

Transreading: Notes from a Transdisciplinary perspective

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Abstract

This work proposes a review of the concept of transreader based on the approach to transmedia narrative. We understand transmedia narrative as a set of texts, products, platforms and media that build from a hypotext or base text, a much broader universe in which we appreciate the sum of different elements that participate, let's say, in the base plot from significant elements. The interesting thing here is that the different ways contribute to the construction of a concurrent meaning. The objective is to explain how the transreader, as the center and agent of the transmedia experience, configures a universe of coherent meaning based on networks of meaning.

Keywords

Transreader; Transmedia narrative; Networks; Meaning

Thinking about how we read different texts and understand what we read is especially relevant to those who study texts—literary and others—as products originating from a practice, and particularly reading as a process. However, beyond printed or electronic books, reading is carried out through texts created in different media, supports, and codes. It is therefore necessary to recover the concept of transreader (Scolari, 2013; Aguerre, 2019),³ to try and understand how transreading is carried out in a transmedia narrative (TN, also known as transmedia intertextuality, Kinder 1993). To this end, it is essential to establish how we understand transmedia and since when; how it is possible and why it makes sense to address a transmedia archaeology that recovers and gives meaning to experiences that preexist the definition of the concept; and, lastly, to question how the process of transreading appears, the reasons that make it possible, and the manner of naming them.

A Glance at the Hypermedia Environment

We understand TN (Kinder, 1993; Jenkins, 2009; Igarza, 2013; Scolari, 2013) as a set of texts, products, platforms, and media that, based on a hypotext or base text (Genette, 1989), build an expanding universe where we can observe the sum of different elements that take part in a basic plot starting from significant elements that nevertheless grow without restrictions from media, supports, or even platforms.

Interesting here is the contribution, through different means, to the construction of a concurrent meaning, i.e., of a common meaning made of different pieces. Moreover, transmedia narrative puts the audience in center stage—hence the importance of the transreader—, those who consume the narrative, unlike the classical schema according to which only the reader is the consumer, the recipient. Our idea is to change this. Something fundamental, beyond any transmedia narrative, is the possibility of participating, interacting, or producing contents, to a greater or lesser extent (Jenkins, 2010).

³ Other similar concepts are: the reader-spectator (*lectoespectador*), who reads and looks at contents (Mora, 2012); the integration of user and producer, that leaves out reading, is formulated as produser (Bruns, 2008); in a similar vein, García Canclini (2007) proposed the term *internauta* (internaut or cybernaut); the category of prosumer comprises the idea of textual consumer and text producer (Toffler, 1980); and the term *emirec*, coined by Cloutier (1973) to combine the terms *emisor* (sender) and *receptor* (recipient).

Transmedia, then, implies narrating stories and integrating them in the crossroads of multiple forms, but always intending to make an expanding universe intelligible. The latter does not grow randomly or fortuitously, but rather invariably, starting from this transwriting process and adding linking elements that a reader will be able to place in relation to a source text. This is essential: if the intertext, interdiscourse, or reference to the base work or hypotext is not acknowledged, then transmedia does not operate.

The different works that we consider separate *a priori*, that can even be bought, read, enjoyed, decoded separately take part in this same universe, each of them contributing something. For example, we can have a film as hypotext, and propose a videogame, a manga strip, a board game, a novelization, all based on the film, each of them developing complementary plot lines, which however do not repeat themselves. The wealth of possibilities was already incipient in Dick Higgins's comment about intermedia in 1966:

The ready-made or found object, in a sense an intermedium since it was not intended to conform to the pure medium, usually suggests this, and therefore suggests a location in the field between the general area of art media and those of life media. [...] However, I would like to suggest that the use of intermedia is more or less universal throughout the fine arts, since continuity rather than categorization is the hallmark of our new mentality. (Higgins, 2001: 49-50)

There is no “purity” in contemporary production. Artistic practices intermingle with daily tasks in their different aspects. This entails the need to explain the understanding of products, texts, or messages based on a vision that transcends the linguistic code, on the one hand, but also the usual codes of the arts—actual or virtual—, on the other.

The continuity of mentality mentioned by Higgins is what allows the passage from one medium to another, and the simultaneous experience of different texts. This involves a change in the way of producing and consuming contents, a change that results from the enabling and normalization of different forms of communication (old, recovered, new) based on the

development of new technologies. Notably, however, what has changed are the cognitive models: “Analytically, models are the combination of elements + rules + the syntagmatic (‘temporal’) relations impossible on the product” (Even-Zohar, 1997: 22). This understanding is made possible by said models based on the concurrence of different codes, messages, stimuli, contents.

