

Artwork – Text – Medium. Steps en route to Intermediality

During the 1950s, the French film theorist André Bazin posed the question: 'Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?', and he responded to this question with a collection of essays consisting primarily of film critiques dealing with examples from the history of film and contemporary films. For Bazin, there was no doubt at all that films were, in principle, works by authors who at certain times and with certain technical and aesthetic means had managed to create certain distinctive cinematic artworks. A short time afterwards, in the Mid-Sixties, the film semiologist Christian Metz spoke of film not as of an artwork, but, rather, as of a 'textual system' that constitutes its own original, singular totality, in which an author, if involved at all, is only one constituent of this system. Today, it seems to be more appropriate to speak of film as of one medium among others which interact as multimedia or are connected to one another intermedially. The same film can be seen at the cinema, on television, on video or DVD; films deal with cinema thematically, with themselves, or with television or the Internet, with which they also share a number of technological and aesthetic characteristics.

With the following remarks, I will attempt to discuss changes in the idea of film with the help of the three major concepts of artwork, text, and medium. These changes are not only relevant to film, but also to all of the other arts to which these concepts also apply in varying degrees, which provokes the questions of what the individual concepts, in relationship to the respective other concepts, actually achieve with regard to the description of their topics and of what might have caused the shift in the dominance of their use. As implied above, the relationship of the dominance of the concepts of artwork, then, text, and, finally, medium is to be understood in the sense of an historical sequence. In the same sense, that which they respectively signify has also changed. For example, from the outset a film such as 'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari' has a different 'status' both in its production and in cinematic reception than any current film that we might watch on television after the evening news. Much the same also applies to the arts, their materialization, their assessment, their use in general. I will attempt to discuss this discrepancy in the difference between the structure and the event of their phenomenon and their (social, institutional, and aesthetic) perception somewhat systematically with regard to the distinctive characteristics of film.

## 1. Film as Artwork

Film had hardly risen from the lowly spheres of popular amusement fairs and created its own space for presentation and reception in the cinema when the time came to decide if film was 'art'. Those who posed this question were neither film producers nor artists engaged in arts cooperating or competing with film, but, rather, journalists, prosecutors, teachers, and, soon enough, experts on a discourse on film who constantly discussed this one issue: Under which conditions and at which position in the Pantheon of the arts can film be 'art'? The other issue concerning whether or not a particular film could be a work of art was only permissible for a small portion of film production, for avant-garde or experimental cinema, which was obviously especially close to the traditional arts. The directors of such films had originally been painters or writers; the films themselves were so far removed from their industrial production and commercial utilization that there was no problem involved with considering them to be works of art. They were characterized by exactly those features that were missing in film as a mass product, namely, the essential criteria of a work of art, the two most important of which are: singularity or autonomy and the author(ity) of an author/subject. The authority of a work of art depends on its uniqueness, which connects it to a subject or creator and which is expressed in its 'aura'. The originator or author (*auctor*) of a work of art has at his or her disposal the power emanating from the product as a work, the legitimation to express him/herself in it as a human subject and to decide what to do with it as his or her intellectual property. Still, a picture, a piece of music, or a story are not 'works of art' from the outset; on the contrary, they must be discovered, described, and defined as art. The good reputation of their author simply serves to shorten this process; it never makes it superfluous. A work of art must become manifest in order to be art. The place where this manifestation occurs is simply: art, art as an institution with museums and an artistically interested public, art as a market and as a didactic, legal, critical, and, above all, commentating and defining discourse. Only art (as a discourse) determines what a work within the framework of art (as an institution) can be. But it is also this definition that identifies the work of art and, e.g., protects it with a copyright. Thus, whenever the attempt was made to include film in the discourse on art and to institutionalize film as art, it was also an attempt to prevent films from one company from constantly being unscrupulously imitated and copied by other companies. Not to mention that, in this way, films attained higher esteem among the affluent middle-class audience. Only

