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# CINEMA BETWEEN MEDIA

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## Introduction

In the second half of the nineteenth century, several different technological apparatuses for reproducing the external world were invented. Many different words were used to describe these new devices – such as Kinetoscope or Theatrograph for machines created to show moving pictures to audiences.<sup>1</sup> As a result of inventions such as these, artists found new ways to narrate stories and reflect the world. In the following, we will call these inventions, created to record and project moving images, ‘cinema’. Step by step, these technologies and traditions developed into both an industry and an art-form, but as one of the newest of the arts, it has often been described as an art form between media. This was the starting point for our book, *Cinema Between Media* (Edinburgh UP, 2018) as well as for this text that is meant to, in an abbreviated form, introduce to some of the basic methodological and theoretical choices that lay behind that book.

As cinema shares its basic material with photography (the exposure of an image on photographic film, at least in the beginning of film history) it has sometimes been described as a mechanical and direct reproduction of reality, but early cinema borrowed heavily from traditional performing arts like theatre, vaudeville, and tableau vivant. The narrative forms of literature, particularly the novel, have also played important roles in shaping narrative cinema. The list of influencing forms also includes music, opera, magic, architecture, photography, and painting with computer games – as the latest addition to the list. Following the recent historical advents of technical media such as the VCR, the DVD and streaming services, and the importance of the current digitalisation of the medium, the notion of cinema as a mixed medium has become even more prominent within contemporary film theory. In other words: cinema is currently and always has been intermedial.<sup>2</sup> However, as we argue in our book, the acknowledgement of this has not had enough of an impact on the practice of academic film analysis. One reason for this is that theorists and critics have been

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1 The Kinetoscope was an early motion picture exhibition device invented by Thomas A. Edison which created an illusion of moving images. The Theatroscope was invented by R.W Paul to show 35 mm film for the first time. For a quick overview of the technical predecessors to cinema, see Kjær Jensen, S. & Salmose, N., “Film” in Bruhn & Schirmacher 2021, p 29.

2 For a short but very helpful historical overview of cinema’s relation to other media (in particular literature), see Corrigan, and for a concentrated textbook description of the intermediality of film see XXXX

more occupied with discussions of what cinema is (and what can be) in distinction to other art forms.<sup>3</sup> What happens if we understand cinema as a mixed medium? How should one approach film analysis from an intermedial perspective? What thematic and formal traits will become clear when we look at film as a mixed mediality? To answer the questions outlined above, in this article we will present the major analytical concepts we find necessary to build a bridge between intermediality studies and film analysis. Thus, central in our approach is the case study, and we will provide a short example to indicate the value of our theory and our three-step methodology, which is fully demonstrated in our book *Cinema Between Media*. We will begin, in Part I, after this introduction, to give an outline of the relations between cinema and intermedial studies. After that, in Part II, we offer a relatively brief introduction to the intermedial concepts that we find most important in the study of cinema. In Part III, the theoretical concepts are transformed into an analytical method, which we exemplify by way of an analysis of an opening sequence of one of the recent Sherlock Holmes adaptations. In a final section, we offer some short reflections regarding our attempt to bring in contact intermediality and film studies.

What we propose is a theory-based method, where the case studies of the book occupies a prominent place, while not forgetting that the case-study has been criticised and deconstructed more than once (see for instance (Sontag, 1966). Mieke Bal, among many others, has observed that ‘the case study has acquired a dubious reputation as a facile entrance into theoretical generalization and speculation’ (Bal, 2010), and one does run two obvious risks when using singular works as case studies. On the one hand, the critic might ‘cherry-pick’ works that all too easily exemplify some preconceived ideas, and on the other hand the case studies may end up illustrating nothing but atomistic, isolated insights that cannot be generalised. We argue that not only can a good case study give analytical insight to the specific film in question, it may also help develop the method of analysis and can even contribute to the development of theoretical perspectives.

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3 An important exception to film scholars' lack of interest in intermedial theory has been Ágnes Pethő, who in her book *Cinema and Intermediality: the passion for the in-between* (2011) and the revised 2020 version *Caught In-Between* provides a valuable history of the methodological questions concerning film and intermediality.

## Part I

### *Intermediality and cinema studies*

The scholarly study of ‘media’ or ‘intermediality’ encompasses broad fields and has a long history that emerged from an interest in inter-aesthetic (often called ‘interart’ phenomena) and analytical methods.<sup>4</sup> The term intermediality has gained popularity and influence despite the sometimes disconcerting confusion about whether intermediality is an object of study, a method of study, or a theory about a category of objects. Here, we will approach all of these categories, but we aim to be clear about what level we work on, as well as the ‘kind’ of intermediality in question.

Intermedial studies is often used synonymously with inter-aesthetic research or ‘interart’ studies, but compared to ‘interart’ studies, the term intermediality designates a broader aesthetical and technological field of investigation. Instead of focusing only on the conventional arts (music, fine art, literature), intermedial studies open the investigation up to other contemporary aesthetic forms, such as performance art, digital poetry, as well as non-artistic medialities such as advertising, political campaigns, football or mass media content – and, of course, film. Furthermore, as our case studies will demonstrate, non-aesthetic, everyday (what we will call technical) media such as computers, telephones or newspapers may also play important roles in the analyses.

Although ‘intermedial studies’ is better suited to covering the entire field than ‘interart studies’, reservations have been raised concerning the term. Intermediality seems to imply that the object of study is relations ‘between’ (inter) media or medialities. The prefix ‘inter’ restricts the object of study to a specific, limited group of media products, as opposed to ‘normal’, ‘pure,’ or ‘monomedial’ phenomena, that is, media products that do not move between medialities or cross any mediality borders. Consequently, the term seems to apply to a relationship between (inter)texts or medialities, rather than express that a merging of media is occurring within a single medium or artefact (Bruhn, 2016, 2010b).

