Postcolonial feminism and non-fiction cinema: Gendered subjects in Alba Sotorra's war documentaries

Anna Fonoll-Tassier, Núria Araüna Baró and Laia Quílez Esteve

Department of Communication Studies, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona, Spain

Anna Fonoll-Tassier (anna.fonoll@urv.cat)

Orcid: 0000-0001-9254-8230

Núria Araüna-Baró (nuria.arauna@urv.cat)

Orcid: 0000-0002-1997-2833

Laia Quílez-Esteve (laia.quilez@urv.cat)

Orcid: 0000-0001-6696-2569

Abstract:

This paper explores how documentary cinema in war contexts can challenge gender representations. To do so, we adopt a feminist and postcolonial approach to analyze the work of Catalan non-fiction filmmaker Alba Sotorra in Kurdistan, Afghanistan and Catalonia. In her films, Sotorra positions herself close to a series of subjects absorbed by wars and armed conflicts that (re)define their identities while acting beyond gender stereotypes. In particular, the paper analyzes the modes of production and representational strategies of two of Sotorra's latest feature films, *Game Over* and *Commander Arian*, documentaries with which the filmmaker aims at overcoming the visual exploitation of alterity. After an introduction to Sotorra, and a brief revision of the theory of postcolonial feminist cinema, our argument unfolds in four parts. Firstly, we reflect on cinematic representations of women and men at war; secondly, we introduce our methodology, based on in-depth interviews with the director to support our film analysis; thirdly, we contrast our hypotheses by means of close-readings of the films; lastly, we reflect on how the filmmaker aligns herself with intersectional feminism by using empathy and solidarity towards her subjects.

Keywords:

Alba Sotorra; documentary; feminism; postcolonial; war; gender roles

Introduction: A postcolonial feminist cinema from Southern Europe

Commander Arian (2018), one of the documentaries discussed in this paper, kicks off paying tribute to Anna Campbell, a British internationalist activist fighting with the YPJ (Yekîneyên Parastina Jin – Women Protection Units) who was killed in a Turkish missile strike in the Afrin Canton in March 2018, and whose death was featured in worldwide media. Over the last years, the iconicity of the Kurdish female guerrilla fighters and the fascination for them among Western audiences has been examined in the media and in scholarly research. Amongst other works, the audiovisual essay *November* (2004), by video-artist Hito Steyerl, and research by Mari Toivanen and Bahar Baser (2016) on the media representation and coverage of the YPJ have questioned processes of romanticization of armed struggles and paid particular attention to the case of female martyrdom. These inquiries have emerged in a context in which transnational feminism (Chandra Talpade Mohanty Mohanty 2003; Ella Shohat 1996; Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan 2002) has portrayed Kurdish guerrilla fighters as harbingers of alternative feminist social models. The media coverage of Anna Campbell's assassination, in particular, epitomizes a double process, characterized by a type of media activism that has contributed, simultaneously, to the politicization and to the commodification of feminism and the Kurdish cause.

In this worldwide, partially favorable context to the Kurdish women cause, Catalan director Alba Sotorra released *Commander Arian* in 2018, a documentary feature about a 30-years-old Kurdish commander named Arian who led a female battalion to retake the ISIS-controlled city of Kobane. To date her most viewed and distributed film, *Commander Arian* has been screened in prominent non-fiction international film festivals, such as Hot Docs in Canada, Sheffield Doc Fest, and Shanghai IFF. Sotorra had already attracted public attention after obtaining a Gaudí award (Catalan Academy of Cinema) to best documentary feature for *Game Over* (2015), a documentary about a war-obsessed Catalan youngster of Iranian descent who eventually joins the Spanish army deployed in Afghanistan.

The present paper examines the strategies used in Sotorra's works to represent ethnic and gender identities, from the standpoint of warlike masculinity and diasporic family identities (*Game Over*), or focusing on feminism and the armed struggle of a stateless nation (*Commander Arian*). While both documentaries present different geographic contexts, their main characters share an experience of the consequences of violence in postcolonial contexts and its effects on gender roles. In both films, our analysis detects the strategies used by Sotorra to confront dominant Eurocentric representational modes, which clearly display a legacy of colonial and patriarchal representations. In contrast, Sotorra's filmmaking aims to overcome the hegemonic and simplistic epistemologies active in the representation of "Oriental locals" as primitive, women as weak, and men as strong (Shohat 1996; Sandra Ponzanesi 2019). Addressing colonial representations of gender in the media, Arjun Appadurai coined the term "mediascape" to refer