very gradually did characteristics of film as an 'artwork' begin to appear, with individual films having conspicuous titles becoming prominent within the bulk of all films (normally as cinematic adaptations of other, literary works of art) and with their originators making a name for themselves. At first, this was the case with the actors and only afterwards the director (e.g., D. W. Griffith), whereas the invariably literary author was either already well-known due to the literary model of the adaptation or was doomed to obscurity (the one prominent exception being the Expressionist screen-writer Carl Mayer). All histories of film that recount the development of film art from its beginnings to the present are histories of artworks which arrange their subject matter canonically according to the evaluative criteria of their singularity and authorship (directorship), both of which are guaranteed by the name of the film and of the author and are thus listed in the index (e.g. of some film history). But at the same moment that film became a topic for the discourse on 'art', the problem arose that film (historically in the aftermath of photography) is the prototype of a modern, technological/mechanical production method for aesthetic products which actually resist the criteria used in establishing their artwork quality. The industrial, technological/mechanical production method for films contradicts the singularity and autonomy associated with the artwork quality in much the same way that the idea of authorship is contradicted by the collective production method, which is, indeed, still based upon a hierarchy among the collaborators, but, nonetheless, no longer refers to an individual creator – as is obvious from a single glance at the final credits of any film. Thus, the interpretation and history of films as artworks directly contradict the idea of artwork and its creator. In fact, photography and film, for their part, have also affected the status of the (Romantic) artwork. Thus, in his 'Short History of Photography', Walter Benjamin describes how the picture of a painting in a photograph appears as a new media-supported way of having the painting at one's disposal. According to Benjamin, taste in art had not changed by regarding paintings in photographic illustrations, but, rather, "with the development of reproduction techniques, conception of great works of art has undergone a transformation. These can no longer be seen as the works of individuals; they have become collective constructions in such a forceful way that their assimilation is directly dependent upon their small-scale reproduction. In the last instance, the mechanical reproduction methods are reductive techniques that allow man to attain precisely that degree of power over the works without which they would no longer be of any use at all." This sort of power over the works is precisely no longer that of the author/subject, but, rather, a technological/mechanical way of having them at one's disposal, appropriated reproductively by means of slide collections or

the ubiquitous art books. What dissolves in these infinite copies is the identity of the artworks, which only maintain their place in discourse and their function in the institution of art (and its position on the art market). Here, products stemming from artisanship or from technological/mechanical methods can be arranged on an equal basis without any distinction in the sense of a difference in their status as artworks. Duchamp's 'ready-mades' or conceptual art illustrate the function of commentary and the museum for the arts – a function that solely accounts for the fact that trivial, industrially made household articles or simply concepts could become 'artworks'. The development of a canon in the history of film ennobles along with their protagonists certain films which derive from the same production methods as do thousands of other unnamed and forgotten films. The difference lies in a(n) (aesthetic?) 'surplus value' which is not in the least a result of their arrangement in critical discourse and in the development of the canon, but not in their quality as singular works of individual authors. Film and the traditional arts do indeed approach one another under a common concept of 'artwork', but under the influence of its dissolution by means of hybridization. Wagner's conception of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* as a hybrid form combining theater, music, drama, and effective aesthetics dissolves a significant number of criteria for identifying an 'artwork' by means of its composite form. The aesthetic syncretism of the film – consisting on the one hand of picture, color, sound, motion, adaptation from literature, structurally analogous or filmed theater, musical or visual-arts avant-garde, on the other hand of the technological/mechanical medium – makes film a new sort of technical *Gesamtkunstwerk* that, as far as the effects of its aesthetics are concerned, has much in common with Wagner's concept (Kittler). Thus, the *Gesamtkunstwerk* is the first hybrid form en route to intermediality. The now deceased director of the *Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie* in Karlsruhe, Heinrich Klotz, for his part formulated some reflections on a 'media *Gesamtkunstwerk*' (1991) and took this to mean the combination of all the forms and expert practices in which the interaction of the arts takes place, particularly in the context of their digitalization, which would transform the arts significantly.

The so-called *Autorenfilm* ('author's film') of 1913/1914 took its name from the fact that there had been some success in functionalizing authors of literary works for film. Thus, it was a matter of authors for film, not of film. At the end of the 50s and beginning of the 60s, a *politique des auteurs* (André Bazins and *Cahiers du cinéma*) declared films to be the works of individual authors, supposedly having been created according to the model of the literary

artist/subject (Alexandre Astruc: *caméra stylo*). Not only did this refer to New Wave films and their successors in, for instance, the 'New German Cinema', but also films of the classical Hollywood film industry now become designated as 'author's films' by American 'author theory' film critics such as Andrew Sarris if characteristics of an individual signature or the 'fingerprints' of Hawks, Ford, Hitchcock, or others can be found in them. The 'label' *politique des auteurs* itself already indicates that it is a question of intentionally and discursively enhancing the status of film as the 'work of an author', of a discourse within the institution of art designed to protect and promote the interests of those interested in film even though the conditions of authorial mastery and authorship in film production had not been substantially changed. Wherever individual authorial mastery did actually become possible, this came about by authors producing their own films. Thus, in its maximum realization, the 'author's film' is a producer's film. It is not difficult to recognize this strategy of regarding film as an individual artwork of Truffaut, Chabrol, Herzog, Wenders, Fassbinder, etc. as a counter-strategy to a new discourse emerging at the same time that no longer speaks of individual films, but, rather, concerns itself with mass media television programs, with *information visuelle*, with networked channels and tendencies towards cultural globalization. At least temporarily (and up to the present date), the American film industry has found other ways of asserting itself in light of the programmatics of television and of multimedia competition by means of individual spectacular films. Everything here, the names, the title, wide-screen format, Dolby surround sound, etc. is not designed to serve the film as the work of an individual artist, but, rather, the film as an event, as a spectacle, the structure of which, however, is no longer able to cope with the complex media events of the new media.

