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Vincent Moon in(-between) Brazil: An Aural Approach to Intermediality

Matheus Araújo de Siqueira

Abstract: *This article discusses how films by Vincent Moon which feature Brazilian musicians illustrate and expand on the notion of in-betweenness in intermediality. At the core of his work is a shift from an optical to an aural approach in filmmaking in which the director becomes more akin to someone who improvises together with the singer and, by doing so, takes the performance into an unpredictable zone. Central to this objective is a method on how to balance the in-between meaning and chaos. Finally, the article questions if such an approach connects to Ágnes Pethő's remapping of intermedial studies.*

Introduction

For better or worse, Vincent Moon has received little scholarly attention even though his films raise an interesting discussion on a visual practice that stems from sound and music. Still pigeonholed by many as the person who gave new life to the music video at the beginning of the YouTube era—a view that a *New York Times* article by Lizzy Goodman has helped to cement—it has now been over a decade since the French director abandoned the music industry and started creating films with musicians from all around the world.

In Brazil, Moon's filmmaking methods produced a fertile territory to expand and mature a practice based on sound. By examining his methodological use of sound and the contextual parameters in which Moon shot his documentary films in Brazil, I will endeavour to highlight the role intermedial borders play as they shift from delineating borders in space and aesthetic form to the in-betweenness that appears in time and experience.

Moon's connection to Brazil has been ongoing for the past decade. He has shot a total of ninety-three short films and one feature documentary with French artist Priscilla Telmon called *Híbridos* (*Hybrids*, 2018) in the country.[1] The intricate history between music and spirituality in Brazil functions as a great appeal for the director's persistent return, coupled with a keenness from Brazilian artists to work with him, despite his unconventional methods in forcing the musicians into uncomfortable and uncontrollable situations.[2]

Moon's first excursion to Brazil was in December 2010 and lasted two months. He shot twenty-four films together with artists such as Tom Zé, Ney Matogrosso, Elza Soares, Jards Macalé, Naná Vasconcelos and Carlinhos Brown. Although many artists that he recorded in 2010–11 had successful careers, Moon also focused on lesser known musicians who were still growing in the Brazilian music scene. Two years later, he returned to record thirteen more films with both

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local artists and promising musicians whose careers had recently exploded, such as Criolo and Metá Metá.

In 2014, Moon and Priscilla Telmon collaborated on the research and subsequent recordings of the feature documentary *Híbridos.* Unlike for previous recordings, here the couple invested a few years to focus on the relationship between music and religious practices in Brazil. According to the film database located on his personal website, of the ninety-three films shot in Brazil up to 2019 fifty-one are part of the *Híbridos* project. Afterwards, the director compiled these fifty-one films into a feature documentary and great attention was given to the editing and the postproduction (an exception to his oeuvre where a quick production release is prioritised to the detriment of the sound design and colour correction). Perhaps due to the partnership with another director, for the first time in his work he inserted interviews with experts explaining the rituals that were recorded. The exhibition of this project also expanded to include a video installation and a live cinema presentation.[3]

Before delving further into the director's work and the question of Brazilian music being recorded by foreigners, Moon's relationship with another compatriot director, Pierre Barouh—a multitalented writer-composer-singer and actor who arrived in Brazil forty years prior to record his interactions with up-and-coming musicians of the country—should be acknowledged. Barouh was a French director and also an actor and musician who fell in love with Brazilian music in 1959. By 1965, he had already become friends with Baden Powell, Vinicius de Moraes and rising talents from Rio de Janeiro (from Dolores Duran to Chico Buarque). He translated many songs into the French language and was partly responsible for the popularisation of the Bossa Nova genre throughout France and Europe (Sukman).

After a turbulent historical period in Brazil and only two months after the AI-5 decree issued by the military dictatorship suspended constitutional guarantees, Pierre Barouh spent three days filming the documentary *Saravah* (1972) in February 1969. Although Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil were imprisoned and Chico Buarque was in exile, through his connection with Baden Powell he managed to record with Pixinguinha, João da Baiana, Paulinho da Viola and Maria Bethânia (Sukman). The musicians selected as subjects in Barouh's documentary film, including Mayuto Correa, the artistic director of the PUC University (an institution that opposed the dictatorship), turned their participation in Barouh's film into veiled protests against the regime during Brazil's harshest years of censorship.

The spontaneity of the recordings marks the tone throughout the duration of the film. Barouh not only observes but forces situations to occur in front of the camera by stimulating performances to occur in places and moments such as at a table of a restaurant during lunch hour. He also joins in and sings with the musicians he films; at the end, he even assumes the role of the lead singer while Baden Powell accompanies on his guitar. In addition to *Saravah*'s archival importance for being the only existing colour footage of Pixinguinha playing saxophone with João da Baiana (Figure 1), Barouh's outsider perspective provides some unpredictable decisions such as pairing Paulinho da Viola with Maria Bethânia—even after Paulinho da Viola explicitly explains to him that they are part of very different artistic movements.




