



Dance and the Mediated Immersive Flux in Carlos Saura's Musical Hybrids with Live Feed

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Abstract. Carlos Saura's "pure musicals," as he calls them, are highly based on the formal properties of the image and the expressive use of light in a minimalist scenic space. Although, they have not been declared screendance pieces (as per Rosenberg 2012), which conjoin rhythmic body movements with screen-based, technologically mediated methods of rendering, they are full-fledged screendance examples, being hybrid, symbiotic, and integral (Richard James Allen, 2006). This article concentrates on Saura's musicals from 2005 onwards – *Flamenco* (1995), *Iberia* (2005), *Fados* (2007), *Flamenco Flamenco* (2010), *Argentina (Zonda, folclore argentino)* (2015) and *Jota de Saura* (2016) – particularly the immersive mediation operated through the use of live video feed as an intermedial sensorial device. Saura's silky, glossy, and lustrous images form an optical-haptic continuum. The twofold bodies, the digital doubles and the flesh-and-bone act as inducers of crystallization in Gilles Deleuze's perception of modern cinema (1985), inasmuch as they interact and alternate in a cinematic flux, forming a circuit. Thus, an image of a recorded stage performance enters into a relationship with cinema, a medium already endowed with reflective features, producing the crystallization of these screendance films in all their Saurian immersiveness and sensoriality.

Keywords: screendance, pure musicals, haptic perception, live video feed, sensoriality, Carlos Saura.

Introduction

The renowned Spanish film director Carlos Saura is an astonishing example of artistic vitality; he started his film career with a documentary short in 1956 and remained active until 2023 when he died at the age of ninety-one. His initiation in the institutionalized variety of musical films happened in 1981, upon watching an informal performance of Antonio Gades's rendition of Federico García Lorca's play *Blood Wedding* [*Bodas de sangre*]. "I entered the world of the musical film

with this obsession of mine to be able to fit the camera to the music. I wanted the camera to be one of the dancers” (Carlos Saura in interview with Antonio Castro in 1996, Willem 2003, 134).

In 1992, following his first three musical films – which have become known among film critics as The Flamenco Trilogy – Saura experimented with a new type of hybrid musical made up exclusively of performances presented in a tableau format, the scene division being dictated by the change of stage settings as in stage musicals. With *Sevillanas* (1992), an assumed non-narrative film, Saura initiated the trend of what he calls “pure musicals,”¹ highly based on the formal properties of the image and the expressive use of light in a minimalist scenic space composed of semitransparent panels (*panós*), which are illuminated from either the front and/or the back. “It’s a rectangle of illuminated *panós*, and nothing else. It’s a musical in its purest state. What confers the rhythm to the spectacle is the linking of the diverse elements” (Saura in interview with Antonio Castro in 1996, Willem 2003, 151). Several other films of the same format ensued: *Flamenco* (1995), *Iberia* (2005), *Fados* (2007), *Flamenco Flamenco* (2010), *Argentina (Zonda, folclore argentino, 2015)*, and *Jota de Saura* (2016).

The collaboration between Saura and the Italian cinematographer Vittorio Storaro, which began with *Flamenco* (1995), brought the Spanish auteur, as Saura likes to be thought of, closer to a formalist conception of sensorial spectacle. Indeed, Storaro’s use of bright colours, whose luminance and tone could change in mid-performance through the use of theatrical dimmers reinforced Saura’s experimental propensity. Through the use of light, colour and textures – many of them enhanced by reflexes and flares caused by mirrors and the disclosed cinematic apparatus itself – the films are a riveting sensorial experience in which the viewers *feel* immersed in a velvety atmosphere of artistic delight. In what follows, I will focus on the five “pure” hybrid musical films from 2005 onwards, which I consider to be the best and more mature examples of Saura’s immersive mediation, concentrating especially on the use of live video feed as an intermedial sensorial device.

