

The media convergence in Wandavision: revisionism and contamination of the genre / A convergências midiáticas em Wandavision: revisionismo e contaminação do gênero

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Received in: 28 aug. 2023. **Approved in:** 03 sep. 2023.

How to cite this article:

MEDEIROS, Andre Aparecido de; NASCIMENTO, Jéssica da Silva. The media convergence in Wandavision: revisionism and contamination of the genre. *Revista Letras Raras*. Campina Grande, v. 12, n. 3, p. 167-184, dec, 2023. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10445542>

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the media convergences in the miniseries WandaVision (2021) and its media contaminations. After building up a shared universe, Marvel seems to reach what Brogan Morris (2021) calls the “end of the super-hero movies” and a “revisionist trend”, that after its exhaustion, the genre starts exploring new possibilities, leading to its maturation and revisionism. Among the new approaches, we find in WandaVision, which is an unfolding of the Marvel Cinematic Universe for the streaming, its contamination by the short story’s structure according to Ricardo Piglia’s (2004) thesis about the genre, which specifies that it tells two stories – a simple story, and “a secret story, told in a fragmented and elliptic way” (2004, p.90). Although structured according to Piglia’s definition, the miniseries breaks with other conventions of the short story, such as that it should “be read at one sitting” (POE, s/d, p. 135), as its episodes were dropped on a weekly basis, preventing the viewers from binge-watching the whole season, leading them to inquire about it and discuss about the clues left on the episodes to find what was really happening in the story, expanding what Jenking (2013) calls “participatory culture”. Due to these ruptures, we consider this miniseries an example of “contamination”, as Baetens (2018) suggests in his novelization studies, not in a “damaging” sense, but as

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innovation – contaminated, but not transformed or remediated, in Rajewski's words (2005). Initially, we discuss the concept of contamination, then we analyze scenes from different moments of the show. These hint, initially with the commercials and then with the addition of elements that are strange to the environment, at the existence of another story. Thereby, we aim to show how these short story's structures of telling "a different story" work in the miniseries.

KEYWORDS: WandaVision; Marvel; Convergence; Media contamination; Literary theory.

RESUMO

Buscamos analisar as relações de convergência de mídias na minissérie *WandaVision* (2021) em suas contaminações midiáticas. Após construir um universo compartilhado, a Marvel parece entrar no que Brogan Morris (2021) chama de "fim dos filmes de super-heróis" e "tendência revisionista", em que após sua exaustão, o gênero passa a explorar novas possibilidades, levando à maturação e revisionismo deste. Dentre as novas abordagens, percebemos em *WandaVision*, desdobramento do Universo Cinematográfico Marvel para o streaming, a contaminação desta pela tese sobre o conto proposta por Ricardo Piglia (2004), a qual estabelece que o conto conta duas histórias – uma em relato simples, e outra elíptica e fragmentada. Porém, apesar de se estruturar segundo as definições de Piglia, a minissérie rompe com outras convenções sobre o conto, como a concepção de Poe (s/d) de que o conto deve ser lido de uma só vez, pois *WandaVision* teve episódios lançados semanalmente, impedindo os telespectadores de "maratonar" a temporada e levando-os a indagar e interagir sobre pistas deixadas nos episódios sobre o que realmente acontecia na história, ampliando o que Jenkins (2013) chama de "cultura participativa". Também por estas rupturas, encaramos a minissérie como um exemplo de "contaminação", tal como Baetens (2018) propõe ao estudar a romancização, não em um sentido "danoso", mas de inovação – contaminado, mas não transformado ou remediado, nos termos de Rajewski (2005). Destarte, discutimos o conceito de contaminação, para então analisar cenas de diferentes momentos da série em questão. Essas indicam, inicialmente através dos comerciais e em seguida a partir da adição de elementos estranhos ao meio, a existência de uma outra história. Por fim, buscamos ilustrar o funcionamento das estruturas do conto como forma de contar "uma outra história" ao longo da série.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *WandaVision*; Marvel; Convergência; Contaminação midiática; Teoria literária.

1 Introduction

Henry Jenkins, in 2006, proposed to discuss the convergence culture. A concept that, according to the author, few were able to understand by then, but that also represented the changes we were already being through, that we could not control and even less avoid them. For Jenkins (2013), *convergence* is about the "[...] flux of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences [...]" (JENKINS, 2013, p. 30), a flux the author notices in *Matrix*, for example, that extends the storytelling from the films to the games or *animes*, creating a big collaboration in which every media product is responsible for presenting a part of the story, complementing the other narratives – what the author calls *transmedia storytelling*.

