

***Her* (Spike Jonzes, 2013): digital romance and post-cinema**
Christophe GELLY
Université Clermont Auvergne (France)



Human faces and voices together with machines are the liminal elements that we encounter in Spike Jonze's *Her* (2013) where the main character, Theodore Twombly (Joaquin Phoenix), first appears on screen in a frontal shot, talking as it seems to a computer which then processes his words into a printable document. Theodore is a writer for the commercial website *BeautifulHandwrittenLetters.com*, a fictional venture that offers to write private correspondence for individuals who feel they have no time or ability to do so themselves. Himself a very lonely person about to complete a divorce procedure, he enters a romantic relationship with an OS—an operating system, named Samantha—which he loads into his computer, and slowly develops feelings of jealousy and self-loathing towards this artificial intelligence, just as he would do with a “real” person. This script foregrounds an obvious intermedial concern with the way humans entertain new types of relationships with their technological devices, and this concern is also with the destiny of this relationships which sometimes echoes the typical “male-oriented” gaze analyzed by Laura Mulvey in her seminal essay, and sometimes hints at new modes of relating not only between humans and machines but among humans. Of particular interest is the persistent presence of bodies in the cinematic treatment of this theme, which raises the question of how cinema can *represent* graphically a virtual, digital relationship which by nature is confined to the immaterial field. It appears as a challenge to cinema trying to integrate a new form of relationships between the audiovisual medium and the digital, which resorts to *and* bypasses traditional audiovisual representation. For instance, the suggestion is made that Theodore does not control and identify the constant scrutiny that Samantha is placing him under, e.g. when she browses through his emails or social network contacts. This “off-screen” activity differs from classical cinematic representation in that no clue is attached to it except when the OS recognizes what she has been doing at the same time as she was talking to the character. This example opens the perspective on Spike Jonze's *Her* as staging a relationship that also suggests a new type of cinema, or post-cinema, where the story is not only what happens on screen but what happens outside of it, as in another film, *Noah* (Patrick Cederberg, Walter Woodman, 2013) which stages the breaking of a “real life” love relationship only through shots taken of a computer screen.

This paper will explore the representation of intermediality in the film—the way *Her* stages a redefinition of filmic material confronted to digital devices—through three main issues that will be addressed consecutively. First, we shall wonder if the predominance of the romantic frame in the man-machine interaction repeats a classical pattern of male-female attraction that means to defuse the anguish born out of the digital mutation of interpersonal relations. Then, we will examine the main climactic episodes in which the confrontation between Theodore and

Samantha resists normalization and assimilation to human love links. This part will focus on the specific representation of two interacting mediums, the film and the computerized world Samantha lives in. Finally, we will assess the possibility for this film to bear a reflexive discourse on our bond with digital devices as a potential redefinition of the role of cinema in post-modern societies.

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Christophe Gelly is Professor of British and American literature and film studies at Université Clermont Auvergne, France, and an active member of the SERCIA. He has worked mainly on film genre, film noir, adaptation and has published two book-length studies on Arthur Conan Doyle (*Le Chien des Baskerville: Poétique du roman policier chez Conan Doyle*, Lyon, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, collection Champ Anglophone, 2005) and Raymond Chandler (*Raymond Chandler — Du roman noir au film noir*, Paris, Michel Houdiard, 2009), and co-edited a book on reception theories in cinema and literature (*Approaches to film and reception theories / Cinéma et théories de la réception — Etudes et panorama critique*, Christophe Gelly et David Roche [eds.], Clermont-Ferrand, Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2012). He also edited the issue of journal *Écrans* devoted to French literary realism and film adaptation (*Écrans*, n° 5, 2016 - 1, *Le réalisme français du XIXe siècle et sa transposition à l'écran*) and co-authored a book-length study of Ang Lee's adaptation of Jane Austen (*Sense and Sensibility*, Atlande, 2015). He approached comic book and adaptation in a paper dealing with Alan Moore's adaptation of Lovecraft in *Neonomicon* (in *Lovecraft et l'illustration*, Christophe Gelly and Gilles Ménégaldo [eds.], Le Visage Vert, 2017). He currently orients his research on cinema theory at large.