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Perspective Chapter: Intermedial Comparative Literature—From the Sister-Arts Debate to the Twentieth-Century Avant-Gardes

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Abstract

This chapter traces an overview of the evolution of the ekphrastic exchanges among the so-called sister-arts until the emergence of the concept of the total work of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) and the artistic syncretism of twentieth-century avant-gardes. The discussion is framed within Intermedial Studies, an interdisciplinary area that merges aspects of semiotics, communication studies and comparative literature, among other disciplines. The chapter focuses on the major technological shifts that have shaped the discussion. It does not contemplate the digital convergence, which is explored in the chapter "Literature Review on Intermedial Studies from Analogue to Digital" as part of InTech volume *The Intermediality of Contemporary Visual Arts*.

Keywords: art, ekphrasis, Gesamtkunstwerk, intermedial studies, medium, semiotics, technology

1. Introduction

Artistic pursuits, sociocultural practices, art history and criticism, as well as evolving theories on intermediality, serve the purpose of 'qualifying' media. They systemically intertwine material aspects with practices, explaining practices themselves from the point of view of their instrumentality and technicity, as well as from their aesthetic, artistic and social value. Thus, since its inception and in my understanding, intermediality has been contemplated as defining the relationships between art forms, technologies and spaces of meaning.

The first examples of intermedial pursuits in Europe can be found in ancient Greece. Plato described the creation of the world in the *Timaeus* as a recursive modelling of parts that he called '*elementum*', the Latin translation of the Greek στοιχεῖον, which included letters (graphemes), numbers and harmonic musical tones, after being inspired by Pythagoras. The term στοιχεῖον (*stoikheîon*) carried both atomistic and cosmological associations and Plato ((*Timeo* 31b-32b ff.) used it to establish the bases of the structure of matter, linking chemical elements to cosmogony (origin

of the universe), anthropology (origin of human nature) and metaphysics (beyond nature, exploring the components and fundamental principles of reality).

The Book One of *De Rerum Natura*, written by the epicurean poet of the late Roman republican era, Titus Lucretius Carus, drew the analogy between atoms and letters to explain the idea of structure. In this way, pattern repetitions gradually became assimilated as ordering principles within certain semiotic correlations in the cultural unconscious, becoming part of languages, writing systems, and other forms of cultural representation (i.e., geometry, algebra and so on). In discourse, these ordering principles followed alphabetic patterns with each letter entering linear col-locations (syntax) and associations (semantic).

As with other technologies, writing occurs in relation to the affordances allowed by the materiality of the writing surface, from stones and clay tablets to the papy-rus, the scroll, the codex and the book. Writing can be considered both a technical medium for representing a realm of experiential and cognitive phenomena and, at the same time, a technology that is constituted by its very material mediality. In other words, writing occurs in close association between the limits and potentialities of the book as a space of activity that places, situates or maps, the visual with the verbal. As such, it may be seen as 'inter-medial'.

Indeed, like writing, intermediality simultaneously codes or maps a given space or territory, that is, the material medium. Thus, with several disciplines involved, the first comparisons, connections and transfers between the so-called 'sister-arts', poetry, music and the visual arts, were situated at the crossroads between various areas. For instance, poetry plays with the material patterning of sound and the graphic qualities of text, involving relations between word (both as sound and as grapheme) and image.

Texts, like images, depict a two-dimensional, visible order in space. In the Western world, the term ekphrasis (from ancient Greek ek- 'out' + phrazein 'tell') was used to refer to the modelling mechanism for drawing analogies between letters and images. Words served to describe the pictorial when this was no longer visible. Through words, something was rendered visible for the listener's mind. The Homeric descrip-tion of the shield of Achilles (*Iliad* 18.478–608) is Western literature's earliest and most influential example of ekphrasis.

The contemporary usage of the term was coined by comparatist Leo Spitzer, who defined ekphrasis as "the poetic description of a pictorial or sculptural work of art, which description implies, in the words of Théophile Gautier, 'une transposition d'art', "the reproduction through the medium of words of sensuously perceptible objets d'art (*ut pictura poesis*)." [1] Painting consisted generally of iconic signs until the emergence of nonfigurative art. In ekphrastic description, words drew analogies and similarities between the painted representation and the real. Scholars in the field of Intermedial Studies have widened this notion. Claus Clüver, for instance, defined ekphrasis as "the verbal representation of a real or fictitious text composed in a non-verbal sign system" that translates "from one sign system into another that is based on a different medium [2]. Musicologist Siglind Bruhn expanded the notion of ekphrasis to "a representation in one medium of a text composed in another medium." [3].

All definitions of ekphrasis include crossings and combinations of different kinds of signs, which depend on the material configurations of media. Thus, intermedial crossings, highlight "relations as a dialogic process taking place between different expressive media, rather than as a set of static references to textual artifacts" [4]. The following lines briefly trace the evolution of ekphrasis as it becomes 'intermediality',

owing not only to the technical advances that transform media, but also on the socio-cultural history of how media become 'qualified'.

2. Ekphrasis and the sister-arts debate in Europe

The Greek biographer Plutarch (46 – c. 120 CE) indicated that Simonides of Kea (c. 556–468 BCE) was the first to affirm that poetry was a speaking picture and painting silent poetry. This close relation between poetry and painting was also captured Plato.

> *Writing, Phaedrus, has this strange quality, and is very like painting; for the creatures of painting stand like living beings, but if one asks them a question, they preserve a solemn silence. And so it is with written words; you might think they spoke as if they had intelligence, but if you question them, wishing to know about their sayings, they always say only one and the same thing.* (Plato. Phaedrus 275d) [5].

In the *Poetics,* Aristotle drew attention to the use of analogy in the different arts, each varying in relation to the medium, the subject or agent, and the manner. He distinguishes between different kinds of imitations with reference to the medium used, such as words, gestures, shapes, colours, etc. The term used by Aristotle to describe the impact of intense description upon the mind of the recipient is *hypotypōsis* (from 'hypo', to stamp and 'typoun', cast impression/form), generating *enargeia* ἐνέργεια (ἐν = en, "in" and ἔργον = érgon, "work/action"). The Greek philosopher develops the parallel between poetry and painting and claims that although the object of both arts is the imitation of human nature in action, their means for achieving this are different. Poetry uses language, rhythm and harmony and painting uses colours and form. Aristotle explains the differences between the arts in relation to the subject/agent who performs the analogic or mimetic act, reminding us that aesthetics requires experience from all the human senses and perceptual modes and, above all, the invocation of resemblance and vividness [6]. The Roman poet Horace (65–8 BCE) coined the expression "*ut pictura poesis*" in his *Ars poëtica* (347–390) [7] in order to explain the relationship between text and images, writing and painting [8].

In spite of a scholarly debate that, since the 1990s, has affirmed that, in the Western world, there was a superiority of the word (and of poetry) over the image (painting) [9], there are many examples of their fruitful coexistence as sister-arts. For instance, the mnemonic images of medieval manuscripts helped memorialization. The Kennicott Bible, an illuminated Hebrew Bible (1476) from La Coruña in the Iberian Peninsula shows the artistic coexistence of the three cultures, Christian, Jewish and Islam, before the expulsion of the Jews and the surrender of the last Islamic groups in Granada in the last decade of the 1400s. Another example that challenges the separation between the arts is the triptych, a term coming from the ancient Greek meaning 'three' but also 'fold'. It refers to a painting divided into three sections corresponding to three scenes. The triptych appeared in early Christian art and became the standard format for altar paintings from the Middle Ages onwards. Some Renaissance painters like Hieronymus Bosch also used this form in *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1490–1510). The triptych can also be seen as an early example of sequential art.

While Christian art was inspired by Biblical stories, in Islam figural representations were forbidden and considered idolatry. The second commandment delivered to Moses by God contained the prohibition to invoke and repeat God's name, but

also to create images. Since humans were made in the image of God, the prohibition extended to human figures. Thus, the repetition of geometrical designs or arabesque was used in Islamic art to symbolize the transcendent, indivisible and infinite nature of God. Floral patterns were also common. The most identifiable architectural design was the *Charbagh*, a quadrilateral layout with four smaller gardens divided by walkways or flowing streams of water. The Qur'an has many references to gardens, and the garden is used as an earthly analogue for life in paradise; the term 'paradise' comes from proto-Iranian for garden, the Garden of Eden. As in architecture, Islamic frescos, were highly ornate, with designs that included florals, geometric and sometimes, though rarely, figural scenes. The garden motif was also intermedially used in the design of other objects, such as carpets, which fulfilled very important and diverse roles in early nomad Islamic cultures. Along with the garden and its floral and geometric shapes, calligraphic inscription was fundamental in Islamic representation, embedded with religious significance and verses from the Qu'ran. Calligraphy was often used side by side with arabesque and floral designs.

