

ICINE BÁRBARAS

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON CINEMA AND AUDIOVISUAL

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

23&24 OUTUBRO/OCTOBER
UNIVERSIDADE LUSÓFONA -
CENTRO UNIVERSITÁRIO DO PORTO

CREDITS

Book of Abstracts

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EDITORIAL NOTE

The I Cine Bárbaras – International Conference on Cinema and Audiovisual took place on 23 and 24 October 2025 at Universidade Lusófona – Centro Universitário do Porto, establishing itself as a new space for encounter, reflection, and debate dedicated to feminist theories and gender studies in cinema and audiovisual media.

Born from the desire to create a space for dialogue between those who research, create, and think about cinema, Cine Bárbaras seeks to promote research, critical thinking, and the visibility of women and non-binary people within the cinematic field. Since its inception, the conference has aimed to bring together multiple voices and perspectives—including researchers, filmmakers, programmers, students, and audiovisual professionals—in a collective gesture of listening and exchange around the practices and discourses that shape contemporary cinema.

By highlighting the diverse forms of participation of women and non-binary people, both in front of and behind the camera, the conference underscores the importance of their contributions to the construction of new audiovisual narratives, aesthetics, and epistemologies. Through an intersectional approach, it also sought to question the power structures that permeate cinematic creation, production, and reception, fostering debate on representation, visibility, memory, resistance, and social transformation.

Over the course of two days, the conference brought together researchers, students, filmmakers, programmers, and audiovisual professionals from different institutions and countries. The programme featured 33 scientific presentations distributed across 11 thematic panels, two plenary sessions with three internationally renowned keynote speakers, a workshop dedicated to good practices in cinema and audiovisual production, and a special documentary screening followed by a discussion with the filmmakers. This diversity of formats enabled the intersection of academic research, critical reflection, and professional practice, promoting an interdisciplinary and international dialogue on gender issues in cinema and audiovisual media.

The texts gathered in this Book of Abstracts reflect the richness and diversity of the presentations delivered during the conference, addressing topics such as women's and queer authorship, intersectional feminisms, curatorial practices and film festivals, memory, post-memory and archives, autobiographical documentary,

coloniality and postcolonial perspectives, representations of gender and sexuality, labour and inequality in the audiovisual industries, cinephilia and programming policies, experimental and essayistic cinema, practices of care and collectivity, as well as new forms of aesthetic and political resistance in contemporary cinema.

More than an academic record, this volume bears witness to the vitality of a growing field of research, contributing to the expansion of debates on gender, power, representation, and social transformation through cinema and audiovisual media.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

ANA CATARINA PEREIRA

Ana Catarina Pereira is Assistant Professor at Faculty of Arts and Humanities - University of Beira Interior and holds a PhD in Communication Sciences, in Cinema and Multimedia subject, from the same university. She is the Master's director in Cinema and researcher at LabCom- Communication and Arts. Between 2021 and 2023 she was the main responsible for the project "Speculum - Filming and looking at oneself in the mirror: the use of self-writing by Portuguese-speaking documentary filmmakers" (FCT), for whom she received the Young Researcher Award in Arts: UBI - CGD 2025. She has a degree in Communication Sciences from NOVA University Lisbon and a master's degree in Human Rights from University of Salamanca. She worked for several years as a freelancer journalist with Notícias Sábado and Notícias Magazine (Diário de Notícias), newspaper I, Focus, Up, Saber Viver and Happy Woman magazines. She was the director and co-founder of the online Magnética Magazine (2008/10); director of the Cultural Sciences course at UBI (2017/19); coordinator of the Film Studies Sopcom seminar (2017/22) and a delegate at the UBI Equality Commission (2019/22). She is the author of the books "The Female-Director: From art through art to an aesthetics of differentiation" and "Study of the Textile Worker Fabric of Cova da Beira". She co-edited the books "Cinema and Other Arts", "(Non)reflected Films", "UBICinema 2007/2017", "Invisible Generation: The new Portuguese filmmakers", and "Poetry Selection - Fundação poets". She has been a member of the organizing committee and jury panel of the Porto Femme International Film Festival since its foundation. Her research interests focus on feminist film studies, pedagogy on arts and Portuguese Cinemas.



ANA SOFIA PEREIRA

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Ana Sofia Pereira is a screenwriter, director, and university lecturer in the fields of cinema and writing. She holds a PhD in Communication Sciences from NOVA University Lisbon, with a research stay at the University of Reading. Her academic and creative work has focused on feminisms, gender, cinema, communication, and representation. She is currently an integrated researcher at CICANT and a Postdoctoral Fellow on the FEMglocal project, within which she co-directed the documentary “Feminismos: A Liberdade de Ser” (“Feminisms: The Freedom to Be”). She is co-screenwriter of the TV series “Rio Grande”, awarded development support by ICA in 2022, as well as screenwriter and director of the documentary “Virgínia”, which won a prize at the Guiões festival (2022) and received ICA support in 2020 (Writing and Development) and 2023 (Production). Her work also includes other award-winning films and series – both features and shorts – among them “2’ Minutos para Mudar de Vida” (“2’ Minutes to Change Your Life”), broadcast in prime time on RTP1 (one of Portugal’s major networks).



CARLA CERQUEIRA

Carla Cerqueira holds a PhD in Communication Sciences from the University of Minho (2012). She is an Associate Professor at Lusófona University, director of the PhD in Communication and Activisms and an integrated researcher at CICANT - Centre for Research in Applied Communication, Culture, and New Technologies. Her research areas include gender, feminisms, activisms, intersectionality, media, and communication. She is part of the Ethics Committee of ECREA - European Communication Research and Education Association. She is the chair of the Research and Policy Committee of GAMAG - Global Alliance on Media and Gender and is a board member of APEM - Portuguese Association for Women’s Studies. She is part of the Opinion Council of RTP representing NGOs from the Advisory Council of the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality. She integrates several associations related to human rights, gender equality, and feminisms.

CATARINA BESSA RODRIGUES

CECS

UNIVERSITY OF MINHO

Born in 1991 in Barcelos, Catarina Bessa Rodrigues has always shown an interest in communication. A graduate in Communication Sciences from the Catholic University of Portugal, she focused on film and audiovisual media—an area she further explored during her master's degree at the University of Minho. She worked in several digital marketing companies and was a professor of Video and Digital Content Production at IPCA. In 2025, she completed her doctorate in Communication Sciences at the University of Minho with the thesis "Witches, Elves and Sorceresses: Female Representations in Fantasy Cinema." She currently continues to research cinema and representation, focusing on female figures.



JULIA FERNANDES MARQUES

I*ARTES

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Filmmaker, membership of I*A Arts Research on Beira Interior University and PhD scholarship holder from the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) with the doctoral thesis project entitled "Since the Day I Was No Longer Yours: The Screenplay of Self-Representation as Care of the Self" (2023–2026). PhD candidate in Media Arts at the University of Beira Interior (Portugal). Scholarship recipient (2021–2023) and member of the project "Speculum: Filming and looking at oneself in the mirror: the use of self-writing by Portuguese-speaking documentary filmmakers" (FCT). Substitute Professor in the Advertising and Publicity undergraduate program at the Federal University of Sergipe (UFS/Brazil) (2018–2020). Holds a Master's degree in Cinema and Social Narratives from the interdisciplinary graduate program at the Federal University of Sergipe (UFS). Bachelor's degree in Cinema and Video from the Faculty of Arts of Paraná (CINETVPR), State University of Paraná (Unespar/Brazil). Works as a filmmaker, screenwriter, director, cinematographer, and editor. Editor of books, and author of published scientific articles and book chapters.



PATRÍCIA NOGUEIRA

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Patrícia Nogueira is a documentary filmmaker, a Professor of Film at the University of Beira Interior, and a researcher at i*Artes. She has been a Visiting Professor at institutions such as the Krzysztof Kieślowski Film School and the University of Texas at Austin. She began her career in the film industry in 2004, working in the production of narrative feature films, and since 2010 she has been working mostly in documentary film. Nogueira holds a Ph.D. in Digital Media under the UT Austin–Portugal international program and a Master's degree in Documentary Film and Photography. During 2015, she completed a residency at the National Film Board of Canada. She is a member of the Steering Committee of NECS and has served as a jury member for the Portuguese Film Fund and at various international film festivals.



RITA CAPUCHO

Rita Capucho is the co-founder and co-director of Porto Femme – International Film Festival and programme director of Femme Sessions and Shortcutz Aveiro. She works as a cultural producer, curator, project manager, and trainer for various cultural organisations. Rita coordinates Cinamiza-te, a project focused on cinema training for young people, and is a founding board member of MUTIM – Association of Women Workers of the Moving Image. A PhD student in Communication and Activism at Lusófona University and the University of the Basque Country, she is also a researcher at CICANT – Centre for Research in Applied Communication, Culture and New Technologies, and a member of NECS – European Network for Cinema and Media Studies. In addition, she is one of the organisers of Poetry Slam Aveiro and a coordinator of Plataforma Portugal Slam. Her work intersects film, feminism, education, and cultural activism.

SHEILA CORREIA

Sheila Correia holds a degree in Social Communication with a specialization in Audiovisual from Universidade São Judas Tadeu (Brazil) and a master's in Information Technology, Communication, and Multimedia from Universidade da Maia (Portugal). She is currently a doctoral student in Digital Media at Instituto Superior Técnico – University of Lisbon. She was the director of the documentary *Deixa-me ser eu*, worked as assistant director and producer on the short film *Curandeiras*, and contributed to the development and scriptwriting of the animation project *Mnema*.



VANESSA RIBEIRO-RODRIGUES

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Vanessa Ribeiro-Rodrigues is a filmmaker and university professor in Cinema, Audiovisual Communication, and Journalism. She holds a PhD in Communication for Development, focusing on cinematic narratives and the humanization of stories. An integrated researcher at CICANT/Lusófona University, she specializes in documentary dramaturgy (EICTV, Cuba; AIC, Brazil). She directed *Land's Baptism* (2017) and *The Sand Spellbound* (2025), and co-directed *Feminisms: The Freedom to Be* (FEMglocal). She focuses on feminist activism, memory, and social change. She has lived in Brazil and Jordan. Recent projects include *The Seed Keepers* (Guinea-Bissau), a documentary on Makwa women (*The Island of Mozambique*), and *Women and Chronic Pain*.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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PhD in Media Arts, a Master's in Cinema from the University of Beira Interior, and a BA in Cultural Production from the Fluminense Federal University (UFF). He has extensive experience in the fields of communication and audiovisual production, with a background in radio, television, and film. He has also served as a curator for international film festivals. In academia, he has experience as a professor, researcher, and organizer of scientific events, such as the International Meeting "Cinema and the Other Arts," and serves as one of the editors of the eponymous book series.



ANABELA DINIS BRANCO DE OLIVEIRA

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Associate professor at UTAD and full member of iA*Research in Arts. With a PhD in Comparative Literature, she focuses her scientific research on inter-arts studies, namely the relationships between literature and cinema and literature and architecture. She teaches several seminars on film discourse analysis and the dialogical relationships between cinema and other arts. She has presented papers at numerous conferences and published in national and international journals. She has been invited to speak at international universities. She has participated in juries and workshops at national and international festivals and film school exhibitions, as well as on the national juries of the ICA and FCT.

ANA CATARINA PEREIRA

Ana Catarina Pereira is Assistant Professor at Faculty of Arts and Humanities - University of Beira Interior and holds a PhD in Communication Sciences, in Cinema and Multimedia subject, from the same university. She is the Master's director in Cinema and researcher at LabCom- Communication and Arts. Between 2021 and 2023 she was the main responsible for the project "Speculum - Filming and looking at oneself in the mirror: the use of self-writing by Portuguese-speaking documentary filmmakers" (FCT), for whom she received the Young Researcher Award in Arts: UBI - CGD 2025. She has a degree in Communication Sciences from NOVA University Lisbon and a master's degree in Human Rights from University of Salamanca. She worked for several years as a freelancer journalist with Notícias Sábado and Notícias Magazine (Diário de Notícias), newspaper I, Focus, Up, Saber Viver and Happy Woman magazines. She was the director and co-founder of the online Magnética Magazine (2008/10); director of the Cultural Sciences course at UBI (2017/19); coordinator of the Film Studies Sopcom seminar (2017/22) and a delegate at the UBI Equality Commission (2019/22). She is the author of the books "The Female-Director: From art through art to an aesthetics of differentiation" and "Study of the Textile Worker Fabric of Cova da Beira". She co-edited the books "Cinema and Other Arts", "(Non)reflect-



ed Films", "UBICinema 2007/2017", "Invisible Generation: The new Portuguese filmmakers", and "Poetry Selection - Fundão poets". She has been a member of the organizing committee and jury panel of the Porto Femme International Film Festival since its foundation. Her research interests focus on feminist film studies, pedagogy on arts and Portuguese Cinemas.



ANA CRISTINA PEREIRA

Ana Cristina Pereira (aka Kitty Furtado) is a cultural critic committed to blurring the boundaries between academia and the public sphere. Currently, she is a researcher at CECS (U. Minho) developing the project The Black Gaze, and a visiting professor at FBAUP (U. Porto). She is an independent curator of (post)colonial and Black-Cinema film exhibitions and promotes public discussions on Memory, Racism, and Reparations, being the creator and coordinator of the Reparations Art-Lab (mala voadora, Porto, 2023), and the film festival The Black Gaze: Cinema Negro em Portugal (CAM – Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, 2025). She is the deputy editor of VISTA: Journal of Visual Culture and co-authored the book Opening the Buds of Time: Conversations on Cinema in Mozambique (2022). Kitty Furtado is a member of the Black Movement in Portugal, of SOS Racismo, and part of the Board of Directors of the Forum Demos.

ANA GABRIELA MACEDO

Ana Gabriela Macedo-Professor of English at Universidade do Minho, Portugal; PH.D. University of Sussex, U.K., 1990. Director of the PHD Program in Comparative Modernities. Research areas: Comparative Literature; Feminist Studies; Visual Poetics, Modernism. Selected publications: -“Resiliência criativa no feminino e re-significação da história”, *Diacrítica* 34.2, 2020, 77-91. <https://doi.org/10.21814/diacritica.564>; “A Grande Vaga de Frio/ The Great Frost: the ‘transmigration’ of Orlando in Portuguese”, *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance*, 13-3, 2020, 345-351.https://doi.org/10.1386/jafp_00036_3; *Estudos Comparatistas e Cosmopolitismo. Pós-colonialidade, Tradução, Arte e Género*, org. AG Macedo (2018); “Visual and Literary narratives of dissent. Unframing Women and Representation”, *Journal of Romance Studies*, 15-3, Winter 2015, 83-98; *Paula Rego e o Poder da Visão* (2010); *Dicionário da Crítica Feminista*, orgs. AG Macedo & AL Amaral (2005) <http://hdl.handle.net/1822/65561>. Project: Women, Arts and Dictatorship in Portugal, Brazil and Portuguese speaking African countries (PTDC/ART-OUT/28051/2017).



ANA ISABEL SOARES

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Ana Isabel Soares holds a degree in Modern Portuguese and English Languages and Literatures (Faculty of Arts, Lisbon University, 1993) and a PhD in Literary Theory from the same institution (2003), where she completed postdoctoral research on Portuguese cinema and poetry (2009). She is Associate Professor at the University of Algarve, where she has taught since 1996, and has been a visiting lecturer at other universities in Portugal and abroad. She was part of the founding team of the Association of Moving Image Researchers (AIM) and served as its first President (2010-2014). From 2011 to 2012, she worked with the Secretary of State for Basic and Secondary Education, a position in which she helped launch the National Cinema Plan. Her research interests include film, literary, and multi-artistic studies, as well as the intersections among these fields. She organized two pedagogical dossiers for the National Cinema Plan, and has published articles in several academic journals, primarily on Portuguese cinema. She is the author of a monograph dedicated to the filmmaker Margarida Gil.



ANA SOFIA PEREIRA

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Ana Sofia Pereira is a screenwriter, director, and university lecturer in the fields of cinema and writing. She holds a PhD in Communication Sciences from NOVA University Lisbon, with a research stay at the University of Reading. Her academic and creative work has focused on feminisms, gender, cinema, communication, and representation. She is currently an integrated researcher at CICANT and a Postdoctoral Fellow on the FEMglocal project, within which she co-directed the documentary “Feminismos: A Liberdade de Ser” (“Feminisms: The Freedom to Be”). She is co-screenwriter of the TV series “Rio Grande”, awarded development support by ICA in 2022, as well as screenwriter and director of the documentary “Virgínia”, which won a prize at the Guiões festival (2022) and received ICA support in 2020 (Writing and Development) and 2023 (Production). Her work also includes other award-winning films and series – both features and shorts – among them “2’ Minutos para Mudar de Vida” (“2’ Minutes to Change Your Life”), broadcast in prime time on RTP1 (one of Portugal’s major networks).



MARÍA BEGOÑA GUTIÉRREZ SAN MIGUEL

Full Professor of Audiovisual Communication at the University of Salamanca. Her research focuses on film, audiovisual narrative language, and gender issues, with publications on these topics. Principal Investigator of the Research Group ‘Audiovisual Narratives and Sociocultural Studies.’ She is a member of the USAL Women’s Studies Center and of GENET/CSIC, the Gender Studies Association (Madrid, Spain). She has served as Director of the Communication and Protocol Office at the University of Salamanca. She was a member of the Steering Committee of the Huesca Film Festival (1993–2010) and the Gijón Film Festival (1984–1991). She has served as a jury member at various film festivals—Huelva, Buenos Aires (Argentina)—... Documentary researcher.

CARLA CERQUEIRA

Carla Cerqueira holds a PhD in Communication Sciences from the University of Minho (2012). She is an Associate Professor at Lusófona University, director of the PhD in Communication and Activisms and an integrated researcher at CICANT - Centre for Research in Applied Communication, Culture, and New Technologies. Her research areas include gender, feminisms, activisms, intersectionality, media, and communication. She is part of the Ethics Committee of ECREA - European Communication Research and Education Association. She is the chair of the Research and Policy Committee of GAMAG - Global Alliance on Media and Gender and is a board member of APEM - Portuguese Association for Women's Studies. She is part of the Opinion Council of RTP representing NGOs from the Advisory Council of the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality. She integrates several associations related to human rights, gender equality, and feminisms.



CARLOS NATÁLIO

Carlos Natálio is a professor, researcher, programmer, and film critic in the field of cinema. He is a contracted researcher at CITAR – Research Centre for Science and Technology of the Arts and a Professor of Film History and Film Criticism. He holds degrees in Cinema and Law, and a Master's and Pdh in Communication Sciences. He is a founding member and editor of the film website À pala de Walsh. Since 2019, he has worked in programming, joining the IndieLisboa Festival team in 2019. Since 2022, he has also been programming for the Batalha Centro de Cinema (Programas Escolas; Novos Encontros do Cinema Português; Selecção Nacional). He is the author of several educational booklets in collaboration with various national and international film education projects (CinEd, Shortcut, PNC, Filhos de Lumière, Insert). He is co-editor of JSTA – Journal of Science and Technology of the Arts and has co-edited the books, O Cinema Não Morreu: Crítica e Cinefilia À pala de Walsh (2019) and O Cinema das Palavras: Entrevistas À pala de Walsh (2024).

CATARINA BESSA RODRIGUES

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Born in 1991 in Barcelos, Catarina Bessa Rodrigues has always shown an interest in communication. A graduate in Communication Sciences from the Catholic University of Portugal, she focused on film and audiovisual media—an area she further explored during her master's degree at the University of Minho. She worked in several digital marketing companies and was a professor of Video and Digital Content Production at IPCA. In 2025, she completed her doctorate in Communication Sciences at the University of Minho with the thesis "Witches, Elves and Sorceresses: Female Representations in Fantasy Cinema." She currently continues to research cinema and representation, focusing on female figures.



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Célia Taborda (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2547-2480>) holds a PhD in Contemporary History at the University of Porto, Faculty of Arts and Humanities. She is Associate Professor at Lusófona University, subdirector of the PhD in Communication and Activisms, integrated researcher at CICANT – Centre for Research in Applied Communication, Culture, and New Technologies, and researcher associate at CEAUP – Centre of African Studies of the University of Porto. She is the co-principal investigator of the project "FEMglocal – Global feminist movements: Interactions and Contradictions" (PTDC/COM-CSS/4049/2021 / DOI 10.54499/PTDC/COM-CSS/4049/2021). Her research areas include contemporary History, social movements, feminisms, activism. Author of books, book chapters and several articles in national and international scientific journals, she participated in diverse international and national conferences (some as invited speaker) and integrated diverse scientific committees and events organization.

DINA IORDANOVA

Dina Iordanova has done work in various areas of film studies — from film festivals and transnational circulation through Balkan and East European film and Asian cinema. Her currently project is a study on the cinema of the non-Russian republics of the Soviet Union, of which she has already published segments on Ukraine and the Central Asian spheres. She is Emeritus Professor of Global Cinema at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. Affiliation: Emeritus Professor, University of St Andrews, Scotland.



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Fátima Chinita is the equivalent of an Associate Professor with habilitation at the Lisbon Polytechnic Institute - Theatre and Film School, in Portugal, where she lectures on Film Studies and Film Narrative. She has a PhD in Artistic Studies – obtained at the University of Lisbon in 2013. She holds an M.A. in Communication Sciences, and two BA's, one in Cinema and the other in Literature Studies. She conducted her postdoctoral research on Intermediality under the supervision of Lars Elleström at Linnaeus University in Sweden and continues to write on the subject to this day. She was a member of the research project SPECULUM about autobiographical cinema directed by women in Portugal and Brazil and has published several articles in English on Agnès Varda and Catarina Vasconcelos.

HÉLÈNE CHARLERY

Hélène Charlery is Associate Professor in US studies and black film studies at the University of Toulouse Jean Jaurès. Using black feminist and intersectional theories, she has published several papers on the representation of identities of race and gender in mainstream films. Her recent research has focused on how black women filmmakers have used and created black feminist and intersectional theories through their art works. In terms of affiliation, Dr. Helene Charlery, Associate Professor, University of Toulouse Jean Jaurès, Center for Anglophone Studies.



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Júlia Garraio is a researcher at the Centre for Social Studies (CES), University of Coimbra. She is a fellow (CEEC) of the Science and Technology Foundation (FCT) with the project Dis/entangling Rape: Sexual Violence in Portuguese literature and cinema in the 21st century (2023-2028). She is Co-PI of the FCT project UnCoveR - Sexual Violence in Portuguese Mediascape (2023-2025). She is member of the steering committee of the international research group SVAC-Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict. She is review editor of the European Journal of Women's Studies. She integrated the Historical Research Group of the Independent Commission for the Study of Child Sexual Abuse in the Portuguese Catholic Church (2022-23). She participated in several projects in the areas of Memory Studies, Gender Studies, Media, Literature and Cultural Studies.

JUSLAINE DE FATIMA ABREU NOGUEIRA

Juslaine de Fatima Abreu Nogueira has a Ph.D. in Education and is a professor in the Master's in Cinema and Video Arts and in the Bachelor's in Cinema and Audiovisual Studies, both at Universidade Estadual do Paraná (State University of Paraná - Brazil). She is a member of the research groups "Art, Culture, and Subjectivities" and "Gilda – interdisciplinary group on Language, Gender, Sexuality, and Subjectivation." Her research focuses on aesthetic experience, formation and the arts of existence, as well as body, power, and the production of subjectivities, especially in connection with Foucauldian studies and post-structuralist political philosophy. She has experience in documentary filmmaking, having directed the short film *As Verdades de Ale em Nós* (2017) and having co-directed with Eduardo Baggio the feature films *A Alma do Gesto* (2020) and *Professoras* (2024).



KARLA HOLANDA

Professor and researcher in the Department of Cinema and Video at the Federal Fluminense University, she is a researcher at Faperj, the research agency of Rio de Janeiro. She is the editor of the book "Mulheres de cinema" ["Women of Cinema"], 2019, and co-editor of "Feminino e plural: mulheres no cinema brasileiro" ["Feminine and Plural: Women in Brazilian Cinema"], 2017, among other publications. She is also a filmmaker, having directed, among other films, "Kátia" (2012).

LUÍSA SEQUEIRA

Luísa Sequeira is an artist, filmmaker, and film curator. She holds a PhD in Media Arts and develops work across multiple platforms, focusing on the intersections between digital and analogue media, with particular emphasis on collage, archival practices, and expanded cinema.

Her filmography includes *Who Is Bárbara Virgínia?*, *Os Cravos e a Rocha*, *The Pioneers of Portuguese-Language Cinema*, *All Women Are Maria*, *What Can Words Do* (co-directed with Luísa Marinho), *Născută*, and *Memory, a Feminine Noun*. She also wrote and directed *Rosas de Maio*, a theatre production with expanded cinema.

Sequeira's work has been presented at institutions such as the Kaunas Biennale, Masc Foundation (Vienna), Mostra de São Paulo, IFF Rotterdam, DocLisboa, the Cinema Museum (London), the New Bedford Whaling Museum, the University of Oxford, the Museu da Imagem e do Som do Ceará, the Bienal de Arte de Cerveira, and the Centro Audiovisual Simone de Beauvoir. Recently, she was invited as a keynote speaker at the University of Birmingham, where she presented a lecture/performance entitled "HerCinema." Luísa Se-



queira is co-founder of Oficina Imperfeita and was recently appointed assistant professor at ESAP in Porto. She also co-programmes *Seleção Nacional* at Batalha Centro de Cinema.



MARGARIDA RENDEIRO

Margarida Rendeiro is an Assistant Researcher, at the Centre for the Humanities (CHAM), NOVA FCSH, Lisbon, and coordinator of the Research Group on Transcultural, Literary, and Postcolonial Studies. She holds a PhD in Portuguese Studies from King's College London. Her research examines Afro-Luso-Brazilian literary and cultural production, forms of cultural resistance, and women's studies. She co-edited *Writing of Women as Cultural Resistance* (Brill, 2025) and *Challenging Memories and Rebuilding Identities* (Routledge, 2019). She was Principal Investigator of *Women's Literature: Memories, Peripheries, and Resistances* in the Luso-Afro-Brazilian Atlantic and participates in projects on women in literature and visual arts, and contemporary historical novels in Portuguese, both hosted by the Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil.

MARIANA LIZ

Mariana Liz is an Assistant Professor in Film Studies at the School of Arts and Humanities at the University of Lisbon in Portugal (FLUL) and a research fellow at Centro de Estudos Comparatistas. She received a PhD from King's College London in 2012 and taught at King's, Queen Mary University of London, and the University of Leeds in the UK (2013-2016). She was a Research Fellow at the Institute of Social Sciences at the University of Lisbon (ICS-ULisboa) (2016-2021). Her main research interests are the idea of Europe in contemporary fiction and the transnational history of Portuguese film. She is the author of *Euro-Visions* (2016), editor of *Portugal's Global Cinema* (2018), and co-editor of *Women's Cinema in Contemporary Portugal* (with Hilary Owen, 2020), among other publications. Mariana is the Director of FLUL's Master's programme in Culture and Communication.



MARINA CAVALCANTI TEDESCO

Marina Cavalcanti Tedesco is a professor at the Universidade Federal Fluminense (Brazil). She researches women in Latin American audiovisual media for almost two decades, focusing mainly on: female directors of *Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano*; feminist productions of the 1960s to the 1980s; and 21st century Brazilian female cinematographers. She has published papers and articles in renowned national and international journals, as well as in several books. Among them are: the anthology *Trabalhadoras do cinema brasileiro: mulheres muito além da direção* [Women Workers in Brazilian Cinema: Women Far Beyond the Director's Chair] (2021); *Mulheres que constroem imagens: a parceria criativa de Kátia Coelho e Lina Chamie* [Women Who Build Images: The Creative Partnership of Kátia Coelho and Lina Chamie] (2024). She is one of the founders of the Research Network on Audiovisual Production by Women in Latin America (RAMA).

MARTA PÉREZ PEREIRO

Marta Pérez Pereiro is senior lecturer and researcher in the Faculty of Communication Sciences of the University of Santiago de Compostela (USC). She holds a PhD from the same university where she teaches the courses Cinema Production, Contemporary Audiovisual Culture and Contemporary Cinema and Gender Perspective in the area of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising. Pérez Pereiro is a member of the Grupo de Estudos Audiovisuais (Audiovisual Studies Research Group - GEA) and the Interdisciplinary Center for Feminist and Gender Studies (CIFEX). She coordinates the Permanent Seminar Communication and Gender CO(M)XÉNERO. Her main research topics are small cinemas, particularly Galician cinema, humour in media and gender studies in media. On these last topic, she has focused in the production and circulation of the films of contemporary women filmmakers, particularly Spanish and Galician, and the analysis of the representation of maids in cinema.



MICHELLE SALES

Michelle Sales is a professor, researcher and independent curator. She is currently the coordinator of the Visual Arts Course at the School of Fine Arts at UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro, and a researcher associated with the Postgraduate Programme in Multimedia at Unicamp, São Paulo. Her current research project, "Forms of self-inscription in contemporary African cinema: the cinemas of the former Portuguese colonies in the 21st century," deepens and expands her work in the field of visual culture between Brazil, Portugal, Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Cape Verde. She works in the areas of postcolonial studies, decolonial studies, cultural studies, and intersectional feminism.

MIRIAN NOGUEIRA TAVARES

Mirian Nogueira Tavares is a Full Professor at the University of the Algarve (UAlg) and the Deputy Coordinator of the Research Centre in Arts and Communication (CIAC). She is also the Director of the Doctoral Programme in Digital Media-Art.

At the international level, she serves as Vice-President of the International Association for Computational Art (ARTECH-Int), a role she combines with other relevant positions at the national level.

She is a member of the curatorial team of the Portuguese Contemporary Art Network and Director of Rotura – Communication, Culture and Arts Journal.

She has been involved in more than 25 scientific projects, taking on general coordination and/or institutional coordination roles in many of them. She has been invited to participate in over 100 national and international conferences and has published more than 60 articles in leading journals.

Her extensive scientific activity has also resulted in the publication of 17 books and 56 chapters in highly recognized works within her field.



Her most recent research areas include Communication, Digital Media-Art, Film, Visual Arts, Culture, and the Arts.

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NAY ARAÚJO

Nay Araújo is a producer, researcher, curator, and audiovisual creator with a PhD in Arts from the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) and over 15 years of experience in cultural and audiovisual production. Her work spans television (TV Globo, Fox Life), advertising, public cultural programs (SAV/Ministry of Culture), film exhibitions, and festivals. She founded and directs Cinema das Mulheres que Falam Português and wrote/directed the award-winning short *A Bacharel e o Presidente*. She was general producer of the feature film *Pasajeras* (2019), funded by Itaú Cultural.

In 2022, she joined the Cinedelas Project, leading audiovisual workshops for women in Brazil and Portugal. She is currently executive producer of the shorts *Curandeiras* and *Amores na Pasajen* (Paulo Gustavo Law), executive manager of Terras da Santa, and associate producer at Ñanduti Filmes, a women-led production company focused on feminist, border-crossing, and territory-based narratives.

PATRÍCIA NOGUEIRA

*I*ARTES*

*UNIVERSIDADE DA BEIRA
INTERIOR*

Patrícia Nogueira is a documentary filmmaker, a Professor of Film at the University of Beira Interior, and a researcher at i*Artes. She has been a Visiting Professor at institutions such as the Krzysztof Kieślowski Film School and the University of Texas at Austin. She began her career in the film industry in 2004, working in the production of narrative feature films, and since 2010 she has been working mostly in documentary film. Nogueira holds a Ph.D. in Digital Media under the UT Austin–Portugal international program and a Master's degree in Documentary Film and Photography. During 2015, she completed a residency at the National Film Board of Canada. She is a member of the Steering Committee of NECS and has served as a jury member for the Portuguese Film Fund and at various international film festivals.



ROSA CABECINHAS

Rosa Cabecinhas is professor at the Communication Sciences Department of the Social Sciences Institute and a researcher at the Communication and Society Research Centre (CECS), University of Minho. She has served as Head of the Communication Sciences Department, Head of the Master in Communication Sciences, and Head of the Doctoral Program in Cultural Studies. She was Vice-Chair of the COST Action IS 1205, titled “Social psychological dynamics of historical representations in the enlarged European Union.” Recently, she was Principal Investigator in an FCT-funded project “Migrations, media and activism in Portuguese language: decolonising mediascapes and imagining alternative futures”. Currently, she is Principal Investigator and Workpackage leader in a Horizon Europe funded project CONCILIARE - Confidently Changing Colonial Heritage.

Rosa Cabecinhas’ research interests include social memory, media, migrations, diversity, and social change.

ROSA MONTEIRO

FEUC AND CES

PhD in Sociology of the State, Law and Administration. Associate Professor at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Coimbra (FEUC) and Researcher at the Centre for Social Studies (CES-UC).

Her main research interests include gender inequalities in the labour market and in organizations; public policy analysis; gender inequalities in STEM and ICT; and pedagogies integrating a gender perspective in education. She served as Secretary of State for Citizenship and Gender Equality (2017–2022).

She coordinates WP2 of the Erasmus+ project STEM-GenderIN: A Bridge to Close the STEM Gap with Gender-Inclusive Education and Teaching and is the Principal Investigator of the project Women4Digital – Gender in the ICT Landscape in Portugal: What Place for Women?, funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT).



SÉRGIO BORDALO E SÁ

Assistant Professor and Coordinator of the Bachelor's Degree in Animation and Visual Creation at IADE (since Sept. 2025). Assistant Professor (Adjunct) at FMH (since Sept. 2025), where he previously held a postdoctoral research fellowship (2015–2019) and later served as Assistant Researcher (2019–2025). He is a member of the Board of Directors of INET-md, acting as coordinator of the unit's branch at FMH (since 2023), and also serves as Deputy Coordinator of CEAP (FMH) (since 2021). He holds a PhD in Artistic Studies – Film and Audiovisual Studies from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon (FLUL, 2013), a Master of Arts in Film Studies from The University of Iowa (2001), and a Bachelor's Degree in Communication Sciences from NOVA FCSH (1998). He was a research fellow at CRIA (2014) in a project on tourist films and currently investigates, among other areas of interest, the relationship between dance and cinema. He has also served as Invited Assistant Professor at the School of Arts and Design of the Polytechnic Institute of Leiria (2014) and at the School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal (2018/19), and has been a member of three FCT-funded research projects.



SÉRGIO DIAS BRANCO

Sérgio Dias Branco is an Associate Professor of Film Studies at the University of Coimbra, where he co-directs the PhD in Art Studies and coordinates LIPA - Laboratory for Investigating and Practicing Art. He is a researcher at CEIS20 - Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Coimbra. He has taught at Nova University of Lisbon and the University of Kent, where he was awarded a MA and a PhD in Film Studies. He was President of the Association of Moving Image Researchers between 2018 and 2020 and member of its Direction Board between 2014 and 2020. He co-edits *Conversations: The Journal of Cavellian Studies*. His latest books are *Cinema e Dialéctica: Uma Gramática Profunda* [Cinema and Dialectics: A Deep Grammar] (Página a Página, 2024) and *Exploring Film and Christianity: Movement as Immobility* (Routledge, 2024, co-edited with Rita Benis).



SHEILA KHAN

Sheilla Khan is a sociologist, Assistant Professor at Universidade Lusófona and researcher at CICANT; and panel commentator on the RDP África Debate program (<https://rdpafrica.rtp.pt/programa/debate-africano/>). Researcher on the the Conciliare project | Confidently Changing Colonial Heritage. Her research focuses on memory and postmemory, on the narratives of people of African descent, and on commitments to historical reparations and the duty of memory from a postcolonial and comparative perspective. Recent publications: Sheila Khan and Sandra Sousa, *Djaimília Pereira de Almeida: Tecelã de Mundos Passados e Presentes* (2023), (UMinho Publisher); Sheila Khan and Sandra Sousa (2026, in preparation), thematic volume, *Emerging Perspectives in Afro-Descendant Cultural Production: Memory, Identity and Global Diaspora*, Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies Journal.

VANESSA RIBEIRO- -RODRIGUES

*LUSÓFONA UNIVERSITY, CICANT,
PORTUGAL*

Vanessa Ribeiro-Rodrigues is a filmmaker and university professor in Cinema, Audiovisual Communication, and Journalism. She holds a PhD in Communication for Development, focusing on cinematic narratives and the humanization of stories. An integrated researcher at CICANT/Lusófona University, she specializes in documentary dramaturgy (EICTV, Cuba; AIC, Brazil). She directed *Land's Baptism* (2017) and *The Sand Spellbound* (2025), and co-directed *Feminisms: The Freedom to Be* (FEMglocal). She focuses on feminist activism, memory, and social change. She has lived in Brazil and Jordan. Recent projects include *The Seed Keepers* (Guinea-Bissau), a documentary on Makwa women (The Island of Mozambique), and *Women and Chronic Pain*.



ZARA PINTO-COELHO

Zara Pinto-Coelho is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences at the University of Minho. She obtained her PhD in Communication Sciences, specialising in Semiotics, from the University of Minho in 2003. She is a member of the Steering Committee of the Centre for Communication and Society Studies as PI of the research group 'Cultures, Arts and Communities'. She teaches in the areas of Discourse Studies, Image Studies and Sociology of Communication. She is co-coordinator of *Passeio - Platform for Urban Art and Culture* (CECS, University of Minho). Her research interests include discourse theories and their critical applications in Media Studies and Cultural Studies, on topics related to power, ideology, inequality and social injustice, for example, at the intersection of gender and heterosexuality, in public health, political participation and social movements. More recently, she has been interested in issues related to urban art and culture.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Dia 1 | Day 1 – 23/10 (Quinta-feira | Thursday)**09h00 - 9h30** - Acreditação | *Check-in & Registration***Sala | Room:** Salão Nobre**09h30 – 10h00** - Sessão de Abertura Oficial | *Official Opening Session***Sala | Room:** Salão Nobre**10h00 – 11h30** - Sessão Plenária | *Plenary Session (PT)***Sala | Room:** Salão Nobre**Pós-Memória e Coletividade: diálogos sobre Cinema, Identidade e Pertença****Keynotes:** Sheila Khan — Universidade Lusófona | CICANT - Centro de Investigação em Comunicação Aplicada, Cultura e Novas Tecnologias e Mirian Nogueira Tavares — Universidade do Algarve | CIAC - Centro de Investigação em Artes e Comunicação**Moderação | Chair:** Vanessa Ribeiro-Rodrigues**11h30 – 12h00** - Coffee break**Sala | Room:** Salão Nobre**12h00 – 13h00** - Workshop: Manual de Boas Práticas no Cinema em Ação (Bilíngue – PT & ENG) | Workshop: Good Practices Manual in Cinema in Action (Bilingual – PT & ENG) Ana Sofia Pereira e Camila LamartinePromovido pela/*Promoted by* MUTIM, XX Element Project e FEMglocalA participação é sujeita a inscrição. /*Participation is subject to registration.***Sala | Room:** Salão Nobre**13h00 – 14h30** - Pausa para almoço | *Lunch Break***14h30 – 16h00** - Sessão Paralela 1 | *Parallel Session 1***Panel 1 – Women Filmmakers & Feminist Histories (ENG)****Sala | Room:** 1.6**Moderação | Chair:** Sara N. Santos

Rafaela Schmidt — Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Porto (FLUP), Portugal

Authorial Traces in Chantal Akerman's Je, tu, il, elle (1974)

Mariana Bicudo Cunha — CEAUL/ULICES (University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies), Portugal

Lazarene: The Afterlife of Maya Deren, Cinema Pioneer

Kirsty Fairclough — Manchester Metropolitan University, England

Documenting Divas: Feminist Counter-Narratives in the Contemporary Female Pop Star Documentary

Painel 2 – Feminismos no Cinema e no Audiovisual: Corpo, Violência e Heroínas (PT)

Sala | Room: 1.9

Moderação | Chair: Camila Lamartine

Ana Saggese — Universidade de Brasília (UnB) / Universidade Nova de Lisboa (UNL), Portugal

Vigilância da Górgona

Beatriz Saldanha — Universidade Anhembi Morumbi / Sorbonne Université, Brasil

Figuras da mulher abjeta na “trilogia da condição feminina” da cineasta brasileira Ana Carolina

Catarina Bessa Rodrigues — CECS – Universidade do Minho, Portugal

Heroínas (Im)possíveis? Uma Análise Feminista das Personagens Femininas em *Wednesday*, (2022) *One Piece* (2023) e *The Rings of Power* (2022)

16h00 – 16h30 - *Coffee break* | Sala | Room: Salão Nobre

16h30 – 18h00 - Sessão Paralela 2 | *Parallel Session 2*

Panel 3 – Violence, Trauma & Ethics of Representation (ENG)

Sala | Room: 1.6

Moderação | Chair: Vanessa Ribeiro-Rodrigues

Najla Amanout — University of Düsseldorf, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Media and Culture Studies, Germany

Sexual Violence on Screen: Representations of Rape, Assault and Trauma in US-American and British Film and Television

Andreia Moreira de Almeida — Independent Researcher, Portugal;

Raquel da Silva — Universidade de Coimbra, Faculdade de Economia, Portugal

The Damsel in Distress and the Knight in Shining Armour: How Popular Culture Shapes Sex Trafficking Perceptions in Western Societies

Rita Alcaire — Centre for Social Studies (CES) & CEIS20, University of Coimbra, Portugal

Listening and Seeing Otherwise: Feminist Curatorship and the Politics of Testimony

Painel 4 – O Cinema e as Cineastas: Arquivo e Memória (PT)

Sala | Room: 1.9

Moderação | Chair: Luísa Sequeira

Maria Cristina Cavalcanti & Mirian Nogueira Tavares — Universidade do Algarve, Portugal;

Priscila Arantes — Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, Brasil

Montagem Anagramática: Temporalidades em Maya Deren

Cybelle Mendes — iArtes/FAL-UBI, Portugal

O Cinema da Dor – A Solidão em Frida

Ana Isabel Soares — Universidade do Algarve, Portugal

OENI: Objeto de Estudo Não Identificado

18h30 – 20h00 - Sessão de Cinema Documental / *Documentary Cinema Session*

Sala | Room: Salão Nobre

Filme | Film: *Feminismos: A Liberdade de Ser* | *Feminisms: The Freedom to be* (77, Portugal, 2025, FEMglocal) by Ana Sofia Pereira & Vanessa Ribeiro-Rodrigues

Exibição seguida de conversa com as realizadoras. Legendado em inglês.