Screendance: The Mediated Body in Motion

Iberia, *Fados*, *Flamenco Flamenco*, *Argentina* and *Jota De Saura* are usually considered by film critics as documentary, a designation firmly contested by Saura: “I’ve never managed to believe in the separation that can exist between documentary and fiction [...]. Where is the documentary part and where is the fiction? I wouldn’t

1 From now on I will omit the quotation marks, but always referring to Saura’s own concept.

know how to explain it well” (Saura in interview with Valeria Ciompi in 1982, Willem 2009, 78). Inasmuch as they are a string of musical numbers devoid of narrative, they appear to meet the documentary brief. Yet, the scope of each musical genre they focus on is deliberately made broader than the titles indicate and, becoming open to debate by critics and specialists alike. It is fair to conclude that more than the specific musical style dealt with in each opus, it is music and dance themselves which are under Saura’s scrutiny. It is my contention that this scrutiny is more than anthropological; it is essentially formal and meta-artistic and its real significance lies in the films’ inherent hybridity, which is twofold. Indeed, Saura’s pure musicals – which are a blend of film, music and dance – are made even more intermedial. They combine the performers’ corporeal motion with the sensorial effects used in the *mise en scène*, such as the live video feed.

Although these films do not exclusively present dance,² I consider them to be full-fledged examples of screendance. In an article significantly entitled *Does Screendance Need to Look Like Dance?* (2009), Claudia Kappenberg prefers to focus on the filming of movement in general. Indeed, many choreographers have created dance works which have less physical movement than is usual in dance pieces. In Saura’s pure musicals, the instrumentalists’ hands fingering the guitar strings, their fists knocking on wood as percussive accompaniment, or the neck exertions of flamenco singers are no less corporeal and rhythmic than the more energetic body movements. If dance is above all the art of movement for its own sake, like Noël Carroll contends (2010, 123), then these phenomena, especially in heavily choreographed films about musical genres, ought to be considered dance too. Moreover, the films are not faithful artistic depictions. For example, to make the relationship more organic between the several art forms, Saura has included many dance numbers in *Fado*, a film about the Portuguese type of song without a corresponding dance (contrary to flamenco).

Douglas Rosenberg defines screendance as the transposition of dance to a screen, broadly understood here as any surface where images can be lodged (2012, 117). “Screendance, being a hybrid practice, contains at least two disciplines: dance and screen-based, technologically mediated methods of rendering” (Rosenberg 2012, 117). In short: screendance may be considered any image of dance on any screen, irrespective of its type, ranging from playback techniques (archival or deferred images) to live feed, and everything else in between. Rosenberg is thinking of films, videos, computer activated or technologically produced images

2 They also contain a large amount of singing and music-playing, often at the same time as dances are being performed.

which can be presented at film festivals and/or watched over and over in its tangible and finished form. Noël Carroll (2010) observes that these works need to be specifically made for the movie theatre and make ample use of cinematic resources.³ According to this criterion alone, Saura's films under analysis here are undoubtedly screendance. Nevertheless – while physically they are films, made for the screen, and meant to reflect on film in the process of filming dance – stylistically they are engaged in a theatrical reproduction of sorts. They may be considered doubly performative in that they focus on corporeal performances but do so without obliterating the importance of stage space and the impression of present-ness it conveys. The scenes start in a wider shot resembling the single theatrical point of view upon the proscenium. However, these shots are more cinematic than they first appear to be. First, they have been recorded by a camera which framed the movement, selecting what was seen and through which lens. Later were fashioned in the editing room, which established different points of view, the size of the dancers, the rhythms of the movement and the imparting of details via close-ups where needed (Vaugh in Mitoma and Zimmer 2003, 36). In other words, the theatrical wider shot is used cinematically as an establishing shot interspersed with closer shots.

