Corinna Sophie Reipen

Visuality in the Works of Siri Hustvedt

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Vorwort

Ich bedanke ich mich bei meiner Doktormutter Prof. Dr. Christa Grewe-Volpp, die mich während meines Diplomstudiums mit Siri Hustvedts ersten Roman *The Blindfold* vertraut gemacht, bei mir ein tiefes Interesse für weitere Texte und Romane der amerikanischen Autorin geweckt und so die Inspiration für diese Doktorarbeit geliefert hat. Darüber hinaus bin ich ihr für ihre Unterstützung und Motivation während der Promotionsphase sehr dankbar. Ich werde diese Zeit als eine sehr bereichernde und lehrreiche in Erinnerung behalten. Herrn Prof. Dr. Ulfried Reichardt danke ich für die schnelle Durchsicht der Dissertation als Zweitgutachter.

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Ich bedanke mich bei meinem Mann Thomas ohne dessen Geduld und positive Grundeinstellung gegenüber meinem Vorhaben meine Arbeit nicht in dieser Form gereift wäre. Sein fachfremder Blick sorgte sehr häufig für Klarheit. Ihm ist diese Arbeit gewidmet.

Düsseldorf, im Dezember 2013 Corinna Sophie Reipen

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1 Introduction to the Author: Siri Hustvedt

Siri Hustvedt was born in 1955 in Northfield, Minnesota, the eldest of four daughters to a Norwegian-American father, a Professor of Norwegian language and literature at St. Olaf College, and a Norwegian mother. In 1972, she spent a year with her aunt and uncle in Bergen, Norway, where she attended high school. Later, she got a Bachelor Degree in History at St. Olaf College, Minnesota (Hustvedt, "Yonder").[1] Her first publication was a collection of poems called *Reading to You* which she published in 1983. After finishing her doctorate in English Literature at Columbia University in New York in 1986, she turned to writing fiction and began work on her first novel, *The Blindfold*, which was published in the United States in 1992. The first part of the novel was also published in *Best American Short Stories 1990* with the title "Mr. Morning" and the third part of the novel was published in the same collection in 1991 entitled "Houdini". In 1996 she published her second novel, *The Enchantment of Lily Dahl*, which was followed by *What I Loved* in 2003, *The Sorrows of an American* in 2006 and *The Summer without Men* in 2011.

She also published four collections of essays: *Yonder* in 1996, *Mysteries of the Rectangle* in 2005, *A Plea for Eros* in 2006 and *Living, Thinking, Looking* in 2012. With the publication of her essay collection on visual arts, *Mysteries of the Rectangle*, Hustvedt established herself as a popular art critic in the United States. Her reflections on paintings by such artists as Francisco Goya, Gerhardt Richter and Joan Mitchell are noticed for a novelist's elegant prose and an art historian's scholarly knowledge. Her first essay on art, "Vermeer's Annunciation", which was first published in *Modern Painters* in 1995, was her breakthrough as an art critic. As a literary scholar, she brought a new viewpoint to the work of Johannes Vermeer and his painting "Woman with a Pearl

1 In her essay, "Yonder", Hustvedt tells many stories about her family and early life. It is published in *Yonder – Essays* and *A Plea for Eros: Essays*.

Necklace" by claiming that the painting demonstrates an Annunciation rather than a Eucharistic image. By solidly arguing in favor of her interpretation, she altered scholarly perceptions of Vermeer's painting.

She has also written catalogue essays for Richard Allen Morris, Kiki Smith and Gerhard Richter, and she published essays on Louise Bourgeois and Annette Messager for *The Guardian*, which have later been published in *Living, Thinking, Looking*. Her increasing reputation as an art critic even brought her the position of Schelling Professor of Art at the *Akademie der Bildenden Künste* (The Academy of the Visual Arts) in Munich in January 2010 and the experience of it resulted in a small book called *Embodied Visions: What Does it Mean to Look at a Work of Art*?[2] What distinguishes her work from classical art-historical publications is her primary interest in the phenomenology of looking at art and in the interactive process of "the silent encounter between the viewer 'I' and the object 'it'" (*Mysteries* xix).