Screening followed by a conversation with the directors. English subtitles provided.

Este filme foi desenvolvido no âmbito do projeto de investigação FEMglocal – Movimentos feministas glociais: interações e contradições (PTDC/COM-CSS/4049/2021 / DOI 10.54499/PTDC/COM-CSS/4049/2021), financiado por fundos nacionais através da FCT — Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P.

This film was developed within the scope of the research project FEMglocal - Glocal feminist movements: interactions and contradictions (PTDC/COM-CSS/4049/2021 / DOI 10.54499/PTDC/COM-CSS/4049/2021), supported by national funds through FCT — Foundation for Science and Technology, I.P.

Dia 2 | Day 2 – 24/10 (Sexta-feira | Friday)

09h30 – 11h00 - Sessão Plenária | *Plenary Session (PT)*

Sala | Room: Salão Nobre

Transforming Production Culture: Towards Social Sustainability in the Film Industry

Keynote: Skadi Loist — Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim, Norway

Moderação | Chair: Rita Capucho

11h00 – 11h30 - *Coffee break*

Sala | Room: Salão Nobre

11h30 – 13h00 - Sessão Paralela 3 | *Parallel Session 3*

Panel 5 – Cine, Género e Interseccionalidad (ESP)

Sala | Room: Sala de Atos

Moderação | Chair: Carla Cerqueira

Fabiene Araújo — Universidade de Aveiro, Centro de Línguas e Literaturas Culturais, Portugal

Las mujeres indígenas en el cine: descolonización, género y protagonismo audiovisual

Tana Garrido — Independent Researcher, Spain

Bendita Tú. Curating Transfeminist Cinema from the Margins

Lennon Macedo — Associação de Pesquisas e Práticas em Humanidades (Brasil) & Universidade da Beira Interior (Portugal)

Paul Preciado, teórico del cine

Panel 6 - Feminist Film Theories: Globalization and Performance (ENG)

Sala | Room: 0.7

Moderação | Chair: Patrícia Nogueira

Carlo Comanducci — Vistula University (Warsaw, Polónia)

The Inward Colony: Biocentric Terror and the Roots of Modern Patriarchy in The Devil's Bath

Faranak Nateghi — Filmeu University, Ireland

The Materiality of Female Veiling & Visual Space in Post-Revolutionary Iranian Cinema

Paulo Filipe Monteiro — ICNOVA / Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

The Trouble with Pina

13h00 – 14h30 - Pausa para almoço | *Lunch Break*

14h30 – 16h00 - Sessão Paralela 4 | *Parallel Session 4*

Painel 7 – Feminismos en el Cine y en el Audiovisual (ESP)

Sala | Room: Sala de Atos

Moderação | Chair: Mirian Nogueira Tavares

Claudia Ferrando-Paulo — Universitat Jaume I, Spain

Aftersun y el recuerdo encarnado: la nostalgia como resistencia en el cine de Charlotte Wells

Carolina Morales Morales — Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, Spain

Ser hija del caos: subjetividad femenina y trastorno bipolar en In My Skin

Lourdes Monterrubio Ibáñez — Pompeu Fabra University, Spain

El film-ensayo francófono europeo realizado por mujeres: Explorando el proceso de pensamiento audiovisual femenino

Painel 8 – Teorias Feministas: Memórias & Resistência (PT)

Sala | Room: 0.7

Moderação | Chair: Manuela Matos Monteiro

Ana Sofia Pereira, Vanessa Ribeiro-Rodrigues, Célia Taborda & Carla Cerqueira — Lusófona University, CICANT, Porto, Portugal

Ciência – Arte – Ação! “Feminismos, A Liberdade de Ser”, o documentário FEMglocal como estudo de caso

Ana Sofia Pereira — Lusófona University, CICANT, Portugal; Camila Lamartine — ICNOVA, NOVA University of Lisbon, Portugal; Célia Taborda & Carla Cerqueira — Lusófona University, CICANT, Portugal

Manual de Boas Práticas no Cinema e Audiovisual: Uma Ferramenta para a Igualdade de Género

Ana Sofia de Almeida — NOVA FCSH, Portugal

Memórias em Segunda Mão de Netas da Diáspora Portuguesa: Laranja no Bolso, Aerogramas e o Resto das Memórias, um documentário interativo

16h00 – 16h30 - *Coffee break*

Sala | Room: Salão Nobre

16h30 – 18h00 - Sessão Paralela 5 | *Parallel Session 5*

Panel 9 – Feminist Film Theories: Experimentation and Avant-Garde (ENG)

Sala | Room: Sala da Atos

Moderação | Chair: Ana Sofia Pereira

Kat Lawinia Gorska — Film historian and free curator, Berlin, Germany

Filming as Desire. Experimental Films by Dore O. Through the Lens of Claudine Eizykman's

Theory

Lara Thompson — Middlesex University, UK

*The Femme Vivante: She Won't Die, She Won't Shut Up and She Doesn't Want You to F** Her**

Zara Luna Hjelm — Stockholm University – Department of Ethnology, History of Religions, and Gender Studies, Sweden

Death of an Orphan: Reimagining Adoption, Kinship, and Grief through Cinema

Panel 10 – Feminist Film Theory & Gender Representation (ENG)

Sala | Room: 0.7

Moderação | Chair: Skadi Loist

Christopher Wolff — Concordia University, Canada

“Ripped off” – Vera’s trans femme representations during the “decade of the transsexual”

Helena de Martini Melo — University of Oslo, Norway

Visualizing Desire: Power, Violence, and Lesbian Subjectivity in Contemporary Female-Centered Cinema

Máiréad Casey — University of Galway, Ireland

Possessed Girl as Teen Witch: Intersectional Possession in Jennifer Reeder’s Perpetrator (2023)

Painel 11 – Feminismo e Representações no Cinema Português (PT)

Sala | Room: Salão Nobre

Moderação | Chair: Ana Isabel Soares

Margarida Laranjeira Rocha & Sahra Kunz — Escola das Artes da Universidade Católica Portuguesa do Porto, Portugal

Mulheres na Animação Portuguesa: Representação de género por autoras femininas

Patrícia Nogueira — Universidade da Beira Interior – iArtes, Portugal

Tornar o Invisível Visível: Reivindicações Feministas do Trabalho Invisível em Tão pequeninas, tinham o ar de serem já crescidas

Luísa Sequeira — Independent researcher and artist, Portugal

Transgressão e Memória: Um Ensaio Dialético entre Bárbara Virgínia e Jean Vigo

18h00 – 18h30 - Sessão de Encerramento | *Closing Session*

Sala | Room: Salão Nobre

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

MIRIAN NOGUEIRA TAVARES

Coordinator of the Research Centre in Arts and Communication (CIAC). She is also the Director of the Doctoral Programme in Digital Media-Art.

At the international level, she serves as Vice-President of the International Association for Computational Art (ARTECH-Int), a role she combines with other relevant positions at the national level.

She is a member of the curatorial team of the Portuguese Contemporary Art Network and Director of Rotura – Communication, Culture and Arts Journal.

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SHEILA KHAN

Sheilla Khan is a sociologist, Assistant Professor at Universidade Lusófona and researcher at CICANT; and panel commentator on the RDP África Debate program (<https://rdpafrica.rtp.pt/programa/debate-africano/>). Researcher on the the Conciliare project | Confidently Changing Colonial Heritage. Her research focuses on memory and postmemory, on the narratives of people of African descent, and on commitments to historical reparations and the duty of memory from a postcolonial and comparative perspective. Recent publications: Sheila Khan and Sandra Sousa, *Djaimília Pereira de Almeida: Tecelã de Mundos Passados e Presentes* (2023), (UMinho Publisher); Sheila Khan and Sandra Sousa (2026, in preparation), thematic volume, *Emerging Perspectives in Afro-Descendant Cultural Production: Memory, Identity and Global Diaspora*, Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies Journal.

SKADI LOIST

Skadi Loist (they/them) is Associate Professor of Film Studies at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim. Their research focuses on film festivals and circulation, digital methods, labor conditions, diversity, sustainability, and queer film culture. They have led major projects such as Film Circulation on the International Film Festival Network (BMBF, 2017–22) and Gender Equity Policy (GEP) Analysis (DFG/ESRC/SSHRC, 2021–24). Loist has published widely in leading journals and co-edited volumes including the textbook *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice* (Routledge, 2016). They co-founded the Film Festival Research Network and the European University Film Award, and serve on editorial boards, such as NECSUS, and in leadership roles in scholarly associations (NECS; SCMS; GfM).



ABSTRACTS

AUTHOR

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TITLE

“To hit a nerve: Eliane Caffé and Anna Muylaert”

KEYWORDS

Cinema of care; collectivity; narrative; identities; politics.

ABSTRACT

Through the analysis of the films of Brazilian directors Eliane Caffé and Anna Muylaert, I propose to discuss a creative process grounded in care and in respect for the other voices that emerge within the cinematographic discourse itself.

The incorporation of these voices—voices that influence the development of the script and the filmmaking process—does not, however, compromise the style or the authorial voice of each director.

The presence of interrelated narratives also does not relegate these productions to a peripheral position, whether in terms of distribution or reception. Each director constructs a web of relationships and affections that takes shape during the very act of filming—nourished by the immediacy of the surrounding reality in the case of Eliane Caffé, or matured over time in the case of Anna Muylaert.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This text examines the work, processes, and political dimensions of two Brazilian filmmakers—Eliane Caffé and Anna Muylaert—highlighting how their very distinct approaches ultimately converge in a shared commitment to destabilizing cinematic norms and reconfiguring the narrative possibilities available to marginalized subjects. By exploring their trajectories, creative methods, and key films, the discussion reveals how both directors challenge the cinematic dispositif—understood through Agamben’s expansion of Foucault’s term as a network of power, discourse, institutional structures, and technological practices. Their films interrogate and resist the hierarchies that define whose stories are told, how they are told, and who is allowed to appear on screen.

The text begins by situating cinema within the modern dispositif: not merely an industrial or technological machine, but a cultural, political, and narrative apparatus that reinforces hegemonic worldviews, often privileging Western, dominant-class perspectives. Within this system, “other cinemas”—women filmmakers, queer filmmakers, filmmakers of color, Global South cinemas—are often relegated to marginal, festival-bound circuits. Their works tend to be isolated on shelves of “identity cinema,” where they circulate within restricted audiences already attuned to their themes. This creates both visibility and confinement. Against this background of structural constraints and epistemic inequalities, Caffé and Muylaert work to “trouble the device from within,” using the industry’s own mechanisms—funding calls, prize money, hybrid production structures—while resisting the aesthetic, thematic, and ideological expectations imposed upon them.

Eliane Caffé: Collective Creation and the Ethics of Listening

Eliane Caffé’s path into cinema began not through formal training but through field research, which shaped her filmmaking ethos. Her early academic background in psychology at PUC-SP and her first professional experience—researching the lives of striptease performers in São Paulo’s Boca do Lixo district—anchored her practice in immersive observation, collaboration, and openness to the other. Later studies at the renowned Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión in Cuba deepened her commitment to socially engaged film.

From her early shorts to features like *Kenoma* (1998), *Narradores de Javé* (2003), and *Era o Hotel Cambridge* (2016), Caffé centers peripheral realities, blending fiction with documentary sensibilities. Her approach relies on an extensive pre-production phase, where she and her team immerse themselves in real communities, establish affective relationships, and collaboratively shape the script. This method supports a cinema that is not imposed from above but co-authored with the people who appear onscreen.

In *Narradores de Javé*, Caffé uses a diegetic narrator to relativize truth and foreground multiple perspectives. The film becomes a meta-narrative about storytelling itself: a community facing the imminent flooding of their town must produce a written history to prove its cultural value and prevent its erasure. In doing so, they reveal the tension between memory, fiction, and the power dynamics embedded in literacy and authorship. Caffé’s interest lies not in sentimentalizing poverty but in high-

lighting the creative agency of marginalized communities.

The methodology developed in *Narradores* evolves further in *Era o Hotel* Cambridge, where the line between fiction and documentary dissolves. Filmed inside a real building occupied by homeless families, immigrants, and refugees, the project grew through dramaturgy workshops, participatory research, and the presence of the crew living alongside residents for two years. The building itself, as Caffé emphasizes, was not a constructed set but a social world already in motion. The script became a flexible map: a structure that allowed the unexpected to shape the final narrative. This produced a “cinema of reciprocity,” where the filmmaking process intertwines with collective struggle and community-building. Through this process, Caffé’s cinema becomes a counter-dispositif, repairing the invisibility imposed by institutional and narrative hierarchies.

Anna Muylaert: Rewriting History Through Intimacy, Motherhood, and Social Critique

Anna Muylaert’s approach differs in form but shares with Caffé a commitment to rethinking social structures through narrative. Trained at the University of São Paulo’s School of Communication and Arts, Muylaert developed a career through film criticism, television writing, and short films before releasing her first feature, *Durval Discos* (2002), which earned critical acclaim and awards.

Her most internationally recognized film, *Que Horas Ela Volta?* (*The Second Mother*, 2015), emerged from a 20-year writing process that traces her evolving understanding of motherhood, class, and domestic labor in Brazil. The spark for the film came in 1996, when Muylaert became a mother and began reflecting on the lives of domestic workers—women who raise the children of wealthier families while leaving their own children to be cared for by relatives or neighbors. What begins as a personal question (“How can a mother leave her child?”) becomes a broader inquiry into structural inequality, colonial legacies, and the normalized hierarchy embodied in the Brazilian household.

Over two decades, the script underwent multiple transformations. Early versions leaned toward magical realism and emphasized the dual roles of the maid as both subservient worker and spiritual leader. But Muylaert felt unprepared to film that version. As Brazil underwent political and social changes—particularly policies that expanded access to higher education for marginalized groups—the film’s narrative possibilities expanded as well. By 2015, the context allowed Muylaert to craft an ending that was both realistic and politically resonant: the daughter of a domestic worker entering a public

university, disrupting the entrenched cycle of servitude.

The film’s original title, *The Kitchen Door*, captures its central metaphor. The kitchen door marks the invisible yet rigid barrier separating the spaces and identities within the elite household: those who belong and those who serve. Val, played masterfully by Regina Casé, knows not to cross that threshold. But her daughter Jéssica does. She sits at the family’s dining table, befriends the employers’ son, and claims rights previously denied to her by social custom. Her academic success—contrasted with the employers’ son’s failure—reveals the cracks in Brazil’s class system. Muylaert intentionally rejected miraculous or exceptionalist endings; Jéssica would not become a celebrity or marry a rich man. Instead, she would achieve something socially transformative yet realistically attainable: higher education.

The film culminates with Val entering the forbidden swimming pool, calling her daughter to celebrate her university admission. This final act of transgression—playful, emotional, symbolic—signifies both maternal pride and personal liberation. It also highlights the deep epistemic violence suffered by generations of domestic workers, whose worlds were confined to the kitchen door. Muylaert “troubles History” by imagining, and making visible, a future in which these women and their children can cross thresholds once considered inviolable.

Two Processes, One Shared Political Gesture

While their methods diverge—Caffé’s collaborative, open-ended structures versus Muylaert’s more traditional, introspective, iterative rewriting—both filmmakers pursue cinema as a political act rooted in narrative ethics. Caffé constructs films in conversation with communities, treating filmmaking as social practice. Muylaert constructs films through long-term reflection, rewriting narratives as Brazil’s historical conditions shift. Yet both aim to amplify voices historically silenced within the cinematic dispositif.

In both cases, narrative becomes a form of salvation—a means of preserving memory, resisting erasure, and enabling transformation. Their films circulate inside and outside festival circuits, touching audiences who recognize themselves in these stories and those who must learn to see differently. Ultimately, Caffé and Muylaert show that cinema, when practiced with attentiveness and ethical imagination, is not merely a form of representation but a mode of negotiation—with communities, with history, and with time itself. Through their work, they call into question the hierarchies embedded in the act of filmmaking and propose new ways of producing, seeing, and inhabiting stories.

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TITLE

“Transforming Production Culture:
Towards Social Sustainability in the
Film Industry”

KEYWORDS

Social sustainability; film industry; inequalities; new work; #MeToo; gender equity

ABSTRACT

The film industry continues to be shaped by precarious labor, rigid hierarchies, and systemic discrimination. Despite heightened debates around #MeToo, power abuse, and diversity deficits over the past decade, recent political shifts threaten hard-won progress on equity and solidarity. As a result, the deeper production culture that enables these inequalities often remains unchallenged.

This keynote positions production culture as a key site of gendered and intersectional exploitation in film labor, where self-exploitation, project-based precarity, and patriarchal notions of genius persist. Drawing on findings from the international project Gender Equity Policy (GEP) Analysis (Germany/UK/Canada), I examine how policies, practices, and norms constrain equitable industry structures. Combining policy analysis, industry interviews, quantitative data, and social network approaches, this research reveals both the limits of current interventions and the potential of systemic reforms that move beyond individual blame.

At the same time, I highlight alternative practices—ranging from queer independent productions to sector-connecting initiatives such as the Fair Film Award and the OMNI Inclusion data monitoring project—that demonstrate concrete strategies for transforming production culture. Extending the analysis across the film value chain, from production through circulation and exhibition, I show how inequities permeate film schools, professional training, and festival infrastructures.

Ultimately, I argue for structural change that foregrounds intersectional solidarity, collective responsibility, and social sustainability. By situating production cultures within feminist and intersectional frameworks, this talk reimagines the film industry not as a site of individual competition, but as a collective project committed to equity and sustainability.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, the film industry has faced mounting pressures to transform—from within and without. Movements such as #MeToo (2017), #TimesUp, #5050x2020, #OscarsSoWhite, and #BlackLivesMatter, along with the Covid-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, and technological disruptions, such as the “streaming wars” and AI, have collectively exposed deep-seated inequities in production cultures. What has emerged is a growing consensus that the industry’s sustainability challenge is not only environmental but profoundly social.

This keynote presentation positions production culture itself as the key site where inequalities are reproduced and, potentially, transformed. Production culture encompasses not only the material organization of creative work but also the symbolic frameworks, affective investments, and everyday practices that shape film labor. Through this lens, gender, race, class, and sexuality are not external social variables but structuring

forces within production systems. Drawing on findings from the Gender Equity Policy (GEP) Analysis Project (Germany, UK, Canada) and complementary research across European and Nordic film sectors, the talk argues that transforming production culture toward social sustainability requires systemic—not merely individual—change.

I. The Need for Transformation

Across diverse contexts, the screen industries exhibit enduring inequalities. Research from Germany, the UK, Canada, and the Nordic region demonstrates that women and gender-diverse professionals remain underrepresented in leadership and permanent positions, while racialized and disabled workers face compounded barriers (European Audiovisual Observatory 2025; FFA 2017; Loist 2018; Loist et al. 2024). The GEP Analysis Project (Loist et al. 2024) has mapped policy developments since 2013 and found notable increas-

es in equity initiatives but limited impact on collaboration patterns or hiring practices. Gains for women and gender minorities do not disadvantage men, yet homophily—the preference for working with those who resemble oneself—continues to structure access. True transformation must therefore address representation not only numerically, but relationally, and qualitatively: equity cannot be achieved by counting and adding participants alone without altering the networks and norms through which production operates.

Parallel to gender inequities, racism and racial discrimination remain under-addressed, particularly in European contexts. While movements such as #BlackLivesMatter have prompted renewed debates around white privilege and colonial legacies, data collection on race remains limited due to GDPR restrictions and Germany's specific historical sensitivities around the category "Rasse." Consequently, systemic inequities affecting Black and People of Color (BPoC) filmmakers—lower rates of permanent employment and lower overall earnings—are often invisible.

The Vielfalt im Film study (2020), based on responses from over 6,000 industry professionals, highlights discrimination and harassment as structural issues in the German film industry. Key findings include that 81% of cis women experienced sexual harassment within two years, around 40% of LGBTQIA+ workers conceal their identities due to career fears, and Black, PoC, and disabled workers face systemic barriers in hiring, retention, and pay. Notably, 70% of those affected do not report incidents, reflecting a broad mistrust in institutional responses. The study concludes that discrimination is not an individual problem but a structural feature of the film industry.

Power, Precarity, and Access

As Caldwell (2006, 127) notes, production culture is often shaped by a "military-identity complex," reproducing autocratic hierarchies and valorizing sacrifice. The industry's project-based gig economy amplifies these power dynamics through precarious, seasonal, and opaque employment (Verhoeven et al. 2024; Fair Film Award). Ideologies of "labor of love" (Basten 2016) and "aspirational labor" (Caldwell 2023) mask exploitation by framing overwork as passion.

Access to the industry is equally uneven. Film schools operate as "pre-industries" where collaboration norms are formed and networks consolidated (Banks 2019). These networks privilege insiders through nepotism, class privilege, and homogeneity—"picking someone who looks and talks like them" (FFA 2017; NFI 2025). The result is a self-perpetuating lack of diversity across generations.

Amid these human inequities, the industry also faces ecological responsibility. The Sustainable Production Alliance (2021) calls for integrating green production standards, yet environmental and social sustainability must be pursued jointly rather than in competition.

II. Social Sustainability

Whereas ecological sustainability has been formalized through green certification schemes, social sustainability remains conceptually diffuse. Following Ross (2013: 2245), it denotes a state of well-being and justice achieved when social, economic, and environmental systems promote intergenerational equity and reciprocal, non-exploitative relations. In the context of film production, social sustainability involves reorganizing creative labor to foster equality, care, and collective accountability rather than competition and endurance.

A socially sustainable production culture integrates gender, diversity, and environmental efforts; institutes clear accountability mechanisms; and continuously monitors progress with room for adjustment. It calls for long-term, systemic change that integrates rather than prioritizes isolated initiatives (e.g., gender or race or green policies). It demands accountability mechanisms, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and openness to readjustment when goals are not met. Importantly, no "one-size-fits-all" solution exists; policies must be context-specific and intersectional. This framework reframes the industry not merely as an economic field but as a social infrastructure whose values—collaboration, well-being, and justice—determine its long-term viability.

III. Transforming Production Culture: Research Insights and Best Practices

The challenge ahead is how to translate policy awareness into practice—how to move from documenting inequities to transforming the cultural logics of production.

1. Networked Inequalities and the GEP Analysis

The GEP Analysis Project employed social-network analysis to map collaboration patterns across national film sectors (Loist et al. 2024; Jones, Dadlani & Verhoeven 2024). Findings reveal that men dominate all three national industries studied, both in numbers and in network centrality. Their preference for working with other men cannot be explained solely by familiarity but by structural homophily. Consequently, interventions focusing exclusively on "key creatives" (writers, directors, producers) are limited, since this elite segment represents only a small and internally homogeneous node within a much larger system.

Because film production often operates on “one-and-done” employment patterns—short-term projects with no continuity—most participants lack opportunities to build social capital or advance through repeated collaborations. To alter this, policies must address not only numerical representation but also relational connectivity: who works with whom, how often, and under what conditions.

Network simulations demonstrate that even small interventions can yield significant effects:

- Assigning newcomer women or gender-minority professionals to projects with established male teams (mentored integration) can broaden access.
- Banning all-male creative teams (“men-only projects”) disrupts exclusionary circuits but is insufficient without structural support.
- Creating new cross-gender, cross-hierarchy connections has the largest positive impact on network openness.

The study thus reframes gender equity as a network problem, requiring connective strategies rather than isolated diversity targets.

2. Emerging Initiatives and Tools

New data infrastructures make inequality measurable and actionable. DIAMOND (UK Creative Diversity Network) and The Everyone Project (Australia) collect granular diversity data to inform policy. The OMNI Inclusion Data initiative (MOIN Film Fund in Hamburg, Germany) pilots self-identification metrics extending beyond binary gender and “key-creative” roles. Such tools enable comparative monitoring across production chains while respecting privacy and self-definition.

Transformative change also requires education and accountability. Training programs should not rely on emotional labor from marginalized groups but function as industry-wide standards. Platforms that exchange best practices between guilds, unions, and festivals foster shared responsibility. Complementary incentive schemes—such as the Fair Film Award and Fair Festival Award—reward productions with equitable contracts, transparent budgeting, and reasonable working hours, reinforcing collective rather than individual ethics.

3. Rethinking Work and Value

Transforming production culture means redefining what counts as professional success. As Deutschlandfunk (2022) observed, “glamour is not enough anymore.” The industry must move toward “normal” working hours—forty-hour weeks instead of ten-hour days—

and experiment with four-day week models already tested in Denmark. The aim is to modify the conditions that exclude marginalized groups rather than “fix” the individuals missing from the system.

These shifts align with “New Work” paradigms emphasizing creativity through well-being, autonomy, and balance. Initiatives such as MUTIM provide institutional resources to understand, prevent, and address harassment. Embedding such support transforms inclusion from a reactive gesture into structural practice.

4. Alternative Production Cultures

Emergent queer and intersectional collectives illustrate viable alternatives. Filmmakers such as Faraz Shariat & Jünglinge Film, Tucké Royale & Johannes Maria Schmit, and Merle Grimme exemplify a new German queer production culture built on collaboration, transparency, and care. Publications like *I See You: Gedanken zum Film Futur Drei* (Molt and Berndt 2020) and *Royale* (2022)’s Living Diversity keynote articulate inclusive creative methodologies that merge political commitment with aesthetic innovation. The “Clashing Differences” concept paper (Grimme 2025) extends these practices toward collective manifestos for equitable co-production.

Such independent, community-driven models demonstrate that transformative production cultures are already being practiced, albeit in marginal spaces. Institutional recognition and funding support are needed to translate these ethics into mainstream industry norms.

IV. Conclusion: Collective Change for Social Sustainability

Sustainable transformation requires collective, long-term commitment across three interlinked dimensions:

1. Policy Change: Integrate diversity and environmental goals within funding frameworks; enforce accountability through transparent evaluation.
2. Industry Standards: Institutionalize fair-work principles—standardized contracts, intimacy and inclusion coordinators, green consultants—to normalize accountability.
3. Cultural Shift: Redefine professionalism around care, cooperation, and solidarity rather than hierarchy and endurance.

Transforming production culture is thus not an optional reform but a structural necessity for the film industry’s creative and ethical survival. Only through reciprocal, non-exploitative relationships can the sector achieve social sustainability—a balance of artistry, fairness, and accountability that endures across generations.

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TITLE

“URO: Unidentified Research Object”

KEYWORDS

Biography, Women filmmakers, Portuguese cinema, Portuguese documentary, Autobiographical documentary, Archive

ABSTRACT

Maria Isabel Canto da Maia (1944-2022) was born in Lisbon, the daughter of the renowned sculptor Ernesto Canto da Maia (1890-1981) and Vera Wladimirovna Pouritz (1905-1977), whom he married in his second union. Descended from one of the oldest and wealthiest families of São Miguel, the main island of the Azores, Maria Canto da Maia spent most of her life abroad in France, England, and Italy. She was a photographer, filmmaker, and stage and film actress. In Italy during the 1980s, she worked with avant-garde theater companies, directed experimental and documentary films between the 1970s and 1990s, and appeared as an actress or extra in films by James Ivory and Federico Fellini. Her visibility was brief yet luminous – insular, fleeting – and she vanished without ever truly revealing herself.

Despite the privileges she enjoyed, the story of Maria Canto da Maia's life and her creative legacy remain

elusive. One of the aims of this research, which begins by reconstructing the main coordinates of her biography, is to revisit the history of Portuguese cinema made by women, especially around the period of the April 1974 Revolution. It is the task of posterity to recover the memory of one of the few women who filmed in Portugal after the revolution, one whose trajectory diverged from those of Monique Rutler, Margarida Gil, Manuela Serra, Noémia Delgado, Solveig Nordlund, or Margarida Cordeiro – among the few who took their place behind the camera in the 1970s.

Maria Canto da Maia's path appears to have been multiple, marked by hesitations and detours. It is still perceived as unfinished. Retrieving her historical presence entails another goal: to reflect on the very possibility of historical recovery, that of a work and that of a creator. How can part of the past be reclaimed when its protagonist remains the most obscure element within it? How to do so when the scattered traces of a life yield not a coherent biography but a sequence of questions and doubts?

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Maria Isabel Canto da Maia (1944-2022) was born in Lisbon, the daughter of the famous sculptor Ernesto Canto da Maia (1890–1981, whose sculpture *The Kiss* is on display here at the Soares dos Reis Museum) – himself a descendant of one of the wealthiest and oldest families of São Miguel Island, in the Azores – and of the Russian expatriate Vera Wladimirovna Patroff Pouritz (1905-1977), whom he met in Switzerland and married in his second marriage. Although her parents lived mostly in Lisbon and in the Azorean Island of São Miguel, Maria Canto da Maia spent most of her life outside Portugal, in Paris, England, Italy, and the United States. She was a creative spirit who produced work as a photographer, filmmaker, and was an actress both on the stage and in films. In the decades between 1970 and 1992, she directed experimental and documentaries and collaborated as an actress or extra in works by James Ivory and Federico Fellini; meanwhile, in the 1980s she incorporated avant-garde theatre companies in Italy, while writing and publishing short manifests and reflections in France. She enjoyed a brief

and brilliant, though insular, moment of visibility, and then vanished without ever truly revealing herself to posterity.

Despite the privileges to which Maria Canto da Maia had access, the story of her life and of what she may have left as creative work is not easily available to posterity. Thus, among the main objectives of this research, which must begin by firmly establishing the main landmarks of Isabel Canto da Maia's biography, one of the consequences I pursue is that of revisiting the history of Portuguese cinema made by women, particularly during the period around the 25th of April 1974. It is the task of present researchers to revise and recover the memory of one of the few Portuguese women who worked in film before and after the revolution, one whose trajectory diverged from those of other female creators who are acknowledged, such as Monique Rutler, Margarida Gil, Manuela Serra, Noémia Delgado, Solveig Nordlund, or Margarida Cordeiro (to mention some of the women who, in Portugal, stood

behind the camera in the 1970s, and not forgetting the many women who worked in film at large since the birth of cinema).

Isabel Canto da Maia's path seems to have been multiple, filled with hesitations and detours; it is still, nowadays, perceived as incomplete. The historical recovery of this figure entails another purpose: to reflect on the very possibility of historical recovery – in this particular case, the recovery of a work and of a creator, with an eye set on historical revision. How can one recuperate part of the past when its protagonist inhabits, seeming to have thrust herself willingly, within it, into obscure corners of posterity? How can this task be fulfilled when the proliferation of traces of this creator's life does not result in a coherent biographical path, but rather in a succession of doubts and questions?

In *Production of Presence*, Hans Gumbrecht theorizes how different media (or, different "materialities") influence the meaning they convey (2010: 32). The possibility of approaching materialities as vehicles of meaning is reinforced by the concept of "production of presence," which results from the interplay of media within a communicative process. For Gumbrecht, the notion of presence is, first and foremost, spatial – it embodies an inescapable feature of what is perceptible and tangible. Tangibility, the effect of the production of presence, arises from materialities, from communicative supports. Being primarily spatial, the process of producing presence is by nature, and to an equal degree, temporal. Yet both time and space (here measured in relation to those who seek to perceive and recognize meanings arising from mediatic combinations) are subject to approaches and distances, whether physical or metaphorical (cf. Gumbrecht 2010: 38-39).

The trajectory of these materialities in the search for a character, for an identity, involves considering several categories of materials: photographs and films, first of all, but also unexpected objects – for instance, a 1904 novel written by Ana Bicudo, aunt of Ernesto Canto da Maia and one of those responsible for the artistic encouragement of the sculptor, as well as postcards of views of Ponta Delgada that she collected, probably with the intention of illustrating the novel. By cross-referencing scattered information, I found that Alice Moderno (1867-1946), editor, author, and translator, published 100 copies of that novel by Ana Bicudo, titled *Anna de Stralsund*. These details, though not directly related to Marie Canto da Maia, help to illuminate the deeply creative cultural and artistic environment of the family in which she grew up and was educated.

For Margarida Medeiros, revisiting archives is a process that may "underlie the construction of contemporary identity, for which the possibility of connection

to a past, to an intertwining of memories, seems increasingly important" (2016: 12). Identity is, therefore, a dynamic of construction rather than reconstruction – to summon the past does not rebuild it but enables its continuous and repeated construction in the present. But what, then, remains in the present of that past glimpsed in the archives, which appears and reappears time and again?

From these theoretical questions and considerations, and through qualitative methodologies and critical interpretation of bibliographic references, I deepen the reflection on the research I conduct around Isabel Canto da Maia – an evoked presence of a past that different materialities simultaneously reveal and conceal, in a narrative where the biographical figure seems constantly to elude grasp.

Although I have access to an immense photographic archive, to numerous and diverse filmic records dated between 1972 and 1991, and to more or less reliable information (from printed publications to conversations with relatives) about her creative biography as filmmaker and actress, this abundance and diversity of elements do not necessarily result in the possibility of reconstructing what I seek to know. How, then, can one arrive at the meaning of this creator, when her presence must emerge from a montage of composite elements – not necessarily historical or verifiable – anchored in a present that must, by necessity, ignore the urge to re-present a certain past, in order to finally arrive at a biographical narrative?

Isabella Kent was the name Isabel Canto da Maia used on the presentation sheet for the documentary about her father, which she began filming during his lifetime and presented at the Portuguese Cinematheque in 1991, ten years after the sculptor's death. The filmmaker used variations of these names to sign other film works (how many might she have made?). To know the rich material legacy of this creator – uncertain and dispersed, markedly photographic but not only – is a challenge that often belongs more to the realm of fabulation than to that of historical reconstruction. The set of speculative gestures that question genealogical, historical, and methodological concepts may well be the only path toward understanding who Isabel Canto da Maia was.

In the 1930s, the motto of the World Center for Women's Archives – in a positivist attitude toward historical epistemology – claimed that without documents there is no history. The case of Maria Isabel Canto da Maia suggests the right to history, even when documentation does not sustain it. It also suggests the possibility of constructing an identity, of elaborating a trajectory legitimately integrable into the history of Portuguese

cinema – a field that is forever unstable, permanently moving – of forming, in all, a portrait in constant re-examination.

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TITLE

"Gorgon's vigilance"

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Medusa; gender-based violence;
women's body; witch hunt; Anita Ro-
cha da Silveira.

ABSTRACT

The film *Medusa*, by Anita Rocha da Silveira (2021), gives us a pretext to think about the relationships between women's bodies and gender violence in Brazilian public spaces, nowadays. An evangelical dystopian narrative featuring a girl gang made of "beautiful and demure housewives" who assault other women for their "deviant" behaviors. Inspired by the guidelines of late capitalism and Christian fundamentalism, a power fight based on vigilance and punishment of these bodies is born.

Echoing Silvia Federici, in *Caliban and the Witch* (2014), the analysis revisits the Greek myth of Medusa, and its current relevance. We also resort to Michel Foucault and Sayak Valencia to consider the relationship between body and power nowadays. The method used is Michel Foucault's archaeology of knowledge.

Anita Rocha da Silveira uses horror as both reproach and irony toward the normalization of women's bodies in Brazilian society. The witch hunt reappears in new forms, restricting and controlling women's bodies.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The filmmaker Anita Rocha da Silveira read a series of articles in the newspaper about young girls who would go out into the streets to punish others who displayed "deviant" behavior. This attitude was a way to set an example for those who did not live within the strict morality of neo-Pentecostalist Christianity. The purpose of this evangelical gang was not only to frighten, but also disfigure the faces of the "sinners."

At the same time, the carioca director found many evangelical YouTubers on the internet who preached a moralizing discourse against feminism, promoted submission to men, and emphasized the idealized female body. Everything was shown with pop imagery and high-quality technological resources.

This attitude revealed the rise of ultraconservatism in Brazil's major cities. Based on her research, Anita began to script the film *Medusa*, critically examining the growing neo-Pentecostal movement that was becoming increasingly prominent across Brazil.

In the film, the character Mari is a young, black evangelical woman who strives to fit into the strict environment of the church and become the "perfect" woman. Her always-straightened hair, carefully maintained skin, pastel-toned makeup and clothing all reflect an ideal of modesty and docility, as expected of women devoted to their homes and husbands.

One day, Mari leaves the church and finds a freer, more empathetic world, where the body can express itself with The filmmaker Anita Rocha da Silveira read a series of articles in the newspaper about young girls who would go out into the streets to punish others who displayed "deviant" behavior. This attitude was a way to set an example for those who did not live within the strict morality of neo-Pentecostalist Christianity. The purpose of this evangelical gang was not only to frighten, but also disfigure the faces of the "sinners."

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devoted to their homes and husbands.

One day, Mari leaves the church and finds a freer, more empathetic world, where the body can express itself without so much repression and control. After this contact, she begins to change and pulls herself away from the church. According to Anita, the film is an adaptation of the Greek myth of Medusa for contemporary Brazil. Thus, what does the Greek myth say?

Medusa was a virgin, chaste and beautiful woman, with gorgeous hair, who lived in Athena's Temple. Her beauty drew men from all over the place to the temple. They would not bring offerings, they would rather watch Medusa—which infuriated Athena.

One of these men was the god Poseidon, Athena's uncle, who never got along with his niece. In fact, both had held a longstanding grudge, ever since Athena defeated Poseidon in a contest to determine who would become the city's patron deity.

Poseidon was at the temple every single day to court Medusa, who dodged his advances. Tired of being refused and "overcome by passion," Poseidon rapes the priestess in Athena's temple. Enraged, Athena punished Medusa—after all, Poseidon was merely following his "male instincts," and the "guilty one" was the alluring priestess.

Athena transformed Medusa into a monster, with snakes for hair, a body covered in scales, and tusks like a wild boar. The curse decreed that anyone who looked at her would turn to stone, condemning her to utter solitude.

Banished from the temple, she sought refuge in a cave. Soon, warriors began to visit the place, hoping to confront her and take her head as a weapon. Perseus, a demigod, was compelled to decapitate Medusa—if he failed, the king would rape his mother.

Wearing a helmet that made him invisible and holding a sword, Perseus beheaded Medusa. With her bloody head in his hands, Perseus turned his enemies into stone, which made him the winner of many battles.

A drop of the gorgon's blood touched the water and, suddenly, a white foam spread across the surface. From it, a beautiful white winged horse emerged—Pegasus, born from the union between Poseidon and Medusa.

Mechanics of the Destruction

Silvia Federici, in *Caliban and the Witch* (2014), argues that the brutal persecution of women was marked by

the birth of capitalism, during which a radical transformation of the world and a downgrading of the female social position were established. This new mechanism served to deprive women of their practices, forcing them to submit to patriarchal control, destroying their knowledge of nature.

The creation of the "witch" as a demonic figure played a central role in the harsh control over women. Capitalism dismantled communal land labor systems and imposed a division of labor by gender, stripping women of autonomy, bodily rights, and their traditional knowledge.

For capitalism to prosper, it was necessary to subjugate "rebellious" female bodies. Women were dispossessed in almost every aspect: financially, physically, imaginatively, and socially. Their unpaid labor became a tool for the primitive accumulation of capital.

To subjugate them, a mechanism of power based on violence and persecution was created, the Witch Hunts. Medusa, the film, shows how these practices of controlling women—especially by disciplining their bodies and desires—are still active today.

Mexican historian Sayak Valencia, in her analysis of contemporary capitalism in border countries like Brazil and Mexico, coined the term *gore capitalism* to describe spaces where necropolitics and drug dealing occur—a context in which Brazil is included. Within this economic and social order, subjectivities are shaped to create monstrous subjects, which Valencia named *endriagos*.

Endriago is a mythological monster that devoured virgins, and Sayak Valencia compares it to a subject shaped by precarious economic conditions who employs extreme violence to find a place in society. Much like *gore cinema*—a genre that takes its name from extreme violence, which inspired Valencia's coined term—*gore capitalism* feeds on blood and bodies, producing militia members, drug dealers, and criminals who resort to kidnapping, organ trafficking, torture, contract killing, and other forms of human annihilation. Among these, femicide stands out.

We consider that the characters in the film *Medusa* fit into this context: women who enact violence in the streets of a dystopian city, which could refer to any major city in Brazil. They go out masked at night to cleanse the city of sin. The use of the horror genre in the film reflects this ultraviolence that escapes our understanding.

For these Christian women, the street is the domain of evil. A respectable woman does not walk alone. Thus,

to be alone on the street at night is to fall under suspicion. Our characters are always at the window, binoculars in hand, surveilling the urban space beyond the confines of the church and home.

These “angels” perform a continuous control of the body aimed at normalization. That is why the film repeatedly shows wheat-paste posters on the walls with messages like “Watch and pray,” as well as images of serpents alluding to the original sin committed by Eve.

Conclusions

The film *Medusa*, with its imagery rich in meaning, helps us to reflect on the relationship between women’s body and gender-based violence in Brazilian public spaces. Although set in an evangelical dystopia, with its gang of beautiful and fierce girls, it shows that reality and fiction feed into each other.

When the world becomes heavy and hard to understand, fiction can be a symbolic way to face Medusa and avoid being petrified by horror. *Medusa*, the film, offers this contribution; for this reason, these images touch us so deeply and help us to understand the contemporary.

The mythological Medusa, much like Sayak’s endriago, is a monster who turns into stone all who look upon her. Yet it is also from Medusa’s blood that Pegasus is born—a winged creature who, with a strike of its hoof on Mount Helicon, causes a fountain of pure water to spring forth. The image seems to suggest that, in order to become lighter and freer beings, we must fight against the mechanisms of power that inflict violence upon us all.