to a media landscape that produces deep geographical asymmetries (1990). Under such mediascape, Eastern territories have often been represented as an imagined geography in a world split between East and West, reinforcing European superiority and rule via the reductionist binary tradition/modernity (Edward Said 1978). In her work, Sotorra departs from such orientalist imaginary and aligns with the tenets of feminist independent documentary, a strategy which, in its decolonial aspects, has been first put to work by Arab (Stephanie Van de Peer 2012, 2020) and Latin American female filmmakers. In this respect, the narratives and representational practices in both *Game Over* and *Commander Arian* (films located in the vicinity of the Middle East), surpass the media exploitation of the missionary discourse of women's rights –and of other minorities–, as employed to legitimize the politics of colonialism and the war on terror in distant places. In this sense, and starting from her first documentary *Unveiled Views* (2008), Sotorra has responded to the provocative question suggested in the title of Abu-Lughod's book, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Lila Abu-Lughod 2013). *Unveiled Views* focuses on women artists in countries like Bosnia and Pakistan with the aim to visualize alternatives to Western stereotypes about Muslim women. Like Abu-Lughod, but through a set of representational film strategies, Sotorra has tried to develop an appreciation of difference in a world characterized by inequalities (2002).

Sotorra's positionality also serves us to argue for the need of scholarly and academic research that decenters discussions about dominant modes of filmmaking and pays attention to traditions considered "peripheral" (Lucia Nagib 2006). While much of the academic literature on feminist cinema has focused on the Anglophone and Francophone film contexts, Spanish filmmaking has been somewhat unattended. Since the 1990s, a growing number of women directors has produced a series of innovations in form and discourse, particularly in the sphere of documentary film (María Camí-Vela 2014). For filmmakers such as Sotorra, non-fiction has become a fertile ground to explore new representational modes in the context of the feminist media of the last decades, addressing the key interests of 21st century feminism, including female workers rights or femicide, and facilitating intersections with feminists worldwide. In fact, the consolidation of female directors in the Spanish public sphere has coincided with the rise and popularization of the feminist movement internationally (Sarah Banet-Baiser 2018), a trend that has received a strong push in the context of the Iberian Peninsula, where it has developed along anti-capitalist and intersectional currents (Lorena García Saiz 2019). Moreover, Spanish feminist filmmaking has claimed back some of the debates of the Anglo-Saxon cinema of the 1970s, which had bypassed Spain at the time, due to the context of dictatorship and democratic transition (Duncan Wheeler 2016), and to the scarcity of academic visual studies in Spain (Fátima Arranz 2010).

Sotorra's interest in transnational geographies and feminist subjectivities, and her approach to authorship as a drifting and negotiated practice, has turned her into a somewhat

uncommon case in the Catalan and Spanish film contexts. Based in Barcelona but shooting in the Middle East for the last years, Sotorra's filmmaking strategies and style avoid local parameters, and set her apart from trends in auteur Spanish filmmaking, as the one labeled "Nuevo/Otro Cine Español" (New/Other Spanish Cinema). Deviating from it, Sotorra's career has connected with the traditions of Postcolonial film, Third, or Fourth Cinema, and World Cinema, to name some of the terms in the scholarly and activist literature. With slight differences, these labels define a set of filmmaking practices that attempt to give voice and to "unimagine" stereotypes that have defined representations of subaltern communities and geographies. In this paper, we frame Sotorra's cinema under the label "postcolonial feminist film". Our aim is to highlight how her filmmaking "opens up occluded frames and proposes a new engagement with the visual, breaking down the grands récits and opening the space for specificities that refract larger, often repressed, omitted or deleted, unofficial histories of nations, communities, genders or subaltern groups" (Ponzanesi 2019, 30). Ponzanesi's interpretation of postcolonial film and feminism underscores the significance of new types of visual registers, able to resist colonial and androcentric depictions. We identify Sotorra's work as an example of the new visual registers of postcolonial film feminist theory, and in so doing, we aim to contribute to the scant scholarly appraisal of Sotorra's films. With the exception of Aina Fernàndez Aragonès (2020) insightful research on the (de)politicization of the representations of women Kurdish fighters, Sotorra's films have passed quite unacknowledged in spite of the director's 10-year career directing and producing activist films.

