

**UNIT  
9**

**LITERATURE AND OTHER ARTS**

**STRUCTURE :**

- 9.0 Objectives**
- 9.1 Introduction**
- 9.2 Relationship Between Literature and Art/s**
- 9.3 Poetry and Visual Arts**
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**9.0 OBJECTIVES**

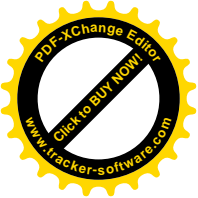
- to establish relationship between literature, viz., poetry, novel, drama, short story, etc and other arts, like painting, drawing, sculpture, music, etc.,
- understand how various art forms are interrelated and how each is helpful in understanding the other.

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**9.1 INTRODUCTION**

“L'art pour l'art” is the famous French saying which means “Art for art's sake”. Edgar Allan Poe opines about the purpose for writing a poem in The Poetic Principle as “poem written solely for the poem's sake”. The primary aim of any art is pleasure, for the self and for the other. The pleasure that it accords is invaluable as it connects the self with the supreme. To this aspect, all other aims are subservient and secondary. A creative artist provides an expression through his/her creativity to various aspects of our existence. There are various forms of art, viz., literature, music, painting, sculpture, etc. All these art forms are ultimately aimed at creating the most elevated expression of mind and heart. One often considers such creativity as the gift of god.

Creative art is categorized as literature, viz. prose, verse, etc., performing arts, viz. dance, music, theatre, etc., and visual arts, viz. drawing, painting, sculpture, etc. These art forms are interconnected to create an altogether different effect. The purpose for mixing more than one disciplines is represent multidimensional aspect of life. And thus literature and other arts are often represented together for creating better understanding of life.



Literature is both oral and written and can therefore make use of both acoustic and visual signs in its various genres. Relationship between a piece of literature and other works of art like painting, drawing, photography, sculpture or drama, etc. creates interrelation between the two. Visual arts, music, and drama provide effective ways for students to develop literary envisionments.

Offering readers the opportunity to read historical fiction, poetry and essays, or even nonfiction works such as diaries and letters, often enables them to imagine the human concerns behind historical events. Connections between literature and math or science expand one's understandings of both areas while broadening habits of mind. Readers who experience a range of such connections learn to establish relationships between and among seemingly contrary ways of defining and explaining the world.

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## 9.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LITERATURE AND ART/S

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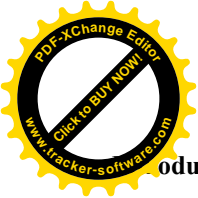
Literature and other arts have been welded together in numerous ways and enjoy various relationships of commonalities and differences. For authors, artists, readers, and viewers, the interrelation between literature and art encourages various questions – of form and content, of interpretations, of visual and written language, of adaptation, translation, and rewriting, of influence and originality, and of the roles of creator and audience.

The relationships of literature with the other arts is in respect to their common features, specific differences, and mutual influences between the verbal, nonverbal, acoustic, and visual signs. At the intersection between literature and the visual arts, visual poetry has made use of the aesthetic potential of both verbal and visual signs. With the visual arts, literature shares the potential of representation whereas music is essentially nonrepresentational. Among the universal characteristics of the arts are symmetry and recurrence of forms. Aesthetic features which literature shares with music are rhythm, tempo, or recurrence, but rhythm is also visual rhythm, which is also a feature of the visual arts. Whereas the visual arts are superior in the representation of the visual word, the verbal arts have the potential of representing the visible as well as the invisible world.

Henri Matisse's masterpiece *Jazz* makes explicit a constant source of tension in the relationship between literature and visual art while showing the limitations of each. It arises a question as to what can art do that literature cannot, and what can literature attain that art cannot ?

Literature is associated with all other arts insofar as it 'represents' these arts and their signs by means of verbal representations. Literary texts describe paintings, sculptures, or works of architecture, music, and dance. They express the impressions made by such works of art on literary characters, and in theoretical treatises, such as Horace's *Ars poetica* (on music) or Lessing's *Laocoon* (on painting and sculpture).