The idea of transmediality is that each of the products, media, and practices contributes contents (expansion of meanings) in differentiated ways to a much larger narrative universe. On this basis, it is relevant to ask ourselves how sense is built, how meanings are built from the perspective of the consumer of these texts: of what we will later call the *transreader*.

The transmedia experience is shaped beyond mere consumption, which could be considered passive, by a specific reader or transreader. What happens is the concurrence of media based on the construction of a universe of meaning grounded on clear references that are recognizable from the different code proposals. Since these experiences are currently more complex—considering the multiplicity of media expressions, of the contents we find at any given time, permanently—, we must stop to think how cognitive models are shaped that allow us to integrate the different information into coherent meanings.

We must note that, unlike other intertextual practices, transmedia narrative is explicit regarding the relation between the elements that comprise it. Unlike other reading experiences, defined by the more or less competent knowledge of the person who reads the texts alluded to in the reading, transmedia assumes and requires the acknowledgement of a hypotext or source text where the key elements for the development of the narrative have been established. The transmedia reader is a transreader capable of recognizing and explaining different products, as well as integrating them naturally.

Thus, the transreader lies at the center of a wheel whose spokes are related contents which participate in the same transmedia universe. These elements can be of a very different nature, but the *sine qua non* condition is that they remain and are clearly recognizable in the extended universe they sustain.

However, there is something we must clarify. One talks about intermedia starting in the 1960s, a decade that bore witness to the beginning of a different and accelerated technological development that today is already a reality: the digital platforms. From this standpoint, we can observe that transmedia refers to what is conventionally called hypermodernity.

Apparently, it is from this moment of technological challenge—hyperbolic or hypertrophied—that we can talk about transmedia, the challenge being to identify, understand, and explain different phenomena from the standpoint of what has been called a transmedia archaeology (Scolari, Bertetti, and Freeman, 2014; Dena, 2009). This implies evaluating the possibility that certain pretechnological significant expressions—prior to binary codes, networks, and multiscreens—may be understood in transmedial terms.

Transmedia Archaeology, or TN before Digital Media

The recovery of transmedia narratives that precede the convergence of the media faces diverse challenges. The first one is related with its inclusion, i.e., with the theoretical openness that enables the recognition of processes prior to the analogical and digital expansion. We must here define transmedia archaeology:

An archaeology of transmedia should start with the transmedia productions created before the introduction of the concept in the early 2000s and move backward, looking for transmedia storytelling practices in the past. Going back to the past means identifying textual networks, looking for textual “fossils” and reconstructing production and consumption practices. (Scolari, Bertetti, and Freeman, 2014: 7)

Drawing on the image of textual *fossils*, shaped in different media and languages, is quite significant, since it refers to texts that need to be traced, rescued, systematized, for they tend to endure in a fragmentary manner because they suffer different physical damages, transcription issues, or reproduction problems due to equipment, hardware, and/or software loss. All this turns the work into the task of a restorer combined with an antiques expert. To explain the process of recovery, recognition, and loss, we include a diagram that allows the visualization of the whole.

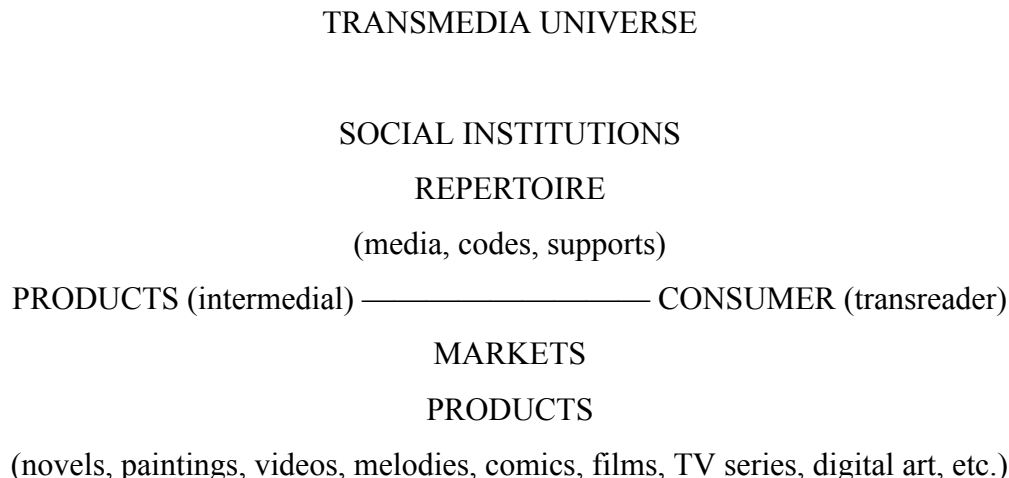


Figure 1. This diagram allows us to observe how a transmedial universe is created, based on Even-Zohar's explanation (1997) of a socio-semiotic event.