Also, Saura repeatedly places a hand-held camera amongst the dancers in order to change the point of perception inside the frame, conveying the impression that the apparatus is dancing with the performers. This accords with both Rosenberg's and Kappenberg's definitions of screendance, which suggests that the whole film may dance. As Kappenberg mentions: "in the works of these artists the dance is not located in, or limited to, a particular dancing body or a set of movements, but the work as a whole is engaged" (2009, 5). Kappenberg advocates in favour of a type of screendance that combines live elements with mediated ones in an absolute intertwining of choreography and cinematography: "in these works, artists combine live bodies and technological bodies, live and mediated processes and real and digital space in ever more complex configurations" (2009, 7). The author calls this filmic variety "real-time choreography." I argue that the use of live video feed in a screendance film, as opposed to a cross-mixed stage production using recorded images together with live actors, approaches this conception and justifies its more detailed analysis.

Saura's pure musicals being analyzed in this article are strongly self-reflexive. The use of live video feed acts as the epitome of all the apparatus-disclosing techniques repeatedly employed by the auteur and may very well be a symbol

3 Carroll prefers the expression "moving-picture dance constructions" instead of screendance.

for the whole screendance practice as per Kappenberg, exemplifying in the best possible manner screendance's intermedial pedigree and artistic hybrid value.

Live Feed: The Immersive Power of Sensoriality

Carl Plantinga (2009, 112) argues that, due to its (audio)visual nature, cinema in general is a profoundly sensual medium which causes film viewers to react largely according to pre-reflective bodily responses. "In a sense, all films appeal to the corporeality of the viewer" (Plantinga 2009, 115). Watching a film is a physiological/corporeal/visceral experience based on everyday perception but highlighted by the medium's intrinsic exaggeration (Plantinga 2009, 27), which is often caused by technical factors other than narrative. These technical elements pertaining to the inner mechanic of the work may trigger a type of spectatorial response which Plantinga calls "artifact emotions." Stylized *décors*, special effects, movement, colours and sounds contribute to this kind of reception and to the medium's sensoriality.

Saura's pure musicals abound in the aforementioned properties, greatly generating artifact emotions in the viewer. Movement, which is an intrinsic part of dance broadly defined, plays an important role in this dynamics. "When you work with abstract movement, you are not imprisoned by a story-line or the requirements of a character, so texture, structure, rhythm, and point of view can be far more potent" (director Daniel Conrad in Voukon 2006, np). The sensorial experience of dance is highly seductive in its own right, as remarked by choreographer Tracie Mitchell, it is "an environment so bewitchingly engaging and addictive an experience for all the senses. This is what dancing makes me feel" (Voukon 2006, 21). She claims that dance conveys an essentially sensorial experience of lust and longing and writes about its immersive nature by comparing it to deep-sea diving, where the diver feels the weightlessness of the water and gazes upon "the exoticness of shape, amplification of colours and textures of the underwater world" (Voukon 2006, 21). Not only are shape, colours and textures evinced in all Saura's pure musicals, but in these films⁴ they really ought to be perceived as his artistic signature. Douglas Rosenberg posits that the innately sensorial nature of dance is heightened when it takes place on film, video or other technological media (2012, 90). The technology is thus responsible for the synergy between dance and moving image: "the body in motion or in action contextualizes the work, but it is the implicitly carnal, predatory nature

4 And a few others which also deal with dance, namely *Tango* (1998) and *Salome* (2002).

of the camera that enlivens the dance as it plays out on screen” (Rosenberg 2012, 159). Saura’s use of the live video feed is one specific use of the camera which reinforces the corporeality of both the dancers and the film as two seductive entities dancing together, resulting in the viewers’ immersion.