The quality of art as a work of art is a manifestation of modernity since it presumes an author/subject expressing him/herself in the work and having authorial mastery – conditions that only become possible in this sense with the onset of modernity. In this view, the work is the event of its subjective production. Artist myths of Romanticism and the self-stylization of the 'author without a work' (e.g., the painter Frenhofer in Balzac's *Unknown Masterpiece*) refer to the over-emphasis of the constitutive role of the subject in the 'work' concept: Wherever genius is present, the work itself can be missing. In that case, the work is the unheard of, the sublime, the unrepresentable, the event that now only in its absence is present discursively and institutionally.

For 'modern' art, Baudelaire's concept of modernity formulated the paradox of the simultaneity of the temporary and contingent and of the inevitable and eternal. What in a work of art can be valid both by chance and eternally? Or, to put the question differently, what in a work of art is at the same time event and structure? The answer indicates a peculiar sort of chiasmus, a cross-wise configuration that will also determine the relationship between text and discourse. For discourse structures an artwork as an art event, and the structure of the relationship between artwork and art, that is, the 'art system', guarantees the repeatability of such events, their perpetual renewal – even if the event of the artwork is its systematic absence. An event proceeds according to the structure of repetition itself by constantly asserting itself in light of the structure, i.e., as something new in opposition to repetition (as with fashion, for example). In other words, an event is only possible at the place of its repetition; it is always already its own repetition (cf. esp. Deleuze 1993). Along the lines of Baudelaire's reasoning, modernity aims at the event as repetition or, to use a different expression, at presence as representation. The concept of text provides the adequate response to this constellation, in which the text reveals the event by concealing it behind itself as text. As presence, the event becomes visible only in its repetition, which conceals the presence with its representation in order to articulate it as an event. Discourses are textual events that interrupt the structure of the texts by means of their presence as speech. In other words, discourse, as an event in a text (cf. Foucault) presumes the textual arrangement of its discursive structure. The new position of the discourses is that of intervention into the text that, for its part, has taken the place of the artworks. This simultaneity and interconnection of (institutional, aesthetic, etc.) discourse and its object characterizes the transformational level of the text, or, characterizes the text as transformation.

## 2. What, in comparison, is a text?

Our everyday conception of texts sees them as materially complete works composed of linguistic elements preserved in written form and longer than a sentence (Knobloch). Noteworthy here is the talk of a 'work' without recourse to someone responsible for its creation. Thus, texts are media for recording meaning that reveal their meanings to interpretive reading. Apparently, a text must provide for its own readability and comprehensibility as a dynamic process *sui generis*, and yet, as the history of interpretation demonstrates, it cannot achieve this. For this reason, text hermeneutics brings the

(author/)/subject as the context of the text into play again, so to speak, *post festum*. Particularly the deconstructive variety of structuralism attempts to extrapolate the implicit subject in the text as its operative function, as the dynamics of its augmentations and shifts.

The structuralist recourse to text, which, during the 60s, replaces the categories of work and author also in relationship to discourses on film, views text as a surface on which entirely contradictory strategies intersect.

For example, in 1972 Roland Barthes defined 'text' as "the surface of the phenomena of a literary work; it is the fabric of words bound into the work and arranged in such a way that they provide a meaning that is stable and, as far as possible, unique." Thus, the text structures a meaningful (readable) arrangement that manifests itself stably and singularly in the work. Its stability allows it to fulfill the function of recall, thus of repetition; its singularity helps to ensure that it cannot be repeated in this form beyond the limits that define it as a work. This fixed form of the text contradicts textual praxis, which, viewed as signifying productivity or 'pure signification' only has its bounds at the limits of all possible spheres of meaning and, thus, is traversed by the various institutional, delineative, juridical, cultural, etc. discourses that the singular text links and transformationally interconnects in its own textual space. In this case, we are dealing with an open, dynamic sign process the textual system of which is in constant exchange with its (textual) environment and thus is constantly undergoing alteration. Every reading is a constitutive intervention with regard to the text, which only reveals its meaning when its fixed textual surface has been deconstructed, that is, opened with respect to its dynamic sense-making processes. Vilém Flusser describes the text as, in principle, an open fabric, as a half-finished product that must first be completed (provisionally) by the reader who 'picks up the threads of the text'. As a hermeneutic subject or autonomous producer of meaning, the author is significantly absent from the text, i.e., not in the sense that he or she is non-existent as the metaphor of the 'death of the author' implies; on the contrary, he or she exists solely as the event of his or her absence in the text. The trace of the author that has become manifest in the work is the trace of its own dissolution in the text, where it figures as something absent and thus becomes readable. Put a different way, the text does not 'personify' its author the way a work personified its originator, who, in the extreme case (of the dandy) became his own work of art; rather, author and reader are environments of textual systems which are absorbed by the dynamics of their textual processes. What does bring the text near

