

Intersemiotic Hospitality: Translating Human Experience Across Poetry, Painting, Music, and Dance

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Abstract: When a poem becomes music, a painting becomes a piano suite, or an orchestral work becomes choreography, criticism often defaults to fidelity: what was preserved, lost, or betrayed. This article argues that literal equivalence is impossible across materially different arts and proposes intersemiotic hospitality as a more rigorous evaluative model. Combining translation studies, intermediality, semiotics, performance studies, musicology, and philosophies of hospitality, it analyses four transmedial constellations: Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn*; Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Ravel's orchestration; the Mallarmé-Debussy-Nijinsky chain; and the cultural afterlives of Picasso's *Guernica*. The analysis uses five lenses - source materiality, transformation strategy, medium-specific affordance, acknowledged remainder, and ethical effect - and identifies five principles: attentive reception, non-annexation, material reciprocity, acknowledgment of remainder, and renewed circulation. The principal finding is that persuasive intersemiotic translation creates relational equivalence rather than sameness: it transfers tensions, rhythms, perspectives, affects, or structures while making loss and mediation legible. The article converts these findings into a five-stage model - receive, situate, transform, acknowledge, recirculate - and tests it against appropriation, medium hierarchy, cultural extraction, and automated transformation. It concludes that movement among the arts becomes humanistically valuable when the receiving work gains autonomy without claiming possession of its source, and when translation enlarges rather than replaces the field of relation.

Keywords: Intersemiotic translation; intermediality; hospitality; ekphrasis; adaptation; music; dance; comparative arts.

INTRODUCTION

When One Art Enters Another

A painting cannot literally become music. Colour has no stable equivalent in pitch, visual simultaneity does not transfer intact into duration, and a painted gesture does not possess the same weight, risk, or vulnerability as a danced one. Yet the arts continually cross these borders through ekphrasis, adaptation, remediation, quotation, performance, and media combination. Intermedial scholarship has developed precise vocabularies for these crossings, but public and critical discussion still often treats fidelity as the primary measure of value (Bruhn *et al.*, 2013; Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013; Rajewsky, 2005).

Fidelity is not irrelevant: a new work can distort, trivialize, misattribute, or exploit its source. Nevertheless, sameness is impossible when sign systems differ in material support, temporality, embodiment, and institutional context. Translation studies has long shown that equivalence is produced through choices rather than recovered as an untouched essence (Bassnett, 2014; Eco, 2001; Venuti, 2018). The more productive question is therefore relational: how does one medium answer another without pretending to own or complete it?

This article calls that relation intersemiotic hospitality. The term joins Jakobson's intersemiotic translation with Ricoeur's linguistic hospitality and Derrida's analysis of the power

embedded in welcome. A host opens a space to a guest, but also controls the threshold; the guest arrives with difference and may reorganize the house. The metaphor is valuable only if its asymmetry remains visible (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000; Jakobson, 1959; Ricoeur, 2006).

Intersemiotic hospitality shifts criticism beyond a binary of faithful or unfaithful toward a set of testable questions. Did the receiving artist study the source's form and context? Which features were selected, transformed, or excluded? What could not be carried across? Is the source attributed and situated, especially when cultural or political inequality structures the encounter? Does the new work generate a return to the source, or does it present itself as a superior replacement? These questions link formal analysis to the politics of translation (Apter, 2013; Spivak, 1993).

The argument is developed across poetry, painting, music, and dance because their differences make transfer visible. Language unfolds through syntax and semantic ambiguity; painting organizes a spatial field; music depends on duration, timbre, memory, and performance; dance makes meaning through bodies whose effort and exposure cannot be abstracted from the event. The strongest transmedial works do not eliminate these borders. They turn the border into an expressive and ethical

structure (Lessing, 1984; Mitchell, 1994; Phelan, 1993).

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND QUESTIONS

Intermediality studies has developed sophisticated distinctions among transposition, media combination, remediation, adaptation, and intermedial reference (Elleström, 2010; Rajewsky, 2005; Schröter, 2011). Translation studies has likewise moved from narrow equivalence toward cultural, political, and ethical accounts of transfer (Bassnett, 2014; Benjamin, 1968; Spivak, 1993; Venuti, 2018). The unresolved problem is not absence of terminology, but the lack of a compact evaluative model that can connect medium-specific analysis with responsibility to sources, communities, and chains of mediation.

The problem is not simply terminological. Transmedial works participate in unequal cultural systems. A prestigious institution may transform a marginalized tradition into an aesthetic resource while detaching it from community and history. A visual adaptation may subordinate music to illustration; a ballet may exoticize a literary source; a poem may speak over the image it claims to honor. Formal innovation does not eliminate power (Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1983).

The study asks five questions: (1) what is translated when material signs cannot be preserved; (2) how can fidelity be reconceived as a relation rather than a copy; (3) which losses should remain visible rather than being disguised as equivalence; (4) what distinguishes hospitality from annexation under unequal conditions; and (5) how can criticism evaluate both the autonomy of the new work and its responsibility to a source?

The article contributes a five-principle model and a diagnostic procedure for criticism, curation, education, and collaborative creation. It defines relational equivalence as a correspondence among forces - rhythm, tension, scale, perspective, affect, sequence, resistance - rather than an identity of content. Relational equivalence permits radical transformation, but obliges the critic to show precisely how the relation is constructed.

METHODOLOGY: COMPARATIVE INTERMEDIAL HERMENEUTICS

The methodology combines conceptual analysis with comparative close reading. It draws on semiotics, translation theory, intermediality, ekphrasis, musicology, performance studies, and

philosophical ethics. The design is qualitative and interpretive: it does not measure audience response, but reconstructs how works organize relations among media and how those relations distribute attention, authority, embodiment, and acknowledgment (Bal, 2002; Lotman, 1990).