In *Pas de deux* (1968) – a short dance film by the Canadian animator Norman McLaren, produced by an analogue process called chronophotography – the stroboscopic effect greatly resembles the sheer multiplication of layers produced by Saura’s live video feeds in his pure musicals. Philip Szporer states that many commentators consider McLaren’s film to be a “visual poem” (Mitoma and Zimmer 2003, 170). In Saura’s tableau *Rondeña (Iberia)* the same could be said of the female figure who leaves a dragging track, seemingly corroborating Susan Sontag’s remark that “dance enacts both being completely in the body and transcending the body” (quoted in Dixon 2007, 254). [Fig. 1.]

According to Steve Dixon, writing about performances in general, the juxtaposition of digital media and live performance in multimedia spectacles (which he calls cross-media) aims at creating a sensorial impact in the spectator and is “more likely to excite visceral, subjective, or subconscious audience responses than objective and conscious ones: to appeal to the senses and the nervous system (in the way that Artaud’s theater was conceived) rather than to the rational intellect”⁵ (2007, 336). Likewise, the use of live feed by Carlos Saura, among other technological devices and *mise en scène* strategies, enables film viewers to appreciate film/video as a sculptural medium (not to be confused with a medium with sculptures in it). [Fig. 2.]

According to Erik Koed (2005, 147), the adjective “sculptural” relates to a distinctive way in which materials are used aesthetically within a given artistic medium, making use of some of the properties of statues, or relaying that impression: three-dimensionality, tactile sensations, the enlivened space (surrounding the sculpture), a plastic sensibility connected to a sensation of volume and a realization of mass. In short: a sense of the tactile, haptic, and kinesthetic (2005, 159). Although in Saura’s pure musicals the sculptural effect can also be achieved without live video feed, the use of this particular technological mediation raises ontological and phenomenological questions which are pertinent for performances considered from an intermedial perspective.

5 Antonin Artaud, the French dramatist who wrote the *Theatre and Its Double* (1938), advocated for a “theatre of cruelty,” a restless form of theatrical performance meant to awaken the spectators’ consciousness.

Laura U. Marks (2002) also claims that film and video impact the senses due to their innate materiality, or, in phenomenological terms, corporeality. Her theory on this topic seems to oppose that of Koed, but in reality their opinions complement each other. Haptic perception, championed by Marks, is usually defined as a combination of tactile, kinesthetic and proprioceptive properties (2002, 2). However, for Marks, it deals with the unique nature of objects and their details (2002, xii), focusing on their surface, and making the viewer respond to the screen as a skin (2002, 4). Among the pro-haptic properties mentioned by Marks one can find pixelated images, videos-on-screen, digital manipulation, indistinct forms and textures, layered images, and silhouettes, all of them implied in no small measure in the use of live video feed in Saura's pure musicals. Haptic visuality invites a "caressing look" (Marks 2002, 8) *per se*, but this is reinforced by Saura's own silky, glossy, lustrous images that wash over the film viewers' sensorium. Haptic visuality pulls the viewer close to the images, often too close to understand what they depict, and this is precisely where Koed's and Marks's arguments intersect. Indeed, it would not be possible to have a non-experimental feature film made up exclusively of rather indistinct details and still maintain the overall legibility necessary for the viewers to understand the film. Haptic visuality, therefore, as imparted by Marks herself, depends on its counterpart, optic visuality, in which objects are seen from afar in a centered perspective corresponding to a cinematic wide shot (or a theatrical tableau, I add). They are "identifiable, existing in illusionary three-dimensional space" (Marks 2004, 79). This relationship between the distant and the extremely proximal results in an ungendered eroticism, based on the formulae of life and not on sexual desire ("life is served by the ability to come close, pull away, come close again," Marks 2002, xvi).