There seems to be a notion among the writers that the images of other art forms will curtail the imaginations of their readers. Such notions are seen throughout the history of the relationship between literature and art, manifesting variously where painting, illustration, sculpture, photography,



or theatre intersect with literary writing in all its forms. This fact seems to be an incorrect notion. The combination of the literary with the visual establishes a hierarchy of signification. Therefore, the reinterpretation of a text by an artist or an art object by an author provokes not only an assessment of the new and original work, but also a reappraisal of art, literature, and the process of adaptation. The relationship prompts evaluations, and therefore a self-consciousness of both or either medium arises. The interaction of literature and art is therefore inherently critical, even crucial.

There are many examples of visual artists' experimentations with written texts directly engaging with literary works. For example, Italy's Sperlonga sculptures depicting episodes of *The Odyssey* and Botticelli's large panel painting *Primavera*. Literature often indicates the visual. However, its engagement with art can draw on more than the representation of an image. For example, American poet Frank O'Hara's 1960 poem 'Having a Coke with You' expresses his absorption with a lover. O'Hara refers to well-known artwork including Rembrandt's painting *Polish Rider*, Duchamp's painting *Nude Descending a Staircase*, and the drawings of Michelangelo to make his adoring point, while comparing a loved one to exalted art.

And the portrait show seems to have no faces in it at all, just paint  
you suddenly wonder why in the world anyone ever did them

I look

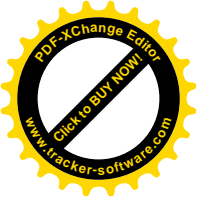
at you and I would rather look at you than all the portraits in the world

'Having a Coke with You' draws on a long history of poetry and literature written about to what is conveyed by words without overpowering the medium of writing.

The interrelation and interconnection of literature and art include combinations of text and image which attempt to balance each medium, rather than reflect one through the other. The twentieth century emergence of the *livre d'artiste* and contemporary graphic novels neither present the visual nor the written, rather they seek a partnership of each other.

The relationship between literature and art indicates intertextuality, adaptation, and translation, of all forms of art, of communication, representation, narrative and beauty. A work which draws from literature and visual art encourages the progression of interpretation, reinterpretation, rewriting, and reimaging. Such interrelation between literature and art depict a creative act of reading or viewing. W. H. Auden's poem 'Musée des Beaux Arts' (Museum of Fine Arts) (1938) expresses a contemplation of human suffering impelled by viewing Brueghel's painting titled 'Icarus' and makes explicit its status as a written response to art.

One can easily assume that literature and art together lead to critical analysis as well as theoretical questioning. Texts and images which engage with both the visual and the written mediums encourage speculations about form, content representation, the impossibilities therein, of commonalities such as narrative, framing, movement, stasis, metaphor. Together they can express concerns of literary and artistic theory.



The contemporary manifestations of literature and art perceive consumerization the very association of art and literature. Recently there is seen a keen interest in book sculpture and the materiality of the book form. The intricate work of artists such as Su Blackwell and Brian Dettmer posit this new approach to the printed medium as a physical creation of art through literary artefacts. A contrast between these two artists demonstrates two very different approaches to the reappropriation of literature. Blackwell's sculptures are consistently composed on a surface of an open book, implying an overflow or visual outpouring of the story within, and thus extending the book as frame while respecting its role as base. On the other hand, Dettmer almost completely abandons the structural character of the frame, instead treating the literature as malleable primary material. Together these artists continue to highlight the modern definitions of literature and art, which is, undefinable and often indistinguishable. It is within this space that these authors perform their analyses, towards a reassessment of artistic boundaries within and without literature.

In her article on sisters Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell, an accomplished painter, critic Annalisa Federici critiques the relationship between art and artist, character and narrative and demonstrates a cross-fertilisation of techniques of narrative and design that make these works both complimentary and self-referential. She asserts :

“...the sister arts can be also considered, in the specific case of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell, as the sisters’ arts, that is two different means of expressing the same underlying aesthetic principles as well as the closeness of their professional and private relationship.”