The point of departure for our approach is that all specific media products and

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4 A useful distinction between interart studies and intermediality is presented by Clüver (2007); (Rajewsky, 2014) and Elleström (2010) also offer helpful descriptions of the field. For a broad presentation of intermedial aspects of all the media types mentioned, see Bruhn and Schirrmacher 2021.

media types, including cinema, inevitably are mixed constellations. We will argue that there is no such thing as autonomous or pure medialities. The idea that cinema is a mixed media type is of course not new, but other perspectives have dominated the discourse in film studies. The conventions that make us think about media (or art forms) as distinct forms separated from each other are the result of media history, the history of media theories and, not least, the history of academia. When cinema became an academic discipline in the 1960s, film scholars, although drawing on other disciplines such as philosophy, literary theory, anthropology, and psychology, sought to clearly and radically differentiate the new discipline from older ones.

Even earlier, at the beginning of the 20th century when cinema itself was a newborn medium, the first film theorists foregrounded the uniqueness of the medium when arguing that it should be considered art proper. Accordingly, an important early goal for film scholars was to find the essence of the new art form (see Andrew, 1976). Thus, cinema has been described as motion pictures or moving images, based on photographic technology (for most of cinema history film was on celluloid, today most films are digital). The visual focus and the illusion of movement are often the starting points for scholarly books about the cinematic medium (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017).

Typically for the focus on cinema as a visual media type, the current Wikipedia definition of cinema reads as follows: 'A film, also called a movie, motion picture, theatrical film or photoplay, is a series of still images which, when shown on a screen, creates the illusion of moving images'. At Britannica.com cinema is defined as follows: 'Motion picture, also called film or movies, series of still photographs on film, projected in rapid succession onto a screen by means of light. Because of the optical phenomenon known as persistence of vision, this gives the illusion of actual, smooth and continuous movement'.<sup>5</sup> Of course, it is common knowledge that cinema is more than its moving images; it is by now convention in introductions to film analysis to describe cinema as a medium based on four major categories: *mise en scène*, cinematography, editing, and sound (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017; Corrigan & Barry, 2012). The emphasis on cinema as an audio-visual medium has also been strengthened over the last decades, with Rick Altman and composer and film theorist Michel Chion as central contributors to the field (Altman, 1992, 1980; Chion & Murch, 1994). Chion argues

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5 Motion Picture. Britannia.com

that rather than see images and hear sounds separately when we encounter cinema, we perceive both elements together and that what we interpret as rhythm, for instance, is a mixture of sound, editing and camera movements (Chion & Murch, 1994). Chion has also discussed voice in cinema, but despite him and others arguing for more attention to sound (music and sound effects) the visual elements of film still receive the most attention. The visual versus verbal divide has been discussed and criticised in books such as Kamilla Elliott's *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (with special focus on the problem of adaptation studies) and Sarah Kozloff's book *Overhearing Film Dialogue* (Elliott, 2003; Kozloff, 2000). Although Elliott shows that novels can be visual and films verbal, and Kozloff demonstrates how to analyse the use of dialogue in narrative film, the verbal element of film is still often both overheard and overlooked.<sup>6</sup>

When Bordwell and Thompson analyse the use and function of sound in film, they investigate the perceptual properties of sound (loudness, pitch, timbre), dimensions of film sound (rhythm, time, space, etc.) and discuss the difference between diegetic and non-diegetic sound, but they do not pay much attention to dialogue, although the focus on sound has been strengthened in the last edition of *Film Art* (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017). Most of the films we watch – and hear – are actually filled with dialogue and other verbal elements, but close attention to this cinematic device is usually only given when words have a particularly important position in the film, e.g. *My Dinner with Andre*, Louis Malle (1981), where the whole film is a conversation at a dinner table, or are pivotal in the narrative, e.g. Denis Villeneuve's *Arrival* from 2016, a science-fiction film based on a short story by Ted Chiang, which is all about language and communication. But we are often faced with the argument that dialogue or a speech in a film is too 'literary', and that, consequently, the use of voice-over is un-cinematic. However, the way characters talk in films is a result of conventions, historical changes, and influence from other media. Theatre, novels, and then later radio, helped cinema in 'finding its own voice' (Leitch, 2013).

Classical film theorists would praise cinema's ability to capture reality (André Bazin, Siegfried Kracauer), create new meaning through montage (Sergej Eisenstein), move in time and space (Hugo Münsterberg) and thus stress its differences from

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6 On the history of the *ut pictura* concept, see Henryk Markiewicz and Uliana Gabara (1987) and concerning Lessing's *Laocoön*, see Sternberg (1999).



painting, theatre or literature (Andrew, 1976; Elsaesser & Hagener, 2009). Such medium specificity claims – that there is something film can do or represent that other art forms cannot – generated a lot of debate both within film studies and in neighbouring disciplines, such as adaptation studies.<sup>7</sup> While some scholars are in favour of studying film by foregrounding what they see as the medium's specificity, others argue against what they call medium essentialism. This is the idea that each art form or medium has distinctive traits that distinguishes it from other art forms and medialities (Carroll, 1996) (for an overview by a scholar arguing against media essentialism see (Gjelsvik, 2013b).

The discussion about mixed versus pure art forms has a much longer history than film and film theory. The concept of *paragone* (roughly corresponding to 'comparison'), originates in Renaissance art theory and relates to a ranking competition among the arts – each form vying to be deemed the best and most valuable. Famously, Leonardo da Vinci argued that painting was the highest example of artistic form, and this contention was refuted by, among others, Michelangelo, who counter-argued for the primacy of sculpture. The *paragone* debate has been a perennial discussion in Western cultural history; a German collection of essays, inspired by intermedial studies, in 2010 reinvigorated the idea of the 'competition' between the arts and media by analysing not only the classical art forms, but also television, advertising, graphic novels, and computer games in a framework inspired by the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (Degner & Wolf, 2010). We will argue that it is indeed possible to see competitions among the arts nowadays, and to trace a *paragone* debate in modern media products such as film and television. While cinema was first compared with theatre, and then later with the novel, it should come as no surprise that comparisons between film and television (and today also computer games) are predominant in contemporary media criticism. Similarly, computer games and television series are today often discussed in light of cinematic aesthetics and film theory.

