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Transfictionality, Extensions and Transmedia Journalism: Expanding the Storyworld of Slavery of The 1619 Project

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Abstract: Transmedia storytelling combines various concepts and respective strategies that were originally intended for the expansion of fictional storyworlds. Gradually, technological convergence and the digitization of information facilitated their adoption by the field of journalism. This study examines if and how transfictionality and its extensions are incorporated into transmedia journalistic projects, with the aim of expanding non-fictional storyworlds. The research methodology follows the scheme of qualitative content analysis in a sample of six essays of the online special issue of The 1619 Project, a transmedia journalistic venture published by *The New York Times*. In this context, Scolari's taxonomy of extensions (2009) was used as an objective research tool through which the research sample was analyzed and interpreted. The research findings reveal that the research sample includes various stories whose functions are similar to those of extensions while audience actively participates in the construction of the represented storyworld. Moreover, the whole project incorporates 'expansion', a form of transfictionality that extends fictional storyworlds, by using extensions (e.g., sequels, prequels). Therefore, it seems that the field of transmedia journalism adopts both transfictionality and extensions, with the aim of expanding non-fictional storyworlds, enhancing the development of collaborative transmedia journalistic efforts.

Keywords: transfictionality; extensions; transmedia storytelling; transmedia journalism; non-fictional storyworlds



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1. Introduction

In recent years, media companies have been completely dependent on technological changes due to the ever-evolving digital landscape (Pérez-Seijo et al. 2020). Journalism's dependence on technology is not a new phenomenon and is due to the incorporation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) into the news production stages (Veglis et al. 2016). In this context, the digitization of information has facilitated the decoupling of media technologies from their respective devices, with each device being able to host multiple media forms and online services. As a result, various ways for publishing the same media content gradually flourished. Subsequently, technological convergence, an underlying trait of media convergence and one of the most significant implications of digitization, caused various rearrangements in the media industry in terms of traditional narrative forms and media channels (Peil and Sparviero 2017). These transformations led to the emergence of 'transmedia storytelling' (Veglis 2012), a narrative structure that combines different concepts, such as the concept of 'transfictionality' and expansive strategies, known as 'extensions', which were originally associated with the entertainment industry's commercial interests (Ryan 2013b; Schiller 2018; Scolari 2013). Since transmedia storytelling includes such characteristics, it was adopted by different sectors, providing a series of strategies that expand a fictional world and strengthening audience participation and engagement with digital works (Gambiarato et al. 2018; Ryan 2017; Scolari 2013). Gradually, technological convergence accompanied with the digitization

of information led to the adoption of transmedia storytelling (Veglis 2012; Veglis et al. 2016), including such concepts and strategies, by the media industry, providing a wide range of possibilities (Freeman 2017) for the creation and expansion of non-fictional storyworlds, enhancing the co-production of content between journalists and the public (Jenkins 2007; Scolari 2013).

Recognizing that ‘transfictionality’ and ‘extensions’ provide a range of abilities in terms of creating and expanding a fictional storyworld accompanied with an audience’s active involvement in such processes, this article provides a comprehensive analysis related to their incorporation into transmedia journalistic projects. The online special issue *The 1619 Project* a journalistic venture of *The New York Times Magazine* that presents the history and the consequences of slavery in the U.S., was used as case study in order to answer specific research questions.

1.1. Technological Convergence and Digitization as Drivers of Change in News Making Processes

In 1993, a couple of months after the launch of the first web browser, Mosaic, the University of Florida’s Journalism Department developed the first online journalism website, a static website that followed the rhythm of print publication, posting online content periodically (Siapera and Veglis 2012). It was only after the global expansion of the WWW that online newspapers began to adopt some of the Internet’s characteristics. The adoption of interactivity, hyperlinking and multimodality by media organizations facilitated the rise of online journalism that allowed for audiences to interact with journalists for the first-time, taking advantage of participatory tools that promoted a two-way communication model (Kolodzy 2015). Consequently, the penetration of the Internet in the field of journalism gradually modified traditional media forms and channels (Siapera and Dimitrakopoulou 2012).

‘Technological convergence’ is defined as “the process by which two hitherto different industrial sectors come to share a common knowledge and technological base” (Han and Sohn 2016) and is another crucial parameter that influenced the traditional news production model (Peil and Sparviero 2017). It has occurred mainly in the fields of information and communication technologies (ICTs) covering telecommunications, broadcasting, information technologies, and entertainment (Han and Sohn 2016). In media and communications, the convergence of ICTs provided media outlets the opportunity to exploit multiple media forms and web-based channels so as to effectively deliver news stories (Katsaounidou et al. 2019).

These changes have resulted in the digitization of production in media organizations. ‘Digitization’ is considered “a digital method of recording, storing and transmitting data” that facilitated the decoupling of media technologies from their respective devices, with each device being able to host multiple media forms and online services (Peil and Sparviero 2017). As a result, new ways regarding the production and dissemination of digital content gradually emerged. In this context, the news was produced once and deployed in various formats for different publication channels, and this process is widely known as ‘cross-media publishing’ (Veglis et al. 2016).

‘Cross-media’ is defined as “the production of any content (e.g., text, image, video, audio etc.) for more than one media channels within the same media organization” (Veglis 2012). In other words, the same story is delivered through various media channels, with the aim of increasing the level of interactivity that interconnects integrated experiences across several media platforms. The introduction of cross-media publishing has resulted in new opportunities for the media industry, which can, for example, be seen in the rise of transmedia storytelling (Pallioura and Dimoulas 2022), an area of media studies that is characterized by semantic chaos and includes many other adjacent concepts, such as ‘cross-media’, etc. (Scolari 2009). It is worth noting that transmedia storytelling was initially seen as a growing trend within the entertainment industry (Jenkins 2003), while it was gradually adopted by other sectors (Veglis et al. 2016).

1.2. Transmedia Storytelling: Brief Definition, Production Process and Publishing Channels

The definition of ‘transmedia storytelling’ has been the subject of considerable debate over the years. The term ‘transmedia’ was firstly used by the cultural theorist Marsha Kinder in 1991 to describe works where characters appeared across multiple media channels (von Stackelberg and Jones 2014). However, the media scholar and USC Annenberg professor Henry Jenkins is considered the founder of the specific academic concept (Canalès 2020). According to Jenkins (2007), ‘transmedia storytelling’ is defined as “a process where integral elements of fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience” (Jenkins 2007). Most often, transmedia stories are not based on individual characters or specific plots but rather complex fictional worlds that can sustain multiple interrelated characters and their stories (Jenkins 2007). According to Klastrup and Tosca (2004), ‘transmedial worlds’ are “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). Subsequently, what characterizes a transmedial world is that audiences and designers share a mental image of the ‘worldness’ (a number of distinguishing features of its universe) that mostly originates from the first version of the world presented but can be elaborated and changed over time. Quite often, the world has a cult (fan) following across media as well (Klastrup and Tosca 2004).

In this context, transmedia production involves the construction of a storyworld applying multiple media for different parts of the story, each with their own benefits and objectives. In other words, each part of the story is developed by employing a specific medium that is most suitable for a certain part of a narrative (Tellería 2020). However, all parts of the story share common features that unify the creation of the storyworld from which they originate. Therefore, transmedia differs from cross-media as it creates a storyworld—not just a single story that runs across media—that consists of different parts; each one of them is independent and can be consumed on its own. The audience plays a fundamental role in this construction, having to navigate the storyworld themselves and in doing so participating in the construction of it (Tellería 2020).

Likewise, transmedia requires multiple publishing channels that are widely known as ‘entry-points’ through which the audience is able to interact with each part of the storyworld, with the aim of participating in its construction and contributing to its expansion (Canavilhas 2018). At this point, it is useful to mention the differences between cross-media and transmedia publishing channels. Cross-media publishing requires several devices to deliver multimedia content, but the audience do not necessarily participate in the spreading process. Transmedia publishing requires each channel to be a distinctive entry-point that allows for the audience to enter into a different part of the storyworld, which expands through their contributions (Canavilhas 2018).

