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In-Between Art and Life

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Tableaux Vivants, Early Cinema, and Beauty-as-Attraction

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Abstract. This article offers a case study in intermediality and explores relationships between tableaux vivants performances and early cinema around 1900. It locates processes of intermedial exchange not only at the level of form but also at the level of modes of address and reception. More specifically, the study is concerned with how bourgeois notions of beauty were transferred to the film image and reconciled with the attraction value of cinema. As a discussion of early film theory reveals, the concept of "beauty in film" depended on a taming of filmic motion, something that had already been realized in performance practices of tableaux vivants. In the subsequent analysis of the cultural context of tableaux vivants in European variety theatres, I outline a specific mode of address, which I term "beauty-as-attraction:" an overlap of the older aesthetics of the beautiful and the more modern aesthetics of attraction. Through concluding film analysis, I show how tableaux vivants became a model and source of inspiration for early cinema, thus bringing to fruition the two-fold address of beauty-as-attraction in a new media context.[1]

Keywords: early cinema, intermediality, film theory, art, painting.

> *"Living photographs are about as far from being things of beauty as anything possibly could be."*
> Cecil Hepworth (1896, quoted in Bottomore 1996, 137.)

Film pioneer Cecil Hepworth's harsh judgment (quoted in the motto) notwithstanding, many of the earliest films and film programmes strove to attain painterly effects and were advertised as especially artistic and beautiful. Examples include the scenic views of waterfalls and sea waves by the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company (see Musser 2006), the many filmed versions of famous

1 A longer version of this article was published in German in *Film Bild Kunst: Visuelle Ästhetik des vorklassischen Stummfilms*, ed. Jörg Schweinitz and Daniel Wiegand. Marburg: Schüren, 2016 (Zürcher Filmstudien 34). I would like to thank the series editors for permission to publish a shortened version in English.

paintings by producers such as Lumière, Pathé, and Gaumont (see Robert 2018), and the screenings by female itinerant exhibitor "Mme Olinka," advertised as "living watercolour photographs of the highest artistic value."[2] These artistic tendencies came to the fore around 1910, when international film companies increasingly catered to highbrow audiences and intellectuals began to write about film as a valid cultural expression. In Germany in particular, writers like Georg Melcher, Hermann Häfker, and Herbert Tannenbaum discussed the art value of film and devised ideas for artistic film programmes, partly modelled on the notion of Richard Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Many of these discussions revolved around ideas of film as "painting in motion" and as an expression of beauty.[3]

Beauty was a key concept of bourgeois culture at the time, especially in the German *Bildungsbürgertum*.[4] The ideas associated with it were largely derived from an everyday understanding of classical idealist aesthetics and neo-platonic thought that circulated in popular books and magazines. They implied the equation of Beauty and Art, the association of the Beautiful with the True and the Good (at the time often capitalized in English), and an emphasis on harmony and perfect proportions. These conceptions were often modelled on the classical art of antiquity, including its afterlife in neoclassicism and contemporary art, as taught and practiced at the big art academies. Although these ideas and preferences contradicted more recent trends in philosophical aesthetics and the emerging art movements of modernity, they nevertheless profoundly shaped the cultural life of the bourgeoisie and its interaction with mass culture. Thus, attempts to adapt beauty as a valid category for the new medium of film were inherently contradictory. As previous research has abundantly shown, many early films were indebted to the aesthetics of *attraction* rather than to the aesthetics of classical art. In many instances, films aimed less at contemplative perception than at the satisfaction of *Schaulust*, that is, of sensation-seeking visual curiosity (see e.g. Gunning 1986 and 1995; Schwartz 1995). According to Tom Gunning, early cinema's "aesthetic of attraction" was, in fact, almost an "anti-aesthetic" (1995, 123) in terms of traditional notions of art reception.[5]

2 *Der Artist* vol. 668 (1897), n.p.

3 Some of these authors' texts have been translated into English in Kaes/Baer/Cowan 2016. For texts in German see Schweinitz 1992 and Diederichs 2004.

4 While this article discusses international film production, the theoretical discourse examined is largely German. Among other things, the titles of popular middle-class periodicals such as *Die Schönheit* (*Beauty*) and *Schönheitskult* (*Cult of Beauty*) or events like the 1909 "Schönheit-Abende" (Beauty Nights) in Berlin (see Runge 2009, 25–39) point to the significance of the notion of beauty in turn-of-the-century Germany.

5 For an opposing, and equally justified point of view on early cinema see Musser 2006.

In the present essay, I examine the arguments, aesthetic choices, and reception strategies that were necessary in order to connect the cinematic image to conventionally bourgeois notions of beauty.[6] As I will show, the idea of the "beautiful film image" in the early 20th century resulted from a complex interplay of theoretical discourses, stylistic practices, and novel audience expectations. Specifically, I argue that the aesthetics of motion in early film images had the capacity to contradict common notions of beauty and was therefore often tamed or domesticated – both in theory and in cinematic practice – in order to pave the way for the "beautiful film image" as a theoretical concept and creative product.

This domestication was not a mere process of suppression. In fact, I argue that a number of films from around 1900 used a specific mode of address, which emphasized what I call "beauty-as-attraction." This was an amalgamation of the aesthetics of the beautiful (associated with traditional art forms such as painting and sculpture) and the aesthetics of attraction (which characterized much of the era's popular visual culture). My claim is that this mode of address had existed before – and continued to exist – in variety theatre, and more specifically in the performance tradition of tableaux vivants, which thus served as a model and source of inspiration for these early films. The present article is thus concerned with issues of intermediality, locating the interaction between classical art forms, early film, and tableaux vivants at the level of specific modes of address and reception.

Arrested Motion: Domesticating the Moving Image in Early Film Theory

The first cinematographic projections presented a new aesthetics of motion, which was also advertised as such by exhibitors. The German travelling cinema Ohr, for instance, called attention to its film screenings through a comparison with other moving-image devices in 1904: "what a difference between these primitive machines [referring to the zoetrope and the electrotachyscope] and the cinematograph! The extraordinary progress in the field of photography has made it possible for this machine to capture everything that plays out in front of the camera in the smallest conceivable partial motions."[7] The passage suggests that the projected film image does not just transform individual bodies or clearly delineated objects into pronounced movements; rather, it sets everything in

6 For a similar perspective on these processes of adaptation see Curtis (2016).

7 Programme booklet of the Ohr travelling cinema, 1904, Nördlingen city archives (call number E IV 1, 6).

motion. This alludes to an aesthetics of motion such as can be observed in many of the Lumières' early outdoor scenes, which show bathing people, arriving locomotives, or lively street traffic. These images seem to pulsate below the surface, so to speak, as if they were composed of a multitude of synchronous and interpenetrating micro-motions.[8]

To many contemporaries, the "life stirring thousandfold"[9] in early film footage did not appear as the result of deliberate artistic creation, but as a merely technical reproduction of an external reality. As early as 1896, British journalist O. W. Winter thus wrote: "here, then, is life; life it must be because a machine knows not how to invent; but life which you may only contemplate through a mechanical medium" (1996, 14). This impression of "life," a trope in many comments of the time which would eventually lead to the notion of film as a "living picture," does not refer to a gentle animation emanating from within (as suggested by the Latin *anima*, which means soul, or breath). Rather, it means a technically reproduced exterior motion that is beyond the grasp of the human mind. As Winter writes: "we cannot follow the shadows in their enthusiasm of recognition" (1996, 14).

As it seemingly evaded any artistic shaping, cinematic motion offered an entry point for the unplanned, the unpredictable, and the contingent in the eyes of contemporaries (see Doane 2002, 137).[10] In this regard, film was a visual manifestation of a loss of control, because it opened up the image – hitherto almost invariably seen as the result of an immobilizing human act of creation – to life, a life that, in modernity, was increasingly conceived of as constantly changing, contingent, mechanically induced, and therefore not fully controllable.

This new cinematic aesthetics of motion held a great fascination for many spectators and could thus also be employed in advertising. At the same time, it was obviously hard to reconcile with the traditional – and still dominant – bourgeois notion of beauty, which was inextricably linked to ideas of the meaningful and spiritual. While classical aesthetics did include the beauty of movement in the concept of grace, this referred to "willful movements […] which express *moral* sentiment," that is, a meaningful emotional expression ultimately radiating from within (Schiller 1992, 339–349). But contingency as a visual effect, insistently

8 Explicit distinctions between the cinematograph and other moving image devices are common at the time. In 1896, for example, Uruguayan Luis Gonzaga Urbina speaks of a "liveliness that the kinetoscope lacks" (2008, 45). See also Gunning 2009.

9 Report on a film screening with footage of Geman Navy League boats, in *Nördlinger Anzeigenblatt* 65 (19 March 1906), 328.

10 While Doane conceives of contingency as a consequence of cinematic temporality primarily at the narrative level, it seems equally important to me to view it as a visual effect stemming from the mechanical reproduction of numerous small motions that are only minimally purposeful, if at all.

asserting itself in the motion dynamics of early films, was diametrically opposed to the idea of the artist whose organizing hand creates beauty by consciously shaping reality. Beauty as an expression of meaning and order rather than of coincidence was still a theoretical premise of neo-Kantian thought in the early 20th century, as emphasized by Georg Simmel in a 1903 essay on Kant: "art […] organizes existence, until it displays the summariness, the inherent necessity, the suspension from the burden of coincidence, […] insofar as the art work lets this form resonate into a subjective feeling, it also contains beauty" (Simmel 2008, 170).

As cinema became a part of visual culture that could no longer be ignored, it began to challenge the cultural leading role of fine art, especially in Germany. For a bourgeois audience that saw itself as a representative of this art sphere, film images must have seemed deeply unsettling. Of course, this also had to do with the fundamentally plebeian character associated with the new mass medium, with its sensationalist and supposedly vulgarizing subject matter that appealed to the "lower instincts." Yet, it was not least the motion of the images that constituted a provocation for an aesthetic sensibility schooled in contemplative art viewing. Often, commentators such as Max Bruns and Konrad Lange detected nothing but "horrible confusion" and "restlessness and blurriness" (Schweinitz 1992, 274; Lange 1912, 13). Nevertheless, reactions to the new "cultural factor" of cinema were quite diverse, even among the middle classes. Whereas a decidedly hostile attitude initially dominated in Germany, the 1910s saw the emergence of aesthetic concepts for a cinematic *Volkskunst* (popular art) that would be acceptable to bourgeois culture (see Schweinitz 1992, 9). Efforts of this kind were concentrated in the so-called *Kinoreformbewegung* (cinema reform movement), which sought to integrate cinema into the ranks of bourgeois cultural assets, and thus attacked the allegedly corrupting forms of popular film. This is also where the notion of beauty entered the scene, assuming the role of a virtual combat term against "immorality," "filth," and "tripe." Thus, cinema reformer Hermann Häfker claimed a "right to beauty" for the film-going public, "a right of the people and of youth […] to be protected from ugly impressions that are offensive to the senses and damaging to health" (1907). This pedagogical impetus, here linked to the notion of beauty, was widespread in Germany. Karl Wilhelm Wolf-Czapek, for instance, wrote in his monograph *Die Kinematographie: Wesen, Entstehung und Ziele des lebenden Bildes*: "in the big catalogues, and sometimes also at screenings, one sees images of the kind that should be cultivated, capable of eliciting instruction, a pleasure in beauty, and the formation of taste" (1908, 102). However, to credibly reframe the film image as a signifier of beauty required

a fundamentally different concept of cinematic motion, for which a potential aesthetic value had yet to be claimed. A comment by Georg Kleibömer from 1909 is symptomatic of this need for reinterpretation: "will the image really cease to be poetic, will it not become even more poetic when the whole image is set into motion, especially for those who are unaccustomed to the contemplation of artworks and lack imagination? […] To my view it would indeed be possible to judge a moving image according to artistic principles like composition or execution" (Kleibömer 1909).

Reconciling cinematic motion with the laws of beauty demanded a normative aesthetics, which avoided the particularly disturbing forms of movement causing "horrible confusion," while emphasizing and welcoming others that were more easily adapted to traditional aesthetic concepts such as the composition mentioned by Kleibömer (see Wiegand 2018b). Around 1910, various authors thus began to conceive of the film image as "painting in motion." That is, while they recognized motion as a constitutive element of cinematic imagery, they conceptually related it to the stasis of painting, with all its attendant formal qualities and reception categories. In this regard, cinematic motion was no longer the disturbing Other, inevitably opposed to the artistically composed picture, but rather its gentle expansion. This expansion was not allowed to stray too far from painterly compositions, though, so that the static image and its status as the highest realization of artistic standards remained ultimately untouched. Accordingly, some writers in the German cinema debate called for more participation of fine artists and suggested bringing to life their paintings in film. As Gustav Taudien suggests: "let us have all the events that preceded the single moment captured by the painter actually play out before our eyes, with the famous picture by the respective painter as the worthy finale" (1913).[11]

In sum, the emerging film-theoretical discourse transferred the aesthetic category of beauty to the mass-cultural phenomenon of film by systematically distinguishing "good" and "bad" kinds of cinematic motion, thereby conceptually subjecting it to a tendency towards stasis. Structurally, these authors demanded something that had already been realized practically in previous years, namely in the static and beautiful displays of tableaux vivants.

11 In early film history, the idea of "realizing" paintings in films is frequently expressed and also put into practice (see Robert 2018). On the German debate about the involvement of painters in film production see Diederichs 2001, 76–78.

Arrested Beauty: Tableaux Vivants in Variety Theatre

When calling for more cinematic beauty, Wolf-Czapek compares cinema's role in society to that of the established institution of variety theatre, which is "to be a stage for physical beauty and physical strength, for colour- and light-suffused joyous art" (1908, 101). The author thus draws on a bourgeois discourse of reform that began in the late 19th century with the emergence of the big variety stages – which addressed a highbrow bourgeois audience – and explicitly applies this discourse to the incipient efforts to reform cinema. The older debate, conducted primarily in the German variety trade press, was still current at the outset of the new reform movement aimed at cinema, and it included several authors who also wrote about film (e.g. Oscar Geller and A. Günsberg). Like the cinema reformers, the variety reformers were concerned with elevating forms of entertainment that originated among and addressed the lower classes – such as circus shows – in order to lend them a semblance of art for middle-class audiences.

With growing economic dominance, the middle classes had become increasingly interested in popular culture during the late 19th century, while simultaneously looking for ways to dissociate themselves from forms of "low," seemingly plebeian entertainment. They were thus open to adapting the respective phenomena to fit their own understanding of art and beauty (see Maase 1997, 103–107). Accordingly, the efforts of German variety reformers to designate circus acts as art became condensed in the notion of "beauty" and in the core idea of an "increasingly perfected aesthetics" (Günsberg 1903). Like the later debate on cinema, this discussion often focused on visual aspects. In variety theatre, this primarily concerned the performers' shapely bodies, their elegant movements, and the design of the stage with the help of lighting and décor. The purported link to the traditional arts was supposed to manifest itself in the aesthetic qualities of the performances as well as in the increasingly splendid architecture of the variety palaces.

In the course of these efforts, no other kind of act was mentioned as often and as unquestioningly as that of tableaux vivants, that is, "the representation of works of painting and sculpture by living persons" (*Brockhaus* 1902, 1029). In addition to animal acts, songs, comedy, and various circus acts, tableaux vivants were a staple in the diverse repertoire of the variety stages, and they remained hugely popular well into the 20th century. Tableaux vivants were presented either by individual performers [Fig. 1], by small groups of two to four [Fig. 2], or by larger ensembles; in the latter case they usually operated under the name of the artistic

director, presenting spectacular "mass pictures" (*Massenbilder*). Sometimes, they re-enacted paintings – with painted backgrounds and a picture frame to create a surface impression –, sometimes freestanding sculptures.

For reformers such as A. Günsberg, the "aesthetic aspect" (1906) that should be a mark of all variety acts found its most complete expression in tableaux vivants. They offered a convincing argument for variety theatre as a site of art and beauty because their origins were not in travelling circus shows, but in highbrow theatre and in the aristocratic and upper-middle-class salons of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Integrated into a sophisticated culture of parlour games and theatricals (which also included charades and masquerades), they were aimed at the acquisition of "good taste" and the constitution of an educated elite, with the re-enacted images belonging to an authoritative canon of art history, which the performers literally incorporated (see Jooss 1999). Even when tableaux vivants became a widespread attraction of popular culture over the course of the 19th century – appearing on fairgrounds, in circuses, and in light theatre – they never fully shed their connotations of the artistic, contemplative, and sophisticated. One reason for this was their subject matter: even in these popular contexts, the tableaux re-enacted paintings and sculptures from the sphere of classical, neoclassicist, and contemporary academic art. Henry de Vry's Gallery of Living Pictures, for example, performed at Berlin's Wintergarten in 1894, presented works of then-current representatives of the German and French art academies such as Hermann von Kaulbach and Émile Bayard in addition to neoclassicist sculptures and the Venus de Milo.[12] The names of the fine artists were printed on the playbill, which shows how explicitly a popular attraction adorned itself with the insignia and prestige of "true" art in order to address an educated and art-oriented audience familiar with these names and titles, thus giving them an incentive to see the show. Even when tableaux vivants didn't represent specific works – so-called free compositions became increasingly popular in the early 20th century – they were stylistically informed by the artistic taste prescribed by the academies, which pervaded bourgeois cultural life. The similarities can be seen when comparing a work re-enacted by de Vry in 1894 – *Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung* (*Faith, Love, Hope*) by Austrian court painter Josef Arpad Koppay – with the photograph of a tableau vivant by de Vry that had no specific model: both consist of a frontal – or at least unhindered – view of shapely bodies seen in their entirety, clearly standing out against a simply designed background in a balanced overall composition. [Figs. 3–4.]

12 Playbill of the Berlin Wintergarten theatre, Berlin City Museum.

Furthermore, tableaux vivants were especially suited to draw on notions of beauty from classical aesthetics because – like paintings and sculptures – they presented *static* images. Although the variety reformers also tried to develop conceptions of beauty for more movement-oriented performances by describing their "harmoniousness of movement" and "artistic elegance" (Kurz-Elsheim 1904; see also Lasker 1904), the completely arrested bodies of tableaux vivants offered a conceptual reference point of artistic contemplation in which ideas of the aesthetic image culminated, as it were. Thus, even when they didn't adopt specific motifs, tableaux vivants lent themselves to established conventions of picture composition and art contemplation more easily than other types of popular performance. Advertisements accordingly emphasized the "grace of lines and of the composition in general" and the "pleasure of graceful lines."[13] The arresting of living bodies into static images, constitutive of tableaux vivants, can be seen as an emphatic display of the aesthetic aspect in variety theatre and as a radical capture of the potentially ugly performing body. As if to emphasize this point, British journalist W. T. Stead described Pansy Montague's popular tableaux vivants as a kind of immobilized island of beauty amid an otherwise crudely grotesque programme: "each tableau formed an exceedingly beautiful picture, upon which the eye, fatigued with the endless procession of grotesque and ugly and garish figures, dwelt restfully and lovingly. It was a glimpse of the clear blue sky, or of the midnight heaven radiant with stars" (Stead 1906).

Tableaux Vivants as an "Attractional *Dispositif*" and Beauty-as-Attraction

Although tableaux vivants pointedly referenced the tradition of art and the aesthetic canon of bourgeois culture, they were simultaneously a visual attraction appealing to the *Schaulust* of an urban and potentially multi-class mass audience. In this regard, they followed the same dynamics of novelty and spectacle as any other kind of variety act. They were advertised as an "unparalleled box-office draw" and "first-rate attraction." As I argue more thoroughly elsewhere (Wiegand 2016 and 2018a), the attraction consisted in the display of well-shaped (often scantily-clad or naked) bodies, and in impressive body control, which allowed for the near-complete illusion of lifelessness. Furthermore, tableaux

13 *Leipziger General-Anzeiger*, quoted from an advertisement for the Mimiplastika Pygmalion Gallery, in *Das Programm* 9 (1902), n.p.; Advertisement for Henry de Vry, in *Das Programm* vol. 626 (1914), n.p.

vivants constituted an astonishing and decidedly modern technology of image production. Along with serpentine dances, illuminated water fountains, and screen projections (such as magic lanterns and films), they belonged to the so-called dark acts (*Dunkelnummern*), for which the auditorium lights were dimmed to show off special light effects (de Vry 1909). Starting around 1890, this included – inherently modern – electric lights. To use an apt term by Frank Kessler (which he employs in relation to early cinema), the tableaux vivants of the variety stages thus functioned as an "attractional *dispositif*" (2006). The technical apparatus and the viewing situation in which the pictures were presented made them visual attractions. The darkening of the auditorium, the lighting of the stage, and possibly also the suspense created by the opening curtain served to focus the spectators' attention and captivate their gaze. Even the lighting was an attraction in itself while simultaneously transforming the bodies on stage into a potentially dematerialized image to be looked at (see Faulk 2004, 142–187).

Thus, at the intersection of sensational light design and aesthetic picture composition, tableaux vivants addressed their audience both with the lure of the latest attraction and with the promise of beauty, art, and sophistication. The result was a kind of overlap between the aesthetics of attraction and classical aesthetics at three different levels – the rhetorical-discursive level, the level of picture composition, and the level of reception.

At the rhetorical-discursive level, advertisements in variety periodicals alternately emphasized the sensational aspect and the artistic value of the numbers. Often, these two rhetorical strategies were interlaced, as in a promotional text for the group Les Olympias [Fig. 2]: "until now, these poses have only been presented in white (marble) or gold (bronze). As a *novelty*, *Les Olympias* bring vivid poses in *patina* (old bronze). The green hue of antique bronze has a soothing effect on the eye, does not blind it and – making the poses stand out ever more vividly – offers the viewers true artistic pleasure."[14] What is announced as a sensational novelty is simultaneously meant to enable artistic pleasure. The introduction of the new hue is thus the logical consequence of a sensationalist consumer culture always aiming for novelty, but also the result of a competent aesthetic judgment, intended for contemplation.

In terms of picture composition, many of the paintings that typically served as models for tableaux vivants already contained a certain attraction potential – with bodies frontally presenting themselves to the viewer's gaze – which readily lent itself to the stage context. At the same time, the paintings' emphasis on

14 Advertisement in *Das Programm* vol. 231 (1906), n.p.; original emphasis.

compositional harmony and balance in the distribution of lines, surfaces, and colours corresponded to classical aesthetics. By imitating such art works, tableaux vivants preserved their qualities, but also modelled them into components of an "attractional *dispositif*" through immediate physical display and spectacular lighting effects.

Finally, the overlap described above constitutes a phenomenon of reception. The cited advertisement assumes an audience equally interested in spectacular variety attractions and in art, indeed, an audience for whom the elaborate presentation of the most recent art works itself is an attraction. Similarly, the playbill for de Vry's Gallery of Living Pictures implies an audience familiar with the bourgeois cultural technique of art contemplation (thus the mention of painting titles and artist names), while also marvelling at the modern "lighting effects and the apparatus with which the images are transformed."[15] For the type of spectator addressed, then, a desire for art appreciation and an appetite for new visual sensations pervaded each other.

I propose the term "beauty-as-attraction" to describe this specific mode of address, which pitched tableaux vivants as spectacular attractions and simultaneously pointed to their beauty and their connection to the traditional arts. In terms of reception, this mode can be linked to a certain *Schaulust,* albeit of a tamed kind that was less about erotic allure, violence, or thrill, and more about the visual enjoyment of colours, lights, and shapes.[16] These elements were designed so as to constantly surprise and overwhelm the sense of vision (in the vein of an attraction), while simultaneously relating to classical aesthetics, a traditional iconographic repertoire, and established categories of art reception.

Beauty-as-Attraction in Film

Film drew on the performance practices of tableaux vivants early on, thus transferring beauty-as-attraction to a new media context. Among the earliest examples are several series of productions by the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, either made or re-released in new compilations between 1897 and 1903. [Fig. 5.] The *Biograph Picture Catalog* highlighted these films separately within the genre label of *vaudeville views* and linked them to the

15 This phrase from de Vry's playbill possibly refers to a revolving stage mechanism.

16 In his 1913 article *Cinema and Visual Pleasure* (*Kino und Schaulust*), later Dadaist Walter Serner disdainfully wrote about the "thickly powdered and besmeared nude bodies" (2016, 43) of tableaux vivants as an example of what he termed the "harmless variety" of *Schaulust* (2016, 42) as opposed to the true and cruel *Schaulust* in cinema (2016, 210).

idea of an artistic refinement of the film image: "we call particular attention to our series of living pictures which were put on with as great care as to models, costumes, pose and properties as any of the largest productions of this order. They are excellent photographically, and of the highest grade pictorially."[17]

Many of the French and German productions advertised as *films artistiques* or *Kunstfilms* around 1910 also drew on the performance practices of tableaux vivants as seen on the variety stages at the time. Examples include *Les heures* and *Le printemps* (1909), two *phonoscènes*[18] by director Louis Feuillade, who would release a whole production series for Gaumont under the title *Le Film Esthétique* (*The Aesthetic Film*) only a year later.[19] Both films presented a thematically but not narratively motivated sequence of shots, showing female bodies arranged into picturesque groups with obvious references to antique art and mythology.[20] *Le printemps* begins by showing a field and a frozen spring; through a dissolve, the water is transformed into a spluttering spring and a woman in a white gown appears above it, lying motionless for about seven seconds like in a tableau vivant, before she slowly moves her arms and plays with the white birds fluttering around. [Fig. 6.] Soon afterwards, two children enter the scene and also start playing with the birds, while the basic image composition remains the same. All the other shots follow a similar pattern: the figures appear as if retrospectively inserted into pre-existing, static, and picturesque compositions of flowers, trees, and bodies of water, sometimes within round or oval frames; their movements are either markedly slow or dance-like. [Fig. 7.] The film is strikingly similar to certain tableaux vivants staged by Henry de Vry, for instance his *Phantasmagorien*, *Traumbilder* (dream images), or his *Schäferspiel* (pastoral) entitled *Johannisnacht*. These performances also presented images of female bodies on (artificial) fields and meadows, with lighting effects that lent them a magical quality. The *Traumbilder* were described as follows: "flocks of fluttering butterflies animate the scene, and floating groups of superbly beautiful girls (8 people) conjure up the most beautiful feast for the eyes in dreamy light effects. An entire fairy world is created: mermaids, nymphs, elves, mythological goddesses, shepherdesses with a large grazing herd, partly

17 *Biograph Picture Catalog* 1902, 54. It should be added that these films oscillated between the conflicting tendencies of artistic ennoblement and erotic display; see Wiegand 2016.

18 *Phonoscènes* were films distributed together with music recorded on sound discs.

19 The publicity text for this series, written in the style of a manifesto, called for the "beauty of ideas and beauty of form" as guiding principles (Feuillade 1910).

20 To the best of my knowledge, no copy of *Les heures* survives, but there are a number of historic publicity posters, advertisements, and programme notes (see e.g. *Ciné-journal* no. 27 [1909], n.p.; *Der Kinematograp*h no. 117 [1909], n.p.; *Die Lichtbild-Bühne* no. 42 [1909], *Die Lichtbild-Bühne* no. 58 [1909], n.p.).

in brightest sunlight, partly in moonlight never before seen in such an effect. A magically beautiful allegory crowns the ending."[21] *Le printemps* and de Vry's stage performance thus share the references to mythological imagery and the interweaving of physical and natural beauty through aestheticizing light effects and colours. While de Vry's tableaux vivants employed coloured lights, films like *Le printemps* brought the luminous appearances to the screen with the help of the projector light and coloured film stock.[22]

In 1909, Émile Cohl also made some films for Gaumont using tableaux vivants. *L'éventail animé* begins with a screen-filling frontal view of a folded fan, which soon opens up as if by magic. Through a dissolve, women appear on the individual fan leaves, each holding another fan in their hands. [Fig. 8.] While the film shows the magical coming-to-life of a fan by way of cinematic tricks, the focus seems to be more on the resulting splendorous ornamentation of the image: the symmetrical composition of female poses presents itself to the audience's gaze for several seconds without further changes through additional tricks. Accordingly, the American publicity for the film by the George Kleine Optical Company points out the impression of beauty evoked by the fan: "a delightfully pleasing and beautifully hand-colored series of panoramic views […]. A large ostrich feather fan opens alternately showing each time a different scene."[23] Ornamental "living fans" were a common type of tableaux-vivants act on variety stages. In 1904, tableaux-vivants director Dr. Angelo appeared at Berlin's Wintergarten theatre with the number *Der lebende Fächer in Watteau Manier*[24] (*The Living Fan in the Manner of Watteau*), and in addition to the main attraction, he also showed "wonderful living porcelain imitations in the style of Sèvres and Meißen, Majolica reliefs, and other creations in the field of mechanics."[25] [Fig. 9.]

In *L'éventail animé*, the living fan is the prelude to a series of six short scenes, which illustrate the use of fans in well-known historic situations. [Fig. 10.] By framing the individual shots with the contours of a giant fan (similar to the circles and ovals in *Le printemps*), the ornamentation from the first shot is carried over into the rest of the film. At the same time, the frame marks a proscenium and thus introduces another level of representation, making the figures seem as if arranged on a stage rather than appearing in a film. Even if they don't keep completely still, the staging of the scenes is obviously reminiscent of tableaux

21 Vom Berufsleben, in *Das Organ* vol. 246 (1913), 10.
22 Unfortunately, the surviving copy of the film does not contain the original colouring.
23 *Moving Picture World* vol. 4/23 (1909), 744.
24 In the 19th century, fans with motifs by French painter Jean-Antoine Watteau were popular.
25 *Moderne Kunst* (monthly edition) XIX/11 (1904/05), 267.

vivants: the conspicuous parallel staging without any background, the bodies' mostly frontal positioning towards the viewer, the overall preservation of poses despite some movement, and finally, the limited dramatic development and reduction to specific representative moments. The film's serial structure, with individual episodes exemplifying the same basic idea (in this case, the fan as a historic leitmotif) also resembles the performance structure of many tableaux vivants. *L'éventail animé* almost ideally fulfils what authors such as Wolf-Czapek demanded for film at the time, namely "the clear side-by-side of persons and objects," the "avoidance of hasty movement," and "that the figures be clearly delineated against the background everywhere in the image" (1910, n.p.).

In other films, the figures are in a complete standstill, at least for a while. *Porcelaines tendres* (Émile Cohl, 1909) consists of four shots, each presenting a short dance number. Before each dance, the performers stand still for several seconds, while imitating decorative objects that contain porcelain figurines. Such imitations were extremely popular on the variety stages in 1909 (see Hellwig 1909). In the first shot entitled *La coupe grecque* (*Greek bowl*), two performers form the bowl's ornamented shaft, with the lower and upper parts represented by painted decorations. The bowl, frontally and centrally positioned, is enclosed by an adorned frame, producing an overall impression of a symmetrically arranged ornament. [Fig. 11.] The neat composition and the dark background, against which the individual elements clearly stand out, create an impression of pictorial coherence and unity. After about ten seconds of complete stasis, the bowl is slowly lifted before the two dancers gradually start moving, climbing down from their pedestal, yet without completely abandoning their poses. While one of them eventually goes into dance movement – which nevertheless resembles a series of pictorial moments – the other sits down on the pedestal in a completely static pose. The shot ends with the dancer also assuming a static pose next to the other performer.

Conclusion

In many ways, tableaux-vivants performances around 1900 corresponded to popular middle-class ideas about art and the contemplation of beauty. At the same time, with their overt display of luminous and spectacular body images, they constituted an "attractional *dispositif*." For the operators of the big variety theatres, they thus fulfilled two objectives simultaneously: to offer new visual sensations and to present "art" to a bourgeois audience. By transferring the performance modes and visual motifs of tableaux vivants to film, this twofold

address of beauty-as-attraction was brought to fruition in the new context of film screenings. Like the respective live performances, films such as *Le printemps* and *Porcelaines tendres* presented shapely bodies frontally facing viewers, turning them into displays of visual attractions through technological transformation while nevertheless preserving a connection to fine art in terms of their composition and content. The successful shift from variety number to cinematic motif was aided by the conspicuous similarities between cinema and the staging of tableaux vivants as dark acts. In both cases, the audience's attention was directed to a succession of potentially dematerialized and often colourful images of light.

Both the mode of address and the film-theoretical discourse outlined above can be read as an expression of a changing visual culture around 1900, when the emerging mass media entered into diverse and sometimes contradictory symbiotic relationships with the established arts. Within these cultural negotiations, the aspect of immobilization significantly influenced the period's theoretical discourses and aesthetic practices as a figure of thought and creative strategy. It structured notions of beauty in film – for instance in the writings of the cinema reformers – as well as the process of image-creation in tableaux vivants (on stage and screen). It was only in the modes of stasis and near-stasis, it seems, that attempts to reconcile traditional aesthetics with the dawning of media modernity succeeded to some extent.

In the films analysed here, the tendency to partially or temporarily arrest the moving image produced harmonious and well-structured compositions. This trend of immobilizing images simultaneously appeared in the emerging fiction film. Certain moments in the plot become condensed into visual stops within the films' narrative flow when hitherto mobile configurations of characters freeze for an instant, presenting orderly, memorable, and momentous compositions, which often also reference well-known paintings (see e.g. Brewster and Jacobs 1997; Blom 2001; Askari 2014). However, what is interesting about the films discussed here is that they do not resort to tableaux vivants within a narrative context; instead, they display stasis as a visual attraction. In addition to adopting the structural moment of arrest and the motifs from fine art, they directly reference the tableaux-vivants attractions of variety theatre.

The developments outlined here are characterized by a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, they can be seen as a conservative reaction to new forms of visual media such as film, which shook the foundations of accepted aesthetic principles and hierarchies. On the other hand, as shown above, these "conservative" tendencies were inherently contradictory as they often united divergent notions of the aesthetic. Thus, the discourse on film as "painting in motion" simultaneously

reflected the need for resorting to familiar categories of classical aesthetics and the educated middle classes' hesitant acceptance of media modernity. In other words, classical image composition and the attractions of modern visual media overlapped in the mode of beauty-as-attraction, which was therefore especially successful in the new medium of film. Rather than simply imposing an antiquated notion of beauty on the films discussed here, this mode allowed them to express a complex layering of varied and partly contradictory aesthetic ideas.

However, to many advocates of art and aesthetics, films such as *Porcelaines tendres* might very well have represented a tendency towards banalization, in the sense of reducing the artistic to something merely pretty, decorative, or even kitschy – a tendency that would occasion its own defence mechanisms over the course of film history (see Galt 2011). Many contributions to the classical film theory of the 1920s and 1930s – especially the writings of Béla Balázs and Jean Epstein – turned decidedly against the picturesque, decorative, stylized, and arrested elements in film, often condescendingly labelling respective scenes as tableaux vivants (see Epstein 1988, 246; Balázs 2010, 42). Conversely, these authors emphasized the cinematic qualities that had already appeared in the earliest film discourses around 1900, but were "suppressed" by the reformist theorists. These very qualities – elusiveness and coincidence, for example – were now being linked to the concept of beauty (see Delluc 1986, 31).[26]

Throughout the history of film and film theory, notions of beauty thus seem to alternately crystallize around and distance themselves from similar creative principles and theoretical ideas. Beauty as a visual quality that is characteristic of static and harmoniously composed images, and which had therefore already reached its peak in painting, is one such insistently repeated topos – whether formulaically invoked in journalistic film criticism to this day or, conversely, raised as the spectre of a theoretical stance according to which the fluid and shifting character of cinematic experience is the epitome of beauty.

(Translated from German by Susie Trenka.)

26 In *Pretty* (2011), Rosalind Galt traces a continuous line from Kant's classic-idealist aesthetics to the film theory of André Bazin in the 1950s, a connection expressed in the appreciation of the "valuable" and the corresponding devaluation of the pretty as that which is only superficially beautiful. To my mind, this needs to be qualified insofar as most of the classic film theorists did not reject the pretty or decorative in film simply because they saw themselves as defenders of idealist aesthetics and as opponents of art's alleged trivialization. Rather, they viewed the unreflecting appropriation of fine art by film *overall* as an illegitimate and doomed undertaking, because for them, it suppressed what was felt to be revolutionary and new in cinematic aesthetics (expressed in terms such as Delluc's *photogénie*).

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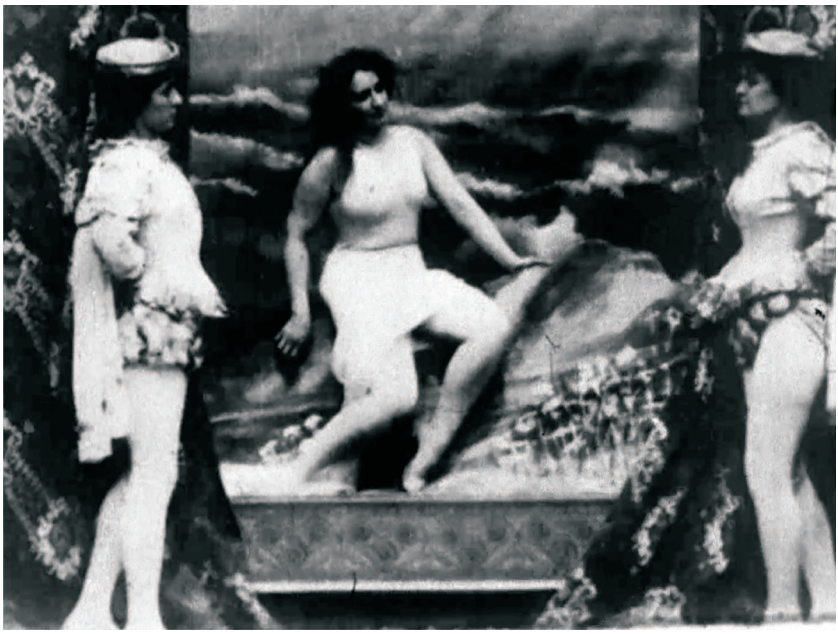

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An Uncanny Cinema, a Cinema of the Uncanny. The Trope of the Doll in the Films of Manoel de Oliveira

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Abstract. I argue that the trope of the doll, recurrent throughout the films of Manoel de Oliveira, is a visual figure that beyond narrative becomes a discourse on modernity and modernism, stillness and movement, life and death. Accordingly, I propose an overview of occurences of dolls and of "dollness" throughout the work of Oliveira – from *Aniki Bobó* (1942) to *The Strange Case of Angelica* (2010) – with the aim of tracking the line of transformations of an emblematic object into an aesthetic principle, a central figure involving psychoanalytical concepts such as the Freudian "uncanny," the fetish or the transitional object.[1]

Keywords: uncanny, doll, fetish, transitional object, modernity, modernism.

Introduction: Defusing an Enigma

Manoel de Oliveira is not only the longest lived film director of all times, active until his death, which occured at the very advanced age of 106, but also one of the most curious personalities of film history. Despite a scholarly interest in his films that used to participate regularly in prestigious European festivals, these were almost never shown in film theaters, therefore his work remains an "exquisite delicacy" for cinephiles. While praised by Serge Daney (2001), Jonathan Rosenbaum (1995) and David Bordwell (2013), just to name a few *connaisseurs*, most critics are puzzled when trying to discover a clue to his cinema, a task as difficult as finding out the secret of his advanced age. These preoccupations are at the origin of numerous interviews, portrait films and television reports (see, for example, Costa 1981; Baecque and Parsi 1999; Araújo 2014 and Costa Andrade

1 This work was supported by a grant of the Ministry of National Education, CNCS – UEFISCDI Romania, project number PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2016-0418.

2008), all keen to set up new categories, periods, concepts and comparisons for his somehow familiar, but still uncanny approach to cinema. The divide of the Salazar dictatorship, the tetralogy of "frustrated loves" (see Parsi 1981) – as Oliveira himself used to call the films with the same topic: *Past and Present* (*O Passado e o Presente*, 1972), *Benilde, or the Virgin Mother* (*Benilde ou a Virgem Mãe*, 1975), *Doomed Love* (*Amor de Perdição*, 1979) and *Francisca* (1981) –, the collaboration with Paulo Branco and Agustina Bessa-Luís, the preference for literary adaptations, cultural-historical topics and painterly allusions (especially to the Impressionism) are only a few, but persistent points of reference that help illuminate some aspects of his work, without providing, however, a coherent clue to interpretation. Similarly, based on the comparison of his style to different moments of film history, such as the German avantgarde (*Labour on the Douro River* [*Douro, Faina Fluvial*, 1931], Ruttmann's *Berlin:* a *Symphony of a Great City* [1927]), the Italian neo-realism (*Aniki Bobó,* 1942), the films of Robert Bresson and his model-theory, some films of Rohmer (his *Marquise de O* [1976] and his moral tales), Buñuel (his predilection to parody, critique of bourgeoisie and thematization of fetishism), it can be stated that none of these similarities became constant in his work and these do not even provide a sufficient basis to call him a "modernist" filmmaker. The most complete non-Portuguese approach has been realized so far by Mathias Lavin, who in his book, *La Parole et le lieu* (2008) analyses one of the fundamental aspects of the Oliveirian cinema: the tensionate relationship between word and image, the gaps, delays and excesses that are responsible for the often disturbing effect on spectators. However, while setting up a coherent method for the analysis, this work doesn't fully illuminate the intertwining of an original philosophy of cinema with a life philosophy that comes to the fore in interviews. I argue that the visual excess characteristic of Oliveira's films is nothing else than a figuration of his constant preoccupation with the mystery of life and death, history and ultimately, time. His attraction to sinister, unusal, uncanny topics, reflected in many of his titles containing words like "doomed," "strange," "magic," "eccentric" is paired with a style that often seems familiar, just to be subverted, parodized or interrupted most unexpectedly. At the same time, the mannerism and aestheticization, the all-pervasive preference for the still(ed) image, painterly compositions and tableaux vivants, reflects on the constant intention of the Western man to hold back time and grab the instant, in accordance with Agamben's view on aesthetics as the destiny of contemporary art: "thus aesthetics is not simply the privileged dimension that progress in the sensibility of Western man has reserved for the work of art as his most proper

place; it is, rather, the very destiny of art in the era in which, with tradition now severed, man is no longer able to find, between past and future, the space of the present, and gets lost in the linear time of history" (1999, 69).

All of Oliveira's work after his return to a very prolific filmmaking at the beginning of the 70s can be seen as an intention to save tradition, revive memories and fulfill unfinished projects from the Salazar era, when he was politically silenced. Unwilling (or unable) to recognize himself in the present (he is already in his sixties at the time of his return, an age at which other filmmakers retire), he chooses to bring the past to the present, arguably with the aim of making the present more familiar. This is the role of his many literary adaptations (most of them from Portuguese works and from the 19th century) and a few films of Portuguese historico-cultural interest. What is striking about these films is the anachronism of their narratives, missing all connections to the present: young women dying of tuberculosis, people dying of grief and longing, moral stories about a decadent bourgeoisie, the self-destructive life of a 19th-century author, lives of historico-cultural personalities from the 19th century, just to name a few topics. Similarly, settings and décors of the films are not revelatory of any specific moment of the 20th century: the costumes, fashion items, cars and interiors represent a great heterogeneity of styles and periods, undermining, again, the actuality of the narrative and creating an uncanny effect. Under these circumstances, only one reality persists: that of the single image that becomes the sole present, or rather, a presence. Conflicted with a voice-over narrator or a voice-off reading of texts, characters' dialogues or monologues and text inserts, the carefully framed image often concentrates the meaning of the story emblematically, metonymically or metaphorically. This preference for the figural and figuration as alternative to narrativization is declared in what can be regarded a late ars poetica of Oliveira, *The Old Man from Belém* (*O Velho do Restelo*). In this short film launched in September 2014, three fundamental dimensions of Oliveira's work intertwine along a meditation on our suspended time: a cultural and civilizational allegory, a reflection on own cinema, and finally biographical, personal elements. The discussion between the four emblematic characters, seated side by side in an eternal garden, is like a diving in history, a seed fertilizing the memory of Oliveira. Camões, the author of the *Luísiadas*, Camilo Castelo Branco (19th-century writer, author of the classical and very popular novel *Doomed Love*), Teixeira de Pascoaes, whose book on Camilo is evoked in this film, and Don Quixote are all emblematic cultural figures recurrent in Oliveira's films either as authors of adapted literary works (the case of Castelo Branco), or as models in terms of meditation on Portuguese history.

With its historico-meditative tone, this allegorical episode inscribes itself in the line of a few films dealing with civilizational issues, mostly of Portuguese interest: *No, or the Vain Glory to Command* (*'Non', ou A Vã Glória de Mandar,* 1990), *A Talking Picture* (*Um Filme Falado*, 2003) and *Cristopher Columbus - The Enigma* (*Cristóvão Columbo - O Enigma*, 2007). *A Talking Picture*, considered by many critics a response to the 9/11 attacks, is a road movie that follows a historian mother and her daughter on their journey from West to East, from Europe towards India, on boat, with stops at touristic sites emblematic of the encounter with the Muslim World. While Oliveira plays with the possibility of a globalized West where everyone understands each other despite speaking different languages (the guests on the board of the boat do so), his visionary premonition is pessimistic, even rootless: shortly after the cosmopolitan American captain (played by John Malkovich) gives the little girl a doll dressed in oriental costume, bombs are detected on board and the ship explodes before the girl and her mother (who return to fetch the doll from the cabin) could escape. The film closes with a freeze-frame of Malkovich's face, lit by the blast and revealing the horror of the Medusa-effect: turning still, as if petrified. The figurative role of the doll has been neglected so far by the critics (some refer to it as a "gift"); it is in fact an object, a product that emblematically and historically concentrates the economic and political aspects of West–Middle East relationships. As Agamben points out, the temporality of history is more present in a toy than in historical and archaeological monuments, to which Oliveira's road movie seems to be dedicated. "For in the toy, as in no other site, can we grasp the temporality of history in its pure differential and qualitative value. Not in a monument, an object of archaeological and scholarly research, which preserves in time its practical, documentary character (its 'material content,' Benjamin would have said); not in an antique, whose value is a function of its quantitative ageing; not in an archive document, which draws its value from its place in a chronology and a relationship of proximity and legality with the past event. The toy represents something more and something different from all these things. [...] What the toy preserves of its sacred or economic model, what survives of this after its dismemberment or miniaturization, is nothing other than the human temporality that was contained therein: its pure historical essence. The toy is a materialization of the historicity contained in objects, extracting it by means of a particular manipulation." (Agamben 1993a, 71.)

The toy, bought by the American captain in a bazaar, is emblematic of the historical, economic and civilizational exchange between the West and the Middle East, and it participates at the same time in the pessimistic, visionary allegory of

these relationships in the 21st century: the trip to Bombay, which throughout the film seemed to signify the hope of a cultural continuity and reconciliation, in the last scene turns into a nightmare. The death of the girl and her mother on a ship connecting the two civilizations translates as a gloomy vision of the future of the Portuguese nation in particular, and Europe in general, endangered by a crisis also involving the USA.

The toy, or more specifically, the doll, besides its role of "container" of meanings related to historicity and temporality, especially "the temporal dimension of a 'once upon a time' and a 'no more,'" as Agamben has shown it (1993a, 72), is a recurrent fetishistic object that can be considered one of the major clues to the Oliveirian work. As the "inexhaustible object of our desire and our fantasies" (Agamben 1993b, 58), it also represents the frustration of artistic creation: for Baudelaire, "the toy is the emblem of the relationship – of impenetrable *joy* mixed wilh stupefied frustration – that *is* the basis of artistic *creation* as of every relation between human and objects" (Agamben 1993b, 57).

Oliveira's aesthetics owes much to the myth of modernity, described by Baudelaire in his *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863): the artistic creation conceived as an adventure of the gaze turns everything into spectacle, just as fashion and makeup transforms women into dolls and mannequins, passive objects of the (male) gaze. Stillness, doll-ness, "to-be-looked-at-ness" or "image-ness" of the female character, a heritage of the impressionist painting (especially Manet, whose paintings are often referred to in his films) is central to Oliveira's aesthetics of the frame, manifesting in a preference for window- and doorframes, mirrors. In what follows, I propose an overview of figurative occurences of dolls and of "dollness" throughout the work of Oliveira – from *Aniki Bobó* (1942) to *The Strange Case of Angelica* (*O Estranho Caso de Angélica*, 2010) – with the aim of tracking the line of transformations of an emblematic object into an aesthetic principle, a central figure involving a range of psychoanalytical concepts, such as the uncanny, the fetish or the transitional object.

