

# UNDERSTANDING INTERMEDIALITY

## Intermedia Project Workshop

AHRC-FAPESP Funded Project 'Towards an Intermedial History of Brazilian Cinema: Understanding Intermediality as a Historiographic Method'

**Wednesday 13 April 2016**

Bulmershe Theatre, Minghella Studios, Whiteknights Campus



18:15 - Keynote Speech by

### **Professor Ágnes Pethö**

Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania

**'Understanding Intermediality in Contemporary Cinema: Changing Shapes of In-Betweenness'**

The presentation by Ágnes Pethö will address some key issues in theorising intermediality in the age of digital cinema.

The workshop is by invitation only, but the Keynote Speech is free and open to the public. Seats are limited. For bookings, please contact Richard McKay on: [r.mckay@reading.ac.uk](mailto:r.mckay@reading.ac.uk)

# Timetable – 13<sup>th</sup> April 2016

## By invitation only:

10:00 – 12:00	Presentations by Universidade Federal de São Carlos/The Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar) PI and Co-Is: Dr Luciana Araújo, Dr Samuel Paiva, Dr Flávia Cesarino Costa, Dr Suzana Reck Miranda
12:00 – 12:15	Coffee break
12:15 – 13:15	Presentations by University of Reading (UoR) PI and Co-I: Prof Lúcia Nagib, Dr John Gibbs
13:15 – 14:30	Lunch
14:30 – 15:30	Presentations by UoR Co-Is: Dr Alison Butler, Dr Lisa Purse
15:30 – 16:30	Presentations by UoR PDRAs: Dr Stefan Solomon, Dr Albert Elduque
16:30 – 16:45	Tea break
16:45 – 18:00	Advisors present their evaluation, followed by discussion: Dr Julian Ross (University of Westminster), Prof Ágnes Pethö, Dr Deborah Shaw (University of Portsmouth)

## Open to the public:

18:15 – 19:30	Keynote Speech – Dr Ágnes Pethö (Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania)
---------------	--

## Reception, Dinner

## Presentations

Dr Luciana Araújo (UFSCar), ‘**Stage and screen attractions in São Paulo in 1920s**’

The proposal is to analyse, as a case study, the interaction between stage and screen attractions in the city of São Paulo throughout 1927, focusing mainly on the “cineteatro” Santa Helena. Over this year, not only Santa Helena but also other film theatres owned by Empresas Reunidas operated under the contract signed between the Brazilian exhibition company and Metro Goldwyn Mayer. Especially in the Santa Helena and the República theatres, the largest and most luxurious “cineteatros” owned by Reunidas, the American company aimed to put into practice new programming strategies which included a well-planned interaction between the film on the screen, the show on the stage and the accompanying music played by the orchestra.

Drawing upon this moment, we are interested in mapping these many attractions and in analysing the dynamic entertainment circuit in which film is inserted along with other artistic and cultural practices, such as popular theatre, music, dance, vaudeville attractions, advertising. The proposal is to address intermediality taking the movie theatre as a privileged space for intermedial exchanges and appropriations. For this purpose, we believe it will be particularly useful to take into account Charles Musser’s ideas on “theatrical culture” and Rick Altman’s concept of “cinema as event”. With his work, Musser (2004) reasserts “both the central role of theatre in Western culture throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth century and the commonalities of stage and screen”. While Altman (1992), in opposition to the notion of film as text, proposes to study cinema as a “macro-event”, arguing that “recognition of the heterogeneous natures of the cinema experience [...] opens the field to consideration of a broad spectrum of objects, processes, and

activities”.

Dr Samuel Paiva (UFSCar), **‘The “Árido Movie” and “Manguebeat” Phenomena – Paths to a Research between Cinema and Music’**

The purpose of this communication is to present possible paths for the study of “Árido Movie” and “Manguebeat” from the perspective of intermediality as a historiographic method. Both phenomena are related to the cinema and music movements that took place, in an interconnected way, in the city of Recife, state of Pernambuco, Brazil, from the 1990s, reverberating until nowadays. In its origins, the two movements can be understood as a response to the city’s crisis at that time, as stated in the manifesto “Crabs with Brains”, then released by artists who draw attention to the local geographic feature of the mangroves with a metaphorical sense of intermedial energy.

