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Repeated Pictures in the Film

Picture philosophical, visual theoretical and media philosophical analysis

DOCTORAL THESIS

ABSTRACT

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Keywords

media/medium, repetition, image, photo, film, film image, visual art, iconic difference, recurring picture, recurring film, host picture, picture network, frame, picture-exponent, picture use, picture migration, picture transplantation, intermediality, total mediality, remedialization, picture theory, media philosophy

Abstract

Introduction

As an approach at the boundary of the film philosophy / picture philosophy and picture theory, and, respectively, the media philosophy, I analyzed the picture-in-picture phenomenon, with special emphasis on the typical pictures occurring in the film. My research analysis related to recurring pictures expressly remained within the picture theory, picture philosophy and film philosophy paradigm. The question of repeated images is a rather new area in picture research, the question of pictures recurring in films has been discussed only tangentially, i.e. no encompassing research has been conducted as yet.

Repetition and picture repetition has emerged as a topic of philosophical discourse even though tangentially, or in connection with other areas, in most of the cases. Jacques Derrida approaches the issues related to repetition mainly from the linguistic and verbality viewpoint, while argumenting the severability of difference and différance. Deleuze (*Différence et répétition*) discusses within a far more encompassing framework the concepts of repetition and difference, and it is in this contextual system that he speaks about the repeated picture phenomenon. In the field of picture philosophy, Stephan Otto (*Die Wiederholung und die Bilder*) exhaustively studied the occurrence of memory images in the history of philosophy, as well as the transformation thereof throughout the centuries.

According to *my hypothesis*, the repeated picture behaves as a node in visual artwork, i.e. in the film, in this case. Relating the picture repetition / recurring picture phenomenon to Barabási Albert-László's network theory theorem, I highlight the existence of weak and strong nodes. I assume that each and every repeated image is a node which changes the course line of accepting, understanding and construing the work. My assumption is that understanding images is similar to perceiving spots. Gottfried Boehm draws the attention – pursuant to Wittgenstein – to the fact that pictures don't say but rather show something. I

assume that there are very strong nodes which generate ever newer image repetitions – this thesis relies upon the theory of scale-free networks. I also assume that the nodes may belong to several mutually independent networks, at one and the same time.

Throughout my research, I not only worded hypotheses, but rather also scrutinize my assumptions from a critical viewpoint, and look for arguments in support thereof. The course line of the analysis is given by questions such as: How can recurring pictures behave as nodes and how can they turn to be dominant picture elements? Is it only the framing or also the pictorial content which plays a decisive role in certain recurring pictures becoming strong nodes? How important it is for a recurring picture to be recognizable and identifiable? I analyze the question of iconic difference in the context of the repeated image. The iconic difference concept as a picture criticism, picture theory, philosophical and esthetic category was introduced by Gottfried Boehm. Relating the iconic turn, the picture strength issue was put at a center stage and the question of how does the picture operate required a new perspective. What Boehm called iconic difference, Gilles Deleuze studied as an abstract mechanism in relation to facial analysis, focusing on face-formation, i.e. on the issue of visagéité.

For the picture-in-picture research, neither picture theory, nor picture philosophy or esthetics provides any useful terminology, and there are no specific methods. I started my research by introducing and working out new terms and methods, and also, by capitalizing the network science methodology in accomplishing the empirical part of the research. At a basic level, the research followed the trace of those repeated images which occur as organic picture elements in cinematographic works. For this purpose, I build upon the nonchronological review of the film history, aiming to create the repeated picture typology. The empirical verifiability of the hypothesis (picture nodes theorem) would mainly be feasible using computer engineering research methods which produce image maps and would outline the picture repetition function system. If I used philosophical tools for argumentation purposes, I would not have had the possibility to involve statistics and accurate figures, so for examining the phenomenon, I use the picture theory methods. My assumption relies on the existence of very strong nodes which further generate even more iconic repetitions. The starting point of the research methods is anchored in media theory, media philosophy, picture philosophy, and picture theory bases, while quantitative research is built on collecting examples, pictures, film reviews, cinematographic examples, and argumentation relies not on numeric data but is rather focused on exemplary picture-phenomenon, where not listing but rather individual support represents the starting point. I do not intend to sustain my thesis

using a series of encompassing chronological examples, but rather using the illustrative power of a few examples, since my main purpose here is to pose theoretical questions and underpin finding answers thereto, least of all application, which can be the research task of a subsequent interdisciplinary research.