South African scholar Elizabeth Geary Keohane offers a novel approach to comparing art and literature by suggesting the potential for a text to play the role of a museum guide. Her analysis of Michel Butor's *Les Mots dans la peinture* suggests word-image relations through her designation of the text as a reader in its own right. She says,

“...Butor's engagement with form in this text sees him develop a string of brief encounters with different artworks over the course of the book, allowing us to align our progression through the text, as readers, with the trajectory of a visitor leisurely making her or his way through an exhibition space.”

The critic shows a renewed interest in the structural importance of the text as an entity, an aesthetic of writing beyond the simple depiction of works of visual art. In so-doing, she sets up a meta-curation of the art exhibition, highlighting the continuous potential for verbo-visual interaction.

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### 9.3 POETRY AND VISUAL ARTS

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North American poetry and poets have made a very significance contribution towards poetry and visual arts. According to Brazilian critic, Solange Ribeiro de Oliveira, the noted Brazilian critic, contemporary poems are not always limited to books as they used to be, traditionally. They may spread to the computer or TV or cinema screen or even into museum galleries, in the shape of multiple objects, paintings, performances, videos



and installations. While citing examples from Brazilian poets, the names of Antonio Fernando de Franceschi, Marcos Bagno, Felipe Fortuna, Carlos Ávila, Duda Machado and Lúcio Autran occur to the critic's mind. The Brazilian poet-critic Franceschi acknowledges that poetic creation frequently surrenders to forms of intervention mediated by languages with a more immediate impact, especially music, both scenic and electronic. Another Brazilian poet Margos Bagno declares that he “extracts his poetry from other sources,” among which he mentions music, “a hollow, a-semantic sign,” “the more perfect for that.”

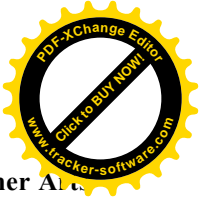
(“Signo oco, assemântico e, por isso, mais que perfeito.” Bagno. In ‘Principio erat Verbum’, p. 247. As in all other Portuguese sentences quoted in ‘Literature and the Other Arts : Post Modern Poetry in English’, the translation by Solange Ribeiro de Oliveira.)

A number of Brazilian poets resort to various forms of intercourse between their poetry and the arts. Felipe Fortuna considers essential the influences he captured from Brazilian humour, from Charles Adams's melancholic cartoons to the most diverse draftsmen, such as André François and Quino. Carlos Ávila says that “Lyrical microforms bearing a strong relationship to music, concrete poetry as well as poems which turn out to be verbal ready-mades, synthesized in brief forms on the white surface of the page.” Another poet, Duda Machado, emphasizes the presence of visual compositions in his book, *Zil*. Together with the abolition of verse for the sake of spatial configuration, words are organized in discontinuous planes, according to sound affinities. The poem becomes an object, “a mixture of words and design.”

The poet, Lúcio Autran, affirms that the starting-point for his book *Um nome* (A Name) was Hieronymus Bosch's painting *Extração da Pedra da Loucura* (The Extraction of the Stone of Madness), and that his poem ‘Uma baleia vista em São Paulo’ (A Whale Seen in São Paulo) refers to three paintings by Franck Stella on display in the 1989 Biennial Exhibition in São Paulo.

Affinities with both music and the visual arts are presented in the work of Michael McClure, one of the leading poets of the Beat generation and also a participant in the 1955 Six Gallery Events, which incidentally launched the San Francisco Renaissance. The poet's alliances with music and performance have led him to perform his poetry with the accompaniment of Ray Manzarek, the former keyboardist for the rock group “The Doors.” McClure's poems sometimes display a graphic design, suggestive of clouds and flowers. Pointing to certain traits of his writing – “the deliberate depersonalizations of grammar and alterations of accepted written syntax” – he invites the reader to see his verses as analogies for the splashes of paint in modern canvases.