The relevance of recovering Itamar Even-Zohar's proposal lies in the coincidence between his concepts and those used to explain TN. What interests us is that the sender would now be a transreader, since they can some way or other address—or consume, if we follow Even-Zohar's polysystem theory (1997)—the different messages and give them a meaning. The latter, however, is not an isolated meaning anymore if we think about it in transmedial terms: it is not a separate meaning anymore, but rather shapes joint meanings.

The consumer of a specific product (that was identified with the recipient or reader) is simultaneously reconfigured as consumer and prosumer during the transreading process due to the abundance of products and media, and, to a certain extent, to the relative demand that they actively participate in the process of meaning construction and TN expansion.

In the case of making, or producing, we can speak of an active operation of a repertoire, or, as an abbreviated term, an active repertoire. In the case of handling, or consuming, on the other hand, we can speak of a passive operation, or a passive repertoire. The terms suggested here are for convenience only; the repertoire is neither “active” nor “passive”,

but can be used in different modes in two different circumstances, as described above, namely, in an event where a person produces something, in contradistinction to an event where a person “deciphers” what others produce. (Even-Zohar, 1997: 20)

In this sense, TN would work as a greatly complex open system, with different codes and media, capable of continuously adding new elements and developing coherent significant networks.

To include and try to explain a narrative as transmedia, it must be an expanding universe where every product or medium contributes new contents that are correlated with the source text or product (hypotext). Moreover, the active participation of the audience / spectators / readers is required, since their role as agents is essential in the network of meaning, not only in the decoding process, but particularly in the production of contents.

In addition to the theoretical definition, the second challenge involved in recovering most narratives is related to the possibility of accessing transmedia products, considering the obstacles to preserve and access the processes and practices that existed before the systems of contemporary archives for the registry and survival of products. In this case I refer to audio or visual recordings, to the preservation of documents in different perishable supports, or even to oral or other manifestations of popular nature that are not registered in conventional media that can be protected and searched in the usual archives.

We can draw an interesting example from religious practice, specifically from that closest to the Catholic church. Classical Hellenic theater from around the 5th century B.C.E. can only be appreciated through some references to the staging, archaeological remains, and a minimal sample of the plays; in a similar way, in the example of the church it is possible to observe that most of the contents expressed by the audiences (churchgoers, believers)—such as prayers, orally transmitted stories, votive offerings, hagiographies, vernacular music and dances, related rites or myths, among other possibilities—are difficult to preserve, systematize and, therefore, include in an exercise of transmedia archaeology that validates and recognizes them as part of an expanded universe of related meanings.

For centuries now, the experience of immersion in the religious space has often occurred as a transmedia narrative. An example taken from the Christian West is the way in which, not unlike digital communication, a pluricode experience was carried out (and still is) that configures one same universe of meaning. This needed exercise of recovering and explaining how analogical transmedia narratives have operated since even before the concept was defined is called transmedia archaeology. The latter comprises a process not only to rescue, but also to establish a tradition and write a history of transmedia practices.

We seek to recognize recurrences and characteristics of a construction of meaning. To illustrate this process, I will refer to a specific church. It is one of the churches that compose the Dominican route of ex-convents in the high Mixteca in Oaxaca, in the community of Yanhuitlán, Southern Mexico (Ramos Silva, 2015; Mora and Soriano, 2002).



Figures 2-3. The image on the left shows the façade of the temple in Santo Domingo Yanhuitlán. Its construction began in the 16th century based on Gothic and Plateresque parameters over a Prehispanic base; photo (fragment) by Julio Bronimann, 2018. The altarpiece (on the right) (Halcón, 1997) is very rich and considered exceptional due to its heptagonal layout; it was registered by the INAH (Spanish initials for National Institute of Anthropology and History) in 1970 and restored during the first decades of the 21st century; photo (fragment) by Bob Shalkwijk.