Aniki Bobó and the Doll in the Window

Considered by many critics a proto-neorealist movie, the first feature film of Oliveira, *Aniki Bobó* tells a story spanning only a few days of working class children based in Porto, the home city of Oliveira. It is a tale played by non-professional children actors and reveals serious dramas that occur on the verge between play and reality, childhood and adulthood, life and death. The daily play of children takes place by

the river Douro, between the river and the esplanade, a street with shops looking at the river, an in-between space representing childhood as a transiton between nature (represented by the enormous river) and culture/civilization, created and inhabited by adults. This transitional condition, the coming-of-age process is emphasized by the children's rhyme that the film's title derives from and which is chanted repeatedly by the protagonists: from the rhythm which evokes archaic rites, uncoherent words emerge denoting, in turn, animals, musical instruments, and biblical figures. The distance between adults and children is apparent from the very first scene of the film: the protagonist is playing with a bibelot (a miniature, a version of the toy) while his mother is preparing him for school, the bibelot breaks and he is slapped instantly by the mother. But this scene is only a premonition of the central topic that also involves conflicts with adults: a doll in a display window triggers a series of anecdotal scenes, by being stolen and finally delivered to the girl the child protagonist is desperately in love with. The image of the doll in the window is central for other reasons, too: it structures the narrative (on the one hand, it halts the action, the intense play of children, who always stop to admire it, on the other, it marks the turning points in the story) and it becomes an alternative to it, prefiguring the contemplative, visually charged, slow cinema of Oliveira. João Lopes was the first to point out the importance of the scene with the doll in the window in this film, reflecting on the uncanny effect triggered by the point of view of the doll (Lopes 1981). Indeed, the gaze of the children is paired with a counter shot that can only be that of the doll, a point of view shot coming from nowhere. [Figs. 1–2.] Two possible interpretations emerge, without mutually excluding each other: this is a projection of the children's belief in the magic of the toy that, just like in Playland from Pinocchio, can come to life. At the same time, it is a self-reflexive instant, where the object of the gaze reveals the spectator by staring back: this is again an effect established by the impressionist painting (of which Manet's *Olympia*, 1863, is paradigmatic), adopted later by cinema with the crash of the "fourth wall" that allowed characters to address the spectator. This effect will be widely used in Oliveira's films, especially in the ones in which he is opting for the frontal style, with characters reciting their lines while looking out at the spectator (e.g. *Doomed Love*, 1978 or *The Day of Despair*, 1992), but also in others where the act of looking and the woman as spectacle is thematized (*Abraham's Valley/Vale Abraão*, 1993), or some sort of conspiracy between character and spectator is implied (*Belle Toujours,* 2006).

In *Aniki Bobó*, the trope of the doll in the window is a figuration of the narrative (an emblem of childhood, innocence and magic), but, as we have seen, it also

belongs to the domain of the figural, of the artistic discourse independent of a specific narrative and providing a clue to the entire work, as described by D. N. Rodowick in his *Reading the Figural* (2001). There are a few other pieces in the filmography of Oliveira where the doll as object has a figurative and figural role. Besides *A Talking Picture*, where it is both an emblem of the relationships between West and East and a site of historical time, in *The Letter* (*A carta*, 1999, an adaptation of the French novel by Madame de La Fayette, *The Princess of Clèves,* 1678, set in the present days' Portugal) it appears as a metaphor of the heroine (passive and helpless, stuck in the position of a child who promised her mother not to marry the man she loves). [Fig. 3.] It also evokes the doll in the window effect, the discourse on the (female) image as object of (male) spectatorial desire (her admirer is repeteadly standing in front of her house, staring at her window). Most intriguingly, this admirer, the Portuguese pop star Pedro Abrunhosa playing himself, never removes his dark sunglases, which makes his gaze unlocalizable. His enigmatic star-image reveals him too as an object of the female (and spectatorial) desire, an icon.

The trope of the doll in the window launched in *Aniki Bobó* can be regarded as a signature of Oliveira's visual aesthetics, sublimated in the very recurrent image of the (inexpressive, passive) woman in the window, exposed to a gaze that doubles that of the spectator. In most cases the woman in the window remains a distant image, the object of a distant longing of the male protagonist. This is also true for the "tetralogy of frustrated loves" – the courtly, purely platonic love for a (dead, rejected, idealized or mystified) person turns characters into carefully framed images, composed as paintings and often reflected in mirrors. The discourses on the woman as doll and woman as work of art overlap in painterly compositions.

The magic, the desire, the uncanny, the frustration and rejection they cause also make the toy/doll and the work of art comparable, as in Rilke's words quoted by Agamben: "it [the doll] makes us almost indignant at its tremendous and crass forgetfulness; that hatred that, unconscious, has always constituted a part of our relation to it breaks forth, the doll lies before us unmasked like the horrible strange body on which we have dissipated our purest warmth; like the drowned corpse painted on the surface that allowed itself to be lifted up and borne along by the floods of our tenderness, until we would dry up again, abandoning it in some hedge (Agamben 1993b, 57).

The animism, fetishism and belief in magic of children in *Aniki Bobó* becomes a recurrent topic in Oliveira's films as an infantile wish or belief in the living doll. As Mathias Lavin has already pointed out (2014, 130), both the *Eccentricities of a*

Blonde Girl (*Singularidades de uma Rapariga Loura*, 2009) and *The Strange Case of Angelica* display the scene from Hoffmann's *The Sand Man*, where the young man falls in love with a beautiful automaton. This short story is analysed by Freud as an example of the uncanny experience consisting of "doubts whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not be in fact animate" (Freud 2003, 5), as it is the case of the impression made by wax-work figures, artificial dolls and automatons. But even beyond that, this trope becomes the figure of the uncanny effect of still images (paintings and photographs) animated by cinematic movement and of the opposite, of moving images turning still, transforming into tableaux vivants, visual objects, thus fulfilling the desire of a fetishist spectator.

The Beautiful Automaton

As Agamben has shown, the doll is, on the one hand, "infinitely lesser than an object, because it is distant and beyond our grasp," but "it is on the other hand infinitely more, because it is the inexhaustible object of our desire and our fantasies:" "in it [the doll] we would mix, as in a test tube, whatever unknowable things happened to us, which we would see boil up and turn colors there" (1993b, 58). In Oliveira's cinema the recurrent voyeuristic scene in which a man is contemplating a woman in the window (as already remarked by other critics, Fausto Cruchinho, 2010 or Lavin, 2014, for example) recalls children's fetishistic attraction to dolls. But beyond the fetishistic content of the male gaze that transforms the female body into "an unattainable object that satisfies a human need precisely through its being unattainable" (Agamben 1993b, 33), the doll and dollness becomes central in the Oliveirian discourse on cinematic ontology, film and modernity, movement and stillness and the cinematic image as ultimate fetish.

Baudelaire in his *The Painter of Modern Life* (1862) already defines modernity as "the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable" (1964, 13). Philosopher Stanley Cavell, on his turn, identifies in Baudelaire's compelling presentation of aspects of modernity the myths of film, the modern medium being the only capable to satisfy "the specific simultaneity of presence and absence" of stability and futility, stillness and movement (1979, 42).

As I have already argued elsewhere (Király 2013), Oliveira, bored with the 20th century, instead of adopting a modernist style after his return to filmmaking in the late 60s, has rather turned back to the original definition of Baudelaire by

re-enacting the myth of modernity on film and by film, staging its paradoxical position between the stability and stillness of plastic artworks – paintings and statues – and the futility represented by the moving image. Playing an organic part of his life (itself characterized by the duality of inactivity and hyper-creativity, an active sportsman's life and contemplative lifestyle in his vineyard, followed by his spectacular return to filmmaking), his cinema is constantly revealing a fascination for both technical innovation and aesthetic tradition, the machine and the statue or painting, respectively. This duality is plastically represented in his *The Cannibals* (*Os Canibais*, 1988), a sinister opera-film displaying the uncanny effect generated by the tropes of the living dead and the automaton: the mysterious count, whom the female protagonist falls in love with, turns out to be half human, half machine, with prosthetic limbs annexed to his body. When he removes these limbs, his body is turned into a torso, reminding of antic statues: it reveals stillness, eternal beauty, movement and technology in the same human body, a complex figure of the myth of modernity. [Fig. 4.]

The same two-facedness of modernity is concentrated in the trope of the doll, or the woman who acts, moves like an automaton. Echoing Degas's painting *Portrait of Michel-Levy in his studio* (1879), in which the doll, the artistic prop is responsible for the uncanny effect (at first we think it is a woman, an artist's model, just to realize, from the clumsy pose, that it is an object), this motif has become in Oliveira's cinema a figuration of woman as a spectacle. Starting from *Aniki Bobó*, this immobile object of contemplation keeps coming back in a series of films where the woman is framed as the still object of contemplation: in *Doomed Love*, *Francisca*, *The Letter*, *Eccentricities of a Blonde Haired Girl*, or *The Strange Case of Angelica.* The prototype of the silent, numb female body exposed to contemplation in the window can be found in *Doomed Love*, where the lovers, Teresa and Simão see each other through the opposite windows of their paternal houses. They will meet only once, in a dark garden, which makes their relationship seem fantasmatic, and melodramatic circumstances transform Teresa into a passive marionette of destiny. We can say, by referring to Susan Sontag's essay *The Illness as Metaphor* (1988), that her sickness appears rather as a metaphor of the death drive that Laura Mulvey identifies in melodramas and which is manifested in a tendency of film action and movement to slide into non-action, stillness and ultimately death (Mulvey 2006, 67–81). The same applies to Francisca, who consents to running away with her admirer, and is taken to his house and kept there as a beautiful captive, regressing slowly into silence and stillness, to a state of living dead – as suggested by the compositions

and light effects that show her as a lifeless doll. This trope is also emphasized by her monotonous way of speaking, symptomatic of her melancholy. In a similar vein, the female protagonist of *The Letter* is like a puppet devoid of own will, all her decisions being animated by the wish of her dead mother not to marry the man she loves. Thus she becomes a beautiful automaton in the window, admired from distance, just like the girl from *The Eccentricities of a Blonde Haired Girl*. This film is visually dominated by idealizing frames, portraits of the worshipped, mostly silent woman, and ends abruptly after showing the image of the young woman falling apart like a marionette (as Mathias Lavin also points out, 2014, 130) when her husband realizes that she is a kleptomaniac. While letting spectators fall in the abyss of the closing black screen and their unfulfilled expectations – nourished by memories of Hitchcock's *Marnie* (1964) or Bresson's *A Gentle Woman* (*Une Femme Douce*, 1969) –, Oliveira's artistic choice is that of a detached contemplation that is never disturbed by the obsession of solving the mystery of the woman. The male gaze, transforming her into a doll, worships her only as long as she is perfect: at the first sign of eccentricity she ends up rejected, like a doll abandoned by children.

The same reference to the infantile aspects of fetishism prevails in *Abrahams's Valley*, completed with the magic and the uncanny associated with the image of the female figure in the window. In this adaptation of Agustina Bessa-Luís's homonymous novel, Ema, the main character is a disturbing presence: whenever she appears in the window, car accidents happen in front of their house. Her beauty has an element of sinister linked by Lord Byron with "the doomed and the damned" (Wilson 2007, 96, 302). But most intriguingly, she has a limp, which makes her movement uncannily mechanic, automaton-like. Ema's oscillation between the traditional role of housewife staying at home and that of the independent, modern woman crossing her boundaries is doubled by still images, tableaux vivants getting on movement, and freeze-action images. She is constantly posing, looking into mirrors that become a narcissistic source of love. Pose as *pause* is, according Laura Mulvey, a tool of delaying cinema, resisting narrative linearity, addressing a fetishist spectator "more fascinated by image than plot" (2006, 164). As I have already argued in an essay on the role of stillness in Oliveira's cinema, Ema is "half doll, half idol," a female dandy, presenting herself as work of art and constantly turning herself into an image (Király 2014, 9). This "imageness" and "dollness" makes her comparable to fashion models, whose facial inexpressivity is due, according to Giorgio Agamben, to "the awareness of being exposed to the gaze." As he argues, "it is this brazen-faced indifference that fashion models, porn

stars, and others whose profession it is to show must learn to acquire: they show nothing but the showing itself (that is, one's own absolute mediality). In this way, the face is loaded until it bursts with exhibition-value. Yet, precisely through this nullification of expressivity, eroticism penetrates where it could have no place: the human face, which does not know nudity, for it is always already bare. Shown as a pure means beyond any concrete expressivity, it becomes available for a new use, a new form of erotic communication" (2007, 90).

The uncanny effect of the expressionless doll-face is often emphasized by a gaze that is looking back at the spectator, transforming the motionless body in the image into a disquieting presence. As Manet's *Olympia* (1863) testifies, this is, beyond the presentation of the female body as an object of the male gaze, a self-reflexive thematization of the female body exposed to the gaze. This trope finds a complex autobiographical, media-theoretical and artistic-cultural representation in *The Strange Case of Angelica*, a film rich, as the title suggests, in uncanny effects that transform the beautiful automaton into a transitional object between life and death.

The Doll as Transitional Object

Dramatic circumstances like the death of a young female cousin, that of one of his grandsons and his advanced age have continuously nurtured Oliveira's preoccupation with death, figurated and sublimated over and over in his films about strange cases of deadly, obsessive and pathological passions. Morbidity is a constant poetical source for Oliveira and the death scene a paradoxical figuration of life, in accordance with Foucault's observation: "the morbid authorizes a subtle perception of the way in which life finds in death its most differentiated figure. The morbid is the rarefied form of life, exhausted, working itself into the void of death." Foucault also defines death as "the lyrical core of man: his invisible truth, his visible secret" (2003, 245).

One of the recurrent scenes of Oliveira's films – as it can be seen in *Doomed Love*, *Benilde or the Virgin Mother*, *Francisca*, *Magic Mirror* (*Espelho Mágico*, 2005), *The Strange Case of Angelica*, to name just a few –, that of the death of a young woman (coined as the most poetical image ever by Edgar Allen Poe), strikes us as both painterly due to its composition and photographic in capturing the moment and framing the perfect stillness of doll-like bodies. [Fig. 5.] These two qualities are reconciled in the intermedial figure of the tableau vivant, often present in Oliveira's movies. The *Strange Case of Angelica* is further illuminating the inherent intermediality of the cinematic image, indebted

both to the painterly and the photographic tradition. The film is overtly self-reflexive and metaleptic, bearing numerous autobiographical details, not to mention that he casts in the role of the main protagonist his grandson, Ricardo Trêpa. The young photographer played by him is hired to take photos of a dead young woman, Angelica, a mission that turns to be fatal for him. In the scene of the photo session we are witnessing a reframing of the image of the beautiful dead girl (who seems alive and even smiling in her death) that results in an intermedial flickering between film, painting and photograph. The film is making the frames, boundaries and crossings visible, thus becoming a whole concentrated history of cinematic intermediality from painterly composition through photographic freeze-frame to the movement dissolving the stillness. This oscillation presents cinema again as a medium indebted both to modernity, characterized by Baudelaire as both contingent and stable, and to cinematic modernism that pushed the experimentation with aesthetic possibilities of the stillness-movement duality to the extreme. The painterly composition of the motionless body of the girl, reminding of Renoir's painting of Madame Monet (1872)[2] is being reframed by the camera of the photographer, then blurred, in a reference to the impressionist painting and revealing the materiality of the image. [Figs. 6–7.] But the strange case of Angelica starts when, through the lens of the camera, the girl comes back to life, in a media theoretical version of the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty, and evoking the uncanny effect of the beautiful automaton. Thus, beyond this short genealogy of intermedial relationships – including socio-cultural background, such as the practice of taking photos of dead people, or the retaining of the moment, of the atmosphere in impressionist paintings – we are witnessing here a figuration of the cinematic technology, presented as a miracle that makes the still image move. Following this scene, the photographer becomes obsessed with this girl who is visiting him every night and takes him to fly, in a setting reminding of the films by Meliès (using the technique of superimposition), until one morning he is found dead in the boarding house where he lives. This story, that can be well interpreted as an allegory of the fatal attraction between life and death, stillness and movement, as well as film and photography, ends by showing the photographic image as the ultimate common denominator of the two technologies. Theorized by Bazin (2005), Barthes (1985), or more recently by Raymond Bellour (2002a, 2002b) and Laura Mulvey (2006), the photographic (and still) image in film addresses

2 This reference might not be a coincidence as the painting is in the collection of the Gulbenkian Modern Art Museum in Lisbon, and Oliveira was most probably familiar with it.

a pensive and fetishist spectator**.** Moreover, according to Bellour (2002a), stillness in cinema traditionally serves to represent the non-representable, like birth, death, or miracles of Christianity such as resurrection, immaculate conception and apparitions, topics systematically exploited by Oliveira since the beginning of the 1970s.

Blurring the borders of media and those between movement and stillness, life and death refers to the ontology of photography, and by opposing stillness in the image and stillness of the image, it reveals cinematic stillness as a *trompe l'oeil*. In the films of Oliveira the scenes of dying are very long shots meant to grab the moment of passage from movement to stillness, from the cinematic to the photographic. The same intention to reveal the discreet line between painting, photograph and film can be found in *Benilde, or the Virgin Mother*, where the photograph of the protagonist's mother, framed as a painting and repeatedly intercut with the ongoing scene, "comes to life" in three steps: first her expression changes, then slightly turns towards us, and finally we are witnessing the scene through her point of view, in another emergence of the uncanny. [Figs. 8–9.] What we have here, again, is a concentrated genealogy and a revelation of the technical mechanisms of the medium, of the movement achieved as a succession of individual images. An exaggerated slowing down and repeated reframing turns this scene into a real cinephile delicacy. As Belén Vidal argues, the emphasis on framing as artifice and "instances of temporal and spatial manipulation" such as fixed framings, long takes, slow motion, zooms or superimpositions "strain the narrative as a whole, drawing our attention to the visual textures of the film. This 'overwriting' of the shot throws into relief tensions between discursive and figural dimensions of film" (Vidal 2012, 111).

In the light of the discussion above I contend that Oliveira, through the trope of the doll and automatons not only thematizes intermedial transitions as figurations of movement and stillness, but, as already hinted at earlier, conceives film itself as a transitional object between the familiar and the unfamiliar. The psychoanalytical concept of transitional object was initially used in the description of a developmental stage of infants that has been later extended to the cultural experience of adults. According to its original definition, for a baby, a transitional object such as a blanket, a pacifier, a cuddly toy, serves to relate between outer and inner reality, facilitating the child's acceptance of the new. In Winnicott's view, "no human being is free from the strain of relating outer and inner reality," and transitional objects and transitional phenomena help us negotiate that relationship (quoted by Kuhn, 2005, 401). Agamben links the

concept of fetish with that of the transitional object that does not belong to the internal and subjective nor to the external, but to "the area of illusion," the location of culture and play, a "third area" (1993b, 59). Annette Kuhn, in her *Thresholds: Film as Film and the Aesthetic Experience* (2005) considers transitional processes in adult life in terms of an aesthetic moment (a term borrowed from Bernard Berenson via Marion Milner) defined as an occasion when time becomes space (that is, concretizes in an object) for the subject. We are stopped, held in reverie, to be released eventually back into time proper (Kuhn 2005, 401).

In the aesthetic moment, the subject then becomes part of that reality, and that reality becomes part of the subject, which reminds us of the phenomenological description of the film experience by Merleau-Ponty saying: "well, the movies are particularly suited to make manifest the union of mind and body, mind and world, and the expression of one in the other" (quoted in Kuhn 2005, 405). Annette Kuhn in her essay takes this idea even further arguing that this experience is due to a particular configuration of space within and outside the edges of the film image, the film frame: "through its organization within the frame of space, time, stillness and motion, film is capable, I would suggest, of replaying or re-evoking certain states of being which are commonly experienced as inner. This, I would argue, is the site of the activity of transitional processes" (Kuhn 2005, 403). This is very close to Laura Mulvey's approach to cinematic stillness and film frame modelling "the longstanding reluctance of the human mind to confront death" (Mulvey 2006, 43). I argue that what makes Oliveira's case special, beyond the aesthetic moment achieved through a constant reframing that reconciles images of life with those of stillness and death, is his obstinate clinging to cinema as a unique language – a transitional object – which translates the experience of the passage between life and death. Films become the fetishistic object capable of making this transition smooth, just as the dead woman is helping the photographer's passage in *The Strange Case of Angelica*. In this film the obsession for the beautiful automaton and for photography overlap: the strangeness of Oliveira's case consists of an exaggerated cinephilia, an obsession with the aesthetic moment that, according to Kuhn, "is characterized by a feeling of being, or becoming, at one with a work of art; and this entails a sensation of crossing over a boundary and entering into another kind of reality – and then returning 'home,' renewed" (2005, 404).

It might not be exaggerated to say that Oliveira is performing this experience over and over, with the euphoria of the artist directly involved with the moving image, in a game with the frames and intermedial possibilities of the medium, somehow evoking the experiments of the avant-garde artists of initial times.

Because he is not only an eccentric, a cinephile par excellence, but also a *cinéfils*, to use Serge Daney's playful term, the son of cinema. His stories might appear clumsy, outmoded, uncanny or too simple, but they always serve as background for the figuration through the still, painterly or photographic image. As Ágnes Pethő has put it: "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" (2011, 6). These frames, marking intermedial boundaries are only partly figurations of the story: as I was arguing above, Oliveira manages to isolate and sublimate the still image (of a woman represented as a doll, mannequin or automaton) as a figure of the dynamics of life and death.

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"Let Man Remain Dead:" The Posthuman Ecology of *Tale of Tales*

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Abstract. In this essay I analyse Matteo Garrone's *Tale of Tales* (2015) within the perspective of embodied cognition. I consider film experience as an affective-conceptual phenomenon based on the viewer's embodiment of the visual structures. Baruch Spinoza stands at the foundation of my analytical approach since his thought was based on the absolute parallelism between the body and the mind. This paradigm redefines anthropocentrism and rejects dualism; however, the criticism of the rationalist ideal is also one of the main characteristics of the film *Tale of Tales*: by staging baroque and excessive characters, it allows the viewer to embody a notion of subjectivity that is performative and relational. Therefore, by combining the cognitive analysis of the film with my theoretical framework I will present a radical criticism of abstract rationality and present an ecological idea of the human.

Keywords: embodied cognition and cinema, sad passions, becoming-animal, posthuman, Spinoza.

Tale of Tales (2015) is a fantasy film based on the 17th-century collection of fairytales *Lu cunto de li cunti* by the Neapolitan poet Giambattista Basile. More precisely, it readapts three tales: *La Cerva Fatata* (*The Enchanted Doe*), *La Vecchia Scorticata* (*The Two Old Women*), *La Pulce* (*The Flea*). The first tale describes the obsessive and destructive maternal love of the queen of Longtrellis (Salma Hayek) for her son Elias. The second deals with two old sisters, Dora (Hayley Carmichael) and Imma (Shirley Anderson), who try to seduce the king of Strongcliff (Vincent Cassel), and crave for youth and wealth. Finally, the third tale portrays the morbid passion of the king of Highhills (Toby Jones) for a flea, which makes him lose his throne and his daughter Violet.

As it happens in many forms of popular narrative, these tales are intended to express a moral message and an existential admonishment. At the end of these fables in the original text, for instance, there is a small sentence that highlights the

teachings communicated by a particular story, which are concepts and notions that reflect the moral values of the baroque age. What is common in the three tales also portrayed in the film, is a sense of existential limitation, which in the end punishes arrogance and envy, and which reminds the readers of their precarious conditions in life (cf. Basile 1995, 52, 87, 98). Furthermore, these admonishments work also as a kind of *memento mori* (remember that you have to die). As a consequence of this conceptual dimension, the characters of the fables are humans driven by passions, illusion and desires. They do not behave as rational and controlled individuals and, during the events of the different stories, they experiment, at their own expense, the vacuity and foolishness of their choices. Nonetheless, it should be noticed that the moral teachings of the text are also intended to encourage the readers or listeners of the time to accept their own social role and position.

In my opinion, the film works in a similar way by establishing visual concepts and an interactive dimension that stresses the role of passions (particularly sad passions) in defining the behaviour of the characters, even though it does not convey exactly the same moral values. From a thematic point of view we can say that the three tales all deal with obsessions and, in order to stress this conceptual affinity, they are intersected in the narration. At the same time, the film develops a peculiar affective-conceptual dimension, which allows us to critically examine the principles of modern humanism.

Theoretical Framework and General Coordinates of the Experience

My analytical account falls within the framework of cognitive film theory (CFT), and focuses on the capacity of film viewers to associate every affective element they experience with concepts and ideas, thus identifying film experience as an embodied phenomenon that integrates sensation and intellection. As Adriano D'Aloia and Ruggero Eugeni affirmed, we should talk of viewers as organisms, as bodies and minds that participate in the experience in their entirety (D'Aloia and Eugeni 2015, 20). I also combine these notions with the neurocognitive studies of Vittorio Gallese and Michele Guerra, who outlined an innovative description of embodied simulation, namely the affective-cognitive process, enacted by mirror neurons and empathic operations, which indicates a resonance and contiguity between the screen and the viewer (Gallese and Guerra 2015, 53–55). Therefore, in film experience we are able to embody the on-screen actions, to empathize with the emotional states of the characters and to interact with the aesthetic

features of the product (camerawork, colours, sound effects, cutting rate, scenic design). We also have to notice the centrality of image schemas and kinaesthetic expressions in cinema, audiovisual spatial metaphors that synthesize complex intellectual models, through which we access to characters' subjectivities and to contextual concepts such as ideas of time, of memory and even general moral notions (cf. Coëgnarts and Kravanja 2015, 274; Fahlenbrach 2007, 107). Indeed, we can generate conceptual models that are useful to empathize with characters or that provide us with a general sense of the experience (cf. Smith 1995, 21; Plantinga 2014, 143). Furthermore, I integrate cognitive film theory with philosophical analyses to highlight the "ecological" and relational nature of the medium, and our capacity to "physically" interact with concepts and complex subjectivities through the embodiment of blocs of sensations. In general, my approach rejects every dualistic distinction between emotion and reason, and identifies film viewers as relational agents who participate in the experience with all the potentialities of their embodied minds. Therefore, I would argue that film experience should be analysed as an interactive phenomenon, which audio-visualizes body states and relational systems and whose characteristics emerge as performative and dialogical events.

Going back to the film, as the director himself declared in an interview, *Tale of Tales* was meant to have a strong visual impact intended to create a general sense of marvel (Garrone 2015). We can notice the prominent role that many low-level features have in this particular experience to establish specific interactive coordinates. For instance, the frequent use of saturated colour tones enhances particular (negative) sensations and narrative situations, and contributes in giving a "dark" and grotesque atmosphere to the experience. We can observe the constant presence of gloomy tints and, at the same time, of bright colours to highlight the luxury of clothes, jewels and of the furniture. Moreover, the recurrent presence of fog and mist strengthens the fairytale and mysterious environment. In this sense, the employment of magnificent baroque and medieval architecture (such as Castel del Monte, and the Castle of Donnafugata), of very peculiar landscapes and sumptuous internal locations is helpful in generating a whole sense of fabulous excess. By following the studies of Kathrin Fahlenbrach and Codruța-Elena Morari, we could affirm that architectural and spatial metaphors have an important role in influencing emotional and intellectual operations in the viewer (Fahlenbrach 2007, 113). In the case of this film then, we can notice a typical conceptual association that connects baroque architecture and a sense of excess and incapacity to control perception (Morari 2007, 94–95). Even the costumes and makeup (which should

reproduce the 17th-century style) are characterized by this very luxurious tone. In particular the clothes of the queen of Longtrellis, who usually wears very long and elaborate dresses of powerful colours (mainly black and dark red), effectively convey the emotional intensity and the morbid desires of the figure. According to Carl Plantinga, these and other aesthetic elements, such as the cutting rate, or the use of the soundtrack, are cognitively combined by viewers to generate the mood of a particular experience, the film's overall affective-intellectual charge (Plantinga 2014, 145). This cognitive and emotional dimension pervades the film in its entirety and frames the viewer's interaction, thus influencing the meaning and significance of particular actions and elements (148–149). Furthermore, Plantinga maintains that these affective elements help us in recognizing the filmic genre that we are perceiving, or the scenario, an expression that identifies the type of interaction we participate in and the actions to be performed within this experiential context. However, although mood and scenario are synthetic and unifying conceptual models, they must not necessarily be coherent and fixed. In this film, indeed, we can notice the presence of different experiential dimensions which are connected with heterogeneous tones and atmospheres.

As the aesthetic elements discussed before already demonstrate, viewers are immersed in fairytale and mysterious mood, but, at the same time, they are also pervaded by excessive and gory elements (which are frequent in all the three stories), which in turn are accompanied by an ironic and grotesque style. The combination of these different features generates a filmic world dominated by a sense of excess and morbidity, an experiential dynamics that the characters inhabit and the viewers participate in. These general cognitive elements help viewers to frame the destructive and passionate behaviour of the characters and motivate their actions by creating a sense of existential instability, which combines affections of marvel and horror.

Engaging Sad Passions and the Connections with Spinoza's Philosophy

The baroque and fantastic tone of the film permeates the conceptualization of both the environment and the characters. I would argue that this effect is reached also through the description of fictional figures that seem lacking of a psychological depth or of a structured inner being. Viewers have the sensation that all their emotional states and reactions are externalized and they never appear in a contemplative or reflective position. Similarly, in the original

text of the fairytales, the names of kings and queens are not known, they can be recognized only through their titles – a stylistic choice that reiterates their fantastic nature, but one that also frames them as prototypical figures more than coherent psychological subjects. Furthermore, this expressive element is strengthened by the fact that very little dialogue is present during the narration. The sequences depicting verbal confrontations are characterized by slow cutting rate and by the use of minimal camera movements, which reduce the emotional and conceptual centrality of the dialogues, particularly for the purpose of engaging the psychology of the characters. Because of their frequent lack of climactic tension, these exchanges tend to have an evocative and poetic tone that enhances the sense of irrationality surrounding the protagonists of the tales.

The initial sequence of the film expresses this aesthetic and conceptual choice more emblematically by completely abolishing dialogue. This scene presents the main characters of the tale *The Queen*; it lasts around three minutes and fifteen seconds, and shows the arrival and the exhibition of a company of jesters at Longtrellis castle, which is interrupted by the queen's nervous reaction to the discovery of the pregnancy of an actress. No word is uttered for the whole duration of this scene; viewers receive diegetic sound effects, the soundtrack is characterized by a placid and dreamlike motif for strings and xylophone, and expressions of surprise, joy and laughs can be heard in reaction to the show. The centrality of these nonverbal expressions in this prologue and the general lack of importance of dialogues have the function of cognitively influencing the viewer by establishing some essential interactive and conceptual coordinates of the experience. In particular, these elements give viewers the opportunity to directly embody emotional states (surprise, marvel, anger) and to understand their importance in the dynamics of the film against a more clear and linear development of the story and of the psychology of the characters. Thus, by abolishing dialogue, the film facilitates our understanding of the characters as pure blocs of sensations and passions, as intensive figures pervaded by desires and affections. The short sequence that depicts the queen of Longtrellis eating the heart of the aquatic dragon (it lasts about thirty seconds and consists of a slow forward tracking shot that ends in a close up) effectively synthesizes this stylistic choice and makes viewers sense the "irrational" dimension of the film. The queen is positioned at the centre of the image, wearing a long black dress and eating with voracity this enormous organ, while her face is getting covered with blood [Fig. 1]. In contrast, the entire surroundings (the wall in the background and the table where she is eating) are completely white, thus emphasizing the gruesome and monstrous aspect of the

sequence. Not incidentally, the image of the queen devouring the dragon's heart was chosen as one of the film's posters since it conveys the excessive and baroque nature of the movie. The animalistic obsession of the queen for her motherhood, which will lead her to self-destruction, is conceptualized in the sequence of the king's funeral. The general atmosphere is lugubrious in accordance with the type of ceremony and because of the nocturnal setting. At a certain point, after having shown the participants to the funeral, the camera moves upon the king's corpse, which is carried on a stretcher. In the foreground, we perceive the close up of the body, whereas in the background the queen appears in a palanquin, completely absorbed by her son, who she carries and caresses while remaining completely indifferent to the death of her husband. After the description of this contrast, the camera moves to a close up of the queen, which shows her indifference for the king's departure and her devotion for the newborn son even clearer. Thus, viewers can perceive and participate in the queen's intense love for Elias through the contrast generated by the relation between the background and the foreground. Moreover, in accordance with Murray Smith's studies on emotional participation (1995, 102), this affective conceptualization allows us to align with the character and to understand the meaning of her future actions. Smith affirms that psychological mechanisms of emotional involvement allow viewers to empathize with a negative character (like the queen) and to understand the sensations and ideas that affect her (1999, 220). However, these aspects of her behaviour do not prevent us from experiencing actions and moments of absolute tenderness produced by her genuine motherly love, or from appreciating her affective and conceptual complexity. It is also interesting to notice how, apparently, this emotional force that dominates the queen prevents her from understanding the admonishments of the necromancer (Franco Pistoni), who repeatedly alerts her about the risks of her own choices. We can infer that in these moments she only listens to what satisfies her wishes or feeds her passion. In the end, when she turns into a flying monster, it will be exactly her absolute love that will block her from attacking Elias (who rushed to help Jonah, his twin born from a maiden servant), and that will lead her to be definitively separated from her son.

Similar emotional developments can be perceived in the case of other characters as well. The two sisters, Dora and Imma, for instance, are possessed by a destructive desire for youth and richness, which, as it is easy to observe, is also motivated by their miserable condition. Dora is moved by the foolish desire to become the king's lover and is ready to hurt herself and to risk her life for this purpose. Furthermore, although she becomes a beautiful woman,

the epilogue shows that her body is aging fast and then she flees from the final ceremony. Viewers, thus, can perceive the futility and precariousness of her illusions, which rapidly dissolve and bring her back to her previous state. Imma, on the other hand, follows a different emotional path. She is not attracted to the king and tries to stop her sister from completing her absurd plan. However, her emotional world changes when she participates in Dora's wedding feast. The visual conceptualization of the sequence helps the viewers in embodying and simulating Imma's affective dimension and in perceiving her complete emotional transformation. The camerawork is essentially based on following with a steadicam her immersion into the aristocratic environment. Most of the time, she remains in the centre of the image (in a medium close up perspective) and her reactions of marvel and admiration can be clearly observed, thus viewers can empathize with these affective states (Smith 1995, 98–99) [Fig. 2]. Furthermore, by analysing this sequence with the instruments elaborated by Maarten Coëgnarts and Peter Kravanja (2015, 286) we can clearly associate Imma's act of looking (association between eyes and understanding) with her growing sense of marvel, which is in turn connected with the atmosphere surrounding her. Furthermore, the continuous focus on her face and expressions makes the viewers embody a sense of complete engagement in the events, which, in turn, manifests the emerging desire of the character. Indeed, the splendour of the ceremony and her sister's beautiful appearance make Imma crave to remain at the palace in order to come out of her previous economic and existential condition [Fig. 3]. When the feast ends, she does not want to leave and instantaneously reveals to everyone that she is the queen's sister (against what Dora recommended because nobody would have believed her) and that, therefore, she needs to remain at the castle. Imma is also shown observing her sister making love with the king with a morbid curiosity (she even gets close to the bed) and we can infer that it is in accordance with these excessive and pervasive desires that, later, she flays herself with the purpose of becoming young again. The final images of the tale depict her, covered with injuries, moving towards the castle. In this small sequence the steadicam follows her and initially remains on her back, while viewers can easily notice the terrified reactions of the people observing her. The fairytale soundtrack (a serene motif for xylophone) is in conflict with the dreadful elements of the sequence, thus producing a disturbing contrast that is enhanced when Imma is shown from a frontal point of view and she appears as a moving corpse. Thus, we directly perceive the tragic end of her foolish desires with a traumatic image that conceptually connects with the limitations of human existence.

Similarly, an ironic attitude can be detected in the description of the king of Strongcliff, who should represent an insatiable libertine and seductive man, but who often acts in a grotesque and comic fashion. Just like the queen with her maternity, and the two old sisters with their craving for youth, the king of Highhills is possessed by a destructive obsession as well. He has a maniacal interest in, and love for a flea, which makes him, at first, overlook his office duties, then lose her daughter through an act of absolute arrogance. However, the passion that affects this character will be analysed later since it directly involves the relation between the human and the animal.

In general, it can be affirmed that the film presents individuals who are passive agents of desires, which leads them to self-destruction. This description of the passions and the focus on the desiring nature of humankind connect the film with the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza, whose work I combine with my embodied cognitive account. As Heidi Morrison Ravven affirmed, Spinoza was a forerunner of theories of embodied cognition and rejected every dualistic distinction, such as the Cartesian body-mind division and the Nature-Culture split, and integrated affection and conceptualization (Ravven 2003). For this reason, he thought that we exist as relational and ecological beings always involved in an emotional and desiring tension towards the world, which is mainly intended to preserve and increase our state (*conatus*). Therefore, according to Spinoza, wise and free individuals are those who are able to connect and compose themselves with the environment and other beings in the most productive, creative and, therefore, ethical way (Spinoza 2011, 1579). However, because of their limited nature, humans are not directly able to control their behaviour and, therefore, they are mostly passive agents with an inadequate understanding of the world. Furthermore, because of the affective and embodied nature of thought, human intellection is always linked with sensations, which are sad passions in the case of an inadequate knowledge, and joyful emotions when new connections and a productive understanding of things are created. Sad passions are often connected with resentment, envy, fetishism and narcissism, which reflect a destructive tension and the incapacity to change. This theoretical framework involves the rejection of higher abstract rationality or of transcendent systems of judgment, and that every action or intellectual model should be evaluated in reason of its connective or destructive power. For this reason, Spinoza maintained that the mad and the wise share the same natural right to exist (Spinoza 2011, 1437, 1487). Probably the most challenging aspect of Spinozian philosophy is that it clashes with the tradition of enlightenment and rationalist thought. Indeed,

Spinoza denies the abstract nature of reason and decentralizes the mind, which is relational and in a continuous state of combination with the world. Moreover, his thought refutes the description of individuals as coherent and fixed beings. In a Spinozian perspective, humans are not closed subjects with a structured inner emotional world, but blocs of sensations, transformations and becoming. In this sense it can be stated that the humanist ideal of a controlled and serene rationality, the moral values that fulfil this ideal together with the positivist model of progress they entail are false to the extent they all deny the desires and the relations that produced these same intellectual models (cf. Braidotti 2013, 31–32; Spinoza 2011, 1437). These philosophical notions allow us to affirm that *Tale of Tales* displays a Spinozian reflection on human condition by presenting different subjects who are victims of sad passions and fetishistic desires. In this sense, the baroque setting of the film assumes strong conceptual valence since it, by stressing the role of emotions in life, defines an ontology based on the immanence of thought and a vision of the human as affective and relational. However, it would be possible to argue that, as in the tradition of fairytales, the film provides the viewer with morals about desires and their dangerous nature. Nonetheless, what is really Spinozian in the film is the attention upon affectivity, the description of characters who are pervaded by emotional states and whose actions are determined by these affective forces. We have seen that, for instance, the lack of dialogues, where the characters could more clearly reveal personal reflections or explain their behaviour, is functional to increase the sensations that pervade the experience. Furthermore, it can be noticed that the desires depicted in the film are not simple affections but entire cognitive states. For instance, the absolute love of the queen for Elias is not a simple obsession, but a general intellectual dimension that prevents her from understanding the admonishments of the necromancer or from accepting the friendship of her son with Jonah. Similarly, it has been discussed above how Imma's desire to remain in the pleasurable state experienced during the wedding feast and the envy for her sister's beauty push her to accept her destruction as if it was her realization (to paraphrase a famous Spinozian question; cf. Spinoza 2011, 1063). It can be noticed that the characters of the film generate a conceptual world around emotional coordinates that viewers can embody and simulate, thus understanding the meaning of their actions and empathizing with their choices.

However, this embodied simulation should not be considered as a passive activity based on the reproduction of affective states; on the contrary, it is a dialogical exchange between the embodied mind of the viewer and the affective and intellectual world expressed on the cinematic screen. Indeed, this point

connects us also with Spinoza's notion of empathy, which, in his views starts from a state of emotional contagion or affective resonance between bodies and allows the simulation of the actions of other individuals. This process, which Spinoza defines as the imitation of affects (2011, 1353–1365), is not one's simple projection into someone else's state, but a continuous negotiation between individuals. In this intersubjective space we do not simply imitate the others' actions, we also assign a meaning and a value to those actions by 'reading the mind' of the others and by trying to understand their subjective-experiential worlds. For this reason, the empathic process is not neutral and mechanistic; it requires an active participation of the viewer and, therefore, its effects are impossible to predict and can lead to the creation of new relational forms of life, but also to mutual destruction and mortification. Spinoza's model of intersubjectivity is compatible with Vittorio Gallese's shared manifold hypothesis, which describes human activity as a continuous mutual enactment between individuals based on the construction of a "we-centric blended space:" a common dynamic ecological dimension (Gallese 2003; Ravven 2003). By applying these theoretical instruments, one can observe how viewers are able to share the world of the characters, even though they express values and desires that they do not agree with (cf. Smith 1999, 221) by negotiating and interacting with them on a cognitive and affective level. At the same time, it can be seen how the characters in the film, because of their being possessed by emotional forces, lack the ability to readapt themselves to the world, to understand the needs of other beings, or more simply to follow the advice that they receive during the narration. Therefore, they remain trapped in a condition without escapes, expressing the reactive power of sad passions. The three young characters of the film: Violet, Elias and Jonah, are, on the contrary, forced to clash with these forces and, exactly because of their being the victims of the desires of others, they are able to accomplish a path of maturation, facing parents who express obsessive love or treat their children as mere properties. These young characters are placed in a position that requires more awareness and wisdom from them, which generates an affirmative and positive resistance against the power of sad passions. However, I would argue that their conquest of independence, which couples their entrance into adulthood, is characterized by the discovery of an "emotional intelligence" (which the other characters are lacking of), but this does not constitute a negation of the centrality of affectivity in life. On the contrary, they demonstrate an ability of extending their emotive capacities beyond the narcissistic limits of their ego and, for this reason, they are capable of transforming and of becoming new individuals.

The Posthuman and the Becoming-Animal

Our considerations on affectivity, on the ecological dimension of the human, and on the precarious value of abstract rationality make possible a combination of what has been discussed in the previous sections with Rosi Braidotti's (Spinozian) work on the posthuman. Braidotti elaborated this term as a tool to investigate the limits and fallacies of the humanist tradition of Enlightenment and transcendent rationalism. These monumental epistemological frameworks constitute the legacy and the backbone of modernity by determining the structure of our scientific or political thought together with the codification of modern states as rational institutions. Moreover, the humanist tradition involves a standardization of gender and ethnic roles by using white masculinity as its reference point (Braidotti 2013, 24). Indeed, the image that summarizes this ideal is Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* (1490). However, the issues of contemporary world, such as new discoveries in biogenetics, the schizophrenic nature of late capitalism, new forms of globalized war and ecological catastrophes, ask for a new embodied thought able to challenge these problems and to draw experiential cartographies of our new existential dimension (Braidotti 2013, 4). Nonetheless, this criticism should never be confused with a banal nihilistic and misanthropic condemnation of humanism. The search for new navigation tools is necessary because the impasses we are facing nowadays took shape in the context of modernity and cannot be addressed with the same account that produced them. Not incidentally, today we are experiencing reactive and nostalgic reuses and recodings of humanism that justify war, imperialism and "clashes of civilizations" (Braidotti 2013, 5, 36). Then, Braidotti combines new scientific discoveries with critical thought in a way that overcomes the nature-culture split and the dualistic codifications of thought.

Therefore, a contiguity between the film and this critical approach can be established, since they both deconstruct the humanist ideal by showing our relational constitution, and reveal the affective and physical ground of rationality by externalizing the mind. Braidotti also reflects on the importance of empathy in demonstrating that we do not exist as atomic subjects, but that we generate our identities on an interactive dimension (Braidotti 2013, 78). Hence, she affirms that in the analysis of emotions and affectivity resides the key to consciousness and that, as Spinoza, we need to build a critical materialism able to highlight the intensities and potentialities of thought.

It has already been examined how *Tale of Tales* depicts of characters driven by desires and sad passions; now I will introduce and analyse, in light of Braidotti's

notion of posthuman, another fundamental characteristic of the film: the relation and contiguity between the human and the beastly and the metamorphic nature of individuals. Many figures during the narration undergo processes of transformation or show a disturbing contiguity with animals (becoming-animal). Dora changes her look with the spell of a witch, while the queen becomes a monster because of the jealousy for Elias. At the same time, Imma transforms into a living corpse. What is interesting to notice is that the "animalization of the human" in the film is not linked to anthropomorphic descriptions of animals or to moralistic admonishments that condemn the beastly behaviour of humans who act dominated by irrationality. It is a description of an existential common plane where these categories continuously negotiate and transform reflecting the ecological relations in which the human, as cultural and cognitive category, is involved. I would argue that these elements emerge more clearly through the analysis of the passion of the king of Highhills for a flea. Because of the interest in this little creature the king starts neglecting his duties, and then his daughter, whom he eventually sacrifices exactly because of his attraction for the flea. At the beginning of the tale, we see the king completely absorbed in the admiration of the animal and ignoring Violet, who is playing a song for him. Later, in his studio he stings his finger in order to attract the animal with his blood. Here a very interesting detail is shown of the king's finger and of the flea sucking the blood from the injury. Through this image an extreme physical contiguity can be perceived between them, which conceptualizes a sense of interchangeability of the human and the animal. Indeed, after that, we see the king manufacturing little carousels for the flea, and, in general, showing a concrete attachment, which becomes glaring in the sequence that depicts the death of the animal (the flea dies after having become enormous because of excessive nourishment). The emotional bond of the king for the animal is then depicted through a medium shot that shows him sadly lying on its corpse (the action lasts twenty seconds with no words pronounced). [Fig. 4.] Even though the king's behaviour can be judged as morbid and absurd, one can affectively and intellectually align with him (cf. Gallese and Guerra 2015, 108; Smith 1995, 189) and experience an emotional link that shatters the limits of the species and rejects anthropocentrism by placing every being on the same existential level. The king shares an experiential territory with the flea and, therefore, gets involved in a relational continuum that reshapes his nature and that, as Braidotti would say, undermines human supremacy over the species (Braidotti 2013, 80–82). However, although he opens to a direct connection with the animal, the king shows a major contradiction

in his behaviour. He builds an affective link with the flea but, at the same time, his morbid curiosity for the animal makes him crave for possession and control. Indeed, this negative affective dimension is exemplified by the king trapping the flea into a little box and intensely admiring it through a hand lens or by the fact that he uses the animal's skin as attraction and challenge for his guests. Therefore, this tale (and the others to a minor extent) describes a humanity that transforms and mutates in its relations with the world and that, therefore, cannot assume any higher hierarchical position in comparison to other existing beings. By doing so, the film makes possible for the viewer to embody a posthuman ecology, which describes subjects as agents within relational systems who continuously modify their condition through the encounters they make. However, the characters of the film, because of being dominated by their desires, are not active agents in these processes of becoming, but passive subjects who try to use these transformations for personal, self-destructive purposes. Consequently, the film demolishes the "too human" illusions of Dora, of the Queen, of Imma and of the King of Highhills by making the viewers perceive how they reflect the affective nature of human intellection and how they cannot be dominated by a transcendent mind that rejects its connection with the world. It is again the narcissistic closure of the characters and the consequently self-centered nature of their desires that prevents them from really opening their identities to an affirmative transformation, which would create new connections and regenerate the affection for their relatives.

In conclusion, by combining all the elements previously examined it can be affirmed that *Tale of Tales* as a whole interactive experience demonstrates that audiovisual media work by integrating affection and intellection, and give viewers the opportunity to interact with complex philosophical notions through embodied simulation and conceptual associations. Therefore, film experience constitutes an active deterritorialization, a becoming into a new experiential and performative dimension with its own affective and conceptual coordinates, which we embody and interact with. Moreover, *Tale of Tales* gives us the possibility to concretely experiment our ecological condition and the desire and necessity for becoming involved in every encounter we make. However, by employing our empathic and simulative qualities, we can use the negative elements of the narration as affirmative stimuli, thus not remaining passive subjects of our emotions, as the characters of the story do, and becoming creative actors in our relation with films. Indeed, a further effective suggestion on our posthuman condition comes with the final images of the film showing the exhibition of a funambulist (maybe a Nietzschean remembrance) hanging in the balance, we

could argue, between the Vitruvian Man, who we should finally declare dead, and its ecological and baroque heir.

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Roy Andersson's Tableau Aesthetic: A Cinematic Social Space Between Painting and Theatre

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Abstract. The article examines three films by Roy Andersson, *Songs from the Second Floor* (*Sånger från andra våningen*, 2000), *You, the Living* (*Du levande*, 2007), and *A Pigeon Sat on a Branch Reflecting on Existence* (*En duva satt på en gren och funderade på tillvaron*, 2014). The Swedish director depicts the human condition afflicted by the loss of its humanity through a personal style that he calls "the complex image," a tableau aesthetic that instigates social criticism, and is dependent upon long shots, immobility, unchanging shot scale, and layered compositions. The author establishes a connection between artistic and social space and scrutinizes the challenges that this "complexity" poses for the film viewer from an intermedial perspective in which cinema enters into a dialogue with two other art forms: painting and theatre. Four specific issues are discussed: (1) the intertwining of reality and artificiality as a "hyperreality;" (2) the visual compositions which are simultaneously self-contained and entirely open, highlighting a tension between volume and surface; (3) the opposition between stasis and movement, conveying a meaningful social contrast and the characters' angst; (4) the pictoriality of the image.[1]

Keywords: tableau aesthetic, inter-art relations, complex image, space, Roy Andersson.