Figures 1 and 2: Pierre Barouh with João da Baiana (left) and Baden Powell with Pixinguinha (right) in *Saravah* (Pierre Barouh, 1972). Biscoito Fino, 2005. Screenshots.

The film is characteristic of Moon's unconventional methods and his drive to press for impromptu encounters between dissimilar artists helps to unify them in a new creative space. As a result of Barouh's naiveté, he transforms what could have been simply an archival snapshot of a turbulent historical period into a border-crossing journey of artistic discovery. His interactions with the music scene take priority over a deeper and more precise understanding of the meaning and signification behind samba and Bossa Nova in Brazil during this time.

The link between directors Moon and Barouh is strengthened by their collaborations on two film projects: first, Moon's film series *Petites Planètes* (*Small Planets*, Vincent Moon and Priscilla Telmon, 2009–) which focuses on Pierre Barouh for an episode; second, by a collaboration on a series called *Obá Obá Obá* that featured recordings of Brazilian musicians performing rock singer Jorge Ben Jor's songs during the 2014 World Cup.[4] Then, shortly after Barouh's death on 28 December 2016, Vincent Moon screened his 2011 follow-up film on the prolific artist *petites planètes • volume 17 • PIERRE BAROUH* at the French Consulate in Rio de Janeiro.

Beyond the direct collaborations between both filmmakers, what is more relevant is the similarity of their documentary approach. Forty years after Barouh's improvisational creation of *Saravah*, Vincent Moon applies the same methods and systematises how to generate this spontaneity in his own films.[5] For example, in *Petites Planètes*, Moon's method has the same problematic lack of knowledge that Barouh had in *Saravah*, but instead of concealing it, he actively searches for spontaneity so that he arrives at the recording stage in a state of unknowingness (Moon, "A fortuitous rendez-vous"). This ignorant premise reveals another aspect present in both artists' work—that the act of participating in a musical interaction is prioritised over offering a definitive meaning for that encounter.

By comparing how both directors approach their interest in exploring the intricacies of Brazilian music different intermedial relationships between cinema and music can be elucidated. Furthermore, there is also an overlap between Moon and Barouh by selecting to collaborate with artists from the same period, and at times even have the same music being performed.

This comparison helps elucidate the discussion of how, through Moon's work, the intermedial borders between music and cinema present in Barouh's documentary shift to what is an intermedial experience in the process of creating music and creating cinema. For example, Moon's methods rely on his insistence to reframe his role as director by teetering between devising the situation and losing control of it. The borders are blurred between the filmmaker and one who plays to the camera. Unlike Barouh, Moon's inaptitude for singing transforms the film into a pretext that allows for him to interact with the musicians through the movement of his body and camera. As I will show in the next sections, a musical interplay is established between performer and filmmaker in that both incite an emergence of something new. In what surfaces, one can find turmoil between what is film, what is music and how in the space between them an untouched experience begins to flourish.

The different outcomes to how spontaneity work throughout Barouh's and Moon's films only introduce how intermedial studies can comprehend different creative practices. Before unfolding the other aspects, the intermedial framework needs to be discussed.

According to Irina Rajewsky, research on intermedial studies requires the author to define the term, demonstrate how they will apply it to their methodology and situate it within the broader spectrum of intermediality. Any study on intermediality requires clarity "in respect to which objects and to which epistemic objectives it gains heuristic and practical value" (64). I approach intermediality through Ágnes Pethő's considerations of in-betweenness that arose in her 2011 book *Cinema and Intermediality* and in her more recent article "Approaches to Studying Intermediality in Contemporary Cinema". Negotiating with this already complex field, I will defend and explore intermedial relations through Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of "listening" and define how this in-between intermedial space intricately relates to sound (*Listening*). I will isolate and tentatively identify three aspects of Moon's work that encounter a direct dialogue with the question of a musical approach to film and intermedial studies: accompaniment; balancing between chaos and meaning; and, lastly, in-betweenness. Finally, I will map out how bringing an otocentric perspective (an anti-ocular or ear-centred approach) helps develop the understanding of the in-between and how this path towards an intermediality envelops time and process.

Accompaniment in *O PATO • a very short portrait of JARDS MACALÉ* (2011)

The idea to define accompaniment as a characteristic in the process of filmmaking appears in Greg Hainge's book *Philippe Grandrieux: Sonic Cinema*. Hainge explains what it means *to accompany* in a film and how the filmmaker Grandrieux applied this to his early documentary works. In his films *Jogo do bicho* (*The Animal Game*, 1994) and *Retour à Sarajevo* (*Return to Sarajevo*, 1996), Grandieux did not aspire to completely disappear in the likes of directors who applied direct cinema methods, nor did he assume sole prominence in the film. Rather, his aim was to integrate and to participate as someone who acts as an accompaniment to a jazz performance.

