

CHAPTER FOUR

Narrate Transmedia

If all the *Iliad*'s Homers, all the Egyptian scribes, all the authors of *Panchatantra* and of the *Old Testament* had had the Internet, what would be the narrative canon to form contemporary narratives today? Or, if the European artists and humanists working during the 14th and 15th centuries could have used a laptop, smartphone or digital camera to share the results of their research with Church libraries or the courts of the European Renaissance, what narratives, what “anthropological basis of imagery” would we be discussing now?

These questions, however provocative or paradoxical they appear, call immediately forth an inescapable *condicio sine qua non* within transmedia storytelling; that it is always collaborative rather than exclusive, choral rather than individual, heterogeneous rather than orderly.

It is a “constellation of texts and works” continuously demanding synergistic actions from its authors in the creation of the myths and the universes of the stories, while it is also the territory of technologies that enable accessible editorial platforms and tools for the distribution and interactive fruition of these stories.

From a contemporary point of view, the most recurrent transmedia storytelling strategies and the dramaturgic elements

that have proven to be the favorite of authors and audience are: the narrative theme, the author's narrative voice and the audience's perspective which work together to form *two goal structures* with the reconstruction of the *anthropological path* made by the audience during the narration. In the tradition of transmedia communications, there are six pillars:

- *theme* (i.e. the deepest meaning and the implicit message of the tale); the theme of a tale is not explicitly told during the narration itself, but is related through the universal synthetic structures of the imagery, hidden in the story's framework. An example? In 2009, for season two of *True Blood*, a TV series created by Alan Ball that follows the adventures of vampires who are well-integrated into American society thanks to the invention of a synthetic type of blood that makes them apparently innocuous, HBO worked to expand the show's audience by launching a transmedia marketing campaign. This started as an online alternate reality game which centred around Bloodcopy.com, and spread out across social networks (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and MySpace,) and through an online forum on the HBO website (with an exclusive interview with Samson the Vampire). Some people received plastic syringes with synthetic blood, and they even commercialized a True Blood Carbonated Drink. Moreover, an American Vampire League was created to support vampire rights, while debates about whether or not American people wanted vampires living in their neighborhood were held in fictional newspapers and on TV. All of this along with a generous display of sharp vampire canine teeth and blood and without ever mentioning the theme of the series: integration and fear of diversity and confronting the dark side inside of us;
- the author's point of view should be invisible, but often manifests itself outside the project framework. This is

why only the insiders know of the few professional figures working as authors, even in a large transmedia global franchise;

- the point of view of the *narrative voice* is of some relevance when it is projected on to the audience in order to get them involved to help represent it and form a loyalty to it. As John Steinbeck wrote, “We are lonesome animals. We spend our life trying to be less lonesome. And one of our ancient methods is to tell a story”. An example? In the *Big Brother* reality show, the audience’s interest materializes when the “favorite character” begins to undergo confrontations with the other housemates. Once the favorite character is out of the scene, the audience’s need for sharing experiences will lead them to select a new housemate as its beloved, similar to the former albeit with a different point of view about the story;
- the audience’s point of view should be entrusted to a fixed medium to best ensure the effectiveness of the project’s main narrative. As formerly said about the building of the imaginative universe of the story, this is vital in order to consolidate the *pidgin* language between author, project and audience. In the same manner, the portraits of characters are not to be defined by the narrative at the beginning of its journey, but further on toward the end of the narrative, both for the sake of the character’s own cultural and educational background and for the sake of their identity and archetypal role. In order to do this you need secondary stories, like was done with the character of Mary Jane Watson in *The Amazing Spiderman* by creating the comic romance *Mary Jane Loves Spiderman*;
- in the *two goal structure*, where the protagonist starts focused on something and then, in the course of the narration, discovers he has to reach for something else more valuable or simply more risky: different media

have to take care to hold this in trust, in order to enhance the value of each of the goals across the steps of the narrative, both from the point of view of the characters and from that of the multiple audiences of the story. An example? In James Cameron's *Avatar*, the protagonist, Jack Sully, is a paraplegic marine who fights for himself (he betrays the Pandorians in order to regain the use of his legs) and at the same time for a better world (he merges into being one of the Na'vi). In the movie's marketing campaign Cameron himself admitted that such an ambiguous protagonist might have been a little disorienting for the public. «It's a very difficult proposal in our modern marketing world», commented the director, who also admitted that the movie, «put pressure on us to create the equivalent value of an existing brand without being an existing brand.» This is also the reason why the first choice of the *Avatar* campaign was to launch a 15-minute free preview of the movie dedicated exclusively to the discovery of the hero of the story, a “journey” which was also already playable in the videogame inspired by the movie, and with the toys and the action figures of the characters which Mattel enriched with augmented reality features;

- the reconstruction of the “anthropological path” made by the protagonists of a transmedia narrative must mirror itself at different stages in the different media. This helps stimulate a stronger desire for participation and cooperation amongst the project's different medial audiences.

With these pillars constant and present in all transmedia narratives, the other techniques discussed in the following pages help serve as tools for the author and the transmedial producer and encompass the dramaturgical, the imaginative and the emotional components of a narrative that can be

additive and complementary to the pillars above. Most of all, it is possible to apply them to the whole communicative system of a transmedia project, or to a single narrative unit within the project.

Moreover, considering that the basic interactivity and complexity of transmedia narratives always involve different authorial forms, acting simultaneously or at different times, in the transmedia storytelling, it is possible to subdivide these tools and techniques according to two basic narrative solutions shared with the public: one participative and one synergistic.

Participative Narratives

Participative transmedia narratives use stories created by single individuals who set their tales within larger narrative frames taken from literature, entertainment, cinema, videogames, television, advertising, comics and the web. Their aim is to involve the audience and enhance the value of their contributions after the release of a transmedial product or work. The most important narrative requirement of a story is *sharing*, as devised by both authors and corporations within “protected” environments and, usually, in a non-profit scheme. Narratives concentrate all their focus on the work and the author is often invisible, hidden behind a nickname.

From a historical-chronological point of view, massive and participative narratives represent one of the “oldest” forms of transmedial narratives and their history has close to half a century of tales. There are two fundamental limits to participative and massive narratives: not being able to effect the narrative, and the *élitis* nature of the construction of plots and characters. A participative narrative is untouchable once distributed (all you can do is carry it on or add to it with another narrative); this fundamental condition makes participative narratives an excellent instrument for those

transmedial projects based on supportive narrative systems, while making it a weapon in competitive ones. Moreover we can identify some common features of all participative narratives:

- the use of simple editorial platforms (with access barriers to prevent the audience from influencing the authors' artistic expression);
- the presence, within author groups, of solid friendships, even for a short time;
- the presence of informal tutoring, constantly occurring between aficionados and newcomers in the narrative stream and experience;
- the presence, in the corpus of narratives, of authors strongly inclined to nomadism and migration.

