

CHAPTER TWO

Plan Transmedia

Each story is set in an imaginative universe and each universe is governed by laws. The use of transmedia multiplies the imagery of a story and divides it into many technological and narrative ecosystems where it is possible to relate and experience the storytelling. Hence, the tale needs to inspire a *great curiosity* (or better, an aptitude for knowledge) from its authors, producers and users, and a certain inclination for all involved to easily pass from one platform to another, and toward the combination of different *languages*. In fact, entering an integrated imaginative universe, which is also distributed across media, forces the public to behave in two different ways, studied by Howard Gardner in his research on ‘multiple intelligences’. They consist of:

- a vertical process, aimed at the *assimilation* of content that a single user will benefit from, while using the media involved in the project;
- a horizontal process, or *adaption*, that a single user will promote in his relationship with the rest of the audience involved in the project.²²

The creation of a transmedia work or project must always ease the audience’s access to the multi-media content and rouse a willingness of participation and sharing from the

²²G. Howard, *Frames of Mind: The theory of multiple intelligences* (1983).

audience. How? There are four essential guidelines used by all transmedia narrators and producers:

- frequent *clarification* of small parts of the plot in the different media involved;
- clear *explanation* of the relationships among the different media, suggesting descriptive areas and expressions that can be shared by the audience;
- *presence* of repeated *books*, *bridges* and *links* between the media involved in the project;
- *adoption* of editorial strategies suitable for the involvement of the audience in the formation of the story in every asset of the project. These are based on dramatic features such as: conflict resolution, pursuit of the goal, reversal or confirmation of a point of view, evocative interpretation of the theme involved across media, and comprehensive, effective, and emotional strengthening of the tale.

However, let's start with an example taken, this time, from the experience of an alternate reality game. It all begins on the morning of May 18, 2007, when the face of the actor Aaron Eckhart and the slogan *I Believe in Harvey Dent* suddenly appear on hundreds of election posters in ten big American cities. *But* it couldn't have been an actual election... In fact, after 48 hours, the posters and brochures are brutally vandalized. At this point, the audience's attention is captured. The mysterious candidate's face now has dark circles around his eyes, ugly bruises on the cheekbones and a diabolic sneer. During the night, the word "*Too*" has been added to the slogan. Batman and Marvel Universe lovers are the first to understand what is happening and start to spread the news online. For everyone else, a phantom election website is already online (ibelieveinharleydent.com) and the mystery is revealed: Dent has entered the list of candidates for the District Attorney's Office in Gotham City, and he needs our votes in order to

fight organized crime. Before this faux election campaign, rumors of a *Batman Begins* sequel had already started to spread. It would be, however, more than a year after the viral marketing's initiation until the release of *The Dark Knight*... Another two days pass and another website appears- that of the most formidable opponent of Dent and the election posters' vandal: the Joker (ibelieveinharveydenttoo.com). At this point, the imaginative universe of the tale is totally set. The movie's marketing campaign has just started the longest and best-paid *alternate reality game* (ARG) in the history of film promotion, created by 42 Entertainment with Jordan Weisman. But what is an ARG in practical terms? Michele Giuliani writes the following about *The Dark Knight* project:

This was just the beginning, if using a specific jargon it is the "Rabbit hole" or "Trailhead" of a long viral campaign, of the innovative variation of the Alternate Reality Game (ARG). [...] A sort of role playing game in an environment that is consistent with the merchandized product; an interactive narrative that uses the actual world as a platform, simultaneously involving multiple media in order to develop the plot created by directors, or master-puppets. Thus, gradually, players will deal with a multitude of ad-hoc websites; in parallel with this, they will be involved in some live "treasure hunts" or they will create different events, physically speaking, in the actual world [...]. However, unlike a regular role playing game, when playing the ARG you don't have another identity and time expands through silences and unexpected new clues. Also the rules are not illustrated but they develop by practicing the game. [...] Everybody is aware of the fact that it is a game, but you interact with events and characters, considering them as an integral part of reality.²³

²³M. Giuliani, in: "Subvertising" (July, 2008).

