



Intermediality in Film: A Historiography of Methodologies

Ágnes Pethő

Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania (Cluj-Napoca, Romania)
E-mail: petho.agnes@gmail.com

Abstract. After a short survey of the key questions regarding intermediality in cinema and placing them into the context of current debates in media studies and film theory, the paper addresses the key issues of the methodology of studying intermediality in film. In assessing the import of intermedial studies on film, the paper focuses on certain characteristic methodologies that have emerged in treating intermedial occurrences within films throughout the history of theorizing about the movies in general. Some of the major historical paradigms to be briefly described are: the normative aesthetic viewpoints in the spirit of cinematic New Laocoöns, the trans-medial theorizing of the moving image, inter-art theories, and parallax historiographies. Finally methodologies aiming at modelling intermediality and mapping the rhetoric of intermedial cinema are presented in somewhat more detail.

1. Theorizing Intermediality in the Cinema

1.1. *Still a Maverick Scholarly Enterprise?*

In speaking about intermediality in the cinema we have to ask ourselves first of all the following questions: What is the role of cinema in what can be defined as “intermedial studies” within media studies? What is the place of an intermedial study of cinema within the general framework of film theory? And implicitly, can we speak of a general film theory regarding cinematic intermediality? And we may find that these questions are not so easily answered as they might seem at first sight. Whereas intermediality has become a generally accepted term in media studies, in film studies it is still a concept surrounded with much scepticism and ambiguity.¹

¹ I am fully aware at the same time that the term “intermediality” itself may not be the only possible term relating to problems involving multiple media relations, lots of terminological surveys have shown us that “multimediality” or recently “multimodality,” or trans-mediality, media hybridity, media convergence, etc. also denote similar media phenomena, yet all of which can and should be distinguished from each other. Or, as the denomination of the recently convened expert workshop

If we look at the bigger picture, without any doubt, in the past two decades, “intermediality” has proved to be one of the most productive terms in the field of humanities, generating an impressive number of publications and theoretical debates. This popularity of intermedial researches was prompted by the incredibly accelerated multiplication of media themselves that called for an adequate theoretical framework mapping the proliferation of media relations. The other factor that propelled “intermediality” to a wider attention was most likely the fact that it emerged on an interdisciplinary basis that made it possible for scholars from a great number of fields (theories of literature, art history, music, communication and cultural studies, philosophy, cinema studies, etc.) to participate in the discourse around questions of intermediality.

The balance of these “intermedial studies,” we can say, is that a great amount of work has been done especially in three directions: a) studies concentrating on “intermediality as a fundamental condition or category” (Rajewsky 2005, 47) that resulted in debates over the general terminology and classification of intermedial relations; b) tracking media history from the viewpoint of the birth and interrelationship of each media (a direction that received a great boost on the one hand from the media studies of Friedrich A. Kittler,² and on the other, from the concept of “remediation” introduced by Bolter and Grusin (1999), or more recently, from the pragmatic concept of “media convergence” introduced by Henry Jenkins³); c) studies using “intermediality as a critical category” (Rajewsky 2005, 47) resulting in detailed analyses of intermedial relations within specific texts or media (configurations). As we see, the field is wide open from meta-theoretical enquiries and general philosophical approaches to specific empirical analyses. So much so, that more recently, even the possibility of conferring intermedial studies the status of an academic discipline has been brought into discussion.⁴ However, an increasing number of theorists argue that essentially intermediality remains more like a “research axis,” a “research concept” (*Suchbegriff*) – to quote J. E. Müller,⁵ and not

(the *ESF Exploratory Workshop* held in Amsterdam, 12–14 June 2009: *Intermedialities*) has already suggested it, we might use the plural form of the word as an umbrella term, and refer to phenomena involving media relations as “intermedialities,” thus admitting that they can be approached from various points of view.

² E.g. Kittler: *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* in which he develops the idea of how “media cross one another in time” (1999, 115).

³ Jenkins stresses both the idea of the interrelatedness of media and their interaction with an active consumer. See: Henry Jenkins: *Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006).

⁴ This was one of the issues brought to general debate at the conference *Imagine Media! Media Borders and Intermediality* hosted by the University of Växjö, Sweden, 25–28 October, 2007.

⁵ See for instance: Müller 2008, 31. Also in an earlier formulation of the same idea, he states that intermediality does not offer the “security” and the status of a closed scientific paradigm, but appears more like a “theory of praxis.” (“Sie bietet gewiss nicht die ‘Sicherheit’ und den Status eines

a coherent system of thought that would unite all the phenomena that can be called “intermedial” within a single theory. This “research axis” is meant to cut across several disciplines and identifies primarily the object of scientific investigation (namely, intermedial relations) that should otherwise be handled in a media specific research. The interdisciplinary approach to intermediality that resulted in the incredible diversity of topics taken on by intermedial studies, however, also brought about a proliferation of heterogeneous conceptions and methodologies that can often seem confusing.⁶ The study of intermediality (or intermedialities) has reached a state of dissemination across disciplines and research topics that may seem productive, yet in fact, often results in a mere inflation of its terminology.

Within this general – and highly disseminated – field of “intermedial studies,” the investigations into cinematic intermediality seem to have a somewhat uniquely paradoxical status. While intermediality in literature and, more recently, in “new, digital media” dominates the discourse on intermediality and most of the people who embrace this “research concept” have a basic training either in literature or in communication studies/media theory, we can see that no theoretical study of intermediality can be written without references to cinema. Almost all essays dealing with the concept mention film as a possible field where intermediality can be observed, but time and again they limit their observations to only a few sentences which sometimes clearly betray that they are not at home with the history or theory of film as a medium; as a consequence these remarks are often received with due scepticism by film scholars. But this does not mean that researches concentrating directly on the intermediality of cinema are missing, on the contrary, the bibliography of cinematic intermediality has grown to an impressive bulk since the 1990s. Still we have to deal with a situation in which the idea of cinematic intermediality is far from being as accepted as literary intermediality is, for instance, that has had its validation through a more “natural” adaptation of the terminologies of linguistic or literary theory (intertextuality, dialogism, deconstruction, etc.). Studies openly confessing an intermedial approach to film may find themselves in a kind of maverick status, being disregarded by certain academic circles that see in them an unwelcome hybridization of film theory, an “application” of a conceptual framework regarded as something coming from “outside” mainstream film theories.⁷

‘geschlossenen wissenschaftlichen Paradigmas,’ vielmehr rückt sie als eine ‘Theorie der Praxis’ Intermedialität in das Zentrum medienwissenschaftlicher Analysen.” Müller 1996, 17.)

⁶ Hence we can see a continuous urge for a more clarified meta-theory in several current scholarly debates around the concept of intermediality.

⁷ Quite often researches concentrating on cinematic intermediality are hosted by academic departments of linguistics and literature embracing interdisciplinary approaches (sometimes as a means of spicing up their current offer of courses and research topics) or departments of communication/media studies instead of university departments specializing in film studies.

So is it only a problem of a somewhat unbalanced interdisciplinarity, where the emphasis remains on territories other than film, and notions related to intermediality come to be merely illustrated by stretching the examples further over the media border lying between literature and cinema? Or is it a problem deriving from the other side, namely from the side of film theory that has still not acknowledged “as its own,” so to speak, researches into cinematic intermediality?