The forms of participative narrative analysed in the following paragraphs, which are among the most effective and most used in transmedia narratives, are: fanfiction and fanmovies in entertainment, nanopublishing and blog-narratives in communication, and adbusting and subvertising campaigns in advertising.

FICTION, FAN & ENTERTAINMENT

Fanfiction is produced by independent users or narrators by re-creating or altering stories taken from television series, cartoon, comics, TV movies, videogames, etc. The imaginative area and the emotional repertoire exploited by fanfiction in its stories are therefore always ready-made, even though they can be renewed and modified by authors both in the textual (*fanfiction*) and in the audiovisual (*fanmovies*) form. There are three standard *tones* for narratives: realistic, verisimilar or

absurd (which can in turn be divided into ironic and comic)⁴⁸. The fanfiction tradition goes back to the popular rewriting, by passionate readers of both high and low cultural background, of romance and “genre” narratives emerging between the 19th and 20th centuries, with stories inspired mainly by noir and adventure novels. More recently, the Internet has made possible the proliferation of archives and authors' communities, erasing the costs of publication for the public, so that currently we can count several narrative sub-genres within fanfiction⁴⁹. Narratives are classified according to how true they are towards the narrative's reference canon (the Middle-Earth in *The Lord of the Rings*, for instance; Springfield in *The Simpsons*; Gotham City in *Batman*, and so on...). In this case, as Henry Jenkins has written, the fan culture is dialogic rather than destructive and collaborative rather than contrastive⁵⁰, and:

“The encyclopedic ambitions of transmedia texts often results in what might be seen as gaps or excesses in the unfolding of the story: that is, they introduce potential plots which can not be fully told or extra details which hint at more than can be revealed. Readers, thus, have a strong incentive to continue to elaborate on these story elements, working them over through their speculations, until they take on a life of their own. Fanfiction can be seen as an unauthorized expansion of these media franchises into new directions which reflect the reader's desire to *fill in the gaps* they have discovered in the commercially produced material”.⁵¹

⁴⁸ The erotic register is strongly present, particularly in Japanese fanfiction or in that inspired by oriental themes, in reference to, mainly, manga and anime, with heterosexual and homosexual variations.

⁴⁹ M. Hills, *Fan Cultures* (2002).

⁵⁰ H. Jenkins, *Fan, bloggers...* cit.

⁵¹ http://www.henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html

The forms of fanfiction that do not involve alterations to the original structure of the subject are called *canon*, and are faithful to the situational universe of the story, the characters' outline and the tale's continuity. According to a fanfiction tale's length, we can find the *drabble* (text up to 110 words), the *flashfic* (between 111 and 500 words) and the *one piece*, or *one shot* (more than 500 words). A story can be continued by the same author or, as it is with Round Robin Stories (RSS), by different authors. Among massive participative narratives, the canon stories are those with the lower degree of authorial intervention; as a consequence their use in transmedia projects is limited to, at most, contests connected to brand or franchise promotion. There are other forms which involve alterations to the original canon: the *Alternate Universe*, "lived" by the characters themselves albeit set in alternative worlds to the original one, and, the contrary *Out of Character*, where the setting stays unchanged and the characters vary, either through the introduction of new protagonists and favorites (*original character*), or through the introduction of heroes and protagonists from other tales (*cross-over*) or of real-life stars (*real person*)⁵². If the narrative is set before or after the original, especially referring to sagas and serial stories, we then have *pre-series* and *after-series*. Finally, those narratives which exploit an alteration of the original events of the brand, in order to create an alternative plot to the standard, are called the *What if*. This would be the case of *alternate history*⁵³ or *one shots*, which only present "closed" variations of the tale.

An example? My first job in the world of transmedia was that of editor-in-chief for the web and mobile section of the Italian edition of *Big Brother* (*Grande Fratello*) in 2002. That was a peculiar season for the show, I remember: as the finale approached, the audience response started to die down, mostly

⁵² <http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fanfiction>

⁵³ The first definition of *alternate history* (in English, differently from Spanish, Italian, German and French it is not used the Greek origin word *chronos* prefixed by the negative "u") dates back to the 1876 Charles Renouvier pamphlet *Uchronie (L'Utopie dans l'histoire)*.

due to the presence of many other reality shows in the Italian broadcasters' schedules. Compared to other formats such as *Survivor* or *Operation Triumpho*, the *Big Brother* housemates were "performing" much less, and their weekly challenges were hardly comparable to the hard trials of would-be castaways or singers. How then to give the narrative a different angle, so it would better succeed? In those years, I was doing my PhD on the "contamination between narrative and iconography in medieval literature and theatre" and I suggested to the authors a possible solution to the problem: a remake of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*! The analogies with Boccaccio's collection of novellas seemed to me so clear that it should have been impossible that nobody had yet thought about it. In the *Decameron*, ten young people were locked up in a villa just outside Florence in 1348 to shelter from the plague, and to entertain themselves, they started to tell each other a tale around a common subject. So was *Big Brother* not the same narrative framework-- the "House", the isolation from media, 10 candidates, the daily subjects? The idea was accepted and in the following show the housemates showed up in front of the cameras dressed up as medieval ladies and pages and challenged each other to tell a story. The result did not go anywhere near Boccaccio in terms of quality, of course, but the audience appreciated the ironic note of the exhibition so much that it generated several fanfictions linked to the different characters, that were interpreted and mocked from then on in many different ways.

Moving on to *fanmovies*, the distinctions between possible narrative forms are less rigid and often imitate filmic narratives. According to the length of the work, we have *shortmovies*, *fanfilms*, and *fanmovies*; to those artistic forms, we must add simulations of commercially oriented *teasers* and *trailers*. Then there are secondary formats based on entertaining and contradictory purposes, like *trials* and *action figure fanmovies*, which are videos dedicated to trials or attempts to imitate the brand characters with toys or puppets. The

strength of the narrative lies in its originality and interactivity, whether it is live action or a toy reconstruction, whether there is a complex 3D set or an improvised location in stop motion. These films are shared through the fandom and online communities, not through official websites or web archives, as in the case of the textual fanfiction, but in the broader arena of online broadcasters, and are then spread by social networks. An example is the irreverent videos made by Trekkers, fans of the *Star Trek* TV series, ranging from Captain Kirk's romantic honeymoons with Vulcan officer Spock⁵⁴, to performances of rap bands whose intent is that of transforming the *Enterprise* control station into a location for interstellar video and music contests. More and more original and participative stories are now leading corporations to avoid censoring those narratives, but rather to welcoming into their creative branches those professionals who were formerly part of the fandom: the technofreaks and fanfiction authors.

