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What partnerships for new forms of writing?

Readers and consumers of cultural products are looking to have unique experiences with each media, especially since the trend is moving towards their convergence. The transmedia narrative brings them these varied experiences, which younger consumers are very fond of.

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From a marketing point of view and thanks in particular to digital technology, this approach makes it possible to connect readers between themselves and around a multidimensional history, deployed according to a 360° strategy. In addition to the fact they must give up their rights, this approach requires publishers to associate themselves with other sectors, such as video games or television, through co-production partnerships, not only to develop the project technically, but also in order to raise various sources of funding. But before that, it is up to the authors to redefine the structures of their narratives and create editorial innovations that will establish new forms of writings.

NEW FORMS OF WRITING, 2 CASE STUDIES

After working in the video game sector for 11 years, Rob Yescombe has since been devoting himself to the writing of virtual reality works. Unlike classic linear stories or interactive video games, virtual reality redefines the narrative structure. The author is currently working on a project in which each character is both a main and secondary one: the player who enters this universe can freely decide to follow any character, his judgment will depend on the information he will acquire throughout the game, information that is necessarily partial because incomplete, and that will influence his interpretation of the story. It is this recovered subjectivity that makes the narration of virtual reality closer to real life, a narrative that the author describes as naturalist.

In transmedia projects, the adaptation of a digital work into a novel is rare, but not inexistent. This is the challenge that American author Matthew J. Kirby has taken on in adapting the cult video game *Assassin's Creed* into a novel for teenagers for Ubisoft and published in France by Bayard. For the author, the challenge was to exploit through the novel all that the video game or other medias couldn't express. The author wished to focus on the emotional and psychological aspects of the characters that are absent in the video game which is action-centred. Writing also helps to make innovations with regards to scriptwriting, by addressing de-synchronization for instance (changing the course of things in one's genetic memory, an act considered taboo in the gaming world), an issue which is then exported to other medias. Addressing an audience of teenagers, Matthew J. Kirby has not censored violence, a structural element of the confrontation between Assassins and Templars, but has just softened its treatment. The novel makes it possible to enrich the universe in depth and to fill in the gaps in the video game's apparent superficiality.

PARTNERSHIPS, A KEY PART TO CARRYING OUT TRANSMEDIA PROJECTS

Marie Blondiaux, who is in charge of development for Red Corner, presented *S.E.N.S. VR*, an adaptation of the *Sens* comic book by Marc Antoine Mathieu (Delcourt) into a game of virtual reality, a project

that would not have seen the light without partnerships. Specializing in audio-visual productions, Red Corner is developing an increasing number of bi-media projects (web and TV) in order to meet the experimental demands of television channels. The R&D know-how is developing continuously, pre-financed by the CNC and in co-production with television channels. The Arte TV channel is helping *S.E.N.S. VR* with their experience in virtual reality. The business model is based on freemium: the game's first chapter is free but implicitly invites players to buy the other 2. From a design point of view, the involvement of the Delcourt publishing house and the author himself, who was able to collaborate with the video game developers, was decisive in overcoming certain narrative pitfalls.

The Danish creative studio Step in Books directed by Aksel Køie, has partnered with a publishing house to create the *Wuvu & co* application, according to the following modalities: the studio advances the development costs and in exchange the publishing house opens up its sales network to them. Created in 6 months on a limited budget, the application has been awarded numerous prizes including the prestigious Bologna Raggazzi Digital Award. The same kind of partnership has been set up for *MUR*, a book and an augmented reality app that is currently being created. Publishers are obviously interested in these partnerships because risk-taking is limited to the studio, this way of operating often doubles book sales and everyone agrees that even if the reader is not yet completely ready, transmedia works represent the future of creation. It is therefore necessary for publishers to strategically position themselves as of today.

EXAMPLES OF TRANSMEDIA STRATEGIES FROM FRANCE TELEVISIONS AND UBISOFT

In offering new forms of writing for over 5 years now, France Télévisions has been seeking to win the loyalty of dispersed viewers, by responding to their needs and adapting to new behaviours. At the head of the digital youth department, Amel Cogard insists on the implementation of a strategy conceived from the conception of the program, in order to question it in a global and complementary way, that is multiply reproducible throughout different forms of media.

Their targets are 3 to 18 year olds: ultra connected, with developing cognitive capacities, increasingly equipped, very heterogeneous, they represent 13,5 million children. Eager to put their hands on non-linear content, children and teenagers are primarily interested in video and gaming and mobile phones have become the dominating medium.

Digital versions accompany TV programs before, during and after their broadcasts to give them more weight. Thanks to social networks, it is easy to directly address children or their guardians (parents or teachers), in order to convince them. These digital formats take the form of very short videos, trailers, tutorials, games... all created for social networks.

These campaigns allow children to become attached to cartoon characters, to develop their creativity and build loyalty to the television program. This is the case for programs inspired by comics, such as the 3D *Boule et Bill* series, inspired by Jean Roba's comic book, broadcasted in 2016, which associated Dargaud Média, Belvision and Ellipsanime productions, or the 4th unreleased season of *Titeuf*, adapted from Zep's comic book, created by Go-N productions. Another example: France Télévisions has also partnered with the Milan publishing house for the creation of a *1 jour, 1 actu web* series, which starts off with a question and offers a video response in 1 minute 30.

On the contrary, the original animated series *Les grandes grandes vacances*, broadcasted in 2015 on France 3, which tells the adventures of two children during the Second World War, was developed into a serious game, in order for children to learn more about that period's history, while Bayard published books about the stories in parallel.

The publication of books is also one of the strategies followed by Ubisoft, which even founded a comic book publishing house Les Deux Royaumes. «Publishing makes our universe bigger,» explains Clémence Deleuze who is in charge of publishing. Comic books or novels must follow the game's brand identity, as with *Assassins' Creed*, their creation is often made with the help of fans. Some teens have not yet played the *Assassins' Creed* video game and their first experience with it is through Matthew J. Kirby's novel, which then invites them to discover the universe on the other media, proving the relevance of such a strategy. The principle is the same for *Les lapins crétins*, which has a 360° deployment, including comic books.



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