The complicated history of the blending of medialities and art forms can also be illuminated by looking at the difference between the tradition pointing out the benefits

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7 See also Elliott (2003) about this debate. For a general discussion of medium specificity, see Carroll (1996); for a discussion of the ideas of medium specificity and visual arts, see (Mitchell, 2005), whereas (Chatman, 1980) offers a classical discussion of film versus literature from a medium specificity perspective



of the meeting and merging of art forms and that which offers warnings about the consequences of such mixing. Utilising terms from widely different historical periods, we can contrast the Roman writer Horace's dictum 'ut pictura poesis' ('as in painting, so in poetry') with ideas found in G.E. Lessing's eighteenth-century essay – on the monumental Laocoön sculpture – subtitled 'On the limits of painting and poetry'. Lessing's interrogation is among the inspirations for some problematic but, often repeated, 'truths' of aesthetic theory concerning the relations between the arts: such as the claim that literature deals with and represents time, whereas painting should stick to spatial, or non-temporal, presentation. His treatise has inspired numerous debates about medium specificity, either as descriptive formats or as normative dogma, from his own day to the present, across the fields of literature, painting, and film.

The struggle of *ut pictura poesis* versus the Laocoön tradition can be traced back and forth through cultural history, and it can be found in different academic disciplines and art forms (art, music, or literature). Needless to say, there are huge differences in whether these aesthetic ideas are seen as descriptive (this is how it is) or prescriptive (this is how it should be): often they are both. Richard Wagner's late Romantic and politically utopian concept of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a total work of art, is one version of the *ut pictura* tradition.<sup>8</sup> Also, several of the so-called historical avant-gardes of the beginning of the early 20th century believed that the mixing of art forms was not only possible, but necessary in order to achieve the highest artistic and political/spiritual goals (Bürger, 1984). Ágnes Peth continues this appraisal of the aesthetic virtues of mixedness in *Cinema and Intermediality. The Passion for the In-Between* (Petho, 2011, see revised version 2020), and offers stimulating interpretations of a number of modern and postmodern auteurs. The numerous attempts at specifying the different art forms (or media), as well as limiting them to their own formal investigation (as in Clement Greenberg's lifelong engagements with modernist art), led to the influential notion of medium specificity, which can be seen as a twentieth-century version of Lessing's idea of establishing strict formal and normative borders between the arts.<sup>9</sup>

8 On the history of the *ut pictura* concept, see Henryk Markiewicz and Uliana Gabara (1987) and concerning Lessing's Laocoön, see Sternberg (1999).

9 See also Elliott (2003) about this debate. For a general discussion of medium specificity, see Carroll (1996); for a discussion of the ideas of medium specificity and visual arts, see (Mitchell, 2005), whereas (Chatman, 1980) offers a classical discussion of film versus literature from a medium specificity perspective.

In film theory, such perspectives had many consequences, one of them being the difference between the so-called realist position and the formalist one. This distinction was foregrounded by leading realist film theorists Siegfried Kracauer (1889–1966) and André Bazin (1918–1958). In ‘Ontology of the Photographic Image’, Bazin argued that the indexical nature of the image meant that realism was given because it was already there in the image (Bazin, 2009). Whereas the realist position often has been described as seeing cinema as a window, the formalist position sees it as a frame (Andrew 1976:12; Elsaesser and Hagener, 2010). These metaphors suggest different qualities in cinema as ‘one looks through a window, but one looks at a frame’, and where the window ideally become invisible and makes cinema look real, the frame draws attention to cinema as something artificial (Elsaesser and Hagener 2010: 14–15; see also (Friedberg, 2006) for interesting perspectives on these traditions).

When discussing the basic elements of the film medium, Rudolf Arnheim (1904–2007) foregrounded how cinema created a world of its own, distinct from the physical world, due to film’s lack of colour and three-dimensional depth, and the margins of the frame (Arnheim, 1958). Accordingly, filmmakers should pursue, in Arnheim’s opinion, the elements that distinguish film not only from other arts, but from life itself, and for that reason Arnheim was in favour of black and white silent films throughout his life. Such normative positions are not only found among theorists; filmmakers have also voiced their opinions about the specificity of the medium, such as when Ingmar Bergman describes Russian director Andrej Tarkovsky as ‘the one who invented a new language, true to the nature of film, as it captures life as a reflection, life as a dream’ (Gianvito, 2006).

Such differing views of what cinema is, can do, or should be, have also led to different approaches to what to study when analysing films: the sound (Michel Chion), the movement (Tom Gunning), the close-up (Bela Balázs), et cetera (Chion & Murch, 1994; Gunning, 2008; Balázs, 1924). We will also investigate what cinematic elements do, for instance the role of sound or motion in a film or a scene, and we will argue that the inherent medial mixedness, or what we could term the ‘heteromedial’ aspect of film, is a major characteristic. As suggested above, the term heteromediality has some benefits over the more common ‘intermediality’. Heteromediality (hetero: other, or mixed) emphasises that blending is an a priori condition in all media products and

medialities, and that the blending aspects consequently do not constitute a peripheral phenomenon or a marginal subgroup: mixedness characterises all medialities and all specific media products. Mixedness comes first, so to speak; the supposed monomedial purity of any specific medial object is the result of an active purification, rather than the other way round (Bruhn, 2010, 2016). In the following, ‘heteromediality’ signifies the general, a priori condition of mixedness, whereas we employ ‘intermediality’ when discussing more specific analytical questions (which is slightly different from Elleström’s way of using the term in Elleström, 2021).

This, we claim, could be the central starting point for the intermedial study of cinema: all cinematic texts are medially mixed, but in infinitely differentiated ways and leading to different effects and meanings.

### *Intermedial studies: a short introduction*

But what exactly are these media that can be mixed, or rather, whose very nature it is to be mixed? Historically, most discussions within intermedial studies have employed the concept medium/media, but the term is much-debated. One of the central scholars of intermediality, Werner Wolf, notes, not without sarcasm, that ‘[c]uriously, problems of definition and typology have not hindered intermediality research. The most obvious among these is the problem of defining ‘medium’ itself’ (Wolf, 2005).

