

# Bibliotekarstudentens nettleksikon om litteratur og medier

Av Helge Ridderstrøm (førsteamanuensis ved OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet)

Sist oppdatert 08.04.19

Dette dokumentets nettadresse (URL) er:

<https://www.litteraturogmedieleksikon.no/cm4all/uproc.php/0/synestesi.pdf>

## Synestesi

(\_litterær\_praksis) Samfornemmelse, dvs. at sanseintrykket fra en sans (f.eks. en smak) framkaller en fornemmelse fra en annen sans (f.eks. en bestemt lyd) (Aarønæs 2007 s. 158). I en tekst innebærer dette gjengivelse av sanseopplevelser på måter som kobler ulike sansninger, f.eks. ved at en person sanser med én sans noe personen egentlig trenger en annen sans for å kjenne. En sans framkaller opplevelser som svarer til en annen sans. Synestesi som estetisk fenomen og stiltrekk innebærer at lukt-, hørsels-, syns- og berøringskvaliteter smelter sammen (Kayser 1973 s. 324). Synestesi er basert på ideen at det finnes en indre forbindelse mellom f.eks. spesifikke lyder og farger, og mellom lyder og former (Beauvais 1986 s. 10).

Med synestesi blir grenser mellom sanseområder opphevet (Friedrich 1988 s. 53). En tone kan utløse en fargeopplevelse, og dette kan ved synestesi som litterær praksis føre til uttrykk som “en rød klang” og “sonoreblå”. En lyd kan luktes, en smak bli hørlig, en lyd bli synlig osv. Synestesi brukes som språkfigur i uttrykk som “en rød duft”, “et gult skrik” (noen synestesier er klisjeer, f.eks. “en myk stemme”).

“Derived from the Greek *syn* (meaning union) and *aesthesia* (sensation), the term *synaesthesia* is used to describe the “production, from a sense impression of one kind, of an associated mental image of a sense impression of another kind” as well as “the production of a synaesthetic effect” through the “use of metaphor” (OED). The first definition refers primarily to a neuropsychological phenomenon, and is used to describe the experiences of those who hear colors, taste shapes, or otherwise demonstrate the capacity to experience two sensations simultaneously as the result of exposure to a single stimulus (Gage 348). The latter definition describes attempts made to simulate this experience through the use of aesthetic techniques, such as metaphor. [...] artists turn to *synaesthesia* in an effort to “deliberately blur” the boundaries between “normal” and “abnormal” perception. [...] Many other artists, writers, and musicians also involved *synaesthetic* phenomena in the process of their compositions, typically with the aim of broadening the sensory experiences of those who come into contact with their work. [...] *Synaesthesia* forces us to question our assumptions about the

relationship between perception and reality.” (Sarah Best i <http://humstatic.uchicago.edu/faculty/wjtm/glossary2004/synaesthesia.htm>; lesedato 03.10.16)

Ifølge den greske dikteren Simonides fra Keos er poesi “talende malerkunst” og maleri “stum poesi” (gjengitt fra Ernst 1991 s. 8).

“[S]ynaesthesia is a figure of speech, a metaphorical textual device where one sense is described by means of another; synaesthesia was already well known in ancient Greece, where poems were believed to be transferred in the sweet sound of the singing Muses. Yet synaesthesia and its literary use evolved and usually absorbed the intellectual ambience of the given period.” (Světлана Ondroušková i [http://www.wls.sav.sk/wp-content/uploads/WLS4\\_2015\\_Ondrouskova.pdf](http://www.wls.sav.sk/wp-content/uploads/WLS4_2015_Ondrouskova.pdf); lesedato 09.02.17)

“Authors use synesthesia as a rhetorical device in their works for many reasons. One simple reason is just to use a new simile or metaphor, thereby connecting previously unconnected images and forming new synapses. The use of synesthesia in Romantic poetry was more purposeful, however. Romantic poets considered there to be a hierarchy of the senses, as follows: touch, taste, smell, sound, and then sight. It has been noted that the “lower” senses have fewer words and vocabulary terms to describe them, while the “higher” senses have many more descriptive words available. It makes sense that sight would have the most words available, as that is the primary sensory input that most humans use to understand the world. When considering the transfer of sensory vocabulary, it is generally understood that using the vocabulary from a “higher” sense creates emotional depth, while using vocabulary from a “lower” sense is humorous. Consider the following two examples:

- Higher to lower: The room had a light purple smell, of the glorious bounty of spring.

