

Cinema and Intermediality

Cinema and Intermediality:
The Passion for the In-Between

By

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P U B L I S H I N G

Cinema and Intermediality: The Passion for the In-Between,
by Ágnes Pethő

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“A love of cinema desires only cinema, whereas passion is excessive: it wants cinema but it also wants cinema to become something else, it even longs for the horizon where cinema risks being absorbed by dint of metamorphosis, it opens up its focus onto the unknown.”

—Serge Daney: *The Godard Paradox*. In: Michael Temple, James S. Williams and Michael Witt (eds.): *Forever Godard*. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2004, 68.

For my children who share my passion for the visual arts

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INTRODUCTION

CINEMA AND THE PASSION FOR THE IN-BETWEEN

Within the last two decades “intermediality” has emerged as one of the most challenging concepts in media theory, and as such – in a relatively short time – it has also become a highly controversial term depending on the assumptions regarding the nature of mediality itself, with no shortage of various taxonomies and definitions concerning the types and categories of intermediality. What prompted the writing of the essays gathered in this book, however, was not a desire for more classifications applied to the world of moving pictures, but a strong urge to investigate what the “inter” implied by the idea of “intermediality” stands for, and what it actually entails in the cinema. This “inter” indicating that this kind of theorizing is focused on relationships, rather than structures, on something that “happens” in-between media rather than simply exists within a given signification has proved to be the key element of the term. Although the idea that film has indissoluble ties with other media and arts is one of the oldest concerns of theorizing about the movies, it is the theory of intermediality that has brought into the spotlight the intricate interactions of different media manifest in the cinema, emphasizing the way in which the moving pictures can incorporate forms of all other media, and can initiate fusions and “dialogues” between the distinct arts.¹ Furthermore, it seems that intermediality has also the potential of becoming one of the major theoretical issues of contemporary thinking about cinema, precisely because it regards film to be a medium in continuous change and interchange, and as such it can address fundamental problems related to the connections between different configurations of communication that

¹ Some of the latest concepts dealing with the interrelationship of media, like “remediation” or “media convergence,” have also helped to fuel the discussions around intermediality (“remediation” dealing with the processes through which different media absorb other media in their evolution, while studies in “media convergence” have tried to map the intricate web of interactions on the level of media production and consumption).

have occurred following the multiplication of the forms of moving images themselves, of the cinematic experience moving beyond the walls of the movie theatre, into the streets, into our homes, into the exhibition halls, and into newer and even newer media.

The benefit of thinking of cinema in terms of intermediality consists, however, not only in a more flexible way of looking at the changes occurring within the mediality of cinema, but also – more importantly from the perspective employed by this book – in the way in which the poetics of cinema and specific stylistic effects can be described. “Long shot” views over cinema get to be replaced by a “close up” investigation of the images themselves together with their media components and media relations, the aim of an intermedial analysis being the uncovering of the possible functions and meanings of intermedial figurations within a film, a type of investigation that in essence has a lot in common with the kind of “piecemeal theorizing” advocated by David Bordwell and Noël Carroll, inasmuch as it is “problem-driven reflection and research” that is “as far from data shuffling as it is from the ethereal speculations of Grand Theory” (Bordwell and Carroll 1996, xiii). Consequently, adhering to this type of research, despite the possible suggestion of the title (*Cinema and Intermediality*) pointing towards a broad-spectrum approach, this book does not have the ambition to construct an all-comprising theory of intermediality concerning the cinema, it is merely an attempt to delve into a few of the theoretical and poetical issues regarding intermediality, to offer in each of the individual essays a cross-section view of some of the possible phenomena implied by the pairing of the terms “cinema” and “intermediality.”

All the films discussed in this volume can be considered as specific instances in which cinema seems to consciously position itself “in-between” media and arts, employing techniques that tap into the multimedial complexity of cinema, exploiting the possibilities offered by the distinctive characteristics of the media components involved in the cinematic process of signification, and bringing into play the tensions generated by media differences. Such tendencies can be seen, in fact, as something that persists in the history of film from pre-cinematic times, beginning from the early, pre-narrative forms of the moving images up to the medium’s recent mutations into video, television and the digital environment, into so called “post-cinema.” Nevertheless, the essays published in this volume only deal with subjects related to what we traditionally call “cinema.” The wording of the title of the book – using “cinema” and not a more general term like “moving image” for example – is in this way a deliberate choice, indicating that the scope of the research

has been more or less narrowed down to a type of film that has been produced for the purpose of being shown in a movie theatre, or in the case of the few exceptions – e.g. Michael Snow's exhibited experimental movie, *So is This* (1982) or Godard's video essay series, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-98) – to films that reflect on cinema as a medium in its more traditional form.

