PROLOGUE

FOUR STEPS ON THE "TRANSMEDIA WAY"

Forty-five years after the first, pioneering experiments, and fifteen after the official birth of its definition, transmedia is still an unexplored frontier, the most complex narrative model and a mindset revolution in the world of contemporary storytelling.

Unpredictable outcome of industrial projects and artistic experimentations, of academic researches and of the intense, collaborative networking activity of a small group of new media pioneers at the beginning of the third millennium, transmedia storytelling is today an advanced working manifold for the Studios and for communication agencies, for publisher and public institutions, for entertainment, information and communication, for the Arts, the Education and for social operators engaged in developing complex imageries in multi-platform projects simultaneously involving multiple audiences. And this is not all. Transmedia has today become an approach, rather than a whole discipline. It is a vision itself. A new boundary.

This is why I have named my book *The Transmedia Way*, borrowing the metaphor of the 'Milky Way', the galaxy which hosts our solar system together with 400 billion other stars: it is a befitting picture of the contemporary media universe, while transmedia is a path running through it, leaving a permanent wake around its course. In its short history, Transmedia has showed how theories and models originating from astronomy, astrophysics, and quantic physics turned out to be extremely useful in order to explain – among other things – the origin

and the "form" of imaginative universes, the gravitational effects of multi-platform narratives, or the structure of complex communicative universes. So, it is not a coincidence that in these pages I shall name black holes, nebulae, and outer space, curvature and metaverses, superpositioning and doppler effect…

If the contemporary media ecosystem is a deep space open to any form of imagination, certainly transmedia is the best travel tool box to trace new routes within its boundaries. A travel bag full of well-tested techniques. A repertoire of maps essential to keep the lead, from one success to the other, one experience to the next experience. By far not the output of any artistic movement, nor a Zeitgeist or a blunder!

It is also true that, as I am writing this book, an artistic and industrial revolution is happening. A change of pace or a "Spanish Opening", as chess players would put it. At this crucial point of its history, transmedia is evolving thanks to the second generation of authors and producers, celebrating a new phase made of experiments which often are not "pure" transmedia, but hybrids with other disciplines emerging with the aim of meeting the stimulations of the contemporary media ecosystem. Those many who, including myself, have in the course of the last few years fed academic papers and online magazines with their researches, those who have made multi-million franchise enterprises flourish and created extraordinary media campaigns and narrative experiences, are starting to point their study nuzzles towards narrower fields. They are turning into virtual reality experts, robotics consultants, new media philosophers, experience designers, showrunners, promotions managers for the film industry or museum curators for international institutions; or even broadcasters and new media publishers. This is not happening by mere chance, nor is it the result of a perspective misjudgment. It is rather their pioneeristic nature, and the experience grown over the years to push them into experimenting "something completely different" and to "push themselves beyond transmedia".

Take a short walk in the San Francisco ILM X-Media Lab, in the writing branch of the Marvel Cinematic Universe or in those of HBO dealt with in the following pages, take a look at the main independent video game or documentary festivals or a peek at interactive installations or conventions and brand markets for Europe and South America, US and Asia, to understand how natural and ordinary transmedia storytelling has become. Look at the most innovative communication campaigns, or the worldwide projects aimed at social enhancement and at a more sustainable and shared globalization: transmedia is always there, punctual and effective, with its participatory platforms and its complex narrative universes. Less visible than it used to be, because it is given for granted by now, and maybe more present in different countries than those it emerged first, but there, alive and kicking. Transmedia is a noun that, on the field and within the spin of a single generation, has earned the honor of also turning into an adjective which, as such, is educating and growing along with a new generation of creators who operate with an approach that is practical and critical at the same time[1], ductile and usable in contexts of industrial production processes, as well as independent projects and new narrative experiments, form *long-term narratives*[2] to communications artforms for global changes[3], which today appear to be closer and better achievable thanks to Transmedia narrative.

