(Re)Mediating the Real

Paradoxes of an Intermedial Cinema of Immediacy

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Abstract. The paper focuses on tendencies that qualify for the label of reflexive and hypermediated cinema, but which, nevertheless, also have the purpose of achieving the sensation of immediacy. Three different types of such hypermediated cinematic experiences of the real are analysed: Agnès Varda's film *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse* (2000), presented as a sort of "encyclopaedia of the real," then Godard's essay film cycle, *Histoire(s) du cinema* (1988–1998), presented as primarily a hand-made cinema derived from photomontage and the calligrammatic fusion of image and text. The third type is exemplified by José Luis Guerin's twin films *En la ciudad de Sylvia* and *Unas fotos en la ciudad de Sylvia* (2007), in which we can see an example of how the most transparent techniques can also end up as remediations. All these examples seen as re-mediating to an excess the indexicality of modernist cinema and challenging cinema's lack of auratic quality through the director's marked personal implication and traces of his "handling" of media. The paper also proposes the possibility of a *"remediational metalepsis"* in which cinema exposes the paradoxes of the everyday experience of metaleptic leaps between "real" and "mediated" and thus calls attention to *metalepsis* as integral part of reality itself.

Hypermediacy versus Immediacy?

Theories of medium and mediality have a wide-ranging genealogy with branches reaching as far as Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms or much more recent post-structuralist theories of literature and text, sharing with them more or less the idea that was expressed in the infinite regress of the "real."

Mediation is commonly understood as a process through which one is able to communicate not only *with the help of* different media, but one communicates *through* different media. Medium, as its denomination suggests, is supposed to stand "in the middle", to act as a sort of mediator. Ever since Marshall McLuhan stated that the "medium is the message," theories of medium have also called attention to the way in which it is never directly the "meaning" or the "pure message" that we perceive in a communication but the material mediality of the signification which unavoidably shapes our constructions of meaning. Based on McLuhan's idea that "the 'content' of any medium is always another medium" (1964, 23–24) – several theorists (like Joachim Paech 2000, Henk Oosterling 2003, among others) have also argued that the term 'medium' highlights the possibilities of modalities of communications acting as "trans-forms," of being able to produce "traces" within other media or being able to be "transcribed" onto other media.

Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin elaborated the idea even further in coining a new term to describe media dynamics in our culture, presenting it as 'remediation' in a book bearing the same title (*Remediation. Understanding New* Media, 1999 – a title openly referencing McLuhan's groundbreaking work). The main contentions of this work are that "a medium in our culture can never operate in isolation, it always enters into relationships of respect and rivalry with other media" (1999, 65), and also, that new media always repurpose and remediate older media.[1] Furthermore, there is a double logic of remediation that involves the concepts of *immediacy* (media transparency) and *hypermediacy* (multiplication of media or self-conscious over-signification). Bolter and Grusin view this duality not in an antagonistic way, but as phenomena which are often intertwined. I quote from the book: "Although each medium promises to reform its predecessors by offering a more immediate or authentic experience, the promise of reform inevitably leads us to become aware of the new medium as a medium. Thus, immediacy leads to hypermediacy. The process of remediation makes us aware that all media are at one level a "play of signs" [...]. At the same time, this process insists on the real, effective presence of media in our culture" (1999, 19). So the desire for immediacy inevitably involves the invention of different techniques that lead to processes of hypermediacy and media consciousness, nevertheless, in our present daily practices hypermediacy can often be integrated into our sensations of the real.

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[1]Sometimes the process is mutual: as seen, for instance, in TV design today: TV, a relatively older media is being more and more refashioned according to the newer model of the world wide web hypertexts, which in turn can assume the function more and more of television programs.

Bolter and Grusin's work constitutes a landmark not only in thinking about the presence of media within media, but also in rethinking the category of the "real" in an increasingly mediated world. Whereas theories of postmodern culture most often emphasize the mediated nature of all our experiences and the short circuiting of our experiences of "texts" into "texts," Bolter and Grusin claim that "despite the fact that all media depend on other media in cycles of remediation, our culture still needs to acknowledge that all media remediates the real. Just as there is no getting rid of mediation, there is no getting rid of the real" (1999, 55–56). They find that "the twin preoccupation of contemporary media" is on the one hand "the transparent presentation of the real" and on the other, none other than "the enjoyment of the opacity of media themselves" (1999, 21).