In general, on all occasions where live feed is used in performative contexts, the film viewers' attention is drawn towards the living performers or the live video feed, or both at once, depending on the framing, lighting, movement and size of the images. Therefore, the viewers' attention can be commanded in order to enhance one element over the others in terms of *agency*. Commentators tend to privilege the following hierarchy: (1) live actors; (2) alternation between video feed and live actors; (3) the digital images projected by the live video feed which replicate the actors. In Saura's screendance films, this hierarchy is compromised. Often, the prominence lies not in the supposed liveness of the dancers, but rather in the *sensuousness* of the elements themselves, which can make the digital doubles⁶

6 I borrow this expression from Steve Dixon (2007).

more salient than their human counterparts. For example, in a tribute tableau to the late Portuguese singer Lucília do Carmo in *Fados*, the dialectic optical/haptical is undermined through directorial choices. A female singer who dances alone to the rhythm of the music is projected via a live feed onto the background, whilst the live musicians playing in front of the digital double are metaphorically rendered invisible, perceived as shadows as they are kept in stage obscurity. Closer to the end of the song, however, a saxophone player in the foreground is bathed in light yet dwarfed by the sheer size of the digital singer in the background, whose open mouth seems to gobble the player up as he bites his instrument's mouthpiece.

Besides, figure and ground are also forcibly interconnected in original ways which reinforce the touch and blur the lines between optic and haptic, making the relationship less dialectic than advocated by Marks (2002, xvi). Ultimately, the alternation between video feed and live actors is more nuanced than usual in performances of this nature. In Saura's pure musicals, all the elements in the image are meant to be perceived together with only slight changes caused by the way attention is manipulated by the auteur. The possibility of using different image layers throughout an entire tableau or for the greater part of it generates and maintains a tighter connection between three- and two-dimensionality than that proposed by Marks. It is probably more adequate to speak of an optical-haptic continuum. For example, in *Argentina* a couple dances together, their digital doubles reproduced in the background in real time. [Figs. 3–4.] The female dancer starts the tableau all by herself and although she is already present live on stage (perceived on the extreme right of the film frame), the viewers' eyes focus first on her enlarged triple reproduction, which occupies two-thirds of the filmic image. The distance at which the viewers are generally maintained – this is a stage tableau perceived in a wide shot, after all – ensures that this an optical image, nonetheless. However, closer to the end of the dance the opposite takes place. Although the woman and her partner are reproduced in large size on the background, their digital doubles remain out of focus and are felt rather than fully apprehended. Overall, the film viewers are touched in both ways at once throughout this film. It is a variety of presence that Russell Fewster, writing about multimedia performances, names “intermedial presence: the inter-twinning of classical presence of the live actor and virtual (digital) presence in a new conception of ‘both-and’ rather than ‘either/or’” (2010, 64).

As a reflection, the technologized self becomes “increasingly indistinguishable from its human counterpart” (Dixon 2007, 268). The 1970s New York artist Dan Graham claimed that live video generated a temporal flux during which the digital

reflex and the human figure(s) were interconnected. Mirrors, on the other hand, despite their reflective properties, could only display time instantaneously and devoid of duration (Dixon 2007, 245). This is obvious in those instances where the live video feed is deliberately used with a delay. I argue that the effect thus produced adds further layers to the spectacle in that it constitutes a visual fragmentation of space *and* time, enriching the whole. In Dixon's opinion, the medial proliferation of screens enhances the theatrical space and makes it "more poetic and pliable" (2007, 335). I add that the multiplication of the human figure achieves the same result. It is as if each visual layer, containing one reproduction of the figure, were a screen combined with others by means of superimposition.

The Body as Major Inducer of Crystallization

The fragmentation of the body evinces its metaphorical and poetical possibilities (Rosenberg 2012, 57), but also calls into attention the human body as fetish. Contrary to Laura Mulvey (1975), who sees in this fact an objectification of the female body by the institutionalized patriarchal male gaze, Rosenberg claims that, perceived on a screen, all bodies are made desirable, "it is the architecture of camera space itself that enables the presentation of any body as an object of desire" (2012, 169). No longer construed merely to be-looked-at, according to Mulvey's voyeuristic conception of the female bodies in classical cinema, the female bodies replicated in Saura's pure musicals are essentially haptic, ensnaring the viewers rather than being optically captured by them. Their multiplicity is seductive but also empowering because they are (a)live rather than mastered by a male director for the benefit of male viewers. Feminist researcher Frances Rosina Hubbard claims that it is time "to return to the idea of the *lived* body as opposed to the fetishized body. And to the ways in which the 'problematic' body⁷ may be 'undone' by the performing body/body of the film itself, in a more liberating counter-cinema that does more than simply deconstruct the patriarchal bias of mainstream film" (2014, 126).⁸