1.2. Intermediality: A Rift in Film Theory, a Matter of Politics, or Just a Blind Spot?

There have been two outstanding critical assessments of the state of film theory in the last few decades. The first critical survey accompanied the introduction of the idea of “post-theory” by David Bordwell and Noël Carroll in the mid 1990s and it was interpreted as an attack on film theory itself in the fiery debates that followed. The second prominent re-evaluation came from David N. Rodowick, who in 2007 voiced his concern in a public lecture entitled *An Elegy for Theory*⁸ that film theory is currently undergoing a crisis, declaring that: “the evolution of cinema studies since the early 1980s has been marked both by a decentering of film with respect to media and visual studies and by a retreat from theory” (2007a, 91).⁹ In this lecture – that is currently being elaborated into a whole book project devised to be a sequel to his latest work, *The Virtual Life of Film* (2007) – Rodowick mourns the loss of emphasis on film theory on the one hand in favour of renewed interest in both the history of film, implicitly the historical poetics of film and of a meta-theoretical interest in the critical history of theory itself. Both of these tendencies can be tied to the ideas put forward by David Bordwell in several of his books. In the introductory chapters written to the *Post-Theory* (1996) volume, Bordwell and Carroll themselves proclaimed the end of “Theory” or “Grand Theory” consisting of what they saw as “ethereal speculations,” and presented strong arguments for a “piecemeal” or “middle level research,” (cf. Bordwell 1996) insisting on “anchoring

⁸ The lecture that was originally prepared as a keynote address at the *Framework* conference “On the Future of Theory,” Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, November 3-4, 2006 and was revised for the Radcliffe Exploratory Seminar on “Contesting Theory” at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, May 4–5, 2007, was published subsequently as an article in the journal *October* (2007).

⁹ Although it seems a little paradoxical that Rodowick admits that the “film theory” that these newer tendencies seem to retreat from was also highly interdisciplinary in methods and concepts, therefore less of an autonomous discipline as certain scientific criteria would demand it: “From the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, the institutionalization of cinema studies in universities in North America and Europe became identified with a certain idea of *theory*. This was less a ‘theory’ in the abstract or natural scientific sense than an interdisciplinary commitment to concepts and methods derived from literary semiology, Lacanian psychoanalysis and Althusserian Marxism, echoed in the broader influence of structuralism and post-structuralism on the humanities” (2007a, 91).

the discipline in film as an empirical object subject to investigations grounded in natural scientific methods" (Rodowick 2007a, 92). On the other hand Rodowick notes that "philosophical challenges to theory came from film scholars influenced by analytic philosophy," naming Richard Allen, Malcom Turvey, Murray Smith as some of the allies from the side of philosophy to the idea of contesting the validity of film theory (2007a, 92). "In this manner," – he finds, that – "throughout the 1980s and '90s there is a triple displacement of theory – by history, science, and finally, philosophy" (2007a, 95). He notes that "from the analytic point of view, arguments for and against 'theory' take place against the background of a philosophy of science" and "philosophy disappears into science as 'theory' becomes indistinguishable from scientific methodology" (2007a, 97).

From these debates the two sides are fairly clearly distinguishable: one is reclaiming the rights of "Theory" grounded in philosophy (consequently ethics and epistemology), and seeking – for instance, as Rodowick points out in Stanley Cavell's example – an understanding of "how our current ways of being in the world and relating to it are 'cinematic'" (2007a, 107), while the other can be seen from this point of view as a "retreat" into "post-theory," understood by its promoters as a multiplication of theories and theorizing, of not doctrine- but problem-driven researches (Bordwell 1996, xvii). What seems to be relevant from our standpoint, however, is not which line of arguments we can accept, but what is missing from these critical perspectives. Although both Bordwell and Rodowick present fairly nuanced overviews of what they consider to be the current state of affairs in film studies, we can observe that there is also another divide that could be taken into account as far as film theory is concerned: there seems to be a rift not only between "Theory" and contemporary "piecemeal" theorizing, as Rodowick sees it, or between associative interpretations or theoretical writings "written as a bricolage of other theories" (Bordwell 1996, 25) and a search for a more "scientific" method as Bordwell sees it, but there is also a distinct divide between current cognitive, ecological or philosophical approaches to moving image theory on the one hand, and a media theoretical discussion of cinema that also inevitably includes questions of intermediality, on the other. This latter rift seems even more acute, as despite the existence of important works on both sides, there seems to be very little communication between the scholars on each side of the two "trenches," so to speak. And while the first "divide" has been much debated, this second "divide" is much less visible. One of the possible causes for this is the fact that the rift seems to be not only between theoretical schools or applied methodologies but also between the languages of discourse: English

versus German and French. In contrast to early film theory which started in Europe, the current mainstream theorizing seems to be located in America. Intermedial studies, however, established strongholds in Europe and Canada, and cinema studies embracing the idea of intermediality are practiced within an interdisciplinary framework. It is no surprise then, that important analyses scattered within mainly German or French language collections tend to fall out of sight as far as American based film theorizing is concerned.¹⁰ It is true that, while there is no shortage of writings that can qualify for an intermedial “theory” in general, no “grand” intermedial film theory is in sight, only the kind of “middle-level research” that Bordwell advocated as “responsible, imaginative, and lively inquiry” (1996, xvii).

Nevertheless, in an age demanding a more specific and scientific pursuit of film studies, an intermedial analysis of film apparently still seems too much tainted by its interdisciplinarity or, as Rodowick’s argument might imply, too much attached to another vast field of interest, media studies in general. And we may also ask: why is it so that an intensely method-driven theorizing that borrows from other disciplines is accepted in the case of film semiotics, narratology or cognitive film theory – which are all recognized as legitimate pursuits of film studies, and not merely as branches of some other disciplines –, but the “interdisciplinarity” of intermediality so often suggests negative connotations of “hybridity”? Is it on account of the language barrier, suggested earlier, on account of the differences in cultural contexts that these researches are embedded in,¹¹ or is it more the effect of diverging trends in what we could call the global “politics of science”? Or does it have to do with the implicit ideological assumptions that also seem to “contaminate” the notion of intermediality,¹² or merely with the suspicion that the undertaking of this research perspective is a sign of decline in an academic world based on classic disciplinary hierarchies and a clear-cut distinction of academic fields of research (as suggested by Jürgen E. Müller¹³)? For

¹⁰ Although Yvonne Spielmann’s book on intermediality and the work of Peter Greenaway (*Intermedialität. Das System Peter Greenaway*, 1997) is a notable attempt to reconcile the neo-formalist film analysis practiced by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson with the perspective of intermedial studies, this “gesture” has not been reciprocated, cognitive film theory has never really dealt with intermedial aspects of cinema.

¹¹ In the USA film theorizing, as I understand, is even today constantly forced to assert itself against filmmaking practices and film criticism. In Europe, by comparison, film theory is compelled to find its “foothold” not so much against the backdrop of film production, but among traditional academic disciplines and institutions in the context of which a strategy of interdisciplinarity might seem more successful.

¹² See details about the ideological charge of the notion of intermediality in Jens Schröter’s paper in this present issue.

¹³ See Müller’s article also in this present issue.

there is undoubtedly an “eschatological” line of thinking linked to intermediality that is discernible in the “symptomatic” interpretation of intermedial researches (as manifestations of the “the end” of certain academic disciplines and subject matters, and also as manifestations of the efforts to revitalize ailing academic structures here and there). The same “eschatological” idea of intermediality emerges in the rhetoric of the discussions about the imminent demise of the cinematic medium (discussions that were held mainly around the centenary of the cinema, mourning the “death” of classical movie experiences and technologies).

But putting aside these ambivalences that can lead to such “final” perspectives and interpretations of academic policies, perhaps it is ultimately more adequate to describe the “place” of intermedial film researches not so much in terms of a “rift” or “divergence” between schools of thought or in terms of a politics of science, but merely as a kind of “invisibility,” “a blind spot of film theory”, as François Jost put it (2005, 111–112). Paradoxically, both Bordwell’s “piecemeal-theorizing” and Rodowick’s researches into the “figural” or the “virtual life of film” have a lot in common with “intermedial studies” of film, one in method, the other in actual content: the bordwellian “piecemeal” – as suggested earlier – can be seen as just another name of the “slices” of researches done along “the research axis of intermediality;” while Rodowick’s theorizing can be seen as revolving around the same questions as debated by media theorists regarding cinema,¹⁴ even if he does not explicitly place himself along this “axis” of intermedial researches.