Representations of gendered bodies at war

The representation of gendered bodies in both fiction and non-fiction warfare films has contributed to establish, as in other political grounds, some of the ideological assumptions that frame the participation of men and women in armed conflicts. Joshua S. Goldstein (2001) discusses numerous historical instances of women who have successfully partaken in military actions, and which offer a rebuttal of their invisibilization and exclusion from military institutions. Surely, this insight connects with the coding of the female gender in the media, which has remained quite stable across time in associating femininity with objectification, weakness, and penetrability (Viola Shafik 2012). Military narratives, according to Yvonne Tasker and Eylem Atakav (2010), mainly act as spaces of performance and definition of masculinities, and in so doing, erase the role of women in wars. As Fernàndez Aragonès has noted, part of the international attention to Kurdish female fighters can be explained away by their treatment as an exception to the stereotypes of the Middle Eastern women, that is, the disenfranchised victim of a patriarchal society (2020). In the end, women have been mainly represented as victims of armed struggles,

or as heroic exceptions. This is precisely one of the reasons that motivated Sotorra to tell the story of commander Arian. "They [Kurdish fighters] greatly appreciated my intention of staying there and shooting the film so as to bring their experience back here (…) The Western press often takes the picture of the attractive female soldier but ignores the underlying project" (Revista Catalunya CGT 2019).

Sotorra has also focused on the fact that men do not escape gendered media depictions of war. Talking about *Game Over*, Sotorra acknowledges that she "really liked the idea of exploring masculinity: the military enactments of Djalal, the main character [of *Game Over*] made him obsessed to become a hero" (Alba Sotorra 2020). In undertaking a portrait of masculinity in relation to war as the one she essays in *Game Over*, Sotorra establishes a dialogue with fictional characters of warfare and action films, genres mainly addressed to male audiences and consumed by the main character of her film, Djalal. Since the 1980s in particular, Hollywood saga films, with *Rambo* or *Die Hard* at the forefront, have enthroned male bodies as icons of strength, sacrifice, and resilience. Shafik (2012) and Susan Jeffords (1994) read the tough, male white body as the embodiment of an American national rhetoric and a hegemonic masculinity, which in turn, via the imperialist projection of these films, are assumed as the ultimate universal heroes. The narrative of these films tends to focus on the traumatic events experienced by their male heroes, rather than on the political and social consequences of war (Mark Straw 2008). In doing so, the majority of action films reproduce colonial biases and establish a link between the dangers faced by these individual male bodies (and their assumed need for a tough self-defense) and the threats to the nation, thus aligning with US military interventions abroad. Given that one of the functions of visual representations is to legitimize power relations in warfare, masculinity in action films eerily echoes images of American soldiers in Abu Ghraib (Shafik, 2012). For their part, feminist scholars such as Mohanty (2003) have underscored the colonial biases in the representation of an "imperial (white) masculine self", which symbolically embodies the colonial military, judicial, and administrative regime always "on duty". Since the 1990s, the formulation of white male masculinity has somewhat evolved and diversified, in what Mary Beltrán terms "*multiculti* action films" (2005), with figures like Will Smith, Vin Diesel, or Dwayne Johnson who, while still portrayed as American patriots, convey multiracial masculinities in a space of recognition. Women have also been included as main characters in action films. However, in this sort of revisionist films female characters end up adopting the attributes of their male counterparts (domineering, violent) and personifying a sort of female masculinity, which Yvonne Tasker defines as "musculinity" (1993), and Sherry A. Innes (1998) as the figure of the "tough women".

War has also been the focus of another, yet quite different, film genre: anti-colonial cinema. Anti-colonial cinema has reread the armed struggles that consolidated or constituted colonial processes, as well as the role of men and women in them. A reference film in this regard is Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), with its representation of Algerian women in