The four principal constellations were selected through maximum variation. Keats stages language addressing an imagined visual object; Mussorgsky translates remembered images and the movement of a gallery visitor into piano form, later remediated orchestrally by Ravel; the Mallarmé-Debussy-Nijinsky sequence forms a chain from poem to orchestral temporality to choreographic space; *Guernica* generates a dispersed field of cultural responses rather than a single adaptation. Together they move from dyadic encounter to layered circulation.

Each case is examined through five analytic lenses: source materiality and context; affordances of the receiving medium; transformation strategy; acknowledged remainder; and ethical effect. Analysis begins with formal description, then reconstructs the historical chain of mediation, identifies gains and losses, and tests whether the new work creates return, dialogue, or replacement. This sequence offers an audit trail for interpretive claims without pretending that humanities interpretation can be reduced to a mechanical code.

The interpretive approach is deliberately self-critical. Hospitality can sound benevolent while concealing control: the host selects the guest, defines the threshold, and can withdraw welcome. The model therefore treats asymmetry not as an exception but as a constitutive problem. Non-annexation, contextual situation, and acknowledgment of remainder function as internal correctives to a comfortable rhetoric of artistic exchange (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000; Levinas, 1969).

Negative-case analysis is built into the method. A formally inventive work can fail ethically by erasing provenance; a meticulously attributed work can fail artistically by reducing one medium to illustration; an automated transformation can display technical virtuosity while concealing the labor and data from which it draws. The framework is designed to keep these dimensions distinguishable.

From Intersemiotic Translation to Intermedial Encounter

Jakobson's (1959) distinction among intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic translation remains foundational, but its verbal point of departure has been expanded by intermedial and multimodal research. Media do not merely carry messages; they configure perception through material supports, sensory channels, temporalities, and conventions (Elleström, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Intersemiotic translation is therefore not a transfer from language to a secondary code, but a reorganization of relations across media.

Semiotics explains why transfer is possible but never complete. Signs do not carry meaning as sealed containers. They operate through relations, conventions, and interpretive habits. When a sign moves between media, these relations are reorganized. A red field in painting, a high register in music, and an elevated body in dance may all produce intensity, but they do so through different material and cultural codes. Correspondence is constructed, not discovered as a universal dictionary (Lotman, 1990; Peirce, 1998).

Rajewsky (2005) distinguishes intermedial transposition from media combination and intermedial reference. This distinction is especially useful. A film adaptation of a novel transforms a work across media; opera combines music, text, performance, and scenography; a novel may evoke the techniques of cinema without leaving language. These categories often overlap, but they help identify where hospitality occurs: in the act of receiving another medium's logic, not only its subject matter (Rajewsky, 2005; Schröter, 2011).

Remediation theory further shows that new media refashion prior media while claiming immediacy or difference (Bolter & Grusin, 1999). Yet artistic translation is not only a technical refashioning. It is an encounter with another form of attention. A painting asks the eye to navigate simultaneity; music asks the listener to retain what has vanished in time; literature activates imagined worlds through language; dance makes meaning through vulnerable bodies in shared space. Translation across these forms changes not only signs but modes of being present (Bolter & Grusin, 1999; Manovich, 2001).

Intersemiotic criticism should consequently track both affordance and loss. What can the destination medium do that the source could not? Which

dimensions become unavailable? What is intensified, displaced, or newly embodied? What remains as an acknowledged remainder? These questions replace a fantasy of total transfer with a precise description of transformation (Ryan, 2004).

HOSPITALITY AS AN ETHICAL MODEL

Ricoeur (2006) describes linguistic translation through the idea of linguistic hospitality: the pleasure of dwelling in the language of the other balanced by the pleasure of receiving the foreign word at home. The concept recognizes both difficulty and reciprocity. Translation neither abolishes difference nor leaves languages isolated. It creates a relation in which imperfect equivalence becomes possible (Ricoeur, 2006).

Applied to the arts, hospitality clarifies why a receiving medium must do more than borrow content. To welcome a poem into music is to attend to its rhythm, imagery, syntax, ambiguity, and silence while accepting that music cannot preserve them as language. The composition must build a new house from its own materials. Hospitality therefore requires autonomy. A host with no house cannot host; a translation that refuses the capacities of its medium becomes inert illustration (Appiah, 2006; Kearney, 2002).

Derrida and Dufourmantelle (2000) complicate this image by showing that hospitality contains power. The host controls the threshold. Unconditional welcome is ethically compelling but practically impossible; every welcome involves conditions. In intersemiotic translation, the receiving artist selects, excludes, frames, and transforms. Ethical practice begins by acknowledging this authority rather than disguising it as neutral admiration (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000).

Intersemiotic hospitality differs from appropriation because it preserves the source's power to unsettle the receiving work. Appropriation detaches signs from relations and treats them as available property; hospitality makes genealogy, location, and asymmetry part of the new form. In cross-cultural contexts, this may require consultation, permission, benefit sharing, or refusal rather than merely attribution (Bhabha, 1994; Glissant, 1997; Spivak, 1993).

The model developed here therefore understands fidelity as fidelity to relation. A translation is faithful when it remains answerable to the source's difference, not when it reproduces a list of

contents. It may alter sequence, perspective, scale, or tone if those changes create a compelling response to the source's force. Conversely, a work may preserve plot and imagery while betraying the source by flattening its ambiguity or cultural context (Eco, 2001; Venuti, 2018).

