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Cinema in the Interstices

Editorial

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The interstice: something empty, something minute—a crevice, a chink, a narrow gap—yet, in spite of this definition of something apparently slight and inconsequential, one perhaps may make the claim that the interstice serves as a foundational element of film. The "intervening space", as the OED defines it, in its celluloid form provided the connection between multiple images, allowing them to run together to form the illusion of movement. While this interstitial black strip that imperceptibly framed the moving image is no longer a constituent part of cinema in its current digital format, interstices continue to proliferate in screen media, perhaps to a greater extent than ever. Indeed, just as cinema originated in the interstices between theatre, painting, literature and photography, this intermediality takes on a redefined role in the digital era, with the lines between cinema, television, art, video and new media becoming increasingly difficult to define.

In his well-known analysis of the interstice in cinema, Gilles Deleuze compares the formal interstice of classical cinema, which offers continuity, with the irrational cut of modern cinema, in which the interstice becomes the significant element (*Cinema 2* 175). Using Jean-Luc Godard as an example of this second kind of cinema, he comments that Godard applies "the method of BETWEEN" to visual images, sound images or visual and sound images (*Cinema 2* 174). Elsewhere, in an alternative formulation, using the conjunction AND, Deleuze comments that "[t]he AND is neither the one nor the other, it is always between the two, it is the boundary" ("Three Questions about *Six Fois Deux*" 41). If we apply Deleuze's comments to a broader notion of cinematic interstices, they seem to encapsulate what is at stake in the different formal, material and intermedial incarnations of the interstice: the in-between where various elements—sometimes disparate, sometimes well matched—move into close proximity and conjoin. It is at boundaries such as these that something new and unexpected can often occur.

Conscious of the underlying significance of this term and its many interpretations within the context of visual culture, particularly as related to film and screen media, *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* set out to provide a forum to explore the myriad of interstices that exist both within the medium of film and between film and other media, firstly in the form of an international conference held at University College Cork in September 2012, and now in a special issue of *Alphaville* dedicated to the topic. Under a broad definition of cinema that included analogue, digital, commercial, art and gallery film, we sought out work that negotiated and interacted with intertextual, intratextual and intermedial aspects of the interstice, and that highlighted the productive interactions possible

within and between, for example, different forms, media, technologies, exhibition spaces, theoretical concepts, geographies or genres. In doing so, we aimed to test these areas of transition and juncture, and thus contribute to an enhanced awareness of new, fertile developments in cinema and its relationships with other art forms and new technologies, while simultaneously recalling earlier cinematic practices and developments and their continuing impact on both film and film studies. The conference produced a range of engagements with this chosen thematic criterion that included: the intrafilmic gap or *entre-image* in relation to duration, montage, foregrounding of the filmic mechanism and subjectivity; interstitial cinematic forms and spaces, such as moving-image installations in the gallery or museum; intermedial practices involving, inter alia, the interaction between film and the other arts such as theatre, sculpture, photography, opera or television; the position of the spectator within intertextual and intermedial narratives; the interstitial as representative of various national cinemas including those of Japan, Australia, Ireland and Brazil; and hybridity in form, genre, technologies and aesthetics, which included analyses of fiction/documentary; cinema/video; analogue/digital; classical/avant-garde and new hybrid print/digital forms. Comprising seven articles and the print version of an oral presentation, this special issue refines and develops many of these various themes. While all the contributions are essentially concerned with the infinitesimal gap that exists between the two elements of any conjunction—or what, for our purposes here, we have termed, like Deleuze, the interstice—they also very accurately reflect the many potentialities of this term within cinema and screen media: whether in relation to interculturalism, intermediality, the analogue and digital divide, Eastern and Western philosophical concepts, fact and fiction, spatio-temporalities, artists' cinema versus classical cinema, or science versus art.

In the opening article of the issue, "Interstices and Impurities in the Cinema: Art and Science", Angela Dalle Vacche presents a compelling analysis of Alain Resnais's *Mon oncle d'Amérique* (1980) that immediately moves beyond the notion of the interstice as an element that can be associated with cinema to focus instead on André Bazin's proposal that cinema is a medium whose ontological basis is essentially impure and interstitial. The framework that the analysis employs is situated between the artistic, the religious and the scientific—specifically, the biological, and views cinema as not only being interstitial as regards the arts but also in relation to science. Resnais's film serves as an exemplary test case to probe this modified Darwinian evolutionary model that Bazin proposes for cinema. Dalle Vacche sets up a dialogue between the model and the film, thereby developing a kind of symbiotic relationship—to use a biological term appropriate to her analysis—in which each enhances the other. By viewing *Mon oncle d'Amérique* through this Bazinian lens, she figures cinema as being participant in a nonlinear, nonhierarchical discourse with the other arts, and the spectator as an animal-plant hybrid that is emotionally responsive to movement on the screen, while Resnais's film becomes a woven textile that embodies the inherent interstitiality and nonspecificity of the medium.