In fact, transmedia narratives actively engage their audiences in the world of narrative (Canalès 2020), which is a crucial parameter that ensures the storyworld’s construction and continuity (Moloney 2020). Transmedia producers should focus on the story experiences across different platforms so as to understand audience needs and preferences, with the aim of providing participation opportunities (Moloney 2020). Such an understanding can be based on collaborative efforts between producers and users so as to build a conversation into a project that lives and expands across various platforms. Since transmedia storytelling is directly associated with audience participation in the social and creative processes (Hayati 2012), it applies a series of strategies for expanding a fictional storyworld, involving audience’s contribution to its construction (Tellería 2020).

1.3. Extensions as Strategies for Expanding a Fictional Storyworld

As narratology expanded from literature to other disciplines and media, it became more reliant on the concept of the ‘world’ that is no longer the elusive sum of the meanings conveyed by a text, nor the sum of the ideas of an author but the very concrete space projected by stories, literally, a ‘storyworld’. Since storyworlds could be shared by various

stories, the emergence of this concept dealt another blow to the one text–one world–one story formula (Ryan 2017). According to Ryan (2017), contemporary culture implements a full range of possible relations between texts, worlds and stories (Ryan 2017). This is what she calls “the aesthetics of proliferation”, where the proliferation can take various forms: ‘narrative’, ‘ontological’ or ‘textual and medial proliferation’. The last type of proliferation, many texts–one world, combines the form of ‘adaptation’ in which the same story is told by different media and in the form of ‘transfictionality’ in which storyworlds are expanded through new stories usually told in the same medium. Transmedia storytelling includes both of these forms so that we now have ‘franchises’ such as Harry Potter, Star Wars, etc., that include transfictional expansions and adaptations using any of the media capable of narration (e.g., books, TV, games), non-media objects (e.g., t-shirts, game characters) and costumes used by fans as “props in games of make believe” (Ryan 2017). Consequently, the concept of ‘transfictionality’ covers the range of practices that expand fiction beyond the boundaries of the work (return of the protagonists, sequels and continuations, etc.) (Ryan 2008). The term refers to “the migration of fictional entities, such as imaginary locations, characters etc., across different texts that usually belong to the same medium” (Ryan 2013b). In this context, a text may be a novel, a news article or a film while a medium could be a book, radio, television, etc., (Mittermayer and Capanema 2019). Transmedia storytelling can be seen as a particular form of transfictionality that “operates across many different media” (Ryan 2013a, 2013b). In other words, it can be understood as a form of transfictionality where fictional entities roam through various documents of different media types (Ryan 2016). These documents contain the same fictional world (Jacob 2021), and their linking relies on three crucial operations: ‘Expansion’, usually also referred to as ‘extension’, ‘modification’ and ‘transposition’ (Ryan 2017). The most common relation between these documents is ‘expansion’, which extends the scope of the original storyworld by adding new stories, by turning secondary characters into the heroes of the story and by prolonging the time covered by the original story (Ryan 2013b). The communication scientist Carlos Alberto Scolari (2009) proposed particular extension categories/strategies that expand a fictional world, including audience participation in the narrative (Scolari 2009). Table 1 summarizes these extension categories/strategies:

Table 1. Four extension categories/strategies for expanding a fictional world according to Carlos Alberto Scolari (2009).

‘Interstitial Microstories’ enrich the diegetic world by expanding the period between the seasons and have a close relationship with the original story (e.g., video games, comics) (Scolari 2009). ‘Prequels’ and ‘Sequels’ can also be classified under this category as they extend the timeline of the original narrative (Jacob 2021; Ryan 2013a).
‘Parallel Stories’ include events or other stories that occurred at the same time as the original story (Scolari 2009).
‘Peripheral Stories’ are considered more or less distant satellites of the macrostory. These texts have a weak relationship to the macrostory, but even peripheral stories may evolve and transform into ‘spin-offs’ (Scolari 2009).
‘User Generated Content/Fanfictions’ are stories produced by users in particular environments that allow for them to enrich the fictional world, such as online forums, comment sections, wikis, blogs, etc. (Jacob 2021; Scolari 2009).

The value of ‘transmedia transfictionality’ is in the possibility of transcending the original fiction limits, expanding its universe, its events and characters by different media. As a result, the main condition for an object to be classified as transmedia transfictionality is the verification of a qualitative fictional narrative system composed by various and different media, each one presenting certain parts and ways of telling stories (Mittermayer and Capanema 2019). Since expansion is one of the most important transfictional practices (Marciniak 2015), extensions can serve a variety of functions, such as maintaining audience interest in the storyworld, by fleshing out its aspects, by providing insights into the

characters and their motivations (Jenkins 2007) and by enhancing worldbuilding experience, generating the possibilities for the story to evolve with new and pertinent content (Gambarato and Tárca 2016).

Since the phenomenon of transmedia storytelling was initially associated with the entertainment industry (Schiller 2018), content creators found new ways to appeal to audiences, using multiple forms of content which belonged to different media but were relevant to a particular fictional structure—storyworld (Dudáček 2018). Stories such as ‘The Matrix’, ‘Star Wars’, ‘Harry Potter’, etc., are told across a wide range of media (e.g., books, feature films, computer games, websites) and are classified under the umbrella of transmedia storytelling (Schiller 2018). In this context, extensions were utilized to provide audience with the opportunity to participate in the construction of a fictional world (Scolari 2013) and their adoption by the field of entertainment represented the need to meet different purposes, such as attracting new or younger audiences (Truyens and Picone 2021). The entertainment industry’s tendency to allow for audiences to participate in and engage with fictional narratives (Dudáček 2018) has created more sophisticated consumer experiences that obviously reflects a transmedia approach (Zomeño and Blay-Arráez 2021).

However, transmedia storytelling is not just fiction. Advertising has been a transmedia experience since the explosion of mass media in the first half of the twentieth century, and the same can be said about journalism in the second half (Scolari 2013). According to Ryan (2015), news stories naturally come to the audience through multiple media, such as, newspaper articles, tv spots, books, movies, etc., (Ryan 2015). In fact, transmedia forms have expanded to non-fictional spheres, such as activism, branding, politics, journalism, etc., following the same definitions and features of transmedia fiction (Gambarato et al. 2018).

Retrospectively, technological convergence facilitated the incorporation of transmedia storytelling by the media industry, providing multiple forms of content and web-based channels that affected the news production process (Katsaounidou et al. 2019). Moreover, the digitization of information led to the emergence of new ways of publishing content across multiple media channels (Veglis et al. 2016). Subsequently, content distribution facilitated the emergence of extensions that were initially adopted by the field of entertainment to attract new audiences and increase consumers’ engagement with fictional works (Freeman 2017). Gradually, media technologies that were initially used by the entertainment industry were also adopted by media outlets. Such technologies were all able to host multiple media forms and distribution channels, enabling the establishment of transmedia storytelling in the field of communication and journalism (Gradillas and Thomas 2023).

1.4. The Field of Transmedia Journalism: Brief Definition, Design Process and Core Principles

‘Transmedia journalism’ can be defined as a journalistic genre that combines various narrative techniques, multiple media channels and primary (or secondary) research in order to produce attractive news (Tellería 2016). The rise of immersive journalism that led to the incorporation of gaming mechanisms and 3D computer visualizations into the news production seems to have contributed to its establishment (Katsaounidou et al. 2019), since immersive experiences, when combined with the practice of journalism, create a transmedia space in which transmedia journalistic projects emerge (Rodríguez 2019). Additionally, transmedia journalism presents dynamics similar to those of transmedia fiction as it is characterized by the involvement of multiple media platforms, content expansion and audience engagement (Gambarato and Tárca 2016).

