

## Editorial

# Comparative approaches in literary and interarts studies

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In reflecting on the processes, methods, and comparativist approaches in the field of language studies, we cannot ignore the approaches developed in the context of the subject's relation to the various forms of the esthetic, including literary esthetics, in presenting this epistemological field. Guided by the contributions of thinkers such as Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), Pavel Medvedev (1891-1938), and Valentin Voloshinov (1895-1936), we recognize the concept of dialogue as a guiding principle that enables the interrelation of ideas at the realm of language. The concept of dialogue, which permeates Bakhtin's works, refers to the power of language and its ability to unify locations, time periods, cultures, languages, and social voices.

The recognition of the centrality of this concept and its nature is accompanied by the perception of how these aspects materialize in the writings of these thinkers. Their works, which we could call dialogic, start from a reflection upon language, bringing together different languages (Russian, English, German, French, Latin, Classical Greek, etc.), different cultures in different historical contexts, and works based on different esthetic forms (literature, music, theater, sculpture, painting, and dance). In short, when we look at dialogue from this perspective, we emphasize the way in which it offers a comparativist approach that focuses on the interrelation between esthetic objects, taking into account both the form, material, and content that constitute each of them, as well as the external elements that have also influenced their respective constructions and elaborations.

## LINHA D'ÁGUA

Our brief foray into Bakhtin's concept of dialogue allows us to discuss the construction of comparative paths and traditions in two specific areas located within the larger field of language studies: the field of literary studies and the field of interarts<sup>1</sup>.

Comparison is an activity that is culturally integrated into the way social groups construct and share knowledge based on associative, generalizing, and differentiating processes. The centrality of comparison as a method for observing and explaining different phenomena in the world allows for analytical exercises that not only characterize comparative studies but also give them a specific way of being and conducting comparative studies in the different fields of knowledge.

According to Tânia Carvalhal (1986), “[t]he emergence of comparative literature is linked to the cosmopolitan current of thought that characterized the nineteenth century, a period in which comparing analogous structures or phenomena in order to extract general laws prevailed in the natural sciences” (p. 8). Therefore, the term “comparative study” began to be used in Europe. Many of the principles of the discipline under consideration and the subsequent visualization of the field as a disciplinary area were first established in France. According to Eduardo Coutinho (2001), the questioning of this characterization, which has and sometimes still reverberates in the academic environment, is consistent with the possibility of encountering methodological inaccuracies or indeterminacies when delimiting an object of study through the comparative prism. As Ben Hutchinson (2018) suggests, the various assumptions and methodological orientations associated with comparativism span researchers' fields of work, trends, and even what are commonly referred to as schools in relatively decentralized ways.

While the term “comparative studies” may be confused with the name of the field, the comparative resource in literary studies alternates over time between different understandings, sometimes with a historicizing emphasis in favor of a hegemony by researchers of different literary, linguistic, and cultural traditions (alongside a search for causal relationships in the works and in the lives of the authors); sometimes with a formalistic emphasis, reflecting on the relationship between works that represent different points of view within the same cultural community, which brings these studies closer to literary theory and formal aspects of text construction. Afterwards, it is possible to notice the valorization of elements outside literary objects and literary language, supported by the aforementioned Bakhtinian contributions, which highlights comparison as a procedure that makes visible tensions in the dialectical interaction between textual, intertextual, and extratextual dimensions.

Without aiming at a comprehensive point of view, among the different approaches and transformations of these paths in the framework of comparative studies, we emphasize how the contemporary scene sets standards for the comparative method in literary studies. As presented by Gerson Roberto Neumann, Cintea Richter, and Marianna Ilgenfritz Daudt (2021) in an

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of comparative studies in the language sciences, see Sardá, Cavalcante Filho, Santos, and Gonçalves-Segundo (2022).

introductory essay of the book that emerged from the proceedings of the XVII International Congress of the Brazilian Association of Comparative Literature (ABRALIC):

The idea of comparison, already contained in the name of Comparative Literature, in fact, points to a paradox, for comparative literature refers much more to relating and connecting objects, literatures, and cultures, thus creating new possibilities for analysis, methods, and approaches, than to merely comparing them, for a strict comparison would presuppose an equivalence of meanings. Comparative literature seeks precisely the discrepant, the difference, and the contrast. (NEUMANN, RICHTER, DAUDT, 2021, p. 7).

