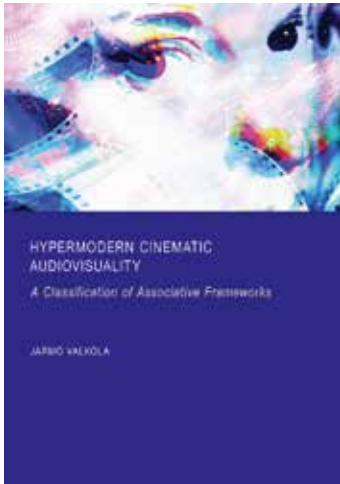


Book Review



Jarmo Valkola, *Hypermodern Cinematic Audiovisuality: A Classification of Associative Frameworks*, Ethics Press, 2025, ISBN: 978-1-83711-262-3, 507 pp.

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The digital era feeds us with audiovisual stimuli that constantly shape how we perceive, interpret, and interact with screen media. We do that through smartphones, streaming platforms, social media feeds, but also through virtual and augmented reality. As our attention keeps accelerating in this hypermodern media environment, it is important to understand not only the content of the media that are behind this intensification, but also how they operate. Jarmo Valkola's *Hypermodern Cinematic Audiovisuality: A Classification of Associative Frameworks* (2025) takes up that task, offering a focused, intellectually ambitious examination of how audiovisuality functions under the pressures of hypermodernity. The concept of hypermodernity

is not new – it has been in circulation since the early 2000s (see Armitage 2000). However, it has now become urgent again, because many of its core traits have intensified with the rise of synthetic media, constant online presence, and attention spans that are shaped by algorithms and platforms. The prefix “hyper” is, therefore, still relevant when describing our current era. It means having too much of something – essentially “a cult of excess” (Rudrum, Stavris 2015: 9). Put differently, hypermodernity is “postmodernism put into overdrive by technology, speed, and consumption” (Cooper 2020) where rationalisation, consumerism, and individualism have not collapsed (as postmodernists suggested) but instead have intensified to the point of producing new paradoxes: more freedom but more anxiety, more connectivity but also more isolation (Charles 2009: 395).

Alongside hypermodernism, many labels have attempted to name the “after” of postmodernism: metamodernism (Vermeulen & Van den Akker 2010), supermodernity (Augé 1995), altermodernism (Bourriaud 2009), automodernity (Samuels 2008), post-post-modernism (Nealon 2012), and liquid modernity (Bauman 2000), to name some of them. These frameworks compete and overlap, but in cultural and aesthetic debates metamodernism has become the leading theory (Hallila, Sandbacka 2025: 5), in part because it addresses the era's “structure of feeling” (Williams 1954) and the return of sincerity. Hypermodernity, by contrast, describes a different register: it is about acceleration, consumerism, and technological advancements, not about the affective turn toward sincerity. There are prior studies that have connected hypermodernity to cinema (for example, Brandon

2015; Shapiro 2024), but Valkola's book is, as he himself points out, “the first interdisciplinary study” of hypermodern audiovisuality (2025: 7). The scope of the book is broad, ranging from psychology, cognitive and phenomenological studies to neuroscience, as well as art, film, media, and cultural studies. Valkola describes the book as “multifaceted” (2025: 11), searching for a variety of approaches rather than attempting to draw “a single interdisciplinary map” (*ibid.*, 2).

The book is in many ways a conceptual expansion of the groundwork he laid in his 2022 book *Hypermodern Documentary Discourse in Cinema*. There, Valkola treats the documentary genre as a privileged site for understanding hypermodernity, because of its entanglement with memory, history, and truth claims. That book applies hypermodern theory to one genre, namely documentaries, whereas *Hypermodern Cinematic Audiovisuality* extends the scope to larger aesthetic and cultural conditions that shape contemporary audiovisuality. Both books, however, share the same theoretical backbone: Gilles Lipovetsky's account of hypermodernity, developed in his book *Hypermodern Times* (2005). Valkola adopts the concept to argue that contemporary cinema not only depicts the world, but also constructs how we sense and remember it. Here Valkola does something similar to a strand of 1990s and 2000s film scholarship that used Fredric Jameson as a macro-frame and traced how films perform postmodern logics (pastiche, irony, depthlessness) through editing, narration, and genre mixing (see Constable 2004: 43–61). In Valkola's case, Lipovetsky's conceptualisation of hypermodernity plays the role that postmodernity did for scholars working

with Jameson's and Jean-François Lyotard's ideas. He tracks how audiovisual form – rhythmic cadences, realigned body-camera relation, polyphonic montage, and orchestrated reflexivity – materialises hypermodern pressures.