the fight for independence. Yet, Pontecorvo's film has been criticized for ignoring the double oppression exerted by the invader as well as by their own patriarchal society (Shohat 1996; Van de Peer 2012). In fact, many of the films produced in Arab countries during the period of decolonization and under the influence of Latin American Third Cinema were framed by the iconographies and narratives of women carrying bombs in the name of the nation, thus prioritizing, at the end of the day, anticolonial struggle over gender liberation (Shohat 1996). Among recent documentaries, the few works that introduce women fighters or *guerrilleras* as political subjects center on very specific geographies and ideological lines. Beyond the resonance of the Kurdish women guerrillas, reflected in works such as the French documentary *Kurdistan, la guerre des filles* (*Girls' War,* dir. Mylène Sauloy 2016) and in the work of Sotorra analyzed in this paper, some films have portrayed Latin American resistance movements against US military intervention, local dictatorships or neoliberal politics. Within them, we can note independently produced documentary films such as *¡Las sandinistas!* (*The Sandinists*, dir. Jenny Murray 2018), a retrospective view of the Nicaraguan women who led the Sandinist revolution in 1979, or *Guerrillera* (*Guerrillera Girl*, dir. Frank Piasechi Poulsen 2005), a film that follows a young Colombian woman who joined and trained with the FARC guerrillas. Similarly, some grassroots documentaries involving the participation of ex-fighters, like *Nunca Invisibles: Mujeres Farianas. Adiós a la Guerra* (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica 2018), surpasses victimization and stress women's agency (Cherilyn Elston 2020). All in all, and in spite of these exceptions and differences between visual codes, the media landscape has perpetuated gendered images of fighters and soldiers through different platforms and genres. The gender binary mutates and articulates in complex ways in the cultural imaginaries of warfare, crossing through different geostrategic contexts. In the case of Sotorra, she is at the same time someone who represents men and women at war, and who incarnates non-stereotypical roles herself. Sotorra is a filmmaker who had herself a presence in the front; she slept in her military uniform, batteries in her pockets, the camera ready to shoot (Sotorra 2020). Literally and metaphorically, she entered into the battlefield of gendered representations, with a camera in lieu of a rifle.

Sotorra's documentary films as case study

The documentary work of Alba Sotorra is an interesting case study to examine Postcolonial Feminist film practices. Her commitment with the representation of the subjects featured in her films aims to break the assumptions of the audience, turning her cinema (in spite of its moderate formal ambitions) into an attempt at counter-cinema. In promoting her films, Sotorra travels to festivals and industry markets, but she also takes part in domestic collective screenings to raise awareness about minoritized people, stateless nations, and feminism.

In itself, being a female documentary filmmaker in the Spanish state requires a dose of activism to counteract invisibility (Annette Scholz 2018). Sotorra shot her first feature without

institutional support or funding, which amounted, in her own words, to a "total guerrilla" (Sotorra 2020). Throughout her career, Sotorra has learnt to take advantage from festivals, film awards, and learning programs abroad, which have allowed her to establish solid international alliances in non-hegemonic circuits. Unquestionably, she acknowledges the importance of the financial support of the MEDIA Creative Europe program for the development, distribution, and promotion of her work (Sotorra 2020). This is also the case of her last film, *The Return, life after ISIS* (2021), a recent co-production that extends Sotorra's engagement with feminist struggles in the Middle East. The film narrates the story of a group of Western women who joined the Caliphate and after its defeat were detained in Kurdish camps, and ultimately interrogates Europeans' responsibility in the decisions taken by these women and its subsequent abandonment in the refugee camps (Sotorra 2020).

This article focuses on two of Sotorra's more recent films, *Game Over* (2015) and *Commander Arian* (2018), to examine the configurations of gender roles and war conflicts, and to assess the extent to which these films contribute to a Postcolonial and Feminist film cartography. Methodologically, this paper takes a mixed-method approach to film practice informed by Postcolonial Film theory and Feminist film studies. In particular, we present a close reading of the films while taking into account their process of production and circulation. To develop a fuller understanding of the films and the filmmaking strategies employed, and in addition to interviews published in the specialized press, press books and promotional texts, the authors have interviewed Sotorra in order to obtain an unmediated access to her views and aims.

Game Over, masculinities ready for war

Game Over situated Alba Sotorra's production within the national scene. The film revolves around Djalal, a Catalan man of 25 years-old inclined to military culture and equipment and a Youtuber of certain popularity, whose perceptions of life change when he joins the Spanish army and experiences "real war" in Afghanistan. The film, which makes use of domestic footage, introduces Djalal who, like many other boys, has been educated in the symbolic space of warriors and fighters, in a masculinity associated with fighting competition. In this sense, Djalal is a product and a producer of what Paul Virilio (2006) termed "pure war", a permanent readiness for war cultivated via action films. Living in a middle-class residential house in Catalonia's Northeast, Djalal joins the Spanish army and is deployed to Afghanistan, where he hopes he would enact the heroic warfare scenes he has become obsessed with. For Djalal, however, war is a Baudrillian simulacrum: it has been a constant presence since his childhood games and it is now the setting of his video games. He obsessively collects military equipment and adages, and his online self-fashioning is all war-related. In fact, the film sets off with images of Djalal in military garb in a room filled with weapons on display. In shooting frontal shots and remaining at a relative distance from the subject, Sotorra's camerawork creates a sort of tableaux that highlight the artificiality of

Djalal's actions. This distancing is complemented with a score of electronic music that further estranges the images and reinforces the performative aspect of Djalal's relationship with warfare equipment.