Although Bolter and Grusin focus on general cultural tendencies and take their examples from a great variety of sources, from the history of visual arts to the evolution of computer design, I have found that the general outline of their ideas is applicable to some of the recent developments in cinema as well. In what follows I will focus on films that undoubtedly qualify for the label of reflexive and hypermediated (or intermedial) cinema, which nonetheless also have the purpose of achieving the sensation of almost palpable immediacy through these self-conscious intermedial techniques. I will present some of the types of what I see as such *hypermediated cinematic experiences of the real*: in some of the films of Agnès Varda, Jean-Luc Godard and those of José-Luis Guerín. In all these examples we have a cinema that is both markedly remediational and self-reflexive. All of these examples have in common a strong affiliation to a modernist aesthetics of film and share the quality of using their techniques to the extreme, of exercising their special impact on the viewer through a certain degree of excess. Among several other aspects, the media to be remediated in each case are: painting, photography and language. These media within media produce an intermedial structure that in each case conveys not a sense of infinite regress of signification, an entrapment within a text that merely refers to another text *ad infinitum*, or a mere play with differences, but a configuration that conveys paradoxically a sense of immediacy both on a more general level (exemplifying the multiple faces of media versus reality or media within reality) and on a more specific, personal level (in the sense of recording one's own personal experiences handling these media).

Modernist Collage and the Culture of Collecting

"According to Clement Greenberg's influential formulation, it was not until modernism, that the cultural dominance of the paradigm of transparency was effectively challenged. In modernist art, the logic of hypermediacy could express itself both as a fracturing of the space of the picture and as a hyperconscious recognition or acknowledgement of the medium. Collage and photomontage provide evidence of the modernist fascination with the reality of the media" – Bolter and Grusin state (1999, 38). Collages always bear the physical marks of manual craftsmanship: by assembling bits and pieces, the materiality of the medium of expression is shown up as integral part of a palpable reality. Although cinema has no materiality comparable to that of other visual arts like painting or sculpture, modernism in cinema also meant a similar cult of collage-like effects and fascination with the "reality of the medium." On the one hand this was achieved by narrative effects of fragmentation and self-reflexivity. On the other hand, modernist cinema articulated in many ways its deep-rooted relationship to the technology and art of photography and cultivated a visual stylistics that highlighted the individual image, the photographic frame.[2] Photography (alongside painting) became the prototype of visual abstraction, the model for the construction of the image as a "world in a frame" and it was used to reveal the archaeology of the medium of cinema.[3] Then again, modernism made deliberate use of the photographic image in film as the direct imprint of reality by techniques of *cinéma vérité*, or close to *cinéma vérité*, in which people acted and reacted consciously to the "gaze" of the cinematic apparatus by looking into the lens, the films recording both the process of photographic representation (the "reality of the medium") and "capturing" moments from the infinite flow of authentic reality.

Thus modernist cinema achieved the combination of the cinema of the apparatus with the cinema of the gaze and that of the cinema of the tactile senses. The *photo-flâneur* (who extends the eye with the photographic

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[2]This can be seen not only in the famous jump-cut technique of Godard's films, but also in the abstract, framed compositions of Antonioni's or Bertolucci's films in the sixties and seventies, in the open thematization of the relationship of photography, film and reality in Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966) or Chris Marker's *La Jetée* and so on (cf. Garrett Stewart 1999).

[3]A modernist film constructed of individual shots of abstract composition (see for example Jean-Luc Godard's *Une femme mariée: Suite de fragments d'un film tourné en 1964*) conveys the similar connotation as the medium of photomontage, that can be seen according to Bolter and Grusin "not as deviating from photography's true nature as a transparent medium, but as exemplifying its irreducible hypermediacy" (1999, 39).

apparatus and roams the streets armed with a "camera-eye") joined the *photo-monteur* (decontextualizing images, fragmenting and reassembling the world into pictures). The twin fascination with the medium and the reality it could make palpable, as well as the paradoxes deriving from the acknowledgement of mediation was a defining feature of modernist aesthetics[4] and also gave rise to the idea of art as collection (and film as a collection of images of life) in close relation to the idea of the "museum without walls" (or the "imaginary museum," to quote Malraux's term) that brought together a virtually endless flow of texts and images that could generate an also endless number of associations. The films of the French New Wave, and especially those of Jean-Luc Godard, for instance, easily mix realistic representations with reproductions of painting, colloquial dialogue with intertextual references, thus the "real" and the "mediated" becoming intertwined and perceivable as "natural" parts of a world consisting of different mediations.

