

## INTRODUCTION

### *Before taking the field*

*Scene 1.* The Brooklyn Bridge is 5989 feet long; that is to say, a little more than a mile. Everyday it is crossed by about 125,000 cars. Yet, from an exclusive point, after walking for half its distance, looking east, amongst the spires and the parallelepipeds of Downtown Manhattan, you can catch sight of it: Sixth Avenue, the *Avenue of the Americas*. The avenue that harbors skyscrapers, one after another, the Fox and CNN towers, NBC studios and the bright towers of Time Warner. In a word, the television industry that makes the shows, the news and the popular fiction series of today. And looking back, or rather below, where the bridge spans the opposite side of the Hudson River, there is a little park crossed by a path and some unplastered benches. This is the Brooklyn Height Promenade, exactly the point where all the famous directors place their cameras to create the collective imagination of the “Big Apple” and the “America Today” of the contemporary cinema. It’s like a good omen: the cinema perspective under the bridge near the imagery and the content that flows like a river of our fantasies made real. Television is on the shore of the river in order to raise towers on towers, season by season, until you are not able to distinguish them one from another anymore... Until one night, while you are there standing on the

bridge, suddenly your cell phone's vibration mysteriously brings you to your senses: is it just the usual promotional MMS from an unknown number? On the contrary: the sender is *Dexter!* He appears in the photo with a strange knife in one hand as he shares an address with you so that you can help him in his new "leather work", if you don't want to have dreadful trouble!

*Scene 2.* Spiderman and the Green Goblin face each other atop of one of the two double lancet windows of the Brooklyn Bridge: the former swings while hanging on his webbing and the latter flies around him threateningly, missing him with his *glider* missiles. The graphics and visual effects are perfect. Only a very trained eye could distinguish at first sight if it is a movie or a videogame. The narrative is captivating; the interface is invisible; soon the audience is drawn into the tale until the image is suddenly blocked and...to continue the tale, the audience finds out *something must be done*. But... what? Some research and you easily discover that the answer is in a comic book on sale at news-stands and comic shops: use your smartphone to capture the QR code printed on the comic's cover and you will soon get some advice about how to continue your online tale or, even, influence it while it develops!

*Scene 3.* Have you ever noticed that when Mickey Mouse turns his head, his ears don't change perspective, but stay still, one standing up more than the other on the back of his neck? Everybody always misses it in the comics, and even watching *Fantasia* on a cinema-sized screen few people would notice it. But if you tell this to Warren Spector, the inventor of *Epic Mickey*, the videogame that is linked to the most popular Disney icon in the world, he will tell you how many days he had to spend programming so as not to let the ears of Mickey Mouse move when the player was playing this *platform game*... So, this is more than comics! *But...what I am getting at?*

Telling stories which are distributed on multiple media is like creating a new geography of the tale and it requires the

author and the audience to agree on some fixed and safe spaces for sharing, even if they can be altered to different combinations. Hence, before going on, it is important to clarify in this short introduction what the publishing and technological restrictions are, that are shared by all the different tales explained in these pages. The four cardinal points of “doing transmedia” are:

1. *Doing transmedia* means to involve multiple media in a publishing project, keeping the features and the language of each one, even if they are part of a single system of integrated communication;
2. *Doing transmedia* means to make the project’s contents available on different technological platforms, without causing any overlaps or interferences, while managing the story experienced by different audiences;
3. *Doing transmedia* means to allow the multiple media to tell different stories but all exploring a common theme, even if it is experienced through multiple narrative perspectives;
4. *Doing transmedia* means to agree to give a part of the authorship and responsibility of the tale to the audience and other storytellers in order to create a participatory and synergistic story in the experiences of the different audiences of the tale.

Thus, exploring the narrative universe of a story by using transmedia is even more like a question of experience than use, and it makes compromises and challenges necessary for both the authors and the audiences. It is the proper founding act for the tale, and an excellent opportunity to influence the *homo ludens* of today who are longing for new and more active roles in the process of fantasy and imagery-making.