


Intermediality and Interarts Studies

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In recent years, a sign has appeared on the backs of cars that is expected to make an immediately recognizable statement. It is composed of a short horizontal convex line connecting on the left with a corresponding concave line, while on the right both lines intersect. In many cultures it would be read as the simplest and most abstract representation of a fish. And that is how it is intended to be read; but the message it is meant to convey is an expression of faith. Those who use the sign and many who read it will know that it has a long history: it was used as a coded sign by early Christians, before their faith was elevated to the state religion. It reads indeed “fish” – in Greek; and ιχθυς (ichthys), or more correctly ΙΧΘΥΣ, was understood to be an acronym for what in English would be “Jesus Christ God’s Son Savior,” in a world view in which this connection would appear as anything but accidental. Decisive for its effectiveness as a furtive sign was its intermedial nature, which made it possible to represent the essence of one’s faith in two easily and artlessly produced lines. The lines are part of a system of visual representation; but the “fish” they represent belongs to a complex mode of verbal representation tied to the spelling system of a particular language. Several instances of the visual sign grouped together would represent no more than a school of fish; but in isolation and in a particular context the sign stands for a Greek word which, tied to this sign, is likewise isolated from all other instances of “ΙΧΘΥΣ” and assumes the character and functions of an acronym. In the particular use to which it was put by the early Christians and for which it has been resuscitated in our days,¹ the sign belongs neither solely to a visual medium nor to a verbal medium but relies on the codes and signifying power of both; it is an intermedia sign. 

The concept of “intermedia” signs or texts, along with those of “multimedia” and “mixed-media” texts, forms part of the instruments operated by a transdisciplinary field dedicated to the study of “intermediality.” The term is relatively new, and

¹ The contemporary function of the sign, now available in solid, mass-produced form, is of a more public nature and addressed to believers and non-believers alike. It has had a polemical response by the production of a sign that has added to the bottom of the fish sign four angled lines signifying feet, in a visual short-hand asserting the theory of evolution by which sea-creatures moved to land, in defiance of Genesis. This has apparently been met with another sign based on the many cartoons showing the bigger fish eating the smaller: the “walking fish” is being swallowed by a bigger one without feet but inscribed with TRUTH in large letters – which turns the intermedia sign into a mixed-media sign, as we shall see.

there are as yet only few institutions offering courses of study and carrying on research under this label. One of the earliest “Intermedial Studies” programs was the Intermedia studies (first called Interarts studies) at the Department of Cultural Sciences of Lund University, created by Hans Lund in 2001.²

The transdisciplinary discourse on intermediality that has begun to establish itself incorporates the traditions of what some fifteen years ago began to be called “Interart(s) Studies”³ and the discussion of intermediality carried on within the “Media Studies” disciplines as well as the more recent investigations into the “New Media Poetries”⁴ based on the digital media.

“Interarts Studies” has been a growing interdisciplinary area of the humanities, still dominated by investigations into the interrelations of literature and the other arts, but increasingly also involved with aspects of intermedial connections between the visual arts, music, dance, performance arts, theatre, film, and architecture, where the word plays only a subsidiary role, or none at all. The focus still tends to be on “texts,”⁵ and the preferred kind of text, and for a long time the only one, has been the kind that could be considered a work of art. Aesthetic concerns were initially of considerable importance.

“Media Studies” have often approached issues of intermediality in the context of communications studies, where questions of production, distribution, function, and reception have always played a significant role. All the areas studied – radio, cinema, television, video, and also the print media – involve multiple media and often complex technological production processes and apparatuses. Intermediality is thus an issue both within each of these media and in their interrelations with each other as well as with the “arts” covered by the traditional Interarts Studies. Here, as in the other instances, semiotics has supplied useful concepts and methods in dealing with a number of crucial issues.

The “New Media Poetries,” a more recent phenomenon, usually rely on digital technologies for their production and for the most part on the computer for their reception. Largely based on developments in twentieth-century visual poetry, where the concept of “poetry” assumed new dimensions, texts produced in the various genres

² Its roots reach back to a research program in Interarts Studies originally developed in Lund University’s Comparative Literature Department by Ulla-Britta Lagerroth.

³ The label was internationally established by the conference on “Interarts Studies: New Perspectives” at Lund University, 15–20 May 1995; see the selected conference papers published in Ulla-Britta Lagerroth, Hans Lund, and Erik Hedling (eds.): *Interart Poetics. Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media*. Amsterdam and Atlanta 1997. I myself had used the label in my introduction to the team’s previous volume: Claus Clüver: “Interartiella studier: en inledning,” trans. Stefan Sandelin, in Ulla-Britta Lagerroth, Hans Lund, Peter Luthersson, and Anders Mortensen (eds.): *I musernas tjänst: Studier i konstarnas interrelationer*, Stockholm; Stehag 1993, p. 17–47.

⁴ Cf. Eduardo Kac (ed.): *Media Poetry. An International Anthology*, Bristol, UK 2007, the revised, enlarged and updated edition of *New Media Poetry. Poetic Innovation and New Technologies. Visible Language Vol. 30, No. 2*, May 1996.

⁵ “Text” is to be understood here throughout in the semiotic usage that refers to all complex signs or sign combinations in any sign system as “texts.”

of media poetry will produce visual, aural (including musical), and kinetic events in which the word (or parts of it) in its graphic and sometimes vocal dimensions may play a leading role or (almost) none at all. Many media (and hypermedia) texts will assign some performative tasks to the recipient, or computer operator; increasingly, texts are designed to be interactive to the point that the operator determines the course of events. Entirely dependent on the ever evolving technological possibilities of the electronic digital media, such texts are entirely intermedial; moreover, they can be instantly transmitted to receivers all over the globe, and can be designed to invite the interaction of a global community. New Media Poetries will inevitably require intermedial considerations in the analysis of individual texts even when the major interest of a study is focused elsewhere. Their connection with earlier forms of visual poetries invites comparison of the old media with the new.