In her article "Between Frames: Japanese Cinema at the Digital Turn", Laura Lee brings into play many of the intermedial aspects of the interstice that originally motivated the choice of topic for this issue. Looking at a range of recent Japanese cinema, particularly work by directors Miike Takashi and Kurosawa Kiyoshi, she considers the renewed presence of the cinematic apparatus in these films that foregrounds both mediality and the materiality of the image, thereby recuperating the sense of wonder and newness originally associated with analogue cinema.

Cinema within cinema is also a core thread of Patrick Tarrant's "Montage in the Portrait Film: Where Does the Hidden Time Lie?", in which he focuses on the idea of a polyvalent montage in Pedro Costa's *Where Does Your Hidden Smile Lie?* (2001), a feature-length portrait film on the working and personal relationship of French filmmakers, Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet. Questions of duration(s) within the diegesis are explored in Tarrant's argument of the screen as interstice, wherein the film's extradiegesis brings to light, through montage, new spatio-temporal possibilities and the dynamics of subjectivity.

In "Picturing a Golden Age: *September* and *Australian Rules*", Pauline Marsh examines intersubjectivity in Peter Carstairs' *September* (2007) and Paul Goldman's *Australian Rules* (2002), focussing on the integration of indigenous and nonindigenous identity in the Australian coming-of-age film, a particularly significant cinematic rendition of national reconciliation. Marsh analyses the stylistic and narrative elements of the films in question that posit an inherently challenging but positive future both for the protagonists and for the nation itself.

In "Memories of a Buried Past, Indications of a Disregarded Present: Interstices Between Past and Present in Henri-François Imbert's *No pasarán, album souvenir*", Veronika Schweigl analyses Imbert's intermedial techniques in recounting the forgotten past (via the medium of the postcard) and visual "absences" of the Spanish *Retirada*. Utilising Benjamin's notion of "the collector", she theorises a filmmaking method that stems from coincidence, but which also transcends time-periods: Imbert's "collection" is therefore perennially incomplete, as his documentation of images of the past are juxtaposed with images of the present, and thus the broader and ongoing condition of forced migration.

Roy Daly, in "*Ma*, *Mu* and the Interstice: Meditative Form in the Cinema of Jim Jarmusch", carries out a close analysis of three films by the director in an attempt to determine the relevance in his work of *ma* and *mu*, two interlinking Japanese concepts that refer to a spatio-temporal interval and a void that can define form, respectively. In doing so, he identifies various spatio-temporal interstices in the films analysed that both characterise Jarmusch's work and support Daly's assertion that the director's approach is influenced by Eastern philosophy and aesthetics.

"The Tales of New Orleans after Katrina: The Interstices of Fact and Fiction in *Treme*" by Delphine Letort focuses on Seasons 1 and 2 of the HBO drama series *Treme* (2010, 2011), based around life after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, and examines the blurring of the boundaries both between fact and fiction and various genres, such as docudrama, melodrama and crime fiction. While ably proving her contention that *Treme*'s tendency to focus on the cultural aspects of New Orleans detracts from a sustained engagement with the political relevance of Katrina and the post-Katrina life of New Orleanians, Letort's article also points to another interstice worthy of consideration, which is the ever narrowing gap between the production values and casting of film and television with the advent of new drama produced by companies such as HBO and Sky Atlantic.

Finally, the issue concludes with a text that is a departure from *Alphaville*'s normal format: "'Cinema Alone', Multiple 'Cinemas'", a substantive contribution by Raymond Bellour, is a written version of a 2002 lecture given by the author as part of a series of lectures organised by Jacques Aumont at the Cinemathèque française between 2001 and

2002, the aim of which was to investigate the relationship between cinema and the arts. Presented here for the first time in English, the text deals specifically with the shift from a singular form of cinema, which Bellour deems to be almost extinct, to a plurality of forms and, moreover, *dispositifs*. It focuses particularly on how installation art has turned towards various incarnations of the cinematic at the turn of the millennium, encapsulating, and intellectually engaging with, the transition from the era when cinema maintained an unassailable position as *the* medium of the moving image to a more contemporary era when it has become only one of several moving image media. This approach speaks directly to Deleuze's notion of the conjunction, at the heart of which lies the boundary or interstice, as the title of the text evokes through its implied shift from singular to plural. Bellour provides an invaluable account of how such an irrevocable change has taken place, not only through his comparison of classical cinema by Jean Renoir, Jacques Tourneur and Otto Preminger with film-based installations by artists such as Zoe Beloff, Pipilotti Rist, Tony Oursler and Bill Viola, but also—recalling Laura Lee's assertion in her article—in relation to how certain elements of contemporary cinema, using Chris Marker's film *Level Five* (1997) as an example, display a cinephilic tendency to look back to a time of "cinema alone", Serge Daney's phrase that becomes a leitmotif in the text.

In its various parts, considering as it does the interstice as a framework for the nonspecificity of film, as a method for the rehabilitation of the analogue image within digital film, as a device to interpret the change that has taken place between classical film and artist's cinema, as representative of interculturalism in national cinema, as blurring the lines between fact and fiction, as a mode of transition between Asian concepts of the void and independent American film and as a form of both temporal and spatial elision, we feel satisfied that this special issue presents a vivid and compelling account of why the interstice is as pertinent to—and representative of—cinema today in its multiple and complex incarnations as it was in the infancy of the medium.

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