Guest Editorial Preface

Intermediality, Transmediality, Multimodality and Intersemiotic Translation

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Intermedial studies represent an area of research that has evolved mainly from comparative literature. In the United States it started as comparative arts and it later became Interart studies; in Europe, especially in Germany and the Nordic countries, the approach was more general since the beginning, with stronger interest in interactive multi-semiotic phenomena (Clüver, 2007). According to Rajewsky (2005: 44), the recognition of the term "intermediality" to deal with similar phenomena in different areas opened up "possibilities for relating the most varied of disciplines and for developing general, transmedially relevant theories of intermediality." There are several definitions of intermediality. The great variation found in the form of explanatory strategies, rivals models and basic terminologies reveals that there are open ontological and methodological problems. For Clüver (2011, p. 6), it implies all kinds of inter-relation and interaction between media. How to approach such a broad phenomenon? Clüver stresses the importance of semiotics, asserting that it "has supplied useful concepts and methods in dealing with a number of crucial issues" (Clüver, 2007, p. 20). For Elleström (2010, p. 4), it is important to answer what is a medium before one can deal with what happens between media. Bateman has insisted on the importance of a rigorous treatment on notion of "semiotic mode". For Müller (2010), one must consider social and historical features of intermedial processes. In fact, there are not unified consistent theoretical models about intermediality, transmediality, multimodality. Historically, scholars interested in intermedial phenomena come from Literary, Media, Communication, General Semiotics and Arts Studies. They tend to privilege the models of their own area. Clüver (2007) and Müller (2010), for example, mention the strong influence literary theory has been imposing on intermedial issues. Marais (see this special issue) submits the whole discussion to the known models in translation studies and semiotics. The topics multiplied to include problems related to (i) the precise definition of the fundamental assumptions and explanatory components, such as the definition of "medium" or "semiotic mode"; (ii) the comparison between rival models and theories, such as social oriented theories versus formal and communication models; (iii) the relation between multimodality, transmediality and intermediality, and so on.

The field of research is fairly well-grounded. Some important research centers and graduate programs focused on the study of intermediality include: Center for Research on Intermediality - University of Montreal (Canada); Linnaeus University Centre for Intermedial and Multimodal Studies (Sweden); Iconicity Research Group [IRG] - Federal University of Juiz de Fora (Brazil); Intermediality and Performance Research Group - The Montfort University (Great Britain); Núcleo de Estudos sobre a Intermidialidade - Federal University of Minas Gerais (Brasil); Master's Degree - Comparative Arts and Media Studies - Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (Netherlands); Department of Intermedia Studies - University of Ostrava (Czech Republic).

This special issue gathers papers with focus on several intermedial phenomena such as intersemiotic translation and combination of two or more different media, media features, or semiotic

modes. The articles presented here approach intermedial phenomena from several methodologies and theoretical frames. In general, they are concerned with the same fundamental question -- how to explain the processes and mechanisms involved in intermedial phenomena?

In the first article, John Bateman develops a sophisticated conceptual apparatus whose structure is based, on the one hand, on Peirce's mature theory of sign, and on the other in the notion of "semiotic mode" developed in the field of multimodality studies. By relating the notion of "semiotic mode" to different dimensions of Peirce's semiotic description, the author suggests that the structure created from this junction explains why, and under what conditions, transmedial practices can be effective. He suggests that current explanations for the workings of transmedial communication in terms of "iconicity" can be refined to consider the particular effects of embodied perception and physical responses to materiality. The paper then argues in conclusion that the strong binding established between semiotic modes and qualisigns demands that all semiotic descriptions be anchored in embodiment and that "disembodied semiotics" should no longer be considered an available alternative.

The paper by Jürgen E. Müller introduces basic notions related to the state of the art of Intermedial Studies and "perspectives of an intermedia network history, which will tackle the reconstruction of historical functions of intermedial processes". Müller proposes six central axes for further research in "economizations," "gamifications," "genrefications," "interactivations and augmented realities," "televisualizations of the digital," "materiality and meaning." For Müller, "intermediality does not imply the striving for one closed theory but the development of several relevant axes of research that offer different perspectives for intermedial studies". Following the idea of constructing a methodological toolbox for intermedial approaches, Müller arguments that such axes are interconnected in a complex manner and offers pathways for research in the field of analog and digital media.

Kobus Marais defends and demonstrates how social semiotics could indeed benefit from attention to indexical signs. One of relevant results from his approach is the idea of the translator of semiotic systems as an agent of social construction. Focussed on the indexicality of social/cultural phenomena, his article presents a method for studying the emergence or development of society or culture without recourse to language as a component notion of explanation. Based on Peirce's theory of signs, the author develops his study considering intersemiotic translations as indexical relations. Using a vast group of examples of semiotic systems at the "University of the Free State," the author exhibits how practices and artefacts can work as translated systems.

Claus Clüver, one of the founders of Interart and intermediality studies, presents his own version of a historical path from the "Mutual Illumination of the Arts" to "Studies of Intermediality". The author points out some of the most important publications that led to the construction of the new field of Studies of intermediality or Intermediality Studies. The importance of this chapter includes its compilation of relevant publications and how they chronologically influenced different scholars and researches. Clüver collects this information from his own point of view as the main scholar involved in the development of the Interarts, and after Intermediality Studies disseminating the field in North and South America and also Europe.

Luci Collin's article investigates how literature has expanded with the new perspectives introduced by the dynamic mutation of cyberculture. She approaches the notions of "hypertext" and "hyper-writing," and the phenomena linked to digital textualities as "hyperfiction," "hyperpoetry," "holopoetry" and "hyperdrama". According to Collin, "new technologies have renewed (and continue to renew) their revolutionary potential to explore artistic languages that are mediated by hypercontextualization".

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