NANOPUBLISHING & BLOG-NARRATIVES

The revolution that happened in journalism and infotainment between 1998 and 2001 has changed the role and modalities of information within the culture of transmedia projects. Today, the emergence of nanopublishing, citizen-journalism and blog-narratives on textual (blogs), audiovisual (vlogs) and mobile (moblogs) platforms offer audiences more accessible and interactive spaces. *Posts* (short comment articles published on blogs and social networks) and *pods* (reports published on web TV, mobile TV and Ip TV platforms) are participative and massive narratives which are published, shared and commented upon on a daily basis, mainly online

⁵⁴ P. Frazer Lamb, D. Veith, *Romantic Myth, Transcendence, and Star Trek Zines*, in: D. Palumbo (ed.) *Erotic Universe: Sexuality and Fantastic Literature* (1986), cited in H. Jenkins, *Fan, bloggers...cit.*

and under a merely user generated perspective, involving a non-stop technological and linguistic renewal. These conditions make them extremely useful when concerned with transmedia projects, containing in their framework quick and engaging updates, discussion and in-depth areas, viral marketing or human relief actions based on the power of content and message, as well as on the active contribution of the *consensus culture*. An example?

On the occasion of the Haiti earthquake in January 2010, the American Red Cross managed to raise 22 million dollars by the Monday following the disaster, thanks to a huge transmedia campaign in which The White House and the Corporation for National and Community Services took part. The main asset of this omnivorous system was mobile, with a text-to-give campaign whose testimonials included, among others, Michelle Obama. The message was very simple: “Send A Message & Save A Life, Donate \$10 To Red Cross Haiti Relief, Text Haiti To 90999”, yet a rich network of broadcasters and media companies all over the world joined in support. In Chicago alone, just to mention a case, eleven TV networks, nine radio stations and two newspapers got involved within a few days. In the first 24 hours from the event on the Red Cross official website and on its social network profiles, millions of users and companies set themselves into action in order to raise funds, giving their contribution in the form of messages, short articles and comments which gained the project further donations. On the American Red Cross YouTube channel the first video on the condition of the island – five hours after the earthquake – was published. In the following days more reports and in-depth analyses from all over the world were uploaded. On the social networks, meanwhile, as Gloria Huang, social media specialist for ARC, declared, «On Facebook we had tons of fans, and there were a lot of discussions and forums where volunteers from previous campaigns were offering tips and advice to and answering the questions of those interested in volunteering for the Haiti

relief efforts; the Twitter account, instead, remained a source of news, links to donation pages, and updates from the ground. And on the Red Cross' main blog, firsthand accounts, photos, and videos have been posted with unerring regularity»⁵⁵. A vast amount of agile content in a blessed network, sharing web, mobile and social network content as never seen before.

BRAND NARRATIVES

In marketing and advertising campaigns, today, the main features of a transmedia brand or franchise can be turned into narrative matter for participative authors who, on their own initiative, decide to manipulate those contents in order to make them personal, or create new narratives independent from the original. The most widespread examples under the participative perspective are *permission marketing*⁵⁶ and *viral marketing* which, more than other contemporary forms of promotion, allow corporations to overcome the *information overload* in contemporary advertising and to actively involve the public in simultaneously multi-articulated narratives. But, when new types of narrative get close to marketing, advertising and other narrative forms which serve the promotion of goods or services, the modalities of creation and intervention might connote in a positive (*brand stories*) or negative (*adbusting* and *subvertising*) way. Starting from the former, participative brand stories mainly enhance the value of:

- a product's name and brand image;
- a brand's overall image and knowledge, including ideas, attractiveness and its consumers' "historical" expectations;

⁵⁵ <http://nonprofit.about.com/>

⁵⁶ S. Godin, *Permission marketing. Turning Strangers into Friends, and Friends into Customers* (1999).

- *brand value*, that is the brand's value in its own market segment;
- *brand identity*, that is the universe of reference created by the company;
- *brand experience*, that is the brand's regular use, already experienced by the audience;
- *brand activation*, since brand stories are often aimed at involving new customers so that they will change their consuming behaviour;
- *brand franchise*, or the loyalty degree to the brand, which through the audience's response to the new narratives and to the brand stories, will allow the company to differentiate its products.

In order to take an active part in those different aspects of the brand, the “participative consumers” and the brand stories mainly use: the originality of ideas; the presence of *early adopters* potentially able to become the brand's sounding board; the use of at least one character (testimonial) in order to favour the self-identification of the consumer and leading he or she into the story; and the use of mainstream narrative rules and traditional advertising techniques.

Brand stories, however, never represent the main asset of a transmedial promotional campaign, but they are instruments able to make the image and the success of the brand even more innovative. Such a goal recalls the “rhetoric of lovemarks”⁵⁷, as it was termed in 2004 by Kevin Roberts to define the fundamental relationship existing between the brand and the consumer's emotional archive, a crucial element for the consumer to be able to interact with all the media involved in a transmedia communicative system⁵⁸.

An example?

⁵⁷ K. Roberts, *Lovemarks. The Future Beyond Brands* (2004).

⁵⁸ A. M. Muñoz Jr, T.C. O' Guinn, *Brand Community*, in “Journal of Consumer Research” (2001).

In June 2009 Baddy Media created an app-vertising campaign aiming at promoting the Busch Entertaining brand in a cross-platform perspective. Busch Entertaining is a company that operates Sea World and Busch Gardens. A Facebook application, a website and an iPhone app sharing a photo challenge game were created. Users were shown two pictures from one of the company's theme parks and had to identify the difference between them. Along the way, customers could also become fans of the different pages of each of its theme parks. When the game was completed either on the website, the Facebook app, or the iPhone app, the user's score could be sent back to the social network to be shared with friends linked to original stories and shared content⁵⁹... Always remaining in a rewarding space within the boundaries of the brand's imaginative universe of reference.