Andersson's Complexity: Humanism Posited as Artistic Illusion

Roy Andersson's so-called Living Trilogy, about the human condition, comprises the films *Songs from the Second Floor* (*Sånger från andra våningen*, 2000), *You, the Living* (*Du levande*, 2007), and *A Pigeon Sat on a Branch Reflecting on*

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Existence (*En duva satt på en gren och funderade på tillvaron*, 2014).[2] It is meant to be a challenging experience for film viewers, both from an aesthetic and an ideological perspective.

The director's working-class background and his left-wing political sympathies have always made him an advocate for the powerless and disenfranchised; his humanist ideology exposes the dystopia that ensues when people neglect their humanity. He made cinema's subversive role an important part of his ideology, directly connecting art to life. He declared in an interview that "humanism's ideal of perfection is the educated person, who acknowledges the value of the truth over every authority. To seek the truth – in the form of artistic expression, scientific knowledge, or philosophical insight – is to develop our humanity" (Lindqvist 2016, 120). In his book *Our Time's Fear of Seriousness* (*Vår tids rädsla för alvar*, published in Swedish in 1995), Andersson posits that as an instrument of social criticism a more "serious" type of filmmaking is needed. An aesthetics, which Andersson calls "the complex image," (Larson and Marklund 2010, 274–78) is deemed essential to criticize all forms of the establishment, including the military, the church, financial corporations, and the film industry itself.

Andersson's "complex image" is characterized by a kind of minimalism: from the dramaturgy to the space, all is intentionally spare and precise. The shots are long, elaborately framed in a wide composition and extreme depth of field (which keeps all the objects and people in focus all the time, often requiring the use of *trompe l'œil* backgrounds); immobility is prevalent, since the characters' movements are reduced to near stasis and the camera, too, rarely moves; the shot scale is consistently maintained and the image composition is deeply layered. The pace is languorous, the characters are archetypes that hardly speak, or utter banalities; the story does not proceed by cause and effect; narrativity is conveyed, rather, through analogies and repetitions (thematic, visual, musical, and verbal), instead of having a conventional plot. The settings are scantily decorated and there is a pervasive sense of abstraction.

Andersson's "complex image" is in fact a tableau aesthetic that deliberately makes the viewers think about the conditions of art and life, and is based on tableau-like shots – as defined by Brewster and Jacobs (1997) –, in which situations are presented in a relatively large space and relatively long temporal units, reminiscent of theatrical pictorialism, but with the added value of near immobility inherited from painting. In Andersson's cinema, the imminently self-reflexive nature of this style, ironically, expresses the vitality of art as opposed to the lifeless society it

2 For the sake of economy, I will refer to them from now on by the first word of their English title.

depicts. In what follows, I intend to establish a connection between artistic and social space, and to scrutinize the challenges that this intrinsic and polymorphous "complexity" poses for the film viewer from an intermedial perspective in which cinema enters into a dialogue with other art forms.

Truth be Told: Social Space and Artistic Freedom

Space is what ties together all the formal and ideological elements implicit in Andersson's aesthetic. According to the filmmaker, human beings cannot free themselves from the space they inhabit. In a pictorial representation, it is space that reveals an individual's destiny as well as his or her position in society (Girola and Fornara 2003, 7–8). Space also has a tragic tone, as it can convey a feeling of "forsakenness" and "vulnerability" (Spiegland 2010). The director himself claims that "the space tells the truth" more than the human face does (Girola and Fornara 2003, 8, my translation); "for example, the room where the person is tells about his tastes, his life. Even if it's not home, you can read the history of a person better in a wide shot" (Vishnevestsky 2009).

The settings of all three films are generally urban. Many are perceived as being spacious, due to the depth of field, the wide shot, the wide-angle lens, and the scarce number of people that inhabit them. Others convey an opposite impression, that of claustrophobia, mainly because of the immobility of groups of people who are usually packed into one area of the image, leaving the rest of the frame unpopulated. In either case, Roy Andersson's worlds are predominantly what Marc Augé calls "non-places:" abstract and universal sites lived in a never-ending present, devoid of history and human relations, filled with signs of an evanescent temporality (Augé 1995, especially 90). These sites are characterized by consumption (bars, restaurants, shops), circulation (train stations, bus stops, trams, streets, an airport check-in area, a cruise ship), spectacle (festivities, music or magic shows, dance or rehearsal studios), and anonymous passage (clinics, hospitals, resting homes). The use of such places reinforces the fate of humans, condemned to a perpetual loneliness. [Figs. 1–2.]

In one situation in *You,* a man standing on a balcony looks at the opposite façade of an apartment building, where he sees, in a wide composition reminiscent of Alfred Hitchcock's film *Rear Window* (1954), a tenant striking the ceiling with a broom in order to try to silence the upstairs neighbour, who is rehearsing his tuba-playing skills at night. [Figs. 3–4.] The man just looks nonchalantly at this scene, himself becoming a spectacle just like the one he is observing, all the

more so because he is perceived from within the house by his own wife, who addresses him off-screen, remaining unseen by the viewer. This perfectly echoes Augé's remark: "as if the position of spectator were the essence of the spectacle, as if basically the spectator in the position of a spectator were his own spectacle" (Augé 1995, 70). This spectatorial stance in the trilogy is reinforced by the fact that, in many tableaux, there are people conspicuously looking on.

The trilogy shows that all human beings are affected by the spaces in which they live (Tuan 1977, 3). According to Yi-Fu Tuan, however, space is undifferentiated and only becomes a place when it is endowed with value by human beings (1977, 6, 136). Andersson's spaces, which are non-descript, mostly empty and monochrome, do not have the aura imparted by familiar places, as conceived of by Tuan (1977, 4). Yet, in the Living Trilogy this cannot be attributed, as Augé contends with regard to non-places, to a supermodern contemporaneity, since the films are not anchored in any specific historical time. However, there are some marks of the transience of supermodernity in order to remind the viewers of the impossibility of developing roots and establishing successful long-term relationships. For example, in *Songs,* a vagrant makes a comment on an enormous traffic jam: "it seems the whole town is on the road. Everyone in the same direction. It makes you wonder where they're headed, you know, the people."[3] Despite going in one single direction, humanity is metaphorically lost. Non-communication reigns supreme, as in a situation in *Songs* in which a mild-looking Middle Easterner male is beaten senseless by a group of young ordinary Nordic men while some people watch passively from afar.

Most importantly, in Andersson's trilogy the unlived-ness of the sites extends to the home, which attests to the moral malformation of humanity in these films. Ironically, in Swedish, the welfare state, one of the targets of Andersson's social criticism, is known as "the people's home" (*folkhemmet*). The home, considered by Tuan (1977, 182) as the most intimate, inviting and symbolic place of man, is a privileged locus for non-communication throughout the trilogy. This is most evident in almost all of the couples' interactions, which are completely devoid of tenderness. In *Songs*, for example, an old clerk refuses his wife's sexual advances because he has to go to work;[4] in *You,* a man exercises on a treadmill in his basement, ignoring his young son who wants to play with him. Besides all else, the scarcity of interior decoration renders the home devoid of any individuality:

3 All quotations from the films are from the Artificial Eye editions of the DVDs, and so are the figures at the end of this article.

4 In contrast, in *You*, an old musician has mechanical sex with a Valkyrian-like matron, possibly in a hotel room, all the while speaking straight to the camera about financial matters.

as a result, every house seems exactly the same. Thus, the anthropological places, where people are supposed to create roots and develop activities characteristic of their identity as human beings, are irreversibly flawed. Due to the tableau aesthetic adopted by Andersson in the trilogy, space is never humanized into "place." On the contrary, the surplus of space in the settings highlights the lack of humaneness in people, as it stresses distance and the invisible barriers that separate individuals. The low mobility that pervades most tableaux reduces kinaesthesia and, coincidentally, makes the spaces seem larger than they actually are. It also gnaws at the sense of physical direction, which comes from moving in space (Tuan, 1977, 12) and without which it is difficult to have a notion of existential direction, goals to accomplish (Tuan 1977, 197, 128).

Ideologically, Andersson's style is marked by "trivialism," in which all the banal moments that make up the sum of this grim humanity conjoined with the impersonal space it inhabits are meant to give "a voice" to the little people who symbolize mankind as a whole (Ratner 2015, 2). He does this by elevating these moments to high art instead of letting them fall into burlesque. His human gallery is pathetic, but treated with respect and commiseration, not turned into a comic target of mindless derision. This is why the trilogy is tragicomic, marked by absurd contrasts occurring within the tableaux, i.e. within space. The fact that Andersson has the great majority of his settings built from scratch, including train stations and streets, is unintendedly ironic in that the most innovative results, apparently, come from a rigid, almost obsessive preparation. More than controlling the environment, in a shooting which entails blocking many extras and guaranteeing the right lighting conditions, the use of studio-built spaces conveys an artificiality – "hyperreality," as Andersson calls it[5] – which highly resembles painting (as well as theatre) and transforms Andersson's cinematic practice into a fully intermedial one.

Infinite Boundaries: In-Depth Flatness

Art has a special signification for Andersson. He is a jazz lover who plays trombone and guitar, has authored two books, and, most importantly, wanted to be a painter, professing, to this day, his admiration for that art form: "I am often very jealous of painting. Jealous because I feel that movie history does not have the same quality as painting history. I really wanted movies to be as rich as painting can be" (Ratner 2015, 12). This comment, and others like it, helps to establish an immediate

5 "I prefer hyperreality. [...] It looks real but it's purified and condensed." (Dagliden 2014.)

connection between Andersson's tableaux and pictorial canvases. Jesper Klevenås, one of the two cinematographers of *Songs*, referred to the filmmaker's practice as "three-dimensional paintings" (Lindqvist, 77). I endorse this evaluation, but it seems to me that it should be scrutinized from the perspective of media specificity and co-option, rather than mere intertextuality, as is often the case (e.g. in Lindqvist 2016). Therefore, I claim that the second challenge posed by Andersson's use of the tableau aesthetic in this trilogy resides in the reinforced use of pictorial framing as he is always positing the visual composition as being simultaneously self-contained and entirely open.

Julian Hanich (2014), in an extremely thorough and well-rounded analytical piece on Roy Andersson's compositional system in the Living Trilogy, posits the matter in terms of staging in depth. Although I agree that "Andersson challenges his viewers to become attentive observers" (Hanich 2014, 37), I contest the fact that the depth of field is the key element in his "complex image" technique. Instead, I argue that depth of field is only important inasmuch as the whole visual field is in focus for as long as possible, and provided that there is as wide a space as is technically feasible.[6] We should consider all the aspects contained in an Anderssonian complex image. I contend that Andersson's complex image calls attention to a game of dimensionality, a tension between volume and surface which is connected to the director's intermedial appreciation of painting and the static impression it holds.

In film, a composition in depth is usually perceived as the extension of the visual field. This conception is highly dependent on the diegetic world and its confines, the borders which separate the on- from the off-screen space, but with the frame reference of the so-called reality in mind. André Bazin, for instance, argued that cinema was the most complete of all the art forms because it could provide "integral realism, a recreation of the world in its own image" (Bazin 1967, 21). Bazin held cinema in higher esteem than painting because, in his opinion, the former's photographic nature secured "objectivity in time" (1967, 14) by halting a certain moment in its duration and, therefore, laying reality bare, as an impression; whereas the latter offered an "illusion" (1967, 12) which was a mere likeness to reality, further affected by the input of the artist. Bazin's partiality towards cinema led him to consider the cinematic and the pictorial frames differently. For him, a screen frame was centrifugal, prolonging the view

6 According to David Bordwell, there is a clear difference between depth of staging, which is a spatial property of the setting, and depth of field, which is an optical characteristic. For that reason, it is preferable to use the expression "deep focus" when referring to the latter factor. Cf. Bordwell 1997, 158–271.

"indefinitely into the universe" (i.e. the real), whereas the picture frame was centripetal, providing "a contemplative area opening solely onto the interior of the painting," i.e. the artwork (Bazin 1967, 166).

Andersson's tableaux are almost all framed the same way, obeying very precise and personal rules of composition in order to introduce depth into pictorial two-dimensionality. Linear perspective has, from the Renaissance onwards, imposed on the viewer a sense of three-dimensionality. This visual space is imaginary, but it is nonetheless based on natural perception, i.e. the way the beholder sees the world. Art historian E. H. Gombrich (1982) warns of the fallacy of considering that linear perspective is realist; the pro-realist Bazin even considered it "the original sin of Western painting" (1967, 12), thus recognizing its intrinsic artificiality. Andersson uses perspectival depth in order to further reinforce artificiality, instead of endowing his tableaux with straightforward realism. Shooting in front of facades is a way for him to stress the surfaces and, at the same time, add a sense of volume. Perhaps the most radical example of this occurs in *A Pigeon*, when a little girl is seen on a balcony blowing soap bubbles into the air. The image is flat and composed horizontally, but, through an open door placed behind her, we perceive another little girl inside the house (in the background), who soon joins her outside (in the foreground). [Fig. 5.]

The contiguity of spaces is a recurrent feature in Andersson's tableau aesthetic. The vast majority of tableaux throughout the trilogy are framed in such a way that they extend into two adjoining spaces: doors open towards another room or a kitchen, windowpanes reflect the opposite or neighbouring buildings, and shop windows reveal what is taking place outside in the street. Usually two of such spaces are perceived in one single shot, either in depth or laterally. For instance, in *You*, a daughter visits her old demented mother in a nursing home: both the mother and the daughter are seated in the foreground of the image, a nurse stands by an open glass door letting the film viewers see, beyond it, a large living room and, even farther away, the windows with their curtains giving onto the neighbouring buildings. [Fig. 6.] The lack of movement in the space is thus compensated by the eye movement of the viewers, wandering through several image layers and the frames-in-the-frame they contain. Thereby, an impression of centrality is often conveyed, emulating Renaissance painting. The composition of Andersson's tableaux is commonly frontal, even when the films allude to beings or objects placed somewhere higher-up: people on the upper floors of buildings, in an allusion to the second floor of the film's title in *Songs*; bombers in the sky at the opening and closing of *You*; and birds perched on the trees of *A Pigeon*. Even

when the camera is placed at an angle to a building, the main human character occupies the middle of the frame. That is the case with the commander in *A Pigeon*, who watches the diners at a restaurant delight in their meals while he stands outside, hopelessly lonely, waiting for a meeting that will not take place [Fig. 7], but this has other implications as, in fact, the accentuated perspective only contributes further to the artificiality of the composition.

Gregory Minissale claims that a self-reflexion from inside the painting (such as an inner frame) may call our attention to the frame itself "in a process activated by the visual experience of framing in art" (Minissale 2009, 20). Consciousness of the frame must be obliterated in order for the spectator to concentrate on the visual content of the canvas and not the canvas itself. Nevertheless, in some cases there is an inevitable rebound movement between the confines of the painting and its interior: "the centre disperses consciousness outwards to an ideal point from where it must return; the frame or edge are continually signalled by this rebounded consciousness" (Minissale 2009, 21). Andersson's compositions highlight the resemblance with painting. In *A Pigeon*, for example, a man stands outside a delicatessen and contemplates the building opposite, which is reflected in his own shop window, then he looks at the camera and says, "today I feel kind. Damn kind." Inside the shop, arranging some cheeses in the window display, a woman looks straight at the camera and signals with her hand that the man is crazy. [Fig. 8.]

The shot composition is static, as is the man on the threshold, and yet the film viewer cannot help but feel a rebounding movement in the image, whose limits, or frames, are exceeded twice: intra-diegetically (or centripetally, in the reflection of the other buildings) and extra-diegetically (or centrifugally, by implicating the film viewer in the scene through the diegetic gaze). Andersson makes the viewer be simultaneously aware of the inside and the outside of the film. According to Jacques Aumont, this is a weaker form of awareness, (Aumont 2007, 194). The viewers mainly watch the fictive space of representation but cannot avoid being aware of the means through which the illusion comes to pass. In the continuity editing style of classical cinema there would never be enough time, or sufficient lack of movement to allow for the rebounding to take place in stages, as it does in the perception of painting.

Although chronological perception is foremost associated with film, which is experienced in a flux of shots, the viewer's eye gazing upon a painting can perceive its content in separate areas, which may correspond to separate moments as well. However, in painting there is no hint of order provided by intra-diegetic movements; the spectator's eye wanders (almost) freely. Andersson manages to

make the most of both media and provide a pictorial composition in depth with inner cues. For example, the bar where the salesman of *Songs* appears for the first time is placed on a street corner overseeing a crossroads which enables the viewer to see through the large shop windows a traffic jam of gargantuan proportions. The viewer simultaneously apprehends the sad tale of personal bankruptcy that the man recounts to the barmaid at the counter and the chaos of the honking cars outside. A woman dressed in brown, who comes and goes, helps the viewer to adjust his or her sight to the inside or the outside of the bar, concentrating on a particular area of the image at a given moment. In the unstoppable narrative film flux, the movement of characters on-screen helps to guide the viewer with utmost economy and efficiency, considering the limited time allotted by the editing. In Andersson's very static tableaux the time provided for the viewer's perception is longer than it usually is in most conventional narrative films.

The Instant that Lives on: Static Motion

From a formal standpoint, the Living Trilogy foregrounds the tension between stasis and movement contained in any tableau composition. The conjoined use of motion and stasis, together with duration and instant, is what makes Roy Andersson's cinema so original in intermedial terms, not his power of quotation or appropriation of sources. This is the third complexity involved in Andersson's tableau aesthetic.

It is Diderot's stage conception of the tableau vivant, as described by Michael Fried, which is closer to Andersson's use of his own complex image: "tableaux (visually satisfying, essentially silent, seemingly accidental groupings of figures)" (Fried 1980, 78). For Diderot, "the spectator in the theatre ought to be thought of as before a canvas on which a series of such tableaux follow one another as if by magic. […] Accordingly, he stressed the values of pantomime as opposed to declamation, of expressive movement or stillness as opposed to mere proliferation of incident" (1980, 78). Such subdued representations are at the core of Andersson's dystopic worlds in the Trilogy.

By adopting some aspects of the theatrical stillness form in his own cinematic praxis, Andersson reinforces the inert nature of his spaces and characters, rendering immobility more pregnant through both media's capability for movement, and also stressing duration more effectively as part of an action that evolves in time. Andersson, basically, rejects the exaggeration that Diderot pejoratively called "theatricality," but, like him, retains the importance of a chosen instant that acts

as a condensed representation of the essence of a scene, conveniently signalled by the actors' transient group immobility. The main difference between Andersson and Diderot in this respect is that in the complex image the chosen moment is undramatic, albeit representative. Diderot's "pregnant moment[s]" were apotheotic, whereas Andersson's slices of life are anticlimactic. For example, in *A Pigeon,* a few people are waiting for a bus right in front of a bicycle repair shop and never change their position during the entire time of the tableau (2:46 minutes). [Fig. 9.] The owner of the shop comes out and says that it is Wednesday again, which causes the man closest to the bus sign to say that it feels like Thursday, which in turn, prompts the others to set him right about which day it is. A man who is in the background attending to his tires leaves the frame, and then a pigeon is heard singing higher up, off-screen, indicating that the most pregnant action is probably taking place outside of the visual composition and is inhuman; people just stand around not doing much.

Notice that it is painting, and not theatre, that is ultimately underlined by the conjunction of stage and screen, as Fried's simile reveals ("thought of as before a canvas"). However, the pictorial effect in the trilogy would not be possible without the performative influence of theatre. Even the white make-up covering most of the characters' faces, in order to unite them in a pathetic brotherhood of Everymen, looks like a softer version of a mime's appearance. Stasis and movement can just as equally occur in theatre and be inferred in painting. There is an uncanny quality that results from the animation of a painting, as much as from the halting or prevention of motion in essentially three-dimensional performances. This juxtaposition reminds us that painting has always striven to represent movement, while theatre has tried to present the scene as a frame to be looked at. Lessing even used the expression "pregnant moment" in his *Laocoon. An Essay Upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1887, 92) in reference to painting and not to theatre.

Diderot's and Lessing's "pregnant moment" is actually a pre-condition of human cognitive experience in general and not of art appreciation *per se*. It is not possible to make sense of the world (and art) without a very short span memory which keeps present, at once, things which have gone before (and are still retained in the memory for an instant) and things which will come after (culture and habit make us prone to the evocative power of images and, therefore, trigger expectations) (Gombrich 1982, 7, 272). Gombrich claims that "visual perception itself is a process in time, and not a very fast process at that" (1982, 50). Lessing also conceives time and space as being interconnected. For him the bodies

depicted side by side in a painting belong to both dimensions: "they continue, and, at any moment of their continuance, may assume a different appearance and stand in different relations. Every one of these momentary appearances and groupings was the result of a preceding, may become the cause of a following, and is therefore the centre of a present, action" (Lessing 1887, 91–92).

This accords well with Gombrich's notion that actions in painting can be, at the same time, represented as being consecutive and simultaneous (1982, 43). In Andersson's tableau aesthetic the whole is perceived along with its parts. The tableaux and the actions depicted in them are apprehended simultaneously and consecutively and, since they are moving pictures, the effect is even more pronounced than in painting.

Julian Hanich is right in saying that Roy Andersson's films are not completely static: "the temporal dimension of cinema allows Andersson to reveal elements progressively and let facets of the shot appear unexpectedly" (Hanich 2014, 48). Hanich refers to the gags and other surprise effects that permeate the trilogy, but there are also other features to consider. On the one hand, all images, including paintings and photographs, can imply movement, as Gombrich indicates in several of his writings; and, on the other hand, the paradoxical nature of Andersson's complex image, in fact, requires that the images move in all tableaux in order to establish a meaningful contrast. For example, in *You*, a small crowd gathers to shelter from the pouring rain in the ridiculously small space of a covered bus stop. [Fig. 10.] The viewer's eye has time to discern the bus stop, in the middle of the frame, and then to perceive the other people looking out of their windows in the background. Two sets of people, who have been discovered consecutively, are standing still simultaneously. Then another man appears in the middle ground of the image, seeking cover from the rain; he moves back and forth before exiting the frame. In view of this intensified motion, the stillness of the other characters is made even more prominent – in physical as well as in social terms – as the unprotected man is made to symbolize the social underdog. The tableau thus means that while some take cover, others get wet. Rudolf Arnheim observes that movement in a frame is perceived by the viewer differently depending on a hierarchy of visual elements pertaining to the background, size, shape, contiguity, and formal intensity. The figures concentrate the viewer's attention and, in comparison, the background seems motionless; objects which change size or shape seem more active than others, as does one of two objects standing side by side, etc. (Arnheim 1980, 372–373). This means that space is not steady and cannot be correctly apprehended without the property of motion.

Inside a painting time is never still, everything is changing, even if ever so slightly. Élie Faure, writing on the plasticity of cinema in 1920, stressed its combination of movement and space. Duration conveyed through the images inside the frame is a rich resource both in cinema and painting, but in Faure's opinion, the physical animation of the image in film (i.e. intrinsic movement) elevates cinema above painting (Faure 2010, 21–23). Andersson uses this to his advantage. Indeed, the expressive force contained in one of *You*'s tableaux, in which the passengers of a tram descend at a stop, would not be possible in painting. In this tableau the tram, bound for "Lethe" (one of the rivers in the Greek mythical underworld of Hades), opens its rear door and a stream of people pours out of it. The overall composition and the tram are perfectly still, but a never-ending flow of passengers – far exceeding the capacity of the vehicle – descends. [Fig. 11.] Taken literally, the scene is nonsensical, but the increased movement of the passengers bestows a certain mechanical feeling upon the image and, therefore, an added dimension of social criticism. In this case, length is reinforced because of motion; without it the tableau would be merely descriptive and would lose the force that comes from the "lingering" of the shot (see also Yang 2013, 48).

The way in which the speed of actions and gestures is perceived by the viewer also depends on the mood and emotional state experienced by the characters (Gombrich 1982, 81). In the Living Trilogy, social angst is conveyed through the depiction of space in time. The angst experienced by the characters is multiplied many times in the viewer, as a sort of emotional rebounding effect. In the beginning of *A Pigeon*, for example, a man is looking out the window as if absorbed in his thoughts, the table is set for dinner and his wife is preparing the meal in the kitchen while singing, totally oblivious to what is going on in the next room. [Fig. 12.] The man, always silent and alone, strives for a while to open the wine bottle and finally collapses to the floor, seemingly suffering a heart attack from which he dies. The lack of marital communication is transformed into a painful feeling of impotence for the viewer; the outcome is to be expected (the tableau is titled "Meeting with Death no. 1"), but the experience is anguishing because the low motility seems to expand time, and place the two contiguous rooms farther away from each other. The fact that the status quo of the scene does not change – that the other character that inhabits the frame does not move in order to prevent the situation in the foreground from taking place – contributes in no small measure to a feeling of static motion.

If all still images can convey movement, all moving images can likewise be arrested. For instance, in a single tableau of *You*, a uniformed marching band

plays in a square for a while and then leaves the frame while a small crowd of spectators remain perfectly still instead of disbanding. In a less painterly film the shot would probably come to an end with the exiting of the band; as it is, the viewer is made to watch a non-event for a while. [Figs. 13–14.] Thus, dead time is responsible for dead space as well and, consequently, for the perception of a metaphorically dead humanity.

Still Life: The Aesthetics of Immersive Awareness

What seems to attract Andersson the most in painting is precisely its profoundly immersive nature for the beholder: "it is fantastic that a person can stand for a long time and look at a single painting, isn't it?" (Lindqvist 2016, 97). Paintings, especially when figurative and composed according to perspectival rules, elicit contemplation because they are actions or situations condensed in a single frame: the beholder strives to perceive what was left out of the canvas, the story that led up to that moment. The vividness of some depictions also calls for a setting in motion of the scene. Indeed, just as Michael Fried (1980, 49–53) considers that Jean Siméon Chardin's canvases, especially the ones depicting children performing ludic activities are meta-pictorial in that they, at once, betray a self-consciousness of the painter's own feelings for painting and his wish to absorb the beholder, so can Roy Andersson's tableaux exercise the same double function. This is the fourth complexity contained in Andersson's tableau aesthetic.

The filmmaker's intended immersion works differently than the one posited by Denis Diderot for painting. Andersson does not wish to awake intense passion and extreme emotions in the viewer, nor does he want to convey such passions and emotions of his own rather sedate and alienated human gallery. These figures may be immersed in contemplation, but that state is not meant to be perceived as joyous by the beholder. Andersson's tableaux are, nevertheless, instantly apprehensible as pictorial images consisting of a single action,[7] charged with morality, and organized for a beholder to see, as are those of Diderot (Fried 1980, 76, 84). He also wants to "make virtue sympathetic, vice detestable and ridiculousness quite perceptible" (Fried 1980, 80). I contend that the tension between the activity of seeing (i.e. the way the tableaux grab the viewer), and the objects/subjects that are seen (i.e. the pictoriality inherent in painting and also applicable to theatre) is the key for Andersson's authorial discourse as an artist. Uniting a particular arthouse cinematic form with a specific social ideology has already granted Andersson a

7 In Andersson's trilogy that action is eminently pathetic rather than heroic.

special place in the history of cinema, but beneath that auspicious conjunction lies yet another level of meaning, a meta-artistic stance on the properties of the cinematic medium and its relationship to other art forms.

Although André Bazin considered the long take a very natural and life-like process (1967, 33), Andersson's use of it far exceeds the Bazinian refusal to break up the action. In fact, the Swedish director's practice contradicts the first of Bazin's postulates on the long take: "therefore it is correct to say that, independently of the contents of the image, its structure is more realistic."[8] Andersson does not "chop up" the world into little fragments, as Bazin (1967) understands classical editing, but he is no less one of "those directors who put their faith in the image" (Bazin 1967, 24), instead of the real. His style is very contrived as he emulates pictoriality above all else, stressing the fact that reality is never represented as it is (in pictorial arts, the standards of truth are intrinsically corrupted) (Gombrich 1982, 244–246) and that "representation is not defined by imitation" (Barthes 1977, 69). For Barthes, cinema, theatre and painting are "direct expressions of geometry" because, visually, their existence is dependent upon a cut-out rectangle, which is not an extension of the real world. The tableau is a frame and all that it contains is "laid out" for the viewers to see (Barthes 1977, 70–71). Contrary to Bazin's idea that cinema by being photographically produced was centrifugal, Andersson proves that cinema can also be centripetal and makes that absorptive quality the basis of his reversed immersiveness. The more the viewers perceive the illusion, the more they want to concentrate on it and analyse it as a spatial art object. In the Living Trilogy spatial homogeneity is a magic trick which reveals the absurdity behind reality.

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8 This is all the more interesting as Andersson confesses an appreciation for Bazin's writings and namely the two other conditions established by the French theoretician in the article 'The Evolution of the Language of Cinema:' mental activity on the part of the spectator and ambiguity of expression. Andersson claims that Bazin "put words to what I was doing" (Johanna Grönqvist 2000, quoted by Yang 2013, 47).

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On the Role of Diegetic Electronic Screens in Contemporary European Films

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Abstract. Given the present proliferation of profilmic electronic screens in narrative feature films, it is of some interest to examine their role apart from that of denoting objects pertaining to everyday reality. Electronic screens within the European-type filmic diegeses – characterized by adhering to conventions of (hyper)realism, non-hypermediation and character-centered storytelling – in a digital era are used not only as props, but as frames that re-order and aestheticize levels of reality (Odin 2016), while focusing, in a hypnotic manner, the viewers' attention (Chateau 2016) on traumatic memories related to usually female characters, and consequently to the collectivities they represent in the respective diegetic worlds. These electronic screens force the viewer to constantly shift between the actual cinematic screen conventions and the mental screen (Odin 2016) of smaller formats, training the film viewers for experiences of expanded and fragmented cinema (Gaudreault and Marion 2015).[1]

Keywords: cinematic screen, electronic screen, European cinema, diegesis, trauma representation.

While once present chiefly in sci-fi environments or paranoid thrillers, electronic screens – television, video, computer, mobile, surveillance devices – have become built-in elements of film diegetic worlds, generating what Giuliana Bruno names "the ever-present environmental screen-effect within which we now live" (Bruno 2014, 102). The embedding of these electronic screens in fiction film narratives may be considered one of the most pervasive ways our culture tries to deal with – nowadays digital – multi-screen realities, offering us cognitive representational models to use in our everyday lives, simultaneously to creating complex narrative structures that are based on the interplay of filmic reality levels[2] and narrative diegetic levels.

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2 Warren Buckland summarizes Étienne Souriau's filmic reality levels as follows: "1. Afilmic reality (the reality that exists independently of filmic reality); 2. Profilmic reality (the reality

In their co-authored volume *The End of Cinema?* André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion set up a system based on 20th-century media history, taking as a principle the substitution of the cinema silk screen by the electronic cathodic television screen, and then by the electronic portable small computer screen.[3] They argue that "we might even view the emergence of the small (but highly cathodic) screen as the point of rupture between a 'hegemonic cinema' and this 'cinema in the process of being demoted and shared,' which is often called 'expanded cinema' but which we believe would be more appropriately described as 'fragmented cinema' (Gaudreault and Marion 2015, 11, citing Guillaume Soulez's conference intervention). Thus "hegemonic cinema" would denote the first part of the 20th century, when the cinema theatre silk screen was the sole framed surface which displayed electronically mediated, and also always pre-recorded moving images. "Expanded cinema" should denote developments of the second part of the 20th century, when television, and then video-camera screen appeared as electronic surfaces where cinematic worlds and narratives would expand, obviously altering the nature and the significance of framed storytelling based on moving images. Finally, the 21st century brought us into the era of what Gaudreault and Marion name "fragmented cinema," with the same cinematically constructed narrative worlds scattering further on "the electronic portable small computer screen," becoming compatible with such surfaces. My analyses show that cinematic diegetic worlds react elastically to these mutations, the smaller electronic, usually portable screens being entrusted with the weight of essentially truthful images once they, as profilmic objects, appear on "hegemonic cinema screens," in a successful survival strategy of what Gaudreault and Marion call "non-hegemonic-cinema-in-the-digital-era" (2015, 14).

With a varied set of examples from contemporary European cinema – Lucian Pintilie's 1993 *The Oak* (*Balanța*), Nils Arden Oplev's 2009 *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (*Män som hatar kvinnor*), Olivier Assayas's 2014 *The Clouds of Sils Maria*, Thomas Vinterberg's 2016 *Commune* (*Kollektivet*), Andrei Zvyagintsev's 2017 *Loveless* (*Nelyubov*) or Ruben Östlund's 2017 *The Square* –, my examination

photographed by the camera); 3. Filmographic reality (the film as physical object, structured by techniques such as editing); 4. Screenic (or filmophanic) reality (the film as projected on a screen); 5. Diegetic reality (the fictional story world created by the film); 6. Spectatorial reality (the spectator's perception and comprehension of a film); 7. Creational reality (the filmmaker's intentions)" (Buckland 2003, 47).

3 "One of the principal effects of the digital shift has been the big screen's loss of hegemony. [...] In fact projection onto a movie screen has become just *one way* among others to consume images. The screen may have a greater *aura,* but it is now just one means of consumption among others." (Gaudreault and Marion 2015, 9.)

focuses on the role of various diegetic electronic screens, mapping intermedial tensions between video/computer/television screens and the filmic/cinematic screen. As a hypothesis that organizes the analysis of the mentioned corpus I propose that electronic screens within the European-type – (hyper)realistic (Casetti 1998, 56),[4] non-hypermediated, character-centered – filmic diegeses in a digital era are of a specific nature. They are highlighted surfaces which might represent traumatic memories that are not only haunting and unpleasant, but also formative of chief female characters, and of the social and/or ethnic collectivities they represent, often allegorically, in the respective diegetic worlds.

Two frameworks of understanding need to be mentioned as these influence in a fundamental mode my hypothesis and the subsequent results. First, my long-term engagement with analysing the role and appearance of various screen surfaces in film diegesis, especially such cases when, besides being props, these multiple, non-cinematic screens also carry narratively significant information, which has the power to influence the first-level narrative thread of the films as such (see Virginás 2014a and 2017). This endeavour luckily blends with the post-2015 resurgence of interest in screens and their theories, the vanishing point of which might be this observation of Roger Odin: "this trivialization of the frame-screen [e.g. due to the proliferation of mobile small screens] should not hide the opposite trend, even if it is still marginal: its disappearance with the emergence of virtual reality" (Odin 2016, 185).

Secondly, cultural trauma theory needs to be invoked, and the analyses I pursued regarding the representation of such gender-specific female traumas as rape within the conventions of cinematic diegesis (see Virginás 2014b; 2016 and 2018). Ann Rigney identifies traumas as "events which, although they are remembered vividly in the hearts and minds of their victims, nevertheless defy sayability in the usual modes of public recollection," and she adds that "creativity and imagination are needed if certain memories are to be made shareable at all" (Rigney 2016, 72). Janet Walker's highly influential concept of "trauma cinema,"[5] Susannah

4 And here I refer to the definition of hyperrealism in cinema as theorized by Francesco Casetti: "hyperrealism is based not so much on careful and slightly abstract scenography as on the operation's ability to find the elements within itself for orienting the audio-visual discourse. Any impression of extravagance and overabundance results less from the nature of the materials staged for the camera than from the task of the technical apparatus to present itself as the origin and finality of its own functioning, much in the manner of a 'bachelor machine'" (Casetti 1998, 56).

5 "The stylistic and narrative modality of trauma cinema is nonrealist. Like traumatic memories that feature vivid bodily and visual sensation over verbal narrative and context, these films are characterized by non-linearity, fragmentation, nonsynchronous sound, repetition, rapid editing and strange angles. And they approach the past through an unusual admixture of emotional affect, metonymic symbolism and cinematic flashbacks." (Walker 2001, 214.)

Radstone's "cinema/memory,"[6] or Astrid Erll and Stephanie Wodianka's term, "Erinnerungsfilm/memory film"[7] definitely fit Rigney's postulate of creativity and imagination when representing traumatic memories. I suggest that the integration of multiple electronic screens in the filmic diegesis, where the traumatic material – embodied as female and situated in social and historical terms – is banished, may be positioned as a further creative method. This method is also highly characteristic of our era in its contrasting, but also hybridizing the electronic and the cinematic screens, the fundamental difference of which was assessed by Vivian Sobchack in a 1990 essay exactly in their non/capacity of generating a diegetic reality through point of view: "ungrounded and uninvested as it is, electronic presence has neither a point of view nor a visual situation, such as we experience, respectively, with the photograph and the cinema" (Sobchack 2000, 80–81).

In a relatively early example, in Lucian Pintilie's *The Oak* (1992) we have an inserted profilmic screen, well differentiated from the cinematic narrative screen, already in the introductory title sequence. The female protagonist, Nela (Maia Morgenstern), lies in an unmade bed with his terminally ill father, and a celluloid Super 8 home movie projector is in function, placed between them on the bed, and projecting its content on the opposite wall in the cramped little room. The home video presents a long gone St. Nicholas/Christmas party, with high ranking communist army and party officials celebrating in an elite communist mansion, persons we possibly identify as Nela's and her father's former entourage, while the little girl taking center stage in the events seems to be herself, several decades ago. Pintilie's diegetic screen is not an electronic one, but a projected smaller frame that Wanda Strauven considers as a "vertical viewing dispositif" (Strauven 2016, 144), which concentrates all the qualities of the framed view as described by Roger Odin: "a first observation is that the fact of framing helps us to see better and make the world be seen. [...] All the theorists of the frame emphasize its power of concentration (preventing the gaze from wandering), insulation and ostension (it has a deictic value)" (Odin 2016, 183).

At the same time, this frame projected by the home video in *The Oak* contains essential data that will prove to be fundamental by the end of the screen time,

6 "In place of formulations that give primacy to cinema or to memory, what emerges is a liminal conception of cinema/memory, where the boundaries between memory and cinema are dissolved in favour of a view of their mutuality and inseparability." (Radstone paraphrased by Collenberg-Gonzalez 2016, 249.)

7 As summarized by Collenberg-Gonzalez (2016, 248), these are: "Films that thematize memory and are seeped within a memory culture as demonstrated in the types of documentaries, making of, and marketing paraphernalia that encourage remembering."

although at this point in the narrative there is no chance for the first-time viewer to assess the relevance of the projected video material. This relevance might only be intuited by submitting to what Dominique Chateau terms "the hypnosis of the screen," via perceptually guided, physical processes: "the screen is hypnotic. Light somehow replaces the stare of the hypnotist. Two characteristics of the screen remind us of fascination as psychoanalysis envisaged it (including Freud and Lacan): first, it depends upon a restriction of the object to one of its aspects and, correlatively, requires a strong focus of the gaze; second, it captures not only the gaze, but the mind in a way that reminds us of hypnosis" (Chateau 2016, 197). The force of the hypnotic screen will be re-confirmed to the viewer retroactively, when the meaning and conditions of the highly memorable final freeze frame of the film, with adult Nela looking at the spectator, will acquire a full-rounded meaning only if one returns to the introductory home movie sequence projected on the wall and re-assesses its relevance for the narrative just viewed. Nela is the main focalizer character in the narrative, it is her multiple personal traumas and the collective traumas of Romanians under communist dictatorship that are highlighted in this short home video, with Giuliana Bruno's ontological definition of (the) screen fully operative throughout the sequence: "an actual projective surface onto which an experience of close relations between subject and object is inscribed, in a way that overcomes divisions between outside and inside, inward and outward" (Bruno 2014, 86).

A valuable contribution to understanding the survival strategies of what Gaudreault and Marion name "non-hegemonic cinema-in-the-digital-era" (2015, 14) is Roger Odin's conception of various screen types in his 2016 study. Here he differentiates between physical, mental or internalized, and dream screens based on a materialist-phenomenological grounding similar to what was palpable in Sobchack's delimitation of the photographic, the cinematic and the electronic screen eras (2000). Odin states that "the notion of a mental screen corresponds to physical screens (cinema, television) that have become mental spaces. Dream screens are mental screens waiting for physical manifestation; one must note that this type of screen is the source of certain inventions: cinema and television have been dream screens before being invented" (Odin 2016, 185). Odin pays special attention to the "mental cinema screen" that constitutes the kernel of his argumentation, and which is operative in our contemporary practices of watching (feature) films on various non-cinematic screens. He suggests that "cinema has become a mental screen, a screen that functions as a constraint when you see a movie in a physical communication space other than the cinema

space" (Odin 2016, 177). Examples like Nela and her father's home video sequence from Pintilie's *The Oak* force the viewer to constantly shift between the actual cinematic screen and the mental screen not of cinema, as Roger Odin formulates, but of the mental construction of smaller format electronic screens. Staging narratively relevant information on home video projections, on television screens, or on mobile smartphone screens seems to prepare and/or train the film viewers for the inevitable transformations that need to be pursued when leaving behind Gaudreault and Marion's hegemonic cinema for the sake of its expanded, and later fragmented variant in the 21st century.

This mechanism is fully at work in the two short sequences preceding the end of Andrei Zvyagintsev's 2017 *Loveless*, when the search for missing 11-year old Aljosa is over, and the two parents are settled with their new families/partners. The father (Aleksey Rozin) is seen in a narrow room in a block of flats, with a framed tapestry of forest animals behind him, and the flat TV screen's hypnotizing beams broadcasting about the war in Ukraine in front of him. The son is visibly unable to capture the affection of his father. The mother (Maryana Spivak) is also watching TV in the elegant upper middle-class interior of her partner's home, simultaneously to being occupied with her smartphone screen. A news programme informing about casualties in the Russian-Ukrainian war is transmitted and shown to the viewers on a diegetic television screen, containing the testimony of distressed locals, a view faced by a mother who has recently had her son gone missing. With the television broadcast's sonic aura fully effective throughout the sequence – as was in the previous scene with the father's new family – the mother putting on a sportswear with a "Russia" inscription on it becomes a deeply symbolic gesture. As she goes outside to run on the treadmill further non-cinematic mental screen operators are inserted in the image, besides the already present television and smartphone screens. [Fig. 1.] The mother is framed by large French windows, clearly separating the grey and spacious interior from the trees outside on which snow starts to fall, furthermore she also manipulates the treadmill's electronic screen to regulate the speed of the band. In the next shot a fix camera films the running woman, and when the camera slowly starts to narrow its focus, trapping the running female figure in an even tighter frame of cinematic screen, the mother stops her determined workout, and facing the camera, clearly breaks the fourth wall. [Fig. 2.] Female and motherly trauma, over-politicized and nationally allegorized through the television signals of the Ukrainian war and her red sweater with the "Russia" inscription on it, is conveyed through a fix image of a cinematic nature. This cinematic image

bordering on stillness is, however, fundamentally dependent on the encaging operations of the several non-cinematic frames (some of them also screens) active in such a short scene: the smartphone screen, the television screen, the French window, the treadmill's laptop screen, and finally the filming camera's dissecting framing activity, made present through the slow focusing advancement.

In Nils Arden Oplev's 2009 adaptation, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (*Män som hatar kvinnor*), detecting journalist Michael Blomkvist (Michael Nyqvist) analyses the report photo series taken on the day of the murder of sexually abused victim Harriet Vanger (Julia Sporre). After having digitized them, he dissects their surface by a repetitive imposition of tighter and tighter frames on the originally high-angle panorama shot taken from a street-side balcony. The last moments of the photographs extending over the whole screen surface of the cinematic diegesis are wrapped by the voice-over of old Henrik Vanger, who informs us that "this is the first trace in the case [investigated] in 39 years," the sequence ending with the two men looking at a computer screen in a sumptuous office-room. It is in their conversation that the seeds of traumatic interpretation are planted: "her murderer" must have caught Harriet's look apparently directly staring at us. [Fig. 3.] The gesture of Harriet's breaking the fourth wall, in a moment reminiscent of the mother's look in *Loveless*, evokes the category of Francesco Casetti's "interpellation" (1998).[8] It is indicative of the trauma buried inside the long-gone female character, who exists as a memory, as a ghost in(side) the first-level narration/diegetic world, while also an explicit index pointing towards the group of morally corrupt industrial magnates, emphasizing their role as buriers of Swedish social democracy.

Roger Odin's already cited media anthropological observation referring to "cinema ha[ving] become a mental screen, a screen that functions as a constraint" (Odin 2016, 177) can be said to be figuratively staged in these European filmic diegetic narratives in such moments when the originally non-cinematic, electronic, (intra)diegetic images are morphing into close-ups with an ambiguous diegetic status that tend to engulf the whole cinematic screen for several seconds of the narrative screen time. A further example might be cited from Ruben Östlund's 2017 *The Square*, when the dominant art museum curator Christian's (Claes Bang) descent into a series of traumatizing events has already started, and he sees for the first time the marketing video that went viral for the artwork *The*

8 "A direct address to a virtual spectator, a gaze and voice from the screen aimed at this individual as if to invite him to participate in the action. [...] the recognition of someone who, in turn, is expected to recognize himself as the immediate interlocutor." (Casetti 1998, 16.)

Square. This artwork, further qualified "as a sanctuary, a zone of trust and care" is actually a frame that creates a different scale and order of reality in the confines of museum space, or in Odin's words: "framing is not just simple observation: the screen is a mental operator, a filter that produces distance and changes the perception of reality as it introduces points of reference (the edges of the frame) that lead us to build relationships that do not exist in reality" (Odin 2016, 83).

Christian starts to view on his infamous smartphone the video that through its politically incorrect depiction of an exploding blonde child beggar has generated a huge number of views on YouTube. [Fig. 4.] The promotional viral video displays the most traumatic, but also most traumatizing visual material, linked to child/female trauma, of the otherwise highly daring film. Hitherto framed by a small electronic screen, the exploding blonde child beggar will cover the whole cinematic screen, and the fade in, fade out, slide-like construction of the video clip emphasizes its nature different from the filmic image and screen, an effect intensified by the clip's similarities to terrorist activist videos. The violently politically incorrect video taps into the hidden fears and wishes of many civilized and cultured Swedes, with the exploding beggar girl framed by a small screen that allegorizes whole ethnic/social collectivities as was the case with Nela in *The Oak*, or Harriet in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, and the mother in *Loveless.* In *The Square* also the electronic, non-cinematic screens, apparently scattered through the diegetic world as non-significant profilmic props with the function of emanating a-filmic-ness, creating what Roland Barthes names "l'effet du réel" (1968, 88), not only reflect, deflect and interpret the first-level narrative, but are also reserved to contain the truly traumatic/traumatizing ultimate truths that cannot be handled through the given system of representation of the linear, realist-type narrative diegesis.

The recurrent interplay of non-cinematic, projected or electronic screens, and cinematic screens in recent European films is definitely based on the exploitation of focused attention, borderlines, and cognitive edges introduced in a semiotically charged filmic diegetic world, and it might be attributed to the responsibility, and even burden, of representing traumatic experiences of collectivities through immobilizing and de-framing female characters from the diegetic events. The connected collectivities might be ethnically, economically, or socially coded: (post)communist Romanians, (post)welfare Swedes, (post)democratic Russians, or (post)liberal Danes and (post)analogue French populate these not-so-fictive worlds.

In Thomas Vinterberg's *The Commune* we are presented the life of a Copenhagen commune during the Cambodian war (1975–1977). Anna (Tryne Dyrholm) and Erik (Ulrich Thomsen) own the house where the commune is living, Anna being

a famous news-presenter in Danish public television, while Erik a university teacher in architecture, and they have together a teenage daughter. Anna's descent into the circles of her and the commune's private, but also personal hells start to intensify when Erik, her faithful, loyal and kind husband falls in love with his young and beautiful student, Emma. Given the timeframe of the diegetic world, the main non-cinematic, electronic screen that hovers over this diegetic world is the analogue, black-and-white television set's flat and small screen, on which Anna's uptight torso and officially kind face appears several times over the narrative. [Fig. 5.] Within this sequence the camera moves horizontally, leaving Anna and Erik's daughter and her boyfriend making love on the bed, only to let enter into the frame the television set and de-coloured, distant, mediated Anna, obviously unaware of her daughter's being initiated into sexual life. As the film is coloured and the shot is staged so as to create the feeling of depth in the room, Anna's being encaged by the television set's old-fashioned, low-resolution screen surface starts to develop very early, together with the intradiegetic, yet non-cinematic screen's capacity of commenting and reflecting on the diegetic happenings being made use of in a methodical manner, even before the sequence that demonstrates the method of morphing non-cinematic, electronic diegetic screens into metadiegetic close-ups covering the whole surface of the cinematic screen.

