



Photography as Cinematic Ekphrasis: Intermedial Study in Garin Nugroho's Opera Jawa

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Submitted: 2022-10-18. Revised: 2023-04-02. Accepted: 2023-06-08

Abstract

The Opera Jawa (2006), directed by Garin Nugroho is an Indonesian film with unique hybridity of art media (music, dance, visual art installation, acting, photography). This study aims to provide an overview of photographic ekphrasis's form, process, and function. This research used a descriptive qualitative method. Data collection was through observation with the note-taking documentation technique. Through intermedial studies, data analysis was carried out using Agnes Petho's cinematic ekphrasis and photo-filmic theory. The results of the study show that Opera Jawa displays the characteristics of intermedial reference media through cinematic ekphrasis of photography in film. This matter is manifested at the diegetic media level through family photos of the character Setyo-Siti, and the extra-diegetic media through photographic frames introducing film characters. Cinematic Ekphrasis works with exchange strategies and crossing the borders of basic media modalities (material, sensory, space-time, semiotic) from film to photography. Cinematic ekphrasis ultimately forms a metaphor that mediates the experience and knowledge of film audiences toward the target media and the source media. Thus, Opera Jawa, as the target media, can offer its ideology as a result of Sinta Obong's source media interpretation.

Keywords: Opera Jawa, Photography, Photo-filmic, Cinematic Ekphrasis, Intermediality

How to Cite: Wibisono, S. (2023). Photography as Cinematic Ekphrasis: Intermedial Study in Garin Nugroho's Opera Jawa. *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education*, 23(1), 64-78

INTRODUCTION

The Opera Jawa (2006) film directed by Garin Nugroho offers a new aesthetic to the world of Indonesian cinema. The combination of cinematography with dance, music, and *tembang* (song in Javanese), contemporary art, has become a characteristic that has not yet reappeared to date. Sasono (Sasono, 2009) sees that Garin's efforts are important in the context of film history because he made a breakthrough. It is a search for a hybrid form through the confluence of opera and film. While there are many musical films or TV operettas,

only Opera Jawa film shows all dialogues with songs.

The achievement has received appreciation from national and international filmmakers, including being determined as the Best Film at the 2007 Singapore International Film Festival, the Best Adapted Scenario Writer and the Best Music Arranger at the 2006 Indonesian Film Festival. Opera Jawa adapts the story from the traditional human puppet Sinta Obong's performance, which is sourced from the fragment of Sinta's kidnapping in the epic Ramayana. This film, both in terms of story and artistic performance expression, uni-

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tes the practice of traditional to postmodern artistic values. The consequences of this practice generate unique cross-media relations inside.

In scientific studies in Indonesia, the phenomenon of Opera Jawa has unfortunately never been studied through intermedial study (intermediality). This term refers to an approach that examines idea, form, content, relationship, and the unification of media. So far, studies on the relationship between film and literature or other art forms mostly used adaptation theory. Hutcheon, one of the main thinkers of this field, also emphasized that, as a practice, adaptation is not limited to happening in the world of literature to films. Since the Victorian era, adaptation has occurred between various media starting from poetry to dance. People in the post-modern era have more choices to adapt. It is not only film, TV, radio, and the history of virtual reality experiments. Therefore, the most important thing to understand is the nature of the adaptation process (Hutcheon, 2006).

Hutcheon put an important theory related to the characteristics of intermediality. However, intermedial studies provide a wider space to define and analyze changes that occur across media, the phenomenon of media borders, and the 'in-betweenness' condition. Rajewsky mentioned that intermediality is a term underlying all phenomena that occur among the media. Intermediality is often identified with studies that examine form, idea, content, relationship, and the unification of media in art. Simply intermediality is a practice that indicates the relationship between different media, and different art forms (Shail, 2010, p.4).

Kristeva's idea of intertextuality becomes the most relevant theory of intermediality. However, while Bakhtin and Kristeva's theories are important for intermediality, neither of these theories consider the perspectives of medial transformation and fusion that currently occurred (Eilitta, 2012).

The potential of the intermediality

concept lies in the fact that intermediality does not limit the study of "literary" media (language text-based works) only. It will enrich the study orientation with materiality aspects and social functions of the process (Müller, 2010, p.22).

Heinrichs and Spielmann provide an understanding of the main function of intermediality with similar studies. According to them, intertextuality explores the relationship of texts, the intermediality of the merger (combination), and transformation (transfer and fusion of forms) of different media elements. Intermediality is positioned as a necessary historical process as long as the previous different media are merged, creating new (art) forms and forming a new medium. (Shail, 2010)

Opera Jawa, in the context of intermediality deserves further study. In this case, this film is an adaptation and offers a more complex intermedial relationship. The hybridity of Opera Jawa opens up the possibility that art forms are related in various ways and, at the same time, display unique relationship results.