One solution which has been employed more or less consistently throughout this introductory chapter is to use the more open form mediality/medialities instead (Wolf, 2008; Mitchell & Hansen, 2010, Elleström, 2021). In Mitchell and Hansen’s anthology *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, ‘mediation’ plays an important role in changing the question of what a medium is towards one of what media do – in other words what the process of mediation involves. Mitchell and Hansen showed that mediation, unlike the objectified existence of a medium/media, is an activity – the process of mediating – which per definition also includes a media product. These are some of the reasons why, instead of the term ‘medium’ (with the implied conceptual connotations of object-hood), we suggest ‘mediality’ and ‘medialities’ (plural), which relate to the process of mediation in communicative situations. However, as the reader might have noticed, we do at times use medium/media and mediality/medialities interchangeably – this is done in order to achieve variation, or when ‘medialities’ feels particularly clumsy.

When it comes to a working definition and stratification of the concept of medialities, we find that Lars Elleström's theorisation offers a precise but relatively flexible definition of mediality as a mixture of media and modalities (most recently in Elleström, 2021). Elleström has ventured to combine two often overlapping theoretical frameworks: intermediality and multimodality studies. These are two traditions that, each often without acknowledging the respective achievements of the other, work from more or less the same assumptions. They both claim that all communicative action takes place by way of devices that mix media (often understood as communicative channels or art forms) or modalities (often understood as more basic aspects of communicative action, such as sound, images or other sensual signs). By means of Elleström's cross-fertilisation of intermedial studies and multimodality/social semiotics, it becomes possible to construct an understanding of how all media are really modally mixed – and consequently that there is no such thing as a monomedial or 'monomodal' communicative situation or media product; this is another way of arguing for the heteromedial condition of all communication that we mentioned above.

What is particularly useful in Elleström's model is that it offers a much needed clarification of and distinction between the many different notions of medium that are available and in use not only in everyday talk, but also in academic discussions and cultural criticism. A mobile phone, a Klee oil painting, a television set, and the genre of opera may all in given contexts exemplify 'medium'. Elleström however defines medium using a model consisting of a basic, a qualified, and a technical media dimension. The main idea is that what we normally call a medium, or perhaps an art form, needs to be broken down into three interrelated dimensions that are often confused and conflated: basic media, qualified media types, and technical media of display.

The basic media are the building blocks, the atoms of qualified media types. This dimension may be exemplified by written words, moving images, or rhythmic sound patterns. These particular basic media dimensions may, under certain conditions, be part of a qualified media type, such as narrative written literature (or even more detailed: a novel, a short story), a newspaper article, a documentary film, or symphonic music. Thus, qualified media in the arts are more or less synonymous with what is often referred to as art forms. Cinema, written narrative literature, and sculpture are examples of qualified media, but it is crucial to stress that not all qualified media are

aesthetic. We also find qualified media types outside the arts, in areas such as the verbal language of the sports page in newspapers, advertising jingles, or in the non-aesthetic verbal language of legal prose. The third media component, the technical media of display, is the material-technological dimension, which makes qualified media perceptible in the first place, say, a TV screen, a piece of paper, or a mobile phone interface. In short, technical media display basic or qualified media.

This division of all media products into three media dimensions makes it possible to include anything from the mobile phone interface to a Renaissance poem into the investigation of medialities (the first being a technical medium of display, the second an example of the qualified medium type of written literature), but it also enables us to differentiate between them in analytical terms. The qualified medium type of cinema accordingly consists of basic media like moving images, words, music etc., and can be watched (and heard) on technical media of display such as a computer, a television screen or (the display of) a mobile phone.

Following this way of understanding medialities, any media product (in its three dimensions) enable communication, but this rather positive or optimistic understanding of medialities is not the only way to understand communication. Media scholar John Durham Peters has argued that communication, historically, has been understood in two, fundamentally different ways which also entails two ways of understanding the function of medialities in communication.<sup>10</sup>

One strong, but also heterogeneous tradition, beginning with Plato's *Phaedrus*, is suspicious and even fearful toward any mediating objects. For Plato, writing was the new medium that threatened both authentic communication and the human being's ability to use memory as the major storage medium. But in subsequent historical contexts, this anxiety came to relate to all imaginable medialities that threatened to interfere with the face-to-face dialogue between speaker and interlocutor, sender and receiver. This tradition of understanding media in communication as an estranging and destructive threat to authentic co-presence and deep, mutual understanding, will be referred to as the 'mediaphobic' position John Durham Peters – and we follow him

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10 See John Durham Peters (1999), who argues against the idealising notion of communication as face-to-face dialogue, and instead demonstrates a long struggle – ranging from Plato to the Internet – between two notions of communication.

– is highly critical of this tendency, because it tends to idealise face-to-face presence as the only legitimate communicative relation:

The image of two speakers taking turns in order to move progressively toward fuller understanding of each other masks two deeper facts: that all discourse, however many the speakers, must bridge the gap between one turn and the next, and that the intended addressee may never be identical with the actual one. (Peters, 1999)

As an alternative to this face-to-face dialogue-model, which implicates a communication magically unfettered of any medialities, Peters demonstrates that a notion of communication as dissemination is a much more fruitful model for how communication works. For our purposes this model is interesting because it does not exclude or ban medialities.

Communication-as-dissemination implies a fundamental distance between sender and receiver, and it is this distance that implies the necessity of the presence of medialities: medialities make possible or even create communication, they do not disturb it. The idea of communication-as-dissemination entails real bodies sending opened signs, by way of material medialities, to whoever wants to interpret them – be it the person next to you on the train, the reader of a book, a radio programme listener, or the participant in a social medium like Facebook. This is a much more realistic understanding of all the communicative aspects of people’s lives, which we, in contradistinction to the suspicious ‘mediaphobic’ position, will call the ‘mediaphile’ position.