The films I am about to discuss were made well beyond the time frame of modernism, but with techniques that derive from its aesthetic, all of them carrying on the modernist ideals of collage (and its paradoxes of mediation), and all of them are constructed with a collector's instinct and passion for images of "life" and images mediated by all possible media. On account of this latter feature all these examples in fact also constitute a powerful artistic response to a culture of collecting in a consumer society that emerged during the 20th century and that has its own paradoxes linked to issues of objectification, possessiveness and self-assertion. The collector in general and the collage maker share the act of de-contextualizing and re-contextualizing involved in their work, and they can also merge in a unique artistic way in the case of filmmakers discussed below.[5]

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[4] As Ka-Fai Yau explains, interpreting Deleuze's categories about modern cinema: "The French New Wave can be said to be a cinema of the 'real,' not owing to its revelation of the consistency between everyday experiences and cinematic presentation, but owing to its revelation of the discrepancies between everyday experiences and the manipulation entailed in presenting such experiences in cinema" (1998, 61).

[5] A question would be well justified to ask here: Why speak of a "collection" and not of an "archive"? Certainly this latter term has also appeared often enough linked to several films that have similar non-linear techniques (like the famous lists of Peter Greenaway's films, for example, that amount to a so called "database aesthetics"). However, the "culture of collecting" differs exactly in this "hands-on" quality that can be seen in modernist collages as well, whereas an "archive," especially in the digital age, always impresses not by its quasi tangible "reality" but by its boundless virtuality. All the filmic examples discussed here convey a physical sense of handling media, of the artist's personal involvement in the material processes of his art. In a digital "environment" the so called immersion within a multilayered world, and even the possible interactivity of the spectator aims exactly to

Agnès Varda is well known for her roots in the art of photography and for her New Wave films (being also sometimes called "the grandmother of the French New Wave"). After several powerful fiction films that established her prestige as one of the most important women filmmakers alive, in her twilight years she surprised the world with a film called *The Gleaners and I* (*Les glaneurs et la glaneuse*, 2000). This is a film that one could perhaps most suitably call a documentary essay, a meditation about the different forms of gleaning (i.e. collecting things others have discarded or left for anyone else to pick). The starting impulse seems to come from more than one direction: there is the word itself ('gleaning') and its common use by people and the changing social practices that the word refers to, and then there is a compelling image seen in recurring representations of rural scenes showing women or groups of people in the fields that glean after the harvest (some of the paintings reproduced in the film include Jules Breton's *The Gleaner*, Jean-François Millet's *The Gleaners*, Jean Héduin's *Gleaners Fleeing before the Storm*). The quest that the film pursues in this way, namely to uncover the forms of contemporary gleaning is on the one hand a linguistic, sociologic, anthropologic pursuit, and on the other hand, it is driven by an art historian's or collector's curiosity for discovering rare and forgotten objects (of art). However, there seem to be some significant differences in how Varda pursues her desires of a collector and how it is generally conceived by culture theorists today. Baudrillard considers for instance that a defining feature of the "system of collecting" is the creation of the collector's autonomous world the need of which originates in some kind of failure in the individual's social communication. He writes: "whatever the orientation of a collection, it will always embody an irreducible element of independence from the world. It is because he feels himself alienated or lost within a social discourse whose rules he cannot fathom that the collector is driven to construct an alternative discourse that is for him entirely amenable, in so far as he is the one who dictates its signifiers – the ultimate signified being, in the final analysis, none other than himself" (Baudrillard 1994, 24). Roger Cardinal also considers that the action of prospecting in public spaces where the collector has no personal rights of ownership is crucial to the attitude of a collector, who then "gathers up his booty and thus removes it from public circulation," upon which returning to his private space, "he unpacks his acquisitions, of which he is now the undisputed owner" (Cardinal 1994, 77). He thinks that "to collect is to launch individual desire across the intertext of

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remove those "traces" of the medium, of the artist's "handwork" that are "inscribed" within a collection/collage, and that an essentially modernist approach seeks to preserve (collect) and communicate.

environment and history. Every acquisition, whether crucial or trivial, marks an unrepeatable conjuncture of subject, found object, place and movement. In its sequential evolution, the collection encodes an intimate narrative" (Cardinal 1994, 68). Mieke Bal also emphasizes the communicational aspect of each collection, the fact that a collection of objects tells a "narrative" that falls outside the realm of language: "collecting is an essential human feature that originates in the need to tell stories, but for which there are neither words nor other conventional narrative modes" (Bal 1994, 103).