FIVE PRINCIPLES OF INTERSEMIOTIC HOSPITALITY

Five principles organize the proposed model: attentive reception, non-annexation, material

reciprocity, acknowledgment of remainder, and renewed circulation. These principles are evaluative rather than prescriptive. They do not dictate how artists should translate; they identify responsibilities that make transmedial freedom intelligible.

Table 1: Five principles of intersemiotic hospitality.

Principle	Core obligation	Critical question	Failure mode
Attentive reception	Study what the source does formally and historically.	Which features were actually heard, seen, read, or embodied?	Using the source as a vague prompt.
Non-annexation	Preserve the source's autonomy, attribution, and cultural location.	Does the new work imply ownership or finality?	Appropriation, erasure, exoticization.
Material reciprocity	Let the receiving medium answer through its own capacities.	What does the new medium contribute that is not imitation?	Illustration or superficial analogy.
Acknowledgment of remainder	Make loss, difference, and mediation perceptible.	What cannot be transferred, and is that limit recognized?	Claiming complete equivalence.
Renewed circulation	Carry genealogy into the new public life of the work.	Are sources and mediators named as the work travels?	Cultural amnesia and decontextualization.

Attentive Reception

Translation begins before transformation. The receiving artist must encounter the source as more than a prompt. Attentive reception involves study of form, context, history, and prior interpretations. It asks what the work does, not only what it depicts. A composer responding to a painting attends to spatial tension, color relations, scale, and viewing movement; a choreographer responding to a poem attends to syntax, breath, metaphor, and voice (Said, 1983; Spivak, 1993).

Attentive reception is not antiquarian obedience. It is the ethical condition of meaningful deviation. The more deeply the source is heard, the more precisely the new work can depart. Without attention, freedom becomes projection.

Non-Annexation

Non-annexation means that the source is not reduced to raw material owned by the new work. Attribution is the minimum requirement, not the full ethic. The translation should preserve signs of the source's autonomy and cultural location. It should not imply that the receiving medium has

delivered the definitive version (Apter, 2013; Glissant, 1997).

This principle is crucial in cross-cultural work. A motif, ritual, text, image, or sound may carry communal meanings, sacred restrictions, or histories of dispossession that do not become freely available because digital reproduction is easy. Hospitality may therefore require contextualization, consultation, altered ownership arrangements, or a decision not to translate. Technical possibility is not ethical permission (Spivak, 1993).

Material Reciprocity

The receiving medium must offer its own capacities rather than imitate the source superficially. Music cannot paint, but it can organize timbre, duration, recurrence, and dynamic perspective. Dance cannot paraphrase every sentence, but it can make tension, weight, proximity, and interruption bodily. Reciprocity occurs when the source activates the medium's resources and the medium returns a genuinely new experience (Elleström, 2010; Lessing, 1984).

Material reciprocity also prevents hierarchy. Literature is not a script waiting for fulfillment by performance, and painting is not silent music. Each art has specific affordances. The translation becomes a dialogue between differences rather than a ladder in which one medium claims superiority.

Acknowledgment of Remainder

Every intersemiotic translation leaves something behind. The remainder may be semantic precision, visual simultaneity, bodily presence, cultural nuance, or historical context. Ethical translation acknowledges this loss rather than presenting itself as complete equivalence. Program notes, curatorial framing, citation, or formal self-reflexivity can make the remainder perceptible (Apter, 2013; Eco, 2001).

The remainder is not only a deficit. It can generate desire to return to the source. A musical adaptation may reveal a poem's temporal dimension while sending listeners back to its language. Translation succeeds when it expands the field of relation rather than replacing the original.

Renewed Circulation

Hospitality culminates not in possession but in circulation. The translated work enters new contexts, audiences, and further translations. It may become the source of another medium, as Debussy's orchestral response to Mallarmé later became a choreographic environment for Nijinsky. Each passage changes the constellation (Genette, 1997; Kristeva, 1980).

Renewed circulation carries responsibility. Later versions should not erase earlier contributors or present a layered cultural chain as a single act of invention. Genealogy is part of the artwork's ethical form. To name the route is to honor the relations that made the new work possible.

MEDIUM SPECIFICITY: WHAT EACH ART GIVES AND CANNOT GIVE

A hospitality model requires attention to the house: the material and perceptual conditions of the receiving medium. Without medium specificity, intersemiotic analysis collapses into thematic comparison. The same story can appear in a poem, painting, symphony, and dance, but the experience is not the same because each art organizes time, space, embodiment, and attention differently.

Literature works through language, but language is not disembodied. Rhythm, typography, voice, genre, and reading pace shape the event. Literature

can name absence, shift temporal levels, enter interior discourse, and make contradiction explicit. Its weakness in relation to painting is also its strength: it cannot place all visual elements before the reader at once, so it creates sequence, selection, and imagined completion (Barthes, 1977; Mitchell, 1994).

Painting and other static visual arts organize simultaneity, surface, scale, color, and spatial relation. A viewer may move across the image in many sequences. Yet the painting does not literally unfold in time as music does, even though viewing is temporal. When painting enters music, simultaneity must become succession or layered sound. When music enters painting, duration must be condensed, suggested, or spatialized (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Mitchell, 1994).

Music is exceptionally powerful in shaping temporal expectation, intensity, recurrence, and affective movement without fixing propositional meaning. This openness makes it hospitable to images and narratives, but also vulnerable to vague analogy. Claims that a chord is a color or a melody is a character require contextual support. The value of musical translation lies less in decoding than in relational organization (Nancy, 2007; Small, 1998).