Nowadays, 16 years after the release of Jenkins' work, the transmedia stories seem to have become common, being *Star Wars*, probably, the most successful example to the moment. However, other universes have followed this perspective, as the Marvel Cinematic Universe (henceforth, MCU). Beginning in 2008 with the release of the movies *Ironman* (FRAVEAU, 2008)

and *The Incredible Hulk* (LETERRIER, 2008), the MCU comes as an attempt of creating a shared universe – that is, one in which the characters presented coexist inside the same universe, with all the consequences that it could result in – that is slowly built, connecting the works, initially, through references, until they finally unite all the superheroes presented in a single work, *The Avengers* (WHEDON, 2012), officializing their coexistence in the same world. Since then, Marvel has invested in this universe, adding stories to introduce new characters and contribute to the great story in development, whose conclusion comes with the cinematic event represented by *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018) and *Avengers: Endgame* (2019), which puts together all the heroes presented to that moment. After this event, Marvel concluded the production cycle, its phase 3, with *Spider-man: Far From* (2019), totalizing 23 movies to that point. Due to the growth in the numbers of production of the genre (which includes movies by Warner Bros./Dc Comics, and other producers), directors as Steven Spielberg¹ and James Gunn² commented about the amount of superhero-based productions, regarding a possible end of the genre, in case it does not change.

On his analysis of *The Suicide Squad* (GUNN, 2021) for The Guardian newspaper, Brogan Morris indicates that this movie represents a possible movement of maturation of the genre that is entering now a revisionist phase³, that reflect and comments upon itself. This movement, in Morris' view, indicates that the superheroes genre reached its late stage and that it tends to follow the path of the western genre, that once ruled the movies and TV shows, but that it had to evolve and “revise” itself in order to avoid its own exhaustion – what occasionally happened, but not before leaving behind some of its best products. For Morris, examples as the series *Watchmen* (2019) and *The Boys* (2019-present) reinforce the idea of the arrival of the superheroes in a revisionist phase (in these shows the “idealized” views on the heroes are left aside and they are seen in a more critical way), that starts to deal of more specific themes and with more depth after the exhaustion of the previous phase of the genre.

In that regard, the productions of superheroes, after a long period of constant production of movies and TV shows, seem to have reached the exhaustion created a kind of “overdetermination” over this kind of story, which created the need for reinventing the ways in which

¹ In: <https://br.ign.com/cinema-tv/7409/news/steven-spielberg-preve-o-fim-dos-filmes-de-super-herois>

² In: <https://www.express.co.uk/entertainment/films/1465710/marvel-james-gunn-guardians-of-the-galaxy-vol-3-suicide-squad>

³ In: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/aug/05/the-suicide-squad-superhero-dc-movie>

these stories are told. The reason for the exhaustion, besides the number of movies, can be comprehended through the use of a popular expression, used to refer to Marvel's works: "the Marvel formula", a structure that seems, in a certain way, "overdetermined" (Geoff Klock's word) by its constant use on their productions, and that works to fulfill certain expectations. In the attempt to establish a transmedia universe, Marvel seems to accede to such revisionism discussed by Morris, investing on new forms of telling stories. Some of the works that constitute Marvel's "phase 4" are TV shows available through *streaming*, as *Loki* (2021), *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier* (2021), *What if...?* (2021) e *WandaVision* (2021), being the last one the focus of our research.

2 *WandaVision*, strangeness and the other story

WandaVision (2021) is the first Marvel TV show⁴ produced by Disney and directly connected to the MCU. The show is led by the characters Wanda (Elizabeth Olsen) and her partner Vision (Paul Bettany). Wanda, or Scarlet Witch, is a character adapted from the comic books, created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, whose first appearance was in the *X-men #4* (1964), having her debut for the MCU in *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (WHEDON, 2015). Like many comic book characters, her powers changed through the time, starting from the possibility of changing the probabilities to the ability of altering the reality. Vision, by his turn, was created in 1968 by Stan Lee and Roy Thomas (reforming the version of the hero presented in the 1940's by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby), appearing for the first time in *The Avengers #57* and debuting his cinema version also in *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. His powers include the ability to change his appearance, intangibility, super force, genius-level intellect, among others.