Following the hybrid characteristics of Opera Jawa, there are also different points of view in enjoying and responding to it in academic studies. Several studies from various disciplines have been carried out, starting from the deconstruction of film narrative expressions and gender issues (Belasunda et al., 2014) and Lacan's psychoanalytic approach to the phase of character development (Mukarromah & Zamroni, 2018), studies of semiotics and ideology in installation work (Budiman et al., 2013), leadership and gender discourse (Toni, 2019). Likewise, it is from the art of acting through a study of the form, style, and meaning of acting in films (Novianto, 2010).

The studies above also try to highlight the diversity of one of the other media (art) forms in film. However, so far, it has not shown media relations in an intermedial context, in terms of form and categorization, as well as the process of operating media modalities in cross-media relations.

Pieldner's Studies, "From Paragone

to Symbiosis. The sensation of In-Betweenness in Sally Potter's *The Tango Lesson* is especially relevant. First, it approaches the diversity of mediums in film in the context of intermediality. The second explains the tableau vivant analysis as an allegory of Eugène Delacroix's painting, *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*. The film's characters, Potter and Pablo, copied the move, Jacob tussling with an angel. This is a trope or the emergence of certain moments or scenes from a drama in another different drama. Delacroix's painting is a moment of imagination in painting which is then "replayed" in the tableau vivant and then transformed into the tango dance (Pieldner, 2020).

Meanwhile, Ignashev has also analyzed cinematic ekphrasis in *Otets i syn* (Father and Son, 2003) directed by Alexander Sokurov. Sokurov's choice of style in the film is cinematic ekphrasis. The film in its visual, verbal, and audio manifestations, evokes associations taken from other artistic texts, juxtaposition of representations, and representations create new meanings (Ignashev, 2020, p. 18).

Despite the fact that Ignashev and Pieldner use intermedial studies approach, they have not specifically discussed photographic ekphrasis in cinema. More specifically, there has been no attention to the practice of ekphrasis involving film-photography. If we look at the intermedial potential as an object of study, it is very large, considering that Opera Jawa presents a variety of media and explores media relations. Textually, this film is directly related to Sinta Obong's text. Visualization in the film is very strong with the form of expression of a human puppet combining dance, music, song to contemporary art. Photography in this case becomes an interesting medium to study the intermedial relationship. It is because the photography and modes of photography displayed by Opera Jawa consistently present descriptions of the characters with attributes, costumes, which strengthen the references for Sinta Obong's play.

Without denying several studies that

have contributed to the scientific discourse of Opera Jawa, it can be concluded that it has not been found; a fundamental study related to the process and intermedial relationship of film-photography in Opera Jawa. This study aims to complement the study of Opera Jawa in terms of intermedial relationships, which can provide an overview of the forms of artistic expression of the film and the influence of other art forms inside. Therefore, through an intermedial study of Opera Jawa, the study aims to: (1) find the form and working process of film-photography cinematic expression as a result of the intermedial process, (2) determine the function of cinematic ekphrasis strategy as an aesthetic practice in Opera Jawa.

Intermedial studies are considered the most suitable to fill the gaps of previous studies. Intermediality can draw attention to the presence of other different and new artistic aesthetics. It will enrich the point of view of study cases, which are discussed only as the translation of one work of art into another (Eilitta, 2012).

This study stands on Rajewsky's tripartite intermediality theory, including ekphrasis (cinematic ekphrasis), and the *photo-filmic Petho* concept, which specifically refers to the practice of ekphrasis with the involvement of the intermedial relationship of photography (still image) and film (moving image).

It must be admitted that the discourse of intermediality is debatable, because of the similarities with other theories such as adaptation, and intertextuality. However, it can be understood that intermediality seems to open up a wider space for art and media to define relationships as developments occur in culture, including the way humans express themselves through new technologies.

Therefore, intermedial studies must determine the perspective of intermediality and define the term in a more specific sense. As Rajewsky formulated three sub-categories in intermediality: (1) Medial transposition. Intermedial quality in this case is the emergence of media products

through the transformation of media products from basic media into other media, e.g. adaptation of literary works to films, writing novels based on films (novelization). (2) Media combination) namely artworks in the form of multimedia, mixed media, and intermedia. The intermedia quality of this category is determined by the medial constellation, which is the process of combining at least two different forms of medial articulation. Each form of medial articulation exists in its materiality and contributes to the constitution and marking of the whole product in a specific way. Examples of this combination of media can be seen in theatres, films, performances, computer installations or sound art, comics, and so on. (3) Intermedial references. In this category, only one medium is present materially. Instead of combining various forms of medial articulation, the given media product can take a theme, evoke, or imitate elements or structures from other media that are conventionally different in use by the specific means of the media itself. Examples of the use of film cinematography techniques are in literary texts, literary musicalization, ekphrasis, references in film for painting, painting for photography, and so on. (Rajewsky, 2005, p. 52).