We believe that the central theme that set the tone for the discussions at the conference (and consequently for the subsequently organized book) reflects contemporary trends in comparative studies. “Diálogos transdisciplinares: Literatura, Ciências Humanas, Cultura e Tecnologia” (“Transdisciplinary Dialogues: Literature, Humanities, Culture, and Technology”) brings these disciplines into focus through the comparatism that has shaped the acquisition of knowledge in the various fields. Transversality makes comparative literature a zone of convergence and contact, welcoming the different ways in which cultures, social problems, ideologies, and epistemological fields interact and are materialized, directly or indirectly, in the various literary productions.

The contemporary comparative study starts from an issue that aims to question and make clear the different points of view and tensions between works, literatures, and discourses that result from the theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices of the researcher. The encounter with diversity, without running the risk of subordination, superimposition, or normalization of cultural singularities anticipated by Hutchinson (2018), aims, on the contrary, to value and recognize the constitutive plurality of literary language in its concrete relationship with subjects and with the different spheres of human interaction.

Interarts studies, for their part, also arise from comparisons. Claus Clüver, an important name in this field, explains how interarts studies have had a close relationship with comparative studies from the beginning:

As a comparatist, I have been concerned for decades with “comparing” literature with something that, though of a different order with respect to literature, can be subjected along with it to a general concept we usually call “art”. My field of interest was for a long time called “Comparative Arts” in the United States, a term that was understandable only to those who associated it with “Comparative Literature.” Nowadays, the field in which I work is called “Interarts Studies” in English [...] (CLÜVER, 2006, p. 11)

As Alexandre Siqueira de Freitas and Geraldo Tadeu Teixeira (2020) suggest, the field of interarts studies shows considerable development, illuminating the intersections of different artistic manifestations. We are dealing with a field that is highly influenced by the different technological categories, exploring already open paths in terms of respective esthetics and following unique paths that benefit from the contact between different theoretical perspectives, methodological orientations, and semiotic expressions.

Around the world, the field has become more and more developed. In Portugal, the Faculty of Languages of the University of Porto (FLUP) recently launched a graduate program in literature and art studies, whose goal is “to enable the acquisition of knowledge in the field of literary studies and art studies, with a focus on Portuguese literature, favoring theoretical and critical perspectives of a comparative, intermedial and intercultural nature,” and to enable future graduates to work in cultural institutions, among others. In Brazil, the Graduate Program in Communication and Culture of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (PPGCOM/UFRJ), with the support of the Foundation for Research Promotion of the State of Rio de Janeiro, organized the colloquium “Interarts: Drifts and Contagions” in March 2022, arguing that “[...] the thinking and practices of art have always been marked by crossings, reconfigurations, zones of indistinguishability, contaminations and thresholds.” The goal of the event was:

[...] to discuss the drift of artistic expression, considering some of its multiple aspects and the complexity of these relationships. Proposed works address the unique intersections between media and the body, technology and esthetics, art and life, and other possible interactions. The colloquium is part of a broader project entitled “Interarts Figurations,” which includes developments in Portugal and Argentina<sup>2</sup>.

The research axis of the above event were: 1) Interarts Creations: Conceptual Crossings; 2) Interarts Dialogues: Historical-Philosophical Perspectives; 3) Interarts Tensions: Esthetic-Political Problems; and 4) Interarts Materialities: Technomedial Experiments.