In his book, he draws a line between postmodern and hypermodern film. In postmodern culture, memory is treated with suspicion: history gets ironised, fragmented, it might be “postponed or even dead” (Valkola 2025: 220). In hypermodern culture, by contrast, memory moves to the centre of how films are built: memory “is revitalized, redressed, and demarcated as a model and fundamental trait and rigor of narration” (ibid.). He says that the “[h]ypermodern image is not only a mirror of its times,” it is also an image that argues with the way we are used to seeing – it cannot be explained just by pointing to existing styles, genres, or media habits (ibid., 210). This is because hypermodern image has “a semantic relation to time” (ibid.) and it carries its own temporal meaning. A hypermodern image can, therefore, “unfold [...] sophisticated introspections and symmetrical meditations on the interpretation of our cultural and historic heritage” (ibid., 443), provide “fresh intentions for the future” (ibid., 206), deal with “temporal passings” and stand “in opposition to current trends” (ibid., 210). The aim that Valkola has in defining this is to build a framework – to establish “the necessary critical instruments and mechanisms” that let different disciplines study hypermodern audiovisuality together (ibid., 465). A framework that, in his words, “will lead to more accurate formation and demarcation of the noosphere of hypermodern thinking and its aligned premises” (ibid., 444).

The book is structured in five

chapters. The first chapter lays the broad foundation: it deals with the theoretical forms, perspectives, and parameters of cinematic representation. The second chapter maps audiovisual structuring – how space, time, and representation are organised and how these shape mindsets. Chapter Three focuses on the specified cases of hypermodern affectional parameters: it looks at the metaphorical qualities of audiovisuality, the role of hypermodern occurred cadences (rhythm and pacing), and the hypermodern rhetoric of time and space that guides how we feel and infer. Chapter Four deals with the hypermodern frame of orchestrated reflexivity; and the last chapter looks at the conclusive criteria of hypermodern sophistication, defining the features used to identify and assess hypermodern audiovisuality.

While this progression from theory to mechanics to criteria gives a structured overview of hypermodern audiovisuality, the prose of the book itself is ambitious; it is primarily suited to advanced academic readers and can be challenging for anyone seeking narrative clarity or reading for teaching purposes. The language is conceptually very dense and operates at an abstract, meta-theoretical level. Valkola writes in long, multi-clause sentences that make the reader pause, reread, and hunt for the main point. This is not a flaw, but more of a positioning choice by the author. The book is not written for general readers, introductory students or practitioners looking for hands-on guidance, and this places it within a relatively narrow scholarly niche. It is demanding to read, but useful to those who value a thorough theoretical approach. In line with this focus, he also works strictly within the hypermodern frame,

leaving aside the broader “what comes after postmodernism” debate. While this makes the book conceptually consistent, the larger map – where hypermodernity sits within the post-postmodern constellation and why this choice of frame matters over others – is not taken up. Considering the density of the theory, some engagement with neighbouring labels (meta-, super-, auto-, and other post-postmodernisms) would give readers additional entry points into the theoretical frame.

Looking beyond those small details, the book is a needed contribution to audiovisual literacy. Its core value lies in creating a comprehensive framework for hypermodern audiovisuality. What Valkola shows is that instead of illustrating hypermodernity, contemporary cinema performs this through cadence, montage, framing, and sound design. In today's world, where everyday life is mediated through audiovisual feeds, knowing how images and sounds steer attention and construct credibility should be a basic cultural competence.

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