The church itself (Figure 2) is an architectonic text that clearly signifies: it speaks from imposingness, from the stone's appearance and function of strength, from the glory that is associated in discourse to the divine and extended to those who ostensibly represent it on Earth. This set of architectural elements stands as a disruption in the landscape; the conventual complex in the middle of the arid valley, far from any important population center, is an atypical element on the horizon in this Mexican region, and this contributes to its greater significance.

We already have a base, a text that is comprised by a specific code—the architectural code—and a particular material support: stone. This is a base product of a possible transmedia narrative. In this case, however, the hypotext is not the building, for the church is already a byproduct of a set of foundational texts that are part of culture and difficult to define clearly.

To the meaning of this first text, we can add the façade's ornamentation, the panels and engraved stone columns contrasting with the sobriety of the rest of the building. The sculptures of saints and the virgin use a different code to communicate, albeit with a similar support, and expand the meaning of the significant universe.

When we enter the building, we integrate ourselves into the space of the church, so that we become participants in this text. This also has a meaning in terms of what we understand by transmedia: we are part of the communicating product; we integrate it into our horizon of meaning.

The main altarpiece of the 16th century (Figure 3), built before 1575, with a height of 19 by 8.35 m (Frassani, 2013; AA.VV., 2002), complements from the inside of the building the meanings proposed by the first approach by integrating at least two other differentiated codes. The complex is the work of Andrés de la Concha (1559-1612), a Sevillian painter who specialized in assembling this kind of structures, mostly made in polychrome wood:

The altarpieces had a “reading” expressed through images and painting; the preachers based their sermons on representations that made the abstract content of their words intelligible. (Halcón, 1997: 84, caption)

Beyond the use of the altarpiece as a stage, there is a transmedial construction of the meaning, whereby the building itself *communicates* and which we can decode and construct based on the interpretation of different synchronized media that expand or extend a particular narrative, in this case religious. The altarpiece contributes its dimension, in addition to its complexity, through seven panels and at least five bodies, besides an attic, a predella, columns and ornamented tops of mannerist and baroque influence. The whole includes 16 polychrome statues, 19 paintings and a gold finish that frames the different significant elements.

Beyond these supports (stone, wood, canvas) and media (architecture, sculpture, painting, images, and tridimensional elements), we must add a whole iconographic series (García, 2018) found on the church's walls. Although this might or might not be counted as part of the altarpieces, it also communicates and confirms the underlying religious discourse. Thus, we have three media, three channels in different supports, different products that contribute concurrently to the same narrative, to the same transmedial universe.

Furthermore, there is an organ inside the church to perform music during mass. Thus, if the rite, the prayers, the discourse, the readings, the whole performance, the music, and the singing are added to the transmedia experience of the building, together with the active participation of the churchgoers who attend mass, the result is practically the whole schema that we nowadays consider new and call transmedia narrative. Whoever developed these spaces based on the Christian-Catholic practice had absolute clarity in terms of creating a multichannel, complex communicative experience that multiplies its meanings. Much like marketing does today, they understood the extraordinary possibilities of a transmedia narrative. There was no need of calling it transmedial, but they put it into practice quite efficiently.

When trying to clarify the experience from the standpoint of transmedia archaeology, we must establish the elements to be considered for such an approach, which is possible from my contemporary perspective as a transreader. There must be a narrative, a series of elements arranged in order, in a more or less coherent sequence—which is the definition of narrative that

we have always maintained—, and meanings that complement each other and contribute to expanding the previous and simultaneous meanings.

There is synchronicity here, i.e., the different elements, products, media, supports, and channels are experienced and decoded simultaneously in this space of the religious building. To a certain extent, we are overwhelmed in terms of meaning construction, and of course everything is part of a common production regarding intentionality. There are recurrent elements, characters, colors, symbols, etc. that integrate networks of meaning that we recognize as part of the same narrative.

To round off this definition of transmedia narrative in the example of the church in Yanhuítlán, we must see the consumer as prosumer: the person who consumes also produces. Any transmedia narrative requires the active participation of the interpreter, who participates in that universe not only because they enjoy it, but also because they produce contents that contribute to its expansion. In this regard, those who actively participate in a mass are producing contents based on certain narrative parameters, certain assumptions and extrapolations that allow us to recognize the coherence of the whole.

There is a performative action that transcends contemplation, that is, there is an explicit participation in a specific narrative and space, which leads us to the idea of transreading. The existence and the active role of a transreader (standing in a church or sitting in front of small screens) establish the possibility of a transmedia narrative. It is not just the products, platforms, and media; also necessary is the presence of a reader who can decode the different products, codes, and media, who can synchronically construct the meaning of a whole narrative where all the former are manifest; dialogism, intertexts, intermediality, multimediality, transmediality, remediality as self-reference of the media, and of course the intermediate (Rajewsky, 2005; Gil González and Pardo García, 2018).