### *Combination or transformation*

To simply claim the mixedness of cinema as a qualified media type is not very surprising, nor very satisfying. The problem of describing and analysing needs to be approached, which is the main goal approached here. We suggest that the question of analysing the mixed media of cinema may be simplified by dividing the heteromediality of cinema into two dimensions: one consisting of a process of transformation and another of the phenomenon of combination or integration.<sup>11</sup>

The media transformation dimension concerns how medial content or form in a temporal process is transformed from one qualified media type to another. Adaptation

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11 For a slightly different way of conceptualizing the intermedial divisions, see Bruhn and Schirmacher (2021).

studies, for instance the study of the transport from novels to film, is one particular investigation of an extremely broad phenomenon. Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl*, parts of which are transformed into the film *Howl*, is an example of this (see Bruhn & Gjelsvik, 2015). In that film, the transformation takes place when the poem written on paper is being read out loud, when the poem is being partly reproduced on written pages in the film, and when it is being represented in court as a printed book.

Media combination or integration aspects, on the other hand, concern phenomena where two or more medial form aspects co-exist or are integrated into each other in the same media product at the same time – for instance when a Cézanne painting is represented in a film accompanied by jazz music. These two dimensions of intermediality are not mutually exclusive; they are, exactly, dimensions. They can be used according to what question you are interested in pursuing change and as part of the combination of media in the film.

The media transformation per definition contains a temporal perspective. First, there is a play, then it is turned into a film; first there is film, then it is turned into an amusement park; first there is a painting, then there is a poem representing this painting, etc. Computer games are made into films (*Assassins Creed*, 2016) and films are made into computer games (*Ice Age*, 2002). In this immense cultural corpus, introduced and discussed in Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (Hutcheon, 2006); see also (Bruhn, Gjelsvik, & Hanssen, 2013), the medial mix lies, so to speak, in the temporal process: certain aspects of the novel (typically: themes, parts of the plot, certain characters, setting etc.) are transported into a film, but certain aspects of the adapted work are necessarily left out or changed beyond recognition. The process is transferring certain aspects while also transforming everything into a new media product (and a different technical medium). A lot of films are based on such transformations, in contemporary media culture the typical process being a bestselling novel or series of comic books turned into a Hollywood film. Notable examples are the many films based on the storyworld of the Marvel universe, the direct adaptation of the *Hunger Games* books, the comprehensive *Harry Potter* franchises or the television series *Game of Thrones*.

In the other large group, we have the combination of otherwise distinct medialities inside the same media product. In a pop song the verbal, sung text is combined with



music; on a Facebook page, photographs are combined with text and graphic design; on a poster, images exist side by side with words. In this group, aspects of different medialities exist synchronously, as opposed to the temporal process of transformation in the first group. In cinema, this is obvious but rarely made explicit. A film often (but not always) starts with verbal and aural information, such as the name of the production company and music, before any other imagery appears. Images can be animated, or photographed, moving or still. Through the film, visual and verbal elements are combined in a multitude of different ways, beginning with the production company's name visualised in their logo, the voice-over accompanying images of a landscape or the dialogue between two actors visible on the screen. Given the fundamental idea of intertextuality (which states that all texts are versions of earlier texts), on the other hand, we may conclude that all medialities are, basically, the result of a transformation.

Consequently, when performing a medial analysis on a specific film, one might investigate either mixtures (combination) or traces (transformation), and thus the film, from a medial perspective, is comparable to the famous duck-rabbit illusion: depending on analytical interest, you can choose to perceive a media product as either a combination or a process of transformation; both dimensions are inherent aspects of the specific film. To get the fullest possible description and interpretation, one might combine the two approaches, but many specific analyses will typically focus on one of the two aspects. Above we mentioned our analysis of Epstein and Friedman's curiously mixed biopic adaptation of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*: in that, for instance, we hardly go into the adaptation analysis, and discuss instead the formal as well as the more philosophical questions relating to the combination axis.

### *Intermedial reference, formal imitation, medial projection*

In order to describe and analyse films from an intermedial perspective, a few further distinctions are useful. These include 'intermedial reference', 'formal imitation', and 'medial projection', all of which are parts of the media transformation perspective previously mentioned.

A first distinction is that between intermedial reference and formal imitation. The creator of a film may, consciously or unconsciously, evoke or insert a medial ref-

erence to another real or fictional media product. In Joachim Trier's *Louder Than Bombs* (Trier, 2015), there is a reference to an earlier film that Gabriel Byrne acted in, which also plays a small part in the narrative: this is an intramedial reference, because the source and target media are identical. In *Howl*, we see an LP cover in Allen Ginsberg's working room that contributes to establishing a setting and a mood, a typical 'reality effect' (Barthes, 1986) that helps create realistic apprehensions of the fictional text (Pethö, 2011). This is an intermedial reference,

But a media product from one specific qualified media type, or parts of this product, can also be formed by copying the formal attributes of another media product or another media type. In such cases, we talk about formal imitation (Wolf, 2008, 2011). There are no strict boundaries between an intermedial reference versus a more comprehensive formal imitation, but a rule of thumb could be that if we are dealing with a specific reference of a media product, the particular example is interchangeable: in *Louder Than Bombs*, for example, there is a scene where the son in the family watches as film clip with his father (played by Gabriel Byrne) online, here the origin and the context of the film is of little consequence. On the other hand, we could say that formal imitation is what happens in *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (Peter Webber, 2003). The film is an adaptation of a 1999 novel by Tracy Chevalier in which the Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer's famous painting is described verbally (as an ekphrasis) and plays a crucial role (see Leitch, 2009). In the film, we find a visual re-enactment that could be considered as a cinematic ekphrasis (Brinch, 2006). Vermeer, who was famous for his sophisticated use of light, inspired the filmmakers to use different film stock and special lighting, in order to capture the style and feeling of the painting. Hollywood star Scarlett Johansson poses as the girl in the painting, in an image that at first glance looks like the original. A more radical example of formal imitation of a painting is found in the Polish film *Mill and the Cross* (Lech Majewski, 2011), where numerous details and some (of a total of 500) characters in Pieter Bruegel's (t.o.) allegorical painting *The Procession to Calvary* (1564) are brought to life. By way of live action, a large copy of the painting, and special effects, the painting is recreated as film.<sup>12</sup> As John Berger demonstrated in his famous television series *Ways of Seeing* (1972),

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12 Pethö, 2013 provides a useful summary of different types of references to paintings, and discusses the *tabloux vivant* more in detail, including Majewski's work.

transformed into a book version the same year, Breughel's painting is so rich in detail that it is easy to move around and focus on different elements, and this is exactly what Majewski does in his adaptation: the result is a film with much less emphasis on the narrative drive than we are used to in mainstream cinema.