But what seems to be the most important “blind spot” factor is that several contemporary scholars who write about the “medium” of cinema consider it primarily from an aesthetic point of view, and place it into a discourse that revolves around the aesthetic value of cinema, and do not seem to consider it from a medium theoretical perspective. The question of cinematic mediality comes into their debates via criticism of classical film theories, and the concept of medium itself seems to become a casualty in the repeated attacks against “Big Theory.” The case of Noël Carroll is perhaps the most edifying in this respect. On the first glance, Carroll throws out completely the possibility of discussing the mediality of cinema. “Forget the Medium!” – the title of Carroll’s chapter explicitly says in one of his latest books. (Carroll 2003, 1–10). But in fact, the rejection of “media foundationalism,” as he calls it, equals merely the ousting of the monomedial

¹⁴ *The Virtual Life of Film* (2007) is essentially about the changing mediality of the moving pictures, and what can also be considered as the “remediation” of classical cinema into newer media.

concept of cinema, and the rejection of a normative, prescriptive aesthetics based on the assumption of media essentialism.¹⁵ So, on the second glance, quite the opposite is true, Carroll seems to advocate the hybrid, multimedial nature of cinema as an artform.¹⁶ However, as Rodowick rightly states (2007b, 41), Carroll manages to throw out the baby with the bathwater in arguing against media specificity of cinema on account of its hybridity. For – as Rodowick states – it is impossible to understand multimediality without a proper understanding of the individual properties of the media being combined. So in Carroll's case it is the concept of a "legislative" aesthetics, and also a simplified idea of cinematic multimediality that in fact "blocks the view" towards a more nuanced understanding of media relations involved in cinema. In an earlier example, in a book entitled *Theorizing the Moving Image* (1996), Carroll even deals with the deep interconnectedness of verbal language structures and images within certain metaphors, for instance, but without considering it a case for "intermediality" as we grew accustomed to in studies about word and image relations.

In a similar manner, there are some theoretical works that speak about certain facets of cinema that would rightly fall under the scope of intermedial analyses or would necessitate the discussion of medial aspects, but this is somehow not the case. Most often intermediality remains: "une question non questionnée" ("an unquestioned question") to quote François Jost (2005, 111) again. In addition, most mainstream theoretical writings (almost all the Film Studies or Film Analysis handbooks available, for instance) treat film as a monomedial entity, without taking into account its intermedial aspects even in newer works which deal with cinema's transition from the analogue to the digital.

Furthermore, in the course of the past decade questions of intermediality have had to face a new challenge that began to take shape in the growing discussions about the so called "post medium" condition. After years of upheaval brought about by the proliferation of new technologies producing and disseminating moving images, the challenge of the so called "post media age" can also be identified in the fact that there seems to be an effect of uniformization among the different forms of the moving images. Theorists claim that now that the term "medium" has triumphed, the actual media "are already deceased." (Luticken 2004, 12). Digitized imagery absorbs media that become "undead" media, mere

¹⁵ He rejects "that there is a distinctive medium of film and that the essential properties of the film medium implicitly prescribe important constraints on what artistically successful cinema can and should achieve" (Carroll 2003, xiii).

¹⁶ Cf. Carroll: "Artforms generally involve a number of media, including frequently overlapping ones" (2003, 5).

“phantoms of their former self” (Lutticken 2004, 12).¹⁷ So, the “invisibility” of intermediality seems to be threatened both by the contemporary media practice of digital “mixtures,” and by contemporary theories claiming that the concept of the “medium” itself needs a mutation accordingly.¹⁸ So what happens to film and the notion of intermediality in the post-media age? Will its relevance disappear while questions of monomediality threaten to gain new strength with the uniformity of digitization? Or quite the contrary, it will come back with a vengeance, as intermediality (and moving images themselves) can be perceived more and more not just as a form of communication but as a form of an “environment” that remains a multilayered sensual experience despite all its globalizing and unifying aspects?

1.3. Film as an Incredible Shrinking Medium, or an Intermedium?

In asking ourselves the basic questions about film theory and intermediality, we cannot avoid the fact that the core of all these questions is the problem of the mediality of film itself. As Rodowick explains: “one powerful consequence of the rapid emergence of electronic and digital media is that we can no longer take for granted what “film” is – its ontological anchors have come ungrounded – and thus we are compelled to revisit continually the question, What is cinema?” (2007, 93.) Film as we knew it, has acquired a historical status, it has become a medium mainly preserved by film archives. Traditional movie theatre experience has been replaced by a cinema based on new digital technologies in order to provide an overwhelming multi-sensory experience. Home video systems, interactive 3D computer games, or even mobile phones or advertising screens installed on streets or underground stations have become media for our daily consumption of moving images. Film has become an “incredible shrinking medium,” as David N. Rodowick has pointed out in his book entitled the *Virtual Life of Film* (2007), disappearing from our daily life as a medium but persisting as “cinematic experience” in new media, and in the spaces and spectacles of everyday life.

So, consequently, a logical step to take is that film studies should include all the possible media “mutations” of cinema. In a way this has already happened. Instead of “cinema” or “film” the more general term of “moving images” seems to

¹⁷ This type of discourse, in a way, seems to continue the “death of cinema” debates among film critics and aesthetes conducted around the time of the centenary of cinema.

¹⁸ See for instance Lev Manovich’s claims for “a new conceptual system that would replace the old discourse of mediums and be able to describe *post-digital*, *post-net* culture more adequately” (2001b).

acquire a growing popularity while the so called, analogue, “classical” cinema becomes only one of the media that can be included under this umbrella term. Cognitive and ecological film theories have already adopted this perspective (see Carroll 2003, Anderson 2005, etc.), and it is only natural that the perspective of intermediality should be edifying with regards to the different manifestations or changes in the mediality/configuration/social uses of moving images and their newfound interrelationships.¹⁹

The other important question, both from a narrower or a wider perspective, has been the following: Is film one medium among several others in our culture or is it one that combines more than one? Is film (even in its traditional form) an “intermedium,” a “composite” medium, in other words, perhaps the ultimate “mixed” or “hybrid” medium that combines all kinds of media in its texture of signification? Or should we more likely regard it merely as a “place,” a “field” where intermedial relationships and/or media transformations can occur? Is cinema therefore a prototype or a unique case for intermediality as some of the studies suggest?

In one of the groundbreaking books written on cinematic intermediality, Jürgen E. Müller writes the following: “The introduction of electricity and electronics made film into *the* intermedial threshold-medium of modernism that meant the final stages of mechanizing and also the beginning of the electronic and the digital within media history. Therefore film is not *hybrid* or *intermedial* because it made its medial forerunners into its own contents (as was the thesis of McLuhan), but because from the very beginning we find medial interactions and interferences on almost every level. Its technical conditions, its circumstances of presentation and its aesthetic structures are all marked by these interactions” (1996, 47).²⁰

Similarly, Jürgen Heinrichs and Yvonne Spielmann address this subject in the following way in an editorial to the special issue entitled ‘What is Intermedia?’ of the journal *Convergence* (2002 No. 8): “Conceptually, intermedia denotes a fusion rather than an accumulation of media. Thus, the convergence of elements of different media implies the transformation that is more than the sum of its parts.” [...] “Media histories tend to view cinema as the first truly intermedial medium.

¹⁹ See also Müller’s views expressed in the article published in this same issue.

²⁰ “Die Einführung der Elektrizität und der Elektronik machte den Film zu *dem* intermedialen Schwellen-Medium der Moderne, welches den Endpunkt der Mechanisierung und zugleich den Ausgangspunkt der Elektronisierung und Digitalisierung in Mediengeschichte markiert. Der Film ist jedoch nicht deshalb *hybrid* und *intermedial*, weil er sich seit seinem Beginn auf nahezu jedem Niveau in medialen Interaktionen und Interferenzen befindet. Seine technische Voraussetzungen, seine Ausführungsbedingungen und seine ästhetischen Strukturen sind durch diese Interferenzen geprägt.“ (Müller 1996, 47.)

Such historical assessments argue that cinema's adaptation, convergence, and amalgamation of discrete features from literature, music, dance, theatre and painting account for its intermedial quality. However, this does not imply that the medium of film per se should be considered intermedia.²¹ The example of cinema rather highlights the transformative quality of intermediality that can be found in the varying interrelationships between two or more media forms. These may have developed separately but are transformed through convergence into a new, mixed form. In the example of cinema, intermediality acts as a model for the varied interrelationships between diachronic and synchronic media" (2002, 6-7).