The need to reconceive “Interarts Studies” as “Studies of Intermediality” or “Intermedial Studies” arose both from a realization that there had been a gradual change within the theoretical orientation and the practices of the interdisciplinary discourse and from an approximation of the areas of Interarts Studies and Media Studies. While discussions comparing what much later came to be considered as “the arts” have a long history that reaches back to antiquity, serious and influential academic studies concerned with the interrelations of the arts began to be published around the middle of the twentieth century. Étienne Souriau’s *La correspondance des arts. Éléments d’esthétique comparée* of 1947 was one of the first, equaled in impact by Susanne K. Langer’s *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* of 1953.⁶ Approaching the subject from a literary rather than a philosophical and aesthetic angle, Calvin S. Brown’s *Music and Literature* (1948) exercised a seminal influence in the US. The international “Bibliography on the Relations of Literature and Other Arts”⁷ which Brown collected and began to distribute annually in 1952, eventually under the auspices of the newly founded MLA Division on Literature and Other Arts, served the literary community as an immediate source of information about the growing number of contributions to this emerging field, which in 1961 Henry H. H. Remak declared to be one of

American readers had been introduced to attempts at organizing the universe of the arts by Theodore Meyer Greene’s *The Arts and the Art of Criticism*, New York 1973 [1940], and Thomas Munro’s *The Arts and Their Interrelations*, 1949, rev. ed. Cleveland 1967.

⁷ See *A Bibliography on the Relations of Literature and Other Arts 1952–1967*, New York 1968. It was continued in annual installments by a team of contributors under the editorship of Calvin S. Brown (until 1972), Steven Paul Scher (1973–1984), and Claus Clüver (1985–1998). The 1974 bibliography was published in *Hartford Studies in Literature*, Vol. 7, 1974, p. 77–96. From 1985 til 1998 published in the *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, it covered “Theory and General Topics,” “Music and Literature,” “The Visual Arts and Literature,” “Film and Literature” (1974–1984), “Dance and Literature” (1985–), since 1986 with author and subject indices and partial annotation. Bibliography not included in Vols. 39, 41, 42, and 44; Vol. 40 contains bibliographies for 1989 and 1990; Vol. 43 (1995) contains a partial bibliography for 1991–1995; Vol. 45/46 (1997/1998) a partial bibliography for 1996–1997.

the legitimate domains of Comparative Literature,⁸ a claim tentatively confirmed by Ulrich Weisstein in 1968⁹ and sanctioned in 1981 by Manfred Schmeling.¹⁰

Comparative Literature was at mid-century being (re-)established as an interdisciplinary program designed to deal with the interrelations among the literatures in modern (usually Western) languages which were housed in individual disciplines. Since its beginnings in the nineteenth century, the dominant orientation of literary studies at the university had been historical. Art history was the academic discipline devoted to the visual arts and architecture, and the study of music and the theatre was similarly organized; all of them were more recent academic fields than *Literaturgeschichte*. Earlier in the century, art history had been reconceived as a history of changing styles, an example followed in the literary disciplines. Comparing the concepts used in determining the visual and the literary characteristics that indicated changes of style, the literary scholar Oskar Walzel had detected parallels which he found so enlightening that in 1917 he published a treatise on *Wechselseitige Erhellung der Künste. Ein Beitrag zur Würdigung kunstgeschichtlicher Begriffe*;¹¹ parallels perceived in the light of this “mutual illumination” have been central to most attempts at constructing periods and movements across artistic media.

New Criticism shifted the focus of scholarly attention to interpretation and thus to “the poem itself,”¹² to the individual text as a quasi-autonomous entity. René Wellek’s and Austin Warren’s *Theory of Literature*¹³ (1949) provided the theoretical underpinning

⁸ Henry H. H. Remak: “Comparative Literature. Its Definition and Function” in Newton P. Stallknecht and Horst Frenz (eds.): *Comparative Literature. Method and Perspective*, Carbondale, IL, 1961, p. 3–37. This first Comparative Literature manual published in the US consisted almost exclusively of contributions by members of the Indiana University faculty, where Horst Frenz and Ulrich Weisstein had begun teaching an undergraduate course on “Modern Literature and the Other Arts” in 1954.

⁹ Ulrich Weisstein: “Exkurs: Wechselseitige Erhellung der Künste” in *Einführung in die Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft*, Stuttgart 1968, p. 184–97; English: “The Mutual Illumination of the Arts” in *Comparative Literature and Literary Theory*, trans. William Riggan, Bloomington, IN, 1973, p. 150–66.

¹⁰ Schmeling included an essay by Franz Schmitt-von Mühlenfels: “Literatur und andere Künste” in Manfred Schmeling (ed.): *Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft. Theorie und Praxis*, Wiesbaden 1981 (p. 156–74), his manual covering six “Aufgabenbereiche” of the field. – In 1979, the ICLA had made “Literature and the Other Arts” one of the major topics of its IXth triennial Congress; see Zoran Konstantinovic, Ulrich Weisstein, and Steven Paul Scher (eds.): *Literature and the Other Arts. Vol. 3 of Proceedings of the IXth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association*, Innsbruck 1981. In the same year, “La littérature et les autres arts” was the topic of a publication of the Institut de Formation et de Recherches en Littérature of the Université Catholique de Louvain; see *La littérature et les autres arts*, Louvain-la-Neuve and Paris 1979.