Thus, thinking about the development of media technologies in the present time, both literature and other arts (such as painting, music, cinema, etc.) have established very close relations with the multimedia perspective. Many researchers have turned to the elaboration of a theoretical construct focused on the study of intermediality (a new term, but referring to an old process) when they considered in the 1990s “the reconceptualization of what art is and the inclusion of non-artistic genres such as the media and their interrelations in the studies”, as claims Thaïs Flores Nogueira Diniz, a researcher dedicated to the study of intermediality and interarts studies (cf. LUZ; WALLAU; MARINS, 2021, p. 3).

Intermedia studies, which are considered a field independent of comparative literature studies, have been strengthened inside and outside Brazil. This is the case, for example, of the group Intermedia: Intermediality Studies Center, from the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), which is registered in the national Directory of Research Groups; a group whose objective is “the study/analysis of contemporary works consisting of texts in different media, including plays, films considered 'adaptations,' comics, ekphrasis, installations, songs, and others.” The group draws on researchers from various fields of knowledge, including the School of Arts, the School of Fine Arts, the School of Music, and the Department of Communication in the School of Philosophy and Human Sciences at UFMG. It also relies on partnerships with foreign researchers, such as those from the Center for Intermediality Studies in Montreal, the

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<sup>2</sup> Available at: <https://www.congressointerartes.com.br/> Accessed on: October 25, 2022.

International Society of Intermedial Studies, and the International Society of Word and Image Studies (IAWIS/AIERTI). The group's activities include the translation of numerous texts produced by researchers in intermediality studies, as well as the members' engagement with the challenges posed by contemporary artistic productions, particularly in relation to teaching and the proper “reading” of these productions, which emerge from the dialogue between different arts and different media.

“Dialogue”, the word with which we open this essay, also allows us to visualize the convergence points between different esthetic manifestations and is closely related to comparative studies in literature. In the wake of the undeniable relationship between texts and discourses – expressed in the works of Bakhtin and the Circle, as well as in other theories dedicated to the study of synesthesia and intersemiotic relations, for example –, there has been a recent increase in research proposals that bring together different art forms in different media, and therefore deserve to be studied and disseminated.

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This issue included contributions from researchers from several Brazilian and foreign universities. Ten texts were approved in the Articles section, in addition to the translation of an article recently published in the journal *L'Annuaire théâtrale* (currently *Percées - Explorations en arts vivants*). The issue also includes an interview with a Brazilian literary scholar and writer and a review of a book published this year by Pontes entitled “Translation, comparatism and interarts studies.”

In the field of comparative literature, our first contribution is the article “Edgarian Archiatric: Edgar Allan Poe and the architectonic imagery of the mind” by Débora Souza da Rosa, a researcher at the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB). Starting from the theoretical assumption of the phenomenology of imagination proposed by philosopher and poet Gaston Bachelard, and exploring two short stories by Edgar Allan Poe, “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “William Wilson”, the author analyzes the poetic spatial forms of the stories in comparison with *Archiatric*, a series of architectural images by contemporary Italian illustrator Federico Babina depicting mental states affected by psychopathologies. The analysis of the short stories enables the author to argue that the poetic spatial images constructed in Edgar Allan Poe's short stories “not only illustrate troubled mental states, but by their efficiency they have become references in an esthetic education of madness.”

Fabianna Simão Bellizzi Carneiro, a researcher at the Federal University of Catalão (UFCAT), analyzes the short stories “Shadow” by Edgar Allan Poe and “O louco da sombra” by Bernardo Élis in the article “Alienation, restlessness, annihilation: readings on Edgar Allan Poe and Bernardo Élis within the framework of comparatism”. The author shows how the works of two very different authors – separated by considerable geographical and temporal distance – share commonalities when it comes to universal themes such as fear, indifference, and

annihilation. Carneiro's article also contains important theoretical and methodological reflections on comparative literature and the *raison d'être* of comparative studies.