Picture theory. Picture. Contemporary visual art

Gottfried Boehm emphasizes that pictures have no language, they do not operate as texts and they do not have a grammar. Seemingly, picture is not a clear-cut means of communication as also stated by Umberto Eco, only certain picture types can be regarded as means of communication, just as symbol pictures or pictograms and ideograms. The cinematographic language and picture language concepts are entirely misleading since they tend to make us believe that pictures operate just as words and the pictorial system is a language system, despite the fact that due to their anatomy and structure, no similarity whatsoever can be revealed. The picture language concept must be avoided by all means, so that we can discuss about pictures and visual experiences in merit.

Extending picture theory to analyze contemporary visual phenomena emerges as an opportunity and means a new research aspect, which is wide open to picture research. The correlative nature featured by contemporary art (Malik) is dual: on the one hand, artworks fetch foreign visual works to incorporate the same in their own body and relate back to referential works, while on the other hand, in a view-artwork encounter, the viewer has to turn away from the artwork, of course after having turned towards it, and the role of the art shall not be sought in the encounter between a single-person subject and the work. The viewer shall overcome the passive inclusive state to reach an active, creative state, which is initiated by encountering the work, i.e. the work provides the framework thereto. The contemporary works are increasingly moving into this direction, so that also the viewer has to change his/her basic attitude, has to be actively present and somehow continue the work. Artworks are there as an interactive call, partly because the viewer's proficiency is presupposed in the case of using repeated pictures, namely because in the context of visual artworks, recurring pictures as picture quotations never appear with their origin revealed by the author who uses them.

Postmediality versus pannediality (total mediality)

Often, the various media migrate, emigrate into other media, not necessarily as parasites, but rather as organitors of possible forms of cohabitation. Let us consider here the

picture poem, the collage, the simple illustration, the letter image, or its oldest form, the calligram. This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of how do various media coexist and transplant. It is not unusual to have a photograph, photographs or paintings, other images appearing in a film. A photograph may show a painting or the photograph itself may be a frame, and using this latter, they usually illustrate press products, studies, picture theory and cinematographic essays, or specialist books. Let's confine further the pictorial transplantation phenomenon and stick with the film. The film is suitable for including, recording and showing in motion picture frames any other media having a pictorial extension (and not only). Media congestion can be experienced in the case of most films, since picture, sound, text and music meet, and picture occurs under various forms. Due to the sophistication of the media congestion and the complexity of its composition, it puts the user in a difficult position, since every time, the user is supposed to establish an ad hoc hierarchy of the components to focus on first, and the sequence to be followed in terms of the details. There is no need for demonstration, because according to our everyday experience, it is clear that the pictorial priority comes first. The dominance of the pictures is unequivocal. But where from and how do pictures get their superiority as compared to all other media? According to Mitchell, pictures are leading media. This is his axiomatic statement, without trying to find an answer why. It is assumed that in the case of a sophisticated, panmedia product, we first turn towards pictures because they are better understandable, readable and conceivable at first sight for us. However, the question related to the origin of the picture dominance still persists, because actually we can hardly say that we can read or understand pictures, but their attraction, which decisively influences our inclusive attitude, is unavoidable. Gottfried Boehm contoured using the picture power term the pictorial force, the energy (energeia) grace to which pictures amaze us, attract us towards them, and impress us. One of the disputed, still open question in the picture theory today is how do pictures act, how the force field of pictures develops. Related to the analysis of the picture-in-picture phenomenon, I examine the hierarchic relationship produced among pictures, and analyze picture media, as leading media.

What is a recurring picture?

Any picture (either painting, reproduction, motion picture or drawing) which occurs as a pictorial element on / in another picture, is deemed to be a recurring picture. These repeated pictures are not necessarily artworks, they do not necessarily belong to the outstanding pictures in the history of arts. A picture, in order to become a recurring, repeated picture, has

to appear within the framework of an inclusive host picture, thus it is about the encounter of at least two pictures. The recurring picture is a re-representation. All recurring pictures are reused pictures. Recurring pictures are the result of a re-creation, reuse, re-contextualization, de-territorialization and re-territorialization.