This metaphorical correlation between music and cinema is old, so how it functions within Moon's work requires some clarification and distinction. As Pethő points out, when writing on the routes that intermedial studies has taken, the notion of film as music had already been present in

Rudolf Arnheim's work since 1938 (*Cinema* 32–3). David Bordwell even took it upon himself to inquire into the history of this analogy. He mentions the word accompaniment to problematise the dominance of different systems over each other and concludes that the overall comparison with music derives from its architectonic features: "[w]hat has made the analogy attractive are the ways in which a musical piece can be analysed as a system of systems" (142).

By contrast, the idea of accompaniment in Hainge and Grandrieux derives from music but not in relation to its structure:

> To accompany is then to move, with somebody, in harmony with that person without a need to be an absolute confluence of perspectives or knowledge. It is, like the idea of a harmonic relation, to open oneself up to a relation with the world that is not entirely one's own, to allow oneself to resonate in harmony with a different way of being in the world and thus to understand one's own positionality in the very moment that it is rejected as essentially arbitrary. (71)

Hainge's description positions accompaniment as the art of becoming coadjutant but also to live in a world where the filmmaker is open to the unexpected, in finding harmony with whatever comes one's way. Moon acknowledges Grandrieux as a great source of inspiration (Moon, "Filmmaker"), takes this approach and integrates it into a pillar of his work. This influence is especially visible in his film *O PATO • a very short portrait of JARDS MACALÉ* (2011).



Figure 3: Opening sequence of *O PATO • a very short portrait of JARDS MACALÉ* (Vincent Moon, 2011). Petites Planètes, 2011. Screenshot.

Having begun his career in 1965 working with contemporary singers of the time, Jards Macalé is a controversial figure in the Brazilian musical scene. He was the musical director for Maria Bethânia's first shows, composed music for Gal Costa and Paulinho da Viola and later worked with Caetano Veloso. He also acted and composed for Nelson Pereira dos Santos's films *O amuleto de Ogum* (*The Amulet of Ogum*, 1974) and *Tenda dos milagres* (*Tent of miracles*, 1977) for which he won (together with Gilberto Gil) the prize for Best Soundtrack at the 1977 Brasilia Film Festival. During the late 1960s and 70s, he composed music for the films *Macunaíma* (Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, 1969), *Getúlio Vargas* (Ana Carolina, 1974) and a few short movies that were recorded in Rio de Janeiro.[6]

The fifteen-minute film *O PATO • a very short portrait of JARDS MACALÉ* opens with Macalé singing "Aquarela do Brasil" ("Brazil", Ary Barroso, 1939) (Figure 3) while photographs appear onscreen that showcase Macalé's contribution to Brazil's cultural history: a handshake with poet and lyricist Vinicius de Moraes; a younger Macalé and filmmaker Glauber Rocha; a photo taken in the middle of a conversation with the former president Lula; a backstage picture with singer-songwriter Maria Bethânia. Moon meticulously records artefacts found in Macalé's house for nearly the whole first segment of the film, allowing for those with prior knowledge to piece together a short history of the singer's career and life. With no clear explanation or contextual understanding of the significance behind these photographs, the shot simply displays to the viewer a random assortment of old and more recent photos of Macalé, including one in which he appears dressed as comic superhero Batman. Breaking away from any remnant of seriousness in this random montage of photos, the singer ends his first performance by casually commenting on a topless picture of Maria Bethânia and how, despite her face, "she had some very nice breasts".

Leaving the musician's apartment, Moon with his camera and Macalé with his guitar head toward the Jardim Botânico of Rio de Janeiro. Moon's method intentionally avoids planning anything in advance and he decides on-the-spot what he intends to capture of the musician. Macalé does not show any kind of purpose either, which makes the film tedious at times. At one point, he just plays with his guitar and describes the tonalities that appear in nature while talking through a stream of consciousness. What appears to be his ramblings, though, soon materialises into a performance of an energetic version of Geraldo Pereira's song "Bolinha de papel" ("Small Paper Ball", 1945). After his performance, Macalé regresses to more incongruous spoken nonsense by shouting out like Tarzan, holding onto a vine and performing Jobim's "Corcovado" (1960). Finally, this dynamic between Moon and Macalé that initially appeared to lead nowhere pays off when they start searching for a lake that contains ducks, in an effort to perform the song "O pato" ("The Duck", Jaime Silva and Neuza Teixeira, 1960). Coincidentally, when they do arrive at a lake with ducks, a middle-grade school field trip also happens to be taking place. With a newfound audience, Macalé starts playing for them. After recognising this event as a long-awaited moment driven by his creative chaos, Moon joins in with Macalé by recording both the performance and the kids that have all stopped to watch (Figures 4–6).

