

Hans-Peter Wagner (Ed.)

Intermediality and the Circulation of Knowledge
in the Eighteenth Century

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Peter Wagner and Frédéric Ogée (Eds.)

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Foreword

The editors wish to thank the Deutsch-Französische Hochschule / Université Franco-Allemande for the generous support of a conference held in Saarbrücken in June 2017. This financial support also included the publication of a selection of conference papers collected in this volume. The articles gathered here represent the outstanding contributions to the symposium concerned with intermediality and the circulation of knowledge in the eighteenth century.

We also want to thank Dr Otto at Wissenschaftler Verlag Trier. By publishing this volume as no. 6 of the series *Landau-Paris Studies on the Eighteenth Century* (LAPA-SEC), he provided once again not only a haven but also a forum for eighteenth-century scholarship. We are deeply grateful for the expertise, the advice and the technical work from the publisher's side that helped us to produce what we hope to be another significant contribution to research on the age of enlightenment.

Introduction

Hans-Peter Wagner

This book collects the edited and extended versions of the best papers delivered at a symposium on intermediality and the circulation of knowledge in the eighteenth century. Held in Saarbrücken, Germany, in 2017, this international meeting united scholars from France, Germany, England and Ireland. Published as No. 6 of the series *Landau-Paris Studies on the Eighteenth Century* (LAPASEC), the volume is divided into four sections dealing with aspects of theory, discursive intermediality, generic intermediality and intermediality and objects. Sparing the reader tedious summaries of the articles collected here, I want to keep this introduction as short as possible by just outlining what I consider to be aspects in need of further exploration.

Given the recent plethora of publications on intermediality¹ and related terms employed by this theory (e.g. ekphrasis, iconotext, intertextuality and intericonicity)², the central topic of this book, one might argue that the field has been thoroughly tilled. But anyone attending conferences on eighteenth-century literature in France or Germany will notice that, for the most part, scholars of literature are still wary of leaving what they consider a hermetic field of research. There seems to be, then, a remarkable discrepancy between a vibrant area of research that has flourished since its first theorizing in the 1980s and 1990s³ on the one hand, and the reluctance, on the other hand, of such traditional subjects as art history, literary studies and musicology (to name just three) to apply recent theories by considering interart studies, for instance, or ideas of the rhizome. The latter actually implies the disregard of disciplinary boundaries while encouraging looks across the fence as it were. There is still some debate among the specialists as to the precise definition of the term intermediality as well as to its relation with intertextuality. Considering what has been discussed in theory to date, one may safely describe intermediality as a term that

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- 1 For an up-to-date survey of the field, see especially the extensive notes and the bibliography in Bernhart, which collects the impressive work on intermediality over more than 20 years by Werner Wolf, a member of the special research centre at the University of Graz, Austria, best known for its series *Studies in Intermediality* (SIM). Wolf, it has to be added, approaches the subject mainly from a narratological angle while trying to develop a theoretical system applicable to various media.
 - 2 See my critical discussion of these terms, and especially my critique of Christoph Zuschlag's proposal for the application of an image-based theory, which he terms intericonicity, in art historical research (Wagner 2006).
 - 3 See, for instance, the introduction in Wagner 1996. For summaries of various theories of intermediality and its relation to intertextuality, and an attempt to establish a typological order in the field, see the monograph by Rajewsky, and the essays in Jahn and Ryan, the latter as well as the contributions in Ryan and Grishakova and Ryan et al., again mainly interested in narratological aspects of intermediality. In the *Handbook of Intermediality*, the editor, Gabriele Rippl, provides a broader survey of aspects of intermediality in theory, literature and other media. See Rippl, "Introduction".

concerns the relations between two or more different media (e.g. a literary text, a painting and a piece of music). Like intertextuality (of which intermediality is often considered to be a variety), it designates the new, richer, meaning of any given artwork that is achieved by exploring its covert and overt allusions to other media. Thus an ekphrasis (the verbal representation of an image) has intermedial aspects; and any allusion to a painting in a literary text can be described as intermedial. (Wagner 2017: 110)⁴