Intermedial reference, one of the categories in Rajewsky's tripartite intermediality, covers ekphrasis. The ekphrasis idea originated from ancient rhetoric, in Greece, with the desire to make texts more expressive, and emotionally colorful. Initially, ekphrasis was understood as a description of art (painting, sculpture, etc.) that appeared in the literature. At first, ekphrasis was often applied to the correlation between poetry texts and painting. Over time, the idea experienced widening and changes (Andreeva, 2020, p. 449).

The widening of the ekphrasis idea also occurs in film studies with the term cinematic ekphrasis. Furthermore, cinematic ekphrasis is used in this paper to discuss the problem of film ekphrasis. This idea refers to an embedding effort, a certain artistic representation in cinema or film. Film

studies from an intermedial point of view, particularly ekphrasis in experimental films in Indonesia are still rare. Similarly, it happened to Opera Jawa. Nevertheless, adaptation, ekphrasis, to the combination of media involving literature, performing arts, visual arts, to photography, are very clear in this film.

Cinematic ekphrasis in the film requires several characteristics that do not merely link the artistic representation inside. Some important aspects that are considered cinematic ekphrasis are as follows: (1) The art form embedded in the film must go beyond the function of diegetic representation (e.g., painting on a wall) and must be manifested as different media from what is seen in the cinematic image. In short, an ekphrasis requires the perception of the intermedial relationship, as objects or transformative figures of mediality in a work. (2) Films explicitly try to adapt or develop styles from, other art forms. For example, expressionist films that transform moving images (videos/films) into moving painting sequences, (3) Films that imitate other art forms are not the main 'target' of ekphrasis impulses, yet as mediators to other media, which are beyond concrete expression. A common example is the 'picto film', where a sense of 'literature' is conveyed through imitation of a painting or painter's style (Pethő, 2015, p. 295-296). Another concept that is still considered in the practice of ekphrasis is photo-filmic.

Naturally, there is no media limit. Media restrictions occur due to convention and this is necessary while discussing intermediality. The purpose of intermedial studies does not only concern the categorization of forms, changes, and combinations of intermedia. However, it is expected that it can describe the intermedial process on the receptors of readers, and viewers of artworks. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the basic modalities of each media. The term 'modality' is related to 'mode'. A 'mode' is a way of being or doing something (Elleström, 2010).

Modality and mediality construct medial complexities integrating materiali-

ty, perception, and cognition. The four modalities required are 1) Material modality, namely the tangible and latent interface of the medium. 2) Sensorial modality is a physical and mental activity to observe the interface of the medium through the five senses, 3) Spatiotemporal modality is the process of structuring the sensory perception of sensory data from the material interface into experiences and conceptions of space and time, 4) Semiotic modality, namely the creation of meaning in a medium that is understood spatially through various types of thought and interpretation of signs (Elleström, 2010, p.15-23). Media will involve a person interacting with the object; understanding information with all of our senses; pay attention to certain temporal and spatial relationships in materials, sensory and semiotic levels (Bruhn & Schirmacher, 2022)

METHOD

This type of research is qualitative with an intermedial study approach. This method examines changes in the media in a certain way. First, intermediality does not focus on one medium, but on the interrelationship of different media. Second, approaching media change as an inter-medial relationship in which no single dimension is an exclusive determinant. Third, intermediality tends to use triangulation of materials (data sources) and research methods (Herkman, 2012). The object of research is the *Opera Jawa* film directed by Garin Nugroho, writers Armantono and Garin Nugroho, the production of SET Film and New Crowned Hope in 2006, with a duration of 1 hour 55 minutes. The unit of analysis determined is the practice of media representation (cinematic ekphrasis) involving modes and forms of photography in Opera Jawa.

Data analysis was carried out interactively. Miles and Huberman state that interactive data analysis techniques shall be conducted interactively between data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion (Rijalli, 2018). The data

collection technique was through observation using the technique of note-taking documentation, as well as literature study. The steps taken were watching the Opera Jawa film repeatedly as the primary data source, noting the shots, scenes, and sequences that were relevant to the research question to identify important aspects needed as research data. This step seeks to collect film-photography intermedial practices. The primary data findings will be strengthened by secondary data in the form of theories, and data, from journals, books, and articles related to the research topic. Data reduction was done to categorize the data based on the form of intermedial practice involving photography. Intermedial analysis was carried out using the Schwanecke media representation concept analysis method, which includes (1) What it is represented?; looking for type references presented by Opera Jawa, (2) How they are represented; describing the process and how the reference works in the intermediate relationship, and (3) Where it is represented; finding the placement of these references in the film (Bruhn & Schirmacher, 2022).