A week later, the Joker's new website (whysoserious.com) urges users to download photos which show how they have vandalized the city or tormented their friends; above all, it urges them to take part in a new crime *game* "launched" strategically on Halloween night. In November, an online daily newspaper (TheGothamTimes.com) is 'published', followed by the TheHa-HaHaTimes.com by the Joker. The newspaper includes links to the Portal of the Gotham Police Department (WeAreTheAnswer.org), the bank that will be held up by the Joker in the trailer (GothamNationalBank.com) and photos of damage to the city incurred during the final pursuit in *Batman Begins* (GothamCityRail.com).

During the following months, the events lead up to a totally unexpected turning point. The death of the actor who plays the Joker (Heath Ledger) forces the creators to shift the ARG's narrative focus to Harvey Dent's character, who will, in fact, play Two-Face in the movie, another one of Batman's arch-enemies. Several weeks are devoted to the diffusion of *fake* messages sent by Dent via mobile, requests for online submissions to his electoral campaign and distribution of gadgets all over the city... and everything happens without involving the protagonist of the movie (this time his name doesn't even appear in the title). Meanwhile, the launch of the movie is impending, but there is still time to play one more game. One night in Chicago, the police (the actual ones) stop a public "Dentmobile" full of the attorney's noisy fans, while a group called "Clowns against Dent" posts some threatening videos on YouTube. Soon after, Dent announces a live web-stream press-conference, which was canceled at the last minute because the candidate was somewhere else. An mp3 file later discloses how in a restaurant (Rossi'sDeli.com), a policeman (FrankNotaro.com) took a woman hostage, asking for the protection of his family and his own life. It was Dent himself who negotiated with the man, first saving the woman, and then assisting in the man's arrest.

At this point, the marketing of experience gives way to the marketing of the story. The alternate world of Dent is the actual one of Batman. The evil face of the Joker on the Web is the tragic one of the dead actor. Grassroots video of amateur ‘joker’ vandals as well as more collective efforts, like one of a surreal duel on a racetrack between a Toyota F1 and Batmobile. The quests and trials promoted by the viral campaign are now replaced by *ambient marketing* sets, which reshape the urban landscape and bring to mind buildings and skyscrapers of the mythical Gotham; they are also replaced by *beamvertising*, which promotes the movie thanks to brilliant projections on building and monument facades all around the world. And now the time has come to tell the film’s story. Time to let the characters talk, and no longer autonomously. Time to spotlight the “new” Batman, reaffirming the *anagnorisis* (or tragic recognition) and the historical message of this superhero created by Kane and Finger: the *homousia* between Good and Evil, understood as the two inseparable sides of a single matter (which is “doubled” through the comparison Batman/Joker and Batman/Two Face), life and death with only a thin line in between (as also in the narrative).²⁴

Thus, something more than a simple “launch” of a movie or a basic advergaming is created. The creation of a new imaginary universe – ARG and viral campaign before, transmedia launch after – is based on some of the fundamental narrative elements of the *semiosphere*²⁵ by Lotman (from the characters’ point of view to the audience’s anthropological journey throughout the project), but is always very attentive to the active role of the transmedial audience of the project.

²⁴ M. Giovagnoli, *Cross-media. Le nuove narrazioni*, cit. (2009).

²⁵ For a definition of *semiosphere* related to a text or a story, ref. to: J. M. Lotman, *On the Semiosphere* (2005).

Modeling Transmedia Projects

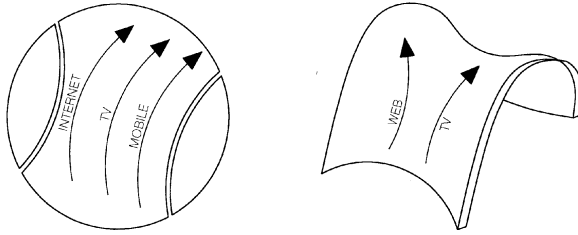
Presetting the “shape” of a communicative system is a fundamental operation in the creative and editorial process of distributing a story in new media. In order to reach this goal, the entertainment industry works with narrative bibles, interactive maps, flow charts, networked systems... These models of “knowledge representation” are adaptable to a movie launch or election campaign planning, to a *reality show* or a *mobile games* platform, an urban setting or a transmedia journalistic report, or perhaps to an integrated advertising campaign, etc... Moreover, considering the complexity of the communicative processes – both *simultaneous* and *asynchronous* – which are used today by transmedia producers, the most useful kinds of representation, in my opinion, stem from different theories concerning the “shape of the universe”. These come from natural physics, quantum and astronomical theories, and in the case of a transmedia project they refer to two fundamental systems:

