

**DRAFT ON MEDIA AS CULTURAL ASPECT: AS THEY SHOW THEMSELVES AND WORK IN COOPERATION WITH EACH OTHER, THEY SHOW THEIR TIME AS SOCIAL ELEMENTS THAT THEY ARE**

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**ABSTRACT:** Intermediality has been the motivation analysis that focused on the different relations between media, as well as their historical evolution within this process of dialogue. Intermedia was the term coined in the mid-sixties by the artist Dick Higgins to describe various interdisciplinary artistic activities that had been taking place. Rajewsky further explains that there are advantages and disadvantages when using a broad definition of the term intermediality. Mixing images to text, unpretentiously, I present this draft, far from being considered a definitive text, in which I bring some media matters, how media relate to each other and how they relate to what is "external" to them, us.

**KEYWORDS:** intermediality; videogame; media.

**RASCUNHO SOBRE MÍDIA COMO ASPECTO CULTURAL: A MEDIDA QUE SE MOSTRAM E TRABALHAM EM COOPERAÇÃO UMAS COM AS OUTRAS, MOSTRAM SEU TEMPO COMO ELEMENTOS SOCIAIS QUE SÃO**

**RESUMO:** A intermedialidade tem sido uma motivação para análises que focalizam as diferentes relações entre os meios de comunicação, bem como sua evolução histórica dentro desse processo de diálogo. Intermídia foi o termo criado pelo artista Dick Higgins para descrever as várias atividades artísticas interdisciplinares que estavam ocorrendo em sua época. Rajewsky explica ainda que existem vantagens e desvantagens quando se utiliza a definição ampla do termo intermedialidade. Misturando imagens com texto, despretensiosamente, apresento este rascunho, longe de ser considerado um texto definitivo, no qual trago alguns assuntos sobre mídias, como elas se relacionam entre si e como se relacionam com o que é "externo" a elas, nós.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** intermedialidade; videogame; mídia.

*If you're too young to remember the Time Before Pong, then you probably can't appreciate the momentousness of its arrival. Bear in mind the game emerged in a very different world. It was a time before home computers, cable television, cell phones, game consoles, the Internet-everything we take for granted today. For many of my formative years, we still watched TV in black and white, and had to get up to change the channel. This was the technological Dark Ages. Had we been less culturally enlightened, we would have denounced Pong as witchcraft and burned its inventors at the stake. For those of us who were there-who had never played, let alone seen, a video game-we knew we were witnessing*

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*something extraordinary, a groundbreaking achievement in home entertainment. However, none of us knew that we were participating in the birth of a revolution.*

(Devin C. Griffiths)

In this text, I attempt to construct a bibliographical revision, exposing some existing theoretical arguments and connecting them to a specific phenomenon. I intend, from the theoretical debate, to re-present the fact that new media are, at first, viewed negatively by society during their emergence process, generating a process of hierarchization and grouping between old and new media. Therefore, I expect to introduce a historical description of how the process of assimilation of videogames occurred until the creation of MMOs to discuss the dialogue that exists between media. During the text, I aim to make use of images, designed by me, to move forward into media issue.

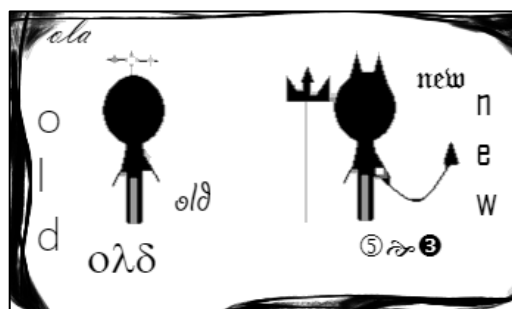
## **MEDIA**

Demands for the creation and reinvention of media, benefited by the new technologies, had their direct and indirect influences on literary creation and the way in which literature started to be adapted. The computer has been transformed from a large calculating machine placed in a basement to an almost unrestricted breeding instrument that is constantly updated. In the last decades, people began to introduce and appreciate more the remediation process due to the development of new media and the adaptation of old traditional media. Bolter & Grusin consider old media the already consolidated electronic media, which they understand as "older electronic media", and print media, a group that includes all physical media such as painting, sculpting, etc. Per them, both traditional and new media seek affirmation or reaffirmation of their *status* within culture. Applying computers' new functions, it was possible to create a whole different group of interactive applications such as mechanical text readers, interactive reading applications, in which the reader chooses the paths that the character must take during the story. At the same time, computers provided the means for media to intertwine and create new horizons beyond old borders that allowed the creation of new categories within the media, such as 3D technology, which today is freely used in rendering new films, and the

internet enhancement that today conceals thousands of players to find other thousands of players in the same virtual gaming space. Thus, the investment in countless efforts at the costly mediatic process that is to create and to programme a videogame is increasing.

