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Image and Storytelling New Approaches to Hispanic Cinema and Literature

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Image and Storytelling

New Approaches to Hispanic Cinema and Literature

Guest Editors: Gina Herrmann (University of Oregon)
and Isabel Jaén (Portland State University)

This special issue is dedicated to Professor Guy H. Wood, founder of the Cine-Lit conference and film series, whose tireless enthusiasm for Hispanic cinema and literature has cultivated, over three decades, scholarly and creative exchange between Hispanists and Hispanic filmmakers. Many of the essays gathered here found their inspiration at the 8th Meeting of Cine-Lit held in Portland, Oregon in 2015.

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Introduction

This special issue of *Periphērica, Image and Storytelling: New Approaches to Hispanic Cinema and Literature*, features leading research by scholars of Hispanic cultures at the crossroads of literature, film, mind, and society. The collection showcases cutting-edge fields and themes including cognitive studies, affect studies, embodiment, and empathy, as well as new perspectives on adaptation, film typology, film teaching, gender, and genre. The research presented in this special issue underscores the excitement produced by crossing disciplinary boundaries in the study of verbal and visual narratives, moving beyond prevalent transnational approaches that do not sufficiently address key factors in the creation and reception of film narratives such as historical-sociological contexts, affective dynamics, psychological responses, and gender variables. The contributors include scholars whose professional and social relationships to the history, practices, and evolution of the moving image and new media vary widely, broaching a diversity of theories and methodologies and presenting readers with a comprehensive and innovative perspective on film art and the relationship between filmmakers, films, spectators, and contexts.

Section I—Metaphors for Memory: Revisiting the Historical Memory Documentary explores the metaphorical vehicles employed in the construction of the historical memory documentary. In “*Mirant al cel* (Eyes on the Sky): The (Im)Possible Expiation of the Spectral Other,” Jaume Martí-Olivella analyzes the new Catalan documentary’s contribution to the current process of reclaiming the collective historical memory repressed by Francoism, underscoring the importance of the family metaphor as a national allegory to represent the plight of the Catalan nation. The second essay in this section, “Una memoria sexuada del cosmos: El marco heteropatriarcal de la cámara telescópica de Patricio Guzmán en *Nostalgia de la luz* (2010)” by Nagore Sedano Naveira draws

on the queer phenomenology of Sarah Ahmed in order to reconceptualize the memory discourses underlying Patricio Guzmán's *Nostalgia de la luz* (2010), drawing our attention to how, despite the director's focus on the natural world as an envelope of memory, the sexualized domestic sphere appears as the site from which "having memory" emanates. Sedano dismantles the claim for the film's generic novelty by critiquing the omission of gender in the acclaimed documentary.

Section II—Movies' Meanderings deals with different forms of experimentation and boundaries crossings between author and spectator, accentuating manifestations of movement (camerawork as well as narrative and plot-driven roamings). The first essay in this section, "Viaje a un mito de autor a través de los géneros en *El muerto y ser feliz* (Javier Rebollo 2012)" by Luis García-Torvisco, reflects on Rebollo's re-elaboration of the road-movie genre to provide audiences with a hybrid avant-garde product that fractures filmic language and moves between reality and fiction, history and myth. Working within a period of inflection regarding the concept of auteurist cinema, Javier Rebollo's film reads as a display case of formal and narrative traits that reaffirm the director as *auteur*. Yanira Angulo-Cano, for her part, draws on Nicolas Bourriaud's notion of "the Radicant," and leads us on a historical-sociological reading of the interpretative possibilities of images of motility, ultimately addressing the dynamics of the portrayal of dysfunctional families in "Spaces and Journeys in Ernesto Daranas' *Conducta: Che or Martí?*" Angulo-Cano explores the filmmaker's use of a wandering narrative to elicit visual commentary on Cuban society's dismissal of children in peril, showing at the same time how Daranas cleverly avoids the censorship of the spoken word in a context in which exploring family challenges has proven politically sensitive.

Section III—Teaching and Exhibiting the Spanish Civil War in Contemporary Spain focuses on the pedagogical and curatorial contexts surrounding Spanish Civil War cinema and their implications for the construction and didactic impulses of Spanish memory and identity. “*La guerre est finie y/o ¿La guerra ha terminado?: El film de Alain Resnais y Jorge Semprún y su papel en la exposición permanente del Centro de Arte Reina Sofía,*” by Maureen Tobin Stanley, discusses how the intertextual dialogue between the film and the works of art included in the Reina Sofía exhibition subverts binary paradigms (before/after the war, war/peace) to allow for multiple perspectives, helping spectators reflect on dehumanizing ideologies and genocide in connection not only to the Spanish Civil War but also to the current Spanish context of the historical memory wars. This section also features Nicole Mombell’s essay, “Teaching Representations of Resistance and Repression in Popular Spanish Film,” in which she offers a pedagogically acute methodology for a seminar course on the legacy of the Spanish Civil War and Francoism. She shows how the power of the film medium allows students to experience and reimagine political tensions through the use of strategies such as the blurring of the lines between history and fiction.