At other times, on the other hand, the advertising message becomes unbearably aggrandizing, or a brand's image aggressive and conveying a sense of misleading modalities of promotion. Now, since the users/authors of the transmedia generation are particularly sensitive to the aggressive strategies of some brands, as well as being alert towards the mechanisms of communication, the answer lies in projects and narratives aiming at strongly mocking or contrasting the brand, through the smart editorial strategies given by *adbusting* of *subvertising*.

Subvertisers represent a counter-cultural movement which all acts worldwide through forms of advanced interaction and which has as its prime adversary the advertising messages inhabiting the urban spaces, working both on the plane of visual impact and on that of the construction of meaning⁶⁰. There obviously are two ways to do that, one more constructive and the other more destructive. An example?

⁵⁹ <http://blog.thoughtpick.com/>

⁶⁰ the adbusters movement is headed by Adbusters Media Foundation, a Canadian no profit organization founded in 1989 by Kalle Lasn and Bill Schmalz. <http://www.subvertising.org>.

For the 2007 campaign *What Would Jesus Buy?*, dedicated to the fight against consumerism and the usual excesses of the Christmas period⁶¹, producer Morgan Spurlock (who made *Super Size Me* in 2004) released a documentary on the extravagant, traveling preaching of an unlikely circuit-rider, Reverend Billy, founder of the Stop Shopping Church. The movie, then out on DVD and diffused as an on-line narrative, was a reminder and an open parody of everything, from graphics to the project's product placement, in the average Disney Christmas movies.

These forms of subvertising and adbusting hardly can be made part of promotion or communication plans, yet they are very effective when it comes to political and cause-related marketing campaigns, for authors of participative transmedial narratives can be found not only among the average user of mainstream narratives, as it is with fanfictions, but also within marginalized subcultures, or among culture jammers⁶², as happens in subvertising, constantly fighting against dominant enclaves of the global media flux.

Synergistic Narratives

More recent than participative narratives, twenty years since their first emergence, narratives of the synergistic type⁶³ have already produced on a global scale a vaster corpus of stories, tales and artistic experiences. They now tend toward hyperproliferation and the saturation of the audience, made by more disorganized authors than the participative and with more infrequent use.

⁶¹ <http://wwjbmovie.com/>

⁶² For an in-depth on *jammers culture*: G., Branswyn, *Jamming the media: a citizen's guide: reclaiming the tools of communication* (1997).

⁶³ For *synergistic storytelling in entertainment* and Ivan Askwith's definition: http://dir.salon.com/story/tech/feature/2003/05/12/matrix_universe/index.html

As a matter of fact, in synergistic narratives the tale is created purposefully by the author, and one project is not necessarily connected to the others. These are the features common to all the different forms of collaborative synergistic narratives:

- the *experimental nature* of the tales, always presented as innovative and revolutionary projects;
- the need for industrial processes and clear roles when the narrative is shared between several authors, as well as the necessity of a *final mentorship* for projects;
- the use of rewards and short term deadlines to reach the most efficient outcome;
- the use of editorial systems based on at least one canonical medium (generally the web).

Moreover, with respect to the “imaginative communities”⁶⁴ of participative narratives, the synergistic:

- involve the creation by authors who do not know each other, of specific portions and stages of a comprehensive narrative;
- allow authors to mutually alter their own creations;
- are not necessarily connected to pre-existing genres;
- alternatively use professional or amateur authors, never mixing them with each other.

What comes out of all those indicators is that participative narratives represent the most widespread narrative prototype

⁶⁴ About theoretical definition and the recognition of imaginative communities as consumers groups within narratives: B. Anderson, *Comunità immaginate. Origine e diffusione dei nazionalismi* (1996).

in “narrative marketing” and in the promotion and launch of projects and narratives, while the synergistic are more effective in the planning phase of artistic and interactive narratives.

From the authors’ point of view, then, participative narratives are more often used in massive editorial experiences and projects and tend to expand the narrative; those collaborative and synergistic, on the contrary, are more suitable to exclusive projects and experiences and tend to a timely closing of the narration. In this perspective, the three forms of synergistic narrative most used on a world scale are: wikinovels, hyperserial and other forms of polymorphic narrative in entertainment; videogames in advertising; and urban experiences, reality games, urban quest and LARPs in events.

FROM THE WIKI NOVEL TO THE SMS POETRY

The necessary requirements for a huge failure are all there: lack of rules or discipline, an inclination towards juxtaposition, narcissism, inability to bring its way to tell stories into the context of pre-existing narrative frameworks... All risk factors, which could make even the most linear, ordered, and traditional narrative ship wreck in the course of its sail. And that is the case of WikiLit (*wiki literature*). Let us imagine one made of thousands of writers, possibly amateur, without fixed deadlines and with very few editorial limitations.. Who wouldn’t be tempted to start up with simpler and shorter narrative forms, in order to limit the possible damage? On the contrary, the most used literary form in synergistic, transmedia projects is that with the most complex structure: the *novel*.

The reason for such a choice must be in the very nature of the novel form itself, from its alexandrine origins to the most original and subversive efforts of contemporary times, already denounced by Michail Bachtin in his essay *Epic and Novel* in which, dealing with the primacy of the novel over other literary genres, he observed how the novel brings in

them the issues, the specific semantic incompleteness and, with in contemporary times, the permanently in progress, incomplete contract.⁶⁵

The most open, risky and interactive form, from a transmedia perspective, is thus that of the wiki novel, which contaminates the 19th and 20th Century literary narrative form with the modalities of Wikipedia. The narrative structure of a novel is organised like an encyclopaedic entry; it is created and then updated by a number of theoretically infinite authors, all potentially allowed to modify at any stage the content written before his or her intervention. Moreover, in wiki novels, there is no character, no fixed element which is given to a single narrator. An example? The first wiki novel project in history, *A Million Penguins*, was born out of an idea shared between the British publisher Penguin and the De Montfort University of Leicester, and was active from January to March 2007. At that time a challenge was thrown down on the project's blog with a post named "Rewriting the *Ilyad*." In it, a mysterious John, the publisher's editor, introduced himself, declaring he was the person who was in charge of *how* the novel should be carried on, particularly as concerned plot, characters, dialogue and style: a professional whose task was not to make any edits to the text itself, but who was to follow the development of the story making comments, suggesting small changes, revisions and possible directions to take as the narrative progressed⁶⁶. The project's tight schedule and the precise administration of the platform made it happen: *A Million Penguins* was completed, one of the very few which achieved such a result in publishing all over the world. *A Million Penguins* is therefore an exemplary case of synergistic narrative and of a transmedia project with wider ambitions. A completely different initiative was that launched in 2002 by the British newspaper *The Guardian*, in partnership with the telephone company Orange:

⁶⁵ M. Bachtin, *Epic and the novel*, in: C. S., Janovič (ed.), *Estetica e romanço* (1979).