the concept of artwork is the relative stability of its singular textual system, of its *textgestalt* or its (grammatical, lexical, etc.) form, which remains the target of philological efforts to establish its identity. On the textual level, what contributes to the dissolution of the work concept are all the processes of trans-formation into which every individual textual system is integrated by means of its relationship to its (textual) environment or which become explicit as intertextual or, in the last instance, intermedial transformation processes. Finally, texts on the surface of computer monitors are completely virtual, hypertextual links, i.e., connections in combination that arrange texts as part of a simultaneous virtual network to constantly changing current textual formations which allow the processing of pictures, graphics, even moving pictures and films on the same textual level. Closing a word processor lets the (virtual) text in its digital simulation 'as text' disappear; the material quality of the text is inaccessible, stored within a data network (whereas upon closing a book, one puts the text in the same form – perhaps even as an artwork – aside).

What does this talk of 'singular textual system' mean for film, particularly with regard to its treatment as an artwork? Above all, it means that the textual system of a film is not 'given', but, rather, is only constituted in the structuralist activity. As Roland Barthes maintained, structuralist activity leads to destruction and reconstruction, dissolution and re-establishment; it is de-construction. Both activities take place simultaneously; the construction of the text of a film is, at the same time, the deconstruction of its supposed artwork identity and the reconstruction of the singular textual system that only originates in this activity in the first place. In this sense, films are virtual texts which constitute themselves during projection by means of the subject position of the viewer. For this reason, Christian Metz (Metz 1977) uses the term 'imaginary signifier' of film; all of the material that precedes this constitutive act and initiates it remains external to the text – a condition which led to the justified criticism of neglect for the medium on the part of textual analysis of film. Likewise, the French film analyst Raymond Bellour considers a film's text to be impossible to find (*introuvable*) or to be unattainable (*anattainable*) (Bellour 1975), which manifests itself in the impossibility of quoting films, for which the use of stills is only an inadequate substitute. We never have a film before us in a fixed textual form comparable to that of a literary text. The film's text itself is transitory, thus, the viewer's construction of the film's textual system is even more important for recalling what was narrated or represented in the film. What we recall is the systematics of the sequences of events, their structure, which keeps a constant process of



intertextual transformation going. For the most part, this systematics must be established by structural textual film analysis. In that case, textual analysis of a film is its re-construction as a transformational system the method of which is the rejection of every signification preceding the analysis; and the signification can only first be established with the transformation of those discourses structured in the text. Codes and subcodes regulate the relevant textual or discursive praxis which, after the establishment of its rules, is comprehensible. Institutional, cultural, delineative scholarly codes, in addition to specific (sub-)codes of basic types (fiction or documentary), of genres (western, *film noir*, comedy, musical), of national styles or of authorial characteristics, govern the process of signification, connect it to other films with similar or diverging codes, and refer to the transformation of texts from other media, for example, from literature, painting (cf. J.-L. Godard: 'Passion' 1982), or music. They activate the viewer's cultural knowledge by involving him/her and making a place available to him/her within the textual system.

For Example:**Illibatezza**



Hermeneutically speaking, this episodic film Rossellini made in 1962 is an 'artwork' of its author shortly before his transition from cinema to television. Structurally, the mirror imagery of two scenes in this final 'film-in-film' sequence is important; the difference in the symmetry here is just as significant as the symmetry itself. The psychoanalytical codes of sexuality, of imaginary and symbolic identity and a structure of desire that refers to the text of the film represented in the film text and this time, in projection, 'embodied' in a special way function by means of the self-reference of the medium (to which I will return later). This mirroring technique functions as a system of (narrative) shift in the text and as an intertextual transformation, i.e., as systematic signification. It is obviously the key to understanding the text, its 'transform'. This filmic text is part of the more extensive compilation film 'ROGOPAG', which offers it a con-text with the construction of its name, a place in a more or