Another relevant characteristic of transmedia storytelling that had direct implication in journalism is the incorporation of 10 strategies/dimensions into transmedia news stories for planned events. Previous research on the design process of transmedia journalistic projects highlights Premise and Purpose, Structure and Context, News Storytelling, Worldbuilding, Characters, Extensions, Media Platforms and Genres, Audience and Market, Engagement, and Aesthetics as transmedia strategies connected not only to entertainment but also to journalism, branding, education, etc. (Gambarato and Tárca 2016). For example, Gambarato et al. (2014) conducted a transmedia analysis on the 2014 Winter Olympic Games

in Sochi, Russia in order to detect which of the above dimensions had been used during the journalistic coverage of the particular event. In their finding, the researchers highlighted the existence of transmedia strategies in the media coverage, such as the utilization of multiple media platforms through which the storyworld of the Sochi Olympic Games unfolded (Worldbuilding), the transmission of primary stories related to sports events and stories about athletes being presented as heroes (News Storytelling), etc., (Gambarato et al. 2014). However, these dimensions cannot not always be applied to a wide range of different news categories, even if we refer to transmedia journalism (Gambarato and Tárchia 2016).

Since journalism has to deal with a variety of news (e.g., breaking news, in-depth stories) (Araújo and Veloso 2015), the design process of such stories should combine multiple media forms and distribution channels that fit the needs of each story based on real-world circumstances (Moloney 2019). Furthermore, different news categories can be delivered through different management models. The 'low-rotation content model' develops in-depth stories (news) that are considered fertile ground in order for transmedia journalistic projects to be developed. The 'high-rotation content model' delivers breaking news designed for mobile sharing and social networks. However, it is recommended to be accompanied by the first model, as it is associated with the production of multimedia content (Ciancia and Mattei 2018).

Additionally, a news story (or a project) can be considered transmedia when verifies the existence of the core principles of transmedia storytelling, proposed by Henry Jenkins in 2009 (Canavilhas 2018). Those principles are 'Spreadability', which refers to a part of the storyworld that is attractive enough and is delivered by fans (the audience) through social networks, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.; 'Drillability', which refers to the incorporation of hyperlinks into stories used to move individuals from one content to another (Moloney 2019); 'Continuity', which ensures the correlation between multiple stories and the storyworld; 'Multiplicity', which requires interactive features that are used to create parallel worlds, reflecting multiple levels of the original narrative; 'Immersion', which requires the development of meaningful experiences through the construction of multiple entry-points that allow for users to participate in the storyworld (Moloney 2020); 'Extractability', which provides users the ability to take narrative components out of their initial context so as to integrate them in their daily lives; 'Worldbuilding', which refers to various stories that are able to stand on their own although are directly connected to the core idea of the storyworld; 'Seriality', which requires content distribution across various channels with each distribution being able to add a new layer or interpretation to the storyworld; 'Subjectivity', which relies on alternative perspectives that reflect different aspects of the storyworld; and 'Performance', which reflects fans' contributions to the storyworld, with the aim of expanding the initial narrative (Moloney 2020).

Although there are no rules regarding the use of specific channels in the field of transmedia journalism, the selected ones should provide multiple entry-points in order for different audiences to gain access to the storyworld (Moloney 2020). It is worth noting that well-structured media channels are able to transfer audiences from one content to another, increasing the level of immersion and engagement with the storyworld. Lastly, the collaboration between journalists and the public is also a significant factor that ensures the co-production of successful transmedia journalistic projects (Canavilhas 2018).

1.5. Research Questions

Technological convergence and the digitization of information facilitated the rise of transmedia storytelling (Veglis et al. 2016), which was initially associated with the field of entertainment (Jenkins 2003). Gradually, the particular narrative form was adopted by the field of journalism (Scolari 2013), providing multiple ways for content distribution through different media technologies (Veglis et al. 2016). Subsequently, some of its features related to the entertainment sector (e.g., Worldbuilding, Characters, Audience and Market, etc.) were also incorporated into the field of journalism. Such traits provide a wide range of

possibilities, ranging from the construction of a storyworld, to co-production of content and audience participation in transmedia narratives (Gambarato and Tárca 2016).

In this context, the incorporation of ‘transfictionality’ and ‘extensions’ into the field of journalism could be further examined. Such strategies are used to expand a (fictional) storyworld while also allowing for the co-production of content and strengthening of audience participation (Scolari 2009). Hence, their detection and examination in transmedia journalistic projects could provide valuable insights in terms of the construction and expansion of non-fictional storyworlds.

Previous studies on the above topics of interest focus on the design process of transmedia journalistic projects, implementing an analytical model for works of fiction, proposed by Gambarato in 2013, to transmedia news coverage of planned events. The model is related to the incorporation of 10 strategies/dimensions (e.g., Extensions, Worldbuilding, News Storytelling etc.) originating from the entertainment industry into transmedia planned events. The results highlight the existence of such strategies in media coverage of planned events (Gambarato 2016; Gambarato and Tárca 2016; Gambarato et al. 2014, 2017, 2018). However, the applied model focuses on the design of such projects and is therefore not relevant to Scolari’s taxonomy (Scolari 2009) while ‘transfictionality’ (Ryan 2013b) is not part of the overall analysis. Moreover, Renira Rampazzo Gambarato (2016) focused on the examination of ‘slow journalism’ within transmedia space, using the Sochi Project as case study. Although the project’s analysis was based on the same model, the results highlight how slow journalism can benefit from multiplatform media production while the project does not presuppose participation, in the sense that the audience cannot co-create or modify the story (Gambarato 2016).

Furthermore, Godulla and Wolf (2018) focused on transmedia strategies of the National Geographic’s Future of Food, one of the largest transmedia projects in journalism, by applying the core principles of transmedia storytelling, proposed by Henry Jenkins in 2007, to the project. The results highlighted the incorporation of the majority of such qualities -originated from the field of entertainment- into the project (Godulla and Wolf 2018). However, the project did not meet the principle of ‘Worldbuilding’, while Spreadability, Drillability, Immersion, Extractability, Seriality, Subjectivity, Continuity, Multiplicity and Performance (Godulla and Wolf 2018) do not present the same functions as extensions (Scolari 2009). For example, ‘Performance’ was associated with users’ contributions to the photo site ‘Your Shot’, where food-related photographs provided inspiration for possible future expansions to the story (Godulla and Wolf 2018).

Lastly, Kevin Moloney (2020) focused on the concept of ‘Worldbuilding’ to identify which types of transmedia storyworlds are included in daily journalism, applying different qualities (Storyworld Definition, Serialization, Entry Points, Internal Connection, etc.) to an individual case study (*The New York Times*). The results define three types of transmedia stories—native, emergent and feral—and the way they can be understood across media industries. However, audience participation was approached by using ‘Additive Comprehension’, a quality related to readers’ engagement with multiple stories of the storyworld in order to develop a complex understanding of its subject (Moloney 2020).

Taking the above into account, this article examines the online special issue of The 1619 Project, with the aim of confirming the following research questions:

R.Q. 1: Are there any similarities between the above extension categories and the narrative structure, meaning the stories, events, etc., of the essays that comprise the online special issue of The 1619 Project?

R.Q. 2: How is the audience involved in the construction of a non-fictional storyworld?

R.Q. 3: Which form of transfictionality can be incorporated into non-fictional storyworlds?

2. Research Methods and Materials

2.1. Methodology

The research methodology was based on ‘qualitative content analysis’, which refers to “a research method which combines objective and systematic means that are capable of

extracting valid inferences from multiple forms of data, such as visual, written or verbal data, with the aim of interpreting specific phenomena” (Bengtsson 2016). The above method was implemented in a sample of 6 essays of the online special issue of The 1619 Project All essays are available on [a distinct website](#) created by *The New York Times*. Scolari’s taxonomy of extensions (2009) was used as an objective research tool (material), according to which the narrative structure (e.g., the stories and their functions) was analyzed and interpreted in the above essays. The incorporation of Scolari’s taxonomy into the research sample was also used to identify the way(s) (e.g., online forms for sharing content) in which the audience contributed to the construction of the project. After analyzing the sample, the results were presented in the form of structured information (tables) that depict an overall and comprehensive description of the findings.