In *Salome* (Carlos Saura, 2002), which is a hybrid dance film but not a Saurian pure musical, the character Salome expresses her pain beside the decapitated head of San Juan, who is literally objectified throughout this film segment. His digital head, seen on the left side of the film screen, represents his absence from

7 That is, a body which is taken advantage of by the male gaze.

8 However, her concept of fetish is sexualized, and therefore patriarchal – contrary to my idea, following Rosenberg, of fetish as a merely desirable body.

physical life whilst the formidable size of the head itself enhances his spiritual importance as martyr. Nonetheless, Salome, who has always seen him as a carnal object of desire, perceives this as a material loss, as denoted by her hand upon his head in a post-mortem possessive gesture. The live feed projected on the background screen at this point, however, concentrates entirely on her, since San Juan's digital head is half concealed from view by the dancer's body placed in the foreground. These images contain a non-patriarchal meaning. From a phenomenological perspective, what is at stake here is not a mild subverted version of the gaze but rather the feeling of complete spectatorial immersion in a sensorial experience conveyed by the blue enlarged elements of the intradiegetic screen and their almost liquid absorptive impact. [Figs. 5–6.]

As mentioned by Hubbard in relation to Maya Deren's screendance films, "the combination of rhythm, speed, sound and image work to immerse me, however briefly, into my embodied experience of the film and further away from habitual attempts at 'mastering' its meanings" (2014, 128–29). Just as the female choreographers/filmmakers/dancers Maya Deren and Amy Greenfield used their bodies "to promote a sensuous engagement with the physicality of film, encouraging their audience to watch with an awareness of their own bodies and interiority," (2013, 148) so Saura achieves the same through his dancers' bodies and the live video feed. "When no longer entrapped within the alignment of form and voice, within the 'beautiful inalterable formulas' of phallogentrism, the spatiality and motility of the female body is infinitely expanded, and the contradictory, multiple, and fluid nature of the female identity is revealed. Thus, the ontology of woman is shown (or heard of) to be one of *becoming*, not of being." (Hubbard 2014, 162, emphasis in the original).

Yet not all the dancing bodies mediatized through a live video feed in Saura's pure musicals are female. On occasion they are men depicted in suffering poses, as is typical of the melodramatic logic of flamenco. In "Granada" (*Iberia*, 2005), for example, a male performer sings and tap dances to great visual effect. The tableau, however, ends on a close-up of the dancer/singer, with a tear notoriously trickling down his left cheek, exposing his sentimental vulnerability and, hence, his inner femininity. Hubbard's commentary is thus generally applicable with the proviso that "female" be changed for "feminine" and "woman" be taken for "femininity." Actually, Laura U. Marks recognizes that the sense of touch is usually connoted with a feminine perception, although the commentator prefers to speak of "visual *feminist* strategy" instead (2002, 7, emphasis in the original).⁹ Most importantly,

9 The driving force in her research was to understand "how looking could be something other

since the feminine body is the preferred depiction contained in the live video images, it is through it that spectatorial immersion is ultimately attained.