The book is divided into four parts, beginning in the first part with theoretical chapters revealing different points of view in approaching intermedial phenomena in cinema and positing some important questions regarding their perception and interpretation, as well as offering concrete film analyses exemplifying the theoretical issues addressed here. The discussion of relevant questions of intermediality is then placed into the context of a historical poetics of cinema as the following parts continue to examine more closely two of the specific paradigms in the poetics of intermediality in the cinema (Hitchcock at the juncture of classical cinema and modernism, and Godard at the juncture of modernism and post-modernism). The final part continues the analysis of the poetics of intermediality, this time primarily from theoretical vantage point: it offers analyses of films that expose the coexistence of the hypermediated experience of intermediality and the illusion of reality, connecting the questions of intermediality both to the indexical nature of cinematic representation and to the specific ideological and cultural context of the films, in the last essay offering insights into a few questions regarding the "politics" of intermediality as well.

The first part of the book, *Cinema In-Between Media*, contains three essays, each dealing with specific theoretical questions of cinematic intermediality. It starts with a meta-theoretical survey of some of the main issues regarding cinema and intermediality addressed within the context of the scientific discourse of film studies (*Intermediality in Film: a Historiography of Methodologies*). After evaluating the persisting problems raised by the still not so commonly accepted idea of cinematic intermediality the chapter focuses on certain characteristic methodologies that have emerged in treating intermedial occurrences within films throughout the history of theorizing about the movies in general. The major historical paradigms to be briefly described here include: the normative aesthetic viewpoints in the spirit of cinematic New Laocoöns, the trans-medial theorizing of the moving image, the inter-art theories, and parallax historiographies. This chapter is also an attempt to systematically present – through the description of some of the key concepts by way of which these analyses interpret intermediality in film – the existing theories and

methodologies aiming at modelling intermediality in film and mapping the rhetoric of intermedial cinema.

The second essay included in this first part, *Reading the Intermedial: Abysmal Mediality and Trans-Figuration in the Cinema*, discusses the way intermediality can be perceived in cinema. It is argued that despite Noël Carroll's famous interdiction ("forget the medium!") the mediality of the moving pictures cannot be ignored, filmic mediality can be conceived in fact as intermediality where the different media forms are not only united as if in a melting pot or reflected as if in a mirror, but where each medium participates with its own cognitive specificities, shaping the messages conveyed by the cinematic flow of images. This chapter also breaks with the tradition of thinking of intermediality in analogy with intertextuality, and attempts a phenomenological (re)definition intermediality, based on the assumption that while "reading" intertextual relations engages our intellectual capacities, "reading" intermedial relations requires, more than anything else, an embodied spectator who gets "in touch" with the world of the film. Intermediality in film is grounded in the (inter)sensuality of cinema itself, in the experience of the viewer being aroused simultaneously on different levels of consciousness and perception. Not surprisingly the poetics of intermediality is called upon whenever the cinematic authors aim to reach the ideal of a "total" cinema. Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966) and Abbas Kiarostami's *Shirin* (2008) are used as examples to demonstrate how cinema can reflexively define itself as a complete and sensorial experience and how in each case the mediality of the moving pictures becomes perceivable ("unfolded") through interactions between the senses and between media. The essay also argues that in certain cases the poetics of intermediality in the cinema takes the form of an intermedial *mise en abyme* in which we see not just an "inscription" of one medium into another, but a more complex "trans-figuration" taking place, in the process of which one medium is transposed as a "figure" into the other, also acting as a figure of "in-betweenness" that reflects on both the media involved in this process. Peter Greenaway's cinema is quoted as an example where this trans-figuration usually takes place in the context of a ritualistic narrative, and Michael Snow's experimental film, *So is This* (1982) is analysed as a minimalistic form in which images and words "mirror" each other in the cinema.