As we move towards the Renaissance, we can provide more examples of the coexistence of the sister-arts. The influence of Asian cultures in the Italian Renaissance cannot be underestimated. The book that recorded the travels of Venetian merchant Marco Polo (1254–1324) shows his great knowledge of the cultures of China, Persia, India and Japan. China was among the first cultures to narrate stories and poems through landscape painting. The first evidence of this art dates back to the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE). During the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE), visions of social hierarchy were established using perspective techniques in painting, representing people's roles in the Confucian well-regulated state and organically integrated within nature. Later, under the invasion of the Mongols and the establishment of the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), Song intellectuals disappeared from public life and their paintings began to represent their idealized garden villas as extensions of themselves. This period also incorporated the landscape of the mind, embodied in the form of calligraphy within the paintings, constituting early intermedial forms in themselves.

Chinese artists made use of oblique projection from the first or second century (Cucker 2013: 269–278) [10], aware of the general principle of varying the relative size of elements according to distance and using colour to create visual depth in painting and illustration. Linear or point-projection perspective (from Latin *perspicere* 'to see through') is one of the types of projection in the graphic arts; an approximate representation, generally on a flat surface, of an image perceived by sight. Systematic attempts to evolve a system of perspective had been developed by Euclid of Alexandria and his *Optics* (c. 300 BCE), but it was during the Renaissance that linear perspective was fully introduced in Europe by Florentine architect Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1146). His colleague Leon Battista Alberti (1406–72) replicated perspective in the pictorial plane by painting directly on a mirror and creating the grid. As mentioned, these developments owed much to the intercultural exchanges between Asia and Europe. *Muthanna* was a popular form of Islamic calligraphy that operates under the principle of symmetrical reflection of a calligraphic text on a mirror. This art form is well documented in the Ottoman Empire. Esra Akin-Kivanç (2020) examines this form of mirror-writing and connects it to their idea of God in Islam [11].

In painting, projections enabled to extend the 'story' presented in the picture, adding background detail and a field of view that contributed to enhance narrative value. Brunelleschi and Alberti worked together at the *Accademia dell arti del Disegno*, established in Florence in 1563 by Cosimo I de Medici. The academia was

an important centre in promoting interrelations between intellectuals, painters, sculptors and architects interested in the study of geometry, lineal perspective, chiaroscuro, anatomy and all the essential disciplines for the practice of the visual arts. Geometric executions, combined with studies on the incidence of light, its reflections and colours, as well as instruments like the mirror, allowed the recreation of the visual illusion of depth relative to the observer, emulating human stereoscopic vision, achieved by curved lenses.

One of the most important statements on the mirror as an instrument that contributes to visualize the world in new ways occurs in Leonardo Da Vinci's *Trattato della pittura*, himself a disciple of the *Accademia*. The articles, collected by Da Vinci's disciples around 1542, were published almost a century later by Raffaelo du Fresne in 1651, and translated to English only in 1721. The Italian artist writes that the mind of the painter is like a mirror that truly reflects each object as if it were second nature. Although this second nature of the mirror had been seen with complacency by Socrates, Plato, distrusted the mirror because it made us believe that its reflection was real. In 1588, Tuscan astronomer, Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), entered the *Accademia* interested in perspective techniques in relation to curved optic surfaces and spherical lenses. In 1609, he designed a tube with a curve lens, similar to Alberti's window, intended to reproduce spherical bodies. A few months later, he developed his greater achievement: the telescope.

The above lines give an idea of the growing importance of optical instruments, lenses and mirrors, in art. The mirror represents a double articulation of the analogic figure, and in the case of curved mirrors, a distortion of analogy enables a meta-reflection on the ambiguity of representation. Thus, the specular relation can be seen as simultaneously staging a mimetic representation or copy of the real, or as a window that opens up other possible realities [12].

It is no surprise that Leonardo Da Vinci felt that it was time to claim a higher status for visual artists, beyond the classical role of artisans and imitators. In his *Paragone* (from the Greek meaning a model or pattern of special excellence or perfection), da Vinci reversed Simonides' comparison by pointing out that if painting is "mute poetry", then poetry is "blind painting." In this treaty, Da Vinci considers painting the noblest art since among the different perceptual modes, vision, he claims is superior to hearing, the main sense involved in poetry. He proclaims painting and poetry to be 'sister-arts' and insists that this sisterly emulation should be an enterprise that elevates painting to the class of liberal arts. When he affirms that the painter is the "lord of all types of people and of all things" (2008: 185), Da Vinci justifies the superiority of painting over all other forms of art:

> *[…] if you, O poet, tell a story with your pen, the painter with his brush can tell it more easily, with simpler completeness, and less tedious to follow. If you call painting dumb poetry, the painter may call poetry blind painting. Consider then which is the more grievous defect, to be blind or dumb? Though the poet is as free as the painter in the invention of his fictions, his creations do not give so great a satisfaction to men as paintings do; for though poetry attempts to describe forms, actions, and places in words, the painter employs the actual similitude of the forms, in order to reproduce them* [13].

Alongside this debate on the 'sister-arts', new techniques allowed novel combinations of words and images. Wood engraving or xylography is the oldest engraving technique known. It was first developed in China around the first century BCE.

Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) is one of the most prominent artists who used this technique. Introduced by Daniel Hopfer (1493–1536), etching soon surpassed engraving. Other popular graphic arts were mezzotint, stipple and aquatint. During the 16th and 17th centuries, many visual pieces continued to be inspired by written texts, often drawn from religious passages. The emblem or allegorical illustration was a prominent intermedial form made up of an icon/image (pictura), often an engraving, bearing a citation or a motto (inscriptio) and a subscript (subscriptio), often a quotation from a prominent work, adding commentary and explaining the connection between image and motto. As they became an independent artistic genre, books of emblems appeared, drawing inspiration and borrowing from medieval fables, where the graphic image was ekphrastically translated into the textual format. One example is George Wither's *Book of Emblems* (1635). Engravings and texts were also borrowed from earlier exemplars, as was the case with Geoffrey Whitney's *Choice of Emblemes* (1586). In this regard, Peter Wagner defends that the concept of ekphrasis, although originating in the field of rhetoric, expanded later to include "all verbal commentary and writing (poems, critical assessments, art historical accounts) on images." (1996: 17) [14].

Familiar with Leonardo da Vinci's text, the Italian painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio employed optics and mirrors in his own work. Giambattista Della Porta published *Magiae naturalis* in 1558, including discussion of optical projections and an account of *camera obscura* (dark room), a device known at least since Roman times where a small hole in a box acts as a kind of natural lens by producing an upside-down image on the side of the box opposite the hole. It was used to study perspective in architecture and painting. The hole was later substituted by a lens, including mirrors inside the box to invert the image to the right side up.

Advances in optics during the seventeenth century, with new instruments such as the telescope and the microscope, developed in 1608 and the 1620s respectively, gave way to novel ways of looking at the world, influencing European Baroque culture. No doubt, Copernicus and Galileo's scientific findings had an impact on the art of chiaroscuro in painting. The possibility of looking close-up may have inspired the exaggerated detail used in architecture, theatre, music, dance and literature. Bach, Vivaldi and Handel created new styles of music, some of which used a multiplicity of choral voices combined in one melodic line to create a contrapuntal texture. All the arts were adorned with fancy, sensuous richness, dynamism and exuberance, as seen for example in Bernini's white marble "Ecstasy of Saint Teresa" (1647–1652; Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome).

Both sensual and spiritual, in the context of Catholic Counter-reformation and Protestant Reform, European Baroque art conveyed a sense of grandeur as well as emotional and dramatic qualities. It showed a growing tendency to blur distinctions between various artistic disciplines, capturing the essence of what later was termed Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art). This can be seen in the *tableaux* (the term was coined later by Denis Diderot 1713–1784) *vivants* painted by Caravaggio and his follower Artemisia Gentileschi (for a semiotic analysis of Caravaggio's "Judith Beheading Holofernes", c. 1598, see Mieke Bal 1998) [15] More information in Fusillo and Petricola (2023) [16].