Intermedial analysis was carried out using the Schwanecke media representation concept analysis method, which includes (1) what is represented, looking for type references presented by Opera Jawa, (2) How are they represented; describes the process and how the reference works in the intermediary relationship, (3) Where it is represented; found the placement of these references in the film (Bruhn & Schirmacher, 2022).

Intermedial analysis was carried out using the Schwanecke media representation concept analysis method, which includes (1) What is represented? Searching for reference types presented by Opera Jawa, (2) How is it represented? Explaining the process and how the references work in intermedial relationships, (3) Where is it represented? Finding the placement of those references in the film. (Bruhn & Schirmacher, 2022). Data presentation was done by capturing (screenshot) shots and film

scenes and describing them. The data will be verified based on the discussion and theoretical basis for further conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the discussion of Opera Jawa from intermedial studies show the emergence of a cinematic ekphrasis strategy through photography that is present in a diegetic or non-diegetic manner. Photography as an object that appears in the scene and a typical film style becomes the medium for the Ramayana literary works and the Sinta Obong *wayang wong* performances.

Literature can appear in the film as the essence of the story, even though its appearance in Opera Jawa has undergone re-interpretation. This is also the case when literature is transformed into the medium of performing arts. Every performance as an artistic event will never be the same, in terms of visual manifestation, acting, music, and artistic arrangement. The only stable thing is the essence of the story itself. So, Opera Jawa takes the outline of the characters and the plot of the story as a reference to the source media. This relationship is interesting because, generally, intermedial studies refer to works of art that are not moving, such as painting, sculpture, or architecture, like Pieldner's study, which found efforts to revive Delacroix's paintings through tableau vivants and Tango dances. Likewise, it was Ignashev who analyzed Sokurov's film. References to the media sources here come from photography, and works of fine art. Similar to Pieldner, Ignashev also found the practice of ekphrasis in painting based on stories from the Bible Jacob Wrestling with An Angel. The story has become the inspiration for a number of artists. If in The Tango Lesson the painting referred to is the work of Eugene Delacroix, then Sokurov in O Tets i Syn refers to the painting by Rembrandt.

Opera Jawa-Wayang Wong : Cinematic Ekphrasis Through Photo-filmic

The form, style, and story elements of the Opera Jawa film show the influence of human puppet performance. Sumaryono explains that a *wayang wong* (human puppet) duplicates dance drama or imitates a shadow puppet show. The basic difference is that humans or dancers replace the puppet in the shadow puppet in the human puppet. The musical accompaniment uses *gendhing gamelan* and Javanese *tembang* (songs). The source of the story is the story of Ramayana or Mahabharata (Saputra, 2018). The structural aspect of the Opera Jawa story explicitly states that it comes from Sinta Obong's play, which is a part of the Ramayana story and is shown in the human puppet. The form of expression with a combination of Opera Jawa media, using acting, dance, choreography, gamelan accompaniment music, songs, and installation art, is also very clearly inspired by the *wayang wong* performance. Likewise, the practice of reference between media bridges the relationship between the characters in the film and wayang performances.

The phenomenon of the occurrence of intermedial relationships in Opera Jawa has started since the beginning. One of the film's first frames focuses on an illustration of the Rama-Sinta puppets (00.00.42). A series of texts in Javanese are shown, which mean approximately; "This story is based on Sinta Obong's play, a part of the human puppet. This section tells while Rama and Rahwana were fighting over Sinta. This section tells about the banishment of Rama and Sinta to the forest until Rahwana kidnaped Sita. When Rama was able to retake Sita, Rama put Sita in the fire to prove his love and loyalty. This section has indicated the practice of adapting the Ramayana literature into the human puppet dance drama of Sinta Obong's play. Adaptation with this kind of transfer, in tripartite intermediality, can be categorized as medial transposition. It can be said that adaptation is a major transformation in Opera Jawa. However, on the other hand, this film meets the requirements of intermedial reference, in the form of the practice of ekphrasis or

more specifically taking the term of Petho cinematic ekphrasis. Opera Jawa also takes other media elements and structures that are conventionally different from film conventions. As Rajewsky said, a media product can have more than one tripartite category of intermediality.