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TITLE

"Secondhand Memories of Granddaughters from the Portuguese Diaspora, an interactive documentary: Orange in the Pocket, Aerograms, and the Rest of Memories"

KEYWORDS

Autoethnography, Anarchiving, Archival Romance, Interactive Documentary, Memory Work, Portuguese Diaspora, Practice-based Research

ABSTRACT

Orange in the Pocket, Aerograms, and the Rest of Memories, an interactive documentary, is the outcome of a practice-based research framework for a PhD. This practice-research encompasses and intersects phenomenology, affect theory, theater, and feminist theories. The methodologies incorporating autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), archival romance (Marks, 2017), memory work (Kuhn, 2002), and anarchiving (Massumi, 2016) establish the foundation for interweaving creative and critical viewpoints. By examining the methods used to mine family archives for the montage and design of an interactive documentary, this approach emphasizes the importance of an interplay between affective and reflexive perspectives. The creative process and gestures that explore memories from the Portuguese diaspora weave the fragmented nature of four families' archives with the fallibility of oral migratory remembrances, disrupting the family archives into dialogue and multiple perspectives. Moreover, the reconfigured archival elements in the interactive documentary create a new form that is open to our senses and sensibilities.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

When delving into personal migratory recollections and extracts from "generational acts of story-telling about prior histories of movement and dislocation" (Ahmed, 1999, p. 342), individual bodies and voices resonate with a collective sphere. This practice-based research (Candy, 2022) explores secondhand memories, ranging from my family's migration memories to those of other granddaughters, on the intergenerational transmission and reception of their family's migratory journeys and archives. In fact, this approach began with the encounter with my maternal family's archives and the fragmented memories of my grandparents' migration from Portugal to Canada in 1957, prompting the pursuit of additional recollections and archival traces of migration to investigate themes of self, dislocation, and family memory. Amid autoethnography and collaborative autoethnography methodologies (Chang et al., 2013), I am gathering oral memories, domestic footage, and personal objects within a phenomenological and feminist theoretical framework. This investigation's scope encompasses four secondhand accounts from Portuguese descendants and aims to map migrant experiences from the 1950s and the 1970s. Together with the descendants, we are excavating mnemonic materials in the present moment, activating and rendering visible individual experiences transmitted across generations, along with their materialities and imagery, thereby fostering a sense of polyphony and multiple perspectives. This abstract outlines the intersection of creative pathways and critically reflects on how prac-

tical interventions reshape the recontextualization of archival materials and audible testimonies within this interactive documentary practice. It underscores the creative process involving family archives and the descendants' oral recollections through the reconfiguration of text, sound, voices, memories, handwriting, analog photographs, and home movies, thus bridging these haptic elements with aesthetic and ethical dimensions.

The acts of memory work, inspired by scholar Annette Kuhn's, facilitate the reinterpretation and appropriation of family archives in my practice-based research. As Kuhn acknowledges, "memory work offers a route to a critical consciousness that embraces the heart as well as the intellect, one that resonates, in feeling and thinking ways, across the individual and the collective, the personal and the political" (2002, p. 9). Therefore, in the creative process, there is a lingering focus on the relational and sensory aspects of excavating family archives, particularly in relation to each family's migration and dislocation, their visual landscape, and the materialities associated with them. Such mnemonic gestures embody an "archival romance" (Marks, 2017), translating a search in remembering and imagining, paving the way for new avenues of subjectivity. In my practice, archival romance is a state of persistent reframing and experiencing domestic materials, as well as a process of unveiling and enabling further processes of appropriating family archives towards montage and phases

of prototyping. After an archival romance phase, I embrace Shaday Larios's sense of care for these private and personal objects, along with the researcher's insights on viewing everyday objects as entities with a lived geography, metamorphic materials, and symbolic carriers (Larios, 2016). This viewpoint enables an interplay between sensibilities and imagination when examining, for instance, photographs, passports, aerograms, or written correspondence. This palpable exploration of the family archives led to sections of the creative and montage work identified as i) domestic imagery, ii) voices, ghosts, and sounds; iii) handwriting and digital textual excerpts; and iv) domestic objects on and off-frame and screen. Thus, in this room of family archives, there are not only conduits to the past but also, more intriguingly, disruptions of temporality, materiality, and significance.

These sections function as guidelines for thoroughly exploring the family archives and excavating its intricate textures, meanings, and multiplicities within the montage process, while also integrating other audio-visual components. The domestic imagery section explores home movies and family photographs, zooming in on the grain and decay of the analog and digitized materiality while reframing faces and landscapes. A sense of appropriation of the archival moving images and photographs means elaborating a dialogue with and beyond the visual surface, which requires imagination. The second section, which focuses on voices and unspoken migratory stories, reflects on the work with the disembodied female voices and their recounted memories. It also considers the unvoiced memories and the lack of sonic archives in the migratory territories, which become more visible in the interactive documentary. In the section on handwriting and digital textual excerpts, I establish a relationship between the family's handwriting and the granddaughters, who echo the intergenerationally transmitted memories through their own handwriting. In this segment, an outline of a creative strategy inspired by Georges Perec's is present, emphasizing a form of writing that includes "jumps in the meaning: discontinuities, transitions..." (1974, p. 11). Thus, the insertion of digital textual memories into the montage incorporates small blank spaces between the words of the sentence. While the phrases remain complete and coherent, the blank space conveys a metaphor for self-forgetting, loss, and also possibilities for other migratory remembrances. The last and fourth section situates family archives as objects that "desentierran tr nsitos afectivos" (Larios, 2016, p. 3) [unearth affective transits]. By adopting Shaday Larios' methodological and ethical framework, the mining gestures examine private archives (including passports, aerograms, and letters) to uncover traces of the family's migratory experiences and expressions of unarticulated memories, while also considering additional personal

details and affective dimensions. When recontextualized and reconfigured, through techniques such as superimposition, reframing, or fading, the aesthetic of these domestic materials transports us to imaginary (or known) places and affective spaces. Following this memory work with photographs, home movies, oral memories, and objects, the montage process reveals different perspectives and interpretations that extend beyond a collector's gesture, fostering a dialectical relationship and reinterpretations of the Portuguese diaspora. In the passages of montage, there is an intention to explore diverse meanings and further investigate perceptions of significance and sensorial possibilities of migratory family archives in their reconfiguration within the interactive documentary.

During this Ph.D. practice and the amalgamation of approaches, questions arise: What kind of creative gestures enable the practitioner-researcher to reconfigure family archives and their gazes and traces of dislocation into heterogeneous readings? What constellations arise in the dissimilar dialogue between the reconfigured domestic imagery and the disembodied female voices in the interactive documentary practice? By employing an anarchiving (Massumi, 2016) methodology in encounters and excavations of domestic textures, I treat anarchiving as an inventive passage, creating traces of a process that includes digitization, collage, and digital manipulation, as well as a physical and analog moment with the family archives and my written notes. Perceiving anarchiving as "a critical feminist practice in its disruption of temporality and potential for multiplicity of interpretation" (Waters, 2024, p. 186), reinforces the work with family archives beyond their circumscribed nature. This approach transforms the domestic materials into "dynamic vectors" (Zimmermann, 2014) with varying intensities of mutability and malleability, not only in creative encounters but also in the tables de montage. Moving the materiality and immateriality of family archives into asynchrony or connection with the female "sonorous voices" (Leimbacher, 2017). These sonorous voices arise in the practice-research solely via audio recordings of the granddaughters recounting their family's migratory experiences. Transcribing each granddaughter's narratives involves exploring both tangible and intangible memories, as well as converting these interactions and recordings into the thesis's textual form, which entails a multifaceted, interpretive, and reflexive writing approach that prompts meaningful exploration and emphasizes critical listening in both practice and theory.

This practice-based research, as a field of multiple maneuvers, revolves around the specificities of the plasticity of the chosen theoretical territories and the openness of the creative process to listening to and caring for the domestic footage and objects, enabling a lay-

ered, fragmented composition of archival excavations and creative gestures. On the one hand, one reflects on the relationship between first-person or autoethnographic writing and academic writing. These writing intervals are crucial for reflecting on and embracing the fluctuating voices of the practitioner, researcher, and subject, amid subjectivity and experimentation, by re-framing personal gestures as dialogical forms. Hence, this practice-based research, with its fragmentary textual nature and sometimes non-linear thinking/practice, finds a path to intertwining the interstices of memory, remembrances, and migratory stories that are fallible but, in this space, are open to interferences and new elaborations. On the other hand, the fissures and contaminations of archival romance, memory work, and anarchiving gestures enable the mining of private materials into the interactive documentary, transforming them into mutable fragments of migratory journeys. It is

in the poignant moment of encounter, assemblage, and disassembly that it is possible to engage with glances of affects and memories that are in motion. As a result, the selected essayistic interferences and methodologies enable the displacement of the family archives within a subjective cartography, liberated from private spaces and original purposes, serving as vessels for plural interpretations, sensations, and dissimilar embodiments. Through the creative process itself and its various iterations and loops, one observes the analog and digital textures through different reconfigurations, continuously operating the archival elements beyond their indexical nature and past evidence to imaginary territories and reassembled mnemonic fragments within the interactive documentary titled *Orange in the Pocket, Aerograms, and the Rest of Memories*.

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TITLE

“Science – Art – Action! “Feminisms,
The Freedom to Be”, the FEMglocal
documentary as a case study”

KEYWORDS

Activism; documentary cinema; fem-
inisms in Portugal; scientific dissem-
ination; counter-narratives; collective
memory

ABSTRACT

This paper examines documentary cinema as an ar-
tivist practice situated between artistic creation and
political action. Using *Feminisms: The Freedom to Be*,
developed within the scope of the research project
FEMglocal, as a case study, it explores how documen-
tary mobilizes aesthetic and rhetorical resources to
contest dominant narratives, construct collective mem-
ory, and foster feminist literacy. Methodologically, the
analysis combines textual and contextual approaches,
addressing both formal dimensions (narrative struc-
ture, use of archives, testimonies) and circulation strat-
egies involving community engagement. The paper ar-
gues that documentary, by bridging academic research
and activism, operates as a privileged tool for promot-
ing active witnessing, critical reflection, and meaningful
social transformation.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Documentary Cinema and Activism

Activism, as theorised by Jordan (2020) and Mesías-Le-
ma (2018), represents a confluence of artistic practices
and political action, a symbolic resistance that mobilis-
es aesthetic resources for political ends while distanc-
ing itself from both traditional activism and conventional
art. It fosters collective expression with strong peda-
gogical and transformative potential (e.g., Roig-Palmer
& Pedneault, 2019). Profoundly influenced by feminist
and queer movements, contemporary activism devel-
ops strategies that render marginalised experiences
visible while actively building alternative narratives
capable of inspiring and mobilising audiences toward
concrete action and awareness of shared causes.

Documentary cinema emerges as a privileged activist

practice with distinctive affordances for creating trans-
formative experiences that bridge personal and polit-
ical dimensions. Suzanne Nossel (2016) argues that
art “has the ability to change our minds—inspiring us
to take on different perspectives and to reimagine our
worlds”, urging activists to “embrace and harness”
art’s emotional power, because “To move an individual
makes social change possible”. Documentary derives
its power from a unique cinematic language that fus-
es reason and emotion, fact and artistry. This inherent
rhetorical power enables documentaries to simultane-
ously inform, educate, persuade, and preserve histori-
cal record, while having the potential to renew cultural
understandings. Nichols (1991) places this rhetorical
capacity at the centre of the documentary form, demon-
strating how ideological representation fundamentally
reorients how audiences apprehend and interpret the

world around them. Complementary, Cowie (2001) underscores documentary's distinctive ability to contest and challenge dominant understandings while actively renegotiating them.

Renov (1993) clarifies how such documentary work connects directly to broader social change initiatives: in moments of cultural and political crisis, documentary can function effectively as "a politically mobilized rhetoric of Truth", representing a form of cultural intervention aimed at resealing social unity and reconstructing structures of collective belief. The most effective activist documentaries encourage inquiry, offer meaningful space for critical judgment, and provide concrete tools for evaluation and further action, fostering what witnessing scholarship identifies as "active" witnessing rather than passive consumption.

Regarding collective memory and feminist narratives, documentary cinema draws on a rich theoretical lineage that highlights narrative's role in shaping collective identities and legitimising social movements. An intersectional approach, informed by Crenshaw's (1989/2017) framework, provides the essential basis for crafting documentary narratives that register and value either diversity and the politics of location (Rich, 1984) while avoiding essentialist or universalising accounts.

Methodology

Case study methodology offers unparalleled depth and contextual understanding in qualitative research, enabling scholars to capture the complexity and uniqueness of social phenomena in their natural settings, making it especially relevant for analysing documentary films as bounded narrative systems (cf. Stake, 1995, 2006; Yin, 2018). This methodological framework provides rich empirical insights into how cultural artifacts such as *Feminisms: The Freedom to Be* function as vehicles for feminist knowledge and global narrative construction, allowing nuanced case-based analysis within broader sociopolitical contexts.

Accordingly, this ongoing qualitative study combines comprehensive textual and contextual analysis methodologies, examining the documentary *Feminisms: The Freedom to Be* as the primary case study for understanding contemporary activist practices. This methodological choice reflects the need to understand not only the film's manifest content but also its complex production processes, innovative circulation strategies, and measurable audience impact across different contexts and communities.

The analytical framework follows established film-analytic approaches specifically adapted to documentary form, attending to formal cinematic elements including

narrative structure, cinematographic choices and framing decisions, sound design and music, and editing/montage techniques. Simultaneously, the analysis examines substantive content dimensions, including personal testimonies, archival materials integration, historical context, and the ethics of representation governing relationships between filmmakers and participants.

The research examines the documentary's specific production context, namely its strategic integration within the broader FEMglocal project – Glocal Feminist Movements: Interactions and Contradictions. This dimension proves crucial for understanding how the film operates simultaneously at the productive intersection of rigorous academic research and committed activist practice, functioning both as legitimate research output and as an effective vehicle for public knowledge dissemination and engagement.

Importantly, the methodology extends beyond textual analysis to examine circulation practices, analysing public screenings followed by facilitated open discussions as integral components of the film's activist praxis rather than as post-hoc reception studies. Grounded in feminist epistemologies of situated and standpoint knowledge, and participatory, decolonising research practices, these dialogic events are treated as active sites of collaborative co-production where audiences, participants, and researchers collectively interpret and reinterpret the film's meanings and implications.

Film Analysis: *Feminisms: The Freedom to Be*

Feminisms: The Freedom to Be presents a deliberately structured narrative that reflects the theoretical principles and practical commitments of contemporary feminist activism. Framed by the preparations for and the march commemorating International Women's Day (8 March), the documentary proposes an engaging journey through both the historical past and dynamic present of feminist movements in Portugal, while maintaining connections to broader international feminist struggles and solidarity networks. The film weaves together personal testimonies from multiple generations of activists, images from feminist strikes organised in several Portuguese cities, audiovisual archives spanning decades, historical photographs documenting earlier struggles, and contemporary activist materials including hand-painted banners and protest ephemera. People representing diverse trajectories – ranging from academic research to grassroots militancy, from informal groups to well-established associations, from anonymous participants to recognised public figures – claim feminisms from multiple gender identities while generously sharing lived experiences of ongoing struggle, systematic discrimination, and creative resistance strategies.

Rather than presenting a singular account of Portuguese feminisms, the documentary creates space for diverse voices and perspectives, actively fostering plural narratives that successfully reclaim stories long forgotten, silenced, or nearly lost. The production process involved 41 comprehensive interviews with researchers, activists, anonymous individuals, and public figures. After careful listening and meticulous transcription, 28 testimonies were selected along thematic axes: street actions and public demonstrations; definitions of feminisms; historical development of feminisms in Portugal; personal stories about academic and professional struggles; experiences regarding abortion rights and reproductive justice; discrimination and oppression experiences; and visions for the movement's future.

Archival, Memory and Literacy Strategies

One of the documentary's key dimensions is its function as a living archive that actively recovers silenced memories of personal experiences, while connecting them to broader collective struggles. Through the careful interplay of archival images, activist materials (posters, leaflets, murals), street recordings, and personal accounts, it builds a narrative that transcends documentation and resists historical erasure. Diverse archives – RTP footage (Portuguese Public Television), the records from UMAR (Women 's Association Alternative and Response), and personal collections – serve not as illustration but as autonomous elements that dialogue with testimonies, bridging past and present.

By privileging unmediated personal voices, the film foregrounds affect as central to transformative audience engagement and social mobilisation. Personal testimonies, presented without excessive mediation or authoritative journalistic voice-overs, enable viewers to establish direct emotional connections with the presented narratives while maintaining respect for speakers' agency and self-representation. This strategic approach aligns closely with Nossel's (2016) observation about emotion's importance in effective social change processes and collective mobilisation efforts.

The circulation strategies employed, particularly public screenings systematically followed by open conversations, prove fundamental components of the documentary's broader activist dimension and political effectiveness. These practices transform the film from a closed cultural object into a dynamic platform for active mediation and collaborative knowledge sharing.

Main Contributions and Future Implications

This ongoing analysis identifies several significant contributions to understanding documentary cinema's potential as an effective tool for memory construction, social mobilisation, feminist transformation, and public

education about feminist movements and intersectional struggles.

i) Bridging Academic Research and Social Activism: The documentary effectively demonstrates how film can translate complex research results into accessible, emotionally engaging language without compromising scientific rigor or oversimplifying addressed issues.

ii) Intersectional Narrative Construction: the storytelling offers valuable models for future activist practices addressing social movements characterised by significant internal diversity and multiple, sometimes competing priorities.

iii) Circulation as Integral Activist Practice: Screenings followed by facilitated conversations constitute fundamental components of activist practice itself, privileging ongoing community engagement and dialogue facilitation.

iv) Active Witnessing Development: The research contributes to more nuanced understanding of "active witnessing" concepts within feminist documentary cinema contexts.

This work suggests directions for future research and practice, including continued dissemination and use as pedagogical resources for developing feminist literacy across educational contexts. Documentary cinema reveals itself as a tool for constructing alternative collective memories and promoting social transformations. Its capacity to articulate art, politics, and research in coherent synthesis suggests potential as a model for future practices seeking more just, inclusive, and equitable societies.

*Disclosure: The first two authors of this article also directed the documentary analysed in this paper. This dual role was acknowledged throughout the research process, with efforts to maintain analytical objectivity while recognizing the reflexivity of this positioning.

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TITLE

“Good Practices Manual in Cinema
and Audiovisual: A Tool for Gender
Equality”

KEYWORDS

Workplace Harassment; Good Prac-
tices; Cinema; Audiovisual; Gender
Equality

ABSTRACT

Workplace harassment is a structural problem that cuts across multiple sectors, including film and audiovisual industries, where precarious employment, rigid hierarchies, and entrenched power dynamics exacerbate the difficulty of reporting abuse. In Portugal, recent studies reveal that more than one-third of women working in this sector have experienced harassment, in a context deeply marked by gender inequality. Within the framework of the research project FEMglocal – Glocal Feminist Movements: Interactions and Contradictions, and in partnership with MUTIM – Women Workers of Moving Images, the first Good Practices Manual for Cinema and Audiovisual in Portugal was developed. This paper aims to reflect on its creation, theoretical framework, and participatory methodology, highlighting its role as a practical tool and political intervention to transform organizational cultures and promote gender equality.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT**Introduction**

Workplace harassment is one of the most enduring forms of violence in professional settings, disproportionately impacting women across the world (cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights et al., 2024; Torres, 2016). Although men may also be victims, women are most often subjected to recurring instances of moral and sexual harassment, frequently silenced by fear of retaliation and precarious employment conditions.

In the film and audiovisual sector – marked by rigid hierarchies and predominantly temporary, unstable contracts – the problem takes on particularly concerning dimensions. Dependence on informal networks, the weight of reputation, and concentrated power, generally in men's hands (cf. Burnay et al., 2023; Lauzen, 2024; Simone, 2023; Katsarova, 2019), create hostile

environments where reporting abuse is risky and often ineffective.

In Portugal, the absence of sector-specific tools perpetuates a culture of impunity. While general legislation and policy frameworks on gender equality and violence prevention exist (e.g., Law no. 14/2008, of 12/03; projects by the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality), none specifically addressed workplace harassment in this creative field.

The Good Practices Manual for Cinema and Audiovisual in Portugal, developed at the request of MUTIM – Women Workers of Moving Images – in collaboration with the FEMglocal research project (Glocal Feminist Movements: Interactions and Contradictions), is the first national document to explicitly recognize and confront workplace harassment. It constitutes both a practical tool and a symbolic political milestone in the

struggle for gender equality in the sector.

This study reflects on the process of creating the manual and its significance, highlighting its theoretical framework, participatory methodology, and transformative potential for Portuguese cinema and audiovisual industries.

Theoretical Framework

Workplace harassment can be understood as a manifestation of structural power inequalities that cut across sectors while taking specific forms in highly hierarchical and precarious fields. In the audiovisual industry, reliance on informal networks, its historical masculinization, and fragmented employment patterns make reporting abuse particularly difficult, often leading to retaliation or exclusion from future opportunities.

In Portugal, the study *The Condition of Women in the Film and Audiovisual Sector in Portugal* (Burnay et al., 2023) – conducted by MUTIM in collaboration with the XX Element Project – Cultural Association – found that 41.6% of participants experienced gender-based discrimination and 37.6% had faced workplace harassment. Reported practices included the infantilization of women and the persistence of a masculinist culture reinforced by exclusionary “club-like” dynamics.

Decolonial and intersectional feminist scholarship (Crenshaw, 1989; Lugones, 2008) demonstrates how intersecting axes of oppression – gender, race, class, nationality – produce distinct forms of inequality in the labor market. In the audiovisual sector, this is evident in the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles and the normalization of hostile, discriminatory work environments.

The development of pedagogical and normative instruments, such as good practices manuals, goes beyond technical guidance: it constitutes a political and cultural intervention. Such tools help transform values, reinforce rights, and foster organizational cultures that are more equitable and inclusive.

Methodology

The Good Practices Manual for Cinema and Audiovisual in Portugal was developed through a qualitative, participatory, and collaborative methodology that bridges academic research with pedagogical and practical approaches. Grounded in a feminist epistemology that recognizes lived experience as situated and legitimate knowledge (Haraway, 1988), the process also integrated the perspective of a researcher with professional experience in the sector, who contributed directly to the manual's writing.

The process, therefore, centered the voices of women workers, ensuring their participation in defining solutions (Ribeiro, 2019). Initially, documents and good practices guidelines from European and international audiovisual contexts were analyzed, identifying effective measures for harassment prevention and response, as well as relevant legislation and recommendations for producers and employers (International Labour Organization, 2020; Finnish Film Foundation, 2024).

This empirical groundwork was essential for exploring, adapting, and comparing these mechanisms within the Portuguese context, as this manual represents the first of its kind in the country. As part of the research process preceding the manual's writing, Portuguese women workers were consulted to ensure their needs were addressed. In addition, a working group of MUTIM members was established to share perspectives on urgent sectoral challenges and to review successive drafts of the document.

The result of this empirical and participatory research was a collaborative drafting process involving FEMglocal researchers, MUTIM's leadership and members (industry professionals), and a legal reviewer. This produced a document with practical applicability, accessible language, and direct relevance to everyday professional contexts.

The Manual as a Tool for Transformation

The Good Practices Manual for Cinema and Audiovisual in Portugal is organized into thematic sections designed for both sequential reading and targeted consultation, enabling flexible and practical use. The first section defines workplace harassment – sexual and moral – within the sector. Given the challenges of identification, often stemming from subtle manifestations, normalization of behaviors, and limited awareness of legal criteria, this section clarifies concepts and provides examples and procedures for recognition and reporting.

The second section addresses the consequences of harassment – both for individuals and organizational culture – before outlining step-by-step procedures for victims, including evidence collection, support mechanisms, and reporting channels. The third section focuses on the role of witnesses, explaining how to intervene safely, document, support, and report.

The final section compiles good practices guidelines for companies, producers, and teams, guiding structural change through internal policies, codes of conduct, intimacy coordination and well-being practices, con-

tinuous training, prevention measures, and reporting protocols.

As a practical reference tool, the manual bridges academic knowledge with feminist practices, assuming an explicitly interventionist role. It provides guidance for victims and witnesses, defines employer responsibilities, and shifts the burden of reporting from the individual to the organization. At the same time, it equips companies and teams with the knowledge to act, combining a pedagogical and preventive orientation aimed at cultural transformation and the disruption of harassment's normalization in the audiovisual sector. Designed for quick consultation, it provides clear action pathways – prevention, recognition, reporting, and follow-up – while promoting informed practices and organizational accountability for structural change.

Conclusion

The Good Practices Manual for Cinema and Audiovisual in Portugal constitutes the first concrete response to a structural problem in the Portuguese creative sector, addressing a historical gap and exposing a reality that long remained silenced. It combines feminist research with participatory methodologies, proposing practical guidelines to prevent, identify, and combat workplace harassment.

As a tool for transformation, the manual underscores the importance of promoting organizational cultures rooted in gender equality, respect, and professional dignity. It further exemplifies how collaboration between academic research and women's professional associations can produce concrete, socially relevant outcomes tailored to specific contexts.

Its initial dissemination confirms strong sectoral interest: a launch event in Porto on June 11; 778 visits to MUTIM's website, where the digital version of the manual is hosted, in the first four days; a Lisbon presentation on June 27; and an initial print run of 500 copies, with a second already in preparation. The manual has since been distributed to professionals, companies, and schools, receiving highly positive feedback.

Yet the manual alone cannot eliminate harassment. Change is neither immediate nor guaranteed. Instead, it marks a first step in encouraging the Portuguese film and audiovisual sector to rethink structural practices, confront gender inequalities, and build new forms of professional coexistence based on justice, respect, and equality. To reinforce its implementation, MUTIM is preparing further presentations in multiple formats and spaces, aiming to broaden dissemination and support application. The manual thus stands as both a call to action and a concrete instrument for cultural and workplace transformation in the sector.

Disclosure: The authors of this article are also the authors of the manual under discussion. This dual role was acknowledged throughout the process, with care taken to balance critical distance and the reflexive awareness inherent in this positioning.

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TITLE

"The Damsel in Distress and the Knight in Shining Armour: How Popular Culture Shapes Sex Trafficking Perceptions in Western Societies"

KEYWORDS

Sex trafficking, popular culture, feminist theory, media representation, human trafficking myths

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how popular culture representations of sex trafficking perpetuate harmful myths that undermine effective anti-trafficking efforts. Through a feminist analysis of the film *Taken* (2008), we demonstrate how mainstream narratives promote gendered and racialized stereotypes rooted in colonial "white slave trade" mythology. These representations consolidate male-Western supremacy while obscuring structural factors that drive trafficking. Using radical and intersectional feminist theory, we analyse five archetypal characters: the damsel in distress, the bad victim, the bad guys, the dirty cop, and the knight in shining armour. Our findings reveal how these tropes reinforce the current criminal justice approach to trafficking while deflecting attention from systemic issues including capitalism, patriarchy, and Western imperialism. The paper argues for deconstructing these narratives to promote more effective, human rights-based approaches to combating sex trafficking that address root causes rather than perpetuating rescue fantasies.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The debate on sex trafficking resurfaced in the West at the end of the twentieth century, coinciding with the proliferation of mass media campaigns and cultural productions addressing the issue. These interventions, while ostensibly aimed at raising awareness, have transmitted a predominantly simplistic rescue narrative that perpetuates historical controversies and myths about human trafficking rooted in the "white slave trade" moral panics, defending the current criminal justice approach while systematically ignoring structural problems that foster trafficking and undermine efforts to combat it (Connelly, 2016; Weitzer, 2011).

These widely circulated narratives function as a form of cultural disinformation, which echoes colonial patterns of justifying domination through civilizing missions that claimed to protect vulnerable populations while extracting resources and maintaining structural advantages. As Kempadoo (2016) argues, contemporary anti-trafficking campaigns maintain colonial continuities through redemption narratives that construct the West as developed and morally superior, presenting interventionist approaches as altruistic humanitarian missions while portraying the Global South as the impoverished, morally compromised Other requiring Western salvation.

The proliferation of these narratives through popu-

lar culture represents a particularly insidious form of ideological reproduction because entertainment media appear politically neutral while reinforcing dominant power structures. In the context of sex trafficking, popular culture representations have become the primary source of information for many people, influencing not only public opinion but also policy priorities and resource allocation decisions.

The central argument of this paper is that popular culture representations of sex trafficking constitute a form of cultural violence that perpetuates the very conditions enabling trafficking while obscuring possibilities for transformative responses. By analysing the specific mechanisms through which these narratives operate, we reveal how entertainment media functions as a site of ideological struggle where dominant groups maintain hegemony through the naturalization of inequality and the individualization of structural problems.

This study employs qualitative content analysis through a feminist interpretative approach to examine popular culture representations of sex trafficking. The research is grounded in feminist ontology and epistemology, challenging hegemonic male perspectives while centring historically marginalised voices (Borger-son, 2001). Our analytical framework draws on Hall's (1973, pp.13) encoding/decoding model, recognizing that media texts contain multiple potential meanings

while focusing on how *Taken* (2008) promotes what Hall terms a “preferred reading” that reinforces existing power relations.

This film was selected as our primary case study for several reasons: it represents the mainstreaming of sex trafficking discourse in popular culture; its commercial success (\$200+ million internationally) and cultural impact (spawning sequels and a television series) demonstrate its influence; it was a joint Hollywood-European production representing dominant Western perspectives; and it epitomizes the rescue narrative prevalent in trafficking media. Five archetypal characters were identified based on feminist film theory: the damsel in distress, the bad victim, the bad guys, the dirty cop, and the knight in shining armour, each analysed regarding their appearance, backstory, personality, and motivations, then compared with empirical data on trafficking realities.

The theoretical foundation of this study integrates a radical feminist analysis of the sex industry, an intersectional understanding of trafficking’s structural dimensions, and a critical examination of how popular culture operates as a site of hegemonic reproduction, through the application of feminist film theory and Gramsci’s cultural hegemony theory.

Radical feminism conceptualises gender inequalities as rooted in patriarchal systems of domination and oppression that operate through both material and ideological mechanisms. Radical feminists argue that the sex industry, including trafficking, represents the epitome of gendered violence and women’s commodification under patriarchy, serving as both a site of direct exploitation for economic gains and a cultural system that normalises women’s subordination (MacKinnon, 1987; Dworkin, 1989). Contemporary research increasingly supports radical feminist concerns about the sex industry’s harms and its interconnection with human trafficking, through shared consumer bases, production networks, and exploitation of vulnerable populations.

Intersectional feminist theory reveals how multiple systems of oppression interact to create unique experiences of marginalisation that cannot be understood through single-issue analyses. Sex trafficking exemplifies intersectional oppression, with victims primarily being migrant women from low-income households, often from the Global South, who face compounding vulnerabilities related to economic marginalisation, racial discrimination, immigration status, and gender-based violence (ILO et al., 2022). However, mainstream trafficking discourse typically adopts dichotomous framings that either criminalise or victimise without accounting for the structural factors that create vulnerability while privileging the experiences of white, middle-class

women who conform to idealised victim narratives (Srinivasan, 2022).

Feminist film theory provides crucial insights into how popular culture perpetuates gender oppression through representational practices that appear natural and inevitable while serving specific ideological functions. Mulvey’s (1975) concept of the “male gaze” reveals how cinema systematically positions viewers to look at female characters from a heterosexual male perspective, objectifying women as passive props in male fantasies while denying them subjectivity and agency. This theoretical framework helps analyse how trafficking representations reflect and reinforce patriarchal worldviews while obscuring possibilities for alternative approaches.

Understanding how these gendered representations function requires situating them within Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, which provides essential insights into how dominant groups maintain power not only through coercion but through the production of consent among subordinated populations. Hegemony operates through cultural institutions that shape common sense understanding of social relations while making alternatives appear unrealistic or undesirable (Hall, 1973; Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Popular culture plays a particularly important role in hegemonic processes because it reaches mass audiences through entertainment rather than explicit political messaging, making ideological content appear natural and apolitical.

The analysis of *Taken* reveals how popular culture functions as a powerful site of knowledge production that shapes public understanding of sex trafficking through emotionally engaging narratives that bypass critical analysis while reinforcing dominant worldviews. By focusing on individual heroes, victims, and villains, the film obscures the systematic factors that create trafficking vulnerability while promoting responses that address symptoms rather than causes. This individualisation serves crucial ideological functions by deflecting attention from the need for structural change while promoting faith in existing institutions and hierarchies.

The film’s gendered representations demonstrate how popular culture reproduces patriarchal ideology through seemingly sympathetic portrayals of women that actually reinforce male dominance and female subordination. These gendered representations have concrete implications for how trafficking survivors are understood and treated within legal and social service systems. The emphasis on passivity and helplessness contradicts extensive research demonstrating that trafficking survivors employ sophisticated resistance strategies and frequently play active roles in their own liber-

ation (UNODC, 2022; Farrell et al., 2019).

In terms of racial dynamics, *Taken* reveals the persistence of orientalist ideology in contemporary popular culture, demonstrating how entertainment media continues to reproduce colonial hierarchies while adapting them to current political contexts. The systematic construction of non-Western men as inherently violent and sexually predatory reflects what Said (1978) identifies as orientalism's central function: creating knowledge about the Other that justifies Western dominance while obscuring the violence and exploitation inherent in imperial relationships. The timing of *Taken*'s release in 2008, during the height of the Global War on Terror, reveals connections between trafficking discourse and broader imperial projects that use humanitarian rhetoric to justify military interventions and surveillance practices.

The analysis suggests the need for alternative policy frameworks that address the structural causes of trafficking while respecting survivor agency and expertise. Human Rights-Based Approaches (HRBA) offer promising alternatives by emphasising prevention, addressing root causes, and centring survivor voices in policy development (Gallagher, 2010; Demeke, 2024).

This analysis demonstrates how popular culture representations of sex trafficking perpetuate harmful myths rooted in colonial "white slave trade" narratives. Films

like *Taken* promote gendered and racialised stereotypes that consolidate male-Western supremacy while obscuring structural factors driving trafficking. These representations have real consequences for anti-trafficking efforts. They influence victim identification, policy priorities, and resource allocation while deflecting attention from systematic solutions. The emphasis on rescue narratives particularly reinforces criminal justice approaches that have proven inadequate for addressing trafficking's complexity.

The stakes of this cultural work are significant. As trafficking continues expanding globally, effective responses require moving beyond Hollywood heroism toward structural solutions that address the inequalities enabling exploitation. Popular culture can either perpetuate harmful myths or contribute to more effective approaches—the choice depends on our willingness to challenge dominant narratives and center marginalized voices.

Ultimately, combating sex trafficking requires more than rescue narratives and individual heroism. It demands confronting the structural injustices that make exploitation profitable while working toward a world where human dignity is not negotiable. This transformation begins with recognising how our cultural narratives either perpetuate or challenge the systems enabling trafficking.

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TITLE

"Abject Women in 1970s and 1980s
 Brazilian Cinema: Ana Carolina and
 the 'Trilogy of the Female Condition'"

KEYWORDS

Brazilian cinema; ana carolina; fem-
 inism; abject; military dictatorship;
 gender studies; women filmmakers

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the cinema of Ana Carolina in the 1970s, focusing on her "trilogy of the female condition" (Mar de Rosas, 1978; Das Tripas Coração, 1982; Sonho de Valsa, 1987). It explores how the restrictions imposed by the Brazilian military dictatorship and women's social condition shaped the filmmaker's work. The analysis draws on the concepts of abjection (Julia Kristeva), purity and pollution (Mary Douglas), and "displacements of the feminine" (Maria Rita Kehl). Through a qualitative approach, it considers how transgressive female characters embody the socially abject, challenging norms of domesticity, submission, and morality. By adopting an experimental language, Ana Carolina circumvented censorship while creating excessive, marginal, and disruptive female figures that unsettle both narrative and social conventions. The study concludes that her protagonists find in abjection a form of resistance and revolt, transforming the female body into a site of symbolic and political conflict.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In 1930, actress Cléo de Verberena became the first woman in Brazil to direct a feature film, *O mistério do dominó preto*. Self-financed, the film was her only venture as a director and is now considered lost. Between her debut and the 1970s, even though Brazil would later witness a significant increase in women filmmakers, only a handful managed to occupy the director's chair: Carmen Santos, Gilda de Abreu, Maria Basaglia and Carla Civelli (both from Italy), and Zélia Costa. In the 1960s, when Brazilian cinema experienced the intellectual effervescence of the Cinema Novo movement, only one woman joined it: Helena Solberg, who directed *A entrevista* (1966), a short documentary – formats to which many women were confined due to their lower production costs (Pessoa & Mendonça, 1989).

For many theorists, the absence or low participation of women in directing and in positions of power within cinema meant that, for many years, female presence was primarily tied to the front of the camera, through representations that frequently idealized and/or objectified them. It was with the rise of the second wave of the feminist movement in the late 1960s that studies on female representation began to flourish: "It is up to feminists, who intend precisely to create new parameters of behavior, and even of defining the woman's role, to systematically carry out studies that can decode a male vision in the representation of women" (Munerato & Oliveira, 1982, p. 17). Meanwhile, the relationship between women and cinema began a significant transformation with the entry of more women into the act of filmmaking.

In 1970s Brazil, twelve fiction feature films directed by women premiered, among them *Mar de Rosas* (1978), by Ana Carolina, still considered one of the country's most singular filmmakers, marked by a provocative narrative both in content and in form. With this film, she began what became known as the "Trilogy of the Female Condition," which also includes *Das Tripas Coração* (1982) and *Sonho de Valsa* (1987). It is important to remember that from 1964 to 1985 Brazil lived under a violent military dictatorship, with significant impacts on political, social, and cultural spheres. While the world witnessed the flourishing of the feminist revival, Brazilian women had their fundamental rights curtailed: "Outside the national borders, the feminist movement instigated and demanded freedom, the right to one's own body and to desire, while here women needed their husbands' signatures to receive their salaries at the bank" (Veiga, 2023, p. 298).

This paper aims to understand the place of women in Brazilian society during the 1970s and how their condition is reflected in the filmmaking of that generation's women directors, taking Ana Carolina's cinema as a case study. How did the filmmaker experience the restrictions imposed by the military regime, and how did she circumvent them? To conduct this analysis, I draw on Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection, based on Sigmund Freud's studies and on the notion of purity and pollution developed by anthropologist Mary Douglas. Also central to this work is psychoanalyst Maria Rita Kehl's concept of "displacements of the feminine." The methodology is therefore qualitative, employing a multidisciplinary analysis that encompasses film theory

and human sciences such as history, psychoanalysis, sociology, and gender studies. In the filmic analysis, I privilege the relationships between characters and social norms, observing the narrative, stylistic, and symbolic elements that articulate the female condition through the notion of abjection.

Kehl (2008) analyzes how, from the mid-nineteenth century onward, literary characters such as the emblematic Emma Bovary, by Gustave Flaubert, entered into conflict with the position assigned to women in family and culture – positions established by the demands of the new bourgeois rationality, which placed the woman as the moral and emotional center of the family, confined to the private sphere and to the role of mother. It is evident that this subordination of women generated dissatisfaction and intense inner conflicts, whose symptom would be what was then called “female hysteria.” The author recovers a reflection by Fyodor Dostoevsky that hysteria could be a form of salvation for women, since it was a possible expression of discontent with their condition and a manifestation of revolt against the suffocation of their individual aspirations. Although Kehl focuses on a specific historical period, she reiterates that this is not an isolated phenomenon, finding parallels in contemporary societies, as women’s rights are frequently renegotiated.

Ana Carolina’s trilogy forms a body of work that investigates, from female characters of different ages, the oppression and discontent of women in a patriarchal society. Although not originally conceived as a series, and even though the filmmaker does not explicitly identify as a feminist, the films share a common impulse to rupture gender expectations and the limits imposed on women. In *Mar de Rosas*, the journey of Felicidade (Norma Bengell) and her daughter Betinha (Cristina Pereira) after the murder of the patriarch becomes a metaphor for domestic violence and the desire for liberation from this system of oppression. Through urine and blood, the female body here is presented as a site of transgression, expressions of the object that confront moralism and good manners. *Das Tripas Coração*, set in an all-girls boarding school, expands this field of rebellion. The young students and the school employees challenge religious and pedagogical authority, transforming the disciplinary space into a theater of chaos. Amid rituals, laughter, and eroticism, Ana Carolina subverts the logic of obedience, portraying collective hysteria as a form of political revolt and affirmation of desire. In *Sonho de Valsa*, the director adopts a more melancholic tone, following a thirty-year-old woman (Xuxa Lopes) who lives under the stigma of being single. Reality, delusion, and fantasy intertwine in the trajectory of a female identity in collapse. The protagonist embodies the impasse between yielding to social norms and following her own desire, turning everyday

situations into spaces of oppression and, ultimately, of resistance.

The “displacements of the feminine,” as Kehl calls the misalignments and adjustments of women in relation to the roles imposed by society, as well as their desire to move beyond those roles and the extent to which they succeed, never occur without reactions and reprisals. In the 1970s, the debate on the female place in society involved intense discussions about sexuality and the body, motherhood, abortion rights, and divorce. The expression of behaviors deviating from social norms – especially in times when the female place in society is under pressure – can generate sensations such as repulsion and abjection. Kristeva (1983) expands Mary Douglas’s ideas of purity versus pollution, observed by the anthropologist in various communities, by connecting the notion of impurity with abjection. She argues that what is considered impure or abject (such as blood, excrement, and bodily secretions) challenges the boundaries of body and identity. Kristeva also goes beyond physical abjection, asserting that this sensation manifests itself in behaviors that defy or transgress social, moral, and cultural norms. Such deviations are perceived as threats to the established order and, therefore, often provoke repulsion or exclusion.

The characters represented by Ana Carolina in her trilogy can be considered socially abject due to their deviant and transgressive behavior: the wife who kills her husband and the murderous daughter in *Mar de Rosas*; the anarchic students of the boarding school in *Das Tripas Coração*; and the thirty-year-old woman burdened by the “cross” of being single in *Sonho de Valsa*. Her protagonists are “ill-behaved”: they urinate on the floor, act violently, disrespect hierarchies, swear, do not renounce their sexual desire, and laugh hysterically at social conventions. Ana Carolina provokes both in content and in form, opting for a metaphorical approach that makes use of idiomatic expressions and popular sayings, sometimes employed ironically, sometimes literally, creating a constant sense of estrangement in the viewer.