These theoretical assessments clearly link the idea of intermediality to film, considering film either as a medium that interacts with other media on several levels and in a variety of forms, or as a medium that has developed certain configurations that can be called intermedial. Nevertheless, there is still room for more comprehensive answers to these fundamental questions. Theorizing intermediality in film, or a philosophy of cinematic intermediality in film is far from being a closed chapter, in fact it should become an even more acute question with the advent of "post-medium" theories and aesthetics.

2. Routes along the Historical Research Axis of Intermediality in Film?

What is already quite clear is that questions of intermediality should always be regarded in a historical perspective: both in the case of researches done into intermediality, or in the case of meta-theoretical inquiries, when we look into theories about intermedial relations. Intermediality as an object of research can only be examined within its context, within the framework of concrete time and place coordinates.²² Early films display a whole different array of media relations than the ones we find in the established institutionalized forms of cinematic storytelling, not to mention later developments of technique that establish new sets of intermedial networks or newer forms of moving images. And if we search for the history of thought regarding the idea of intermediality, likewise, we will find that the problem of media interactions emerges right at the very beginning of film history and is immediately reflected upon by early film theorists. Media

²¹ In her earlier book, Yvonne Spielmann declares in a similar way that film has produced intermedial forms throughout its history, however this does not mean that film should be considered "per se intermedial." (Cf. "Im Medium Film haben sich historisch intermediale Formen herausgebildet, aber das Medium ist nicht per se intermedial." Spielmann 1998, 9.)

²² Rodowick's *The Virtual Life of Film* is a good example of this.

relations together with inter-art relations of film prove to be an area under discussion that persists more or less emphatically throughout the history of film theory and do not only surface in the intermediality studies of the latter decades. On the one hand it is indeed a subject brought to attention by media studies, and the amount of literature that has been published on the topic of intermediality in film can already be assessed in terms of specific methodologies and terminology. On the other hand, it is also true that we can trace the input not only of “explicit” intermedial theorizing of cinema, but also of the more “implicit” theoretical considerations that preceded the emergence of medium theory, and also of analyses that may not include themselves under the heading of intermedial studies, which nevertheless deal with the same issues as the studies grounded in intermedial theories.

Historically speaking, the ways in which *intermedial occurrences* (in other words, media relations that cinema engages in) have been discussed (directly or indirectly) in film theory or analysis can be grouped in the following paradigms sketched below.

2.1. *Film as Synesthetic Experience and the Spirit of a New Laocoön*

The idea that cinema is unavoidably interconnected with other media and arts has been a constant issue addressed by theories one way or another ever since the first moving picture shows were presented in a theatrical environment and ever since movies attempted to present narratives and to produce emotions by a combination of images in movement, music and words. In the early decades of cinema history we find wonderfully poetic similes or synesthetic metaphors in essays describing the essence of cinema as a new art and medium emerging in terms of comparison to the other arts, also defining what films are not, and thus defining the specificity of cinema. Ricciotto Canudo wrote in 1911: “The new manifestation of Art should really be more precisely *a Painting and a Sculpture developing in Time* [...] in a most astonishing apotheosis, *the Plastic Art in Motion* will arise” (1993, 59). The name of “photoplay” employed by Hugo Münsterberg (1916) also suggests a similar mixture of arts giving rise to cinema. Vachel Lindsay’s *Art of the Moving Picture* (1915) even elaborates a taxonomy of “photoplay” types describing film either as “sculpture in motion,” “painting in motion,” or “architecture in motion,” and his whole vision of cinematic complexity culminates in the idea of a specific “hieroglyphics” of the moving image.

This tendency of describing the essence of cinema by way of pointing out analogies with other arts and media continued in a more systematic way with the ideas of Sergei Eisenstein, whose famous montage theory was elaborated on the concept of film being “music to the eyes” (the terminology used also reflects this concept, e.g. “tonal,” “overtone montage,” etc.). His famous collaboration with Sergei Prokofiev in *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) is a well-known example of how he conceived of moving images following the rhythmic structure of a musical score. Eisenstein’s essays (1942) can also be regarded as the forerunners of the idea of media archaeology when he talks of the techniques of Dickens’s or Zola’s novels in comparison to filmic narrative, or the parallels between cinematic montage and El Greco’s paintings. In all his works, at the same time, he maintained a highly synesthetic view upon cinema, in which elements characteristic to each of the arts or to each of the senses were combined in a unique way. When talking about El Greco, for example, he talks of “chromo-phonic” montage and the rhapsody of the colour yellow; in presenting his own method of mixing black-and-white cinematography with colour in *Ivan the Terrible* (1944), he speaks of colour acting as a musical theme. As a whole, his theory of montage is an attempt (matching the ambition of Lessing’s synthesis in his *Laocoön*) to find correspondences between all the arts.

This type of theorizing cinema’s interconnectedness with the other arts and media is more than merely conferring a poetic quality (consequently aesthetic value) to film by the use of a synesthetic language, it can be attributed in fact to an early realization of what later came to be known as the phenomenon of “remediation” in the media theory of Bolter and Grusin (1999) or what Jens Schröter denoted as “ontological intermediality” (“ontologische Intermedialität,” 1996, 146): the definition of the emerging new media is done through comparisons with other, already familiar arts and media, and also cinema’s repurposing of the arts and media is acknowledged. It is also consistent with the process necessarily involved in the emergence of a new medium, as Gaudreault and Marion explained: “a medium’s identity is a very complex affair. Moreover, specificity by no means signifies separation or isolation. A good understanding of a medium thus entails understanding its relationship to other media: it is through intermediality, through a concern with the intermedial, that a medium is understood” (2002, 15).

However, the arguments for the acceptance of the new, seventh art bring forward not only such enthusiastic Gesamtkunstwerk-like ideas or synesthetic metaphors about cinema as quoted above, but also explicit rejections of too much “contamination” with the other arts, especially literature. And these debates tend

to renew from time to time around the introduction of new technologies within cinema: the introduction of sound or the shift from analogue to digital, and also around the questions of adaptations from literature.²³

The so called “essentialist” aesthetics of film often resort to a comparison between the arts in the spirit practiced by G. E. Lessing in his famous *Laocoön* essay and set up normative aesthetic principles and media boundaries that film should conform to. Arnheim’s *New Laocoön* (1938) dealing with the advent of the talkies and dismissing sound as an unwelcome interference with the purity of the medium is one example in point.²⁴ In a later article, however, published in 1999, Arnheim revised his attitude and admitted that: in film “a variety of media could be involved, as is the case of an orchestra where every instrument plays its part in the whole performance.²⁵ [...] I see now that there is no such thing as a work limited to a single medium. [...] The film medium, as I recognize now, profits from a freedom, a breathing space that I could not afford to consider when I fought for the autonomy of the cinema. It is free to use sound or no sound, color or no color, a limited frame or an endless space; it can exploit depth or use the virtues of the flat plane. This freedom puts the film more closely in the company of the other performing arts, such as the theater, the dance, music, or pantomime” (Arnheim 1999, 558).²⁶ Thus Arnheim actually returns to a synesthetic or *Gesamtkunstwerk*-like model in the vein of Eisenstein.

2.2. Trans-Medial Theories of Cinema

This is perhaps the most arguable category listed here. As we know, especially in the field of narratology we have a long running tradition of theorizing filmic narrative (just like more recently computer games) on the basis of the notions developed in literary narratology. The first theorists to do so were the Russian

²³ See for instance the views of Russian Formalist Boris Eichenbaum, who advocated the idea that cinema and language cannot be separated and the analysis of the use of language in film constitutes one of the most important questions of film theory (*Problems of Film Stylistics*, 1927), but who also compared the relationship of film and literature to a marriage that has been going on too long, and urged that cinema should leave his “honourable mistress,” namely literature (*Film and Literature*, 1926). Bazin’s highly influential essay written in defence of an “impure cinema” can also be noted (1967).

²⁴ “A medium of expression that is capable of producing complete works by its own resources will forever keep up its resistance against any combination with any other medium” (Arnheim 1938, 2002).