Seeing the world as if it was a painting has been theorised under the term 'iconic projection', by Swedish scholar Hans Lund (Lund, 1992; Tornborg, 2014). However, a broader understanding of this mechanism is needed, and 'medial projection' has been proposed (Bruhn, 2016), a term which may encompass a much wider array of medial phenomena. Perceiving and describing particular aspects of the world as if it were, or could have been, either an example of, or deeply informed by a qualified media type (like music or more specifically a symphony), or a technical display medium (a TV-screen, a canvas), is a common literary device, and actually a typical intermedial phenomenon. In Mike Leigh's *Mr Turner* (2014), for example, many shots appear to be partly through the eyes of J.M.W. Turner: not only as a person, but by way of his particular painterly vision of the world.

To briefly summarise the arguments so far, we can start by reminding the reader that we define medialities as a broad term consisting of the three internally inter-related dimensions of basic media, technical media of display (sometimes simply referred to as technical media) and qualified media types (or qualified media). We use mediality and media interchangeably in our book to refer to the material aspects of communication. A distinction between intermedial and intramedial relations were shortly mentioned, designating either connections between different qualified media types (intermedial relations) or between examples of the same media type (intramedial relations). We also made a provisional distinction between medial combination and medial transformation, and intermedial reference versus formal imitation. Finally, we introduced medial projection as yet another way that cinematic texts come in close contact with other aesthetic or non-aesthetic medialities. In the following, we want to propose a more specific methodology for analysing cinema based on these theoretical and analytical terms.

## Part II

### *Studying cinema intermedially*

#### *The three-step mediality analysis of film: To list, structure, and contextualise*

The specific methodology we propose is a three-step approach moving from constructing a list of mediality presences, via an examination and structuring of this list (still staying inside the borders of the analysed film) and into an interpretation of the work, often but not always by way of a contextualisation beyond and outside the given film.<sup>13</sup>

We analyse films by listing, structuring and contextualising medialities. But how can this method be characterised according to some of the well-known options in film studies and aesthetic analysis? Is it a thematic analysis where the continuous and repeated representation of medialities adds up to an over-arching theme? Not quite; in particular because we tend to focus on the formal importance of the presence and function of medialities as opposed to a content-oriented, thematic analysis. Are medialities, instead, to be understood as a 'leitmotif' in the films we discuss, so that the repeated presence of singular medialities represent some kind of higher psychological, existential or aesthetic vision? Given the heterogeneous nature of the different medialities, this is not really fitting either.

A better description is to say that we investigate 'mediality as motif'. Bordwell and Thompson describe motif as part of cinema's essential dialectic between repetition and variation: "A motif is any significant repeated element that contributes to the overall form. It may be an object, a color, a place, a person, a sound, or even a character trait. (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017, 63). Working with our broad notion of medialities it makes sense to say that we investigate medialities as motif; a motif that produces meaning on several levels simultaneously and thus, becomes part of an overall interpretation of the film,

The repeatable structure of the method is supposed to be sufficiently open to improvisation and creativity to make it useful when analysing the complexities of

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13 We are here further developing a method for intermedial analysis of narrative literature suggested by (Bruhn, 2016).

specific cinematic texts. Obviously, the methodology does not offer a simple, universal solution for anyone engaging with film studies: we presuppose certain basic skills in cultural analysis from and we are well aware that while in particular the first step is relatively easy to conduct, the second and third steps demand a certain amount of creativity and analytical training and practising.

### *First step: listing*

The first step consists of a localisation and cataloguing of the representations of media products, types and aspects in the film. Once again it is important to stress that the focus for us here is the representation of medialities in cinema, rather than readings of cinema as material objects, or understanding the distribution and production of cinema. This first step is intended to generate a list or catalogue of medially interesting phenomena in the analysed film. In this opening phase, we suggest employing as broad a concept of medialities as possible (following the definition presented above) and registering a large number of aspects connected directly or indirectly to any mediating devices in communicative situations.

Let us demonstrate how the first step in such an analysis (albeit not a fully-fledged analysis) could work with a rather long example. We have chosen the title sequence from Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) as a useful exemplary case.<sup>14</sup> Georg Stanitzek has described a title sequence as a film 'inside the film', and as the cinematic form that makes use of the highest number of cinematic techniques to the fullest extent possible (Stanitzek & Aplevich, 2009). The title sequence could be described as an intermedial example par excellence, since it almost always will express a very direct combination and integration of basic media elements such as sound, verbal text, images, animation, and more. In the case of *Sherlock Holmes*, the opening title sequence is quite short; it starts with the Warner Brothers (and the other studios') logo redesigned in cobblestones, and rather than a still before the action starts, the logos are included in a moving camera shot (or in fact the CGI illusion of a moving camera). After a short chase, we find Sherlock Holmes (Robert Downey Jr.), Dr Watson (Jude Law), and a policeman (Eddie Marsan) standing in a church. We hear a voice say:

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14 See the website *The Art of the Title*, which is dedicated to title sequences, for more on this: <http://www.artofthetitle.com/title/sherlock-holmes>

‘Gentlemen’, and the three men turn around; when the photographer shouts ‘cheese’, the camera goes off and Sherlock hides his face. The next image shows the photograph that was taken, first a blurred version in motion and then the negative, as if the frozen image is meant to show the process of photo developing. The final version of the image is on the front page of a newspaper, this time as a drawing. Our view is then expanded (through a motion that looks like camera movement) to expose the full newspaper page, with the title of the cover story, ‘Scotland Yard catches killer!’, and a second title reading: ‘Sherlock Holmes aides police’. If we watch the film on our own screen, we are able to freeze the image and actually decode the text in the newspaper article in *The Penny Illustrated Paper*. The film quickly focuses on the name Sherlock Holmes (the title of the film) and cuts to a new image: The sign on a wall saying Baker Street, N.W. And so, the story begins. Within the short span of twenty seconds, we have been presented with a camera, a photograph (in two different versions), a drawing, a newspaper, including illustrations, an article, and a street sign.