Thus, by adopting a language that approaches an anti-classical narrative form, Ana Carolina also occupies a space conducive to women exploring their issues in complex ways, managing to circumvent the censorship imposed by the military dictatorship – something that did not occur with filmmakers who presented more explicit revolutionary discourse. Her non-conventional language resists categorization, and her characters escape the models of domestication, submission, or moral redemption desired by the society of the time. Instead, they represent bodies in excess – marginal, disruptive – within narratives that reveal a profound social imbalance. They embody what I call “abject wom-

en,” whose presence is disturbing not only to diegetic characters but also to the traditional spectator’s gaze, transforming the woman and the female body into a space of symbolic and political conflict. It can thus be concluded that, by displacing themselves from pre-

defined social expectations, Ana Carolina’s “hysterical” characters find in their abjection a form of salvation – an outcry of revolt, a possible path of escape from the repression of women.

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TITLE

“The Inward Colony: Biocentric Terror
and the Roots of Modern Patriarchy in
The Devil’s Bath”

KEYWORDS

Culpabilisation, Coloniality of Gender,
Ecofeminism, Folk Horror, the Gaze,
Patriarchy, Structural Violence

ABSTRACT

Drawing from the work of Maria Lugones on the coloniality of gender, Silvia Federici on the violent capture of reproductive labour, Sylvia Wynter on the transition from a theological to a biocentric order of bodies in the age of Enlightenment, and Maria Mies and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen on the systematic attack against subsistence and autonomy as part of the establishment of the gendered distribution of labour in early modernity, the paper discusses how Veronika Franz and Severin Fiala’s *The Devil’s Bath* (Austria, 2024) uses the archival, the haptic, and the surreal to represent patriarchal violence at the onset of the capitalist world, in a way that can contribute to the historicisation of the concepts of interpellation and the gaze in feminist film theory.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The paper proposes a reading of Veronika Franz and Severin Fiala’s film *The Devil’s Bath* (*Des Teufels Bad*, Austria 2024) as a feminist intervention in the folk horror genre, diverging drastically from the neoliberal feminist model of “empowerment” (Rottenberg 2018), of which the film can be understood as a critique (see Shaffer, 2024). *The Devil’s Bath* is among some of the few folk horror films that does not use the supernatural as a figuration of horror, and rather stresses their connection with ordinary and structural forms of violence in a way that moves the genre away from its more or less implicit religious frameworks of understanding and rather subjects this framework itself to reflection. Where, for instance, in Robert Eggers’s *The Witch* (USA, 2015), witchcraft is presented in the end as a diegetically real demonic force and is manifested cinematically through symbolic presences of the Christian devil and through ominous and threatening landscapes, Franz and Fiala’s film historicises and politicises this imaginary, relating these forms of demonisation with the persecution of women in early and later modernity and with the capitalist enclosure and exploitation of the natural world.

Working in this direction, an analysis of *The Devil’s Bath* can contribute to the ongoing debate on feminist representations in contemporary cinema, to a more intersectional and materialist approach to feminist film theory and the politics of cinema as such, and to a better understanding of the relations between heterosexual violence and capitalist exploitation, culpabilisation, and colonial forms of power and domination.

The theoretical framework for the paper combines Sil-

via Federici’s neo Marxist feminist theory with different strands of new feminist materialism – Maria Mies’s subsistence perspective, Stacy Alaimo and Karen Barad’s theories of material and discursive entanglement, and Aníbal Quijano and Maria Lugones’ theorisations of the coloniality of power and gender. With reference to Federici’s work, *The Devil’s Bath* is interpreted from the point of view of the capitalist and patriarchal capture of reproductive labour (broadly intended to encompass not only the reproduction of workers and of the regeneration of the work-force, but also emotional labour and the work needed to reproduce gendered relations of production) and as a way of staging the internalisation of theological imperatives, patriarchal norms, and capitalist relations of domination. Horror in Franz and Fiala’s film is not manifested and contained by a monstrous figure and it does not emanate from the land or an ancestral past, corresponding either to resurgent pagan forces, an essential “evilness” of nature, or (despite the film’s title) the troubling action of the devil or of demons. Horror is, instead, always presented as a manifestation of power. In one type of case, we can think of the mutilated body of the woman executed for murder shown at the beginning of the film, which is arranged to be seen by everyone, as a horrifying spectacle and a warning, and is meant as an allegory and a visible token of the social and religious order of world. In another type of case, we can think of the self-harm that the protagonist Agnes seeks out, by going out to work in freezing waters or by thrashing her body through brambles and rubbing her tongue with thorns: here, horror corresponds to a making-visible of a violence that the character cannot articulate in speech, and that the very institutions and discourses through

which she is forced to make sense of her life (Christianity, family, wage labour, and the heteronormative gender binary) do not allow to be spoken.

The first half of the paper offers a contextualisation of Franz and Fiala's film, first in its historical context, then, briefly in the context of folk horror cinema and of Franz and Fiala's other works – including a reference to the role of ambivalent vision and focalisation in *Goodnight Mommy* (Ich seh, Ich seh, Austria 2014), a discussion of religion, culpability, and suicide in *The Lodge* (UK, US 2019), and a comparison with the more politically “upbeat” ending of the short film “The Sinful Women of Höllfall” from *A Field Guide to Evil* (2018).

The second half of the paper consists of the analysis of *The Devil's Bath*, itself articulated over three main points. First, a reading of the film of its main scholarly reference, Kathy Stuart's work on suicide by proxy in early modern Germany (2023), through Silvia Federici's (2004) argument on the role of sexist violence in the establishment of capitalist relations of production and reproduction. From this perspective, the folk horror genre as such appears less like a staging of the supernatural or of a dark and disturbing, premodern or ancestral, relation to land, community, and social roles, and more like the demonisation of pre- and anti-capitalist practices and landscapes. Franz and Fiala's film can thus be understood as a meaningful attempt to represent the structural character of heteronormative violence and the psychological dimension of domination and “enclosure” of bodies, relationality, and natural environments.

Second, more specifically, *The Devil's Bath* can be used to stress the “coloniality” (Quijano, 2000; Lugones, 2010) of capitalist patriarchy and its domination over women, sociality, and “nature”. In this respect, the paper will stress the interlocking geographies that are involved in the representation of suicide by proxy in the film (religious and institutional, material and environmental, psychological and oneiric), and the interacting registers of *mise en scène* that are used to render this coloniality (the archival, the haptic, and the surreal). The close collaboration with Kathy Stuart, the reference to real historical women rather than figures of legend or drama, and the occasional highlighting by the film of archival items (pamphlets about public executions), are clear examples of the first register. The second can be identified in various scenes that either show the main character in close physical contact with animals, mosses, shells and bodies of water, alternatively to seek comfort or inflict discomfort on herself, or other scenes that present her emotional states, by contiguity, through labour activities, everyday tools, ritual objects, or uncommon items and textures. The haptic, in this sense, outlines an alternative world and

possible lines of escape from the moral and institutional forms of control that the character suffers, and from the centrality that vision has in their functioning. Finally, traces of the surreal can be found in the use, between the symbolic and the material, of certain images: for instance, a basket of fish heads, mouth agape and as if silently screaming, are given to the protagonist by her mother-in-law, framed in close-up accompanied by a single eerie chord, suggesting a metaphorical connection between the animals' heads and the severed women's heads exposed in cages after executions, and thus establishing a link between the overreaching concern of Agnes' mother-in-law and her fate. Through this surreal devices, the violence of early capitalist patriarchy is shown to be structural and pervasive, and is both displaced and naturalised in such a way as to assume an inescapable, lawful and divine, character.

The various entanglements between these registers in the film, between individual agency and impersonal gestures and rituals, violence and redemption, the material and the discursive, result in what can be considered the specific feminist aesthetic of *The Devil's Bath*.

As a final point, the paper interprets Franz and Fiala's study of culpabilisation and suicide in connection with a queer feminist and decolonial reconsideration of Laura Mulvey's classic concept of the male gaze in feminist film theory (Mulvey, 1989 [1975]). In this respect, the paper proposes a more intersectional conception of the gaze, integrating a variety of what can be considered, after the Combahee River Collective's formulation of interlocking forms of domination, interlocking gazes, located in the history of biopolitical techniques and biocentric forms of supremacy and domination, rather than understood predominantly in a Eurocentric framework of analysis and as a quasi-transcendental meta-psychological category (cfr. Žižek, 1999). The paper concludes by stressing the coloniality of gender and power that emerge from this interpretation of Franz and Fiala's film, as part of a broader reflection on the connection of biopolitics and the moving image.

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“Daughter of chaos: female subjectivity and bipolar disorder, explored in *In My Skin* (2018–2021, Kayleigh Llewellyn)”

KEYWORDS

Bipolar disorder - mental health - female perspective - feminism - film analysis

ABSTRACT

Humor created by women has increasingly emerged as a space of resistance, critique, and collective catharsis. This paper examines the series *In My Skin* (2018–2020), created by Kayleigh Llewellyn, as a case study at the intersection of comedy, mental health, and the female gaze. The narrative follows a teenager who conceals her mother’s mental illness while growing up in a violent and dysfunctional family environment, illustrating how gender, class, and adolescence shape her lived experience. In dialogue with female-centered series such as *Girls*, *Fleabag*, and *Such Brave Girls*, *In My Skin* employs an unsettling form of humor that destabilizes taboos and reframes traumatic situations through comedy. Drawing on qualitative methodology and feminist film theory, this analysis demonstrates how humor operates as both a political and aesthetic strategy to address female suffering without aestheticizing pain.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Lately, women are claiming humour for their own, using it to shout out against unfairness, and share the truth of their lives. Hence, female humour has become a place for healing, pushing back, and analysis. This can be seen in *In My Skin* (BBC Three, 2018–2020), which blends comedy with stories about women’s mental health and a distinctly female perspective. Written by Kayleigh Llewellyn and directed by Lucy Forbes and Molly Manners, the show tells the tale of Bethan, a young woman who hides her mother’s mental struggles from her classmates while trying to survive in a troubled family. *In My Skin* shows that mental health is something deeply felt, and shaped by gender, class, and formative environments. Furthermore, the series fits in within a line of female-focused stories—*Girls*, *Fleabag*, *My Mad Fat Diary*, *Such Brave Girls*, and others—that challenge women’s traditional roles in comedy and questions older ways of portraying trauma and the limits of female humour (Gill, 2016).

A rather unusual opening phrase greets the viewer: “A small white lie harmed nobody” setting in motion Bethan’s journey. Every day at school, she carries a secret: her mother’s struggle with bipolar disorder and the chaos it brings. These moments often unhinge her, often dragging Bethan into the chaos as well. What makes it worse is her father, a drunkard whose violent behaviour makes her live even harder. Lacking financial means or emotional support, Bethan builds a double life where everything appears spotless.

On this note, the series explores how humorous narra-

tives can be effective not only in ridiculing family expectations but also in allowing people “to understand who we are and want to be” (Serra, 2018, p.155). The show seeks to break down the barriers surrounding women’s mental health, teenage struggles, and the awful abuse the main character experiences. It reframes these complex issues in shades of grey rather than black and white. By using humor as a platform of free expression, it challenges common clichés about women’s mental states and highlights that humor belongs to no one and everyone alike.

Álvarez contends this:

Feminist humour seeks both personal validation and group cohesion, built upon shared mental spaces that help the audience grasp their daily discrimination, and on the collective laughter it generates by mocking representative stereotypes—forming group bonds and highlighting women’s neglected issues or those belonging to a society’s “little culture” (2019, p. 64).

The show uses close-ups and medium shots, narrowing the viewing angle and urging viewers to focus on the main character’s face. The visual approach hints at the sense of daily entrapment and also supports comic timing, as silence and glances become essential for humor to emerge from the tension between action and speech. Bethan’s house, where her actual life happens, is filled with gray tones, but the school is depicted in warmer tones, highlighting her duality. The spaces Bethan inhabits are far from neutral, intensifying her feelings of helplessness. While the home and

the psychiatric hospital materialize the protagonist's vulnerability, the school operates as a stage for representation: there, Bethan acts for others, pretending to come from a stable home. The domestic space, by contrast, ceases to function as a truly habitable place. This logic is reinforced through the *mise-en-scène*, as the school's warm palette contrasts sharply with the grays of the domestic environment.

On the narrative level, diegetic time is interrupted by episodes of reverie that externalize adolescent consciousness: they do not romanticize the wounds of trauma, but rather serve as a formal device that allows us to identify the protagonist's strategies for survival. From a feminist perspective, the series makes visible the realities of many adolescents who grow up in broken homes and maintain complex relationships with their mothers. Bethan loves her mother, but her mother's bipolar disorder forces her, at an early age, into the role of a caregiver when she should be focusing on the concerns of her own life stage. In this sense, the audiovisual narrative participates in a tradition of feminist humor that uses laughter as a critical tool to challenge normative gender discourses. Thus, just as contemporary comedians such as Sarah Silverman, Tina Fey, Ali Wong, Jessica Williams, and Lena Dunham unambiguously exploit the "subversive force of feminist humor" (Willet and Willet, 2013, p. 16) to produce "disruptive spectacles" (Karlyn, 1995, p. 31), the series refuses to reproduce stereotypes of the good daughter and rejects the appeal of normative bodies (toned, white, slender). In this context, humor does not soften the pain; rather, it exposes and, at times, ridicules the structures that produce it, lending depth and epistemic authority to the perspective of an adolescent habitually disavowed by narrative discourses.

They lay bare desires and dreads without romanticizing suffering. Far from softening pain, styling choices functions as a sophisticated device that allows viewers to discern the main character's strategies for coping. Thinking feministically, these interruptions challenge the authority of the so-called "objective" viewpoint and grant weight to the perspective of a teenager, who is often dismissed in her own world.

The camera rarely resorts to shots that infantilize Bethan, but when it does, these moments fit into the logic of power within the storytelling. This is particularly evident when she faces school authorities, highlighting the built-in layer of surveillance. The narrative also demonstrates an awareness of gender, socioeconomic status, and adolescence through objects and clothing—worn out school uniforms, a battered backpack, chewed nails—subtle clues to her difficult circumstances.

In *My Skin* positions female humor as a counter-mechanism, a kind of ethical-aesthetic montage that skillfully navigates depictions of mental health, without sacrificing emotional depth or the political force of humor. Teresa Castejón in *The Comedians: An Unserious Essay on Women and Humour*, gives space to humor within poetry. She highlights Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz—who, knowing that by pursuing a writing career she was following "not her own" path—using humor as a form of defense, downplaying her efforts. "Laughing at herself and her lit, she breaks down the walls that would have been so hard to scale otherwise" (Franc, 2017, p. 155). This article will examine how female humor functions as a strategy of resistance and as a means to thrive in what once was a man's world. Methodologically, it will combine close readings of film with an attentive analysis of representation. The theoretical framework will draw on key ideas from feminist film theory, particularly those of Annette Kuhn and bell hooks.

It will also engage with the research of Elaine Showalter and Phyllis Chesler on madness and femininity, placing the analysis in critical dialogue with typical portrayals of women's mental health in audiovisual narratives.

The series explores the mother-daughter connection through a role reversal: the daughter cares for a mother with bipolar disorder while constructing a seemingly perfect life for her friends, a way to shield herself from a dangerous and intense reality. Bethan's dream sequences brings us closer to her most private thoughts, allowing her to speak openly about her father and articulate feelings commonly experienced in relation to abusive men. Overall, the narrative brings together drama and comedy to address complex issues with care and nuance.

In closing, this article demonstrates how humor can function as a political tool for engaging women's suffering—refusing to prettify pain while insisting on its visibility—and extends theories connecting humor, gender, and mental health in today's audiovisual landscape. As Lori Marso (2019) contends, feminist cringe comedies evoke the cringe as audiences are uncomfortably reminded that desire is neither singular nor pure; we laugh together at the absurdity and at the possibilities it reveals. It is an uncomfortable laughter, yet one that heralds a new day—the resonant, defiant laughter of the Medusa, who always gets the last laugh (p.21).

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“(Im)possible Heroines? A Feminist Analysis of Female Characters in Wednesday (2022/2025), One Piece (2023), and The Rings of Power (2022)”

KEYWORDS

Female heroism, feminist theory, female gaze, intersectionality, urban fantasy, high fantasy, character analysis

ABSTRACT

This case study examines the representation of female characters in contemporary fantasy television through Wednesday (2022/2025), One Piece (2023), and The Rings of Power (2022), exploring the possibilities and limitations of female heroism. Anchored in feminist theory, particularly the concepts of the male and female gaze, and intersectionality, the analysis highlights how these series negotiate gender, power, and identity. Wednesday Addams, Nami, and Galadriel are examined as protagonists who challenge traditional archetypes—outsider, vulnerable, warrior—by integrating agency, emotional complexity, and relationality. The study emphasizes how contemporary audiovisual media both reproduces and subverts patriarchal norms, offering nuanced portrayals of women’s heroism. By centering female subjectivity and examining narrative and visual strategies, the research demonstrates that contemporary fantasy can foster diverse, complex, and transformative female protagonists.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Representations of women in audiovisual media simultaneously reflect and drive social discourses on gender, power, and identity. In the 21st century, with the rise of streaming platforms and the global circulation of content, fantasy television series have become privileged spaces to examine how models of femininity are constructed and problematized. The international impact of works such as Wednesday (Netflix, 2022/2025), One Piece (Netflix, 2023), and The Rings of Power (Amazon Prime, 2022) makes these narratives particularly revealing case studies, not only due to their wide reception and popularity but especially because of the centrality of female characters who embody different possibilities of heroism. Analyzing these figures, Wednesday Addams, Nami, and Galadriel, allows us to interrogate how contemporary audiovisual media updates, re-signifies, or reproduces female stereotypes within diverse fantasy narrative genres.

The reflection presented here is anchored not only in a feminist critical tradition stemming from Laura Mulvey (1975) and her formulation of the “male gaze,” which identifies the ways in which visual narratives tend to inscribe themselves within the logic of male desire, but also, and more importantly, in more recent formulations of the “female gaze,” which seek to re-center female subjectivity, valuing agency and emotional experience while questioning gender stereotypes and including issues of intersectionality to explore affective relationships and foster empathy (Soloway, 2016; Ince, 2017; Brey, 2022). Authors such as Bolton (2011) and Greven

(2011) have also sought to theorize a female gaze capable of re-centering female subjectivity in visual experience, problematizing alternative ways of seeing and narrating. This approach intersects with the notion of intersectionality (Hole & Jelaca, 2019), allowing us to understand how gender, class, race, and other identity markers intersect in character construction. Textual and filmic analysis (Penafria, 2009) provides the methodological tools for a careful reading of the narrative and visual construction of these protagonists.

In the case of Wednesday, the series updates the classic character of Wednesday Addams, portrayed by Jenna Ortega, as an outsider who challenges social and cultural norms while maintaining the centrality of her subjectivity. In the first season, the opposition between Wednesday and Enid evoked the Eva/Maria dichotomy described by Mota Ribeiro (2000): Wednesday, dark, independent, and cold, represented the “Eva” pole; Enid, colorful, social, and obedient, the “Maria” pole. The second season (2025) moves both away from rigid archetypes toward subjects in transformation, capable of building a complex friendship that transcends stereotypes, aligning with Soloway’s (2016) ideas about the potential of female protagonists to subvert patriarchal structures.

Wednesday retains traits of the Eva archetype, rejecting norms and treating others coldly, as seen in the violent interrogations in search of Isaac Night. However, the season introduces vulnerability and reflection:

Thing confronts her about the risk of losing allies, and the scene in which Enid saves her in the climax forces Wednesday to acknowledge dependence on another person. This movement symbolizes significant narrative evolution: the protagonist integrates affectivity and solidarity, opening space for new forms of female subjectivity.

Enid, in turn, breaks from the innocence of the Maria pole (Mota-Ribeiro, 2000) by assuming the status of “alpha werewolf.” Leadership brings challenges and isolation: when defeating one of Isaac’s henchmen, she perceives the fear and mistrust of her peers. Yet sacrificing her hard-earned status to save Wednesday demonstrates that power and affection can coexist strategically and ethically.

The body-swap between Wednesday and Enid is the most innovative narrative device of the season. Wednesday experiences Enid’s sociability and vulnerability, while Enid feels the marginality and coldness of her friend. The sequence functions as a visual metaphor for the dissolution of the Eva/Maria dichotomy, allowing the characters to understand the other’s alterity and redefine their own identities.

Compared to the first season, the transformation is evident: from antagonistic archetypes, Wednesday and Enid become subjects in continuous negotiation, learning from and redefining each other. The body-swap synthesizes this movement: rather than merely coexisting as opposites, they integrate mutual traits, dissolving boundaries and rejecting ideological confinement. Wednesday expands the understanding of what it means to be a heroine in contemporary urban fantasy, offering a reading that combines independence, vulnerability, and interdependence, asserting itself as a series built around the female gaze, where friendship, power, and reinvention intersect.

In *One Piece*, Nami gains particular prominence as one of the few female figures in the narrative’s central core. In the live-action adaptation, Nami is presented not only as a navigator and cartographer but also as someone marked by poverty, trauma, and subjugation. The arc culminates in a moment of vulnerability in which she asks Luffy for help, a gesture that reinforces her agency: recognizing limits and trusting alliances becomes an expression of emotional strength. Reading through Murdock’s (1990) *Heroine’s Journey* allows a reconsideration of female heroism models: not solitary invulnerability, but a trajectory that values relationships, empathy, and reconciliation with one’s own pain. Nami breaks stereotypes of the “manipulative woman” or “decorative companion,” revealing herself as a multi-layered character whose power derives from technical competence and psychological resilience.

The *Rings of Power* presents a distinct configuration by re-inscribing Tolkienian characters into a new narrative arc. Galadriel emerges as a military commander and avenging warrior, closer to the epic warrior archetype (Smith & Robinson, 2022) than to the ethereal sorceress of Peter Jackson’s film adaptations. This version represents a symbolic achievement in high fantasy, dominated by male protagonists, but it tends to flatten the character, bringing her closer to the caricature of the “strong woman” who replaces emotional complexity with assertiveness (Chocano, 2011). She becomes the commander of the Northern Armies and completes the stages of her journey, a feat for which she possesses the necessary social and political status (Wickham, 2018, p. 167) and contributes to the construction of worlds based on gender parity (Wickham, 2018, p. 25). However, the narratological themes of Galadriel’s story do not always align with what is defined as “women’s cinema” (White, 2015, p. 106), remaining largely tied to traditionally male narrative arcs.

The comparison of these three series reveals that, although each operates within distinct narrative genres, they all converge in a movement of reinscribing women into positions of narrative centrality. Wednesday, Nami, and Galadriel are not mere accessories to male heroes but protagonists of their own journeys. Still, tensions remain: narratives often rely on classic archetypes—outsider, vulnerable, warrior—only partially displaced. Feminist potential lies in the fissures: when the outsider refuses domestication, the vulnerable claims help without relinquishing strength, the famous warrior whose leadership is sometimes flawed. It is in this intertwining of stereotype and transcendence that the current landscape of global female heroism takes shape.

Contemporary female heroism oscillates between reproducing patriarchal stereotypes and opening new possibilities for subjectivity and agency. These series capitalize on recognizable archetypes but introduce significant shifts: Latin identity in Wednesday, vulnerability as strength in Nami, and leadership—sometimes flawed—in Galadriel.

Feminist criticism illuminates these tensions, showing that audiovisual media is a symbolic battleground where visions of gender, power, and identity are contested. If, as Mulvey (1975) asserts, cinema and television inscribe desires and ideologies, the analysis of these (im)possible heroines demonstrates that they are also spaces of resistance, negotiation, and reinvention. By bringing characters such as Wednesday, Nami, and Galadriel to the center, space is opened to imagine protagonists of narratives that are complex, plural, and autonomous.

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"Aftersun and Embodied Memory:
Nostalgia as Resistance in the Cinema of Charlotte Wells"

KEYWORDS

Feminist cinema, Memory cinema,
Nostalgia, Gaze, Representation

ABSTRACT

The reconstruction of the past has been a recurring motif throughout the history of storytelling, both as an exercise in personal memory and as a way of interrogating the social and cultural frameworks that sustain it. In contemporary cinema, this gesture has shifted by understanding memory not as mere nostalgic evocation but as a critical space of subjective rewriting. Within this context, this paper focuses on *Aftersun* (Charlotte Wells, 2022) as a paradigmatic example of the representation of memory from a feminist perspective. The proposal explores how feminist cinema and memory cinema converge in Wells's work, and how this hybridity allows us to rethink the relationship between nostalgia, gender, and representation.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT**Introduction**

The reconstruction of the past has been a recurring trope throughout the history of storytelling, both as an exercise in personal memory and as a way of interrogating the social and cultural frameworks that sustain it. In contemporary cinema, this gesture has been problematized by understanding memory not as mere nostalgic evocation, but as a critical space of subjective rewriting. Within this framework, the present conference analyzes *Aftersun* (Charlotte Wells, 2022) as a paradigmatic example of representing memory from a feminist perspective, where nostalgia and embodied memory function as critical tools against dominant discourses on gender, fatherhood, and subjectivity. Wells articulates this through an intimate cinematic language and through the use of domestic archives as a materialization of memory's fragmentation.

The purpose of this conference is to examine how *Aftersun* establishes a dialogue between two cinematic traditions: feminist cinema and memory cinema (Rincón Yohn et al., 2017). Since the 1970s, feminism has problematized patriarchal modes of narrating and looking, giving centrality and space to the everyday and the vulnerable, as Chantal Akerman emphasized regarding her film *Jeanne Dielman*, by "giving room to things that had never been shown in that way" (1977: 118). At the same time, memory cinema does not simply evoke a lost time but activates a dialogue between past and present that can be deeply critical. Memory cinema seeks, to a certain extent, to visually emulate the workings of memory itself: the mental processes involved in recalling.

Aftersun stages a dialogue between these two traditions: on the one hand, it shifts the narrative focus to the gaze of the adult woman recalling her childhood (thereby questioning classical narrative modes), and on the other, it turns the act of remembering into an aesthetic and almost political practice, grounded in narrative absences and the use of audiovisual archives as material traces. At this point, the question that emerges is clear: how can nostalgia be transformed into resistance against dominant discourses?

Methodology

To address this question, a qualitative methodology has been employed, combining classical film analysis with a feminist perspective. *Aftersun* is understood here as a paradigmatic example of hybridity between feminist cinema and memory cinema. From a formal standpoint, the study draws on Jacques Aumont's reflections on *découpage* and Christian Metz's semiotics of the image, which are useful for unraveling how meanings are constructed through visual and sound devices. However, this framework is enriched by a feminist approach which, beyond technique, implies a political stance: to give centrality to historically silenced experiences, to question structures of power, and to deconstruct binary categories. Applied to *Aftersun*, this allows us to see how the film not only represents an intimate and vulnerable memory, but also destabilizes hegemonic narrative frameworks through a fragmented and affective language.

State of art

Nostalgia as Critique: Reconstructing the Past through Affective Memory

The exploration of memory in contemporary cinema is often articulated through an intimate language. Remembering carries multiple implications, one of the most relevant being the possible alteration of an alleged past reality through the lens of the present gaze. This discrepancy makes memory an unstable territory, traversed by gaps shaped by the absence of domestic archives or by memory lapses. From this arises nostalgia, the idealization of a lost time. Yet, in certain narratives, nostalgia ceases to be merely melancholic and becomes a critical tool. In Svetlana Boym's words, restorative nostalgia does not seek to restore a lost time but rather to adopt a spectator's position from temporal distance. It enables us to revisit past experiences from the present, interrogate the frameworks that contained them, and sometimes open cracks in dominant discourses. Intimate aesthetics, with their emphasis on the vulnerable and the everyday, thus operate as a political device for rereading the past, where subjectivity asserts itself not as a limit but as a form of resistance.

Memory, Grief, and Self-Exploration in Female Authorship

In recent years, there has been a significant growth of auteur cinema directed by women. While the label "women's cinema" is problematic—due to its ambiguity and the risk of homogenizing diverse audiovisual styles and languages—it is undeniable that these authorships introduce meaningful particularities into the cinematic landscape. Chief among them is the subversion of the traditional gaze of the camera, which shifts toward historically neglected perspectives and explores alternative representational forms. As Sheila Rowbotham notes, it is an exercise in "revisiting ourselves through our cultural creations" (1973: 28), in which female authorship reconfigures modes of narrating and looking, questioning dominant frameworks of representation.

In this context, memory and grief emerge as recurrent narrative devices to inhabit wounds from an intimate place. A significant wave of contemporary women directors—such as Carla Simón with *Romería* (2025), Elena Martín Gimeno with *Creatura* (2023), Céline Song with *Past Lives* (2023), or Charlotte Wells herself with *Aftersun* (2022)—turn to the autobiographical in order to articulate stories that connect with the collective. This language challenges the linearity of classical narrative, proposing a space of subjective exploration where memory is performed and pain becomes aesthetic material, opening the possibility of re-signifying identities and memories through audiovisual production.

Aftersun and Charlotte Wells: Transgressive Narratives and the Shifting Gaze

In *Aftersun*, Charlotte Wells constructs a narrative that departs from classical linearity to place the story within the unstable terrain of memory. Adult Sophie functions as meganarrator—the absolute mediator of what is shown. We do not witness events as they happened, but rather their fragmentary reconstruction through her present gaze. Memory becomes, then, a device of searching, where each scene responds less to the will to tell a closed story than to the need to make sense of a past that remains unresolved. This fragmented quality is reinforced through the use of domestic audiovisual archives (MiniDV recordings), which act both as narrative engine and as material traces of the intimate: shaky, incomplete images that condense the fragility of memory and the impossibility of fully accessing what is lost. The texture of the archive not only evokes the time of childhood but also highlights the distance between memory and its representation, emphasizing the subjective operation of reconstruction.

At the same time, Wells offers a portrayal of masculinity distanced from hegemonic patterns: Calum, the father, is marked by vulnerability, melancholy, and emotional wear. Rather than embodying fatherhood as stable authority, he appears as a fragile subject, unable to fully meet the social expectations of normative fatherhood. In this way, *Aftersun* shifts the narrative center toward the intimate and affective experiences of a daughter who remembers and a father who withdraws, building a transgressive narrative where memory, archives, and masculine vulnerability shape an aesthetic and political gesture of resistance.

Conclusions

Aftersun not only stands out as a key work in contemporary cinema, but also as a proposal that reshapes how we think about the relationship between memory, gender, and representation. Firstly, the film demonstrates that nostalgia can function as a political device, capable of resisting dominant discourses by placing vulnerability and intimacy at the heart of the narrative. This gesture not only questions the patriarchal authority of classical storytelling but also opens the door to new forms of filmic subjectivity, where remembering does not mean restoring the lost, but rewriting it from the present.

Moreover, *Aftersun* confirms the relevance of female authorship in reconfiguring the cinematic gaze, as Wells shifts the focus to marginalized experiences—fragile fatherhood, childhood revisited from adulthood—and proposes an aesthetic language that combines archives, silences, and fragmented narratives as embodiments of memory.

The film invites us to imagine a broader horizon: the

need to conceive filmic memory as an embodied, affective, and collective process that questions the limits of traditional representation. In this sense, *Aftersun* not only offers an intimate story about the relationship between father and daughter but also inscribes itself in a genealogy of feminist and memory cinema that

challenges established forms of narrating, looking, and feeling. Wells's work thus helps us envision a cinema where nostalgia is no longer a melancholic refuge, but a practice of resistance and an opening toward new critical sensibilities.

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TITLE

The Cinema of Pain - The Loneliness
in Frida
Keywords

KEYWORDS

Female Cinema, A/R/COgraphy, Fri-
da, Misogyny, #MeToo

ABSTRACT

The film *Frida* (2002), directed by Julie Taymor and developed by actress and producer Salma Hayek, is the focus of this analysis. I use the methodologies of A/R/COgraphy (Veiga, 2020) and Filmmakers' Theory (Graça; Baggio; Penafria, 2015) to, through the dialogue between Taymor's female gaze, the actions of producer Weinstein, feminist theories that discuss image and narrative codes (Mulvey, 1975; Kaplan, 1995), and the impact of visibility campaigns (Banet-Weiser, 2018) such as #MeToo (Boyle, 2019) to foster meaningful debates about the female cinematic experience. At this crossroads between feminism, cinema, and their interpretations, we can reach spaces for creation and resistance, where the director's female gaze remains central despite exposure to structures that seek to constrain it.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT**Introduction**

Frida Kahlo's life and work were marked by experiences of physical pain, loneliness, and childlessness (Herrera, 1983; Lima, 2024). Accidents, surgeries, miscarriages, and the inability to bear children profoundly influenced her artistic production. Paintings such as *Hospital Henry Ford* (1932) and *Frida y la cesárea* (1931) convey this experience of a bodily rupture, transforming pain into aesthetic power. Works such as *Autorretrato con pelo corto* (1940) and *Unos cuantos piquetitos* (1935) expand on this gesture, revealing a subjectivity that negotiates between gender violence and resistance.

At the same time, her diaries (Kahlo, 1995) expose an intimate loneliness that articulates desire, politics, and creation. This loneliness is not only biographical but historical as well. Frida emerges as a mestiza woman, an artist, in a post-revolutionary Mexico. But her work is constantly reinterpreted from external, colonial, patriarchal, and market perspectives (Lima, 2024).

Frida (2002), conceived by Salma Hayek and directed by Julie Taymor, attempts to translate Kahlo's biographical universe into cinematic language. The director's vision, however, is marked by complex negotiations. On the one hand, Taymor sought to bring Kahlo's painting to the screen in a visceral way, recreating paintings such as *Henry Ford Hospital* or *El sueño* (*La cama*) in sequences that establish connections between cinema and painting. On the other hand, her vision was constrained by a Hollywood production, produced by the American company Miramax.

The analysis of this authorial gaze implies recognising both its gestures of resistance and its limitations. The film, for example, makes room for Frida's sexuality. But superficially, it mentions her bisexuality, but reduces it to momentary and exotic episodes. Her relationship with Diego Rivera is prioritised, reproducing a narrative in which male genius occupies a central place. Thus, the director's gaze appears as a site of contestation between the intention of female authorship (Taymor/Hayek) and the pressure of a patriarchal and colonial structure that conditions the film.

To reflect on *Frida* (2002) through Taymor's eyes and the concept of Cinema of Pain is to put body, image, and structure in tension. The term, inspired by Susan Sontag (2003), acknowledges the pain that runs through the biography of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, her work and its cinematic translation. The loneliness that Kahlo recorded in her diaries and on canvas is mediated in an unstable way in the film. The director leads the romanticised narrative, actress Salma Hayek embodies it, but the project was never free from the industrial machinery that produced it. Frida is interpreted as conflicted work, an attempt to assert a feminist perspective that clashes with the logic of production controlled by Harvey Weinstein, founding partner of Miramax, and a figure denounced by Hayek, Taymor, and other filmmakers during #MeToo.

I propose to explore how these readings intersect, as Frida oscillates between celebrating the artist and constraining her within limiting frames. It is in this irregular, sometimes contradictory oscillation that I pose the question: What does it mean to examine the represen-

tation of Frida from the perspective of the Cinema of Pain?

Theoretical Framework

In dialogue with feminist and decolonial thinkers, I situate these contradictions. According to Laura Mulvey (1975), mainstream narrative cinema organises visual pleasure unevenly; the female figure is positioned as a passive object of the gaze, while active agency is attributed to male characters and, by extension, to the cinematic device. According to Ann Kaplan (1995), female filmmakers are part of a system that operates according to specific narrative and visual codes, created to satisfy the male gaze; not all of them manage to subvert these conventions. Kaplan warns that any analysis of female authorship must consider both creative intentions and the limitations imposed by the medium.

Karen Boyle (2019) examines the impact of the #Me-Too movement on society and warns of the risk that, by being widely publicised, the movement becomes decentralised and is transformed into celebrity-centred narratives and individual figures instead of addressing the structural and systemic patterns of violence and harassment, which shifts the focus from structural criticism to media narratives of scandals and individual accountability.

Sarah Banet-Weiser (2018) refers to this visibility as, which does not always lead to paradigm shifts, 'popular feminism', referring to a feminism that is widely visible in media culture but often dissociated from structural transformations. It is useful for this research to understand how films can be celebrated as feminist icons through the circulation of images of empowerment and visibility. Without this implying concrete changes in working conditions in the film industry or in the position of women in society.

Analytical Approach

The analysis of Kahlo's historical figure is carried out through the theories and concepts established and addressed by Latin American and decolonial feminisms, in a context traversed by race, class, and coloniality. By verifying the divergences and convergences of Taymor's gaze, space is opened to question whether the director's gaze reiterates or challenges these layers. Rita Segato (2012, 2014) considers, regarding gender coloniality, how modernity has emptied women's spaces of political influence, pushing them into a devalued private sphere. It is necessary to reflect on Kahlo's search for autonomy from Diego Rivera, whether financial or symbolic, as a political gesture. Works such as *Unos cuantos piquetitos* (1935), in which the artist exposes male violence, can be seen as the inscription

of a historical structure that is now recognised as femicide.

Analysing the film in light of these questions means understanding that the director's gaze involved both affirmation and negotiation, resistance and concession. In this case, the Cinema of Pain is not limited to the historical figure of Frida Kahlo, the narrative or the film's content, but extends to female authorship in cinema itself: the pain of creating under coercion, the loneliness of facing a hostile industry, and the silencing of voices that dare to resist.

These contributions allow for multiple interpretations and perspectives. They also open space to discuss authorship, structural violence, and coloniality. Each of them reveals fissures in the film *Frida*, which oscillates between translating and restricting the historical character. In this irregular, non-linear, and sometimes contradictory movement, it is possible to question the director's perspective on female loneliness.

Methodology

This research adopts A/R/COgraphy (Veiga, 2020), a methodology combining creation and reflection. Analysis is conducted through diverse audiovisual experiments and compositional strategies. In this context, I use the desktop documentary (Lee & Avissar, 2023) and audiovisual essay (Grant, 2016) as methodological tools that serve as instruments for examining the director's perspective.

The Theory of Filmmakers (Graça, Baggio & Penafria, 2015) offers a counterpoint for analysing Julie Taymor's directorial perspective on filmmaking, as well as the creative tensions with Salma Hayek, recognising the constraints imposed by the industry.

The methodology combines archival images, interviews, theory, and the film narrative itself. It seeks to trace the marks of loneliness and structural violence. Some are evident, such as in Hayek's statements about Weinstein. Others are suggested by formal choices, in the way Frida's body is framed, or in the silence that permeates moments of the film. The method is therefore open: it follows clues, welcomes deviations, and embraces contingency as part of the analysis.

Conclusions

The director's perspective highlights the tensions of female authorship within the logic of film production, particularly in Hollywood. Julie Taymor and Salma Hayek sought to articulate a sensitive and feminist reading of Frida Kahlo's biography in the film, but had to negotiate narrative and aesthetic pressures that reinforce colo-

nial and patriarchal logics.

The structural violence exposed by the #MeToo movement, which also encompasses the Weinstein case, reshapes the interpretation of the film. The Cinema of Pain extends to the creators themselves. They face constraints and silencing in their attempt to assert an authorial gaze. Frida becomes a site of contestation between resistance and appropriation, between affirmation and concession. The concept of Cinema of Pain helps us understand how the loneliness and violence that permeated Kahlo's life echo in her film representation, and behind the scenes of the film industry.

At this intersection between feminism, cinema, and decoloniality, this study emphasises the female cinematic experience as a space for creation and struggle. The director's gaze remains central, despite being exposed to structures that attempt to limit it. What emerges is not a definitive answer as to how Taymor represents Frida Kahlo's loneliness, but rather an unstable interplay between interpretive possibilities and constraints. The film makes room for pain as creation, but also imprisons it within the confines of the industry and the patriarchal pressures that shaped it.

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TITLE

“Indigenous Women in Cinema: Decolonization, Gender, and Audiovisual Protagonism”

KEYWORDS

Indigenous cinema; Cultural Studies; Intersectionality; Representation; Decolonization; Gender; Female protagonism.

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses an intersectional approach to the multiple dimensions of the lived experiences of Brazilian indigenous women, focusing on their representation in cinema. The main objective was to investigate how these women self-represent and construct memory through their own audiovisual productions, positioning these creations as cultural practices of resistance and instruments of decolonization. The work offers relevant contributions to the reflection on the intersection between cinema, gender, and decolonization by highlighting the centrality of indigenous women as producers of meaning and as creators of alternative narratives to the colonial gaze. By making their protagonism visible, this paper proposes to displace dominant paradigms in the audiovisual field, promoting epistemic diversity and cognitive justice.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT**Introduction**

Situated within the field of Cultural Studies, this paper is guided by the theoretical contributions of Stuart Hall (2003) and Maria Lugones (2008), whose approaches to identity, representation, and the colonality of gender offer a critical and interdisciplinary perspective for understanding the social construction of Indigenous women's identities and their protagonism in the contemporary cultural field.

The study seeks to answer the following research question: “In what ways do cinematic narratives contribute to the visibility and empowerment of Indigenous women in the global context, and how can Cultural Studies foster an interdisciplinary reading of such narratives?”

The main objective is to investigate processes of self-representation and memory construction in audiovisual productions created by Indigenous women, considering these works as integral parts of the ongoing process of decolonisation in Brazil.

Theoretical Framework

This reflection is grounded in Cultural Studies, particularly in the contributions of Stuart Hall, Maria Lugones, and Kimberlé Crenshaw, whose combined perspectives allow a critical reading of the intersections among gender, race, class, and colonality. The research also dialogues with Latin American feminist thought and with debates on Indigenous cinema, upholding an approach that values active listening, the epistemologies of the South, and the recognition of multiple subaltern voices.

Methodology

Topic	Objective	Authors / References
Conceptual Framework: Decolonization and Intersectionality	Ground the analysis in the concepts of colonality, decoloniality, and intersectionality, contextualizing the experiences of Indigenous women.	Maria Lugones (Coloniality of Gender), Aníbal Quijano (Coloniality of Power), Walter Dignolo (Epistemic Disobedience), Gloria Anzaldúa, Kimberlé Crenshaw (Intersectionality).