Closely connected to the experience of art is Hustvedt's other field of research: psychology and, more recently, neuroscience. In her essays "The Bostonians: Personal and Impersonal Words" Hustvedt describes the interrelation between the visual arts, the art of fiction and psychology as follows:

> But in art, knowing isn't everything – the unknown often pushes its way to the surface. In recent years, neuroscience has demonstrated that Freud was surely right in this sense: A huge part of what the brain does is unconscious. And every novelist can tell you while writing, things happen. You don't know why the characters or their words appear to you or where they come from, but there they are, and often these peculiar ghosts and their voices, rising up from nowhere, are exactly the ones that are most crucial to the story. *(A Plea for Eros* 155)

Hustvedt emphasizes the importance of thoughts and how the possibilities our inner lives offer access to the world: she also states that art reflects these internal – mostly unconscious – processes while psychoanalysis helps to explain them. She claims that all art forms are related in their revelation of the subconscious and that looking more closely at art reveals hidden motives, themes or desires.

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2 The book is also reprinted in Hustvedt, *Living, Thinking, Looking*.

While at first she was mainly concerned with psychoanalysis – especially Freud – she has become increasingly absorbed by neuroscience and the recent research on the brain. She attended the neuroscience lectures at the New York Psychoanalytic Institute and the Mortimer Ostow Neuro-Psychoanalysis Discussion Group led by Mark Solms until 2006 or volunteered as a writing teacher at the Payne Whitney Clinic at New York Hospital where she taught writing classes to patients in order to extend her knowledge in that field. Her research resulted in her non-fictional book *The Shaking Woman or a History of my Nerves*, which was published in 2008, in which she elaborates on her own seizure disorder, which she had developed after the death of her father. From her personal point of view, she assesses the history of psychoanalysis and the development of neuroscience on the basis of her own suffering which manifests itself in a shaking of her body every time she makes a speech in public. In 2008, she contributed two short essays, "Arms at Rest" and "Lifting Lights, and Little People" to a Migraine blog for *The New York Times* online which were later published in *Living, Thinking, Looking* entitled "My strange Head: Notes on Migraine". She also contributed "Bipolar Epidemic" to the online blog of *Psychology Today*. Hustvedt intensified her studies in neuroscience in a dialog with Antonio Damasio, a behavioral neurobiologist at the University of Southern California, and she focuses on questions concerning biological realities of what we think of as consciousness and how this idea relates to our contemporary thinking about the brain and the mind.[3]

Her interest in Freud and her extended knowledge of psychoanalysis and neuroscience resulted in her delivering the annual Freud lecture in Vienna in 2011. With her speech, "Freud's Playground: Some Thoughts on the Art and Science of Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity," Siri Hustvedt now stands in line with the psychoanalyst Mark Solms, who delivered the lecture in 2007 about "Freud's Dream Theory," and the art-historian Ernst Gombrich, who lectured in 1981 about Freud's thoughts on visual arts (*Living, Thinking, Looking* 196–219). Even within this scientific environment, she draws

3 „Zwischen Psychoanalyse und Neurowissenschaften: Im Gespräch Mit Siri Hustvedt und António Damásio," *Scobel*, Gert Scobel (3Sat, 6 Oct. 2011). Television.

connections between visual arts and psychoanalysis, and hits a nerve that inspires intellectuals from both academic disciplines. The academic relevance of her writing for American Studies in Germany is expressed in her status as the key lecturer at the annual conference of the German Association of American Studies in 2012.

Focusing on her interest in and knowledge of visual arts, and basing my discussion on an analysis of her three novels *The Blindfold*, *What I Loved* and *The Sorrows of an American*, I will answer the following research questions: What function does the description of visual arts in her novels fulfill? And what additional interpretive value can be acquired by analyzing these *visual images* in her novels?[4] By means of the *visual image* I will be able to outline a development in the history of American fiction beginning with *The Blindfold* followed by *What I Loved* and finishing with *The Sorrows of an American* that demonstrate characteristics that qualify her first novel as post-modern and the two latter as post-post-modern. As a consequence, the varied forms and functions of the *visual image* help to identify literary characteristics that not only allow a close reading of the three novels but also reveal contemporary developments in the American novel.

4 Visual is used here as a synonym for visual artifacts: a general non-descriptive term for patterns on surfaces taken in by the eye. In connection with the image, the collocation of the *visual image* refers to texts that arouse visual artifacts. The prerequisite for the following analysis is that images are originated in texts (or pictures) as will be explained later in more detail.