Two other examples of the use of perspective to increase dramatic effect and engage the viewers are Velazquez's "Las Meninas" (1656) at the Prado Museum in Madrid, and "The Crucifixion" (1565) by Tintoretto, installed in the Sala dell'Albergo of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Venice. "Las Meninas" shows and intricate play of perspective in a tableau-vivant that many art critics have described as capturing

the philosophy of art. Eluding a clear narration of what is taking place in the scene, the painting engages the viewer's gaze, and traps it in the mirror interplay of speculative forms of looking exhibited by the range of characters the populate the painting. Writing about ekphrasis and Tintoretto's "The Crucifixion", Jean Paul Sartre (1948/1988) affirmed that.

> *Tintoretto did not choose that yellow rift in the sky above Golgotha to signify anguish or to provoke it. It is anguish and yellow sky at the same time. Not sky of anguish or anguished sky; it is an anguish become thing, an anguish which has turned into yellow rift of sky, and which thereby is submerged and impasted by the qualities peculiar to things, by their impermeability, their extension, their blind permanence, their externality, and that infinity of relations which they maintain with other things. That is, it is no longer readable. It is like an immense and vain effort, forever arrested half-way between sky and earth, to express what their nature keeps them from arresting.* (1948/1988: 27; emphasis in the original) [17].

What Sartre highlights is the capacity of visual art to magically embody emotions beyond explanation (*readable*). For Sartre, Tintoretto's painting is no longer ekphrastic. Its power of enchantment lies in its capacity to simultaneously capture past, future and present: a memory, an imagined place and the present circumstances –the political 'rift' taking place at the Scuola Grande at the time Tintoretto was working there. The painting holds a moment in time while liberating it to eternity. The space of the painting becomes a 'place' where anyone can enter. As abstractions cannot be told (except in metaphors), emotions are made present by an inexplicable mutual transfer of sensation between the artist, the artwork and the experiencer.

To return to the seventeenth century, the ceiling fresco by Italian artist Andrea Pozzo, "Triumph of St. Ignatius of Loyola" (1691–94), at Church Sant'Ignazio, Rome, is another example of the dialogue between architecture and painting. The Counter-reformation was trying to revive the cult of the saints by using the allegorical mode. Accordingly, Pozzo creates a tableau-vivant with a 3D spatial effect that makes the figures almost touchable. Using an advanced perspectival technique and painting on the curved surfaces of vaults, Pozzo succeeds in creating a space that encloses the viewer within a scene that is simultaneously sacred and quotidian. Some drawn architectural elements, columns, balustrades and arches, fused with the real architecture, contribute to create the effect of immersion within the artwork.

In contrast, to the exuberance of Southern Europe, most of Northern European art remained austere. The Reformation's iconoclastic attitude to religious images turned the attention of artists and their patrons towards secular subjects like portraits and landscapes. It has become widely accepted that landscape painting in Europe began with the Reformation. At the same time, the use of optic technologies and *camera obscura* is evident in portraits that show extreme and almost photographic realism, like those by the Dutch Rembrandt (1606–1669) or Jan Vermeer (1632–1675) [18].

The mechanization of art paralleled the impact of technology in all areas, a fundamental aspect in the move towards greater intermediality. A portable version of *camera obscura* was developed by Dutch inventor Cornelis Drebbel and sold to artist Constantijn Huygens in 1622. A kind of ancestor to the *lanterna magica*, this device enabled intermedial figurations, generating not only images but also texts and images within texts. In 1645, the Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher published *Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae,* which included a description of his invention, the 'steganographic mirror'. Putting together the ideas of Drebbel and Kircher, Huygens developed the magic

lantern in the 1660s. These technologies were the direct ancestors of motion picture projectors. The Baroque period created awe-inspiring 'works of artifice', automata and forms of machine theatre with intermedial characteristics, all of which were precursors of 1800s *Phantasmagoria* shows [19].

Technological developments in the second half of the seventeenth century contributed to extending the debate on the 'sister-arts', a discussion that was sustained well into the nineteenth century, particularly during the Romantic period. In 1695, British poet John Dryden had translated *The Art of Painting* (*De Arte Graphica*) by Charles Alphonse du Fresnoy, and included a commentary entitled "Parallel of Poetry and Painting", establishing an analogy between the two arts and their aesthetic properties. Dryden explains that each discipline is equally valid in its field, but that no comparison can be established between them since they use different means of expression. Quoting Du Fresnoy, he affirms: "tis the pencil thrown luckily full upon the horse's mouth to express the foam which the painter with all his skill could not perform without it. These hits of words a true poet often finds, as I may say, without seeking: but he knows the value when he finds them." Dryden stresses the coexistence of the sister-arts and adds that "without Invention a Painter is but a Copier, and a Poet but a Plagiary of others. Both are allow'd sometimes to copy and translate" (Dryden 1695: xxxiv) [20].

Owing to the Longinian tradition, the debate about the differences between the arts was directed towards the emotional aspects of aesthetics. The identity of Longinus is still disputed, and there remains just a single surviving incomplete manuscript of his *Peri Hupsous*. The concept is comparable to that of the sublime, a moment that brings oral speech to a climax that produces a sense of wonder in the audience. The *Peri Hupsous* managed to integrate the approaches used by Plato, Aristotle and Horace, enhancing the value of imagination. In section VIII, the author stresses the importance of language to conceive great thoughts and inspire strong emotions. In section IX, he refers to sublimity as an echo of the noble mind [21, 22].

Although the British poet Alexander Pope was very critical of Longinus' text in *The Art of Sinking in Poetry* (1727), in Epistle I of his moral essay, *Of the Knowledge and Characters of Men* (1734), addressed to Sir Richard Temple, Lord Cobham, Pope stresses that the combination of reason and fancy is important. He uses terms drawn from the visual arts, such as 'tincture', 'discolour' and 'mark' to draw the analogies between both qualities of the mind:

> *On human actions reason tho' you can,*   25.
> *It may be Reason, but it is not Man:*
> *His Principle of action once explore,*
> *That instant't is his Principle no more.*
> *Like following life thro' creatures you dissect,*
> *You lose it in the moment you detect.*   30.
> *Yet more; the diff'rence is as great between.*
> *The optics seeing as the objects seen.*
> *All Manners take a tincture from our own,*
> *Or come discolour'd thro' our Passions shown;*
> *Or Fancy's beam enlarges, multiplies,*   35.
> *Contracts, inverts, and gives ten thousand dyes.*
> *Nor will life's stream for observation stay,*
> *It hurries all too fast to mark their way* [23].

The relations between the arts, politics and the development of national identities in the consolidation of European nations were very dependent upon the emerging media formats of new journals and magazines. In the eighteenth century, print culture was particularly strong in France, where King Louis XV was a printing enthusiast. Several members of his family had private presses, and his mistress, Madame de Pompadour was also an engraver. The *Imprimerie Royale* dictated the style of Rococo taste, favouring the production of smaller books, reduced enough in size to be held in the hand. There was also a rising popularity of small-format paintings called 'conversation pieces' in the Van Dyke tradition. Portraits turned into private art forms to show in the salons. The cost of printing began to decline and several French artists and engravers, like Gravelot, came to live in England becoming the most prominent engraver and influencing local English taste. For example, Samuel Richardson commissioned the 1742 luxurious edition of *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* to Gravelot. This was the second edition of the book, which had been a best-seller when first published in 1740. At this time, books and paintings began to attract interest as affordable items to be collected by middle and upper classes. They helped to create a public image of economic success, taste and education [24].

A complete transformation of the public sphere took place in the major European cities at this time, and the tensions between artistic practices and medial requirements contributed to shape the distribution of power relations. In *Picture Theory,* W.J.T. Mitchell asserts his "conviction that the tensions between visual and verbal representations are inseparable from struggles in cultural politics and political culture." (1994: 3) [25] Jürgen Habermas (1989) has also described the rise of an autonomous subjectivity as the defining feature of the philosophical and historical concept of modernity. His theory of the 'public sphere' shows how social change is associated with the processes of modernisation that qualify media [26].

