Fictional history frames in an intercultural larp

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GAME IN LAB

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1. ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

- Role-playing games:
  - An "assemblage of practices" (Kamm, 2020)
  - "the rule-structured creation and enactment of characters in a fictional world" (Zagal, Deterding, 2018, p. 47) with a variety of forms and traditions (Harviainen et al., 2018)
  - Using an "intercreative" process of collective improvisation (David, 2016)

- Role-playing with the past:
  - To play, one needs the perception of decision and fictionality (Brougère, 2005)
  - Play and fiction as cognitive frames used to interpret a situation (Goffman, 1974 ; Stenros, 2014 ; Williams et al., 2018)
  - Fictionality as a suspension of the need for documentary proof (Caïra, 2011)
  - In the tension between "ludic involvement" and the feeling of "historical authenticity" (Mochocki, 2021, p. 272), the priority goes to maintaining play (Dauphragne, 2009)

2. METHODOLOGY

Open observant participation (Gold, 2003 ; Soulé, 2007 ; Kemper, 2018) as a player at an international session of *Legion: Siberian Story*

Ethnography: 3 months of virtual participation and 4 days of physical participation (Berry, 2012 ; Arborio & Fournier, 2021)

Interviews (Beaud & Weber, 2010):

- More formal:
    - 2 French players, Margot and Victor*, 25-35 y/o, higher studies, representative of the session participants (2h30)
    - 2 members of the organization, having designed and organized Legion (2h)

- More informal and heuristic: 10+ conversations with players and organizers

*Names changed

3. FRAMES USED TO DESCRIBE LEGION

Intertwined frames of play (Fine, 1983 ; Joseph, 2002 ; Williams et al., 2018):

- Social intercultural event frame (participants)

- Intercreative role-play frame (players)

- Historical fiction frame (characters)

The following are excerpts of successful frame maintaining despite tension between frames (Goffman, 1974). It can be intentional or not, conscious or not (Schugurensky, 2007 ; Levin, 2020).

"Margot: At some point, they whistled 'Silent Night' and my brother asked what it was. And I know how to sing it in three languages, and **it was silly, really**" (smiles)."

(1 excerpt, player interview)

"Margot: And it was quite beautiful, the fact that this object found itself in play in our hands and... Me, **when I knew that in fact all that came from the historical thing, it touched me a lot** (voice moved)."

"Victor: When you identify with someone who really exists, who really existed, who really exist… **It's not just fiction, it's not a character**."

"Margot : I like to discover a part of History through larp, and after go tickle it. […] Then **I want to sort out the real from the fake** and think: 'fuck, that bit is true! They really did that!'"

(3 excerpts, player interview)

*From Levin, 2020 ; see also Schugurensky, 2007

5. WEIGHT OF THE CONCERNED FOLKS' GAZE

"Victor: **This larp was made for Czechs**, initially."

"Margot: That's interesting, they kind of made a larp with their national anecdote.

Victor: Yes, that's it. **It's something they really are very proud of.**

Michael: Really?

Victor: Absolutely! Yes! Legion, it's… **Didn't you feel it through the documents?**"

(2 excerpts, player interview)

This video marks the end of Legion, as it reveals in a final truth the real purpose of the game: **salute these lives, explain the present, feel a connexion to the horrors.**

(Michael's field notes and analysis)

5. CONCLUSIONS

Participation as foreign players to the Czech larp *Legion: Siberian Story* :

- Historical knowledge given to participate to the larp is framed as a form of fictional history

- Documentary-based fiction, when concerned folks are present, can modulate the frames and:

  - Give social legitimacy to concerned folks in regard to the documented theme

  - Add an emotional "weight" for the other participants, inciting to a kind of *prudence*

Further research is required:

- These implicit processes can be observed during their recalling/discovery in interviews