In “The indigenous as a common place in colonial rhetoric battles: a comparative approach of the accounts by Staden, Thevet, Léry and Knivet”, Paula Regina Siega and Girleane Santos Araújo, of Santa Cruz State University (UESC), examine travel literature based on colonial discourses materialized in the accounts of four travelers who were in Brazil in the 16th century (the German Hans Staden, the French André Thevet and Jean de Léry, and the Englishman Anthony Knivet). The authors show how different interpretive models, derived from different historical and social realities, guided the production and exchange of travelers' views on Brazilian indigenous people. Drawing on the notion of *topoi* or topics of discourse and on studies on colonial history and mentality, depending on the different travelers' accounts, the study shows that the opinions, either pejorative or positive, about the indigenous population do not explain the different factors that characterize the reality of the latter.

Raphael Valim da Mota Silva of the University of São Paulo (USP), in “Eclipse of the novel: narrative reflexivity and slices of life in Huxley, Döblin and Waugh”, conducts a comparative study of the notion of “crisis of the novel,” with a focus on the 20th century. The author takes on three novels published in the 1920s/30s: *Counterpoint* (1928) by Aldous Huxley, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929) by Alfred Döblin, and *Vile Bodies* (1930) by Evelyn Waugh. In the article, the author also argues that these three authors of different nationalities (two English and one German), as well as their respective works (understood as “structures of thought and metapoetics”), showed awareness of the esthetic, historical, and social crises that characterized the first half of the century. In doing so, they presented new responses to the modernist novel genre by resorting to procedures that included restraint and dispersion, variation of viewpoints, polyphony, and formal self-reflexivity.

In the article “The guardians of religious traditions: the representation of the *nochês* in *Os Tambores de São Luís* and *Comando Doce poetry*”, authors Rubenil da Silva Oliveira and Welida Maria Gouveia Silva, from the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA), analyze comparatively the *nochês*, black priestesses and leaders of candomblé *terreiros* who are represented in the work “Os tambores de São Luís”, by Josué Montuello, and in the poem “Comando Doce”, by Juraci Tavares. The focus of the work is, on the one hand, to observe how the representation of black women occupies a space of protagonism and centrality in the religious tradition of candomblé, marked in the works by rites materialized in the literarily constructed space of the *terreiros*. On the other hand, the study also shows how the Jeje-Nagô religious practices, originating from the Yoruba people, with their symbols and rituals, continue to be a form of resistance to white domination. Thanks to the comparison, one can see how in both works black women are social agents in the construction and maintenance of the ancestral character that organizes their respective religious communities; *terreiros* are not only places for prayers, but also for the preservation of traditions, customs, culture, and black identity.

Concluding the contributions in the field of comparative literature is the article by Luã Leal Gouveia and Claudia Letícia Gonçalves Moraes, from the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA), which is entitled “Oedipus, G.H. and the drama of existence: heroism in de-heroization”. Taking comparative literature as a contact zone, the study approaches the protagonists of the works *The Passion According to G.H.* by Clarice Lispector and *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles and, drawing on comparative analysis, discusses the perception of the tragic hero. By focusing the discussion on the figures of Oedipus and G. H., both perceived as tragic heroes, the authors propose a reading that problematizes the constitution of these figures under the ambivalent sign of de-heroization. In other words, the parallels drawn between the characters' descriptions show how the traversal of human existence – the journey from loss to gain – is the main virtue of the tragic hero.

In the field of interarts studies, we first have the work of Francisco Ricardo Cipriano Silveira of the University of Coimbra, entitled “The ekphrastic sublime of music videos: a literary traveling starting from the lyrics”, which examines the extent to which the format of “moving image art” is unique in the intersemiotic conception of music videos. Through what the author calls the “ekphrastic sublime” category, two artistic languages – the literary and the audiovisual – are brought closer together in the analysis of the construction of music videos. The proposal starts from the music video “Bachelorette”, directed by Michel Gondry (1997) and connected to a song by the Icelandic singer Björk, and problematizes the existence of a literary specificity in the relationship between literature and music videos.