In Britain, one of the most important shapers of public opinion was the journal edited by Joseph Addison (1672–1719), *The Spectator.* In 1712, a series of articles in issues 411–421 explored the viability of the '*Ut pictura poiesis*'. The conclusion of this debate asserted that "[...] by the pleasures of the imagination, or fancy, (which I shall use promiscuously), I here mean such as arise from visible objects, either when we have them actually in our view, or when we call up their ideas into our minds by paintings, statues, descriptions, or any the like occasion." ("The Pleasures Of Imagination." *The Spectator* No. 411, June 21, 1712) [27]. This assertion illustrates the importance of the existent debate between imagination and fancy (which Samuel Taylor Coleridge ruled as different concepts) and its impact on the notion of the sublime within the growing field of aesthetics.

The British scholar and politician Edmund Burke attempted to reconcile the cognitive and emotional aspects of art. Whilst at Trinity College Dublin (1743–8), Burke read Pope as well as a large range of Greek and Latin texts, including Plato, Aristotle, Horace and Longinus. Cressida Ryan (2011) contends that Burke imitates Longinus' intertextual allusions as a meta-reflexive strategy. Burke emphasized that whatever excites ideas of terror and pain arise the strongest emotions in the mind and body and can be even more sublime than pleasure (Burke 1757: 39–40) [28].

> *The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate*
> *most powerfully, is astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which*
> *all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case, the mind is so*
> *entirely filled with its object that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence*

> *reason on that object which employs it. (Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our*
> *Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, 1757, Part II/Chapter 1) [28].*

Burke's example of ferocious animals as sublime generated great controversy, as captured by poet and artist William Blake in his poem "The Tyger" and his famous line 'fearful symmetry'. Concerning the '*Ut pictura poiesis*' debate, Burke insisted that lively and spirited verbal description can raise stronger emotions than the best picture.

Under Cartesian influence, perception had been contemplated as a mechanism to be understood by reason, the most important quality of the human mind. Objects were made up of several unified parts and when visually appraising them, the eyes moved from one part to the next to subsequently integrate each part as a whole in the mind. Thus, for Burke, as for Pope, proportion was still associated to the measure of relative quantity, which is a matter of reason. In Pope's quote above, the reference to 'optics' is relevant because he affirms that instruments like the microscope do not provide the bigger picture. He insists that only "Fancy's beam enlarges, multiplies". Likewise, Burke believed that sensible beauty is not only to be understood in the light of reason and requires 'fancy'. Although Burke's notion of the sublime would inspire the Romantics, he does not celebrate fancy/imagination as a sort of innate, natural and divine quality, independent from reason and learning. Coleridge will clearly differentiate fancy and imagination in *Biographia Literaria*. To Burke, aesthetic response is primarily non-rational in nature but it is, nevertheless, something which can be cultivated and developed in its role to emphasize ethical and political judgement. This treatment of the sublime is the aspect most debated during the Romantic period.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing is also a figure worth mentioning in the debate over the 'sister-arts'. Between 1760 and 1765, during the Seven Years' War between Britain and France, Lessing was working as secretary to General Tauentzien in Wrocław (now in Poland). He was first-hand witness to the territorial disputes and changes that took place during Prussian rule. The intellectual climate struggled to legitimize German language and art as part of the development of nation-building during the *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment). In 1757, only some months after its publication, Lessing had discovered Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* through his friend Moses Mendelssohn. Initially, he wanted to translate the book into German. He never did, but in *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766), Lessing explored the differences and similarities between painting, sculpture and poetry by focusing on the temporal, rather than the spatial aspects of analogy.

> *[…] If the work of art, though destined to last, represents only a single moment, there*
> *can be no doubt that that moment must be chosen which is most suggestive of effect;*
> *i.e. that which allows the freest scope of imagination. But that moment is certainly*
> *not the extreme point of the passion represented, otherwise the imagination could*
> *not soar beyond. In the case of the Laokoon it is not the shriek, but the supressed sigh*
> *that is most apt to set the imagination working. Another reason is that transitory*
> *acts are not fit to receive unchangeable duration through art, as they would look*
> *unnatural. A shriek is transitory; the apparent continuance of the cries of Laokoon in*
> *marble would have digusted the beholder. The famous painters of antiquity, in their*
> *representations of passion, always chose that point where the behold could anticipate*
> *the extreme outbreak of the passion they represented, but did not actually see it –that*
> *point which was at the same time not so inseparably associated with the idea of*
> *transitoriness as to displease by its continuance in art. (1766/1880: 3) [29].*

Lessing compared the visual representation of Laocoon and his sons being devoured by sea serpents during the Trojan War to Virgil's description in *The Aeneid* (l. II). Known as the Laocoön Group, the marble was found in the Esquiline Hill in Rome in 1506 and its description appears not only in Virgil, but also in the accounts of Roman historian Pliny the Elder's *Historia naturalis*. Lessing's remarks about the boundaries between art, by which he means painting and sculpture, on the one hand, and poetry and literature, on the other, stressed the ability of poetry to excite mental pictures in a temporal sequence, thus creating the illusion of reality. According to Lessing, the visual artist is more limited than the poet because he can only capture one point of view in a particular instant in a temporal sequence that is transitory. Painting and sculpture function within simultaneity, as static objects, while poetry moves on the axis of succession, and is, according to Lessing, better able to create an illusion of reality. Turning to Burke's idea of the sublime in terror and fear, Lessing considers that it is more difficult to appreciate suffering and pain in the statue than in the poem. He also discussed the impossibility of each art to be completely faithful to reality, since poetry lacks immediacy, and sculpture cannot give enough descriptive detail or voice sounds. Thus, although Karl Friedrich Eusebius Trahndorff did not introduce the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* until 1827 [30], Lessing seems to be an early advocate of the unity of all art.

The work of archaeologist and art historian Johann Winckelmann had great significance in Lessing's generation. Philosophers like Kant, Mendelssohn and Herder, and the younger literary architects of Weimar Classicism, Goethe and Schiller, were inspired by Winckelmann's work *Die Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (1764) (*History of the Art of Antiquity*). Winckelmann argued that the unity of simplicity underlying the ideal of beauty could not be grasped intellectually, but only as an effect of beauty's appearance in the artwork. The task of explaining the conditions of aesthetic understanding was the most discussed topic until after the Romantic period [31].

Winckelmann's conception also finds concurrence in Lessing, Burke and in the emerging field of aestheticism. The term 'aesthetics' had been coined by Alexander Baumgarten while working on his dissertation on the philosophy of art, published in 1735. As seen, reflections on aesthetics and on the dialogue among the arts coincided with a period of inquiry into the role of emotions, sentiment and the sublime. During the Scottish Enlightenment, the discussion had focused mainly on 'sympathy' and public justice. In Britain, Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) believed that in the face of two emotions like pleasure or delight, pity and grief "delight is so far predominant, that men usually are content in such a case to be spectators of the misery of their friends." (Hobbes, *Elements of Law* 9.19) [32]. Like Burke, and on the opposite side of the argument, Adam Smith (1723–1790) posited that grief experiences from others were also very real emotions experienced through our imagination: "Human beings all have a natural feeling for others. Even the worst of us feels some pity when others suffer" (*Theory of Moral Sentiments* 1759, cited in Butler 2011: 77) [33]. David Hume (1711–1776) also published a collection of essays entitled *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*. The first part dealt mainly with political and aesthetic issues. Hume considered that taste involved more than just the rational capacity to detect the structure and composition and that there were also aspects of sensory discrimination linked to human capacity for pleasure.

> *Tis indeed evident, that when we sympathize with the passions and sentiments of others, these movements appear at first in our mind as mere ideas, and are conceiv'd to belong to another person, as we conceive any other matter of fact. 'Tis also evident, that the ideas of the affections of others are converted into the very impressions they*

> *represent, and that the passions arise in conformity to the images we form of them
> (Hume "A Treatise of Human Nature" 1739/1973: 2.1.11.8) [34].*

In his *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant criticized certain aspects of the use of the term aesthetic saying that Baumgarten hoped to bring critical judging of the beautiful under rational principles in order to raise common rules. Like Burke and others, Kant claimed that aesthetic judgement contains an important subjective substratum that relates to internal feelings of pleasure or displeasure, and not only to the external qualities of objects. He stressed that judgement requires both emotional and intellectual capacities and that perception and cognitive reason alone cannot grasp the concept of infinity and transcendence. For Kant, there is a supra-sensible faculty of the mind that determines a form of dynamic sublime that is out of bounds in terms of magnitude (space) and time, and which evinces the power of transcendence over the limitations of the human phenomenal being (Hammermeister 2002: 33) [35]. With Kant, the experience of the sublime begins to be seen as liminal, featured by indeterminacy, infinity and resolvability [36].