It is important to note that nowadays we generally think that hypermedia is solely connected to the digital environment because there is a link where one can place the cursor and click (hyperlink) to open another window and access another content or product.

With all due distance—and with other technological characteristics—, the same happened and still happens when there is a quotation in a text, or a footnote, or a reference to an author or a text: all these cases involve a hyperlink. The difference is that instead of clicking on the link and opening a window, we need to get up, maybe pick up the book, check a volume of the encyclopedia, take another journal, search for the reference, and establish the connection. The meaning-construction mechanism works in the same way. The digital medium allows the connection to be more immediate, but while this would seemingly simplify the process, it also promotes a different way of constructing meanings, since there is no mental or physical effort.

The inclusion of the body and its movement also entails significance understood as the construction of meaning based on psychomotricity (Piaget, 1981). Also part of the construction of meaning are our feelings, our being, our physiological and emotional behavior, as well as the physical ease or difficulty that go beyond the lack of electricity or Wi-Fi failure.

Let us consider a simplified communication schema, with a sender, a message, a recipient, a channel, a code, feedback, and a context. We would thus be following the classic model posited by Roman Jakobson (1960), systematically used and assuming that the recipient knows the code, the context is adequate, the channel is free, and there is not consequential interference noise in the decoding process... However, this tends to be more complex. “For the potential consumer, the “model” is that pre-knowledge according to which the event is interpreted (‘understood’).” (Even-Zohar, 1997: 23). I now propose that we imagine what happens when there is more than one product: the reader-consumer faces different products simultaneously, through different media and channels, where each message is constructed and set out based on different codes, with undifferentiated noise, and feedback that might be simultaneous.

Transreader 2.0

We might ask whether we all are transreaders. It is possible to answer in the affirmative, in a certain way and to different degrees. Some people still believe, partly due to ignorance, that they pay attention to one message only, and reprimand those who do not: turn off the music if you are studying, do not get distracted, do not turn on the TV, lose the cell phone, etc. We are naturally

transreaders to very different degrees because we live in a semiosphere that has increasingly more products, texts, codes that simultaneously bombard us out of screens, speakers, walls, practices, and to this we respond by constructing meanings.

In many senses, we are more visual than ever as readers/consumers, but we are also more textual because we see and decode texts, but we also produce them. We are increasingly more transmedial, that is, we see, understand, connect. This is probably the most important thing: connecting different texts in different supports and codes synchronically, not only diachronically, and constructing meanings and sense based on those connections.

That is the great contribution of this perspective: understanding the transreader as someone who—with no conscious effort or extraordinary difficulty—can consume and construct meaning at the same time, integrating the contribution of different products. In this fashion, we can see someone who is watching TV and at the same time chatting about what they are watching on screen and googling something they deem interesting, besides answering text messages or talking about what is happening with someone sitting next to them... all this simultaneously. We are increasingly able to read in transmedial terms, due to the urgency of times, the proliferation of media, and certain social practices that tend more and more to this kind of reading.

The reader-transreader goes beyond mere consumption and the way in which they assume the transmedia narrative as their own (Ryan and Thon, 2014).

The transreader usually assumes the logic of appropriation regarding what they consume, they make the product or content their own. More and more spaces of consumption are configured where everything happens simultaneously and which moreover promote the sense of property, of content ownership.

In this regard, the transmedial proposals I adopt enable me to comment, discuss, propose new routes, write an alternative story, make a drawing, that is, to participate as prosumer in different ways, in different platforms, codes, and spaces.

We have to assume that the transreader must first take shape as a multimodal reader by being able to master different languages—understood as semiotic systems—in synchronic terms. The fact that decoding-signifying results from processes that are co-present when operating in networks is relevant: audiovisual elements are present, but also interactive and visual ones, along with writing in all its forms—from what we consider normative writing to all those *parawritings* that occur in blogs, text messages, WhatsApp communications, among many others.

In the end, what we must focus on—beyond the description or definition of the process—is appreciating the way knowledge is constructed. When interpreting different products or messages, we do not build different meanings and then integrate them into one; we build a *common* meaning. The result is a meaning that connects all the elements of the transmedia narrative, thus synchronically establishing links based on meaning-construction processes that create networks.