- Lower to higher: The metal band sounded salty like sweat.” (<http://www.literarydevices.com/synesthesia/>; lesedato 31.03.16)

“Karl Heinz Bohrer identifies a very distinct use of synaesthesia in German Romanticism, where it was employed to metaphorically depict elimination of the duality of subject. However, “[w]e do not concern another delimitation of subjectivity here. Its body organ is not the reason anymore, but neither is it the heart. The duality of subject, head or heart, as we know it from the Enlightenment and even from the early Romanticism dissolves in favour of a unique anonymous disposition” (Bohrer 1998, 50-51). As Bohrer further explains, synaesthesia is used here in a new and more complex manner as compared to its employment up to the point, “the final occurrence [is depicted] as sort of an epiphany” (ibid). I is then felt as transcending I, it enters a condition which is metaphorically portrayed as entering into the realm of music, I demonstrates itself as musicality. This particular

synaesthesia combines two domains: the domain of psyche usually depicted through the imagery of “music, nature, and night”, as opposed to the domain of intellect represented by the sphere of “word, society and daylight”. (Světlna Ondroušková i [http://www.wls.sav.sk/wp-content/uploads/WLS4\\_2015\\_Ondrouskova.pdf](http://www.wls.sav.sk/wp-content/uploads/WLS4_2015_Ondrouskova.pdf); lesedato 09.02.17)

“In description, a blending or intermingling of different sense modalities. While synesthesia appears in ancient literatures, including both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, it became especially popular in the 19th century through the work of poets such as Charles Baudelaire and Arthur Rimbaud and the symbolist movement. Examples of synesthesia include Baudelaire’s “The Ragpickers’ Wine,” where he writes of “the dazzling, deafening debauch / of bugles.” In her heavily synesthetic poem “Aubade,” Dame Edith Sitwell describes the “dull blunt wooden stalactite / Of rain creaks, hardened by the light.” In George Meredith’s “Modern Love: I,” a woman’s heart is made to “drink the pale drug of silence.” Synesthetic effects include textual amplification, complication, and richness. Some poets, notably Percy Bysshe Shelley, have used synesthesia to suggest visionary states.” (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/resources/learning/glossary-terms/detail/synesthesia>; lesedato 31.01.17)

Den franske dikteren Charles Baudelaire skal ha fått vekket sin språklige sans for synestesier blant annet ved å lese verk av den tyske romantikeren Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann, f.eks. *Kreisleriana*, ifølge Baudelaires *Salongen i 1846* (1846) (Rincé 1984 s. 88). I Baudelaires sonett “Correspondances” (1857) “Nature is evoked as a realm where the distinctions between different orders of perception are annulled, allowing each sensation to be synesthetically allied to its complement in a sphere normally kept distinct, so that the acts of smelling a perfume, touching a child’s soft skin, hearing a note from an oboe or looking out across a grassy meadow become equivalent acts. Furthermore, these sensations are in turn linked in Baudelaire’s vision to a spiritual or ideal register, in that each of these sense perceptions corresponds to a quality or essence which, so to speak, hovers above it on the spiritual plane.” (Cardinal 1981 s. 161)

“ “Augenmusik”, or synaesthesia as a technique in the early avant-garde [...] First, synaesthesia is a neurological condition where two or more senses are combined to enrich our habitual perception by other sensations. One of the most common explanations is that there seems to be a cross-activation between areas in the brain each serving a distinct function, the other not usually being integrated in the particular cognitive process. This cross-talk thus creates an unusual sensory experience, probably the best known being the ability to associate numbers with colours. The psychological and physiological functioning of synaesthesia began to be explored as early as the 19th century; one of the first medical observations comes from Francis Galton. Not surprisingly, the scientific studies and descriptions soon caught the interest of artists, and synaesthesia became a fashionable topic. The most famous examples of synaesthetic perception in literature are probably Charles