less random arrangement of other short films according to the names of their authors: Rossellini, Godard, Pasolini, Gregoretti. Almost immediately after 'Illibatezza' (actually after 'Anima Nera'), Rossellini stopped making films for cinema and concentrated entirely on television work, that is, here in this film 'Illibatezza', a new 'media constellation' of textual construction already makes itself conspicuous. But television is the final deconstruction of the concept of artwork; it is the programmatic heterogeneousness of its purely endlessly flowing texts; and their institutional code (of television) is in control of all of the transformational processes even including the contingency of reception. (Erich Schön has demonstrated that the deconstruction of the concept of artwork *in actu* is not simply an effect of zapping from channel to channel, but, due to altered reading habits, has also taken hold of literature. [Schön 1999]) Apparently, the filmic text of 'Illibatezza' was already conceived with reference to the self-reference of the medium and to the programmatic intertextuality of television in the compiled film, which would make it quite interesting as an intertext and intermedial figuration. It is no accident that, during the 60s, a considerable number of such compilation films emerged within the framework of (French and Italian) New Wave (as an adjustment to the structure of television?). Incidentally, several of these films establish a significant connection between flying in an airplane and the construction of sexual unfaithfulness (Truffaut: *La peau douce*, 1963/64; Godard: *Une femme mariée*, 1964).

While every 'work' tends to lock itself inside its own universe with its author as a hermeneutical key figure, every text has the capacity to become transformationally linked to a global cultural reality which, for its part, can also be regarded as text. From the outset, the structuralist text is always intertext. Julia Kristeva defined intertextuality as "that textual interaction which originates in the interior of a single text". This means that we are always dealing with an updated excerpt and with an ideal or open entirety of all possible texts which is never the totality or the sum of all actual texts. In that case, intertextuality is the figuration of the relationship between texts as discursive units if this relationship itself, for its part, can be determined as this updated text – according to Kristeva, determined "in its intersection, assimilation, and referential context of textual organization (a semiotic praxis) with respect to the forms of statements (sequences) in other texts". Julia Kristeva terms this intertextuality as a system of coordinates an 'ideologem' and relates it to the specific shifts and augmentations of discursive events in texts, which, for example, become 'readable' as transforms in symbolical or allegorical figurations (de Man). However, that which exceeds the text is in any

case only readable in the concrete text itself insofar as it participates in its intertextual text links or calls them to mind (Lachmann/Schahadat).

I have already mentioned that both the conception of film as artwork and textual analysis of film neglect an essential distinctive quality of film. Histories of film cite the names of author-directors and the titles of filmic works, but do not take into consideration the material form of the films or the circumstances of their projection at the cinema, on television, on video or DVD. While it is certainly possible to proceed, for instance, from the artwork quality of film to the socio-economic form of film as a commodity in a culture industry, textual analysis usually remains unhampered by the weight of the material signifier. Regardless of a few exceptions (concrete poetry, for example), it makes no difference if a poem written on paper appears printed in a book or if a film can be seen on celluloid in a cinema or on magnetic tape on a monitor. In any case, the apparently annoying specific medium aspect of a work or, even less so, of a text is not taken into account. Borrowing the term from the French philosopher on communication Michel Serres, I would like to call this the issue of the 'parasitic third'. A parasite is an unwelcome, but nonetheless inevitable guest, as it were, the background noise (redundancy) at the 'table' of communication, as a participant an excluded third without which the other parties could not reach an understanding. ["The parasite is an operator, a generalized 'clinamen'", [a connecting force] and a "thermal pathogen" involving the risk of entropy (Serres 288/89).] The third we are speaking about here is neither artwork nor text, but, rather, a difference, something 'between' that is also at work in all the other conceptions as an 'excluded or hidden third', but which alone makes it possible to respond in a 'differentiated' way to the issue of the status of the medium.

A few remarks on the current discussion of film theory: At the moment, the structuralist textual analysis of film is the object of intense criticism from a considerable number of positions. The main target for a neo-formalist epistemology of film (David Bordwell and his associates) is the shift in the subject position to the dimension of the constitution of the film as an (ideological) textual system. The conception of film as a text that constructs its own viewer and then allocates a place within the film to him or her by allowing participation in the construction of the filmic system and its deceptive reality effects now undergoes a cognitivist turn. Now, it is the viewer who has certain schemata stemming from his or her knowledge, from everyday and film-viewing experience, which promote the understanding and