¹¹ Oskar Walzel: *Wechselseitige Erhellung der Künste. Ein Beitrag zur Würdigung kunstgeschichtlicher Begriffe*, Berlin 1917, English: “Mutual Illumination of the Arts,” introduced and abridged by Ulrich Weisstein, trans. Kent Hooper and Ulrich Weisstein: *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, Vol. 37, 1988, p. 9–31.

¹² Cf. Stanley Burnshaw (ed.): *The Poem Itself*, Cleveland 1962, an anthology of poems from the major European literatures in their original languages, with prose translations and interpretive commentary by master critics.

¹³ René Wellek and Austin Warren: *Theory of Literature*, New York 1963 (1949).

for an approach that insisted on the “intrinsic” study of literature as the proper scholarly activity, relegating the study of the relations of literature with the other arts, along with other non-literary concerns, to the non-essential “extrinsic” approaches. All of this was part of a basically formalist discourse that took the ontological status of “Art” for granted and was engaged in defining the essence of each of the individual arts,¹⁴ which tended to confine their study to specific academic disciplines.

But the discourse also included those voices that, while sharing most of the assumptions of the dominant paradigm, insisted on the interrelation of the arts and on the long tradition supporting this view. Jean Hagstrum’s *The Sister Arts. The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (1958)¹⁵ traced in its first chapter the history of the *ut pictura poesis* concept from antiquity into the seventeenth century, when poetry began to count on familiarity with the manner of pictorial representation to complete images sketched verbally; the Horatian formula has remained a prominent theme in word-and-image studies. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s strictures against that descriptive literary practice in *Laokoön oder: Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766),¹⁶ which were based on a distinction between time-based literary representation and space-based plastic representation, became a point of departure for many twentieth-century investigations into spatial properties of literary texts and temporal aspects of visual works;¹⁷ Lessing’s essay has remained one of the classical points of reference in the discourse.¹⁸ Brown followed his first book in 1953 with a volume on *Tones Into Words. Musical Compositions as Subjects of Poetry*.¹⁹ In 1955 Leo Spitzer re-introduced the rhetorical term “ekphrasis” into literary discourse,²⁰ and studies of verbal representations of visual representations have become a major area of word-and-image studies. I later proposed to extend the definition of the term to “verbal representations of texts composed in non-verbal sign systems,” because the objects of such representations need not be representations and are often in other media besides painting or sculpture, and the manner of such

¹⁴ Examples are Wolfgang Kayser: *Das sprachliche Kunstwerk*, Bern 1948, and Roman Ingarden: *Untersuchungen zur Ontologie der Kunst. Musikwerk, Bild, Architektur, Film*, Tübingen 1962; English: *Ontology of the Work of Art. The Musical Work, the Picture, the Architectural Work, the Film*, trans. Raymond Meyer with John T. Goldthwait, Athens, OH, 1989.

¹⁵ Jean H. Hagstrum: *The Sister Arts. The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray*, Chicago 1974 (1958).

¹⁶ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: *Laokoön oder: Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*, 1766. English: *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. with introduction and notes by Edward Allen McCormick, Baltimore 1984 (1962).

¹⁷ Perhaps the earliest was Joseph Frank’s essay “Spatial Form in Modern Literature,” 1945, rpt. in Frank: *The Widening Gyre. Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature*, New Brunswick, NJ, 1963, p. 3–62.

¹⁸ Most recently in Walter Moser: “As relações entre as artes. Por uma arqueologia de intermedialidade” in *Aletria. Revista de estudos de literatura (Belo Horizonte)*, No. 14, July–Dec. 2006, (p. 40–63), p. 42–45.

¹⁹ Calvin S. Brown: *Tones Into Words. Musical Compositions as Subjects of Poetry*, Athens, GA, 1953.

²⁰ See Leo Spitzer: “Ode on a Grecian Urn”; or, Content vs. Metagrammar” (1955), rpt. in *Essays on English and American Literature*, Anna Hatcher (ed.), Princeton, NJ, 1962 (1955), p. 67–97.

representations tends to depend more on the function served than on the non-verbal medium involved.²¹ Particular forms of ekphrasis amount to intermedial or intersemiotic transposition, the transformation of a text into a self-sufficient text in a different medium or sign system. Such transpositions can also occur from word to image (e.g., certain illustrations), from word to music (e.g., tone poems, but not songs), and from the visual arts to music and vice versa,²² besides other media. More common, however, is the adaptation of texts to a different medium, where elements of the source text are carried over into the target text. This can involve adapting a narrative to the stage, or plays to the operatic medium; most film studies began with analyses of cinematographic adaptations of literary sources. The methods and objectives of adaptation studies have changed considerably over the decades, but interest in this kind of intermedial relationship is unabated.

The development of film studies from investigations into the adaptations of literary sources to the medium “film” and the shifting conventions of cinematographic representation and narration, usually carried out by literary scholars, into a full-fledged discipline of its own had a remarkable impact on the interarts discourse and was one of the factors that brought about its transformation and re-orientation. Besides introducing into the study of intermedial relations the complex considerations involved with its modes of production and the apparatus supporting it, the interests of many film scholars in the Hollywood cinema boosted the growing tendency in other media to broaden the investigations beyond “high art” into areas of popular culture, ultimately to include objects of a decidedly non-artistic nature – frequently objects that defied accommodation in any one of the traditional disciplines because of their status as multimedia, mixed-media, or intermedia texts. This is a situation they share with many types of cultural production. Before presenting a quick sketch of the developments and transformations of what had gradually become established and recognized as the interdisciplinary field of the comparative study of the arts, developments that led to the recognition of “intermediality” as the central concern of all such studies, I find it useful to offer a brief introduction to the concept of multimedia, mixed-media, and intermedia texts.