In terms of theoretical and methodological parameters, the research begins with the notion of “politics of impurity”, as proposed by Lúcia Nagib. More specifically, it aims to explore the dimension of a “dilemma” or a “dialectic crisis”, exploring the relationship between films, songs and city as a question. It also intends to investigate Ágnes Pethö’s proposals of a “historiography of methodologies” focused on cinema and intermediality, considering the “sensual and structural gateways of intermediality in the cinematic image”, observing in particular the “flow of life” revealed as tensions between image and sound.

Dr Flávia Cesarino Costa (UFSCar), **‘Musical numbers in Brazilian films between 1936 and 1960: intermedial dialogues between cinema, theatre, radio and the interplay with popular culture’**

The concept of performance brings the idea of the body as a support that presents itself live and usually for a public, acting, dancing or/and playing music. In cinema, the mise-en-scène of performances in musical numbers – acted with live music or with pre-recorded sound – is broadened to include the camera, although its narrative strategies do not contribute the spectatorial absorption typical of classical narrative film fiction, but, instead, use reflexive strategies and often address the public.

My research aims to analyse scenes of musical numbers in Brazilian fiction films between 1936 and 1960, using intermediality as a crucial tool, considering that these filmic performances interact with the repertoire of other media like the “teatro de revista” and radio, as well with cultural activities like the carnival and musical shows. I will focus on questions concerning staging, dancing, playing and acting for the camera.

Accepting the Bazinian “cinema’s impurity” as a method and not as an object, as Lucia Nagib advocates, brings many challenges. Up to what point should we extend the research to the other media? Having access to many primary data as interviews, newspaper stories, leaflets, music recordings, the films themselves and all the data concerning the other media, how can we draw a limit between these films and the other cultural activities or media in the daily work of research? Up to what point should we connect the cultural environment and the specific objects being analysed? How can we productively mix historical research on the context and the film analysis?

Dr Suzana Reck Miranda (UFSCar), **‘The filmed musicians in Brazilian musical films in the 1930s’**

My investigation will focus on the intersection between Brazilian musical films of the 1930s with popular music, radio and phonographic industry. My goal is to specifically observe musicians that perform during musical scenes in selected films. Sometimes almost invisible, these musicians were usually instrumentalists and, just like the singers, they used to have permanent contracts with Brazilian radio stations and record labels. Some of them, such as “Bando da Lua” members, for example, would show up as “background musicians” in Hollywood films during the following decades. Even when remaining little time on screen, their performances are outstanding and seem to confer an aura of

"authenticity" to the musical numbers. There will be several methodological and conceptual challenges when thinking about the interpretive dimensions brought about by these musical moments, which include intermedial encounters and transnational dialogue. In this workshop we will observe to which extent it is possible to articulate the concept of intermediality (Rajewski, Pethő, Nagib) with some ideas from Film Music Studies.

Prof Lúcia Nagib (UoR), '**The Politics of Intermediality**'

In our day, it has become redundant to champion the breaking of boundaries of territory, race, genre, gender and the like in the arts and media. This is a fait accompli widely acknowledged and even celebrated by concepts such as 'transnationalism', 'multiculturalism' and 'hybridisation'. Cinema, whose nature as a meeting point of all other arts is universally recognized, is particularly prone to the celebration of hybridity, something that in my view presents two kinds of risks. On the one hand, formalist intermedial analyses of cinema tend to disregard context to the point of becoming purely narcissistic exercises, undertaken by well-informed critics who rejoice in simply decoding more or less hidden or more or less sophisticated citations in a film's narrative mesh. On the other hand, the obstinate champions of hybridisation, in particular those coming from Cultural Studies, must confront the fact that this has already been achieved by an overwhelming and irresistible globalisation. Eschewing these approaches, my particular exploration of intermediality in this talk will endeavour to define a 'politics' that drives film beyond the specificities of the medium and into the realm of the other arts and the reality of life itself with a view to achieving social change. Privileged examples will be drawn from the works of Beto Brant (*The Trespasser, Delicate Crime*) and Cláudio Assis (*Bog Beasts, Rat Fever*) in which corporeal engagement on the part of crew and cast is indissolubly entwined with painting, poetry and music as works of art in progress envisaged to produce as well as reproduce reality.

Dr John Gibbs (UoR), '**Videographic film studies and the InterMedia project**'

Itself an intermedial form, the video essay could prove a key tool of analysis and dissemination for InterMedia. This paper will reflect on some of the practicalities and possibilities of this diverse and developing form, particularly around the possibilities offered for juxtaposing films, which may speak to the comparative elements of the project, and for style-based criticism.