## A NEW MEDIA

To research video games is to study a new medium that still diverges opinion among people in general. As the Canadian philosopher, Marshall McLuhan (2013), recalls that every new medium brings with it a new context and precisely because of this, it ceased to be seen by common sense as a corrupting agent that is going to corrupt our society. Thus, its direct predecessor ends up being hierarchized as “art” and the new medium as a peripheral movement with degrading potential. Still following McLuhan’s beliefs, I would like to highlight that when cinema appeared, theatre was formulated in the popular imaginary as a superior medium and so, it received the status of “master art”. Certainly, we all may remember that both in Rome and in Greece, also in England and Portugal, theatre had its popularity also among common people, not only among aristocratic audiences nor among intellectual audiences.



It seems natural to the human being to react with fear to the unknown. About that kind of reaction Jean-Jacques Rousseau once told the story of a wild man that, meeting others, would have initially been frightened. His terror would have led him to see these men greater and stronger than himself and so, the meeting would have led him to call the other men giants. After many experiments, he would have recognized

that these pretentious giants were neither greater nor stronger than he. Interregnum, he would leave the giant image of fear to the false object that had impressed him during his illusion (ROUSSEAU, 1781, p. 6).

As stated earlier, “art” *versus* “non-art” denomination is a historical and cyclical conceptual process. Therefore, revitalization and hierarchical division do not maintain themselves along the decades. New media emerged precisely from the influences of the previous one and brings to all media new perspectives, new applications and new possibilities or ideas. Videogames, today, enable a greater degree of interaction with the new medium itself, but also, with other players.

Studying a video game mode like the Massive Multiplayer Online Role-playing Game is to understand that video games, besides being complex cultural objects, are also means of social interaction. In the last decades,

(...) massively multiplayer games (i.e. games where thousands or millions of people play the same game) have recently (thanks, in part, to the tremendous success of World of Warcraft) become mainstream forms of social interaction across the globe. Such games are introducing new ‘states’ (six million people worldwide for World of Warcraft) or ‘communities’ into the world (GEE, 2007, p. 197).

In a previous text<sup>50</sup>, I brought a reflection on a tree I saw through my window as a metaphor for the beginning of a discussion about *intermediality*. Once that previous text is written in Portuguese, to facilitate the understanding of English-only readers, I have taken the liberty of bringing that reflection again here, but rewriting it to the proper purposes of this new text.

If sitting in my living room I look at a tree through the window, what is between me and the tree? What mediates our relationship? Maybe, the window. What if I decide to jump the window and go against the tree, what would mediate my relationship with it? My eyes, perhaps, if I was not still touching or smelling it, or hearing its branches against the wind. In many ways, the tree exists and, in many ways, I relate to it. This living being may be a mere setting for the events of my day, it may be where I look for inspiration to solve a theoretical problem, it may be an ally

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<sup>50</sup> MARTINEZ, L. Yana L. Muitas abordagens: intermedialidade, um conceito difícil. In: ARENDT, João Claudio et all. (orgs.). Anais do III seminário internacional de língua, literatura e processos culturais: novas linguagens, novas leituras. Caxias do Sul: UCS, 2016, p. 1706-1715. <available in: <https://www.ucs.br/site/midia/arquivos/anais-iiisillpro-volume-3.pdf> >.

that protects my room from the vigorous light of the sun on the hot summer days, etc. What varies is how I perceive it and how I interact with it.

When the tree is reproduced within the interactive universe of the video game, I, Yana, can no longer touch it, but my other self can: my avatar can interact with it in various ways. If so programmed by developers, my avatar could touch it, climb it up and, furthermore, see it from three hundred sixty degrees. Several avatars gathered together would be able to circle around it, just as several people can circle the tree that I see through my window. In a sense, the in-game tree is still a tree and, somehow, I still see it through a window, the computer screen. However, my avatar, my representation of myself, is also inside this window and this window opens to another world. Not my world anymore, my avatar's world.