Agnès Varda's film is unique not only because it is a film about collecting, but because the film itself amounts to a genuine collection of media representations and also offers an authentic record of the passion driving the filmmaker herself to collect and assemble and display the "booty" found in the world. What is definitely missing in this gesture is the withdrawal into a short-circuited world that characterizes typical collections, the opposition between public and private spaces, the removal of the collected objects from cultural circulation. On the contrary, the film records an unprecedented success (instead of failure) of communication on several levels and in different social contexts, and pursues a relentless incursion into public spaces that are made homogenous with the private space of the filmmaker herself (the improvised shelters of the homeless or the streets and fields or even museums shown in the film become equal with Varda's own home). The spirit of it all is therefore closer to Malraux's "imaginary museum," that seems to be transposed from the "virtual" into the realm of the "real" and tangible. Through the medium of the cinema, everything adds up to a patchwork put on display, an intermedial weave that seeks to convey a sensation of a complex and multifaceted reality, a purpose that the film follows uncompromisingly. The extension of the project into its sequel, *The Gleaners and I . . . Two Years Later* (*Les glaneurs et la glaneuse... deux ans après*, 2002) that traces the developments in the destinies of the first film's protagonists (including the newer revelations of Varda herself) only underscores this ambition of an all encompassing recording of reality.

Beyond all these aspects, however, Varda's "collection" also tells a self-narrative (a function not alien to any collection as we have seen in the examples earlier), the film also amounts to an unusual self portrait: that of Agnès Varda who is first and foremost herself a collector of discarded, disregarded things or artistic topics. The metaphor of gleaning is in this way a self-reflexive one and as such it manages to avoid the connotations of the commonplace metaphor of "trash as treasure" or any picturesque glorification of poverty altogether. This is what raises the film above being about the plight of the outcast, and makes it a film about life and about the way a

filmmaker can best record life with personal passion and self-consciousness. In this way it can be related to the best qualities of *cinema vérité*, in fact, to adopt Bolter and Grusin's term, it can be seen as a remediation or upgrading of *cinema vérité* to intermedial cinema. (Let us not forget that according to some theorists, *cinema vérité* was itself none other that a remediation of the kind of street photography that had been practiced before by the likes of Henri Cartier Bresson, for instance.) And it can also be seen as the remediation of a text-based encyclopaedic form to a cinematic hypertext which is organized by the logic of metonymic association and of different links that extend and enrich its texture.

Although in the presentation of the phenomenon of "gleaning" we have a variety of media – books, dictionary entries, pictures, paintings, archival film footage, cinematic reportage, street images edited in a video-clip style, later even highly personal meditations about aging and about Varda's private life – the result does not only foreground the hypertextual structure of intermedial cinema, but the media fragments in each case offer *the context of tangible reality to an abstract notion*. For instance, the showing of a particular book (with the close details of the leather cover) on the bookshelf of Varda's home in the company of her pet cat is enough to lift the text out of abstract signification and place it into the concrete world of the real and the personal (the personal being perhaps the most archetypal level possible of the perception of the real), the pictures of the gleaners are shown not merely as illustrations but as exhibits in a museum, where people can experience them in their auratic uniqueness and record them with their own "domesticated" media tools (photo or video cameras). [Figs. 1–4.]

The film consists of a series of remediations in which the quality of one medium is transformed onto the other medium (the gestures seen in the painting are captured in real life and are multiplied by the techniques of cinematic montage and other representations, see Figs. 5–8.), and also to the level of Varda's identification with the world presented through these media. [Figs. 9–12.] Direct reference and personal experience are always the key highlights. The small digital camera presented to us in technical detail does not only represent the "cinematic apparatus" but one particular camera that fascinated Agnès Varda and that she playfully used. In addition to the fact that the presence of the camera is not hidden, Varda also allows us to experience the "reality of the medium," the way it filters the world on its own (not cutting out in the final montage the images when she accidentally left the camera on, filming the dangling of the lens cover over random images), or reveals its digital "texture" next to images of her own wrinkled and spotted skin or to other

textures found in real life. [Figs. 13–16.] "Reality" and "representation" are continually confronted, collaged, linked to another. Perhaps the most revealing part from this respect is the final scene in which Varda insists on tracking down a painting that lay forgotten in a museum cellar and insists on carrying it out into the open air exactly in the middle of a heavy gust of wind, taking genuine pleasure in participating in the act and in the fact that the reality that in this way "frames" the painting reflects its theme and authenticates the experience of the painting that shows Jean Héduin's *Gleaners Fleeing before the Storm.* [Figs. 17–18.]

Immediacy through Hypermediacy: Handling Media or Touching the Real?