If the implications of intermedial concepts are taken seriously, one will have to admit that a purely disciplinary approach in the analysis of texts or images, for example, cannot do justice to any given representation. For all cultural representations emerge out of the interplay of several media. As the essays in the present collection by Degott and Wagner, to take just two examples, demonstrate, pictures and musical performances are rhizomatically connected to texts, while fictional texts, even if on the surface they appear to play with other texts exclusively, are highly indebted to visual representations. Taking cognizance of what is obviously amiss in studies concerned with intermediality – i.e. the discussion of its relevance outside narratology as well as a true, interdisciplinary, interest in the rhizomatic nature of cultural representations (texts, images, musical pieces) – the present volume of essays was compiled with two major aims in mind. Firstly, the contributions intend to widen our view of the field by addressing issues of intermediality beyond the area of narratology, which has perhaps taken too much space in recent scholarly discussions. Thus the volume also considers such issues as frame, genre, intercultural and chronological problems in the area of intertextuality. And secondly, the ensemble of essays also takes the discussion beyond the dominating fields of literature and art by providing additional analyses of such neglected genres as travel literature, paramedical writing and theatrical discourse. Last but not least, some essays also address the ways in which the intermedial, rhizomatic nature of material objects affected the circulation of knowledge in the culture of the eighteenth century.

Many outstanding writers in world literature have borrowed from neighbouring fields (e.g. art, theatre and music) in their highly intermedial works; yet in doing so they often critiqued and questioned what they obviously considered essentially unreliable systems of representation. Let me just provide two examples. When Herman Melville repeatedly alludes to, and actually integrates, the art of William Turner and Jacques Louis David in his superb exploration of epistemology entitled *Moby-Dick*, he does so by juxtaposing the insufficiency of verbal and visual representation as such.⁵ Similarly, both the excess of the image (the silent yet eloquent part of a visual work of art, as Derrida called it, that which is not or cannot be expressed in words) and the constant slippage of the word also fascinated Samuel Beckett who found in the images of Caspar David Friedrich a congenial system of (opaque and unreliable) representation serving as kick-off, inspiration and enrichment for his dramatic pieces.⁶ If writers from

4 See also Wagner 2015. For a brief summary and discussion of notions of intermediality as presently applied in theory, see Wolf's entry on "Intermedialität" in Nünning.

5 For a detailed study of Melville's handling of art in the context of the epistemological quest for truth, see Wagner 2018.

6 An example is Beckett's strategic integration of Friedrich's Romantic painting *Zwei Männer in Betrachtung des Mondes* (1819) in *En attendant Godot* (1953). See my recent analysis in Wagner 2016.

Jonathan Swift and Laurence Sterne in the eighteenth century, and Melville in the mid-nineteenth century, down to Beckett and Borges in our time produced what might be termed metafiction – that is writing always reflecting its material and ideological conditions of creation – it is because they never accepted the alleged borderlines between, say, art, music and literature.

In his last lectures on art at the Collège de France, published posthumously as *Manet: une révolution symbolique*, Pierre Bourdieu argued that if we wish to widen and enrich our understanding of the creation of aesthetic norms and standards in art and literature over time, we need to look at painting "à partir du point de vue de la littérature"; he added that the division of criticism by disciplinary thinking is precisely what stands in the way of our discovering the principles that eventually shaped artistic and literary thinking (Bourdieu 2016, 178). Meanwhile, the distinguished Swiss scholar Joseph Jurt (an expert of French and Hispanic literature whose pioneering work in this context was highly recommended by Bourdieu 2016, 178) has made a giant step forward in this field of research by focusing on the creation and rise of aesthetic norms in the relation of art and literature. What emerges from Jurt's meticulous analysis of the affinities and rivalries between literature and the visual arts on the level of practices, theoretical reflection, and institutions (with a particular focus on France from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries) is the obvious need of a wider scope⁷ and, above all, more critical work of this nature.⁸ Such an interdisciplinary look at drama, philosophy, poetry, prose and the arts should help us to overcome not only the crippling generic and disciplinary boundaries, as Bourdieu saw them, but also inapt views such as Jean Hagstrum's description of art and literature as "sister arts" (Hagstrum). This is the way then for us, as critics and readers, to attain a level of insight that will allow us to recognize and enjoy the common features (and snares) of different fields and genres of representation. Instead of insisting on generic separation, which keeps us barred in cages, we could thus discover the wonders, pitfalls and the fascinating if problematic essence of the construction of principles of representation as such from a viewpoint promising rich and new insights.

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7 For example, when Jurt traces the relations between the norms established in early modern drama and those in critical writings on art, one notices the work to be done for later periods.

8 See Jurt's article from 1987 and his splendid monograph *Les Arts rivaux* (2018).

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