In the first part of the film, Sotorra and scriptwriter Isa Campo focus on Djalal's self-construction and self-representation as a hegemonic masculinity, incarnated in a macho figure epitomized by his online avatar, *Lord_Sex*. Through all these elements, Djalal becomes a canonical (almost excessive) example of the ideal pattern of Western hegemonic masculinity (Raewyn W. Connell 1990), which finds in war the perfect scenario to unfold itself (Shafik 2012). However, Djalal is also traversed by diverse transnational relationships. While he lives in Catalonia, half of his family is of Iranian descent. At the same time, much of the culture he consumes is North American. An American flag hangs on his room's wall, and he fantasizes about moving to the US with his girlfriend because there "it is easy to own guns and they have the best cars" (Djalal in *Game Over* 2015). By showing the audience the omnipresence of these cultural traces and influences, Sotorra seems to hint at the origins of these toxic models of masculinity. In an early conversation with some male relatives, iconic action film heroes in revival films of 1980s blockbusters, such as Chuck Norris, Jean-Claude Van Damme, and Dolph Lundgren, are celebrated —the sequel *The Expendables 2* (2012) was released during the shooting of the documentary and the characters make reference to it. From the very start of the film, then, male comradeship is established around these sorts of hyper-masculine referents.

The kind of excessive hyper-masculinity portrayed in the film is mediated via digital devices as part of the sphere of public exhibition: it is omnipresent in video games, cartoons, films, and different products in Djalal's home and in the many videos Djalal and his friends shot for online sharing. In contrast to a masculinity constructed as an effect of common sense and of turning social norms into rule (Michael S. Kimmel 1993), the film denaturalizes the masculinity codes of mainstream audiovisual products. Djalal only appears to be comfortable in the sphere of simulacra of Hollywood-style films, where war becomes the natural setting for tough men (Tasker and Atakav 2010) but which the film reveals to be at odds with Djalal's eventual reality.

War culture, as the origin of the hegemonic white masculinity spread via Western media, is presented in *Game Over* as a paradigm of gender performance. The characterization of Djalal as a "multiculti action" man (Mary C Beltrán 2005) is not without certain contradictions. At the airport about to travel to Afghanistan, Djalal's father reminds him: "Remember our ancestors are there, uh? [...] They came to Iran from that region more than a thousand years ago". This sentence parallels the well-known critique of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) to Western military interventions: "White men saving brown women from brown men". By including the footage of this dialogue, Sotorra places the audience in a gray area, far from the media and cultural framing of the conflict in the aftermath of September 11 2001 (Abu-Lughod 2002). Djalal travels to take

part in the war in Afghanistan on behalf of Spain (white men) in order to liberate the country (brown women) from people who are supposed to be his ancestors (brown men).

For all its distancing techniques, however, the gaze of the director does not condemn Djalal. Using parallel montage, Sotorra contrasts Djalal's life (and his masculinity) with his father's, Hansi, who slacks around the house until he eventually abandons it. The failed relationship of Djalal's parents (as acknowledged by themselves) and in particular Hansi's inattentiveness to his wife, contrast with the complicity and tenderness between Djalal, his girlfriend Cristina, and his mother. It is Cristina who shoots many of Djalal's photo sessions, in many of which she also appears as a complementary, excessive femininity. In addition, Djalal also displays an understanding and closeness to his mother, who seeks a divorce that fulfills the family's collapse. Actually, Djalal appears in the film credits under his mother's last name, which is not common in the Spanish or Iranian cultures. Djalal turns out to be a quite sympathetic figure who establishes horizontal relationships with the women in his life, who can confess his own insecurities and excuse the others' **Figure 1**. Overall, Sotorra goes beyond the performative dimension of gender roles to access a deeper dimension of the subjects and their conflicts.

Djalal's excessive masculinity is presented as a performatic masquerade (Judith Butler 2006), a weighty disguise (as Djalal acknowledges at the end of the film, dressed in neoprene and carrying heavy scuba equipment) that Sotorra unpacks throughout the film **Figure 2**. She does so by getting growingly closer to the characters and turning the initial warfare tone of the film into a family melodrama. We may note that in focusing on the intimate drama of the male protagonist, and in spite of the aim to deactivate hegemonic narratives, the film does not totally break away from the narrative conventions of war films. However, it is Djalal's vulnerability, rather than his strength, which turns him into a cracking masculine figure.