- one *flat* and *Euclidean*, where the forces (different media of a project) and the bodies that are subjected to them (contents of the project) move on a single infinite plane, depending on measurable and classifiable sprints (after the official closing of the project as well as during the “active” time of its spectacularization);
- one *curved*, where the forces (different media of a project) and the bodies that are subjected to them (contents of the project) move around and take on different forms, which are not always predictable, as in neural or particle tissues.

Considering the two communicative systems it is clear that, based on the definition, the *curved* ones are often more complex. The publishing contents and interactions between the different technological platforms depend on the shape of the curve shared among the authors and the audience of a project. The calculation of this curve comes in part from Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity where, in his opinion, the mass of bodies is directly proportional to the entity of *curvature* that is used.

In the case of transmedia, the *mass of bodies* depends on the richness of their contents and the media alterations of a project. The *motion* depends on the popularization process and the operational use (through the communicative system) made by each of the involved media. Finally, according to the ratio of the curvature, the use of time and length of the tale, a transmedia project can have two additional "shapes":

- a *sphere* (with a *positive curvature*), which is a system based on perfectly balanced communication between the various media, with content that is cyclically and repeatedly distributed, with frequent shuffling and interventions of products that live a "second life" in the multiple media involved in the project;
- a *saddle* (with a *negative curvature*), that is a multimedia system in which the mass of bodies (media contents) tends to spread out and enlarge, but at the same time, tends to disperse. As in the case of reports distributed on multiple media, they change and repeat until their tales become fragmented and poor.



Img. 1 - Positive and negative curvature of a project

An example? After extraordinary success in the U.S. with its October 2007 publication, *The Secret* was on top of the best-seller lists in the U.S. and Europe within a few weeks, thanks to the use of a curved transmedia communicative system. The cover's *blurb* read: "Whoever you are and wherever you are, the secret can give you anything you want". Following the global success of *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Secret* was also launched as a low budget film, which used the narrative prototype of Dan Brown but focused on the emotional connection between the ordinary life of its audience and the dreams of its narration. The film, based off of the book, claims: "It has been handed down for centuries, fervently desired, hidden, stolen and bought, all thanks to a considerable amount of money. This very ancient "secret" was known to some of the greatest figures in history: Plato, Galileo, Beethoven, Edison, Carnegie, Einstein, and to some inventors, theologians, scientists and philosophers. Now the secret is going to be revealed to the world."

The online aspect of the project took these considerations into account. Over a few weeks, *The Secret's* official website collected hundreds of stories recounting "my dream that has come true thanks to *The Secret*". At the same time, e-books, soundtracks and photos were given as presents to the online users. There were "dedicated" screenings of the film in movie

theatres around the U.S. and it was sold online and abroad (thus, giving a negative curvature, or a saddle-shape to the system). Moreover, some of the stories sent by the readers were forwarded and then distributed, as well as published and spread online. This allowed *The Secret's* imaginative lore – although it was a low-budget project with no Hollywood stars – to quickly spread all over the world and accrue incalculable revenue. Hence, the case of *The Secret* is a paradigmatic example of transmedia narrative which used a curved narrative system with a sphere-shaped curvature for the book, and a negative curvature during the dissemination of its contents around the world. This particular case went from traditional media (book, cinema, home video) to digital (internet, mobile, social networks).

Point and Line to Plane

Christy Dena, the Australian pioneer of cross-media studies, was the first to notice that if a project integrates many different media platforms, it inevitably offers more points of entry for the audience. Having multiple points for an audience to get involved is a great opportunity, but at the same time, can prove to be very risky.