Sigrid Merx (2015) connects the live video feed in theatrical performances to the cinematic philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, more specifically to the concept of crystal-image and its bifacial, or dual, nature. According to Deleuze, all modern bifacial images, also known as hyalosigns, have two reversible sides that cannot be discerned, such is their interconnectedness. When the “actual” or real side of the image is relegated to the background, thus becoming “virtual,” the “virtual” side of the image becomes real, gaining prominence (1985, 90). Merx, following Deleuze, points out that the actors (and, I add, dancers) manifest in two forms: as carnal, living entities and as vestigial images, reflections of the former lodged on a screen surface. The film viewers either concentrate on the actor (real) or on the character (virtual), together operating as a bifacial image. Since Saura’s use of the live video feed provides both instances simultaneously – always placed in the background (the reproduction) and another one always set in the foreground (the flesh-and-bone dancers) – the virtual digital image is kept under the viewers’ sight all along, which, in my opinion, undermines ever so slightly the dual nature of the image. This is not to undercut Merx, whose point is extremely relevant. The live video feed is a Deleuzian crystal, even in my more nuanced sense of alternation between the human actors/dancers and their digital doubles. Yet, Merx restricts her analysis of the crystal-image to time, whereas, for my purposes, the sensorial properties of the reflex are more compelling. The real import for me is the flux. “Spectators often find themselves enjoying (marveling at, drawn in by) the interface between the actual and the virtual, the corporeal and the mediatized” (Merx in Chapple and Kattenbelt 2006, 67, referring to multimedia stage performances).

In fact, Deleuze argues that there is a constant permutation between the two sides of the bifacial image, a structural process that he names “circuit” (1985, 96) and which applies in Saura’s pure musicals to the focus of spectatorial attention. Furthermore, the crystal is also characterized by a propagation of the reflex. An “embryo” (“*germe*”) extends to a whole “environment” (“*milieu*”) (1985, 100). The live feed thus possesses the ability to highlight the self-reflexive properties of Saura’s pure musicals, expanding the mirroring to the entire film. An image – a tableau containing an apparent stage performance – enters into a relationship with a medium which is *per se* endowed with reflective features – cinema – and

than the exercise of power, and how to explain the pleasure of looking as not gendered, not perverse” (2004, 79).

the result is the crystallization of screendance films. The feminine body, being the most depicted in these situations, becomes the major inducer of crystallization, advertising Saura's self-reflexive *praxis* and, consequently, spelling "cinema" through dance.

To a certain point, this extension to a whole environment achieved through technological mediation corresponds to the expansion that Gene Youngblood predicted and advocated for cinema (1970). Yet, whereas Deleuze is concerned with the aesthetic possibilities of films made of crystal-images, the *sine qua non* condition of filmic modernity; Youngblood is more interested in sensuality as the basis for a new cinematic language that he calls "synaesthetic mode" (1970, 42). For Youngblood, the sensorial dynamics of such cinema manifests in the graphic design of the films as well as in the sensations experienced by the film viewers upon viewing the films. Superimposition – which consists of two (or more) shots pasted together in different visual layers – create "one total image in metamorphosis" (1970, 87).¹⁰ This is exactly what the live video feed as used by Saura does: "a synaesthetic film is, in effect, one image continually transforming into other images: metamorphosis" (Youngblood 1970, 86). In this respect, sensoriality meets self-reflexivity; Deleuze coexists with Youngblood in another form of in-betweenness which so completely characterizes Saura's pure musicals.

Conclusion

Saura's films *Iberia*, *Fados*, *Flamenco Flamenco*, *Argentina*, and *Jota de Saura* are works of screendance, although no such thing has, to my knowledge, been claimed to date. They correspond to the three main characteristics of screendance according to Richard James Allen: they are hybrid ("hybrid suggests coming together of forms that are different to create something potentially strange but also potentially glorious and fascinating," Allen in Voukon 2006, no pag.), symbiotic ("symbiosis suggests forms that can exist independently but which, when coordinated in balance and harmony, have the potential to create a third entity greater than the sum of its parts," Allen in Voukon 2006, no pag.) and integral ("integrated or integral suggests things that are disparate and separate coming together to create something more whole and complete," Allen in Voukon 2006, no pag.).