The transreader is not located in the center of the transmedia narrative, but rather in the vortex of a network where videogames, printed texts, computers, tablets or similar devices, TV, social networks, music, films, etc. participate synchronically (Zeiser, 2015).

It is necessary to study how this idea or illusion of meaning units is constructed. One of the many challenges is whether these units build a homogenous meaning based on different products and codes, whether what I have called *common* sense exists. Another issue that must be further examined is whether simultaneous consumption is superficial, considering synchronicity, since at first sight it would appear that we are not capable of integrating deep knowledge through simultaneous stimuli, as opposed to concentrating on only one code or product.

To nuance the idea of transreader, we will examine another two related concepts. The first one is *interactor*, which comes from French and highlights the action-creation dichotomy of the esthetic experience, that is, the moment when we participate in transmedia narrative. In this sense, we consume while at the same time playing different roles, both passive and active, as

readers-spectators-players, listeners-scriptwriters-camerapersons, etc., all this simultaneously. We participate in two concurrent routes: action and creation.

Another approach includes the concept of prosumer. This term originated in economics and refers to a person who consumes a product, while at the same time producing others. Those who consume transmedia narrative are *prosumers*, that is, they do not only consume (decode, create meanings), but also produce contents. This is different from the interactor, a term that refers to the roles in the act of reading, because it points at the result of said act, the generated contents. It is interesting that both interactor and prosumer—depending on where we locate them—are transreaders who can construct contents (meaning) based on the interpretation of different texts, supports, media.

Although these dynamics are ever changing, the concept of transreader is for now a relevant and operational definition for our way of consuming some contents and producing others. The great challenge still lies in explaining how we construct sense, meanings in transreading, and whether those meanings and contents that are part of one same horizon of meaning are different from the sum of its parts. Based on this, we will be able to assess their relevance or depth.

This is the prospective challenge. It would seem that the exercise that we define as transreading wavers between two possibilities: a superficial, disaggregated consumption that faces possible obstacles to focus on one same product or medium, or on the contrary, a transreader who integrates a deeper network of meanings that comprises the expansion of a transmedial narrative.

Notes on Transreading: Plasticity and Cognitive Models

The process of transmedial reading (transreading) is similar to a phenomenon described in linguistics during the 1980s (Myers-Scotton, 1983; Gafaranga and Torras i Calvo, 2001;

Gardner-Chloros, 2009): *code-switching*.⁴ Although this switching refers to the transposition of two speeches, it is possible to use it as a starting point to reflect on how a reader shapes themselves as a transreader; in other words, to explain how they effectively carry out the transreading.

Code-switching refers to the change, with no solution of continuity, between two languages in contact. This assumes that both languages' syntactic rules are maintained, as is the full integration in the use of both equivalent codes, since they belong to the same linguistic sphere. An example of this switching between Spanish and English can be observed in the following fragment of "Pollito Chicken", written by the Puerto Rican Ana Lydia Vega and considered to be the first short story in Spanglish:

Suzie Bermiúdez se montó en el station-wagon del Hotel Conquistador que estaba cundido de full-blood, flower-shirted, Bermuda-Shorted Continentals con Polaroid cameras colgando del cuello. Y –sería porque el station-wagon era air-conditioned– se sintió como si estuviera bailando un fox-trot en la azotea del Empire State Building.⁵ (Vega, 1977: 74)

Switching the Spanish noun for its equivalent in English, using a colloquial expression maintains, to a certain extent, the sense of the sentence. However, the meaning is enriched, since the semantic variations and the cultural load of the different languages add nuances and peculiarities that configure a meaning (or its possibility, at least) that is different from that of a text written wholly in Spanish or English. The bilingual sender configures in the code-switching a third space and a specific code, which in Vega's case is not Spanish or English, but a fusion. What is salient here is the fact that the "third code" (its formulation) implies a different cognitive model that makes it possible. This model does not only integrate and equate two languages, but also the cultural networks they are part of.

⁴ "Conversational code switching can be defined as the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two grammatical systems or subsystems." (Gumperz, 1982: 59)

⁵ Suzie Bermiúdez climbed into the Hotel Conquistador station-wagon that was full of full-blood, flower-shirted, Bermuda-Shorted Continentals with Polaroid cameras hanging from the neck. And –maybe because the station-wagon was air-conditioned– she felt as if she were dancing a fox-trot on the roof of the Empire State Building.

The idea of a repertoire suggests not only systemicity, i.e., dependencies between the assumed items of that repertoire, but also the idea of sharedness. Without a commonly shared repertoire, whether partly or fully, no group of people could communicate and organize their lives in acceptable and meaningful ways to the members of the group. [...]