Opera is one of the many areas that would not be adequately covered by the standard practices of any of the traditional single arts disciplines. It will obviously

²¹ See Claus Clüver: “Ekphrasis Reconsidered: On Verbal Representations of Non-Verbal Texts” in Ulla-Britta Lagerroth, Hans Lund, and Erik Hedling (eds.): *Interart Poetics. Essays on the Interrelations Between the Arts and Media*, Amsterdam; Atlanta 1997, p. 19–33. Objections have been raised both to the term “verbal” rather than “literary” and to the extension of the class of objects to such temporal media as music, dance, and other types of performance. I have dealt with poems on music in “The *Musikgedicht*. Notes on an Ekphrastic Genre” in Walter Bernhart, Steven Paul Scher, and Werner Wolf (eds.): *Word and Music Studies. Defining the Field*, Amsterdam; Atlanta 1999, p. 187–204.

²² In May 2008, the Université Paris-Sorbonne will host an international colloquium on “Musique et arts plastiques: La traduction d’un art par l’autre” (call for papers by Jean-Jacques Nattier, Université de Montréal, and Michèle Barbe, Université Paris-Sorbonne, April 2007).

fall into the domain of musicology and music history. But an opera is a multimedia text that is meant to be performed. One can buy and read the libretto separately or as part of the score. To be studied as an adaptation of a literary source text and its intertextual contexts, it will have to be approached with the tools and background of literary studies; treated as part of the score, the libretto will be approached as a component of the operatic text. But a full study of an opera's reception will have to include not only the musical interpretations it has received, but also the ways it has been staged, and that involves everything that makes theatre a multimedia enterprise, besides the frequent inclusion of ballet interludes. This means considering the collaborative efforts of stage director and set, lighting, and costume designers, conductor, choreographer, and the performers on stage and in the orchestra pit.

Scores and movie scripts and a film's sound track can be bought separately, and overtures, arias, and ballet interludes can be performed in concert halls or as part of dance recitals. But as they are combined in an operatic (or theatre) production, the various media involved – such as the décor and the costumes – function only as part of the whole. In a comic strip, image and verbal text are distinct elements, but they would not be self-sufficient if removed from the strip. The same would be true of the verbal and visual elements of a poster or a postage stamp. It is therefore useful to distinguish between multimedia texts and mixed-media texts. “A multimedia text comprises separable and individually coherent texts in different media, while the complex signs in different media contained in a mixed-media text would not be coherent or self-sufficient outside of that context.”²³ A comic strip is a mixed-media text; an opera score that contains the libretto is a multimedia text.

There are, however, texts that are “constituted by two or more sign systems in such a way that the visual, musical, verbal, kinetic, or performative aspects of its signs cannot be separated or disunited.”²⁴ The “fish” text described in the beginning falls into this category, which is usually labeled as “intermedia discourse” or “intermedia texts,” but which might better be called “intersemiotic texts” because such texts will often be housed in one medium. Concrete or sound poems are prime examples of this type, and they are usually read as literary texts.²⁵

²³ I first published these definitions in Swedish in 1993. See Claus Clüver: “Interarts Studies: An Introduction” (1992); Swedish: “Interartiella studier: en inledning,” trans. Stefan Sandelin, in Ulla-Britta Lagerroth, Hans Lund, Peter Luthersson, and Anders Mortensen (eds.): *I musernas tjänst. Studier i konstarternas interrelationer*, Stockholm; Stehag 1993, p. 17–47. The unpublished English original was circulated among colleagues.

²⁴ This is the reformulation of my previous definition, published (in German) in Claus Clüver: “Inter textus / inter artes / inter media” in Monika Schmitz-Emans and Uwe Lindemann (eds.): *Komparatistik 2000/2001. Jahrbuch der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft*, Heidelberg 2001, p. 14–50.

²⁵ In Portuguese such texts have also been called “textos intercódigos,” which may be the most appropriate term but is untranslatable into most languages.

Using the criteria that I had established in my “Introduction,” Leo Hoek published in 1995 a systematic account of the relations of intermedial transposition and types of intermedial connections with regard to word-image relations; the title of his study, “La transposition intersémiotique: Pour une classification pragmatique,” indicates its semiotic orientation.²⁶ In “The Eternal Network: Mail Art, Intermedia Semiotics, Interarts Studies” Eric Vos synthesized in 1997 Hoek’s observations and mine in a table derived from Hoek (Hoek, p. 77), into which I have reinserted Hoek’s terms in square brackets:²⁷

SCHEMA OF WORD-IMAGE RELATIONS	transmedial relation [relation transmédiiale]	multimedia discourse [discours multimédial]	mixed-media discourse [discours mixte]	intermedial discourse [discours syncrétique]
distinctiveness [séparabilité]	+	+	+	–
coherence/self-sufficiency	+	+	–	–
polytextuality	+	–	–	–
simultaneous production	–	–	+	+
simultaneous reception	–	+	+	+
process	transposition	juxtaposition	combination	union/fusion
schematized text-image relation	text > image image > text	image text	image + texte	<i>i t m e a x g t e</i>
examples	ekphrasis art criticism photonovel	emblem illustrated book painting & title	poster comic strip postage stamp	typography calligramme concrete poetry

²⁶ Leo H. Hoek: “La transposition intersémiotique: Pour une classification pragmatique” in Leo H. Hoek and Kees Meerhoff (eds.): *Rhétorique et image. Textes en hommage à A. Kibédi Varga*, Amsterdam; Atlanta 1995, p. 65–80.