The story, briefly, is about how Wanda deals with the feeling of grief, after the death of Vision in the events of *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018). Over the course of nine episodes, the characters pass through many situations that cause strangeness – in themselves and in the viewer – that ranging from basic questions to which they do not know the answers (as for how long they've been together or why they went to live in *Westview*), strange reactions from other characters (a

⁴ A série *Agente Carter* (2015), recentemente inserida como parte do cânone do UCM, foi desconsiderada neste argumento, pois esta série foi produzida pela Netflix e não era considerada parte integrante do UCM até o lançamento de *WandaVision*.

woman laughs while she sees her husband choking, a man sawing a wall), or objects that are strange to the environment (a toy helicopter that falls in Wanda's garden, being the only colored object in a whole black and white episode or a beekeeper that comes out of a sewer in the middle of the night).

There are also the aesthetic progressions, as the episodes pass from black and white to colors different conventions of montages throughout the series, that contribute to the strangeness and introduce a hypothesis manipulation of the reality

The show starts with the couple arriving to their new home, in the small town of, reproducing the aesthetic of the shows from the 1950s/60s, with black and white images and the screen presenting a 4:3 aspect ratio, with numerous references to *sitcoms*⁵ of that age. For the ones familiarized with the MCU, it is known that the story happens *in media res* (that is, when we follow a story already in progress), but for a new viewer, it may look the start of a new story. Although all these elements may cause strangeness, once the aesthetic pattern differs to the common standards of the MCS –vibrant colors, display aspect ratios of 2.39:1 –, what causes the great strangeness is the presence of Vision in the show without any previous explanation, once the character had died in *Avengers: Infinity War*. The story goes without providing any explanation and Wanda receives the visit of a woman that does not present herself (Agnes/Agatha Harkness, as we find later), that makes questions about the couple to which Wanda does not know the answers. Vision, at his work, also shows not to be really aware about what is happening, as for what exactly is his function in the company.

⁵ Abreviation of term "*Situation Comedy*".

Figure 1 – The aesthetics of the sitcoms from the 1950s and 60s in the first episode of WandaVision.



Source: Disney Plus.

In the middle of the episode, we are surprised by the TV advertisement/commercial (which is strange for streaming service) of a toaster, which we will discuss later on. Closer to the end of the episode, Wanda and Vision welcome Vision's boss, Arthur, with his wife, for dinner. Again, Wanda is questioned about her story with her husband and shows she does not know about what is happening. After some insistence on the questions, the atmosphere of the show is gradually changed and the comedy starts to become thriller, as Arthur chokes and his wife incessantly repeats for him to "stop it", while she smiles. At the end of the episode, the protagonists are framed by a hexagon that closes over, followed by the credits of episode. However, the camera starts to move away, revealing the episode was being streamed through an old television next to a kind of control panel, in an environment full of colors, with the aspect ratio updated to the current standard (possibly 2.39:1), and also a hand that moves, indication that someone was watching the episode. The structure of this episode is replicated in following episodes (except the fourth episode, as the focus is taken from Wanda in order to give the viewer the first real glimpse of what is happening outside the reality created by Wanda), with progressive changes. All the information mean to increase the feeling of strangeness, moving the plot through the questions instead of answers, indicating that there could be another story hidden behind the one is being told to the viewer, which lead us to the following aspect – the *contamination*.

3 The concept of *contamination*

Jan Baetens (2005), discussing the novelization, states that it is generally treated as the return of what was once the dominant system, that of the written word, but that with the arrival of a “visual culture”, it became the subjugated system that comes back “counterattack” making use of the tools of the dominant system, that of the image, and using them against visual culture itself. However, the author claims that the impact of the visual culture is not necessarily diminished by the return of the “verbal”, and that the novelization could be a good example of “indirect contamination” of media regime by another – that is, the contamination of the novelization by the culture of the image. The novelization, according to the author, is an antiliterary genre, for not being *ekphrasic* like the literature (2005, p. 55), antiadaptation, for it sidesteps the common challenges of the intermedia adaptations (2005, p.46-7), e antiremediation, as in the novelization there is no repurposing and refashioning/improvement of a media’s potentialities by another (2005, p.53). It is a contamination because the novelization is affected/influenced by elements of a visual culture, without being transformed by it.