Section IV—Global Crisis and Social Critique centers on film representations of urgent social issues, highlighting new perspectives and innovative strategies that help audiences reflect critically on human diversity and survival. In “Para gustos, los colores. El matizado mundo delirante de los géneros: la ‘patergaynidad’ en otro tipo de familia en *Azul y no tan rosa* de Miguel Ferrari,” Pércio Castro shows how Ferrari employs humanizing dialogue and melodrama aesthetics to effectively tackle problems such as homophobia, gender violence, hypocrisy, and oppression, making audiences ponder the biologically and culturally constructed aspects of paternity in the context of new family conceptions and their vulnerability to social prejudice. Also in

this section, Jesse Barker's essay, "Unsheltered: Visions of Future Scarcity in the Past. Pablo Berger's *Blancanieves* and Jesús Carrasco's *Intemperie*," offers an affect studies perspective on how these works employ the aesthetics of silence to connect a dehistoricized past to our global contemporary economic, cultural, and ecological crisis, proposing an alternative ethics of empathy and intersubjectivity. Barker avers that the social-political projects underlying these texts (including Benito Zambrano's 2019 film adaptation of *Intemperie*) can be related to the 15M movement in Spain, constructing terrains of anguish and hope, and confront a destructive ethos of fear, envy, and domination.

Section V—Resistances from el Cono Sur approaches themes of political and socio-economic injustice in the Southern Cone from two distinct vectors. Ana Corbalán's essay, "Militancia femenina contra la dictadura de Pinochet: Legitimación memorística de *La mujer metralleta*," brings into focus the forgotten figure of Marcela Rodríguez Valdivieso, an anti-Pinochet militant whom López-Balló's documentary resuscitates. Corbalán emphasizes how the filmmaker builds around this *guerrillera* an affective identity of closeness that counters women's invisibility in the fight against Pinochet. The reading of the documentary draws out how revolutionary discourse in Chile has largely attributed the legends of valor to men at the expense of women like "la mujer metralleta," a soldier against dictatorship and later neo-liberalism. Like her male comrades, Rodríguez Valdivieso led violent skirmishes and suffered a traumatic battle injury and imprisonment. In the second piece in this section, Thomas Deveny takes on another critique of neo-liberalism in his "El paraíso perdido: La adaptación a la pantalla de *Las viudas de los jueves*," which focuses on Claudia Piñeyro's 2005 bestselling novel and its 2009 film adaptation by Marcelo Piñeyro. Deveny reads these works as vehicles to underscore the consequences of the 90s adoption of a brutal model of neoliberalism in Argentina and how the new rich who live isolated and protected within the

countries (the private gated communities) are also impacted. Piñeiro's novel constitutes a powerful psychological portrayal and sociological critique, while its film re-elaboration amplifies it by visually highlighting central themes such as hypocrisy, sexual violence, and death.

Section VI—New Transnational Typologies provides readers with three innovative perspectives on film taxonomies, allowing us to reflect on well-worn categories and how we can better organize them to fit what filmmakers communicate about the imaginative and creative acts of cinema production. Julien Jacques Simon's "From the Life to the Mind of the Writer in the Literary Biopic: Andrucha Waddington's *Lope* and Ray Loriga's *Teresa*" shows how these two biopics—and particularly *Teresa*—are illustrations, in the Spanish context, of a trend in the European literary biopic genre to renovate the formula. This renovation marks a move from the author-as-historical-figure to the author-as-artist, in which life events are deemphasized, secondary to the investigation of interiority and the creative process, now the main driving force of the narrative fabric. In the second article, "La flor de mi secreto: El deseo de la creación en Almodóvar," Doralba Pérez Ibáñez also addresses a film whose plot revolves around the act of creation—both writerly and cinematic. Pérez Ibáñez argues that Almodóvar's least studied film, *La flor de mi secreto* (1995), operates as an elegy to both literary and filmic creation and constitutes the auteur's most metafictional effort, one that serves as a guide to the entire catalogue of Almodovarian tropes and aesthetic fetishes. Finally, in "Objetivos transnacionales: El cine español del nuevo milenio" Cristina Martínez-Carazo explores the dialectics between the concept of transnationality and Spanish cinema, proposing a typology to help us address more accurately key factors such as the limitations of the film industry, the transnational aspects of filmmaking (with directors, actors, and crews constantly moving and erasing frontiers), and ethical-ideological aspects, among other factors. As Martínez-

Carazo demonstrates, new ways of working and communicating, as well as new human concerns within our global societies, call for an urgent revision of our taxonomies to calibrate the relationship between the production, distribution, and reception of film narratives.

The issue closes with the **epilogue** “Filmmakers on Filmmaking,” where Nancy Membrez gathers the views of a diverse group of film directors—who participated in the 2015 Filmmakers Roundtable at the International Conference on Literature and Film, Cine-Lit 8—on the current state of the film artistry and industry, describing current and future challenges and suggesting new avenues to keep cinematic narratives healthy and connected to our human concerns, interests, and realities. Among the voices featured in this section readers will find a group of young rising stars in Hispanic Cinemas, including Carlos Marqués-Marcet (Spain), Celina Murga (Argentina), Mariana Chenillo (Mexico), Juan Carlos Valdivia (Bolivia), and Javier Corcuera (Peru). This section also features filmmaker/scholar Dr. Gabriela Martínez Escobar.