



Luciana Barroso Gattass

Digital Literature: Theoretical and Aesthetic Reflections

Tese de Doutorado

Thesis presented to the Postgraduate Program in Letters of the Departamento de Letras do Centro de Teologia e Ciências Humanas, PUC-Rio as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doutor em Letras.

Adviser: Prof. Heidrun Friedel Krieger Olinto de Oliveira



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To Bernardo,
my very own listening post.

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Abstract

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The emergence of a new phenomenon – digital literature – within the field of literary studies calls for the reorganization and creation of new theoretical and analytical repertoires. Since digital literature partakes of literary tradition as well as introduces critical medial and conceptual innovations that challenge the very concept of literary frontiers and spaces, its scholarly analysis demands significant reformulations in literary studies. As models of communication change, so do the reception and production processes accompanying these changes. Within these altered scenarios, the thesis *Digital Literature: Theoretical and Aesthetic Reflections* is a response to the aesthetic and theoretical challenges brought on by computer-based literature. As a methodological strategy, the thesis articulates recent trends in the theory of digital aesthetics – remediation (BOLTER), eventilization (HAYLES), correlations of performativity, intermediality and interactivity with meaning-driven analysis (SIMANOWSKI), *Medienumbrüche* (GENDOLLA & SCHÄFER) – with theories of production of presence (GUMBRECHT), autopoietic communicative models (LUHMANN) and close-readings of digital works. By scripting a dialogue with key theorists from print literary theory as well as new media theorists and artists in the burgeoning field, the thesis offers conceptual and theoretical contributions to the formulation of a poetics of new media.

Keywords

Digital literature, ergodic aesthetics, production of presence, interactivity, intermediality, remediation, flickering signifier, materiality, embodiment, *Medienumbrüche*.

Resumo

Gattass, Luciana Barroso. Heidrun Krieger Olinto. (Orientadora). **Literatura Digital: Desafios Teóricos e Estéticos**. Rio de Janeiro, 2011. 192p. Tese de Doutorado – Departamento de Letras, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

A emergência de um novo fenômeno – a literatura digital – na esfera disciplinar dos estudos literários provoca a reorganização e invenção de seus instrumentos analíticos e de seus circuitos de comunicação. Concepções de literatura, historicamente instáveis e deslocando constantemente as suas fronteiras e seu horizonte de expectativa, hoje são marcadas também por travessias do espaço escritural. Neste quadro a tese, *Literatura Digital: Desafios Teóricos e Estéticos* responde aos desafios teóricos e estéticos contemporâneos elaborando novas formas de saber que permitem entender e circunscrever a literatura digital em contextos de produção e recepção alterados. Inserida simultaneamente em uma tradição e defendendo o seu lugar no cenário contemporâneo, este tipo de literatura requer assim revisões e reformulações significativas. Por enquanto ainda faltam contornos à própria literatura digital, e os processos de teorização circulam em espaços predominantemente transdisciplinares. Ao estabelecerem reciprocidade através da epistemologia da complexidade, a cultura midiática e a teoria da literatura vêm desenvolvendo alianças no campo das possibilidades analíticas das obras literárias digitais. Como estratégia metodológica, a tese alia teorias de produção de presença (GUMBRECHT), eventilização (HAYLES), remediação (BOLTER), teorias autopoieticas de comunicação (LUHMANN), análise estética do fenômeno digital – interatividade, intermedialidade e performance (SIMANOWSKI) – e *Medienumbrüche* (GENDOLLA & SCHÄFER) a um olhar sobre realizações concretas (*close-readings*). Em suma, a tese oferece um repertório conceitual inovador formulando fundamentos para uma nova poética digital.

Palavras-chave

literatura digital, processos ergódicos, produção de presença, interatividade, intermedialidade, remediação, materialidade.

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Think of the Turing test as a magic trick. Like all good magic tricks, the test relies on getting you to accept at an early stage assumptions that will determine how you interpret what you see later. The important intervention comes not when you try to determine which is the man, the woman, or the machine. Rather, the important intervention comes much earlier, when the test puts you into a cybernetic circuit that splices your will, desire, and perception into a distributed cognitive system in which represented bodies are joined with enacted bodies through mutating and flexible machine interfaces. As you gaze at the flickering signifiers scrolling down the computer screens, no matter what identifications you assign to the embodied entities that you cannot see, you have already become posthuman.

Katherine Hayles, 1999