²⁷ Eric Vos: “The Eternal Network: Mail Art, Intermedia Semiotics, Interarts Studies,” in Ulla-Britta Lagerroth, Hans Lund, and Erik Hedling (eds.): *Interart Poetics. Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media*, Amsterdam; Atlanta 1997, (p. 325–327), p. 325–337. I have slightly changed Vos’s sequence. The examples are (mostly) Hoek’s, who may have found “mixte” and “syncrétique” to be the most appropriate translation of “mixed-media” and “intermedia.”

I cite the table because it includes “transposition” as a category and offers a visual representation of the decisive criteria, which refer to individual instances of the types of texts listed in the examples. It does not reflect many of the subtler forms of word-image relations. And while it can accommodate more complex media connections than the binary word-image relations, it is not easily adjusted to represent the internal and external relations of more complex media, nor does it show the complexities actually encountered in the various genres of illustrated books. Many illustrations are forms of intermedial transposition, but are juxtaposed to the text; in many modern *livres-d’artiste* and children’s books, text and image are combined or even fused in such a way that the image (and often the text) are not self-sufficient, often as a result of the book’s design and lay-out. But while it may be difficult to place such a book into any one of the categories, the criteria serve to sort out a text’s internal intermedial relations. Few texts are purely multimedial. As our glance at the opera has shown, how we approach the intermedial aspects of a text (or even a genre) depends on the context and the objective of a study.

The schema is inevitably static and treats the texts as objects. It shares this approach, as Vos has shown, with the concept of “intermedium/intermedia” used by Dick Higgins and also by Peter Frank, which presents certain classes of texts as situated between the conventional media. “Thus the happening developed as an intermedium, an uncharted land that lies between collage, music and the theater,” Higgins wrote in 1965.²⁸ This is contrasted by the dynamic view of an intermedia text offered by Jürgen E. Müller, who (carefully distinguishing between “intermedial” and “intermedia”) has suggested that we should “understand the indissoluble *connection* of diverse media as a *fusion* and *interaction* of different medial processes”²⁹ – without suggesting, however, where such processes take place. Tables like the one above are certainly useful, but this schematized format offers no possibility to indicate, for example, the various performative aspects of text reception that I have elsewhere analyzed with regard to developments in text production and theory-formation during the last fifty years.³⁰

²⁸ Dick Higgins: “Intermedia” in *Horizons: The Poetics and Theory of the Intermedia*, Carbondale; Edwardsville 1984 (p. 18–28), p. 22. Higgins published the first part in *Something Else Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1966; p. 23–28 were added in 1981. Cf. Peter Frank: *Intermedia: Die Verschmelzung der Künste*, Lecture at Kunstmuseum Bern, May 31, 1987, Berne 1987. – I have elsewhere dealt more fully with Higgins’s concept and his erroneous assumption that he was using “intermedium” in the same sense S. T. Coleridge had used the term over a century before; see Clüver, “Inter textus.”

²⁹ Jürgen E Müller: “Intermedialität als poetologisches und medientheoretisches Konzept. Einige Reflexionen zu dessen Geschichte” in Jörg Helbig (ed.): *Intermedialität: Theorie und Praxis eines interdisziplinären Forschungsgebiets*, Berlin 1998, (p. 31–40), p. 38 (my translation).

³⁰ Claus Clüver: “Concrete Poetry and the New Performance Arts: Intersemiotic, Intermedia[!], Intercultural” in Claire Sponsler and Xiaomei Chen (eds.): *East of West. Cross-cultural Performance and the Staging of Difference*, New York 2000, p. 33–61.

This production includes such new genres³¹ as the happening, not only by Higgins' definition an intermedia event – and not easily accommodated by any of the traditional academic disciplines, though certainly covered by the intermedial discourse. There are other contemporary phenomena that exceed the domains even of such multimedia disciplines as Theatre Studies. The most complex events of all times (though with a history that goes back to antiquity) are the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games, which engage all the traditional theatrical and ceremonial media including light shows and fireworks and rely heavily on modern technologies. Though usually not directly using video effects, they are essentially staged for the cameras, because the activities of the hundreds of performers, the thousands of spectators filling the stadium, and the athletes moving into the arena behind the flags of the participating nations, as well as the ceremonies of raising the flag and lighting the torch, are simultaneously recorded and broadcast to a multi-lingual audience of many millions around the globe according to carefully planned strategies (though not as painstakingly arranged and controlled as Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph des Willens* or her film of the Berlin Olympics of 1936, both given final shape after the conclusion of the events). There are many such genres, old and more recent – such as religious and civic rituals, processions and parades, rallies and pop concerts – that are entirely based on the interaction of many media and can only be adequately approached from the perspective of an intermedial discourse, no matter what the particular interest of a study, whether ideological, anthropological, sociological, semiotic, and so forth. The interdisciplinary, intermedial approach has also opened up access to such hitherto neglected though culturally significant genres as *carmina figurata*, emblems, broadsides and even medieval plays, which are no longer approached (and largely dismissed) with the expectations of literary drama but understood to have served, within their specific cultural contexts and as multi- and mixed-media productions, significant functions for the community that created and received them.³²

Broadening the field and enlarging the perspective to include these phenomena, as well as changing the questions asked and the objectives proposed for studying them, is only one of the transformations that the interdisciplinary discourse has undergone, and one of the reasons for the increasing inadequacy of the label “Interarts Studies,” which go far beyond its intranslatability into French, German, and several other languages. I have traced these developments and transformations elsewhere in somewhat greater detail.³³ Here are a few salient points, certainly oversimplified in their sketchiness:

³¹ On the questions involved in distinguishing between genre and medium see below.

³² Cf. C. Clifford Flanigan: “Comparative Literature and the Study of Medieval Drama” in *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, Vol. 35, 1986, p. 56–104.