For Walter Benjamin (1936–39), no artistic work produced via mechanical reproduction has a singular existence in time and space, thus lacking presence

10 Youngblood was averse to editing, but as long as the film flowed, he seemingly accepted it, as proven by the way he praised Stan Brakhage's films.

and losing “aura.” Inversely, in traditional stage performances, the existence of the performers in the “here and now” of the spectators endows performative media with co-presence (a shared presence between those on stage and those on the audience), possibly resulting in an ontological unique event, as advocated by Peggy Phelan (1993). However, in multimedia performances,¹¹ which are characterized by an articulation of two-dimensional images projected on screens and actions undertaken by performers on a three-dimensional stage, the relationship between live performers and the live digital images (such as those captured by a live video feed) is also made unique inasmuch as playback is completely banished¹² (Trott 2015). However, in Saura’s case there is a rub: his pure musicals are not real stage performances but emulations thereof. They are films – or else they would not be screendance – recorded on sound stages, exhibiting their self-reflexive condition unabashedly. Ontologically, they are not unique and, furthermore, they are patterned upon embedded digital duplications, forever fixed in the final unchangeable filmic object. However, that might just be what endows them with a Benjaminian kindred aura. As intermedial works of art Saura’s pure musicals exist in-between art forms, making the most of both of them. Specifically, the tableaux that contain live video feed combine reproduction (cinematic and digital media) with uniqueness (dance performance) and, since both media affect each other resulting in a sensorial effect greater than the sum of its parts, this points to the fusion advocated by Dick Higgins when he proposed his concept of “intermedium” ([1965] 1981).¹³ Although, of course, Saura’s dancers had to rehearse and repeat their routines in numerous takes during the shooting process, the moments in which live video feed is used are mostly unedited pieces of dance over which the director had no apparent control and that seemingly possess the same level of contingency as the performers on stage, subject to reactions, eventual improvisation and possibly technical mistakes (Trott 2015, 27).

Live video feed in general presents two images doubling one another, coexisting with one another, that is, living together. They too are collaborating and, are therefore co-present – that is, physically present, at the same time, in the here and now of their performance/recording/projection – and, moreover, acting

11 Also known as “digital theatre” (or cross media) because it employs media played in the very moment of the performance from a variety of sources.

12 Pre-recorded material may be used as long as it is activated live.

13 This concept differs from the expression “mixed-media,” used by several commentators in performance studies, namely Andy Lavender, Chiel Kattenbelt and Freda Chapple. Throughout this article I have substituted it for multimedia, which implies a coexistence whose nature is not explicit.

palpably on the viewers' senses in the most unforgettable way. This collaboration between the two different elements, the performer(s) and their digital double(s), is continuous and fluid. As Trott observes, "when the performer/character is present in both human and non-human state for the audience, the multimedia image doubles the representation of the performer and establishes all entities on stage as subjects in a state of becoming" (2015, 19). In cinema, more specifically in Saura's pure musicals, self-reflexivity is made dazzling and enticing and combines with immersive sensoriality to produce a thoroughly engaging experience for the viewers: a form of absorption that I call "mediated immersive flux."

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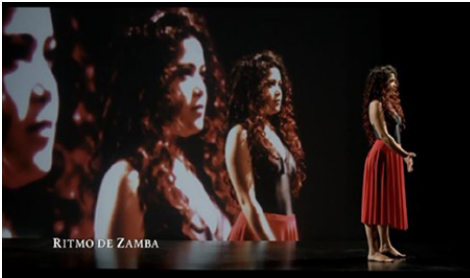
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Figures 1–2. Carlos Saura, *Iberia* (2005) and *Fados* (2007).



Figures 3–4: The optical-haptic continuum in *Argentina (Zonda, folclore argentino, 2015)*.



Figures 5–6. Salome fantasizing about San Juan after having received his head on a platter in *Salome* (2002).