Using repeated images defines a specific category of visual artworks. Recurring pictures often occur as reproductions. As recurring picture, a photograph of a painting is actually an original photograph, i.e. an original picture. By being photographed, the painting does not cease to exist but rather requalifies into a recurring picture and receives a new mediality and a new materiality. The recurring picture does not replace the picture which it repeats. The recurring picture is not a degraded picture, authors do not reduce a picture during repetition but rather re-contextualize, remediate, de-territorialize and re-territorialize it. The recurring picture emerges as a new opportunity making possible that the repeated image be further thought of, as an attempt of re-interpretation. Actually, repetition creates a new aura, endows with a new layer of meaning the repeated image. Without Picasso's pictorial interpretation, the Mona Lisa would most certainly be less, meaning that all forms of repetition and all acts of repetition add something to the original picture, which still remains remote however new layers of the work develop to supplement the work. It is equally possible to encounter a recurring picture which has no actual background picture, and these are called pseudo-recurring pictures. One can speak about recurring picture only provided that two pictures encounter, and it is about the mutual incorporation and transplantation thereof. In the case of pseudo-recurring pictures, there is no such picture which gets incorporated in the inclusive host picture. Pseudo-recurring pictures do not have earlier material appearance, i.e. they are born at the same time the host picture is created.

I categorized recurring pictures according to their form of occurrence, and proceeded in this respect in terms of the encompassing picture-in-picture phenomenon as known in the history of arts, and organized, categorized and designated them using newly introduced concepts.

Picture-networks

Each iconic repetition constitutes a networking act. Pictures are wandering and living in permanent migration, a painting from the XVth century may appear today on Instagram or as part of a GIF – in the form of a photograph or a motion picture –, but it is equally possible that a photograph taken of a painting becomes part of a collage, and thus specific picture-exponents are created. Images may even be incorporated, integrated, transplanted into one

another, they do not only switch to other media, but can also occur as parts or elements of new pictures, and today one encounters recurring images that undergo not only binary-, but also multi-exponentiation. It is not only pictures, but also media that step out of their reclusive life, often migrating and popping up in new media. Pictorial media are constantly changing during their migration, but they also conserve referentially their initial medial attributes. Mitchell also stresses the fact that pictures dislike solitary existence primarily because humankind itself - image-using by its very nature - likes to collect pictures, establishing museums, galleries, grouping images in private collections, photo albums and displaying masses of pictures on Facebook pages, websites or publications. That is to say, both pictures and media like to connect (W. J. T. Mitchell). Picture-networks, picturefamilies, picture-conglomerates, picture-groups represent specific arrangements created by humans as image-using beings. Meanwhile, peculiar linkage-patterns emerge. During image use, some of the pictures occupy a privileged position in the iconic network, interrelating many times and with many types of pictures. Visual arts are increasingly embracing the opportunities offered by imagistic repetition. Art history has various similar cases, too. The painting-in-painting represents the earliest example of the picture-in-picture phenomenon. With modern art, exponentiated images become increasingly common, change in the medium or remedialization becomes, as well, more and more natural in the creative process and is progressively accepted by the receiving audience. The encounter, mixing, juxtaposition of different media and pictures, their incorporation into one another, image-implantation, pictorial constitute axioms of contemporary visual art. Examining the iteration rate of still images, we can assume that Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa (1503-1519) is the most common recurring picture that is present in the most diverse medial contexts and interpretations. Similarly, Diego Velasquez's Las Meninas and Edward Munch's The Scream have achieved high popularity among repeated images.

These pictures are present as strong picture-nodes which can also be analyzed according to the network theory rules and one can presume that they would eventually become ever stronger nodes.

Recurring pictures. Picture-exponents. Exponentiated frames

When recurring pictures are used, a re-representation is made and a second representation is produced which derives from repetition and reutilization. In most of the cases, recurring pictures are not simple reproductions but rather reused and re-contextualized images, integrated in a new environment, re-defied pictures, transplanted pictures which

received a new role in a new context. Recurring pictures may occur in various places: in collages, installations, photographs, paintings and films. My dissertation expressly treats repeated images occurring in features films, namely such recurring pictures, which requalify as motion pictures. I assume that pictures recurring in the film are recognizable even though not immediately, but soon enough, as recurring pictures, as foreign, embedded images. I prefer to use a hypothetical wording because with films, the director or the author hardly ever indicates or designates the repeated image as being a foreign picture, and never ever reveal the origin of the reused recurring pictures, so that we encounter the same only as a spectacle element.

Framing, as Deleuze put it, means a closed system. Pictures operate as systems. Usually, frames are not moving frames – except for films – still images have still frames and the image in the frame is still, too. I analyzed Deleuze's frame-interpretation as discussed in his work entitled *The Movement-image*. The issue of *on* an *off* as picture philosophical and picture theoretical problem gives rise to several other questions related to the frame. Each thing which is part of the image cannot be part of the off. My analysis examines the frame-image context system according to aspects such as: As a recipient, what can I observe and experience from off and what can I see from off? Do we see something beyond the image whenever we look at an image? The visible off means such an area beyond the image which can be seen during reception, while watching the image, and is called a relative off. Whatever is outside the visual field during the encounter with the picture, is called absolute off. The borderline between the relative and absolute off is ever changing and moving, the boundary between two offs is subject to time and cannot be accurately plotted.