⁶⁶ http://thepenguinblog.typepad.com/the_penguin_blog/2007/03/a_million_pengu.html

a competition for poems and content on any subject to be written within the space of the 160 characters of a mobile short text message, which was fairly successful (within a few days about 7500 compositions were sent) and at the same time granted itself a vast media echo-chamber all over the world, even creating a new literary form of expression: *SMS Poetry*. Apart from its length, the use of wiki novel, weblit and all the different forms of interactive literature within synergistic transmedia projects remains even now a limited phenomenon, even though it *is* an expressive form with high imaginative potential, particularly for its effectiveness in expanding a narrative outside the boundaries of the most traditional channels of a project with a simultaneous, multiplatform distribution.

HYPERSPACE NEEDS HYPERSERIAL

What happens when a synergistic transmedia narrative changes its medium or is developed through different media languages?

Net-drama, for instance, appears on the Internet in 2004 as a narrative form in between theatre and net-art. A dramaturgical, experimental product that landed on the Net, it kept its hybrid nature, parcelling out its content between literature, radio and cinema. For this reason it ended up being a little rigid and not suitable to the existing transmedial communicative systems: it soon disappeared. An example?

Secret Room, a 2004 Italian-Australian production, is noteworthy for being among the first net-dramas in Net history. Its narrative device involved ten people gathering every night for dinner in one of the characters' houses, to chat and tell each other stories and share experiences. Then, at some stage, something happened: the dinner and the scene stopped and the audience was brought into a (online) secret chamber where thousands of windows started to open; to the

user those windows were unmanageable. During the theatre performance, meanwhile, the group filmed everything that happened and split this material into short fragments, adding to them brand new animations – 45 tracks in all – and sending each movie to a different HTML page. The novelty existed in the fact that the director was neither the programmer, nor the user: the pages were in fact randomly refreshed by the computer each time, both in terms of length and in terms of sequence. The whole mechanism was then multiplied through a series of *pop ups* littering the screen and suggesting to the user alternative cuts and paths to take through the labyrinth. There was actually one single way on 45 to gain access to the secret chamber, an actual website where all the secrets would be eventually revealed, thus closing the narrative device based on the public's surprise endurance.

Following its early disappearance from the web, the term 'net drama' has become sporadic with the passing of time and has been replaced with *hyperserial*. The impromptu narrative forms were advanced at the same time by interactive and serial stories which, in the passage from the audiovisual to the online narrative form, fragment their plots and allow the public to reconstruct them as if they were actual transmedial jigsaws. An example?

After having filmed ,in his own Tampere cellar, dozens of episodes of the hyperserial *Star Wreck: In the Pirkinning*, a parody of *Star Trek*, “the first science fiction serial ever set in Finland”, Samuli Torssonen and Timo Vuorensuola left their more than 300 collaborators behind, with their cameras, laptops, weird uniforms and pointed ears⁶⁷ to radically change their narrative modalities and forms. Thanks to the amazing success that diffusion by word of web mouth has granted them, they now own a dedicated editorial platform (Star Wreck Studios) and Universal Pictures bought the old *Star Wreck* and produced their second movie, *Iron Sky*, a satirical

⁶⁷ *Star Wreck* (<http://www.starwreck.com/>) © *Iron Sky* (<http://www.ironsky.net/site/>).

alternate history where the Nazis, who escaped to the moon in 1945, are making their return to Earth in 2018, armed to the teeth. Yet this is a model which, over time, has limited the audience, rather than open its narratives to the authors or the transmedia generation; in this view it does represent a step back which leaves narratives by the roadside and it is certainly not looking ahead to the future of contemporary narratives.

If compared to net-drama and to the first experiments of meta-fiction, today's hyperserial must use narrative models closer to those narratives based upon moving experiences, on games and on TV *microfiction*⁶⁸. This is the reason why in the most successful products:

- the format of the episodes is flexible and variable;
- the maximum number of characters speaking at the same time on a single scene is limited;
- the rhythm of each episode is fast, and so it is with the lines spoken by the actors;
- sets and locations alternate, from fixed (with characters) to computer generated (without characters);
- there is no explicit reference (except for occasional incidents) to facts and events from the news; this is to avoid the early outdating of the narrative;
- subcultures and tribes are often portrayed on screen in a more insisted fashion than with more traditional narratives;
- spaces are reserved to the audiences' creativity, even though they may be planned for the following editions of the project;
- extreme care is dedicated to graphics and visual effects, to affect the memorization process of the audience.

⁶⁸ Definite *minifiction*, *filler*, *fiction interstiziali* o *strisce brevi*: le microfiction televisive sono serie lunghe composte da episodi brevi, generalmente di registro comico o sentimentale, legati tra loro senza soluzione di continuità.

An example? Two years after its project *Voyeur*, the U.S. broadcaster HBO came up in September 2009 with a new narrative experiment called *Imagine*. New York, Philadelphia and Washington hosted, with no previous notice or announcement, in sequence, the installation of a huge black cube on whose sides the images of an innovative hyperserial were projected; it was possible to enjoy it in a different way according to the angle one was watching it from. At the same time, online, according to a clear omnivorous system, the official website of the project (www.hboimagine.com) allowed users to enjoy the very same interactive experience by spinning – in a 3D menu – the same cube and changing the point of view of the narrative.

This time in the form of a 41 pieces *puzzle game*, content including video, audio files, letters and images connected to each other, an interactive story and game-like experience that deepens the more one explores it, realized by the BBDO NY agency and released online by The Barbarian Group.

POLYMORPHIC NARRATIVES

An even more interactive form of audiovisual and multiplatform narrative than hyperserial and interactive fiction is the *polymorphic narrative*, made of narratives which make simultaneous use of different media, which can be adapted in progress according to the audience's choices (following trends I have already dealt with when I wrote about the *Doppler effect* on transmedia projects). The main aim of polymorphic narratives is that of allowing its authors/users to *make a unique experience* and totally yield to a flow of stories, adventures and fascinations, a stream whose result is strongly cooperative and emotional. In other words, literature and fiction getting closer to games, with narrative time synchronized to that of performance.