Dance makes translation bodily. Weight, effort, balance, proximity, breath, touch, and risk become signs. Dance can expose what verbal accounts leave abstract: the cost of a gesture, the vulnerability of an encounter, the politics of who may occupy space. Yet dance is also ephemeral and dependent on specific bodies and performance conditions. Its translations are never separable from embodiment (Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Phelan, 1993).

Intersemiotic hospitality respects these asymmetries. It does not ask one medium to become another. It asks how the difference itself can become expressive.

CASE STUDY I: KEATS AND THE VISUAL OBJECT THAT SPEAKS BACK

John Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, composed in 1819 and published in 1820, does not describe a single identifiable artefact. It constructs an imagined urn and stages a complex encounter among visual stillness, verbal sequence, desire, history, and interpretation. The poem is canonical in studies of ekphrasis, yet it is more than verbal description: it is a drama in which language welcomes a visual object and repeatedly discovers

that the object exceeds its questions (Heffernan, 1993; Keats, 2001; Krieger, 1992).

The poem translates spatial scenes into temporal acts of reading. Figures frozen in pursuit, music that cannot be heard, and a procession toward an unknown destination become occasions for verbal movement. The speaker animates the object, attributes narratives, and asks questions that the urn does not answer directly. Language hosts the image by giving it sequence, but the image unsettles language through silence (Hollander, 1995; Mitchell, 1994).

This encounter exposes the power of the host. The speaker names, interprets, and moralizes. The urn is repeatedly addressed, yet its agency is produced through the speaker's rhetoric. The famous closing propositions intensify rather than resolve the asymmetry because their attribution and meaning remain debated. The poem does not finally master the object; it dramatizes the desire to do so (Heffernan, 1993).

From the perspective of intersemiotic hospitality, the poem succeeds because it acknowledges remainder. The unheard melodies, unknown town, and arrested gestures cannot be translated into complete narrative. Their silence remains active. The verbal work becomes compelling not by filling the visual object, but by circling what it cannot know (Krieger, 1992).

The case demonstrates relational fidelity. Keats does not reproduce an urn; he creates a lyric situation faithful to a tension between permanence and change, arrested action and sequential reading. The decisive transfer is not iconographic content but a structure of desire before an object that cannot answer in the speaker's terms.

The negative case is equally important. Ekphrasis can become ventriloquism when language claims to reveal what the visual object supposedly cannot say. Keats's poem remains compelling because its confidence repeatedly encounters resistance: unheard melodies, an unknown town, and frozen gestures survive the speaker's attempts at narrative possession.

CASE STUDY II: MUSSORGSKY'S PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

Modest Mussorgsky composed *Pictures at an Exhibition* in 1874 after a memorial exhibition of works by his friend Viktor Hartmann. The piano suite comprises ten picture movements linked by recurring Promenade material. It does not offer a

sonic catalogue of objects; it translates the movement, memory, and changing affect of a visitor passing through exhibition space (Taruskin, 1993).

The Promenade is central to the work's hospitality. It represents neither Hartmann's image nor a neutral transition. It stages the visitor who approaches, remembers, and changes between encounters. Its recurring material is varied, suggesting that the observer is affected by what has been seen. The host medium - music - does not merely receive pictures; it includes the perceiving body that carries one image toward the next (Small, 1998; Taruskin, 1993).

Mussorgsky uses musical resources to create relational equivalence. Register, rhythm, texture, harmony, and dynamic scale respond to architectural, grotesque, playful, and monumental qualities. The movements do not claim that sound can reproduce line or color. Instead, they reorganize visual forces as temporal experience. A gate becomes accumulated sonority; a ballet design becomes nimble rhythmic motion; catacombs become resonance and stillness (Cook, 1998).

The work also preserves absence. Several Hartmann images associated with the suite are lost, disputed, or known only indirectly, so music has become one route through which their cultural afterlife continues. The score is not a transparent archive and cannot restore missing visual objects. It witnesses a relation among friendship, mourning, looking, and transformation, thereby making loss part of the work's genealogy (Taruskin, 1993).

Maurice Ravel's 1922 orchestration adds another layer of hospitality. The piano suite enters an orchestral medium with new timbral, registral, and spatial possibilities, and Ravel's version has become so influential that it can obscure the keyboard work it transforms. This is a productive negative test: renewed circulation becomes annexation when a later mediation is mistaken for the source. Ethical listening should therefore name Mussorgsky, Hartmann, Ravel, and the exhibition history rather than collapsing the chain into a single masterpiece.

CASE STUDY III: MALLARME, DEBUSSY, AND NIJINSKY

The movement from Stéphane Mallarmé's *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (1876) to Claude Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894) and

Vaslav Nijinsky's choreography (1912) offers an exemplary transmedial chain. Each work receives a predecessor while reorganizing ambiguity, sensuality, and temporal structure; the sequence demonstrates that intersemiotic hospitality is a history of thresholds rather than a single act of transfer (Code, 2001; Garafola, 1989; Mallarmé, 1994).

Mallarmé's poem constructs the faun's uncertain recollection of desire through symbolic density, discontinuity, and self-questioning. The language does not deliver a stable event; it hovers between memory, fantasy, and dream. Debussy's *Prelude* does not narrate the poem line by line. Its opening flute, flexible phrasing, harmonic ambiguity, and suspended direction create a musical analogue to indeterminate awakening and desire (Code, 2001; Mallarmé, 1994).

Debussy's relation to the poem is hospitable because it preserves ambiguity through musical means rather than replacing it with a clear program. The composition receives the poem's atmosphere and structure of hesitation, but lets orchestral color and temporal unfolding answer in their own language. Fidelity occurs at the level of relation: languor, recurrence, interruption, and unresolved sensuality (Code, 2001).

