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Afterword

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Afterword

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Gender matters in discussions of intermediality. The history of critical debates about the meeting and merging of disparate art forms and genres demonstrates this fact; the articles in this special issue give ample illustration of how gender can condition and constrain art, but also how a gender-aware approach to art can twist, stretch and remake its confines. But there is nothing inherent in an artistic form that would lend gender such a prominent role; instead, we must look to the history of critical and theoretical debates to understand how this conditioning and constraining has taken place.

One pertinent example we can cite is a symposium on poetic cinema hosted by *Cinema 16* in 1953 (before many of the foundational discussions of intermediality had emerged). The event was chaired by Willard Maas, with the participation of Maya Deren, Parker Tyler, Dylan Thomas, and Arthur Miller.¹ After Tyler's detailed tracing of the history of poetic films, in a variety of forms, it fell to Deren, stepping back from cinema itself, to explain her theory of poetry. Adopting the language of structuralism, Deren spoke about the difference between "vertical" and "horizontal" explorations of a given situation, arguing that poetry had a capacity for depth, for plumbing emotion, feeling, and "the invisible", that is overlooked or downplayed in the "attack of a drama", as she called it (Maas 1963). Deren discussed short films that could approach the lyric poem, and thus become "vertical" poetic constructions. Within her broadly structuralist frame, much of what Deren argues seems quite commonsensical – obvious, even. For those of us who have attempted to explain the difference between the lyric and the epic to university students, for example, her axes are most useful. The response from Dylan Thomas was at best remarkable: "Well I'm sure that all Maya Deren said was what I would have said, had I thought of it or understood it"; the editor notes that this was followed by "laughter and slight applause" (Maas 1963). Thomas continued, making explicit the gendered and sexualized context and underlying innuendo of his words: "Now I'm all for (I'm in the wrong place tonight) ... I'm all for horizontal and vertical", again, followed by laughter from the audience. Deren, a pioneering experimental filmmaker, went on to make insightful comments on the role of sound in avant-garde films, including an outline of what would become known as "acousmatic" sound, but by the end of the discussion pronounced herself "flabbergasted" at the direction of the conversation; Thomas continued with his "up and down" jokes, while Miller accused Deren of being "mechanical" in her analysis (Maas 1963).

The articles selected here demonstrate that such prejudices are not merely historical curios; artists and writers in Argentina and Brazil continue to battle against unfavourably gendered constructions of art and society more broadly. Anna Castillo's intervention deftly unpicks the argumentative tactics of a funny and provocative *opera prima*, Melisa Liebenthal's *Las lindas* (Argentina, 2016), an autobiographical reflection on the experience of not fitting in that simultaneously reworks a personal, even intimate, filmic archive while messing with gender – more specifically, with a contemporary vision of a certain mode of femininity, still very much alive, with all its noxious consequences, in Argentina and beyond. Castillo's analysis identifies an "intermedial palimpsest" in Liebenthal's work while also nodding to the history of media specificity in cinema (as outlined by David Rodowick and others) (14). While

¹ I am grateful to David M.J. Wood for first drawing my attention to this debate; conversations with David have been central to my thinking about intermediality and what we have termed "the poetry-film nexus" in a number of collaboratively written texts.

Liebenthal dialogues with the wider history of feminist documentary, the lo-fi aesthetic she chooses points to key filmmakers in the renovation of Argentine cinema – Raúl Perrone, and Albertina Carri, the subject of Pablo Boido’s article in this collection. The “roughing up” of contemporary femininity is not confined to Liebenthal’s work, even within Argentina: one might cite the *oeuvre* of Laura Citarella, in particular her collaborative movies *La mujer de los perros* (co-directed with Verónica Llinás, Argentina, 2015) and *Las poetas visitan a Juana Bignozzi* (co-directed with Mercedes Halfon, Argentina, 2019) (31).

Boido himself offers a panorama of the intermedial work of one of Latin America’s most provocative contemporary filmmakers, Albertina Carri, whose production encompasses fiction films, reflexive documentary, comic animation, filmic performances, and site-specific interventions. Boido is particularly drawn to Carri’s archival labour, exploring her own parents’ political activism and writing (both were “disappeared” by agents of the civic-military dictatorship in the 1970s), and like Sbardella (see below and the article herein by Agustina Wetzel) aiming to queer the archive. If, as Jorge La Ferla has argued, “expanded cinema” has expanded art, Carri’s work demonstrates the potential of the performative film to disrupt both narratives of the past and fixed artistic models. Boido’s article should provoke further work, for example on Carri’s more traditional narrative films (*Géminis*, Argentina, 2005; *La rabia*, Argentina, 2008) and her queer porno-road movie, *Las hijas del fuego* (Argentina, 2018).