The implicit invitation of the best work in traditional style-based criticism is to compare the argument advanced on the page with another viewing of the film, and videographic work provides particularly rich ways of moving between evidence and argument, creating new opportunities to appreciate the detailed organisation of films in motion. At the same time, attempting to develop a detailed argument about the complexity of the moment by means of the moving form of film is not without problems, practical, rhetorical and expressive.

The presentation will draw on some of the perspectives which emerged from participating in the NEH-funded workshop at Middlebury College and on experiences of creating style-based videographic criticism, and will be illustrated with appropriate examples.

Dr Alison Butler (UoR), '**Artists film as intermedial form**'

Artists' film and moving image exists in an indeterminate category, between the gallery and the cinema, and often figures this in-betweenness within itself, by adopting intermedial forms or rhetoric. Sometimes these forms reference the space or function of the museum or gallery, sometimes they mimic other art forms, such as sculpture or performance, adopting some of their qualities, and in some instances they constitute an opening out of cinematic forms

into three-dimensional space. My paper will explore the question of whether the artists' film and moving image – especially when presented as an installation – is inherently intermedial, and will consider the ways in which the forms of intermediality are determined by the artist's direction of travel, from the traditions of art cinema and experimental film to the gallery, or from the multimedia practices of the contemporary art scene to the moving image. Works discussed will be international in scope.

Dr Lisa Victoria Purse (UoR), **'Texture and intermediality in the contemporary Brazilian music documentary'**

The challenge of using one medium to document the creative energy, output and cultural impact of artists working in another sits at the heart of the documentary strand of the Brazilian Music Film tradition. As archive footage of performances and backstage events on grainy film or glitchy videotape are combined with photographs of people and press clippings and with (often high quality footage of) present day 'talking heads' remembering the past, the contemporary Brazilian music documentary's multiple framings of past and present manifest through textural and gestural disjunctions that are inherently intermedial.

This paper will draw on scholarship on intermediality, film phenomenology, and music documentary in an examination of the recent music documentaries of Paulo Henrique Fontenelle, in order to propose the importance of attending to the haptic dimensions of these 'tensional differences' (Oosterling 2003: 40) described above. Embracing Ágnes Pethő's notion of cinema's '(inter)sensuality' (2011: 4), the paper will explore the relationship the embodied spectator is invited to take up in relation to the mediation and remediation of music and 'authentic performance' on the one hand, and personal and collective memory on the other, that such films offer.

Dr Stefan Solomon (UoR), **'Still Brazil: Photography, Cinema, and the Freeze-Frame'**

'I decided I liked Photography *in opposition* to the Cinema', wrote Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida*, 'from which I nonetheless failed to separate it'. While the moving images of the cinema have on the one hand been held in opposition to the appearance of stilled motion in the photograph, there has always been a sense in which the two are more closely aligned. The particular instance of the freeze-frame in the history of cinema – from early avant-garde films, to New Wave experimentation, to its current digitized manifestations – has made clear the material association of these media, while at the same time affording the spectator a 'pensive' (Bellour, Mulvey) moment to contemplate their differences. In addition to this shared effect, freeze-frames also take on certain meanings in the context of different national cinemas. Following Garrett Stewart's broad distinction between the uses of this device in recent European and Hollywood films, in this paper I consider the particular ways in which the freeze-frame has emerged in Brazil, focusing on Cinema Novo, but extending my analysis to the present day. In so doing, I will argue that Brazilian cinema has a great deal to teach us about the freeze-frame and the intermedial encounter it stages between film and photography.

Dr Albert Elduque (UoR), **'Sensual music divorced from image: the case of Júlio Bressane'**

The importance of music in the history of Brazilian film is undeniable, and it has manifested in many different ways. Some modernist films from the 1960s and 1970s presented extra-diegetic songs as emancipated from the image and the narrative, thus creating stimulating intermedial effects between music and film. In this paper I will focus on some feature films by Júlio Bressane (*Barão Olavo*, *o Horrível* and *Cuidado Madame*, among others) where the narrative flow is interrupted by an external musical performance, often a samba theme written by the composer Lamartine Babo. This music reveals the nature of film as a constructed artifice and establishes an ambiguous relation with Bressane's cold, clinical shots; while underlining the inevitable distance between image and sound, at the same time it supplies them with a sensual quality. Following these cases, which Ismail Xavier characterised as the passage from the 'music-

movement' to the 'music-time', I intend to approach the links between sensuality, intermediality, film and music (Arnheim, Bordwell, Chion, Wolf, among others), as well as to think of Brazilian concept of "estética do lixo" ("aesthetics of rubbish") and its possible connections with intermedial theories.