The song "O pato" was written in the 1940s by Jaime Silva and Neuza Teixeira for the group Garotos da Lua. Nevertheless, it was only recorded by João Gilberto in 1958 with a musical arrangement composed by Tom Jobim. On the album's inner sleeve, Jobim writes, "And everything was made in an atmosphere of birds and peace. P.S.—The children loved 'O pato'" (Severiano and Mello 40).[7] As if reading Jobim's mind, Macalé asks the kids to join him in a

chorus composed of quacks. Moon incites the school group to participate and reinforces this arrangement by walking over and pointing the camera at the youngsters. This dynamic is at the essence of *Petites Planètes*: Moon creates a situation outside both artists' comfort zone where both need to figure out what can be done and how to make the most in that situation. Once (and if) something happens, both musician and filmmaker surrender to the flow and play to the strength of the moment, incorporating what unfolds in the performance and the film. In the documentary's final scene, Macalé provokes the kids to ask the director if they will appear on television. Moon responds with an extreme close-up of their faces while slowly fading to black to roll the credits



Figures 4–6: Kids slowly gathering around Jards Macalé while he plays in *O PATO • a very short portrait of JARDS MACALÉ*. Petites Planètes. Screenshots.

Barouh, in *Saravah*, recorded similar situations where artists are forced out of their comfort zone. Does this indicate an aspect of accompaniment in *Saravah*? This distinction is what is at stake. While Pierre Barouh literally accompanies the singers, his film bears witness to something external of itself. Music is recorded and the director actively participates in the scene, but the camera and film are not part of the song.




Figures 7 and 8: Maria Bethânia and Paulinho da Viola playing during lunch with Pierre Barouh in *Saravah*. Biscoito Fino. Screenshots.

Instead, what is being captured in *Saravah* supports the argument that the director was in the right place at the right moment to witness Maria Bethânia and Paulinho da Viola eating and singing together in what would otherwise be a typical day (Figures 7 and 8). Barouh conceals the camera's role in order to give the impression that the moment could have spontaneously been recorded. By doing so, the focus is on Barouh's interaction with those at the table. He is the one that joins in to sing while the camera passively captures the event unfolding without any interference. The technical apparatus does not assume the role of a band member. It is there merely to corroborate and confirm that Barouh is singing together with the artists of that time.

With Moon however, the artist is "alone" in his surroundings, but the camera and director become part of the song. The camera dances to the song, reacting to the singer's actions and to the environment. This results in a performance that would never have occurred without the camera's presence and it provokes whoever is around to be part of the song, inserting itself as a backup vocal to the chorus, accompanying the solo and creating the beat's rhythm.

O PATO • a very short portrait of JARDS MACALÉ, thus, helps distinguish that while both Barouh and Moon adopted the notion of accompaniment into their personal lives, only the latter positioned the film itself into a harmonic relationship with its subject.

Balancing Between Chaos and Meaning in *petites planètes • volume 3 • JOSÉ DOMINGOS* (2010)

As it is starting to become clear, the intermedial in Moon's works shifts from being the relations between different art forms to how creative practices from other media integrate with his filmmaking process. The musical improvisation of camera and music that follows and reacts to the soloist demonstrates how accompaniment is present in his films. Now, the concept in focus is the systematic insertion into and control of chaos, which is equally ripened through Moon's methods. Rather than music, though, this concept first appears in painting. In his book *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Gilles Deleuze uses the term "diagram" to identify and map out how Bacon creates a set of characteristics that positions him at the edge of meaning.[8] During Bacon's painterly process, this appears through the production of random marks that blur the body through swiping, smudging and other techniques that allow for something uncertain (even to the artist) to emerge from the painting.

Drawing upon Bacon to discuss cinema appears to be an unusual source, but his artistic practice is essential to discussing the intersections between intermediality in different art forms. For example, Bacon "shares the musician's attentiveness for the harmony of two moments: his aim is composition in the sense of a melody. Better put: his art consists in a resonance between visible and invisible, or heard and unheard" (Carraro 46). The crux between Moon and Bacon is that the process of creation becomes more pertinent than the final form. For both, the unpredictability of chaos and catastrophe is an ontological necessity and not just an accident. Furthermore, Moon prioritises entering an unknown experience over exploring the meaning and signification of the songs he records. In his words, "the music is the pretext. What I am interested in is the human interaction. From the beginning, the big idea was a simple thing. The films are not very important, it's the process that might change things" ("Vincent Moon"). As such, to properly grasp his films, this shift from object to process is required.

In intermedial studies, a similar move is occurring. In her 2018 article, Pethő maps out three major paradigms in the field. The first one—crossing of media borders—aims to "produce definitions of categories that can function as a conceptual framework for identifying intermedial relations across different media" ("Approaches" 167). This approach is connected to the tradition of finding and fine-tuning the limitations of the different art forms in which the final form provides the starting point to investigating the intermedial.

The second approach is epitomised by Joachim Paech's question about the importance of intermediality for film studies: "How could one describe this 'between' as a productive form in a cinematic process?" (237). This "between" that Paech mentions is defended by Pethő as being not an isolated inquiry but the second paradigm in the field of the intermedial, what she calls in-betweenness. This understanding already appeared in 2011, when Pethő argues that for her the "inter" in intermediality "is focused on relationships, rather than structures, on something that 'happens' in-between media rather than simply exists" (*Cinema* 1). Approaching the intermedial through the in-between implies that process rather than form can also be the focus of intermediality. The last paradigm is still in its early stages but already strives to take the process into account. Pethő calls it the "double helix" of intermediality ("Approaches" 174). Inspired by Bellour's figure of speech in his book *Passages de l'image*, she uses the DNA's structure as a

metaphor for how intermediality "weaves the fabric of cinema through its virtually infinite connections between the arts and an inalienable bond with perceptions of the real, anchored in bodily sensations" (175).