It is a genre that was once opposite to the image, but that currently cannot be thought of outside a broader visual context. Baetens discusses the *contamination* of the genre by a visual practice to account for this contradiction, but *contamination* meaning a “source of cultural innovation” instead of the damaging sense of the word (BAETENS, 2018, position 1230). In *WandaVision*, we find the reverse movement: a contamination because the visual media works from the concepts of written practice.

Gallerani (2020) also uses this concept, revising its historical use. While in the past the word “contamination” was once understood as the “disfiguration” or “profanation” of a work, in the Middle Ages “contamination” referred to the “combination of two different things in order to create a new prototype” (GALLERANI, 2020, p. 22-3). These insights arise through a notion of rigidity in the genres, as discussed by Goethals e Refini (2020), that go back to examples as the genre “Tragedy” and “Comedy” from the Renaissance, in which the plays explained in the prologues, through “allegorical personifications”, the convention that the viewer would find in the performance (GOETHALS, REFINI, 2020, p, 321). Occasionally, these spaces and contexts of performance, would become a “particularly fruitful platform for innovation and experimentation across forms and media, which, ultimately, blurred definitions and distinctions of genre” (GOETHALS, REFINI, 2020, p, 321).

In the contemporary context, we can understand “the extent to which the *contaminatio* of old literary forms with traditional mass media, such as radio, or new media such as YouTube, contributes to the adjustment and transformation of literature throughout history.” (GALLERANI, 2020, p. 23). In that regard, *contamination* is not about the mix of different medias creating a new one, but the transformation and adjustment of a media based on the influences of others.

It is worthy making a distinction here between the concept of *contamination* discussed and some concepts it can be confused with. The first of them is the *media combination*, that according to Rajewski (2005), is the combination of two medial forms that will result in third one, as in the case of the comic books (RAJEWSKI, 2005, p. 51-2). Though it had been, as seen, a definition for *contamination* in the past, nowadays they are different notions. Another concept is the *intermedial reference*, in which techniques of other media are evoked or “imitated”, as we find the movie *Hulk* (LEE, 2003) in which the frames appear framed as in a comic book page (FIGUEIREDO, 2010, p.16-7), or even the show *Batman* (1966), that presents fragments of text and onomatopoeia in the scenes, as it was in the comic books of that age. In this case, the influence of the “evoked” media does not necessarily change the former, just like a comic book page can show a TV and use it as a resource, showing the news to bring some information that will be important for the story, this feature does not change how the media works, as we find in *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (MILLER, 1986). It is not *remediation* either, in which a media refashions and appropriates of and older media (RAJEWSKI, 2005, p. 60), as it is already a new media making use of the influences of and older media without refashioning it, as we will discuss.

Once the concept is established, we will analyze the media genres and other influences present in *WandaVision*, starting from the TV ads/commercials, media references, that contribute to the construction of the “strangeness” in the story indicating the existence of another story, and next we discuss the contamination by the literary forms.

4 Commercials as intermedial references

The commercials presented in the show, more than simple ads, are responsible for bringing forward important information about the story. The strangeness starts, initially, by its own

presentation, once the commercials are not common in the middle of the episodes on streaming services. Some of these approach elements of Wanda's past – which is the case of the commercials of the first, second and third episodes, being the first about a toaster branded *Stark* that emits the sound of a bomb about to explode, a reference to the bomb that killed her parents when she was a child, and the others are references to the Hydra, an organization that used Wanda as an experiment for her to develop powers. In other cases, the current situation is reflected – in the fifth episode, Wanda is confronted by Vision, that accuses her of keeping the whole town citizens as hostages, manipulating reality, while the commercial presents a paper towel, branded *Lagos*, that can be used to clean the “mess you didn't mean to”, suggesting Wanda's possible lack of control over the situation. The commercials of the sixth and seventh episodes also refer to the current situation, being the former a reference to the use of magic as “the snack for survivors”, and the latter being about depression, presenting an antidepressant from the brand “Nexus” – a term that is also used to refer to Wanda's magic in the comic books, hinting at the reason that led her to use her magic to alter reality around her.

Figure 2 - Commercials of the episodes 1 to 5.



Source: Disney Plus.