2 The Development of a Theoretical Model

2.1 Text, Picture and Image

In order for us to understand how descriptions of visual art works unleash their power in the literary text, the terms "pictures" and "texts" and their relationships must be clarified on a rather general level before developing a concrete model. The following brief excursion into history demonstrates the manifold relations between text and picture. For centuries texts (mainly poetry) and pictures (painting) were regarded as 'sister arts', following Horace's 'ut pictura poesis' ("as is painting so is poetry" or "as in painting so in poetry"); pictures (painting) and texts (poetry) were granted the same characteristics. In the Renaissance, Leonardo's notion of the *paragone* described a similar relation between visual arts and literature, even though Leonardo – being a painter – strongly believed in the priority of the visual sense over all the other senses. Still, Leonardo's *paragone* initiated an interest in the investigation of possibilities and limitations of the various arts and their medial form. This discussion is taken up again in the eighteenth century by Lessing, who forays into the topic of intermedial relations in his *Laocoon* and concludes confidently that poetry and painting are two different domains and should not be mixed. Barely a generation later, however, Blake brilliantly belies Lessing's claim – not in theory but in practice – in his illuminated manuscripts demonstrating that writing and painting have a point of convergence: namely the material two-dimensionality on a paper sheet.[5]

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5 See for the argument of the "unequal sisterhood" of painting and poetry. W. J. T. Mitchell, "The Politics of Genre: Space and Time in Lessing's Laocoon," *Representations*, no. 6 (1984).; revised as chapter 4 of *Iconology*. William Blake, who had professionally learned the tradition of drawing and engraving, tried to avoid the heaviness painted surfaces can create. He created light, almost transparent, figures that transcended their worldly incarnation. See also on William Blake: John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, Modern Classics (London: Penguin, 2008), 87.

With the advent of photography and film in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this discussion of picture-text relationships slowly turns into a discussion of intermedial relations and takes on a new and much broader dimension. Gradually, with the increasing importance of the press, motion pictures and radio, the mass media established themselves and the relationship between the medium and the message exploded once more against a different background. The medium was no longer two-dimensional, but turned into a technological device that not only interacts with the message it conveys but actually very powerfully influences the production. The interpretation of new media and its content are discussed in depth in the sixties with Marshall McLuhans's *Understanding Media*. McLuhan's discourse on technology sees the penetration of media into psychic structures and social relations as an "extention of man." For McLuhan new technologies do not penetrate the body cognitively as much as they extend it "electrically" (McLuhan 5, 51, 108, 203, 357). On the whole, McLuhans' study makes discourses into cultural studies based on changes in technological developments that hardly refer to differences in the human perception of pictures and texts. He mostly elaborates on new technologies in which the impact on psychic and social structures based on mixed forms of media are concerned and hence, his definition of the medium is a broad one that does not provide a suitable ground for defining the term medium here. Thus, I will narrow the term medium by referring to the two media picture and text only. In order to make clear distinctions between the terms "text" and "picture" and finally differentiate the term "image" from the term "picture," I start with definitions of the terms "picture" and "text" and then explain why I chose the term "image" over the term "picture" in my analysis.

2.1.1 Picture and Text

The interaction of the verbal and the visual is part of any basic human communicative situation. Everyday communication is a combination of the acoustic medium of the spoken language and the visual medium of non-verbal communication expressed in facial expressions or gestures. Photography, film or television demonstrate how the acoustic verbal medium of speech is

replaced or extended in the visual non-verbal medium of pictures. Further, pictures not only represent the non-verbal aspect of human communication but also highlight the visual aspects of objects, facts and incidents that lie beyond direct perception of them. In order to avoid a mixture of verbal and visual forms of communcation, I see static pictures as a prototype for the term picture – be it a painting or a photograph – and the written or printed text as the purest form of text.