[...] it would be more fruitful to think of “culture,” or any socio-semiotic activity thereof, as the network that obtains between all of the factors interdepending (interrelating) with the repertoire. (Even-Zohar, 1997: 21)

In a similar sense, the bilingual reader approaching “Pollito Chicken” must not only be able to construct meaning with this mixed code, but also to configure an equivalent cognitive model where such a code and its interpretation are accepted.

On this basis, and following Wolf (2018) and Gumperz (1982), it is possible to extrapolate some of these considerations to transreading, understood as a kind of code-switching that goes beyond its linguistic nature. The expansion of meanings mentioned by Jenkins (2008) goes through different code practices and parameters, so that not only contents are added (in terms of Hjelmslev, 1974), but also forms of expression whose experience (beyond that of reading) is formulated synchronically. To acknowledge speakers who practice code-switching we must assume that they “have their own socially defined notions of code or grammatical system” (Gumperz, 1982: 99).

Similarly, we must assume that the transreader integrates meanings in one same model, but also the cultural aspects comprised by these meanings, whose implications—understood as networks—will quite probably ease their integration. Likewise, studies about code-switching provide “evidence for the existence of underlying, un verbalized assumptions about social categories [...]” (99), which also manifests in transreading. However, what is at stake here is not only a language switching (linguistic codes), but also an effective switching of codes (linguistic and other kinds) and media.

Thus, transreading involves the understanding of different structures, elements, systems, categories, whose integration is eased by the networks (culture as a network, as Even-Zohar

[1997] emphasizes from a socio-semiotic perspective) operating within and between the different media.

As in the Spanglish example, this new network of interwoven meanings—proposed from different correlated codes—entails an original model that enables their integration, and, similarly, a cognitive model that allows the transreader to merge and give coherence to the transmedia universe that requires and demands code-switching to configure a global meaning based on, among others, implicit cultural networks.

From reader to transreader

A reader who is accustomed to only one support, medium, or code can be introduced, in practice, to new contents, media, and codes based on the approach to a meaningful content or narrative that is interesting for them.

This means that we are capable of learning new codes based on the recognition of meaningful elements related with a source text or content (hypotext). These elements enable us to understand structures, syntaxes, and signs that follow other operational logics, but are based on contents or meanings similar to those we are familiar with.

The transition processes between media are thus facilitated by significant nodes of understanding that enable the establishment of significant connections, code changes, and, to a certain extent, equivalences between different signs that feed the same transmedia universe.

In this manner, the transreader is not restricted to reading only one text or content, but rather integrates in practice a system of related texts or contents that comprise a meaning network that expands exponentially.

In many ways, it is possible to think about a diverse transreading practice at different moments of history. A transreading was carried out when different sources were examined—written, iconic, interviews with various people, or turning to the study of architecture, among other things. In other words, devices created in different codes were integrated to construct a significant transmedia universe.

However, what has changed since the mid-twentieth century and accelerated with the technological changes of the last decades is the possibility of accessing, both as consumer and prosumer, very different media that simultaneously and significantly broaden transmedial—and, hence, transreading—possibilities.

Transversal experience is a phenomenon constructed based on a synergy. On the one hand, we have the production of contents that require a greater participation from readers. This is a phenomenon associated with the way markets operate and with the peculiarities of most user-centered technology. On the other hand, we have a more involved reader/consumer, a person whose relationship with the media tends to be or can be more active, and who, in many ways, perceives the need to participate in content production, either due to a sense of belonging, affinity, access to media and technological possibilities, or also—as we mentioned regarding contents—due to market pressure.

An average consumer who does not produce contents remains outside most of the practices that are deemed relevant in social media, among other spaces and practices.

The transreader is thus a subject that voluntarily demands, in the first place, a larger number of choices, of puzzle pieces to construct their experience and, subsequently, the network knowledge resulting from their reading process.

Simultaneously, however, this transreader is a subject conditioned by market rules to participate by producing contents that enable the survival and, to a certain extent, the advertising of contents (media, products, devices, codes, etc.) produced and controlled by specific businesses, capitals, production companies, among others.

This phenomenon is a sign of current times. On the one hand, we have the possibility, the freedom to read on a larger number of platforms, with different codes, practically on the palm of our hand. We can, in this fashion, construct knowledge based on fragments that broaden the perspective offered by the original text.