Fernando Valcheff García analyses a recent film by one of Argentina’s most subtle and thought-provoking contemporary directors, Natalia Smirnoff, *La afinadora de árboles* (Argentina, 2019). Valcheff points to the central contrast in the film, between individual and collective creativity, rooted in the work of the protagonist – a children’s writer and illustrator living through a personal and creative crisis – at a parish community kitchen for children. Smirnoff incorporates animation, drawings, and collage, blurring the limits of the traditional fiction film in a process that Valcheff comes to call “transremediation” (38). There are comparisons beyond the scope of the article that underscore the importance of gender in cinema. Diego Lerman’s *El suplente* (Argentina, 2022) also revolves around a community kitchen. If Lerman’s feature does not shy away from urgent urban issues – poverty, violence, drug dealing – it also turns the collective labour of mutual care into a battle of wills between local big men as the film slips into the melodramatic thriller mode that characterizes Lerman’s most recent directorial outings. In stark contrast, Santiago Loza’s contemplative, strange and beautiful screening of the work of poet and children’s author Roberta Iannamico, *Amigos en un camino de campo* (Argentina, 2022), stresses the intermedial potential of poetry and film to work together, like the “mutualismo” promoted in Iannamico’s poetry (Iannamico 2021, 292). A further contrast might be found in the depiction of the artist in the films of Gastón Duprat and Mariano Cohn, who in *El artista* (Argentina, 2008) and *Mi obra maestra* (Argentina, 2018) focus exclusively on male artists with a dry humour and occasional cynicism distinctly absent from Smirnoff’s vision.

Literature, be it narrative or poetry, can enrich cinema and other arts. Films also have the ability to address and redress blind spots in their source material; such is the case, Fernanda Guida argues here, in Monique Gardenberg’s 2003 cinematic version of Chico Buarque’s 1995 novel, *Benjamim*, retitled for the screen as *benjamim: Ninguém Esconde o Amor*. Guida highlights the “malleability” of Gardenberg’s work, in which relatively subtle tweaks to the source material, in particular in casting and the allocation of screen time, simultaneously foreground political aspects of the story told – set against the backdrop of the Brazilian military dictatorship and the organised left’s resistance to it – while introducing a “new gendered dimension” into the relationship between the titular protagonist and the young woman, Ariela, with whom he becomes obsessed (54).

Intermediality, as practice and theory, has tended to prefer film/cinema; Agustina Wetzel’s piece takes a different approach, analysing the ways in which Lucía Sbardella’s site-

specific installation, *Cautivas* (Camarones, Galería de arte contemporáneo, Buenos Aires, 2020) queers the official, monumentalized narrative of the War of the Triple Alliance, central in the development of the modern Argentine state and decisive for the political history of the region. Sbardella's work, Wetzel demonstrates, goes beyond criticism of state narratives of the war offered by the (mostly) Marxist revisionism of the 1960s, to focus on the largely unregistered or mythologized female experience of the brutal conflict. The figure of the captive (white) woman, central in founding narratives of Argentina, from Esteban Echeverría's *La cautiva* (1837) to José Hernández's *La vuelta de Martín Fierro* (1879), has proved popular with creators in Argentina in recent years: witness, for example, Gabriela Cabezón Cámara's novel *Las aventuras de la China Iron* (2017) and the recent critically-acclaimed play by Mariano Tenconi Blanco *Las cautivas* (first staged in 2021). We might also cite the final "chapter" of Mariano Llinás's epic *La flor*, a retelling of the female captives' return, filmed in grainy *camera oscura*. These works share the "contramonumentality" (Cvetkovich 2018) that Wetzel finds in Sbardella's work, an artistic "strange fruit", to borrow Florencia Garramuño's term (2015).

Also examining the connections between art and film, Inela Selimović's article analyses Paula Markovitch's 2013 documentary film *Armando y Genoveva*, an innovative and moving reflection on the artistic careers of her parents and their legacy –physical and sentimental– for the filmmaker today. The director mixes film, her parents' paintings, and a personal audio archive, to create "a meditative homage, a multisensory art catalogue, and an intimate cultural sanctuary" (112). It is also a form of "intermedial mourning" that tells an often-overlooked story of what might be called a quiet resistance to the civic-military dictatorship, away from the well-documented histories of the armed left, and told, albeit in provocative, unexpected fashion, in the films of Carri or Nicolás Prividera (101). Jordana Blejmar's concept of "playful memory" is important here (Blejmar, 2016), as are wider considerations on listening and touch from Jean-Luc Nancy and Jacques Derrida; we might pick up on the tenderness that Selimović detects here to connect to a longer affective tradition that takes in writers as diverse as Gabriela Mistral and Juan Gelman.

I have argued elsewhere for intermedial studies not to overlook the presence of poetry – verse, lyric, epic – on screen or canvas, in galleries or museums, and beyond. Selimović's and Wetzel's contribution, in particular, in a collection that demonstrates the breadth of contemporary intermedial art in Latin America, should encourage readers to expand our corpus further, without losing sight of those media-specific aspects that enable close and detailed formal analysis. Perhaps most importantly, this collection's focus on gender and genre reminds us once again of what Jens Andermann (2003) has called the "politics of style".

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