Following this equation, the characteristics of each medium need to be identified. A written text and a static picture share the two-dimensionality of their medium of representation which, in most cases, is a sheet of paper. Both text and picture are complex, visual signs which are carried by a two-dimensional medium. Texts, however, differ from pictures in our process of perceiving them. The written text is produced linearly and received successively. The reader has to know how to decipher the signs on the page and can do so only by reading them successively from left to right (at least in the Western world). This characteristic of the text and the linear pattern that lies at the heart of our understanding of it implies that our comprehension of the verbal essentially depends upon the dimension of time. The text's dependence upon time results in our successive perception. The picture does not depend upon this temporal dimension as we can capture its major elements at one glance. We perceive its elements simultaneously and holistically even though our attention does not concentrate on each detail of the picture alike. Even the production of a picture, as in photography, can be a simultaneous process. The distinction between the sequential order of verbal material and the simultaneous presences of visual forms of representation goes back to Lessing who changed the belief that text and pictures function according to the same rules.[6] Based on Lessing's observations, one can argue that the verbal and the visual sign systems can be identified as two completely different modes of representation: texts, on the one hand, follow the rules of successivity and time, while pictures, on the other hand, adhere to the laws of simultaneity and space.

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6 Lessing is also discussed by Hans Holländer in his article „Literatur, Malerei Und Graphik. Wechselwirkungen, Funktionen Und Konkurrenzen."

Winfried Nöth points to another important difference in our perceptions of pictures and texts when he argues that they differ in their cognitive processing. The processing of visual information occurs predominantly in the right hemisphere which is the same cerebral hemisphere in the human brain that processes emotions (Nöth, „Text und Bild"). Language processing takes place in the left hemisphere which also regulates processes of analytic and rational thinking. Hustvedt also hints at the two different regions and their diverse functioning in our brains in her elaboration on photography, "Old Pictures", when she states: "The visual and the linguistic occupy different sites in the brain" (*Living, Thinking, Looking* 253). From this, we can conclude that pictures bear a higher emotional impact than texts. Related to emotional responses to pictures is their higher attention-gaining value in contrast to texts. Humans are more likely to memorize pictures than the words of a text due to their holistic form. Hence, pictures can be memorized longer.[7] Using the representation of objects as an example, pictures of objects can be better memorized than verbal representations of them.

Another difference between texts and pictures lies in their semiotic structure and potential. At the bottom of (linguistic) texts lies a twofold principle: the meaningful unit of the word consists of the meaningless phoneme or grapheme. Pictures, on the other hand, cannot be divided into such subunits. At least, there is no alphabetic letter (or phoneme) that can be compared to elements in a picture.[8] The principle of pictorial or visual representation is its similarity between signifier and signified.[9] As a consequence the picture is the prototype of the iconographic sign defined as a minimal unit of meaning. Linguistic

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7 This has been argued earlier by Frances Yates in *The Art of Memory* (1972). Following Yates, visual representations guarantee an easier reconstruction of messages than verbal forms and he advises to translate any verbal message into visual form.

8 The fact that pictures cannot be devided into meaningful subunits is precisely what Mitchell regards as the biggest problem in creating a theory of pictures and it is, at the same time, the problem he is trying to solve in *Picture Theory*.

9 The terminology of the signifier/ signifié (material side) and the signified/ signifiant (cognitive side) goes back to the semiotics of Ferdinand de Saussure which is reassessed in the relationship between texts and pictures by Schapiro. See for an elaborate discussion Meyer Schapiro, *Words and Pictures: On the Literal and the Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text*.

signs, to the contrary, demonstrate an arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified. Words and alphabetic letters are prototypical symbolic signs (Nöth, *Handbook of Semiotics* 39–48).

Besides these medial differences and their influences on productive and receptive processes, there are also differences in the semiotic potential of pictures and texts. Pictures and texts can depict ideas, incidents or thoughts in different ways regarding their relationships in respect of (1) space and time, (2) the visual and the non-visual, (3) concrete and abstract representation, and (4) negation, affirmation and causality (Nöth, „Text und Bild“).[10] Regarding the first aspect, space and time, pictures are better suited to spacial representations such as maps and layouts, while texts (or language) can depict in more detail instances of time such as points in time, durations, or temporal developments. The static picture is essentially atemporal and even in films the potential for representing time is limited when, for example, leaps in time advance the filmic action. Nonetheless, in the same temporal period of perception pictures transmit more information than texts. The second aspect, visual and non-visual forms of representations, emphasizes that pictures in general represent something visual while language can describe visual, acoustic, olfactory, thermic or tactile sensations. In 1986, the French linguist Émile Benveniste emphasized that language is the only sign system that is able to represent other sign systems.[11] In this respect, language is superior to pictures (or visual representations in general) because all pictures can be represented in language but not all verbal representations can be visualized in pictures (Nöth, *Handbook of Semiotics* 229–36). This hints at the inability of the visual to draw connections between pictures using only pictures.[12] Hence, a picture theory