If Varda managed to create a *cinematic encyclopaedia of the real* that also ultimately achieves a high level of immediacy and personal communication, Godard's essay film cycle, *Histoire(s) du cinema* (1988–1998) seems to go a step further in presenting the medium of cinema as both a vehicle for the most personal self-reflection and a reflection of the collective memory of mankind, a collection adding up to a sort of "museum of the real," as he calls it (Godard being well aware of the pun involved in the word "real"/"reel" that works both in French and English.[6]) The film is a visual *palimpsest* in which the different layers reflect the complex processes of a culturally saturated memory. What is clear from our point of view is that Godard presents the "reality" of the medium of cinema once more as a complex set of remediations, imitations of one art by another, in which again abstract notions come to be contextualized in concrete media representations conjured up by subjective associations.[7] [Figs. 19–22.] The imitation of one art by another can also be called *ekphrasis* (that Bolter and Grusin include under the umbrella term of remediation). Only the question remains, which is the medium that reflects, remediates the other? It is not the usual case in which literature is seen through cinema or vice

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[6]In English the pun works on the level of pronunciations ("reel" and "real"), in French it works on the level of spelling (the word "réel" meaning "real" that resembles the English word "reel" meaning a roll of film). The expression itself of the "museum of the real" is borrowed from Malraux's *Les voix du silence* (1951).

[7]I have elaborated on this subject in more detail in another essay entitled *Deconstructing Cinema as a Narrative Medium in Jean-Luc Godard's Histoire(s) du cinéma* that will be published in the proceedings of the international conference *"Orientation in the Occurrence." Interdisciplinary Approach to Complex Cultural Processes* held at the Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 17-18 October, 2008.

versa, but cinema seen through the filter of an archaic medium of moving pictures. However, this is a form that has never existed as such, never existed as vehicle for cinematic storytelling; it can be called "archaic" only because the techniques used were available at the earliest stages of cinema, it is a sort of "hand-made cinema" derived from photomontage and calligrammatic writing (both connectable though to Eisenstein's early experiments with cinematic language). This "impossible" inter-medium is the one that ekphrastically mirrors what cinema is supposed to stand for in-between the arts.

Both Varda's and Godard's films can be seen as re-mediating in fact what can be considered as the *indexicality of modernist cinema* epitomized by the chrono-photographic rifle of Jules Marey – whose heritage is directly evoked by Varda in her film – or by Antonioni's photographer who hunted down, shot his pictures then put them on paper after carefully pinpointing with a marker details to be blown up. This indexicality was perceptible not only in the techniques of *cinema vérité* (extended here into intermedial dimensions by Varda), but also in the techniques of collage, of stopping and slowing down the images (pushed here towards the spiritual dimensions of musical-intermedial montage by Godard). As early as in the time of *Pierrot le fou* (1965) Godard declared that for him film was a tactile art; well, he accomplished a new level of "tactile cinema" here. Throughout the *Histoire(s)* we see recurring images of Godard himself writing on the typewriter often followed by an image of an old fashioned editing table. Besides the fact that this breaks down the familiar metaphor of cinematic writing, we see how literally he takes one image, one word and places them onto the other.[8] It seems to me that all the all paintings referred to, collaged into the cinematic frames in the *Histoire(s)* become metaphors for this kind of tactile handling of photographic, cinematic material.

This personal and bodily implication in manufacturing motion pictures and clearly leaving a trace of the author's personal bodily experiences on screen can be seen in Varda's film as well, not only in the images in which she presents her aging hand, but in the famous images in which she tries to capture reality

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[8]I think that the intellectual aspect of the *Histoire(s)* has been somewhat overrated, in this film Godard proves to be first and foremost not a philosopher but an ideal reader and a collector, one who reads extensively and interprets ideas in his own way, collecting, mixing and re-mixing quotations at every step in his films. Most of all, he proves to be someone who has a passionate love for making, handling, hand-crafting mixtures of words and images. Jacques Rancičre considered that the common measure for Godard's associations in the *Histoire(s)* is that there is no common measure. I would add that the possible common measure is the pleasure of this "tangible materiality of cinema," the perceptible rhythm and the texture that binds them together.

itself within her palm, as if *transforming her own body into a camera*, both framing the fleeting images and recording the physical impulses, imprints of the world upon her own eyes, body and skin. It is as if we have the opposite of Barthes' *punctum* from his *Camera lucida* (1980) that seems to "touch" the viewer. It is reaching out and touching the world through – literally – hand made pictures. [Figs. 23–24.] As we have seen earlier, it is commonly accepted that the complex medium of cinema is an elusive one. This gesture, however – just like Godard's hand-crafted photographic and cinematic juxtapositions – gives somehow a physical shape to the "materiality" of the art of moving pictures.