The description above explains the position of Opera Jawa in the research as an intermedial reference. The practice of ekphrasis, which is a part of the intermedial reference category is specifically carried out through photo-filmic. Photo-filmic practices include (1) the emergence of a collage effect from a still picture into a frame in a film (as an insert in a film), (2) or offering a photographic sensation in a film through the still frame and slow motion, (3) and moving image that is fixed as a still image (Petho, 2016, p. 237-238) cinema, and other forms of visual culture respond to a digitized and networked world. Traditional discourses on medium specificity, developed in distinct disciplines, often fail to provide an adequate description of the transformations that photography and film have undergone. The essays, written by internationally renowned scholars, encompass a broad range of different media such as video, documentary film, cinema, photography, and the Internet, as well as different disciplines such as art history, film studies, photography theory, visual culture studies, and media theory. In this way they deal with various practices or techniques ranging from panoramas, drone surveillance, tableau vivant, press coverage, computer-based editing, digitized financial markets, and various concepts such as temporality and contemporaneity, eco-aesthetics and forensic practice, counter-visibility, human rights and political imagination, social transparency and control, thus mapping the possibilities of photofilmic images within contemporary art and visual culture. This volume also contains, as an artist's contribution, a substantial and richly illustrated interview with Eric Baudelaire. Cotemporality, intermediality : time and medium in contemporary art / Terry Smith -- Futures past : imbricated

temporalities in contemporary panoramic video art / Alexander Streitberger -- Eco-aesthetics, massacres, and the photofilmic / Brianne Cohen -- Specters, animals, youth, and love : inventing the possible via photofilmic images / Hilde Van Gelder -- Eric Baudelaire interviewed by Alexander Streitberger and Hilde Van Gelder -- Eric Baudelaire, Letters to Max (2014).

Photo-filmic practice can be seen from the presentation of photographic frames for introducing the characters and family photos of Setyo-Siti (Figure 1). A series of frames for the introduction of the characters and supporting actors of the film display images that evoke a sense of photography in the audiences (00.00.45-00.01.25).



Figure 1. Photographic Frame of *Opera Jawa* (00.00.45-00.01.25). From left to right, Setyo, Siti, and Ludiro are in *wayang wong* costumes. Source: Opera Jawa. (G. Nugroho, 2006)

This section introduces film actors with photography modes; still images with black and white tones. The main characters are shown with make-up and costumes of human puppet characters. Martinus Miroto is as Rama, Artika Sari Devi is as Sinta, Eko Supriyanto is as Rahwana. The three people are central characters in Sinta Obong's play. The character recognition frame provides a slide show effect of photos in film, a cinematic technical strategy that demonstrates the photo-filmic practice. We can understand here that cinematic ekphrasis through photo-filmic attempts to display basic media types, namely still images (photography).

Modality Shift in Opera Jawa's Photographic Frame

Ekphrasis is always related to the presence of a certain way of expressing art that appears in other arts. The discussion of the "sense generation" of photography in the *Opera Jawa* film begins by placing photography with its four basic modalities as qualified media types. Photography is understood as a visual art made using camera devices to record objects using light, which is then captured by the media (film or digital sensor). The results of photographic works can be enjoyed in print on paper or other materials and on various digital screens. Traditionally this art genre has a material modality in the form of a flat surface; the sensory modality can be felt through the sense of sight. The modality of space and time can be seen from space and time, which is realized through the technical media of delivering photography, one's subjective experience of the passage of time, or the perceived duration of events. The semiotic modality is in the form of an immovable image, which generally refers to signs categorized as icons, indexes, and symbols. At the same time, films have material modalities like flat surfaces and sound waves, cinema screens, home projectors, televisions, and so on. Sensory modality is in the form of perception of the senses of sight and hearing (visual, auditory). The modality of space and time is space and time, which is manifested in the film. Semiotic modalities are signs that include symbols, icons, indexes in moving images, and texts that are spoken through dialogue, sound effects, and music.

Opera Jawa ekphrasis is in the photographic frame of moving character introduction from the basic modalities of film to photography. Movement is temporary and needed to convey ideas as well as aesthetic expression. If the idea emphasizes the message, then the aesthetic is the way of conveying the message. Aesthetic photography strategies will provide a different sensation in other ways. The sensation of seeing a still image in a series of moving images in a film is a process of shifting

"between" or in-betweenness modalities, which is one of the characteristics of the intermediality practice. We can see more or less the same phenomenon from the practice of tableau shots in films, where there is a "suspension" of time for a few moments. This kind of shot invites the audience to focus more on exploring the expression, gestures of actors and, compositions with other actors in a certain dramatic environment, situation, and condition. The modalities of film and photography materials seen by the audiences in Opera Jawa are the same; a flat screen that displays a two-dimensional image. The technical medium for delivery is the sensory modality that the audiences can perceive through sight and hearing and creates a photographic sensation. This stage creates sensations that have not been pretended.

