

# **Introduction: Transmedial Approaches to Space and Gender**

By

Susan Ingram

**Susan Ingram**

Associate Professor

York University

4700 Keele Street Toronto, Ontario M3J 1P3 Canada

[singram@yorku.ca](mailto:singram@yorku.ca)

Copyright © by the CCGES/CCEAE 2012.  
All rights reserved.  
Working Paper Series Number 20a

*“Introduction: Transmedial Approaches to Space and Gender”* Susan Ingram.

The views expressed in the *Working Papers* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of The Canadian Centre for German and European Studies/Le Centre canadien d'études allemandes et européennes.

CCGES/CCEAE welcomes offers for publications. Please send your papers to the CCGES at York University.

Les opinions exprimées dans les *Notes de Recherche* sont celles de l'auteur et ne reflètent pas nécessairement le point de vue du CCEAE.

CCGES/CCEAE accepte volontiers des propositions d'articles. Faites parvenir votre article au:

CCGES  
York University  
4700 Keele Street  
Toronto, On, Canada  
M3J 1P3

CCEAE  
Université de Montréal  
Pavillon 3744, rue Jean- Brillant, bureau 525  
Montréal, Qc, Canada  
H3T 1P1

The papers gathered here are the result of the DAAD-sponsored Transatlantic Graduate Student Conference Series held July 7-8, 2011 at York University's Canadian Centre for German and European Studies (CCGES). Jointly organized by CCGES and its German partners, Brigitte Glaser and her DFG-Graduiertenkolleg on "Dynamiken von Raum und Geschlecht / Dynamics of Space and Gender" at the Universität Göttingen and Jutta Ernst, who has the Professur für Amerikanistik at Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Fachbereich 06 – Translations-, Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft, the purpose of the series is to pose transdisciplinary questions in the humanities with a special focus on the exploration of contemporary academic methodologies from a transatlantic perspective.

The concept of "transmediality" was chosen as the theme for this workshop because it is a widely used framework in German-language Cultural Studies circles, while seeming to have remained largely unknown in the North American context. We wanted to explore in how far it can or cannot, or has or has not been able to, travel and why. We hoped it would prove a useful wedge to pry open and gain some insight into the changing disciplinary and institutional parameters as they are developing differently in the German-language/ European and Anglo/ North American academies, and is clear from the essays collected here, which were chosen on account of their representativeness, it was.

The series opens with "Transmediality in the Work of Imtiaz Dharker: Gendered Spaces in Poetry and Visual Art," in which Sonja Lehmann offers a useful introduction to the topic by pointing out that "the focus of transmediality lies on the transgression of boundaries between media" and that "if a work of art consists of different media that interact in a transmedial way, the boundaries between these media do not remain intact but are transgressed in such a way that the media involved cannot be examined separately in an analysis of this work of art" (3). Her example is the transmedial interaction between poetry and drawings in the first half of Dharker's 2001 collection *I Speak for the Devil*. Lehmann's careful analysis "emphasizes the highly complex and differentiated nature of Dharker's art" and draws attention to the ways in which a transmedial analysis of the different media involved furthers this emphasis (14).

In the following contribution, "'Disaster [...] followed every step': Images of Gendered Technologies and Power Relations in *Transmission*," Julia Elena Thiel tackles the highly challenging globality of Hari Kunzru's 2004 novel *Transmission*, a biting, postmodern satire in which an exploited Indian computer geek wreaks havoc by unleashing a computer virus in the form of his favourite Bollywood starlet. Like Lehmann, Thiel takes her cues from Meyer, Simanowski and Zeller's influential *Transmedialität: Zur Ästhetik paraliterarischer Verfahren*. (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006) and finds that Kunzru's novel that transmediality is indispensable in understanding "how the dynamic relationship between different 'mediated' spaces intersects with dynamic power structures and gender relations revealed in the contrast between the computer virus Leela and Leela Zahir, the "real" Bollywood star" (4).

In the following two essays by Canadian contributors, we find a marked departure from the German essays in that both have chosen topics with a much greater breadth, concentrating not on a single literary work that features transmediality but rather on a transmedial cultural phenomenon, which is alluded to but not theorized explicitly *as* transmedial. In "Love Will

Tear Us Apart ... Again': The Endurance of the Orpheus Myth in Goth Subculture," Kathryn Franklin is "concerned with how the Orpheus myth has been adopted and reinterpreted by goth subculture", and she provides ample examples that "illustrate that goths are perpetually performing Orpheus' tragic and decadent narrative transmedially through music, literature and fashion" (3). Inga Untiks, on the other hand, in "Berlin's Trashy Urban Imaginary" takes as her focus the Kunsthaus Tacheles "– a dilapidated yet vibrant arts complex located in the former East Berlin (and now at the center of the city) –" and shows not only how the site has been "a central component of the debates regarding Berlin's transmedial "poor but sexy" image" but also how it "provides a useful lens through which to consider material and social understandings of the term "trash"" (3), and the ambivalence of our relationship to "trash."

In a final contribution, "Translation, Transmediality, Comparative Literature," I try to tease out what these differences in approach mean for the locationality of my own discipline of Comparative Literature. The essay was originally solicited for a special issue of the *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* on *Übersetzungen* (Translations), and so had to be written in German, something which seemed entirely appropriate given the topic. Because the request came at the same time as the workshop, transmediality seemed a logical direction in which to take the overarching theme of translation. The essay has been translated for this collection by CCGES affiliate Lee Kuhnle, who generously took time from his own work on Benjamin to see the project through to completion.

In addition to Lee, I would like to express my gratitude to all of the workshop participants for the engaged discussions from which all of the essays here benefited enormously. We are also grateful to CCGES Centre Coordinator, John Paul Kleiner, for his help with the logistics, while Markus Reisenleitner deserves our special thanks for getting this material into its online form. I hope our readers find that we have made a substantial contribution on the topic, and to the ongoing project of transatlantic cooperation.