Moon's film *petites planètes • volume 3 • JOSÉ DOMINGOS* (2010) embodies how the balance between chaos and meaning connects to the intermedial. While the previously discussed *JARDS MACALÉ* moved from the artist's home to Jardim Botânico, here the film starts with Zé Domingos singing in his house before shifting to a stroll through downtown São Paulo. The metropolitan street is Moon's set "par excellence". This is the place where the director loses control of events that may unfold in front of his camera. The only way forward is to accept the randomness of the streets and work with whatever situation is thrown at him in the process of shooting. The tension of balancing chaos and meaning is stretched to its maximum and at times leaps from a chaotically meaningless shot to an over-controlling director shying away from the unknown. For Moon's many failures in searching for an unexpected situation to appear, when it works, a unique moment presents itself in a way that planning cannot.



Figure 9: José Domingos playing in front of an "inferninho" in *petites planètes • volume 3 • JOSÉ DOMINGOS* (Vincent Moon, 2010). Petites Planètes, 2010. Screenshot.

In *JOSÉ DOMINGOS*, this occurs as Moon and the musician are wandering around the "inferninhos" ("small hells") of São Paulo, an area located in the city centre which is concentrated with sex workers and clubs. The film opens with the musician singing Paulo Vanzolini's "Ronda" ("Patrol", 1953) while they patrol the streets around Zé Domingos's house. This choice of music is not a casual one, first because the word "ronda" in Portuguese means "to patrol", secondly because Vanzolini's song describes a desperate and disenchanted woman patrolling the pubs searching for her loved one, a song that became a local success in São Paulo during the 1950s.[9]

They stop by one of the old places where he used to sing, and the bouncer of the strip-club asks when he will return to perform. Domingos politely answers that those days are over, but as to please his fan, he draws his guitar and plays "Deusa da minha rua" ("My Street's Goddess", Jorge Faraj and Newton Teixeira, 1939). The 1939 song performed by Sílvio Caldas about a penniless man in an impossible romance takes on new meaning of what appears to become an ode to prostitutes who loiter the filmed location. In Domingos's gentle voice, the songs that he chooses to perform interact and reveal new facets of the places that they pass. The openness to chaos rewards once again when the pair are confronted by a group of people drinking and congregating outside a bar and are invited to sing once Domingos's guitar is noticed.

After performing a few songs, they slowly realise that they recognise Domingos. But now, he is already tired and ready to end that small impromptu show. Strumming the guitar, Domingos starts to sing Baden Powell and Vinicius de Moraes' composition "Samba da bênção" ("Samba of the Blessing", 1966). The joyous group of friends sitting at the table join in at the end of each phrase shouting "Saravá!"—an Afro-Brazilian word originating from "salvar" that in music functions as a salutation more akin to "God Bless!". Domingos uses "Samba da bênção" as a way to thank those who made that moment possible, those musicians that came before him, those in his life who helped him to that point, to Moon for inviting him to record and also to that anonymous group who received him so full heartedly. Finishing the song, he excuses himself because he wants to go home. The table of friends ask him to stay a little longer. He thanks them but leaves and Moon takes the cue with a shot of Domingos walking back to his apartment.





Figures 10 (previous page), 11 and 12: Singing "Samba da bênção" for the group that invite José Domingos to their table in *petites planètes • volume 3 • JOSÉ DOMINGOS*. Petites Planètes. Screenshots.

Returning to the intermedial process, Moon's reliance on the random directly corresponds with how Francis Bacon attempts to find a balance between a purely sensorial experience (Pollock) and a purely rational one (Kandinsky), the diagram being a systematised attempt to locate an edge between meaning and chaos. Likewise, Moon does not aim to create meaning with his films but

rather follows Bacon by denying a purely sensorial experience. For Moon and Bacon, the randomness of chaos is not an accident; rather an ontological constitutive that occurs during the creation of the in-between. A moment in time when the artist bonds his practice with the unknown to discover his own subjectivity being traversed by an outside (the in-between self that is addressed in the next chapter). The result is what visual artist Gerhard Richter calls arriving late to his own creation: "something will emerge that is unknown to me, which I could not plan, which is better, cleverer than I am" (O'Sullivan 255). The challenge then is creating an art process that shifts slightly towards chaos without rendering it meaningless.

By contrast to the final bar scene in *JOSÉ DOMINGOS* is Barouh's performance of his own adapted version of "Samba da bênção". With an improvised mic stand and a predominantly French performance, Barouh sings while Powell plays the guitar and occasionally joins in with the vocals. Similar to Moon's film, "Samba Saravah" (the name Barouh gave to his version) appears in the last sequence of the film and the French director makes use of the song to thank all of the musicians that inspired him and those who helped make the documentary possible. So, what is the difference between two similar sequences that are separated by four decades?