The frame as a container is defined by Edward Branigan. In his cinematographic research, he analyzed frames as systems and reformulated in a film theory context the cognitive psychology thesis according to which our mental images act as containers; we set up them as internal image repositories. Frames, as containers, are closed systems connected to other containers, thus an entire container-system is created. Thus Braniganean model emphasizes the closeness of Deleuze's frame-interpretation, this is what he further thought into and worked out the frame-process schedule. The *mobile framing* concept was introduced by Bordwell & Thompson, and mainly the various camera movement possibilities, zooming, blowing up and distancing are deemed to be mobile framing. Both the vertical, and the horizontal, as well as depth movement of the camera result I mobile framing. Mobile framing is to be found in almost all films, being conscientiously avoided in several cases. In this context, framing is a visible area taking the place of our visibility frames. We perceive the

motion experience while we are motionless, and this is possible because our experience acquired along our seeing processes help us in identifying our point of view as well-definable location in the mental space. In the case of recurring pictures, mobile framing can also be exponentiated provided that both frames move, i.e. both the frame of the receiving picture and the frame of the recurring image. Often, only one of the frames becomes a mobile frame, so that exponentiation does not take place as far as frame movement is concerned.

Recurring pictures in the film

From the very beginning, films continuously reflected on other types of image. The film history offers numerous examples in proof of the fact that films often behave as a collecting and gathering place of multifarious media. The reflective attitude of the film is manifested in the intent to show the image however the film can focus not only on other media, photograph or painting as foreign external image, but rather on the very motion picture, fulfilling its self-reflecting function.

The picture-in-picture phenomenon is often approached from the intermediality viewpoint in the specialist literature. Nevertheless, intermediality (in Latin inter+medium: among media) is a concept more suitable for specifying present media featuring a parallel existence. In the case of intermedial works, the film is present together, alongside, at the same time and at the same place with another medium, either photograph, painting, installation, theatre, music, or dance. No matter the image appearing in the film, it is not present in its material form (in its materiality) but rather as a reference, i.e. what we encounter is not the tangible photograph but rather a film picture taken of the photograph, more exactly the photograph occurring in the film picture. Under such circumstances, the most important viewpoint is the recognizability of the photograph, the purpose is to have a photograph that can be identified and not the actual encounter with the photograph. The film repeats and incorporates foreign images into its own motion-picture body in terms of referenciality. The other picture appearing in the film cannot be called a clear intermedial phenomenon, because what we encounter directly, as viewers, is only film pictures. Indirectly, beyond materiality, only a reproduced, dematerialized image is present, which is fully recognizable as a foreign picture and cannot be confused with the other film picture elements. Jens Schröter analyzes the picture-in-picture and the picture-in-film phenomena, which are under-researched areas of the film theory and of the picture theory even today, since quite frequently, intermediality is discussed with reference to the film and to the nonimage media by the specialist literature. I relate recurring pictures also to the terms

transplantation and occulation, in cases where it is about the media migration, not only about picture migration.

Painting-in-film

The painting-film relationship is preponderantly unidirectional: the film turns to the painted picture. The interest of the camera in the painting as possible film picture or film picture element accompanies the film storyline all the way through.

In this chapter, I analyzed the forms of occurrence and the context of changing the medium of the painting pictures recurring in feature films. In most feature films, there occurs at least one painting. My attention was focused first of all on those feature films where the presence of a painting has a distinct specific function. Film and painting are typical pictures that differ the one from the other. The painting transforms into film picture when recorded by the camera. As soon as the viewer recognizes the presence of a painting in a film, a sudden caesura intervenes in the reception act, making the viewer to pay a special attention to the inserted picture. All paintings occurring in a film are highlighted, so to say emphasized images, which force us to take them in our focus. Paintings occur as a transplanted elements in the film, as interposed, inserted or interlaced picture forms in motion picture environment, because two media encounter and cohabit not in terms of intermediality, but rather in terms of intramediality, since the presence of the two media is not parallel, they do not complement each other, but rather undergo some sort of annexation or merger, so that we must consider a transmedial phenomenon here.

