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Title: ***Intertextual Webs: A Multimodal, Inter-Genre Approach to English Literature in High Schools***

Abstract

This thesis investigates South African high school learners' remaking of prescribed novels, poems and plays into songs, storyboards and videogame 'screenshots' respectively. As a social semiotic study situated in the multimodal paradigm, it unpacks the contextual, thematic and modal features of each redesign and determines how these are representative of the literary elements (and meanings) of the original texts. Three schools − all within the Johannesburg South district − serve as research sites, with eleven FET Phase learners selecting a canonical narrative and using the researcher's *genre frames* to draw, colour, write, cut, paste and even sing their way to artefacts that concisely and agentively communicate prescribed themes, characterisations, settings, symbols and moods. Conducted over three months as an extramural, multimodal enrichment programme dubbed the *inter-genre approach*, the researcher analyses this data with the aid of his *label method* and *five C's of intertextual linkage*; two forms of transmodal captioning which can be applied as both a learning and data-analytical tool. Three simple but effective research questions not only enable the identification of such 'links' between original and remade works, but also the complex embodied process involved in redesign and − perhaps most importantly − the future implications of these for English HL pedagogy and language classrooms in general.

The findings emerging from the study are diverse, and many. With regards to the *product* of participants' redesigns, it is found that signs are not self-contained entities, but reliant upon a multiplicity of signifiers, modes and materialities to communicate their meanings. As for the *process* behind this, the author locates drawing, in particular, as an agentive mind-to-hand-to-paper process informed by mental image, transduced meaning and past experience. The final multimodal artefact is thus presented and analysed as a series of mental images, newly embodied. Findings that impact most upon the *pedagogic* dimension of the study (that is, its future in-class applications) include the possibility of modal affordances being limited only by the sign-maker's interests or capabilities, and the school-based semiotic chain being permeable to many more out-of-school texts and experiences as previously thought.

Another conclusion is that an *interconnectedness* exists between multiple modes, texts and genres, provided that these are thematically congruent or connected in some way. Thus, school set works are seen not as existing in a vacuum, but relatable to a plethora of out-of-school artforms and activities − particularly digital ones. Eagleton's seminal concept of *webs* of signifiers and signifieds (1983) is also expanded to the researcher's own *intertextual webs*; a hybrid of the semiotic chain which seeks to track participants' use of scaffolds and other, primarily screen-based substrates to arrive at the final artefacts. These trackings in turn demonstrate the *multimodal revivability* (De Jager, 2017) of formally prescribed texts − their ability to be *seen* again and regain prominence in the discourses of literature, art and entertainment − as a direct result of the proposed approach.

Keywords: ● multimodal pedagogy ● intertextuality ● social semiotics ● art and literature education ● transmodalisation / redesign of prescribed texts ● music and film studies ● videogamification