2.2. Presentation of The 1619 Project

The 1619 Project is a journalistic venture developed by the investigative journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones and published by *The New York Times* in August 2019. The project aims to reframe America’s national narrative regarding the history of slavery by exposing its consequences and the contributions of enslaved Africans to their nation (meaning the consequences of slavery) (Silverstein 2021). It includes two print editions in the NYT newspaper and the corresponding magazine (Silverstein 2021), an online special issue available on a distinct website, a documentary miniseries (released on Hulu in 2023) and a book titled *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*. The online special issue of the project (case study) was created by Nikole Hannah-Jones in collaboration with other journalists and interacts with the original *New York Times Magazine* publication (Pulitzer Center n.d.). It includes multiple essays, some of them similar to those in the corresponding magazine; a five-episode podcast; 17 art works; a primary education curriculum; etc. It refers to the origins and the history of slavery in the U.S., to the contributions of enslaved African Americans to their nation, etc. (Silverstein 2021). The book was written by Nikole Hannah-Jones and expands on the original project, weaving together 19 essays and 36 creative works, 17 of them are also included on the website (Pulitzer Center n.d.). It also refers to the key moments of origin, oppression, struggle and resistance, placing them in a current temporal context (Pulitzer Center n.d.) that is dedicated to the legacy of slavery, which did not end with emancipation and continues to shape contemporary American life (Silverstein 2021). Both the miniseries and the book are considered expansions of the initial version of the project (Silverstein 2021). The miniseries was created by Nikole Hannah-Jones and *The New York Times* and is a Lionsgate Production in association with One Story Up Productions, Harpo Films and *The New York Times*. It was released by Hulu in 2023 and includes six docuseries from which the episodes ‘Democracy’, ‘Race’, ‘Music’, ‘Capitalism’, ‘Fear’ and ‘Justice’ were adopted from essays included in the book (Hulu Press n.d.). It refers to the consequences of slavery and the contributions of enslaved Africans to their nation, by placing them in current temporal context that depicts how the legacy of slavery shapes different aspects of contemporary American life (Jensen 2024; Joseph 2023). Both the miniseries and the book are considered expansions on the original project (Silverstein 2021).

2.3. Selection Criteria and Research Limitations

The online special issue of The 1619 Project was used as a case study as it includes multiple types of data, such as essays and photo essays (visual and written data) and a podcasts series (verbal data). Such data justify the selection of the research methodology. The first criterion behind the selection of the project is related to the existence of a non-fictional storyworld that requires extensions. Since The 1619 Project is more than its online special issue, it includes various documents, meaning the news article of the newspaper, the miniseries, etc., that belong to different media types, such as the book, the streaming platform, the Internet, etc. Such documents and the corresponding media consist in the storyworld of slavery while sharing its common features.

The second criterion behind the sample’s selection is related to the existence of essays that have been created with UGC. The analysis of such essays potentially confirms the second research question. Lastly, the research sample includes essays with similar characteristics in terms of their content (e.g., text, images). However, there are some limitations related to our research results, since the case study also includes a podcast series that may presents differences in terms of its narrative structure. Table 2 includes the essays’ titles accompanied with the source link of the online version of the project.

Table 2. Examined essays (sample) from *The 1619 Project* The 1619 Project of *The New York Times Magazine*.

Essay (no. 1): What does a traffic jam in Atlanta have to do with segregation? Quite a lot
Essay (no. 2): The sugar that saturates the American diet has a barbaric history as the ‘white gold’ that fueled slavery
Essay (no. 3): Stories of Slavery, Shared over Generations
Essay (no. 4): It was very Humiliating: Readers Share How They Taught About Slavery
Essay (no. 5): We asked 16 writers to bring consequential moments in African-American history to life. Here are their poems and stories
Essay (no. 6): Their ancestors were enslaved by law. Today, they are graduates of the nation’s prominent historically black law school ¹

¹ Essays’ source link: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>, accessed on 12 February 2024.

3. Results

3.1. Stories Concerning Events before the Initial Story (Prequels)

Stories concerning events before the initial story were found in the narrative structure of all essays and are used to expand the narrative time of the storyworld. For example, the second examined essay refers to Christopher Columbus’ second voyage in the Spanish Canary Islands in 1493, which seems to be an event that expands the diegetic time of the original story. After returning to the U.S., Columbus introduced the first sugar canes, which became the cause for the establishment of forced labor in the sugar production sector. Consequently, it seems that the temporal context in which the above story unfolds is earlier than the narrative’s inaugural year (1619). Therefore, Columbus’ story has the same functions as the stories contained in ‘prequels’. Another example included in the narrative structure of the same essay is related to the earliest traces of cane demonstration on the Pacific Island of New Guinea 10,000 years ago. Since the temporal context of the first traces of sugar canes is earlier than the initial narrative time, the story has similar functions to those included in ‘prequels’. It is worth noting that such stories have also been used to construct a general historical framework within which the storyworld of slavery unfolds.

None of this — the extraordinary mass commodification of sugar, its economic might and outsize impact on the American diet and health — was in any way foreordained, or even predictable, when Christopher Columbus made his second voyage across the Atlantic Ocean in 1493, bringing sugar-cane stalks with him from the Spanish Canary Islands. In Europe at that time, refined sugar was a luxury product, the backbreaking toil and dangerous labor required in its manufacture an insuperable barrier to production in anything approaching bulk. It seems reasonable to imagine that it might have remained so if it weren’t for the establishment of an enormous market in enslaved laborers who had no way to opt out of the treacherous work.

Figure 1. Columbus’ second voyage as an example of stories concerning events before the initial story (prequels). Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/sugar-slave-trade-slavery.html>, accessed on 12 February 2024.

3.2. Stories Concerning Events after the Initial Story (Sequels)

Stories concerning events after the initial story mostly represent the current obstacles that African Americans have to face due to their origins. Subsequently, they are also used to expand the initial diegetic time of the general narrative. The narrative structure of the second essay includes related examples concerning black farmers who have sued sugar-cane companies that attempted to sabotage their businesses. For example, Wenceslaus Provost Jr., a former fourth-generation black farmer, sued ‘M.A. Patout and Son’, the largest sugar-cane mill company in Louisiana. Since the company breached a significant contract to sabotage his business, he and his wife lost their house in 2018. Such stories reflect the phenomenon of racial discrimination in current American societies and the challenges African Americans currently face due to their origins. According to the same essay, the total proportion of all African American farmers has plummeted since the 1900s because of racist actions by government agencies, banks and real estate developers. Consequently, the above example is considered a story that expands the initial narrative time, highlighting the phenomenon of racial discrimination that shapes contemporary American societies. Moreover, the narrative structure of the first examined essay refers to the isolation of enslaved African Americans through the establishment of ‘imaginary borders’ after the abolition of slavery. According to the essay, enslaved Africans were pushed into ghettos by civic planners (also referred to as ‘white masters’) since they were released and no longer served the needs of their ‘owners’. The reason behind such isolations was associated with the phenomenon of racial discrimination. Since the temporal context of those stories succeeds the temporal context of the initial narrative, their functions are the same as those of the stories belonging to ‘sequels’.

The company is being sued by a former fourth-generation black farmer. As first reported in *The Guardian*, Wenceslaus Provost Jr. claims the company breached a harvesting contract in an effort to deliberately sabotage his business. Provost, who goes by the first name June, and his wife, Angie, who is also a farmer, lost their home to foreclosure in 2018, after defaulting on F.S.A.-guaranteed crop loans. June Provost has also filed a federal lawsuit against First Guaranty Bank and a bank senior vice president for claims related to lending discrimination, as well as for mail and wire fraud in reporting false information to federal loan officials. The suit names a whistle-blower, a federal loan officer, who, in April 2015, “informed Mr. Provost that he had been systematically discriminated against by First Guaranty Bank,” the lawsuit reads.

Figure 2. Provost’s story as an example of stories concerning events after the initial story (sequels). Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/sugar-slave-trade-slavery.html>, accessed on 12 February 2024.