Moreover, both Varda's two films and Godard's *Histoire(s)* seem to work on the re-construction of a certain "aura" of the moving image, an "aura" that has been lost according to Walter Benjamin's famous essay about the "work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction." As Laura Marks emphasizes, the "*aura* entails a relationship of contact, or a tactile relationship. The 'Artwork' essay implies that aura is the material trace of a prior contact, be it brushwork that attest to hand of the artist or the patina on a bronze that testifies to centuries of oxidation. Aura enjoins a temporal immediacy, a co-presence, between viewer and object. To be in the presence of an auratic object is more like being in physical contact than like facing a representation" (Marks 2000, 140). Although film can never actually realize this actual co-presence of viewer and object, both Varda and Godard, by insistently pushing their own body as mediator between the represented reality and the reality of the viewer, and also by these gestures of indexicality and touch that emphasize both the physical presence of reality before the apparatus, before the director's body and the palpable experience of images they behold or handle, at least manage to effectively *mediate a kind of auratic experience*. It is an experience that insists on the power of media in making accessible the sensual complexity of life itself, a complexity that includes artworks as "natural" "objects" of a multimedial reality. Likewise, by insistently arresting the flow of the images, intervening, commenting and handling the images, the frames can almost be observed as individual objects of contemplation, thus challenging another crucial criterion of Benjamin's.[9]

This challenging of film's lack of auratic quality through the director's marked personal implication and indexical traces of his "handling" of media

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[9]"The painting invites the spectator to contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations. Before the movie frame he cannot do so. No sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed. It cannot be arrested" (Benjamin 2001, 62).

(something comparable to the "brushwork" of a painter) together with paradoxical techniques of remediation conveying a sensation of immediacy can also be seen in another type of film, practiced by José Luis Guerín. In his twin projects, *In the City of Sylvia* (*En la ciudad de Sylvia*, 2007) and *Some Photos Made in the City of Sylvia* made in the same year (*Unas fotos en la ciudad de Sylvia*, 2007). Guerín's art can also be connected to the same genealogy of modernist photo-cinema as that of Varda's or Godard's only through a different "branch." Here we can see an example of how the most transparent techniques can end up as remediations. To quote from Bolter and Grusin's work: "The (...) paradox is that just as hypermedia strive for immediacy, transparent (...) technologies always end up being remediations, even as, indeed precisely because, they appear to deny mediation. Although transparent technologies try to improve on media by erasing them, they are still compelled to define themselves by the standards of the media they are trying to erase" (1999, 54).[10] In this logic of thinking the technique of cinema can be seen as an upgrading in effects of immediacy of both painting and photography. Nevertheless, in Guerín's work – that has often been compared to Godard's on account of its techniques that seem to strip down cinematic storytelling to the bare essentials of images and words –, we see how the images lay bare the photographic, painterly and literary undercurrent of the cinematic texture.

In this case it is the uninhibited *flânerie* of street photography that is remediated and also remedied (refashioned and rehabilitated) by cinematography. *Flânerie* denotes a complex artistic attitude that was productive both in literature and in the visual arts. Its theorists vary from Baudelaire to Walter Benjamin and Susan Sontag. It was Sontag, who was the first to evaluate the application of this notion to photography. In her book *On Photography* (1977) she describes how, since the development of hand-held cameras in the early 20th century, the camera has become the most characteristic tool of the *flâneur*: "Photography first comes into its own as an extension of the eye of the middle-class *flâneur*, whose sensibility was so accurately charted by Baudelaire. The photographer is an armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitering, stalking, cruising the urban inferno, the voyeuristic stroller who discovers the city as a landscape of voluptuous extremes. Adept of the joys of watching, connoisseur of empathy, the flâneur finds the world '*picturesque*'" (Sontag 2002, 55).

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[10]For example: "In general, digital photorealism defines reality as perfected photography and virtual reality defines it as first-person point of view cinema" (Bolter and Grusin 1999, 55).

In Guerín's first film, however, we have a *flâneur* in a disguised form. The hero is not a photographer or a poet, but a graphic artist, who also has a quest: he tries to find a woman whom he met only once. In trying to find the face that once attracted him, he walks the streets, watches the passers by, and observes the faces of strangers in a bus stop or in a café, draws maps trying to retrace his earlier steps and sketches faces. Following his footsteps and gaze, the camera produces a moving picture album of human faces and streets, but also very subtly, an intermedial palimpsest, capturing the images of "life" in a "natural collage" with images of advertisements or paintings. [Figs. 25–27.] In these, on the one hand, the sheer painterly and photographic beauty emerges from underneath the thin story line, and also, we become aware of something that we could call the "cinema of the street" (in the reflections seen in the windows of trams or in the glass panes of advertisements, mixing all kinds of images, etc.). The cinematic experience of moving images is transposed onto the occurrence of the ever changing images of the street itself, obtaining a kind of everyday primordial encounter with pictures and their "traffic." At the same time, at one point in the film quite literally a sort of primitive, hand made archaic technique of moving images emerges, as we see the pages of the drawing book blown in the wind. [Figs. 28–30.] On the other hand, however, exactly the opposite happens: the thin story line slowly emerges as a reminder, re-mediator (again stripped to bare essentials) of several well known literary stories in which we have either a passive voyeur faced with the infinite flow of life, or a man who discovers that the end is never as exciting as the road that leads to it, or, most importantly, a man who is haunted by or who pursues the overwhelming image of the ideal woman, that proves to be unattainable.