When initiating a Massive Multiplayer Online Role-playing Game (MMO), to the player is presented a character creation screen where she/he can name her/his future avatar and choose her/his race (variable according to the chosen game) her/his physical characteristics (eye colour And type of face, etc.), her/his skill class (the type of warrior she/he want to be, whether she/he will have magic powers, whether she/he will use a sword or a bow and arrow, whether she/he can control the creatures of nature, etc.) And sometimes where she/he was born. The games allow the player to exercise a life, the life of her/his characters (the avatars), and, in this way, enables the player to do everyday tasks like buying and decorating a house, having a profession (historian, farmer, jeweller, etc.) and, sometimes, even adopt other players' characters, creating a family. The player travels through the map created by the game's programmers and could become recognized as a hero when she/he completes difficult quests.

## THE MEDIA

Marshall McLuhan believed that what matters in media is the message. Therefore, electric power would not be considered a medium since it doesn't have a message to share. McLuhan (2015) assigns an entire chapter, called "The medium is the message", on this theme. I would like to agree and explain briefly: media are also their messages. Today, one may not deny the structure of a medium, considering only its content.

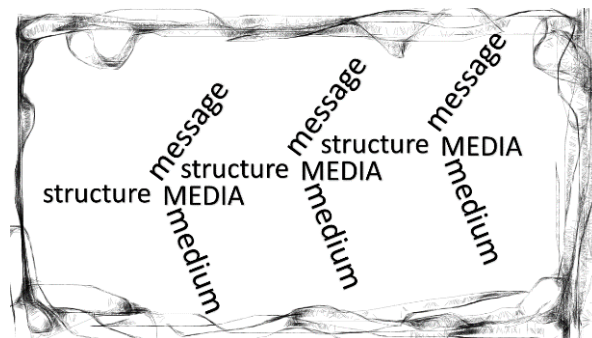
McLuhan's speculations about media, paying attention to their message in a less pessimistic way than the Frankfurt School had done, have still their relevance today. Glen Creeber, in a chapter in which he draws a parallel between old media and modernism *versus* new media and postmodernism, explains that the first signs of the not so pessimistic view that defines the modernist approach regarding media studies are in McLuhan's work. Such revolution of consideration would have been caused by the significant changes that occurred within the post-industrial society in the sense of understanding and conceiving the role played by media at the society. Creeber details:

While McLuhan shared many of the modernists anxieties about the ideological influence of the media on a gullible and powerless audience, his work often betrayed an enthusiasm and excitement for the media that was seldom detected in the modernist critical theory." (CREEBER, 2009, p.15).

Plus, Levison points out that McLuhan would have anticipated the possibility of a new medium that would tread on the path of greater user interactivity (LEVISION, 1999, 112). The theoretical shift from media design and user design:

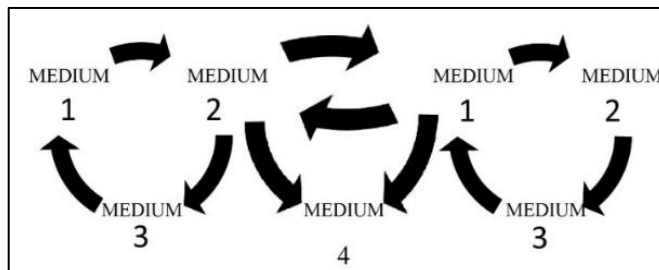
(...) was later carried out by much of the work informed by post-structuralism. While structuralism generally reflected the modernist need to uncover the latent ideological meaning embedded in media text, post-structuralism tends to take less deterministic view about the nature of the media as a whole. (...) Media analysis gradually began to acknowledge that ideology was more complex than first imagined (...), that is, consisting of multiple meanings (CREEBER, 2009, p.15).

According to Bolter & Grusin, the emergence of new media challenges those before to readapt to the new provocations created. McLuhan asserts that every new medium brings with it a new context and precisely because of this, it ends up being seen by common sense as a corrupting agent that has corrupted society. Thus, its direct predecessor ends up being hierarchized as "art". As stated earlier, this is a cyclical process. Therefore, revitalization and hierarchical division do not hold. The new medium arises precisely because of the influences of the previous one(s) and, with it (them) to rival, gives it a new perspective or applications and possibilities. Developing new graphics to get closer to "the real", the videogame, for instance, started sharing its digital findings especially with the audiovisual media.



