

## **Corporeal Cinema – Embodied Spectator:**

### **Tracing Cinema’s Spectatorial Immersion and the Internal and External Embodied Experience**

Several cinema scholars, such as Stanley Cavell, Laura Mulvey, David Bordwell, Noël Carroll, Murray Smith, amongst many others, have tried to invert (or subvert) the idea of a passive spectator who brings nothing to the cinematic art, narrative, process and *dispositif*. This paper will try to explore cinema’s embodied spectatorial experience in an intermedial context. How does the spectator read intermediality and intermedial relationships in cinema? And how does cinema as intermedial process and aesthetic invite the spectator to immerse him/herself in the cinematic experience and to learn from said experience?

Cinema as narrative, medium and process is “inseparable from its socio-cultural, institutional background and foreground, its spectators and the various discourses of spectatorship.” (Király 2011, 200) Acknowledging a historically variable corporeal / embodied spectator who refuses the role of subject and passive viewer and takes upon himself an active role in co-creating and recreating the object of cinema, is fundamental to better understand cinema’s immersive qualities and the social uses and implications that might entail.

Per Ágnes Pethö, ““reading” intermedial relationships requires, more than anything else, an embodied spectator who “gets in touch” with the world of the film.” (2011, 4) Hence, the cinema spectator “is invited not to a narrative decoding but to a kind of post-cinematic contemplation” (Pethö 2011, 6) that works, according to recent studies, both on a conscious and unconscious level. It is the presence and the recognition of such an embodied and historically variable spectator that allows for the reading and study of the intermedial processes and aesthetic qualities cinema offers.

Cinema is not just about telling or showing a story. Cinema is corporeal. Specifically in the context of intermedial narrative and cinema, the embodied spectator becomes incorporated in the narrative, in the cinematic process and experience. This will create an effect on the spectator, and it may even promote change in the spectator’s way of thinking, values, etc. In live performances, and in films such as *Dogville* (Trier 2003), we could call this effect and appeal to the human sensorial “felt charge” (Lavender 2006), “sensorial layer” (Boenisch 2006), “experiencer” (Nelson 2010), etc. (Scott 2016, 51) Cinema also demands for an elicit, visceral, sensorial (and (inter)sensual) reading, encounter and contract between its medium and spectator.

Using *Dogville* and other film examples that demand the embodied spectator, the main focuses of this paper are: (1) understand and further analyse how intermediality (as process and aesthetic quality) might help reshape and reconceive cinema spectatorship; (2) explore spectatorial immersion and adhesion to the cinematic experience and its implications. If we muse on the spectator, on his historically variable corporeal experience, we might see cinema as more than telling a story that is put into the frame, but as a moment of suspension, of experience and immersion, that brings the embodied spectator into the scene. Understanding cinema and spectatorship in such a way also allows us to further examine how cinema communication works, how cinema shapes its spectators, and how cinema might even help reshape and rejuvenate cultures.

**Key-Words:** Spectatorship, intermediality, embodied spectator, rejuvenate culture, collective memory.

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