²⁵ Although such metaphors necessarily imply a synesthetic view upon film as a composite medium, as Noël Carroll has pointed out, quite often such “musicalist analogies” are used in order to express the “true essence” of the medium in contrast to an overly literary cinema “in the name of purism” (1984/85, 146).

²⁶ One of the interpreters of Arnheim’s theory, Dimitri Liebsch considers that Arnheim’s revision of his earlier views could be described something like a new “*Hamburgische Dramaturgie*” in a further parallel with Lessing’s works (2004).

formalists (Boris Eichenbaum, Viktor Shklovsky, Yuri Tynyanov, etc.) who, as we know, wrote extensively on matters regarding the medium of film as well. Their ideas were later taken over by the so called neo-formalist film analyses (as practiced by Kristin Thompson, for example). David Bordwell's narratology is also based on formalist categories (like *fabula* and *suzhet*), just as Edward Branigan's theories of filmic narration or point of view repurpose Genette's categories. What makes it questionable to include such theories in the line of theorizing intermediality is that these categories of narratology are considered to be trans-medially applicable exactly because according to certain views narrative structure is believed to be medially non-specific (as a semiotic universal or as a deep structure), and without doubt these theories do not approach cinema as having the potential of engaging in intermedial relations. However, there are cases in which a trans-medial theoretic framework is used in order to theorize medial specificity and differences. Seymour Chatman's seminal essay: *What Novels can Do that Films can't (and Vice Versa)*, 1981, is a good example, but it can actually be fitted in the next category, named below (exemplifying how these categories are sometimes interconnected).

2.3. Comparative Analyses, Inter-Art Theories (“Cinema and...”-Type Works)

Quite a few works present comparative analyses of cinema and the other arts. This type of theorizing is most often practiced as a general inter-art theory comparing two art forms or media (painting and cinema, literature and cinema), which usually does not only comprise the comparative presentation of one art versus the other, but also deal with: a) tracing *the influences/borrowings between the arts and media*, their genealogical interconnectedness (see for instance, Joachim Paech's *Literatur und Film*, 1988), or b) concrete occurrences of interartiality, namely *embedded representations* of one art within the other (the analysis of the role of paintings seen in cinema, for instance, or comparing literary works and films, etc.). Both Bazin's well-known essay on the differences of painting and cinema (*Painting and Cinema*, 1967) and Chatman's essay quoted before, exhibit such duality in their methodology within a single work. Also, we can find a third type: c) comparative analyses that deal with phenomena that can be viewed comparatively in the arts, this is the case, for instance, of Robert Stam's approach, who examines reflexivity in both film and literature (Stam 1992). Nevertheless, this type of work can also be considered as both comparative and trans-medial theory as it deploys a methodology that rests on concepts elaborated by Bakhtin or Brecht in reference to literature.

As a whole, this category covers an extremely large area of researches (beside the already named connections: cinema and photography, cinema and architecture, cinema and theatre, cinema and television, cinema and new media, cinema and computer games, etc.) and it has to be said, that some of these do not even adopt a media theoretical approach (most works that incorporate intermediality as their “blind spot” can be found in this group, as sometimes the applied trans-medial conceptual frameworks – like hermeneutics or general philosophical categories – do not allow a conscious exploration of mediality). Nevertheless, as I have said, the works are numerous, only the works dealing with the relationship of painting and cinema, for instance, are so many that I cannot even attempt to enlist them here.²⁷

An equally important subcategory here consists of the *adaptation theories*. Not all of the works, however, analyze the relation of film and literature from the perspective of mediality. Earlier theories most often construct their theses and methodologies based on aesthetic and critical assumptions and revolve around the “fidelity” issue, questioning to what degree films are true to their literary source. An important turning point in the history of adaptation theories constituted the rejection of the “fidelity discourse,” and the orientation of the adaptation studies in the direction of Bakhtinian dialogism and intertextuality (implicitly, sometimes even intermediality).²⁸ As Linda Hutcheon has pointed out in her recent book synthesizing contemporary views regarding these questions, adaptation can be seen from several perspectives: as trans-mediality, a “trans-coding into a different set of conventions” (2006, 33), translation of one media into another, as a cultural or trans-cultural phenomenon of “indigenization” (or “colonization”) or “a kind of extended palimpsest” (2006, 33). Or, we can add, as a more complex intermediality that combines all kinds of media relations, as can be observed, for instance, in the so called “picto-films”²⁹ that have emerged almost as a sub-genre among adaptations. We have so many adaptations of classical narrative literature in which a sense of “literariness” is conveyed in fact through ostensible imitations of paintings or painterly styles.³⁰ [Figs. 1–2.]

²⁷ Only some of the names here: Bonitzer (1987), Aumont (1989), Dalle Vacche (1996), Felleman (2006), Bonfand (2007), etc.

²⁸ Again the works are too numerous to even attempt to list them here. Some of the important contributors to the contemporary discourse on adaptations are: Elliot (2003), Stam and Raengo (2004, 2005), Stam (2005), Aragay (2005), Hutcheon (2006), Leitch (2007), etc. A new impetus was given to these studies by the start of a new specialized Oxford journal, *Adaptation*, in 2008.

²⁹ The term is borrowed from Jost (1993).

³⁰ Numerous BBC series adapting the works of Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Jane Austen or Thackeray could be cited as examples for this, or Roman Polanski's *Tess* (1979), Franco Zeffirelli's *Jane Eyre* (1996), James Ivory's films etc. (Cf. Pethő 2009.)

2.4. “Parallax Historiography” and Media Archaeology

The term “parallax historiography” has been introduced by Catherine Russell (2002), and refers to the way in which earlier forms of cinema get to be revisited and re-interpreted from the perspective of newer media forms of moving images, or reversely, how these newer forms can be interpreted from the perspective of earlier forms of cinema. As Russell explains: “new media technologies have created new theoretical ‘passages’ back to the first decades of film history” (2002, 552). “Parallax historiography refers to the way that early cinema comes into focus from the perspective of the end of the 20th century.” [...] “The term parallax is useful to describe this historiography, because it is a term that invokes a shift in perspective as well as a sense of parallelism” (Russell 2002, 552).

Naturally, we could dispute whether the relation of older and newer forms of moving images should be considered intermediality or a sort of trans-mediality within moving pictures; nevertheless, this approach is extremely appropriate at a time of an incredible multiplication of the media forms of moving images and of an ever widening area of the remediation of cinematic techniques. We can see, for instance, how the internet is displaying forms of private moving picture consumption similar to early, pre-cinematographic techniques of cinema (see for instance, Lev Manovich’s idea that Quick Time is similar to Edison’s kinoscope). In a similar parallax view Manovich (2001a, 180) sees Méliès as the father of computer graphics and there are several studies of computer games or digital media that draw similar parallels with early cinema. (See: Punt, 2000). The ongoing fascination or fashion of contemporary silent films (the films of Guy Maddin, for example), some instances of postmodern pastiche also invite such a parallax view over the medium of film.

From the part of film history this approach has benefited from the ideology of so called contemporary “revisionist” film history (as practiced by Thomas Elsaesser and Tom Gunning, for instance [cf. Elsaesser and Barker 1989]), defined as a kind of complex archaeology of the medium, that on the one hand takes into account several factors of the production of cinema and on the other hand, also envisages the history of cinema not as a linear progress in time, but as a set of paradigms that can be re-visited and refashioned (like the “cinema of attractions” that characterized early cinema and that proved to be a paradigm the elements of which persist not only in the avant-garde or several Hollywood genres, but can be “reloaded” into a number of other film types along the history of film or even newer media, like video blogging³¹).

³¹ Cf. the essays in the volume edited by Wanda Strauven: *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (2007).

In other instances we have researches into media archaeology in the spirit of Bolter and Grusin's idea of remediation, examining how cinema displays earlier forms of media, or how cinematic forms get to be remediated in other, newer forms. Certain types of films have also been singled out as explicitly acting as the "memory/archive of the medium," (see the "museum of memory" taken over from Malraux, in Godard's work, or the kind of archival or "database aesthetics" [cf. Vesna 2007] employed by Greenaway).