The second part of the title sequence, normally called the end credits, reuses these elements and combines them with writing: an image of a character in the film is frozen and transformed into a drawing, accompanied by the relevant actor’s name, appearing as if written by a calligraphic pen on old paper. Members of the cast, photographers, scriptwriters, editors etc., are listed in a similar way. However, here the combination of images and words is closer to the characteristics of the technical medium of the book, an impression strengthened by the effect of rapidly turning pages. Accordingly, viewers may be reminded of old news media, paintings and books when watching this title sequence.

The first step may be characterised, in comparison with the two steps that follow, as the least creative and most rote-like aspect of the analytical labour. Ideally, different readers with different interpretational agendas should be able to agree upon most of the items on the initial list created in the first step, but it cannot be generated without any interpretive considerations whatsoever. Even if it may seem like a rather empty exercise, simply making such a list induces an important recognition: a supposedly homogenic medium such as film includes many, many represented medialities – it just takes a new analytical perspective to notice.

A practical question rises here: what should be included and what should not be included in this sort of media catalogue? For an example of what not to include in a catalogue, let's take as our starting point the soundtrack of a film. The soundtrack of a film is a complex mixed mediality (consisting of dialogue, music, sound, voice-over) whose function and presence needs to be analysed in any cinematic text. But that does not mean that all instances of the soundtrack in a film should be put on the list (which would mean, basically, that the entire film would be reproduced soundbite for soundbite in the list. In the Sherlock Holmes sequence, we focused on the visual elements, but we also mentioned the spoken words. We could have foregrounded the click sound of the camera blitz, and other spectators perhaps would be more interested in the striking theme music composed by Hans Zimmer, allegedly played on an old broken piano, but we chose another analytical perspective in our discussion. So even if the list resulting from the first step is supposed to be constructed in compliance with relatively objective standards, the list is, of course, following pragmatic considerations.

### *Second step: structuring*

As the second step of the analysis, we suggest to structure and organise the large and often incoherent material collected and catalogued in step one. From our experience, we know that this second step demands rigour, because it is all too easy to skip ahead into step three's contextualising activities. In step two, the more or less meaningless list is inserted into some kind of comprehensible and coherent structure. In our example case, we could sum up how the technical media of display (paper or the camera) in the film could be said to reflect the contemporary media history of the original author Conan Doyle's time, when the Sherlock Holmes stories were originally written (1887–1900). Or we could reflect on how the use of photography, newspapers, and books draws attention to the fact that this is a film adaptation of classic literature (See Geraghty, 2009).

What we focus on could be dependent on the specific elements of a film or the context of the film. In some one of the historical dichotomies presented above between, for instance, medial mixedness versus medial purity in step two or three. In some cases, the paragone tradition of arts competing to be the 'best' art form could be interesting to pursue. Sometimes the film as a whole aesthetic statement can be seen



entering such a discussion. In other cases, the abstract paragone might be discussion embodied in a hierarchy of representatives of the various media (a painter versus an author, for instance). Sometimes the paragone may be detectable on the level of style or form, where the director's aesthetic choices may express a schism between a descriptive, 'painterly' style versus a more literary, discursive style.

### *Step three: contextualising*

These dichotomies, or whichever structure we have described in step two, are now ready to be contextualised or 'framed' into some larger context, which may fall into numerous different categories. The structures of step two may, in the third step, be related to a biographical context for a filmmaker, or more comprehensive aesthetic, theoretical, or art-sociological patterns or formations. Of course, the requisite context may also be technological, or an ideological formation in the society in which the film was made, or the society represented in the work.

If we were to continue our sketch of a possible interpretation of the Sherlock Holmes title sequence, a tempting contextualisation would be a comparison between the 1990-ish media situation in Guy Ritchie's film as opposed to the 2000-something setting of the BBC's series *Sherlock* (2010–2016). In the BBC series, the story has been moved to a contemporary London, and the title sequence starts with a hectic overview of Leicester Square: horses have been replaced with cars, the newspaper with big neon signs. Whereas the film's credit sequence was illustrated with drawings, the BBC's credit sequence is based on time-lapse and tilt-shift technology, which creates the feeling that we as viewers can look down on Sherlock's world from above. In sum, the BBC's title sequence foregrounds the role of mobile phones and surveillance technology. In the first example, the media is watching what Sherlock is doing, but in the BBC version it is less clear who is looking at whom, a change which echoes the change in our mediated environment during this historical period.

## *Concluding remarks and further perspectives*

Our method of analysing the media aspects of cinematic texts is a maieutic method; it focuses our attention toward a certain ‘dimension’ of the text, and thereby offers access to aspects that would otherwise have remained undetected. And we repeat: the maieutic three steps are no guarantee for a productive reading, you need to bring engagement and basic analytical skills to the table. Our aim is to show that when focusing on listing and structuring the medialities of a given film, one’s attention is almost invariably drawn to larger contexts beyond the question of mediation or representation itself. Suggesting an intermedial model for film analysis is modest as well as immodest: we wished to suggest new ways of analysing narrative films for students and researchers, and hoped to tweak film theory a little bit in an intermedial direction. The reader may decide which of the two goals is the modest and which is the immodest one, but we have tried to do both.

We have presented a couple of questions that represent the specific analytical objectives: What happens if we understand cinema as a mixed medium? How should one approach film analysis from an intermedial perspective? What thematic and formal traits will become clear when we look at film as a mixed mediality? We have, to put it short, tried to establish some of the theoretical foundations for rethinking cinema studies with an intermedial perspective. Therefore we have, rather briefly, presented some of the central theoretical discussions within intermedial studies as well as our own analytical three-step model.