1. As Caitlin Burns writes: "Being involved in transmedia ten years ago meant experimenting with new platforms for narratives, while also developing the language for their critique - both in real time" in: Burns, C., *Transmedia: Art Forms created in Real Time*, accessed november 15, 2016, immerse.news
2. The definition is Christopher Markus's and Steve McFeely's, Captain America: Civil War and other blockbusters screenwriters, and it specifically refers to the writing modalities within MCU (Marvel Cinematic Universe), where each single movie is connected to the others since the very beginning when the story is created, and it is closely related to its diffusion on the various platforms. See: Berkovitz, J., Captain America Writers talk about long form of storytelling in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, accessed may 6, 2016, fastcocreate.com
3. I am referring to the researches on the so called "Collective Journey" as an instrument of social influence on transmedia narratives, a perspective I shall deal with in chapter six and on which transmedia producers Jeff Gomez, Maya Zuckerman and Joe Brewers are focusing on while I am writing this work. See: Zuckerman, M., *The*

This is the landscape and the reason, for me, to write a new book on transmedia narratives, communication and design. For the last 10 years, I've been attending workshop and master classes in different nations with creatives, artists, professionals and designers, trying to help them spreading their imaginative universes and their communications projects thanks to transmedia strategies and storytelling. At the same time I have carried out projects both with the Studios and with independent producers; I have experimented new formats and work plans, new production models and planning prototypes. This book consists of all those experiences. It is the result of all the projects I have made, and a "captain's log" of those journeys. With 100 examples of the most relevant and original transmedia campaigns/franchises invented over the past years, from America to Europe, from Asia to Africa and Australia, it gives you all the necessary tools to keep your own walk on the transmedia way.

Since most of the techniques I have described in my past essays[4] have anticipated those currently in use by media players all over the world, I am here re-introducing them in a more updated and organised form. My discussion is also endorsed by the presence of many prestigious friends, first rated professionals and academics, who list among the most important international producers and scholars in transmedia history.

The present work owe so much to those two elements and the reader shall find multiple traces of them, being structured as a workshop as it is. In it the discourse traces back all the steps necessary to the creation of a transmedia project, analyzing its most important techniques. The first two chapters focus on the creation of imaginative universes, complex story worlds and

---

Collective journey Part. 1 and *Part. 2* accessed January 26 and 29, 2016, huffingtonpost.com

4. The first essay I have written on cross-media narratives was the first published in Europe on the subject. See: M. Giovagnoli, *Fare cross-media* (2005), to which *Cross-Media. Le nuove narrazioni* (2009) and *Transmedia Storytelling e Comunicazione* (2013) have followed.

multilayered narratives, while the third and the fourth go deeper into the substance concerning design, from the planning of the communicative system to the art direction and the creation of compelling and engaging experience for the audience. The fifth and the sixth chapter witness a change in perspective, being thematic deepening which set sail away from the world of information and entertainment to address specifically to the transmedia focusing on branding, institutional communication and art, as well as to the no profit and educational universes, the latter representing a high experimental profile low budget perspectives and therefore casting among the most interesting and energetic stars of the transmedia way. The final appendix is dedicated to the workflow and to the compilation of the necessary documents to present a transmedia project which meet the present market criteria: it is a quick user-friendly toolkit which too is composed of extracts from real projects. Each case study mentioned in this book is in fact connected to a precise key concept, so that the reader shall be able to adopt both the features which have made it successful and its possible weak points. Moreover, I have included in my work – in which I also create my own "work methodology" – exercises, documents and simulation which can be used as a "toolbox" for the transmedial author. In other words, *my* Transmedia Way.

I am sending it to print hoping that it shall be customized and successfully used by all authors, scholars, experimenters, all the new pioneers who will come across and read it. I wouldn't think it appropriate to either say or anticipate more than I already have. The moment has come, in fact, to take a sit in the cockpit. To switch the drive unit on. To be at disposal of the journey. To seal the shipboots and be ready for taking off and vanishing, once again, lightning among the stars.