An example? In October 2007 the TV serial *CSI-NY* “landed” in the metaworld of *Second Life*, with a very peculiar idea. In the television narrative, an episode of the series saw protagonist Mac Taylor (Gary Sinise) entering *Second Life* to flush out a murderer who was luring his victims in by surfing the metaworld. Simultaneous to the airing of the episode the authors proposed to the audience three different forms of synergistic performance:

- solve the case through interaction with links on the CBS website, or visiting the *CSI* lab in one of the New York skyscrapers reconstructed within the metaworld of *Second Life* ;
- join in the game *Murder by Zuiker*, following the traces left by the killer in the form of virtual gadgets for the 100 contestants who would get closer to the solution of the case;
- become detective, using the kit for investigations and wearing a uniform, with the possibility of questioning suspects so as to be able to solve the same case which was being aired, built to close with a cliff-hanger and leave the audience hanging ... until the following February!

A complex initiative, then, which added the recreational dimension typical of the treasure hunt or the book game to the television narrative, and at the same time was metaphorically unlocking the doors of the writing section of a great TV series to the narrative model of interactive fiction to the transcoding of narratives and to the additive comprehension⁶⁹ typical of the new transmedia narratives.

⁶⁹ The definition of the audience’s additive comprehension in transmedial narratives is due to Neil Young, former Electronic Arts, as it reads in: H. Jenkins, *Convergence...* cit.

Even though for a short fraction of time, when author and user draw close as they do in polymorphic narrative, we are witness to a case of *omusia*, identity, as is more commonly in the case of Alternate Reality Stories. Another form of polymorphic narrative, *ARS* are the result of a contamination between alternate reality games and interactive storytelling and owe their terming to Jane McGonigal, who defines them as interactive performances played online and in real places at the same time, in the space of weeks or months, by small groups, as well as by thousands of participants, committed to a narrative product. An example?

I know people who, some nights, even in the form of avatar, change their features to make them look like those of Jennifer Anniston, Courtney Cox or David Schwimmer, buy wholesale clothes in some simulation and go down into the dusty hull of a galleon harboured on the shores of Caribbean Breezes Island, in *Second Life's* Metaverse. In the days before they created the scripts, scheduled the scenes and decided all the movements their avatars would make, some of them had modified a location in order to make it similar to the famous greenish Greenwich Village apartment, while others had decided the camera movements (with respective angles, lighting, point of view, framing) and the musical score until, one day, eventually it was all ready for “shooting”. It is then time to set a rendezvous with the public, that is to say other avatars, to observe the narrative directly “on the spot”, or interfere with it, suggesting gags, situations, *escamotages*, while the narrative itself is in progress.

Whether the aim is to recreate an episode of the series *Friends* or produce an original sitcom, from the point of view of techniques used for the production of the narrative there is no basic difference: alternate reality stories are actual *machinima*⁷⁰, that is to say they use actors, locations, and a 3D

⁷⁰ Short form for *machine cinema* or *machine animation* using real time footage through the use of 3D graphic motors from virtual games and worlds. Created in 1996 with a video

graphics engine from a virtual universe or videogame and then place them inside their own original, strictly user-generated stories.

In the above mentioned example about *Friends*, backgrounds and avatars come from *Second Life* (for this reason the more specific and branded definition of *Second Stories*), but the question is: what kind of contribution can these narrative forms give to a transmedia project? Being totally transversal narrative forms, alternate reality stories use the traditional genres of literary narrative, film grammar, the dramaturgical structure of TV serials and the interactivity of videogames mostly to create new active spaces for audiences within more traditional transmedia projects, in the course of the narrative and after its ending. Some examples?

In May 2008 the first live musical from the metaworld was produced: *Second Life Odissea – The Musical*, a remake of Homer's poem with dozens of avatars actively singing, dancing and acting in front of an audience made of hundreds of skins sitting in a Greek amphitheatre; the purpose was to raise funds for the African Medical Research Foundation.

In literature, moreover, a very personal example comes from the first Italian *machinima* set in *Second Life* for the promotion of a novel I wrote in 2008: *All'immobilità qualcosa sfugge* (*To Stillness Something Slips Away*). This is a choral story, based on the use of multilinear dramaturgies, telling about three couples violently imploding on one another in the space of one single night, during which the protagonists would use their avatars to meet and cheat on their partners, in *Second Life*⁷¹. From narrative to game, in this case, as it was for that of *CSI*, the idea agreed with the publisher was to create an alternate ending of the novel and two virtual stages in *Second*

exploiting the videogame's Quake graphic motor, machinimas are today an actual expressive form with a n institutional portal (<http://machinima.com>) and an official festival organized by the Academy of Machinima Arts & Sciences (<http://festival.machinima.org/>).

⁷¹ M. Giovagnoli, *All'immobilità qualcosa sfugge* (2008).

Life and, finally, a contest for machinima and *songvid* realized by the readers and inspired by the story. Not simple book trailers, but “narratives within narratives” to be shown during the live appearances in the launching tour of the novel and in a viral online campaign on social networks and online broadcasters with the aim of giving the most creative part of the audience filterless, immediate visibility.

Anyhow, before leaving alternate reality stories behind, even though comprehensive coverage of the topic would require greater autonomy, it is convenient to at least hint at the form of synergistic narrative *par excellence*, that is to say MMoRPGs, which are extremely autonomous in their nature but do not often involve transmedia forms of contamination in their imaginative universes. Still it would be sufficient to quickly browse the names of the most famous games in recent years, from *Final Fantasy* to *World of Warcraft*, from *Lord of the Rings Online* to *Star Wars Galaxies* and *City of Heroes*, to realize how MMoRPGs are playing a most crucial role in the creation and the management of the imaginary in our entertainment. MMoRPGs allow users, in other words, to inhabit and play with the imaginary universes other media create, and do so with excellent competitive devices.