Figures 13 and 14: Baden Powell and Pierre Barouh singing "Samba Saravah" in the last sequence of *Saravah*. Biscoito Fino. Screenshots.

Barouh envisions his documentary as a registry of his personal discovery surrounding the musical scene of that time. From the outset, *Saravah* functions as a rare document during a historical moment when a scarce number of colour film recordings on these musicians existed. His conversations throughout the film—as exemplified in the scene where Powell discusses with Barouh the nuances of Candomblé—explain a small amount of what is happening and provides context to a foreign public.

The film begins with the 1969 Carnival presentation of the samba school Mangueira. While Barouh explores different angles of the parade, the audio slowly fades to the song "Samba Saravah". Not once during the whole introduction, is the source for this nondiegetic music revealed. What appears as a random soundtrack used to transition from the samba parade to Pixinguinha, only becomes relevant at the end of the film, when Barouh and Baden Powell surface singing "Samba Saravah" together. This song is used to close the circle between Brazilian music's

past (Pixinguinha and João da Baiana), its present (Baden Powell) and its future (Paulinho da Viola and Maria Bethânia).[10] By naming the documentary *Saravah*, Barouh reinforces how the song envelops everyone who appears within it and so functions as a thank you letter to the artists who participated and taught him about Brazilian music over a four-year period.

Conversely, Moon does not aim to spin his encounter with Domingos into a narrative; his aim is to set in motion an experience between him, the musician and chaos. By concluding the film with "Samba da bênção", the song functions as an ode to the random, unpredictable moment sprung into life by the openness of all who interacted with Moon and Domingos on that particular night. It is not concerned with registering a precise and narrative-driven meaning; rather, it is aimed solely at creating an experience that cannot be replicated. Zé Domingos's "Samba da bênção" is an ode to the in-betweenness of chaos and meaning, to which filmmaker and musician respond with "Saravá"!

The In-betweenness of *A DAMA DO SAMBA: Dona Inah in the Nights of São Paulo* (2010)

With this concept of balancing between chaos and meaning, the idea of an in-between space (or time) appears through the sensorial experiences. Pethő's categorisation of in-betweenness transforms the sensory into the space for the intermedial: "most of all intermediality in the cinema is not something one 'deciphers,' it is something one perceives or senses" (*Cinema* 68). Thus, the body also becomes an important aspect. The process does not stop once the film is in the can (or hard drive, cloud server, YouTube, etc.) but continues once the film is viewed: "'reading' intermedial relations requires, more than anything else, an embodied spectator: film cannot be denied to be a profoundly sensuous experience in many ways" (69).

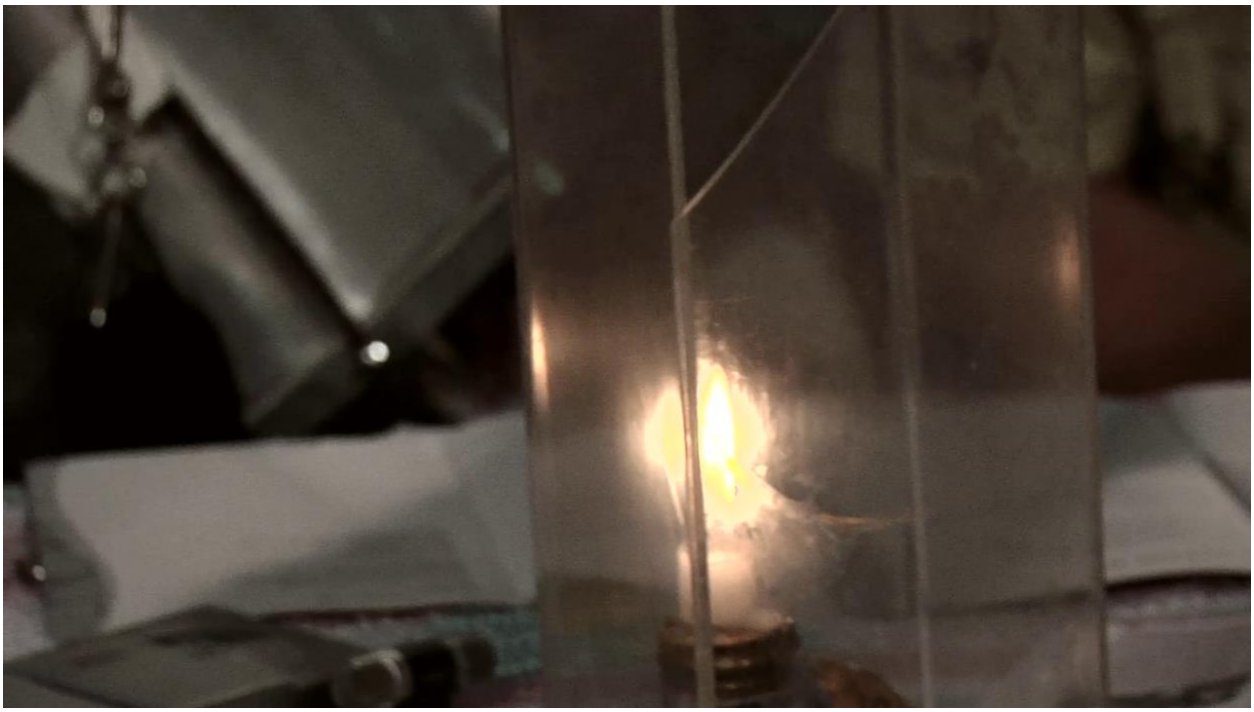
With Moon I would like to reinforce how his films and his practice activate a dialogue with the viewer through a physical connection and interaction in the realm of sound. His small series *A DAMA DO SAMBA: Dona Inah in the Nights of São Paulo* (2010) is remarkable in this sense. For this film, Moon followed Dona Inah for four consecutive nights, each time in a different venue. As always, the series is not concerned with providing an explanation of the events; what is at stake is the interaction between Dona Inah's performance and her audience. In the series' first two episodes, this interaction takes place in the night clubs where she sings. The third film is located in a recording studio where she performs to a small audience and the final film of the series is set in the famous samba community Samba da Vela. Throughout the series, we have little knowledge of her story. Only through personal research do we uncover that she is a samba singer who once gained the national prize for best artist only to fade away and work for decades as a house cleaner.