Sensation, according to Coon and Benjamin is a fundamental experience that is immediate and related to the human senses. The sensation does not require any verbal, symbolic, or conceptual elaboration (Widagdo, 2018, p. 10).

The modality of space and time-shifted because a conventional film has the basic media type of moving image and inserts a still image. The modality of space and time organizes sensory experience from sensation to perception. Sobur stated that perception is the process of receiving, selecting, organizing, interpreting, testing, and reacting to sensory stimulation (Sumarandak et al., 2021). Perception is thus more analytical, and this process is not always absolutely the same in each individual. Notoatmodjo (Sumarandak et al., 2021) said that the same thing tends to be seen in different ways by each individual. These differences are influenced by factors of knowledge, experience, and point of view.

The perception of the Opera Jawa audiences naturally move from watching a movie to looking at a photo. The image does not move, giving an emphasis or invitation to the audience more through their senses. In the end, sensations and perceptions that are arranged in response to ma-

terial, sensory, and space-time modalities will lead to the signification process in semiotic modalities.

Back to the series of black and white "photography" pictures from an inter-medial point of view, it is not just an introduction to the characters as is common in films. The ekphrasis concept in cinema is not only addressed as the presence of other media with the need for other artistic representations. As Petho stated, "...Given also the fact that the idea of ekphrasis is usually linked more closely not only the idea of representation for also to the aesthetic value of texts, whenever the relations of cinema and the other arts, or the other arts are involved...", (Elleström, 2010, p. 213).

The "suspended" shots of the film will evoke the sensation of photographic image, emphasizing the drama of the story. The ekphrasis characteristic of Opera Jawa photography, eventually evokes memories, not only to the human puppet, but also to Ramayana and the stories affiliated with the work. Photography while in its concrete representation makes framing and suspension of time, yet on the one hand, it evokes memories. Regarding the depiction of time in photography, Jussim calls it a metaphor that reflects the difficulties we have in expressing "a complex series of experiences regarding the past, present, and future." If this is the case, then the perception of the metaphor will depend on our experiences and memories and about how we map our own past through its memories and traces" (Sutton, 2009, p. 34).

This process of shifting the basic modality of film-photography is an attempt to cross-media borders. It exchanges, switches, and blurs the borders of basic characteristics such as motion versus stillness. As a result, cinematic and photographic sensations merge film-photography in-betweenness.

Rebuilding Ramayana's Character on Photo-filmic and Family Photography

As mentioned earlier, Opera Jawa is a reinterpretation of the Ramayana story.

The title of the film using the word/opera/ becomes an offer between the definition of the Western tradition and the interpretation of the Indonesian filmmaker. One of the definitions from the West is "Opera is a formal theatrical medium that expresses its dramatic essence by integrating its words and action with music. Like drama, opera embraces the entire spectrum of theatrical elements: dialogue, acting, costumes, scenery, and action, (...)" (Fisher, 2005, p. 14). Thus, aspects of art that form the foundation of opera are play (drama) and music performed on stage. The characteristics of this kind of performance also appear in Indonesia in the form of human puppet performances. Garin wants to give a discourse on the Javanese version of opera in the medium of film. In general, a puppet for a Javanese people is a discourse to see the world widely. Anderson (1965) stated that while mostly based on the Indian epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana, for the Javanese, a puppet is the means of seeing their existential position, their relationship with the natural and supernatural order, with their fellow human beings, and with themselves (Nugroho, 2008).

The film tries to represent the story and articulation of puppet performances, although they make new interpretations of the old values of the puppet. Visually, the photographic representation emphasizes the human puppet icons as a comparison between the stereotypical characteristics of the characters Rama, Sinta, Rahwana, Setyo, Siti, and Ludiro in Opera Jawa. This effort is present at the level of diegetic media and extra-diegetic media. The representation of photography at the diegetic media level is in the form of photos of Setyo-Siti's family, because it presents photography in the technical medium of delivery in the form of framed photos. Meanwhile, the character introduction frame is an extra-diegetic photographic sensation in the film is the collage effect of a still picture into a frame.

Art creators can create ekphrasis with a variety of strategies. References can appear anywhere and will provide a diffe-

rent experience for each audience. Schwanecke stated that the representation of a medium could be applied to the story's overall structure, imagery, plot design, or constellation of characters. References can appear at the diegetic, extra-diegetic, and even paratextual levels (such as the occurrence of titles of plays, poems, novels or short stories, chapter titles, and table of contents) (Bruhn & Schirmacher, 2022, p. 173).