Figure 3 - Commercials of the episodes 6 and 7, que sugere o uso de mágica de Wanda para controlar a cidade e a depressão de Wanda.



Source: Disney Plus

These commercials work as instruments of the plot that evoke the traumas of the protagonist's past and give hints about what is happening beyond the reality shaped by her. They function as intermedial references – they work as regular commercials in the middle of the TV shows, also as references to the conventions of the referred periods. However, they are reformulated in relation to the regular commercials as they push the story and contribute to the feeling of strangeness. The elements presented hint, in different moments, at the possibility of a hidden story, leading the viewer to try to unveil the meanings and which facts are not being told, which leads us to the structures of the short story.

5 The structures of the short story

As discussed, *WandaVision* initially presents a story that emulates *sitcoms* from different decades, always bringing elements throughout the episodes that are strange to the situation. There is the previously mentioned choke, in the first episode, along with the lack of memory of the protagonists. In the second episode, there is the red toy helicopter, in which it is possible to recognize the SWORD agency symbol in yellow, differing from the grayscale shown throughout the episode (as we find later, it is a real helicopter that was transformed into a toy when it entered the territory under the control of Wanda), followed, later, by a radio interference with a voice that asks “Wanda? Wanda? Who is doing this to you, Wanda?”.

Figure 4 – Colored object that causes a feeling of strangeness.



Source: Disney Plus.

Many elements, throughout the episode hint to another story that is yet to be revealed: in the same episode, Dottie, one of the neighbors whom Wanda talks to, when listening the radio calling, accidentally breaks a glass on her own hand, and the blood also shows up in red; a beekeeper comes out of sewer near Wanda's house in the middle of the night and the scene is "rewinded" (as in a videocassette recorder) to the moment that precedes the character's departure of their home after Wanda utter a "No". These elements, along with the commercials, suggest interferences that are external to the reality created by Wanda, following a structure that indicates the existence of a story that is developed alongside to the one that is told to the viewer.

This structure or *form*, to use Piglia's word, that arises as a *contamination* of the genre by another (in this case, a literary *contamination*) is, more specifically, the structure of the short story. In order to understand how this works, we will discuss Poe's (1999) and Piglia's (2004) studies. Piglia illustrates the functioning of the short story starting by an example:

'A man in Monte Carlo goes to the casino, wins a million, returns home, commits suicide.' The classic form of the short story is condensed within the nucleus of that future, unwritten story. Contrary to the predictable and conventional (gamble–lose–commit suicide), the intrigue is presented as a paradox. The anecdote disconnects the story of the gambling and the story of the suicide.

That rupture is the key to defining the double character of the story's form. First thesis: a short story always tells two stories. The classic short story (Poe, Quiroga) narrates Story One (the tale of the gambling) in the foreground, and constructs Story Two (the tale of the suicide) in secret. The art of the short story writer consists in knowing how to encode Story Two in the interstices of Story One. A visible story hides a secret tale, narrated in an elliptical and fragmentary manner.⁶ (PIGLIA, 2004, p. 89-90)

It is a surprise effect: the reader is taken to the end of the story just to be surprised and reflect about what information he/she could have possibly left behind. This process urges the reader to “poach” (de Certau’s word) the text in order to find an explanation for what was not seen in the first reading. According to the author, the second story in the short story is a “secret” tale, not meaning that it depends on interpretation, but that the second story it is told in an “enigmatic way”, telling a story while it announces the existence of another (2004, p. 90-1). The second story, however, cannot be exactly “told”, but only told in an elusive manner, built by what is not said, out of allusions (2004, p.91). Poe, by his turn, in *The Philosophy of the Composition (s/d)*, approaches the short story, initially, in terms of extension. For Poe, If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting”, the effect of the “unity of impression” is lost “for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and everything like totality is at once destroyed” (POE, 1999, p.116). The goal of a short story, according to the author, is related to the *effect* or *impression* that one intends to have on the reader. The extension of the short story, therefore, should be long only to the point that is necessary for the construction of the intended effect.

As regarded, WandaVision develops its narrative as a *sitcom*, however, suggesting another story through situations of strangeness – strange reactions, strange objects. The “other story”, then, is told in a “secret” and “enigmatic” way, hinting at a story behind the *sitcoms*.