But, on the other hand, we are increasingly conditioned to participate, to produce contents that promote so-called “original contents”, whose main idea does not belong to us, but which we feed in the transversal universe where we, through our own active exercise, participate.

Beyond this tension that enables the existence of transreaders who are increasingly able to add new elements, with increasingly diverse codes in their approach to transmedia narratives, what is interesting from an analytical perspective regarding the processes that foster transreading is to identify and explain the cognitive mechanisms located at the base of the networks or interconnections between codes and non-equivalent meanings. This points at how a reader, in a specific pragmatic situation, can read various written texts, with different intentionalities, or even actively participate in written and oral dialogues, besides interpreting images, doing active searches, streaming animations or videos, and coherently establishing comprehensive networks between all these media, supports, and codes.

Depending on the discipline that we choose as a starting point, this manner of consuming, producing, and building knowledge could be explained in different ways.

One of them would be experimenting with specific subjects. This would entail controlled experiences, limited to specific laboratory circumstances, and would therefore have, to a certain extent, more restrictions due to its artificial nature.

Another way to approach this live practice would be turning to the digital spaces where different fans, consumers, and specialized content producers recreate, validate, consume, and produce contents in particular transmedia universes.

Nevertheless, we consider another path that can complement the previous ones. We propose to start by establishing particular units of analysis that are part of the same transmedia universe and which we would relate with one another to validate significant networks that are capable of building new contents based on the expansion of the source narrative.

This is a first textual exercise which will provide us with certain strategies and analytical instruments that will allow a more meaningful approach to the real experience of transreaders: consumers/prosumers.

This consideration is based on the assumption that every reading, and therefore every transreading, is an active process. In this way, instead of merely describing the transreading practice, we seek to carry it out so that the study parameters can be built in practice and are no mere labels describing active processes from the outside.

Thus, the transreader requires different texts to integrate a much more complex panorama, inhabited by diverse contents and codes. As a prosumer, it is the interactor who participates, who actively acts not only in the consumption and production of contents, but at the same time and in person, in the construction of new knowledge based on the relationship and configuration of new relevant networks.

How does one become a transreader? Unlike most readers of printed books, who learned the reading process in school spaces and practices, the common transreader learns from experience, i.e., from the involvement in a pan-codified world. The semiosphere becomes explicit around the person in multiple media, messages, and syncretic code experiences.

As Maryanne Wolf (2018) points out:

[...] fluent reading involves knowing not only how words work but also how they make us feel. Empathy and perspective taking are part of the complex woof of feelings and thoughts, whose convergence propels greater understanding. [...]

Deep reading is always about connection: connecting what we know to what we read, what we read to what we feel, what we feel to what we think, and how we think to how we live out our lives in a connected world. (Wolf, 2018: 171)

This is one of the reasons that help to explain the transreading experience: the media-switching is carried out based on subjective interest, which establishes meaningful networks between feelings and thoughts; between feelings, sensitive experience, and abstract knowledge. The switching process becomes easy for the transreader due to their evident interest in what they know / consume / decode through different signs, products, or messages.

Interest does not only help to carry out things, but it also enables quantum leaps between codes and media (code-switching, medium-switching), which expand the universe of meaning for the transreader with a motivated experience.

However, the connection between what is decoded (in networks) and what is felt is not enough to explain the fluency of the transreading exercise in all its dimensions. It is not only the decoding speed, but also the capacity to relate dissimilar processes and contents based on harmony:

Over time —by the third and fourth grades— these lower-level, basic circuit components need to be so practiced and automatic that children can turn their attention to ever more sophisticated comprehension processes, beginning with expanding their background knowledge and ending with the elicitation of their insights and reflections.

This is the basis of fluency and also the best way of acquiring it. Fluency is not simply about the speed of decoding, an assumption that has led to the common but insufficient practice of having children reread a passage over and over again. Think back to the Cirque du Soleil image: Each ring has to be fast enough in and of itself so that it can pass its information forward to the other rings. Only when each of the rings is fast enough to work in tandem with the other rings can time be allocated to comprehending what is read and having feelings about it, too. (Wolf, 2018: 170)

Let us take this example as a basis to explain transreading. Each ring can represent a different product or text, ruled by their own particular conditions (code, medium, support). The synchronic vibration between the different rings is formed based on the establishment of significant links that are deemed pertinent, identified, and built in an exercise where meanings complement each other. Maybe unlike other practices, each medium contributes to the construction of meanings in equal conditions due to the simultaneity of the experience, which goes beyond linearity towards the network configured and put into practice by the transreader.

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