The emergence of diegetic media is not always addressed simply by discovering the types of media and their patterns. The cinematic ekphrasis concept, in this case, also emphasizes the search for an intermedial relationship and positions them as intermediaries. The presence of diegetic media can be studied to find out what type of media and when it appears in the film. However, the diegetic media can also be an intermediary for references outside the film itself. A painting hanging on the wall of a house in a movie scene may only function as an interior decoration. Nevertheless, the painting probably has a more symbolic relationship. Other knowledge is needed that can support the interpretation of the painting with the scene in the scene, even the structure of the story as a whole. The same thing happened in Opera Jawa, in the scene where Siti received an invitation letter from Ludiro. Siti is described as quietly reading the letter because she is being watched by Sura, the maid assigned by Setyo to look after her. Siti moved from the guest chair to the hall. This movement made the shot show Siti with an anxious expression combined with the background of Setyo-Siti's photo in the Rama-Sinta costume on the wall (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Scene of Siti reading Ludiro's letter, with the background of Setyo-Siti's family photo (00.24.01-00.24.15). Source : Opera Jawa (G. Nugroho, 2006)

The family photos of Setyo and Siti in the context of cinematic ekphrasis are an intermediary to recall the memory of the harmony of a married couple. From an intermedial point of view, the photo is also positioned as a diegetic medium, namely a form of photography that is presented as an object family photos are powerful icons to be interpreted as an ideal picture of a household. Furthermore, this visual icon places Setyo-Siti in Opera Jawa with the time when they played Rama-Sinta in the *Sinta Obong* performance (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Clockwise. Setyo-Siti's family photo with Anom. Siti opened her fashion box and returned to dress like Sinta. Siti in Sinta's makeup enters the installation of "Vagina Brocade" as proof of loyalty. Source: Opera Jawa (G. Nugroho, 2006)

This matter can also be seen in the scene where Siti looks at a black and white family photo showing herself, Setyo, and Anom in human puppet costumes. Siti reminisces about her past and maybe hopes that the power of Rama-Sinta's love can happen in her life. She rushed, opened the clothes box, and then put on Sinta's clothes and accessories. Although there is an ideal hope for a husband and wife love relationship like Rama-Sinta, in the end, the reality of Setyo-Siti's life is not as sweet as the plays they have played. The journey of their love life is a paradox. The challenge of proving loyalty to Rama through the burning ceremony in *Sinta Obong's* play can be passed by Sinta. Sinta, who the gods protected, did not burn in the slightest and proved that she was still pure. However, it is different from Siti in Opera Jawa. Siti

finally had to die at the hands of her husband, Setyo, in a ceremony to prove her chastity. Setyo kills Siti and then reaches into her heart. It was done because Setyo wanted to “ask” Siti directly about the loyalty of her love. Siti’s murder is also proof of Setyo’s distrust.

By aligning the characters in these two stories, film photography invites the audiences to explore knowledge through the complex dimensions of space and time. Like the characteristics of photographic work, Setyo-Siti’s photo is not just a visualization of the past. As long as they can be seen, photos are always connected to the present. Photos provide an imitation of ownership: past, present, and even future (Sontag, 2005). Intermedial studies emphasize multidimensional analysis methods based on clear and neat classifications. When finding traces of other media on a medium, that media should be treated as a source media because it can be recognized on other media, which can then be treated as a target media (Elleström, 2017, p. 682) “ISSN” : “2027534X”, “abstract” : “A broad variety of media traits are transmedial in the sense that they can, to a certain extent, be transferred among media that differ in fundamental ways. This article presents a new theoretical framework for studying media transformation, which should be understood as the transfer of transmedial characteristics. The goal is to explain how meaningful data are changed or corrupted during transfer among various media. First, I launch a few fundamental theoretical distinctions concerning the creation of meaningful media data. The most fundamental distinction is that between mediation and representation. Whereas mediation is the material prerequisite for representation in media, representation should be understood as a semiotic operation, that is, the creation of meaning in the mind. On the basis of this division, I also distinguish between two kinds of media transformation: transmediation and media representation. The article then continues with a section about the transmedial basis. All media have basic and universal (mate-

rial, sensorial, spatiotemporal and semiotic.

It can be said that there is a layered space-time dimension of photographic representation, both in the introduction of the main characters of Opera Jawa (Setyo, Siti, Ludiro) and in the photos of Setyo-Siti’s family (Figure 4). The first dimension is the past in the context of the Opera Jawa timeline. The embodiment of the photography is a picture of the time before the characters were involved in a love triangle. The second dimension is the space and time of stories and other art forms that originate from the classical to contemporary Ramayana. Opera Jawa, from many variants of the Ramayana story, emphasizes that it was inspired by Sinta Obong’s play in the *wayang wong* through the opening frame (00.00.42-00.00.57).