meaningful processing of the corresponding formal filmic appeals, narrative, visual, and auditory characteristics of the film. We understand films so well (and more easily than literary texts) because the schemata they utilize are, to a certain extent, homomorph in comparison to those of our everyday perception, i.e., we needn't learn to understand films because we already know our way around in the world. The formally uncomplicated, classical Hollywood film complies with this understanding to the greatest extent; its success is based on its reality effect, which, to be sure, the text structuralists had exposed as an ideological deception and illusion in order, instead, to activate the consciousness of the intentional construction of such illusory realms and their subject effects. However, at the moment, an American pragmatism (cf. Bordwell, Carroll) which assumes an extensive transparency of the medium (of the film and its technological/mechanical, formal, institutionalized etc. means, whose 'background noise' must be repressed) with regard to the represented reality and its schema-oriented reception is predominant. Neither the film (nor television etc.) nor the mind of the receptor, who wants to understand the film simply according to its own guidelines and to participate in it by virtue of empathy, are to be held responsible for deceptive illusions, lies, fakes, etc. In this view, only the confrontation between what is experienced in film (at the cinema, on television etc.) and one's own reality and interests can allow for a pragmatic judgment of what is right and wrong. Advertising serves as a model for these considerations: at the outset, it is only an understandable and, as far as possible, entertaining message until as a receptor, I consider what to do with this message and its appeal; the free decision is solely in my hands. The medium itself is thought to be largely neutral and transparent with regard to the uninhibited consumption (which itself is to be as entertaining as possible) of its message.

In light of this, a strategy of emphasizing the medium aspect and of determining the contribution of the medium to the representational form of filmic messages in the medium analysis of the film and its intermediality appears to be a radicalization of structuralist textual analysis and its potential for (ideological) criticism.

### 3. The Question of the Medium

What, then, is a medium? Medium can be the middle between something and the means for something (but, then, is the middle (medium) not the same as that which it is between? And is the means (medium) not the same as that for which it is the means?) Language, writing,

pictures, for example, can be media, but doesn't their 'mediality' designate only one aspect, e.g., a function of language, writing, or a picture without actually being it itself? The concept of medium is a substitute for that which could be designated just as well without it. A medium can be a bodily mediator to the beyond or the mechanical form of societal communication in this life or even the institutional construction of such communication in the mass media. In the first case, the medium is tautologically, in the second substitutionally, and in the third trivially employed as a name for the institutionalization of a purpose. These problems can only be avoided if one ceases to inquire ontologically into the being of the medium in order to identify it functionally in a purpose (means), topologically at a place (middle), as a substitute, a body or an apparatus, or a corporate body and institution instead of differentiating it from that which it *is* not, namely the particular appearance of that for which 'it' acts as a mediator. Tautologically, Friedrich Kittler defines: "A medium is a medium is a medium. Thus, it cannot be translated." (Kittler, 1987, 271) A response to Kittler's assertion that media cannot be translated might be that media are nothing other than 'translations' or transformations. At this point, it makes good sense to introduce Niklas Luhmann's systems-theory differentiation between medium and form (Luhmann 1995, 165-6; 1998, 190-1) and its consequences, particularly for the concept of intermediality.

To put it briefly, the distinction between medium and form designates no (physical, mental, etc.) essentialities at all, but, rather, different magnitudes of the junction of elements which, on the part of form are thought to be denser than on the part of the medium, which thus provides the (conditions for) possibilities of creating form which appear as determined on the part of form. Only the form is observable, i.e., "the media are only recognizable in the contingency of the formations they make possible" (Luhmann 1995, 168). Every form is a form solely because of a medium which is only observable in the form it has made possible. Conversely, the medium is only observable as form; what "always serves as a medium becomes a form as soon as it makes a distinction" (176); for its part, every form can become the medium of a new development of form. What is at issue is the "insight, that it is important to distinguish between medium and form; that this is a matter of two sides that cannot be conceived of as divisible, as isolated from one another. And this leads to the insight that the distinction between medium and form is itself a form – a form with two sides that contains itself on the one side, the form side." (169)

The medium can only be observed in its Other. Its disappearance aids the other's emergence, in which it participates in a 'parasitic' way. Whenever we watch television, we do not wish to see the television (as place and function between transmitter and receiver), but, rather, simply that other which television demonstrates as present through the telecast. Similarly, air and light are media of the appearance and visual perception of something which is precisely not air and light but which would remain invisible without them. Nothing appears without air and light, but this only applies if air itself does not appear, for instance, in the form of fog, and light does not simply blind one's eyes. One could say that light is a medium of distinguishing observation that itself is not observable, but only functions as something else, for example, as illumination. In this sense, François Lyotard is right in saying that light is pure energy, pure information.