The *points of entry*, both primary and secondary, of a project have to be set and organized in the system with great attention, understanding their role and how they interact with the project's fundamental moments of navigation. The audience must not reach a project's primary point of entry in a traumatic or unsuspecting way, but rather by consciously moving towards it. Thus, it is necessary for each medium to identify itself and provide the pertinent information needed to explore the other platforms of the system. An example?

Since 2009, a mysterious killer has stalked the Italian Renaissance courts. His name is Ezio Auditore, and as in the

usual case with avengers, he is very determined and very capable with both his time and his weapons. This allusive assassin is not on today's Most Wanted list, but is actually the protagonist in the *Assassin's Creed 2* videogame. For the publication of the second game in the *Assassin's Creed* saga, the publisher, Ubisoft, decided to improve and expand upon the transmedia variations that were created for the first installment of the game (with other games like *Assassin's Creed: Discovery* and *Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines* and with a series of three short movies dedicated to the backstories of the same imaginative universe, *Assassin's Creed: Lineage*). Soon a novel series dedicated to the various adventures of the protagonists, additional online videos, and a collection of action figures were released too. Each platform in a project, therefore, adds something to the game universe, and each publication provides a useful point of entry that allows further exploration of the story. All this is done with maximum autonomy, and above all keeping in mind the central focus of the project (the game) and its goal (recreation) in the eyes of the audience.

The most important narrative dimension of a transmedia project always consists of the way in which the audience interacts with it (*call-to-action*). Without a correct action process the whole system is bound to collapse. Therefore, the 'intervention principle' of a cross-media project's audience has three stages: motivation to act (*primer*), sense of the action (*referral*) and personal reward for the action done by the audience (*reward*).

A good example exists in an old TV ad that aired in 2004 by Mitsubishi titled *What Happens Next?* The commercial shows two sports cars trying to avoid objects that are mysteriously being thrown at them from the back of two trucks. The objects multiply and become bigger and bigger, until you see two cars sliding out of the trucks and falling on top of the two sports cars, causing them to swerve suddenly. At this point, the image disappears, leaving the audience in suspense (*primer*). A few seconds later, a website address is

shown: seewhathappens.com. In the first six hours, eleven million viewers switched from TV to the web to visit the site in order to find out the ending (*reward*).²⁶

The aim of the *primer* is to give to the audience a valid and specific reason to interact with the narrative. The Mitsubishi commercial did this by using a cliffhanger. On the other hand, the *referral* gives the audience useful information about how and when to come into the action. The information could be intradiegetic or extradiegetic, that is to say internal (like the commercial) or external to the development of the tale. Finally, the *reward* has two basic aims: give a direct response from the system (showing the audience that their actions have been noticed) and provide a material reward for their effort (consumption). “Planning a system of transmedia communication means creating stories that allow users to go from *the interactivity of consultation*, based on simple research of information, closer examination of media and the power of personal choice on the general completion of the project, to the *interactivity of conversation*, based on participation and the sharing of expressive forms and different technologies.”²⁷

Questions of Timing

In 1967, John Archibald Wheeler, an American physician, was the first to put a name to “black holes” even though he realized that they were neither totally “black” (because they emit particles whose weak evaporation can be recorded) nor were they “holes” (but dying celestial bodies, whose surface escape velocity is so high that it exceeds that of light, making them seemingly invisible)²⁸. They are a type of cyclopean

²⁶ J. Jaffe, *Case study: “See What Happens”*, iMedia Connections (2004).

²⁷ M. Giovagnoli, *Cross-media..cit.*(2009).

²⁸ J. A. Wheeler, M. Rees, *Black Holes, Gravitational Waves, and Cosmology* (1974).

funnel with an intense and concentrated gravitational field that attracts everything during its rotation, even light²⁹. Some of you may realize that this is the same Wheeler who, before becoming a pioneer in quantum gravity studies, had already taken part in the Manhattan Project in Los Alamos for the creation of the atomic bomb, and the Matterhorn B project for the hydrogen bomb. But... that is another story. Actually, Wheeler's theories about mass, charge, and angular momentum as well as those about the universe's wave function greatly contribute to today's transmedia studies. These theories are particularly influential in the creation of a hypothesis about the future of new narrative, as well as new technological methods of global storytelling.