10 These aspects are a shortened version of Nöth's outline regarding the semiotic potential of pictures and texts.

11 Hustvedt quotes Benveniste when she calls attention to the linguist's *polarity of person* and *non-person* in her essay "Charles Dickens and the Morbid Fragment" published in *A Plea for Eros*.

12 I am outlining the purest functions of pictures and text in this part and hence, I only hint at the concept of metapictures which has also been discussed by Winfried Nöth in "Metapictures and Self-Referential Pictures,". In this article Nöth distinguishes between "metapictures" (pictures about pictures or pictures of pictures which include quotations

based on pictures is unthinkable (Mitchell, *Picture Theory*).[13] This aspect is closely related to the third main difference, namely the different potential of texts and pictures in representing abstract or concrete ideas. Both texts and pictures can represent concrete ideas or objects. Abstract ideas, however, can only be represented indirectly in pictures accompanied by texts in the form of an emblem, for example. Texts (and language in general), on the other hand, can express concrete as well as abstract ideas. Noeth's last point – texts and pictures differ in their potential for negation, affirmation and causality – implies that pictures cannot negate anything without language. Causal relationships as well as questions, orders or promises cannot be represented visually.

Summarizing the above, pictures and texts are in many ways complementary to each other. What is missing in the picture (i.e. temporal dimension) can be added in a verbal text (i.e. missing spatial capacities). A picture's predominance in its representation of concrete objects in space stands in contrast to a text's superiority in the representation of time and causality as well as in the depiction of abstract thoughts and circumstances. The complementarity of texts and pictures becomes particularly apparent in the coexistences of texts and pictures: pictures illustrate texts and texts comment on pictures.

2.1.2 Picture and Image

In the English language, picture and image are often used interchangeably, thus leading to many different definitions as both terms generally designate visual representations on a two-dimensional surface (Boehm,

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or other forms of intertextual references) and "self-referential pictures" (pictures that refer to themselves). Nöth illustrates the difference between the two types of pictures by means of an analogy with the linguistic concept of metalanguage (a language of higher order of abstraction and description) and self-referential language.

13 In contrast to Nöth, Mitchell does not distinguish between metapictures and self-referential pictures. Michtell's "metapicture" is an artefact and a form of metareflection which demonstrates a (meta-) language. In his *Picture Theory*, Mitchell tries to come by a theory of picture, not with pictures but with an art-historical outline about forms of vision and representation.

Beschreibungskunst).[14] A distinction will, however, be useful, especially when the *text* as the medium of investigation and the *picture/image* as object of investigation are used at a later point in this study. I want to explain them on the basis of the argument by the American art historian and literary scholar W.J.T. Mitchell. In 1994, W.J.T. Mitchell declared a new cultural phenomenon called the "pictorial turn" that describes the transition of a culture dominated by books to one dominated by images (*Picture Theory* 11–35).[15] The rhetorical topos of turn is borrowed from Richard Rorty who, in 1967, described a culture created from text only, with his "linguistic turn."[16] The long dominance of the book has created a culture that reads any cultural production as a text, according to Rorty's argument. Mitchell develops this assumption by claiming that the text has given way to the picture – cinema, video, and other forms of pictorial representations – since the 1990s, a change that has become a determining factor of our culture. The pictorial turn, then, is "a postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visuality, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figurality" (*Picture Theory* 16). Mitchell is interested not in the mimetic or correspondence potential of pictures and text but in the power of the pictorial presences in cultural contexts. According to Mitchell, the pictorial turn is based on the assumption that our world and identities are transformed due to our persistent exposure to pictures; as a consequence, pictures also play an increasingly important role in the construction of our social reality.