The theoretical questions of cinematic intermediality are continued in a longer essay closing the first part of the book entitled *The World as a Media Maze: Sensual and Structural Gateways of Intermediality in the Cinematic Image*. Starting from the idea that techniques of intermediality effectively break the transparency of the filmic image, and open it up

towards illusory inter-media and inter-art “transgressions” I claim that this can happen not only in obvious cases of stylization, but also within a cinema that maintains the illusions of realistic representation. There are instances in which we can witness a two way porosity of the moving image both towards what we perceive as the “real world” and both towards its own mediality reflected in a kind of intermedialization of the image: in its being perceived “as if” filtered through other arts (like painting) or being reframed, disassembled by other media. Consequently, in this chapter I tried to outline some of the possibilities of how intermediality enters our perception of images in cinema by identifying some of the gateways through which cinematic images within the boundaries of the transparent perceptual cinematic frame of the “real world” get to be “re-framed” by other media.

I have found that there are at least two “templates” that are capable of generating a more or less emphatic sense of intermediality within the cinematic image. First of all a kind of *sensual mode* can be revealed that invites the viewer to literally get in touch with a world portrayed not at a distance but at the proximity of entangled synesthetic sensations, and resulting in a cinema that can be perceived in the terms of music, painting, architectural forms or haptic textures. This model can be comprehended as based on the attitude of *flânerie*, on the sensibility of the stroller/driver that wanders around the (urban) landscape, absorbing the kaleidoscopic sensations of a modern (cinematic) city that appears as a liquid environment constructed of a continuous flow of spots of lights, shades and colours. The way in which such haptic imagery contrasts with the optical is demonstrated by examples taken – among others – from Francis Ford Coppola’s, Wong Kar Wai’s films and a special subchapter is dedicated to the cinema of Michelangelo Antonioni which displays the most elaborate forms of such a contrast (elaborating an exquisite cinematic poetics of framing and un-framing the haptical within the moving image), opening up at the same time sensuous interfaces within the image towards the “affordances” of painting and architecture.

The “structural gateway” into intermediality, on the other hand, relies on the possibility of the cinematic flow of images to “break down” into their media components and the image of the world to become spread out as a giant screen of media palimpsest. The *structural mode* thus involves either a fragmentation, a shattering of the world into pieces of media representations or the experience of some kind of juxtapositions, jumps, loops or foldings between the media representations and what we perceive as cinematic reality. This kind of intermedialization may take the form of diegetic reflexivity, or it may result in the world appearing as a media

collage, it can be perceived as a marker for metaleptic leaps, intermediality may perform metaleptic contrasts between the “natural,” the seemingly “unmediated” and the “artificial” within the image, as well as “folds” of the immediate and the mediated (applying Deleuze’s well-known concept to intermedial cinema). In some of the latest films of Jim Jarmusch, Abbas Kiarostami or Tsai Ming Liang I have found that we have a proliferation of images juxtaposing reflection and/or mediation over what is perceived as the “immediate” world. Accordingly, still image appears to be “folded” over movement, while the spectator is invited not to a narrative decoding but to a kind of post-cinematic contemplation over individual frames and scenes. In this way, in certain cases the “sensual” mode also seems to “fold” into the “structural,” resulting in a type of cinematic image that displays its palimpsest like layers and that impresses the viewer with its fusion between the haptical and the optical.

The second and third parts of the book are both centred on the idea of intermediality being conceived as a kind of excess, a surplus in the cinematic image, as the medium is reaching beyond its own conventional boundaries and into ways of expression attributed to the other arts: cinema is displaying its passion for expanding “beyond” cinema. The allure of such an inter-media “trespassing” may prove threatening and disruptive, as it is demonstrated in the examples taken from the films of Alfred Hitchcock, or – as it is shown in the art of Jean-Luc Godard spanning already more than half a century – it may also bear the promise of a total cinema, of the possibility of cinema becoming “the currency of the absolute” (as Godard quotes Malraux), of cinema being capable of “figuring the infigurable” (Lyotard), of making the viewer “see the invisible.”

