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ABSTRACT

Questioning ekphrasis by using eye-tracking technique

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In recent years, the classical figure of ekphrasis has proved to be a very productive concept especially in the field of intermedial studies. Theorists such as J. A. W. Heffernan, W. J. T. Mitchell and C. Clüver have contributed to the definition of ekphrasis, progressively enlarging its borders beyond the image-word relation. However, in Clüver's definition of ekphrasis as the "verbalization of a real or fictitious text composed in a non-verbal sign system", the focus remains on the verbal nature of the target medium. Following S. Bruhn, L. Sager Eidt and A. Pethő, we aim at questioning this limitation.

We propose to analyse ekphrasis as a case of intermedial relation (W. Wolf) between qualified media (L. Elleström), a relation in which enargeia (the vividness of the description, according to ancient rhetoric) and repurposing (a new purpose for the source medium in the target medium) play a distinctive role. On the basis of an empirical eye-tracking test (a technique for measuring the point of gaze of the viewer), which we have conducted on informants watching a film sequence, we intend to show that the notion of ekphrasis can be applied even outside the language medium.