Table 3 summarizes the main functions of the above stories found in the research sample.

Table 3. Stories concerning events after the initial story (sequels).

Stories concerning events before the initial story (prequels)	Construction of a historical context that highlights different dimensions of the history of slavery
	Expansion of the initial narrative time
Stories concerning events after the initial story (sequels)	Presentation of current obstacles that African Americans face due to their origins
	Expansion of the initial narrative time

3.3. Stories Concerning Events with a Less Strong Relation to the Original Narrative (Peripheral Stories)

Stories concerning events with a less strong relation to the original narrative were also detected in the narrative structure of all essays. Such stories associate past and/or future events with the main idea of the storyworld. At first glance, such events seem to have a weak relation to the original story, developing a general context of discussion through which the history of slavery unfolds. The first examined essay refers to the construction of the Interstate Highway System in the U.S (past event) and the corresponding traffic congestion in Atlanta (event happened after 1619). In this way, the essay introduces readers to the storyworld of slavery by exposing events that are seemingly unrelated to its main idea. However, those events are connected to the phenomenon of racial segregation in the U.S. that still influences American societies. Therefore, the essay reveals a link between the way the Interstate Highway System was designed and the phenomenon of racial discrimination, since the particular construction aimed to discriminate 'black' from 'white' Americans. Moreover, its design currently causes traffic jam. Since the above stories include events that are seemingly unrelated to the original story, their functions present similarities to those of 'peripheral stories'. From this point of view, they introduce readers to the storyworld of slavery by associating events that have a weak relation to the initial narrative. Moreover, they can also be considered stories concerning past and/or future events that are indirectly associated with the storyworld of slavery and expand the narrative time.

Atlanta has some of the worst traffic in the United States. Drivers there average two hours each week mired in gridlock, hung up at countless spots, from the constantly clogged Georgia 400 to a complicated cluster of overpasses at Tom Moreland Interchange, better known as "Spaghetti Junction." The Downtown Connector — a 12-to-14-lane megahighway that in theory connects the city's north to its south — regularly has three-mile-long traffic jams that last four hours or more. Commuters might assume they're stuck there because some city planner made a mistake, but the heavy congestion actually stems from a great success. In Atlanta, as in dozens of cities across America, daily congestion is a direct consequence of a century-long effort to segregate the races.

Figure 3. Traffic congestion in Atlanta as an event with a less strong relation to the original narrative (peripheral story—story concerning events after the initial story). Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/traffic-atlanta-segregation.html>, accessed on 12 February 2024.

While Interstates were regularly used to destroy black neighborhoods, they were also used to keep black and white neighborhoods apart. Today, major roads and highways serve as stark dividing lines between black and white sections in cities like Buffalo, Hartford, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh and St. Louis. In Atlanta, the intent to segregate was crystal clear.

Interstate 20, the east-west corridor that connects with I-75 and I-85 in Atlanta's center, was deliberately plotted along a winding route in the late 1950s to serve, in the words of Mayor Bill Hartsfield, as "the boundary between the white and Negro communities" on the west side of town. Black neighborhoods, he hoped, would be hemmed in on one side of the new expressway, while white neighborhoods on the other side of it would be protected. Racial residential patterns have long since changed, of course, but the awkward path of I-20 remains in place.

Figure 4. The construction of the Interstate Highway System as an event with a strong relation to the original narrative (story concerning events before the initial story). Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/traffic-atlanta-segregation.html>, accessed on 12 February 2024.

Furthermore, the narrative structure of the second essay includes the story of Domino Sugar’s Chalmette, North America’s largest sugar factory. At first glance, the story highlights the factory’s annual sugar production for 2019, an event that happened after the initial narrative time and has a weak relation to the initial story. Taking advantage of the reference to sugar production, the essay creates another association with a past event related to the establishment of forced labor in the U.S. that caused the establishment of slavery. At first glance, the factory’s story has a weak relation to the original narrative and its functions present similarities to those of ‘peripheral stories’. In this way, the story introduces readers to the storyworld of slavery, presenting a general discussion context. On the other hand, the same story is associated with the establishment of forced labor in sugar cane production. From this point of view, it is a story concerning events happened before and after the initial story, expanding the initial narrative time. It is worth noting that such stories do not present functions similar to those of ‘spin-offs’, as they do not derive from an already existing work related to the storyworld.

Table 4 summarizes the main functions of the above stories found in the research sample:

Table 4. Stories concerning events with a less strong relation to the original narrative (peripheral stories).

Stories concerning events with a less strong relation to the original narrative (peripheral stories)	Readers’ introduction to the storyworld through past and present events with a weak relation to the original idea of the narrative
	Expansion of the initial narrative time

3.4. Stories Concerning Parallel Events (Parallel Stories)

Stories concerning parallel events were only detected in the narrative structure of the second essay. In fact, such stories include functions similar to those of stories with a less strong relation to the original narrative and, subsequently, to stories concerning events after the initial story. However, both of them are referred to events that unfold in parallel in the same temporal context, highlighting some of the project’s main dimensions (e.g., the association between sugar cane plantations and the establishment of slavery). As a result, their functions are similar to those of ‘parallel stories’. For instance, the story of Étienne de Boré, who invented the first sugar crystals, and the Haitian revolution unfold alongside each other in 1795. However, if both stories are removed from the particular temporal context, they cannot be considered parallel, presenting functions related to ‘peripheral stories’ and ‘sequels’. For instance, de Boré was a New Orleans sugar planter who granulated the first sugar crystals in La Luisiana, and his story has a weak (indirect) relation to the original narrative. According to the essay, the advent of sugar processing locally, which came after de Boré’s innovation, caused the Haitian revolution within the same year. The reason behind the revolution is associated with the expansion of sugar plantations, which encouraged the ‘exploitation’ of enslaved people, in areas near Haiti. Consequently, the second story can be considered a story that presents similar functions with those of ‘sequels’, expanding the initial narrative time.

Table 5 summarizes the main functions of the above stories found in the research sample.

Table 5. Stories concerning parallel events (parallel stories).

Stories concerning parallel events (Parallel stories)	Presentation of parallel events that highlight some of the project’s main dimensions
	Expansion of the initial narrative time

In 1795, Etienne de Boré, a New Orleans sugar planter, granulated the first sugar crystals in the Louisiana Territory. With the advent of sugar processing locally, sugar plantations exploded up and down both banks of the Mississippi River. All of this was possible because of the abundantly rich alluvial soil, combined with the technical mastery of seasoned French and Spanish planters from around the cane-growing basin of the Gulf and the Caribbean — and because of the toil of thousands of enslaved people. More French planters and their enslaved expert sugar workers poured into Louisiana as Toussaint L'Ouverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines led a successful revolution to secure Haiti's independence from France.

Figure 5. An example of stories concerning parallel events (parallel stories). Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/sugar-slave-trade-slavery.html>, accessed on 12 February 2024.

3.5. User-Generated Content (UGC)

User-generated content (UGC) was detected in the majority of essays that comprise the research sample. Such stories expand the original story, exposing readers' testimonies regarding the phenomenon of slavery. In this way, the online version of *The 1619 Project* provides the audience with the opportunity to participate in its storyworld. It is worth noting that users' stories include functions similar to more than one extension category, such as 'prequels', 'peripheral stories', etc.:

Prequels/Sequels: Readers' testimonies regarding their enslaved ancestors' lives were detected in the narrative structure of the last essay. Such stories present similar functions with those of 'prequels' and 'sequels'. For instance, Elijah Porter's ancestor, Moses Turner, was born into slavery in 1839, and as a result, his story presents functions similar to a 'sequel', expanding the initial narrative time. As Turner's story unfolds, it presents more details regarding enslaved Africans' contributions to their nation. According to the essay, Moses Turner was a landowner who contributed to the American economy, utilizing his knowledge of agriculture. Therefore, the same story provides meaningful insights related to African Americans' contributions. Turner's story has also been incorporated into an earlier temporal context than that of Porter's testimony. In this context, the first story refers to a past event that is related to the storyworld and is similar to 'prequels' while the second one presents functions similar to those of 'peripheral stories'. Elijah Porter's story refers to his personal achievements (e.g., university, work), for which his ancestor was a source of inspiration. Moreover, the narrative structure of the examined essay titled "We asked 16 writers to bring consequential moments in African-American history to life. Here are their poems and stories" presents art works (poems) with similar functions. For instance, Clint Smith's poem refers to the overall number of slave ships that crossed the Atlantic over the course of 350 years, highlighting the implications of slavery and the violation of Africans' rights. Since the poem refers to events that occurred within 350 years, it can be considered a story similar to both 'prequels' and 'sequels'. In both cases, the poem extends the period of the initial narrative while also referring to the suffering enslaved Africans endured. It is worth noting that the temporal context in which such stories have been incorporated affects their functions, providing similarities with more than one extension categories.