Gender, Ethnicity, and Indigenous Epistemologies	Discuss the construction of gender within Indigenous cosmologies, in opposition to colonial and patriarchal impositions	Ailton Krenak, Davi Kopenawa, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Indigenous Feminism), Vandana Shiva (Ecofeminism), Cristina Rocha (Intercultural and Gender Studies).
Indigenous Women's Agency in Audiovisual Media	Analyze how Indigenous women produce, direct, and lead audiovisual narratives, breaking away from stereotypes	Joana Cabral de Oliveira (Indigenous Cinema in Brazil), Ernesto de Carvalho (VÍdeo nas Aldeias), Priscilla Ermel, Caroline Fernandes, filmmakers such as Takumã Kuikuro, Graciela Guarani, Patrícia Ferreira Pará Yxapy.
Colonial Representations and Counter-Narratives	Examine historical stereotypes and how Indigenous productions subvert them, creating their own narratives	Stuart Hall (Representation, Identity), bell hooks (The Oppositional Gaze), Homi Bhabha (Hybridity), Ella Shohat & Robert Stam (Post-colonialism and Media).
Case Studies and Film Analysis	Present detailed analyses of films/documentaries by Indigenous women, focusing on aesthetics, narrative, and political context.	Works by Fabiene Priscila and Eneida Afonso Bayaroá, Indigenous-themed documentary, and Thays Kokama's Cine Aldeia, a cinema space for Indigenous film screenings.
Challenges and Future Perspectives	Discuss structural barriers, access to resources, and public policies to expand Indigenous audiovisual agency.	Debates in cultural policy (MinC, Funarte, ANCINE), collaborative networks of Indigenous filmmakers, studies on audiovisual distribution and circulation.

Critical Analysis

The presence of Indigenous women in audiovisual media and positions of power remains limited, reflecting historical and structural inequalities. This paper problematises such marginalisation and analyses how the visibility of Indigenous women in cinema challenges colonial stereotypes, reclaims representativeness, and promotes social and cultural inclusion.

The analysis draws on a corpus of audiovisual works led by Indigenous women, through which it is possible to understand how myths of origin and rites of passage are reinterpreted and reimagined in contemporary contexts, reaffirming their own identities and cosmologies.

Gender relations within Indigenous contexts do not follow a universal logic. As ethnographic studies (MACHADO, 2014) have shown, the sexual division of labour, social roles, and expressions of femininity vary widely among different peoples. However, the imposition of Western gender categories—mediated by schooling and missionary activity—generated tensions and conflicts with local cultural conceptions. It is within this space of negotiation and tension that processes of

identity reinvention emerge, finding in contemporary cinema a powerful arena of political and symbolic expression.

Feminist studies of race and ethnicity are essential to deconstruct the categories imposed on non-white women, promoting visibility, epistemological recognition, and representation for Indigenous women who have been historically marginalised by colonial modernity.

In recent decades, the political, intellectual, and artistic protagonism of Indigenous women has gained significant strength. Leaders such as Eliane Potiguara and Célia Xakriabá articulate an intersectional critique of racism, patriarchy, and coloniality, asserting Indigenous women's place as rights-bearing subjects and knowledge producers. Their action extends beyond political activism, reaching literature, education, visual arts, and increasingly, cinema. By occupying spaces of creation and representation, these women reconstruct narratives of self-affirmation and subvert colonial stereotypes.

Drawing on the concept of “coloniality of gender,” Ma-

ria Lugones (2008) demonstrates how European patriarchy profoundly reconfigured gender relations in colonised territories. In contrast to the often matrilineal and community-based practices of many Indigenous peoples, the imposition of a binary and hierarchical gender model operated as a mechanism of epistemic domination, silencing Indigenous women's knowledges and subjectivities. In this sense, Indigenous women's cinema constitutes a form of "epistemic disobedience," allowing the authors themselves to narrate their stories, denounce colonial violence, and reinscribe themselves as agents of their own memory.

The study focuses on the "KATAHIRINE Indigenous Women's Audiovisual Network," launched in September 2022 in Brazil. Comprising sixty filmmakers, producers, and screenwriters from across the country's biomes, the network's primary aim is to transfer audiovisual protagonism into the hands of Indigenous women, who use the camera as an instrument of political struggle, memory preservation, and territorial defence.

"Katahirine" is a word from the Manchinieri people meaning "constellation," symbolising plurality, interconnection, and solidarity among diverse women who mutually support one another in promoting Indigenous protagonism. The network constitutes a collective and safe articulation space that encourages experience sharing and values both collective embodiment and individual subjectivity.

Its main goals include: giving visibility to authors and their trajectories; creating channels for production circulation; stimulating dialogue with diverse audiences; and attracting partners to strengthen Indigenous women's audiovisual initiatives. Moreover, the network advocates for public policies that address the specificities of Indigenous women's film production, confronting their statistical and institutional invisibility.

Stuart Hall's (2003) theory of identity helps to understand these dynamics through the notion that identity is a continuous process of construction and negotiation. For Hall, identity is constituted through language, culture, and representation, shaped by shifting discursive positions. In the case of Indigenous women, myths, rituals, and cosmologies serve as cultural enunciations reaffirming belonging and gender meanings. In cinema, these elements acquire both aesthetic and political value, questioning colonial paradigms and asserting Indigenous worldviews.

Thus, Indigenous women's cinema emerges as a space of decolonisation and identity reinvention, where gender, memory, and cosmology intertwine. These productions not only challenge the crystallised images of Western cinematic traditions but also affirm the

plurality of Indigenous voices, establishing a territory of resistance, creativity, and emancipation.

Conclusions

The low representativeness of Indigenous women in positions of power and media spaces reflects historical and structural inequalities. Despite the progress of recent research, theoretical and empirical gaps persist in articulating Indigenous knowledge with decolonial theories of gender and cultural identity. Most existing studies remain limited to descriptive anthropological approaches, giving little attention to Indigenous women's voices and epistemologies.

This paper seeks to contribute to the overcoming of these gaps by recognising Indigenous women not merely as objects of study but as epistemic subjects and agents of cultural transformation. It reaffirms the central argument that Indigenous women's audiovisual protagonism constitutes an act of decolonisation, fundamental to strengthening Indigenous epistemologies and interseccionality as critical analytical tools.

The experiences analysed demonstrate that audiovisual production, when appropriated by Indigenous women, functions as an instrument of empowerment, visibility, and cultural resistance. The creation of autonomous spaces for the production and exhibition of narratives represents an epistemic shift in how Indigenous peoples — and particularly their women — reposition themselves at the centre of their own histories.

In conclusion, audiovisual productions led by Indigenous women provide rich material for analysing how gender relations are represented and reinterpreted in contemporary contexts. These works offer valuable insights into processes of empowerment and identity renegotiation within intercultural and decolonial frameworks.

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TITLE

"The Materiality of Female Veiling and
 Visual Space in Post-Revolutionary
 Iranian Cinema"

KEYWORDS

Feminist film theory, Iranian Cinema,
 femininity and space, veiling and hi-
 jab, mise-en-scène

ABSTRACT

Women's presence under the strict regulation of the hijab in Iranian cinema after the 1979 Revolution has been one of the most debated issues in Iranian film studies. This essay employs Laura Mulvey's psycho-analytic theories of dialectics, concealment, and revelation to examine the materiality of covering and veiling in this era. While the hijab was intended to desexualize women's on-screen presence, it paradoxically intensified the objectification of femininity through a fabricated *mise-en-scène* and a regulated use of space that repositions the female body within the frame. In Mulvey's framework, this covering functions as a masquerade of secrecy rooted in patriarchal anxiety, producing fetishization and fragmentation of the female body.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The 1979 revolution in Iran and the establishment of the Islamic Republic led to new laws that targeted the media and visual arts as well as other sections in society, to promote Islamicization and de-Westernization. Among the most significant were laws concerning the representation of women. Because women were required to observe the Islamic hijab in public, this restriction led to unrealistic portrayals of female characters on the screen. Such constraints, which gave rise to new cinematic traditions affecting both content and form, have been the subject of extensive scholarly examination. Scholars have discussed how these limitations led to the development of a unique visual language, with a primary focus on auteur cinema. For example, Hamid Naficy theorizes this development within a sociopolitical context, considering how the notion of the gaze within Shi'a principles shaped techniques of presentation. Others like Negar Mottahedeh and Michele Langford, in turn, analyze the result in allegorical terms. Mottahedeh specifically defines this as "displaced allegories," where the modesty of the female body becomes a new cinematic indexical address.

Focusing on the materiality of the imposed dress code, this paper highlights a less-examined aspect: the element of veiling itself constructs an unintended *mise-en-scène* with every female appearance. This phenomenon is particularly evident in popular and mainstream cinema, where the hijab has become an accepted cinematic convention for audiences. The institutionalization of veiling introduced a new element into the aesthetics of Iranian cinema, affecting its spatial dynamics. I will argue how the hijab, as a non-diegetic element, was imposed to desexualize and neutralize the female

body; yet paradoxically, it results in intensified objectification of femininity through repositioning the female body in a system of fabricating or regulating the modes of *mise-en-scène* and space. Following that, I will explore how this reconstructs itself in a form of denial of femininity stemming from the male psyche's anxiety, leading to the structuring of fetishistic fashion. This occurs when the spatial rules that govern women's relationship with space presuppose the male gaze to reconstruct a patriarchal geography.

Drawing on Laura Mulvey's psychoanalytic framework in "Pandora: Topographies of the Mask and Curiosity," this paper argues that masking through veiling in Iranian post-revolutionary cinema refers to patriarchal anxieties around female sexuality, and this enforced dress code generates a new spatial logic that systematically imposes a surplus on cinematic perception. While Mulvey's arguments are grounded in Hollywood cinema, where the female body is staged as a site of allure using eroticized masks, they can be extended to Iranian cinema with a crucial twist: here, concealment is achieved not through allusion but through the literal, non-eroticized fabric of the veil. According to the Islamic guidelines that rule this dress code, only the circle of the face and hands to wrists are permitted, while the body's shapes must be hidden and flattened into a neutral surface. In Mulvey's terms regarding the topography of meanings, this concealment can be translated into the dialectics of inside/outside or visible/invisible. In the case of Iranian cinema, it intensifies the sense of absence alongside the continuous attempt to hide and cover. This masquerade, rather than simply hiding the body, actively directs the gaze toward what is con-

cealed, engaging a topographical inquiry.

While Mulvey's Pandora represents a seductive android whose mechanical allure provokes fascination and fear, in the Iranian context, the perceived danger of this figure exceeds all other aspects, and the cinematic project becomes one of minimizing fascination through enforced invisibility. Fetishism here emerges as a reaction to this withdrawal. Consequently, the topography of femininity is mapped not on an eye-catching surface but through the tension between presence and absence. The veil produces a paradoxical hyper-visibility: the more it conceals, the more it provokes a gaze that seeks to decode the forbidden through fragmentation of the visible. This is where Mulvey's notion of phantasmagoric imagery becomes critically relevant. The neutral surface of the covering operates as a phantasmagoric field, an uncanny screen for projection where the female body is simultaneously erased and multiplied in the spectator's imagination.

This research combines textual and visual analysis of a curated corpus of commercially successful melodramas from the 1990s and 2000s, a period where veiling regulations were fully normalized into a cinematic convention. Although auteur and arthouse filmmakers employed circumventive strategies (i.e., Kiarostami by removing women, others by shaving women's heads or making hijab itself a plot point), these mainstream films absorbed the covering as a non-negotiable fact of their visual language. The analysis will focus on how the imposed dress code fundamentally reshapes cinematic spatiality. The films for close reading include, but are not limited to: *The Pear Tree* (Dariush Mehrjui, 1998), *Two Women* (Tahmineh Milani, 1999), *The Bride* (Behrooz Afkhami, 1990), and *Killing Mad Dogs* (Bahram Beizai, 2001).

Through visual analysis, it will examine the specific framing and composition that negotiate the female figure's presence, analyzing how her clothing and relative size and performance within the frame are dictated by the need to conceal. This extends to how covering mandates a particular performance of movement, presence, or even erasure within the scene, and how the entire *mise-en-scène* is reconfigured into an apparatus of concealment. This method pinpoints the precise visual mechanics through which patriarchal anxiety is spatialized on screen and how it redefines itself in relation to the male character or the spectator.

In Bahram Beyzai's *SagKoshi* (*Killing the Mad Dog*), for example, the aftershower scene, in which the protagonist plans to dry her hair, demonstrates an economy of looking reflecting on the logic of enforced invisibility. This gaze is divided among close-ups of tools and equipment within the room: the mirror, the hairdry-

er, and the absent husband's photograph in the corner of the frame, a detail shadowed throughout all the acts. The performativity of the tools, combined with a fragmented *mise-en-scène*, pressurizes absent elements like the woman's hair by evoking and fantasizing the hidden. Although not part of the explicit drama, the protagonist's gender is continually reminded through this fractured *mise-en-scène*. The chain of signifiers connoting the forbidden erotic presence of women accentuates its phantasmagoric, mystic aspect in the service of patriarchal voyeurism. The hairdryer and towel, standing in for the hair itself, transform the space into a new mechanism analogous to Pandora's box, where we remain safely outside, protected from the evils within. This replacement of the mask of femininity with tools and instruments that intrude upon the "to-be-looked-at-ness" introduces an imaginary space. This level of avoidance refers to the danger perceived by the male gaze, which, in a Freudian reading, produces a fetishized depiction. This represents a disavowal, an ignoring and rejecting of female sexuality, wherein the male gaze refuses to accept or see it.

In conclusion, what remains most striking is how the presence of the veil on screen has been naturalized over time, accepted as a cinematic norm rather than continually questioned. Of course, it has often been discussed as a form of suppression and censorship, an emblem of the lack of freedom of choice. Yet what needs further study is how this imposed condition has shaped spectatorship itself, reconfiguring the very act of looking through decades of repetition. The most explicit marker of this transformation is the way clothing has redefined the cinematic economy: women are positioned as objects whose meaning is continually negotiated, while space becomes a passive subject, a surface against which these negotiations unfold. Although today artists are strictly challenging and resisting this dress code, the regime of reconstructed meaning it established has already become part of the film legacy of Iranian cinema, one that demands to be studied in multiple dimensions.

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TITLE

“Visualizing Desire: Power, Violence, and Lesbian Subjectivity in Contemporary Female-Centered Cinema”

KEYWORDS

Feminist gaze; Lesbian desire; Triangulation of desire; Mise-en-scène; Resistance; Female representation; Power.

ABSTRACT

This research examines how lesbian desire functions as a counter-narrative to heteronormative power and spectatorship in “Portrait of a Lady on Fire” (2019) and “Tár” (2022). It investigates how desire and the female body are constructed on screen through intimacy and domination — and how these representations reshape gendered dynamics of power, gaze, and subjectivity in contemporary cinema.

The framework draws on feminist film theory, post-Lacanian psychoanalysis, and Anne Carson’s triangulation of desire, which conceives desire as a triangle of lover, beloved, and barrier. Methodologically, the study employs close textual and visual analysis of mise-en-scène, framing, spatial relations, and spectatorial alignment to map how power circulates — who sees, who is seen, and what mediates their relation.

It argues that lesbian desire, when treated with aesthetic and political nuance, challenges normative regimes of visibility and affirms that feminist counter-narratives emerge not only through inclusion but through disruptions of bodies, gazes, and affects.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT**1. Introduction and objectives**

Centering on *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (2019) and *Tár* (2022), this study examines the dynamics of the triangulation of desire through a psychoanalytic lens, with particular attention to how it is articulated in the mise-en-scène. The analysis seeks to unpack how romantic relationships between characters are visually and narratively constructed, and what significance these portrayals carry in terms of power and intimacy.

By focusing on the representation of lesbian desire, this project aims to trace how such images are shaped, what they communicate, and how they might unsettle dominant frameworks of relationality. In doing so, it proposes a framework for interrogating the ways lesbian sexuality is staged and made legible in contemporary cinema.

My objective is to analyse the way in which the mise-en-scène of desire is conveyed and what are the power dynamics present. By thoroughly examining each aspect of the triangulation of desire, I aim at understanding each role and the reverberation it causes on the narrative and its portrayal.

To pursue this, I address two research questions:

1) How is the triangulation of desire portrayed in the

relationships of the protagonists in *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* and *Tár*?

2) How does mise-en-scène depict the power dynamics between lovers and beloveds, and what is the significance of these portrayals?

The broader goal is to investigate whether these films envision relationships outside the heteropatriarchal order—a system privileging heterosexual men. As Annette Kuhn (1985, as cited in hooks, 1992) argues, challenging dominant representations requires first understanding how they function, locating the cracks and fissures that open glimpses of “a world outside the order not normally seen or thought about.” By examining how Sciamma’s and Field’s films stage desire and power, I aim to identify such contradictions and explore how new representations of lesbian relationships might emerge.

The films share clear affinities that justify their comparison: both center on lesbian-identifying artists negotiating love while creating art, both have achieved critical acclaim, and both have sparked debate in feminist and queer circles. Despite their thematic and cultural parallels, they have yet to be analyzed side by side.

In sum, this research asks whether these films can produce images of “a world outside the order” through

their portrayals of lesbian desire, while also situating them within contemporary feminist and queer film culture. By drawing out their parallels and divergences, I aim to map how cinema imagines—and contests—the representation of sexuality and power.

2.Theoretical framework

This research is grounded in psychoanalysis, centering on Lacan's concept of *objet petit a* and Anne Carson's triangulation of desire. In Lacanian theory, *objet petit a* represents the unattainable object that drives desire, not a tangible goal but the symbolic cause of desire itself (Kirshner, 2005). As Homer (2005, p.87) explains, the subject experiences a perpetual sense of lack, seeking fulfillment that can never be fully attained. Desire is thus always structured around absence, and the pursuit of temporary objects merely reinforces the ongoing gap.

Carson (1986) extends this principle to romantic desire through the triangulation of desire, which posits a three-part structure: lover, beloved, and a barrier. The barrier is essential because if the lover could attain the beloved directly—the *objet petit a* realized—desire would collapse; fulfillment would eliminate the lack that animates eros. Instead, the barrier preserves distance, allowing desire to circulate and energize the relationship. This third component may be a person, object, or circumstance, creating a tension in which the lover can “touch without touching,” maintaining the dynamic of longing that defines romantic desire (Carson, 1986, p.36).

By examining each component of the triangulation, this study traces how lesbian desire is structured, circulated, and mediated through the films' mise-en-scène, informing both narrative and affective meaning.

3.Methodology

This research adopts a psychoanalytic perspective, building on Christian Metz's foundational work in cinema studies. In *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier*, Metz demonstrates how cinema engages the unconscious through concepts such as mirror identification, voyeurism, and fetishism, offering tools to analyze the psychological dimensions of film (Metz, 1982). Following Metz, this study examines both narrative and visual elements, attending to their interplay in constructing meaning. Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith (2019) emphasize that film form is systemic, with all elements—framing, lighting, spatial relations, performance—working together to produce effects. Together, these perspectives frame a psychoanalytically informed formal analysis.

Building on this foundation, I employ the triangulation of desire methodology, developed by myself (De Martini Melo, 2024), which organizes analysis into three chapters corresponding to the structural components of desire: the lover, the beloved, and the barrier. As I have described, this approach “allows for a detailed investigation of each element and a comprehensive exploration of how desire and power dynamics are portrayed in the selected films” (De Martini Melo, 2024, p.41). The first part examines the lover and their subjectivity; the second explores the beloved and the relational dynamics of desire; the third analyzes the barrier—persons, objects, or circumstances—that mediates desire and maintains its tension, as expressed in the mise-en-scène.

This integrated approach enables a nuanced examination of how desire circulates, how power operates, and how lesbian relationships are represented, connecting psychoanalytic theory with formal cinematic analysis in a systematic, rigorous way.

4.Critical analysis

4.1 Lover

In *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* and *Tár*, desire drives the protagonists like an unrelenting current. Lydia commands through status and accolades, yet beneath her authority pulses a persistent void—a craving for recognition that no career triumph can fill. Marianne seizes power in the intimate space of painting, asserting influence through skill, presence, and subtle dominance. Both inhabit Mari Ruti's notion of phallic power, where sexuality, authority, and control collide (Ruti, 2016). Carson captures this restless pursuit: “For his delight is in reaching; to reach for something perfect would be perfect delight” (Carson, 1986, p.100). They chase not completion, but the motion itself—eros as momentum, ambition as desire—launching the triangulation into action.

4.2 Beloved

The beloved refracts, reflects, and resists. Héloïse meets Marianne's gaze, creating a reciprocal vision that channels erotic power—the force that bridges difference and affirms subjectivity (Lorde, 2017, p.26). Teresa de Lauretis reminds us that such reciprocity positions the viewer to see both women as subjects of desire (de Lauretis, 1994). In contrast, Olga resists Lydia's gaze, exposing the transactional, coercive undercurrent of her ambition. As Ruti notes, a returned gaze shatters narrative control and unsettles authority (Ruti, 2016, p.50). Desire is not given—it is negotiated, challenged, mirrored, and defied. The beloved shapes the lover, forcing reckoning with ambition, vulnerability,

and the cost of pursuit.

4.3 Barrier

The barrier structures the chase, connecting and separating. In *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, the painting binds and distances, co-creating erotic power while preserving absence—the ultimate gift and the enduring void. In *Tár*, institutional constraints, scandal, and professional collapse strip Lydia of phallic power, revealing desire's fragility when control is transactional. The barrier sustains the unattainable *objet petit a*, contrasting genuine co-creation in Marianne and Héloïse with coercive manipulation in Lydia and Olga.

Desire moves in arcs, gaps, and echoes. Phallic and erotic power collide, gazes intertwine, subjects emerge and resist. Both films map pursuit and absence, revealing desire's capacity to disrupt hierarchies, test agency, and expose the consequences of power within intimacy. Desire is never fulfilled; it is always in motion, burning through what is attainable, illuminating what remains forever out of reach.

5. Conclusion

This research investigates the depiction of lesbian desire and relationships in contemporary cinema, revealing dynamics often overlooked in media studies. By tracing the triangulation of desire, it demonstrates how lesbian characters can wield erotic and phallic power, challenging assumptions of passivity or invisibility. The analysis of *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* and *Tár* shows

that desire is structured by absence, pursuit, and negotiation, and that the spectator's position is actively shaped by reciprocal and resistant gazes.

In *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, Marianne and Héloïse co-create a space of erotic power, where mutual recognition allows desire to be experienced without coercion, producing a model of intimacy and subjectivity that disrupts normative hierarchies. Conversely, in *Tár*, Lydia's pursuit of Olga exposes desire as violent, transactional, and enforced, illustrating the fragility of authority when desire is wielded through domination rather than reciprocity.

Following de Lauretis, the research shows that the spectator can be positioned to see both women as subjects of desire, challenging heteropatriarchal frameworks and the male gaze (de Lauretis, 1994). Similarly, Audre Lorde's notion of erotic power highlights how desire can forge connections that respect difference while asserting agency (Lorde, 2017).

By integrating Lacanian theory, feminist film scholarship, and the methodology of triangulation, this research offers a framework to evaluate representations of lesbian relationships that avoid objectification, emphasize reciprocal power, and cultivate new modes of seeing. It demonstrates that desire on screen is never neutral: it is a dynamic force, capable of redefining intimacy, authority, and spectatorship, and ultimately reshaping the possibilities of how lesbian desire can be represented and experienced in cinema.

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TITLE

"Filming as Desire. Experimental Films by Dore O. Through the Lens of Claudine Eizykman's Theory"

KEYWORDS

Experimental film, film theory, Dore O., Claudine Eizykman, post-structuralism, feminist theory, 70s

ABSTRACT

In the German experimental film landscape of the 1960s and 1970s, Dore O.'s early films stood alone, both aesthetically and formally. At that time, the male dominated German experimental film scene was pre-occupied with formalist questions and experiments in perception. Dore O. also focused on film form and technical solutions, but her aim was the visual and the search for different narrative possibilities. It is difficult to reduce Dore O.'s films from the 60s and 70s to an aesthetic, content-related or technical film denominator. As one of the few female experimental film theorist, Claudine Eizykman mentions Dore O. twice in her book *La jouissance-cinéma*. Unfortunately, she does not discuss her films in detail. This led me to try to think about Dore O.'s films through the lens of Eizykman's theory. In my talk, I will present and discuss some of the key aspects of Eizykman's theory in relation to Dore O.'s filmmaking.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to concentrate on two overarching themes, namely experimental film and film theory from the 1970s. The subsequent analysis shall provide a detailed examination of the theories of the renowned French film theorist, university teacher and filmmaker Claudine Eizykman (1945-2018) in relation to the films of the German experimental filmmaker Dore O. (1946-2022).

The insights presented herein are drawn from my research on experimental film and video art in Europe during the 1970s and 1980s. In the course of my research, I seek to trace the dynamics of the experimental film scenes in different geographical regions and in the different political constellations that prevailed in Europe at the time. In order to provide a comprehensive response to this query, it is first necessary to consider the manner of cooperation in collectives that was characteristic of the period in question, and thereafter analyse its relation to theoretical frameworks derived from post-structuralist and feminist intellectual currents. In this particular context, I encountered Claudine Eizykman's book *La jouissance-cinéma*.

Claudine Eizykman was a student of the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, and as such, her theoretical work was influenced by post-structuralism, as well as by film theory from the beginning of the 20th century. She was also a long-standing teacher of film studies at the Université Paris 8 in Vincennes, which is widely regarded as one of France's most influential centres

for experimental cinema and critical film theory. In collaboration with her partner, Guy Fihman, she played a pivotal role in the establishment of the film studies programme at Paris 8, with a particular emphasis on experimental cinema. She began teaching at the experimental university in Vincennes, founded in the wake of the 1968 student uprisings, and continued her work after the campus was destroyed and moved to a new location in Saint-Denis.

Until her retirement in 2012, Eizykman had a significant impact on generations of students and emerging scholars, both in terms of theoretical and practical approaches to cinema. In the context of the experimental film workshops known as "ateliers d'expérimentation cinématographique", her teaching encompassed not only the technical and aesthetic dimensions of experimental film, but also cultivated critical reflection on perception, narrative structures, and image politics. Eizykman's contributions to film education were as pioneering and influential as her own theoretical and cinematic work. Her theoretical writing combines film analysis with philosophical, psychoanalytic and aesthetic frameworks, while demonstrating a fundamental interest in the question of how cinema affects the audience, rather than merely how it tells stories.

Eizykman's research focused on the potential of film to disrupt perception, provoke the body, and generate sensations that conventional logic and narrative structure are often ill-equipped to process. Her work

championed experimental cinema as a space of resistance, a form of filmmaking that challenges traditional narrative logic and creates opportunities for intensity, rupture, abstraction, and sensory overload. She demonstrated a meticulous approach to the analysis of cinematic techniques, positing that these techniques do not merely embellish a film, but rather, they are instrumental in challenging our perceptions and cognitive processes.

Dore O. began making films at the end of the 1960s. Her first independent film, *Alaska*, dates from 1968, when experimental film was flourishing in West Germany with alternative cinema movements and film collectives. As was the case with Claudine Eizykman in Paris, Dore O. was one of the few women involved in the movement. A notable example of this involvement was her role in the co-founding of the Hamburg Filmmakers' Cooperative (Hamburger Filmmacher-Cooperative), which, at the time, was the largest film cooperative in Germany.

In the German experimental film landscape of the 1960s and 1970s, Dore O.'s early films stood out, both aesthetically and formally. At that time, the male dominated German experimental film scene was preoccupied with formalist questions and experiments in perception. Her films do not fit neatly into the categories of structural, material, or lyrical experimental film. She also focused on film form and technical solutions, but in a different way. Dore O.'s films reveal her knowledge of film techniques and their effects. The filmmaker resorted to the conventional means of cinematic expression, while simultaneously deliberately disregarding its established rules. In this manner, she relinquished the illusionism of classical cinema and devised her own methodology. While Dore O. demonstrated a high level of technical expertise, her focus lay in the visual and the exploration of diverse narrative paths. In comparison to many of her male contemporaries, her emphasis was less on conceptual thinking. It is difficult to reduce Dore O.'s films from the 60s and 70s to an aesthetic, content-related or technical film denominator.

During the 1970s, there was a notable absence of connections or exchanges between the French and German experimental film scenes. It is therefore surprising that the filmmaker and experimental film theorist Claudine Eizykman mentions Dore O. on two occasions in her 1976 book *La jouissance-cinéma*. However, she does not provide a comprehensive discussion of her films. It is evident that both Eizykman and Dore O. were recipients of awards at the 1974 EXPRMTL film festival in Knokke-le-Zoute. Notably, Eizykman was honoured with the Prix du Jury de Sélection, while Dore O. received the prestigious Prix Agfa-Gevaert. This event was of considerable significance as a platform for the

presentation of experimental films from the 1950s to the 1970s, not only in Europe but on a global scale. The encounter between Eizykman and Dore O. and her films occurred on that occasion. In the aftermath of the EXPRMTL festival, Eizykman published two articles in which Dore O. was lauded and referenced, albeit briefly.

Eizykman's reference prompted me to consider Dore O.'s films through the prism of her theoretical framework. A distinguishing feature of experimental film is its emphasis on the exposure of the fabrication of the film image. This underscores the importance of understanding the techniques employed in a given film, facilitating a comprehensive examination of its visual elements. Today, it is often difficult to identify the film techniques used in a film simply by looking at the image. In their cinematic work, both Claudine Eizykman and Dore O. placed significant emphasis on utilizing and experimenting with film techniques.

During my research into Dore O.'s films, I aimed to identify her techniques. In this presentation, I will analyse the technical approaches she employed in her films, using film excerpts to demonstrate how these techniques were applied. I will then correlate these with the notions of fluidification and agencement, as elucidated by Claudine Eizykman. Eizykman's seminal work *La jouissance-cinéma*, from which the two notions I will focus on originate, provides a comprehensive analysis of experimental film in the 1960s and 1970s. It draws upon concepts that were prevalent in poststructuralist circles at the University of Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis.

This presentation does not assume a direct theoretical continuity between Dore O.'s filmic practice and Eizykman's conceptual framework. Rather, it aims to stage a critical encounter between the two. I propose the hypothesis that Dore O., through the repurposing of cinematic means, was working on a restructuring of the narrative-media field and thus on a restructuring of social modes of production. This project finds expression not in a subject-object relationship between the filmmaker and the filmic technique, but rather in a fragmentation and ambiguity of the self/other dualism. In this context, filmic techniques are not merely instruments but vital elements of the filmic process.

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TITLE

“Documenting Divas: Feminist Counter-Narratives in the Contemporary Female Pop Star Documentary”

KEYWORDS

Feminist film theory; celebrity culture; intersectionality; female gaze; pop star documentary; audiovisual resistance; feminist counter-narratives

ABSTRACT

This paper interrogates the cultural and political significance of the female pop star documentary as a contemporary site of feminist counter-narrative. Focusing on a corpus of recent films—including *Homecoming* (2019), *Miss Americana* (2020), *Billie Eilish: The World’s a Little Blurry* (2021), and *I Am: Celine Dion* (2024)—the presentation explores how these texts construct complex celebrity personas while negotiating the politics of the female gaze, bodily visibility, affect, and voice in patriarchal media ecologies. Deploying an intersectional feminist framework grounded in Laura Mulvey’s seminal critique of the male gaze, Judith Butler’s theorisation of performativity, and bell hooks’ articulation of oppositional looking, this paper analyses how such documentaries reclaim narrative agency and resist the spectacle of the ‘female breakdown’ so often commodified in celebrity culture. It asks: to what extent do these films operate as acts of self-fashioning and resistance? How do they challenge established representations of gendered vulnerability, power, and performance?

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This paper interrogates the cultural and political significance of the female pop star documentary as a contemporary site of feminist counter-narrative. Focusing on a corpus of recent films—including *Homecoming* (2019), *Miss Americana* (2020), *Billie Eilish: The World’s a Little Blurry* (2021), and *I Am: Celine Dion* (2024)—the presentation explores how these texts construct complex celebrity personas while negotiating the politics of the female gaze, bodily visibility, affect, and voice in patriarchal media ecologies. Deploying an intersectional feminist framework, this paper analyses how such documentaries reclaim narrative agency and resist the spectacle of the ‘female breakdown’ so often commodified in celebrity culture. It asks: to what extent do these films operate as acts of self-fashioning and resistance? How do they challenge established representations of gendered vulnerability, power, and performance?

Methodologically, the study uses close textual analysis combined with discourse analysis of critical reception and audience engagement. The paper argues that these documentaries blur the boundaries between public and private, performance and confession, product and protest, offering new spaces for feminist visibility and cultural labour. It ultimately contends that the female pop star documentary is emerging as a vital site of audiovisual activism and a tool for rewriting cultural narratives about femininity, agency, and fame.

The figure of the diva—simultaneously commanding and vulnerable, glamorous and politicised—has long served as a cultural site where femininity, power, and

performance intersect. From the operatic “prima donna” to the contemporary pop superstar, the diva embodies a complex negotiation of gendered visibility and control. In recent years, the female pop star documentary has emerged as a compelling medium through which these negotiations are staged, mediated, and contested. Films such as *Homecoming* (Beyoncé, 2019), *Miss Americana* (L. Wilson, 2020), *Billie Eilish: The World’s a Little Blurry* (R. J. Cutler, 2021), and *I Am: Celine Dion* (I. Taylor, 2024) offer a new cinematic form: part confessional, part manifesto, and part self-curated archive. These works operate not merely as publicity vehicles but as politically charged texts that reclaim authorship, confront patriarchal media structures, and foreground the affective labour of female artistry.

This paper interrogates the female pop star documentary as a contemporary site of feminist counter-narrative. It argues that these films—created in collaboration with or under the close supervision of their subjects—disrupt the traditional logics of the male gaze, reframe celebrity confession as self-determined storytelling, and articulate an emergent politics of female authorship in the age of digital intimacy.

These documentaries operate within what Gill (2017) terms the postfeminist sensibility—a cultural logic that simultaneously celebrates female empowerment and reproduces neoliberal individualism. Yet they also exceed this frame. By using the machinery of celebrity to critique the very systems that produce it, they embody what Banet-Weiser (2018) calls popular fem-

inism: a mode of mass-mediated activism that circulates through mainstream platforms while retaining subversive potential. The diva documentary, therefore, becomes both a commodity and a critique—a space where self-promotion intersects with structural resistance.

To unpack the political charge of these texts, it is useful to return to the theoretical foundations of feminist film analysis. Mulvey (1975) identified the male gaze as a structuring principle of mainstream visual culture, wherein women function as passive objects of scopophilic pleasure. The contemporary female pop star documentary, however, complicates this dynamic through its embrace of the female gaze—a perspective that privileges empathy, embodiment, and agency. By foregrounding interiority and affect, these films reclaim the power of looking and being looked at.

A recurring motif across these films is the reclamation of vulnerability as a site of strength. Historically, female celebrity has been framed through narratives of excess and collapse—the “madwoman” trope that fuels tabloid fascination and cultural misogyny. The tragic arcs of Amy Winehouse, Whitney Houston, and Britney Spears demonstrate how female suffering is commodified as entertainment. Against this backdrop, the recent wave of documentaries reclaims vulnerability as an active, not passive, position.

Miss Americana portrays Swift’s eating disorder and public backlash not as spectacle but as testimony. Her willingness to articulate shame, fear, and self-doubt functions as an ethical intervention into the culture of perfectionism that surrounds women in media. The film’s framing invites empathy rather than voyeurism, turning confession into critique. Similarly, *I Am: Celine Dion* documents the singer’s experience with the rare neurological disorder Stiff-Person Syndrome. Directed by Irene Taylor, the film transcends the conventions of celebrity portraiture to explore bodily fragility and perseverance. Dion’s candid depiction of physical limitation disrupts the ableist and ageist expectations placed upon female performers, reframing her as a subject of resilience rather than decline.

This recalibration of vulnerability aligns with Cavarero’s (2000) notion of the narratable self—a being defined through storytelling and relationality rather than autonomy. In narrating their own pain, these artists reclaim authorship over narratives historically written about them. Their self-documentation becomes an act of care and solidarity, offering audiences new modes of identification that privilege complexity over idealisation.

While these documentaries claim authenticity, their production contexts complicate any straightforward

reading of them as acts of resistance. Most are produced in partnership with major streaming platforms such as Netflix, Disney+, and Amazon Prime, whose algorithms thrive on affective engagement and parasocial intimacy. The commodification of the confessional thus raises questions about the limits of feminist agency within neoliberal media economies.

Nonetheless, as McRobbie (2020) notes, feminist practice within late capitalism often entails negotiation rather than rejection. The female pop star documentary operates precisely within this ambivalence. Its power lies not in escaping commodification but in manipulating it—transforming visibility into a tool of control. Beyoncé’s meticulous authorship of *Homecoming* exemplifies this strategy. Every frame bears her aesthetic signature, yet its distribution through Netflix ensures mass accessibility. The film thus occupies a hybrid position: an auteurist statement embedded within corporate infrastructure, simultaneously radical and complicit.

Audience reception further underscores this duality. Online fan communities engage with these films as affective events—moments of collective witnessing that blur the line between activism and fandom. The circulation of clips, quotes, and memes extends the films’ feminist messages across digital platforms, transforming spectatorship into participatory discourse. As Jenkins (2006) observes, convergence culture collapses the boundaries between producer and consumer; in the context of the diva documentary, it enables new forms of feminist spectatorship grounded in digital solidarity.

The female pop star documentary can also be understood as a form of audiovisual activism—a mode of cultural production that leverages sound, image, and emotion to mobilise political consciousness. Beyoncé’s use of historically Black marching-band aesthetics in *Homecoming* reclaims African-American musical traditions as sources of pride and power. The film’s sonic landscape—combining gospel, hip-hop, and classical instrumentation—functions as aural resistance to cultural erasure. Likewise, Swift’s public endorsement of LGBTQ+ rights in *Miss Americana* situates pop performance within broader struggles for equality.

These acts of mediated activism resonate with DeNora’s (2000) concept of music as a technology of the self. Through their documentaries, these artists construct frameworks for self-understanding and collective identification. The diva, historically maligned as excessive or egotistical, becomes a conduit for social commentary. Her labour—emotional, aesthetic, and political—renders visible the invisible work of women in the cultural industries. In this sense, the female pop star documentary functions not only as self-portraiture

but as feminist pedagogy, teaching audiences to see, listen, and feel differently.

In an era saturated with digital self-representation, the female pop star documentary stands as a paradoxical yet potent form of feminist intervention. These films operate at the intersection of confession and control, intimacy and industry, spectacle and sincerity. They reclaim the narrative agency long denied to women in the public eye while acknowledging the compromises inherent in visibility under capitalism.

By mobilising the tools of celebrity—camera, stage, brand—these artists transform the act of documen-

tation into a mode of resistance. They perform what Lorde (1984) described as the “master’s tools” paradox: using existing structures not to dismantle but to subvert and repurpose them. The result is a new feminist aesthetic of self-authorship that redefines the relationship between fame and feminism.

Ultimately, the female pop star documentary is more than entertainment; it is a cultural archive of women’s labour, resilience, and creativity. Through these films, the diva becomes not a spectacle to be consumed but a storyteller reclaiming the terms of her own visibility. In doing so, she invites audiences to look—and listen—again.

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TITLE

"The Femme Vivante: She Won't Die,
She Won't Shut Up and She Doesn't
Want You to F*** Her"

KEYWORDS

Gender, violence, gaze, revenge,
sexuality, femme fatale

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the evolving relationship between gender and violence in contemporary crime and thriller fiction. Engaging with debates around 'dead girl' tropes, revenge narratives, and theories of the gaze, it examines how recent works challenge the genre's history of female victimhood. Focusing on the texts *My Sister the Serial Killer*, and *Bad Sisters*, it traces a shift from passive victims to complex female protagonists - ruthless, resilient, and emotionally layered. The paper introduces the concept of the 'femme vivante' (living woman), a protagonist who hunts, survives, kills, or refuses to stay silent. She appears in shows like *Mare of Easttown* and *Killing Eve*, suggesting the evolution of the femme fatale from egocentric to altruistic. These narratives, often framed as responses to patriarchal violence, reimagine crime fiction through the lens of female survival and agency. In a world where violence against women is endemic, such stories offer both radical critique and hopeful escapism.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In this paper I will explore the relationship between gender and violence in contemporary crime and thriller fiction. Incorporating recent debates around 'dead girl' tropes, revenge dramas and theories of the gaze, I will explore the process of writing in a genre that, until relatively recently, has been saturated with dead women. Focusing on two pivotal works from the past fifteen years - *My Sister the Serial Killer* and *Bad Sisters* - I will discuss the shifting fashions of female representation in crime fiction from faceless victims and unreliable narrators to ruthless cops and caustic murderers.

Most importantly, I will suggest and reflect upon a new kind of female protagonist - the 'femme vivante' or 'living woman' - who sits alongside the femme fatale in contemporary fiction as a woman who either hunts the killer, cannot be killed, becomes the killer or refuses to stay silent. She is the stubborn, powerful, emotionally problematic (frequently sexually adventurous) front woman of shows like *Mare of Easttown*, *Happy Valley* and *Killing Eve*, and she is also the killer-with-a-heart in female-led revenge dramas like *Bad Sisters* and *My Sister the Serial Killer*, as well as cropping up in a slew of recent works that explore crime fiction from the survivor's perspective (Dean, 2021), *The Girls* (Cline, 2016) and *Women Talking* (Toews, 2018).

In some respects, these narratives can be seen as a riposte to all those old crime stories of female victims and male aggressors, a loud and vengeful reaction against both the beautiful, silent, dead girl and the duplicitous, seductive vamp. The femme fatale has evolved. She's deadly and exuberant. Less ice cold,

more on fire. She's a survivor, a hunter, a killer. She doesn't lie to get what she wants; she tells the truth. With violence against women and girls at 'epidemic' levels (see Topping, 2025), during a political moment when the erosion of certainty is continually exploited in the pursuit of profit and power, can escapism and hope be found in radical crime fiction that reframes outmoded gender tropes, upends victim/killer archetypes and elevates sexual autonomy?

Dead Girls and Femme fatales

Most crime fiction is built atop the bodies of dead women. They lie prostrate, strewn on bathroom floors, stacked up beneath wooden boards - often white, often young, often thin - if not dead then always bleeding, always screaming. These dead or dying girls are one of the most interdisciplinary elements of crime fiction, recurring in multiple works across literature, cinema and television, from Edgar Allen Poe's 1841 seminal short *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* that some see as the first detective story, through *Twin Peaks* (Lynch, 1990), *True Detective* (Pizzolatto, 2014) and a slew of scandi-noirs, all the way to *True Crime* 'documentaries' that are obsessed with dead white girls. We are told that this is 'realism' because women are murdered all the time. However, men are the most likely victims of homicide (See Herrera 2024). The screen loves dead women, not because they evoke some kind of truth, but because their beautiful, virginal, silent passivity, is the very definition of Laura Mulvey's 'to-be-looked-at-ness' (Mulvey, 1975). Dead girls cannot return the look; instead, like gauze on blood, they soak up the gaze.