Figure 4. Ludiro’s photographic frame in Rahwana’s costume in front of the theater booth (left). Ludiro’s illustration in the cow abattoir in Opera Jawa (right). Source : Opera Jawa (G. Nugroho, 2006)

Furthermore, from the different (multi-dimensional) dimensions of space and time, photographic representations provide an overview of the characters in Opera Jawa who experience reinterpretations of the source media when they are realized in the film as the target media. For example, Setyo, as a representation of Rama, is embodied in the character of pottery craftsmen and sellers. Siti (Rama), is as a housewife and is a housewife, and Ludiro (Rahwana) is a butcher. The names of characters and characterizations of Jawa also form an interesting set of signs. This research does not specifically interpret signs through a semiotic approach but is limited to exploring the process of the emergence of signs as a semiotic modality in the practice of ekphrasis.

Such signs are, e.g., the name Siti which in Javanese means land. She is positioned as Setyo's wife, a pottery craftsman. Pottery is a product made from soil. Ludiro, in Javanese, means blood and is close to his profession as a cow butcher, but also, at the same time, describes the psychological side of anger, lust, enthusiasm, and passion. The relationship between the meaning of names, professions, and characters in this film opens a space of meaning in the film's semiotic system.

If we look more broadly at the structure of the film's story, there is an effort to image the three main characters as "ordinary" people and characteristics related to the three-dimensional aspects of the characters: physiological, sociological, and psychological aspects. These characters are positioned as if they are living a life story with Sinta Obong's plot, but with different character development and space-time setting. This multidimensional relationship is reaffirmed through photographic representations that mediate the images of Rama, Sita, and Rahwana which are well-known to the public. Setyo, Siti, and Ludiro are assumed to be characters who are cursed to undergo the destiny of Rama, Sinta, and Rahmana.

In a singing *Opera Jawa* text (00.08.31-00.08.51), Setyo revealed that his life with Siti was like Rama and Sinta, who were pushed out of their place. They, as Javanese, still believe that puppet art is a means to look at the existence of human life. It is in line with the phenomenological view of seeing the close relationship between art and understanding the nature of human life. Art can describe the complexity and depth of human freedom. While not always providing solutions, art can open up new realities and possibilities. This is one of the reasons for the interaction of art with religion, spirituality, and transcendent things (Hidajad et al., 2022, p. 175). It reinforces the reason the practice of film-photography cinematic ekphrasis always brings up Setyo and Siti in human puppet costumes.

The process above shows that ci-

nematic ekphrasis embodies a structural representation of photographic media through images and constellations of characters. The photographic representation then forms a system of metaphorical symbols. Metaphors indirectly connect the signifier and the signified (Surahmat & Karina, 2019). Lakoff and Johnson emphasize that metaphor is a matter of language, thoughts, and actions. Colors, shapes, textures, and sounds which are natural dimensions of human sensory experience, can be involved in metaphors (Handriyotopo, 2022, p. 140). The function of a metaphor becomes a mediator in the intermedial relationship of photography, film, and the typical mainstream characters of Rama, Sinta, and Rahwana. The mediation process of metaphor can be identified through various elements to the plot, such as costumes, character traits, and characteristics.

CONCLUSIONS

As an intermedial reference work, *Opera Jawa* presents the practice of cinematic ekphrasis with photography. Photography appears at the diegetic media and extra-diegetic media levels. Photographic representations at the diegetic media level are presented directly through photos of the Setyo-Siti family. Meanwhile, at the extra-diegetic media level, it is presented by generating a sense of photographic sensation and sensation through photographic frames for photo-filmic character recognition. Both represent Siti and Setyo in Rama Sinta costumes used in human puppet performances.

Cinematic ekphrasis works with exchange strategies and crossing the borders of basic media modalities (material, sensory, space-time, semiotics). The main basic modality exchange in the photographic character recognition frame is sensory modality. The practice is visually in the form of freezing a moving image of film into a still photographic image with black and white tones. The main basic modality exchange in the photos of Setyo-Siti

family is also sensory modality. The practice is visually in the form of presenting still image photography media products in film scenes in the form of moving images.

These two practices eventually form a metaphor as a semiotic modality by presenting Setyo, Siti, and Ludiro as Rama-Sinta, and Rahwana. Metaphor serves as a mediator of the experience and knowledge of film audiences towards the target media and the source media. Audiences who are familiar with the Ramayana narrative will have a more complete perception of the triangle love story of Setyo, Siti, and Ludiro in Opera Jawa. Thus, Opera Jawa, as the target media, can offer its ideology as a result of Sinta Obong's source media interpretation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my colleagues who have become discussion partners in the fields of film, theatre, and communication; Dr. Koes Yuliadi, Dr. Basuki Agus Suparno. Dr. Agnes Petho for her brilliant mind of intermediality. Finally, at Sekolah Tinggi Multi Media MMTC which facilitated this research.

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