Baudelaire's "Correspondences" and Arthur Rimbaud's "Les voyelles". In the case of Symbolist authors, experimenting with synaesthesia remains on the textual level, in metaphorical imagery, yet it is exactly this imagery that can provide an insight into the rather labyrinthine theoretical texts of avant-garde authors." (Světlna Ondroušková i [http://www.wls.sav.sk/wp-content/uploads/WLS4\\_2015\\_Ondrouskova.pdf](http://www.wls.sav.sk/wp-content/uploads/WLS4_2015_Ondrouskova.pdf); lesedato 09.02.17)

"Da jeg var elleve år, hørte jeg han [Rolf Stenersen] lese dikt for min mor, dikt av Rimbaud som han selv hadde oversatt. Da jeg var seksten år, ga han meg denne diktsamlingen. Rimbauds dikt er fulle av åpenbar og hemmelig synestesi. Jeg fikk den samme opplevelsen av våknende språk som i barndommen. Det slo inn i meg med voldsom kraft. Det var som en randopplevelse, følelsen av å gli langs den lysende randen av en sort sol. I denne rand mellom jeget og språket, som i en formørkelse, ble språket borte og deretter gjenfødt i meg." (Stein Mehren i *Klassekampen* 15. mai 2010 s. 16) En "likely explanation for these sound/colour correspondences lies in Rimbaud's study of alchemy at the time he was writing *Le sonnet des voyelles* [...] the sequence of colours in the first line of the poem: black, white, red, green, blue, are the order of colours which appear during the process that the alchemist uses in the attempt to produce the philosopher's gold. [...] the symbolism of the alchemical colours are related to Rimbaud's seemingly unrelated poetic images." (Enid Starkie i [http://offscreen.com/view/eisenstein\\_synaesthesia](http://offscreen.com/view/eisenstein_synaesthesia); lesedato 30.01.17)

"The following is an extract from Arthur Rimbaud's "Alchimie du verbe" that appeared in his collection of poems *Une saison en enfer* in 1873: "I invented the colour of vowels! – A black, E white, I red, O blue, U green. – I set out rules for the form and movement of every consonant, and with instinctive rhythms, I prided myself to be the inventor of a poetic word sooner or later accessible to all senses. I reserved its translation to myself. It began as an investigation. I expressed silences and nights in writing, I wrote down the inexpressible. I gave the vertiginous chaos a form" ([1873] 2015, 30). What synaesthesia enables is to express the inexpressible, or in other words, to provide a visible, material form to something so vertiginous as affects and instincts; in light of Bohrer's observations concerning the use of synaesthesia in Romanticism, we can trace a similar tendency in Symbolism as well. What is crucial in terms of aesthetics is that Rimbaud here disposes of the dual nature of subject by internalizing the affective component of sensory perception, "silences and nights", which for a long time was metaphorically externalized in the heart. To internalize here means to blend with the intellect, or the cognitive process, by means of synaesthetic devices where the intellect is metaphorically expressed through the visual or through the effort to bring it to light in terms of a visible form." (Světlna Ondroušková i [http://www.wls.sav.sk/wp-content/uploads/WLS4\\_2015\\_Ondrouskova.pdf](http://www.wls.sav.sk/wp-content/uploads/WLS4_2015_Ondrouskova.pdf); lesedato 09.02.17)

Litteraturprofessor Knut Stene-Johansen skrev i 2016 om den franske forfatteren Joris-Karl Huysmans' roman *Mot strømmen* (1884): "Enda mer dekadent og

ekstragavant blir det når estetikerer anlegger et brennevinsorgel med ulike tønner sprit og forsker i smaken, eller mer presist i det synestetiske, sammenfallet mellom smak og klang: “det eksisterer forbindelser mellom tonene i likørens musikk”, og med tungen spiller han “stille melodier, stumme begravelsesmarsjer med fullt orkester, soloer av peppermyntelikør og duetter av vespetro og rom i munnen”.” (*Morgenbladet* 19. – 25. februar 2016 s. 54)