Alice Bolin, in *Dead Girls: Essays on Surviving an American Obsession*, defines the “Dead Girl Show” as one that begins with the discovery of a murdered young woman. The lead characters attempt to solve her death, and the dead girl is emphasised not as a character, but as the memory of one: beautiful, powerless, mute. These narratives reaffirm women as victims and men as aggressors, embedding the idea that men are both enemy and saviour. Though often entertaining and/or comforting, since the killer is usually caught, these works also perpetuate horror, cliché, and apathy. This proliferation of ‘dead girl’ crime fiction has led to contemporary societal ennui with the genre and reflects a dangerous desensitisation. Apathy towards the dead girl on screen becomes apathy towards dead girls in real life.

The femme fatale rubs alongside the ‘dead girl’. While she too is constantly observed, she is silenced not through death, but by disbelief. Her status is mutable, bound up in societal mores, hemmed in and occasionally exploded; always mythic. (See Farrimond, 2018, p.2) The femme fatale’s use of sexuality and duplicity to control and kill across literature and cinema from Dashiell Hammett to *Basic Instinct* (Verhoeven, 1992) makes her not only dangerous but, in the narratives in which she appears, worthy of judgement. Her use of sex and lies for power suggests she must not be trusted or listened to. The camera looks at her, but (like the dead girl) it cannot hear her voice.

The Femme Vivante

In part as a reaction to dead girl indifference and femme fatale obsession, in recent years contemporary crime fiction (predominantly written by women) has begun to focus on ‘living women’, pushing narratives that put strident, vocal, empowered women, who ultimately not only survive but thrive, centre-stage. The ‘femme vivante’ sits beside horror cinema’s ‘final girl’ – the one who survives against all odds - but as well as enduring, they also detect, avenge and kill, taking ownership not just of the narrative and the screen, but of the power and the gaze as well - simultaneously looked at and looking.

The femme vivante now frequently appears in true crime tales of vengeful wives, in female-led detective procedurals, and in mainstream comedy-dramas that push complex women with scores to settle centre-stage. In some respects, these narratives can be seen as a riposte to all those old crime stories of female victims and male aggressors, a loud and vengeful reaction against both the beautiful, silent, dead girl, and the glamorous, immoral femme fatale. In this paper I want to mention two key femme vivante crime works that have pushed the genre forward in interest-

ing ways.

Oyinkan Braithwaite’s 2018 thriller *My Sister*, the Serial Killer is a darkly comic exploration of sisterhood, morality, and gender dynamics set in Lagos, Nigeria. The story follows Korede, a dutiful nurse who repeatedly cleans up the crime scenes left by her murderous younger sister Ayoola, whose boyfriends keep dying. Tensions rise when Ayoola targets a Doctor Korede secretly loves. Ayoola’s violence, though morally ambiguous, can be seen as a warped response to a misogynistic society. She remarks of one boyfriend, “He isn’t deep. All he wants is a pretty face. That’s all they ever want,” (p.69) while Korede observes the police meeting her sister, “They have met her. They have looked into her eyes and fantasised about her. They are all the same.” (p.218) These quotes reflect the novel’s critique of male objectification and entitlement. Braithwaite subverts the typical serial killer trope by placing two femme vivantes (killer and protector) at the centre of the violence, forcing readers to confront uncomfortable questions about justice, loyalty, and the limits of both sisterly love and female representation.

Sharon Horgan’s *Bad Sisters* (Apple TV, 2022) is a dark comedy that powerfully subverts both the ‘dead girl’ and femme fatale trope while offering five versions of the femme vivante. Set in Ireland, it follows the Garvey sisters - Eva, Grace, Ursula, Bibi, and Becka - united by trauma and a shared loathing for Grace’s abusive husband, John Paul. His suspicious death triggers an insurance investigation that unravels their secrets, exposing a complex tapestry of loyalty, pain, and vengeance. The show explores revenge as justice, with each sister driven by love and protection to liberate Grace from her toxic marriage. Their bond becomes a weapon against oppression, and while their actions are morally ambiguous, they’re deeply sympathetic. *Bad Sisters* champions resilience, autonomy, and the strength found in togetherness, as these women refuse silence and deliver the justice John Paul deserves.

In the femme vivante narrative, to a certain extent all ‘Living women’ whether detectives, witnesses, killers or survivors are reconstructed, altruistic femme fatales – complicated, sexual, problematic and frequently dangerous women who fight not for themselves but for those they love. Perhaps then, as much as patriarchal culture fears the femme fatale, in recent years it has come to fear the femme vivante even more. In this context, while the dead girl echoes the status quo and the femme fatale reinforces it, the femme vivante upends it. Like the final girl she refuses to be killed, but she also refuses to remain silent. And perhaps, in a contemporary context, as we saw with the Giselle Pellicot trial, this voice is even more powerful. Of course, questions of morality are brought into play here, since the women

in both narratives mentioned above break the law out of a sense of revenge. However, in each case, the writers make clear that unlike the dead girls of old, many of the dead men in these stories were guilty of terrible crimes and (potentially) deserve to be punished.

In all three contexts – whether dead, fatal or living – female sexuality sits at the heart of contemporary crime fiction. While the ‘dead girl’ is often a sexual victim and

the femme fatale uses sexuality for control, the femme vivante gets pleasure and release from sex (see Korede’s desire in *My Sister the Serial Killer* and each sister’s empowered sexuality in the ironically named *Bad Sisters*). Perhaps then, these ‘living women’ mark a positive shift in female representation, a decisive reclamation of agency, sexuality and voice. Ultimately the femme vivante might fuck you, but she is never, ever, fucked.

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TITLE

"Paul B. Preciado, a Film Theorist"

KEYWORDS

Autotheory, Contrasexuality, Image, Paul B. Preciado, Pornography, Semiotics, Filmmakers' Theory.

ABSTRACT

This research seeks to understand and design elements that allow us to extract a theory of cinema from the theoretical and filmic works of Paul B. Preciado. Starting from the Filmmakers' Theory approach, we seek to understand the associations between conceptual thinking and aesthetic thinking that permeate his texts and his film, *Orlando, My Political Biography*. Based on an interested reading, we seek to describe and systematize a) signs of cinema scattered throughout his books, b) critical concepts invented by Preciado to understand certain audiovisual phenomena, and c) cinematographic signs from *Orlando* that re-propose Preciado's theoretical thinking in their own way, especially the concept of Autotheory. Thus, we hope to contribute to bringing film theory closer to queer theory and to inventing, together with Preciado, new concepts for understanding the semiotics of images.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

It is well known that an artist can devote herself to writing theories about her praxis, whether under the heading of a description of process, the enunciation of a method, or even a more systemic theoretical proposal about the art to which she is committed. Thus, it is customary to seek formal parallels and tonal harmonies between the theoretical text and the work of art when they come from the same author. And what happens when we devote ourselves to studying works of art created by theorists? Would there be the same kind of question regarding internal coherence between philosophical creation and aesthetic creation? Would the artistic object be an applied materialization of a concept? Or could we think of an unspoken concept that is already implicit in the philosophical work and that only a painting, a song, or a film could make visible? Is it possible to think aesthetically within a philosophy book or, conversely, to think philosophically through a work of art?

In 2023, Paul B. Preciado, one of the leading names in queer theory, gender studies, and trans studies, released his first feature film, *Orlando, My Political Biography*. In this documentary fiction, the title character of Virginia Woolf's novel is used as a guiding sign for a series of biographies of trans people, in an effort to present *Orlando* as the very form of trans subjectivity in the contemporary world. The gesture is similar to that already depicted in his books, such as in *Testo Junkie* (2008), where the intimate account of his experimentation with testosterone is interspersed with philosophical concepts, political statements, and a virulence of writing that demarcates a style of thinking

that is both theoretical and aesthetic. Even so, it seems to us that the film *Orlando* opens up ways of thinking that the philosopher had not previously explored in his texts and highlights the unique importance of cinema and audiovisual media in the constitution of his artistic-philosophical thought.

This research seeks to understand and devise elements that allow us to extract a theory of cinema from the theoretical and filmic works of Paul B. Preciado. We anchor this research in the Filmmakers' Theory approach, a field of study that focuses on reinventing and renewing film theories based on the sayings and writings of filmmakers, promoting new semiotic arrangements between conceptual and aesthetic thinking in the field of images. In this way, reading Preciado not only as a philosopher but also as a filmmaker leads us to confront written ideas with filmed ideas, in an attempt to trace not only connections and conjunctions but also disjunctions and differences.

Thus, methodologically, we unfold our analysis according to three procedures: a) we describe the signs of cinema in his written work, highlighting references to films and filmmakers, as well as indications of collective semiotic functions of the film industry; b) concepts created or reworked by Preciado that touch on audiovisual materiality; c) signs from the film *Orlando, My Political Biography* that rethink the concepts written by Preciado, or even give rise to the invention of new concepts. This is, therefore, an interesting reading that shifts the focus of Preciado's work to consider him as a film theorist.

For the current stage of this study program, we will focus on Preciado's first books, *Countersexual Manifesto* (2000), *Testo Junkie* (2008), and *Pornotopia* (2010), as well as some articles that populate this moment in his thinking. Our foray into these texts shows that there is an overlap between cinema and gender in the constitution of queer theory, given the relevance of feminist film criticism for understanding the semiotic dynamics between subject, desire, and representation. Works such as those by Laura Mulvey, Teresa de Lauretis, and Linda Williams are central to Preciado's understanding of a constructivism of gender and sex through images.

Furthermore, the importance given to pornography by the queer theorist is well known. Here, it ceases to be a marginal audiovisual genre and is shifted to the center of the production of meaning and capital (and pleasure) in the contemporary cultural industry. Hence the name Preciado gives to the current biopolitical regime: the pharmacopornographic regime, where subjectivities are organized as somatopolitical fictions constructed biologically and semiotically from hormones and images. Thus, if for Michel Foucault the emblematic spaces that characterized disciplinary societies were schools, mental hospitals, and prisons, for Preciado the pharmacopornographic society consists of relations of control and excitement derived from the pharmaceutical and film industries. Once again, we see the leading role that cinema plays in his reflection, and for this reason concepts such as pornopower, snuff politics, and pornotopia translate the semiotic indiscernibility between a critique of representation and a critique of the subject.

A third point that we noticed from reading his books is his interest in dissident practices in audiovisual media and the arts as counter-sexual ways of deconstructing gender. Post-pornography carried out by artists such as Annie Sprinkle, Virginie Despentes, and Bruce La Bruce (to stick to a few examples from the field of cinema) reworks power-pleasure dynamics based on critical performances of hegemonic pornography. In post-pornography, the dismantling of patterns of subjectivity and desire is inseparable from the dismantling

of aesthetic and poetic codes that are the foundation not only of pornographic cinema, but of the cultural industry as a whole. It is within the scope of these micropolitical actions that Preciado positions himself as a theorist, giving centrality to concepts such as autotheory, autofiction, and the principle of the auto-guinea pig, making his body and his writing a laboratory for experimentation and pharmacopornographic difference.

So, if we return to the film *Orlando, My Political Biography*, we see that there are convergences between Preciado's conceptual thinking and aesthetic thinking, especially with regard to the deconstruction of subjectivity. The filmmaker refrains from telling his own biography, or rather, he tells it from fragments of other biographies, in a game where fiction and truth tend to chase each other. To auto-theorize is to auto-fictionalize, hence the importance of Virginia Woolf's text as the guiding thread of this multifaceted biography. In a way, the multi-faceted character that is Orlando is both a becoming that runs through all the characters and also the only possible identity for the trans experience in a pharmacopornographic society. Saying "I" with another name, reading "I" in someone else's text, narrating 'I' in a foreign language, staging "I" in a studio with cameras and film professionals as scenery... These are precisely the audiovisual signs that Preciado uses to construct a documentary autofiction, a cinematographic autotheory.

Based on the three analytical operations of our reading, it is possible to conclude that cinema is a constituent of Preciado's queer theory in two main aspects: it is a semiotic machine of social control that constitutes the pharmacopornographic regime, acting as an important locus for the philosopher's description of contemporary power relations; it is a counter-sexual medium for experimenting with gender biofictions and dissident semiotics of desire, affirming a power of life inherent to images when they set out to deconstruct subjectivities. Thus, this communication aims to contribute to bringing film theory closer to queer theory and to inventing, together with Preciado, new concepts for understanding the semiotics of images.

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TITLE

"Transgression and Memory: A Dialectical Essay between Bárbara Virgínia and Jean Vigo"

KEYWORDS

Bárbara Virgínia; feminist cinema; video essay; dialectical montage; film archive; invisibility; Transgressive Discourses

ABSTRACT

This communication examines a dialectical encounter between *Aldeia dos Rapazes* (1946) by Bárbara Virgínia and *Zéro de Conduite* (1933) by Jean Vigo, articulated through the methodological and artistic practice of the video essay. The analysis builds upon *Discursos Transgressivos* (2019) by Luísa Sequeira, a split-screen visual essay where both films are juxtaposed to reveal intersections and resonances often obscured by conventional film historiography. Drawing inspiration from Lois Weber's pioneering use of split screen in *Suspense* (1913), the work mobilizes editing strategies such as repetition, slow motion, and image superimposition to reimagine cinematic temporality from a feminist perspective. By placing both films in a shared visual frame, this approach highlights erasures and silences surrounding women filmmakers, particularly Virgínia, within archival and historiographical discourses. The communication thus situates the video essay as a feminist and intersectional practice of memory, resistance, and historiographic rewriting.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT**Introduction**

Cinema history has long privileged canonical narratives that marginalize or erase the contributions of women filmmakers. The Portuguese director Bárbara Virgínia, exemplifies this archival invisibility. This paper proposes a dialectical analysis between Virgínia's *Aldeia dos Rapazes* (1946) and Jean Vigo's *Zéro de Conduite* (1933), situating both works within a methodological experiment: the video essay *Discursos Transgressivos* (2019). This video essay juxtaposes these two films in a split-screen format, creating a space where their formal and political resonances can be explored beyond the confines of linear historiography. Objectives The research aims to: Reassess the place of Bárbara Virgínia in film history through an experimental audiovisual method. Investigate the political dimension of the video essay as a form of historiographic intervention and artistic creation and explore the feminist potential of montage and split screen as discursive strategies. Critically analyze how archival practices shape visibility and invisibility in cinema historiography. Theoretical Framework This paper draws on film theory, emphasizing the contributions of several authors. Notably, Alter (2007) situates the video essay within broader debates on film criticism and freedom of form, while Mulvey (2018) highlights the role of digital technology in uncovering additional layers within films. Techniques such as slow motion, repetition, and freeze-frame serve as both ideal and disruptive tools to challenge the flow of the hegemonic narrative and produce alternative narratives. This framework is also anchored in early

cinematic experimentation, such as Lois Weber's split-screen in *Suspense* (1913), which disrupted dominant visual regimes and prefigured feminist interventions in montage. The dialectical juxtaposition of Vigo and Virgínia's films engages with theories of counter-memory and archival critique. By questioning the omissions of women filmmakers in traditional historiography, this communication aligns with intersectional feminist perspectives that regard archives as contested sites of power and resistance. Methodology The methodology is grounded in the artistic and analytical practice of the video essay and in the concept of "literary montage" from Benjamin (2019). *Discursos Transgressivos* employs split screen to place *Aldeia dos Rapazes* and *Zéro de Conduite* within the same visual and temporal frame. Editing strategies such as slow motion, and repetition generate new interpretive possibilities, disrupting linear narratives and emphasizing moments of transgression. This approach extends beyond textual analysis, operating as both creative practice and historiographic method. The video essay enables a dialectical reading where images interact dynamically, producing critical insights unavailable through conventional film criticism. According to Russell (1999), video can be viewed as an extension of cinema, frequently acting as "an allegory of cinema's vanishing aura". Critical Analysis From Bárbara Virgínia's film, only the silent film reel remains, making it an incomplete archive. A neglected archive not only reveals material conditions but also political ones: which images deserve preservation and which are abandoned. In this act of cinematographic editing, I reactivate the silent archive of *Aldeia dos*

Rapazes to engage with *Zéro de conduite*, composed by the french composer Maurice Jaubert. The juxtaposition of Virgínia and Vigo's films foregrounds shared motifs of rebellion, collectivity, and disruption of institutional order. While Vigo's film has been canonized as a landmark of poetic transgression, Virgínia's *Aldeia dos Rapazes* has been marginalized, its significance muted by both national and international film histories. In both cinematographic works, the school is represented as an institution endowed with a repressive function, operating as an extension of the mechanisms of surveillance and discipline described by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1999). The author emphasizes the role of the state in the creation and maintenance of control apparatuses that manifest within the school environment, whose primary function extends beyond the transmission of knowledge to the production of docile and useful subjects, shaped to integrate harmoniously into the functioning of modern social machinery. The school thus appears not merely as a place of instruction but also as a space of normalization and discipline, in which practices are consolidated that aim at the internalization of rules, obedience to authority, and adaptation to the productive demands of contemporary society. Through split-screen montage, the two films engage in a visual dialogue that repositions Virgínia's work not as derivative or peripheral, but as an equally radical articulation of resistance. This reframing challenges the absence of women filmmakers in canonical discourse and opens space for rethinking cinema as a site of feminist historiographic struggle. The montage destabilizes temporal and spatial hierarchies, creating new rhythms that reveal what was previously hidden. In this sense, evoking Benjamin's concept of "brushing history against the grain", the video essay becomes a tool of counter-memory, reactivating forgotten fragments to transform them into another audiovisual creation.

Conclusions

The video essay *Discursos Transgressivos*, through its experimental use of montage and split screen, operates as both artistic creation and historiographic intervention. By placing Bárbara Virgínia's *Aldeia dos Rapazes* in dialectical dialogue with Jean Vigo's *Zéro de Conduite*, the research exposes the structural erasures of women in film history and proposes alternative forms of memory. *Aldeia dos Rapazes* and *Zéro de conduite* can be understood as cinematographic works that share a spirit of transgression and resistance against established systems, positioning themselves as profoundly disobedient films. Although separated by more than a decade, both display remarkable aesthetic and thematic affinities, constituting poetic and political works created by young filmmakers at the beginning of their artistic trajectories: Jean Vigo, at only twenty-eight years old, and Bárbara Virgínia, at twenty-two.

The rapprochement between these two cinematic universes, when placed within a temporal continuum or a dialectical montage, allows for the conception of a "cinema-time" in which both authors—though distant in time and space—seem to engage in dialogue and coexist within the same conceptual territory. This reading underscores not only the relevance of both filmmakers within the cinematographic landscape but also raises critical questions concerning the representation of women in cinema. While Bárbara Virgínia faced numerous constraints that limited her production to only two works, Jean Vigo—whose life was tragically cut short at the age of twenty-nine—left behind four films that became fundamental references in the history of cinema. The contrast between their trajectories is revealing: Bárbara lived until the age of ninety-two, always with the expectation of returning to filmmaking, yet without ever finding the necessary conditions to fulfill that aspiration. Beyond this limitation, her legacy today is marked by another form of silencing: The extant version of *Aldeia dos Rapazes* survives in a deteriorated state, lacking its original soundtrack and existing only as a sequence of silent images. This material silence is not merely a technical flaw but rather a powerful metaphor for the condition of women filmmakers, whose voices have been historically erased or relegated to the margins of official film history. The absence of sound in Bárbara's archive can thus be read as a reflection of broader absences and gaps in the preservation and valorization of women's work in the cinematographic field, revealing how processes of conservation and canonization within audiovisual heritage continue to reproduce gender inequalities. In this sense, Bárbara Virgínia's case not only exposes the material fragility of a neglected archive but also calls for a critical reflection on how the memory of cinema—and, more specifically, the memory of women filmmakers—is constructed, silenced, and often lost. Her case is exemplary: the deterioration of her archive coincides with the deterioration of the very memory of women in cinema, who have been systematically rendered invisible in canonical processes. To recover Bárbara Virgínia, along with many other marginalized women filmmakers, is therefore a political and historiographical gesture—one that reinscribes women into the cultural memory of cinema, counteracting the logics of erasure that have shaped the past and persist in the present. This approach reinforces the relevance of feminist film theory as a critical tool for rethinking the archive and historiography, while affirming the political potency of audiovisual practices in rewriting cinematic narratives. Ultimately, the video essay emerges not only as an analytical method but also as a feminist act of resistance.

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TITLE

"Possessed Girl as Teen Witch: Intersectional Possession in Jennifer Reeder's *Perpetrator* (2023)"

KEYWORDS

feminist film theory, horror, intersectionality, abjection, witches, girlhood

ABSTRACT

Perpetrator reimagines the trope of the possessed woman through an intersectional feminist lens, merging horror aesthetics with teen witch iconography to radically reframe the abject, leaky female body. This paper analyses *Perpetrator* as a subversive hybrid of possession and coming-of-age narratives, centring a queer, biracial, working-class protagonist, Jonny, whose supernatural transformation is an embodiment of empathetic power. Reeder's aesthetic and narrative choices challenge postfeminist, postracial and depoliticisation. Through grotesque aesthetics and intergenerational alliances, the film offers a celebratory vision of girlhood as a site of rage, care, and empathy. *Perpetrator* contributes to feminist cinema by challenging dominant visual languages of purity and victimhood and by recoding the female body not as a site of shame but of connection. This paper situates Reeder's work within a genealogy of feminist horror that privileges embodied experience, offering a critical intervention into how teenage girlhood, power, and the monstrous are represented on screen.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In Jennifer Reeder's *Perpetrator* (2023) a mysterious woman with demonic powers named Hilde (Alicia Silverstone) mentors a younger woman coming into her own supernatural power, Jonny (Kiah McKimman). The 'Forevering' as Hilde calls it, is 'like a possession but in reverse' instead of being overcome by a demonic entity, they have the enhanced empathetic power to become other people, to channel and control dark and monstrous forces. The symptoms of the Forevering include a transformation of facial features as they absorb and channel other people's consciousness, monstrous deluge-like periods, and the ability to create portals and traverse bodily into another dimension. The film is surreal and farcical in ways that echo both David Lynch and John Waters. In the new school that Jonny attends, girls have been abducted from their suburban streets. To protect the student body from harm, Principal Burke (Christopher Lowell) mandates safety drills preparing for school-shooters with the principal himself playing the part of shooter, squirting them with red-dye water-guns. He sends notes home to their parents to say that they were 'dead' and should be punished for not protecting themselves from a hypothetical shooter. Gym class comprises of intense self-defence classes against would-be attackers and rapists. In this heightened surreal filmworld where victim-blaming and hypervigilance is made an explicit and mandated facet of young women's existence, Jonny uses her powers of enhanced empathy to channel the abducted girls' consciousnesses, find their location and rescue them with the aid of her friends, as well as her mentor Hilde and

her estranged mother.

As can be seen from this brief plot synopsis, the narrative arc of the demonic possession is turned on its axis and the tone and meaning of the possessed female body is markedly different from the other films described in this corpus. In Reeder's story of 'possession but in reverse' we see a possessed female protagonist who is not othered or stigmatised by her demonic power nor is marked pejoratively in relation to her sexuality, racialisation and classed identity or biographical experiences of trauma.

Jennifer Reeder is a filmmaker with a long-standing interest in the interior and social worlds of teenage girls. Her 1995 short film *White Trash Girl*, submitted for her master of fine arts thesis at the School of Art Institute Chicago, was a low-fidelity, grainy, riot-grrrl aesthetic film about a teenaged girl who was conceived through incestuous violence inflicted on her own teenage mother before being flushed down a toilet as a baby only to survive the sewerage and grow up to be an invincible feminine avenger and leader of a gang of similar social misfits. Of the female directors discussed in this chapter Reeder, along with Karyn Kusama, has the largest filmography, particularly in horror and genre film. Her films frequently feature Black, Muslim and South Asian protagonists. Her debut film *Signature Move* (2017) is an indie-comedy collaboration written by Fawzia Mirza, who also stars in the film as Zaynab, a Pakistani Muslim lesbian caring for her mother, falling in love with

a Mexican woman named Alma and finding herself in the world of wrestling. Her horror films include *Night's End* (2022) about a reclusive divorced father who tries to exorcise his apartment of a ghost but accidentally summons a demon that takes over the world and the frame narrative 'Holy Hell' for the 2021 anthology film *V/H/S 94*. Previous to *Perpetrator* her most well-known feature is the teen noir *Knives and Skin* (2019) where a teenage girl goes missing (not through a violent death but an unfortunate accident and exposure) and the film follows the reverberations of the mystery and trauma of her disappearance on the community of her Midwest town. The *LA Times* described it as encapsulating 'a kind of radical and rebellious girlhood, and effortless inclusivity, seldom seen onscreen.'

In contrast to films which reinforce the visual language of the pure white female body, the spectacle of sexual degradation, sexual exhibition and trauma and adopting all the associated notions of abject and monstrous femininity, *Perpetrator* reinscribes the abject or leaky body with positive meaning. As mentioned in the introduction of this book, the notion of abjection and the monstrous feminine is a foundational concept of horror scholarship and as such one of the many varied interventions, thematic threads and aesthetic projects of female-directed horror is an intervention in the visual representation of abject waste, particularly menstruation. If the abject is that which does not respect 'borders, positions, rules' and 'disrupts identity, system, order' (Kristeva as quoted in Creed), then it is the mission of feminist horror to challenge the presumed value of these borders, positions, rules and to question whether identity, system and order ought not be disrupted. Erin Harrington builds on Creed's initial work on the abject and monstrous feminine in horror, specifically in relation to menarche and menstruation.

Perpetrator features an abundance of bodily fluids and experiences of leaky, permeable bodies: menstruation, miscarriages, bleeding, vomiting, and spit. All of these experiences are presented as normal, as part of having a body and being embodied and with the potential to suture bonds instead of alienating or disgusting others. When Jonny first meets Elektra (Ireon Roach), she is reading a zine called 'Cunty Slut' with an article on sex education on the use of vibrators. She's smoking a cigarette while reading while standing on top of a bathroom stall when Elektra rushes in to vomit into a toilet. Jonny correctly guesses that Elektra is vomiting from morning sickness and asks her if she intends to carry out the pregnancy, Elektra says no, Jonny shares her cigarette with Elektra and they flirt before going to class. Elektra and Jonny later become lovers and in the morning after they first have sex at Elektra's house, Jonny finds a box containing Elektra's miscarriage and the two form a deeper bond with Jonny promis-

ing that she does not have to go through burying the box alone. Elektra explains the sexual experience that led to conception: she tutors a classmate named Kirk (Sasha Kuznetsov) who is the only unifying thread of the disappeared girls – they have all had some sort of relationship with Kirk. She describes how a man with a mask followed her on her walk home from Kirk's house and that she started running toward a police car parked ahead. She says that the policeman behaved strangely, almost as though colluding with the masked man stalking her but that she vomited unexpectedly and explosively and then the men were suddenly gone. By the end of the film, we learn that the policeman and Principal Burke are abducting young girls to steal and sell their body parts, vitality, and youthful looks through blood transfusions, skin grafts and fantastical plastic surgery. Elektra's abject vomiting, this signal of compromised bodily health and the paradoxical queasiness of the attackers, saved Elektra from being abducted like the others.

Blood and menstruation are endowed with transformative and teleportational power in *Perpetrator*. Pools of blood have the potential to become three-dimensional portals to another realm. When Jonny first moves in with Hilde she experiences a preternaturally heavy period, bleeding uncontrollably onto the bathroom floor and rug and accidentally slips into this other dimension. She returns and expects Hilde to be angry about the bloodstain on the rug but Hilde is sympathetic, saying that the stain is tough to get out but she can handle it. Hilde then kneels down on the rug, touches the stain with her index finger and the blood pool becomes three-dimensional, her finger sinks and she transports momentarily into the bloody other realm. She tells Jonny that this place in her house is exactly where she is meant to be. The melding of aesthetics, polished pure and girlish and gnarly, visceral and blood-stained is best illustrated in the scene of Jonny's transformation on her eighteenth birthday. Hilde has a cake with white icing, white meringue swirls, and rainbow sprinkles, positioned on a cake-stand with two orange and pink candles in the shape of numbers 1 and 8, both glittered halfway up the numerals. The candles preternaturally blow out, Hilde tells Jonny that she has already made a wish for her and Jonny storms away, leaving Hilde alone. Hilde proceeds to eat the cake, puncturing the white icing with her finger and revealing that it is filled with blood. Jonny wakes in the middle of the night and returns to her slice of cake, eats it and immediately feels sick, vomiting thick viscous blood into the upstairs toilet until it fills and overflows. These scenes of bodily fluids, of the domestic and polished paired with the visceral and what is normally considered unclean is not a juxtaposition but a breaking down of categories and boundaries. The abject should not be devalued and discarded.

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TITLE

“Women in Portuguese Animation:
Gender Representations and Female
Authorship”

KEYWORDS

Portuguese Animation, Feminist Film
Theory, Female Representation,
Gender and Identity, Female Anima-
tors.

ABSTRACT

In recent years, Portuguese animation has emerged as a platform for female filmmakers to challenge conventional narratives and explore gender, identity, and belonging. This paper examines the work of Regina Pessoa, Marta Monteiro, and the collaboration between Mónica Santos and Alice Eça Guimarães. Drawing on feminist film theory, we analyse how their films portray women's experiences and visibility in a male-dominated industry. Pessoa's poetic shorts depict misfits seeking acceptance; Monteiro addresses domestic violence, caregiving, and female resistance; Santos and Guimarães interrogate the dynamics of the female and male gaze through stories of failed heteronormative relationships. We also delve into Guimarães' recent work, *Porque Hoje é Sábado/Because Today Is Saturday* (2025), which reflects on traditional domestic roles. The presentation positions these films within the framework of feminist and animation studies, emphasising how Portuguese female animators employ visual and narrative techniques to challenge traditional gender roles and transform the cinematic landscape.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT**Introduction**

Over the past decade, Portuguese animation has become a prolific field for female audiovisual artists. While male voices have long dominated the animation industry worldwide, recent years have seen the increasing visibility of female storytellers, directors and animators who challenge conventional cinematic narratives. Portuguese animation, in particular, offers a compelling case study due to its strong tradition of auteur-driven short films and the distinctive poetic style of its practitioners.

This presentation examines how female Portuguese directors address issues of gender, identity, and belonging through their animated films. By analysing selected works of Regina Pessoa, Marta Monteiro, and the collaborative projects of Mónica Santos and Alice Eça Guimarães, we aim to demonstrate how contemporary Portuguese animation contributes to feminist debates on representation, authorship, and spectatorship.

We argue that these filmmakers' works explore themes of marginalisation, domestic life, invisible labour, and love relationships from a distinctly female perspective. In doing so, they visually and politically reshape the medium. We frame this presentation within feminist

film theory and animation studies, referencing insights from Suzanne Buchan's *Pervasive Animation* (2013) and Marie-Josée Saint-Pierre's *Women and Film Animation* (2024). Through these lenses, we examine how female Portuguese animators create alternative representational strategies that disrupt traditional gender roles.

Objectives

- To explore how female Portuguese animators represent gendered experiences through their films, focusing on issues such as social exclusion, domestic roles, and mental health.
- To analyse the narrative and representational strategies employed by Regina Pessoa, Marta Monteiro, and Mónica Santos & Alice Eça Guimarães, which challenge conventional cinematic structures.
- To frame Portuguese animation within feminist theoretical frameworks, this study examines how the works of these filmmakers contribute to ongoing discussions in feminist film studies and animation scholarship.
- To highlight the cultural and political significance of women's perspectives in Portuguese animation, showing how these directors navigate and redefine a traditionally male-dominated field.

Our presentation acknowledges the contributions of contemporary female animators in Portugal, particularly in understanding gender roles. It aims to highlight the vital role women play in shaping the industry and encourages ongoing discussions about gender equity.

Theoretical Framework

Our research draws on feminist film theory, animation studies, and foundational concepts, such as Laura Mulvey's "male gaze" (1975), which criticises women's representation for male audiences. This concept has been widely discussed and reinterpreted in feminist scholarship. While Mulvey focuses on live-action cinema, her arguments regarding how mainstream films objectify and fetishise women are equally applicable to animation, from Disney princesses created by predominantly male teams to female characters in video games aimed at young male audiences. Recent academic research has increasingly emphasised the concept of a "female gaze," which reflects on how female creators craft narratives targeted at a female audience.

Suzanne Buchan's *Pervasive Animation* (2013) positions animation as a flexible medium, from its early explorations as a cinematic magic trick to its portrayal of memories in animated documentaries. This perspective is particularly relevant for the films analysed here, which often address psychological and emotional realities — such as mental health or domestic violence — challenging to depict through live-action.

We also draw on Marie-Josée Saint-Pierre's *Women and Film Animation* (2024). Saint-Pierre examines how women animators historically developed strategies of resistance and authorship in male-dominated institutions. While her case studies are Canadian, her methodological framework — mapping recurring feminist themes and aesthetics in animation — helps situate the Portuguese case within a global context of women's creative agency in animation.

Finally, we engage with feminist media studies addressing representation and labour. Scholars like Susan Ferguson (2020) and Tithi Bhattacharya (2017) have emphasised how domestic labour becomes culturally invisible. By analysing how Portuguese women animators explore these experiences, we connect their films to ongoing feminist debates about social reproduction and gender inequality.

Methodology

Our methodology involves critically analysing a selection of short films directed by Regina Pessoa, Marta Monteiro, and the duo of Mónica Santos and Alice Eça Guimarães. We examine these films based on their crit-

ical recognition, thematic relevance, and their impact on Portuguese animation. All the films are short-form and primarily employ 2D or mixed-media techniques, aligning with Portugal's strong tradition of independent animation.

We analyse the films along three components:

- Narrative content: themes of exclusion, domesticity, female subjectivity, and relationships.
- Representational strategies: use of stylisation, symbolism, and experimental techniques to express psychological and emotional states.
- Authorship and perspective: how the filmmakers' gendered perspectives shape their storytelling.

In addition to a meticulous reading of the films' narratives and visuals, we will also consider supplementary research materials, such as recorded interviews and witnessed festival presentations.

Feminist theoretical frameworks and existing literature in animation studies inform this qualitative analysis. While our scope is limited to a small number of directors, the goal is not statistical generalisation but rather to highlight key thematic and aesthetic patterns that illustrate how Portuguese women animators engage with feminist issues.

Critical analysis

1. Regina Pessoa: Young Misfits

Regina Pessoa is one of the most internationally acclaimed Portuguese animators, known for her highly stylised, hand-drawn imagery and poetic storytelling. Her films often centre on characters who feel out of place. In *História Trágica com Final Feliz/Tragic Story with a Happy Ending* (2005), the protagonist is a young girl whose differences seem to disturb her community. Ultimately, this community loses its sense of rhythm when the girl leaves the village, embracing her uniqueness. *Kali, o pequeno Vampiro/Kali, the Little Vampire* (2012) presents a male protagonist; however, in this case, gender is not a relevant topic. The film explores themes of social exclusion and the longing for connection during childhood. *Tio Tomás: A contabilidade dos dias/Uncle Thomas: Accounting for the Days* (2019) combines autobiographical elements with a tribute to Pessoa's uncle, further exploring the emotional connections that nurture a creative young mind and challenge social perceptions of gender.

While these films showcase protagonists of different genders, their emphasis on estrangement deeply resonates with the female experience in patriarchal societies, where women frequently confront exclusion or social expectations. Pessoa's first film, *A Noite/The Night* (1999), is particularly notable: it portrays a

young girl's fear of the dark and her relationship with a schizophrenic mother. This narrative addresses mental health and intergenerational trauma — issues historically stigmatised and silenced, especially for women. Pessoa's symbolic and textured visual style amplifies these themes, creating an affective space that invites empathy and reflection.

2. Marta Monteiro: The Hardships of Womanhood

Marta Monteiro's work directly engages with the social roles of women. *Independência de Espírito/Independent Mind* (2011) humorously depicts the life of a single woman who resists societal pressure to marry, offering a playful counter-narrative to dominant romantic discourses. *Sonolenta/Sleepy* (2017) presents a more sombre tone, addressing exhaustion and caregiving in the context of poverty and family obligations. Its surreal imagery communicates the crushing weight of domestic responsibilities. *Sopa Fria/Cold Soup* (2023) deals with domestic violence, representing the cyclical nature of abuse and the silenced suffering of victims.

Monteiro's films focus on women's lived experiences, often highlighting invisible labour. Her use of metaphor and stylisation allows viewers to engage with complex subjects such as violence and oppression without resorting to graphic realism. Through her work, Monteiro contributes to a feminist cinematic voice that critiques demanding structural conditions of womanhood.

Similar to Monteiro's work, Alice Eça Guimarães's *Porque hoje é Sábado/Because Today Is Saturday* (2025) is a more recent reflection on domestic work and its unequal distribution, visually expressing the repetitive and invisible labour historically assigned to women.

3. Mónica Santos and Alice Eça Guimarães: Combating the Male Gaze

Guimarães' concerns with the female role can be traced back to the films she co-directed along with Mónica Santos, which add another dimension to Portuguese feminist animation. Their pixelation short films,

Amélia & Duarte (2015) and *Entre Sombras/Between the Shadows* (2018), propose what a female gaze might look like in animation by exploring heteronormative relationships from a female perspective. Both films deconstruct love narratives, depicting breakups and emotional disconnection that challenge male ideals of romance. By concentrating on women's willpower and agency within these relationships, the short films combat Mulvey's male gaze.

Conclusion

By examining these short films, our study situates feminist discourse within contemporary Portuguese animation. We demonstrate that these directors, through varied aesthetics and narratives, address critical feminist issues: marginalisation, socio-cultural expectations and patterns, and female agency. They also exemplify how animation can represent emotional realities that are difficult to capture in other media.

Our main contributions are:

- Contextualising feminist themes in Portuguese animation, highlighting an understudied branch of national cinema in global feminist film scholarship.
- Demonstrating how female authorship and aesthetic choices shape independent cinema, a context dominated by male filmmakers.
- Bridging feminist film theory and animation studies, showing how concepts like the male vs. female gaze and invisible labour connect to pervasive animation and visual storytelling.

These contributions are significant not only for scholars of animation and gender but also for broader discussions of representation and authorship in cinema. The works of Pessoa, Monteiro, Santos, and Guimarães reveal the potential of animation to engage critically with social issues, positioning Portuguese women animators as key voices in the global feminist cultural landscape.

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TITLE

"Anagrammatic Montage. Temporalities in Maya Deren"

KEYWORDS

Image, Montage, Cinema, Moving Image, [Des]montagem

ABSTRACT

This paper proposes an interpretation of the work of Ukrainian filmmaker Maya Deren, a pioneer of American experimental cinema in the 1940s. It is based on the understanding that her work operates, on several levels, according to the logic of anagrams, a concept present in her theoretical text *An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film*, a seminal work for cinema. The anagram is understood not only as a linguistic game, but as an aesthetic and epistemological procedure that reorganises visual, sound and narrative elements, aiming to produce multiple, unstable and constantly changing meanings. Creator of the concept of Vertical Filmmaking, Deren argues that the viewer can evoke certain emotions from an image, or from the superimposition of images. The anagram is also understood as a strategy of subjectivation: a way of undoing and remaking the self, proposing an identity adrift.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The following paper proposes a reading of the work of Maya Deren (1917-1961), an artist of Ukrainian origin based in the United States, a filmmaker, thinker, and a pioneer of American experimental cinema in the 1940s. Her work operates, on several levels, according to the logic of the anagram, a concept present in her theoretical text *An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film* (1945), fundamental to cinema. The anagram is understood not only as a linguistic game, but as an aesthetic and epistemological procedure that reorganises visual, sonic and narrative elements, with the aim of producing multiple, unstable and constantly changing meanings. The text itself is written with an organisation of ideas in a complex anagrammatic structure, rather than in the linear logic to which we are accustomed.

She is the creator of the concept of Vertical Filmmaking, through which she argues that the viewer can evoke certain emotions from a single image or from the superimposition of multiple images. In her conception, human memory is not linear and simultaneous access to memories, subverting chronological order, allows for a dynamic relationship between the parts. Imagination is possible only through memory and can precipitate natural and real processes, rendering them abstract and unreal. The whole is more than the mere sum of its parts.

Unlike animals, human beings tend to reflect on and distance themselves from their own experiences, rationalising what they have lived through. Awareness of subjectivity prompts a search for correction and leads to the creation of instruments that ultimately shape and unify perception. Countless calculations and devices have been invented to enable objective analyses of reality, culminating in the theory of relativity, which, for Deren, is an attempt to compensate for the inalienability of subjectivity. She questions whether the pursuit of realism might deny art and transform it into science, and she reflects that there would be neither philosophy nor science, nor even art, if humanity thought like the Romantics and Realists.

Art is the dynamic result of the relationship of three elements: the reality to which a man has access-directly and through the researches of all other men; the crucible of his own imagination and intellect; and the art instrument by which he realizes, through skillful exercise and control, his imaginative manipulations. To limit, deliberately or through neglect, any of these functions, is to limit the potential of the work of art itself (Deren, 1945, p. 17)

Films

In the preface to the aforementioned theoretical text, Deren clarifies that her career acquired new meaning with each work, and refutes some of her earlier statements. She notes that in her first film, *Meshes of the Afternoon*, from 1943, she understood the function of cinema, and of any work of art, to be the provocation of an experience: in this case, a “semi-psychological reality” (Deren, 1945, p. 5).