These events happen over several episodes, in order to make the fans create different theories about the facts. In the third episode, for example, the story is told in colors and reproducing

⁶ "Um homem em Montecarlo vai ao cassino, ganha um milhão, volta para casa, suicida-se". A forma clássica do conto está condensada no núcleo desse relato futuro e não escrito. Contra o previsível e o convencional (jogar-perder-suicidar-se), a intriga se oferece como um paradoxo. A anedota tende a desvincular a história do jogo e a história do suicídio. Essa cisão é a chave para definir o caráter duplo da forma do conto. Primeira tese: um conto sempre conta duas histórias. O conto clássico (Poe, Quiroga) narra em primeiro plano a história 1 (o relato do jogo) e constrói em segredo a história 2 (o relato do suicídio). A arte do contista consiste em saber cifrar a história 2 nos interstícios da história 1. Um relato visível esconde um relato secreto, narrado de um modo elíptico e fragmentário. (PIGLIA, 2004, p. 89-90)

the aesthetics of the shows of the 1970s. In this episode, a doctor states that it is difficult to escape from “small towns”, Wanda is suddenly pregnant, Monica Rambeau tries to approach Wanda, but she is expelled from Westview after questioning her about her dead brother, in addition to an awkward and uncompleted conversation between Herb (Wanda’s neighbor and Vision), Agnes and Vision. At the end, we find Monica lying on the grass, next to a *SWORD* camping, a secret counterterrorism agency. The picture now is on 2.39:1, standard format for Marvel’s movies, which indicates that Monica is in the “real” world.

The presence of *SWORD*’s agents with the commercial in the next episode, that hints at the use of magic for manipulating reality, apparently solves the enigma about the “other story”. The fourth episode tells the viewer how the events we watched were observed from outside of Westview until that moment – through an old Television – and explain some of the interferences we saw before: almost nobody can enter the town, due to a protection shield created around it –, which explains the ending of the first episode; it also explains the radio interference and the presence of the beekeeper, as results of the attempts of the *SWORD*’s agents to contact Wanda. These facts, however, are used to distract us from Agnes/Agatha Harkness and role of manipulation in the plot.

As discussed by Piglia, there is a paradox that is gradually revealed: we find, because of *SWORD*, that Wanda created a new reality inside *Westview*, controlling its residents and keeping them as hostages, but the strange events slowly show that she is not in full control of this reality. This feeling gets stronger throughout the episodes, especially due to the interferences on episode 7.

In the fifth episode, in colors and aspect ratio 16:9, that is a reference to the shows from the 1980s and 90s, Wanda and Vision have trouble putting their babies to sleep, and Agnes shows up proposing to help them. When Vision stops her from approaching the babies, Tommy e Billy, Agnes shows to be confused and asks Wanda: “Do you want me to take that again?”, proposing to repeat the scene, as if something did not go as expected. This moment reveals once more a clue about Wanda’s control over the town and its inhabitants, also leading Vision to question Wanda about what is happening. But, it also suggests that Agnes may be beyond Wanda’s control. At the end of the episode, Vision confronts Wanda about her control over the people of the town. Wanda forces the credits to roll the screen, attempting to end the episode and avoid the argument, and, in failing, she reveals that she knows about the illusion, but she guarantees she does not know how all started and that she has no control over anyone on *Westview*.

From then, events begin to suggest Wanda's loss of control, suggesting the possibility that she is out of control and going mad, in addition to distracting all the attention from Agnes: the episode ends with an "intertextual" appearance – Wanda's deceased brother, Pietro (Quicksilver), shows in her doorstep, yet, not being played by the same actor from *Avengers: The Age of Ultron* (2015), Aaron Johnson, but by Evan Peters, the Quicksilver/Pietro from the *X-men* saga, that leaves Wanda herself confused. In the sixth episode, after being released from Wanda's supposed mind control, Agnes reveals to Vision that Wanda does not allow anyone to leave the town and starts to laugh frantically. Vision restores the mind control in Agnes, so she could return to her previous state, which we find later that is a mere interpretation by the character. The attempt of the plot is to deviate any suspicion from Agnes, in order to keep the surprise for the next episode.

