

Panel 11
Intermedial Narratives: Bodies and Voices

Polyphonic Modalities:
The Intermedial Dialogicality of Modernist *Ut pictura poesis*

Bowen Wang
Shanghai Jiao Tong University

The early twentieth century has marked an unprecedented era of intermedial convergence, where various artistic disciplines such as *poesis* and *pictura* extended beyond historical paragone towards dynamic modes of expressions. A defining characteristic of modernist aesthetics is the increasing emphasis on non-verbal media, as poets broke away from conventional subjects and linguistic structures, instead experimenting with the visual, material, and spatial incorporation from non-literary domains. This article aims to reconceptualise modernism through the lens of intermediality, and argues that modernist *ut pictura poesis* – a Horatian paradigm for theorising media relations – should be regarded not as a rigid hierarchy but as a state of flexible, polyphonic exchange. To this end, it develops a framework of polyphonically dialogic poetics, which identifies four key types of intermedial dialogue: *referential*, *associative*, *programmatic*, and *self-reflexive*. These categories focus on the interaction and reintegration between textuality and visuality, the hearable and the seeable, and discourse and representation, revealing modernist productions as a series of ineffaceably multimodal practices. By foregrounding intermediality as an act of dialogisation and collaboration rather than just formal experimentation, this study sheds further light on the reciprocal agency of twentieth-century creators and the sociocultural implications of their artworks. It appeals to a revisionary approach to modernist intermediation, one that recognises its fluidity, multiplicity, and synergetic nature.

Biography

Bowen Wang is Assistant Professor in English Department at Shanghai Jiao Tong University. He received his PhD in English and MSc in Literature and Modernity from Trinity College Dublin and the University of Edinburgh respectively. His research focuses on intermedial modernist studies, with articles published in *Journal of Modern Literature*, *Modernist Cultures*, *Journal of Literary Studies*, and *The Palgrave Handbook of Intermediality*, among others.