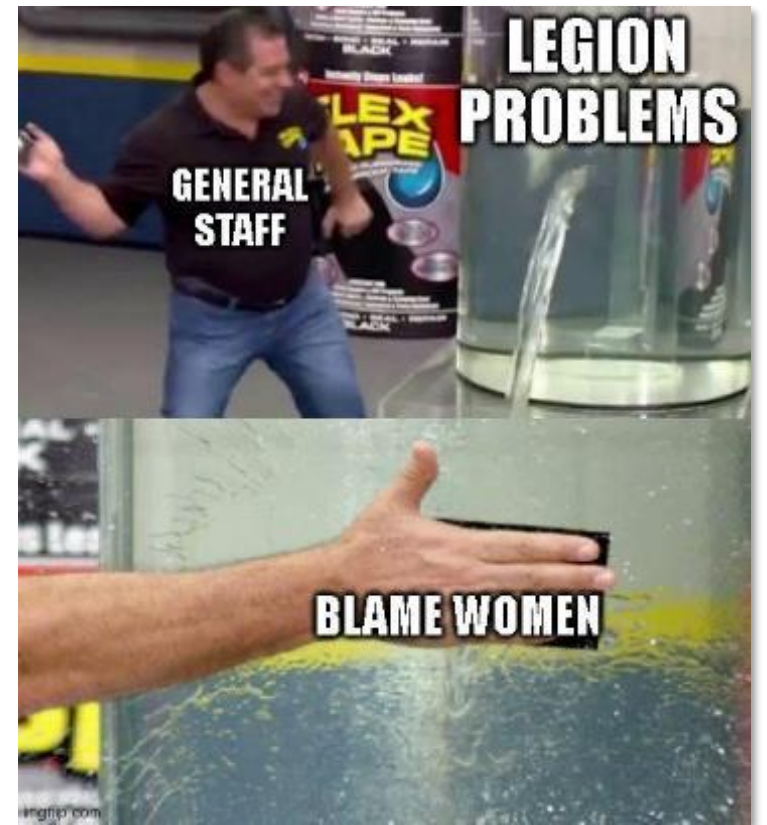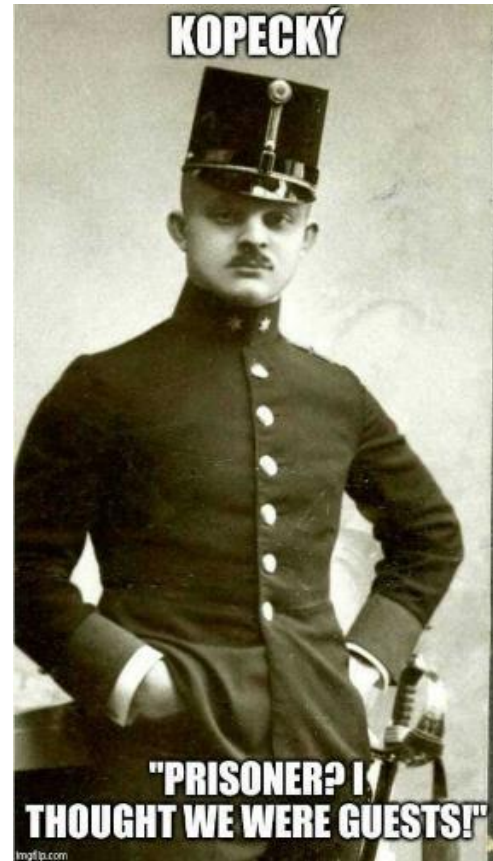- More empirical qualitative data is needed in more varied analog games played leisurely

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Thank you
for your attention

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A few examples of memes showing appropriation of historical information

Thank you!
Credits *Legion: a Siberian Story*

- Photographies by Josef Vyškovský et Tomas Chlup.

- *Legion: a Siberian Story* est un larp de l'association Rolling

Crédits : David Wanka (directeur de production, chef de projet) ; David František Wagner (chef de projet, responsable de l'équipe histoire) ; Eva Wagner (personnages, intrigue, responsable des costumes), Madla Urbanová (personnages, intrigue), Ondřej Hartvich (accessoires et intrigue), Lucie Chlumská (personnages, création), Petr Urban (intrigue, personnages) ; Michaela Portychová (communication), Jan Mottl (communication, costumes), Milan Korba (Web), David Michálek (graphisme) ; Ondra Pěnička et Lukáš Makovička (photos promotionnelles), Ondřej Petrášek (recherche), Jitka Pešková (recherche), Ondřej Benda (accessoires), Václav Průša (accessoires), Jan Wollmann (accessoires), Jakub Philipp, (production), Josef Hlavinka (production), Michal Horáček (production), Klára Wanková (administration, costumes), Klára Příbramská (costumes), Tereza Šolcová (costumes), Iva Vávrová (traduction), Crian Shields (relecture)

Thank you!
Other mentioned larps

- *Halat Hisar* (2013) by Fatima Abdul Karim, Faris Arouri, Kaisa Kangas, Riad Mustafa, Juhana Pettersson, Maria Pettersson and Mohamad Rabah.

- *Future is Straight* (2021) by Karete Jacobsen Meland, Tor Kjetil Edland and Anna Emilie Groth.

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