Nijinsky's choreography receives both poem and score, but it introduces the visible, gendered, and controversial body. Stylized profiles, flattened poses, and frieze-like groupings respond to visual antiquity while resisting the flowing conventions associated with ballet. The faun's desire becomes spatial and bodily. What was ambiguous in language and sound acquires the risk of public gesture (Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Garafola, 1989).

The chain also exposes asymmetry. Each later work may overshadow the earlier one, and performance traditions can normalize gestures that were once disruptive. Historical memory is therefore part of formal analysis: Nijinsky is not simply dance to Debussy, and Debussy is not merely music inspired by Mallarmé. Each stage transforms the conditions under which the others are perceived.

Relational equivalence in this constellation resides in hesitation rather than plot. Symbolist ambiguity becomes harmonic suspension; orchestral languor becomes stylized bodily tension; desire moves from grammatical indeterminacy to public gesture. What crosses the media is not a stable message but

a pattern of uncertainty that each medium must remake.

CASE STUDY IV: GUERNICA AND THE ETHICS OF RESPONSE

Picasso's *Guernica* was created for the Spanish Pavilion at the 1937 Paris International Exposition after the bombing of the Basque town on 26 April. Its subsequent history has generated poems, songs, performances, reproductions, political posters, and institutional debates. The painting is therefore not only an object of adaptation but a cultural threshold through which later media confront violence, memory, and protest (Chipp, 1988; van Hensbergen, 2004).

The painting's monochrome scale, fractured bodies, compressed space, and unstable iconography resist a single narrative reading. That resistance has made it powerful and vulnerable. Later works may respond to its formal force, its historical referent, its status as an antiwar icon, or its institutional aura. Not all such uses are equally hospitable (Chipp, 1988; Mitchell, 1994).

An ethical response to *Guernica* must maintain the relation between formal innovation and historical violence. Detached from the bombing and Basque memory, the painting can become a generalized brand of suffering; confined to a single historical meaning, it loses the capacity to address later violence. Hospitality requires both location and circulation: the work may travel, but the route and historical referent must remain legible (van Hensbergen, 2004).

The case makes non-annexation especially important. Political art is often reproduced because it has become recognizable. Recognition can mobilize solidarity, but it can also become branding. A hospitable translation should disclose its source, name the historical event, and create a new responsibility rather than use suffering as visual intensity (Chipp, 1988; Said, 1983).

Guernica also clarifies the role of remainder. No poem, performance, or musical work can carry the painting's simultaneous field, just as the painting cannot reproduce the sounds, testimonies, and temporal experience of the bombing. The gaps among media become ethically productive when they lead to archives, voices, and histories beyond the iconic image (Apter, 2013; Chipp, 1988).

This remainder should direct the receiver beyond the icon. A hospitable response opens routes toward photographs, testimonies, Basque histories,

the politics of the Spanish Civil War, and later antiwar uses of the painting. It fails when recognizability substitutes for historical work.

THE TRANSLATOR AS CURATOR, CO-WITNESS, AND RESPONSIBLE STRANGER

Intersemiotic translation is frequently described as an act of artistic authorship, but the case studies suggest three additional roles: curator, co-witness, and responsible stranger. Each role corrects a different danger. The curator selects and arranges relations; the co-witness accepts an obligation to the event or experience approached; the responsible stranger recognizes that closeness does not abolish distance (Bal, 2002; Butler, 2005; Said, 1983).

The curatorial role becomes clear whenever a translation chooses fragments from a larger source. Mussorgsky did not translate an entire exhibition. Keats constructs a selective visual field. Choreography foregrounds some musical structures and ignores others. Selection is inevitable, but it should be visible as selection. The translator-curator does not claim that the chosen elements equal the whole. Instead, the new work offers a situated path through it (Bal, 2002).

The role of co-witness is especially important when the source concerns violence, trauma, exile, or collective memory. A later artist cannot occupy the position of those who suffered, yet neither is the artist merely an external observer. By responding publicly, the artist enters a chain of memory and assumes obligations: accuracy where facts are known, humility where experience is not owned, and resistance to the conversion of pain into spectacle. Co-witnessing is neither identity nor distance; it is responsible proximity (Butler, 2005).

The responsible stranger names the condition of all translation. Even within the same culture, another artwork remains partially foreign. Its medium, historical horizon, and internal decisions cannot be fully possessed. This foreignness is not a defect to overcome. It is what makes translation necessary. The stranger approaches, learns the customs of the house, and still speaks with an accent. That accent may become the site of invention, provided it does not present itself as the source's authentic voice (Appiah, 2006; Kearney, 2002).

These roles also complicate the opposition between source and adaptation. The so-called

source may itself be a translation of myth, memory, testimony, or earlier form. The translator enters a crowded house. Curatorial honesty therefore includes genealogy: identifying prior mediators and recognizing that originality often consists in reorganizing relations rather than beginning from nothing.

Understanding the artist as curator, co-witness, and responsible stranger makes ethical evaluation more concrete. It asks not whether the translator had good intentions, but how selection, framing, proximity, and distance were formed within the work and its public presentation.

THE INTERSEMIOTIC HOSPITALITY MODEL

The Intersemiotic Hospitality Model translates the five principles into a five-stage procedure: receive, situate, transform, acknowledge, and recirculate. The sequence is heuristic rather than linear; artists may move repeatedly among stages. Its value lies in making usually invisible decisions discussable: what was studied, who was consulted, which formal relation was chosen, what could not be transferred, and how the new work returns audiences or benefits to the source field.