This seesaw experience, alternating the levels of the "real," primary, empirical visual impulses of the world and the "represented" (i.e. framed, constructed media "texts," parts of a contemporary culture and cultural heritage), may remind us of the technique called *metalepsis.* When Gérard Genette (2004) extended the use of the rhetorical term *metalepsis* and transformed it into a narratological concept (that is, transposed the notion "from figure to fiction"), he relied on the idea that fiction itself is an extension of the logic of the trope, the figure of speech that always relies on our capacity to imagine something "as if it were real." Metalepsis as a narrative phenomenon performs a paradoxical loop between the ontological levels of the "real" and the "fictional," and as Genette emphasized, this feature is often highlighted in metafictional works by the introduction of a fantastic element (e.g. the screen actor stepping out of the projected film in Woody Allen's film, *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, 1985). However, this fantastic element is not necessary for

generating a metaleptic structure within a filmic narrative. Intermedialization of the cinematic discourse in general can also act as a metaleptic (and/or metareferential) force within a film.[11]   In Guerín's case, we see that the paradoxical "intermedialization" of visual perception: mixing in the "natural" field of vision images of different levels of mediation and remediation, achieves such a metaleptic effect. This "remediational metalepsis," however, does not convey a metafictional discourse aimed at the exposure of the artificiality of the medium or the ontological differences of "reality" and "film" (as it is seen in films like *The Purple Rose of Cairo*), but it manages to turn the cinematic discourse towards the paradoxes of a continually remediated reality, of the everyday experience of metaleptic leaps between "real" and "mediated", and calls attention to *metalepsis* as integral part of reality itself.

Guerin's two films locate the cinematic experience within the sensual "reality" of specific places, street corners and urban landscapes filtered, however, constantly through the medium of photography, painting and literature. The film entitled *In the City of Sylvia* is in colour and uses motion pictures, its twin counterpart, *Some Photos Made in the City of Sylvia*, is a more straight forward re-mediation: it consists almost entirely of black-and-white photographs to which a few lines of text (sometimes poetry) are added, without any music. The film is a worthy descendant of Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962) – incidentally a film that also shares this theme of a man being haunted by the powerful image of a woman. Paradoxically Guerín's film is more powerful as a film not despite, but exactly because it is an unashamed remediation of photography (and literature). And just like in the earlier examples, there is a tendency here to open up the hypermediated cinema towards encyclopaedic generalization. Guerín explicitly refers in the second film to Goethe's *Werther*, Dante's Beatrice, Petrarca's Laura, as parts of a series of possible literary prototypes that his film remodels. These literary references included in the form of direct quotations (i.e. books read by women portrayed in snapshots) or captured within the "cinema of the street" (i.e. in the forms of graffiti) not only contribute to the merging of the "real," the sensual with the "mediated," the "cultural," but also prompt us to recognize the interrelatedness of "picturacy" and literacy in contemporary life (cf. Heffernan 2006). At the same time, similarly to Varda's or Godard's case, the flow of images again adds up to a highly personal storytelling as well: it is *his* camera again (as emphasized especially in the second film) and *his* quest, as

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[11]This has already been explored by studies of painterly *tableau vivants* as transgressions from one level of filmic representation to another and from the level of "reality" to that of "art" (cf. Peucker 2007).

a person, as a man. As a photographer-flâneur, the director himself is the one who is haunted, tantalized by *the image of a woman* or – as we know from W. J. Thomas Mitchell (1994) – haunted by *the image* itself *as a woman.* Ultimately this being nothing else but a metaphor of the passion embodied in the post-modern (or even post-postmodern?) *flâneur*, wandering within an increasingly remediated and metaleptic world, a *flâneur* that is doubled by the *photo-monteur* again in assembling a collection of images in order to convey a multiple sensual experience of the world.