³³ See Claus Clüver: “Interarts Studies. An Introduction” (1992/2000); “Interarts Studies. Concepts, Terms, Objectives” (1997); “Inter textus / inter artes / inter media” (2001) – all three essays unpublished in English.

1. The developments of critical theory led to a widely accepted recognition that such concepts as “art” and “literature” are cultural constructs and not ontologically grounded. The concept of “art” has undergone profound changes in Western cultural history and is not universally known in all cultures, at least not in a form comparable to the Western “arts” discourse since the 18th century.
2. Ever since the introduction of the “ready-made” and the “found object” (Marcel Duchamp) into the artworld and their eventual acceptance by that world, the status of objects as “works of art” has become dependent on the dominant “arts” discourse. “Literariness” is not inherent in a text, it is ascribed to the text by the interpretive community.
3. Some developments in contemporary artistic production (happenings, Pop Art) tended to eliminate the distinction between “high art” and “low art.”
4. The critical interest in many forms of popular art shifted the emphasis from formalist and aesthetic concerns to investigations of audiences and their expectations and needs and to the functions served by all cultural productions.
5. Theories of intertextuality led to the recognition that intertextuality always also involves intermediality, since pre-texts, inter-texts, post-texts and para-texts always include texts in other media. An individual text may be a rich object for intermedial studies.
6. Neo-avant-garde creations in all the arts tended to highlight the materiality of the media involved.
7. Artists have increasingly tended to work in several media and to produce mixed-media and intermedia “texts,” many involving performance.
8. The range of materials and physical media increased vastly – everything could be turned into “art” (sculptures made from scrap materials, installations, earthworks, mail art, music made from all manner of sound sources such as hair dryers). New technologies gave rise to new art forms such as *musique concrète* and electronic music, holographic poetry, bio-art.
9. The interarts discourse became increasingly media-oriented and included the products of the technology-based (mass-)media in its investigations.
10. New art forms have begun to develop that are entirely based on digital media and are received via the computer, either by CD’s or increasingly via the Internet. These art forms tend to involve visual, verbal (graphic and spoken), sound (including musical) and kinetic materials either in separable or in fused manifestations, and are frequently interactive.

Once “medium” instead of “art” has become accepted as the basic category for the interdisciplinary discourse, the interrelationship of the various media is conceived of as “intermediality.” This is how this research area now understands the object of its investigations, rather than as “the interrelations of the arts.” But as any dictionary will prove, “medium” has many meanings, and several of these are involved in what constitutes “intermediality.” “Physical media” are the means by which any medium’s complex signs are produced, such as the body; flute, percussion instruments; the Moog synthesizer; oil on canvas, brush and ink on paper; marble, wood; the video camera; voice; typewriter, pen; paper, parchment, skin; etc. Corresponding “media” employing these physical media are dance, music, electronic music, painting, sculpture, architecture, video, speech, typography, writing, tattooing (although the correspondences are far from perfect, for many of the physical media above are used in several “media,” including several not listed here). Then there are the “public media” including the traditional print media (the press) and those relying on more complex technological means of production (radio, television, video, etc.) that are dealt with in “Media Studies” programs. In fact, these studies tend to restrict the term “medium” to technologically based media. But to find a general definition of “medium” that will apply to all those listed above and all others covered by the concept of “intermediality” has proved a difficult task. One of the definitions found in the 1975 edition of the *American Heritage Dictionary* offers a traditional view: “A specific type of artistic technique or means of expression as determined by the materials used or the creative methods involved,” which is exemplified by “the medium of lithography.”³⁴ Materiality and means of production certainly figure more prominently in the concept of “medium” than in the concept of “art”; but the desired definition needs a less restrictive focus. Two of the definitions given in the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary are relevant in our context: “a channel or system of communication, information, or entertainment” and “a mode of artistic expression or communication.”³⁵ The first might be more acceptable to Media Studies, the second more reflective of an arts discourse. But is it possible to find a formulation comprehensive enough to suit both – and is it desirable to find one? In his book *Intermedialität: Formen moderner kultureller Kommunikation* (1996), which deals extensively with the concept, Jürgen E. Müller accepts the formulation offered in 1988 by Rainer Bohn, Eggo Müller, and Rainer Ruppert, which defines “medium” as “that which mediates for and between humans a (meaningful) sign (or a combination of signs) with the aid of suitable transmitters across temporal and/or

³⁴ See entry “medium” in William Morris (ed.): *The Heritage Illustrated Dictionary of the English Language*, International Edition, Boston: American Heritage Publishing Co.; Houghton Mifflin. International Edition distributed by McGraw-Hill International Book Company 1975, p. 815.

³⁵ See entry “medium” in *The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. Available at: <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/medium> (2007–01).

spatial distances.”³⁶ There is an appropriately greater emphasis on communication here, but “music,” “architecture,” or “holographic poetry,” in fact all categorical terms, refer to more than a single text. Moreover, in the contemporary media discourse “music” covers not only the generation and transmission of musical “signs” but also the contexts of production, distribution, and reception as well as the functions served by the musical text and its production: and all of this can hardly be accommodated in a single definition. Furthermore, there are great differences between media categories, which can only be roughly indicated here. The visual media are usually indeed categorized by the means of production (especially the traditional graphic media); but are installations and earthworks to be thought of as media or genres? Opera would be a medium (like theater), and likewise electronic music, but what about song? Under what circumstances should speech and writing be treated as individual media, and what is their relation to the verbal medium? In the absence of a single noun to designate the verbal medium (comparable to “music” or “architecture”), should “literature” stand for the entire medium, or should it be considered as designating a class or type within the medium? What are the distinctions we should make between “medium” and “genre”? Generally, “genre” will refer to a sub-category, a class within a medium. Song is a type of vocal music; should vocal music be categorized as a multimedia class within the medium “music” or as a separate medium, like opera? Under the rubric of “Mixed Media” Karin Thomas lists as one of its meanings: “Collective term for all forms of collage that expand the materials involved, e.g., assemblage, combine painting, environment.”³⁷ That makes installations and environments sub-categories of collage, but is collage a medium, like lithography?