Elijah Porter's ancestor Moses Turner was born in April 1839 in Georgia. At the time of the 1870 census, he and his wife, Sarah, had five children between 6 months and 9 years. The family lived on 265 acres valued at \$750 (\$14,665 in today's dollars). Turner was an employer, and the farm produced cotton, sweet potatoes, molasses, butter and Indian corn.

By 1910 the Turners had no mortgage and were living with three daughters who worked as laborers on their farm. Turner died in 1917 and did not leave a will; his wife was the administrator of his estate.

"The way the story is always told is that we were slaves, we got free and now here we are and we didn't make any positive contributions to America," Porter said. "So when I am reading about Moses Turner, not only is he a landowner but he is contributing to the American economy, he knows agriculture, he is married and has children. I was really in shock because I always wanted to know my history." Porter also found some irony in the story of Turner's death. "The interesting thing was he died without a will," he said. "The story of me becoming an attorney was already written before I knew about it."

Figure 6. Elijah Porter's testimony (descendant) regarding Moses Turner's (enslaved ancestor) story (UGC). Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/howard-university-law-school.html>, accessed on 12 February 2024.

Over the course of 350 years,
36,000 slave ships crossed the Atlantic
Ocean. I walk over to the globe & move

my finger back & forth between
the fragile continents. I try to keep
count how many times I drag

my hand across the bristled
hemispheres, but grow weary of chasing
a history that swallowed me.

Figure 7. Lines from Smith's poem. Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/african-american-poets.html>, accessed on 12 February 2024.

Sequels/Peripheral Stories: Readers' stories whose functions present similarities to those of 'prequels' and 'peripheral stories' were detected in the narrative structure of the fourth essay. Such stories include events that reveal how the history of slavery is currently taught in American schools. From this point of view, the stories are used to expand the narrative time of the initial story using the current educational system that exposes the dominant approaches related to the American history. For example, Sheridan's testimony refers to her 10th grade American history class in which the students were asked to write the "pros" of slavery. Since her testimony refers to an event that took place after the initial story and is directly connected to the storyworld, it expands the narrative time, revealing the way the country's educational system distorts the truth behind the facts, meaning the phenomenon of slavery. Therefore, it presents functions similar to stories included in 'sequels'. On the other hand, such stories present similar functions with those of 'peripheral stories' as they refer to different perspectives that reveal multiple aspects of the storyworld. Since slavery is the main idea behind such testimonies, readers expose

different perspectives regarding the way the former's history is currently taught in schools. For example, Karen Seay was taught that removing people from Africa and bringing them to America "saved" them from idolatry. Angela Aguero was taught that the Civil War had nothing to do with slavery while John Beauregard revealed that his high school history teacher taught students that slavery was not a cause of a war or a revolution in general. Such contributions highlight multiple aspects related to the way the history of slavery was and is currently taught, providing new insights to the general idea of the storyworld.

In my 10th grade American history class, we were given an assignment to write the "pros" and cons of slavery. Many of us questioned what, if any, "pro" would there be, but the assignment stood.

— Deirdre Sheridan, 24, went to school in Scotch Plains, N.J.

We were taught that removing people from Africa and bringing them to America "saved" them from idolatry and damnation. We were also taught that slavery was a "kindly" institution and that enslavers "loved" their enslaved people and took good care of them.

— Karen Seay, 72, went to school in Inman, S.C.

Figure 8. Readers' testimonies (UGC) concerning the way slavery is taught in American schools. Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/09/27/magazine/slavery-education-school-1619-project.html>, accessed on 12 February 2024.

Peripheral Stories: Readers' stories whose functions present similarities with those of 'peripheral stories' were detected in the narrative structure of all essays composed with UGC. These stories expose descendants' personal achievements (e.g., work, education, family), which have a weak relation to the storyworld. For example, Ky'Eisha Penn refers that her ancestors were enslaved people who managed to achieve their goals and their story inspired her to become a lawyer, as she wanted to be challenged by the history and to create a better future for her future children. Yasiman Montgomery refers that the history of her ancestors made her feel more purposeful in life. These testimonies have a weak relation to the original narrative, exposing events that are not directly associated with the history of slavery, providing a general context of discussion.

Montgomery grew up in Washington and knew of Wilder, who, she said, a lot of people in the area trace their history back to. "Reading about it makes me feel more purposeful," she said, "because I am attached to that legacy." She credits her parents, Alfred and Cecily, for instilling in her an appreciation for her heritage. "They were older and grew up in segregation," she said. "They took me to look at archives together; they wanted me to learn my history. I have a lot of pride in being black and that's because I know my heritage. It's important to start the conversation before slavery. We didn't just pop up in America, we were part of a culture."

Figure 9. A part of Montgomery's testimony (UGC). Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/howard-university-law-school.html>, accessed on 12 February 2024.

Tables 6–8 summarize the main functions of the above stories (UGC) found in the online version of *The 1619 Project*:

Table 6. User-generated content (UGC).

UGC (Prequels/Sequels)	Exposure of enslaved Africans' personal lives
	Expansion of the initial narrative time
	Presentation of African Americans' contributions to their nation
	Presentation of the consequences of slavery

Table 7. User-generated content (UGC).

UGC (Sequels/Peripheral Stories)	Expansion of the initial narrative time
	Presentation of different perspectives related to the history of slavery (storyworld)

Table 8. User-generated content (UGC).

UGC (Peripheral Stories)	Expansion of the initial narrative time
	Readers' introduction to the storyworld through past and present events with a less strong connection to the original idea of the narrative

3.6. Results' Interpretation

Considering that the narrative structure of the examined essays includes stories that are characterized by different functions (similar to 'prequels', 'peripheral stories', 'parallel stories', etc.), it is vital to mention how they are used to expand the storyworld of slavery. Through this content analysis, it becomes understandable that the (direct/indirect) relation of such stories to the storyworld of slavery and the temporal context in which they have been incorporated are key factors that reflect the range of their capabilities.

Analytically, stories concerning events before the initial story are separated from those concerning events with a weak relation to the initial story because of their direct association with the phenomenon of slavery. From a reader's point of view, Columbus' voyage in the Spanish Canary Islands is directly connected to the establishment of slavery in the U.S. This is immediately apparent within the structure of his story as the particular essay mentions a few lines below Columbus' story that "it seems reasonable to imagine that it may have remained so if it weren't for the establishment of an enormous market in enslaved laborers who had no way to opt out of the treacherous work". This part of the text refers to the establishment of forced labor in the U.S. after the arrival of the first sugar canes that caused the establishment and the expansion of slavery. Consequently, within the particular context of discussion, readers can directly associate the arrival of sugar in America with the storyworld of slavery (cause identification). On the other hand, stories that present functions similar to those of 'peripheral stories' do not directly introduce readers to the original narrative, reflecting events seemingly unrelated to the phenomenon of slavery. For example, Ky' Eisha Penn and Yasiman Montgomery refer to their achievements (e.g., university, work and life in general) and in the way that their ancestors' stories made them feel, leaving readers little room to relate their past—that is, their ancestors and their origins in general—to the initial narrative. Consequently, readers have to pay attention to contextual details in order to relate the subjective side of the narrative—that is, the descendants' feelings and references to their ancestors that present them as sources of inspiration—with the storyworld (slavery). Another related example is the story of the Interstate Highway System (similar to 'peripheral stories'), which is used to indirectly correlate an unrelated event (traffic congestion in Atlanta) with the original narrative. The story begins with a reference to the traffic jam in Atlanta, providing readers a general discussion context. However, one should read more than 10 lines (in case of Columbus

voyage, there are only 4 lines) to create a direct correlation between the construction of the Interstate Highway System with the phenomenon of racial discrimination in the U.S. It is worth noting that its construction causes traffic congestion as it aimed to discriminate 'black' from 'white' regions. Therefore, a reader who is not familiar with the particular context will not be able to associate traffic congestion (caused by the design of the Interstate Highway System) with a whole storyworld that reflects a story spanning several centuries.