The medium is the (loose) condition for the observation of a (more fixed) form. To perceive (observe) a (any) form means to distinguish it from that which it is not and in which it appears. The only possibility to, as it were, reach the medium behind the form consists in self-observation of the observation and the re-entry of the medium as form or as a back link, in which mediality as the constitutive difference in the oscillation between medium and form becomes observable as the 'parasitic third', whose background noise renders the event of the difference, thus, the message, perceptible and comprehensible.

While we have a manifest object in the artwork, namely some particular film, and as text this object seems to already be dissolved in the process of its constant alteration and reconstruction, media analysis is dependent upon the observation of configurations of media conditions of form processes which 'occur' in the breaks, gaps, and intervals of the form processes. What is meant are all 'events' that, opposed to the continuity of visibility and audibility in favor of an illusory space, refer to the media conditions of their construction. These are forms of montage, superimposition, formats, framing techniques, etc., as well as appearances or traces of their materiality and dispositive construction which 'figure' in the film. At a further stage of the re-transcription of the medium as form, these breaks, gaps, and intervals are overridden by the symbolic repetition of their media condition 'in the form of' self-referential formulations of the media.

I would like to call to mind again the conclusion of Rossellini's film 'Illibatezza'. This time, we are not concerned with the construction of a singular system for diverse encodings of its text, but, rather, with the 'media self-reference' that is systematic, i.e., constitutive for this conclusion. The film presents the presentation of a film twice; there are two projectors, two projection surfaces, two films, and two viewers. Only the woman in both films is the same, and yet she is, in each case, different, and that is the problem of the film's narrative or, rather, of the two men in the final sequence of the film. The projection apparatuses depicted and the dispositive structures or arrangements of the observation of their projections are not the same as those with which they are observed (by us) at the cinema (or on the monitor), which, for their part, must remain invisible as media of their observation at the cinema so that the form that they must allow to appear and with respect to which they must be transparent can be perceived. In this sense, the presentation of observing the projected film also has to do with us as its observers because it repeats or mirrors the observation in the presentation and does this instantaneously in a twofold manner so that the invisible gap between us and the projection of the film is repeated in the gap between the two projections and thus becomes visible and form-ulated. Up to this point, we are dealing with the illusion of observing the medium as form in the **represented** media self-reference simply because its respective observers remain within the blind spot of a self-observation which would be the pre-condition for making the difference between medium and form itself observable. Precisely this problem is demonstrated to us as spectators by the behavior of the two spectators in the film. While the Italian friend of the woman dissociates himself from the projection in the blind spot of the observation, her American admirer as his own observer attempts with the difference between medium and form, projection and picture to accomplish a back link and to situate himself self-referentially in the blind spot of his self-observation. What, then, do we as spectators 'identify with' when, in the blind spot of our self-observation, we relate ourselves to a projection that both dissociates and 'identifies' us?

Media analysis of a film would involve the trace of the medium as the condition allowing the possibility of perceiving (even as far as understanding) the film as form in the observation. The trace of the medium would become describable as a figured process or a configuration in the film and in the dispositive situation of observing the 'film' (at the cinema, on television or video, etc.).

#### 4. Intermediality

According to the definition of the medium provided above, intermedial relations are only possible between reflectively observable forms of media. Anything beyond this would have to call all media processes (related to institutions, the apparatus, etc.) 'intermedial', which would trivialize the concept. How can intermedial processes (in the non-trivial sense) be observed? Jacques Derrida staged the 'scene of writing' for the appearance of the disappearance of the trace of writing (as a medium), for clearing its path, as he calls it. He adopts the apparatus metaphor with which Freud 'described' the memory of the unconscious, but it is not the apparatuses that function as media, but, rather, the structure of a difference that represents the delay in time and space required by consciousness 'post scriptum' for the perception of presence as always already elapsed and that paves its way into the unconscious as a trace. Writing figures 'in the medium of difference' as the disappearing trace of a non-procedural and unavailable presence. Not writing is the medium of memory, but, rather, the gap, the delay in the here and now, in which writing figures, clearing the path for its trace. Figurations of difference indicate the mediality of their production (clearance). They *mean* intermediality because they are, in principle, 'present' in the interim of forms and in the oscillating disappearance of representations. Thus, the problem of their representability poses itself all the more so and preoccupied Freud as well as all other media theorists. With regard to representability, we need to come to an understanding on 'forms of media' and their interrelationships.