At the core of Moon's work, the experience of what is happening in that moment opens the space for an in-betweenness. This is a place where fluidity and interaction are emphasised more than form and meaning. Perhaps it would be more suitable to comprehend the in-between through the aural. A term that refers to sound, but also equally important, connects to the question of what is there to experience through Walter Benjamin's 1935 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility"; his work "Experience and Poverty", first published in 1933, and the studies on the definition of aura by Buck-Morss and Hansen ("Benjamin"; *Cinema*).

In his book *Listening*, Jean-Luc Nancy proposes a model of thought aimed to overcome the limitation of the textual and visual. To listen and to "be all ears" not only refers to the aural but is envisioned as a sensory mode of interaction where sensual apperception is prioritised over understanding.[11] Moreover, Nancy's model of thought is especially effective in overcoming any phenomenological approach by posing as a third self that opens and exists in the sonic interaction only. To listen is to pursue a sensual apperception beyond meaning, to search for the ephemeral flame that exists purely in the interaction between two sonic bodies. Listening, according to Nancy, is a quest to chase the fleeting moments when a third self emerges. This could also be called to experience the "in-between self".

In the films that star Dona Inah, Moon's priority is opening this third self in the performance and capturing what happens in between performer, director and audience. The embodied spectator that Pethő mentions as necessary for intermedial relations is precisely the requirement necessary for this third self to emerge, first, in Moon and how he attempts to capture the sensuous experience that his body is going through in that moment through his camera, and afterwards in the viewing spectator who is invited to forego understanding and to relive that moment when watching his work. This becomes evident on the fourth night, when Dona Inah performs at the Samba da Vela community in São Paulo.[12]

Unlike the preceding three films with Dona Inah, the location's layout where she will perform breaks convention between the singer and audience. In the middle of the large room is a candle lit and positioned on a table. What surrounds the table is a circle formed first by the musicians and then by the community. Every Monday at 20:45 the programme begins, and the candle is lit while "Acendeu a vela" ("The Candle Is Lit", Edvaldo Galdino Paquera, 2003) is sung. The gathering ends when the candle burns all the way down and its flame is extinguished.







Figures 15 (previous page), 16 and 17: The candle is shown in the fourth episode of *A DAMA DO SAMBA: Dona Inah in the Nights of São Paulo* (Vincent Moon, 2010). Petites Planètes, 2010. Screenshots.

Dona Inah arrives once the programme has started, is introduced under heavy applause and performs “Praça 14 Bis” (“Square 14 Bis”, Eduardo Gudin and Notícias dum Brasil, 2006) and “Maior é Deus” (“God Is Greater”, Eduardo Gudin and Paulo César Pinheiro, 1974). As she sings, all of the voices and instruments join in. The whole community plays and sings together the sambas

from the São Paulo composer Eduardo Gudin. With his camera, Moon also participates in this interaction, responding by circulating around the group as if to reinforce that everyone is gathered around one central fixed point, the candle.

The burning candle becomes a visible index of this in-between self that exists for as long as the sonic interaction is taking place. This is a self that persists in the sensuous interaction. Moon is not listening to what Dona Inah or the community is singing; he is listening to what has spawned in between his camera and the reunited group of people. He is listening to this ephemeral in-between self and attempts to capture with his camera what it is to experience that encounter.

Reframing the in-between through the aural provides an alternative answer to Joachim Paech's question: "How could one describe this 'between' as a productive form in a cinematic process?" (237). While Paech seeks the answer in Bellour's discussion of what is in between the images (Godard's films being of particular interest to this topic), in Nancy the answer is to seek what emerges in between an interaction.