In *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), Friedrich Schiller (1802–1805) explains that: "However sublime and comprehensive it may be, the content always has a restrictive action upon the spirit, and only from the form is true aesthetic freedom to be expected." (Snell 1954: 83) [37]. Schiller insists that freedom itself is something 'noumenal' (to use Kant's terminology) and, thus, it can never actually manifest itself in the realm of the senses. Schiller's position is similar to that of Hegel in that beauty is the expression of human inner freedom, a sort of harmony that emerges from the work of divine creation when organically integrated in the world.

> *The reason is that even the most etherial music, by reason of its matter, has a closer
> affinity with the senses than true aesthetic freedom allows; that even the happiest
> poem still has a greater share of the arbitrary and fortuitous play of imagination,
> which is its medium, than the inner necessity of the truly Beautiful permits; that even
> the most admirable piece of sculpture—and this perhaps most of all—borders on
> severe science by reason of the positiveness of its conception. These special affinities,
> however, are lost in proportion as a work of one of these types of art attains a higher
> level, and it is a necessary and natural consequence of their perfection that, without
> shifting their objective limits, the various arts are becoming increasingly similar to
> each other in their effect upon our natures. (Snell 1954: 83–84) [37].*

The form and content of art are, thus, part of the platonic Idea, the divine Geist that connects everything in the world as part of one organism.

3. Romanticism and the total work of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*)

The Romantic organic and borderless ideal began to integrate the different arts. The expression "Romantic Poetry", coined Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) in his *Athenaeum Fragments* 116, also highlighted the power of imagination to achieve organic aesthetic unity. However, the Romantics did not wish to replace reason with imagination, but to point out the emotional aspects that they felt were also present in the human mind.

As secularization and various revolutions set in, many scholars become interested in liberty, equality and fraternity, as well as in new forms of spiritualism and

mysticism, the unknown aspects of self (the unconscious and the irrational). Hindu, Gnostic and Hermetic beliefs, as well as occult traditions, inspired poets like William Blake (1757–1827), deeply influenced by the mystic Jakob Boehme (1575–1624) and by Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772). Rather than a spatial focus, the struggle for dominance between the arts-focused then on ways to liberate the human from the phenomenological context and direct aesthetics towards ideals of transcendence [38].

Before Romanticism, aesthetics highlighted the ephemeral nature of artistic creation. For the Romantics, art became a way to make a moment transcend time. Poets like Schlegel and Blake put forth the idea of the artist as genius, a visionary who could enlighten and educate society, thus striking a balance between individual growth and social good. This organic social unity sought by the Romantics required reciprocity among the parts and the whole. Beyond the Cartesian mechanist focus, for the Romantics, art provides a structural and political model by virtue of its organic unity; a harmony also found in nature. In this way, it is a return to platonic tenets, also in the sense that art becomes capable of (re)enchanting the social as part of the organic whole of nature, where the totality and the parts are mutually interdependent [39]. This proposed model is aesthetic dynamic and future-oriented (teleological), beyond mechanical causality. Almost like a living force, it is self-organizing and self-generating, opening an interdisciplinary space of dialogue between the arts and the sciences. This vital principle or 'élan vital' (the term was coined by Henry Bergson in the twentieth century) was discussed for years among biologists and philosophers. The claims of Vitalism had come to the fore at the end of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century among the founders of modern chemistry. They influenced Romantic artists like Percy Bysshe Shelley and his wife, Mary Shelley.

The British poet William Wordsworth, for example, claimed that human beings should return to "the laws of things which lie/beyond the reach of human will or power;/The life of nature" ("The Tables Turned", *Lyrical Ballads* 1798). The way to connect with nature was to adopt a holistic approach that fused practical reason, sensibility, feeling, imagination and, above all, the aesthetic capacity of the mind. This is exemplified in Wordsworth's declaration, "All good poetry [originates in] the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* 1800, paragraph 26). The Romantic artist is no longer a transcriber inspired by the muses or the gods, not a copier under the influence of the ancients. Coleridge also asserted that the aim of art was "the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed." (Coleridge *Biographia Literaria* Ch. 4) [40]. Another British Romantic poet, John Keats declared that "'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,'—that is all//Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know" ("Ode on a Grecian Urn" 1820). To the Romantics, the artist as prophet and visionary is capable of bringing social change through the conjunction of reason and passion, as William Blake explains in "Auguries of Innocence" (1803):

> *To see a World in a Grain of Sand.*
> *And a Heaven in a Wild Flower.*
> *Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand.*
> *And Eternity in an hour […].*

As mentioned, the Romantics revised the theories of John Locke and Thomas Hobbes regarding sense perception in order to emphasize that reason alone was not sufficient, and that artists could create without world experiences, attaining inspiration from their own creative genius and divine inspiration. For them,

imagination could make the connection with the platonic realm of Ideas: the Geist. Blake's poem "The Tyger" (1794) celebrates this divine force of creation personified as the blacksmith, Hephaestus, who heats, hammers and twists the essence of life (Ideas) into shape (Forms). The strong beating and repetition of words give the lyrics a musical martial tone, creating a tension between beauty and terror that was used to illustrate Burke's notion of the sublime: "And what shoulder, & what art, Could twist the sinews of thy heart? And when thy heart began to beat, What dread hand? & what dread feet? What the hammer? What the chain, In what furnace was thy brain? What the anvil? what dread grasp, Dare its deadly terrors clasp!" [41].

In his "Defence of Poetry" (1821; published posthumously in 1840), Percy Bysshe Shelley was categorical in defending poetry as "the expression of the imagination" (12), "connate with the origin of man" (13), part of a divine plan: "A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth ... the creation of actions according to the unchangeable forms of human nature, as existing in the mind of the Creator." According to Shelley, "Poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted", and "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world", (90) stressing the impact of art upon the social by "dealing with objects not as they are, but as they appear to the mind of the poet" (cited Abrams 1953: 331) [42].

As mentioned above, Kant had moved one step forward in questioning Cartesian reason by affirming that aesthetic judgement is also subjective in that it relates to the internal feeling of pleasure or displeasure and not only to the qualities of an object. The Romantics moved even further in affirming that because of the capacity of judgement and self-judgement, artworks are self-regulatory quasi-organisms and not artefacts. Thus, beauty in nature can stimulate the feeling of infinity that is part of the sublime, with representation looking simultaneously outside and inside itself, replicating the acts of mimesis and diegesis *ad infinitum*. Aesthetics is central for the Romantic revolution in its capacity to "enchant" nature, that is, a process of rendering nature magical, mysterious and inspiring. The transcendental nature of romantic poetry suggests that it does not transcend merely the boundaries of a particular genre, but even the boundaries of the literary as such, reaching out to the other 'sister-arts' and to the realm of the social.

Crossing media borders, Wordsworth describes poetry using terms from the pictorial. He explains that poetic diction should start with the most familiar and contingent: "the incidents and situations from common life", striving to elevate them by adding "a certain colouring of the imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way", and following "the primary laws of our nature" (Wordsworth Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* 1802). According to one of the most famous scholars of Romanticism, M.H. Abrams, Wordsworth and Coleridge mixed traditionally separated genres and discursive registers in their collection of poems known as *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), a title that encapsulates the spirit of the age as it levels the popular folk ballad with the highbrow literary lyric. However, regarding the integration of various artistic forms, Wordsworth and Coleridge were more conservative:

> *In the place of painting, music becomes [for the romantics] the art frequently pointed to as having a profound affinity with poetry. For if a picture seems the nearest thing to a mirror-image of the external world, music, of all the arts, is the most remote.'* (Abrams 1953:50) [42].