In the same vein, although the story of Domino Sugar's Chalmette provides a more direct relation between the topic of discussion—that is, the sugar production rates of the particular factory during 2019—and the storyworld, readers should pay attention in the next three paragraphs in order to create a correlation between the story and the storyworld. Related references to Hurricane Katrina and the failed levees that "destroyed so many black lives" do not provide sufficient details for a corresponding correlation.

Stories concerning parallel events (similar to 'parallel stories') are also composed of incidents that are not directly connected to the original narrative. For example, de Boré's story (that of a New Orleans sugar planter) cannot provide readers with a direct connection to the storyworld because of the reference to his origins—which is not related to the African continent. Even though the particular essay refers that he granulated the first sugar crystals in Louisiana, one has to read more than seven lines below to create a correlation between the expansion of sugar production and the history of slavery. In this case, the indirect connection can be understood from the text's reference to enslaved laborers who "needed" to be recruited to pick and cultivate sugar canes.

Taking into account the type of relation (direct/indirect) between the stories and the storyworld that seems to define some of their functions, it is important to mention how the temporal context in which the above stories have been incorporated also influences the 'range of their capabilities, expanding the whole storyworld'. De Bore's story occurs along with the Haitian revolution in the same temporal context (1795), something that is clear within the narrative structure of the particular essay. However, those stories present functions related to those of 'parallel stories' only because of the temporal context in which they have been incorporated. Taking into account that both of them present more than one function (similar to 'peripheral stories' and 'sequels'), they can be understood as 'parallel' only by using the chronological order in which they have been placed and the reference to the year during which the corresponding events occurred (1795). Their functions also allow for the expansion of the storyworld, since both of them happened after 1619, providing readers more insights related to the history of slavery (e.g., enslaved expert sugar workers led a successful revolution to secure Haiti's independence from France in 1795).

In the same vein, stories generated by users' content are also affected by the temporal context in which they have been incorporated. For instance, readers' testimonies regarding their enslaved ancestors (similar to 'peripheral stories') who, born into slavery, allow for the audience to 'move' between the past and the future. Mose Turner's story is a remarkable example of such stories, presenting functions similar to those of 'prequels' and 'sequels'. Turner was born into slavery, and more specifically in 1839 (vs. 1619), as the particular essay mentions. His birth has a strong connection between the storyworld as he was 'born into slavery'. Taking into account the temporal context in which this story has been incorporated, Turner's story can be considered similar to stories included in 'sequels'. However, the year of his birth accompanied by the fact that he lived in the previous century precedes the year his story was shared by his descendant (1839 vs. 2019), and, as a result, it can also be characterized as a story presenting similar characteristics to those of 'prequels'. In both cases, the particular story utilizes the temporal context of the narrative structure, providing details regarding African American contributions to their nation and expanding the storyworld of slavery.

Another related example is located in stories similar to those included in 'sequels' and 'peripheral stories'. Specifically, these are incorporated into a future temporal context that depicts the way current American educators are teaching the history of slavery (sequels). As a result, they highlight the dominant narratives regarding the truth behind the facts

occurred into slavery and are directly connected to the storyworld. On the other hand, former students' experiences regarding the way they were taught history present functions similar to those of 'peripheral stories'. The students are now young adults who have recently graduated from American schools, as it can be understood through the references to their age under their testimonies. Since the narrators provide multiple insights about the stereotypes and prejudices that characterize their society, their testimonies are similar to 'peripheral stories'. Therefore, they create new insights related to the storyworld of slavery. In contrast, the story of the Interstate Highway System does not provide relevant information as it is used to introduce readers to the storyworld, utilizing the narrative structure and the chronological order of its essay.

Stories concerning events after the initial story are also remarkable examples that highlight the consequences of racial discrimination in current American societies, utilizing functions related to 'sequels'. Readers can directly associate such stories with the implications of racial discrimination in the U.S. as they expose the current obstacles African Americans have to face because of brutal racism. For example, the story of Provost, a black farmer who lost his house due to an American company that breached a contract to sabotage his business, highlights the phenomenon of racism that developed during slavery but still shapes current American societies. Such stories also expand the initial narrative.

Through the above findings, it is also argued that the audience also participates in the construction of the storyworld of slavery. This assumption is confirmed through the existence of stories compiled with UGC within the case study. Moreover, the website includes online forms through which the audience, including the descendants of former slaves, can upload content related to the storyworlds' main topics. For instance, within an essay regarding the way the history of slavery is taught, there is a link that transfers readers to an online form in which they can upload content by providing an email address and a surname, regarding the way they have been taught about slavery. Furthermore, the podcast series includes Hannah-Jones' email through which anyone can express their beliefs and thoughts about the topics the audio series reproduces. Readers' comments have also been detected in the comment section of the podcast.

It is worth mentioning that the majority of such contributions and comments highlight the implications of racism in current American societies, the constant violation of African American rights and the concealment of the history of slavery from the public. For example, Rob Simmons shared his enslaved ancestor's voter registration documents, referring to the battles of African Americans for social and political equality. He argued that the battle for equality did not stop with the abolition of slavery and continues to this day. Simmons was one of many African American voters who had to re-register to vote in the 2018 American elections. Their votes did not count because of some "typos" made when adding their names to the voter rolls. Another user commented that listening to the podcast series was enlightening, as the history of black people in the U.S. is often silenced and ignored, also highlighting his concerns about the collapse of democratic values. Such comments highlight the project's contributions to uncovering the aspects of slavery in the current U.S., influencing the dominant narratives that "justify" the racial discrimination between black and white Americans.

Through the presentation of The 1619 Project in the Research Methods and Materials Section, it is argued that this journalistic venture incorporates a particular form of 'transfictionality' that is called 'expansion'. Analytically, the whole project is composed of different media types (the newspaper, the magazine, the website, the book, the streaming platform, etc.) that include various documents (e.g., online essays, written essays, the documentary miniseries) whose linking relies on 'expansion'. Here, 'expansion' relates the documents that include the storyworld of slavery, by prolonging the time covered by the original story, meaning the beginning of slavery, through 'prequels' and 'sequels'. For instance, the print edition of the magazine accompanied with the case study are considered 'prequels' and refer to the origins, the consequences of slavery and the contributions of enslaved Africans to the U.S. Subsequently, the book places related historical events (e.g., issues of origin,

the oppression and struggle of African Americans) in a future temporal context, reflecting the legacy of slavery in contemporary American societies. Utilizing a different temporal context, the book expands the original narrative and can be considered a 'sequel'. The documentary miniseries was mostly based on the books' essays, by presenting episodes with the same theme (e.g., 'Democracy', 'Race') in a current temporal context that reflects how the legacy of slavery shapes various sectors of contemporary American societies. As a result, the movie is also considered a 'sequel' that expands the original story. What 'migrates' between those documents is a combination of characters, events and elements that construct each one of the aforementioned parts of the storyworld. For example, some of the magazine's essays migrate in the corresponding online special issue. Subsequently, parts of the original story, meaning the historical events in terms of the origins and consequences of slavery, migrate from the online issue to the book and the miniseries. Subsequently, events concerning the book are considered the basis of some of the miniseries' episodes. Moreover, the creator of the project seems to migrate between the different versions of the storyworld of slavery. Nikole Hannah-Jones is the creator behind the original version of the project, wrote the corresponding book, and is also considered the creator of the movie, in collaboration with *The New York Times*. Lastly, some of the elements that make up the essays of the website, for instance, some of the art works included in the essays, were migrated to the book, which introduces 36 pieces of original imaginative writing related to the history of slavery. From these art works, 17 of them were migrated from the website in a different temporal context. Consequently, such events, characters and elements are incorporated into different documents of different media types that represent different temporal contexts (past and future) by expanding the scope of the original narrative.