Strictly speaking, intermedial processes are also only manifest as configurations or as transformative inscriptions of mediality in a work, text, or intertext. Thus, intermediality as medial transformation can always be observed where the medial difference of forms (of communication) is relevant in works, texts, or other (cultural) manifestations. The arts in their relationships to one another or respectively to older (printing press, geometry, etc.) and newer technological media (e.g., gramophone, film, typewriter, television, video) are only special cases of intermediality which occur at times when forms that originate from contexts defined as art (a specific genre) and passed on as artwork or text appear in other art forms (specific genres) or in mechanical-technological production.



Then, it is a question of discovering, for instance, 'older (forms of) media in newer (forms of) media' – in any case, following Marshall McLuhan, one could define intermediality in this way. The analysis of the intermedial relations of 'forms of media' can, in principle, be undertaken on two levels: on the symbolic and on the material level. The symbolic level means all the forms of repetition of media processes on the level of depiction, thus, for example, the 'demonstration of the dispositive' in the film itself. This means that in the film a camera takes pictures or the projection of a film itself is shown (as in 'Il libeccio'). On this level, intermedial relations to forms of other arts are also possible – paintings can be cited or the action might take place in a theater (or it might just as well take place in a cinema itself). An interesting aspect here is how immanent to a film the medial self-reflection reveals the 'trace of the medium' and which (disillusioning or illusory) effect this has for reception (cf. Kay Kirchmann). The adaptation of literature as an intermedial process would have to be placed somewhere between the symbolic and the material levels. Literature is transformable into a film only by means of something being narrated or read and, thus, is symbolically represented, not, for instance, in the material constitution of writing on paper or of the book. Nevertheless, the 'scene of writing' on the part of literature can be expanded into film; film, too, can narrate literarily in the medium of writing (as in a number of avant-garde films, e.g., by Michael Snow or Hollis Frampton – which does, however, encroach upon the medium-specific qualities of iconic and acoustic representation). Generally, one could classify all medial inscriptions of older media into newer ones as symbolic intermediality as long as they function as a subject or theme on the level of narration or depiction. Forms of material intermediality are to be found where the representational layer itself (as a mechanical dispositive or a painted or photographed picture or an acoustic sequence of notes) reappears constitutively in a different medium. A film (as a new medium), e.g., consists of 25 photographs (old medium) that run through the projector in one second. This makes film into the ideal case of an intermedial hermaphrodite and typical transitional medium between photography (old) and digital representation on the monitor screen (new), which leads to fully new relations of symbolic and material intermediality.

To conclude, I would like to attempt to summarize the results of my lecture in a few sentences. The relationship between the views of cultural manifestations (such as a novel, a photograph, a film, or a video) as artwork, text, or (inter-)medium is not one of alternatives or of displacement. Rather, certain concepts are specific to particular epochs and predominant in

the history of the media and, in this respect, are succeeded by others. The concept of artwork is closely related to the authority of the author's function, to the cultural and economical singularity of the work (as a commodity), and to its hermeneutical analysis. In this sense, a painting by Rembrandt or a novel by Flaubert are 'works'. The dominance of the concept of text (which, of course, already existed beforehand) is the result of a different perception of the object and its relations or, rather, of an object that apparently dissolves into its relations. Intertextuality is a constitutive process that affects all texts, even the oldest ones. But under the dominance of the concept of text, it increasingly lacks a middle ground previously occupied by the singular 'work'. With reference to television programs, it makes no sense to speak of 'works', even though for most of the published material authors' names are provided. All of these materials are texts in the obviously intertextual conglomerate 'television program', which, in addition, functions intermedially. In his *Laokoon*, Lessing was concerned with distinguishing between the arts (visual arts and literary narrative) according to their specific qualities. Today, the television and, even more so, the computer monitor is the place where the arts become indistinguishable in the digital code and can only figure 'intermedially' as quoted forms of their media. Here, too, there will still be 'works' in the future even if only because the artistic or intellectual achievement of their originators can only be utilized under this label. Whatever in the flow of data is 'text' and can be mediated intertextually to readable forms is a question of programming and of presentation on the monitor's surface. There are no longer any texts in the sense of written or even just alpha-numeric consistency, even though they can take on this form. For this reason, the conception of a (global) network is closer to the mark. And it seems doubtful that the (mathematical) digital 1-0 difference can be conceptively repeated as the difference between media and form. Intermediality, then, is understood more as multimediality in the sense of the addition of technological-mechanical media (television and computer, for instance) and their inherent media concepts to a new media constellation, which, for its part, is subject to constant alterations. However, we will understand and describe these changes as processes only where new differences figure in new trans-forms. In any case, it will become even more difficult in future to imagine that with a certain work, text, or medium, one would have 'the real thing'. At best, one has that which distinguishes it from others, and that is actually a great deal.

(Translated from German by Thomas La Presti, Siegen)

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