Lastly, Moon's attempt at capturing this in-between self and turning it into a film, empowers the viewer with the possibility of reopening this interaction. Each film that features Dona Inah aims to suspend the interaction that is taking place at that moment. In other words, to freeze the candle that has been lit when her voice finally reverberates with Moon, who strives to capture not what he is seeing but the sensuous bodily experience through which he is experiencing it.

In watching the films of *A DAMA DO SAMBA*, the spectator takes Moon's perspective and assumes the role of the embodied spectator—opening once again the in-between self—that only extinguishes when the film ends. The viewer, as such, is encouraged to have a sensorial approach to the film and enter with his body into an acoustic interaction with Dona Inah that started with Moon but that now is available to whoever wishes to unfreeze the candle and light it one more time. When viewed as a creative process, the intermedial continuously changes how the film is experienced.

Hainge elucidates this process in a breakthrough that had transpired for him, by suggesting that Grandrieux's films need to be approached in an expanded acoustic sense. This turn to the sonic changes the "body not as something that pre-exists, that has a fixed form, but only as something that propagates itself in space and time, a waveform whose qualities are consistently formed by its environment and the other bodies" (80).

Towards an Aural Intermediality

Vincent Moon's Brazilian films suggest how reframing the intermedial through an otocentric perspective, by using notions such as accompaniment and balancing between chaos and meaning, aids in comprehending the in-between as a productive form. In contrast with Barouh's *Saravah*, in which a lack of contextual knowledge may become problematic, Moon openly defies providing any background information and meaning to his films. He dismisses understanding and solely focuses on listening for sensual apperception to arise. The refusal to convey any element of

the background story of his subjects permits the director to enter these performances without any foreplanning, resulting in an unrestricted reaction to the sound that envelops the moment.

Moon's films and the discussion around form versus process help to expand the aural into new evolving intermedial configurations. It also serves as a reminder of how practices that attempt to balance between chaos and meaning rely on the intermedial to weave, once again in Pethő's words, "between the arts and an inalienable bond with perceptions of the real, anchored in bodily sensations" ("Approaches" 175). Instead of a film, Moon offers the candle for the viewer to light and participate in whatever unravels until the fire burns down.

Notes

1 Forty-two of these are from the main collection of *Petites Planètes* and fifty-one are the independent short films of rituals from *Híbridos*.

2 In 2014 Moon affirms that "I really believe Brazil, far from the clichés, is the greatest religious country in the world, the greatest country in terms of spirituality and in experimentations in spiritualities" (Moon and Vasconcelos).

3 The site-specific film installation was presented at the Barbican from September 2017 to February 2018, while the live cinema toured many festivals in Brazil and other countries. The highest profile event for the live presentation of *Híbridos* was Doc Fortnight 2018 held at MoMA.

4 Originally recorded as a ten-hour series and directed by Benjamin Rassat with the collaboration of Pierre Barouh and Vincent Moon. However, it was only released on Moon's website as a series of short films then as a 104-minute documentary that was showcased at the Cinémathèque Française on 22 April 2015 and credited to Benjamin Rassat (2014).

5 Radio France also makes this link in their celebration of fifty years of the Label Saravah when mentioning Moon as one of the legitimate heirs of Pierre Barouh (Conquet).

6 The *Dicionário Cravo Albin da Música Popular Brasileira* (*Cravo Albin Dictionary of Brazilian Popular Music*) also lists that he collaborated with songs to the films *O dragão da maldade contra o santo guerreiro* (*Antônio das Mortes*, Glauber Rocha, 1969), *A rainha diaba* (*The Devil Queen*, Antonio Carlos da Fontoura, 1973) and *Se segura, malandro!* (*Hold On, Swindler!*, 1978) ("Jards Macalé"). I cannot confirm this, however, as his name doesn't appear anywhere in the credits or in the official repository from Cinemateca Brasileira.

7 My own translation from "E tudo foi feito num ambiente de paz e passarinho. P.S.—As crianças adoraram 'O pato'". The word "passarinho", which literally means little bird, is used here as an adverb, hence the difficulty to properly translate it.

[8] Although the article delves into a singular aspect of this diagram (accompaniment), a fuller account on Moon's methodological uses of the diagram and its characteristics can be found in my PhD thesis *Listening to Vincent Moon: Musical Encounters and the Cinematic Diagram*.

[9] Paulo Vanzolini, a zoologist and composer, wrote the song when he was twenty-one years old and it was first released by Inezita Barroso in 1953 ("Paulo Vanzolini"). Although it was successful in the city of São Paulo, it only reached a wider audience when Márcia recorded the song in 1977. The song's wider release in 1977 gained a new meaning in a story about a woman desperately searching for her loved one as it was associated with the military dictatorship who was responsible for "disappearing" those who stood against the ideology of that historical moment.

[10] In his review of *Saravah*, Oliveira delves deeper into the relations and roles between the roots of samba, the present and what is still to come in Pierre Barouh's film.

[11] In her article "Aesthetic and Anaesthetics", Susan Buck-Morss makes a similar case in her reading of Walter Benjamin's work of art.

[12] "Vela" is the Portuguese word for "candle".

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