to them. However, what has already been commented may provide a clear idea of what kind of phenomenon this franchise is.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Every passing day, *The Walking Dead* becomes a stronger franchise. The works analysed in this essay are proof of that fact, taking into account that many of them have been released very recently. Furthermore, some others have barely been announced, but they promise to bring exciting new approaches and interactions with each other, which keeps the brand encouraging to explore. Regarding the different levels of engagement among fans, there is diversity, which may generate interesting debates or, more commonly, fierce arguments with no place for kindness.

Seven years after the release of the first comic issue, *The Walking Dead* was no longer the name of a mere fictional world. It became a transmedial world when it was welcomed by television sets all over the world. For a vast majority of people, the televised version is the ur-text, since it belongs to the group of the most mainstream media. Viewers are generally unwilling to look for alternative or additive stories to it, even though they see a shared title in all of them. Instead, they are eager to take part in every comments section on social media or forums. Shortly after the TV series debut, other entries began to spread. Both comic and TV universes offer interesting enhancements throughout media. The experience provided by the comic transmedia universe might be richer and more rewarding if we attend to official channels of production and distribution: novels and videogames have achieved to deliver interesting crossroads with the original story. On the other hand, the show is widely exploited regarding user-generated contents. AMC's series is always at the center of all discussions and beating audience ratings year by year.

Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that nowadays society is connected in every level. Cultural experiences are included, as it is the case of our object of study. After the TV show began, an “unprecedented number of people” attended comic shops, wanting to know about the original story. It has been reported to be the first adaptation of a comic book “to inspire new readership at such a surprising level”.⁹⁰ Both media feed each other in different manners: the comic provides the show with a path to follow, and the show makes it easier for the comic to reach a wider readership. Moreover, every entry to the franchise is self-contained enough to allow for its particular delight.

⁹⁰ From <<http://www.newsarama.com/9677-kirkman-why-tv-s-walking-dead-translates-to-comics-sales.html>>

If I have to speak personally, I choose the comic series above any other option. Some may criticise a long-term repetitive structure, but that is what has happened with the history of humankind so far. Indeed, what I see is one more retelling of that history accelerated by the circumstances. Not only in a social level, but also from an individual perspective. The long-term characters have followed steps towards a maturity that would have difficultly achieved without walking into the undead world. That is what all other works in this franchise try to display following different approaches. Some of them, I find more enjoyable than others. The television series has to deal with slower and more frequently repetitive plotlines. Sometimes, it causes its characters to walk backwards in their development and an inability to introduce more themes than the dilemma of “killing and losing humanity”. That is why its success is negatively surprising to me, even though it presents several ways to interact with the source material. However, it has been proved that something bigger takes place when mere users become fans, gathering as many pieces as possible and new meanings emerge. The experience can reach even higher levels when we consider not only the texts navigated, but the particular vision of every explorer on each of them. Our networked culture allows us to share all those personal yet common experiences, which creates an unmeasurable mass of opinions. All of them struggle to survive above others.

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