When we, in our book, aspects of which are described in this article, dedicated to these questions, discussed our case studies, we were well aware, however, that as a group of films, our cases were not at all comprehensive or representative, neither in terms of historical representation and geographical breadth nor cinematic genres. If we were to expand our project to include more different genres (while staying inside the same spatio-temporal realm) we would have liked to include both more commercial examples than we have worked on here, and more challenging experimental films. Genre movies such as *Star Wars: Rogue One* (Gareth Edwards, 2016), *Wonder Woman* (Patty Jenkins, 2017), *The Jungle book* (Jon Favreau, 2016) or *Get Out* (Jordan Peele, 2017), or art films such as *The Square* (Ruben Østlund, 2017) or *The Exhibition* (Joanna Hogg, 2013), as well as television series such as *Big Little Lies* (David E. Kelley

and Jean-Marc Vallée, 2017), *The Handmaid's Tale* (Bruce Miller, 2017) or *Stranger Things* (Matt and Joff Duffe, 2016) would have been interesting to think about from an intermedial perspective. Working with shorter films, such as Don Hertzfeldt's animated short film *World of Tomorrow* (2015) or the Facebook horror film *Alexia* (Andrés Borges 2013), would have given us different possibilities and provided other ideas. We also certainly consider our approach relevant to the study of non-western films although none have been included here.

As mentioned already we think that film studies do need to update all the fruitful 'proto-intermedial' insights from the earlier history of film and film criticism and stands to gain from incorporating central aspects of contemporary intermediality studies with these insights. The reluctance we have sometimes met from some film scholars towards intermediality – following the line that 'intermedial studies find out what film criticism has known all along' – will hopefully decrease. We are, of course, not claiming that intermedial studies can or should overtake or replace film theory, far from it. But what we do say is that the focus on the inherent mixedness of media, as well as some of the theoretical and analytical tools developed in intermedial studies, may help clarify issues in film studies. One area where intermedial studies and film studies are already productively meeting is in adaptation studies, but other areas might benefit from such combined efforts as well: the study of sound is another obvious one.

Our focus on mediality as motif has demonstrated, very briefly here and much more in detail in the book, a rich potential for further explorations, and the three steps of our analytical model – cataloguing, structuring, contextualising – work well as an analytical tool for research, but can also, we think, serve as a valuable aid in pedagogical situations. For students at most educational levels, and for scholars, the three steps offer useful insights. The first step – listing the presence of medialities – may feel rather mechanical or even banal. It does, however, bring home the awareness that lies at the bottom of media studies and intermedial studies, namely that medialities are constantly surrounding us and playing important roles in our lives. This basic condition tends to be very present, consciously or not, in narrative cinema, and the first step demonstrates this quite effectively. The second, structuring step may, with the maieutic help of some of the categories discussed or developed in intermedial theory like *paragone*, *medium specificity*, and others, help a student of film better organise

the often rich presence of medialities. This step is not easy, but practising one's capacities in it will be rewarding in other fields of aesthetic analysis too; it develops cognitive skills such as ordering, choosing, and imagining a structured understanding of complex material. Finally, the third step's contextualising demands other efforts, this time relating to aspects beyond the internal borders of the work itself, thus incorporating the film into larger historical, aesthetical, or perhaps psychological contexts.

But despite our optimism concerning the possible outcomes of our theoretical and analytical strategies, there are, needless to say, still improvements and additions to be made to what we have proposed here, which we, for now, will have to put on our imaginary film-intermediality wish list.

That list would include:

**Thematic concentration:** it might be productive to use the three-step model more instrumentally in investigating pre-established themes across cinematic genres (for instance gender, post-colonial questions, ecocritical issues) in order to avoid the possibly formalist bent of our analytical model.

**Geographical and historical expansion:** in terms of case studies, it would be clearly fruitful to expand the analytical objects geographically (to reach beyond the Western canon in this book), but also to open up for historical considerations. Would the presence and function of a given set of medialities work the same way in early Asian film as in contemporary European film, for example? Probably not – and the differences would be worth investigating.

**Generic expansion:** it would be interesting to expand the analytical model to moving images that are not realistic-representative (say, American experimental film from the 1960s), or films that are less fictionalised and narrativised (Scandinavian instructional films related to public health, for instance). Would the suggested model work on these kinds of moving images? And if not, why? A first thesis would be, perhaps, that our model works well on films of a certain 'realistic' tendency, whereas our three-step model would be harder to apply to, for instance, avant-garde film. This leads to the next possible extension of our model:

**An intermedial expansion:** mediality as motif is a productive instrumentalisation of the abstract aspects of intermedial theory into a practical analytical methodology. But it comes with a methodological cost, namely that the analysis stays on a represen-

tational level often limited to the diegetic level of the films, the ‘what’ rather than the ‘how’, so to speak. This we could call the external mediality aspects. We have only very hastily discussed the technical media making cinema possible in the most practical but still very important ways: cameras, sound recording equipment, the sets relating to film production, but also all the technical aspects of the distribution and reception side of cinema. As mentioned above, our model, as it stands now, would be rather weak when confronted with, for instance a Stan Brakhage film from the 1960s or Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul’s metaphysical films, where conventional representation, diegesis and narration is minimal or even absent. Or, more to the point concerning our case studies: what difference does it make to experience *Citizen Kane* in a movie theatre in 1941 as opposed to an art house cinema in the 1970s or on a small computer screen in the twenty-first century? Generally, the importance of digital media and differences between screens and viewing modes could be further developed.

And last, but not least: Pedagogical precision: it would be interesting to specify even more the analytical model in terms of ages and educational levels. Should one version of the three-step model be offered to lower-grade students, while another, more complex one should be developed for graduate and post-graduate levels? What adjustments should be made? These pedagogical questions needs to be pursued further.

But for now, we hope that our suggestion will be seen as an opportunity to reconsider both some of the fundamental theoretical questions of film theory and a valuable guide to hands-on, practical suggestions on how to analyse narrative cinema. The book is aimed at higher-level students at universities and colleges, film scholars, and people simply interested in analysing and understanding film better. We hope our approach will stimulate new, general visions of what cinema is and specific and exciting understandings of specific films.

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