His another poem ‘Ode to Jack Pollock’ is about abstract expressionist's favourite colours. In this poem, Pollock's technique of pouring and dripping paint comes out as an image for a lyrical evocation of pain, in which the hand swinging the loops of paint is presented as equivalent to the poet's “gestures” :



Hand swing the loops of pain \_ splashes \_ drips\_  
chic lavender, duende black, blue and red!  
Jack Pollock my sorrow is selfish. I won't meet  
you here. I see your crossings of paint!  
We are all lost in the cloud of our gestures\_

Another North American poet Clark Coolidge adopts a similar stance. In the essay “Words”, he relates his poetry to the work of Philip Guston, the neo-expressionist painter and printmaker of the New York School. Coolidge writes : “I find myself very close in spirit and work to the (...) dialectics of the painter Philip Guston (...) the kinetics of thought/action : growth, destruction, transformation.” Puzzled at the obscurity of Coolidge's writing, the reader can only vaguely associate it with Guston, the painter and printmaker of the New York School, who in the late 1960s helped lead a transition from abstract expressionism to renderings of personal symbols and objects. The hermetic character of Coolidge's is purposeful. One cannot forget his affiliation with language poetry – a kind of creative enterprise marked by its disregard of referential meaning and corresponding preoccupation with fragments, nonsense, and unmeaning, as well as the rejection of the linear model current in traditional literature.

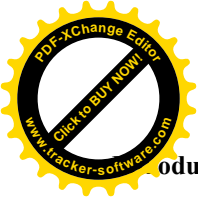
The Pre-Raphaelite poets combined poetry with painting. The movement was initiated by William Hunt, John Millais and Dante Rossetti. The primary purpose of these poets and painters was to reform art by rejecting the mechanistic approach. These artists were inspired by Raphael who himself was one of the finest painters. The combination of painting and poetry was wonderful. William Hunt created a painting on Keats' poem ‘The Eve of St. Agnes’. Dante Rossetti was a gifted poet and a painter. His poetry and painting “The Blessed Damozel” inspired generations of poets and painters. Similarly, celebrated Victorian poet Alfred Tennyson's poem ‘The Palace of Art’, first published in 1832, became favourite subject matter for painters. His famous poem ‘The Lady of Shallot’ inspired the English painter John William Waterhouse is paint three versions of this character. Another great Victorian poet Robert Browning's poem, a dramatic monologue, ‘Andrea del Sarto’ is based on the life of a great painter Andrea d'Angolo. Similarly, his another dramatic monologue ‘Fra Lippo Lippi’ is based on the famous Italian painter Filippo Lippi in which the poet seems to question whether art should be true to life or should become an idealized image of life. This is how poetry and painting are inextricably interwoven with each other. The verbal creation seems to register the author's subjective response to a piece of visual art.

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#### 9.4 WHAT IS ‘EKPHRASIS’ ?

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While describing relation between literature and other arts, the term ‘ekphrasis’ or ‘ecphrasis’ is often used. It means describing an object or existing a work of art as vividly as possible in order to ‘bring it before the eye’. Jongeneel Robillard considers it as textualized images. An ekaphiristic text creates the image by means of a narrative. Critic like Peter Wagner



describes the term as ‘inter-art studies’. According to Murray Krieger, the word ekphrasis or ecphrasis is “the most extreme and telling instance of the visual and spatial potential of the literary medium. ... Ekphrasis, under this definition, clearly presupposes that one art, poetry, is defining its mission through its dependence on the mission of another art – painting, sculpture, or others. ... the study of ekphrasis ... seemed to me the most extreme ... way to put into question the pictorial limits of the function of words in poetry.” (Krieger, 6) The purpose of ekphrasis is to use an artistic language when trying to turn into words a picture or a sculpture. It meditates this relationship between a poem and a work of art, being able to establish an interconnection between literature and other visual arts.

In literature, the theory of the three aspects of language and thought finds corroboration in Ezra Pound's poetological treatise *ABC of Reading*. Pound writes about three fundamental categories to account for all poetic processes, *melopoeia*, *phanopoeia*, and *logopoeia*. *Melopoeia* refers to the acoustic dimension of the verbal arts, to its auditory dimension, its musicality, and rhythm. *Phanopoeia* accounts for their visual and imagetic dimension, the myriad of images which literature can evoke. And *logopoeia* accounts for the verbal, logical, and linguistic impact of literature.