Here we are after Erik's young mistress moved in with the commune, to the generous offer of Anna herself, and the two (rival) women have apparently shared moments of harmony too, when they went shopping together. However, Anna's well-composed facade begins to crack, we see her neurotically tense face during the editorial meeting too, and she cannot bear being made-up by an equally beautiful young woman, being in need of her daily alcohol portion even before entering the television news transmission room. The presence of the various, non-cinematic screens that will morph into metadiegetic shots constituting traumatic screens is also diegetically motivated, as it was in all the previous examples. The cameras' optics circle around the lonely female figure who barely manages to hold herself together and the filmic image chooses to linger on Anna's tense hands, the way she closes her eyes so as to shield her from the world. Her wrinkled and made-up eyes full of sadness and resignation are shown in a strangely framed shot that cuts her face in two: Anna's profilmic close-up fills the cinematic screen even before her television-screen mediated image appears to us. As she is supposed to enter into live transmission, the countdown of the programme coordinator begins, but tears start to flow from Anna's eyes. Her nearly frontal extreme close-up emerges as highly artificial when compared to the previous, more relaxed

way of framing: interestingly, instead of choosing to show it as seen through a television screen, Vinterberg chooses to show only its supposed effect, as the technical personnel far away starts to wave their hands, having noticed on their electronic monitors that the news presenter is crying, instead of professionally reading the news headlines.

The filmic image keeps on moving between Anna's cinematic close-up, highlighting Tryne Dyrholm's inspired performance, and showing the effect of this performance on the technical personnel of the TV studio. Anna is taken away in a slowed-down sequence, with the pace of the music matching the tragic denouement. The sequence ends with Anna and her two colleagues disappearing in the darkness that envelops the television cameras, and with the diegetic closeup of the black-and-white television screen, which presents an error signal so well known from analogue television era. Thus, though not actually introducing the tragic female face on the television screen – another non-cinematic, smaller electronic screen enclosed in this diegetic world –, Vinterberg succeeds in generating Odin's mental screen, but this time formatted for the television screen. In Vinterberg's *The Commune* this mental screen materializes as a (meta)diegetic close-up apparently about the failure of Danish television, while also representing the breakdown of Anna, her trauma of being abandoned and left on her own.

My last example is Olivier Assayas's 2014 *The Clouds of Sils Maria,* a film where the French director juxtaposes the generation of digital immigrants to that of digital natives by showing these, on the one hand, as women in masked hierarchical relationships to each other, and on the other hand, by creating a diegetic world about contemporary theatre and filmmaking as deeply embedded within the online internet sphere. Maria Enders (Juliette Binoche) is a world-famous actress with a long career, weary of the digital ("I'm sick of acting hanging from wires in front of green screen" – she categorizes her experiences in action blockbusters) and who embraces the analogue. Maria is contrasted with both Valentine (Kristen Stewart) – her young assistant, whose two smartphones and tablet are fully integrated into her flesh-and-bone existence – and Jo-Ann Ellis (Chloë Grace Moretz), a Hollywood fantasy blockbuster superstar, famous for her private scandals gone viral.

The final part of *Clouds in Sils Maria* presents the theatrical performance of the play entitled *Maloja Snake*: the story of a powerful firm executive (Helena as played by Maria Enders) and her painful lesbian love story with her ruthless young assistant (Sigrid as played by Jo-Ann Ellis). Sigrid enters the cubes signifying the company offices, takes files from the desks of the office workers, and at the

end of the theatrical scene (but also of that of the filmic sequence) she exits the geometrical, sterile office space towards the audience, stopping at the extreme edge of the stage. The camera focuses on Jo-Ann-as-Sigrid's angry, disillusioned, tired and sad face: this female face is filmed in real-time and projected on the huge canvas of the stage in magnified proportions, with a bluish lighting effect overimposed on it. The view created is that of a beautiful female head squeezed through the grid of pixels and geometrical lines that define such a body in a digital environment of 1s and 0s. The analogue narrative filmic image of an actress performing a role in the sketchy environment of a theatre play is transmediated into the digital filmic image of the same theatre actress in the front of our very eyes, creating a hybrid representation that is neither analogue filmic image, nor filmed theatre scene, or digital filmic image, but all of these at the same time.

Such (intra)diegetic shots transforming into (meta)diegetic, long-duration, fix shots, which often are close-ups, exemplify what Odin calls "inclusion," e.g. those moments when "the mental cinema screen encompasses and somehow erases the physical space" (Odin 2016, 179). These long-duration shots ambiguous as for their diegetic status – no focalizer character's optical POV matches them – turn into moments of true spectacle offered to the film viewers in a digital era, staging the process of immobilizing animate images, of which Gaudreault and Marion write that "within the flow of digital visual media and through the widespread animation of these media, the 'moveable' image has become almost the norm and the still image the exception" (2015, 77). And definitely the urge towards an aesthetic attitude that framing entails is also present in such moments: "the desire to see something 'framed' reflects a will to transform the world into an aesthetic. [...] One can see this movement as a way to extract or at least to protect oneself from the world and its hazards. The frame effect can then turn into a screen effect: framing to make something seen, but also screening oneself from the world" (Odin 2016, 183).

My main question in this essay has been: when we have profilmic electronic screens in a narrative, what is their role apart from denoting everyday reality objects? I suggested that such screens are used not only as props, but as frames that re-order and aestheticize levels of reality, while focusing, in a hypnotic manner, the viewers' attention. The examinations show that these electronic screens also need to contain such traumatic images that constitute the kernel of especially the female main characters, and in this respect they seem to oppose the concept of screens as "mere mediation surfaces." It is of the latter that Marco Rubio writes, based on Richard Barbeau and Raphäel Lellouche's screen theory,

that "Lellouche's '*l'écran amnesique*' somewhat underlines the 'forgetting' of the message by the screens: the screens are becoming a mere format for completely interchangeable messages, mere mediation surfaces, which are not determined by the nature or characteristics of their messages" (Marco Rubio 2016, 221). Finally, these electronic screens force the viewer to constantly shift between the actual cinematic screen conventions and the mental screen not of Odin's cinema, but that of smaller format electronic screens, training the film viewers for experiences of expanded and fragmented cinema.

Thomas Elsaesser proposes a cinema that "does not project itself as a window on the world nor requires fixed boundaries of space like a frame," but "it functions as an ambient form of spectacle and event, where no clear spatial divisions between inside and outside pertain" (Elsaesser 2016, 133). On her turn, Giuliana Bruno observes that "[w]e no longer face or confront a screen only frontally but rather are immersed in an environment of screens" (Bruno 2014, 102), which she also names, based on Pippilotti Rist's 2010 installation *Layers Mama Layers*, "a fluid, haptic world of surrounding screens," "where one becomes an integral part of a pervasive screen environment in which it is no longer preferable or even possible to be positioned in front of the work" (Bruno 2016, 102). The analysed filmic narrative which embeds multiple electronic screens within the diegesis designed for classical cinematic screen, dispersing relevant narrative information on these screen surfaces, to the degree that it might even generate "multiple diegetic worlds" (Elsaesser 2016, 69) may be considered an intermediary form between fixed screen/fixed spectator photographic cinema and Elsaesser's "ambient form" post-photographic cinema or Bruno's "surround screen environments."

These examples are also instances of technological interactivity within the diegetic filmic worlds for the fictive characters involved. Through their role of questioning, expanding, erasing or simply dispersing the narratively valid information on various electronic surfaces they also force what Gaudreault and Marion name "passive viewer" watching "linear cinema" (2015, 10) into a highly active one, who must energize their mental screen for electronic small portable screens within a filmic diegetic world, while simultaneously constructing the narrative world(s) as having multiple, intersecting levels. Interestingly, this trope of/for technological interactivity characteristic of expanded (remote controls) and fragmented (touch-screens) cinema leaves room for hardliner definitions of cinema in the digital 21st century, represented by such doyens of moving image theory as Raymond Bellour or Jacques Aumont, with the latter's axiom – "any presentation of a film which lets me interrupt or modify the experience is *not* cinema"– (quoted

by Gaudreault and Marion 2015, 25) remaining valid too. Or as Gaudreault and Marion prophetically formulate: "no matter what happens to it, there always remains something of cinema in the supposedly degraded images of every very-small-screen device" (2015, 60). Such a temporally limited, geographically and culturally defined corpus might also offer us "the archaeology of the screen and frame" (Elsaesser 2016, 112) in a region that has more abruptly collided with convergence culture, being more weakly equipped in dealing with multiscreen realities, yet obviously receptive to global trends in media and gallery art.

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Figure 3. Anita's look on the digitized photograph framed by the computer screen. *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2009). **Figure 4.** The moment when the traumatic material is contained by the framed screen in *The Square* (2017).

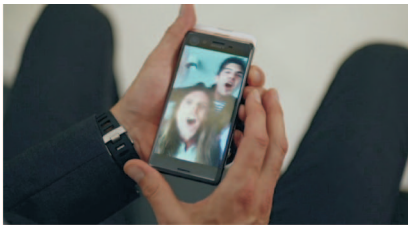
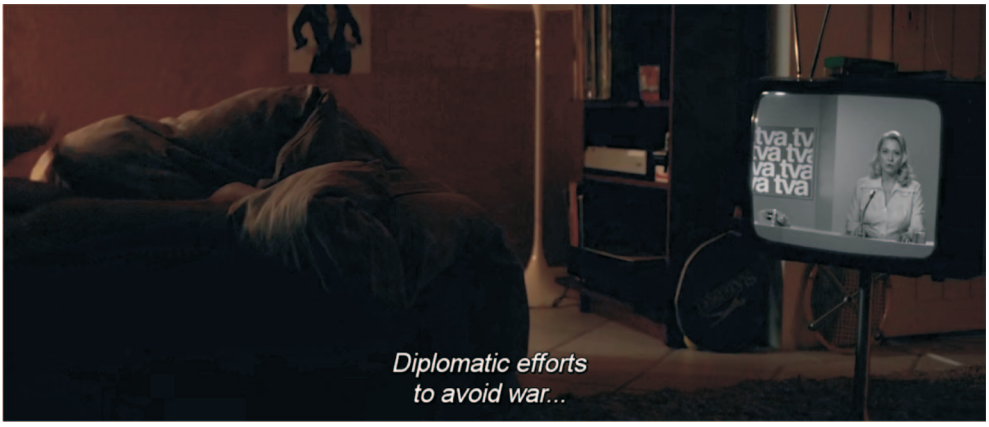


Figure 5. Anna trapped on the black-and-white television screen in the *The Commune* (2016).



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The Camera in House Arrest. Tactics of Non-Cinema in Jafar Panahi's Films

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Abstract. In close intratextual connection with earlier pieces of Jafar Panahi's oeuvre, pre-eminently *The Mirror* (*Ayneh*, 1997) and *Offside* (2006), his recent films made in illegality, including *This Is Not a Film* (*In film nist*, Jafar Panahi and Mojtaba Mirtahmasb, 2011), *Closed Curtain* (*Pardeh*, Jafar Panahi and Kambuzia Partovi, 2013) and *Taxi Tehran* (Jafar Panahi, 2015), reformulate the relationship between cinema and the "real," defying the limitations of filmmaking in astounding ways. The paper addresses the issue of non-cinema, pertaining to those instances of cinematic "impurity" in which "the medium disregards its own limits in order to politically interfere with the other arts and life itself" (Nagib 2016, 132). Panahi's overtly confrontational (non-)cinematic discourse is an eminent example of "accented cinema" (Naficy 2001). His artisanal and secret use of the camera in deterritorialized conditions and extreme limitations as regards profilmic space – house arrest, fake taxi interior – gives way for multilayered reflexivity, incorporating non-actorial presence, performative self-filming and theatricality as subversive gestures, with a special emphasis on the off-screen and remediated video-orality performed in front of, or directly addressed to the camera. The paper explores the ways in which the filmmaker's tactics become powerful gestures of "politicized immediacy" (Naficy 2001, 6) that call for the (inter)medial as an also indispensably political act (Schröter 2010).[1]

Keywords: Jafar Panahi's films, non-cinema, reflexivity, intermediality, orality.

The Camera in House Arrest. In the Context of Accented Cinema

In an interview for Agence France-Presse in 2010, the year in which Jafar Panahi was arrested with the charge of propaganda against the Iranian government, he made the following statement: "when a filmmaker does not make films it is as if

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he is jailed. Even when he is freed from the small jail, he finds himself wandering in a larger jail. The main question is: Why should it be a crime to make a movie? A finished film, well, it can get banned but not the director" (Ryzik 2010). Jafar Panahi's films were born under the rule of the Islamic theocratic government that – contrary to the regime prior to the 1979 Iranian revolution, the Pahlavi era, characterized by the flourishing of the institution of cinema – has not favoured the art of cinema and has imposed serious restrictions on filmmaking. However, it is in this period that Iranian film has revived, has been relieved from under its subservience to the thematic, generic and stylistic palette of Western cinema and has evolved into an autonomous use of the medium, with several authorial contributions of filmmakers such as Abbas Kiarostami, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Asghar Farhadi, Majid Majidi, to mention but the most notable ones, who have shaped the trend of the Iranian New Wave.

In 2010, after several years of conflict over his non-adherence to the official propaganda, his free treatment of social-political matters and the profoundly humanist perspective employed in his films, Jafar Panahi was sentenced to six years of prison and a 20-year ban on filmmaking. After a shortened imprisonment, his sentence was changed into house arrest; now he can freely move but is not allowed to leave the country and, above all, he is not permitted to make films. It is under these conditions that his recent films were born. While awaiting his sentence in house arrest, he made *This Is Not a Film* (2011), co-authored by Mojtaba Mirtahmasb, which was smuggled out of Iran on a flash drive hidden inside a cake, and presented at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival. His second illegal film, *Closed Curtain*, co-authored by Kambuzia Partovi, was made in 2013 and won the Silver Bear for Best Script at the Berlin Film Festival. His third work, *Taxi Tehran*, premiered at the 2015 Berlin Film Festival and won the Golden Bear for Best Film.

In close intratextual connection with earlier pieces of his oeuvre, pre-eminently *The Mirror* (*Ayneh*, 1997) and *Offside* (2006), his recent films reformulate the relationship between cinema and the "real," defying the limitations of filmmaking in astounding ways. The paper addresses the ways in which Jafar Panahi's works transgress the boundaries between documentary and fiction, the "real" and the mediated, cinema and non-cinema, pertaining to those instances of cinematic "impurity" in which "the medium disregards its own limits in order to politically interfere with the other arts and life itself" (Nagib 2016). As overtly expressed in the title of his 2011 film that reproduces the famous Magrittean phrase, "these are not films," but rather cries for help, manifestations of revolt, and, not least, games with the medium, responses of creativity in conditions of extreme limitation of creativity.

Panahi's clandestine trilogy is an eminent example of "accented cinema." Hamid Naficy regards exilic and diasporic filmmaking as "accented cinema," where "the accent emanates not so much from the accented speech of the diegetic characters as from the displacement of the filmmakers and their artisanal production modes" (Naficy 2001, 4). Accented cinema, as he argues, "crosses many borders" (2001, 5), employing narrative strategies that transgress generic boundaries and subvert cinematic realism; it is characterized by creating in deterritorialized conditions and artisanal modes of creation; authorial styles; often by the presence of the author within the film in the interstice between fiction and autobiography; the subjectivity of the dislocated self inhabiting "sites of struggle" (Harlow quoted in Naficy 2001, 11); fragmentedness, openness and self-reflexivity. Internal exile represents a distinct case of accented cinema: "when they [accented filmmakers] speak from this site at home, they have an impact, even if, and often because, they are punished for it. In fact, interrogation, censorship, and jailing are all proof that they have been heard" (Naficy 2001, 11). Jafar Panahi's artisanal and secret use of the camera in deterritorialized conditions and under technological constraints – filmmaking under house arrest, filming in secret, disguised as a taxi driver – gives way for multilayered reflexivity, incorporating non-actorial presence, performative self-filming and media entanglement as subversive gestures infused with an implied political stance.

The films having "Mr Panahi" himself as the protagonist cross the generic boundaries of "home" movie, to be understood literally, in the sense that the film director allows the camera into his own home, transforming his own private spaces into the "house" of cinema. Throughout his cinematic career prior to the ban, Panahi used to pursue his profession as an urban flaneur, observing life in the streets of Tehran, "at once a 'dreamer,' an 'artist,' a 'collector' and an 'archaeologist' who experientially reads the city and articulates his perceptions into filmic texts" (Niazi 2010, 3). Notwithstanding, he has recently turned into the protagonist of his own films, playing the – overt or camouflaged – role of the filmmaker. Thus, his surreptitious works can be regarded as ingenious film performances, centred on the subjectivity of the filmmaker at the boundary of the private and the public, pushed from behind the scenes into the foreground as a performer who utilizes his own personality and corporeality as a live medium in interaction with the cinematic apparatus within confined, claustrophobic spaces.

In *This is Not a Film*, a video diary documenting one day of the filmmaker awaiting his sentence, the camera directed at Panahi in his home emerges as a demonstrative act of protest against deterritorialization. Instead of being allowed

to record the scenes of the planned film script, the cameraman-protagonist and co-author Mojtaba Mirtahmasb's DV camera, in alternation with Panahi's mobile phone camera, records the efforts of the frustrated film director to come up with some sort of replacement of his original plan. In lack of the possibility of shooting the film, Panahi proposes to enact himself a few scenes from his latest film script about a girl whose parents do not allow her to study at the university of art and close her in the house – the story itself being highly reminiscent of Panahi's own conditition. At a certain point, however, Panahi loses confidence: if a film can be enacted like this, what is the use of making the film itself? He says, he has to remove this cast similarly to Mina, the protagonist of *The Mirror*, and searches for singular moments in his earlier films, *The Circle* (2000) and *Crimson Gold* (2003), which testify to the fact that films are not entirely under the filmmaker's control, there are impulses in the amateurs' performance that emerge spontaneously in the process of shooting. [Fig. 1.] The film ends with the cameraman leaving and Panahi taking over his DV camera, shooting an impromptu dialogue in the elevator – an even more confined space – with the boy collecting the garbage in the building, a true amateur performance challenging the filmmaker's control. Finally, the camera follows the boy outside the block of flats and captures brief moments of celebrating Fireworks Wednesday, in the eve of the Persian New Year, taking place in the streets of Tehran.

In *Closed Curtain*, "a claustrophobically self-referential chamber piece" (Romney 2015), a fragmentary, solipsistic docufiction formulated as a perceivably desperate response to the situation of crisis, the interior of Panahi's own beach villa becomes the scene of a series of events which are later laid bare as being directed. A man hiding with his dog (dogs are considered unclean by the Islamic state) shaves his head to disguise his identity and covers the windows of the villa with black curtains [Fig. 2], then he is surprised by unexpected visitors, a girl, Melika, and his brother, Reza, persecuted by the authorities for consuming alcohol at a beach party. At a certain point the allegedly suicidal girl stops acting as before, starts pulling the curtains apart and with this gesture a metaleptic trangression of narrative levels takes place: the whole series of events, perceived so far as "real," are unveiled as scenes of a screenplay; the hiding man turns out to be Kambuzia Partovi, script writer and co-author of the ongoing film shot behind closed curtains. Panahi also turns up from behind the scenes, revealing the presence of the cinematic apparatus; on the uncovered walls posters of his former films, *The Circle* and *The Mirror*, become visible. Thus, *Closed Curtain*, also reminiscent of *The Mirror*, this time due to the twist in the narrative, evolves from an apparent

documentation of the "real" to unveiling it as fiction, which induces a *trompe l'oeil* effect, acquires a Moebius ribbon-like character, denying/redoubling "reality" in a Magrittean manner. The allegorical film also incorporates floating, surreal scenes about the girl leaving the villa, walking into the sea and gradually disappearing in the water, then rewound and suggested that all has taken place in the filmmaker's dream. The suicidal girl turns thus into the alter-ego of the filmmaker, who associates escape and death with the situation of deprivation.

Panahi has apparently overcome the private crisis and found a loophole to unwrap his creative energies in his 2015 *Taxi Tehran*, an homage to *Ten*, Abbas Kiarostami's 2002 in-taxi drama. The scene of this ingenious docufiction/road movie is no longer the interior of an immobile location, as in his previous works, but that of the eponymous means of transport, also an enclosed space, which however, confers a mobile, dynamic setting and makes possible an urban *flanèrie*, letting Panahi and his camera back to the streets of Tehran. If the filmmaker is not allowed to move around and make films, then, with a brilliant reverse gesture, he will let the world in, allowing "reality" to perform itself in front of the camera, on the apparently improvised "stage" of the taxi interior. Equipped with dashboard cameras performing the surveillance of the passengers, the fake taxi driven by the filmmaker himself becomes the scene of lively episodes, and it remains playfully suspended throughout the film whether these have been staged, partly or fully, with employed actors, or we watch spontaneous moments of Panahi's taxi ride set up for shooting and it is just the everyday life in Tehran that provides this mottled mosaic. The puzzle is only reinforced by the absence of the cast in the closing credits. Matters of life and death, the entire Iranian reality unfold within the micro-universe of the taxi cab interior, with the passengers hopping in and out, bringing their stories and dramas as *Kammerspiel* type mini-capsules – just as the two elderly sisters bring their fish in a glass bowl that represents their own lives. The passengers are engaged in hilarious conversations with the taxi driver, some recognizing Mr Panahi at the wheel, some pointing at the camera, interacting with the camera (Nasrin Sotoudeh, suspended human rights lawyer, offers a rose for the spectators), some expressing their suspicion that he is just shooting a film – all these being inbuilt metaleptic gestures that give the salt and pepper of the film's comic ambiguity. [Fig. 3.] Starting with the first male passenger's argument with the female teacher whether thieves should be hanged (as a twist, he later introduces himself as being a pickpocket) and ending with two thieves robbing the taxi, the film is imbued with allusions to theft, which, complemented with a discourse unfolding on the relationship between filmmaking and reality – mainly

in Panahi's conversation with his niece, Hana –, highlight the filmmaker's most important concern, namely remaining loyal to the "real," as opposed to the ruling ideology that marauds the essence of reality. The multiple references to cinema as well as the subtle passages created between autobiography and fiction, life and art, the spontaneous and the staged, turn the confined taxi interior into a reflexive playfield, an expanded space of reflection on socio-political realities. Thus, in these works, the confined profilmic spaces turn the films into allegories of the "real" and into parables of seclusion, and at the same time, they constantly point outwards and perform the miraculous transformation of closed spaces into open social-medial networks.

Non-Cinema: From Media Technology to Media Politics

In the first place, the issue of non-cinema is triggered by Jafar Panahi's own choice of film title. If "this is not a film," what are its qualities that go beyond the limits of the film medium? Perceivably, the statement is paradoxical to the same extent as the term "non-cinema" is.

In his seminal study entitled *Non-Cinema: Digital, Ethics, Multitude*, William Brown starts his argumentation by stating that "'non-cinema' is of course, paradoxically, cinematic," that "non-cinema is an intrinsic component, or quality, of cinema" (2016, 105). It is actually the digital image, he suggests, that necessitates repositioning what can be regarded as the "dark side," the non-cinematic "other" of cinema, a set of qualities that fall within rather than outside the scope of cinema. Through the analysis of diverse non-mainstream filmmaking practices overarching geographical bonds, the study looks at the sides of production/distribution and reception/perception, highlighting the technological as well as aesthetic aspects of what may be regarded as non-cinema. The technological aspects may vary from the film director's expressed intention of making a non-film,[2] through technological limitations due to low or no budget, material shot with a DV camera or other new media appliances, to forms of distribution that fall outside the institutional frameworks, while on an aesthetic level, non-cinema may embrace a whole range of tropes including low quality (grainy, shaky) or dark, hardly visible images, handheld camera work, amateur(ish) acting, otherwise not absent from mainstream cinema either but

2 Interestingly, as William Brown mentions in his study, the filmmaker from the Philippines often signs his works with the phrase "this is not a film by Khavn de la Cruz" (Brown 2016, 112) – bearing much semblance to Jafar Panahi's eponymous label attached to his first film made under the ban.

gaining an accentuated role in non-cinema. In his study, Brown also expounds on the paradox of the realism of the digital image, achieved through deliberate, non-cinematic flaws that simultaneously create and act against the impression of the "real." Hence "the simultaneously self-conscious and realistic treatment of the work" (Brown 2016, 122), which can also be addressed via the immediacy and hypermediacy of cinematic experience that constitute the double logic of remediation (Bolter and Grusin 2000).[3]

Beyond the technological and aesthetic features that may delineate the domain of non-cinema, the discourse of non-cinema also brings into discussion significant implications regarding the politics of the image. Informed by Enrique Dussel's philosophy of "non-being," encompassing qualities such as the peripheral, the barbarian and the wretched, as well as by François Laruelle's terms "non-philosophy" and "non-photography," William Brown proposes rethinking "non-ness" pertaining to cinema as a counter-discourse set against capitalist cinema and in favour of the liberation of cinema: "in some senses, non-cinema is equally not a rejection of cinema, in that these are still films. But it is a rejection of cinema as capitalist, as per Beller's formula, and it is a cinema of liberation, after Dussel" (Brown 2016, 127, with reference to Beller 2006). The author points at the discourse of non-cinema as "what demonstrates to us that what we define as cinema is a political as much as (if not more than) an ontological question" (Brown 2016, 110).

In her profound film-philosophical essay *Non-Cinema, or The Location of Politics in Film*, Lúcia Nagib traverses a distinct route in order to also point at the close interconnectedness between the negation of cinema and political engagement.[4] She proposes to rethink the concept of "non-cinema" by historically tracing its origins among the major discourses pleading the "purity" vs "impurity" of cinema, paying special attention and tribute to André Bazin as the first to "intuit," as she says, the essence of non-cinema. Bazin's understanding of cinema as being the expression of, and profoundly interrelated with, the real, also implies the acquiescence of the real as what cinema can never ultimately reach. Thus, as Nagib infers from Bazin's foundational essay *The Ontology of the Photographic*

3 Such is the way in which lo-fi images direct perception, in-between transparency and opacity: "the low grade quality of the image – with the grain taking us away from a sense of transparency and towards a painterly sense of the image maker's intervention in what is being recorded" (Brown 2016, 122).

4 See also: Lúcia Nagib: *From Non-Cinema to Total Cinema: A Reflection on Film beyond the Medium*. Keynote speech at the international conference *The Real and the Intermedial*, organized by the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, Department of Film, Photography and Media, Cluj-Napoca, 23–24 October, 2015. *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yExHA8xaJ0Q* Last accessed 15. 04. 2018.

Image, "this early inkling of indexicality, which in semiotic parlance means the material link between sign and referent, was destined to become one of the most central concepts in film studies. But it was also a first intimation of non-cinema, insofar as it identifies cinema with reality only to demonstrate its insufficiency to fully signify it" (2016, 135). Based on an in-depth analysis of Bazin's realist aesthetic and the position it held in relation to the discourses of artistic modernism,[5] the essay celebrates Bazin as the forerunner of thinkers who "resorted to negative dialectics to make the case for art in cinema" (Nagib 2016, 134), and discusses the French film theorist's concept of "impure cinema" as the nucleus of the major satellite terms of non-cinema. In this, she includes Adorno's "uncinematic," expounded on in his *Negative Dialectics* (1973) and proposed in defence of cinema as art; Lyotard's "acinema," set forth in his essay with the same title, *Acinema*, implying "what is fortuitous, dirty, confused, unsteady, unclear, poorly framed, overexposed" (Lyotard 1986, 349, quoted in Nagib 2016, 136) and, together with that, the enjoyment of cinema as art, propagating an anti-utilitarian approach; and finally, Alain Badiou's "impure cinema," elucidated in his *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (2005), echoing Bazin's term and idea of incorporating the other arts and, at the same time, identified as the location of the real. Thus, as the essay suggests, non-cinema should be conceived as the "impure" quality of cinema that distances cinema from itself and approaches it to the real and the other arts, embracing the ways in which "the medium disregards its own limits in order to politically interfere with the other arts and life itself" (Nagib 2016, 132).

The two essays outlined above, foundational as regards the positioning of non-cinema on the map of film theory, albeit applying distinct methodologies in discussing the subject, converge, first of all, in the recognition of non-cinema as a key issue as regards the politics of the medium.

Non-cinema is not an external "other," but is inherent in, constitutive of, the concept of cinema. As Brown suggests, the option for non-cinema is the result of an ethical decision: "so to choose to look at cinema in this way, democratically to see both cinema in non-cinema and non-cinema in cinema, becomes an ethical choice" (2016, 125). Non-cinema allows for cinema to go beyond its limits, in the sense of being itself "enworlded, entangled" in the "real" (Brown 2016, 125)

5 Philip Rosen's essay *From Impurity to Historicity*, analysing Bazin's concept of – the often mistranslated – "impure cinema" is highly revelatory as concerns the position of Bazin's view in the context, and even resistant to the context of modernism: "Bazin's notion of impure cinema not only opposes the historical avant-garde in cinema, but also a basic premise of much classical film theory. In so doing, it may superficially seem to go against the grain of the modern/modernist project, of defining the uniquely new in the cinematic" (Rosen 2014, 8).

and being "in permanent communion with what it was not [in Bazin's view]: the other arts and real life" (Nagib 2016, 133–134). As William Brown argues, "non-cinema asks for a politicized, or an ethical, engagement with digital cinema, such that its democratic ontology is not only understood, but perhaps also honoured politically" (Brown 2016, 107–108), idea that he extensively dwells on in his fresh book on non-cinema, which formulates the thesis that non-cinema challenges "the limits of cinema and, by extension, the limits of what is constituted as real in our world of cinema-capital. Non-cinema is for this reason a point where aesthetics meets politics" (Brown 2018, 2). The examples brought up to support the argumentation in Nagib's essay are meant to underpin the affirmation that the act of transgressing the borders of medium specificity and stepping into the realm of the life and the other arts is emphatically a political act in the sense of "negating cinema in order to let reality speak for itself" (Nagib 2016, 147).

The second point of convergence can be identified in the recognition of subtle forms of in-betweenness that non-cinema instates, arising from the ambiguity of the perceived moving image situated, on the one hand, in-between distinct technologies of mediation, transparency and opacity, fiction and documentary, as Brown argues, and, on the other hand, the real and the intermedial, as Nagib elaborates. The status of in-betweenness of non-cinema ensues from its dynamics of displacement and transgression, from its marginal position, raw matter and blurred contours, which become all the more significant in the recognition of the non-cinematic gesture as a political act that distances itself from the cinema and, synchronously, folds back on the "real."

Jafar Panahi's Non-Cinema: Passageways between the "Real" and the (Inter)Medial

Jafar Panahi's filmmaking practice may serve as an illustrative example of non-cinema, a political act and, at the same time, a multilayered, proliferating site of in-betweenness. His recent clandestine cinema stands on the grounds of his overt self-exclusion from the realm of cinema, as declared in the title of *This is Not a Film*, ensuing from his conflict with the Iranian authorities, the financial and technological limitations, as well as the concomitant aesthetic decisions, including self-performance in front of the camera (*This Is Not a Film*), low quality images due to secret shooting (*Closed Curtain*), and amateur(ish) acting (*Taxi Tehran*). Jafar Panahi's non-cinema, performed as a gesture of defiance, has turned into a powerful reinscription into, and an ingenious extension of the

discourse of cinema, in a way that his non-cinema only adds to the rethinking of the aesthetic of contemporary cinema and its relation to the "real."

Panahi's *This is Not a Film* pre-eminently figures among the examples analysed by William Brown and Lúcia Nagib as one standing for a "raw" film aesthetic, made partially with a mobile phone, and as a confrontational and self-reflexive work created on behalf of the politics of the "real." As Panahi's earlier, similarly self-reflexive (non-)film, or counter-documentary,[6] *The Mirror* – embedded in *This is Not a Film* and also discussed in Nagib's essay as "another relentless exercise in self-negation" (2016, 131) – suggests, Panahi has actually always pursued non-cinema. It can be said that with the ban his latent and implied non-cinematic practice has become overt and declared, and there are only differences in degree between his earlier and more recent films in this respect. Panahi's recent cinematic counter-discourse designates a border zone in which the relationship between the medial and the political is explored in a way that they incessantly overwrite each other.

The title *This is Not a Film* evokes the Foucault who extensively wrote about social exclusion and who wrote about Magritte's work: "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe* exemplifies the penetration of discourse into the form of things; it reveals discourse's ambiguous power to deny and to redouble" (Foucault 1983, 37). Analogously, Panahi's non-films can be regarded as ways in which discourse penetrates into the form of things, denying and redoubling the representational layers and attesting the performative power of the medium: the way the rejection of the situation that hinders the filmmaker in pursuing his profession turns into an affirmative gesture, the non-film becoming the film itself, this is how the film elevates to a state where it can perform its own politicized mediality. The physical seclusion of the filmmaker and the ban on filmmaking relocate film at the boundary of cinema, a liminal place where the exposed mediality of film becomes a political gesture of resistance. Evidently, there is a positive message in this gesture, implying that no limitation imposed upon cinema can prevent the devoted filmmaker from creation. Spatial, physical alienation is impossible since beyond political matters, cinema is where the human being is, indeed an

6 According to Joanne Richardson, counter-documentary films "employ the conventions of documentary but simultaneously negate their fulfillment. Sound-image discontinuity, image distortion, interruption of natural time sequences, use of alternative speeds, faked oral-testimony by actors, and the misappropriation of newsreel footage in incongruous contexts have all been used to create counter-documentary effects" (Richardson 2000). In *The Mirror*, the aleatory moment of the girl's stepping out of her role, laying bare the cinematic apparatus, the asynchronity of the image frame and the sound frame arising from the position of the microphone that remained attached to the girl after she had left the crew, all count as counter-documentary effects.

extension and prosthesis of man in the McLuhanian sense, resulting in a sort of counter-cinema, a privileged site of in-betweenness, between art and life itself, between the medial and the political, testifying to the way in which "cinema's dissolution into other art forms and life itself results in transformative politics" (Nagib 2016, 134). Thus, limitation becomes a site of experimentation, pushing the boundaries of cinema where anti-cinema experiments become gestures of "politicized immediacy" (Naficy 2001, 6) that call for the (inter)medial as an also indispensably political act (Schröter 2010).

The intermediary position of Panahi's non-cinema, in-between the medial and the political, entails that his films qualify through an emphatic shift in both directions. On the one hand, they fall within the scope of political cinema – a discourse opposed to mainstream cinema and thus figuring in William Brown's survey of the satellite terms of non-cinema – as they touch upon issues that go beyond the particular case of the banned filmmaker and lead into the public sphere, the private subject becoming a politicized subject. On the other hand, their media-orientedness and heightened reflexivity locate them in the realm of meta-cinema, laying bare the cinematic apparatus and bestowing memorable film-within-the-film moments upon film history. Panahi's works also stand for significant media events, triggering reactions in the social media internationally. In her survey of *Iranian Cinema and Social Media*, Michelle Langford regards Jafar Panahi's 2011 film as a social media event, "not so much a film, but the content of newer media, an intermedial vehicle for spreading a crucial message" (2015, 266). As the author suggests, *This is Not a Film* becomes the content of newer media, similarly to the way in which it contains a plethora of media references, from Panahi's earlier films and object traces of his cinephilia – an old camera, DVDs of films, photos of old film stars – to his own diverse media use, including the mobile phone, the laptop, the DV camera, the TV screen. In Langford's use of the term, intermediality is applied with reference to the multimedia environment surrounding the film director in his home, a space "into, through, and ultimately out of which a range of old and new mediatized images, ideas and products flow" (2015, 265). The way *This is Not a Film* incorporates, and resonates with images of earlier films, *The Mirror*, *The Circle* and *Crimson Gold* respectively, turns into a subtle intratextual metafilmic discourse; what is more, "if *The Mirror* is already an example of meta-cinema, then *This is Not a Film* becomes perhaps a form of meta-meta-cinema" (Langford 2015, 266).

Throughout his cinematic activity, Jafar Panahi has always remained under the spell of reflexivity. What may, prior to the ban, have been a reflexive game with

the medium, at the same time "solidly anchored on a real that clashes against and ruins the possibility of a conventional film" (Nagib 2016, 142) – as testified by the story of Mina, the little protagonist of *The Mirror*, who in an unexpected moment removes her cast, leaves her role and the entire staff behind only to get lost, but discretely followed by the camera, in the labyrinth of Tehran's unconcerned adult society – has deepened in the recent years in the direction of an even more emphatic reflexivity, employed in a site of crisis and developing into the dominant strategy of Panahi's non-cinema. With him, the "real" becomes visible together with the camera that records it; the camera also becomes part of the "real" to the same extent as the "real" is evinced via a pervasive reflection on the cinematic medium. Nevertheless, with Panahi, the "real" is not a mere matter of self-sufficient reflection, distanced by pushing the medium and mediality into the foreground, by the discourse of representational criticism in the Derridean sense of infinite regress; on the contrary, the Real, capitalized and without quotation marks, so to say, is there indeed, palpably, painfully, drastically limiting – but from a shifted angle, also extending – the scope of cinema. In what follows, I will examine, in turn, the applied tactics of what I have identified as the major strategy of Panahi's clandestine (non-)cinema, contending that these tactics never remain within the confines of the "purity" of the medium as an end in itself but forcefully resort to "impurities" of cinema, as proposed by Lúcia Nagib, on Bazinian grounds, in the sense of reaching out towards "the other arts and life itself" (Nagib 2016, 132), filling the gap of medium insufficiency and as such regarded as "a useful tool, one which allows us to identify political materials capable of advancing film theory in new and exciting directions" (Nagib 2014, 29).

One of the idiosyncrasies of Panahi's art, at the same time, the major tactic of non-cinema extended in the direction of meta-cinema, is the presence of the camera, laying bare the cinematic apparatus. It is perhaps not an exaggeration to affirm that the camera advances into the role of the protagonist in Panahi's three recent films, performing surrogate roles in the absence of a free utilization. In *This Is Not a Film*, at the end of the day, in lack of any other filmic material to record, two recording appliances, Mirtahmasb's DV camera and Panahi's mobile phone, are pointed at each other, bitterly mocking at media-reflexive gestures of avant-garde art; here, however, it is the framing reality that turns this moment of apparently forlorn reflexivity into an act of defiance. "It's important that the cameras are on," these are the words with which Mirtahmasb leaves Panahi's home, emphasizing the importance of documentation, of making the "real" visible through its mediation. In their resulting video diary the cinematic

dispositif, made visible, appears as a tool set against the *dispositif* or apparatus of power (Foucault 1980; Agamben 2009). In other words, the technology of the medium is set against the technology of power, finding thus a niche in the solid construction of prohibition through the demonstrative act of using the camera, whereby the image performs its own "politicized immediacy" (Naficy 2001, 6). In *Closed Curtain*, recording evolves from invisibility, from observing the events taking place in the seaside villa to being unveiled, in a metaleptic twist, as an accomplice in recording scenes of a pre-planned film script, revealing the real identity of the emerging figures as the script writer Kambuzia Partovi and the actress Maryam Moqadam playing Melika's part. Here, laying bare the situation of shooting, making visible the filmmaker in his own villa and the posters of his own films previously hidden behind veils confronts the discourse of the "real" with the discourse of meta-cinema, showing the two in a particularly close entanglement. In *Taxi Tehran* the presence of dash cams is complemented with the passengers' own recording media. Such are the injured man's mobile phone on which he attempts to record his last will, becoming an accomplished caricature of media-freak society, and the camera with which Hana, Panahi's little niece shoots her own film, negotiating with the boy caught in the act of stealing the money from newlyweds to perform again and restore his actions otherwise he spoils her film. She tries to make a film that complies with the teacher's instructions favouring the discourse of official film propaganda, prescribing the norms of filmmaking and tampering reality. The dialogue between Panahi and Hana clearly marks the borderline between Iranian mainstream ideology and Panahi's oppositional non-cinema. [Fig. 4.]

The presence of the camera entails, as another tactic within the strategy of reflexivity, performance for the camera. Filming the filmmaker, the protagonists' self-filming, filming the camera or "filming back" are moments of heightened reflexivity, exploring to the full the possibilities of the self-conscious mode of filmmaking. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that these self-reflexive moments are, ultimately, attempts at enacting the "real" in front of the camera, transmitting an image about the "here and now," having effect thus in accordance with the double logic of immediacy and hypermediacy. On-camera performance in (mimicked) real time, implying breaking the fourth wall, a rupture in the sense of a self-sensing and self-displaying awareness, approximates the film medium to today's new media practice, to the genre of the vlog, with all the ensuing tension arising from the intermedial junction between film and new media. Panahi conveys an image of Iran where people are avid media users and media consumers, keen

on speaking about film and media when caught in interaction with some sort of media appliance, and eager to join games of mediation at any time.

Self-enactment[7] interspersed with direct camera address is perhaps the most spectacular in *This is Not a Film*. In order to provide some sort of surrogate of the film's setting, Panahi traces out the area of the girl's room with an adhesive tape on the Persian rug from his living room. [Fig. 5.] The carpet, in itself a *mise en abyme* – that of the world –, is empowered to "imagine" the film and morphs into a *mise en abyme* of cinematic space. In its two-dimensional materiality, it becomes an allegorical signifier of the film screen, "where idea meets matter" (Marks 2013, 16). It models another dimension of the medium that breaks down the "round" cinematic experience into a "flat," atavistic and syncretic mode of expression, that is, the molar into the molecular along Laura U. Mark's (2013) phenomenology of "thinking like a carpet." Panahi's enactment turns into a metacinematic process, a forceful tactic of non-cinema pointing at the limits of representation, which at the same time is even capable of deluding the ban. As Panahi says in the film, "20 years ban from film-making, 20 years ban from writing screenplays, 20 years ban from leaving the country, 20 years ban from having interviews. Acting and reading screenplays were not mentioned." Reading the film script aloud, adding verbal comments and setting the scenes in space, all this carried out by the film director alone, form part of a process of transmediation that turns the screenplay into a mental film-within-the-film.

The one-person enactment of the unmade film involves corporeal presence and material immediacy, while what is enacted, the film itself, is absent, is *praesentia in absentia*. The spectator is invited to imagine what the filmmaker imagines, a film that is not there, unmade, unseen, come undone, doomed to failure but still coming to life beyond the grasp of the medium: a non-existent film, non-cinema indeed, which reaches out into the invisible and thus performs what all art aspires to. The mental images transform external representation into internal representation; in a media archaeological sense, "the ambivalence of endogene images and exogene images, which interact on many different levels, is inherent in the image practice of humanity" (Belting 2005, 304).[8] The transmediated,

7 Enactment, in its diverse forms of manifestation and with its multiple, often meta-cinematic connotations, is frequently present not only in Jafar Panahi's oeuvre, e.g. in his 2006 *Offside*, in which the girls who are not allowed, on a gender basis, to enter the stadium and watch the football match enact it "offside," but also at other Iranian filmmakers, e.g. in Mohsen Makhmalbaf's *Hello Cinema* (*Salaam Cinema*, 1995), a movie about casting, in which the applicants have to perform themselves in front of the camera.

8 What is more, as Belting points out, this interaction pertains to the politics of images: "the interaction of mental images and physical images is a field largely unexplored, one that

enacted mental film, as non-image, slips out from under the authoritative regulations referring to the medium, and creates a space of freedom. Hence the performative power of enactment as embodied, ethical response, the emanating force of non-representation, gaining its contours as an immaterial artwork that opens up a shared space of solidarity between the filmmaker and the spectator. Enactment, with its implied performative power, also carries a critical potential by reflecting a situation of deprivation and becoming a form of resistance, folding the medial upon the political.

Performance for the camera entails, in Panahi's discussed films, an accented role of orality. Together with the narrowing of the scope of filmmaking, which implies confined spaces, limited action, often deliberately performed for the camera, and tendentiously reserved camera movement, the utilization of the verbal channel becomes more pronounced, to such an extent that its foregrounded mediality permeates the cinematic experience. With Panahi, accented orality gets shape in a temporal in-betweenness, perceptibly arising from deep down the Persian traditions and meeting the "third orality"[9] of the digital age. It may result from the video diary format, as in *This Is Not a Film*, centred on the interaction between the performing body and the recording apparatus, with the implied theatricality of enactment, where speech takes over the leading role and is intended to compensate for, reflect on, process the constrained condition and supplant inertia with action, stasis with motion, that is, to reanimate lifelessness and gain back the spirit of the cinematic. The verbal channel also makes possible an ingenious extension of the profilmic by using the off-screen voice through mobile phone conversations: the voices of family members, the lawyer, colleagues and friends populate the film's soundscape and endow it with such dynamism that would otherwise be absent from the spectacle. In *Closed Curtain*, the main area of action is, again, the predominance of the verbal channel, manifested through the female character's allusive, theatrical way of speaking and through the male protagonist's oral performance for his mobile phone with the aim of documenting and reconstructing the events. A particular layer of the Persian theatrical tradition is also subtly interwoven into this work: its Persian title, *Pardeh*, alludes to *pardeh khani* (literally meaning "reading off the curtain"), one

concerns the politics of images no less than what the French call the *imaginaire* of a given society" (2005, 304).

9 "Today, we have entered another stage of orality. Now orality relies on rewriting, downloading, recording, transmission and networking. Oral voices are heard everywhere, but given authority through a number of presentation and storing media, from the blog to the pod-cast. This is the 'third orality.'" (Rasmussen 2014, 27–28.)

tradition in the Persian theatre – intermedial in itself – referring to the dramatized narration of historical events or religious-allegorical scenes, involving acting and singing, which takes place in front of a painted curtain. In Panahi's film, the curtain is black, suggesting a void of representation, and the protagonist's and his dog's staring at it becomes a form of passive resistance. [Fig. 2.]

Mediated orality becomes perhaps the most conspicuous in *Taxi Tehran*, which explores to the full the possibilities of verbal action under the limited circumstances of action within the taxi cab. The passengers, especially Hana, the little girl, are characterized by exceptional verbosity, complemented with the sensory experience provided by the Farsi/Persian language, and their corporeality and gestures are framed in performative interaction with media technology. They are eager to express and share their opinion, shaping a micro-society that speaks out social and political matters, thus the taxi interior becomes a forum to exchange views and opinions, and the medium of film frames and conveys this direct channel of verbal expression. Human voice becomes a discussion topic between Panahi and Nasrin Sotoudeh. Panahi says: "I've heard a voice before seeing you. The voice of a person I heard when I was imprisoned." Sotoudeh gives another dimension to the importance of voice by saying that "It often happens to my clients. They focus on voices. That's the effect of being blindfolded." This also explains the importance of voice at an abstracted level, in the larger jail that is the coutry, or even more, the entire world itself. As she concludes, eerily echoing Panahi's thoughts expressed in his 2010 interview for Agence France-Presse, quoted at the beginning of the paper: "they make your life a prison. You go out, but the outside world is nothing but an even larger prison. They make your best friends your worst enemies. You will have to flee the country, or you leave praying for a safe return. So there is nothing else to do: Nothing to do!" It is in this socio-political context that the significance of voice, distributed on the film reel, emerges as a powerful act and tactic of non-cinema.

Conclusions. Shifting Forms of In-Betweenness

Panahi's non-cinema arises from the fundamentally non-cinematic condition of the ban on filmmaking, and develops ways in which this very condition is thematized, incorporated and, ultimately, defied through the particular impurities characteristic of his works: playing off the forms of documentary and fiction against each other; creating multiple passageways between the "real" and the mediated; an accentuated self-reflexivity achieved through metaleptic transgressions, through

laying bare the cinematic *dispositif* as well as through a strong metafilmic discourse developed in the most varied manners; *mise-en-scènes* in-between the natural and the artificial, the spontaneous and the premeditated, the professional and the amateurish, transparency and (haptic) opacity, immediacy and hypermediacy, demarcating a site "between-the-images." This latter term was conceived by Raymond Bellour as a space of multiple passageways between the "real" and the reality of the image: "this is how images now come to us: within the space where we must decide which of them are real images. That is to say a reality of the world, as virtual and abstract as it may be, reality of an image-as-possible-world" (2012, 17). Panahi's works reserve themselves the right of medially overwriting reality, of always setting up a camera somewhere, becoming therapeutic means through the belief in the power of, indulgence in the reality of the camera. However, he places the camera in positions in which the "real" overwrites any attempt of its medial harnessing. The "real" is not just "out there," it breaks in, literally: in *Closed Curtain*, while making the film in secret, a break-in takes place (or is pretended to take place, in the spirit of the film's fruitful ambiguity), altering the direction of further shooting. Melika, the female character tells the script writer/protagonist: "you can't steal reality," challenging the realist claim of the film. Thus, *Closed Curtain* fails to access the "real" via a film script but manages to touch upon it by laying bare the failure in a metaleptic twist. Thus the crisis of representation results in the fruitful moment of reflection. *Taxi Tehran* ends with the taxi left on its own and being invaded and robbed by two thieves recorded by the surveillance camera. It suggests that life proves to be larger than what the filmmaker can hold under control, but this is the way in which it truly gets into the focus of the camera, in line with Panahi's realist aesthetic, maintaining a subtle, shifting in-betweenness in this respect throughout his works.

As a conclusion, the three films made in illegality[10] seem to find their way ever closer to the "real," revealing "the entangled, becoming reality that allows cinema to exist" (Brown 2018, 4), with an implied awareness of the insufficiency of the medium to ultimately reach it, thus maintaining their accented, overt, playful, challenging, stimulating, politicized mediality in conformity with the entire Panahian oeuvre.

