



“Film Studies Always Need the Wider Approach of Intermediality.”

Interview with Joachim Paech

by Ágnes Pethő¹



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

One of the texts that I find that has been extensively cited by scholars, and that I have also often recommended to my students, as it could serve as a great introduction into thinking about intermediality, was a lecture translated into English and available on the internet³ with the title Artwork – Text – Medium. Steps en route to Intermediality. This was a wonderful example of a line of thinking that you revisited in later articles (e.g. from another viewpoint in your text, also translated into Hungarian, entitled Warum Medien?, 2008), namely, tracing the different paradigms of thinking from seeing film as an artwork to text, and finally, to considering it as a medium (and defined by its intermedial relations). If I can borrow the expression from the title, what have been your own steps en route to the study of intermediality? What were the theoretical or artistic works that influenced your views?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Are these cinephile journeys in any way?

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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