The chapter dedicated to Hitchcock (*Spellbound by Images: The Allure of Painting in the Cinema of Alfred Hitchcock*) is intended to offer a summary of some of the most important issues related to the use of paintings and painterly techniques in Alfred Hitchcock’s cinema and to contribute to an intermedial interpretation of some of his major films displaying explicit relations with painting. Hitchcock’s films constitute a unique link between the early “cinema of attractions,” the avant-garde affinity towards painting and the conventions of classical storytelling, displaying in certain films an abstract imagery that can achieve a self-reflexion of cinema as a visual medium that resembles at the same time the techniques of modernism. The paintings introduced in his films always have the potential of opening up an abyss, a rupture in the “texture” of classical narrative, and transpose the story over a meta-narrative plane by dislocating the narrative into an abstract space. The referents of the

painterly images are always revealed to belong to an ontologically different plane – such images being always strongly connected to pure fiction and imagination. The significance of the paintings in Hitchcock's films is not only connected to the solving of a particular story of mystery or mysterious identity, but it also consists in raising questions about the interpretation of images in general. In contrast with a classic dramaturgy that neatly solves all the puzzles, the Hitchcockian painting, or painterly image emerges as the medium of the unknown threatening to throw the mind of the character (and implicitly of the viewer) into the abysmal depths of the uncanny and the unidentifiable. (One of the most eloquent examples of this is the startling image of the squirt of blood “painted” over the black and white images and “thrown” towards the off-screen space, implicitly “at the spectator” at the end of *Spellbound*.) It seems that for Hitchcock painting acts like an “intermedial demon of the cinematic image,” a medial doppelgänger that is ready at any time to take charge, threatening to disrupt the reasonable (and discursive) order of the world.

The next part of the book is dedicated to the “total” cinema of Jean-Luc Godard, a cinema that has achieved not only the undisputed status of being one of the most important paradigms in cinematic intermediality but played a decisive role in advancing the idea of intermediality itself into the centre of contemporary thinking about the arts. The first chapter dedicated to Godard (“*Tensional Differences*,” *The Anxiety of Re-Mediation in Jean-Luc Godard's Films*) discusses the way in which in his early films, made during the period of the *Nouvelle Vague*, Godard consciously addresses the issues relating to the rivalry between the emerging modern cinema and the other arts and media. In a combination of Harold Bloom's (1997) literary concept of “*the anxiety of influence*” that evaluates the re-writing and/or debunking of earlier poetic models as a natural way through which a new artist asserts himself and the idea of “remediation” elaborated by Bolter and Grusin (1999) that implies that all media repurpose and incorporate older media, the chapter contends that early Godard films display a pronounced “anxiety of remediation,” for they continually present filmmaking as incorporating, refashioning other media while also relating to these other media, and among them, especially literature as a major authority that cinema has to come to terms with. It is argued that in Godard's early films, beside other, better known (or documented) stylistic techniques, media differences are also projected onto a narrative level: the “tensional differences” between the media and “the anxiety of remediation of literature within cinema” are often staged as an allegoric confrontation between the sexes. In Godard's New Wave films we find several examples in which men and women seem to embody different

media ideals and the complex relationships and/or conflicts between them can be interpreted as narrative enactments of intermedial relations or media rivalries. In this line of thought, for example, Godard's "romantic comedy," *A Woman is a Woman* (*Une femme est une femme*, 1961), is relevant as it presents a "ménage à trois" between two men and a woman that can be interpreted as a parable constructed around the issue of the rivalry of influences and the wish for the birth of a new cinema (as such a parable of the inception of the New Wave itself). Through these films Godard's cinema is actually trying to come to terms with its own re-mediating processes by narrativizing the processes of a cinema that is inseparably linked to literature in a sort of "painful intimacy."