“Inspiration by synaesthesia, the blending of the senses, and its use in art reach far before the avant-garde; it is metaphorical synaesthesia whose roots can be traced back the furthest. However, it was only in the late 19th century with the advancements in the fields of medicine and psychology that synaesthesia entered the focus of artists in relation to perception and cognition. [...] to analyse the concept of Augenmusik – a term employed by Hermann Bahr in his study *Expressionismus* published in 1916 to describe a novel approach to artistic creation adopted by the young generation of avant-garde artists which he titles as ‘expressionists’. Expressionism in Bahr’s terms should therefore not be understood as an artistic movement of the same name, but a particular visuality established by means of our mental capacities. This visuality is marked as synaesthetic because it relies on the whole palette of sensory perceptions; the synaesthetic quality is also employed in order to accentuate the fact that the “inner vision”, as it is often called, can be stimulated independently from the external visual input. To summarize, Augenmusik as Bahr contemplates it bears three major traits: first, it evokes a specific mode of visuality which is defined as aspect seeing where not all of these aspects (if any) fall within the realm of the visible; second, it claims to be independent of historical time entering into the internalized (subjective) sphere of human perception; third, it calls for a synaesthetic perception and seeing in such a way as to establish a new mode of visuality in bypassing mimetic observation. It also tries to stage the synaesthetic effect in order to integrate affects into cognition, an objective of which is to induce “feelings so refined that words fail” as Kubin writes.” (Světlana Ondroušková i [http://www.wls.sav.sk/wp-content/uploads/WLS4\\_2015\\_Ondrouskova.pdf](http://www.wls.sav.sk/wp-content/uploads/WLS4_2015_Ondrouskova.pdf); lesedato 14.02.17)

Den russisk-franske maleren og kunstteoretikeren Vasilij Kandinskij “expresses his dissatisfaction with “coarser emotions such as terror, joy, sorrow, etc.”; in relation to the potential success of their application in the new art, the artist “will strive to awaken as yet nameless feelings of a finer nature” ([1911] 1994, 128). Whether the realization of such a conception is possible or not remains questionable even today. The concept of Augenmusik was already doubted by some contemporaries. In 1925 Helmuth Plessner, a German philosopher and proponent of philosophical anthropology, wrote: “It is possible to say even today that the radical attempt of Expressionism to *invent* an Augenmusik [...] is and must be doomed to failure, since it contradicts the essential principles of optical awareness” ([1925] 1982, 62; italics added by S. O.). I nevertheless point out that neither Plessner denies the fact that the attempts of Expressionists consist in inventing – in other words, that they are staged. In this respect we might also doubt whether it is appropriate to regard

the attempts to integrate the affective component into visuality as being synaesthetic in nature, especially where synthetic might suffice. [...] Bahr was obviously well informed about synaesthesia which seemed to be a trendy topic of the period. His article “Colour Music” published in *Die Zeit* already on August 10, 1895 shows detailed knowledge of the theme, ranging from observations in medicine to experimenting in art. He mentions Luigi Bertramo Castel’s *clavicembalo oculare* or more recent experiments of Wallace Rimington to paint music but also writers such as E. T. A. Hoffmann. Also in this article, synaesthesia is linked to expressing emotions, even to experiencing ecstasy.” (Světlana Ondroušková i [http://www.wls.sav.sk/wp-content/uploads/WLS4\\_2015\\_Ondrouskova.pdf](http://www.wls.sav.sk/wp-content/uploads/WLS4_2015_Ondrouskova.pdf); lesedato 14.02.17)

Den amerikanske forfatteren Stephen Crane skrev blant annet romanene *Maggie* (1893) og *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), med sterke innslag av impresjonisme. “Synaesthesia is a recurring feature of Crane’s prose, and usually performed by semantically ectopic colour: ‘A crimson roar came from the distance’, ‘He imagined them shaking in black rage.’ The effect is a more forceful expression, but also a blurring of sensory categories, once again strengthening the painterly associations of impressionist literature. The technique is, moreover, another means by which to portray the immediacy of the impression, as a sensation, before it potentially becomes distanced by rationalisation.” (Weavis 2002 s. 75)

Den tyske forfatteren Wolfgang Borchert har i antall verk et lite omfattende forfatterskap, men bruker en rekke synestesier – “våtgrønn”, “blåmyk”, “fiolettstinkende”, “is-stor” m.m. (sisert fra Gehse 1993 s. 52).