Indeed, music was considered as the paradigmatic art form to which poetry aspired because it was untainted by any worldly concerns and material embodiment. This valorisation of sound over visible forms of expression is observed in Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1805). The author reflects on his childhood and youth memories which "felt what'er there is of power in sound/To breathe an elevated mood, by form/Or image unprofaned" (II, ll. 321–326). He soon discovers "such a holy calm/ Did overspread my soul that I forgot/That I had bodily eyes, and what I saw/Appeared like something in myself, a dream/A prospect in my mind." (II, ll. 367–371).

Music was also in agreement with this emphasis on the invisible and on transcending mere sense perception in order to cultivate an inner and imaginative mode of perception: "a tone and spirit of unity that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by the synthetic and magical power, to which I would exclusively appropriate the name of Imagination." (Coleridge *Biographia Literaria*, Chap. XIV) In a lecture on Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet (1811), Coleridge stressed that "the power of genius was not in elaborating a picture." For him, "The grandest efforts of poetry […] where the imagination is called forth, is not to produce a distinct form, but a strong working of the mind"; not "the substitution of a sublime feeling of the unimaginable for a mere image." (Coleridge *Lectures on Shakespeare* 1811–1819). The sublime becomes in Coleridge the power to reveal something about the world that cannot be known through perception and reason; only through imagination [42].

Although Wordsworth and Coleridge might have been reluctant to include the visual in their conceptions of transcendence and imagination, well into the 1800s, other Romantic artists began to expand the limits of representation and the political by producing poems to memorialize different pieces of art. There are several reasons behind this re-evaluation of the sister-arts taking place in Europe. Alongside the discovery of ancient artworks in various excavations (Herculaneum had been discovered in 1738 and Pompeii in 1748), the unstable situation, with various wars and new emerging nations, triggered a concern for the preservation of artworks. Various museums had been established; for example the British Museum in 1759, the Louvre in 1793 and UK National Gallery in 1824. Public intellectuals, such as Sir Joshua Reynolds at the British Royal Academy, or the archaeologist and art historian Johann Winckelmann were invited to lecture and raise awareness on the cultural and national value of art.

Among the memorializing activities, we can mention the Newdigate Prize Competition, established by Oxford University in 1806 to acknowledge the best ekphrastic poem stimulated by the excavations taking place (Larrabee 1943:261) [43]. There was also an expansion of engraving technologies and, in the mid-1850s, the development of the daguerreotype and photography (Wells 2016), all of which drew artists to experiment with forms of recreation in different art forms. Lee Erickson has traced the turn towards ekphrasis and pictorialist description in the nineteenth century to the impact of art annuals, where engravings and poetry were displayed hand in hand. For instance, the commemorative engraved plates pictured in annuals were often accompanied by poetic descriptions. Erickson notes that "the shift from a romantic to a Victorian poetic stemmed directly from the popular pressure exerted by the publishing market on poetry to conform to a purely pictorial aesthetic" (1996: 40) [44].

The contemporary understanding of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* could be said to emerge from the Romantic utopian mindset that contemplated imagination as the supreme form of mental expression and the later move towards the idea that artistic disciplines shared the same aim—the expression of feelings. As mentioned before, the idea was

put forth by Trahndorff. However, composer Richard Wagner (1813–1883) reformulated it in his musical performances. Wagner envisioned opera as a fusion of music, poetry and painting, and created a complex collection of leitmotifs and recurring themes associated with the characters and themes of his compositions, many of them inspired in stories from the Germanic tradition and Arthurian legends. His ideas can be considered a version of intermediality that synthesizes various modes of forms into a universal, all-embracing artwork. Additionally, we can affirm that the evolution of intermedial concerns contemplates not only a growing dialogue between text, sound, images and other art forms but also an increase in audience engagement.

It is important to return to scientific advances and their impact on the philosophical and artistic discussion on intermediality. In the 1800s, Scottish scientist Sir David Brewster (1781–1868) was working on optics and used similes from biology and painting to explain how the 'mind's eye' is actually the body's eye and that impressions were 'painted' on the retina, receiving visual existence according to "the same optical laws" as in painting (*Fraser's Magazine,* Vol. 11, 1832: 648) [45]. Louis Daguerre and William Henry Fox Talbot announced the success of their photographic 'camera obscura' devices around the same time. And Thomas Carlyle coined the term 'visuality' and the verb 'visualizing' in a series of writings between 1837 and 1841. Carlyle described his work as the embodiment of the 'eye of history' that captured the 'whole' by means of what he called "a succession of vivid pictures". [46] Carlyle distinguished between 'inward' and 'outward' visual impressions, holding that both were meaningless unless motivated by the inner or spiritual eye. In a letter he received from his friend, Ralph Waldo Emerson, the North-American philosopher noted that "I think you see in pictures". Emerson's remark implied that it was possible to see otherwise, referring to the previous prominence of text over image [47].

The Victorian art-critic John Ruskin (1819–1900) also tried to reformulate the idea of *ut pictura poesis* in his book *Modern Painters* (1856). He claimed that painting "is properly to be opposed to speaking or writing but not to poetry [for both] painting and speaking are methods of expression" (Landow "Ruskin and the *ut pictura poesis* tradition" 1971: 43–53) [48]. Similarly, Walter Pater (1839–1894) thought that.

> *Although each art has thus its own specific order of impressions, and an untranslatable charm, while a just apprehension of the ultimate differences of the arts is the beginning of aesthetic criticism; yet it is noticeable that, in its special mode of handling its given material, each art may be observed to pass into the condition of some other art, by what German critics term as Anders-streben– a partial alienation from its own limitations, through which the arts are able, not indeed to supply the place to each other, but reciprocally to lend each other new forces.* (1893/1980: 105) [49].

Thus, in the second part of the nineteenth century, social conditions as well as technological advances in the reproduction of images introduced changes in the debate on the sister-arts. One example of the intermedial genres that emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century is the feuilleton, a term that originates from the French *feuillet* (meaning leaf of a book) and consisting of a non-political supplement to newspapers that chronicled on the literature, art and cultural issues. The term was first used by the editors of the *Journal des Débats* in a supplement that appeared in their journal on 28th Jan 1800. In 1836, the Paris newspaper *La Presse* began to circulate a separate section under the same title. It established particular forms of typesetting and included vignettes with informal and humorous satirical content. The feuilleton became widespread in other European countries as a genre of masses.

As noted, the growing number of images in print media was possible due to technological advances in printing and distribution as well as due to laws that reduced taxes on paper and publication. In Britain, many novels appeared as either monthly or weekly instalments after the successful publication of Charles Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers* (1836) [50]. The use of images contributed to the popularization of the serial market and the rise of literacy. Dicken's example shows that the close relationship between illustration and writing. If the illustrator was a renowned painter, the work acquired greater value. Because of a number of technological and economic factors, the periodical market began to grow. In Britain, while some periodicals like *Blackwood* or *Cornhill* magazines preferred serials, some miscellany weeklies started to publish very short stories (no more than 4000 words to be read in under 50 minutes) as well as series. The form of the series was inaugurated by Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, which did not require knowledge of any previous instalments (unlike the serial, each instalment of a series was a complete narrative unit). These new formats were destined to satisfy the development of primary and secondary schools after the 1870 Education Act, and in the early 1900s, the transformation of static images (photography) into moving images (film).

After 1860s, photography had become popular and accessible. Its introduction represented a challenge to artistic creation as it was seen to come to replace painting. Many critics of the time mourned the death of imaginative creation. However, long before collage techniques were used by the avant-garde artists of the early twentieth century, a group of aristocratic Victorian women began experimenting with handcraft design, photo collage and painterly collage, playing with different materials. The term 'collage' comes from French and means to glue or paste together. The technique involves cutting up pieces, in this case, photographic portraits, placing them alongside watercolour paintings and text pieces in personal albums. Collage simultaneously separates and connects different elements in a spatial–temporal continuum, creating an almost cinematic experience and, because of the different textures and configurations, adding perspectival depth. Differences in colour could also create the effect of layering, since each colour has a specific expression of density and profundity. Examples of this feminine craft came from all over Europe, including the French Marie-Blanche-Hennelle Fournier (1831–1906), the English Georgina Berkeley (1831–1919), Constance Sackville-West (1846–1929), or Kate Edith Gough (1856–1948). These albums often criticized the social circles and politics of the time, as in Eva Macdonald's "What Are Trumps?" from *the Westmorland Album* (1869) [51]. Collage is a good expression of intermediate transformation because the photographs, paintings and texts used in these works were in themselves incoherent, allowing the perception of different visual layers and anticipating the notion of temporal simultaneity as captured in a spatial configuration.