Receive concerns attentive encounter with form and resistance (Said, 1983; Spivak, 1993). Situate reconstructs history, authorship, culture, prior mediation, and power (Bal, 2002; Genette, 1997). Transform identifies the formal operation by which the destination medium actively reorganizes relations (Elleström, 2010; Rajewsky, 2005). Acknowledge makes loss, selection, and mediation visible (Apter, 2013; Venuti, 2018). Recirculate considers what the new work does in public and whether it preserves genealogy, enables return, or produces extractive replacement (Jenkins, 2006; Kristeva, 1980).

The model can be used to compare works that differ radically in style. It does not reward closeness automatically. A radical adaptation may be more hospitable than a literal one if it responds deeply to the source's tensions and names its changes. A superficially faithful version may be annexing if it treats the source as content without context.

The model also permits disagreement. Critics may differ about what constitutes the source's central force, which remainders matter most, or how much contextual explanation a work should carry. The purpose is not to eliminate judgment but to make its ethical grounds explicit.

Table 2: The Intersemiotic Hospitality Model.

Stage	Action	Evidence to examine	Possible outcome
Receive	Attend closely to form, context, and prior interpretations.	Notes, sketches, source study, rehearsal process.	A grounded rather than generic response.
Situate	Identify history, authorship, power, and cultural ownership.	Attribution, provenance, community relation, framing.	A translation that knows where it stands.
Transform	Use the destination medium's specific resources.	Timbre, movement, montage, spatial design, verbal structure.	Relational equivalence rather than copying.
Acknowledge	Mark remainder, loss, and mediation.	Program notes, formal gaps, citations, reflexive devices.	Respect for what the new work cannot contain.
Recirculate	Return the work to public exchange with its genealogy intact.	Credits, archives, education, access, further adaptation.	An expanding network of responsible relation.

Table 3: Comparative analysis of four transmedial constellations.

Constellation	Direction of transfer	Relational equivalence	Productive remainder
Keats and the imagined urn	Visual object to lyric poem	Stillness becomes verbal questioning and temporal suspension.	The silent image refuses complete narrative possession.
Mussorgsky and Hartmann	Exhibition images to piano suite	Visual character becomes rhythm, register, texture, and promenade.	Lost or uncertain images remain absent from musical reconstruction.
Mallarme-Debussy-Nijinsky	Poem to orchestra to dance	Ambiguity migrates through syntax, harmony, color, gesture, and space.	Each medium leaves untranslatable elements that provoke the next.
Guernica response field	Painting to poetry, music, performance, and public iconography	Fracture and protest become renewed acts of witnessing.	Historical specificity exceeds the generalized antiwar symbol.

APPLICATIONS IN COMPARATIVE CRITICISM, CURATION, AND COLLABORATION

Comparative criticism can use intersemiotic hospitality to move beyond influence hunting. Rather than asking only whether one artist knew another work, the critic can examine how a medium reorganizes perception. The object of study becomes the quality of relation: what was received, what was transformed, and what remained resistant (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013; Ryan, 2004).

Curatorial practice can make these relations visible by presenting sources and transformations without arranging them in a hierarchy. An exhibition might place poem, sketch, score, rehearsal record, and performance documentation in a network rather than treating one as origin and the others as supplements. Labels can identify losses and mediations, not merely celebrate cross-disciplinary creativity (Bal, 2002; Said, 1983).

Arts education can also benefit. Students can translate a short passage into movement, a painting

into sound, or a musical structure into visual form, but the exercise should include reflective documentation. They should explain what they attended to, what their medium could not carry, and how they avoided turning the source into decoration. This converts creative activity into humanistic inquiry.

Collaborative creation requires explicit conversation about power. Who initiates the project? Whose work is named? Who controls editing and distribution? How are communities represented and compensated? Intersemiotic hospitality is not fulfilled by aesthetic sensitivity alone. Institutional relations are part of the form (Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Small, 1998).

Digital culture expands the urgency of these questions. Images, sounds, texts, and styles can be sampled and transformed at extraordinary speed. Generative systems intensify the distance between source and output, often obscuring the works on which patterns were learned. A hospitality ethic would demand greater attention to provenance, attribution, consent, and the meaningful difference between inspiration and extraction.

Digital Remediation and Machine Transformation

Digital remediation and machine transformation intensify these questions. Generative systems can convert text into image, image into music, or performance traces into synthetic motion at unprecedented speed. Yet automated fluency can hide provenance, data extraction, labour, and the statistical nature of the transformation. Intersemiotic hospitality therefore requires documentation of source materials, rights, model limitations, and human editorial decisions rather than treating technical output as autonomous creation (Bender *et al.*, 2021; Crawford, 2021; UNESCO, 2021).

Machine systems do not receive a work in the human sense: they do not encounter vulnerability, history, or obligation. Human agents and institutions remain responsible for dataset selection, prompting, curation, attribution, publication, and consequences. The model should therefore be applied to the entire sociotechnical chain rather than anthropomorphizing the system.

Non-annexation in generative media requires transparent provenance, respect for rights and restrictions, and refusal to present statistically derived style imitation as unmediated originality. Acknowledgment of remainder also requires stating what the transformation cannot know: community significance, lived experience, embodied risk, and the historical specificity of a source.

Digital tools can nevertheless support genuine hospitality by widening access, enabling practice-led comparison, supporting disability access, and revealing formal relations that remain difficult to test manually (Hayles, 2008). The ethical issue is not digital transformation itself, but whether speed and scale expand relation or intensify extraction.

The model proposed here does not reject machine transformation. It asks whether the process receives, situates, transforms, acknowledges, and recirculates responsibly. These questions make visible what automation tends to hide: every output has a genealogy, every style has makers, and every translation enters a field of obligations.