Franskmannen Frédéric Kastner brukte ca. 1870 kjemiske gasser til å lage et “farge-orgel”. Gasser produserte fargede stikkflammer og toner når de ble antent i glassrør. Den tyske komponisten Richard Wagner oppfattet Kastners “Pyrophon” som et vellykket eksempel på et Gesamtkunstwerk (totalkunstverk), og planla å kjøpe et for å installere det i operaen i Bayreuth (Bódy og Weibel 1987 s. 21-22). Den engelske maleren Alexander Wallace Rimington lagde et annet farge-orgel og skrev boka *Colour-Music* (1912).

Et synestesi-orgel “kan frambringe lys, farge, bevegelse, lyd og dufter i en sensorisk krysskobling. Dette krysskoblede sanseintrykket kalles på fagspråket “synestesi”, et neurologisk fenomen hvor man opplever at en sans også framkaller opplevelser som svarer til en annen sans, som smaken av former og fargen av lyd. [...] The Emotion Organ (2007) er en synestesisk simulakrum-maskin hvor utøveren kan utforske det sensoriske samspillet av følelse, syn, hørsel, lukt og bevegelse. Det er også en tidsmaskin – et ombygget pumpeorgel fra 1895 som kombinerer både gammel og ny teknologi og bygger på flere århundres utvikling av ideer om synestesiske fenomener. [...] I Vesten har interessen for synestesi økt i perioder med hurtig teknologisk utvikling samt sosiale og kulturelle endringer. I andre tider har den blitt glemt. Sent i det 19. århundret og tidlig i det 20. århundret

brakte reisende med seg hjem sine erfaringer fra Orienten – religioner og filosofi, vitenskap, narkotika, krydder, medisin, urter, parfymen, stoffer, musikk, dans, teater og maleri. På samme tid syslet kunstnere fra Russland til Amerika med pseudo-religiøse og vitenskapelige drømmerier, begeistret over mulighetene for en ny, syntetisk og fusjonær opplevelse av kunst, hvor skillelinjene mellom den fysiske verden, bilde, ord og lyd, ville oppløses i en sanselig og åndelig ekstase. De utnyttet teknologiske framskritt til å oppfinne nye innretninger for å eksperimentere med ideene sine. Liknende ting er påtakelige på det intermediale og psykedeliske sekstitallet, undergrunns-acid/techno/house-klubbmiljøet sent på 1980-tallet og tidlig på 1990-tallet, og på cyberscenen midt på 1990-tallet – skjønt i det siste tilfellet snakket man sjelden om synestesi.” (Steggell 2007)

Dikteren og ingeniøren Malcolm de Chazal fra Mauritius bruker ofte synestesi som poetisk virkemiddel, f.eks. i diktsamlingen *Sens-plastique* (1947) (Joubert 1965 s. 118). Et dikt fra 1957 av spanjolen Juan Ramón Jiménez begynner med verselinjene “Hele natten lang / har fuglene sunget / deres farger til meg”. “The poet, awake, enjoys the songs of the birds; but by a very interesting transference of sense perception (synesthesia) he hears the birds in terms of their color.” (Burnshaw m.fl. 1964 s. 189)

“Når Verena Waddell åpner sin utstilling “Fusjon” i Galleri Bølgen på lørdag, er det med medbrakt poet og pianist – som hun maler til der og da. [...] Marte Østmoe sendte sitt første dikt til Verena Waddell. Siden har de holdt kontakt. - Vi er begge opptatt av hva som er utsiden og innsiden av oss mennesker, forteller Verena Waddell og ser på bildene sine. Kvinnefigurer i søyleformer i flere lag og farger. - Begge er opptatt av synestesi, prøver Marte Østmo å forklare. Synestesi er et fenomen der sansene er mikset, karakterisert som en sammenblanding av ulike sanser. At ord smaker, ulike lyder eller bokstaver har egne farger, eller ukedager har tredimensjonale plasseringer.” (*Østlands-Posten* 13. juni 2014 s. 14)