10 Complemented, at the deadline of the present article, with the fourth, most recent *Three Faces* (*Se rokh*, 2018), the theme of which resonates with the film script read aloud in *This Is Not a Film*. In Panahi's new film – winner of the Best Screenplay Award at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival –, Behnaz Jafari, an Iranian actress, and Jafar Panahi, acting themselves, are in search of a girl, Marziyeh Rezaei, after receiving her video message in which she cries for help to escape from her patriarchal environment and to attend the drama conservatory to become an actress.

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Gestural Intermediality in Jean-Luc Godard's *First Name: Carmen* (1983)

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Abstract. Although the intermediality of Jean-Luc Godard's films of the 1980s has been extensively analysed, especially the tableaux vivants in *Passion* (1982), little has been said on the intermedial dimension of gesture in the director's work of this period. The article investigates how the gestural flows in Godard's *First Name: Carmen* (*Prénom Carmen,* 1983) interrelate heterogeneous forms, meanings, arts, and media. The interconnection between the gestures of the musicians who are rehearsing Beethoven's late string quartets and the lovers' gestures, inspired by Rodin's sculptures, gives cohesion to the hybrid aesthetics of the film. Gesture is the element which incorporates, develops, and sets in motion the features of the other arts, not only by creating an in-between space that forges links between media, but especially by exhibiting the process of making itself. Indeed, the relationship between the performing, musical, and visual arts is made visible in the exhibition of the corporeal effort of making (whether it be making music, film, or love) that tends to open the boundaries separating the different arts. The aural and visual qualities of gestures communicate between themselves, generating rhythms and forms that circulate in the continuous flow of moving images. By fostering the analogy between the gesture of carving, of performing music, and of making film, Godard highlights what unites the arts in cinema, while feeding on their differences.

Keywords: intermediality, gesture, sculpture, music, sound.

After the end of the New Wave in the late 1960s and a decade of militancy and exploration of video in the 1970s, Jean-Luc Godard returned to cinema in the early 1980s. This period is often considered a return to mythical texts, the great masters of art history, and, to a certain extent, the themes of the New Wave. *First Name: Carmen* (*Prénom Carmen,* 1983) is the free adaptation into contemporary France of Prosper Mérimée's tragic short story *Carmen* (1845) that inspired Georges Bizet's famous *opéra comique* in 1875. While robbing a bank with the help of her gang, Carmen (Maruschka Detmers) falls in love with the watchman Joseph (Jacques

Bonnaffé). Manipulating her Uncle Jean (Godard himself), a filmmaker living in an asylum, she plans to use the shooting of a film as a ploy to kidnap a rich industrialist. In the meantime, Joseph's fiancée, named Claire (Myriem Roussel) rehearses Beethoven's late string quartets with the Prat Quartet. While Laura Mulvey sees a strong connection between *First Name: Carmen* and *Pierrot le fou* (1965), which "was already a version of the Carmen story" (1992, 84), Guy Scarpetta notes a difference of tone between the two films: the horizon of Carmen and Joseph's run is no longer utopia, but manipulation, ratios of power, domination, lies, and ploys (1985, 45). However, similarly to *Passion* (1982), the disenchanted criticism of the pressure of capitalism[1] is counterbalanced by the filmmaker's attention to the gestures of creation. In a fictional world which is at once violent and chaotic, Beethoven's music, which structures the entire film, becomes a source of gestural exchanges that interconnect the scattered fragments of the editing.

Godard's aesthetics of heterogeneity, which plays with formal contrasts and variations of tempo, combines heterogeneous motifs and media, while mixing contrasting genres (comedy, melodrama, and crime film), acting styles, and tones: "the love story is on the one hand made of elliptical gestures and violent clashes, and on the other intimate moments which combine the poetic with the vulgar," Powrie notes (1995, 66). Yet, instead of emphasizing the effects of "dislocation" (Powrie 1995, 64), the film, especially its editing, creates a productive and unifying dialogue between the heterogeneous components which constitute it, such as the musical rehearsals, the pictures and sounds of the sea, and the lovers' gestures inspired by Rodin's sculptures. According to Jacques Rancière, Godard, in *First Name: Carmen,* works on the mysterious co-presence of the heterogeneous elements which compose the world, including music.[2] Rather than highlighting their antagonism, he connects them in "the fusion music of images which unite, in one and the same breath, the noises of strings, of waves and of bodies" (Rancière 2004, 81). Although "fusion" is not the most adequate term to qualify Godard's editing and gestural research since the director also emphasizes the interval between

1 The film insistently refers to Godard's militant work of the late 1960s and early 1970s. More than fifteen years after *La Chinoise* (1967), Godard shows himself dwelling on similar political ideas. Strikingly, both in *First Name: Carmen* and in an interview for *L'Avant-scène cinéma* published after its release, Godard uses the same words to criticize the excesses of capitalism. The fictional filmmaker, when talking in the film, strangely echoes the "real" filmmaker when he comments on the same film: "the machines have started to produce goods that don't correspond to any need from atomic bombs to plastic cups" (*Prénom Carmen*); "as Norman Mailer said, we produce more and more, but useless things: the nuclear bomb and plastic cups" (Godard and Steinebach 1984, 8). All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

2 According to Rohmer, music in Godard's cinema does not aim to accompany the image, but is filmed as being part of the world, like a tree or the sea (1998, 234).

the heterogeneous elements, the interrelation between the musicians' and actors' gestures generates shared motifs and rhythms. The "linkage of gestures," to use Petra Löffler's expression (2017, 34), makes hold together the pieces of the puzzle.

In his well-known essay *Notes on Gesture*, Giorgio Agamben defines cinema as the exhibition of a "pure gesturality" and the exposure of the "mediality" of gesture (2000, 58–9). Similarly, Godard defines the original form of cinema as a medium "which deals in human gestures and actions (unlike painting or music and dance) in their reproduction" (Godard and Bachmann 1984, 19). Gesture, which must not be confused with action, reveals itself in its corporeal qualities. For example, effort, endurance, dexterity, grace or clumsiness are gestural qualities which manifest the characters' attitude and ethical relationship with the world and others. In this sense, gesture proves to be above all relational and intersubjective. In *First Name: Carmen*, gesture can be viewed as a means of interaction, not only between the characters and musicians, but also between various media and arts, such as film, music, and sculpture. The crucial role of gesture as a medium of in-betweenness enables us to rethink the concept of intermediality in cinema. According to Ágnes Pethő, intermediality designates an "in-between" space where arts and media circulate and interact. "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." (Pethő 2011, 2.) By drawing on this definition, we can postulate that gesture in film interconnects different media and subjects, interrelates art forms, and highlights the relationship between heterogeneous modes of expression. As Jenny Chamarette suggests, "gesture, in all its philosophical and embodied complexity, offers a means of thinking about intermediality and intersubjectivity, as a migratory, transitory process of meaning-making" (2013, 46). She adds that "gesture is […] what transmits expression, but also the modality through which expression is made perceivable" (Chamarette 2013, 48). Making a film involves not only the interaction of different media, but also of different modes of expression that enter into dialogue and exchange their gestural properties.

In the early 1980s, Godard multiplies intermedial strategies to reflect on the gestural nature of the cinematic image. In *Every Man for Himself* (*Sauve qui peut [la vie],* 1980), Godard shows, thanks to the technique of slow motion, the interplay between the mediality of human gestures and the technological body of cinema that mechanically reproduces them. In *Passion,* Godard stages tableaux vivants

which, through the models' attitudes and gestures, figurate the tension between painting and cinema. Moreover, at the time of *First Name: Carmen*'s release, Godard is more and more concerned about the issues of the death of cinema and of the crucial role of human gesture in the fabrication and communication of images (Godard and Bachmann 1984, 19; Godard and Steinebach 1984, 8). While praising the "love of the cinema" (Godard and Bachmann 1984, 15), he criticises the power of television that, according to him, fails to really communicate with the spectators and to stimulate their faculty of imagination. He considers television, which is "causing the decline of the images" (Godard and Bachmann 1984, 18), as a lifeless mass ("masse amorphe") that does not address spectators as active subjects (Godard and Steinebach 1984, 8). By contrast, Godard considers the cinematic image as a gestural trace of life, like the traces left on the walls of the caves (Godard and Steinebach 1984, 8). Indeed, far from being only the product of the cinematic machine, moving images are also made by human gestures. As the French philosopher Marie-José Mondzain writes, "a film is a gesture and the objects which form the history of cinema are significant thanks to the gestures they address to the spectator. The image is made by "human hands"' (2011, 25). Exploring the gestural potentialities of cinema, Godard attempts to restore the capability of the cinematic image to address the spectator's gaze. Beyond the ontology of cinema, based on the process of mechanical reproduction, the director seeks to communicate the mark of his gestures, and, in order to rethink the craft of filmmaking, develops analogies with the other arts, such as music and sculpture.

First of all, Godard draws on silent cinema to revive film as a gestural form of art. In *First Name: Carmen,* he develops and highlights the interplay and interval between images, gestures, words, sounds, and music. According to André Leroi-Gourhan, the perfection of reproduction in talking films and television (unlike in silent cinema) tends to plunge the spectator's perception into a state of passivity that neutralizes his/her effort of interpretation and imagination (1965, 295). Although Leroi-Gourhan's assertion is arguable, as sound in talking pictures, for example, enables filmmakers to develop the off-camera space and explore the boundaries between the visible and the invisible, his argument echoes Godard's criticism of the "terrorism of language," which not only is pervasive in television but also tends to reduce the potentialities of the cinematic image (Godard and Bachmann 1984, 14). In the title *First Name: Carmen*, the word *prénom* points to what comes before the name, or, in other words, before language. Godard attempts to show things before they are named by returning to a form of cinema which precedes the advent of talking pictures: "children are going to play Carmen;

like Chaplin in the old days. Because it is true that it is a silent film. A film which would have become silent with the appearance of talking pictures" (in Lefèvre 1983, 115). In this perspective, Godard's resistance against the dominant use of the audiovisual medium manifests itself in *Prénom Carmen* through the relationship between the image and the music, and more broadly the soundtrack. The combination of heterogeneous artistic forms and the hybridization of the audiovisual medium foster the spectator's active reception. The coordination of the musicians' and characters' gestures creates what Deleuze names a "pluri-dimensional, pictorial and musical gest" (1989, 195). Godard weaves a complex network of gestures in order to compose the film, from the rehearsals of the string quartet to the visual and sonic bodily attitudes of the lovers, inspired by Rodin.

In *First Name: Carmen*, gesture makes the corporeal effort of making, working, and performing visible and audible. Far from being only visual, gestures produce sounds, noises, rhythms, and music, which resound in space and time. At the beginning of the film, when Uncle Jean makes the objects of his hospital room resound, the director invites us to consider gesture not only in its visual but also aural qualities. Like a blind man, he frantically and noisily touches the windowpanes, as well as other objects, such as the bed, the typewriter, and his own body. As Deleuze writes on Godard's cinema, "the body is sound as well as visible" (1989, 193). The filmmaker shows his ability to manipulate and design the sounds which, in the sequence described above, have a particular resonance and precision, as if the author had carefully selected, isolated, and intensified them. Michel Chion analyses how filmmakers usually emphasize the sounds of gestures and "give noise to the body through sound effects" by recreating the sounds in real life and giving them a "rendering" adapted to the cinema (2009, 237). Although Godard uses direct sound (Fox 2018, 67), he stresses the musicality of gestures by revealing the percussive and sonic potentiality of the human body. Jennifer M. Barker defines a sonic body, not as a body that makes sound, but as a body which "resounds" (2013, 252). When the sound propagates in space, it resounds within and outside the body. In the film, the sounds (including the waves, Beethoven's music, or even the bursts of gunfire) resound from one image to another. As Carrie Noland points out, the trace of gesture can be unfixed and migrate from one site of performance, one medium and/or one body to another (2008, 16). In *First Name: Carmen,* the sound trace of gestures is detached from their visual trace, and is connected to other visual and/or sound elements in the editing.

In this way, the editing makes the resonance between the music and the actions of the narrative visually and audibly perceptible. Inspired by the collaboration

between Eisenstein and Prokofiev in *Alexander Nevsky* (1938),[3] Godard wrote the script and shot a large part of the sequences in accordance with Beethoven's late string quartets, which are played in chronological order (the quartets 9, 10, 14, 15, and 16) and developed in the continuity of the sequences (Godard and Bachmann 1984, 16). Strikingly, in the script, the filmmaker has described each sequence by referring to the tone, the tempo, and the musical intentions of the quartets (see Godard, 1985). Music becomes a model of composition ("modèle compositionnel") which enables Godard to envision the actors' gestures (Scarpetta 1985, 48). For example, Godard explains that "the attack on the bank came to be after [he] heard a certain part of the 10th Quartet" (Godard and Bachmann 1984, 16). When he edits the attack of the bank in parallel with the Prat Quartet's rehearsal, the filmmaker connects the act of shooting to the musical performance which is accompanying the on-going action in a distancing effect (the musicians' gestures are at once linked to the images of the bank robbery and kept at a distance, in a separated time-space). At the beginning of the sequence, Godard creates a subtle match cut between the movement of Joseph's rifle, which is waved in all directions, and the bow, which attacks the strings of the violin. Godard establishes intermedial equivalences between the script and the music score, between the musical rehearsal and the shooting of the film, between the rhythm of the musical phrase and the rhythm of the editing, and between the musical instrument and the actor's body. By interweaving the musicians' and the characters' gestures, Godard creates a choreography which simultaneously shapes the visual and aural perception of the quartet's performance and of the action taking place in the bank. Creative and destructive gestures are in dialogue with one another in a ballet of waving arms; the noise of gunshots, typical of B movies, contrasts with the elevated style of Beethoven, while the indications of the first violinist, insisting on the violence of the musical phrase, heighten the energy of the shooting scene. On several occasions, the musicians stop playing, comment upon their performance, and try to improve it by reworking some parts of the piece: "there it becomes much more tragic;" "it must be more violent;" "the tempo was a bit slack." Such recommendations, which they annotate on their score, determine the colour, the mood, the energy, and the rhythmic sensitivity of the musical phrase and of the cinematic sequence. Similarly to the actors, who need to make gestures appropriate to the meaning and/or form that the director wants to convey, the musicians adapt their gestures to the musical intention that the conductor wants to achieve.

3 For a detailed analysis of Eisenstein's influence on *First Name: Carmen,* see Fox (2018, 75–81).

According to Deleuze, Godard succeeds in creating a pluri-dimensional and musical *gestus.* Drawing on Brecht, Deleuze uses the term *gestus* to name the linkage, interconnection, and coordination of heterogeneous attitudes and gestures (1989, 192). Deleuze's definition of *gestus* evokes the concept of hypergesture, which has been theorized by Guerino Mazzola in free jazz (2009, 79–87). Hypergesture refers to the dialogue of disparate gestures in a musical performance. In the Prat Quartet's performance, for example, the movement of the violinist's elbow communicates with the cellist's arm and hand gestures, despite their physiological dissimilarities. [Fig. 1.] Their posture and gestural techniques adapt to the shape of their respective instruments. "Hypergesture results […] from the subjective resonances that humans perceive between physiologically different gestures," Citton explains (2012, 55). The concept highlights the intersubjective dimension of gestures which, rather than being isolated, achieve something in common, through interpersonal relations, exchanges, resonances, dialogue, affective linkage, and collaboration. In *First Name: Carmen,* the musical *gestus*, as Deleuze notes, coordinates the couple's and the musician's respective gestures: "the rehearsals of the quartet are not limited to developing and directing the sound qualities of the image, but also the visual qualities, in the sense that the curve of the violinist's arm modifies the movement of the bodies which are embracing" (1989, 195). As the script proves, Godard intended to create an effect of resonance between the curved movements of Claire's arm when she bows up and down in sequence 10, and the curved movement of Carmen's arm when she embraces Joseph in sequence 11 (Godard 1985, 565). Besides, contradictory gestures of attraction and rejection structure the lovers' relationship. When Joseph approaches Carmen, she rejects him; when Joseph keeps at a distance, she attracts him. In a scene, Carmen says to Joseph "tirez-vous, attirez-moi" (get out, catch me) rejecting Joseph (*re-pousser*), and then attracting him (*at-tirer*). In French, when a violinist pushes the bow up or pulls the bow down, he or she *pousse* or *tire* the bow. In that sense, the dialectical movement of attraction and rejection that animates the couple's gestures is directly connected to the musicians' gestures of bowing.

Finally, Godard also coordinates Beethoven's music and the lovers' gestures with the sounds of the sea, while developing an analogy with the gesture of carving. "Godard has likened his method of working with sound in *Prénom Carmen* to that of a sculptor," Fox explains (2018, 71). In the preparation documents of *First Name: Carmen*, Godard juxtaposed some reproductions of Rodin's sculptures with Beethoven's quotes. He also asked the cinematographer Raoul Coutard, as well

as the actors, to see Rodin's work. Facing their lack of interest, as he repeated in several interviews, he eventually gave up the idea of imitating his sculptures. "Take Rodin, the sculptor. In the planning stage of *Prénom: Carmen,* we had love scenes, which in the end did not become real love scenes in the film, and we wanted to make them like certain Rodin sculptures. In the end the actors didn't like the idea and we didn't do it like that, but we continued to call the love scenes 'the Rodin scenes.'" (Godard and Bachmann, 17.) Nevertheless, Godard felt the sculptural aspect of the film while editing and mixing the sound: "the sculptor works with two hands against a surface, he carves space, and since musicians are always speaking of audible space I think that the thing I'd like to lead them to do is to carve this audible space" (Godard and Bachmann, 17). By superimposing the sound of the sea and the lovers' bodies, the filmmaker carves the spectator's perception of gestures through editing. If editing and sound are crucial elements to understand the influence of sculpture in the film, Rodin's expressive gestural approach is also visible in the *mise-en-scène*, in Coutard's work on lighting, which underlines the volumes and angles of the body, in the actors' gestures, and in the shots of waves.

Throughout the film, Godard inserts shots of waves which, like a life force, constantly revitalize the movement of the sea. [Fig. 2.] According to Ágnes Pethő, the filmmaker uses the metaphor of ebb and flow in his cinema to stress the idea that "the blank screen becomes the shore of a cinematic ocean where the waves can be either images or sounds" (2011, 280). In *First Name: Carmen,* the cinematic screen becomes the in-between space where gesture generates rhythms, forms, and traces, which circulate in the continuous flow of sounds and moving images. The images and sounds of the sea echo not only the choreography of the string quartet – the musicians continuously draw the bow up and down, creating a tide-like swaying movement that circulates between them —, but also Rodin's sculptures. In his well-known essay on the French sculptor, Rilke compares gestures to rushes of water (*jaillissement*), waves, and backwash (see Gheerardyn 2015). He observes how the gesture in *The Age of Bronze* (*L'Âge d'airain*, 1877) "bursts forth like a spring that softly ripples over this body" (Rilke 1946, 21). The expressivity of the sculpted gestures evokes the fluid movement of water and the swell. In *First Name: Carmen*, the opening shot starts with Carmen saying in voice-over: "it makes terrible waves in me, in you." In the "Rodin scenes," the dialectical movement of ebb and flow echoes the couple's gestures of rejection and attraction. The water retreats in an inward movement and then springs forwards and outward, in the same way that the characters' gestures externalize their inner contradictory feelings and emotions. For instance, during the sequence in Uncle

Jean's flat, after Carmen rejects Joseph's gestures by pushing him off screen, the man's hand suddenly springs from the off-field space and grips the woman's shoulder. [Figs. 3–4.] The *jaillissement* is emphasized by the way Godard turns off the diegetic sounds in favour of Beethoven and the sound of the waves. The sudden and silent apparition of Joseph's hand enables the spectator to perceive the emergence of the gesture in the frame. The way that Godard isolates the character's hand evokes Rodin's technique of fragmentation which tends to emphasize "a body's specific gesture" (Steinberg 2007, 362). Rodin sculpted 150 single hands, detached from the rest of the body, which condense "the sum of gestures which a whole body can make" (Steinberg 2007, 339). Then, after having inserted a shot showing the surging of the waves, Godard repeats the exact same take, but instead of editing Beethoven's music, mixes the sounds of the sea with Carmen and Joseph's dialogue. Again, Joseph's hand springs from the off-camera space and grips her shoulder, while she says: "you're attracted to me." Similarly to the sculptor who works the forms with his two hands, Godard uses only two mixing tracks because he has "only two hands to manipulate them" (Godard and Bachmann 1984, 16). While the characters' gestures echo the continuous sound of the waves, the cinematic process of repetition contributes to carving the spectator's perception of movement in two different ways.

The metaphor of the gesture of carving proliferates in the film. The filmmaker uses the sculptural motif to forge links between the images of the quartet, of the sea, and of the couple, and the editing to create associations, metaphors, and equivalences. "The view of a violin which is carving [the audible space]" is associated with the "image of the sea which does the same, carving with waves and crevasses, highs and lows," and finally with the image of the lovers "who will have moments of high and low feeling." Such a manner of constructing the film and creating cohesion defines cinema according to Godard: "this is how it all hangs together, completely logically, that's the cinema" (Godard and Bachmann 1984, 17). It is through these gestural dynamics of interrelation and intermediality that Godard, as a filmmaker, seeks to actively stimulate the spectators' imagination.

Through the intermedial relationship between cinema and the other arts, Godard roots the media of moving images and the practice of filmmaking in the framework of art history. In this perspective, gesture appears as a central element in the analysis of intermediality in *First Name: Carmen,* and more broadly in Godard's cinema. When the filmmaker insists on the interplay between the musicians' and the actors' gestures, who work in different places and times, he draws our attention to the craft of filmmaking. Cinema is indeed a hypergestural

form of art involving the close collaboration of multiple artists, technicians, performers, the interplay of different media and arts, and the coordination of a plurality of technical and artistic gestures, from the writing, the preparation, and the shooting to the editing and the mixing of the film. If a film mechanically reproduces the actors' and performers' gestures, it also communicates, more indirectly, the invisible trace of all the creative gestures which crucially forge its style. In conclusion, we can thus expand Agamben's definition of gesture in cinema by arguing that Godard's cinema exhibits the intermediality of gestures. One the one hand, they interact with the technological body of film, and on the other, incorporate and develop the features of the other arts.

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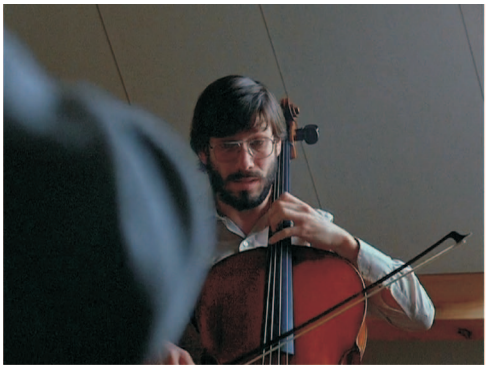
Figures 1–2. *First Name: Carmen*: The images and sounds of the sea echo the tide-like swaying movement of the bows as the musicians play.



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Sensing History. On the Uses of Medium-Specific Noise in Eastern European Found Footage Films

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Abstract. This article examines how sensual aspects of the moving image, such as visual errors, blurring and technical disturbances are employed in found footage films dealing with Eastern European socialist past and the regime changing events. In the selected films Eastern European socialist visual culture is reworked with the cinematic practices of the post-media age in order to shape the spectators' historical consciousness. By deliberate reframing and intensifying the medium-specific noises of the archival sources, or by an artificially created visual precariousness a new type of spectatorial awareness is created. The article delineates four different strategies through which the mediality of the recycled archival footage is brought to the fore and made operational (engaging the senses of its viewers).[1]

Keywords: found footage film, socialist past, medium-specific noise, haptic visuality, intermediality.

> History has become "something to be shown before narrated"
> (Ruchel-Stockmans 2015, 41).

The recent boom of reassemblage-filmmaking has turned found footage films into a lively field of research as it aroused the interest of scholars dealing with representation of history and memory, documentary cinema, and media archaeology. Questions regarding contemporary image recycling exceed the classical theoretical frames provided by such authors as Jay Leyda (1964), William Wees (1992), Catherine Russel (1999) or Paul Arthur (1999). These texts proved to be paradigmatic in defining found footage filmmaking, yet the variety of historical events and of the aesthetical approaches to the past (a wide array

1 This work was supported by a grant of the Ministry of National Education, CNCS – UEFISCDI Romania, project number PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2016-0418.

of conventional and experimental techniques) raise new questions about the performativity of archival images.

This article explores reassemblage works that offer innovative ways of representing Eastern European history through a media conscious reworking of archival materials. The socialist history of Eastern European countries has been processed and polemically addressed by several filmmakers as a kind of plea for a collective memory work. These works ponder on the regime changing events but also on the everyday life under socialism, through ingenious reshaping of the images of communism. The fall of the Iron Curtain has been interpreted as a media event in itself,[2] a highly staged spectacle, effectively dissected in *Videograms of a Revolution* (*Videogramme einer Revolution*, 1992, Harun Farocki–Andrei Ujică), an event which, paradoxically, is part of a vivid, communicative memory – in the sense Jan Assmann (2011) uses the term –, at least part of the memory of the generations born before the 1980s. One of the characteristics of the films dealing with the socialist past is that they initiate their spectator into a memory work that is different from artworks dealing with post-memory (e.g. with the topic of World War II). The materials available for recycling are also idiosyncratic to the socialist years, thus an Eastern European found footage filmmaker works either with the official televisual and propaganda records (mostly 16 mm film), pirated materials originating from the black market, or with amateur media (home video). These differences are creatively reused in the cinematic medium chosen by the filmmaker, who adapts or conflicts medial differences, just as Farocki and Ujică do in *Videograms* when they juxtapose the professional, state-controlled media with the rise of the independent gaze of video cameras.

Images of communism are either propaganda inflected (such as educational documentaries, newsreels, television broadcasts) or restricted to a very personal point of view (amateur materials). The control society turned photo-based visual culture either into a vehicle of agitation, or downplayed the documentary potential of the photographic images, by promoting it as a highly artificial artistry and delegating it into the realm of crafts (Bădică 2014, 209). In spite of a multitude of visual documents made before 1989, there is a lack of images depicting the actual socialist reality (Bădică 2014, 215). Although there are images to see, these do not really relate to the lived experiences that people remember. Thus, the existing archival materials are considered unreliable witnesses of their times, which stimulate contemporary filmmakers to perform a kind of skeptical distancing

2 Vilém Flusser famously declared that in the case of the Romanian revolution "there is no reality behind the image, there are realities in the image" (1990).

from the visibility these images of past afford. As these films suspend the representational conventions (e.g. the indexicality of film), a figurative reshaping occurs, which Paul Arthur defines as metaphoric fabrications of reality (1999, 66).

Although editing and juxtaposition of sound and image are traditionally considered to be the main re-interpretive tools in found footage cinema (Arthur 2000, 63), recent Eastern European productions seem to move beyond the assemblage of fragments, and attempt to interrogate or detour the images inherited from the socialist period through an aesthetic based on technical errors and blurred vision. While constructivist theories such as the montage of attractions or Vertov's interval investigated the ways in which pieces can be put together in order to produce new meaning, in recent examples one can find an unprecedented fascination with the medium and the materiality of the image. Meta-mediumistic, materialist strategies prevail in the cinema of the digital age. The increasingly sharper, high definition image and the immersivity of 3D technologies has resulted in a hyper-realist aesthetic, but also in a revival of the decorative, pretty image (Galt 2011) or the tableau aesthetic (Pethő 2014), but contemporary cinema also developed the opposing strategy of "poor images" (Steyerl 2009), low definition (Casetti–Somaini 2013, Balsom 2017), *vague*/indefinite (Beugnet 2017), non-cinematic (Nagib 2016, Brown 2016) or the so-called precarious aesthetic (Fetveit 2015). Arild Fetveit identified the cinematic retooling of originally unwanted "symptoms of wear and tear, malfunctions characteristic of specific media as deliberate expressive devices" (2013, 189) as a new aesthetics: that of the medium-specific noise. Deliberate use of visual errors might signal an opposition towards mainstream media aesthetics and representations, and function as "a potential point of resistance" against the culture of photographic transparency (Beugnet 2017, 10), or noises can testify to the embodied dimensions of images, as a reflection on how representations become and connect us to the world (Fetveit 2013, 197).

The motivations for "thickening" the medium and blurring of vision in a found footage film is different in a more classical, narrative documentary form, where archival images function as markers of authenticity rather than as the primary source for the documentarist project (Arthur 1999, 61). Subverting the denotative and indexical integrity of archival images was more characteristic to avant-garde practices, where refiguration and creative unmasking of the materiality of the image became the norm. Unmediated transparency and exact evidential illustration is the exception rather than the rule within both paradigms (Arthur 1999, 66). Signs of visual precarity or deterioration play a decisive role in the

figurative reshaping of the archival image: within the documentary paradigm they become figures of authenticity and truth, while in avant-garde projects they tend to figurate mediation itself.

In contemporary practices the differences between documentarist and experimental reassemblage have blurred simultaneously with the changing significance of low-definition images in the new media environment. Questions of mediation haunt even the most traditional, narrative documentaries, too. According to Erika Balsom, in the context of the new media hybridisation, "low-definition images shift from the markers of specificity they were in the 1920s to markers of intermediality and cinematic expansion" (2017, 84).

In found footage films, medium-specific noise becomes a figuration of intermediality, and it is also bound up with questions relating to embodied vision. Emphasizing the tactile qualities of film brings into mind Laura Marks's notion, the skin of the film (2000), but also Hans Belting's definition of the medium as a body where images are performed (2014). Certain uses of archival images seem to be paradigmatic examples for history unfolded through haptic visuality, which according to Marks, "values the material labor of embodied reception as a way of being open to the unknown without seeking to master it" (2017, 30–31). Moreover, when mobilized through haptic tactics, archival images become "lures to feeling and thought" (Whitehead paraphrased by Marks 2015, 173). But the intensification of perception and consciousness also alters the possibilities of knowing history through images. When a found footage practice calls for embodied vision, it also redefines documentary from a mode of making visible into a mode of alluding to the edge of vision and to the lack of things to see, creating a case of paradox visibility (see Tarnay 2017). In Aleida Assmann's words: "material traces are signs which can restore only 'a miserable defective shred' of the magic web of the past" (1996, 132). The laconic character of the images, their blacks (in the sense Didi-Huberman uses the term, 2008) and blurs create a distance from what seems to be an instant view of reality, but they also make an impact on the real, affecting the here and now of the spectator.

The following subchapters look at Eastern European found footage films to investigate how the medium of film becomes the skin of the past (instead of an image of it) through different media strategies in order to provoke historical consciousness in the spectator. By delineating four, at times simultaneously present strategies of this media aesthetics, the article will demonstrate how socialist past is enfolded and unfolded from visual sources held to be unreliable and with a deficiency in realism.

The Sensual Archaeology of the Archive

"Mining of the mnemonic depths of the archives," according to Patricia Pisters (2016, 162), is besides the multiplications of perspectives on the past and an intensive affecting remixing, one of the "metallurgic" principles employed by filmmakers trying to find the singular and the contingent in an abundance of archives, in order to enable a fresh look at history. The processes of detecting and digging up materials affect the value of images, and also the creative practice and the aesthetics of the artistic product.

The sheer multitude to plough through transforms every bit of finding into an enigmatic fossil rather than a meaningful whole. Aleida Assmann suggests that as more and more data are registered, and archives are established, cultural memory is redefined: it becomes less reliant on texts, there is a shift from texts to traces and eventually to litter (1996, 132). Filmmakers reworking the archival documents of Eastern European past are in an idiosyncratic position as they have to excavate state archives which are not fully catalogued, nor digitized, moreover their collection is influenced by past ideologies or by a rough weeding-out of materials devaluated as the debris of a past regime. Working in closed, chaotic archives makes the smallest finding a treasure, no wonder the image of the archive resurfaces in so many Eastern European found footage films. [Figs. 1–2.] Sometimes raw materials are found outside the archives, which adheres them to a different kind of multitude, that of amateur media. On the other hand, during the excavation process, the filmmaker encounters different types of image materials or low quality transfers as research copies, which are in the end transferred digitally into pristine quality copies to be used in the film (to be remastered and assembled digitally) – all this renders the entangling of the material aspect of filmmaking an even more complicated puzzle.

Creating connections within the dilated, the expanded multitude or locating the most meaningful microfossil have turned found footage filmmaking into an archaeology, or a research-based artistic practice bordering on scientific ambition. Within this context, repurposing and assembling archival footage seems playful and serious at the same time: the creative outcome of this kind of filmmaking is almost always an epistemological treatise of the visual culture as well.

The films made by the Polish Maciej Drygas constitute an interesting example of this kind of filmmaking, as himself acknowledged that: "I don't really consider myself a filmmaker. I spend most of my time documenting history, and rarely make films. The job does in fact resemble the work of an archaeologist, to some

extent. I reach under the surface, uncovering layer after layer, to find some bit of truth about the world I'm describing" (Czerkawski 2011). These films are not merely a product of an archival research, they are, at the same time, excavations into the way images work, gain depth and produce the "real." Moreover, the forementioned hands-on approach to research also influences the (media) aesthetics of the final artwork, in at least two ways.

a) Manufacturing meaning within the multitude of images in the archive

One of the most prevalent topic in the interviews on the pre-production processes of a reassemblage film is the amount of work that a filmmaker or its team dedicates to the selection of the visual material to be included in the film. The activity of "mining the depths of the archive" – which can be a physical pleasure, or an exhausting experience – puts the findings into an intermediary state of becoming, waiting to gain sufficient weight to enter the film. Some of Maciej Drygas's films: *State of Weightlessness* (*Stan nieważkości*, 1994), *Voice of Hope* (*Głos nadziei*, 2002), *One Day in People's Poland* (*Jeden dzień w PRL*, 2005), *Violated Letters* (*Cudze listy*, 2011) were made based on extensive research work with a duration of 3 to 5 years, based on the haptic encounter with the matters of the archives (with handwritten letters, film reels or sound tapes), as the director is famous for refusing to work with protective gloves.[3] Even though these films do not really foreground haptic visuality, the physical contact during their elaboration had shaped significantly the historical awareness and empathy of the filmmaker.

There is also a longing of the archives to be dusted down and to be repurposed, most prominently expressed by such films that are commissioned by archives. For example, Deimantas Narkevicius's *Into the Unknown* (2009) was made on the invitation of the BFI and of Hartware MedienKunstVerein, Dortmund in order to mark the anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain with a film reusing material from the largest surviving collection of socialist propaganda films originating from the former GDR and housed by the BFI. As the title of the film suggests, the images originally designed to be reassuring and attractive at the same time are thrust into

3 "It's just about the everyday archaeological toil, digging pebbles out day after day after day. And I'm allergic to dust, so every year I need to go through a treatment to enable me to continue to work. I cry, I cough, but I just can't touch the archival material with gloves on. In the Polish Institute of Remembrance, there are tons and tons of files of the secret communist police, all the researchers work with masks and gloves on, but I just can't do it, because then I can't feel the material. I believe that if you want to find out the truth you need to pay the price, even if it's a physical price, crying and coughing. Touching the truth wearing a pair of white gloves just doesn't agree with my emotions." (Drygas in Garrad 2012.)

the unknown. Thus, images made to advertise the assembling line of a radio factory [Fig. 3], the design of the socialist home, or the operational health system is reframed through the soundtrack as uncanny and frail. Just as the church bells at the end of the film, which are shown in the process of being tuned and waiting to resonate [Fig. 4], the film makes the spectator feel for the images that are in an intermediary state, having lost their initial purpose and longing for new connections with the world.

Bringing new images to the surface through a haptic filmmaking practice does not necessarily lead to a materialist aesthetics, as there is a strong ambition to express new findings within the realm of the visible, and through it. In some cases, the process of archaeological exploration is often translated as a cinematic quest in the optical image, and as a result, the image is released from the grasp of an archive, from the material object it turns into a tool for making history visible. The physical experience of watching and re-watching raw images for months, and of locating the meaningful fossil exerts an impact on the cinematic reshaping of the materials, for example on the length of the shots or on editing.

There is a great expectation to discover the flux of history from the visible, by getting beyond what images represent and focusing on the ways they operate, in a Harun Farockian manner. The reality of the image is both asserted and reflected in this analytical mode. For example, in *Videogramme einer Revolution* (Harun Farocki–Andrei Ujică, 1992), shots taken from multiple points of view are put together chronologically so as to render possible the reconstruction of the Romanian events of December 1989, but this also draws attention to the ways images were produced in the television before and after the revolution, and to the perspective of video-amateurs.[4] Similarly, in the *Autobiography of Nicolae Ceauşescu* (*Autobiografia lui Nicolae Ceauşescu,* Andrei Ujică, 2010) we can follow the life events of the former dictator, but also the ways in which he produced his own image (hence autobiography[5]) detectable in reel ends, registered by cameras before going into live transmission and while getting prepared before the public speeches and performances.[6] The strong emphasis on

4 The filmmakers compiled their film from 120 hours of archival material collected from various sources (Ruchel-Stockmans 2015, 57).

5 The visual chronology of Ceauşescu's career is contextualized as his flow of memories that starts during the interrogation preceding his execution. Hence the word autobiography in the title. By defining it as memory, a certain autonomy is given to the image that weakens its potential of being an objective record of the past.

6 Reel ends are debris specific to the analogue media age. Dana Bunescu, the editor of the film even declared that the movie was possible because everything was recorded on celluloid film. See: *Masterclass with Dana Bunescu*, *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rX9zplTH1Xw.* /. Last accessed 25. 08. 2018.

sequentiality, on the consecutive ordering of disparate materials in *Videograms of a Revolution* is also mentioned in an interview with Andrei Ujică: "the idea at the basis of the project can be summarized in this way: in 1989, a hundred cameras followed what was happening in Romania; history is no longer divided into theatrical scenes, nor into literary chapters – it is perceived as a sequence; and the sequence demands a film" (White 2011).

In the *Autobiography of Nicolae Ceauşescu* the filmmakers went even further, by giving a special role to the long sequence shot. Departing from the tiresome process of viewing a total of 260 hours long pre-selected footage, they decided to slow down the rhythm of the film starting from materials related to the 1980s, when a period of deprivation started. Thus, the final takes of the film are sustained with the intention of creating a sense of endless burden in the spectator (Dana Bunescu in Filippi and Rus 2011). The seemingly un-edited parts, like the sequence about Ceauşescu's visits to the shops have a non-cinematic character.[7]

Perhaps the most prevalent effect of an extensive analogue research and of digital post-production is a preference for seriality. As the editing emphasizes repetitions, the spectator gets a sense of quantity of the materials, or recognizes the database aesthetics of a digital storage system. The *Autobiography of Nicolae Ceauşescu* is a great example of cumulative editing: most memorable are the images of the heavily choreographed mass spectacles, or the series of images presenting the birthday flowers received by the dictator throughout the years.

Marta Popidova's *Yugoslavia: How Ideology Moved Our Collective Body* (*Jugoslavija, kako je ideologija pokretala naše kolektivno telo*, 2013) is a real feast in terms of cumulative editing. The filmmaker juxtaposes images covering mass gatherings in the Yugoslavian public space beginning from 1945 until 2000, from the installation of communism, through the creation of the youth movement's spectacular mass ornament-style stadium shows during the 1980s, up to Tito's funeral procession and the disintegration of the country. *Yugoslavia*, just as *Videograms* or the *Autobiography* became possible because of an "excessive representability of history" (Leslie 2004),[8] but Popidova's film creates an even

7 See Nagib's analysis of the final long take from *The Act of Killing* (2016) building on Bazin's notion of realism.

8 The multitude of the images that allow this kind of archaeological filmmaking and the role of images in the course of history is mentioned in the voiceover of *Videograms* and also in an interview with Andrei Ujică: "since its invention, film has seemed destined to make history visible. It has been able to portray the past and to stage the present. We have seen Napoleon on horseback and Lenin on the train. Film was possible because there was history. Almost imperceptibly, like moving forward on a Möbius strip, the side was flipped. We look on and have to think: if film is possible then history too is possible" (White 2011).

stronger bond between the multitude of images, the ideologies of collectivity, and the psychology of the masses. Departing from Kracauer's notion of the mass ornament, Popidova mobilizes a mass of images to uncover the moment when a sense of collectivity was exchanged for the sake of individualism that eventually led into chaos and destruction. Through a scrutiny intensified by the director's voiceover, the spectator is made to discover the moment of social change in the coordinated movement of the masses of dancers that shifts into the unruly movements of a dancing woman, who paradoxically, becomes the protagonist of the mass ornament show. [Figs. 5–8.] And this makes it probably the most enthusiastic Eastern European found footage film about what pictures can show.[9]

The manufactural, research based filmmaking shapes the aesthetics of these films, leaving its mark on the figurative dimension, but mostly on the editing of the film. The materialist aspects of filmmaking are enfolded in terms of music and rhythm (and not necessarily touch).

b) Digging up the "radioactive fossil"

There are images testifying to the shortcomings of official history or memory. These images embody traces of events without being able to represent it, but as "radioactive fossils" (Deleuze quoted by Marks 2000, 51) they can activate the process of memory. Such a fragment of only seven seconds constitutes the core of Drygas's first film, *Hear My Cry* (*Usłyszcie mój krzyk!*, 1991), which deals with Ryszard Siwiec's self-immolation as a protest on September 8, 1968 during a televised harvest festival at Warsaw Stadium. The story was very well hidden by officials and erased from the archives, although the spectacle of the harvest was a highly mediatized event. In spite of all, a small fragment of the TV recording survived, and the filmmaker found it in the Polish Archives as an object not listed in the official catalogue. The film makes dramaturgic use of the finding of the footage, as it withholds it until the final part of the film, embedding it into the narrative presentation of the main character and the act of immolation, through a series of talking head-style interviews made with family members and witnesses, and also within the story of the filmmaker's quest for visual documentation. Creating a certain kind of suspense, Drygas introduces the footage gradually, as short inserts that break the series of the interviews. Through ingenious reframing

9 This attitude towards visibility is manifested also through a written insert presenting a quote from Siegfried Kracauer: "spatial images [Raumbilder] are the dreams of society. Wherever the hieroglyphics of these images can be deciphered, one finds the basis of social reality." (The exact location of the quote is not specified in the film.)

and slow motion, the emphasis shifts from the gestures of the dancers and the audience reacting to the human body in flames, then in the finale Siwiec's figure gets to be centrally framed and enlarged four times until there remains a freezed close up of a shouting man in flames. [Figs. 9–10.]

Prepared by the narrative context, and manipulated through medial interventions the seven seconds long fragment becomes a historical document, whose cultural, political and also material heritage is unearthed in this process. Firstly, through the recourse to repetition, delay and slowness the viewers are given a new chance to grasp the view and to get into a state of extended contemplation. As Laura Mulvey suggests, "extracting the image from a narrative surrounding gives the spectator the illusion of possession" (2006, 151). As Drygas' film artificially creates the sense of proximity to the image, if not to the burning, protesting man himself, the self-immolation becomes an image event and the spectator becomes another kind of participant. We do not get immersed in the event of the harvest festival, but we get to face a still image of a human self-sacrifice – the filmic image devoid of movement. The aesthetic of delay can also intensify the encounter with the index for "the fetishistic spectator, driven by the desire to stop, to hold and to repeat images [...]. The time of the camera, its embalmed time, comes to surface, shifting from the narrative now to the 'then.' Reality takes over the scene" (Mulvey 2006, 155).

The dissection of the footage into freeze frames continues with their enlargement until a grainy, highly textured, abstract image remains. While the director makes archaeological explorations in the depths of the image, sharpness and visibility disappears, and the physical holder of the image, as a haptic, almost tangible object appears, as if shielding it from further explorations. The indexical image presents a human body that is no longer identifiable, as if trapped in the televisual medium of the image. The archival properties of the image are reduced to a stain. No wonder, the fragment about the burning man has been compared to Malcolm Browne's shocking 1963 photograph about the self-immolating Saigon monk (Pfeifer 2018), and its inclusion in Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (Coates 2015), as being an exploration about the limits of representation. Yet, regarding the sensing of history it is important to pinpoint the affinities of the title and the final image of the film with the *Scream* (1893) by Edward Munch. As the distorted landscape of the painting is connected to the sound waves emitted by the screaming figure, the unheard, forgotten cries of the burning man also penetrate the image of the film: as we get closer and closer to Ryszard Siwiec's face, the visual blur distorts the image as a visual equivalent of the unarticulated cry of a man protesting at the border of life and death.

Cumulative editing and magnification of the fossil are the flip sides of the same coin: they are processes dedicated to rendering history visible either by mobilizing an army of images, or by enlarging the smallest fragments, even at the cost of exposing their material as being fragile and limited.

Veiling the Image with Medium-Specific Noise

This strategy usually means a simultaneous reliance on the image and its medium: it is important to create a domain of interest within the visible, but the affective power of a medium's materiality is also exploited. Veiling the image[10] with analogue grain or electronic interferences in this case is not used as a materialist critique of the totalizing quest in the visible, or as a liberating counter-aesthetics with "poor images" (in the sense Hito Steyerl uses the term, 2009). In the following examples, medium-specific noise becomes primarily a means to add something to the image rather than an intervention to reduce or restrain its visibility.

Vladimir Tomić's *Flotel Europa* (2015) makes the most expansive use of this strategy when reusing footage originally recorded on analogue video. The film follows the fate of a refugee community who escaped from the horrors of the Yugoslavian war and found temporary shelter for two years on a floating ship in the harbours of Copenhagen. The story of the community is narrated by the voiceover of the director and it is visualized through digitized VHS-tapes made on the board of the so-called *Flotel*. Beside narrative cohesion, the voiceover impregnates the story with the idiosyncratically naive and playful point of view of a 12-year-old boy, who at the boundary of childhood and puberty does not have real concerns related to social history or nationhood. The footage was not edited in order to support the narrative in itself, nor to become an exact illustration of the voiceover,[11] rather it becomes similar to a subjective memory flow. By emphasizing the flows of the electronic video signal, the viewer gets a chance to connect emphatically to Vladimir Tomić's stream of memories: "there were these moments where you sense that someone is struggling to get the tape to work, or a moment later in the film when a person watching the footage rewinds the tape. That was so much more useful than the material that was

10 The metaphors of veiling and rupture (see next chapter) are related here to the relationship between the image and its medial body, to a cinema of sensations, thus are not used in the sense George Didi-Huberman defines them. In his seminal book, *Images in Spite of All* (2008) veil-image and tear-image are analogous with Lacan's imaginary and the real (2008, 51–88).

11 The director himself declared this during a talk given after the screening of his film at CEU Budapest, at *Screened Memories Summer University* in 2016.

cleanly digitised since it created yet more depth" – as Srđan Keča, the editor of the film has declared (Cohn 2015).

The unfolding of the past as a subjective memory through VHS images is prepared carefully in the first sequence of the film, with an abundance of medium-specific noises. [Figs. 11–12.] Errors like displaced colours or image interruptions characteristic to a demagnetizing VHS tape persists stubbornly during the segment of the video letter that the boy/director is producing together with his mother and older brother in front of the Flotel as a message to the father and other relatives who had chosen not to leave their home country. The video letter has a crucial role since finding it inspired the director to make the film,[12] and it also functions as an establishing shot presenting the location and the main characters of the narrative. It is also important because it introduces the concept of the video as a veil that wraps the images with all the affective meaning that is attached to the medium of analogue home video as a dispositif, plus all the political and cultural implications that this technology – coming from the West – could have in the socialist Eastern Europe.

The 1980s was the decade when video market expanded and even managed to gain access to the socialist everyday life, in spite of the state control over representational technologies. VHS tapes, video cameras and video players were a commodity desired by many and acquired by a few via smugglers, just as the storyline of the Romanian film *Adalbert's Dream* (*Visul lui Adalbert*, Gabriel Achim, 2012) demonstrates.[13] Video had become not so much a narcissistic (see Krauss 1976), but rather a democratic medium in the Eastern Europe of the 1980s.[14] In 1992, for the Bosnian family of Vladimir Tomić it was a means of communication with their home, in a period of unstable telephonic connections with Yugoslavia. Video can be seen as a medium enfolding the complex reality of the refugees from the Flotel. Television also appears in the film, but inversely, it is used to receive news from home, to unfold the world that they left behind. Images

12 After finding his own video letter, he collected video materials from his former Flotel-mates, and even managed to locate the producer of the VHS-tapes. The film was made from a total of 20-hour-long video footage (Cohn 2015).

13 The film presents the story of Adalbert, an amateur filmmaker and VHS-user in the socialist era, who while preparing a screening in his factory discovers, in an ironic way, how much reality differs from its filmic representation. Nevertheless, he manages to capitalize on his VHS-recorder by taping football games.