In the discourse the concept “medium” obviously comprises diverse but inter-fused categories, which will have to be carefully sorted out only when required by the respective research interest. A general definition is likely to require more than one sentence; moreover, it will only arise from the construction of a relevant media theory that would support a comprehensive theory of intermediality. This is an ongoing project, continually affected by the development of new media. It remains to be seen whether the emphasis will fall on the processes of communication or on the techniques of production, or whether questions concerning reception will assume increasing importance.³⁸

³⁶ Rainer Bohn, Eggo Müller, and Rainer Ruppert: “Die Wirklichkeit im Zeitalter ihrer technischen Fingierbarkeit,” introduction to Bohn, Müller, and Ruppert (eds.): *Ansichten einer künftigen Medienwissenschaft*, Berlin 1988, (p. 7–27), p. 10 (my translation). Cf. Jürgen E. Müller: *Intermedialität: Formen moderner kultureller Kommunikation*, Film und Medien in der Diskussion 8, Münster 1996, p. 81.

³⁷ “Sammelbegriff für alle Formen einer materialexpansiven Kollagierung, z.B. Assemblage, Combine painting, environment.” Thomas, “Fachbegriffe zur modernen Kunst: Mixed Media,” in Thomas, *Bis Heute: Stilgeschichte der bildenden Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert*, Köln 1981, n.p.

³⁸ In 2006 Iwan Pasuchin published an overview of the numerous recent German-language publications concerning intermediality and Media Studies with a view to the consequences of these discussions for art and media education; see Iwan Pasuchin, “Thesen zur intermedialen künstlerischen Bildung,”

The conceptualization of literature as a verbal medium and the theoretical discussion of intermediality involving literature has been largely the domain of scholars working in Germany and Austria, several of them professors of English. A volume edited by Helmut Kreuzer in 1977, *Literaturwissenschaft – Medienwissenschaft*, was the sixth in the series “Medium Literatur.”³⁹ According to Jens Schröter, the first to have used the term “Intermedialität” was Aage A. Hansen-Löve, in 1983.⁴⁰ Peter Zima’s *Literatur intermedial. Musik – Malerei – Photographie – Film* was published in 1995,⁴¹ preceded by *Intermedialität. Vom Bild zum Text*, and soon followed by two other books covering central areas of Interarts Studies but carrying “intermediality” in their sub-titles (Peter Wagner, ed., *Icons – Texts – Iconotexts. Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, 1996, and Werner Wolf, *The Musicalization of Fiction. A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality*, 1999).⁴² But much of the discussion was carried on in Media Studies, with a major emphasis on film. Jörg Helbig’s *Intermedialität. Theorie und Praxis eines interdisziplinären Forschungsgebiets*⁴³ (1998) staked out a wider area. The contributions to the volume were not geared to a common definition of the concept; the label appears to have been applied to at least three kinds of relations:

1. general relations among the media,
2. transformations from one medium to another,
3. the combination (fusion) of media.

There can be no question that restricting the concept to the second or third kinds is unjustifiable. Intermediality must be seen as a comprehensive phenomenon that includes all the relations, topics, and issues traditionally investigated by Interarts Studies. It concerns such transmedial phenomena as narrativity, parody, and the implied reader/listener/viewer as well as the intermedial aspects of the intertextualities inherent in individual texts – and the inevitably intermedial character of each medium. The concept therefore extends to the literary pictorialism explored by

<http://www.ikb.moz.ac.at/downloads/IKB-Thesen.pdf> (accessed 3 sept. 2007). I did not have access to Irina Rajewski’s study *Intermedialität*, Tübingen; Basel 2002, whose position differs from that of J. E. Müller, according to Pasuchin.

³⁹ Helmut Kreuzer (ed.): *Literaturwissenschaft – Medienwissenschaft*, Medium Literatur 6, Heidelberg 1977.

⁴⁰ Aage A. Hansen-Löve: “Intermedialität und Intertextualität. Probleme der Korrelation von Wort- und Bildkunst – Am Beispiel der russischen Moderne” in Wolf Schmid and Wolf-Dieter Stempel (eds.): *Dialog der Texte. Hamburger Kolloquium zur Intertextualität*, Wien 1983, p. 291–360. See Jens Schröter, “Intermedialität” in *montage|av*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1998, p. 129–154.

⁴¹ Peter W. Zima (ed.): *Literatur intermedial. Musik – Malerei – Photographie – Film*, Darmstadt 1995.

⁴² Thomas Eicher and Ulf Beckmann (eds.): *Intermedialität. Vom Bild zum Text*, Bielefeld 1994; Peter Wagner (ed.): *Icons – Texts – Iconotexts. Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, Berlin 1996; Werner Wolf: *The Musicalization of Fiction. A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality*, Amsterdam; Atlanta 1999.

⁴³ Jörg Helbig (ed.): *Intermedialität. Theorie und Praxis eines interdisziplinären Forschungsgebiets*. Berlin 1998.