Originally an electronic evolution of war simulators and table games, from 5th Century Hindu *Chaturanga* to early 19th century Prussian *Kriegsspiel*, as well as of contemporary role-playing games (from Dave Arneson’s and Gary Gygax’s 1972 *Dungeons & Dragons* on), MMoRPGs started their adventure in 1996-97, creating digital *othernesses* where it would be possible to exalt Pierre Lévy’s four variables necessary to develop collective intelligence⁷²: *nomadic mobility* (of players and characters played by them), *control over territory*, *ownership over commodities* (exchanged both in the virtual and in the real world), and *mastery over knowledge* (either shared or hidden, according to the objectives of the games). Compared to other

⁷² P. Lévy, *L’intelligence...* cit.

typologies of transmedia narratives, MMORPGs stand out for the use of open narratives, which can at any stage be influenced by users-narrators and for the possibility of altering through the game the experience and the representation of the “real” as it is lived both collectively and individually⁷³. The narrative becomes thus interactive and inter-operative at the same time and the author’s intervention consists in the creating adventures (*quests*) and testing skills (*tricks*), all enjoyable “in private” or “in groups” connected via server. In MMORPGs, then, the narrative rhythm is not preset and the stories are set in fictional universes, arranged in islands (primary, secondary, and so on...) but then made more chaotic by the users’ actions.

The user plays and tells the story together with the other players using different options for their perspective. Sociality among players can be either peaceful or antagonistic, is organized in groups (guilds, factions, and so on...) or in systems of alliances created by the users. As it is with adusting, then, MMORPG can also display its community of subverters, in fact: the *modders*, users who can alter a game’s source code “from ground level”, either by personalizing it, or by inserting elements which are not real in the model created by its developers. An editorial practice – modding – which is now also a marketing technique, as it was for instance the case of the launch of *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* in 2004, when modders gave the antagonists of the game an XJ8 Jaguar which was not in the corporate plans. The only element, which does remain the same within the game, is the form of internal learning provided for by the narrative; it can be considered as an *expert paradigm* (EP) crucial to the success of the narrative. It is exactly because of the presence of stirring, user-friendly expert paradigms that, with their immersive presence on the Internet, MMORPGs could gradually gain spaces in other

⁷³ T., Flew, *New Media: an introduction* (2008).

media, hybridizing with and contaminating comics, cartoons and movies all over the world. An example?

In 2008 French Studio Ankama created the MMORPG *Wakfu*, a tactical, fantasy role-playing game one could play online with 14 different classes of characters. Even to the producers themselves such a structure appeared too rich and ambitious, although in a few months *Wakfu*'s unexpected success allowed the game to become an animated series and a comics series too, as had happened before with *Dofus*, also produced by Ankama. It was distributed all over Europe and is today one of the best moneymaking transmedial franchises of the Old Continent.

CODE NAME: ADVERGAME

There are forms of hybrid transmedial narratives which today move on the wire hung on the border between videogames and advertising, born out of the following realization: a significant part of the public today gets fond of a given brand in a more long-lasting and effective way than before, and it prefers to “play” the brand, rather than just listen to its slogans. Yet advergames are an independent product, albeit insufficient if considered within transmedial products; they mainly work as an entertaining asset of promotional campaigns based on omnivorous communicative systems, essentially aiming at the pathemic involvement of the consumer.

The first advergame in history is considered that created by Dan Ferguson and Mike Bielinski, of Blockdot, in 1998: a goliardic game sent by e-mail to an undefined group of addresses and inspired by the adventures of Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky and associated, a few days later, with the advertising campaign of a famous American brand. Interactivity and the consumer/user's freedom of choice represent advergames' dramaturgical basis. Moreover, unlike

the majority of transmedia narratives, advergames do not openly declare in advance the *regles du jeu*, but aim at, on the other hand, the self-training and self-satisfaction experienced by the player. The most ideal means they use is certainly the web, which is more and more integrated with free apps for smartphones. Besides, as a form of narrative strictly connected to commercial products and services, advergames can offer transmedia promotion campaigns:

- informal and spontaneous, positive memorization (*mark up*) of the brand, granted by the positive interaction given by the experience of gaming;
- a longer *company time* experienced between consumer and product, thanks to the game;
- development of a different *brand awareness* by the consumer/player about the brand's universe (for example with experience and educational games);
- the creation of a database of consumers which would be impossible to reach out in any other way, and who are – on the contrary – very present in the advergame microcosm.

The most credited classification in advergames is that made in 2001 by Jane Chen and Matthew Ringel, of the New York agency KPE, which made a distinction between *associative*, *illustrative* and *demonstrative* advergames.

In associative advergames the brand is displayed during the course of the game. In illustrative advergames the brand is interpreted and integrated within the devices of the game. Finally, in demonstrative advergames, the brand is directly tested and experienced by the consumer during the game.

In associative advergames the communication axis is completely overbalanced on the message, reducing the narration to a simple paradigm or pattern, in favor of the game's emotional revenue. An example?

In 2008 a partnership between Italian motorcycle company Ducati and power company Enel generated an online magazine which displayed, together with news and contests dedicated to its community, a simulation advergaming played online. At the end of the race, the player could “migrate” on the *Second Life* company’s sim or in the Ducati blog, for the prize-giving ceremony. This process, however, would not involve any form of creative contribution to the creation or to the development of the narrative by the player/consumer.

A higher narrative degree can be observed in illustrative advergaming, where the brand can identify: the *location* where the adventure takes place, the *protagonist* of the story or the *objective* to be achieved in the game. In the 2002 advergaming *Flip the Mix* by M&M’s, for instance, the objective of the game was to line up chocolate sweets in order to complete the different levels of the game and win product prizes: “from the brand, with the brand, for the brand”, what David Marshall calls intertextual commodity in transmedia narratives. A productive other than editorial approach: in the brand’s communicative project, in fact, it is possible to find an integration between entertainment and marketing content, leading the consumer from a traditional medium on to a digital one, and vice-versa⁷⁴.

A further degree of participation is moreover distinctive of demonstrative advergaming, in which the consumer can alternatively:

- directly influence the narrative structure, stepping in the brand’s shoes, as in, for instance, the 2005 Siemens advergaming *Buildy Game*, where the player plays the role of the manager of one of the major projects implemented by the corporation all over the world (involving the construction of stadiums, airports,

⁷⁴ D. Marshall, *The New Intertextual Commodity*, in: D. Harris (ed.), *The Book of New Media* (2002).

hospital wards and so on...), thus obtaining information about those Siemens products which are most suitable to each scenario (it also involved a prize competition);

- directly experience the brand through the game, as it is for instance with the advergaming *Vince Carter* produced by Nike, where the player wears the basketball champ's uniform, independently interpreting the game and testing different models of sneakers in an involving dunk shot tournament.

The synergistic dimension of the narrative in advergaming, if compared to other transmedia forms, is always managed by the user and is not connected to the live modality which can be found in other media of the communicative system. Despite this, the future of advertising is in its hands, as well as a more and more interactive and pathemic modality of promotion.

