Comparative Literature and Internet Studies Anke Finger Introduction The discipline of comparative literature is undergoing challenges: not only is literature across the world to be studied, that is, cultural traditions and productions in comparison with each other instead of a nation-based approach, but the added task presents itself in the search for a comparative history of the arts, within which literature is one.Flusser's and Bec's philosophizing in a dialog, that is, "(inter)mediality," is a field of study now widely accepted in media, literary, and cultural studies (see, e.g., Golumbia; Manovich; Schmidt and Valk; Tinckom; Wolf), and it is a constituent part of comparative cultural studies (see Totosy de Zepetnek, Digital Humanities). An example of the definition of intermediality is as follows: Intermediality refers to the interconnectedness of modern media of communication. As means of expression and exchange, the different media depend on and refer to each other, both explicitly and implicitly; they interact as elements of particular communicative strategies; and they are constituents of a wider cultural environment. Three conceptions of intermediality may be identified in communication research, deriving from three notions of what is a medium (–> Media). First, intermediality is the combination and adaptation of separate material vehicles of representation and reproduction, sometimes called multimedia. Second, the term denotes communication through several sensory modalities at once, for instance, music and moving images. Third, intermediality concerns the interrelations between media as institutions in society, as addressed in technological and economic terms such as convergence and conglomeration. As a term and an explicit theoretical concept, intermediality has perhaps been most widely used in reference to multiple modalities of experience (–> Modality and Multimodality), as examined in aesthetic and other humanistic traditions of communication research (–> Aesthetics) (Jensen 2385). What kind of fiction would Vampyroteuthis Infernalis be had it been conceived in the electronic realm? Following Katherine N. Hayles, Vampyroteuthis Infernalisin the digital realm could be delivered in a number of genres and formats: it could be written in Storyspace , a hypertext authoring program that favors linked structures; it could use the multimodality of the world wide web with "a wide variety of navigation schemes and interface metaphors" including "sound, spoken text, animated text, graphics, and other functionalities in a networked linking structure" written as interactive fiction with "game elements" (7-8), engaging the user/reader by requiring her/his input and, in turn, requiring from the critic or scholar an entirely new take on reader-response criticism.Intersubjective dialogue and "multilogic interaction" takes place on two levels: 1) within the book where Vampyrotheutis infernalis is positioned as an othering of humans and 2) without the book between two collaborators who move beyond their individual arts, the textual and the visual, but not to describe the images via language or to undermine the text by covering it or expressing it with an image; rather, the two artistic modes complement each other to such a degree that that which is to be presented can only find creation through both arts together. Thisconstitutes either a process of birthing or the aesthetic expression of a Hegelian synthesis: Bec has created a plethora of images of types of octopus that also turn up in different media: the images shown at flusserstudies.net are digital and in 2007, in a retrospective of Bec's work in Prague, show fictitious genealogies of cephalopods and their various imagined biological data on the kind of hanging maps formerly in use in chemistry, physics, and biology classes (see Bec). They are worked in relief, with elements hanging down and sticking out, hinting at unfinished three- dimensionality. In this sense, the fictitious world of the animal–– brought

about by conjoining two artistic expressions and different media to confront the fictitiousness of humans' spatiality and virtuality, or as Bec puts it, their parallel zoologies––is complemented by the unfinalizability of the artists' dialogue with each other, with their creature, and with their audiences (on the philosophy of the animal, see Calarco). Another example emerges from conceptual art and precedes Dick Higgins's 1969 concept of intermedia based on La Monte Young's 1963 edited volume An Anthology (the volume is without page numbers). Young, as a Cage and Stockhausen influenced minimalist composer interested in conceptualism, assembled in this art book (published several years before the official onset of the conceptual art movement) pieces that, like Henry Flynt's influential essay on concept art that was published in it, simultaneously called attention to conceptualism while including elements of dialogism and unfinalizability. Indeed, according to David Farneth, the anthology ranges "among the most influential collections of music and performance art of the 1960s ... represent[ing] an unprecedented breaking down of barriers between artistic media" (Farneth qtd. Talking about Compositions 1960, of which numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 9 are contained in the anthology, he stresses that both categories of theater and music apply: "I divide my works into music pieces, and musical–theatrical pieces. During the last decades, in the art scene, two tendencies are to be observed: on the one hand a still growing tendency towards an annulment, a dissolution of the boundaries between different art forms, as brought about by performativity, hybridization, multimedia; on the other hand, we have observed an anesthetization and theatricalization of other cultural fields, including politics, economy, the media, sports, everyday life, that tends to abolish the boundary between art and non–art. Both tendencies are a challenge to the arts disciplines. For those have preferred a kind of monadic existence for a long time. Art history, theatre studies, musicology, film studies, comparative literature or national literature studies, each arts discipline has understood itself as defined and clearly delimited from the others by its very specific objects, as well as by a methodology and theoretical approaches that referred expressly to them alone. The new situation that has emerged over approximately the last fifty years, radically questions this self–understanding. It disorientates the arts disciplines in terms of their special objects, i.e. in terms of just that momentum that seemed to guarantee the self–definition and delineation of the other arts disciplines in each case and, as a result, in terms of their methodologies and theoretical approaches. ("Conception," eurodocsem.net).Many art disciplines hence "speak" the language of literary criticism, leaving literary critics wondering whether to embark on the search for a fresh taxonomy and new theoretical frameworks for dialogue and discourse. Guillen's second question, of course, is an existential one, and points to aesthetics as a possible answer, namely that a great deal of scholarship in aesthetics concentrates on internet studies and on analyzing parallels or convergences in the arts. As the study of aesthetics appears to be making a comeback in the humanities, this facilitates the study of literature with the other arts and thus produces work in the contextual study of literature. This does not mean a revival of "universalism"; however I consider it essential that comparative literature and comparative cultural studies need to (re)integrate the study of aesthetics and thesis with a specific focus on internet studies, and this in a global context.The following pages repeat the title in a different and much larger font and in black and blue, and eventually one comes to a complete list of the contents of the collection: "an anthology of chance operations concept art meaningless work natural disasters indeterminacy anti–art