14 See, for example, the scholarly approach to the Polish phenomena, presented by Michał Pabiś-Orzeszyna in his talk entitled *Video Connectors: Smuggling Westernity in Communist Poland* (NECS Berlin, 2016). Based on recent in-depth research on VHS and video culture in Poland, he argues that the individualism embedded in the democratic media use has actually prepared the fall of communism.

of refugees watching the news programme in the TV-room of the Flotel recur in the film, and supported by the voiceover these emanate a sense of belonging and home. Thus, television becomes an almost melodramatic medium.

After the introductory sequence of the noisy video letter, the veiling of the images continues through the occasional appearance of timestamps burnt on the image, and by the means of an electronic interference that lingers at the bottom of almost every image. The domain of the visible is constantly wrapped in medium-specific noises, enveloping the life events of the inmates within the affectively and ideologically textured fabric of the video image.

Medium-specific noises are used to signal the presence of a medium within another (Fetveit 2013, 204) (as a kind of veiling) in many of the fore-mentioned films: textures, timestamps and video-specific low resolution is also present in *Videograms of a Revolution* and in *Yugoslavia: How Ideology Moved Our Collective Body*. Low resolution and VHS-specific errors in both examples drive attention to the presence of a camera, moreover the corporeality of the images is a means to confer presence to the subjectivity of the otherwise invisible filmmakers. Thus, the gesture of veiling seems to be attached to a form of expressing subjectivity, just as we have seen it in *Flotel Europa*. The veil equals here with a restriction of point of view, indicating that what we see is merely a fragment of a whole.

There are examples of remediation through medium-specific noise where the emotional wrap added to the image is nostalgia, indicated also by the term technostalgia (see van der Heijden 2015). This is the case of Gábor Zsigmond Papp's documentary series containing such titles as *Budapest Retro 1–2* (2002, 2003), *Balaton Retro* (2007), *Hungarian Retro 1–2* (2010, 2014). These documentaries are based on 16 mm celluloid-based newsreels that were usually projected in Hungarian cinemas before feature films. The veiling texture of the 16 mm celluloid can be seen as a way of distancing, as an ironic treatment of the often naive scenes in order to reveal their absurdity, but in the meantime it also induces a feeling of nostalgia through empathy towards the once palpable celluloid material.[15]

Ruptures and Fissures on the Skin of the Past

While the examples belonging to the veiling strategy demonstrated how noisy matter is used to wrap the visible and to generate emotional engagement, sometimes errors are used as ruptures, dissections on the film's body and are

15 Arild Fetveit argues that nostalgia articulated through noises "does not return us to a longed-for past, but sets up a relation to the past" (2013, 208).

meant to generate embodied experiences related to a specific historical event. Within this strategy, various errors suddenly break the opacity of the medium (and all its cultural, political and aesthetic implications) in order to question the images' relationship to the real.

Videograms of a Revolution incited much theoretical interest for uncovering the ways images operate and for testing the Flusserian hypothesis on the role images play in historical events.[16] Images, instead of representing the event with all its complexities, become the site of the event, or at least an "essential ingredient" in them (Ruchel-Stockmans 2015, 62). In *Videograms* there are at least two gestures in which medium plays a crucial role among the attempts "to create a space for critique from within the images" (Ruchel-Stockmans 2015, 62). First of all, a sense of rupture and discontinuity is caused by the juxtaposition of multiple types of images as a continuous time flow: the film structures the events of the 1989 Romanian revolution as a colossal 3D puzzle, as it combines different viewpoints of the same event. There is a multiplication of fields of vision, marked by different mediatic veils, like those of the live TV broadcasts and amateur video. Through editing they become oppositional: TV as the medium and the institution of the control society and amateur video as the inarticulate, a medium of the private sphere. By juxtaposing them, their discrepancies come to the fore, and – as video renders visible what TV images conceal – they become ideal to supplement each other during the expansive investigation of the event (Ruchel-Stockmans 2015, 72).

However, the most significant visual error embedded in the film is the technical disturbance that interrupts the live broadcast of Nicolae Ceauşescu's last public speech. [Figs. 13–14.] The dictator's carefully planned speech and his attempt to reaffirm his position of power fails when the mass gathering transforms into a fervent protest. TV images try to conceal the disobedient crowd by turning the camera away from the turmoil, yet a sudden interference in the signal renders the image unstable and eventually interrupts the live broadcast. Thus precariousness and error tears the pre-fabricated aesthetics of the control society, moreover image disturbance becomes the event of the revolution, the very moment of the falling apart of a totalizing system. [Figs. 15–16.] The moment of rupture is enhanced with the subtitling of the broadcasting team's barely audible discussion trying to explain the error, one of them even utters: "earthquake."

Theorists of the 1990s conceptualized the televised revolution in Romania as the "end of history," as being *l'art pour l'art* (Flusser 1990), a reality of the image

16 For a detailed overview of the filmmaking process and an in-depth analysis of the film see Ruchel-Stockmans 2015, 55–97.

or an example of simulacra and dissolution of history (Baudrillard 1994, 54). But recently emerged concepts, such as non-cinema (Nagib 2016; Brown 2016), allow it to understand these ruptures as "going underneath the surface," as part of a counter-aesthetics based on errors precisely to occupy an oppositional stance towards an established image regime (itself derived from a real social regime) and to reconnect the precarious images with a reality in transition. The aesthetics of non-cinema, in a post-indexical manner, considers the artifice of cinema as a passage to the material reality via medial transmissions and variations (see the interview with Lucia Nagib in the present issue of the journal).

Andrei Ujică, as the director of *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceauşescu* (the follow up of *Videograms*) has declared: "if you are attentive and look hard enough – and this is why the film must be this long – you discover that no propaganda in the world can manage to make a complete *mise en scène* out of reality. Behind or on the sides of the images you discover fragments of true life" (Peranson 2010, 67). He calls it infra-level (as opposed to meta-level) realism to use nonfictional raw material, as one of his main preoccupations is the primary discourse of a film (instead of a secondary discourse of the found footage director). Andrei Ujică capitalizes on the excesses and margins of representation and lets images speak for themselves[17] in *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceauşescu*, and his commentary upon the images is expressed mostly through an intricate combination of naturalistic and abstract sounds.

Looking behind images, peeping through the tectonic lines becomes important within this infra-vision at a key point of the film. At the beginning of the third hour of the film, there is a cut to a black screen over which screaming and commotion can be heard. This sound fragment is a historical document, as the director explains: "on the evening of March 4, 1977, at 9.22 p.m., a 7.3-magnitude earthquake hit Romania, destroying a vast part of Bucharest and having an impact on the entire southern area of the country. At that very time, the Radio Hall was hosting a symphonic concert. The earthquake took place during the break, but a magnetophone was on in the recording cabin, to 'catch the background,' as they say. It recorded a little over twenty seconds of earthquake noise, half of the total duration. We wanted to give this acoustic document a context fitting its gravity, that's why we put it on black" (White 2011).

Thus, real noises become like a black screen that ruptures the fabric of *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceauşescu*; for a few moments unruly sounds suggest

17 Harun Farocki had a similar definition of his work with images: "my way is to look for submerged meaning, clearing away the detritus on the images" (Foster 2004, 158).

a world missing from the official pantomime. Sound turns off the image, just like the revolution as disturbance had done it in the previous film. By taking up the metaphor of earthquake from *Videograms*, a rupture of the image is produced to designate a real earthquake. Reaching the infra-level means getting under the skin of the film, which combined with the archaeological approach to images (the search for meaningful micro-moments) constitutes strategies to re-assert the historical truth.

Marta Popidova in Y*ugoslavia* also uses the electronic disturbances of the videos made during the events marking the disintegration of the confederation. In her film errors of the image signal the transformation of the unified collective into a gang that does not restrain itself from pointless vandalism. Just as an individualist crowd emerges, and people enthusiastically engage themselves in the destruction of the remnants of the former Yugoslavia, the image becomes more imperfect. Visibility is reduced by profilmic blurring effects, like images of smoke on the streets, but also by the grainy texture and the hesitant use of the medium of video. [Figs. 17–18.] Thus, just as we have seen it in *Videograms* and in *The Autobiography*, medium-specific noises can break the illusion of a (visual) regime in order to indicate the beginning of a state of transition. The technical disturbance in *Videograms*, just like a Barthesian *punctum*, signals the beginning of an intermediary state of an unruly image operation that will last until the establishment of a new televisual image regime. In *The Autobiography* the earthquake of the image also signals the start of a harsher period in the life of the dictator and of the country that eventually led to the much darker period of the 1980s' Romanian communism.

The Iconoclasm of the Interval

In the films that create a sense of rupture via tactility, medial imperfections do not mean an effacing of the visible, much rather they indicate the moment when a change occurs within the regimes of the visible. On the other hand, the strategy of iconoclasm is about letting astray all the indexical expectations from images' visibility and releasing the image as pure sensation. It is like moving within the gap between the image and its medium in order mobilize the viewer into an active participant in finding meaning.

The key example of this strategy is *The Second Game* (*Al doilea joc*, 2014), directed by Corneliu Porumboiu, a Romanian New Wave director known for his variations on conceptual realism (State 2015). His move into experimental

nonfiction designates in fact a fiction filmmaker's quest for the real within the non-cinematic, or on the "margins of cinema," as one of his critics disapprovingly remarked (State 2015, 87). Porumboiu declared that he had chosen to recycle this specific football game because he remembered it as the worst image he had ever seen on television.[18] The film consists in the remediation of a VHS recording of a football game's live broadcast from December 3, 1988, played by the two main Romanian teams, Steaua and Dinamo. The football event has an autobiographical character as well, as the director remembers watching it live on television, and furthermore, his father, Adrian Porumboiu was the referee of the game. Shortly after the game started, a heavy snowfall began that made the profilmic reality barely discernible. The blurriness caused by the snow is doubled by the medial noises of the televisual broadcast and the grainy texture of the VHS recording. On the soundtrack we can hear the discussion of the filmmaker with his father as they rewatch the game, just like a home video, 25 years later. Their discussion tackles questions of ethics and aesthetics, such as the rules of the game, sport etiquette during socialism, or the visual style of the live broadcast, in which the director even recognizes a similarity with his own preference for long sequences. The voiceover commentary introduces questions related to memory, inheritance and the representation of history to the issues of intermediality and visibility implied by the images. It is precisely due to these questions that Patricia Pfeifer has chosen the term interval to describe the film, which she also sees "as a media-based interstice and as an aesthetic-epistemological approach to a retrospective understanding of history" (2017, 238). The term is borrowed from the title of an exhibition, *The Seductiveness of the Interval*, opened at the Romanian pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2014, where Porumboiu's film was commissioned to be part of an architectural site-specific installation representing the interval. Within the rich discussion about the uses of the in-between in Porumboiu's film, the author uses the words break and interruption as synonyms of the interval (Pfeifer 2017, 235), moreover she compares it with the technical interference that occurred during Ceauşescu's last speech (Pfeifer 2017, 239). However, it is also important to stress the differences between interval and interruption. While the strategy of rupture is actually a dramaturgic one, disturbance marks the moment of transformation visually (and in the case of *Videograms* we also see what precedes it, and its outcome too); in *The Second Game* the interval could be perceived as an opening, or as a temporal frame, yet unshaped and uncanny, longing for the spectators' willingness to unfold it and connect to it by activating their own

18 Q&A session after the screening of the film at Transylvania Film Festival, Cluj-Napoca, 2014.

historical consciousness. Instead of emphasizing the break, I propose to think of it as flow, where the phenomenology of the passage is more important than the state of before and after. *The Second Game* is about this intermediary state of transition, the in-between of television, VHS and the cinematic screen, but also about the in-between of a socialist past and the present. In order to sustain and to expand the interval, the director restrains himself from editing and embraces the unruly, noisy in the image as a kind of iconoclasm.[19] The game is scarcely visible, there are difficulties in locating the ball in the image, and all the players are effaced. [Figs. 19–20.] In terms of media aesthetics, *The Second Game* renders its own corporeality visible on the detriment of images of corporeality. By showing the textures and incongruities of the skin of the film, this strategy capitalizes on haptic vision, on pure sensation that according to László Tarnay can relate us to our mental images, to the non-thinkable (2017, 24). Thus, the iconoclasm of the interval is meant to set our consciousness free from any kind of images that shaped our imagination in the past, or in the present. The reliance on the sensible materiality and on indefinite vision provokes desire in the viewer towards the unmediated, "the object perceptively 'lacking' in the image" (Tarnay 2017, 26).

Fetveit also understands the ubiquitous uses of medium-specific noise as a form of iconoclasm, that according to Groys can be defined as a rivalry between media, "as a sign of progress, where it appears to clear our path of all that has become redundant, powerless and void of inner meaning" (Groys quoted by Fetveit 2013, 205). From this perspective, the iconoclasm of the interval in *The Second Game* can be seen as a retooling of what was formerly unwanted noise (at least this is how Porumboiu's father sees the images) into an artistic device that allows "to approach that which cannot be integrated into the narrative of historical continuity" (Pfeifer 2017, 248).

Conclusion

These found footage films show us images that do not represent reality, but rather trigger our imaginary. They seem to challenge the concept of the frame as a container of images, or the frame as the boundary of a meaningful whole, instead they feature the image as a surface, or in Laura Marks's terms, a haptic visuality: "it is most valuable to think of the skin of the film not as a screen

19 Black frames in-between the flow of images occasionally appear in *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceauşescu* as well, but they are intended as a respite between main chapters, rather than iconoclastic. (See the interview with Bunescu, Filippi and Rus 2011.)

but as a membrane that brings its audience into contact with material form of memory" (Marks 2000, 243). In these films the aesthetics of medium-specific noises afford sensable versions of history. Doing history through this type of films means being open to reverberate with new sensations and to rework our own memories. Communicative memory, as a type of historical consciousness that is not yet solidified, seems to go hand in hand with indefinite vision in these Eastern European films.

Sensual archaeology, veiling, rupture and iconoclasm are strategies that resort to errors, repetition and excess, and to different degrees reject the pre-constitution of meanings, the comforts of visibility in order to lure the viewers into their own quest for hidden meanings and memories. These strategies afford the viewer their own "noisy brush with the infinite" (Marks, 2013). Visual contingencies do not achieve the effect of immediacy, they do not figurate the real, they appear instead as hypermediated, as constraints of the real or even of iconic figuration, and they bring us back to the litter (Assmann 1996) or to the stain, the sheer marker of existence (Doane 2007). Images become noise, rhythm and music. They are sounding history (just as tapping on the membrane of a drum) through medium-specific noise.

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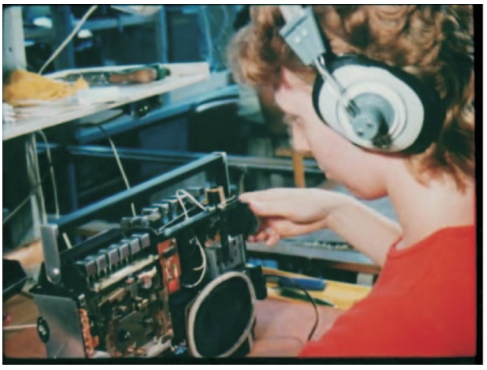
Figures 3–4. Two scenes, one about the radio-production line and the other about the tuning of the bells, put emphasis on a world of sounds.



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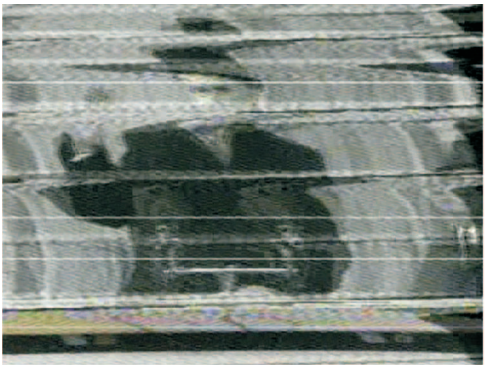
Figures 11–12. Electronic disturbances veiling the images in the digitized version of the VHS tapes in *Flotel Europa*. .

Figures 13–14. The revolution as a disturbance in the live television broadcast in *Videograms*.



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Figures 19–20. The reduction of visibility in *The Second Game* sometimes results in poetic images reminiscent of the soft focus pictorialist aesthetics. The few close ups and medium shots of the film are actually effacing the players and rendering them uncanny.

SPECIAL DOSSIER: AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF INTERMEDIALITY STUDIES

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Approaches to Studying Intermediality in Contemporary Cinema

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Abstract. The article attempts a brief overview and evaluation of the main theoretical approaches that have emerged in the study of cinematic intermediality in the last decades since intermediality has become an established research term in media studies. It distinguishes three major paradigms in theorizing intermedia phenomena and outlines some of the directions of change in the intermedial strategies of recent films. It identifies in contemporary cinema a tendency to add new dimensions to the relations of in-betweenness regarding both the connection of cinema to reality and its inter-art entanglements. Finally, the article describes a new type of intermediality, which integrates elements of trans-textuality, creating a format of expanded cinema within cinema. This strategy is presented in the context of Eastern European cinema through a short case study of Cristi Puiu's film, *Sieranevada* (2016).[1]

Keywords: theory of intermediality, in-betweenness, Raymond Bellour's double helix, Cristi Puiu, *Sieranevada*.

Paths in the Theoretical Jungle

Several decades after the idea of intermediality came into the spotlight within communication and media studies, and at a time when studies of cinematic intermediality have gained new momentum through the vigorous research activity within several academic projects at universities around the world, the variety in approaches and a burgeoning scholarly literature interwoven with far too many metaphors may still puzzle anyone trying to get acquainted with the field. I would like to address, therefore, headlong this heterogeneity of the discourse on intermediality and review its major directions of thought, briefly

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assessing their implications and productivity. In the process of mapping the theoretical field, I have tentatively identified three major paradigms (conceived around the ideas of: a) media borders, b) in-betweenness, c) connecting the real and the intermedial), which I will summarize below. These paradigms may be seen as partially overlapping, nevertheless, they all have their divergent vantage points in perception and methodology.

a) Blurring the Borders

The "crossing of media borders" is one of the most persistent metaphors in the study of intermediality, one that is at the centre of perhaps the most clearly identifiable paradigms in the study of intermediality. Irina Rajewsky considers it as "a founding category" (2010, 52, cf. also 2002, 11–15). In the same vein, Lars Elleström defines intermediality as "a result of constructed media borders being trespassed," and postulates that even though "there are no media borders given by nature […] we need borders to talk about intermediality" (2010, 27). By now, talking of "blurred borders" and "media trespasses" have not only entered the vocabulary of intermedial analyses but they have also become somewhat blurry figures of speech themselves, frequently divorced from a precise theoretical background. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that the rhetoric based on the metaphor of media borders originates in a particular perspective that defines a very important and broad avenue in intermediality studies.

The borders in question are admittedly constructed (historically, cognitively and conventionally) and perceivable on different levels as differences that frame each medium coming into contact with another. Theoretical writings based on such "border-talks" conceive intermediality as a relationship between media and are concerned with typologies of modalities and operations that can identify what happens to media (more precisely, to media forms or media characteristics) in an inter-media relationship. Media differences constitutive of their "borders" as well as similarities which enable their interpenetration are equally important. Broadly speaking, and disregarding the terminological debates, according to such typologies, in an intermedial border crossing: a) media are fused, combined, integrated to form a complex multimedia or hybrid entity,[2] b) media (forms, characteristics, products) are represented, referenced by other media, or c)

2 This is the case of the so-called synthetic intermediality in Jens Schröter's view (cf. 2011, 2012). It is also one of Elleström's main categories for intermedial relations (2010).

characteristics (which are either specific to one medium or not[3]) are transposed, trans-mediated,[4] trans-semioticised (Gaudreault and Marion 2004), transformed or re-mediated. The pursuit of refining such typologies makes use of diverse theories of communication but it is ultimately rooted in semiotics and aspires to produce definitions of categories that can function as a conceptual framework for identifying intermedial relations across different media. Much of this type of scholarship deliberately aims to develop a meta-theory, working on definitions of what intermediality is and elaborating a universal grammar of intermediality of sorts applicable to the analysis of a variety of media phenomena. As such, it is conceived primarily as a branch of media studies which it attempts to "fine tune" and amend.[5] On the one hand, looking further back for connections, we may see a great affinity with the tradition of aesthetics dealing with the idea of the "sister arts," the rivalry and limitations of specific art forms.[6] On the other hand, this avenue connects surprisingly easily to the relatively newer area of transmedia, cross-media or media convergence studies of the digital age, despite their completely opposite premise (i.e. instead of the emphasis on borders that separate and distinguish individual media, and across which "trespasses" are made, these studies presuppose that such borders have already collapsed in a so called post-media age). Although they deal with practices making use of the merging and interconnectedness of formerly distinct media technologies and media forms within a digital environment, and a "convergence culture" where old and new media meet in a "flow of content across multiple media platforms" (Jenkins 2006, 2), the focus is similarly on categories and operations in a perspective that is essentially the flip side of intermedial "border-talks."[7]

3 Schröter describes this latter instance as formal (or transmedial) intermediality, "a concept based on formal structures not 'specific' to one medium but found in different media" (2011).

4 In Elleström's definition: "transmediation is repeated mediation by another type of medium (exemplified by adaptation)" (2014, 11).

5 See in this respect Elleström's criticism of Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's seminal book, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (1999), which, he writes: "is full of relevant observations but severely lacks in-depth theoretical discussions on the nature and different forms of 'remediation.' The authors' notions of media and remediation are acutely vague. In a way, my own study is an attempt to develop more finely tuned notions that rival the all-embracing concept of remediation of Bolter and Grusin" (2014, 7–8).

6 I.e. as manifested in the Renaissance concept of *paragone*, in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's famous *Laocoön* essay (1767), or the Wagnerian ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (1849).

7 Jean-Marc Larue's short article (2014) also supports this idea of connecting these theories by presenting remediation, hypermediation, media convergence, and transmediality as ideas that emerged in logical succession.

b) Being In-Between

The alternative to the paradigm based on the border metaphor (and its research goals of identifying a limited set of well-defined media characteristics and operations describing their trespassing "movements" or mergers) can be seen in theoretical pursuits that shift the emphasis towards the idea of some kind of in-betweenness. At first sight this might seem related to the former metaphorical image of media boundaries, and indeed the concept does occur in writings belonging to the first type mentioned here and which briefly acknowledge the existence of liminal/contact/border zones when discussing intermedial occurrences (e.g. Rajewsky 2010, 59). Still, there is also a vast and far more heterogeneous area of a variety of theoretical approaches which converge on the notion of in-betwenness based on different philosophical perspectives and which have usually very little to do with the semiotics-based scholarship of intermediality outlined before.

Bernd Herzogenrath observes, quoting the Fluxus artist Dick Higgins's words who coined the term "intermedia" in 1966, that "intermedium" is not only the "uncharted land that lies between" (2012, 2) in the sense that it comprises "the links (and cross-breeds) between various art forms" but also in the sense of connecting "various disciplines with which we talk about these media. […] Intermedia[lity] thus can very literally be described as between the between" (2012, 2). While the border metaphor prevails in the attempts to forge a solid theoretical framework for a single discipline of intermedial studies dealing with all media forms, the metaphor of in-betweenness not only suggests an impossibility of pinning down the boundaries, a state of instability, of being in the "blur" (rather than the act of blurring formerly distinct entities), but it is also a key notion which opens the way to the absorption of different methodologies as well as a multiplication of perspectives regarding the phenomena of intermediality.

In terms of theorizing, so far, the application of post-structuralist philosophies has been the most productive in the exploration and "opening up" of the in-between. One could not even attempt a comprehensive survey here, suffice it to say that thoughts of Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard have influenced important researches into intermediality from this perspective. Based on Deleuze, for example, Herzogenrath redefines the main issues in this way: "rhizomatic interconnections among the various media are what constitute the field of intermedia[lity]. Intermedia[lity] is thus the 'media-version' of the plane of immanence, of that fractal surface – which is not to say that first there are different media, and then there is intermedia[lity]: this rhizomatic

intermedia[lity] is the quasi-ontological plane underlying all media, out of which the specific media that we know percolate, so to speak" (2012, 3). Intermediality has often been articulated through Foucault's notion of *heterotopia* (e.g. in Borer, Schellow, Schimmel, Wodianka, eds. 2013) as an in-betweenness of space, time and media forms.[8] Then again, in-betweenness has also been theorized not as a metaphorical or unidentifiable place, a state, but in terms of Lyotard's notion of the figural (with strong links to phenomenology and psychoanalysis). To quote Lyotard himself, the figural arises as an "interworld" in the text, something "a linguistic space cannot incorporate without being shaken, an exteriority it cannot interiorize as signification" but remains "steadfastly within the sensory" and "every form of discourse exhausts itself before exhausting it" (2011, 7). In the book *Reading the Figural* (2001), David Rodowick argues that the figural can be seen "as a transversal concept" (2001, 32) that can demolish the illusory divide of the textual versus visual from both sides, and reverses Lyotard's perspective (who starts from observing the text) by identifying the work of the figural within the media hybridity of cinema, where its effect is to challenge "the self-coherence of the visual" (2001, 33). It is Joachim Paech who explicitly applies the notion to cinematic intermediality, defining it "as a perceivable figure of media difference which disturbs the order of the discourse" (2011, 73) as a radical heterogeneity.

Viewing intermediality in terms of the figural is therefore the perfect model of in-betweenness, for instead of delimiting media boundaries, it reveals their deep imbrication, it connects the discursive with the non-discursive, universally recognizable structures with whatever cannot be fitted into categories. Moreover, if we remember Lyotard's poetic description linking the figural with beauty, the sublime, and what he calls the untamed "silence of art" standing "as plasticity and desire, a curved expanse against invariability" (2011, 7), we can see that the figural not only brings a welcome "leap into the void" (Rodowick 2001, 4) of in-betweenness, but it may highlight what is singular in each instance of intermediality, much in the spirit of Dick Higgins's original idea that intermedial works are "not governed by rules; each work determines its own medium and form according to its needs" (2001, 50). As such, this line of thought, influenced by diverse strands of so-called post-structuralist philosophies, leads the way in the exploration of intermediality not as an abstract set of relationships (i.e. a kind of grammar), but as an ever-changing aesthetic configuration, and a sensuously perceivable excess.[9]

8 See more on intermediality conceived in terms of heterotopia in Pethő (2011, 42–43).

9 Henk Oosterling, for example, speaks of a "sensible" intermediality in which "the sensible, as a reflective sensibility, balances between presence and absence: going back and forth from one medium to the other," and considers it as "a movement in which positions are articulated in the

While the previous avenue of intermedial studies is heading in one specific direction (i.e. the general theory of intermediality applicable for each separate media), this type of scholarship, which has gained much traction in film studies, has successfully decentred the field both with an emphasis on dealing with specific instances of intermediality through analyses of works, auteurs or stylistic trends in diachronic or synchronic cross-section, and with freely adopting and combining concepts not only from media studies or philosophy but from a wide range of disciplines (including film theory, art history, aesthetics, psychology, anthropology, etc.). The direction set by philosophies of in-betweenness was also recently reinforced by studies focusing on the "liminal" in cultural and post-colonial studies, which extended the idea of the "blurry area" of in-betweenness to interpreting historical, cultural, social and psychological phenomena.

c) Remapping Intermediality and Rethinking In-Betweenness

Moving beyond the widespread influence of post-structuralism, the most intriguing new perspectives for thinking about intermediality in cinema have been brought by the works of recent philosophers and film theorists like Alain Badiou, Jacques Rancière, Giorgio Agamben or Raymond Bellour, who have explicitly written about cinema and offered new vantage points for interpreting its hybridity. Although these theoretical approaches are far from being similar in many respects, there are a few aspects that loosely connect them: for example, without mentioning the term intermediality, they all implicitly point toward expanding the area to be considered in intermediality studies beyond media. They suggest diverse possibilities to radically rethink, this time not the metaphor of media borders but another core assumption of intermediality, namely that this is something that happens between media, that its relevance extends solely to relations between media.

Alain Badiou interprets the designation of "the seventh art" not as indicative of the position of cinema among the arts but of the way it is constituted: it is not simply another art added to the succession of previously existing ones, but as he famously says, it is the "plus-one" of the arts in the sense that "it operates on the other arts, using them as its starting point, in a movement that subtracts them from themselves" (2013, 89). Badiou writes: "all the arts flow through cinema. […] Cinema uses and magnifies them, according them a distinctive emotional power. There's a power of revelation of the arts, a power of subjugation of the arts in cinema that truly makes it the seventh art" (2013, 7).

awareness that they are principally relational and provisional" (2003, 43).

And although the metaphor of the "breached borders" resurfaces in his arguments, he also makes it clear that any "movement from one art to another" is a false one, a subtraction, "an allusive quotation of the other arts," through which we have a fleeting passage of an idea, like a "visitation," cinema working essentially as an "art of memory," for, as Badiou notes, "what I will have seen or heard lingers on to the very extent that it passes" (2013, 88). Reviving André Bazin's metaphor of "impurity," he considers cinema to be "an impure art" (Badiou 2013, 93), that is, "a knot that ties together" the movements in which cinema not only "wrests the[se] arts away from themselves" (2013, 92), but also connects to the domain of non-art[10] and becomes contaminated[11] by it. Accordingly, it is not the image that identifies cinema but this kind of "impurity," and cinema as artistic practice can be conceived as a never completed "process of purification of its own immanent non-artistic character" (2013, 139). Through this key notion Badiou weaves together the inter-art relations in film with a set of other relationships outside the arts which are closely linked to them.

We see a similar gesture of extending and remapping the area where cinema (and thinking about cinema) operates on the principle of in-betweenness in Jacques Rancière's recent writings (2014). Only instead of Badiou's vision of binding together the divergent aspects of cinema, Rancière "pulls" them apart, by emphasizing the "gaps" or "intervals" (*les écarts*) of cinema. Like Badiou, Rancière, too, speaks of the "impurity" of cinema and highlights the revelatory experience of cinephilia for the perception of the medium's essential hybridity in which the discovery of a "closer and less obvious linkage between the types of art" may occur at the same time with the experience of "the emotions of the narrative" or "the splendour that the most commonplace objects could acquire on a lighted screen in a dark auditorium" (2014, 3). Questioning the very unity of the art, he states, "cinema exists only as a set of irreducible gaps between things that have the same name without being members of a single body" (2014, 5). "The gaps of cinema are the results of cinema being other to itself – this internal heterogeneity producing extensions or relations with literature, politics, and other art forms. Gaps and extensions make cinema overflow itself. These 'gaps'

10 Badiou considers in this respect the connections between the art of cinema and cinema as entertainment, a product of the movie industry, as a medium "steeped into the infinite of the real" (2013, 18).

11 Perhaps Badiou can also be credited with bringing into vogue a series of biological metaphors like cross-pollination, contamination, fertilization, etc. that have pervaded the recent texts written on intermediality.

are precisely what make it excessive in the sense of extending the questions and experiences it produces to other 'non-cinematic' fields" (Rancière 2012).[12]

Giorgio Agamben joins the rank of the contemporary philosophers who venture into these 'non-cinematic' fields not only through considering film as a "nexus of relationships between differently constituted objects and practices" (Harbord 2016, 217), and as the champion of what Janet Harbord, the author of a recent monograph on his work calls "ex-centric cinema" (2016), driven by a veritable fascination with what is external to it, but most of all, through dislodging the image from the centre of discourse on cinema altogether and replacing it with "gesture." Thus, for Agamben, cinema re-enacts the tale of the living statue: "the mythical rigidity of the image has been broken" as the cinematic world unfolds a "dream of a gesture" (2000, 55), he writes. "Properly speaking, there are no images but only gestures" (2000, 55) in cinema. Gesture itself is articulated in multiple ways as an agent of in-betweenness, between dance and image, language and pure spectacle, the body as an "exhibition of mediality," of "being-in-a-medium" (2000, 57) and its obliteration by the alienating machinic gaze of the cinematic apparatus, and ultimately as the "intersection between life and art" (2000, 79).

This recovery of the non-cinematic and cinema's various relationships with the real within thinking about cinematic hybridity in the writings of these theorists not only institutes a new kind of "border-talk," this time between art and non-art, the real and the intermedial, but it is also marked by a strong emphasis on performativity (on what intermediality does). Unlike the metaphors of "media trespasses" of the first paradigm, which define what intermediality is in an abstract fashion, these relationships are considered here literally as action and interaction, as relations of power and conflict with the possibility of unearthing tensions that go beyond the realm of media. As Badiou once said, cinema is not "a peaceful art."[13] A great contribution to this line of thought is Lúcia Nagib's elaboration on the "politics of impurity" (2014), which draws inspiration from Bazin's visionary ideas, and connects intermediality conceived in terms of impurity with Rancière's notion of dissensus, "which establishes new relations between reality and appearance, the individual and the collective, multiplying

12 Endnote to Rancière's article in NECSUS (2012) written by Sudeep Dasgupta in consultation with Rancière.

13 Badiou speaks of cinema as "the visibility of the conflict between art and non-art in the contemporary world" in a public lecture delivered in 2015 at the University of New South Wales, Sidney, available on YouTube *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Arwso3fy50M&t=2320s.* Last accessed 17. 07. 2018.

the possibilities of the film medium in a polemical way, while challenging its own limits and the power of representation" (2014, 37).

The disruptive way in which intermedial relations are enacted in cinema are perhaps most explicitly spelled out by Raymond Bellour in the essays collected in his two books (1990, 1999) written about all kinds of mixtures between photo, cinema, video, painting, literature, and digital media. His key concepts of "entre-images" or "images-in-between" unfold a vision of in-betweenness in which forms are "hollowed out from within" (2012, 21) or "irrigated" by the new forces that surround it (2012, 21), there are fissures, interventions, intrusions, collusions and corruptions. Speaking about an "explosion" of cinema into other forms of moving images, Bellour shifts the discourse on in-betweenness from "media" as a system of signs (similarly to Badiou or Rancière's inspiration drawn from their own cinephilia) to the more palpable, real-life framework of the "dispositifs" in which they are experienced, and where, again, he sees in-betweenness in terms of multiplication, tension and as the title of his more recent book indicates, *The Battle of the Dispositifs* (2012b). At this point I will conclude this brief (and unavoidably incomplete) overview of some of the central questions regarding the state of the art in what can be defined as a broadly inclusive area of intermediality studies. What is important to note regarding these three major paradigms (1. based on the idea of "media trespasses;" 2. contact-zones mapped through post-structuralist philosophies; 3. rethinking in-betweenness between art and non-art, the real and the intermedial) is that despite partial overlaps (less between the first and the other two, more between the second and third), there is no unified framework here. If we try to assess the research output in these areas, we can see that, notwithstanding all the rigour of scientific accuracy and a declared purpose of elaborating adequate tools for the analyses of a wide range of intermedial phenomena, the studies based on "trans-semiotic border-talks" which make use of a media studies framework without any hybridization with other fields of theoretical inquiry have so far proved to be rather self-enclosed. They remain within the bounds of abstract meta-theory, the most important achievements in this paradigm are the carefully elaborated definitions of what intermediality is and the identification of its subcategories. (Whereas analyses which apply these well-defined categories are often satisfied with pigeonholing instances of intermediality and thus prove to be derivative and less productive in their results.) Researches that adhere to the second and third paradigms conceive intermediality in terms of multiple in-betweennesses, and open up new avenues by acknowledging the need for multiplication of perspectives as well. They

consist of case studies and theoretical investigations which seem only loosely associated with the kind of intermediality studies (rooted in semiotics and media studies) practiced in the first paradigm. Their most productive lines of inquiries seek out new, interdisciplinary vantage points also at the level of methodologies (studying less the concept of intermediality *per se*, and focusing more on the contingencies, phenomenologies, philosophies and specific historical, poetical manifestations of intermediality).

In the following subchapter, based on ideas gleaned from the theoretical writings that redefine intermedial in-betweenness in the third paradigm drawn up earlier, I will present how a recent Eastern European film can help us to explore the changing strategies of intermediality in contemporary cinema, and even to sketch the contours of an emerging new type of intermedial and inter-art relationship.

Changing Strategies of In-Betweenness: the Double Helix of Intermediality

In order to highlight these new strategies, Raymond Bellour's metaphor of the double helix (1996) seems to be a good starting point. Bellour borrowed the notion of the double helix from molecular biology in an article written originally for the catalogue of the landmark exhibition entitled *Passages of the Image* (*Passages de l'image*, organized by the Pompidou Centre in Paris, in 1990, and which was the first of its kind to bring together photography, cinema, video and digital image installations in an intermedial dialogue). Through the complex model of the double helix Bellour further unpacks his concept of the images-in-between. Images in the digital age, he writes, are not only ubiquitous but ever harder to define as things-in-themselves; we experience them more in terms of "passages of the image," where the ambiguous preposition "of" includes not only the sense of "in-between" the images but also the viewers passing "in front of' images and a more obscure connection to "what is missing from the image" or to "what contains it" (1996, 174), a passage, as the motto chosen by Bellour from Henri Michaux's poem indicates, "from one mist to one flesh" (1996, 173). Furthermore, moving images combine embodied and disembodied experience, reality and artificiality, sensations and codes through the double helix structure intertwining two forms of analogy: the photographic reproduction of the real (i.e. the analogy based on natural vision), and the mechanical reproduction of movement (i.e. the way the cinematic apparatus creates its own visible world) (1996, 180). Although, in principle, this structure applies to all visual media, its complexity is enhanced

in cinema because "a pattern of possibilities is established, formed by the overlappings and passages that are capable of operating (technically, logically, and historically) between the different arts" (Bellour 1996, 180).

Extending the metaphor to another level, and taking into account the import of all the other recent theorizations which introduce the real into the discourse of intermediality, we may perhaps consider the inter-art and inter-media connections and analogies on the one hand, and the power of the cinematic image to resemble, represent and to rely on various "passageways" to material reality (from its production to its interpretation), on the other, as two sets of relations (comprising the domains of art and non-art) joined in a similar double helix. On both sides there are further interrelationships (or as Badiou would say, "impurities") at play, yet they are constantly interlocked. Intermediality operates in this way like the DNA of cinema, connecting the old with the new: "inherited" forms, patterns, conventions, with technological and aesthetic innovations and mutations. It weaves the fabric of cinema through its virtually infinite connections between the arts and an inalienable bond with perceptions of the real, anchored in bodily sensations.

But one should not insist too much on the metaphor in itself, its relevance is merely to suggest that this conjunction is where important changes can be seen regarding the intermedial poetics of contemporary cinema (besides the obvious area marked by CGI technology, where reality, artificiality and the passages between the arts can converge or diverge along a wide spectrum). There is a growing strategy to add new dimensions to the relations of in-betweenness in a way that ultimately produces a new type of intermediality emerging in contemporary cinema. This new type can be added to the other basic "templates" (see Pethő 2011, 95–179) that generate a more or less emphatic sense of intermediality within a film also based on inter-media/inter-art associations correlated with our sensations of the real (i.e. a sensual mode that brings forth impressions of other arts through a synesthetic experience of the world; and a structural mode that unravels the world into pieces and layers of media forms and representations). In these days of media convergence and multiplied real-intermedial and inter-art contact-zones, we can also distinguish an expansive mode that excessively stretches and "skews" the cinematic form in the direction of other arts and media, at times adding further trans-media extensions to a film, while on the other hand, many times, in parallel with the newest trends of site-specificity and the preference for more personal or immersive forms in the arts, it anchors the cinematic world further into a specific historical, cultural context. To co-opt

Rancière's terminology, in such an expansive mode, cinema may "overflow itself" (2012) both through the "gaps" between media (as it displays a chameleon-like ability to change its appearance to resemble the other arts and to be incorporated, remediated by other arts), as well as the "gaps" between the medium and physical reality (the connection to which is reinforced on many levels and in many ways). One such strategy relies on creating "contaminated" forms (to apply Badiou's term), on creating a format of "expanded cinema"[14] within cinema, in which there is a mutual infiltration between the arts and media, between art and non-art, through a unique expansion or folding of one form over the other. We can see in this way, for example, films which we experience as if they were conceived as prolonged video installations (often also reconfigured as such, relocated into the realm of installation art, with fragments extracted and displayed on multiple screens adapted to specific venues, e.g. Lech Majewski's *The Mill and the Cross*, 2011[15]), video blogs (e.g. Sally Potter's *Rage*, 2009), recorded theatre and/or multimedia performances (e.g. Peter Greenaway's 2007 *Nightwatching*, alongside his other, VJ performance-like films), and so on. As these examples suggest, this expansion may employ multiple strategies, but in what follows, I would like to present a more subtle and manifold "contamination" and "expansion" of cinema along both axes of the double helix through a closer look at the Romanian film *Sieranevada*, directed by Cristi Puiu in 2016.

The film, inspired by the events surrounding the death of the director's father, is about a family reunion on the occasion of the Orthodox ritual for remembering the dead forty days after the funeral. The large family is making preparations for the religious ceremony without much piety but with plenty of bickering. A great feast is prepared yet this is somewhat absurdly constantly delayed. According to the intentions of the director, the film presents the family gathering through the imagined perspective of the dead man, yet this point of view is never actually

14 The term "expanded cinema" was applied, in the mid 1960s, to avant-garde artworks that used moving images (e.g. video, multimedia performance) and sought to rethink the way moving images can be produced, exhibited and experienced beyond the framework of traditional cinema. The meaning of the term has also undergone some expansion, from a specific art movement that can be seen as a branch of so-called structuralist film that included elements of live performance and experiments with projections in unconventional locations, forms and multiple screens, to encompassing all kinds of new media art practices making use of moving images. The idea of viewing new media as an expansion of cinema beyond its traditional boundaries originates in Gene Youngblood's famous book with the same title (1970), which described the implications of new image-making technologies emerging after cinema.

15 In Julian Rosefeldt's *Manifesto* (2015) we have an example for the reverse procedure, in which installation art expands into cinema, i.e. scenes filmed for a multi-screen installation have been edited into a full-length film.

articulated in the film, and it is only the spectator who is in the position of watching through the mobile eyes of the camera, moving closely around the people as an invisible guest. With more than a dozen characters paraded in front of us, the film paints a contemporary fresco of "the human comedy" of contemporary Romanian society. In accordance with Agamben's iconoclastic rethinking of cinema, the absence of genuine mourning is filled with a rich choreography of everyday gestures in a truly gestural cinema that renounces classical dramaturgy for fluctuations in tensions, endlessly repeated acts of comings and goings from one room to another, doors opening and closing, people entangled in petty arguments, banal conversations peppered with political conspiracy theories, the venting of frustrations and bitter recriminations within an overcrowded apartment in Bucharest. [Figs. 1–3.]

Stretched over 173 minutes, the film challenges the attention span of the viewer, who gets immersed in this way not so much in a story, but in a world, in a sensuous universe of voices, gesticulating bodies moving in and out of the dark hallway and the cluttered rooms. Gesturality prevails over the image also in these richly decorated, box-like spaces, in which the paintings, mirrors, superimposed with photographs and holy icons all point to people having placed them there. Even the first images in which we may be struck by the pictorial quality of the composition, the scene is pervaded by the gestures of human intervention in the world, with the colourful graffiti in the background and the cars jostling around in the crowded street. And although the film may be seen also as a hilariously deadpan, post-communist variation on thematic or stylistic elements borrowed from the cinema of Luis Buñuel, John Cassavetes or Eric Rohmer, its strength resides in its quasi real-time format, making the viewer part of an experience resembling something in-between reality TV and the newest vogue of site-specific theatre, in which plays are staged within the confined space of people's homes, actors mingling with spectators, and making them literally "go through" the performance, thus "bleeding" art (or artifice) directly into the perception of reality and vice versa.[16]

In such a heavy contamination of cinema with theatricality on the one hand, and everydayness on the other, it is surprising to see how more sophisticated art references also pop up (something we are accustomed to see in Eastern European films with a more aestheticized style). Mantegna's *Dead Christ* or Michelangelo's *Pietá* is evoked in two scenes by the postures of the protagonists. [Figs. 4–5.]

16 Another recent Eastern European film to apply such a strategy is *It's Not the Time of My Life* (*Ernelláék Farkaséknál*), made in the same year as *Sieranveda*, in 2016. The Hungarian director, Szabolcs Hajdu actually adapted his own play performed originally as a site-specific theatre show into a so-called no-budget film made with the collaboration of his own family and students.

In both cases, what we have is not a clear reference, but only a hint, a fleeting impression that lingers over the image, or "passes through" exemplifying what Badiou describes as the "the visitation of the idea in cinema" (2013, 123), like the passage of "grace" coming through the transparent veil of the images. While similar images that we encounter throughout global commercial cinema and popular art are used as fairly straightforward devices meant to add a degree of sophistication to the image, the examples in Eastern European cinema, as several previous studies have shown,[17] are usually much more ambivalent or layered. In this case, they appear side by side with references to Western politics and culture (for example, in the form of the argument over the Disney costume of the little girl) and within a much more complex framework, in which the idea that comes along with the *Dead Christ* or the *Pietá* may be perceived both in terms of irony (mocking the chaotic gathering and the lack of cultured sophistication) and in terms of a genuine yearning for authentic mourning as well as for a connection to (European) high art. With regards to art references, Mircea Valeriu Deaca (2016) notes that although everything in the film revolves around a ceremonial feast, the most obvious art reference, the one to Da Vinci's *Last Supper* is missing, and he interprets this absence as a gesture of denying the bearded protagonist, Lary, the central role and the association with Christ. However, we do find a reference to the *Last Supper*, only it comes not in the film, but in the poster made for the film, in the arrangement of the family chatting and smiling at the dinner table (quite inappropriately for a funeral reception). [Fig. 6.] The image devised for the international distribution takes into account the expectations of the market regarding the specific Eastern European "brand," in which irony, ambivalence, sophisticated allusion is something to be expected.

We should be aware, nevertheless, that Cristi Puiu himself created another poster for the film, which was used for its domestic advertising, and which shows the fog-infused outskirts of Bucharest with a string of typically dreary blocks of flats lined up under the horizon and a frozen lake in the foreground with a flock of black crows gathered around the patch of thin ice in the middle. [Fig. 7.] Designed by the director-author, this photo-pictorial poster art would have been in itself a meaningful trans-media extension of the work had it not opened the way towards another set of artworks altogether. And this brings us to the other possible strategy of this type of expansive intermediality.

In this mode we may see connections established across interrelated works conceived in multiple art forms in which one becomes the extension of the

17 The interpretation of art references is one of the key issues in the study of the intermediality of Eastern European cinema, see among others: Pethő (2014), Király (2016), Pieldner (2016).

other. This mode integrates elements of intermediality with trans-textuality (e.g. in the present case, the actor Mimi Brănescu, who was used deliberately as a connection to *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* [*Moartea domnului Lăzărescu*], 2005) and transmediality (meaning that different interconnected works constitute parts of the same universe). This extension happens most of the times in the direction of installation art. Several examples from contemporary cinema may come to mind: from the installations of Pedro Costa to those of Apichatpong Weerasethakul. Or we may remember that Béla Tarr also broke his earlier promise not to make any more films, in a way, by exhibiting a newly shot short film within an art installation expanding the universe of his films at the Eye Film Museum in Amsterdam in 2017.[18] In the case of Puiu, the extension was made in the direction of photography. Searching for an adequate image for the poster art, the director took hundreds of photographs at the outskirts of Bucharest, a selection of which was exhibited at the Baril Art Gallery in Cluj in June 2017 (and later in the same year in the Art Museum in Arad). At this exhibition, the whole collection was made available to the public in the form of a photo album printed in one copy, displayed in the same space together with a selection of the photos hung on the wall and a booklet containing an in-depth interview with the director, transforming the whole exhibition into a complex multimedia installation. The photos extend the universe we saw in the film by moving away, paradoxically, from the fictional story into the "real world," from the beehive of blocks of flats where Puiu staged the highly realistic family squabbles in his film towards a highly aestheticized, peaceful landscape covered with snow. The particular image chosen for the poster [Fig. 7] shows the frozen artificial lake created by a dam on the Dâmbovița river in the 1980s, also flooding in the process the site of an old cemetery. Conscious of its history, Puiu, elevates the foggy image into an expression of his own diffuse feelings of melancholy or anxiety overlaying the historical memory of the place. Other compositions also frame the cemetery next to the grey blocks of flats with its old headstones buried under snow or single out the lonely elements of the landscape, industrial buildings looming in the distance, tracks in the snow, some reduced to a few graphic elements only, like brushstrokes on a canvas. For the viewers of the exhibition, the series of elegantly minimalist, almost monochrome compositions framed in white, displayed on the white walls of the art gallery set up a perceivable aesthetic distance, cleanse the

18 The title of the exhibition was *Till the End of the World*, and it ran from 21 January to 7 May 2017. See: *https://www.eyefilm.nl/en/exhibition/b%C3%A9la-tarr-%E2%80%93-till-the-end-of-the-world.* Last accessed 17. 07. 2018.

universe of the film contaminated by the vulgarity of everydayness and introduce a visible gap not only between cinema and photography but also between art and non-art, reality and its sophisticated mediation. [Figs. 8–11.] Across these gaps the connections and reversals unfold an expansive artistic vision that ultimately challenges our perception of the world, and effectively reframes the real from multiple perspectives. Thus, in a chiastic structure, everydayness conveyed through the immersive realism of the film (ordinary happenings, real-time quarrels which we perceive more like "life" than art), i.e. non-art is shown as art, as a fictional story, while in the stylish, minimalistic photographs hung in the art gallery it is a highly sophisticated, visibly constructed art[19] that shows us real locations. A fictional family network unravels in front of us, up close and seemingly personal in the film, while what is actually deeply personal for the director[20] is conveyed through the impersonal, wide-angle landscape photography bordering on abstraction.[21]

This multiplicity of perspectives and manners of presentation (fictional, realistic, ordinary, sophisticated, metaphorical, artificial, abstract, personal, etc.) appears in an unusual form already in the title of the film (*Sieranevada*), written in a provocatively fine print and with a deliberate misspelling of the geographical name, Sierra Nevada. On a literal level, the word contains a puzzling and ambiguous misreference to a snowy mountain range either in Europe (Spain) or in America. The snowy images associated with the name may perhaps be loosely linked to the photographs taken in winter around the outskirts of Bucharest, but they have absolutely no connection with the film, in which the name is never mentioned (correctly or incorrectly) and only disorients the viewer who searches for hidden references. According to several press conference interviews with Puiu, he chose an absolutely arbitrary title to mock the practice of attaching labels to everything, and partly, also in protest against foreign distribution practices that usually change the title of films, thus making sure it will stay the same. In this way, however, without becoming a metaphor in the film, the title can be perceived as a subversive gesture of defiance and dissent added to the film, multiplying references in the sense Rancière conceives dissensus "as the

19 The photos were later further framed as "art" being published alongside the film in an expensive, collector's edition Blu-ray box-set with the author's unique handwritten quotations from the film and signature.