Ekphrasis, Anti-Ekphrasis, and the Right of the Image Not to Speak

Ekphrasis is often defined as the verbal representation of visual representation, but its history includes both desire and resistance. The speaking text approaches an image, animates it,

narrates it, or competes with it. This can be an act of attention, yet it can also become a form of verbal conquest in which language claims to reveal what the image supposedly cannot say for itself (Clüver, 1997; Heffernan, 1993; Krieger, 1992).

Krieger (1992) describes ekphrasis as a recurring attempt to arrest the movement of language and achieve the spatial presence associated with visual art. Heffernan (1993) emphasizes the dynamic contest between word and image. These accounts show that intersemiotic hospitality cannot assume harmony. The arts often meet through rivalry, fascination, and anxiety about their different powers (Heffernan, 1993; Krieger, 1992).

The idea of anti-ekphrasis is useful for works that refuse to translate the image into a stable verbal account. A poem may circle an artwork, foreground the failure of description, or attend to the conditions of looking rather than explain the image. Such restraint can honor the right of the visual object not to become a proposition. The image is allowed to remain seen without being fully spoken (Mitchell, 1994).

This right is especially significant in relation to sacred, traumatic, or culturally restricted images. Some images are not available for unrestricted reproduction or commentary. Their visibility may be governed by ritual, community authority, or ethical protection. Intersemiotic hospitality includes the possibility that the threshold should remain closed, or that entry requires conditions established by those to whom the image belongs (Glissant, 1997; Mitchell, 1994).

At the same time, the claim that an image is ineffable can become another form of mystification. Images participate in institutions, ideologies, and histories that require critical language. The right not to be exhausted by speech is not immunity from interpretation. It is a demand that interpretation remain aware of its medium and power.

Ekphrasis thus becomes a test case for relational equivalence. The strongest verbal responses do not duplicate the image or surrender before it. They create a language of looking that reveals both contact and distance.

OPERA, THEATRE, AND THE SHARED HOUSE OF MULTIPLE MEDIA

Some arts do not translate one medium into another but construct a shared house in which

several media coexist. Opera, theatre, music theatre, installation, and digital performance combine voice, text, image, movement, architecture, and sound. These forms complicate the host-guest metaphor because no single medium necessarily owns the space. Hospitality becomes a negotiation among co-residents (Cook, 1998; Fischer-Lichte, 2008).

The dream of the total artwork has often imagined synthesis as unity. Yet synthesis can become hierarchy when music dominates text, scenography subordinates bodies, or technology turns performers into moving surfaces. Cook (1998) proposes that musical multimedia should be analyzed through relations of similarity, difference, and contest rather than presumed fusion. Chion (1994) likewise shows that sound and image transform one another in audiovisual experience; neither remains untouched when combined (Cook, 1998; Schröter, 2011; Wagner, 1993).

Performance makes these negotiations material. A singer's breath, a dancer's weight, projected images, architectural acoustics, and audience attention share finite time and space. The success of the work depends not on making the media indistinguishable, but on composing their borders. A pause in music may open space for gesture; a visual field may contradict the libretto; a body may expose the cost of a musical climax.

Theatre also reveals that hospitality is institutional. Rehearsal schedules, authorship contracts, accessibility, technical credit, and the distribution of visibility affect which medium and which person is treated as central. A production that celebrates interdisciplinarity while erasing designers, translators, or performers fails the principle of renewed circulation. Genealogy includes labor (Auslander, 2008; Lehmann, 2006; Phelan, 1993).

Contemporary performance can make mediation explicit rather than hiding it. Cameras on stage, visible surtitles, live sound processing, and documentary materials show the machinery through which presence is produced. Such devices may deepen intersemiotic awareness when they help audiences perceive translation as an event. They become superficial when technology is used only as spectacle.

The shared house therefore offers a second model alongside host and guest. Media can enter a temporary commons in which each retains specific

capacities and accepts transformation through proximity. The ethical task is not perfect synthesis but equitable composition.

RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS AND EVALUATIVE USE

The model generates five propositions for future comparative and practice-based research. P1: perceived relational equivalence will be stronger when transformations are traceable to identifiable formal relations rather than thematic resemblance alone. P2: explicit acknowledgment of mediation and loss will strengthen, rather than weaken, critical legitimacy. P3: cross-cultural projects will be judged more hospitable when affected communities retain agency in framing, attribution, and circulation. P4: medium-specific invention and source responsibility can be mutually reinforcing. P5: automated transformation will require more, not less, human contextual labour as scale increases.

Second, acknowledgment of remainder may strengthen rather than weaken audience engagement. When a new work signals what it cannot carry, audiences may be more likely to seek the source and recognize mediation. Reception studies could test this relation across museums, concerts, classrooms, and digital platforms.

Third, cross-cultural translation will be more hospitable when contextual authority is shared with source communities. Shared authority may take the form of consultation, co-authorship, licensing, benefit sharing, or community control over restricted materials. The relevant form will vary, but the proposition directs analysis toward governance as well as aesthetics.

Fourth, multimodal works should be evaluated through the distribution of agency among media and collaborators. A work is not intermedially rich merely because it contains many channels. The question is whether the channels transform one another and whether credit, visibility, and interpretive power are equitably arranged.

Finally, digital and machine-generated transformations should be judged by provenance transparency in addition to formal novelty. This proposition treats metadata, attribution, and process disclosure as components of aesthetic responsibility. It opens a research agenda linking intermediality with copyright, archival ethics, and platform design.

RISKS AND COUNTERARGUMENTS

The first risk is that hospitality becomes a reassuring moral metaphor. Artistic relations are not private dinners among equals. They occur within markets, institutions, copyright regimes, colonial histories, and unequal visibility. A model that praises welcome without examining power would reproduce the problem it seeks to solve. Non-annexation and situating are therefore indispensable (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000; Said, 1983).