plans of action improvisation stories diagrams poetry essays dance constructions compositions mathematics music." Listed thereafter are Young's colleagues, friends, and collaborators, and stringent copyright restrictions. The volume opens with a performance instruction piece by George Brecht, "Motor Vehicle Sundown (Event)" dedicated to John Cage, in which "any number of motor vehicles are arranged outdoors" and form and enact a complex canon with respective lights, radios, horns, opening and closing hoods/windows/doors, triggered by instruction cards and engines running.that I call 'multilogic interactions'" (205; on visual culture studies, see, e.g., Mirzoeff). The ubiquity of the term and its approximate equivalents––dialogicity, polyphony, intersubjectivity, connectivity–– signify a shift in Western aesthetic, philosophical, sociopolitical, and ethical stances that helped bring about new fields, including postcolonialism. As Jeffrey T. Nealon points out, "dialogic intersubjectivity, understood in terms of an impassioned play of voices, has displaced the dominant modernist and existentialist metaphor of the monadic subject and its plaintive demand for social recognition and submission from the other" (33).Furthermore, the dialogic work is reflected in the fluid and unfinalizable reception within its audience or readership (see also Mitchell on Blake and "the infinity of globalization"). The dialogue within the work, in whatever way it constitutes itself, may find its resonance among the spectators. At the same time, each member of the audience or readership may piece together the fragments, impressions, and sensory experience derived from the artwork individually, thereby dialoguing with the artwork through channels all on her/his own while not cutting herself/ himself off entirely from a communal conversation or interpretation. Bakhtinian dialogism as defined by Michael Holquist gains in importance at this point of the discussion since the center (of the artist, of the self, of the artwork, of the community) loses prominence: "in dialogism consciousness is otherness.Next are Earle Brown's "Music Essays," instructions for a piece for multiple pianos with multiple possible ways of executing it. Joseph Byrd then contributes "Music Poetry" which includes a short reflection on Nam June Paik, time, and Gertrude Stein, a "Ballet for Woodwinds," and instructions for a poem "Homage to Jackson Mac Low" (who helped edit the volume). Inserted is a loose sheet of music. Next are Terry Jennings with "Music" for piano and string quartet (instructed), Dennis Johnson with the copy of a letter and an envelope glued into the book itself containing a letter covered with blue script (questions, sayings, haphazard thoughts), and more "music" in the form of two words arranged exactly like the title of the anthology on the covers: "ding dong." Ronald Gregor Smith, 1937) and is echoed in Bakhtin's early essay entitled "Art and Answerability." According to Eduardo Kac, in the visual arts, dialogism it refers to "interrelationship and connectivity": "The dialogic principle changes our conception of art; it offers a new way of thinking that requires the use of bidirectional or multidirectional media and the creation of situations that can actually promote inter subjective experiences that engage two or more individuals in real dialogic exchanges . Curiously, the anthology has failed to attract in-depth studies, and this short discussion, too, will hardly give the contents and the book's significance its due (see Kotz, "Post-Cagean" 60). It is to be stressed, nonetheless, that internet translation and conceptualism intersect dynamically in this slim volume and that the design by Fluxus artist George Maciunas mirrors the simultaneous diversity and unity of the artists and their "products" therein.Concluding the volume are Richard Maxfield's "a simultaneity for people," instructions for a conceptualist, Dada-infused simultaneous poem, and his essays, Paik's

reminiscences of an encounter with Stockhausen and thoughts on unfixed form, Terry Riley's "Music" including instructions for Young to crawl inside a grand piano, roll around in it, and kick it, Diter Rot's "white page with holes" (literally a loose white page with holes of varying sizes), Emmet Williams's "poetry" including his "Cellar Song for Five Voices," Christian Wolff's "Duet I (Piano four Hands, I is at right, II left)," and last Young's famous Composition 1960.One dialogue--and I am merely suggesting that it is an example of "multilogic interaction"--is played out in a fable authored by philosopher Vilem Flusser and artist and self-described zoo systematician Louis Bec. Vampyrotheutis Infernalis ("vampire squid from hell"), a (theoretical) fable published by Flusser and Bec in 1987, juxtaposes humans and a type of octopus in order to answer some fundamental questions about dialogic inter subjectivity in light of humans' anthropocentric positionality.While the Renaissance did point to convergences between disciplines, not until the eighteenth century--with the beginning of the study of aesthetics representing the numerous debates during the Enlightenment and after on the comparability of the arts and their significance for human experience and expression--did theoretical discussions emerge from examining interart creations.(98)...