2.5. *Modelling Cinematic Intermediality and Mapping the Rhetoric of Intermedial Cinema*

Within the studies explicitly dealing with intermedial occurrences in cinema we find that general theory and concrete analysis are two large "avenues of investigation"³² that are usually intertwined: the aim to reach a general outline of some kind of a model of intermediality is usually meant to lead to specific analyses of intermedial techniques.

In trying to identify the methodologies employed by the writings on cinematic intermediality within the last few decades I have found that the general debate over types and terminologies in intermedial studies have been matched by similar meta-theoretic approaches concerning cinematic intermediality. Moreover, these often meant a thorough investigation into the nature of cinematic mediality itself. The adaptation of the terminology of philosophy, literary theory or communication studies has been done with an ambition to draw conclusions that could apply not only to cinema but to a general view over intermediality as well.³³ Also, more specifically, certain artists like Peter Greenaway or Jean-Luc Godard have been singled out not just to exemplify cinematic intermediality but in order to unravel the intricate weave of intermedial relations within cinema and the particular intermedial rhetoric distinguishable within their works.³⁴

It seems that intermediality has been explicitly targeted in such studies both as a *general concept* defining the complex mediality of cinema and as a *rhetoric* that defines certain artists or cinematic trends.

If mapping the rhetoric of intermedial cinema has been one of the main goals of theoretical investigations, in order to sketch some of the characteristic points of view adopted by these analyses, in what follows, *mutatis mutandis*, I should

³² I have borrowed the expression from Gaudreault and Marion (2002, 12).

³³ No doubt, this is a possible argument for including studies of intermediality within the cinema under the umbrella term of media studies, as well as considering them as valid exercises of film theory.

³⁴ Cf. Spielmann (1998), Paech (1989), Müller (1996, 1997), Roloff-Winter (1997), etc.

likewise be mapping the rhetoric of intermedial studies of cinema. In order to do that, I will attempt a brief survey of some of the key concepts by way of which these analyses interpret intermediality in film. I am doing this not only because there seems to exist a recurring terminology, but also because, as a rule, the analysis of specific concepts or metaphors used in the rhetoric of a discourse may prove to be relevant in trying to assess how a certain way of theorizing “makes meaning” of the things it tries to describe.³⁵

a) *Intermediality described as a system or a network of interrelations (“Beziehungsnetz”), a system of media convergence and transformation*

This model is perhaps best presented by Yvonne Spielmann in her analysis of the intermedial features of Peter Greenaway’s cinema (cf. Spielmann 1994 and also 2001). She speaks of media correlations, of the way different types of images are *correlated* and *merged*, describing intermedial cinema as a result of “processes of transformation effected through convergence of elements of different media” (2001, 55). She emphasizes: “What is essential to intermedia and intertextuality as well is *the category of transformation*. But where intertextuality expresses a text–text relationship, intermedia means that the reference frame of the entire system of art forms that mediates the intermedial correlation is itself included in the processes of transformation.” (2001, 57) Joachim Paech speaks of a “constitutive intermediality” and a “dynamic correspondence/relationship”³⁶ between media (2002, 279), stating that intermediality is to be understood as the repetition of one medium as the content of its form within another medium.

b) *Theorizing the perception of intermediality in film: as a reflexive experience, a trace, difference, a “parasitic third,” oscillation, an interim form*

All these are ostensibly indebted to Derrida’s ideas of *difference* and *trace* and these ideas often accompany the previously named “correlational” model. I quote Joachim Paech again, he writes: “The only possibility to, as it were, reach the medium behind the form consists in self-observation of the observation and the re-entry of the medium as form or as a back link, in which mediality as the

³⁵ The choice of words in my own rhetoric here is also not accidental, as I proceed with this type of meta-theoretical analysis in the spirit of David Bordwell’s methodology of identifying cognitive metaphors underlying the rhetoric of film criticism in *Making Meaning* (1989).

³⁶ Translated from the German original of: “konstitutive Intermedialität,” and “Dynamische Zusammenhang.” (Paech 2002, 279.)

constitutive difference in the oscillation between medium and form becomes observable as the ‘parasitic third,’ whose background noise renders the event of the difference, thus, the message, perceptible and comprehensible.” (Paech 2000)

In this view there are certain conditions that have to be met in order to perceive intermediality as such. This definition contains multiple elements that are important: first of all the self-reflexive aspect (the spectator has to be either conscious of media processes or the film has to use a reflexive strategy that makes media processes visible)³⁷ and also the idea of media “difference” that has to be “inscribed”/“re-inscribed” within the work.³⁸ Paech further develops the idea, saying that: “Strictly speaking, intermedial processes are also only manifest as configurations or as transformative inscriptions of mediality in a work, text, or intertext. Thus, intermediality as medial transformation can always be observed where the medial difference of forms (of communication) is relevant in works, texts, or other (cultural) manifestations” (Paech 2000). The state in which we can observe intermediality according to this view is never a fixed form or structure but the “events of difference,” of “oscillations,” and as such, merely as the “interim” of forms.

All these ideas have served not only as the foundations for a general theoretical argument, but have also generated in-depth analyses of media relations within film. See for instance Joachim Paech’s study (1997) written on the subject of the “traces of writing” (“die Spur der Schrift”),³⁹ a comprehensive and detailed study of the interrelationship of writing and cinema that can eloquently exemplify the huge import this type of approach has brought to film studies in general.

c) *Intermediality described as a performative act, an “action”*

In close connection with the view presented earlier, we can also distinguish a “performative” aspect emphasized in theorizing cinematic intermediality. Already as we have seen earlier, Paech described the perception of medium difference as an “event,” a “process,”⁴⁰ and this kind of rhetoric persists in several other intermedial analyses emphasizing in the first place the dynamics of intermedial

³⁷ Yvonne Spielmann also speaks of this reflexive aspect: “In relation to visual media, then, this definition of intermedia inherently implies that the processes of transformation are reflected in the form of the images, because it is through the modes of self-reflection that the structural shifts characteristic of new media images are mediated and made visible.” (2001, 55.)

³⁸ “Intermedialität ist als konstitutives und reflexives Verfahren der Wiederholung eines Mediums als Inhalt seiner Form in einem anderen Medium dargestellt worden.” (Paech 2002, 283.)

³⁹ An earlier study by Ropars-Wuilleumier (1982) referring to the way writing gets inscribed within a filmic image and narrative should also be noted.

⁴⁰ Cf. Paech: “Intermedialität ist nur prozessual denkbar” (2002, 280).

relations. This dynamic is presented as *ars combinatoria* (cf. Roloff 1997, 22), a *play with media forms*,⁴¹ or a *transgression of media borders*, a *displacement/dislocation* of media forms. Most often, however, it is presented as a “*dialogue*” between arts and media, repurposing Bakhtin’s term that came into focus with the theories of intertextuality. Then again this “dialogism” involved in intermediality can also highlight the differences of media in an acute manner, intermedial “dialogues” can actually become tangible manifestations of media rivalries. As Bolter and Grusin’s book on remediation has stated: “A medium in our culture can never operate in isolation, because it must enter into relationships of respect and rivalry with other media” (1999, 65). Cinematic intermediality, as such, quite often takes the form of remediation or a reflection upon the processes of remediation. Intermedial cinema incorporates painting or literature, but this is often done as a kind of “*anxiety of influence*,”⁴² the tensions of such relations are then often described as warfare (“inter-media battles”) or in psychoanalytic terms of displacements, repressions.

