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Introduction

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and Hannah Van Hove

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This issue of the Journal for Literary and Intermedial Crossings contains articles by Ezzahra Benlahoussine, Rosemary Klich and Andrés Franco Harnache and interviews with British authors Laura Fish and Elizabeth Chakabarty that were conducted during their visits at Vrije Universiteit Brussel¹. The articles were selected through an open call and are centred on various topics and forms of literary discourse, ranging from an analysis of works by Marrakesh expatriate writers and contemporary visiophonic theatre to that of photographs in the novels of Argentine author Julio Cortázar. They approach intermedial phenomena from different methodological angles, thus offering a variety of perspectives on relations between and across media, as well as on the ways in which diverse cultural contexts enter into a dialogue and give shape to alterity in and through literature.

In the article "Writers of the Elsewhere: Marrakesh as a Case Study", **Ezzahra Benlahoussine** analyses the concept of "the elsewhere" as perceived by Western authors in colonial Marrakesh. More specifically, she convincingly describes how Marrakesh expatriate writers formulate their perceptions of alterity according to the dialectics of reality and imagination. For centuries, the city has attracted authors and artists in general because of its geographical location, its rich cultural past as well as its fascinating traditions. Drawing upon the work of Jean-Marc Moura, the article shows how both in George Orwell's essay "Marrakesh" and in Elias Canetti's travel journal *The Voices of Marrakesh: A Record of a Visit* a significant dichotomy between the perception of reality as seen from the perspective of the authors who describe and the reality of those who are the subject of the description. More often than not, only a thin line marks the separation between the act of travelling and the act of depicting Marrakesh during the French protectorate. As a result, both authors reinvent their place of origin from the new horizon they find themselves in while immersing themselves in a cross-cultural encounter. In her analysis, Azzehra Benlahoussine studies both orientalist and anti-orientalist discourses and interpretations of the sometimes raw and confronting reality under the French protectorate. But while Orwell includes a convincing number of examples illustrating this reality, albeit with a strong emphasis on the political aspect, Canetti rather focuses on the force of Marrakesh as a site of metamorphosis, capable of creating and maintaining an open "access between people".

In her contribution, "Unravelling the Visiophonic Knot: Audiovisual Incongruence and Perceptual Glitch in Intermedial Performance", **Rosemary Klich** (University of Essex)

¹We extend our gratitude to Professor Elisabeth Bekers (VUB) who organised the meetings with the writers, facilitated the interviews and edited them.

takes the case of 'headphone theatre' as the starting point for her theoretical and methodological reflection on the divergence between sound and image in intermedial performance. Building on perspectives and insights from film, music and audiovisual studies, Klich looks at the way in which intermedial performances disrupt the process of communication between the stage and its auditorium. The author shows that productions such as Complicité's *The Encounter* (2016), Vox Motus' *Flight* (2017) and *Lady Eats Apple* (2018) by the Back to Back Theatre company can be fruitfully described as intermedial performances that trigger considerations of the ways our perceptual systems make sense of sound and image. By deliberately confusing and creating cognitive unease between both modes, these productions temporarily unravel and expose perceptual processes which are usually taken for granted.

Klich deepens her analysis of the fracturing of audiovisual communication by conceptualizing this incongruence in terms of a perceptual 'glitch', a notion which commonly refers to faults or interferences in technology and which has been appropriated productively by scholars working in cultural, technological and sociological fields of study. She highlights how incongruence leads to "cognitive distortion in the perceiver's mind". Klich concludes by clarifying how the radical separation of audiovisual modalities in headphone theatre can be perceived as a "postdigital strategy for resistance" against the conventional narrative of audiovisual integration and the notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. According to Klich, these moments of disjunction and incongruence in intermedial theatre lead the way to the development of a divergent aesthetic, which politically resists "coherent narratives" and promotes plurality, so as to "open the eye and query the ear".

In *62 / Modelo para armar: a literature outside of the margins*, **Andrés Franco Harnache** focuses on the meaning and the function of Julio Cortázar's photographs in relation to his literary production. The rather complex novel, the reception of which was not unanimously positive, was conceived by Julio Cortázar while drawing inspiration from the recently published *Rayuela*. By integrating some of his own photographs into his works, Cortázar explored the photo-literature genre stemming from the Surrealist movement, particularly in the works *Último round* (1969) and *Prosa del observatorio* (1972). This practice has preceded, to a certain extent, the late 20th century transition to a more visual literature. In this article, Andrés Franco Harnache demonstrates how the novel *62 / Modelo para armar* and the photographs included in *La muñeca rota* are intertwined to the extent that they should be considered an artistic and intermedial dialogue. More specifically, the author emphasizes the importance of photography, as a literary subject as well as a medium of expression, in the author's work. Through the convincing analysis of the doll, which first appears as a joke but subsequently becomes a symbol of sadomastochistic phantasies and the desire for revenge, Franco Harnache shows that, even though the doll as an object does not contribute to the development of the plot, its visual appearance does not only become a decisive element in the definition of the protagonists but assumes a metafictional meaning guiding the reader through the text. The intermedial analysis conducted throughout the novel leads

to a new and inspiring interpretation of Cortázar's work. The author concludes that 62 / *Modelo para armar* could be included in the intermedial genre of neo-literature.

We are particularly proud to include conversations with Laura Fish and Elizabeth Chakrabarty in this issue and hope they will pique our readers' interest in the fascinating writings of both authors. The interview with **Chakrabarty** took place at Vrije Universiteit Brussel at the end of April 2023, during her residency at Passa Porta, the International House of Literature in Brussels. Professor Elisabeth Bekers conducted the interview with Sofie Vandepitte, one of her pedagogical assistants, in the context of her courses on literature in English. Afterwards, students had the opportunity to ask questions and these exchanges are also published in this issue. The conversation focused on Chakrabarty's debut novel, *Lessons in Love and Other Crimes* (2021), which she published alongside her essays, "On Closure and Crime" and "On Evil (Crime in the Academy)". Racism in academia is at the centre of these three autobiographically-inspired texts, their different formats enabling the author to address this topic in different ways. In the interview, Chakrabarty discussed the generic hybridity of *Lessons in Love and Other Crimes* and answered questions about the possibilities of closure after a hate crime and about her plans for a second novel.

Laura Fish discusses her third novel, *Lying Perfectly Still* (forthcoming in November 2024), which is set in Eswatini (former Swaziland) during the AIDS crisis of the 1990s and was inspired by her own experiences there. The interview took place at the African diaspora bookshop Pépité Blues in Brussels, during the Vrije Universiteit Brussel's weKONEKT.week at the end of March 2023. The conversation was led by Patricia Neves da Costa (board member of WeDecolonizeVUB), who also moderated the Q&A session during which participants shared their impressions of Fish's novels and asked questions; these exchanges are also published here. As both writers' literary works are characterized by generic and intermedial crossings (of music and literature in the case of Fish's second novel *Strange Music*; of crime and campus fiction in the case of Chakrabarty's debut novel), the inclusion of their interviews in the *Journal for Literary and Intermedial Crossings* is particularly apt. We hope that you will all enjoy discovering this new *JLIC* issue and wish you happy readings.