Please use the form below to respond. Some responses may be published.

What is your name? *

First and last preferred, please.

What is your email? *

Please share specific details about how slavery was taught to you or your child(ren) in school. Is there a moment that stands out? *

Continue

Figure 10. An online form through which readers can upload their experiences on how slavery was taught in American schools. Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/19/magazine/slavery-teachers-textbooks.html>, accessed on 12 February 2024.

4. Discussion and Future Research

Through these findings, the research questions this article examines are answered and verified. The online version of The 1619 Project applies Scolari's taxonomy of extensions (2009) to the narrative structure of the examined essays through stories whose functions are similar to those of stories included in 'prequels', 'sequels', 'peripheral stories', etc. (Scolari 2009). Such stories provide a wide range of functions, ranging from non-linear storytelling to audience participation in the storyworld of slavery. The temporal transposition between past and future events accompanied with their relation (strong or weak) to the original narrative reflect multiple dimensions of the storyworld of slavery (e.g., the causes, the contributions of enslaved Africans, the phenomenon of racism), encouraging its expansion and connection to contemporary American societies. These functions can also be observed

in the field of entertainment where extensions have been initially developed ([Gambarato et al. 2018](#); [Ryan 2015](#); [Scolari 2009, 2013](#)).

In this context, transmedia journalism, and more specifically the case study, exploits such traits to provide readers with the opportunity to investigate different parts of a non-fictional universe within the same medium, following the flow of stories that unfold in a non-linear way. Additionally, the existence of essays compiled with UGC (e.g., testimonies and stories related to enslaved descendants, photos, documents, etc.) encourages the audience's active involvement in the construction of the storyworld while also ensuring the plurality of perspectives that reveal further aspects of the history of slavery, increasing the project's reliability, by narrating real-world events. It is worth noting that online forms for content sharing and the journalists' emails within some of the essays strengthen the co-production of content, developing the conditions for more direct communication between the creators of the project and the public. Furthermore, comment sections enabled audience reactions to the project's main ideas. Readers were able to express their personal thoughts and beliefs, providing extra material for future expansions of the already-existing work. Related examples include users' suggestions for further research on the phenomenon of brutal racism that plagues contemporary societies, the media's role in shaping biased and distorted narratives about African American citizens, etc.

Apart from the case study, the overall construction of this whole project makes use of 'expansion', a form of 'transfictionality', in order to bring together the different parts of the storyworld of slavery ([Ryan 2013b](#)). By utilizing a number of different media types, from which the one is the expansion of the other, that include various documents which share the same events, characters and features and by exploiting different temporal contexts (past and present/future), the project combines the multiple facets of a non-fictional transmedia narrative ([Ryan 2013b, 2017](#)). The migration of such events, characters and features in different temporal contexts and their association with current conditions that are related to the legacy and the cultural impact of slavery in contemporary American societies enables the original narrative to expand in a future temporal context, providing a continuation in a non-fictional storyworld ([Hulu Press n.d.](#); [Pulitzer Center n.d.](#); [Ryan 2013b, 2017](#); [Silverstein 2021](#)). Unlike the field of entertainment, transmedia journalism, and more specifically, The 1619 Project, relies on the migration of non-fictional stories, events, characters, elements, etc., within documents that depict real-world circumstances. However, these works are temporally connected to each other, presenting characteristics similar to those of 'prequels', 'sequels', etc., ([Ryan 2013b](#); [Scolari 2009](#)). The case study also presents similar characteristics, as the narrative structure of the examined essays is composed of stories whose functions are similar to those of extensions, a series of strategies for expanding fictional works ([Scolari 2009](#)). Consequently, it can be understood that the range of practices used to expand a fictional world can also be used to extend a non-fictional narrative. The similarities between the entertainment and the media industries have largely arisen from the phenomenon of technological convergence accompanied with the digitization of information, encouraging the exploitation of various strategies that strengthen the production of collaborative transmedia journalistic projects ([Gambarato 2016](#); [Gambarato et al. 2014, 2018](#); [Ryan 2015](#); [Scolari 2013](#); [Veglis et al. 2016](#)).

It is worth mentioning that The 1619 Project exerted great influence on contemporary American societies, shedding light on black history, which was often a silent topic, ignored by U.S. governments and historians. Initially, the magazine issue was greeted with an enthusiastic response and when it was available in print, on Aug. 18 and 19 of 2019; readers around the states complained of having to visit multiple newsstands to find a copy. At the same time, criticisms of the project arrived too. 'The World Socialist Web Site' published a series of articles about the project and interviewed historians who disputed Nikole's argument about the role of slavery in the American revolution. However, after George Floyd's murder by a Minneapolis police officer in 2020, the largest protest movement in American history made use of the language and the ideas of the project, carrying out peaceful demonstrations across the country for the equality of human rights. The project's

ideas were written on cardboard signs during the demonstrations while its incorporation into school curriculums had already begun to increase. A bit later, Tom Cotton introduced a senate bill called the 'Saving of American History Act' to ban the teaching of the project in elementary, secondary and higher American education (Silverstein 2021).

In 2021, *The Times*, in collaboration with 'The Pulitzer Center' began to develop learning communities around the project, including programs for K12 Classrooms, out-of-schooltime programs, etc. During 2024, a series of education conferences and grant programs (e.g., The 1619 Education Conference 'We Want Students To Be Able To See Themselves') dedicated to the project gave educators and students the opportunity to collaborate and create innovative works that led to sustained awareness in terms of racial discrimination and the segregation between contemporary American citizens. The above references were all detected during the examination of the case study and confirm that the project has continued to expand since 2019 as an ongoing initiative that affects current American societies, reflecting on the ideal of "democracy", utilizing different ways to narrate the history of slavery (Silverstein 2021).

Taking the above into account, The 1619 Project seems to have influenced the national narrative regarding the history of slavery in the U.S., shedding light on hidden dimensions that reveal the consequences of racism, the prejudices and stereotypes that undermine the ideal of democracy. Thus, it is a remarkable example of transmedia storytelling that incorporates 'expansion' as the form of 'transfictionality' with which a storyworld based on real-world circumstances may expand (Ryan 2013b, 2017), providing a range of practices that can be adopted by media outlets to cover similar issues (Gambarato et al. 2018; Scolari 2009, 2013).

Future research suggestions on the field of transmedia journalism include content analysis in a number of related projects, through the use of Scolari's taxonomy, so that it can be clear if there are other parameters that determine the main functions of stories similar to 'extensions' (e.g., the spatial context, the main dimensions of such stories in relation to their direct/indirect association to the storyworld). Moreover, deeper investigation regarding the incorporation of different forms of transfictionality (e.g., transposition, modification) into transmedia journalistic projects would provide new insights regarding the way the media industry exploits strategies intended for entertainment to create successful non-fictional storyworlds. Additionally, readers' contributions to the construction of non-fictional storyworlds should be further examined in a number of related projects for the identification of the most common interactive mechanisms used in transmedia journalism. In this case, a typology regarding the tools that provide users the opportunity to participate in non-fictional constructions would further highlight their importance in terms of collaborative transmedia journalism efforts. Lastly, the challenges professional journalists have to face when deciding to implement users' content in transmedia journalism should be further examined through a series of interviews that would probably reveal the range of skills journalists should develop to moderate such content, with the aim of producing news articles with an increased level of reliability.

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