4. Twentieth-century avant-Garde and the birth of media studies

So far, this chapter has provided an overview of the European debate over the relationships between the arts, technological development, and the origin of the interest in Intermedial Studies. The debate on the sister-arts has shown that, despite the belief in a kind of subordination of images to the higher power of imagination conveyed by words, there are many examples where painting and poetry function together. For instance, the canvases of Claude Lorrain and Salvatore Rosa influenced the landscape poetry of the eighteenth century. The British Romantic poet John Keats

took details for his "Ode on a Grecian Urn" from a painting by Claude Lorrain. In the late nineteenth century, the Parnassian movement in France, named after the sacred mountain of Apollo and the Muses in ancient Greece, owes much the visual arts, as can be seen in the works of artists like Théophile Gautier, Théodore de Banville, Stéphane Mallarmé, or Paul Verlaine. Mallarmé's "L'après-midi d'un faune" was inspired by a painting by François Boucher, kept in the National Gallery in London. In his well-known sonnet "Correspondences", which explores synesthetic relations among sensorial perceptions, Baudelaire wrote that "les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent" (1857: 19–20) [52].

Although the influence of non-Western cultures lies beyond the scope of this chapter, we have already suggested some intercultural crossings. The earliest illuminated manuscripts in Europe came from the Byzantium and the Eastern Roman Empire. Constantinople, now Istanbul, was a melting pot of Asian and European cultures, and exchanges were also common along the Silk Road. Chinese and Indian art, iconicity had always played an important role. Chinese ideograms were used in ancient Chinese pattern poetry. Some poems were written in particular shapes like *huiwen* ('circular' poems), *baota* ('pagoda' poems) and *wugui* ('tortoise' poems) [53]. Eastern influences may be present in the early visual poems of the *carmina figurata*, compositions where the graphic layout of the text resembled the concept described, pictorializing text content either in the form of a silhouette or integrating the image into a text. Illuminated manuscripts also included rubrics, miniature illustrations and initials drawn by hand, as we have already mentioned. Additionally, poems from different periods show the system of reciprocal analogies between texts and images exploring iconotextuality in visual poetry. Some examples are François Rabelais' "epilenie" (in *Les Aventures de Pantagruel* 1537), George Herbert's The Altar" (1633), Lewis Carroll's "Long and Sad Tail of the Mouse" from *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), Dylan Thomas' "Vision and Prayer" (1944), e. e. cummings' "L(a" (1958) or Edwin Morgan's "Siesta of a Hungarian Snake"(1971).

The impact of Chinese and Indian art in the Western avant-gardes has not been sufficiently explored. Whether the proverb "a picture is worth a thousand words" comes from Confucius or not is a matter of controversy. What is undeniable is the fact that the various art movements of the early twentieth century-Cubism, Surrealism, Futurism, Dadaism, Constructivism, Bauhaus, etc., proposed a transformation in the way of contemplating art, both in their artistic works as well as through proclamations and manifestos. The borders between text and image, between calligraphy, typography, painting and imagery, began to disappear. In painting, a certain autonomy came from the artists' liberation from the sacred and the writings of the past, as well as through contamination with other cultures, beliefs and techniques. A certain rebellion against perspective interrogates the self-reflexive representation of the medium in the fractured planes of Cubist art, the disjointed figures of Expressionist painting, or in the hybrid juxtapositions of Surrealist imagery.

The transformation of static images (photography) into moving images (film) had a fundamental impact. An early device known as 'cinématographe' had been invented by the French Léon Bouly in the 1890s. Louis Le Prince registered the first British patent for a camera that was capable of filming motion and later created a device that could project images in rapid succession using a Geneva drive. The Lumière brothers expanded these technologies and produced the first firm of their workers leaving the factory (*Sortie de l'usine Lumière de Lyon*) in 1895. Their camera incorporated also a projector and it weighed much less than a similar invention created in the United States by William K. Dickson and Thomas Edison known as 'kinetoscope'

or 'kinetograph'. The cinématographe was portable and could shoot outdoors on location. In the meantime, Edison turned his attention to projector technology with devices such as the 'photoscope' and the 'vitascope'. By the 1900s, Edison and his associates were experimenting with sound effects using the phonograph (later known as gramophone). They produced synchronized sound recordings by the end of the 1920s [54].

Among the intermedial experiments used to create the sense of depth in acoustic space was the phenomenon known as 'projicience', which equated loud sounds with nearby events and quiet sounds with far-away events creating the synesthetic sensation of distance and panoramic movement. Borrowing techniques from serialized narratives, phonographic performers and scriptwriters of the first decade of the twentieth century explored techniques for constructing a story based on adding episodes with common motifs, which created sonic recurrences (Feaster & Smith 2009). Nowadays, TV serials and series use multi-layered narrative lines that add complexity, as in HBO production *Westworld* [39].

The first weekly fan magazine in the UK, *The Pictures*, was created at the end of 1911, after the North American Vitagraph Studios' *Motion Picture Story Magazine* (MPSM). Vitagraph was later bought by Warner Bros. in 1925. Within months, other companies created their own magazines to advertise their movies as well as sell posters and place advertisements. These magazines amounted to a sort of paratext as well as a product line, much like today's transmedial products that release the same story concept in multiple media simultaneously (one of the first film websites accompanied the movie *The Blair Witch Project* in 1999, destined to make the plot believable). Ben Singer has argued that these early forms of fan-fiction were essential in helping early cinema "to transform itself into a storytelling medium." (1993: 489) [55]. It was very difficult for the audiences of early silent movies to make sense of the plot without a supporting text and "filmmakers and spectators may have relied on them as a key to narrative comprehension." (1993: 499) [55]. However, the intermedial format of motion-picture story magazines also reversed the dependency of images from texts, highlighting that movies could be fully appreciated without having read the story. The purpose of these magazines was not to present the narrative lines of the movies, since unrelated juxtaposed images would always yield some kind of semiotic connection, but to explain that this new media used different techniques and linguistic forms to narrate.

The influence of cinematography was felt strongly in the aesthetic sensibilities of the *avant-gardes*. Playing with figuration by using iconic and indexical signs along with texts, the Surrealists subverted the factual logic of images and the idea of cinema as a realist medium. They found in cinema a dream machine that could stage the unconscious, the irrational and the hallucinatory, as explored by Roland Barthes (*Camera Lucida* 1980). André Breton's "Manifesto of Surrealism" stated that dream and reality, "which are seemingly so contradictory", could be fused "into a kind of absolute reality, a surreality, if one may so speak" (1924/1994: 14) [56]. Dreams capture emotional content in a way that consciousness cannot. Surrealism was trying to find in art an expression for emotions and irrationality for which different kinds of signs were needed. This attempt explains their experiments in bringing together different sign systems, the iconic, the indexical and the symbolic, in compositions such as Guillaume Apollinaire's "Il pleut." Calligrams were a violent attempt to dissociate word from content matter by reducing it to a mere graphic sign. This violence is even more evident in Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí's landmark movie *Un chien andalou* (1929). The denaturalization of time, its experience (or temporarility) and

narrativity were also explored in Buñuel and Dalí's *L'âge d'or* (1930), and it is evident in one of Dalí's most singular images: his melting watches, found most famously in his painting "The Persistence of Memory" (1931). The relationship between perception, representation, imagination, random events and automatisation was another area of interest. Their experiments in automatic writing tried to access a sort of repository of all knowledge (previous and future; sometimes known as the Akashic records). They thought that it could not be reached by rational means, only by instinct and chance. For example, they used games like posing questions about everyday objects and tried to respond spontaneously in order to uncover facets of irrational knowledge (a process known as surrealist enlargement).

The interests of Futurists, like Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, were also the result not only of emerging technologies but also of new scientific concepts in Physics. Kinetic sculpture was one of the artistic forms explored in trying to capture movement in static art pieces. Physical material properties acquired great importance, and unconventional materials began to be incorporated. Multi-sensory experiments in print included typographic innovation, ink colours, paper textures and collage. These experiments looked beyond the lettered words themselves, exploring layout, spacing, or the pictorial aspects of colour. The Futurists coined neologisms like 'polyexpressivity' or 'multisensoriality' to define mixed media art products, foregrounding the material aspects of language by focusing on graphical coding, the acoustic and the visual [57]. Some authors also experimented with the subversion of alphabetic language [58] and a return to child games, for the image or icon may have been seen as the childhood of the sign, without the complex semantic properties of discourse [59].