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14 The English language makes a distinction between the terms picture and image that differs from research conducted in German. The German art historian, Gottfied Boehm, makes this distinction between picture (Bild) and image (Abbild) in his study by interpreting the terms in the context of the philosophic tradition; he starts with Kant, continues with Nietsche, Heidegger and Gadamer and ends his investigation with Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty.

15 Boehm declared the "iconic turn" (ikonische Wendung) at about the same time, drawing attention to a similar phenomenon in Europe; see „Die Wiederkehr Der Bilder."

16 According to Rorty, ancient and medieval philosophy dealt with modern ideas while modern philosophers (Derrida, Heidegger, Nietzsche and his favorite Wittgenstein) are mostly engaged in words.

Mitchell looks at the problem of pictorial representation from a historical perspective to determine what interest pictures serve. Thereby, he demonstrates signs of the pictorial turn in Pierce's semiotics, Nelson Goodman's analytical art philosophy, Derrida's criticism of logocentrism, and Michel Foucault's understanding of the picture as the fundamental principle of order (Foucault, *Die Ordnung der Dinge*). Mitchell argues that a theory of the picture is still not comparable to the status of linguistics in literature. While art historians such as Erwin Panofski and Ernst Gombrich establish the basis for iconology, Mitchell extends their achievements to a field of research known as visual culture which expands research in art history by paying attention to vernacular practices of seeing (*Iconology*).[17] In art historical research, Mitchell does not detect a history of the forms and functions of seeing that create a sort of linguistics of the visual field.

Mitchell calls attention to the historicizing of vision and spectatorship as performed by Jonathan Crary. Crary describes a shift of spectatorship, from the eighteenth-century's "camera obscura" that suppressed subjectivity by objectifying the observer, to the development of photography in 1839 which characterized the nineteenth-century as a period in which the observer's subjectivity was omnipresent. Crary's main argument is that at the end of the 19th century the abstract subject was replaced by an embodied observer (Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*). According to Mitchell, Crary tries to establish a principle for visual perception in its historic construction by respecting bodily and mental activity of the observer in the process of experiencing visual arts (*Picture Theory* 19–24). This embodiment, which lies at the heart of visual perception, is a characteristic that is fundamental to Mitchell's picture theory and in particular to his notion of the image. Pictures become images as they arouse individual (embodied) reactions in their spectators. By focusing on the perceiver – an aspect that Nöth omitted in his elaboration of texts and pictures as outlined in the previous chapter – pictures become internal, mental productions that are generally described as images.

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17 Mitchell formulated the foundation of a critical iconology in his earlier work *Iconology: Image, Text and Ideology*. From the works of Nelson Goodman, Ernst Gombrich, Gotthold E. Lessing, Edmund Burke and Karl Marx Mitchell develops his iconology which is developed further in *Picture Theory*.

Mitchell states that a picture is a representation of a "constructed, concrete object" while the image is a "virtual phenomenal appearance" that is created in "a less voluntary, perhaps even passive or automative act" (*Picture Theory* 4). The picture is "a deliberate act of representation" whose haptic nature derives from the verb to picture or depict and refers to "a specific kind of visual representation" (*Picture Theory* 4). Consequently I conclude from Mitchell's definition that a picture is commonly regarded as a material object (drawing, painting, photograph) whose existence serves as an objective point of reference. This definition ties in with the one from the preceding section in which I argued that both picture and text are carried by a two-dimensional medium. Mitchell's argument, however, expands this point when he focuses on the materiality of pictures and texts that are no longer restricted to their two-dimensional carrier. The material nature of texts and pictures implies that both exist as haptic objects in the real world and are stable points of reference like, for example, paintings or books.

The image, on the other hand, is not a material object, as Mitchell argues. His definition of the image as a "virtual, phenomenal appearance" shows that the image is a mental construction and hence immaterial. As the word already implies, an image calls upon human imagination. The image, then, is a visual construction aroused in the perceiver's mind by another medium. Mitchell argues that pictures serve as the carriers or media of images, as pictures are "the concrete, representational objects in which images appear" (*Picture Theory* 4). Images are, then, mental productions as they are triggered by a material object to create a presence or a visual sensation in the human mind. This "capacity for arousal" of a picture highlights the role of the observer and the dependence of images on subjective processes of perception. Summarizing the characteristics of pictures and image, it becomes obvious that the perception of images is always embedded into a communicative situation, either in the viewing of a picture or in the reading of a text. Recalling the shared characteristic of pictures and texts that allows them to arouse images, the next section explains what texts will be looked at and how texts can incorporate images in order to allow an investigation of visual arts in literature.