The next chapter, *From the "Blank Page" to the "White Beach: Word and Image Plays in Jean-Luc Godard's Cinema*, outlines the paradigm shift in Jean-Luc Godard's transition from his New Wave period to his major films made beginning from the late 1970s and leading into the new millennium. It describes the underlying principles that distinguish "early" Godard from "late" Godard by identifying the most relevant artistic devices through word and image relationships are actualized in Godard's cinema. The key notions of these paradigms are borrowed from Godard's meditation over the nature of the cinema offered by his essay film entitled *Scenario of the film called Passion* (*Scénario du film Passion*, 1982) in which, in a word play typical for Godard, he proposes two ways of looking at cinema by contemplating the empty screen's resemblance first with a white page ("*page blanche*"), and then with a white beach ("*plage blanche*"). The paradigm of the "white page" brings into mind first of all literary associations, like Mallarmé's notion of the "white page" or the "palimpsest," ideas connected to "writing" or "re-writing" (as such its other characteristic self-reflexive metaphor recurrent in Godard's films is the image of the blackboard, a surface awaiting the inscriptions, erasures and re-inscriptions of different signs). Words and images in these early films continuously deconstruct each other and consequently the unity of the cinematic image, of cinema as a cohesive medium. The use of language itself is always visibly performative and bears the traces of intermedial tensions. Diegetic texts are not merely transposed onto the screen, but they are always subjected to some kind of action: they are read aloud, they are being translated, rewritten, misquoted, etc. Text is always subjected to violent de-contextualization and re-contextualization as it enters the screen: it is torn out of context, and broken down to words and letters, these pieces in turn are often re-arranged and multiplied.

The paradigm of the "white beach," on the other hand, crystallizes around the metaphor of the screen compared to a beach basked in blinding

sunlight and covered in a rhythmic flow by the images coming in time like the waves of the ocean. And while in the connotations of the first metaphor texture and mosaic like fragmentation emerge as key features; the second metaphor suggests a shift towards a more fluid, “musical” model: instead of the page or the blackboard implying literary analogies and a collage-like patchwork, what becomes more important in this model is the space of “in-between” that is continually constructed and deconstructed by the ebb and flow of the images, by their appearance and disappearance. Accordingly, in many of the films of Godard’s later period the transcendental qualities of the images are emphasized together with the fundamental mystery of art.

After exploring Godard’s various techniques of connecting images and words, the third chapter included in this part (*Ekphrasis and Jean-Luc Godard’s Poetics of the In-Between*) focuses on features that connect Godard’s cinema to a more general artistic tradition: the phenomenon known as *ekphrasis* which has always been considered a challenge for the arts to test and/or surpass their limitations. The chapter attempts an application of the term *ekphrasis* to the medium of cinema based on the assumption that certain films and tendencies in film history have aspects that can be related to what theorists call “ekphrastic impulse,” and a few major conditions for the perception of cinematic ekphrasis are outlined. The investigation into the ekphrastic aspects of Godard’s films have revealed that these films can be considered ekphrastic not merely on a general, philosophic level, but also because some of them include explicit quotations from ekphrastic literature. Detailed analyses of Godard’s ekphrastic techniques have been undertaken hoping to produce not only a more refined understanding of his films, but to get us closer to understanding the possibilities of ekphrastic intermediality in cinema in general. From the variety of intermedial relations that can be called ekphrastic in Godard’s films, four types have been set apart and exemplified here: (1) the multiplication of media layers “opening up” towards each other and remediating each other, producing a kind of vertigo of media; (2) *ekphrasis* seen as a “figure of oblivion” (adopting the literary term introduced by Harald Weinrich); (3) the functioning of ekphrastic metaphors pointing to the (medial) Other of the filmic image; (4) the “museum of memory” and the essayistic expansion and deconstruction of the principle of ekphrasis in his later, highly ambitious cinematic meditations upon the archaeology of the seventh art, discovering in it layers upon layers of mediality and culture.

Jean-Luc Godard’s grand project and ultimate ekphrastic endeavour entitled *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–1998) – comprising a total of four