## Keynote Speech

Prof Agnes Pethö (Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania), '**Understanding Intermediality in Contemporary Cinema: Changing Shapes of In-Betweenness**'

The presentation will address some key issues in theorising intermediality in the age of digital cinema. The figuration of the tableau (vivant) will be singled out as a par excellence intermedial phenomenon that condenses changing models of cinematic intermediality throughout the history of film. As a rule, this is a type of image that flaunts the inter-art relations of film, being, as many theorists have noted, a veritable battlefield of media. In the digital age, however, in which the cinematic medium itself merges with photography and painting, the photo-pictorial images blurring the distinction between tableau vivant proper and the tableau shot effectively challenge the core tenets of the concept of intermediality. I propose therefore to sketch some of the major differences between the modernist model of intermediality and the re-conceptualization of "in-betweenness" in contemporary cinema shaped by the affordances of new technologies and convergence of dispositifs. In terms of theorising this also means the necessity of considering not only the phenomenology but also some aspects of a possible post-phenomenology of the intermedial image. In films based on the aesthetic of the tableau, images are no longer "shot" but "moulded" into a virtual container of colours, shapes, bodies and sounds displayed through the conspicuous mediation of photofilmic technologies. And as the tableau vivant implodes into the ubiquitous, intermedialized tableau shot, the traditional relationships between image and narrative, stillness and movement, flatness and plasticity, abstraction and raw corporeality, high art and popular culture embodied in the tableau are reconfigured along with the emerging new folds between cinema, photography, painting, sculpture, architecture, and installation art. Through the analysis of examples gleaned from so called "small", "peripheral" cinemas, yet viewed in the context of a globalised culture, my aim will be to map some of the recent strategies in deploying such (post-cinematic) tableaux. I will also emphasize the performativity of these images manifest in conflicting acts of connection to and disconnection from a historically localizable profilmic reality, in a rigorous control over detail and adherence to structure, only to be undermined by themes of violence, trauma, vulnerability, and transience.

## InterMedia Project Advisors

**Ágnes Pethő** is Professor at the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania in Cluj-Napoca (Romania) where she is currently head of the Department of Film, Photography, and Media as well as the executive editor of the journal, *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae: Film and Media Studies*. She is the author of *Cinema and Intermediality. The Passion for the In-Between* (2011), the editor of the volumes: *Words and Images on the Screen* (2008), *Film in the Post-Media Age* (2012), *The Cinema of Sensations* (2015). She has also published several essays about the relationship of painting, photography and film, and the aesthetic of the *tableau vivant* in cinema.

**Julian Ross** is a Leverhulme Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Westminster. His PhD at the University of Leeds was on Japanese expanded cinema, a topic on which he co-curated a film and performance series at Tate Modern and International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR). He has curated film and performance events at British Film Institute, Eye Film Institute, Anthology Film Archives, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Art Cinema OFF and Nottingham Contemporary. His work was published in *Impure Cinema* (2014), *Slow Cinema* (2015), *Preservation*,

*Radicalism and the Avant-Garde Canon* (2016) and he has written for *Sight and Sound*, *Film Comment* and *Aesthetica Magazine*. He is on the short film selection committee for International Film Festival Rotterdam.

**Deborah Shaw** is Reader in Film Studies at the University of Portsmouth. Her research interests include Latin American Cinema, women in film, Transnational film theory, and Hispanic women filmmakers, and she has published widely in these areas. She is the founding co-editor of the Routledge journal *Transnational Cinemas*, and is author/editor of 6 books and numerous peer reviewed chapters and articles. Books include: *The Three Amigos: The Transnational Filmmaking of Guillermo del Toro, Alejandro González Iñárritu, and Alfonso Cuarón*, Manchester University Press (2013); *Contemporary Latin American Cinema: Ten Key Films*, Continuum Publishers (2003). She is the editor of *Contemporary Latin American Cinema: Breaking into the Global Market*, Rowman and Littlefield (2007). Her forthcoming book (2017) with I.B Tauris, co-edited with Deborah Martin (UCL), is entitled *Latin American Women Filmmakers: Production, Politics, Poetics*. She has just been given a book contract for her next monograph, *Transnational Latin American Filmmaking: A New World Cinema* (Bloomsbury Publishers, 2018). She has been a member of the AHRC Peer Review College in the Academic category since 2010.