

Editorial

T. S. Satyanath

Subha Chakraborty Dasgupta

It gives us great pleasure to present the second volume of the journal that takes up intermediality in the context of Indian expressive traditions and literary cultures, as well as general conceptual issues related to the rich, multifaceted field of study. Intermediality, in the articles, is understood in its basic formulation as the diverse range of exchanges, interactions, and transformations that occur between various art and media forms both synchronically and diachronically. The articles also study how the interactions construct various systems of representation, communication, and meaning in society.

The topic of intermediality is of great importance for comparative literature in India because the prevalent mode of expressive traditions for a long period of time combined oral, musical, visual, and performative contexts, and the tradition continued even after print took over. The dominant mode of reading intermediality in many contexts has essentially been as a subordinate component of textuality, but the demand is for a theoretical framework that would

take into account the multimodal character of representations and their relation to different nonhierarchical knowledge systems.

It has been said that there is no “pure” media as each medium holds elements of others. Moreover, today there is constant movement of components from one medium to several others. Accordingly, intermedial studies could be a comparison between textual and other media, from textual to other media, and vice versa. Attempts to understand interrelationships between media on the one hand and the directionality of movements on the other, in particular, from oral and visual to textual, hold immense possibilities in understanding certain kinds of social dynamics. The presence of a text in multiple media may give rise to dialogic relationships, challenging notions of central and peripheral modes of expression and they could be perceived as being in continuous interaction with the other. This opens possibilities of interaction among various publics, transforming intermediality into a continually evolving system. The aim is not to trace monogenetic origins, but to study the networks of interactions and movements in terms of diverse imaginaries of world-making.

Nilza Angmo organised a workshop on ‘Intermediality and Storytelling’ for Delhi Comparatists in 2021. In this volume are included two papers from the workshop, Angmo’s analysis of three types of narrative scroll paintings: the *Phad* of Rajasthan, the *Pata* of West Bengal, and the narrative *Thangka* of the *Manipa* tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, and T.S. Satyanath’s mapping of medieval Indian intermediality that brings together music, *Ragamala* paintings, and Bhakti compositions. Angmo’s focus is on narrativity generated by intermodal and multimodal presentations, both in religious and secular contexts, the various strategies used at

various points in the presentation and the role of such performances in perpetuating cultural knowledge. Satyanath looks at intermediality in terms of intersemiotic translation. He demonstrates how the work of art in the medieval period was scripto-centric, phono-centric and body-centric that “roughly” corresponded to the court, the temple, and the outside and the overlapping nature of forms pointed to a heterogeneous public sphere in the precolonial period. However, there seems to be an underlying continuity between the medieval canon of poetics and the nineteenth-century musical play with certain elements reflected again in modern YouTube versions, prompting him to comment on the innovative and evolving dimensions of intermediality. Satyanath then goes into the formal and social structures of knowledge that comprise such intermedial forms. He looks at *Ragamala* paintings, a form from the medieval elite public sphere, in their combination of painting and music and then moves on to the area of Bhakti in the popular public sphere. His data suggest that the musical canon, *Ragamala* paintings and Bhakti compositions constituted a spatiotemporal area. Intermediality then can be thought of as an existing channel of communication where the forms also actualize the channel.

We have in this volume a paper by Kuljeet Singh dealing with text to performance in theatre within a particular ‘region’, the University of Delhi campus. Campus Theatre takes place at the intersection of a wide range of cultural debates drawing upon the diverse reflections of students, student movements and political movements in the country, and the paper traces the trajectory of Campus Theatre as it moves from colonial to *desi* in the University of Delhi. Singh used photographs, blurbs, newspaper cuttings, reviews, brochures, and interviews of directors, actors, and students wherever possible to construct his history. Then we have a paper by Shashikanta Koudur who studies the transformation of *Navodaya*, the early phase of modern

poetry in Kannada that drew upon Western Romantic forms, into components of song that give it a new phase of life in later periods. To demonstrate the process of this transformation, he studies the intricate history of the development of sensibilities related to Kannada songs through concerts, radio programmes, and the cassette industry within the popular cultural circuit of Karnataka. Shubhasree Bhattacharyya works with rhythmicity and repetition in work songs, their changing nature in different contexts and their contribution to the production of collective labour. Her chief area of focus is the labouring body and the utilitarian role of rhythms in organised disciplinary contexts such as parades and close-order drills, and she draws upon a wide range of critical thoughts in the area. Her paper calls for a deeper engagement with rhythmicity as a political category.

In this volume there are two papers on Arnold Bake's archive, by S.A. Krishnaiah and Moushumi Bhowmik. Bake probably was the first scholar to start an analogical documentation of Indian performative traditions nearly a century ago. A revisiting of Bake's archive in this volume is envisioned as a tribute to him and a celebration of the continuity of performative traditions and their recreation for the new public. S.A. Krishnaiah introduces Bake's audio and video recordings of folk and classical performances and moves on to the study of his documentation by Nazir Ali Jairajbhoy and Amy Catlin. He then goes on to provide detailed information on Bake's work in regions of Karnataka. This article was originally written in Kannada for All India Radio and has been translated by Kamalakar Bhat for this volume. Moushumi Bhowmik, focussing on the *kirtan* form in Bake's archive, takes up intermedial and intersubjective exchanges between temporal, spatial and cultural divides. She consciously accentuates her subjective-affective involvement by introducing an alternative method of research. Moushumi examines the

processes of intermedial archiving with relation to Bake's recording of *kirtan* in Bengal, taking into account wax cylinders and photographs, VHS recordings and digital tapes, the song and the text, the surrounding physical and cultural landscape along with accompanying time frames. While focussing on the extensive potentials of transformation and meaning making in intermedial exchanges, an underlying preoccupation is also with the ways in which the migration of archival material impacts the art form, the community and the participants including the audience.

The papers provide audio and visual clips, links to archives, and websites to facilitate a rich and diverse experience of different kinds of media combinations. Most of the papers also go into the history of the form that they are taking up. And where comparative literature is concerned, they expand the web of relationships and bring new understandings to the concept of "text". We hope that the articles will lead to further research in the areas concerned.

We are extremely grateful to the contributors, reviewers, advisory board members, Amitava Chakraborty and others who have helped us to bring out this volume. Special mention must be made of Dhurjjati Sarma and Saheb Kaur for their valuable help with this volume. It would not have been possible to bring out this volume without the help of Anam Siddiqui who prepared the files for the web-based journal, and we gratefully acknowledge her help.