To conclude this small round-up of some possible examples of the paradoxes of hypermediacy leading to immediacy, let me return to the ideas of Bolter and Grusin, who state the following: "Hypermedia and transparent media are opposite manifestations of the same desire: the desire to get past the limits of representation and to achieve the real. They are not striving for the real in any metaphysical sense. Instead, the real is defined in terms of the viewer's experience; it is that which would evoke an immediate (and therefore authentic) emotional response. Transparent digital applications seek to get to the real by bravely denying the fact of mediation; digital hypermedia seek the real by multiplying mediation so as to create the feeling of fullness, a satiety of experience, which can be taken as reality" (1999, 53).[12] Although these words refer to the world of digital media, we may see in the examples shown earlier that cinema, refashioning the frameworks of some of its most traditional forms (rooted in photographical representation), has managed to achieve the same "satiety of experience" of the "real" by complex intermedial techniques.

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[12]One of Bolter's latest studies again discusses "the real – not as a philosophical category, but as cultural construction" (2008, 567). The argument cited above is also consistent with the findings of Colapietro, who states that in "the markedly aesthetic dimension of contemporary existence," the self-referential tendencies evident in various media constitute "no argument against a direct encounter with the actual world; for Peircean realism insists that all our encounters with reality are *direct yet mediated affairs*" (Colapietro 2007, 39).

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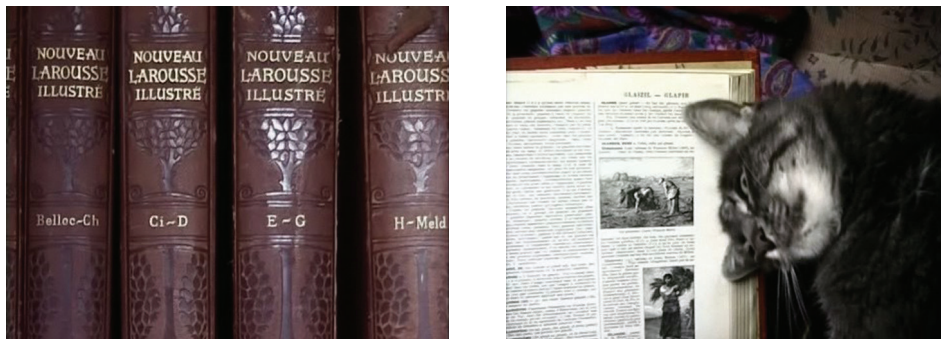
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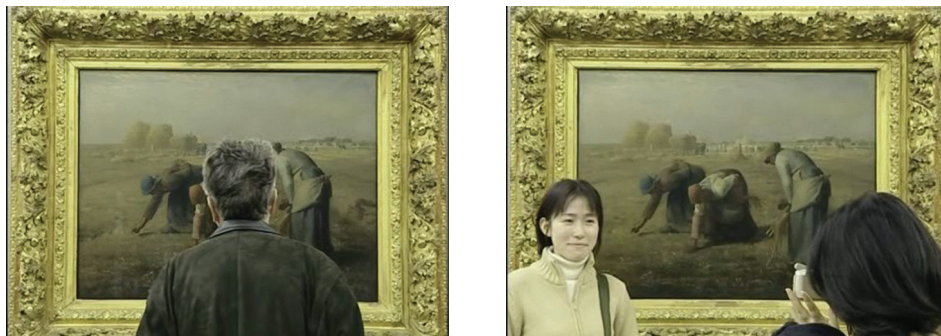
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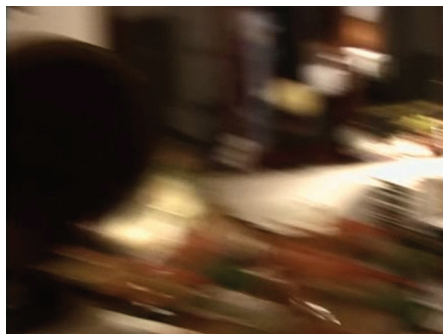

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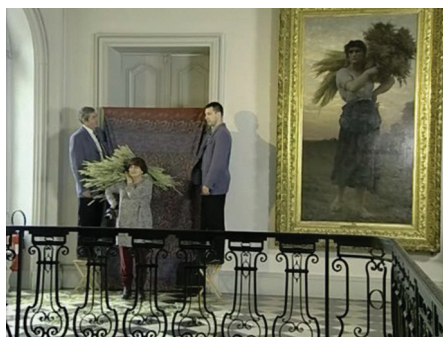
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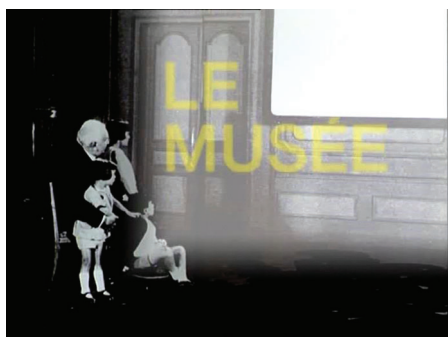
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