Hagstrum (*The Sister Arts*) and Hans Lund (*Text as Picture*⁴⁴) and to the entire *ut pictura poesis* topic as well as to the “musico-literary relations” first schematized by Steven Paul Scher,⁴⁵ a schema refined by Werner Wolf (*The Musicalization of Fiction* – still with the questionable focus on the individual text and without concern for production, performance, and reception). The concept covers all the topics included in *Intermedialitet. Ord, bild och ton i samspel*, the textbook edited in 2002 by Hans Lund.⁴⁶ It covers likewise the interrelations among the “old” and the “new” media and such issues as the analog versus the digital as recently discussed by Mark Hansen, W.J.T. Mitchell, and Bernard Stiegler, and the topic of *Intermedialität analog/digital*, a forthcoming volume edited by Jens Schröter and Joachim Paech.⁴⁷

Questions of transposition, transformation, and adaptation are certainly central topics of studies of intermediality. There are indeed instances of intersemiotic or intermedial transpositions that appear equivalent to interlingual translations;⁴⁸ but they usually serve different functions than these, and any critical approach should consider these functions. The majority of such transformations involves much more than the re-presentation of the decisive features of a text in a different medium, and the analysis becomes more difficult when this occurs between non-verbal media. Adaptation should be considered as a form of transformation that may involve intersemiotic transposition but requires a theoretical treatment of its own. Adaptations of verbal texts to the cinema have induced an extensive discussion, which includes the question whether a film is indeed a multi-media and/or mixed-media text or whether it should be compared, in essential features, to an installation, which is probably best read as an intermedia text. One can argue that even though parts of a story’s dialog and plot, as well as the “characters,” may be part of the film script (and therefore continue to exist in the same medium), once enacted and filmed, they are no longer the same: like the words in a performed song, as a part of the new composite text the words are not the same as the words in print.

Discussions of what Jens Schröter has labeled “Synthetische Intermedialität”

⁴⁴ Hans Lund: *Text as Picture. Studies in the Literary Transformations of Pictures*, trans. Kacke Götrick, Lewiston 1992. First published in Swedish as *Texten som tavla. Studier i litterär bildtransformation*, Lund 1982.

⁴⁵ Steven Paul Scher: “Literature and Music” in Jean-Pierre Barricelli and Joseph Gibaldi (eds.): *Interrelations of Literature*, New York 1982, p. 225–250.

⁴⁶ Hans Lund (ed.): *Intermedialitet. Ord, bild och ton i samspel*, Lund 2002.

⁴⁷ “Critics Roundtable: Mark Hansen, W.J.T. Mitchell and Bernard Stiegler on Media’s Critical Space, with Kristine Nielsen, Jason Paul, and Lisa Zaher” in *Immediacy: Chicago Art Journal 2006*, p. 82–99; Jens Schröter and Joachim Paech (eds.): *Intermedialität analog/digital. Theorien, Modelle, Analysen*. Expected to be published in 2007. See <http://www.theorie-der-medien.de/>

⁴⁸ See Claus Clüver: “On Intersemiotic Transposition” in *Poetics Today, Vol. 10, No. 1*, 1989, p. 55–90. Cf. Gwenhaël Ponnau and Andrée Mansau (orgs.): *Transpositions, Actes du Colloque National organisé à l’Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail sous le patronage de la Société Française de Littérature Générale et Comparée*, 15–16 mai 1986. Travaux de l’Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, A-38. Toulouse 1986 (involving literature, the visual arts, and music).

(cf. Hoek's "discours synchrétique") have often had recourse to Dick Higgins's concept of the "intermedium," which, as Schröter has shown, had strong ideological implications (Schröter 1998 p. 130–35). As a noun designating a new and separate class of medium the concept has not been widely accepted. The placement of an "intermedia discourse" alongside the "multimedia" and the "mixed-media" discourses shown in the table above seems to reflect the predominant view. But questions as to whether a film is best understood as an intermedia text, especially with a view to its presentation and reception, are likely to be discussed long after the status of happenings, installations, and also "bio-poems" has been (temporarily?) settled.

These are mere hints at some of the basic issues faced by a theory of intermediality. As a concept and a label, the term has been widely accepted to designate a discourse that has not only far exceeded the parameters of the more traditional "Interarts Studies" but also introduced new objects and objectives, interests and concerns, criteria and methods. The concept of "art," however understood, has certainly not been abandoned, even though quite a few of the cultural productions within the purview of "Intermedial Studies" would not be considered by an "art"-oriented discourse.

While studies of intermediality have been variously institutionalized in Media Studies and Communications Studies programs, the Humanities have only rarely offered institutional structures for the old Interarts Studies or the new Intermedial Studies. For a long time the work has been carried on at conferences, through publications,⁴⁹ by such associations as the Nordic Society for Intermedial Studies, the International Association of Word and Image Studies or the International Association for Word and Music Studies with their regular meetings, and by interdisciplinary research groups such as the Núcleo de Estudos sobre a Intermedialidade at UFMG in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Serious study of intermedial relations requires competence in dealing with the aspects of the different media involved that are relevant for the topic at hand. Until there are academics trained as students of intermediality, scholars engaging in such work are likely to approach a topic with the paradigmatic assumptions and the methods of their home discipline. But just as young artists tend to work more and more in various media, the younger generation of scholars will be familiar with the codes and conventions of several media, ranging from the traditional to the digital, as well as the many forms of media combination and fusion that characterize contemporary cultural production. They will look for institutional spaces where they can become familiar with the assumptions of the developing theories of intermediality and competent in their application, spaces that also accommodate those intermedial phenomena whose disciplinary locus has so far remained uncertain, such as the medieval Mass, the Olympic ceremonies, or the seemingly simple: "fish."

⁴⁹ There are a few book series devoted to such issues, and a number of journals primarily dedicated to intermedial relations, such as *Ars Lyrica*, *Music and Letters*, OEI (Stockholm), *Representations*, *Word&Image*, and since 2003 *Intermédialités. Histoire et théories des arts, des lettres et des techniques*.

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