This film is concerned with the interior experiences of an individual. It does not record an event which could be witnessed by other persons. Rather, it reproduces the way in which the subconscious of an individual will develop, interpret and elaborate an apparently simple and casual incident into a critical emotional experience. (Mystic Fire Video/Microcinema International, 2007)

In the second film, *At Land*, released in 1944, the aim was for reality itself to explore cinema’s capacity to manipulate time and space. In the third, *A Study in Choreography for Camera*, made in 1945, the emphasis lay on the power of images, which should be capable of generating tension, emotion and narrative meaning solely through their appearance and articulation, without relying on plot or script. In the fourth, *Ritual in Transfigured Time*, produced in 1946, the focus shifted to the creative use of time and to the understanding of the work as a ritual, closer to a symbolic and sensory experience than to a conventional narrative. During this period, Deren also co-directed, with Marcel Duchamp, the silent and unfinished film *The Witches’ Cradle*, considered one of the most important documents of modernism in cinema. The exact date of the film’s production remains uncertain, but it may pre-date *Meshes of the Afternoon*. Although Deren went on to produce later works, this paper concentrates on her early period, which already encapsulates the central strategies of her cinematic practice and resonates with the anagrammatic and spiral temporalities addressed here.

Time

In her films, time is manipulated, whether during filming or editing, through strategies such as slow motion, freezing the image and varying speeds. For her, the camera functions as a microscope, revealing a new reality: something imperceptible to the human eye, filled with repetitions, indecisions, pulsations, and agonies (Costa Ribeiro, 2017; Deren, 1953). She also proposes that time, in a film made by a woman, has a distinct quality: it is linked to waiting, and to the dilation of experience, as opposed to masculine immediacy. This perspective brings the female body closer to a constant sense of becoming, a term already used by

the director in 1953, and which would later be a central concept widely developed by Deleuze and Guattari as a process of continuous transformation, always in between (1997).

The idea of Spiral Time, formulated by Leda Maria Martins (2021), offers a non-eurocentric critical framework that resonates deeply with the logic of the anagram. Martins conceives of the body as an inscription of ancestry and memory, capable of reconfiguring time through performance, and understands repetition as an act of memory, invention, and transformation: a time that manifests itself in gestures, rhythms and returns that never reproduce the same, but instead create meaning through variation and deviation but instead create meaning through variation and deviation. In Deren’s work, images, bodies, and symbols, such as keys, ladders, and mirrors, appear in circular sequences.

[Des]montagem

These concepts are directly related to the subject of the doctoral research in Digital Media Art, [Des]montagem: art, archives and digital media. This is an Art Practice-Based Research project that focuses on montage as a critical method, drawing on the studies of Didi-Huberman (2013b, 2015, 2016), Benjamin (1984) and Warburg (Didi-Huberman, 2013a) as theorists of image and montage; on the notion of time-image proposed by Deleuze (1995); and by Martins’ (2021) concept of spiral time.

The methodology adopted is qualitative, with an emphasis on formal and symbolic procedures that reflect the logic of the anagram. The approach involves identifying recurring motifs and their variations (keys, ladders, mirrors, gestures, landscapes); analysing montage as a recombination of elements in altered orders; and observing structures of symmetry, reversal and mirroring. Finally, the anagram is also conceived as a strategy of subjectivation: a way of undoing and redoing the self, proposing an identity adrift.

This overview demonstrates that Maya Deren’s work, both in her filmmaking and in her theoretical writings, offers a conceptual and methodological repertoire that continues to reverberate in contemporary thought on image, time, and memory. Her use of anagrammatic logic as both aesthetic and epistemological practice, her vertical conception of cinema, and her emphasis on ritual and the non-linear experience of time all prove deeply fertile for thinking about alternative forms of narrative, sensibility, and subjectivation. The present research is conceived as part of this continuity and dialogue with a logic of fragmentation and recomposition. In this encounter between the filmmaker and the re-

searcher, the gesture of [dis]montage and [re]montage also becomes a gesture of reconfiguring time. In [Des] montagem, there is an attempt to reinscribe this legacy in an expanded field, where body, archive and memory intersect as anagrammatic forces of creation.

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TITLE

"Lazarene: The Afterlife of Maya Deren, Cinema Pioneer"

KEYWORDS

Maya Deren; American Cinema; Women in Film; Independent Film; Feminism; Afterlife of Art

ABSTRACT

Taking up the epithet used by Deren as the title for a 1942 poem, and borrowing from Aby Warburg's notion of the afterlife of art, this paper aims to introduce the overlooked impact of Maya Deren's oeuvre (1917-1961) through its echoes in later works. The first section, "Broken Reflections", addresses the use of mirrors in films like *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943). The interest Deren has in the woman's reflection and the figure of the double is, for instance, also present in Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962) and Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* (2001). It is noteworthy how Deren seems to examine a kind of internalized (male) gaze, thirty years avant la lettre. The second moment, "Broken Clocks", addresses how Deren's oneiric film montage also appealed to Lynch, and is replicated in music video language. In conclusion, we may establish how Deren's formal and aesthetic contributions continue to be emulated.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Borrowing from Aby Warburg's notion of the afterlife of antiquity, this paper aims to introduce the overlooked impact of Maya Deren's oeuvre (1917-1961) through its echoes in later works. Maya Eleanora Deren remains mainly known for her important independent short-films, although her work included many other artistic and humanistic disciplines, like dance, music, ethnography, and most crucially, I would argue, poetry. She began her filmmaking career collaborating with her then-husband, Czech filmmaker Alexander Hamid (1907-2004), in the making of *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), placed sixteenth on the 2022 Sight & Sound critics' poll for the best films of all time. The rest of Deren's films became more individual endeavours in terms of direction, but she continued to collaborate with friends and fellow artists, such as Marcel Duchamp, Anaïs Nin, and John Cage. Deren's last finished short-film titled *The Very Eye of Night* (1955), was poorly received and remains misunderstood. In 1961, at the age of forty-four years old, Deren died of a brain haemorrhage. Nineteen years prior, she wrote in her poem "Lazarene" (1942): "Having once died, how can one yet grow older?/After such a pilgrimage one lives forever." (Clark et al., 1988, p. 64). Indeed, Deren's preoccupation with death and (re)birth is recurring throughout her career. She often reworks both the biblical Lazarus, character of resurrection, but also continually addresses the classical notion of katabasis, or journey to the underworld. This kind of interest is, like most of the questions posed by Deren's filmography, already present in Deren's poetry. In fact, her poems and her films, when closely studied, reveal a rich dialogue, in which moments, shots, sequences, stanzas, and images reflect one another, and respond

to each other, in a fashion reminiscent of art historian Aby Warburg's concepts, here summarized by Georges Didi-Huberman as working within "a phantasmal model [modèle phantomal] of history, in which temporal periods are no longer fashioned according to the academic transmission of knowledge, but are expressed, rather, by hauntings, "survivals," residues, and the persistent return of forms" (Didi-Huberman, 2017, p. 12). Deren's oeuvre is not only an intriguing "self-contained" example of Warburg's theory of the afterlife of images and their continued rebirth, but she was also particularly intrigued by the non-linearity of time. This notion, which Deren called "vertical time", or "verticality", is akin to Henri Bergson's psychological time, which would later influence Gilles Deleuze (Jackson, 2001, p. 66). Moreover, it reminds one of Warburg's perception of the connection between objects across time and space. In this manner, firstly in her poetry, and later in her ground-breaking short films, Deren explores subjectivity through a poetic, or, as she calls it, a vertical structure. Thus, by forsaking realistic timelines she opens the door for unique metaphysical exploration. Taking up the epithet used by Deren, this paper is interested in how Lazarene's work continues to live on in the works of others, initially establishing the relevance of Deren's filmic contributions, and then, how these were reincarnated in later and more recent examples. As such, this analysis proposes two moments. The first, "Broken Reflections", addresses the ample use of mirrors as objects (and metaphors), in films like *Meshes of the Afternoon* and even *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (1946). Such mirrors are, according to Catherine Soussloff, interesting not only for their "reflective capabilities but also for [their] distortions" (Soussloff, 2001,

p. 123). In *Meshes*, a cloaked figure with a mirror for a face haunts the film and its protagonist, played by Deren, personifying what could be a walking “Death”, also representing the haunted woman looking death in the face, and seeing herself, or her own imminent fate. A trope which will continue in later works – the double or *doppelgänger* – appears for the first time in this film, as well as in *Ritual*. The interest Deren shows in depicting women reflecting each other, and opposing each other, can be understood as another, symbolic, form of mirroring and of exploring feminine self-awareness, very much in the vein of John Berger’s surveyor/surveyed dichotomy (Berger, 2008), or the internalized male gaze, according to Laura Mulvey (Mulvey, 1975). The interest Deren has in the woman’s reflection and the figure of the double is, for instance, also present in Agnès Varda’s *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962) and David Lynch’s *Mulholland Drive* (2001). Varda’s imaginative approach to the woman’s self-image is deeply reminiscent of some of Deren’s earlier contributions. We can most easily see this in a shot where the main character looks at a broken reflection of herself, only one of many mirror shots in the *Nouvelle Vague* film. Moreover, the allegorical figure of “Death” is likewise present in Varda’s film, through the opening Tarot card reading scene. Lynch, not exactly preoccupied with feminist questions, is nonetheless indebted to Deren, and often borrows from her works – though he never acknowledged it, a question to be discussed in the upcoming section of the paper. *Mulholland Drive* is a conspicuous example of this influence, where several shots and sequences resemble Deren’s films, and, there is, of course, the recurring Lynchian interest in the female *doppelgänger*. Bearing all this in mind, the second moment, “Broken Clocks”, will address more specifically how Deren pioneered the subjective and oneiric film montage, also appealing to Lynch, and more widely replicated in music video language. Hopefully, with this comparative reading, we may begin to establish that Deren’s afterlife is, at least, twofold. On the one hand, thanks in great part to the authors of the project *The Legend of Maya Deren* (Clark et al., 1984) (Clark et al., 1988), the so-called mother of American avant-garde film remains a feminist inspiration, despite working before the rise of feminist criticism. Some feminist artists and filmmakers directly reference Deren and proclaim how much they owe to her legacy and legend. We can highlight, for instance, American filmmaker Barbara Hammer (1939-2019), who directed *Maya Deren’s Sink* (2011), a film in which images are projected onto Deren’s former sink. Another example is Judith Noble’s artistic and academic work. Noble, Professor of Film and the Occult at Plymouth University, has been particularly interested in Deren’s exploration of magic, the element of water, and women’s bodies, as can be seen in her 1980 exhibit “Water Into Wine”. On the other hand, Deren’s formal and aesthetic contributions continue to be emulat-

ed, knowingly or unknowingly. This aspect is one the more fascinating manifestations of a “Derenian” afterlife, since its existence is often uncredited or unspoken. Nonetheless, I would argue the presence of gestures and motifs in work posterior to Deren is a conspicuous example of Warburg’s “*Pathosformel*” or emotive formula – emotional gestures and visual tropes which are endlessly revived throughout time and space (Bing, 1999, p. 85). One of the clearest cases is the filmography of David Lynch. Although Lynch has denied knowing of Deren’s work, the striking parallels are, at times, difficult to ignore. For instance, Lynch biographer Greg Olson mentions he “often wondered if Lynch viewed the films of pioneering American avant-gardist Maya Deren (1917-1961), whose lyrically subjective, consciousness-manifesting pictures alter time and space and intermix dream and reality as hypnotically as Lynch’s do.” (Olson, 2008, p. 600). Lynch, however, claimed when interviewed by Olson, in 2004, that he had not. Equally relevant is the rich afterlife of Deren in music videos. Herb Ritts seems to repurpose some of Deren’s compositions in the video for Chris Isaak’s 1989 “Wicked Game”, echoing the *At Land* (1944) beach shot with a woman running into the distance. The video for Madonna’s “Cherish”, from the same year, and also directed by Ritts, features shots nearly identical to Deren’s opening shots of *At Land*, depicting a woman washed up on the beach shore. An important connecting element between Lynch’s work and the music video language is the oneiric temporal structure they often share. Deren is known for constructing a particular time-space dialect, in which, through montage a character is able to cross the natural boundaries of physics, and, with one step (and one cut) transport themselves to a new location. The poetic manipulation of time Deren creatively experimented with, has since been revived at length. What is more, Deren’s montage techniques and visual tropes are continually revived, by both experimental and more “mainstream” artists. As such, although Deren’s name remains a relatively underground reference, its afterlife is far more widespread than one would therefore assume. The filmic oeuvre of Maya Deren may, indeed, exist as a ghost, haunting the (moving) images of those who willingly invite her spectre, and those who, perhaps, ignore it – lingering, thus, in a kind of eternal existence.

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TITLE

“Sexual Violence on Screen: Repre-
sentations of Rape, Assault and Trau-
ma in US-American and British Film
and Television”

KEYWORDS

Sexual violence, trauma, television,
film, representation, rape

ABSTRACT

Sexual violence on screen ranges from threats to graphic portrayals of rape and assault. It is frequently used to develop character arcs, particularly female characters, by catalysing transformations, motivating revenge or generating complexity and emotional depth. This paper investigates how rape and sexual assault are depicted in contemporary US-American and British visual media, with a particular focus on the mid 2000s to the present.

By researching recent US-American and British films and series, the paper hopes to mark a distinction between the representation of the violent act and the lack of representation of its aftermath and absence of addressing psychological, social and interpersonal consequences.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Sexual violence on screen ranges from threats to graphic portrayals of rape and assault. It is frequently used to develop character arcs, particularly female characters, by catalysing transformations, motivating revenge or generating complexity and emotional depth. This paper investigates how rape and sexual assault are depicted in contemporary US-American and British visual media, with a particular focus on the mid 2000s to the present.

By researching recent US-American and British films and series, the paper hopes to mark a distinction between the representation of the violent act and the lack of representation of its aftermath and absence of addressing psychological, social and interpersonal consequences.

Introduction

According to Dyer’s White (1997), the representation of anything shapes how we think, understand and feel about it, meaning the depictions of sexual violence, survivors and life post the assault shape collective understandings of the subject, the survivors and predators. The representations or lack of through shot composition, editing, sound and mise-en-scène create narrative tropes of both violence and its aftermath. These tropes create expectations about how sexual violence occurs and how survivors “should” emerge afterwards.

The paper is not only concerned with explicit scenes of violence but also with what follows: what is made vis-

ible about the survivor’s personal life, social environment, and long-term struggles. While some films and series present themselves as empowering, they often fall back on familiar patterns such as revenge. For example, *Promising Young Woman* (Fennell, 2020) reduces trauma to a quest for revenge and narrative closure. Furthermore, the paper considers whose stories of sexual assault are centered and whose are absent, drawing attention to the predominance of white, middle-class narratives of violence and trauma on screen.

Objectives

This paper aims to identify common filming techniques used to portray survivors and perpetrators and analyse how female and queer characters are positioned before and after sexual assault. The study interrogates which aspects of sexual violence narratives are emphasized and whose perspectives are foregrounded in these stories. It further assesses the role of race, class, gender, and sexuality in shaping who is depicted as a victim/survivor. Finally, it investigates whether the aftermath and consequences of sexual violence are given sustained representation, or whether they are minimized in comparison to the act itself.

Theoretical framework

Grounded in feminist, film theory and intersectional analysis, the project draws on scholars such as Lisa Cuklanz, whose analysis in *Rape on Prime Time*

shows how sexual violence is framed in TV dramas in the 1990s and how it is limited to being a plot device. The study also uses E. Ann Kaplan's works on trauma to cite cinema's limitations to film symptoms of trauma such as memory and psychological complexity. TV and films have rarely portrayed the complex symptoms of trauma, such as dissociation, isolation, or other lasting psychological fragmentation are either briefly signaled or entirely absent. The study examines whether U.S. American and British films and series, produced within predominantly white, male, and capitalist perspectives, can portray the aftermath of sexual violence without falling into reductive or exploitative tropes.

In many cases, sexual violence becomes a plot device; a turning point used to advance storylines rather than a central theme worthy of sustained representation. This tendency is particularly evident in genres such as thrillers, action films, dramas and crime dramas, which often instrumentalize sexual violence to justify a female protagonist's emergence as "strong" or "resilient," or to develop male characters as protectors, saviors, or avengers. Such narrative tropes emerge from production cultures dominated by the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975), whiteness as a structuring norm (Dyer, 1997), and capitalist demands for spectacle and marketability. Even in works directed by women or featuring non-white, or non-heteronormative characters, the persistence of these narrative patterns suggests the broader structural forces at play in shaping representations of gendered and sexual violence.

Methodology

To investigate the representation of sexual violence, and post-sexual violence experience on screen, the study employs a qualitative textual analysis of scenes from the following corpus: *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011), *Big Little Lies* (2017), *Sharp Objects* (2018), *Promising Young Women* (2020), *I May Destroy You* (2021).

The corpus was chosen for its thematic relevance and both critical and financial success it gained. Furthermore, the corpus includes explicit scenes of sexual violence either at the beginning or in the middle of the story. Through close readings of scenes, I document the shot types, mise-en-scène, the transitions and editing, and sound and analyze if they construct or fail to construct the experience and its aftermath.

In the process of selecting media for the research, the film or series should contain one or two of the following criteria:

- A scene containing a form of sexual violence should be visible.
- Either the survivor/victim or the predator should be

a leading character.

- The scene should contain at least two characters discussing sexual violence.

The study also hopes to look at the following questions: Who is assaulted? and Who is being assaulted? What's the background; sound, angle, and location? How long is the scene? Who do we see more during the act?

Once the media is thoroughly collected and watched, and the previous questions are answered. The study will dive into its most important question of what's next? What is shown post-sexual violence? Do characters talk about the event? Do we see the interpersonal, social, economic and psychological consequences of such violence?

Critical analysis

The following section states *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Fincher, 2011) and *Promising Young Women* (Fennell, 2020) as examples, nevertheless, the presentation will also include a discussion of series such as *Big Little Lies* (2017), *Sharp Objects* (2018), and *I May Destroy You* (2021).

In *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Fincher, 2011), Lisbeth is assaulted twice, with the camera depicting the violence through close-ups, low-angle shots, and screams. By contrast, the aftermath is reduced to brief gestures such as showering, smoking, and tattooing her body, before the narrative shifts toward revenge. The assaults are never mentioned again, but they serve as a turning point in Lisbeth's character arc. The violence then becomes instrumental to show and justify her brilliance and ruthlessness. This framing reduces the post-sexual violence to certain tropes such as showering and uses the pain as a narrative device while limiting its social psychological complexity.

Promising Young Women (Fennell, 2020), a film focusing solely on the subject, it centers around Cassie's quest to find future sexual assaulters and to avenge her dead friend, who was a victim of sexual assault. The viewer never hears from the actual victim, instead, the story is told from Cassie's perspective, that of a young, white, middle-class woman. Cassie suffers the same fate before dying, and both she and her friend's assailants are eventually caught before the film's end. The repetitive use of sexual violence to criticize "all men", rape culture, to fuel revenge and to frame the protagonist as psychologically unstable end up mirroring the limitations of cinema's portrayal of post-sexual violence experience. The psychological, economic and interpersonal aftermath are only scratched from the surface in one character and completely overlooked in

others.

Conclusions

This research highlights recurring tropes in the visual depiction of sexual violence, showing how contemporary US-American and British film and television, shaped by male, white, and capitalist gazes, often reduce such experiences to narrative devices. Violence becomes a turning point for character transformation or a measure of morality, to which other male counterparts are measured. While the psychological, economic, and interpersonal aftermath of trauma is largely ignored because it is less profitable to portray. By examining

these patterns, the study underscores how narratives that appear empowering frequently reproduce limited patterns, relying on revenge, or resilience rather than sustained engagement with trauma.

This work does not claim to offer definitive results at this stage but instead demonstrates the importance of critically interrogating whose stories are told and which aspects of violence are made visible. By foregrounding the absence of aftermath in comparison to the act itself, the project opens space for alternative feminist approaches to representation, approaches that can more fully address the complexity of living after sexual violence.

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TITLE

“Making the Invisible Visible: Feminist Reclamations of Invisible Labor in *Tão pequeninas, tinham o ar de serem já crescidas*”

KEYWORDS

Invisible Labor; Domestic Work; Feminist Film Theory; Archival Testimony; Documentary Re-enactments; Portuguese Cinema

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes Tânia Dinis’s *Tão pequeninas, tinham o ar de serem já crescidas* (2024) through the lens of feminist theories of invisible labor. The film revisits the experiences of young girls who, in mid-20th-century Portugal, migrated from rural areas to work as domestic servants in Porto’s bourgeois households. Drawing on Arlene Kaplan Daniels’s foundational concept of invisible labor, as well as contributions by Joelle Trasowech and Ciciolla & Luthar, the analysis examines how Dinis employs aesthetic strategies—such as the dissociation of voice and image, the layering of real and fictional archives, and the use of reenactment—to foreground erased histories. Central to the film is a reflexive game of role-playing that destabilizes historical hierarchies while opening dialogical spaces aligned with Trinh Minh-ha’s notion of “speaking nearby.” The film thus reclaims silenced voices while interrogating the politics of representing invisible labor.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Invisible labor has long structured social life, sustaining households, economies, and cultural formations while remaining unrecognized and undervalued. Feminist scholarship has consistently drawn attention to the gendered and classed dynamics of such work, while documentary film, as both an artistic and social practice, has a privileged capacity to interrogate this invisibility, reclaiming erased histories and surfacing experiences that dominant narratives often silence.

This paper examines Tânia Dinis’s *Tão pequeninas, tinham o ar de serem já crescidas* (2024), a short film that revisits the experiences of rural girls who, in mid-20th-century Portugal, were sent to Porto to work as live-in domestic servants in bourgeois households. First, it investigates how the film reclaims the erased contributions of young girls engaged in domestic service, situating their experiences within feminist theories of invisible labor. Second, it analyzes how Dinis’ aesthetic and formal strategies, particularly her use of archival material, voiceover, and reenactment, foreground the tension between visibility and invisibility. Third, it explores the ethical dimension of representation, asking how the film navigates the delicate balance between exposing historical hierarchies and avoiding their reproduction.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of invisible labor provides the central lens for this analysis of *Tão pequeninas, tinham o ar de serem já crescidas*. Feminist scholarship has long

demonstrated that much of women’s work, particularly care, domestic, and emotional labor, remains unrecognized, uncompensated, and socially devalued. Arlene Kaplan Daniels (1987) introduced the concept of “invisible work” to describe how essential forms of labor are systematically excluded from cultural and economic recognition, thereby sustaining both gender inequality and the socioeconomic status quo.

Subsequent scholarship has sharpened the conceptual tools for analyzing the mechanisms of invisibility. Erin Hatton (2017), for instance, identifies cultural, legal, and spatial processes that work together to obscure certain forms of labor. In the Portuguese mid-20th-century context, these girls’ labor was rendered culturally invisible by ideologies that naturalized women’s domesticity; legally invisible by the absence of protections or labor contracts for child domestics; and spatially invisible by the confinement of their work to private households, away from public recognition. In this sense, domestic spaces function simultaneously as sites of labor and consumption, trapping women in cycles of repetitive and undervalued work (Cox, 2013). By reconstructing the domestic sphere as a cinematic stage, Dinis’ film dislocates it from its naturalized associations and exposes the structural inequities it embodies.

Further, the testimonies resonate with the emotional and cognitive burdens of caregiving (Ciciolla & Luthar, 2019), and highlight how women are expected to anticipate and manage others’ needs, often without acknowl-

edgment. Even as children, these domestic workers carried obligations to maintain order, provide comfort, and serve with gratitude, revealing how invisible labor is not only physical but profoundly emotional. This perspective aligns with Joelle Trasowech's (2023) critique of how systemic erasure shapes domestic workers' identities, leaving their voices absent from broader narratives of labor history. The film's testimonial structure directly counters this erasure, allowing the women to articulate experiences that had been silenced.

Finally, the film engages with feminist critiques of representation. By refusing to appear on screen while inserting herself as the "employer" in staged scenarios, Dinis highlights her own positionality as both filmmaker and authority. This reflexive strategy aligns with Trinh T. Minh-ha's concept of "speaking nearby" (1992), which calls for forms of representation that remain accountable without appropriating the voices of others. The film's formal choices thus enact an ethics of visibility: making the women's voices central while acknowledging the filmmaker's mediating role.

Methodology

The methodological approach of this paper is grounded in textual and formal film analysis, informed by feminist film theory and labor studies. Rather than treating the film as a transparent reflection of social history, the analysis attends to its formal construction, including the use of archival materials, voiceover testimonies, and reenactments as constitutive of its meaning. Special attention is given to the interplay between sound and image, the layering of real and fictional archives, and the strategic use of role-playing.

At the same time, the analysis situates the film within broader feminist debates on invisible labor and cinematic representation. The film's testimonies are read in dialogue with theoretical accounts of domestic service, emotional labor, and silenced subjectivities. Finally, the analysis considers not only what the film portrays but also the ethical dimension of representation of how it stages memory, voice, and power relations.

Critical Analysis

The aesthetic strategies of *Tão pequeninas, tinham o ar de serem já crescidas* function as a cinematic apparatus for rendering visible what has historically remained unseen. The film interlaces real and fictional archives with testimonies from women who, as young girls, migrated from the rural north of Portugal to Porto to work as domestic servants in bourgeois households. This blending of archival materials and oral histories underlines the constructedness of memory while simultaneously reclaiming erased experiences. As Arlene

Kaplan Daniels (1987) argued, invisible labor is foundational to social reproduction yet consistently unrecognized by employers, institutions, and society itself. Dinis' documentary foregrounds precisely this invisibility by placing at its center the recollections of women whose contributions were both essential and ignored. Through juxtaposition of archival images (sometimes authentic, sometimes staged) with the women's voices, the film destabilizes the authority of the archive and suggests that memory itself is a contested site of visibility. In doing so, the film affirms cinema's role, particularly in its documentary form, as a medium for making the invisible visible.

The dissociation of voice and image plays a crucial role in this process. The women's voices, delivered in voiceover, are often accompanied not by synchronized images of their speaking bodies but by archival footage or silent portraits. As Mary Ann Doane (1980) has argued, this duality produces a "phantasmatic body", an absent presence reconstructed through technological mediation. By refusing the naturalization of synchronized speech, Dinis avoids the objectification of the protagonists and instead emphasizes the constructedness of their representation. The result is a heightened critical distance: the viewer is invited not to consume the image of these women as objects of nostalgia but to listen to their words as testimony, resonating against the backdrop of erased histories. This strategy re-frames domestic service as labor and resists its reduction to familial "help" or childlike apprenticeship. The invisibility of this work is not only narrated but staged formally, and its surfacing becomes a deliberate cinematic act.

If these aesthetic strategies make invisible labor perceptible, Dinis' reenactments open a space for dialogue about power, hierarchy, and memory. Central to the film is a recurring game of make-believe in which the director assumes the role of the employer while the women perform as maids. This device serves as a leitmotif that returns repeatedly, both recalling the subordinate positions the women once occupied and problematizing the act of representing them in the present. The ambiguity of this gesture is deliberate: while it risks reinscribing historical hierarchies by positioning the filmmaker as "the boss", it simultaneously exposes those very hierarchies to scrutiny.

Rather than appropriating the women's voices or distancing herself into objectivity, Dinis situates herself beside her subjects, "speaking nearby" (Minh-ha, 1992), acknowledging her role as mediator while refusing to eclipse their agency. Her choice to participate in staged role-play reveals her positionality and power as director, while her voiceover narration articulates solidarity rather than authority. She does not translate

or interpret the women's testimonies but frames them within a reflective discourse that recognizes the limits of her own standpoint.

The dialogical quality of the film extends beyond staging into its soundscape. The women's testimonies, layered over archival and staged imagery, create a polyphony where voices resonate without being absorbed into a single authoritative narrative. Dinis' own voice enters not as counterpoint but as complement, weaving her political stance with the protagonists' memories. By positioning herself as an implicated narrator rather than a detached observer, Dinis highlights the responsibility of cinema to confront power while making space for marginalized voices.

In this sense, the film constructs a shared space of listening and recognition. The alternation between silence and testimony, portrait and voiceover, past and present underscores the delicate balance between giving space to voices and acknowledging the power dynamics of representation. Through its aesthetic strategies and reflexive reenactments, *Tão pequeninas, tinham o ar de serem já crescidas* makes invisible labor perceptible while also interrogating the act of making-visible itself. The film asks not only what is remembered but also how it is remembered and rep-

resented, inviting the viewer into a dialogical process where history, cinema, and feminist critique converge.

Final Considerations

Invisible labor, as theorized by feminist scholars, is not simply a matter of oversight but the result of cultural, legal, and spatial mechanisms that systematically devalue women's contributions. In the film *Tão pequeninas, tinham o ar de serem já crescidas* Dinis employs formal strategies that balance presence and absence to reconfigure cinema as a means for surfacing erased contributions, embodying a feminist politics of visibility that resists romanticization and foregrounds accountability. Thus, the film operates on two levels: as historical testimony reclaiming silenced voices, and as methodological critique that reimagines how invisibility itself can be represented.

By reframing invisible labor as a central condition of women's lived experiences, Dinis's film contributes to ongoing feminist struggles to expand definitions of work and to recognize the essential, though often hidden, contributions of women. In doing so, it not only honors the women whose stories it tells but also challenges us to rethink labor, memory, and visibility in contemporary contexts.

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TITLE

"The trouble with Pina"

KEYWORDS

Gender, trouble, performing art

ABSTRACT

As Catalan dancer Pau Aran Gimeno explains, Bausch had a "feminine way of working," characterized by respect and love, along with enormous freedom. This also involved playing with gender roles. When Gimeno complained that one day he would like to be a "proper" man, she replied, "You already are."

In *Bandoneón*, a Pina Bausch play premiered in 1980, dancer Dominique Mercy appears dressed in a tutu. Since that performance, Pina Bausch and her co-creators have created powerful images and movements featuring men dressed as women, with an impact far beyond the issue of transvestism.

In particular, we will give examples from Bausch's film "The Complaint of the Empress". We will consider them in light of gender studies (namely the concepts of gender trouble and stay with the trouble) and also the profound reflections of Susan Sontag, in a curious film she made about Pina, and of José Gil, in chapter 8 from the book *Movimento Total*.

We suggest that the key to understanding the naturalness with which, in Pina Bausch's pieces, men appear as men dressed as women has to do with the ideas of freedom and vulnerability, in which men, like women, benefit from the profound rethinking of gender relations.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Catalan dancer Pau Aran Gimeno says that Bausch had a 'feminine way of working', characterised by respect and love, along with enormous freedom. This also involved playing with gender roles. When Gimeno complained that one day he would like to be a "proper" man, she replied, 'You already are.'

Pina Bausch did not like to define her work verbally. When at the press conferences she was asked what her piece was, she always answered: it is about the relationship between men and women. In fact this is perhaps the most present aspect in all of his work.

In this confrontation between men and women, there is one part that is "gender prothesis" (Paul Preciado 2019). In Pina Bausch's shows, the formal clothes worn by men and the fluttering dresses worn by women refer to these normal or normative identities, and the repetition linked to the exaggeration of gestures associated with gender roles, masculine and feminine, makes their ritualistic and built character visible. As Bausch always seeks the authenticity of emotions, it is the artifice of norms that end up not being tolerated, it is the idea of a natural opposition between men and women that is scrutinized.

There are several scenes in which a woman is alone in front of several men. In the play *Masurca Fogo*, created after a residency in Lisbon, there is a scene in which Julie Shanahan is almost naked, her body cov-

ered with red balloons. While talking about her ballet teacher, she lights the cigarettes of nine men in suits surrounding her. With their cigarettes, they end up popping the balloons, leaving her almost naked, wearing only underwear and stars covering her nipples. Fragile, this enormous woman loses her initial sparkle and ends up leaving, ashamed.

In another scene, from *Kontakthof*, a place of encounters, we see Nazareth Pañadero surrounded by many men in suits who begin to touch her: first slowly, curiously, then faster and faster, on her face, stomach, legs, lifting her up, knocking her down, in paradoxes of affection and sadism, need for contact and aggression, in which she becomes a mere object.

But the women also respond, as in that scene from *Kontakthof* where sometimes the women, sometimes the men, advance giving orders. And there are scenes in which it is the women who attack the men. And scenes in which the power of women is shown, the free woman, the muscular woman, the woman who is even grandiose in comparison to the man, in the piece *Eurydice*.

Fortunately things get more complicated, far beyond a war of the sexes. As in the scenes, starting with the 1980 play *Bandoneon*, in which men dress up as women. "One of the singularities of Pina Bausch's work is the permanent oscillation between processes of sub-

jection that tend to standardise bodies according to prefabricated models, always the same for everyone, and incessant movements of becoming that break these models, releasing forces that would perhaps lead to the formation of singular subjectivities. Oscillation between vectors of subjectivation and vectors of singular becomings.' (Gil, 2001, 224-5)

If in 1990 Butler spoke of 'gender trouble,' Donna Haraway, in 2016, said that we must stay with the trouble, because that is the most serious and lively option. This is the opposite of the idea of sedimentation, it is a dynamic situated between reality, fiction and imagination. As José Gil (2001) notes in his book, which includes a chapter on Pina Bausch, "There is never a defined state in which she stops. We often ask ourselves: are we looking at women-in-becoming or transvestites (who are caricatures of women-in-becoming)? The speed of the characters' movements and of the transition from one scene to another prevents us from knowing." There are also many child becomings and even a frequent context of children's games that facilitates fluidity. "At the same time as sweetness, violence; at the same time as people dressed for a gala evening, the nakedness of a body.

"Violence, men's inability to love, the devices (prostheses) that make bodies be stiff are opposed, in Bausch's film *The Lament of the Empress*, to becoming-woman, becoming-women, becoming-sphinx, becoming-animal (curiously, in Pina's work, I do not believe there is a becoming-man for women), becoming-elements (the man covered in earth, the mud man). "The means (milieux) of becoming are the elements (water, earth, snow, wind), clothing and movement. De-contextualisation prepares the becomings." (Gil, 2001)

The secret to interpreting Pina Bausch is paradox. "If there is one author who made paradox a means of creating movement, it was certainly Pina Bausch." (Gil, 2001, 213) Pina herself, somewhat like Brecht, liked to constantly experiment with scenes in reverse, turning them inside out. As she herself said when receiving her honoris causa in Bologna: "Everything is turned inside out and thoroughly rethought. Every detail undergoes countless metamorphoses until it finally finds its rightful place. It always takes a long time for something to start flowing." Moreover, looking at each scene of the final play, "You can also see the opposite.' 'What I think is right is that a person can see it one way and another person can see it in a completely different way." (Gil, 2001, 213)

But it is more than that, says Gil. In Pina Bausch, "The multiplication of possible points of view follows the directions that the play itself induces: they diverge, oppose or contradict each other, regardless of the sub-

jective tastes of the spectator. They are made not to converge." "It is not: "both points of view are possible", but: 'The two (or three or four) meanings of the event coexist in the event itself and constitute its meaning.'" (Gil, 2001)

The fact that Pina mixes her enormous attention to the real with the exploration of the surreal, the unconscious, the dream, the fictional, the illogical, the uncanny, all of this enhances the emergence of virtual bodies and beings. In 1977 (four years after founding Tanztheater), Pina created a method of questions to elicit small, precise movements and scenes to work on. When Pina asks the dancers, 'When did you first become a man or a woman?', it reminds us of that primordial scene Freud spoke of, when the boy, realising the difference between the sexes, fantasises that the female penis has been removed, creating a lasting anxiety that his penis may be cut off by his rival, the father figure, as punishment for desiring the mother figure. It is a crucial stage in psychological development, marking the transition from the phallic phase to the latency phase. And the phallus is understood not only as a sexual organ, but as a symbol of power, completeness and identity.

In Pina's pieces, it is as if we are always left with this primordial wonder and inquiry: what is each gender, what do they have and what do they lack, in a continuous process of anguish and fantasy, a process that has no age (nor nationality, although Germany is a good homeland for this Angst). In other words, although identities (woman, man, transvestite, gay) are much more comfortable, Pina and her performers dare to stay with the problem, 'stay with the trouble'.

Once again, we can turn to Freud, who speaks of a compulsion to repeat, the attempt to symbolically relieve the moment of loss, of separation, of entry into the symbolic order (the Law of the Father). And in this, she challenges the dominant phallic structure — making room for the feminine, the fragmented, that which escapes the father's order.

In Latin, wound was called *vulnus*, from which vulnerability comes. Now, Freud teaches us that 'vulnerability is your strength.' This can be seen in the influencer version (like Brené Brown), but it is much deeper and applies fully to Pina Bausch's beings, who all benefit from the profound rethinking of gender relations.

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TITLE

"Supporting Female Narratives: The
Role of Mentorship in the Film Indus-
try"

KEYWORDS

Mentorship, women in film, feminist
initiatives, film industry, professional
development, Eastern Europe, gen-
der equality

ABSTRACT

This presentation offers a concrete overview of the mentorship program Her Story, Her Future, a feminist initiative dedicated to supporting women working in the film industry in Eastern Europe. Developed in Romania, the program includes curated mentorship sessions, pitching workshops, group coaching, and public events aimed at empowering women across a wide range of film professions — including directors, actors, producers, production designers, directors of photography, and scriptwriters — particularly those at early or transitional stages of their careers. As the founder and creative manager of the program, I will present, drawing from its first editions, the specific tools and methodologies we implemented: open calls with inclusive selection criteria, a personalized matching system between mentees and professionals, a value-based group dynamic inspired by Shirzad Chamine's "inner saboteurs" model, and public pitch events designed not only to attract funding but also to enhance visibility and provide validation. The presentation will also under-

underscore quantifiable outcomes (such as the number of projects developed, festival participation rates, and international collaborations), alongside qualitative feedback from participants. Notably, while mentees have been exclusively Romanian, the mentors have been international, coming from Romania, Bulgaria, Egypt, Lithuania, and Ukraine. This diversity has enriched the program by offering a broad range of perspectives, while the close age ranges between mentors and mentees helped minimize knowledge gaps and foster a more inspirational dynamic. Furthermore, I will examine various challenges encountered during the program's implementation—including mentorship fatigue, resistance from industry gatekeepers, and the complexities of securing sustainable funding for women's empowerment initiatives. In particular, the program's experience highlights how persistent ambiguities surrounding the concept of mentorship can complicate funding opportunities, underscoring the need for a clearer theoretical framework to better define and support mentorship practices in the film industry. By emphasizing both practical application and reflective analysis, my contribution seeks to advance the broader discourse on mentorship as a tool for professional support and feminist intervention aimed at deconstructing hierarchical and exclusionary paradigms within the film and audiovisual sectors.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction

The film industry is still dominated by male professionals, women facing many hurdles—both structural and cultural—when trying to progress in their careers. This is the case at a global level, not only in Eastern Europe, where auteur films predominate. For instance, a large-scale study conducted by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative examined 1,300 top-grossing U.S. films released between 2007 and 2019 and found that only 4.8% of directors were women. Even in 2019, a year considered more progressive, only 10.6% of directors of the top 100 movies were female (Smith et al., 2020).

In Europe, where film is art, not only industry, the situation is still not ideal. According to the most recent report from the European Audiovisual Observatory (2023), women remain underrepresented in almost all

key film professions. Between 2018 and 2022, women accounted for only 26% of directors, 29% of screenwriters, 35% of producers, 11% of cinematographers, 10% of composers and 33% of editors (Simone, 2023). These numbers show that gender inequality is still deeply embedded in society. I started Her Story, Her Future to help change this. Through mentoring sessions, networking opportunities and practical personal development workshops, the program has the aim to support women in cinema to face these challenges, gain confidence and make meaningful professional connections.

Objectives

This presentation provides an overview of the Her Story, Her Future mentorship program, showing how it supports the growth and visibility of women working

in the film industry. I will look at how the program has influenced participants' careers, and I will share some of the challenges we faced while running this mentorship initiative, as well as the lessons we learned along the way. Finally, this presentation reflects on how mentorship can act as a feminist tool, helping to challenge hierarchical and exclusionary practices within cinema.

Theoretical Framework

Women in the film industry are often less visible and have fewer opportunities to take on leadership roles (Eikhof & Warhurst, 2013; Smith et al., 2019). In *Her Story, Her Future*, mentorship isn't about giving advice, teaching technical skills or pushing a specific project forward. It's about helping women see their way forward and—most importantly—build confidence in what they can do (Creech, 2017).

The program is based on values-based development, inspired by Shirzad Chamine's "inner saboteurs" model (Chamine, 2013). This approach focuses on self-awareness, resilience, and how to work well with others. In group workshops, we use simple exercises and trust-building games that turn these ideas into something tangible. Participants have the chance to reflect on what truly matters to them, connect with each other and practice working as a group.

We also use the DISC personality framework- Dominant, Inspiring, Supportive, and Conscientious- to help participants understand how they communicate, how they react under pressure and how to collaborate with different personalities (Scullard, Howard, & Salcedo, 2025). Being aware of these styles gives women more confidence in creative projects.

Finally, the one-on-one mentor-mentee relationship is at the heart of the program. These authentic connections give tailored guidance, encouragement and honest feedback for work in progress projects. Many mentees say these relationships are transformative, helping them tackle challenges and grow professionally. From the other side, mentors often find they learn as much as they share. In the end, mentorship here is as much about human connection, community, trust and support as it is about personal and career growth.

Methodology

Her Story, Her Future program begins with an open call. We aim to bring together a diverse group of women working in different areas of the film industry and not only directors or producers, as they have generally more opportunities than other professions. Selection is not based on resumes or experience, but on finding individuals who can match with the invited mentors for

the specific edition, and who will actively engage with their mentor and with the other mentees in the group sessions. For future editions, we try to think about candidates in advance and invite mentors who can support their aspirations.

Once the pairs are established, mentors and mentees work closely together throughout the program for at least three months. Mentoring is combined with group workshops with special guests, participation in international events such as European Film Festival Palic in Serbia, and a presentation forum, where mentees present their projects to a professional jury and other women in the field, receiving personalized feedback.

Throughout the mentorship, mentors, peers and guests provide feedback, while sessions remain flexible and adapt to the changing needs of the group. We evaluate the program by analyzing participant feedback, observing interactions and monitoring project outcomes. This helps us see what works, what is difficult, how mentoring can truly support women in the film industry and how to adapt the program in the future editions.

