

**Fani Paraforou: Images and their beholders *on stage*:  
Michel Foucaults *Las Meninas* and Heiner Müllers  
*Bildbeschreibung*.**

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The long tradition of text-image relations is being challenged today by questions of intermediality. The goal of this paper is to explore the field of ekphrasis, in order to reconsider its specific interaction between image and text in an alternative theoretical perspective. By recapitulating the long history of ekphrasis and tracing its fault line, we are invited to reflect on its inherent representational character as on the heterogeneous nature of ekphrastic representation, which are being accentuated in recent definitions of ekphrasis.<sup>1</sup> Our specific point of emphasis is, that ekphrastic texts could not only represent image as such, but also mediate the relationship between beholder and image, as specific element constructed through visual representation.<sup>2</sup> Of central importance is then to approach the theoretical potential of ekphrasis as representation of visual representation and contour its performativity, an heuristic concept for debating on 'iconotextual' issues. In this representational perspective ekphrasis can be conceptualized as a »wider discursive praxis« (Brosch: 104) and so enable the comparison between different kinds of ekphrastic texts, as far as their performative strategies are concerned. To provide evidence of this hypothesis, a comparative analysis between Michel Foucaults *Las Meninas*-essay and Heiner Müllers *Bildbeschreibung* (*Description of an Image*) is going to be attempted, in order to detect strategies being motivated by the discourse of the text to represent visual representation and set up the act of beholding it.

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<sup>1</sup> See James Heffernan, »Ekphrasis and Representation«, in: *New Literary History* 22 (1992), 297-316, here 300, where Heffernan succinctly defines ekphrasis as »the verbal representation of graphic representation«, see also W. J. T. Mitchell, »Ekphrasis and the Other«, in: *South Atlantic Quarterly* 91 (1992), 695-719, here 696, where Mitchell gives a more elegant definition of ekphrasis as »verbal representation of visual representation«, both foregrounding its meta-representational character.

<sup>2</sup> See Renate Brosch, »Verbalizing the Visual: Ekphrasis as a Commentary on Modes of Representation« in: J. Emming, A. Jael Lehmann, Irmgard Maassen (eds), *Mediale Performanzen. Historische Konzepte und Perspektiven*, Freiburg i. B. 2002, 103-123.