The seventh episode, whose title is "Breaking the fourth wall", a reference to the rupture of the dividing wall that separates the viewers from the world created in the story. The title refers to two features of the episode: first, to the reproduction of the conventions of the shows from the 2000s, in moments in which Wanda and Agnes "talk" directly to the camera, as if they were talking straight to the viewers, a resource known as *mockumentary* or *pseudo-documentary*, and, second, to the revelation of Agnes' role in the events, which breaks with the story controlled by Wanda inside the show. In this episode, several objects seem to suffer interferences, changing to black and white, or changing their looks for versions of previous decades.

Figure 5 – Contemporary objects suffering interferences and transforming into old objects.



Source: Disney Plus.

These interferences, after Wanda e Vision's argument, reflect a possible loss of control of Wanda over the reality created by her. Later, Wanda is trapped by Agnes in a rune trap, in which Wanda's powers do not work. In this moment, Agnes reveals that her true name is Agatha Harkness, and there is a new wall breaking, that shows that Agatha was not a participant of the *sitcoms* created by Wanda, but that she arrived in *Westview* after feeling the magic on the place, and she adapted herself to the aesthetics of the episodes, while the soundtrack – a song called “*Agatha All Along*” – presents the character as the star of the show, responsible for manipulating the important events that cause the strangeness, some already mentioned, and the characters throughout the show, including the fake Pietro. The Characters also shows up as director in other scene, indicating that she was the one who in fact directed and controlled all that happened.

Figure 7 - Agatha reveals to be the one behind several events.



Source: Disney Plus.

Briefly, the eighth episode explain what really happened in between the *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) and *WandaVision*, telling Wanda's story (just briefly commented until then) and showing the relation of each of the commercials with Wanda's story, as well as presenting the real story of Agatha Harkness and her real goal – to find Wanda's secret to use a powerful magic that reaches miles away. Agatha also reveals that she tried to “wake her”, so she interfered in the events (as the resurrection of Pietro or the death of the pet the of the twins), causing strangeness that would wake Wanda up for the reality (that Wanda created unconsciously), but Wanda choose to blind herself instead of facing the truth. At the end of the episode, Agatha claims to have discovered that Wanda is in fact a “Scarlet Witch”, a supposed myth, someone able to use the “chaos magic” and to manipulate the energy of creation, an extremely dangerous being, and that she should be stopped, which leads them to the final battle in the next episode.

Conclusion

These revelations show us what is the other story that should be unraveled, whose structure we can relate to the short story's structure, connecting the events and justifying all the strangeness caused. Nevertheless, some ruptures in relation to the short story should be noted, as discussed. The weekly release of the episodes serves two purposes: increasing the suspense and

creating a web of interactions. Not being able to binge-watch the show – that is, watching all the episode in “single sitting”, as proposed by Poe for reading short stories – there is simple no way to find the truth about the mysteries. The serial release, consequently, lead to the increase of the participatory culture, proposed by Jenkins in discussing about convergences and transmedia storytelling, and forces the viewers community to go on without answers. The fans start to observe details in the speeches or images presented throughout the episodes, in order to find clues about the upcoming events, looking for the comic books as sources of information, as well as basis for their theories –Mephisto’s theory being, probably, the most popular.

The use of this way of telling, telling a story while suggesting the existence of another one, does configure, however, *media combination* or *intermedial references*. Only the way of telling is adapted from the literature to the *streaming* show, with no transformation of the *show’s* format by the aggregation of the short story, and the resource is neither evoked as another media, as a letter in the middle of a novel, or as the commercials in the middle of the episodes. The short story is not present, just its way of telling, that *contaminates* the new media, contributing to the adjustment of its (the new media’s) way of telling, as proposed by Gallerani, but without actually transforming it or generating a new media, or, as proposed by Baetens, it allows itself to be affected, but without being transformed by this influence. There are only traces of the literary, until there is a break with this pattern, in revealing Agatha’s story and the return of Marvel’s cinematographic standards. These contaminations are incorporated to the show as a way of renewing the genre, in a possible expression of the revisionist phase that now seems to affect the superheroes’ stories.

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Acknowledgement: Not applicable.
Financing: Not applicable.
Conflicts of interest: The authors certify that they have no commercial or associative interest that represents a conflict of interest in relation to the manuscript.
Ethical Approval: Not applicable.
Contributor Roles:
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NASCIMENTO, Jéssica da Silva. Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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WANDA VISION. Direção: Matt Shakman. Produção: Jac Schaeffer. Estados Unidos: Marvel Studios, 2021.