Critical Analysis

Qualitative feedback from participants indicates that the program has a real impact on their confidence and broadening of their professional networks. At the same time, we have observed some challenges. The relatively short duration of the program can sometimes limit how deep mentorship can go. Organizing face-to-face meetings (which participants tended to enjoy the most) proved challenging, so we relied mostly on an online format. Obtaining sustainable funding has also been difficult, partly because funders often misunderstand the nature of mentorship, confusing it with traditional training or professional development courses. The program does not follow a fixed lesson plan; instead, each session is tailored to the specific needs and goals of the mentees, which makes the experience more personal but more difficult to quantify. While the small number of participants- seven mentees per edition- allows for intensive guidance and meaningful relationships between mentor and mentee, it also limits the overall reach of the program, and, consequently, the opportunities to secure larger grants. What we have realized through these editions is that there is always a delicate balance between deepening the relationship with each participant and trying to reach more women. At the same time, we have seen how important it is to remain flexible and adjust the program along the way, responding to the needs of the mentees and the reality of each group.

Conclusions

Her Story, Her Future shows that mentorship can be much more than giving advice on projects or technical skills. It is a tool for encouragement and, at the same time, a way to create change in the industry. The program helps participants build confidence, develop skills, and expand their professional networks, but it also does something else: it gives them visibility and a chance to challenge the way power is concentrated in the hands of a few. Attending international festivals and participating in pitching events allows mentees to make themselves heard and to form connections beyond traditional hierarchies. The array of mentors hailing from Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Germany, Lithuania, Ukraine and Egypt brings a wealth of insights, enhancing the program and promoting vibrant cross-cultural education.

One-on-one mentorship, values-based workshops, and group activities support personal growth and help create a more inclusive and equitable environment. At the same time, there are limitations. The small budget means we cannot include more participants or organize face-to-face meetings as often as we would like. Ideally, more women would take part, increasing the program's impact and strengthening the community. These challenges highlight the importance of sustainable resources and long-term investment to continue reshaping traditional structures and practices in the film industry.

Overall, Her Story, Her Future presents a mentorship model that integrates skill development, personal advancement and feminist support, highlighting the opportunities and hurdles in fostering inclusive and equitable professional spaces in the film industry.

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TITLE

"Authorial traces in Chantal Akerman's *Je, tu, il, elle* (1974)"

KEYWORDS

Authorial cinema, Cinema analysis, Identity, Chantal Akerman, *Je tu il elle*

ABSTRACT

This essay reflects the role of identity and memory in authorial cinema by analyzing Chantal Akerman's *Je, tu, il, elle* (1974) in comparison to her production of the same decade. It observes the inscription of the body into the screen and determines the recurring methodological and aesthetic aspects to discover the points of contact they establish with her biographical self and identity as a Jewish lesbian woman. To support this analysis, the theoretical basis of Hélène Cixous (1976), Gilles Deleuze (2000), John Berger (2008), and Laura Mulvey (2016) were conjoined to the critical articles of Philippe Azoury and Magalie Genuite (2004), Joanna Hogg and Adam Roberts (2019), Maria João Madeira (2019), and Luís Miguel Oliveira (2019). By framing the identity of the director as a central feature of new perspectives, it observes how Akerman explores womanhood, intimacy, and loneliness as a human condition in an outlook affected by WWII.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Chantal Akerman's first full-length film, *Je, tu, il, elle* (1974), features the director's body as its conductor, with Akerman also playing the main role. From the late sixties to the late seventies, the body is, too, a central subject and device in Akerman's filmography. By continually evidencing the body, Akerman's work incites us to rethink the body on the screen and the role the body of a director plays in authorial cinema. What changes when marginalized bodies are the ones behind the cameras? How do the personal and biographical aspects of Chantal Akerman intersect with her filmmaking?

With the purpose of understanding the role of the body in Chantal Akerman's filmography, this essay aims to identify Akerman's authorial marks in *Je, tu, il, elle* (1974) and how these marks relate to her identity as a Jewish lesbian woman. Additionally, it seeks to understand the significance of identity and memory in authorial cinema and the pertinence of own-voice narratives for marginalized communities.

The theoretical support was selected based on the relevance to the studies on the discussion of the body in cinema and the creative production by women: starting with Gilles Deleuze's perception of the capacity of the cinema to create a body, followed by John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (2008), in conjunction with Laura Mulvey's concept of "male gaze" to meditate on a new language of the body by female directors, and lastly, Hélène Cixous' perspective on women's writing, which will be expanded to authorship in cinema. For the technical and aesthetic arguments, the essay is supported by interpretations of Chantal Akerman's work, select-

ed from specialized sources: *Autoportrait en cinéaste*: Chantal Akerman (2004), Chantal Akerman for *Cine-mateca Portuguesa* (2019), and Chantal Akerman *Retrospective Handbook* (2019). Finally, seeking to better understand the director's methodology and biographical aspects, the essay utilizes Nicole Brenez's interview with Chantal Akerman (2011).

The essay conjugates the given theoretical basis with a critical analysis of *Je, tu, il, elle* (1974) that is done in comparison to Chantal Akerman's film production within the same decade (starting from 1968 to 1978). This interpretation leans on the central spheres of Akerman's work: intimacy, womanhood, loneliness, and space, and how these themes relate to the body. Secondly, it seeks to identify the shared methodological and aesthetic features in the selected filmography and the points of contact these choices establish in relation to her biography in the postwar context Akerman is inserted.

Gilles Deleuze (1985/2000) relates body and cinema by the capacity of the cinema to give a body. By applying this lens to Chantal Akerman, Deleuze declares that her methodology shows the "states of body particular to the female character" (p. 196). Through a fixation on gesture, Akerman's filmmaking style is marked by a match of the time of action to the length of the sequence—the body conducts time; time becomes secondary to the body. What Deleuze called "a ceremony of anorexia" in *Je, tu, il, elle* (1974) brings an understatement to the narrative progression by craving ("I'm hungry" is the protagonist's first diegetic phrase) that leads to the "two bodies desire to feed from each

other" (Oliveira, 2019, p. 46)—the intimate encounter.

It suggests a new relationship when it comes to female directors: founded on cinematography, the oppressed body acquires the capacity to move freely, not constrained as an image or "an object of vision: a sight" (Berger, 1972/2008, p. 63). Chantal Akerman uses a singular and static camera or moves it slightly, capturing the scenery in long takes. There is a "conviction of the importance of the frontality of the image found on the axis of the camera" (Madeira, 2019, p. 25) that frames subject and scenery without hierarchy, which allows the characters to move away from the frame, although their presence is continued by the sound design. By combining the frontal perspective with full shots and avoiding close-ups, the action seems to take place before the spectator's eyes. Combined with that, nakedness is not submitted to shame; instead, it is a resource of intimacy. Actions like undressing or showering are exposed unabashedly, not turned into nudity but captured "without disguise" (Berger, 1972/2008, p. 74), and particularly in *Je, tu, il, elle* (1974), Akerman's own body is depicted. Luís Miguel Oliveira (2019) refers to the film as an "essay on intimacy" because of "the self-exposition of the filmmaker [...], enlarged by the terrible 'frontality,' from which there isn't any escape" (p. 45)—by erasing the sense of separation, the cinematography creates an obstacle for erotic provocation.

That would challenge how "mainstream film coded the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order" (Mulvey, 2016, p. 805) even when it comes to the sexual intercourse sequence, which is coded through enhanced intimacy. During this sequence, the parole is minimal, and all is spoken through the body, as if "they, the women, while caressing, transform speech into desire" (Azoury & Genuite, 2004, p. 178). Contrary to this, while the protagonist physically stimulates a truck driver, the shot frames him only, suggesting that the woman is absent even when present. Hélène Cixous claims that women "must write about woman and bring woman to writing, from which they have been drawn violently as from their bodies—for the same reason, by the same law, with the same fatal goal." (1976, p. 875). Expanding the discussion to cinema, what Chantal Akerman does by showing womanhood and lesbian pleasure and directing and acting on it conceives a new language of the body in cinema, one that diverges from the dominant one. It is also through this new language that Akerman explores feminine desire in following productions, for example, *Jeanne Dielman* (1975), which explores the absence of desire and the body is reduced to an operator fulfilling tasks, and *Les rendez-vous d'Anna* (1978), in which desire is not strictly carnal but affective, and the body is a moving device in a context of lack of human connection.

Entwined with desire, the portrait of loneliness may take form throughout the travel, which can be observed in *Je, tu, il, elle* (1974), *Les rendez-vous d'Anna* (1978), and *News from Home* (1970). By tracing a parallel with Chantal Akerman's biography, travelling not only dialogues with a personal preference—Akerman was an eager traveller and has lived in multiple cities around the globe—but also with her Jewish identity. Akerman's mother is an Auschwitz-Birkenau survivor, and Akerman's filmography appears to resonate the Shoah trauma and subsequent diaspora through a sense of non-belonging and displacement. In *Je, tu, il, elle*, this feeling is evidenced by the truck driver, whose dwelling is the transitional place of the highways. Along with the protagonist, the driver suffers from the loss of home (his, due to work demands; hers, by the end of a relationship), but even with this similarity, they don't bond: she stays in silence. It's characteristic of Akerman's filmography that, in a supposed dialogue, a character starts a monologue to expose their thoughts and feelings. This is how that, what Akerman "shows, by structural means or others, is nothing less than the human condition, a series of astonishing meditations about loneliness and anxiety, alienation and discomfort" (Hogg & Roberts, 2019, p. 44), in which the sound design also plays a fundamental role: there is no soundtrack, and except for the use of voice-off, the sound is diegetic and includes the external noise—in *Je, tu, il, elle* the passing cars, the radio, and the television all carry the Zeitgeist of the postwar period and enhance the silence.

Loneliness is also shown through reading: in an interview with Nicole Brenez (2011), Chantal Akerman declared that she wrote *Je, tu, il, elle* (1974) "as a novel, not a film," which shows an intrinsic relationship between literature and cinema. The first third of the film consists of a voice-over reading through an epistolary narrative. The reading device has been used previously in *News from Home* (1970) and *Le 15/8* (1973), which are, respectively, letters from Akerman's mother and a fictional journal entry, which suggests an attempt to connect oneself with an unattainable exterior world. In *Je, tu, il, elle*, the letters are displayed in material form, enhancing the isolation of the protagonist and evoking the longing for some other, whilst home is a space of restlessness. Without a correspondent, the letters may address the spectator: the protagonist faces the camera, implying a dialogue, and, through intimacy, she dissolves the margins in-between film and the 'real world.'

Throughout this analysis, it's possible to conclude that Chantal Akerman finds a new language in the cinema of the body through her authorial marks, which are built in conjunction with the identity aspects of the director. In *Je, tu, il, elle* (1974), it is mostly noticeable through an

attentive work of intimacy that embraces her physical body and builds, through cinematography and sound design, a viewpoint that places the spectator before it. In articulating this bodily language, Akerman defies the

normative, patriarchal one that prevails in cinema and, through her own marginalized body, brings out new possibilities for filmmaking.

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TITLE

“Listening and Seeing Otherwise:
Feminist Curatorship and the Politics
of Testimony”

KEYWORDS

Feminist curatorship; ethics of care;
testimony; audience engagement;
gender and sexual violence; cultural
transformation; civic spectatorship

ABSTRACT

This paper examines feminist curatorship as an ethical and political practice of listening, care, and resistance, focusing on representations of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and mental health. Drawing on two curatorial interventions—The Power of Representations (Caminhos do Cinema Português Film Festival, 2023) and Resonances: Between Silence and the Echo of Individual Experiences in Mental Health (Teatro Académico de Gil Vicente, 2024)—this analysis examines how curating can materialise care, redistribute visibility, and foster civic spectatorship. Grounded in feminist theories of care, testimony, and witnessing, the paper argues that curatorial practice can act as cultural activism, unsettling hegemonic representations and positioning audiences as ethical witnesses. Through an interdisciplinary methodology combining curatorial analysis, audience observation, and paratextual reading, it identifies feminist curatorship as a form of institutional critique and symbolic reparation, reconfiguring how trauma and survival are collectively perceived, understood, and remembered.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction

Mainstream media and cultural institutions have long struggled to represent sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and mental health without reproducing voyeuristic or reductive logics. Survivors’ voices are often silenced, sensationalised, or aestheticised in ways that perpetuate harm. Against this backdrop, feminist curatorship emerges as a relational and political practice of listening and care — one that challenges the power structures embedded in both cultural production and spectatorship.

This paper situates feminist curating within the broader context of two interconnected research projects. The first, UnCoveR (2023–2026), investigates the representation of sexual violence in Portuguese media between 2011 and 2022, analysing they shape public understandings of gendered violence and justice. The second, ENGAGE — Promoting Gender Equality and Social Justice through Social Science Communication and Transmedia Storytelling (2023-2025)— is a post-doctoral project exploring how transmedia storytelling can bridge academic research, artistic creation, and public engagement.

Within this framework, The Power of Representations and Resonances emerged as curatorial experiments translating research questions into public experiences. Each sought to transform the aesthetics of spectator-

ship into spaces of civic dialogue, emotional reflexivity, and social responsibility.

Objectives

This paper pursues four interrelated objectives:

To conceptualise feminist curatorship as a listening-centred praxis and an extension of feminist epistemology.

To analyse how curatorial infrastructures can embed care and ethical witnessing into their design.

To examine how selected artworks and programmes disrupt hegemonic representations of trauma, survival, and mental health.

To reflect on how curatorial practice can act as institutional critique, civic pedagogy, and symbolic reparation.

Theoretical Framework

Feminist curatorship is increasingly theorised as a form of cultural activism that redefines the relationships between artists, audiences, and institutions (Reilly, 2018). Rather than an act of selection, curating is understood as an affective and political labour — a choreography of relations that redistributes visibility and attention.

Four conceptual strands underpin this study:

- Curatorial activism and institutional critique. Reilly (2018) and Reckitt (2016) identify curatorship as a counter-hegemonic practice that intervenes in patriarchal and colonial epistemologies, transforming the exhibition into a space of feminist pedagogy and resistance.
- Ethics of care. Tronto (1993) and Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) conceive care as a speculative, political, and collective responsibility that must be materialised in social and institutional infrastructures. This framework guides how curatorial processes can enact care procedurally — through access, rhythm, participation, and attentiveness.
- Testimony and witnessing. Drawing on Felman and Laub (1992), testimony is understood as a relational act that calls for an ethical listener. Curatorial mediation can thus function as a mode of witnessing — amplifying survivor narratives while resisting the confessional and the spectacular.
- Civic spectatorship. Azoulay's (2008) notion of the civil contract of photography is expanded here to the curatorial field: audiences are not passive observers, but co-witnesses bound by civic and ethical responsibilities.
- Together, these frameworks conceptualise curatorship as both a feminist and epistemic intervention — a practice that transforms seeing and hearing into acts of care, relation, and resistance.

Methodology

The study follows a qualitative, interpretive, and arts-based methodology that integrates curatorial analysis, ethnographic observation, and paratextual reading.

1. Curatorial analysis: The artworks, films, and performances are examined as curatorial gestures that reconfigure the visibility of trauma and survival.
2. Audience observation: Notes from post-event discussions and open forums capture affective and ethical responses from participants, revealing how spectatorship can become an active practice of listening.
3. Paratextual analysis: Programmes, press materials, and curatorial statements are analysed to reconstruct institutional framing and the protocols of care embedded in design.

This triangulation positions curatorship simultaneously as object and method — a feminist tool for generating knowledge through relational and affective encounters.

Critical Analysis

Case Study I — The Power of Representations (Caminhos do Cinema Português Film Festival, 2023)

Developed in collaboration with the Caminhos do Cinema Português Film Festival, The Power of Representations interrogated cinematic portrayals of sexual and gender-based violence in contemporary Portuguese-language cinema. The programme featured nine films organised into five thematic axes — Imaginaries of Sexual Violence, Domestic Violence, Migration, Racialisation and Sex Work, Lived Experience, and A Way Forward — privileging experimental formats including animation, documentary, and hybrid forms.

Selection criteria were grounded in feminist ethics: violence against women needed to be central to the narrative, and its representation had to resist voyeurism and sensationalism. Curatorial care extended beyond film selection — each session provided content information and explicitly affirmed the audience's right to disengage. Post-screening discussions were facilitated by moderators with expertise in the theme of each session, while several team members received training in anxiety and trauma management, transforming Q&As into spaces of collective witnessing and care.

This structure enacted what Azoulay (2008) calls a civic contract of spectatorship: audiences were not merely observers but participants in ethical and affective negotiation. By framing spectatorship as a shared ethical practice, the programme operated as both cultural critique and symbolic reparation, positioning cinema as a counter-archive of testimony.

Case Study II — Resonances: Between Silence and the Echo of Individual Experiences in Mental Health (Teatro Académico de Gil Vicente, 2024)

Resonances extended the ethics of feminist curating into the domain of mental health, integrating performance, film, sound installation, and photography. Conceived as both curatorial experiment and research practice, the programme invited the public to reflect on how storytelling and listening can transform understandings of distress and well-being.

Each artistic work began from lived experience: *Waiting Room* (Paula Dürks Cassol) explored trans and non-binary perspectives on healthcare through photovoice; *Open Your Mind* (Ricardo Pinto Reis & Dânia Viana) and *My Rage Is Underground* (Francisca Antunes) examined resilience and voice; *Words That Serve Me* (Laura Falésia & André Tecedeiro) challenged linguistic and social norms; and *Para-Suicídio Pop* revisited narratives of suicide attempts through a participatory and commented screening.

Curatorial ethics were operationalised through trauma-informed design: flexible participation, content guidance, and visible resources on mental health

and LGBTQ+ support. Spatial setup, lighting, and sequencing were carefully orchestrated to balance exposure with rest, echoing Puig de la Bellacasa's (2017) "speculative ethics of care." These material decisions translated feminist theory into institutional practice, transforming the theatre into a laboratory for empathy, vulnerability, and shared responsibility.

Politics of Care and Institutional Contexts

Both programmes unfolded in emblematic sites of Coimbra's cultural life — the Caminhos Festival and the Gil Vicente Theatre — which carry the institutional histories of Portuguese academia and art. Working within these spaces involved what Ahmed (2012) calls working the institution differently: embedding care within infrastructures that, while open and accessible, are usually governed by conventional academic and artistic norms.

By implementing trauma-informed frameworks and redistributing curatorial authority, the initiatives enacted an institutional friction (Mignolo; Vázquez; Rogoff) that revealed epistemic hierarchies while offering alternative modes of participation. Care, here, became a counter-infrastructure — not sentiment but structure — materialised through free access, co-facilitated discussions, and visible pathways to support.

This approach redefined curatorship as collective care work, resonating with Cvetkovich's (2012) notion of "public feelings" and Stauffer's (2015) reflection on "ethical loneliness." Through small yet intentional gestures the curatorial team acknowledged emotional la-

bour as part of the public encounter. These gestures repositioned spectatorship as co-responsibility and curating as civic pedagogy.

Conclusions

Through The Power of Representations and Resonances, feminist curatorship emerges as a transformative form of civic engagement — one that integrates artistic creation, research dissemination, and collective ethics. Both programmes demonstrate that curating can function as a feminist infrastructure: a method for redistributing care, mediating trauma, and enacting cultural repair.

Rather than aestheticising suffering, these initiatives cultivate spaces where testimony circulates ethically, and affect is collectively held. They materialise what Princenthal (2019) calls "feminist strategies of transformation", altering not only what is seen and heard but the very conditions under which seeing and hearing occur.

By embedding care into institutional design, they transform curating into civic pedagogy and spectatorship into ethical relation. Listening becomes a method; witnessing becomes a shared act; and curatorship becomes a feminist and decolonial praxis of reparation.

Ultimately, these projects invite us to listen and see otherwise — to understand cultural production not as representation but as relation, where art, research, and activism converge to imagine new forms of collective survival and epistemic justice.

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TITLE

“Bendita Tú. Curating Transfeminist Cinema from the Margins”

KEYWORDS

Situated curatorship, affective curatorship, intersectionality, transfeminist aesthetics, possible worlds

ABSTRACT

The transfeminist Bendita Tú Film Festival, held in Madrid and Buenos Aires, is a space of resistance to the structural inequalities of the audiovisual industry, where the participation of women and gender-diverse creators remains marginal. In response to this reality, the festival’s curatorial practice is grounded in situated and affective curatorship, intersectionality, and transfeminist aesthetics. Specifically, its programming prioritizes short films by emerging filmmakers in essay, nonfiction, and experimental formats. Moreover, this approach amplifies marginalized voices through a horizontal and self-managed organization. At the same time, it fosters networks of care, affect, and knowledge across territories thus, Bendita Tú operates as a political and community-based practice. Ultimately, it challenges hegemonic narratives, proposes new forms of audiovisual representation and language, and enables possible worlds from the margins.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

1. Introduction: Bendita Tú, Transfeminism from the Margins of Audiovisual Media

This study examines the curatorial practice of the transfeminist Bendita Tú Film Festival. It demonstrates how the global audiovisual industry remains marked by structural inequalities, limiting the participation and visibility of women and gender-diverse creators—non-binary, trans, or self-determined identities—. Consequently, festivals like Bendita Tú emerge as spaces of resistance and activism, showcasing works that challenge normative standards of representation and production. Thinking about cinema from a transfeminist perspective implies considering multiple voices, bodies, and experiences historically marginalized or invisibilized within the industrial film context, questioning power structures that reproduce inequality on and off screen.

Data on women’s participation further confirms the necessity of such spaces. According to the CIMA Annual Report (2023), in Spain only 38% of professionals involved in feature films submitted to the Goya Awards were women, with 29% occupying directorial roles. In the short film circuit, figures are even lower: 70% of directors were men, 27% women, and 3% mixed teams. In Argentina, the INCAA (2022) reports women represented 43% of team leaders, yet only 20% of released films were directed by them. Meanwhile, in the United States, the Celluloid Ceiling report (Lauzen, 2024) shows women held 23% of behind-the-camera roles and 16% of directorial positions, with racialized women even more marginalized (Lauzen, 2025). Altogether, these data highlight persistent inequalities and

the need for curatorial spaces that amplify historically excluded voices.

Thus, the Bendita Tú Film Festival, held in Madrid and Buenos Aires, is an intersectional, situated, and affective curatorial project, oriented toward exploring a transfeminist aesthetic and centering short films by women and gender-diverse creators. This practice relies on self-managed organization, horizontal decision-making, and the establishment of care relationships with filmmakers and audiences. Accordingly, the guiding hypothesis posits that this curatorial practice not only renders marginalized voices visible but also constitutes a political and community-based act. It also generates networks of care and knowledge across territories while promoting new ways of imagining, inhabiting, and transforming the world from the margins.

2. Objectives

- To analyze how Bendita Tú’s intersectional curatorial practice makes visible the voices of women and gender-diverse filmmakers in audiovisual contexts marked by structural inequalities.
- To examine how the festival’s programming—focused on short films by emerging women and gender-diverse filmmakers in essay, nonfiction, and experimental formats—challenges hegemonic narratives and explores a feminist aesthetic that problematizes the dominant male gaze while proposing new forms of audiovisual representation and language.
- To investigate how situated and affective curatorship

can build networks of care, knowledge, and community across territories, enabling possible worlds from the margins.

3. Theoretical Framework: Situated and Affective Curatorship, Intersectionality, and Transfeminist Aesthetics

The conceptual framework of this study revolves around three axes of the Bendita Tú Film Festival's practice: situated and affective curatorship, intersectional feminism, and feminist aesthetics in cinema. On the one hand, situated curatorship, inspired by Donna Haraway's (1991) notion of situated knowledge, recognizes that curatorial decisions depend on the contexts, experiences, and affects of those selecting and exhibiting the works. At Bendita Tú, a single work may resonate differently depending on the territory, history, and experiences of gender and race. Therefore, curatorship does not aim to homogenize interpretations but fosters horizontal and community-based connections. Alongside this, affective curatorship, as defined by Kekená Corvalán (2015), integrates this perspective with collective practice and mutual care. At the festival, it manifests in self-managed organization, horizontal decision-making, and the creation of care networks between filmmakers and audiences, reinforcing the political and community-oriented nature of the programming.

Intersectional feminism, as articulated by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1989) and taken up by María Lugones (2008), is essential to understanding Bendita Tú's curatorial decisions. This approach moves beyond numerical representation of women and gender-diverse people in cinema to consider how gender inequalities intersect with other forms of oppression, such as race, class, and sexuality. Recognizing these intersections means understanding that there is no singular experience of being a woman; rather, multiple realities exist, which the festival seeks to reflect in its programming and in how it fosters communities as a form of curatorial activism (Díaz Mattei, 2022).

Regarding feminist aesthetics, Laura Mulvey (1975) highlighted how classical cinema reproduces a male gaze that objectifies women, demonstrating the need to dismantle this patriarchal visual-narrative pleasure. Later, Teresa de Lauretis (1984) proposed not eliminating pleasure but reconfiguring it from alternative positions of enunciation. This discussion is crucial for Bendita Tú, guiding the selection of works that challenge roles and spaces assigned to women and gender-diverse people and experiment with audiovisual language to open speculative and community-oriented pathways. Therefore, the festival fosters narratives that reveal alternative ways of being in the world—not from

a homogeneous category but from a plurality of voices and experiences. Taken together, these frameworks allow us to understand Bendita Tú's curatorial practice as a situated, intersectional, and aesthetic process, where programming functions as a strategy of resistance against hegemonic discourses. The following section addresses the methodology and how these premises are translated into concrete organizational and programming decisions.

4. Methodology: Curating with Care Across Territories

The festival was founded in 2017 as a spontaneous response by a group of friends seeking visibility for our first audiovisual works. Initially imagined as a small showcase with our pieces and those of women and gender-diverse filmmakers close to us, it quickly transformed after the audience's response, revealing a shared need for alternatives outside the hegemonic framework. Since then, Bendita Tú has been held annually, alternating between Buenos Aires and Madrid, sustaining a transnational conversation rooted in attentive listening that embraces difference as a political and aesthetic force. A film resonating strongly in one place may appear subtle in another, and this difference drives curatorial practice, compelling reflection and program creation based on each audience's contexts and affects.

Within this framework, programming focuses on short films by emerging women and gender-diverse filmmakers, consolidating an editorial line centered on essay, nonfiction, and experimental cinema. These formats allow the festival to challenge hegemonic narratives and explore audiovisual language more freely. As fiction is often inaccessible due to material constraints, programming prioritizes works based on archival material, first-person accounts, genealogies, and moving-image experimentation. Each work is conceived as an encounter with the unexpected, opening fissures in the everyday and offering perspectives to imagine other possible worlds through a transfeminist aesthetic.

Building on this foundation, the festival operates within a small, fragile, and self-managed framework. This fragility—combined with balancing the festival with other work and care responsibilities—has shaped a deliberately small and attentive project. Decisions are made horizontally, and each film receives the time it deserves. Moreover, mutual care permeates the entire endeavor—among the team, the filmmakers, the films, and the audiences. Far from being a limitation, this approach is a strength, keeping the festival grounded in the contexts and affects that traverse it. Thus, the festival is not only screenings but also a space of celebration, gathering, shared viewing, and collective recognition.

tion within a community. These reflections lead to the final notes, where the broader impact and significance of Bendita Tú are discussed.

5. Final Notes: Building Possible Worlds through Transfeminist Film Festivals

The curatorial practice of Bendita Tú unfolds within an audiovisual landscape marked by structural inequalities, where women and gender-diverse filmmakers remain marginal. In response, the festival has developed a model of situated and affective curatorship, built in dialogue with specific territorial contexts and reinforced through connections between cultural spaces via audiovisual works. This approach recognizes that each piece encounters particular historical, political, and social frameworks, and that its reception is shaped by experiences of gender, race, and geopolitical positioning, highlighting the relational and situated nature of curatorship.

Moreover, the intersectional approach ensures that programming goes beyond numerical representation of women and gender-diverse people, considering how gender inequalities intersect with race, class, and sexuality, and how these hierarchies are inscribed in specific historical and colonial contexts. In this way, Bendi-

ta Tú amplifies voices that, across diverse geographies and experiences, challenge dominant narratives and construct stories that invite rethinking how we exist and engage with the world, generating spaces for imagination and resistance.

In addition, attention to feminist aesthetics is reflected in the selection of works that question roles assigned to women and gender-diverse people, reconfiguring modes of looking and frameworks of representation and desire. Programming prioritizes essay, nonfiction, experimental cinema, and works based on archival materials or first-person accounts, enabling experimentation with audiovisual language and opening speculative and community-oriented pathways.

Finally, affective curatorship permeates all aspects of the festival's organization—from its self-managed economy to horizontal and collective decision-making—strengthening the political and community-oriented dimension of programming. Bendita Tú demonstrates that a transfeminist film festival can function as a space of cultural resistance: making marginalized voices visible, weaving networks of care and knowledge across territories, and enabling possible worlds from the margins, where curatorial practice becomes a political, aesthetic, and relational act.

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TITLE

“Death of an Orphan: Reimagining
Adoption, Kinship, and Grief through
Cinema”

KEYWORDS

Adoption, feminist decolonial thought,
queer death studies, posthumanism,
narrative analysis, social death

ABSTRACT

This paper draws on a doctoral project that investigates adoption stories as reimagined in contemporary (semi) fictional films produced in the digital age. The study utilizes a theory-method assemblage integrating feminist decolonial thought, queer death studies, posthumanism, post-cinema theory, alongside critical fabulation and culture-narrative analysis to interrogate form and cultural meaning. Through this framework, it examines how cinema articulates complex and intersectional experiences of and belonging, violence, grief, and death shaped by heteropatriarchal and colonial structures of power. Focusing on two films, namely, *Return to Seoul* (2022) and *Lion* (2016), this paper investigates how established norms surrounding kinship, gender, and affective labor are contested. By foregrounding liminal adoptee identities and reflecting on the ethic of authorship, the paper also highlights how cinema can challenge hegemonic adoption narratives and amplify marginalized voices.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT**Introduction**

This paper emerges from a larger doctoral project that examines how adoption narratives are constructed, contested, and reimagined in contemporary cinema, focusing on (semi-)fictional films produced from 2010 onwards. Through close analysis of narrative form, affective expression, and visual composition, the project explores how cinema has become a critical medium for articulating the complex lived experiences of adoption. Situated in the heteropatriarchal, colonial-modern matrix of power (Lugones, 2007; Mignolo, 2008), this study investigates how adoption is shaped through the intersecting logics of race, class, and gender, revealing its entanglement within a broader system of domination. In this way, it frames alienation, grief, and death produced through adoption within social, historical, and political structures, rejecting the neoliberal idea of adoption as a merely individual experience, and highlights how it commodifies kinship, racializes belonging, and exploits women’s reproductive labor.

Against this backdrop, cinematic forms both reflect and challenge dominant paradigms of kinship, subjectivity, and relationality, opening up new ways of telling, feeling, and knowing. From this, three key questions arise:

1. In what ways do the films challenge hegemonic cultural norms around belonging, grief, and gender within adoption narratives?
2. How are the heteropatriarchal colonial structures contested and constructed through cinematic sto-

rytelling in the digital age?

3. How do these films engage with questions of authorship and authenticity in portraying the lived experience?

At the core of the project are films created or co-authored by individuals with a personal connection to adoption, who use cinematic storytelling to navigate these layered realities, demonstrating how film operates as a site of representation, in addition to being a platform for meaning-making, resistance, and reconfiguration. The ten selected films span from the end of the 2000s to the mid-2020s, a period marked by intensified ethical debates around adoption and a surge in adoption-led narratives, shaped in part by digital technologies, such as social media, DNA testing, and increased media visibility. This new terrain raises important questions about who controls adoption narratives and how authenticity is negotiated in cinematic storytelling.

While the larger paper analyzes a range of films and themes, this paper mainly focuses on *Return to Seoul* (2022) and *Lion* (2016). These films both center on an adopted individual navigating emotionally and culturally fraught journeys to their country of origin – foregrounding themes of ambiguous loss, cultural belonging, and identity formation. Although neither of the directors has personal experience of adoption, each film has been deeply informed by adoptee voices and experiences: Korean-French adoptee Laure Badufle co-wrote *Return to Seoul*, while *Lion*’s screenwriter Luke Davis traveled to India with Saroo Brierley, whose autobi-

ography *A Long Way Home* inspired the story. These two examples of collaborative authorship provide an insightful entry-point and useful contrast to the broader dissertation, where the majority of the films are written or directed by adoptees themselves – a contrast that further enables a discussion on ethics surrounding voice, agency, and the mediation of lived experience in film.

A theory-method assemblage

The project adopts a theory-method assemblage that builds on feminist decolonial thought, queer death studies, posthumanism, and a post-cinema approach to examine the embodied, affective, and politically situated dimensions of adoption in digital culture. This multifaceted framework highlights the negotiation of mourning processes, identity, and kinship as deeply embedded within, and constituted by, the entwined modalities of colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and racial capitalism. It engages with the gendered and racialized afterlives of colonial violence (Lugones, 2007, 2008), the political and cultural temporalities of mourning and decay (Radomska et al., 2020), and the more-than-human entanglements of subjectivity (Braidotti, 2002, 2013), while simultaneously drawing on post-cinema concepts, such as fragmented narratives, affective transformations, and subjective mediation, to situate the films in the digital age (Shaviro, 2010).

This assemblage also incorporates Hartman's (2008) 'critical fabulation' as a method for navigating the representational limits and affective struggles of adoption, while concurrently engaging questions of authorship, agency, and the ethics of storytelling. In doing so, this approach embraces speculative storytelling to reimagine lives rendered invisible by hegemonic historical narratives, revealing the transformative potential of critical thought grounded in both imagination and affective engagement with the past. Complementary to Hartman's method, Bal's narrative-cultural analysis (Bal, 1985, 1996) unpacks the formal construction and cultural positioning of these stories within broader systems of meaning. This framework, combined with comparative and thematic analysis, delves deeper into the shape of the narrative structure, focalization, and temporality, in parallel with attending to how the films negotiate themes of identity, kinship, and belonging within intersecting systems of power. Together, this theory-method assemblage provides a comprehensive lens to interrogate both adoption narratives and the narrative strategies through which adopted identities and experiences are cinematically structured.

Liminal lives and estranged bodies

Released in 2022, *Return to Seoul* follows the

French-Korean adoptee, Freddie, who travels to South Korea in a spontaneous attempt to explore the country of her origin. Similarly, *Lion* (2016) tells the story of Saroo, who was adopted from India to Australia, and, through fragmented memories and the use of digital tools, manages to retrace his past. Each film examines the liminal conditions that, e.g., Ahmed (2006) describes capturing the feeling of non-belonging – a condition central to transnational adoption that reflects the in-flux negotiation of identity, memory, and belonging across geopolitical and temporal thresholds. Building on this foundation, the following sections analyze two key scenes that take place at the beginning of the films, focusing on how adoption trauma is mediated through cultural, colonial, and gendered frameworks, expressed in embodied sorrow and affective struggles.

Freddie's journey unfolds in Busan, where, during a dinner with her newfound Korean friends, she exhibits a quiet yet potent resistance to the cultural expectations placed upon her. The scene is marked by subtle acts and emotional withdrawal, as she refuses to conform to imposed notions of the 'returned adoptee'. These affective responses underline her process of 'becoming', what Braidotti (2002) explained as a fragmented, fluid self in continuous transformation. The emotional ambiguity she displays evokes the melancholic temporality of unconventional mourning, one that resists resolution and reflects a dynamic, relational sense of identity. Her body becomes a site of liminality and resistance, a state in between, where neither her adoptive culture nor the culture of her heritage provides a stable sense of belonging. This embodied liminality echoes Patterson's (1982) concept of 'social death', marked by the dispossession of identity through separation from language, culture, land, and kin. Freddie's gestures of disconnection reflect the adoptee experiences of structural grief, shaped by the ongoing afterlives of the colonial violence embedded within transnational adoption.

In *Lion*, this cultural dislocation is shown through 'affective assimilation', as Saroo's emotional restraint and identification with whiteness mirror the racial dynamics of adoption. According to Bissenbakker and Myong's (2021) concept of affective assimilation, adoptees internalize dominant social expectations, such as gratefulness and compliance, which leads them to suppress grief and ambivalent feelings towards their origins. This becomes evident in a scene where Saroo attends a university class, and, when asked where he is from, he hesitates before saying Calcutta, then quickly adds that 'I'm adopted, I'm not really Indian'. His hesitation and disavowal reveal a deeper emotional conflict and grief that permeate the film, paralleling Freddie's rejection of her origins, especially in the presence of the people from their respective mother(s)lands. These focalized affective responses are also gendered in that

sense that Saroo's emotional restraint reflects masculine norms that discourage vulnerability, while Freddie's outspoken defiance pushes back expectations for women to conform.

From a queer death studies perspective, these affective gestures reveal a non-conventional form of mourning tied to the symbolic death of the original identity, cultural erasure, and the unspoken loss inherent in transnational and transracial adoption. The identity loss glimpsed in the analyzed scenes illuminates a death that remains unrecognized and unmourned within normative cultural frameworks – a 'non-death' that blurs boundaries of living and grieving. Moments of ambivalent cultural dislocation, embodied resistance, and narrative fragmentation reflect the disorientation and unresolved grief entangled with ambiguous loss. This fragmentation is shaped by constant movement across geopolitical, cultural, and emotional borders, a condition where adoptees are forced to navigate imposed, fluid identities that transcend linear narratives. While some distance remains between the filmmakers and the adoptee experience, these scenes still resonate with emotional authenticity, reflecting the significance

of engaging closely with adoptee voices in storytelling.

Conclusion

This study highlights how (semi-)fictional films about adoption act as digital spaces that challenge dominant narratives of assimilation, healing, and resolution. Through a comparative analysis of two key scenes from *Return to Seoul* and *Lion*, it reveals how these films deconstruct heteropatriarchal and colonial structures that shape adoption, while exploring the liminal space that adoptees navigate – shifting zones of cultural ambiguity that transgress fixed boundaries of belonging. The analysis briefly touches upon the ethical complexities of authorship, especially when adoptee stories are mediated by non-adoptees, emphasizing the importance of centering adoptee voices to ensure authentic representation and agency in storytelling. By foregrounding marginalized perspectives, the project continues to foster a dialogue between personal storytelling and cinematic representation, fostering critical and empathic discussions attentive to the complexity of adoption and its interconnectedness with grief, violence, and death.

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PHOTO GALLERY













CONCLUDING REMARKS

The first edition of Cine Bárbaras – International Conference on Cinema and Audiovisual fostered the creation of a community committed to contemporary feminist film and audiovisual studies.

The opening plenary session, “Post-Memory and Collectivity: Dialogues on Cinema, Identity and Belonging”, brought together Sheila Khan (Universidade Lusófona/CICANT) and Mirian Nogueira Tavares (Universidade do Algarve/CIAC) in a dialogue on memory, identity, belonging, and representation. Drawing on distinct yet complementary perspectives, both speakers highlighted the importance of cultural and audiovisual practices in constructing alternative narratives, recovering silenced histories, and creating spaces of resistance and social transformation.

In her presentation, “To Hit a Nerve: Eliane Caffé and Anna Muylaert”, Mirian Nogueira Tavares reflected on the creative processes of two important contemporary Brazilian filmmakers, highlighting forms of cinematic creation grounded in listening, collaboration, and the valorisation of experiences that are often marginalised. Through their work, cinema emerges as a creative space capable of challenging hierarchies, expanding representation, and constructing new forms of visibility. Sheila Khan, in turn, addressed questions of post-memory, colonial legacies, and Afro-descendant experiences, emphasising the importance of listening, recognition, and symbolic reparation in the construction of more inclusive societies. Her contribution invited participants to think of memory processes as active practices of social justice and collective reimagination, reinforcing the role of culture and the arts in shaping more plural and democratic futures.

The keynote lecture “Transforming Production Culture: Towards Social Sustainability in the Film Industry”, delivered by Skadi Loist (Norwegian University of Science and Technology – NTNU, Norway), shifted the focus towards the structural challenges facing the contemporary film and audiovisual sectors. Drawing on research conducted in different international contexts, the presentation examined persistent inequalities related to gender and diversity, mechanisms of exclusion, labour precarity, and power relations that continue to shape the creation, production, distribution, and circulation of audiovisual works.

By introducing the concept of social sustainability, Skadi Loist advocated for an integrated vision of transformation within the film and audiovisual industries, bringing together gender equality, diversity, inclusion, fair working conditions, and institutional responsibility. The presentation also highlighted international policies, initiatives, and good practices aimed at promoting long-term structural change, reinforcing the need for collec-

tive commitment, continuous monitoring, and effective accountability mechanisms in order to build more just, diverse, and sustainable cultural ecosystems.

The bilingual workshop “Manual de Boas Práticas no Cinema em Ação / Good Practices Manual in Cinema in Action”, led by Ana Sofia Pereira and Camila Lamar-tine, authors of the publication, provided an important space for knowledge-sharing, learning, and collective reflection on working conditions within the audiovisual sector. Organised by MUTIM – Association of Women Workers of the Moving Image, in partnership with XX Element Project and the research project FEMglocal, coordinated by Carla Cerqueira and Célia Taborda, the workshop presented the Good Practices Manual, introducing tools and strategies aimed at preventing discrimination, harassment, and gender inequality in professional contexts. The session brought together approximately 30 participants from different professional and academic backgrounds, creating an opportunity to discuss and explore more inclusive, safe, and equitable practices for the present and future of cinema and audiovisual production.

The conference programme also included the screening of the documentary *Feminismos: A Liberdade de Ser* (Feminisms: The Freedom to Be, Portugal, 2025, 77 min.), directed by Ana Sofia Pereira and Vanessa Ribeiro Rodrigues, followed by a discussion with the filmmakers. Developed within the framework of the research project FEMglocal – Glocal Feminist Movements: Interactions and Contradictions, the documentary brings together testimonies, experiences, and reflections on different trajectories of contemporary feminism, exploring issues related to citizenship, political participation, rights, media representation, and activism. The discussion following the screening provided an opportunity to further engage with the themes raised by the film, fostering dialogue between academic research, audiovisual creation, social intervention, and feminist literacies. This session reinforced the role of documentary cinema as a tool for critical reflection, knowledge production, activism, and social transformation.

We hope that this Book of Abstracts will contribute to extending the dialogues initiated during the conference and to strengthening the networks of research, creation, and collaboration that emerged through it. More than a record of the presentations delivered, this volume affirms the relevance of feminist film and audiovisual studies as a critical field of knowledge production, capable of questioning power structures, expanding forms of representation and visibility, and imagining more just, inclusive, and plural futures.

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