One of Wheeler's most popular quotes is: "A black hole has no hair", referring to the fact that any object or signal, once consumed by a black hole, disappears without any chance of coming back. Even so, it leaves a trace because its mass and charge affects the gravitational attraction of the black hole³⁰. How is this relevant? Well, what happens in a dark and atemporal black hole is comparable to the story of new transmedia: the collective imagination of oral, analogue and digital traditions that has been developed over millennia is now at death's door, but it continues to influence modern day storytelling. Black holes are ruled internally by "other" thermodynamics, which require adaptations and exceptions to universal laws. This also happens in the contemporary story: traditional paradigms and narratives are still used in the new transmedia interfaces, but they are subject to revolutions concerning how stories are perceived, imagined and created, not to mention the *horizon of events* or *laws of falling* bodies in the cone of a black hole... The similarities and possible implications are numerous. So, the following sections are

²⁹ P. Davies, *The Last Three Minutes* (1994).

³⁰ J. Bekenstein, *Black-hole thermodynamics*, "Physics Today" (Jan. 1980).

dedicated to different kinds of intervention – whether temporary or permanent – between one or more media platforms in a transmedia project.

THE STOP AND GO EFFECT

During the course of the story, one of the middle segments of a project is suspended, while other parts continue on, and then the stalled segment resumes its course as if nothing happened. For example, in a transmedia promotion of a movie, online trailers all around the world simultaneously disappear from the web as soon as TV and radio commercials are aired, and then return online a few days after the movie comes out.

THE DOMINO EFFECT

A particularly emotional narrative in one of the multiple media platforms or a particular asset of a transmedia project becomes temporarily more important than the others. This dominant asset changes the flow and direction of all other assets and acts as the dominant ‘driver’ until the conclusion of the project.

THE SPIN-OFF EFFECT

Like some satellites that take advantage of a planet’s gravity to move somewhere else, one of the platforms in a transmedia project can temporarily attach itself to another medium in order to strengthen or revive its role or its content and continue towards a secondary goal in respect to the project as a whole. This is a strategy that forces the author and the transmedia producer to attentively and frequently supervise the comprehensive integrity of the system, in order

to avoid collisions and imbalances in the distribution of a project's contents.

THE DOPPLER EFFECT

At a certain point during the development of a project, one of the media involved in a transmedia system changes its identity or language, altering its appearance as well as the comprehensive balance of the narrative. This works exactly as it does in nature with energy and sound: from an animal's cry as it comes towards you, to the different shades of a "color," or the temperature of the stars.

Another example? *Heroes* (2006), a TV-series created and written by Tim Kring, chronicles the lives of a group of people, initially unknown to each other, with supernatural powers. Since the beginning of the project, Kring planned for a progressive evolution of the story visible throughout all of the media involved. During the first season, for example, *Heroes 360 Experience* was launched on the NBC website. This online version was not very different from the series, and later changed its name to *Heroes Evolutions*, aiming to better explain the "universe" and "mythology" (the mysterious fantasy elements linked to the science-fiction and supernatural phenomena) on which the tale was based.

Heroes also used the "Doppler effect" from the beginning: different media simultaneously switched their roles (from primary to subordinate, or vice versa), and in doing so, they added to each other's narrative material, instead of competing with one another. In fact, the structure of the series, which was originally conceived as a series of *volumes* (the seasons) divided into *chapters* (the episodes), was very complex and needed a deeper analysis that would have never been possible in a shortened TV-series. Consequently (*the domino effect*), as the

show progressed, five more web-series, a comic series (*9th Wonders*), a graphic novel (actually a long web comic in 160 episodes published by Aspen Comics after the broadcast of each episode), iStories and a serialized documentary (a *making of* for each season) called *Heroes Unmasked* were produced. Thus, it creates an imaginative universe appealing to any transmedia technogeek, while having a narrative paradigm, similar in some aspects to that of *LOST* (the survivors of an air disaster (artificial) and an island (natural) vs those endowed with superpowers of genetic or synthetic origins (artificial) and survivors of a (natural) eclipse. This isn't surprising, considering that before writing *Heroes*, Tim Kring had worked for a while on *Crossing Jordan* together with *LOST*'s creator, Damon Lindelof.