The most characteristic example in this way is perhaps the presentation of the relationship of the French New Wave to literature: in T. Jefferson Kline’s evaluation New Wave filmmakers developed an ambivalent, almost oedipal relationship to literature which appears in their films as “a constituted-and-then-repressed authority” (1992, 5). For them literature was both a model and an authority to be challenged which can be seen in the techniques used to remediate literature. This prototype of interpreting modernist cinema can be seen also in Dalle Vacche’s descriptions of different media rivalries, the “random proliferation of competing, unstable signs” (1996, 6) within Godard’s *Pierrot le fou* that culminates in Godard’s use of cinematic collage meant to dismantle the traditional powers of painting and portraiture.⁴³

Henk Oosterling’s theoretical writings emphasize this aspect of performativity from several points of view: from the perspective of the receiver we can say that the interpretation of intermediality requires an active viewer, willing to participate in interactivity; from the perspective of the avant-garde type intermedia artist we have the desire to make a statement (often to deliver a conceptual message – no

⁴¹ Cf. “Zwischen-Spiele” (Müller 1997), “Spielformen” (Spielmann 1998).

⁴² Harold Bloom (1973) has coined the phrase that was widely used in the discourse on intertextuality.

⁴³ Cf. Dalle Vacche, in the essay entitled *Jean-Luc Godard’s Pierrot le Fou. Cinema as Collage against Painting* uses all kinds of imagery to describe the violent “action” that takes place in the interaction of media on the screen: “In collage the frame does not regulate any longer what gets into the composition; life seems to hit the canvas and leave its traces in defiance of aesthetic norms and standards of good taste” (1996, 108), or: “the transformation of the portrait into collage can also pave the way for a new level of energy” (1996, 129).

wonder that performance can be seen as a typical form of intermediality), and also from a general, philosophical view we can note the “tensional differences” of media within phenomena of intermediality (cf. Oosterling 1998, 2003).

The ideological charges that accompany ideas on intermediality and that we see time and again also attest to this performative, active aspect of intermediality. Intermediality is seen, more often than not, as something that actively “does,” “performs” something, and not merely “is.”

d) *Intermediality described in spatial terms, as a transitory or impossible “place” (heterotopia)*

Intermediality appears as a *border zone* across which media transgressions take place, or an instable “place” of “*in-between*” (“*Zwischenraum*”), a *passageway* from one media towards another.⁴⁴ The site for intermedial relations to be played out is considered in much of the literature of cinematic intermediality an *impossible place*, a “*heterotopia*” making use of Foucault’s term.⁴⁵ It is also a fact that explicitly intermedial films often prefer diegetic settings that can be directly associated with the principles of heterotopia described by Foucault (see for instance the garden and the hotel in *Last Year in Marienbad*, 1960), and such heterotopias also often serve as allegorical sites for intermedial relations to be brought to the viewer’s attention in some self-reflexive films. (See for example almost all of Greenaway’s films: the imaginary, “impossible” space mixing time and spatial frames in *Prospero’s Books*, the stylized cathedral as ritual and theatrical space of the *Baby of Mâcon*, the garden in *The Draughtsman’s Contract*, the zoo in *A Zed and Two Noughts*, the combination of the diegetic sites of the train, the cemetery and the museum in *The Belly of the Architect*.)

e) *Mapping intermedial figurations, and intermediality as part of the domain of the “figural”*

First of all, it has to be noted, that according to Joachim Paech, intermediality as such manifests itself as a kind of “figuration.” He writes: “The trace of the medium would become describable as a figured process or a configuration in the film” (2000). It is perhaps not surprising that as a methodology, identifying

⁴⁴ Raymond Bellour’s title, *L’entre images* (2002) also echoes this idea.

⁴⁵ It is true again, that heterotopia is also used in describing the “impossible,” mirror-like and illusory medium of film in general. The term is used in reference to cinematic intermediality for example by Roloff (1997).

specific figures of intermedial cinema has been one of the main goals of intermedial studies of cinema. There have been a great number of analyses of individual films with an explicit aim of *researching the historical poetics of intermediality* so to speak, of identifying the most important rhetorical tropes or “figures” of cinematic intermediality or a taxonomy of the basic techniques that convey medial difference.

Some of these figures are derived from techniques specific to cinema; others are trans-medial “adaptations” of more traditional rhetorical figures, while some of them seem to be forged on a more poetic level, in the poetics of individual authors. Without the possibility of making a complete list, let us review some of these two types of figurations.

Yvonne Spielmann identifies, for instance, a category of intermedial relations in Peter Greenaway’s films that she calls *cluster* (i.e. “multiple layering of different images or image elements, resulting in a spatial density,” see: Figs. 3–4.) closely linked to another category, the *interval* (something that in classical cinema marks a temporal difference or mediates continuity, which, however, in intermedial cinema can mediate the juxtaposition of different media and thus result in a cluster). Although she does not explicitly refer to them as tropes, the terminology that can also be related to musical theory entails connotations beyond a mere formal device.

Perhaps the most debated intermedial image type has been the “*tableau vivant*,” a site where painting and cinema can interact in different ways. The analysis of Jean-Luc Godard’s *Passion* (1982) by Joachim Paech revealed the multiple facets of the use of the cinematic reproductions of painting by Godard as devices that anchor certain thematic elements of the fragmented narrative, and as more complex vehicles for a cinematic meditation at the state of the art of cinema among the arts (Godard himself likened these to the operation of a musical theme, a note that is struck, so to speak, with each picture).⁴⁶ [Figs. 5–8.] What is also very important in a *tableau vivant* is that it does not only mediate between reality and fiction or between painting and cinema, but figurates a more complex intermedial relation. As Paech writes: “In a *tableau vivant* we only have the memory of a painting present and not the painting itself before the camera. The confrontation between cinema and painting unfolds on a third level: the level of the *theatre*. Such *tableaux vivants* are actually theatrical scenes, in which the penetration of the camera into the picture means an entrance into a stage-like setting. The space of the picture becomes theatrical space, the bodies that are represented in a picture become actual bodies further deconstructed into

⁴⁶ See Godard’s reflections on his own film in the *Scénario du film Passion* (1982), a video “post-scriptum” to the film itself.

actor and part interpreted by the actor” (1989, 45). We have a direct rendering of this idea in Peter Greenaway’s more recent film, *Nightwatching* (2007), [Figs. 9–12.] in which he presented this interconnection between the scene of the painting transposed both onto the screen and onto the theatre stage, thus confronting the painter’s gaze and handwork (resulting in images and textures) with theatrical “acting” and “watching” (resulting in different situations and interpretations of situations).⁴⁷ Brigitte Peucker (2007) emphasizes that *tableaux vivants* in cinema are extremely charged instances of intermediality in which, furthermore, the bodily sensation is accentuated, animating the otherwise more abstract image and eliciting a direct, corporeal and emotional response from the viewer.⁴⁸

Joachim Paech identifies in the technique of the photographic *blur* a similar device that can act as a figure of multiple mediation between the transparency of the cinematic image and the painterly, almost palpable and material rendering of an image on the one hand, and the photographic reality of the event captured in motion on the other (2008).

Another way of obtaining a complex intermedial figure in film is *translating verbal metaphors* or just *word plays into cinematic imagery* or narrative, thus, implicitly, self-reflexively foregrounding in cinema a deep underlying relationship between words and images, the culture of the book and that of the visual, between discourse and figure. Greenaway’s “framed” draughtsman in *The Draughtsman’s Contract* is a good example of this. The film’s main figure is both a visual rendering of the draughtsman’s concrete activity of representing reality by framing it, and transferring it via a mechanical system of grids into the field of graphic representation (enacting the meaning of “*mise en cadre*”), thus inscribing the trace of its own medium within the representation and the narrative of “being framed,” entrapped. [Figs. 13–14.]

Beside Greenaway, Godard is also famous for an extensive use of word plays and word-image translations. Of the multitude of such instances (some of which I have analyzed myself, cf. Pethő 2008), I will now quote just one. Christa Blümlinger identifies the figure of “*défilé*” in Godard’s oeuvre as one not only present in his short film entitled *They all Marched By* (*On s’est tous défilé*, 1988) but in many other films. The French word “*défilé*” that stands at the basis of this complex figure means, beside ‘*procession*,’ also ‘the passage of the celluloid film through the projector.’ In the form “*se défiler*” it means ‘to undo something that has been threaded,’ and the phrase ‘to steal away.’ Godard draws on all these

⁴⁷ A film that continues the theme of being “framed” and trapped presented in his earlier *Draughtsman’s Contract* with the theme of being “set up,” “staged.”