films each consisting of two parts accompanied by the publication of an art book and a set of CDs with audio-visual material taken from the films – is the subject of the analysis of the next chapter in the book (*Post-Cinema as Pre-Cinema and Media Archaeology in Jean-Luc Godard's Histoire(s) du cinéma*) that also concludes the series of essays written about Godard. This is one of the most challenging works in the history of cinema, one that has often been compared to the magnitude and importance of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, and although it has most often been treated as a regular documentary or a philosophical investigation, here the attention is directed towards problems of mediality and intermediality regarding Godard's project. Several models and metaphors are proposed that could describe Godard's project (e.g. André Malraux's idea of the "imaginary museum," Freud's and Derrida's "mystic writing-pad," Deleuze and Guattari's "rhizome"), and also it is pointed out that Godard's *Histoire(s) of cinema* can be considered as a whole not only an intermedial palimpsest reflecting on images from the history of cinema, but first and foremost it can be regarded as an experimentation with and an inquiry into the complex mediality of the moving images (in the spirit of an avant-garde "direct theory"). As a whole, we can observe that *Histoire(s)* uses a seemingly archaic medium of moving pictures, however, this is a form that was constructed in retrospection, a form that has never existed as a vehicle for cinematic storytelling as such: it is a uniquely paradoxical fusion of photographic collage, calligrammatic text with the musical and spiritual aspects of cinematic montage, and this inter-medium is the one that ekphrastically mirrors what cinema is supposed to stand for in-between the arts according to Jean-Luc Godard. Furthermore, by saturating each frame to the extreme, by the sheer excess of the various superimpositions and cultural references, what we experience in this flow of cinematic, painterly, musical and literary discourses blended together is a "language about the outside of language" (Foucault 1989, 154). Godard seems to experiment here with a medium that remains throughout the film open to its "outside," and constantly gravitates towards its abysmal collapse into its "Others," the other arts. At the same time, the *Histoire(s)* also impresses as a highly personal and sort of "hand-made" cinema that communicates primarily a sense of texture and manual craftsmanship emphasized also by Godard's bodily implication into the artistic creation: the work continuously bearing the traces of performing the artistic creation.

The final part of the volume, *Re-Mediating the Real: Paradoxes (?) of an Intermedial Cinema of Immediacy*, continues to concentrate on this possibility of intermediality being closely connected to a strong emphasis

on the indexical nature of cinema, of cinema mediating between the “palpable” and the imaginary. The chapters included in this part intend to show how a kind of cinema employing markedly intermedial techniques can “fold” back to the “redemption of physical reality” (Kracauer), and, after the “death of the author,” we may assist to the paradoxical revival of the author as an intermedial collector, or as a “first-person installation,” and also we can see how in the case of certain Eastern-European films an elaborate strategy of deceiving official censorship was forged through an intermedial language of esoteric allegory that nevertheless managed to deliver a relevant cinematic representation of a contemporary reality, and a message containing substantial ideological charge. This last part of the book is at the same time a further exemplification of the possibility of viewing intermediality as being deeply grounded in the complex experiences of the embodied spectator, and the inter-sensuality of perception, a concept put forward in the second and third chapters of the book. As such, the analyses offered here may effectively dispute the paradoxical nature of pairing the notions of “intermediality” and “immediacy” (as indicated in the title of this part), since there may be perceived no paradox at all, if we consider the essentially sensual nature of intermediality.

The first chapter included in this part, *Intermediality as the Passion of the Collector*, examines films that qualify for the label of reflexive and hypermediated cinema, but which, nevertheless, have the purpose of achieving the sensation of immediacy as well. Agnès Varda’s *The Gleaners and I* (*Les glaneurs et la glaneuse*, 2000) and José Luis Guerín’s two interrelated films, *In the City of Sylvia* (*En la ciudad de Sylvia*, 2007) and *Some Photos Made in the City of Sylvia* (*Unas fotos en la ciudad de Sylvia*, 2007) are interpreted as typical examples of such hypermediated cinematic experiences “re-mediating the real” (Bolter and Grusin). The media to be remediated in each case are: painting, photography and language/literature, and the experience of media within media somehow does not convey a sense of infinite regress of signification, an entrapment within a “text” that merely refers to another “text” ad infinitum, but a configuration that communicates 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). Furthermore, all these examples can be 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 the traces of his/her “handling” of the media.