The second risk is overemphasis on medium purity. Media have always been hybrid. Song joins language and music; theater combines bodies, space, voice, and image; manuscripts integrate visual and verbal design. Medium specificity should not become essentialism. It names dominant affordances and material conditions, not sealed ontological territories (Elleström, 2010; Mitchell, 1994).

The third objection is that artists need freedom and should not be burdened by ethical protocols. The response is that freedom is not weakened by relation; it becomes more exact. Artists already make choices about framing, attribution, and transformation. The model does not prescribe outcomes. It asks them to recognize the consequences of choices that are often treated as purely aesthetic (Rancière, 2009).

A fourth concern involves accessibility. Contextualization can become so heavy that it overwhelms experience. Hospitality does not require every artwork to contain an academic apparatus. Responsibility can be distributed among artist, curator, publisher, educator, and institution. The key is that mediation should not vanish when its absence benefits the most powerful participant.

Finally, not every artistic encounter should be harmonious. Translation may be agonistic, parodic, critical, or resistant. Hospitality does not mean politeness. A guest can challenge the house; a host can expose conflict. The ethical criterion is whether difference remains legible and whether transformation answers to what it contests (Glissant, 1997).

DISCUSSION: EQUIVALENCE WITHOUT SAMENESS

Relational equivalence is the theoretical centre of this article. Conventional fidelity asks whether the new work corresponds to a source; intersemiotic hospitality asks how correspondence is produced

across material difference. The answer may lie in rhythm rather than plot, spatial pressure rather than imagery, timbre rather than colour, bodily effort rather than syntax, or silence rather than statement. The critic must identify the chosen relation and show what it illuminates and what it leaves behind.

Relational equivalence makes criticism both more generous and more demanding. It is generous because it allows the destination work genuine autonomy. It is demanding because every transformation must justify the relation it creates. The phrase inspired by is not enough. The critic must identify the formal and ethical work of reception (Eco, 2001; Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013).

The four constellations show different outcomes. Keats stages a verbal host questioned by visual silence; Mussorgsky composes the movement and memory of seeing; Debussy and Nijinsky carry ambiguity across language, sound, and body; *Guernica* creates a public field where translation is inseparable from historical responsibility. In each case, the most productive element is not what transfers intact, but what changes under material and ethical pressure.

This insight has broader humanistic significance. Cultures encounter one another through translation, migration, education, performance, and media. The fantasy of perfect equivalence produces either assimilation or despair. Intersemiotic art offers another lesson: relation can be real without sameness. Difference need not prevent shared form, but shared form should not cancel difference (Appiah, 2006; Glissant, 1997).

The arts therefore provide more than examples for translation theory. They stage coexistence. A poem enters music; music enters the body; an image enters public memory. Each crossing asks whether the new form will possess, imitate, ignore, or answer. Hospitality names the fragile discipline of answering.

Listening provides a final image for this discipline. To listen across media is not to search for a hidden common language that would dissolve difference. It is to notice how one form changes the conditions under which another can be perceived. Music may teach a reader to hear rhythm in prose; dance may reveal weight inside an image; poetry may return silence to a familiar painting (Nancy, 2007).

Such listening is reciprocal but not symmetrical. The receiving work answers from its own material position, and the source remains capable of

resisting the answer. Intersemiotic hospitality is strongest when this resistance is audible. The goal is not consensus among the arts, but a relation in which each becomes more distinctly itself through contact with another.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The article proposes a normative framework rather than a universal measure. Judgments about attention, annexation, reciprocity, remainder, and circulation remain interpretive and may differ across traditions. The model should clarify disagreements and evidence, not produce mechanical scores.

The selected cases are largely drawn from European canons. Future studies should begin within other artistic genealogies and examine whether hospitality is the most appropriate concept in every context. Traditions organized around reciprocity, kinship, ritual transmission, collective authorship, sacred restriction, or refusal may require different vocabularies and may expose the limits of the host-guest metaphor.

Further research should also include artists, translators, performers, curators, and communities as participants rather than only objects of criticism. Practice-based inquiry could document how ethical decisions are made during creation, where conflicts emerge, and which institutional conditions support genuinely reciprocal work (Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Small, 1998).

Finally, generative media require longitudinal study of attribution norms, audience expectations, creative labour, rights, and environmental cost. Practice-based research should document how artists combine machine transformation with archival study, consent, and human editorial judgment rather than treating automation as a single variable.

CONCLUSION

Intersemiotic translation is not the transport of identical meaning between containers. It is a transformative encounter among material forms of attention. Poetry, painting, music, and dance do not share a universal code, yet they can construct relations through rhythm, tension, perspective, gesture, memory, affect, and silence.

Intersemiotic hospitality provides an ethical vocabulary for those relations. Attentive reception, non-annexation, material reciprocity, acknowledgment of remainder, and renewed

circulation distinguish transformation from extraction. The practical sequence - receive, situate, transform, acknowledge, recirculate - makes that vocabulary usable without converting it into a formula.

The cases demonstrate that fidelity becomes most persuasive as fidelity to relation. Keats stages the limit of verbal possession; Mussorgsky composes the movement of looking and mourning; Debussy and Nijinsky remake ambiguity in sound and bodily space; responses to *Guernica* remain credible when formal power stays connected to historical violence. None is a copy, and none is ethically free from its genealogy.

The humanistic promise of intersemiotic art lies in its capacity to welcome transformation without erasing remainder. One medium enters another, changes and is changed, and returns to the world as a new invitation. The border does not disappear. It becomes the place where autonomy, difference, and responsibility acquire form.

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