2.2 Image-Text-Relationship

2.2.1 Image and Text

Image-text relationships are an intermedial phenomenon. In general the concept of intermediality is understood as a complex and highly dynamic set of relationships among different media and can be extended beyond interpretive approaches to literary texts. Christian Emden and Gabriele Rippl define intermediality in a broad sense as a theoretical framework between various dimensions of texts and images:

> The concept of intermediality, thus, refers to those occasions when text and images run parallel, that is, when they are present at the same time, referring to each other, but also to those occasions when texts describe objects of visual culture or images evoke complex references to the world of texts. Intermediality, in its minimal definition, seeks to stake out the space in which images and texts, visual culture and print culture collide, refer to each other, and even converge. (*Imagescapes* 10)

I rely, in this broad sense of image-text relations as an intermedial phenomenon, on Emden and Rippl's definition. However, my interest does not focus – as Emden and Rippl do – on cultural phenomena that reflect how the visual shapes the way we think in language. I am interested in how verbal descriptions of visual artworks shape fiction and what function these textual descriptions of traditional paintings such as Giorgione's *The Tempest* or Goya's *Los Capricios* serve in the contemporary American novel. My approach comes close to what used to be identified as ekphrasis in literary studies which is defined by Ruth Webb as a textual evocation of a visual work of art.[18] Still, I find the term *ekphrasis* and the

18 For a transhistorical overview, see: Boehm, *Beschreibungskunst – Kunstbeschreibung: Ekphrasis von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*. Ekphrasis is a Greek term which means "to show clearly and completely" and which, according to the OED, was first used in English in 1715. Ekphrasis is derived from the ancient Greek term, *enargeia,* which was introduced by Quintilian. He explained that *enargeia* is produced when the orator uses his own power of imagination to conjure up a scene in his mind. This excerise in visualization ensures that his language will spark a mental impression in the mind of his audience. See: Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imaginiation and Persuation in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009). Rhetoricians of late antiquity developed a sort of theory of description called ekphrasis. Description was

various concepts that are associated with it inconvenient to work with and offer instead a new model that approaches text-image relationships within the area of intermediality. In order to explain this approach in intermediality, I will first define the term 'text' and in a second step the term 'image' as used in this study.

Image-text relationships are an intermedial phenomenon because the text functions as a carrier of the image, as Mitchell has demonstrated. Still, he does not grant the term "text" or "textuality" much attention and uses it without further elaboration as a "foil to imagery." He sees texts and pictures as "rival mode[s] of representation" while focusing on establishing a theory or genealogy of the image (*Iconology* 3). Like Mitchell, I understand a text as a framework in which imagery is created, but there is a need to be more specific about the text as an object of investigation. In this study, the literary text of Siri Hustvedt's novels is the object of investigation because, as a specific kind of literary texts, novels incorporate more forms of human interaction than any other form of writing.[19] Novels are part of our social and cultural scope of action, and are thus a constituting device of social realities. Michael McKeon's intercessional evaluation demonstrates that the novel is a narrative form that relates to reality but at the same time constructs social and cultural conditions. Based on an analysis of the early modern novel, he proves his point: "[T]he genre of the novel can be understood comprehensively as an early modern cultural instrument designed to confront, on the level of narrative form and content, both intellectual and social crisis simultaneously" (McKeon 181). By analyzing the novels and not all literary texts by Siri Hustvedt, such as her non-fictional essays and books, I support the point Michel McKeon is making by claiming that the novel not only mirrors social and cultural concerns but also constitutes a terrain upon

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considered a mode of speaking – aiming at *enargeia* (visual imagination) – that can arouse absent objects before the listener's mind's eye. Ruth Webb pointed out that the term ekphrasis has undergone a severe narrowing-down of its meaning as descriptions are regarded as ekphratic if they evoke a visual work of art.

19 My approach is similar to the one conducted by Antje Kley in *Ethik Medialer Repräsentation im Britischen und US-Amerikanischen Roman, 1741–2000* where she endorses the possibility of proving social developments via the American novel.