20 The pictures showing his own daughter and the drawing made by her included in the selection of exhibited photographs all reinforce this personal nature of the photographs.

21 We may go further and see also a bit of a site-specific irony in the fact that the immaculate, white box of the art gallery exhibiting these photos in Cluj is actually inside a shabby building of an old, abandoned factory.

presence of two worlds in one" (2010, 37), "the demonstration (manifestation) of a gap in the sensible itself" (2010, 38). The mistaken spelling, the meaning that may take us to two different places, the many possible associations, and finally the impossibility to connect any of them to the diegetic world intrigue the viewer, and introduce just the kind of "multiplicity of folds and gaps in the fabric of common experience that change the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible" that Rancière speaks about (2009, 72) when describing the "political" effect of an aesthetic experience.

Evoking a well-known name in the title yet making it strange on so many levels, reinforces in a condensed linguistic form the same characteristics that we saw in the art references connecting to and disconnecting the film from a conventional frame of reference. It demonstrates how intermedial strategies can emerge as interfaces between East and West, and as such, become inscriptions and articulations of a desire for cultural (re)connections, while, on the other hand, they can also stage an effective dissensus regarding the standardization of images (or words, concepts, etc.) within a globalized world. They employ the overflowing excess of the double helix of intermediality for enmeshing current general trends of aesthetic practices (e.g. "contaminating" cinema with forms of reality TV or site-specific theatre, engaging the complex relationship of interrelated artworks conceived in different media) as well as universally recognisable iconography with images enrooted within the intranslatability of specific, local anxieties and realities. Such examples as *Sieranevada*, Cristi Puiu's intertwined project of film and photography, present new and complex configurations of in-betweenness which challenge us to explore their uncharted implications by searching for theoretical tools that can reveal the depths and layers of intermedial strategies in contemporary cinema.

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Figures 8–11. Photos shown in the exhibition with the same title, *Sieranevada* (insallation view, photographed by the author).

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Three Interviews with Scholars who Defined the Field

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Beginning from the 1990s, intermediality has not only been a highly productive concept that generated a great deal of analyses and theoretical writings that contributed to the understanding of media hybridity and interart connections, but has also proved to be a somewhat nebulous term that semiotics and media studies repeatedly attempted to define and categorize once and for all, or quite the contrary, that was "opened up" through different philosophical approaches. Moreover, our immersive experiences within an environment dominated by digital media, as well as discourses regarding media archaeology, convergence, the interconnectedness of humans and technology, art and life, etc., continually shift our vantage points and challenge us to rethink intermedia or interart relations in the context of the complex new relationships that define our contemporary culture. The aim of this series of in-depth interviews is to perform a kind of informal "archaeology" of researches connected to questions of intermediality through presenting trajectories of thought that lead to the diversity in the state of the art in intermediality studies today. In each of these interviews, I would like to present different methodologies and topical issues that have been addressed by researchers working in various places of the world. I have asked three of the most renowned scholars (Lars Elleström, Lúcia Nagib and Joachim Paech), whose works have had a wide-reaching impact in the field, to explain what drew them to the study of intermedial phenomena in the first place and how they see the relevance of intermediality and its most important questions today. I also wanted to find out how their different cultural or theoretical backgrounds have informed their work.[1]

1 The interviews were made within the framework of the Exploratory Research Project, *Rethinking Intermediality in Contemporary Cinema: Changing Forms of In-Betweenness*, PN-III-ID-PCE-2016-0418, funded by a grant of the UEFISCDI (Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation), Romania.

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"A Good Concept Should Be both Very Concrete and Very Abstract."

Interview with Lars Elleström

by Ágnes Pethő[1]

You are Professor of Comparative Literature at the Linnaeus University in Sweden with an impressive research output, comprising several books, edited books, articles and book chapters written both in English and Swedish, some also translated into Portuguese and several other languages (listed in detail on the webpage of the university: https://lnu.se/en/staff/lars.ellestrom/). Besides several important articles, at least two of your books can be considered as real milestones regarding the theory of intermediality published in English: the edited collection of essays, resulting from an international conference that you organized in Växjö,

1 This interview was made within the framework of the Exploratory Research Project, *Rethinking Intermediality in Contemporary Cinema: Changing Forms of In-Betweenness*, PN-III-ID-PCE-2016-0418, funded by a grant of the UEFISCDI (Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation), Romania.

Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality *(Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and the book summing up your major ideas regarding the theory of intermediality, entitled* Media Transformation: The Transfer of Media Characteristics Among Media *(Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). At present, you are heading two important institutions dedicated to studies of intermediality, you are the director of the Linnaeus University Centre for Intermedial and Multimodal Studies (IMS) and you are the chair of the board of the International Society for Intermedial Studies (ISIS).*

How do you see your own journey towards the study of intermediality? How did you, a Swedish scholar trained in the study of literature, first become interested in questions related to intermediality? And, connected to this: was it the study of literature, or an interest in media studies or in semiotics that guided you more in this direction? Was there any specific theoretical or artistic work, or personal experience that steered you towards theorizing intermediality alongside your other major interests at the start of your career?

Long before coming to academic intermediality studies, my life was full of "interart." Like most children, I liked picture books a lot and I still have vivid memories of many of them. My mother was an artist, and as a kid I could watch her drawing and painting for hours. My first and greatest artistic passion was, and still is, music. I liked to read adventure books until my teens, but it was not until I was 18 that poetry and so-called serious literature came into my life. When I later started my university studies, philosophy and literature came first, followed by visual arts, music and psychology, but this order was largely a reversal of my own development. Anyway, that did not matter much, because, as long as I can remember, I have felt the strong interconnections among various forms of art, entertainment and other forms of communication.

Apart from my strong interest in literature, of course, I probably chose to study for a doctor's degree in literature because of the strong theoretical focus of the subject. I remember searching in vain for good ideas for a thesis on interartistic relations (Lund University, where I studied, was by then a stronghold of interart studies), but it ended up with a monograph on a Swedish poet. I was very interested in the theory of interpretation, which took me a bit, but perhaps not very long, on the way to theorizing about arts and media interrelations. I was also early fascinated by semiotics and realized that it might be important for the interartistic endeavours, but I simply did not know what to do with it by then. It ended up with some small publications, a few of them rather embarrassing. In brief, then: lived experience came first and theoretical ideas later, and I had a hard time matching them.

Could you trace the most important stages of your intellectual journey, the main ideas or areas of research that you became interested in along your career? Is there an evolution palpable in your work – an expansion of the areas of interests – or is it more like an intensification, a deepening of the same interest in your scholarly work throughout the years? How would you identify the main pillars of your research output? What do you think are the key issues and the most important accomplishments in your research work?

My favourite subjects at school when I was young were the natural sciences. Mathematics was always my strongest subject. I guess I saw some beauty in the abstract, and yet so real, universe of mathematics. It was also a bit of a game and a challenge to get things right. For me, it was very much about having inner images in the mind, where sizes, proportions and relations could be manipulated, so to speak, in order to find the solution. I liked the visual mathematical diagrams and found a great pleasure in mental calculation. Even though I left maths already before the age of 20, I find the relation between mental spatiality and material ways of communicating it through various forms of media intriguing – although it took me more than 20 years to come back to the area from the perspective of mediality!

When I had almost finished upper secondary school, however, I entered some sort of existential crisis that lasted for many years; maths and the natural sciences suddenly felt meaningless and could not help me cope with myself and the world. I started to read a lot and my university studies started with philosophy and literature, as I already mentioned. Even though I changed tracks completely, I have never regretted my early investments in the sciences, and I am still an avid reader of popular science. I would like to think that it helps me keeping an open mind and welcoming connections between the humanities and the natural sciences. Anyhow, the natural sciences definitely constitute stage one at my intellectual journey.

I finished my Ph.D. in comparative literature in 1992, and, for the next decade and a half or so, I published quite a lot (in Swedish and English) on poetry, gender issues, the concept of irony and interart – in various mixtures. I was (and still am) very engaged in gender questions but did not manage to come up with any really new perspectives. The concept of irony was intriguing to work with because of the intricate historical developments and the complex interpretive mechanisms involved. Irony is also a transmedial phenomenon, despite its clear roots in the verbal domain. Wrestling with irony in literature, music and the visual arts gave me the first genuine insights, I think, into the always delicate balance between

the specific qualities of external, material media products of various sorts and internal, mental mechanisms that deal with our perceptions of the external. Even though it might seem to be a bit of a truism that both media products and their perceivers have their parts in how meaning is created, I still believe that we must stubbornly continue to investigate how this works. Often, things that we see as self-evident are not properly examined just because we take them for granted.

My interart project on irony was concluded by a major book that was finished and first sent to the publisher in 2000 but not published until 2002 (in those days, most publishers still worked with paper proofs, so, having a US publisher meant sending them back and forth over the Atlantic Ocean again and again …). Finishing this book, *Divine Madness*, while simultaneously teaching a lot, working as a literary critic and not having a tenure at the university, made me work much too much. One day, I collapsed. As so many others, I did not see it coming at all because I had suppressed my needs for such a long time that I believed it to be normal never being able to relax properly. It was a terrible experience to, literally, all of a sudden, fall to the floor and start trembling and crying. After a while, however, when I understood what was going on, I was extremely relieved. I just left everything and was immediately sick-listed, first full-time and then part-time, for half a year. It was one of the best things that have ever happened to me!

Since then, my working hours are very strictly regulated. I work much less but more efficiently and I feel so much better. I also decided that being overambitious wouldn't lead to much good for me, so, for many years after the collapse in 2000, I kept a rather low profile. I finished some old projects, tried out some new ideas that did not really work out, published rather little and bided my time.

In 2005 and 2006, I started to reflect anew on media interrelations. Interart studies was by then on its way to being transformed into intermediality studies, and, since I had started to feel somehow claustrophobic in the interart paradigm, I was enthusiastic about this broadening of the frames. I was lucky to get funding for a project on iconicity and media interrelations in poetry, but, when starting to work intensely with these issues again for the first time in many years, I had a hard time ever coming close to my announced literary material; I got so caught up in the more theoretical issues that I felt I had to wrap my mind around before I could start analysing the poems that I spent several years re-examining and rethinking intermedial issues. This resulted in publications on iconicity – signification based on similarity relations in a multitude of media types – as of 2008. It also resulted in the article *The Modalities of Media: A*

Model for Understanding Intermedial Relations, published in 2010 and still my most quoted publication. It was part of the book *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality*, that I also edited. The guiding thought of *The Modalities of Media* is very simple: every single media product and, hence, every media type must necessarily have certain material, spatiotemporal, sensorial and semiotic traits. Elaborating methodically on this almost axiomatic starting point, however, has some consequences for conceptualizing media interrelations that are perhaps not as self-evident.

Since then, I have worked in a focused way with interrelated issues that in various ways deepen or broaden ideas that are presented or hinted at in *The Modalities of Media*. I also decided to mainly publish articles (and now and then, perhaps, a short book) because I found the small format more efficient. I think many books in the humanities, including most of my own, are unnecessarily long. I have, thus, since then, in a pace directed by my strict working schedule, published several articles focused on particular media types from an intermedial perspective, and, of course, also articles with general perspectives on intermediality.

Mentioning a handful of publications may give an overall idea of the directions that my research has taken. In *Material and Mental Representation: Peirce Adapted to the Study of Media and Arts* (2014), I wrestle with Charles Sanders Peirce's most foundational semiotic concepts and try to find a way of making them as useful as possible for the study of communication and mediality. Peirce, who wasn't a communication or art scholar, but rather a mathematician and philosopher (among other things), can be rather irritating and confusing, but, the more work one invests, the more brilliant ideas one finds in his scattered writings. Semiotics does not provide answers to everything, of course, but I would find it very difficult to theorize about mediality without access to the basic semiotic concepts. The most essential semiotic principle is, again, very simple, and almost impossible to deny: our minds work in such a way that things such as perceptions, sensations, thoughts and ideas constantly trigger the awareness of other thoughts or ideas – in other words: "signs" make present to our minds "objects." In the case of communication, media products act as signs because they trigger the perceiver to construe some sort of meaning or "cognitive import;" the media products represent something – if they do not, they are not media products. I believe that even scholars who do not deliberately use semiotic theory must subscribe to this basic principle. And, once one starts to disentangle the implications of this basic principle, many interesting and useful things are found …

In the short book, *Media Transformation: The Transfer of Media Characteristics Among Media* (2014), I summarise my most central thoughts about diachronic media interrelations. A synchronic perspective on media interrelations means that one primarily focuses on a particular media product or media type and investigates how it is constituted in terms of multimodality and other characterising traits. A diachronic perspective means to pay attention to media traits that are shared by many media products or media types and, hence, potentially can be – or actually have been – transferred among media. This is the area of transmediality (which I conceptualize as a specific form of intermediality). One of my central concepts here is transmediation. Building on several earlier similar concepts, I define transmediation as media characteristics that have already been represented by some medium being represented again by some other kind of medium. Transmediation can have enormous implications in all forms of communication for the simple reason that meaning, or cognitive import, is necessarily somehow transformed in transmediation because of basic media differences. Sometimes, the transformation of meaning is marginal but other times it is fundamental.

In *Bridging the Gap between Image and Metaphor through Cross-modal Iconicity: An Interdisciplinary Model* (2017), my last and, I believe, most complete article on iconicity, I summarise the central implications for mediality of this important semiotic concept. Media types are always more or less dissimilar but also more or less similar. Dissimilarities among media constitute various forms of borders that may make it more difficult to, say, transmediate cognitive import from one media type to another. However, these borders are not in any way definite, which is easily proved by way of simply pointing to the many media interactions that constantly occur around us. One vital answer to the question how such transgressions are possible is that we have cognitive abilities to perceive connections among different material, spatiotemporal and sensorial modes – for instance, through similarity, the ground of iconic meaning-making. Perceiving an inorganic image, such as a drawing on paper, one may take it to be a representation of something organic, like a body. The mind, so to speak, takes a leap from an inorganic sign to an organic object. Similarly, it takes a leap from a two-dimensional sign to a three-dimensional object – we do not think that the represented body is flat! By the same token, our cognitive abilities of perceiving similarities between what we see, hear, feel, smell, taste and think are well-developed. A visual diagram, such as a curve chart, for instance, may represent changes in sound intensity as well as economical fluctuations. Understanding these crucial cognitive abilities and their interrelations are essential, I think, for

grasping intermedial relations; our minds provide cross-modal openings, so to speak, that make it possible to partly overbridge media differences.

I have talked a lot about communication so far, but it actually took a while after the publication of *The Modalities of Media* before I realised how truly important this concept is. In my article, *A Medium-Centered Model of Communication* (forthcoming in *Semiotica*) and some other recent publications, I make the framework of communication explicit. Modelling human communication as interaction among minds made possible through intermediate media products – that may consist of either our bodies and their immediate extensions or external physical objects or phenomena – makes it possible to methodically investigate media similarities and differences in a comprehensive way. I have also recently started to think a lot about how different media types can communicate truthfully in various ways. In a forthcoming publication, *Coherence and Truthfulness in Communication: Intracommunicational and Extracommunicational Indexicality*, I explore some of the most important functions of indices, signs grounded on contiguity, or real connections. Like *A Medium-Centered Model of Communication*, this is an investigation that starts with fundamental queries about communicative representation – such as how it is possible at all to reach the outer and inner realities through communication – in order to enable conceptualizations of media dissimilarities. The article is an initial contribution to the complex question of what happens to truthfulness when cognitive import is transmediated.

Today, with several decades of research behind you, do you consider yourself first and foremost a literary scholar, a media studies scholar, an intermediality scholar or a combination of these?

I am not sure ... To be honest, I sometimes feel that I do not belong anywhere. I struggle with forming concepts so that they may be broadly applied, which can also lead to that they meet resistance or indifference everywhere. My books are scattered on various shelves in the libraries and there are no journals that I feel to be safe bases. In a way, I like this situation, because it forces me to stay awake and watch my back – which is compensated by my stable and secure private life! When trying to explain what I do to non-academic persons, I say that I do research on communication and how various forms of media, such as speech, still images, gestures, movies and written texts, necessarily form what is being communicated: when you verbally describe a motion picture or an image in the newspaper, the meaning unavoidably changes in various ways. Everyone

understands that and, thus, also realizes that the research field actually has some bearing even on perfectly normal, everyday communication. So, perhaps I am a communication scholar with a strong interest in intermedial issues and a personal inclination towards music, film, literature and other art forms that help us to understand life better.

How do these areas of scholarship combine in your own work and how do you see their connection in general? I mean, a lot of researchers of intermedial topics have a basic training in the theory of literature or in media studies, so, how do you think this has shaped the state of the art in intermediality studies?

Things are slowly changing, no doubt, but intermediality studies today – at least the research that itself uses the label 'intermediality' – is strongly dominated by investigations of various art forms and artistic phenomena, perhaps particularly in relation to new digital techniques. Furthermore, the legacy of literary and linguistic theory, including Saussurean semiology, is still strong. Too strong. Although literary and linguistic theory, again including Saussure, has meant very much for the development of what is today known as intermedial studies, and still has a lot to offer, of course, I think that it, in the end, must be, if not abandoned, thoroughly adapted to a broad media perspective. In spite of the immense importance of language – understood as systems of habitual signs, symbols – and in spite of the impressive theoretical developments during the last century or so, communication in general cannot be subsumed under language – and, hence, the study of intermediality cannot really be theorized in terms of linguistic or literary theory (with the exception of, naturally, those parts of linguistic and literary theory that are already inherently transmedial, valid for all forms of media).

So, in a way, linguistic and literary theory has also been harmful for a sound development of intermediality studies and, for a long time, semiotics and structuralism (developments of Saussurean semiology) had, rightfully, a bad reputation for trying to force grammar and other linguistic structures on all forms of communication. I think this is also why my own initial steps towards intermediality partly failed; I could find no ways of using the available theoretical tools in a way that fitted my lived experience of various art forms. When I finally started to mature intellectually, and, simultaneously, slowly started to better understand Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics, I saw other ways of thinking about media interrelations; it was about integrating language in communication

in general rather than the other way round. I also got a little bit impatient with the traditional ways of thinking about "word and image," "word and music" or just about anything as long as "word" was part of the parcel – a scholarly tradition that obviously has its roots in the predominance of literature researchers in the interart tradition. I guess this means that, no, I do not think my scholarship can any longer be characterized as focused on literature, for instance, although I quite often use this and related areas as resources for exemplification simply because I have been trained in them. Analysing literature does not necessarily imply that one uses literary or linguistic theories!

How do you evaluate the state of the art in the area that we can consider "intermediality studies" today? What do you see as the major challenge that researchers of intermediality have to face today? Do these challenges come from the "outside," i.e. from the new and complex media phenomena that we encounter today in the digital age, the new theories that have emerged dealing with media relations, or do they come from the "inside," i.e. from the specific methodologies employed by researches and the quality of researches on intermediality?

I think the main challenges come from the inside. Although today's complex media phenomena deserve a lot of attention, of course, they cannot be seen in isolation from all those other complex media phenomena that we have always had around us and that have always seemed to be new. In my view, intermediality studies should strive for an integrated understanding of dissimilar forms of communication – synchronically and diachronically. Today's advanced digital technologies for communication exist side by side and very much joined with analogue technologies and purely bodily-based communication that have been with us for a very long time indeed. The theories and methodologies of intermediality should reflect these deep connections, instead of pursuing research in separate tracks. For instance, the divide between art forms and other forms of communication still makes many intermedial studies look like interart research in disguise. While there is absolutely nothing wrong with interart as such, the shift to the broader notion of intermediality still holds many promises that have scarcely at all been fulfilled. This is partly because it is truly difficult to seriously transgress the borders between established research traditions. Nevertheless, I think that intermediality will eventually become marginalized if we do not broaden the relevance of the field; we simply have to engage larger areas of the field of communication studies.

Do you see intermediality as an established research area with important results, or something that still has to assert itself against other approaches of studying contemporary media phenomena? In what do you see the specificity and productivity of the notion of intermediality today?

Intermediality is a research field with fuzzy edges. Many researchers work with issues that are very much intermedial, understood as dealing with interrelations among various media forms, without really being aware of the existence of such a research field. Now and then, intermediality – either the term or the various concepts that it refers to – is reinvented by people who become interested in the perspective of comparing media forms. This is a good thing, because it shows that core questions of intermediality are relevant also for researchers who have not come across the field as such. I think that remediation, media convergence and media archaeology are concepts, or even research traditions, that are complementary and, largely, although perhaps not in all their details, parts of the field of intermediality. The way I see it, intermediality research is actually (or should be) much larger than the sum of those publications that overtly use terms such as intermediality or transmediality. Taking a look at the references in my own publications, for instance, one soon discovers that only a minority of them are explicitly intermedial. But I am perhaps not a very typical intermediality scholar. In my view, the potential strength of intermedial perspectives is in always starting with a wide-ranging outlook, which makes it much easier to generalize one's findings and find relevant connections to issues and research problems that are beyond one's own expertise. Without an intermedial perspective, researchers of human communication run the risk of not being able to communicate with each other …

The most specific, truly intermedial research question that I have been working with, and will continue to investigate, is how cognitive import is necessarily transformed (enhanced or corrupted) when transferred among dissimilar media types. This is an immensely complex and, also, very important question that no doubt requires a profoundly intermedial conceptual framework. Whereas this question is specific because it is easy to succinctly formulate, it is, at the same time, overwhelmingly general because of its broad applicability. It, thus, requires empirical approaches that should be selected from different communicative areas where, also, more particular questions and problems can be formulated.

Much of your research work focuses on the fine-tuning of notions, the precise definitions of categories and operations involved in the relations between media.

Why do you consider this a priority? In your book, you criticise Bolter and Grusin's notion of remediation as something that is inspiring but "severely lacks in-depth theoretical discussions" and is "acutely vague" (2014, 7). Do you think the same is true for other notions that we use in media studies today? Which are the areas regarding media phenomena where you think that scholars should work on further clarifications and in-depth theoretical discussions?

Whereas I do not think my critique of Bolter and Grusin is wholly unjust, it is perhaps a bit presumptuous and unnecessary. Sometimes, one has to demarcate certain differences to make one's own contributions more visible, however, and it would have been impossible to simply ignore their influential book on remediation. But, perhaps, our ways of thinking about intermedial relations are so blatantly different that my pigheaded critique is superfluous. Anyhow, I think there may be great value in research that opens doors and windows for us to discover interesting territories – even if its concepts are a bit vague. When a research field is under development, one, furthermore, cannot expect everything to fall into place immediately. I, therefore, refrain here from listing other vague notions. In the end, it is rather easy and not always very fruitful to point to conceptual vagueness if one does not, at the same time, offer clearly better solutions. In-depth discussions of concepts also require a common view on why and how the concepts are expected to be used.

Finally, however, research is about producing new knowledge, and that cannot be achieved without fine-tuned concepts. Producing new knowledge within the humanities is very much about making it possible to see things clearer, making the mental image more fine-grained – and, without fine-tuned concepts, vital differences between and interrelations among, so to speak, conceptual forms, colours and textures of mental images cannot be properly discerned. A good concept should be both very concrete and very abstract: concrete in the respect that it is properly and, in some detail, defined in relation to neighbouring concepts, and abstract in the sense that is applicable to more than one very specific area of investigation. Fine-tuned concepts can be used for forming conceptual models that make it possible to chart complex occurrences and, perhaps, even to discover or predict the existence of hitherto unknown phenomena. A lack of fine-tuned concepts is, furthermore, likely to lead to fruitless scholarly debates fuelled by basic misunderstandings of positions and arguments.

Studying intermediality as a theoretical investigation in your work owes a great deal to semiotics and so-called multimodal studies. In terms of theory, do you see other approaches that may open up new paths in researching intermediality in the future?

Having in-depth theoretical discussions and trying to clarify things is, no doubt, an eternally ongoing process. It is an unavoidable and vital feature of all research. As you mention, I have profited from research areas such as semiotics and multimodality, which provide useful theoretical models to wrestle with, and, in the future, intermedial studies might, perhaps, also profit more from cognitive science if we can find ways of actually collaborating. After all, the way human cognition works is central for how we use various media forms.

Related to the previous question, what do you think are the most important topics or areas which should be approached from the points of view articulated in the scholarship on intermediality? What are the key issues to be tackled by intermediality studies today?

Because of its broad scope, as I envision it, intermedial research can be used for so many issues that I really cannot survey all. One truly important area, however, is to develop our understanding of truthfulness in communication. Communication always somehow puts us in contact with what we perceive to be realities in the world, but dissimilar media types may do that in rather different ways that complement and interact with each other. I believe that an intermedial perspective is essential for a nuanced conception of truthful communication – a huge challenge!

And, also, to pose the question from a different perspective, should we apply the notion of intermediality to ever-new areas of research (and, thus, keep up with the evolution of new media in the digital age), or should we leave it behind and try to elaborate other, new concepts instead? In short, how do you see the future of intermediality studies?

When I was a Ph.D. student in comparative literature in the years around 1990, we were just about to leave a paradigm behind us saying that you can only study authors that are dead or, at least, very old. Nowadays, most young researchers in the humanities study contemporary, rather than historic, phenomena. I think we

will always need both perspectives, and, additionally, research that tries to bridge over such differences. My vision is a field of study that incorporates both old and new ways of communicating and, hence, never falls out of fashion, so to speak. This means creating theories that are abstract and robust enough to withstand all kinds of changes in the world and in our ways of investigating it, and that, at the same time, incorporate concepts that, as such, are adaptable to ever newly emerging communicative phenomena. In my generation of literary scholars, it was for some time a deadly sin, and a safe way to ridicule and dishonour, to use terms such as "universal," but I am convinced that there are vital phenomena in the study of media that will completely escape us unless we are ready to recognize that some things are, at least, much more universal than others. I am primarily thinking about vital cognitive abilities that have been developed for hundreds of thousands of years and that are shared by all people from all cultures; cognitive abilities that cannot be overlooked if media interrelations are to be understood. While isolating such "universals" is perhaps as difficult as isolating "cultural specificities," ignoring them means to cripple one's understanding of basic communicative capacities.

I have increasingly come to understand my field of study as *mediality*, a research field that basically covers the area of human communication, but with an emphasis on the intermediate entities between what I call "producer's mind" and "perceiver's mind:" the media products. Only when this field is thoroughly developed can we properly conceptualize interrelations within one and the same media type – intramediality – and interrelations among dissimilar media types – intermediality. Conceptualized on such a high level of abstraction, I think that yes, we both can and should apply notions such as communication, mediality, intramediality and intermediality to ever-new areas of research.

You are the founding member and the leader of the International Society for Intermedial Studies. What can you tell me about the history of this organization, its main goals and range of activities?

In 1995, Professor Ulla-Britta Lagerroth arranged the highly international and very successful conference *Interart Studies: New Perspectives* at Lund University, Sweden. I was one of the members of the conference committee, and it was during this conference that the initiative to form the Nordic Society for Interart Studies (NorSIS) was taken. After that, the society arranged several conferences and, ten years later, in 2005, I myself arranged a NorSIS conference at Linnaeus University (in Växjö, Sweden). For some reason, the work of the board then stagnated and no

new NorSIS conferences were announced. I, therefore, offered myself to arrange yet another conference in 2007 to keep the pace up, and I was by then also elected as the new chair of the board. At the General Assembly that same year, the society's name was changed to Nordic Society for Intermedial Studies (still abbreviated as NorSIS) because of the broadening of the field that was underway. By then, the NorSIS conferences were already profoundly international events, so all involved found it natural to, once again, in 2011, change the name of the society, this time to International Society for Intermedial Studies (ISIS). Since then, ISIS conferences have been organized in Romania, the Netherlands and Canada. This year, 2018, we will be in China, and, after that, it is back to Europe and France.

Although we have had many ideas about how the society could work, it has, in effect, mainly been a tool for arranging conferences and supporting networking. I have always wanted to keep it as simple as possible, which means that we have no membership fees and a minimum of administration. There is a basic website and, also, regular email notifications of calls for papers that are relevant for the members. In line with this straightforwardness, our statutes simply say that "intermedial studies focuses on interrelationships between art forms and media. These relations are viewed in a general cultural context and apply to art forms in the broadest sense. […] The aim of the Society is to promote intermedial research and postgraduate education by means of conferences, seminars and projects."

Lars Elleström at the Rethinking Intermediality in the Digital Age conference in Cluj-Napoca, in 2013.

There have been renewed suggestions that the Society should change its name, or, at least, its acronym, because of the unfortunate coincidence with the name of a well-known terrorist organization, but you have been one of the staunch supporters of keeping the name and abbreviation as it is, arguing that we expect people to be able to separate the areas of politics and science (even if, perhaps, search engines may confuse them in the realm of the internet). I am not interested in renewing the discussions around this, but I am interested in your views regarding the connection between intermediality and politics in general. In an article published in 2010, Jens Schröter discussed how intermedial techniques in the arts have been both dismissed as manifestations of the "capitulation to the society of spectacle" (in the view of Rosalind Krauss), and praised as a revolt against the idea of pure media reflecting the capitalist division of labour (in the view of Dick Higgins). By identifying such connections between thinking about media and politico-economic aspects of society, he contends, we can speak of a political dimension of intermediality. Do you see this dimension as something relevant?

According to my view, intermediality is, first of all, an analytical perspective. Virtually all forms of communication can be scrutinized and discussed in terms of multimodality and intermediality with some profit, although I agree that some communicative phenomena are probably in more dire need of an intermedial approach. From this line of reasoning follows that an intermedial perspective can and perhaps even should be applied to also all those forms of communication that are political or have political implications. Intermedial analysis must certainly be able to be integrated with other research perspectives. However, I do not think there is a political dimension of the intermedial perspective as such. The example of Krauss's and Higgins's different positions can probably be explained by a closer look at their own norms and what kind of artistic communication they refer to, more precisely. What I mean is that political perspectives and values are parts of a communicative reality that intermedial research can certainly embrace. Although the intermedial research perspective is not political as such (research should provide knowledge, not values), it may certainly be helpful for understanding political issues. I am convinced that, for instance, transgression of conventional media borders can have all kinds of very different political functions that can be highlighted through intermedial analysis.

The Society has recently launched its collaborative online platform (http://isis.digitaltextualities.ca/). What is the main goal of setting up such a platform?

In what way will this platform develop? What will be the impact of this platform in the research community, in your view?

The primary goal is to facilitate communication among researchers interested in intermediality. Right now, the platform is under development, but, hopefully, it will be easy to advertise all kinds of events and projects. It will also be possible to engage in debates and discussions of one's own choice. The amount of possible happenings will depend entirely on the activities of the members, who will also be able to post information about themselves and their publications. The platform will additionally work as a more ordinary website, providing basic information about the society. It is really an experiment to see if there is a demand for such a platform or not; if people will engage properly, it will hopefully lead to more and better research cooperation on an international level.

There are several ongoing research projects connected to the Centre for Intermedial and Multimodal Studies at Linnaeus University. What can you tell me about these? And what are you working on at the moment?

The projects at IMS, consisting of around 25 researchers, are too many to be discussed in detail here. As indicated, we strive towards combining and partly integrating the research traditions of multimodality and intermediality. The group consists of scholars from subjects such as media and communication, comparative literature, musicology, film studies, visual studies and linguistics, working with collaborative as well as individual projects. We have defined four very general, overarching perspectives: meaning, interaction, learning and narration. Apart from more theoretical work and a diversity of smaller projects, we have collaborative research projects on empirical areas such as teaching science, news in emerging media forms, narration in criminal trials and aesthetic narratives of the Anthropocene.

At the moment (i.e. April 2018), I am finishing a small but compact book on transmedial narration that will, hopefully, be published before the end of the year. As one might guess, it will be highly theoretical on a rather abstract level, which is necessary if one wants to embrace all possible kinds of media. I will actually even include some pages on narration in mathematical equations here! As usual, I often feel very enthusiastic and convinced while writing but sometimes rather terrified and sceptical when reviewing my drafts … I presume that is quite common. As all of my publications from the last ten years are parts of a conscious strategy, I

will, sometime before I retire, in ten years or so, try to put together a major work including the most important results of my research on mediality.

The International Society for Intermedial Studies connects researchers from all over the world. Do you think that the scholarship on intermediality, which deals with mutual influences – "border crossings" – and often involves interdisciplinary methodologies, can be seen as something so abstract that it transcends cultural boundaries? Or do you think that our approaches are more or less determined by the cultures we live in or come from? What are your personal experiences about the relevance and productivity of this cultural dimension in researches on intermediality?

I am very happy about how easy it has been to find people in, so far, Europe, North America and Asia who are willing to organize our ISIS conferences. I think it is really important to spread the activities over the continents, even though I am acutely aware of the fact that many researchers do not have the possibility to travel extensively. The alternative would be to simply stay in Europe and, hence, indirectly exclude those who do not stand a chance of coming here. It is also a great opportunity to be able to create a truly international research environment at my home university. IMS, or the Linnaeus University Centre for Intermedial and Multimodal Studies, as the full name reads, has a spine of researchers with permanent tenure and more than a third of us have our roots outside of Sweden. A great majority of our (not so many) Ph.D. students come from abroad (Brazil, Denmark and Iran). This year we will, additionally, have five or more international postdocs. I get into some detail about this because I am a bit proud over how things have developed. The strong internationalization of the research centre has also meant a lot for my own development. Not wanting to exclude anyone, my personal international contacts (if one thinks in terms of several invitations, followed by various forms of interactions and collaborations) are especially developed in Denmark, Germany, England, Czechia, Romania and, not the least, Brazil. So, yes, I am more than convinced that intermedial research transcends cultural boundaries!

In order to answer your question in a more nuanced way and from a slightly different angle, however, I must recall my distinction between basic media types and qualified media types. Sometimes, we mainly pay attention to the most basic features of media products and classify them according to their most salient material, spatiotemporal, sensorial and semiotic properties. We think, for instance,

in terms of still images (most often understood as tangible, flat, static, visual and mainly iconic media products). This is what I call a basic medium (a basic type of media products), and it is relatively stable. However, such a basic classification is sometimes not enough to capture more specific media properties. So, we qualify the definition of the media type in question and add criteria that lie beyond the basic media modalities: we also include all kinds of aspects of how the media products are produced, used and evaluated in the world; how they are situated in geography, history and culture. We may want to delimit the focus to still images that are, say, handmade by very young persons – children's drawings. This is what I call a qualified medium (a qualified type of media product), and it is more fluid than the basic medium of still image simply because the added criteria are optional, vaguer and more culture-dependent than those captured by the basic media modalities.

So, thinking about interrelations among the communicative phenomena that we perceive and study, there are, broadly speaking, two kinds of media interrelations. On the one hand, there are relations among basic media types – such as still images and written verbal (symbolic) texts; this can be understood as intermediality in a narrow sense, which is less culture-dependent and more universal. On the other hand, there are relations among qualified media types – such as children's drawings and restaurant menus; this is, then, intermediality in a broad sense, which is more culture-dependent and less universal simply because qualified media types are much less stable. This means that, even though the analytical perspective of intermediality in a narrow sense (among basic media) is globally useful, the perceived phenomena of intermedial relations in a broad sense (among qualified media) may vary a lot through history and across cultures. For instance, what appears to be a perfectly normal way of speaking in one context may be perceived as an intermedial mixture of speech and song in another context. Hence, the cultural aspect is often crucial and can hardly be avoided in intermedial studies, even though it does not provide answers to all our questions.

Furthermore, do you think that it is by sheer accident that the idea of founding an international society for intermedial studies came from Scandinavia, where it started its activity under the name of Nordic Society for Interart Studies? Is there a tradition in Nordic countries that steered scholars in this area towards the study of intermediality?

I can only speculate. Much interart theory was initially developed by literary scholars. Sweden and our neighbour countries had a strong tradition of concrete

poetry from the 1950s and onwards, which directed many researchers towards thinking about the relation between literature and other (artistic) qualified media types during a period when the development of literary theory exploded – let us say, from the 1970s and onwards. Also, in Brazil, concrete poetry was strong and gained an international reputation, so one might presume that it became important for their literary scholars to be able to cope with the phenomenon properly – hence, the strong Brazilian interest in intermediality today. Perhaps many factors like these together can provide some sort of explication.

Do you find that research centres or scholars active in different countries bring diversity to the field? Is there a different approach in research methodology or topics in Scandinavia, Germany, Brazil or Canada, for example? Or do you think that the real "fault lines" (if there are any) are not drawn by cultural differences but by the diversity in the theoretical approaches and influences (i.e. semiotics, post-structuralist philosophies, cultural studies, cognitivism, media phenomenology, etc.)?

I lean towards your latter suggestion: the diversities of the field can be traced, also, very much within nations, regions and cultures. Although I very much feel at home academically in Scandinavia, I may sometimes feel more deeply connected to researchers that I meet in, say, Estonia, Czechia, Ukraine, the Netherlands or Brazil. If there is a Scandinavian school of intermedial studies, it should, perhaps, be described by someone from the outside! I do not think much in those terms myself. But language differences do matter, of course, so intermediality in French-speaking countries is often not really the same as intermediality in German-speaking countries because of different intellectual traditions carried by the respective languages.

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"The Use of Other Media within Film as a Passage to Material Reality."
Interview with Lúcia Nagib

by Ágnes Pethő[1]

Lúcia Nagib as a keynote speaker at The Real and the Intermedial Conference in Cluj-Napoca, in 2015.

In the brochure of the international conference, The Moving Form of Film: Exploring Intermediality as a Historiographic Method, *that you organized in November 2017, at the University of Reading, UK, we can read the following bio-bibliographical note about you: "Lúcia Nagib is Professor of Film and Director of the Centre for Film Aesthetics and Cultures at the University of Reading. Her*

1 This interview was made within the framework of the Exploratory Research Project, *Rethinking Intermediality in Contemporary Cinema: Changing Forms of In-Betweenness*, PN-III-ID-PCE-2016-0418, funded by a grant of the UEFISCDI (Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation), Romania.

research has focused, among other subjects, on polycentric approaches to world cinema, new waves and new cinemas, cinematic realism and intermediality. She is the author of World Cinema and the Ethics of Realism *(Bloomsbury, 2011),* Brazil on Screen: Cinema Novo, New Cinema, Utopia *(I.B. Tauris, 2007),* The Brazilian Film Revival: Interviews with 90 Filmmakers of the 90s *(Editora 34, 2002),* Born of the Ashes: The Auteur and the Individual in Oshima's Films *(Edusp, 1995),* Around the Japanese Nouvelle Vague *(Editora da Unicamp, 1993) and* Werner Herzog: Film as Reality *(Estação Liberdade, 1991). She is the editor of* Impure Cinema: Intermedial and Intercultural Approaches to Film *(with Anne Jerslev, I.B. Tauris, 2013),* Theorizing World Cinema *(with Chris Perriam and Rajinder Dudrah, I. B. Tauris, 2011)*, Realism and the Audiovisual Media *(with Cecília Mello, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009),* The New Brazilian Cinema *(I.B. Tauris, 2003),* Master Mizoguchi *(Navegar, 1990) and* Ozu (*Marco Zero, 1990)." This is a summary of an impressive research output, but what is even more intriguing for me, is that also, somewhere in-between the lines, there is a personal journey from Brazil to the UK (accompanied by a language shift from writing in Portuguese to writing in English), and an intellectual journey from a "polycentric approach" to world cinema to an intermedial approach to film.*

Can you tell me first a little more about the personal aspects of this journey? What were the major "ports of call" in your life, before and after you came to the UK and how did they shape you? Is research also a kind of personal journey?

Let me start with an anecdote. My first degree was in Law, but from day one I realized I had no inclination to that subject. Instead, in my second year at the university I started to work at a literary magazine in São Paulo, called *Escrita.* The way I was hired at that place is hilarious. São Paulo was going, in the 1970s, through a poetry boom, led by self-published poets who distributed their work in mimeographed booklets, and *Escrita* was a forum for all these young literati. I had been writing poems and songs since I was 12, and at 19 I had completed a book of poems. So one day I sneaked into *Escrita*'s headquarters, dropped my manuscript on a desk and ran away. A week or so later I received a call from the magazine's editor-in-chief inviting me for an interview! I was beyond myself with excitement, but when I met him, he started to leaf through my poems, read out one or the other and laugh out loud! You can imagine my humiliation, but he then concluded: "Look, forget about poetry. But you can write. Would you like to work for me?" So that's how my literary ambitions were cut short and my career in literary criticism

started. They say that critics are frustrated artists, and there might be some truth in it. Whatever the case, this was a major event in my life that defined my future career. Given the poverty of that small press, I was one of the only three workers there, and the editor would give me simply everything to do, from posting letters to writing reviews of big names. Because I knew a bit of French, I was even given the translation into Portuguese of Charles Baudelaire's *An Opium Eater,* a piece he wrote on Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium Eater.* To my horror, this translation is still circulating in Brazil to this day, with all the errors and misunderstandings introduced by a fledgling 19-year-old.

All this to say that my initial subject was indeed literature and not film. And it was in fact literature that led me to film. In the 1970–80s, in Brazil, still under military dictatorship, there were some sanctuaries where films were allowed to show without prior censorship. The Goethe-Institut was one of these places, safeguarded by diplomatic immunity. That period also marked the peak of the New German Cinema, and in the premises of the Goethe-Institut, in São Paulo, we could regularly watch, fresh from the oven, the latest masterpieces of Alexander Kluge, Edgar Reitz, Werner Herzog, Margarette von Trotta, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Wim Wenders, and some others who are lesser known today, such as Peter Schamoni, Herbert Achternbusch, Werner Schroeter, Rosa von Praunheim etc., all in the 16mm-copies distributed by Inter Nationes for educational purposes. I was particularly riveted by the films of Werner Herzog, and watched them compulsively to the point of becoming completely familiar with their casts, crews and contexts. However, the decisive work, which actually changed my life, was the book *Of Walking in Ice* (*Vom Gehen im Eis*), a travelogue Herzog wrote while walking continuously nearly a thousand kilometres, in the winter, from Munich to Paris, breaking into leisure houses at night or simply sleeping rough. The motive of this pilgrimage was the hope that Lotte Eisner, the great German film historian, who lived in the outskirts of Paris, would be healed from her life-threatening heart condition once he arrived there. This heroic and semi-religious kind of prowess would perhaps not attract me so much today, but it fascinated me so much at the time that I decided to learn German in order to be able to read the original book, which I had first read in French. Two years later I translated it into Portuguese and published it with a prestigious press. I then went on to translate Lotte Eisner's foundational *The Haunted Screen* as well as other film books from Germany and other places.

It was my Herzog fascination that led me to start a postgraduate degree in film studies. Master's degrees were very long in Brazil at the time (full 5 years!), and I was lucky to be accepted by Brazil's leading film scholar Ismail Xavier,

who supervised my MA dissertation titled *Werner Herzog: Film as Reality,* which was then published as my first single-authored book (1991). During that period, I undertook many research trips to Germany, funded by the DAAD and the Goethe-Institut, interviewed many filmmakers, including Herzog, and made perhaps one of the last interviews with Lotte Eisner, in 1982, before she died in 1983, all of which were published in the Brazilian daily newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo,* to which I contributed as a film and art critic for c. 20 years from the early 1980s. In hindsight then I could perhaps say that film was never an isolated medium for me, as my cinephilia had a straight relation with the written word.

Already during the development of my MA dissertation my interests started to divert. It was again a foreign institution, this time the Japan Foundation, which caused the next significant turn in my career by introducing me to the work of Nagisa Oshima. Brazil, and in particular the state of São Paulo, concentrate the largest Japanese population outside Japan, so Japanese arts and cultures are very familiar to us, *paulistas.* Japanese films were distributed directly to the outlets of the major Japanese studios in São Paulo, so I had seen a number of them before the life-changing impact of watching a full retrospective of Oshima's films, organized by the Japan Foundation in 1988. Again the great Ismail Xavier accepted to supervise my PhD research on Oshima, and soon after, I was awarded a Japan Foundation grant to spend a year in Japan, between 1991–92, conducting research for my thesis. I was so privileged to count, during this period, with the generous support of Oshima himself, who gave me numerous interviews, invited me to private screenings, granted me access to all his TV documentaries and introduced me to some of his key collaborators. My year in Japan is one of the most memorable in my life. I was blessed with the opportunity to meet and interview the great composer Toru Takemitsu, the actor and director Takeshi Kitano and several other celebrated actors. In subsequent funded visits, I interviewed seven key directors of the Japanese nouvelle vague generation: Masahiro Shinoda, Kiju Yoshida, Seijun Suzuki, Susumu Hani, Hiroshi Teshigahara and Shohei Imamura, as well as Nagisa Oshima. These prolonged visits gave me the opportunity to immerse myself completely into the Japanese culture, resulting in two books: my PhD thesis turned into a single-authored book on Oshima, titled *Born of the Ashes: Authorship and Subjectivity in Oshima's Films* (*Nascido das cinzas: autor e sujeito nos filmes de Oshima*, 1995) and *Around the Japanese Nouvelle Vague* (*Em torno da nouvelle vague japonesa*, 1993), with a foreword by Oshima himself, though prior to that I had already published two edited books on Japanese cinema, *Ozu* (1990) and *Master Mizoguchi* (*Mestre Mizoguchi*, 1990).

Herzog and Oshima may sound like completely disparate subjects, but what connected them for me was the fact that they consistently worked on the borderline between art and real life. Herzog famously commits crews and casts, as well as himself, to the physical accomplishment of the acts portrayed in his films, albeit in hostile environments such as deserts and jungles. As for Oshima, the physical encounter with the real takes place on a transgressive, sexual plane, resulting in unique erotic masterpieces such as *In the Realm of the Senses* (*Ai no korîda*, 1976). Both in Herzog and Oshima, I identify an ethical commitment to the event of truth, as described by Badiou, through which the process of filmmaking is aimed at entailing personal, social and political change.

As for Brazilian cinema, it only became meaningful in my life once the military dictatorship had ended and filmmakers were again able to express themselves freely in their films. The mid-1990s gave rise to the so-called Revival of Brazilian Cinema, a boom of fascinating films which I felt an urgency to map out and record, resulting in two books: *The Revival of Brazilian Cinema* (*O cinema da retomada*), containing interviews and analyses of the work of 90 filmmakers of the 1990s, conducted by me and a group of postgraduate researchers under my supervision. This was followed by my single-authored *Brazil on Screen: Cinema Novo, New Cinema, Utopia,* first published in Brazil with the title *A utopia do cinema brasileiro: matrizes, nostalgia, distopia.*

During these developments, my interests wandered a lot. The question of realism is inherent in most new cinemas since neorealism, so new cinemas (from France, Japan, Germany and the Brazilian Cinema Novo) were all the object of my interest, and there was a period between 1994-96, when I travelled to India and to sub-Saharan Africa, and wrote several pieces about the cinema of these regions.

Do you consider yourself more of a film historian of Brazilian and world cinema, a theorist well versed in philosophies of film, a researcher of cinematic intermediality, or a combination of all these?

