

## Abstract

Ágnes Pethő: *Cinema and Intermediality: Key Issues, Stylistic Figurations*

(Habilitation Thesis, 2017)

The habilitation thesis is based on the most important scientific results obtained since earning the PhD degree in 2000, a series of studies that discuss cinema from the perspective of intermediality, collected in a 430-pages volume entitled *Cinema and Intermediality: The Passion for the In-Between*, published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing in 2011. The first part of the thesis outlines the significant scientific achievements (publications, research projects, academic work). Together with the portfolio of the most important publications, the habilitation thesis offers a representative selection of the subjects addressed in Ágnes Pethő's studies and the basic ideas of her researches.

The first chapter of the thesis, entitled *Intermediality in Film: a Historiography of Methodologies* (originally an article in *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae: Film and Media Studies*, revised for the book) contains a meta-theoretical survey of some of the main issues regarding cinema and intermediality. The major historical paradigms briefly described here include: the normative aesthetic viewpoints, the trans-medial theorizing of the moving image, the inter-art theories, and parallax historiographies. This chapter also presents some of the key concepts used to describe the occurrence of intermediality in film. The theoretical questions of cinematic intermediality are continued in a longer essay entitled *The World as a Media Maze: Sensual and Structural Gateways of Intermediality in the Cinematic Image*. The chapter outlines some of the possibilities of how intermediality enters our perception of images in cinema and distinguishes two major modalities of generating a sense of intermediality within the cinematic image identified as "sensual" and "structural." These two modes are presented through analyses of scenes from the films of Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, Wong Kar Wai, Jim Jarmusch, Abbas Kiarostami and Tsai Ming Liang.

The discussion of relevant questions of intermediality is then placed into the context of a historical poetics of cinema as the following parts continue to examine more closely two of the specific paradigms in the poetics of intermediality in the cinema (Hitchcock at the juncture of classical cinema and modernism, and Godard at the juncture of modernism and post-modernism). These chapters of the thesis are also centred on the idea of intermediality being conceived as a kind of excess in cases in which cinema is displaying its passion for expanding "beyond" cinema. The allure of such an inter-media "trespassing" may prove threatening and

disruptive, as it is demonstrated in the examples taken from the films of Alfred Hitchcock, or – as it is shown in the art of Jean-Luc Godard spanning more than half a century – it may also be an expression of a quest for a total cinema, of making the viewer “see the invisible.” The chapter, *Spellbound by Images: The Allure of Painting in the Cinema of Alfred Hitchcock* (originally also published in the prestigious Danish journal of art history, *Passepartout*) demonstrates how Hitchcock’s films constitute a unique link between the early “cinema of attractions,” the avant-garde affinity towards painting, the conventions of classical storytelling, as well as pictorial abstraction characteristic of a modernist self-reflexion of cinema as a visual medium.

The following two chapters are dedicated to the intermedial cinema of Jean-Luc Godard (a subject that was an important part of my scientific researches). The chapter, *From the “Blank Page” to the “White Beach:” Word and Image Plays in Jean-Luc Godard’s Cinema*, outlines the paradigm shift from his New Wave period to his so called “late” films made after 1980. It describes the underlying principles that distinguish “early” Godard from “late” Godard by examining changes in the nature of word and image relations in Godard’s cinema. The key metaphors used to identify these paradigms are borrowed from Godard’s essay film entitled *Scenario of the film called Passion (Scénario du film Passion, 1982)* in which he proposes two ways of looking at cinema by contemplating the empty screen’s resemblance first with a white page (“*page blanche*”), and then with a white beach (“*plage blanche*”). The next chapter (*Ekphrasis and Jean-Luc Godard’s Poetics of the In-Between*) focuses on features that connect Godard’s cinema to a more general artistic tradition: the phenomenon known as *ekphrasis* which has always been considered a challenge for the arts to test and/or surpass their limitations. Detailed analyses of Godard’s ekphrastic techniques are meant to produce not only a more refined understanding of his films, but to get us closer to understanding the possibilities of ekphrastic intermediality in cinema in general.

The final part of the thesis continues to contribute to a more profound understanding of the poetics of intermediality, this time addressing a key issue in postmodern cinema and connected to the emergence of new media: the coexistence of the hypermediated experience of intermediality and the illusion of reality. It emphasizes the idea that “all media remediates the real. Just as there is no getting rid of mediation, there is no getting rid of the real” (Bolter and Grusin). In the chapter, *Re-Mediating the Real: Paradoxes of an Intermedial Cinema of Immediacy*, Agnès Varda’s *The Gleaners and I (Les glaneurs et la glaneuse, 2000)* and José Luis Guerín’s two interrelated films, *In the City of Sylvia (En la ciudad de Sylvia, 2007)* and

*Some Photos Made in the City of Sylvia* (*Unas fotos en la ciudad de Sylvia*, 2007) are interpreted as typical examples of such hypermediated cinematic experiences “re-mediating the real.” The media to be remediated in each case are: painting, photography and language/literature, and the experience of media within media somehow does not convey a sense of infinite regress of signification, an entrapment within a “text” that merely refers to another “text” ad infinitum, but a configuration that communicates paradoxically a sense of immediacy both on a more general level (exemplifying the multiple perceptual forms of media in the context of reality) and on a more specific, personal level (in the sense of recording one’s own personal experiences). Furthermore, all these examples can be seen as re-mediating to an excess the indexicality of modernist cinema and challenging cinema’s lack of auratic quality through the director’s marked personal implication and the traces of his/her “handling” of the media. The habilitation thesis also includes a bibliographic list of the works cited in the thesis. It concludes with a chapter outlining the main avenues of research she intends to pursue, the future plans for a scientific and academic development.