“Da det japanske rytmespillet [dataspillet] “Rez” ble utgitt i 2001, var det mange som for første gang fikk et forhold til ordet *synestesi*. Folk med synestesi blander gjerne sammen forskjellige sanser, slik at de for eksempel opplever at bokstaver har farger, eller at lyder har smak. I “Rez” sørget sammenblandingen av lys, lyder og følelser for at spillere opplevde en slags synestesi, som gjorde dem ekstra oppslukt av spillet.” (*Dagbladet* 22. juni 2011 s. 46) “As for the primary goal behind the creation of the game: “Synesthesia – the combination of visuals and audio to form something new, the merging of two senses to overpower you.” Mizuguchi was most influenced by the artwork of Wassily Kandinsky” ([http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/130712/go\\_to\\_synesthesia\\_jake\\_kazdals\\_.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/130712/go_to_synesthesia_jake_kazdals_.php); lesedato 27.03.17).

“When used as a literary term, synesthesia is a figure of speech in which one sense is described using terms from another. Examples of synesthesia often are in the form of a simile, as this is an easy way to link two previously unconnected images.

For example, you might say, “The silence was as thick as a forest.” The definition of synesthesia as a rhetorical device comes from the neuropsychological phenomenon in which a person perceives a sensory stimulus through another sense, such as seeing colors when hearing music or sensing the personalities of numbers, days, months, etc. [...] Some common idioms are examples of synesthesia. For example:

- I smell trouble.
- You could cut the tension in the air with a knife.
- Actions speak louder than words.
- She spoke in honeyed tones.

There are some advertisements that take advantage of synesthesia as a rhetorical device, such as:

- Skittles: Taste the Rainbow
- Pepsi: You’ve never seen a taste like this
- Coca-Cola: Life tastes good

It is also well known in the advertising community that customers perceive certain colors and tastes to represent certain things. For example, due to the light blue color of Tiffany’s familiar packaging, customers generally associate this shade with elegance and luxury. Similarly, there is a certain taste that people associate with energy drinks – a very unusual and unnatural taste that can be found in Red Bull and Monster drinks, among others. When manufacturers have tried to develop energy drinks without this specific flavor they’ve found that customers do not believe the drink will give as much energy, regardless of the other ingredients used. This is true, too, for the color of cola drinks. Pepsi tried to create clear-colored drink with the traditional “cola” flavor (again, a completely unnatural construct). This was the drink for which they created the slogan “You’ve never seen a taste like this.” It backfired, however, because consumers believe that colas should have a rich, dark-brown color, independent of any rationale besides the fact that this taste has come to be associated with that color.” (<http://www.literarydevices.com/synesthesia/>; lesedato 31.03.16)

“Hun er mer kjent enn Kongen. Persillekrans i håret til Ingrid Espelid Hovig, som fyller 90 år i dag. Ordet “ikon” har det gått stygg inflasjon i. Men dagens 90-årsjubilant er et virkelig ikon, en skikkelse som utløser synestesi hos alle voksne nordmenn: Ser du bildet av henne, hører du stemmen, og omvendt. Enkelte vil fornemme lukter og smaker også.” (VG 3. juni 2014 s. 26)

Synestesi brukes også som en sykdomsbetegnelse for personer som helt ufrivillig og ofte (noen ganger på en ubehagelig måte) opplever slik sanseblending.



“Den “vanlige” og mer utbredte formen for synestesi manifesterer seg i enkelte menneskers evne til å forbinde tall, bokstaver eller til og med toner med farger, slik at for eksempel tallet 3 oppleves som blått, bokstaven J fremstår som grønn eller tonen A “høres” lilla ut. Mennesker med *mirror-touch synesthesia* føler andres psykiske eller fysiske følelser nærmest som sine egne, og før fenomenet fikk et vitenskapelige navn i 2005 kunne personer med denne tilbøyeligheten anses for å være “ekstremt empatiske” (Hustvedt 2010: 117ff). Oppdagelsen av fenomenet er nært koblet til den voksende kunnskapen om speilnevroner, og senere forskning kobler *mirror-touch synesthesia* med forsterkede empatiske evner, som igjen forsterker tanken om at empati med andre skjer gjennom en prosess hvor vi simulerer andres følelser (Banissy og Ward 2007: 815-816).” (Stapnes 2010 s. 50-51)

Alle artiklene og litteraturlista til hele leksikonet er tilgjengelig på <https://www.litteraturogmedieleksikon.no>