⁴⁸ Other notable artists beside Jean-Luc Godard, who have used this device extensively, include Peter Greenaway, Derek Jarman or Raul Ruiz, all of them have also been subjects of such analyses.

meanings, as the procession, in the form of/ functioning as a “*mise en scène*” of a number of bodies crossing the field of view, conspicuously represents the idea of the passage of the moving, ‘living’ image” – says Blümlinger (2004, 178). Through this figure Godard records “the power of the image (and of the body) that is recorded and then projected, but which in its very projection and movement constantly pulls back and remains, therefore, forever elusive” (2004, 187).

Beside these figurations there is also the possibility of exploring the cinematic versions of some more traditional rhetorical figures like *metalepsis* (which usually involves a reference to yet another figure or requires a further – often intermedial – imaginative leap to establish its reference⁴⁹), or like *ekphrasis*, a figure that implies crossing media borders. In fact, *ekphrasis*, as Bolter and Grusin have pointed out, can actually be considered a form of remediation (1999, 151–152). Again, we can think of several instances of cinematic intermediality in Godard’s films in which one medium becomes the mirror of the other in such an ekphrastic way. In other words we can speak of an intermedial *mise en abyme*. One of the best known examples of this is Godard’s early masterpiece *Vivre sa vie* (1962, translated as *A Life of her Own/Her Life to Live*) which also includes a direct reference to the ekphrastic tradition itself. Here in the last episode a young man reads out a fragment from Edgar Allen Poe’s short story *The Oval Portrait* which includes an ekphrasis of a painting and the whole sequence displays cinema’s “ekphrastic impulse” that aims at rivalling the other arts by remediating traditional forms of portraiture both in the visual arts and in literature. The embedded representations flaunt cinema’s multiple mediality, but they also result in an endless process of signification. Similarly, in other Godard films the numerous reflections of characters in paintings, posters, comic book drawings, genre film iconography, literary figures, etc., may be seen in parallel with the re-mediational logic of traditional literary ekphrasis. Not to mention Godard’s ultimate ekphrastic project, the series of essays entitled *Histoire(s) du Cinema* (*Histories of Cinema*, 1989–1999).⁵⁰ Paech argues (2002) that the film’s main figuration is the medial difference between video as ‘individual’ medium (as video-graphic ‘writing,’ a medium suitable for personal archives) and the dreamlike medium of film. Not disputing this, we can also observe that as a

⁴⁹ I have elaborated on the possibility of intermedial techniques being perceived as *metalepsis* (both in a figurative and in a narrative sense) in a research article to be published in the next issue of *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Film and Media Studies* with the title: *Intermediality as Metalepsis in the “Cinéécriture” of Agnès Varda*.

⁵⁰ The ekphrastic nature of the film was consciously explored by Godard who conceived of the project first as a book transcript of a series of lectures delivered at the request of the Conservatoire d’Art Cinématographique in Montréal, and then released together with the film version an art book of reproductions and a set of five CDs containing an edited version of the soundtrack. See also: Pethő (2009a).

whole, *Histoire(s)* accomplishes a uniquely paradoxical fusion of photographic collage, calligrammatic text with the musical and spiritual aspects of cinematic montage, and thus, using a seemingly archaic, or primitive medium (with relatively simple superimpositions, dissolves, photographic inserts, etc.), Godard effectively creates a singular inter-medium for cinema to speak about cinema.⁵¹

In conclusion, we can say that this methodology of mapping intermedial figurations not only produces data for a historical poetics of cinematic intermediality, but also effectively distances studies of intermediality from intertextuality, a concept it used to have a lot in common with at its genesis. While in intertextuality we have “an object that apparently dissolves into its relations,” in cinematic intermediality, more recently, we seem to have moved closer and closer to what Oosterling defines as the “sensible,” or what Peucker considers, “the material image:” namely, a quasi-palpable, corporeal entity in its intermedial density.

At the same time, we can also witness a strong direct influence of Lyotard’s concept of the *figural* (1971) applied not merely to film in general (as was systematically done by D. N. Rodowick in the chapters dedicated to film in his book, *Reading the Figural*, 2001), but in particular to intermedial occurrences. For Lyotard, “the figural is an unspeakable other necessarily *at work* within and against *discourse*, disrupting the rule of representation. It is not opposed to discourse, but it is the point at which the oppositions by which discourse works are opened to a radical heterogeneity or *singularity*. As such, the figural is the resistant or irreconcilable trace of a space or time that is radically incommensurable with that of discursive meaning.” (Readings 1991, xxiv.)⁵² Moreover Lyotard’s concept of the *sublime* can

⁵¹ For a more detailed analysis of this see Pethő (2009b).

⁵² See the further assessment of Lyotard’s concept by Readings: “Against the rule of discourse in figurative or textual space, Lyotard insists upon the figural. It is crucial to understand that the figural is not simply opposed to the discursive, as another kind of space. Lyotard is not making a romantic claim that irrationality is better than reason, that desire is better than understanding. If the rule of discourse is primarily the rule of representation by conceptual *oppositions*, the figural cannot simply be opposed to the discursive. Rather, the figural opens the discourse to a radical heterogeneity, a singularity, a difference which cannot be rationalized or subsumed within the rule of representation. *Discourse, figure* evokes a difference or singularity of objects (A is not B) which cannot be thought under the logic of identity, as an *opposition* (A is defined by not being the rest of the system). The discursive system cannot deal with this singularity, cannot reduce it to an opposition within the network. The object resists being reduced to the state of mere equivalence to its meaning within a system of signification, and the figural marks this resistance, the sense that we cannot ‘say’ everything about an object, that an object always in some sense remains ‘other’ to any discourse we may maintain about it, has a singularity in excess of any meanings we may assign to it. The figural arises as the co-existence of incommensurable or heterogeneous spaces, of the figurative in the textual, or the textual in the figurative.” (Readings 1991, 3–4.) We can also note that Barthes’s comments on Eisenstein’s photogram (on ‘the third meaning,’ 1977, 52–69), or even Eisenstein’s idea of ‘hieroglyphic’ writing in film can be seen very much in parallel with Lyotard’s notion of the ‘figural.’ Also, W. J. T. Mitchell’s concept of the “imagetext” (1994) shares similar ideas on a more general level.

also apply: intermediality is often viewed as having the ultimate goal of “figuring the infigurable,” the incommensurable. This is obviously the case with Godard, for instance, who in *Vivre sa vie*, attempts by different embedded media forms and representations to ‘figure’ the ‘infigurable’ identity and beauty of Nana/Anna Karina. (The ultimate image of Nana/Anna Karina that we get in the film is placed somewhere in an impossible space between art and reality, between one medium and another.) Or we can note the case of the *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in which Godard regards, on the one hand, – as Jacques Rancière has put it – the image “as a promise of flesh” (2007, 8), and on the other hand, considers that cinema is ultimately: “Neither an art, nor a technique. A mystery,” or in other words – borrowing the expression from Malraux – “the currency of the absolute.” The *Histoire(s)* in this way highlights, paradoxically, both the tangible, hand-crafted nature of a quasi corporeal cinema in its sensual mediality and intermediality, of the transcendence from “the reel” into “the real,” and – by way of the intermedial “figurations” – a cinema that is reaching into domains that are intangible, infigurable, invisible.

The mapping of such tendencies has brought the study of cinematic intermediality far from the mere listing of media combinations or analogies of intertextual relations. As Henk Oosterling has observed, there has been, in general, a major shift “from the utopia of the Gesamtkunstwerk to the heterotopia of intermediality” (2003, 38), but furthermore, we can also add that nowadays we can witness a similarly important shift towards a scholarship acknowledging cinema’s non-discursive domains and more sensual modes of perception.

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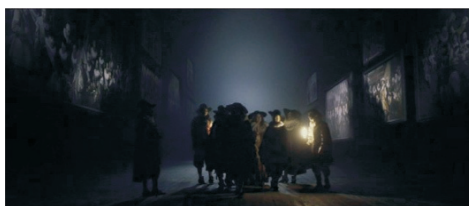
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