Photograph-in-film

If photographs occur as recurring pictures in the film, they get stuck within the two media – within the photograph and the film. We see a photograph easy to be identified as a photograph, as a recurring picture, but generally, we do not experience it as a photograph but rather confined within the limit of time frames, i.e. the frames of the cinematographic motion and film time. As images, photographs turn in fact into film pictures and one can recognize their photograph nature only in traces, they transform in terms of their mediality and remain photographs only by reference, i.e. our spectacle-experience make them to be seen as such. A photograph occurring in the film is actually a distinctive picture not only necessarily because it is known (even though it is a pseudo-photograph seen never ever before or a photograph-like image generated using a computer), but rather also mainly because it refers to a medium which is free from the film, is another kind of picture, recalls another image which is basically different from the film picture, i.e. a still image appears within the moving picture.

I dedicated this chapter to the analysis of how films and photographs coexist, how can there take place a medial transformation in both directions, i.e. how can a photograph turn into a film picture or how can a film picture occur in photo-quality. It is the context of the picture-migration and picture transformation within which I analyzed the photograph – film relationship. Photographs have in a cinematographic environment not only their own content but rather also their meaning-layers defined by the montage and structural context of the cinematographic environment. First of all, the photograph steps out of its own temporality and while it becomes time-based moving picture, we can encounter a photograph for only a certain period of time within the framework of a film. If we stop the film picture which contains a photograph, we see in fact a still image, a photograph of a certain time moment of the film picture, which acts as a photo montage. Susan Sontag assumes that both photographs and films are time-representations. The photograph-film encounter actually redefines both media, i.e. the film uses the photograph as a moving picture and the film livens the photograph without turning it into a time-based medium. Beside the image philosophical and photograph philosophical / film philosophical analysis, I provide support with numerous cinematographic examples in proof of the internal rules and functions of the photograph – recurring picture phenomenon.

Film-in-film

The film occurs in film as an exponentiated medium, just as a photograph occurs in a photograph, or a painting occurs in a painting. In this chapter, I analyze the media intermediality and total mediality problem, as discussed in the previous chapters.

The film exists in a sophisticated system of dependence, and technically speaking, inclusion itself presupposes several dependencies and technical dependencies, since the presence of players is needed, without which the film is not accessible. Remediation is the sphere of media coexistence possibilities, i.e. media merge or get transposed the one into the other. To a certain degree, remediation is a form of repetition, and since the remediation phenomenon is most frequently experienced in films where paintings, photographs and other films occur, picture-exponents can feature a heterogeneous or a homogenous character.

We speak about a recurring film / repeated film in cases where another film occurs within the framework of a given film. Recurring films can take various forms and inserting a film portion into another film may serve various functions. Recurring films may be documentaries, fictions or cartoons, may occur on the TV screen, cinema screen or as a montage element. As a following step, I analyzed only such other films which occur in

feature films. A feature film may include documentary films, sequences of other feature films, but also portions of cartoons. My research was conducted along a line of questions such as: How does a film occur in a film? What is the framework within which it occurs and what is its function? Often, the TV screen provides the opportunity for this, or a cinema screen, but it is quite common to find a repeated film inserted as a montage element into the film body. When a film occurs in a film, we encounter a highly sophisticated pictorial structure, since it is about the encounter of two moving pictures. Such occurrence can take place in two ways: the repeated film is inserted as a linear montage element, or as another film picture incorporated into the film picture. This is no longer the simple encounter of two pictures but rather of two time-based media which overlap and get exponentiated, so that the viewer has to find the way around in between two distinct space-time coordinate systems.

I categorized repeated films according to genres, on the one hand, and according to the place of occurrence and disposition, on the other hand, and separately, I analyzed documentaries, cartoons and other feature films occurring in the feature film, and yet also separately, the recurring montage films.

Summary

Writing this dissertation is mainly intended for introducing the repeated image concept in an academic context and in the field of picture philosophy and picture theory, as well to emphasize the importance and the unavoidability of the recurring picture phenomenon, to prove the formation of picture networks and analyze the same. As a part of the everyday use of terms, the recurring picture concept may highlight the ever frequently occurring phenomenon of repeated image. An accelerating picture repetition process can be experienced both in the field of arts, and in the field of the everyday life.

We are picture-user and picture-maker beings, we use pictures more and more frequently, we create pictures more and more frequently and we repeat them more and more frequently. A pretty large repository is available for us online, thus thinking about repeated images and analyzing them may represent a challenge both in terms of academic discourses and in terms of our everyday dialogue situations for times to come.

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