In “Cinematization, transcreation, and adaptation: poetic aspects of the intersemiotic relations in *Broken April*”, Francisco Heitor Pimenta Patrício and Ana Carolina Negrão Berlini de Andrade of the Regional University of Cariri bring together the book *Broken April* (1978) by Ismail Kadaré and its adaptation *Behind the sun* by Walter Salles (2001) to examine the possible intersemiotic relations between them. Drawing on the poetic elements in both works as a basis for the construction of the comparative dialogue, the paper problematizes the relationship between literature and cinema through the concepts of adaptation, transcription, and cinematization. From the perspective of these theories, the reading proposed by the authors shows, among other things, how the poetic traces discernible in the different semiotic media can give rise to the existence of shared meanings between one work and the other, even if adaptation is considered here as both a process and a product.

Marcelo Cordeiro de Mello, a researcher at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), in the article “The position of images – Text, photography and cinema. Didi-Huberman on Benjamin, Brecht and Pasolini”, analyzes the works of Bertolt Brecht and Pier Paolo Pasolini, in which the written word enters into dialogue with the image. Mello draws on Georges Didi-Huberman's reflections on the work of these two artists, moving between literature, photography, and cinema, and using the concept of montage as an essential starting point for his analyses.

Lilian Santana da Silva, from the Federal University of Alagoas (UFAL), in an article titled “Color and sound: significant interfaces in the work of Sonia Coutinho”, drawing on a discussion on the relations between literature and music, proposes to highlight the narratives of the Bahian author Sonia Coutinho, who, through the integration of verbal and musical constructions, emphasizes art as a producer of meaning in the constitution and representation of female characters; a subject, moreover, neglected by literary criticism.

The article by Marie-Christine Lesage, a researcher at the University of Québec at Montréal (UQÀM), entitled “Arts vivants et interdisciplinarité : l’interartistique en jeu” (“Theatre and Interdisciplinarity: The Interartistic at Issue”), can be read in Portuguese thanks to the translation by Daniela Nienkötter Sardá (USP) and Guilherme Soares dos Santos (Université Paris-Sorbonne). In the article, originally published in the journal *L'annuaire théâtrale* (currently *Percées - Explorations en arts vivants*), the author reminds us that interdisciplinarity can be considered from two points of view: that of epistemology and that of artistic practice. The article, divided into two parts, presents these two points of view in detail, thus shedding light on the question of the interartistic.

In the Interviews section, the reader will find a singular perspective that illustrates the dialogic-comparative relationship in literary and artistic studies that is addressed in this issue of *Linha D'Água*. Interviewed by Elisiane Matos (UESC), the poet, performer, cultural mobilizer and professor of literature at the State University of Bahia (UNEB), Daniela Galdino, talks about the creation of the work “Profundações”, a literary-photographic anthology written by women, from the point of view of the dialogue between the arts and the ethical-esthetic relation that characterize the work. The interview, then, discusses the intersection of languages and points of view that make up both *Profundações* and the other projects in which Galdino is involved, demonstrating an extensive trajectory that defends the active participation of women, in its broad definition, in artistic, literary and editorial spaces.

The issue ends with a review of the book *Tradução, Comparatismo e Estudos Interartes* (*Translation, Comparatism and Interarts Studies*), published this year by Pontes Editores, written by Urbano Cavalcante Filho, a professor and researcher at the Federal Institute of Bahia (IFBA), the State University of Santa Cruz (UESC) and the University of São Paulo (USP), and organized by the coordinators and members of the research group GELCON (*Studies of contemporary literature: comparatism, translation, and interarts*) at the Federal Technological University of Paraná. It is a collection of 15 contributions by researchers from Brazil and abroad, distributed in three areas: Translation Studies, Comparative Literature and Intermediality, and Interarts Studies.

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We wish everyone an excellent reading!

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## LINHA D'ÁGUA

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