To my mind, before I “nourish” historical questions, I need to make clear that intermediality and interarts are not synonyms, nor do they come from the same theoretical field. Intermedia studies have, in many respects, affinity to studies based on the concept of intertextuality and aggregate the look on the non-verbal texts of the other arts. Intermedia, in turn, is a term used by the Canadian artist Dick Higgins, a member of the Fluxus group, to refer to the interdisciplinary associations that were going on in the 1960s. Claus Clüver interpreted that the nomenclature refers not only to what we still broadly designate as arts – such as Literature, Visual Arts, Theatre and Cinema, but also media and their texts, already customarily so designated in most Western languages and cultures. Therefore, alongside printed media, such as the press, there are (also here) the cinema and, in addition to it, television, radio, video, as well as the various electronic and digital media that have emerged most recently. Almost all these forms of expression and communication are institutionalized in isolation. The disciplines have developed their own methods by considering the materials of the objects they engage in, and cultural and social

function. Moreover, they are all aware of their own identity (CLÜVER, 2006, pp. 18-19).



Thus, intermediatic analyses eventually prefer not to walk through aesthetics issues and, often, of representation. For this reason, Bolter & Grusin argue that they do not mean that remediation is a characteristic that presents itself as a universal aesthetic truth to the media.

New technologies and techniques do not stand for the emergence of new independent media of any technique. As new media are not external agents to a context, they emerge from within cultural contexts. The content of writing is discourse, just as the written word is the content of the print and printing is the content of the telegraph (MCLUHAN, 2013, p. 7). The "loan" or even "use" of a medium by another form of appearance is one of the characteristics of the process of remission. For this reason, Bolter & Grusin argue

(...) that remediation is a defining characteristic of the new digital media. What might seem at first to be an esoteric practice is so widespread that we can identify a spectrum of different ways in which digital media remediate their predecessors, a spectrum depending on the degree of perceived competition or rivalry between the new media and the old (BOLTER & GRUSIN, 2000, p. 45).

Obviously, each medium has its own essential characteristic that makes it a new, original medium, even if it was borne by other media. Like living beings, the media are generated from their previous peers, but they depend on them only in the early years. The consolidation of the dialogue of the genetic characteristics of the former solidifies in the new one as a current and current reference. Therefore, it can be said that medium is what appropriates the techniques, forms and social importance of other media and sometimes tries to rival them or remodel them. Today,



media cannot operate in isolation. Bolter & Grusin even consider the possibility of cultures where a single form of representation – they thought that it could have been painting or music – existed with little or no reference to other media. This isolation does not seem to be possible today, when we cannot even recognize the power of representation of a medium, except regarding other means of communication (BOLTER & GRUSIN, 2000, p. 65).

It is now known that what is new in a new medium comes from the ways in which it redraws older media and the ways in which the old medium re-creates itself to respond to the challenges brought by new media (BOLTER & GRUSIN, 2000, p.15). Ergo, no medium is isolated from other media, nor are any of them isolated culturally, socially and / or economically.

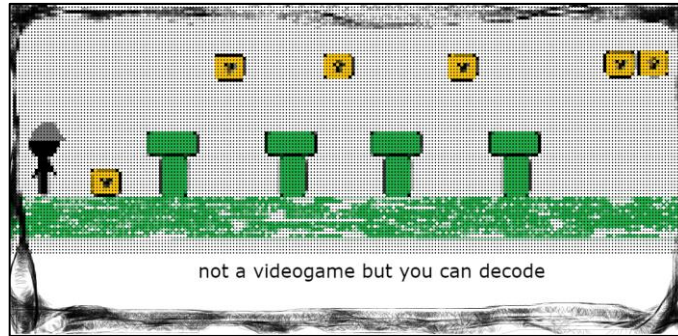
## **VIDEOGAMES**

*Not all those who wander are lost.*

(J.R.R. Tolkien)

The videogames are complex cultural objects whose rhizome is nourished by traditions of the most varied media and, by globalization, tend to combine praxes called canonical to the most popular to the ones coming from the four corners of the world. Thus, clear references to the Greco-Roman epics are to be held in dialogue with the representatives of television series or comic books. That may appear not only in the plot, but also in the design of the setting or the articulation of a character.