Abstraction became prominent, connected perhaps, to a desire to resist the rule of words and narratives. The story of sequential images yields interesting ideas because even if abstraction points to the non-figurative and non-narrative, a contiguous sequence of abstract images might convey a story. Jan Baetens raises this point when examining abstraction in comics. His works defend the need of a medium-specific approach in order to explain the "degrees of narrativity" (2011: 106) that might be involved even in abstract art [60]. In *Un chien andalou* Buñuel and Dalí, played with a series of discontinuous images to encourage free associations on the part of their spectators. This experiment would break the narrativity of the movie. The pictorial works of Mondrian, Kandisky and Klee developed free techniques to replace images with abstract signs. Abstract expressionism or *Art Informel* (art without form) also fled from any narrative component. Man Ray's "rayograph" experiments in photography are yet another example. In Marcel Duchamp's photography "Autour d'une table" (1917), Duchamp places a snapshot of himself multiplied around a circular table in a mesmerizing way that simulates the action of a mirror. His idea was to question 'self' expression and demonstrate that the creative act is not performed by the artist alone. The spectator brings the work in contact with the external world, interpreting and contributing to the creative event. For André Bazin (1945) the photographic experience is intermedial in that it reveals the world anew, forged between the camera's contribution (technical medium) and the viewer (natural medium), in an union of perception as well as the viewer's previous knowledge and imagination. Roland Barthes also claimed that desacralization of the author was initiated in the *avant-gardes*, although we have seen that much older strategies of viewer engagement were used in 'inter-media' collaboration.

These experiments with abstraction, sequence, figuration and non-figuration also appear in visual poetry, concrete poetry [58, 61] and conceptual art [62, 63]. Concrete poetry focuses on visual and/or aural substance to the detriment of sense. As Ezra

Pound would have it in "A Few Don't by an Imagiste" (1913): "the natural object is always the adequate symbol." Object poetry or sound poetry enabled a greater interplay of perceptual modes, enhancing diverse forms of emotional and aesthetic charge, even in the absence of meaning [64]. The *avant-gardes* also tried to achieve political impact and revolution through formal innovation because, as William Burroughs put it in the Electronic Revolution (1970), the word is recognized as a virus because it has achieved a state of stable symbiosis with the host.

In *Finnegans Wake* (1937), James Joyce described cross-perceptual synesthetic experiments as "verbovicovisual". He had previously played with perceptual multi-modality in his *Ulysses* (1922). Virginia Woolf's early essays—"Street Music" (1905), "The Opera" (1906), and "Impressions at Bayreuth" (1909)—deal with music as subject-matter, and she frequently uses music figuratively as well as painting musically, as in *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and in *Between the Acts* (1941). Some pieces of concrete poetry, like e. e. cummings's "L(a", have made their way into the digital media, adapted to pieces of electronic literature, transmediated into "The Sweet Old Etcetera" by Alison Clifford (2006). Others explore kinetic typography, that is, the animation of images and sound. These experimental works can be considered the forerunners of contemporary e-poetry which, interestingly, questions the narratological turn involved in the notion of 'transmedial narrative' [65]. Artists such as Paul Klee, Antoni Tàpies or Cy Twombly also convert pictures into script bringing out the scriptural dimension of images. These relationships foreground the inevitable cultural hierarchies that qualify media and intersect with valuations of the sensorial modalities in particular spatiotemporal contexts. As already noted, while it is possible to read images as texts, in ekphrasis, it is also possible to approach writing visually and use a series of images to construct a narrative.

Avant-garde experimentation also coincided with the rise of Formalism and Structuralism. In his essay "Art as Technique", Viktor Shklovsky explained that, in reading, understanding first moves along the recognition of words in the text, shifting then to an interpretative non-linear locus where "a more complex rhythm" emerges; and even "a disruption of rhythm itself, a violation, we may add, that can never be predicted" (1965: 14) [66]. Thus, interpretation sways the text beyond the linearity of reading to the aural temporal dimension of mental associations and the flight of the mind. Defamiliarization, as formulated by Shklovsky, was a device to present common things in an unfamiliar or strange way so that audiences could gain new perspectives on the world. Shklovsky considered that works of art modify perception in order to raise cognitive awareness of how knowledge is produced. These ideas deeply influenced *avant-garde* art and theory, from Dada cut-ups to culture jamming as well as contemporary cinematography (i.e. David Cronenberg, David Lynch, Guy Maddin, or Jan Švankmajer). It has also become relevant in contemporary posthumanism, which interrogates itself as to the mechanisms by means of which nonhumans might convey meanings [67].

The term 'intermedia' was popularized by artist Dick Higgins to describe artistic activities within the *Fluxus* movement. A similar term, 'intermedium' had been previously used in a letter by Coleridge in 1812, but he never developed it. Higgins acknowledged Coleridge's influence and expanded the concept to describe artworks "in which the materials of various more established art forms are 'conceptually fused' rather than merely juxtaposed." (*Something Else Press* Vol.1, Iss.11963: 18) [68] Fluxus was an international community of artists from a wide range of areas, literature, visual design, music, sculpture, video art and so on, who developed experimental performances in the mid-1960s and 1970s. Fluxus performances were intended to bridge the gap between

art and society. It was a communal experiment to establish collective workshops, cooperatives warehouses and exhibition spaces, like the arts centre FluxFarm in New Marlborough, Massachusetts. Notable influences were Marcel Duchamp as well as musician John Cage. A manifesto was put forth in 1963 by art historian George Maciunas, a founding member of the group. However, it was not adopted by an eclectic community that did not consider itself a unified movement. For the first time, women artists were founding members of the community, including, for example, Yoko Ono (and her partner John Lennon) and feminist activist Kate Millett [69] The community dissolved after Maciunas' death in 1978. The influence of Fluxus continued and is still present today in multi-media digital art performances. The term intermediality was used in 1990 as part of the Edge'90 "Art & Life in the Nineties", which followed the Fluxus spirit. Also in the 1990s, Higgins created the Fluxlist Blog an online intermedia community of Fluxlist members.

One of the most important Fluxus characteristics was the elimination of boundaries, not only between art and life but also between the arts themselves. The impact of Japanese culture in Fluxus still remains to an object of further research [70]. Fundamentally, artists in Fluxus wanted to explore what happens when different media intersect. This sense of media heterogeneity can be seen connected to the growing dependency of artists, and society in general, on media technologies. The post-medium condition is partly defined by the fact that artists work across a range of different modalities and medialities, combining them for various purposes and effects, and contributing to blur intermedial boundaries.

5. Conclusions

Intermediality is a multi-layered concept that involves a cluster of aspects that range from sensorial configurations to material and technical media, including also the sociological and cultural aspects that qualify media and cause a particular technical apparatus to be developed, accepted and popularized. Intermedial Studies explore art forms as having no borders. Perhaps because of the neuroplasticity of the human brain, our artistic creations are also plastic contact zones.

To look at art history is, in fact, to contemplate media history, the manifestation of the specific possibilities of each medium and their reciprocal sociocultural capacity of influence through representation. The history of art is inextricably linked to the development of different media. From cave paintings to oil paintings, from sculptures to photography and film, each new medium has opened up new possibilities for artists to create and express themselves. Moreover, each new medium has also influenced the way artists have approached their craft, shaping their techniques, styles and artistic visions.

As seen in this overview, until the twentieth century, the discussion on intermediality largely involved philosophers as well as artists and writers. The invention of the printing press appeared in relation to the new materiality of paper formats. Gradually, printing also evolved, to include engraving, etching and other techniques on a variety of materials. The nineteenth century saw the birth of photography and, soon after, film and later video making. With digital media convergence, screens became part of our lives. After the 1990s, a number of monographs and compilations from diverse disciplinary and methodological backgrounds, including literary studies, music, theatre, film, television, video, etc., saw the light coinciding with the great shift caused by the rapid growth of digital technologies. Thus, this research is extended in another chapter, part of IntechOpen volume *The Intermediality of Contemporary Visual Arts.*

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