URBAN EXPERIENCES & REALITY GAMES

Reality narratives are stories lived by their authors, by the public and by the characters of the tale, physically and digitally at the same time. Whether it's small groups of users acting inside an urban circuit or hundreds of actors in costume, all gathered on the top of a hill or among the castles' merlons, in reality narratives the new media integrate and enrich the human sensorial experience, providing new forms of awareness and consumption. More than moving experience and expanding environment narratives, they offer the audience new territories for an active reflection, a confrontation, a content performance and competition.

The most frequented and better-established reality narratives of the last decade in terms of transnational projects are: *urban quests*, *urban experiences* and *LARPs*. These narrative forms are very different both in what concerns the editorial

and narrative perspective, and in terms of user spaces offered to the public, from the more traditional to the new media environments.

Although reality narratives can offer marketing and advertising deeper narrative dimensions, in fact, based on perception rather than on appearance, it is nevertheless in the cultural and touristic valorization of local products and traditions that their own aggregative and explorative nature appears more effective through transmedia communication systems.

An example? Let's start right from commercial urban quests and go back in time to 2007, when there were three hundred people who came to the perforated stage. White overalls and work-suits, in this Italian summer which takes no prisoners: Milan, Rome, and Naples. They are all ready. Some are sitting on the sidewalk, others gathered in small circles frantically typing letters and numbers on their palm computers and next-generation mobile phones. They may look like survivors of a city marathon, but they are actually the selected winners of *Navigator Hunt*, the first great Italian urban quest realized on a non-existing city circuit, a virtual otherness coming out of the hybridization of three different urban fabrics, implemented by the Nokia media company in cooperation with environmental agency Legambiente. A middle step between the pure adventure narrative and a cause related marketing experience, the project's payoff is very clear, after all: "Have you ever explored three cities at the same time?" and so the campaign teaser appears to be:

Milan, Rome, Naples are joined together in Italy's greatest treasure hunt. 60 teams, 300 players in the finals. From September 16th to October 13, 2007. You can win dozens of Nokia 6110 Navigator and the newest Renault Twingo Nokia.

In this case, as always happens in reality narratives, the narrative has a two-goal structure basis: where the audience's

final achievement shall be, or the end of the game (in other cases the urban fabric is real and the goal of the game is simply to completely cover the path), and the valorization of the subject (learning to respect the environment consciously moving inside the city fabrics).

From the perspective of the construction and management of the narrative, urban quests are a hybrid form of reality narrative, hovering between life-size games and gamebooks, and, within its narrative, join into a relationship the territory (seen as a network), the citizen (seen as an active consumer) and the city (seen as a social network). There are instances of team adventures being posthumously collected into tales and stories, when the experience is over, mostly in the form of an online diary, but that is not the rule. The typical dimension of those kinds of narratives is mainly real time.

A literary and educational variation of urban quests, mostly devoted to “genre fiction” and to the classics, is represented by *Google Lit Trips* (or Google Literature Trips), virtual journeys and treasure hunts played by groups and teams (of mainly students) which perform actions modifying the geographical and cultural imagery of a given story, entrusting the reader with the experience of a “second grade narrative” run through the use of an online localizer provided by Google Maps, as well as software dedicated to the creation of presentations, slideshows and multimedia animations (in a concrete, user generated perspective).

Architectural, artistic and socio-anthropological variation of these narrative forms, finally, are represented by *urban experiences*, which transform cities reconstructed in living tissues by geoblog, integrating life and culture experiences with multimedia content accessible via smartphone, with QR code or radiowalk along emotional paths structured in wider “networks of signified”. An example?

In 2011, an original *walkshow* was organized focusing on the theme “Socially Responsible Media” with an emotional journey through pagan Rome, with an itinerary symbolically

starting from the “Bocca della Verità” (representing human instinct), to get to the Roman Forum (law), via Rome’s ghetto (struggle for equality), the Capitol (new institutions) and the Colosseum (the media-arena, the *ludus*). The different stages of the journey were animated with sounds, 3D animations, short documentaries, and written accounts.

Finally, based on a closer relationship between non-specialized media, traditional forms of narrative and entertainment, we have *reality games*, a richer, more interactive version of TV reality shows where authors/consumers do not recreate emulation, but self-recognition with the protagonists of the narrative which is developing online in front of their own eyes.

In this sense it can be a valid example to mention the case of *8 in Punto* (*Eight o’clock sharp*), created by the car company FIAT in October 2008. A webserial and a reality game divided into episodes following the on-the-road adventures of eight competitors, four men and four women, divided into two teams driving two cars and broadcast in real time. Eight weeks and four big cities (Milan, Boulogne, Florence and Rome) made the narrative arena of the game, “driven” from the beginning by the users through suggestions and comments published on social media and with occasional presence of stars and guests within the tale.

A last form of reality narrative is that, a middle way, which stands between urban quests and reality games: the LARP (*Live Action Role Playing*). “Costume” performances involving the online and live participation of groups of users, it has similar modalities to those of role playing and narrative games. Objective: re-enacting – both physically and digitally – of ancient battles or social-cultural events, never associable to commercial brands and, in this case too, often filmed and broadcast online after the event. Mostly operative in no-profit areas or in solidarity projects, or for the valorization of tourism or the environment, LARPs originated most probably with the group “Dagorhir Outdoor Improvisational Battle

Games” founded in 1977 in Washington, after the role play game *Dungeons and Dragons*. LARPs use stories and plots created for everybody by a larpwright – the equivalent to a Game Master of role-play games, only more skilled in terms of choreography, localization, theatre direction and improvisation. A LARP’s narrative time can vary from a few hours to some days, seamlessly. The intervention of media has generally very limited interactive boundaries and can be considered an active party in a narrative or an exclusive witness to the performance. Its rhythm depends on the plot, as much as on the movements of the actors on the field. Stories represent a collection ranging from committed, avant-guard narratives (*arthaus*), to theatre and spectacular narratives (like *freeforms*, with fights taking place within fests, re-enacting historical battles). Moreover, as in the case of fanfictions, while the narrative is in progress, the protagonists can interpret real life characters (*in character*) or fictional characters (*out of character*).

Frequently used in conventions and theme parks, the high value of reality narratives in terms of experiences is a witness of the crucial role played, in transmedia narratives, by the confrontation between history and everyday life, real territories and digital landscapes, reportage narratives and fictional narratives, but, more importantly, between the human being and active space, beyond the artistic or commercial purpose of an editorial project.