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### 9.5 WHY COMBINATION OF LITERATURE AND OTHER ARTS ?

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Relating an individual's literary experiences in a variety of forms leads to fresh insights and new understandings of a text. Encouraging a scholar to represent those experiences in a variety of forms offers access to representations that might not be available verbally and offers less-verbal students alternative ways to demonstrate knowledge.

Jacques Derrida argues that, “The fact that a spatial work of art that doesn't speak can be interpreted in two ways. On the other hand, there is the idea of its absolute mutism, the idea that it is completely foreign or heterogeneous to words. ... But on the other hand ... we can always receive them, read them, or interpret them as potential discourse. That is to say, these silent words are in fact already talkative, full of virtual discourses.”

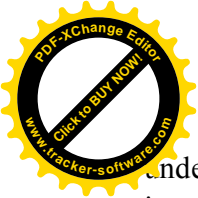
(Derrida, Jacques, in Peter Brunette and David Wills (eds.), “Deconstructive and the Visual Arts”, 1994, pp. 12–13.)

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### 9.6 LET US SUM UP

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Comparing literature with other arts is beneficial to students. The visual arts, music, and drama provide effective ways for students to develop literary envisionments. Teachers are integrating history, social studies, science, and even math with literary experiences. Students benefit cognitively when they are exposed to various art forms while studying literature. Art, drama, and music enable students to explore their literary understandings more deeply and expand their thinking about texts. Integrating social studies, history, and science with literature study helps students by adding a human dimension to the content. Embedding literature study in the context of social studies, history, or science helps students expand their literary



understandings. Art, drama, and music can provide different points of entry into literature, especially for students with diverse learning styles. The arts can provide realistic or metaphorical representations of literary meanings. To maximize their value in the literature classroom, art, drama, and music should be integral to literature study, not just seen as add-ons. Art provides students with another way to talk about their literary understandings. Visual art, drama, and music provide additional ways for teachers to see students thinking about a literary text as well as a way to help students develop their understandings. The arts elevate literacy comprehension and further envisionment-building because they force students to shuttle back and forth between their literary understandings and their artistic creations. Having students dramatize characters or situations helps further their understandings. Skits, role-playing, and other dramatic activities help students understand characters and the situations they are in. Dramatic activities provide excellent ways for students to share what they have read with one another. Convincing administrators, parents, and other teachers of the value of integrating the arts in the literature classroom can be difficult; others may view the arts as non-essential, or even frivolous. The arts can help students develop their sense of imagery, an important aspect of envisionment-building. Social studies and history are often paired with literature because literature offers new ways of seeing historical periods and events. Contextualizing literature with social studies and history enriches the study of the literature.

Connecting the study of literature to other art forms enriches both subject areas. Such connections reinforce related concepts across disciplines, provide fuller understandings by revisiting concepts or topics from different disciplinary perspectives, provide a more coherent learning experiences, and lead them to coordinate the tools used in different disciplines when tackling complex problems.

The relationship between literature and art is longstanding and multifaceted. There is the creative potential of a constant renegotiation of the boundary space between literature and art. Conversations and Collaborations between literature and art provoke questions, and further interest in unpicking this rich subject area, in a contemporary world where accessibility and interdisciplinarity provide the backbone of cultural interaction.

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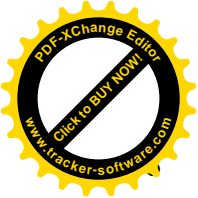
## 9.7 SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

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1. Create a dramatic reading of the poem using your voices individually or in unison – to present the poem's meaning(s) to the class.
2. Set the poem to music and prepare to sing it to the class.
3. Create and perform a dance that conveys the poem to the class.
4. Choose another mode of presentation that involves rhythm, music, and/or dance.
5. Use audio-video performances to analyse a text.







Nöth, Winfried & Lucia Santaella. *Literature and the Other Arts: The Point of View of Semiotics* - ©Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS). *Comparative Literature: Sharing Knowledges for Preserving Cultural Diversity* - Vol. I

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<b>ANSWERS</b>
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1. (a)                      2. (b)                      3. (c)                      4. (d)                      5. (a)

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