The next chapter both expands and narrows down the research as compared to the previous text. The scope of the analysis is widened to cover the whole span of Agnès Varda's cinematic oeuvre but it is narrowed down to consider specific ways in which Varda's films accomplish a kind of metaleptic leap between levels of "fiction" and "reality." Varda's techniques can be viewed both within the context of the poetics of New Wave cinema's metaleptic tendencies (as best represented by Godard's films) and as significant alternatives to these well-known tendencies. Most of the times, for Varda cinema is defined as an "artifice" between two layers of the "real:" the reality of herself, the personal world of the author-narrator and the reality captured by *cinéma vérité* style cinematography. Intermediality in these films serves as a "figuration" that on the one hand performs these metaleptic leaps from "palpable" immediacy to stylized representation/hypermediacy, and on the other hand "figurates" the impossibility of such a leap. The survey presents instances in which intermediality can be conceived either as a leap into the domain of the "figural," or cases in which discourse is disrupted or masked by the intermedial figuration, concluding with the ultimate metalepsis: the leap from the figural into the corporeal. Among the films referred to in the analysis are *L'opéra-mouffe* (1958), an effective collage of photographic *flânerie* and concept-art; *Daguerreotypes* (*Daguerreotypes*, 1976), a controversial documentary that includes a playful paraphrase of the mirror-image structure of *Las Meninas*; *Ulysse* (1982), a narrative-dramatic ekphrasis of a photograph; *Seven Rooms, Kitchen and Bath* (7p., cuis., s. de b., ... à saisir, 1984), a film inspired by an exhibition entitled *The Living and The Artificial*; the short film *The Story of an Old Lady* (*Histoire d'une vieille dame*, 1985), a sort of cinematic *objet-trouvé* recovered from the shooting of *Vagabond* (*Sans toit ni loi*, 1985); and finally, *The Beaches of Agnès* (*Les Plages d'Agnès*, 2008), an autobiographical essay film, etc.

The last chapter of the book, *Message in the (Intermedial) Bottle. The Politics and Poetics of Intermediality in Eastern Europe: the Case of Mircea Daneliuc*, connects the questions of intermediality even more closely to a specific time and space frame of reality. At the time when fiction films in Romania were mainly used for the ideological propaganda of the communist party, Daneliuc's *Glissando* (1984) shocked its spectators as a message out of chaos: it managed to capture the general disgust of a people fed up with a life of seemingly never-ending humiliation, and to express at the same time a nostalgia for artistic beauty through elaborate techniques of intermediality, creating a unique allegory. As a contemporary to Western European filmmakers like Peter Greenaway who practiced a kind of baroque intermediality, Daneliuc constructed his own unique and

typical Eastern-European version of an intermedial cinema that on the one hand relied on references to French decadent literature and techniques characteristic of modernism in film, while on the other hand, it systematically deconstructed a textual world all too well known to contemporary viewers. This erased “text” of official genre movies and ideological clichés lay as a hidden canvas behind Daneliuc’s own images and was responsible for the film’s exceptional impact at the time. The whole film could be interpreted as a giant, metaphorical wipe-cut that cleaned the cinema screen of all the lies that filled it earlier. The more the film glissaded into symbolic and intermedial dimensions, the closer it got to becoming not a representation of Romanian reality but an accurate portrayal of the state of mind of the Romanians, and of the images that haunted them. As such the film proved that the expression of the need for reflection and the repeated thematization of the act of reflection itself, the imprints of certain intertexts have the power of becoming authentic traces of the reality of a certain age, and it also constitutes a good example for the relevance of ideological and contextual considerations in examining phenomena of intermediality.

In conclusion, after this round up of the main questions raised in the individual chapters, I feel that some acknowledgments and personal remarks have to be made as well. First of all, the book is the result of several years of investigations into cinematic intermediality, the texts that can be read here also bearing the imprint of a personal journey that started with an interest in semiotics, intertextuality and self-reflexivity in film, and went on in the direction of a re-evaluation, and re-interpretation of ideas about intermediality and the poetics of intermediality beyond ideas of (inter)textuality applied to film, following, on the one hand, the recognition of the importance of the sensual nature of filmic experience revealed by phenomenological approaches, and on the other hand, an increased awareness of the figurative nature of intermediality. Being the outcome of several years of work, as it usually happens, ideas expressed in the individual chapters have been previously tested in the form of conference presentations and articles published in conference proceedings or film studies journals, consequently there are cases in which an earlier version of the essay included in this collection has already been published.² It has to be mentioned, however, that all the previously

² Chapter One, *Cinema and Intermediality: a Historiography of Methodologies*, was originally published with the same title in the *Film and Media Studies* journal of the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae*, 2010, vol. 2. 39–72. The previous, shorter version of Chapter Six, *From the “Blank Page” to the “White Beach:” Word and Image Plays in Jean-*

published material has been substantially reworked (ideas have been re-distributed, and important additions, more detailed analyses have been made) for the purposes of this volume.