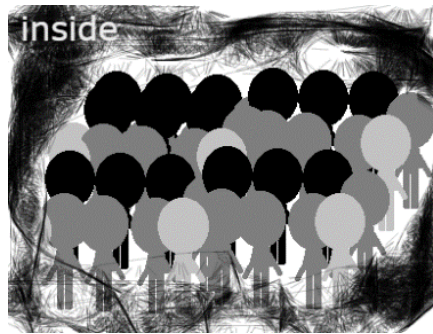
Apparently, the videogame has no limits while dialoguing with other media. As rhizomes that create and recreate new dialogues, interactivity is its essential characteristic, in which the games are based. Further, in Adrienne Shaw's words, "the audiences (...) they are always active, but in videogames indispensably" (SHAW, 2010, p. 8).



Videogames are part of daily life. They are familiar. There is no longer any estrangement as to how they are configured and the massive adherence of their worshipers. There is no longer the fear that videogame has come to make future generations less intelligent. On the contrary, games have invaded not only the houses, but also the school spaces, where they are used as facilitators for the understanding of certain content. According to Mark Wolf,

The video game has an important place in cultural history. The video game was the first medium to combine moving imagery, sound, and real-time user interaction in one machine, and so it made possible the first widespread appearance of interactive, on-screen worlds in which a game or story took place. It was also the first mass medium to require hand-eye coordination skills (except for pinball, which was much more limited and not as complicated) (WOLF, 2008, p.21).

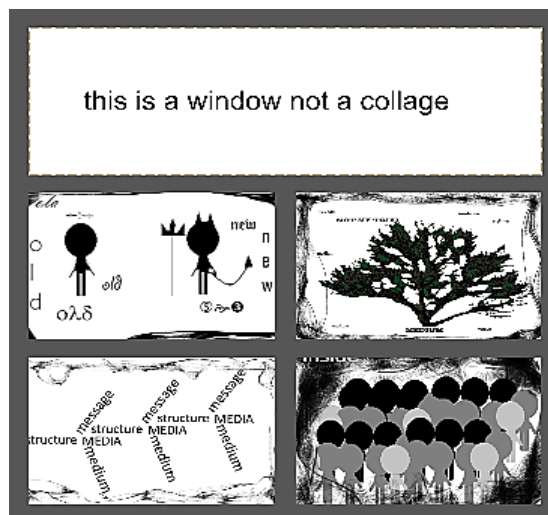
Today, theorists have a clear understanding that the limits of this new media are not yet known. Jesper Juul believes that as well as the press and the cinema have allowed new ways of telling a story, computers have acted as facilitators for games, allowing new types of games that would not be possible without computers (JUUL, 2001, digital source). Digital language has given the computer the power to create what the imagination allows; the limit oversees the capacity of the graphics and the memory of the devices among other more technical questions. However, all momentary impossibility presents itself as a challenge and, a few years later, the limit is broken and the object of the imagination is not only possible but also the act of wishing for new and more complex objects. The insertion of a greater interaction came from the modifications and temporal changes in the process of consolidation of videogames as medium.



Combining the human interaction, a fundamental component of the RPGs, the RPVGs, there are the Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORP or MMO), according to Asbjørn Jøn (2010), by Richard Garriot. The MMOs equalize the Interactive Fiction (FI) of RPG games with the possibility of large-scale interaction not only with the software, but with numerous other players. Among the best known and most played, stands out the World of Warcraft.

### SOME CONSIDERATIONS

If I see a tree through my window, the window is the starting point for my dialogue with the "real". However, my eyes would be the starting point for my dialogue with the "real" if there was no window. Medium is not something new, thinking about how media dialogue or the fact that the border between them is a place of passage and not of separation line may not be considered a new point of view either. Media are bridges to a content, but each bridge has its materials. The bridge may be colourless to our perceptions, but necessarily exists.



Therefore, intermediality, according to the perspective I follow in my research, is in the dialogue. The pleasure of studies is on the frontier and not on an extreme categorization of their individualizations. It is in the abstract, in transparency. It is on the threshold of the "event horizon" of each media. Thresholds that are distinguished from medium to medium, since medium is what rejects, adapts, refracts and reports.

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