My polycentric approach to (world) cinema proposes, in a way, a new method in film history and geography. Being open to a multitude of national cinemas made me understand the futility of trying to organize them through some artificial chronologies or evolutionary schemes. West African cinema, due to processes of colonialism, is usually considered a late bloomer in cinematic terms, but only if you don't take into account their ancient oral literature traditions that include live performances, music, sculpted masks, costumes and body art, as well as a

considerable amount of proto-cinematic illusionism. As Alexander Kluge has once stated, "cinema has existed for over ten thousand years in the minds of human beings" in the form of "associative currents, daydreams, sensual experiences and streams of consciousness. The technical discovery only made it reproducible" (1975, 208). We also know that our ancestors drew dynamic pictures of animals on the walls of caves, which they animated with the help of torches in their magical or religious rituals. Plato's cave is a foundational philosophical formulation of the existence of cinema before its technological invention. All this to say that, yes, I have an interest in the history of cinema, but only if it can be told from a non-linear, non-evolutionary perspective. One way of organizing this history, as I propose in my paper *Towards a Positive Definition of World Cinema* (2006), is through comparable creative peaks across history and geography.

In terms of film theory, my positive definition of world cinema seems to have had considerable repercussion. World cinema was not a concept for me before I moved to the United Kingdom – in Brazil and other non-anglophone countries we simply refer to "cinema," rather than "world cinema." But then in the UK I understood that "cinema" meant Hollywood, or the mainstream associated with it, and all the rest was referred to as "world cinema." This negative definition, in my view, was unhelpful for the understanding of the rich variety of cinemas produced around the world. Thus, drawing on Robert Stam and Ella Shohat's deconstruction of Eurocentrism (1994), I formulated a polycentric approach to world cinema with a view to defining their singularities, but also their interconnectedness in time and space. It's a short piece, published in the book *Remapping World Cinema,* edited by Song Hwee Lim and Stephanie Dennison, but it attracted a lot of attention. Many scholars around the world wrote and still write to me to say how empowered they felt by reading it. I then expanded on this idea in some of my other books, notably the edited collection *Theorizing World Cinema* (2011) and my single-authored book *World Cinema and the Ethics of Realism* (2011).

The latter undertakes to develop my understanding of "realism" in the cinema, a term which is often utilized without any scholarly rigour, and can encompass from Hollywood's narrative illusionism to Bazin's ontology of the photographic image. My book defines a number of possible realist approaches including physical realism, the realism of the medium and conceptual realism. In another book I co-edited with Cecília Mello, *Realism and the Audiovisual Media* (2009), I provide a breakdown of film's possible relations with the real, including indexical, mimetic, representational, phenomenological, documentary etc., which I find useful in the classroom. In my current book in progress, *Realist*

Cinema as World Cinema, I am working on the idea of realism as mode of production, rather than address and reception.

Now about the intellectual journey that lead you to questions of intermediality: when and why did you first get interested in questions related to interart and intermedia phenomena? Was there any specific theoretical or artistic work or personal experience that steered you towards theorizing intermediality alongside your other major interests? And how did this interest unfold from the key issues that you addressed in your first major writings and that you continue to write about up to the present day (realism, corporeality, the political aspects of art, etc.)? What is the trajectory (and the intertwining) of the main ideas that you developed in your writings?

My experience in Japan was key in introducing the new element of intermediality into my research. If there is a cinema unconcerned with medium specificity it is the Japanese, although, as Aaron Gerow (2010) has documented, there was a strong "pure cinema" movement in Japan in the 1910s. This was however doomed from the start in a country where cinema sprung out of the kabuki houses and the first moving images were intended to register geisha dances. Watching *kabuki*, *noh*, *bunraku*, and being exposed to scroll painting and calligraphy in Japan opened up myriad avenues for me to better understand this production. If you don't take *kabuki* and scroll painting into consideration, you will not understand camera angles and long takes in Mizoguchi. The world of *shunga*, or erotic prints, from the Tokugawa period, explains the whole aesthetic conception of Oshima's *In the Realm of the Senses.* I wouldn't have understood the film's colour palette and bodily disposition were it not for this exquisite art. Thus, when I was based at the University of Leeds, the opportunity arose to apply to the White Rose University Consortium, involving the universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York, for an academic network involving three PhD studentships. I devised a project entitled Mixed Cinema Network focusing on Japanese cinema and drawing on Hugh Gray's (mis)translation of Bazin's famous article, *In Defence of Impure Cinema* (which he rendered as *In Defense of Mixed Cinema*) (1967), championing the interface between cinema, theatre and literature. I was successful in this application and the PhD student allocated for my supervision was the extraordinarily talented Julian Ross, now an international authority on matters concerning expanded cinema and intermediality. One of the outputs of this network was the Impure Cinema conference that originated the book *Impure Cinema: Intermedial and Intercultural*

Approaches to Film (2013), which I co-edited with Anne Jerslev. My piece in this book refers to the use of the *noh* mask in *The Sound of the Mountain* (*Yama no oto*, 1954), by Mikio Naruse, which defines the lighting, camera angle and ambiguous expressions of the main character, played by the mythological Setsuko Hara.

This first approach to intermediality opened up so many doors for me that I realised that the entire history of cinema could be refashioned and recounted from an intermedial point of view, in order to illuminate areas of filmmaking which are normally overlooked for being unrelated to the technical and/or narrative specificities of the medium. This point of departure makes the core of my current AHRC-FAPESP funded IntermIdia Project, whose full title reads: "Towards an Intermedial History of Brazilian Cinema: Exploring Intermediality as a Historiographic Method," a bilateral project involving the University of Reading, where I am based, and the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar), Brazil. As the title says, our primary goal is to recount the history of Brazilian cinema from an intermedial perspective, but another important aspect of the project is to test intermediality as a historiographic method as applied to cinema as a whole.

The keywords for our own international conference organized at the Sapientia University in Cluj in 2015, "the real and the intermedial," could be considered keywords that define the main axes of your researches, as well. No wonder, that you delivered a memorable keynote speech[2] at this conference, one that has had a great influence on researchers ever since. How do you see the relationship of "the real" and the "intermedial" now, with a few more years of research added to this talk? Where and in what way do these two intersect and what aspects of these interest you most at this time? How does "politics" come into this relationship?

Intermediality is such a fascinating subject when it comes to cinema that one feels tempted to spend time identifying intermedial relations within a film and being satisfied with this exercise. I try to resist this temptation by focusing on the politics of intermediality. Bazin's defence of impure cinema was political in that it resonated with the rejection not only of "pure cinema" currents, but of the catastrophic Nazi-fascist experience, still very fresh in his memory, whose emphasis was precisely on racial purity. In this, as well as in many other respects, Bazin was ahead of his time because he foreshadowed the politics of hybridisation, multiculturalism and transnationalism that would arise in the wake of the structuralist and poststructuralist

2 See: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLDesrDcatwbYh-6nwUlXTKdpDDYkScJwS&v=yExHA8xaJ0Q*. Last accessed 22. 08. 2018.

schools of thought. The subject (and defence) of border crossing has become even more pressing in our time, marked as it is by the rise of xenophobia and the erection of national walls. But a discovery I made very early on in my intermedial adventure is that the use of other media within film often functions as a passage to material reality. An example already explored by Bazin is the film *The Mystery of Picasso,* by Henri Georges Clouzot (*Le mystère Picasso*, 1956), which shows Picasso in action, drawing on a transparent surface which is filmed from the other side. This glass wall that separates the work of art from real life is trespassed by the film medium, changing the act of painting into a passage to life as it happens, with all its contingencies and unpredictable events. When Oshima, in *In the Realm of the Senses*, basing on a *shunga* print, has the actors engage in real sex for the sake of the camera, the print at the origin of the scene becomes a passage to physical reality.

That this passage is also political is made clear, for example, in Jafar Panahi's films produced under his ban from making films, starting with *This Is Not a Film* (2011). These are works that can only exist by denying their nature as art and attempting to become life itself. In so doing, Panahi is proclaiming film to be his lifeline, in defiance of the Iranian oppressive regime, meaning that the absence of film equals death, and this is why the motif of suicide haunts his forbidden films.

How do you evaluate the state of the art in the area that we can consider "intermediality studies" of cinema today? What do you see as the major challenge that researchers of intermediality have to face today? Do these challenges come from the "outside," i.e. from the new and complex media phenomena that we encounter today, the new theories that have emerged dealing with media relations, or do they come from the "inside," i.e. from the specific methodologies employed by researches and the quality of researches on intermediality? Do you see intermediality as an established research area with important results, or still as a kind of "blind spot" ignored by "mainstream" film studies, and still as a not sufficiently questioned question?

In my view, intermediality as a method has never been more relevant than today, in the post-cinema era. Convergence and remediation are all around us and audiovisual media permeate all our activities from WhatsApp conversation to the didactic materials we use in the classroom. Cinema as we used to know it is increasingly becoming entangled with, or even superseded by streaming services, which are also radically affecting the real-time appeal of television. Audiovisual media have never been as fluid as they are now, in the age of Internet.

Intermedial studies are undoubtedly a key tool to understand such phenomena. There are challenges of course, the most important of them being "preaching to the converted," i.e. intermedial scholars becoming trapped in an ivory tower in which they only talk to each other through a sophisticated jargon undecipherable (and irrelevant) to the rest of the world. Taxonomies are a temptation hard to resist, and I myself have succumbed to them many times, but they risk becoming an end in themselves. We, scholars, must constantly remind ourselves that intermediality is not an object but a method, a way of better understanding phenomena around us. Ágnes Pethő is a master at applying intermediality in revealing ways, for example, with her fascinating analysis of tableaux vivants in Agnès Varda and others (2011). I am currently reading a book which explores "intervisuality" in Visconti (Blom 2018), and understanding more about him than I ever did before. In ways not unrelated to Pethő's, I am also fascinated by processes in which cinema animates other inanimate arts, for example, a film such as *Mysteries of Lisbon* (*Mistérios de Lisboa*, 2010) by Raúl Ruiz, in which paintings, drawings and toy theatres come to life, while real characters freeze up into paintings, sculptures and murals (Nagib 2017). I have addressed this kind of phenomenon via intermediality but also theories such as speculative realism, inspired by Quentin Meillassoux (2016), that ascribes to objects a life of their own, unrelated to human design. This is why I find it premature to sound the death knell for intermediality.

What do you see as the most productive method, or theoretical approach in researching intermediality? Can intermedial researches articulate relevant questions that reveal and interpret important issues with regards to the arts and culture? If yes, what are these?

A useful procedure, at least as far as I am concerned, is the combination of intermedial and intercultural studies, which has proved extremely productive, not only in my writing but in the classroom, too. Students become tremendously excited by discovering, for example, how understanding a different medium within a film can open up the doors to a whole national culture, whilst film continues to be film and the other arts continue to be distinguishable within it. The understanding of *kabuki* and *noh* in Mizoguchi, Ozu and Naruse, for example, is tremendously revealing of the Japanese cultural context of these filmmakers. You simply cannot understand the full breadth of Visconti without taking opera, and Italy's devotion to it, into account. And if you overlook the central role of music in Brazilian culture, you'll be missing the juicy bits of Brazilian cinema.

You invited Jacques Rancière for a public lecture and discussion to the University of Reading where you currently work as the Director of the Centre for Film Aesthetics and Cultures.[3] In 2017 you also invited Alain Badiou as a keynote speaker for an international conference that you organized. Even though he had to cancel in the last minute, you managed not only to provide an adequate context for the lecture he sent to be read, but also to stage a lively debate on his work. You have had the opportunity to have conversations with both of these major contemporary philosophers and you have used their thoughts on the impurity of cinema as stepping stones in your own writings. What can you say about their influence on your own work and on contemporary thinking about intermediality?

Those are two giants whose complexity of thought I cannot claim to fully master, but who nevertheless have been tremendously influential on my scholarly approach to film. The beauty of French philosophers is that they take cinema seriously and have produced innovative thought on the basis of it. As you know, Gilles Deleuze has changed the way cinema was being read as "language" and "discourse" before him, by introducing a sensory-motor element resulting from the combination of time and movement that defines film. Both Rancière and Badiou engaged in fierce debates with and about Deleuze, and I wouldn't like to take sides here. But Rancière, whose work I penetrated via his *Film Fables* (2001), was inspirational to me for redefining the relation between film (and all other arts) and the audience, through the anti-Brechtian idea of the emancipated spectator. His basis here is the eighteenth-century French teacher Joseph Jacotot, whose Dutch students had to self-teach French in order to understand his lessons, and were successful in devising their own learning methodologies. Rancière was also important for me for his praise of the creative power of (political) dissensus.

As for Badiou, he gave me grounds to develop my theory of an 'ethics' of realism. Let me cite my book *World Cinema and the Ethics of Realism,* where I explain that, following Badiou's terminology, what I call ethics about the films of my choice is their commitment to the truth of the unpredictable event. For Badiou, "there can be no ethics in general, but only an ethic of singular truths, and thus an ethic relative to a particular situation" (2002, vi). Badiou's "regime of truths" is governed by the notion of "event:" "to be faithful to an event," he says, "is to move within the situation that this event has supplemented, by *thinking* […] the situation 'according to' the event" (2002, 41). "A truth," says Badiou, "is solely constituted

3 See the video recording of this here: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtH9PIJaZgo*. Last accessed 22. 08. 2018.

by rupturing with the order which supports it, never as an effect of that order" (2007, xii), that is to say, by the emergence of the unpredictable event. Such notions of "event" and "situation" chime with my approach in many respects, in particular as regards spontaneous presentational aspects that occur within representation and the commitment of filmmakers and actors who choose to remain faithful to these presentational moments, or, in Badiou's terms, who demonstrate "an active fidelity to the event of truth" (2007, xiii). Badiou is also key to my approach as regards intermediality. There is a quote that perfectly summarizes his contribution in this realm and that has been decisive to my own thought: "it is effectively impossible to think cinema outside of something like a general space in which we could grasp its connection to the other arts. Cinema is the seventh art in a very particular sense. It does not add itself to the other six while remaining on the same level as them. Rather, it implies them – cinema is the 'plus-one' of the arts. It operates on the other arts, using them as its starting point, in a movement that subtracts them from themselves" (2005, 79). From this we can conclude that cinema cannot exist without the other arts, and that this fact is its most distinctive specificity.

At present you are the PI of the AHRC-FAPESP funded project, Towards an Intermedial History of Brazilian Cinema: Exploring Intermediality as a Historiographic Method, which brings together researchers from the UK and from Brazil. According to the information posted on the website, the aim of this project is to produce "the first groundbreaking intermedial history of Brazilian cinema." Can you explain how this "historiographic method" has been employed in the researches of the group? What does this method consist in? How do you assess the innovative value and the productivity of your method? What are your most important findings and results at this stage? What can Brazilian cinema teach us in terms of intermediality?

The AHRC-FAPESP funded IntermIdia Project has provided a privileged ground for Brazilian film scholars to interact with their British counterparts. Because the project does not acknowledge hierarchies across the different artforms, cinematic periods and styles, it has been tremendously liberating for both sides. It is a big surprise and great pleasure to me to see my Reading colleagues working so well with Brazilians they have not known before and vice versa. Intermediality applied as a historiographic method is allowing us to place different periods of Brazilian cinema on the same plane and make them converse with each other in a completely novel way. One of the main finds of our project has been the realization

of the huge importance of music in most phases of Brazilian cinema, starting with the musical comedies of the 1940s and 50s up to the boom of music films from the late 1990s onwards. Popular theatrical forms come very close to music in the way they have inflected this national cinema, and we are discovering real treasure troves, including the theatrical film prologues of the 1920s, which will be re-staged in Brazil later in June 2018, and then again in the UK in December 2018, both under the auspices of our project. We have revealed a facet of the *Tropicália* movement which was mostly unknown to the general audiences. *Tropicália* is mostly associated with music and the visual arts, but it was also hugely influential on cinema, and the *Tropicália Film Season* we held last November at Tate Modern provided abundant evidence of this. The project has already elicited c. 40 published articles, and there is still a similar number to come, alongside three hefty catalogues accompanying the *Tropicália Season*, the *Brazilian Film Music Season* held at the Reading Film Theatre in January 2018 and the forthcoming re-staging of the silent film prologues. There will be two edited books, one focusing on the intermedial history of Brazilian cinema and another on intermediality as a general film historiographic method, plus a dossier on Intermediality in Brazilian Cinema coming out in the *Screen* journal in the near future.

Lúcia Nagib at The Moving Form of Film: Exploring Intermediality as a Historiographic Method Conference organized by her research team at Reading University, in 2017.

Your research project involves a wide range of activities: besides the publication of scholarly articles, you have already organized two major conferences and a workshop,[4] *as well as several artistic events; your research group also makes audio-visual essays, and you yourself are directing a documentary film. How do all these different types of activities add up? What can this kind of diversification of the research activity bring to the study of intermediality in the cinema?*

One of the most gratifying aspects of our project was the realization that publications were not enough to express our finds. So, alongside the publications, events and conferences, several of us have devoted ourselves to audiovisual productions focusing on the subject of intermedial film studies. John Gibbs (a specialist in videographic criticism) has produced two marvellous video essays with Brazilian colleagues Flávia Cesarino Costa and Suzana Reck Miranda, the latter of which has been published in the electronic journal *[in]Transition*. Our two postdoctoral researchers, Albert Elduque and Stefan Solomon, have also produced video essays which have been published in *[in]Transition*.

As for myself, who has never shot a film before, I am now involved, together with my Brazilian colleague Samuel Paiva, in the production of a feature-length documentary (or rather essay film) entitled *Passages.* The film starts from the premise that the relationship between cinema and the real is one of the most central and complex issues in film studies. *Passages* attempts to address this issue by looking at a selection of films in which intermedial devices, that is, the utilization within film of artforms such as painting, theatre, music, photography and others, function as a "passage" to political and social reality. In order to reflect on this premise, we have interviewed 15 key Brazilian filmmakers, technicians and curators, all of whom are prominent figures of the Brazilian Film Revival that started in the mid-1990s and brought back to the agenda the question of national identity and Brazil's lingering social issues. The flourishing and diversification of independent filmmaking from that period onwards favoured not only a new approach to reality, but an emboldened use of the film medium that acknowledged and exposed its inextricable connections with other art and medial forms. The *Passages* project proposes that the intermedial method is thus strategically poised to shed a new light on the ways in which these films not only represented but interfered with and transformed the world around them. The chosen case studies hail from Pernambuco, in the northeast of Brazil, and from

4 See videorecordings of these events here: *https://research.reading.ac.uk/intermidia/video-gallery/*. Last accessed 22. 08. 2018.

São Paulo, in the southeast, whose filmmakers, though stemming from disparate regional cultures, have been in a close artistic dialogue since the Brazilian Film Revival, demonstrating their shared values at a certain historical juncture and interconnectedness across Brazilian geography. At the time of writing, the interviews are being edited with clips of relevant films and other imagery and sound, in order to buttress the film's central hypothesis of the recourse to intermediality as a means to access physical and historical reality.

You currently live in the UK, but you come from Brazil (and you also have family ties to the Arab world, am I right?); how do you think that your ethnic and cultural background has influenced your work? Do you think this shaped your interest in a wider area of world cinema or made you more sensitive towards the relationships between the different arts?

Furthermore, I find that the notion of intermediality is far more popular in Brazil, than say, in the scholarship practiced in the US. Why do you think this is? Do you think there is something like a Brazilian school of intermediality studies? Or at least, some kind of a tradition that makes researchers more open to questions of intermediality?

I am not sure of the extent to which my background has determined my choice of subjects and methodologies. São Paulo, where I come from, is very cosmopolitan and we are all exposed to foreign influences there in very natural ways, as our daily bread. Japanese *sushi*, Italian spaghetti and Lebanese *sfiha*, alongside our native *churrasco*, are all part of our diet. As you say, I am a descendent of Syrians on my father's side and from Lebanese on my mother's side, and I remember, as a child, being surprised at seeing the grandparents of some of my classmates being fluent in Portuguese, because from my home experience elderly people could only speak Portuguese with a heavy accent. But I do think that the protestant background in the Anglophone world entails some sort of iconophobia and guilty feelings towards (audio)visual pleasures – something addressed with great poignancy in Laura Mulvey's epoch-making piece *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, a powerful indictment of the pleasures derived from cinema. Of course, Mulvey was addressing the ideological content of the Hollywood mainstream, and proposing in its place an experimental cinema that appealed to reason rather than emotion. Narrative art cinema has no place in this piece, though Mulvey will devote important scholarship to it in subsequent writings. Cultural Studies, which dominate film studies in the anglophone world, are devoted to detecting misrepresentation of minorities, so

the main drive is normative, films are judged by what they should be, rather than enjoyed for what they are. In my cinematic education in Brazil we gave free rein to our audiovisual pleasures, which I think is a common attitude in other Latin countries such as France, Italy, Portugal and Spain, and their former colonies in Latin America, and probably Romania, too. My colleagues and I never felt guilty for enjoying films, in particular art films, to the point of obsession. Intermediality as a formal method of analysis certainly captures this kind of pleasurable, artistic imaginary, so this might be an explanation to your query.

The title of the research project you are currently leading contains an unusual spelling of the word "intermedia" as IntermIdia. Can you explain why this is spelled like this? Why was it important for you to retain this spelling, even though everyone in the English-speaking world will think it is mistaken without further explanation? What would have been lost in translation?

In Portuguese, "intermedia" is spelt "intermídia." We adopted the Portuguese spelling of it, plus extended the "I" in the middle to highlight its foreignness and connectivity at the same time. I am sorry that some readers will be lost in translation!

Do you think that the scholarship on intermediality, which deals with mutual influences, "border crossings" and often involves interdisciplinary methodologies, is basically "accent" free? Or do you think that our researches are more or less embedded in the cultures we live in and are informed by the specificities of the artistic phenomena we are studying? (Just a thought, as an example: does the carnivalesque, colourful diversity/heterogeneity of Brazilian culture has anything to do with the similarly colourful combination of scholarly and artistic activities within your research project?)

Yes, that is very true. Intermediality exists everywhere, though it may not be called so. And I agree that Brazilians are "intermedial" to the core in their daily practices – and there is a particular revelling in bad-taste mixtures that can be identified, for example, in *Tropicália* pieces that delighted in breaking the boundaries between high and low cultures.

In what way is the cultural diversity of your own research team (consisting of British, Brazilian, Spanish, Australian members) productive for your research project?

Even if I wanted, it would be impossible to form a team from a single nation or culture. Multiculturalism is now inescapable, and I love it!

Do you plan to continue this type or area of research after the conclusion of this IntermIdia project? How? What are your plans for the future?

Intermediality will certainly be part of my next ventures. It will appear in my next book under the guise of "non-cinema," and in a new, major collaborative research project entitled *Understanding the Audiovisual Planet*, which addresses the ubiquitous presence of audiovisual media in the contemporary world.

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"Film Studies Always Need the Wider Approach of Intermediality."

Interview with Joachim Paech

by Ágnes Pethő[1]

Joachim Paech at the Rethinking Intermediality in the Digital Age conference in Cluj-Napoca, in 2013.

Until your retirement in 2007, you were a professor of Media Sciences at the University of Constance/Konstanz, where you also headed several research projects on intermediality. Your books and articles, the collections of studies edited by you are among the most influential writings about the intermediality

1 This interview was made within the framework of the Exploratory Research Project, *Rethinking Intermediality in Contemporary Cinema: Changing Forms of In-Betweenness*, PN-III-ID-PCE-2016-0418, funded by a grant of the UEFISCDI (Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation), Romania.

of film. One of the first, and certainly the one that was quite a revelation for me when I first read it, was Passion oder: Die EinBILDungen des Jean-Luc Godard (Passion, or the Imaginings of Jean-Luc Godard, 1989*), a book-length study of Godard's use of painting and music in his 1982 film,* Passion. *Then there was* Literatur und Film (Literature and Film, 1997*), an important work on the media archaeology of cinema, and* Menschen im Kino. Film und Literatur erzählen (People in Cinema. Film and Literature Tell Stories, 2000), *a book written with your wife, Anne Paech, as well as a selection of writings on film published with the title:* Der Bewegung einer Linie folgen: Schriften zum Film (Movement Following a Line: Writings on Film, 2002). *You have also been an editor and co-editor of a series of volumes of writings dealing with TV, video, the digital media, the relationship of film and the arts, the theory and analysis of intermediality, e.g.* Film – Fernsehen – Video und die Künste. Strategien der Intermedialität (Film, Television, Video and the Arts. Strategies of Intermediality, 1994), Strukturwandel medialer Programme. Vom Fernsehen zu Multimedia (Wandering Structures of Media Programs. From Television to Multimedia, 1999), *and* Intermedialität, analog/digital. Theorien, Methoden, Analysen (Intermediality, analogue/digital. Theories, Methods and Analysis, 2008).[2]

How did you first become interested in questions related to film, and more particularly, the intermediality of film? Was there any specific personal experience that steered you towards questions regarding media and intermediality?

Today it is usual to name the succession of generations according to their dominant technical media with which they grew up: there was the TV generation (but no photo or cinema generation?), then the internet generation, and at present, one wonders how long an entire generation will be defined by the smartphone and the so-called social media. I myself belong to the post-war generation, which made late and very sporadic experiences with the media (first of all the radio). By chance, during the first years of my schooling in West Berlin, I was invited to participate in the radio for children and, between 1951 and 1953, in the television for children. Was that the beginning of my later interest in intermedial relationships? Certainly not. Later, I was not so excited about the cinema (that too), but mainly the theatre. By the end of school, I already had my acting diploma in my pocket. The theatre studies that followed and the theatre work on the studio

2 For a complete bibliography and collection of Joachim Paech's texts visit: *www.joachim-paech.com*.

stage of the Free University in West Berlin led me to the student movement, with which the technical media finally came to the fore for me.

The turmoil among the students since the mid-1960s throughout the Western world was to denounce the injustices that capitalism had produced. From the US, criticism of the war of the United States against the people of Vietnam was everywhere the current occasion for demonstrations against the respective governments. In Europe, the students fought with workers against the exploitation of people in the Third World and in the local factories. In West Germany a special role was played by the Nazi past of the fathers, who frequently occupied powerful positions in the West German state and in the economy even after the war. It was about nothing less than the foundations of a changed society. The then "new media," especially video, were needed to illustrate and discuss new ideas among the population.

The hostile attitude of the press and of the German television towards the students caused them to take the "media" into their own hands. With the first available video recorders, I participated in political enlightenment activities on the "social basis" and made autonomous contributions to West German television with school classes.

Have you ever considered becoming a filmmaker (maybe a documentary filmmaker) following this experience?

At that time, video work primarily meant putting the camera in the hands of the "affected," concerned people themselves, so that they could learn how to express their own interests with these new devices. Even though we worked with film/video, far from any form of professionalization, I never thought of making films myself, although some of my colleagues went at later time to the newly formed film schools in Munich, Berlin or Ulm. Today, everyone makes "movies" (or whatever they think this is) with their smartphone anywhere, anytime. The difference to our former video practice could not be bigger. In the end, when the great excitement was over, most of the students returned to the seminars. I wrote my doctor thesis on the theatre of the Russian revolution … For me, the discovery of the video recorder as a recording and reading device for movies was very important. In fact, the analytical, critical interest, and the still-lasting love for film, I owe to the video recorder. So far the prehistory of my media-scientific engagement with phenomena of intermediality.

One of the texts that I find that has been extensively cited by scholars, and that I have also often recommended to my students, as it could serve as a great introduction into thinking about intermediality, was a lecture translated into English and available on the internet[3] *with the title* Artwork – Text – Medium. Steps en route to Intermediality. *This was a wonderful example of a line of thinking that you revisited in later articles (e.g. from another viewpoint in your text, also translated into Hungarian, entitled* Warum Medien?*, 2008), namely, tracing the different paradigms of thinking from seeing film as an artwork to text, and finally, to considering it as a medium (and defined by its intermedial relations). If I can borrow the expression from the title, what have been your own steps en route to the study of intermediality? What were the theoretical or artistic works that influenced your views?*

Until the 1970s, there were no film or media studies at (West-) German universities. We invented it at that time. And because we did not yet know what the scientific subject "media" of this new discipline should be, we had to design it as broad as possible, interdisciplinary and intermedial. Media science was initially offered as a hyphenated subject (e.g. theatre-, film-, and television studies) at some universities. At my University of Konstanz, media science was (and still is) from the beginning dependent on institutional cooperation with the departments of art history and general literature, which made intermedial work and thinking a matter of course from the outset, even before intermediality was to be thought of as a disciplinary programme. The new media scientists had brought their original academic background as literary, theatre and art scholars, as sociologists or philosophers. From the beginning, the narrow technical and academic boundaries of the university had to be overcome.

Was there any resistance to this new field, this "mixture" of disciplines? Or it was embraced equally enthusiastically by everybody? (I am asking this, because my experience was that academics working in literary or linguistic, art history departments, for example, hated this "crossing" of academic boundaries in the 1990s. Was this not the case in Germany in the 1970s?)

Of course barriers have been erected against the new discipline Media Studies everywhere. One suspected and perhaps feared that in the foreseeable future every

3 Now it can be read here: *http://www.joachim-paech.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ArtWorkMedia-1.pdf.*

subject would be connected with "media," especially since the first computers were already on the academic desks. The least willing to cooperate at that time was at many universities (except in Constance) just the art history, which sulkily retreated in the face of the new technical media into the Renaissance. Literary studies have been confronted for a long time with phenomena such as literary film adaptation, audio books or comics, which could now be treated literarily and then medially in the broader spectrum of subjects. Today, universities are undergoing profound transformations, also starting with a new subject such as "media science" (Medienwissenschaft).

Our experience with practical media, with video work and creating an "alternative public sphere" (to use the term introduced by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge) has led us to ask questions of the social use of the media, comparable to the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (John Clarke, Paul Willis, Stuart Hall and others) with which we had some exchange. On the German side, texts by Jürgen Habermas (e.g. *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 1962), Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge (*Public Sphere and Experience*, 1972) or Hans Magnus Enzensberger (*Constituents of a Theory of the Media*, 1970) were important. Texts of the English film magazine *Screen*, which we translated and published for a German readership, have, for example, brought a new perspective on Bertolt Brecht. With Stephen Heath, we have returned from England back to the Continent in France, where the film semiotics of Christian Metz was in full swing. But instead of his "big syntagms" of a film grammar, we were more enthusiastic about the structuralist (somehow Marxist) cultural, film, and text theory of Tel Quel and took Julia Kristeva's suggestions in her *Problèmes de la structuration du texte* (1968), applied them to media science and extended them to our own approaches of theories and methods of "intermediality." After all, a media understanding has developed, that has initially led me from studying the singular work of literature, art or theatre in the context of the institution of art, to the awareness of the textual structuring of cultural phenomena in the context of the mass media. As long as the arts were distinguished by their "material conditions or requirements," there could be no transformations between them: a book (literature) can never be a film (celluloid). But if films were included as an art work in the canon of the arts as a technical newcomer, then they could at least bring it to an equal relationship with the other arts without being too close to them, as required by the avant-garde. The recognition of films as narrative singular art works meant that they were treated according to the rules of literature by genres arranged with title and author name and date of origin. A film cannot be

the original work of a single author comparable to a painting of the Renaissance or a novel of the nineteenth century, but a kind of text that, like a literary text, has one or more authors and is massively distributed with many connections and references to other texts, e.g. novels of the nineteenth century. Texts are networked, even if they are on the table as a single book or projected as a single film. It is about keeping track of their (narrative, then structural) context.

In the textual network of written and spoken language, moving and still images, information and communication, different media properties and forms of their articulation or representation allow "as forms" the transformation between them. As texts they are all the same, while the media remains in the blind spot of their observation. A text is a text, but it is the media that makes the difference. The Internet and the digital media have finally established themselves as an all-dominating "media form." Our future scientific project had to be to examine and present these "media properties and forms" in their networked internal and external relationships, functions and operations in culture and society.

From the beginning, there were two directions in West German (initially film-, then) media studies (or "media science"). On the one hand, there was a media-critical approach, following Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Siegfried Kracauer and concerned with the affirmation of author and work. On the other hand, there was the group, to which I belong myself, following Walter Benjamin's thesis (1936) of the "mechanical reproducibility of artworks" and the definitive approach to mass media. Because we continued to hold on to the hope of an emancipatory, enlightened approach to media in an "alternative public sphere" (based on the ideas of Enzensberger, Negt and Kluge), we did not share the media skepticism of the "cultural industry" essay by Horkheimer and Adorno (2002). Kracauer's thesis of the photographic or cinematic redemption of the physical reality contradicted from the outset the medial properties of photography, which by no means is able to pick up even traces of the real in its documentary images. The discussion about the supposedly indexical character of the photographic image (e.g. by Roland Barthes, Philippe Dubois, Rosalind Krauss) is well-known, but has been since overtaken by questions about the digitization of photography. Photography has always been in every sense a product of its technical (analogue or digital) device, showing properties of their mechanical origin, not of an exterior reality. When pictures are computer generated they do not even need any reality as prerequisite to show a realistic image of actuality. They look like photographs, but they aren't. Walter Benjamin's idea of the "optical unconscious," which is influenced by the (photo) camera, and which appears with the camera, seemed

plausible to me as a mutual influence of technology and perception. The "living images of the film" give the semblance of the natural back to the perception of nature in the images; only a new kind of distance (unlike that of a painting to its object) produced by techniques of self-reflection on the form of its medium makes us aware of the mediality involved. Regarding intermediality, even more important than the "Artwork" essay (and *The Short History of Photography*, 1972) for me was Benjamin's essay on the "task of the translator" (2002). The translation (of linguistic texts) is itself a form in the medium of the text, brings along its (linguistic, textual, medial) transformation on its own. The step from intertextual to intermedial transformation was then obvious for me.

Which were the main ideas and areas of research regarding intermediality that you became interested in along your career?

Filmed literature was initially (and traditionally) the major topic of research on intermediality; after all, media studies first emerged within the framework of literary studies. Based on the *tertium comparationis* of the shared narrative, shifts between the respective bodies of texts could be observed and presented in a dynamic process (Paech 1984). In my book about the film *Passion* by Jean-Luc Godard (1989), I made a decisive step ahead. I not only disassembled analytically the relevant elements of the literary and filmic text, but tried to reconstruct the (self-)production and own dynamics of the film's texture on the model of weaving, by identifying the connections of the scenically performed paintings, of the tableaux vivants acting like knots of "warp threads" weaved together with the transversal "weft threads" of the film plot. I actually took the text literally as a texture. Another very complex process of "intertextual exchange" between painting and literature in a film was portrayed in Alain Robbe-Grillet's film, *The Beautiful Prisoner* (*La belle captive*, 1983) as a symbolic exchange, suggested by the film itself (see Paech 1991). But again the symbolic exchange works intertextually, the forms of the media (literature, painting, film) and their interacting properties remain largely unconsidered in this process (again in the blind spot of their observation).

Jean-Louis Baudry's (Tel Quel) essay, *The Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus* (1974–1975) taught us something we should have known for a long time, but what most scholars avoided asking until then, namely that the (ideological) appearance of the natural in photographic images (that Benjamin spoke of) is an effect of the mechanical apparatus, where differences

between succeeding images are concealed by the illusion of a continuous flow of movement. Breaking it up, showing the mechanical production of the apparatus would reveal its inner potentialities of a truthful reflecting of reality. Thus, the revelation of the cinematographic illusion does not impact the narrated content of cinematographic representations, but reveals precisely the medial form of cinematography as the content of the media-reflective representation.

Two lines of discussion have emerged, one criticized the apparatus as an embodied ideology (this was the so-called apparatus debate), the other described the apparatus as a form that organizes people and their perception in specific arrangements, e.g. during the cinema projection in front of the screen. The dispositive that describes this arrangement was characterized by Foucault as a spatial dispositive of power. While the apparatus is specific to cinema, the observation of dispositive structures allows, in particular, the intermedial comparison of the increasingly dynamic disposition of observers in various media relations to the depicted movement, for example, their fixed gaze at the cinema screen, at the television set, in front of the computer, their fixation with the omnipresent smartphone or their movement along the fixed images on the walls in art galleries. Essential is that the dispositive is an interactive space where aesthetic events can be formulated under conditions of the apparatus and its mechanical means and, as in the cinema, become translated into the (ideological) appearance of the natural. Gilles Deleuze later described this appearance of the natural as an aesthetic property and uninterrupted sensorimotor form of the cinematographic moving image, but without reference to its medial conditions (unlike Baudry). However, it is again the medium that makes the difference, especially when the same phenomena of the film will have completely different digital requirements.

Of particularly far-reaching consequences was the reception of Raymond Bellour's idea of *l'entre-image* (1990, 1999). He takes (as I myself) his starting point from the experience that it was possible for the first time with the video recorder (who back then had access to an editing table?) to interrupt the film, to pause the picture, or advance from frame to frame to pursue the question "what happens between the pictures?" In this sense Bellour's article is to be seen as a continuation with video of Baudry's discussion of the cinematographic mechanical apparatus. It was no longer about the montage of sequences of cinematic storytelling (for example, the "Great Syntagms" described by Christian Metz), but about the connections between elements of the film (strip) itself that would have otherwise been hidden by the above mentioned "sensorimotorization." It is

about the connection (or interruption) as a form that is directly involved in the formulation of the film. How could one describe this "between" as a productive form in a cinematic process? Of importance from the outset was that Bellour was interested in relationships of the "between," not only between images, but also between their different media configurations, for instance between photography, film and video. The pattern was given by the video works of Jean-Luc Godard, who inserted a special, third image between two others, to mark their connection as a special form (as he does it in *Ici et ailleurs* [*Here and Elsewhere*], 1976). This was literally an AND-image as a BETWEEN-image, that connects and separates at the same time.[4] "Neither a component nor a collection, what is this AND? I think Godard's force lies in living and thinking and presenting this AND in a very novel way, and in making it work actively. AND is neither one thing nor the other, it's always in between, between two things; it's the borderline, there's always a border, a line of flight or flow, only we do not see it, because it's the least perceptible of things" (Deleuze 1995). This AND-image has subsequently become the image-marker of intermediality, an aspect that Deleuze misses in his subsequent analysis of Godard in his second Cinema-Book (2000) as a mere interval without media reference. Later, using the notion of ambiguous figures in photographic flipbooks as specific moments between successive photographs with a specific difference code, I identified the seemingly moving images of the flipbooks as their "distinctive moment."[5] Baudry's critique of the cinematographic apparatus and Bellour's observations of the medial "in-between" have finally initiated a new view of the cinematographic moving image in time, before the digitization of the media has created completely new requirements for it.

The fact that media communicate their forms to the contents they convey is immediately obvious: the same film is different in the cinema, on the television monitor or smartphone. When the digital projection of all the films in the cinemas was enforced, one could sometimes read the note (the apology) at the hall doors, "this film is digitally projected," which meant at that time a lower quality, and

4 Form and function of this in-between image reminds of a figure, used by late Gestalt Theorists for their reception experiments. This figure contains two parts interwoven with each other which can only be perceived alternately, either-or. A distinction is possible only for one part, while the other gives the ground for the appearance of the one as a figure. This interdependent changing of figure and ground is also responsible for the relationship of medium and form in general. A form can only be distinguished on the ground (or cause) of its medium and vice versa, but between both sides the change itself can be represented by a third image, denoting the one AND the other … See Rubin's figure–ground distinction, or Ludwig Wittgenstein's example of the change from rabbit to duck head in the same picture. The change marks the AND.

5 See: www.joachim-paech.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Der-unterscheidende-Moment.pdf.

therefore a deception that actually could not be recognized. Films, which today are increasingly produced completely digitally (through "digital compositing"), take the look of cinematographic (photographic) films, successfully hiding their medial difference.

Intermediality as a method and procedure for the analysis of films, the internal relations of their production, distribution and projection, and their external relations, for example to painting or literature, presupposes the awareness of the necessity of methodical operation. I have found suggestions for "intermediality as a method and procedure" in the so called System Theory of Niklas Luhmann (2012), who does not (suggest to) take media forms substantially as celluloid, paper or canvas, but as form-forming potentials, which participate in the process of medial formulation. Photography, the essence of film for Kracauer, for example, is involved in digitally modelled films merely as a medial form, because the properties of photographic images, which we recognize as photographs, are given in a very complex digital modelling as the form and aesthetics of film, where there is no photographic procedure anymore. The intermedia relationship between photography and films which are produced, delivered and projected digitally, is that of mere quotation. One of the characteristics of photographic images is their (supposed) ontological credibility, which has become groundless as a digital reformulation.

Do you consider your career a strictly professional journey, or was research also a personal adventure in your life (connected to different stages, places, academic environments/different universities you worked in)? Also, you seem to have accomplished an enviable connection between your professional and private life: you wrote a book in collaboration with your wife, Anne Paech, who is also a film scholar, about the storytelling power of literature and cinema; you maintain a joint website (http://www.joachim-paech.com/) displaying the works of both of you. What can you tell me about this combination of personal life and academic research?

I started my academic career at the then newly founded reform University of Osnabrück. There I met some politically interested colleagues, mostly from the linguistic department, who at that time made their connections to the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Another group of scholars of semiotics assembled at the neighbouring University of Münster (Münsteraner Arbeitskreis Semiotik). In Osnabrück I met my future wife, who worked on a history of cinemas in Osnabrück (Anne Paech 1985). She turned out being a cinema historian, no wonder that we soon stuck together. Actually, some of our publications were

really made in teamwork and the organization of our congresses in Osnabrück and Konstanz was mainly in the responsibility of my wife, as well as the planning and booking of our voyages today.

Are these cinephile journeys in any way?

During our travels we enjoy to discover old cinema buildings, for example, in small Greek villages, which we collect on photographs, or we go to film archives (e.g. in Montevideo, etc.). It is a sort of *déformation professionnelle*, not the pursuit of science but our private pleasure during vacation. Our professional travels are motivated by invitations to lectures (e.g. by Goethe-Institut) or congresses (Brazil, China, Korea, etc., and Cluj), which are often connected with private vacations in the country.

A playful portrait of Joachim Paech, the (multi)media scientist.

Given that your work addresses a variety of intermedia relations (between literature, film, television, digital media, etc.) and you usually combine concepts from various disciplinary fields, do you consider yourself a media studies scholar (or media philosopher perhaps?), an intermediality scholar or a film scholar who writes about intermediality in cinema?

Soon after media sciences were established, the corresponding departments all over were seeking their special profiles as "media-philosophy," "media-anthropology" and so on, and so important. I always understood myself simply as a (multi)media scientist in the framework of cultural studies.

Do you see major paradigms or directions emerging within studies that deal with interart or intermedia relations today? Or, what are the most interesting ideas or directions that you see in recent works written on intermediality?

I am sorry, I have no systematic or qualified insight in the development of my discipline any more. Sometimes it makes me satisfied to state the stunning success of the research programme on "media participation" of my successors in my former department in Konstanz. I think, this topic is more than important in the domain of social media. This has not directly to do with intermediality, I suppose, but very much to do with our democratic survival.

I resigned from my academic duties, which included the observation of the related scientific scene, more than ten years ago. Since then, I exchanged duties with pleasure. I follow my own interests and the internet allows me to publish the results of my work on my own. The topic that momentarily I like best of all, which I developed in an article entitled *The Clocks Dream of Cinema*, concerns the relationship between the clock and the media history of the cinematic apparatus (Paech 2013). I observed that the clockwork is of the same mechanism as the cinematographic apparatuses of camera and projector. There is a direct, also historical connection and development between clock and cinema, many pioneers of the cinema were also horologists. The cultural meaning of that is that a clock parts the apparently flowing time into seconds and minutes etc., which is necessary for us to be able to get common points in time (e.g. for appointments). There are many other times, like biological time, for example, but this clock-time rules our stressed life, because we are used to live from point to point, minute to minute, unable to get back to a self-controlled flow of time. The cinematic apparatus parts an apparently fleeting movement into 24 frames/second to be able to register and consequently represent movement; its projection reconstructs the flow of time as movement on the screen. Both mechanisms part or interrupt motion in order to represent time, they count time or combine different sections of movements like a water mill, which intervenes with its shovels into the naturally uncontrolled flowing river, disturbing it, in order to make movement a controlled one, that is, work. Clock and cinema

complement one another in that cinema gives vivid impressions of life to the abstractly ticking clock-time.

What do you see as the major challenge that researchers of intermediality have to face today? Do these challenges come from the "outside," i.e. from the new and complex media phenomena that we encounter today in the digital age, the rival theories that have emerged dealing with media relations, or do they come from the "inside," i.e. from the specific methodologies employed by researches and the quality of researches on intermediality? The idea of intermediality rests on the perception of differences between media. Such differences are, however, more and more difficult to perceive in an age when we write, watch movies, take photographs, listen to music and can combine all of these creatively with the same devices. Do you think that the notion of intermediality is still relevant?

As I told you, when we started media studies, we did not really know what the subject of our science would be and that is why we established a research field as wide as possible. Facing the present situation of the media I would repeat the same advice. The most successful definitions identify medium with the institution (or building) which produces (or broadcasts) mass-media, with the gadgets on our tables and in our pockets, which globalize our communication and terrorize our everyday life. Intermediality may be the connection between these devices (hardware), but this is not what we mean when we speak of intermediality. It is still possible to reduce intermediality (of film) to the very special case of works of art, literature and painting, but should we? And what is film today anyway? It will be more and more difficult in the present to distinguish art from our everyday surroundings made with texts and images, which are constituting a (virtual) reality in their own right. How far is our whole post-postmodern life a fact of intermediality if it has become a mixture of different layers of media caused aspects of (virtual) reality? Will intermediality help us to maintain the difference between the perception of a true reality and its fake (media) repetition? This is what will become more and more important and the real challenge in the future.

Do you see intermediality as an established research area in film studies with important results, or still as a kind of "blind spot" ignored by "mainstream" film studies, and still as a not sufficiently questioned question?

For me, intermediality as an established research area in film studies would be a too small claim anyway. Film studies always need the wider approach of intermediality because they have to include at least the respective media form in which a film is produced and exposed (Netflix? YouTube?). I prefer film and cinema studies to be part of intermedia-studies in a broader sense, because we will never be able to understand film or cinema without including other media and cultural situations. Whether our scholars always do so, I am not sure.

You have written most of your work in German, and only a fraction of it has been translated into English. But you are not the only one in this respect, there are several other scholars with relevant researches in the field whose work is similarly only partly written or available in English. You mentioned the influence of Benjamin's text on translations, what do you think about the differences in language and culture in the scholarship on intermediality? As Benjamin says, "both the original and the translation [should be] recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel" (2002, 260) – similarly, do you see different ways in approaches (something like a German school of intermedial studies, as compared to a French or Scandinavian one) that are still somehow parts of the same "vessel" of intermediality studies?

I read in German, English and French, unfortunately not in Polish, although recently I wrote some articles about Polish film history (in German). My audience is German and I would be satisfied when my texts find some inclined readers in Germany at least. I am not so much interested to appear on a larger scientific market, the response will be limited anyway. Every scholar who finds interesting keywords on my website is free to translate and use what he or she has found. On the other hand I am grateful to you, Ágnes, for the opportunity of international contacts to generous people in Cluj, which I enjoy.

In 2008, an international conference, *Media Theory on the Move: Transatlantic Perspectives on Media and Mediation* took place at the Institute of Arts and Media of the University of Potsdam. The central question was: is media science in Germany a special way (Sonderweg)? The conference remained without answers and ended in the nice get-together of friendly people with small talk and drinking beer. Maybe it was not the right question. We all have our personal style of thinking and speaking, caused by our individual and cultural background, which we should mutually accept.

Do you think that our researches are more or less embedded in the cultures we live in and are informed by the specificities of the artistic phenomena we are studying? Do you think this has to do with the fact that the idea of media convergence, remediation or transmediality is far more popular in the United States, while intermediality still seems to be a predominantly European pursuit? Or, do you think that film scholars "growing up" as cinéphiles and researchers on the films of the grand masters of European cinema have a specific approach to issues connected to intermediality, in contrast to researchers whose main interest is in literature, television, new media or communication studies in general?

Perhaps we should establish a new academic subject "General Intermedia Studies" ("all-inter mediality") integrating all specialized developments in its framework, as there are Media-Philosophy, Media-Anthropology, etc.; on the one hand, European Intermedia Studies, and "remediation," "transmediality," etc. on the other, transatlantic hand. Both aspects, media and the fine arts, and media in cultural and social life are important and inseparably connected. (Remember, there was no talk of "media" – what's that and why? – up to the 1970s except perhaps for Marshall McLuhan).

Are you working on any new article now? What is the topic that interests you most nowadays?

I am free to think, research, write and publish what I want and think it can interest other people. Currently, I'm preparing collections of film clips and comments for their use in lectures (e.g. in Cluj this autumn). And this is the context of my current work: many years ago, my wife and I started to collect material for a history of cinema going seen in cinema. Our book is only in an in-between stage, we continue our research by collecting articles, literary texts and most of all films containing cinema sequences up to the present. We found a lot of all these. In the meantime, we added to the subject of "cinema going in films" the subject "going to the picture gallery in films." We found interesting parallels between them. We stated that this attitude to the history of art and paintings in film is rather a recent one, only seen since the late 1960s. Why? And what is the meaning of art galleries and museums included in film, cinema, analogue or digital? There is a vivid exchange between both institutions, cinema (television, video, Internet) and museum, because film is more and more present in galleries and museums, too. My lecture will discuss these questions based on several, often very beautiful film clips.

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