Transmedia Communications Systems

In order to define which relationships will exist between different media platforms, there are several models of representation that can be used. The designer or author must identify the most suitable model for the publication and technological aspects of the project. The most important difference between these models is the way in which the story is managed through multiple media within a project, a condition on which both the dramatic universe of the project and the variety of experiences presented to the audiences clearly depend. In this case, there are three different types of systems: *supportive*, *competitive*, and *omnivorous*.

THE SUPPORTIVE SYSTEM

In the United States in 1976, Ballantine Book published *Star Wars: From the Adventures of Luke Skywalker*. The book's

genre, in some opinions, was too specific (both in science-fiction and in fantasy), and it wasn't able to attract the attention of a US best-seller audience. It was a proper publishing "flop". The novel was written by Alan Dean Foster and commissioned by George Lucas and was actually a novelized version of the screenplay, which was already in progress in Hollywood. Even the link between the two media (cinema and literature), shown on the cover with the quote, "Amazing movie by Twentieth Century Fox coming soon," was not able to save the book. This was partly due to the fact that the audience of the time was accustomed to the book being written before the movie but published after it. Since the beginning, Lucas had planned for *Star Wars* to be a transmedia project with a very large curvature (a rich nine-part story with many opportunities for audience involvement). Soon, this came to be true. In the wake of the movie's success, the book became a best-seller in America; it exceeded all expectations and contributed to the budget with which Lucasfilm would finance future episodes of the saga. Consequently, in the history of transmedia, *Star Wars* is the first case of a *supportive* publishing project (as *supportive media*), where the different media involved in a story are integrated, they share content and information and together invite the audience to participate in a series of experiences, quests and contests. They form links and bridges across platforms which allow for better communication and encourage fans to make *skill flows*³¹ and to collaborate to create potential content for the project. The basic dynamics of the skill flow in a communicative supportive system are:

³¹According to Pierre Lévy (op.cit.), *skill flow* is the shifting and increasing of the sensory and emotional faculties of an audience, reached through the media function, incited particularly by the testing of new forms of interaction and execution, both personal and collective.

- switching from synchronous to asynchronous communication in the different media;
- using dramatic/theatrical teasers between one medium and another;
- using repeated content in the different media involved in the project.

THE COMPETITIVE SYSTEM

In the transmedia *competitive* system, different *ad hoc* versions are created for each of the media involved in the project on a technological, dramaturgic and consumptive level. Multiple media “split up their roles”, and trigger antagonistic movement within the audiences. They rely on the autonomy of each individual medium in relation to the project, and aim at creating a more customized dialogue within each medium’s own community. Since the creation of additional narrative versions requires further time and money and decreases the efficiency of the control exercised by the broadcaster, the use of a transmedia competitive system is often discouraged by the corporate management. Therefore it is more often used by independent productions. Some examples: A type of advertising available on the Internet is used as an alternative to a more traditional television-based one, for the launching of a new TV-format. Or the extra content of a movie preview is shown first to communities of cell phone users, or a level of a videogame that can be played online on the publisher’s official website in preparation for the full launch.

Media components of a competitive system often *safeguard* short consumer and editorial segments that otherwise wouldn’t have had space and would have escaped the control of their authors (with the consequent loss of their official format, *brand* visibility, profits for production staff and all the actors of the project). A good example from this point of view is the *in-game* narrative created for the DVD release of *The Ring*

2 (by Hideo Nakata, 2005). Using the same concept as the movie's plot (whoever watches a mysterious videotape is called and warned that they will be killed in a few days), a website was created (7daysleft.com) for each country where the movie was distributed. By submitting an email address and a mobile number, it was possible to terrify the phone's owner through anonymous messages, exactly like in the movie. Hence, a transmedia competitive system that used cinema, internet and phones ingeniously exploited the emotional repertoire of its different audiences by using the slogan: "Terrify your friends... it's easy and free!".