As a whole this collection of writings in its present form is intended to be a mere contribution to the study of the theory and the historical poetics of intermediality in film as I am fully aware of the vastness of the subject in terms of the possible topics or approaches that “cinema and intermediality” might imply. Jean-Luc Godard confesses in *For Ever Mozart* (1996): “It’s what I like in cinema: a saturation of glorious signs bathing in the light of their absent explanation” – and I find this to be an idea that this whole book subscribes to, as the words might be interpreted also as a concise definition of what I perceive to be the essence of intermediality in the cinema: a saturation of media within media, media overwriting media, open to interpretation but actually deriving its expressiveness from the very fact that it is not something that can be easily translated into words, as it belongs primarily to the domain of the “sensorial,” it is something that “is only discontinuously ‘sensed’ and can

Luc Godard’s Cinema, was included with a different title (The Screen is a Blank Page: Jean-Luc Godard’s Word and Image Plays) in the collection publishing the proceedings of an interdisciplinary conference held in Cluj-Napoca, at the Department of Photography, Film and Media of the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, *Words and Images on the Screen. Language, Literature, Moving Images*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing: 159–187. In Chapter Seven, *Ekphrasis and Jean-Luc Godard’s Poetics of the In-Between*, I considerably reworked a previous, shorter essay that can be read with the title *Media in the Cinematic Imagination: Ekphrasis and the Poetics of the In-Between in Jean-Luc Godard’s Cinema* in the volume edited by Lars Elleström *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality*, Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010: 211–225. Chapter Eight, *Post-Cinema as Pre-Cinema and Media Archaeology in Jean-Luc Godard’s Histoire(s) du cinéma* is based on a paper published in the conference proceedings *Orientation in the Occurrence*, edited by István Berszán, Cluj-Napoca: Komp-Press, 2009: 317–331. Chapters Nine and Ten are revised versions of two articles that were published in *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae*, as follows: *Intermediality as the Passion of the Collector* is based on an article from 2009, vol. 1: 47–69, the ideas of *Intermediality as Metalepsis in the “Cinéécriture” of Agnès Varda* first appeared in 2010, vol. 3: 69–95. The final chapter, *Message in the (Intermedial) Bottle. The Politics and Poetics of Intermediality in Eastern Europe: The Case of Mircea Daneliuc*, is based on an earlier, shorter essay (*Chaos, Allegory, Intermediality. The Cinema of Mircea Daneliuc*) included in the volume edited by Anikó Imre: *East European Cinemas*, New York–London, Routledge, 2005: 165–179. All the articles mentioned here have been revised to suit the goals of the present publication, therefore the chapters of this book can be considered as longer and improved versions of these texts.

never be [...] grasped as a whole” (Oosterling 2003, 41). Accordingly, the present volume is merely a “discontinuous” imprint of the incursions into the cinematic “in-between” undertaking some of the intellectual challenges raised by intermedial cinema.

The illustrations included in the volume at the end of each chapter, screenshots of the analysed films, are meant to make the arguments more accessible to the reader and to communicate the medial aspects in a more palpable manner through alleviating the tensions induced by the intransitivity of the linguistic discourse of the analyses towards their subject, the moving images, even though this is achieved through the performance of another intermediality, that of designating stills images as imprints of moving pictures. As such the book itself is instituting its own unique position of being in-between words and images in the process of discussing not so much the “language” of cinema, but of recording some of the “dialogues” between the “languages” constituting the “saturation of glorious signs” in cinema.

CINEMA IN-BETWEEN MEDIA

CHAPTER ONE

INTERMEDIALITY IN FILM: A HISTORIOGRAPHY OF METHODOLOGIES

1. Theorizing Intermediality in the Cinema: Persisting Questions

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

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

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 (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.

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 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

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

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

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* (2007b) – 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

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* (2007a).

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).