THE OMNIVOROUS SYSTEM

A proper *condicio sine qua non* of transmedia projects is the fact that a narrative should invite its receiver to cross the communicative system of one medium to another. From this point of view, the most effective communicative model is definitely the *omnivorous* one. In this model the different media are subjected to the presence of a central platform on which all the others depend (both the official ones and the ones autonomously created by the audience). An omnivorous communicative system is one that favors the creation of a common *agora* for all the authors of a project, and, above all, one that relies on what Umberto Eco defines as the "interpretive cooperation" of the audience. This is a condition that is part of the "text pragmatics" of all content of a project and is the real conversational *topic*.³²

Moreso than with supportive and competitive systems, transmedia projects with an omnivorous communicative

³² In this direction, it works the research of economic and planning models that, considering the marketing and communication experiences of the web, aim their interventions at the creation of vertical and horizontal communities able to build loyalty in transmedia projects.

system are based on a basic imaginative and publishing *pidgin*³³ which is shared between the sender and the receiver. For this reason, and because of its technological, economic and publishing aspects, the most effective medium in the omnivorous system is the web. In addition to being cheaper than other media, the web can foster communities loyal to a project because of the speed at which it can be updated, the high dose of creativity that can be expressed in its frames, and the opportunity to upload - thanks to a single publishing *tool* (panel) - the contents of all technological platforms of the project. That is to say that the Internet is like a tool for the delivery of content, and at the same time, it is a *retable*, one of the glasses in a cathedral, whose pieces magically dismantle and compose stories and tales under spectator's eyes. An example?

In June 2008, the novelist Paulo Coelho presented a great opportunity to his dearest readers: the web audience who for many years had been writing on his blog and following him on MySpace or Facebook. *The Experimental Witch* was a contest inviting filmmakers to create a new interpretation of his recent novel, *The Witch of Portobello* (2007), from the point of view of one of the story's 15 protagonists. The end goal was to create a *mash-up* movie, by combining the best fifteen short films. According to the project's rules, Coelho himself would be selecting the stories and original soundtracks through his MySpace mirror. The writer would also be engaged in presenting the movie in the most important international cinema festivals and world TV broadcasts. In addition to creative and promotional visibility, the project also included monetary awards for the selected short films and the best soundtracks. From a transmedia perspective, the project was

³³ *Pidgin* is an language that comes from the mixture of languages spoken by different people, who came into contact because of immigrations, colonizations, or trade relations. Considering the transmedia communication, it expresses a communicative code that is shared between the sender and receiver of all the messages and the contents within a publishing project.

soon spread among mobile and smartphone users, celebrating the imminent integration of the movable platform to the publishing proposals of social networks and Web 2.0.

Another example? In anticipation of the Italian release of *Bee Movie* (2007), an animated movie by DreamWorks, a different version of the plot (the adventures of a little bee that works as an attorney and takes legal actions against humans for honey theft at his species' expense) was used by the provider for the creation of an "educational" transmedia project that developed in two parts for *kids & family* targets. Two months before the release, in fact, there was a didactic contest for the students of primary schools, in collaboration with co-marketers and institutional licensors of the movie: McDonald's, Activision, San Carlo and the satellite TV broadcaster Coming Soon. In this transmedia model, "Il Giornalino", an Italian magazine, presented a special supplement, *Conoscere insieme* (Let's go to know One Another), that was totally dedicated to the bees' world. A special issue of the magazine, dedicated to the movie, was published soon after the *release date*, with an online contest, "Disegna e Vinci!" (Draw and Win!). There were subscriptions, didactic kits in 500 Italian cities and a "Monopoly-like" game as prizes. Up until this point it was a transmedia project based on a competitive system aimed at taking the audience into the movie universe, even before it was released. The day before the screening, at the Museum of Natural History in Milan, "A Honey Christmas Day" was organized. It was an *open-day* with a gigantic Barry Bee as the special guest. In order to allow the audience to return home after watching *Bee Movie* and keep on creating a "movie within the movie", *gadgets* and *giveaways* such as multimedia CDs, a leaflet promoting customized Happy Meals, TV advertising material and different *Bee Movie* gadgets were distributed. In this way, the system switched to omnivorous transmedia, based on a web platform and merchandise. But with this last example and its reference to the kids & family worlds, it is time to abandon the

technological and publishing planning and go on to a new phase in the creative process: *HOW* to imagine stories that can have different versions on different media platforms.