The war footage recorded by Djalal himself and included in the film are hybrid images, converging in multiple screenshots, as in the videogames he enjoys playing with. Djalal cannot get rid of a performance tone and, even in the battlefield, he seems to follow the codes of Youtube homemade videos. He sets his camera next to the trenches and addresses his audience, while the reality of Afghanistan exceeds the control of his performance. Gazes of Afghan children, looking at a handheld camera and approaching the soldiers for money and humanitarian aid, end up prevailing in the shooting. Once back home and while showing his Afghan footage to his family, Djalal acknowledges the differences between mediated and direct war. For example, he comments his feelings when aiming at an enemy with a rifle: "It is not the same as shooting from inside a tank, where you don't see anybody and it feels fake" (Djalal in *Game Over* 2015). By extension, we assume that real war is also different from his childhood fantasies, his video games, and his homemade simulacra. The experience of real war puts at stake the whole construction of Djalal's masculinity as connected to warfare heroism (Shafik 2012). Besides, it provokes him a crisis about the ethics of military interventions regarding civil populations (Abu Lughod 2002). For its

part, the attention to Djalal's life and his process of enculturation is mirrored, in a reverse angle shot, by the presence of the Afghan children: the archival footage of Djalal's childhood resembles to, and contrasts with, the videos of these Afghan children, and establishes a sort of counter-cinema, or counter-documentary, of warfare. The quality of these "poor", low-res images (Hito Steyerl 2012) convinced Sotorra to shoot a documentary about Djalal: "He had a huge amount of archive material about his own life. I was very interested in that self-projection, in addition to that Afghanistan connection from my previous works" (Sotorra 2020). These images remain in a hybrid state: on the one hand, they are, as any documentary footage, performative images; on the other hand, they introduce the kind of war-related experiences that do not usually make it into dominant imaginaries.

After Djalal's experience in Afghanistan, and once the audience has watched his footage, the performance of Djalal's masculinity gradually collapses when he gets back home. The crisis of the warfare imaginary goes hand in hand with the crisis of a middle-class family going through a divorce and the collapse of the relative welfare of the Spanish economy during the 2008 crisis. Shot between 2012 and 2013, the film coincides with levels of youth unemployment of over 50 percent and labor reforms that threatened workers' rights (Miquel Úbeda, et al. 2020), a context that finds its way in the film as Djalal decides to sell his weapon collection, take down the American flag and, finally, and in a ceremonial way, conduct his last photo session. The whole training and pedagogy of war of the Western audiovisual ecosystem (Virilio 2006) proves insufficient to sustain Djalal at war, neither in a physical setting nor in his imagination.

Commander Arian, the body as a battlefield

Commander Arian is Sotorra's second-to-last film to date, and the one that has attained a wider international repercussion, probably because the film deals with the Kurdish guerilla fighters of the YPJ in Syria. The YPJ is the female battalion of the People's Protection Units (YPG), the armed branch of the Kurdish Supreme Committee (DBK in Kurdish) at Rojava. It is connected with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK in Kurdish), a political affiliation frequently ignored by Western mainstream media, as the PKK is listed as a terrorist organization by both the EU and the USA (Fernàndez Aragonès 2020). The PKK struggle stems from the notion of "Democratic Confederalism" by Abdullah Öcallan, the founder of the party, who vindicated the matriarchal origins of Kurdish society and held that the freedom of the Kurdish people would only be attained by the collapse of patriarchy. *Commander Arian* approaches YPJ fighters moving between two temporalities: the past, when Sotorra joins their last mission in Northern Syria during the fighting for the liberation of Kobane; and the present, when Arian, separated from her companions, recovers from her wounds. While a first reading of *Commander Arian* might consider it a war film, war is actually only the background of the Kurdish women's fight and, particularly, of the presentation of their feminism and the rethinking of their own bodies. It was this feminist struggle

in the Syrian Kurdistan, which interpelated Sotorra, personally and politically, and drove her to cross the Syrian-Turkish border to shoot her film. As noted by herself, "the first contact was an investigation trip and I stayed for three months. I was fascinated by the cause, the spirit and the personalities of these women. Then I came back with a camera to shoot. That's how this experience began, which involved almost three years of comings and goings following Arian" (Sotorra 2020). Such mobility parallels the movements of Commander Arian between the front and rearguard. In so doing, the film reformulates the traditional travelogue of documentary filmmakers as privileged auteurs who benefit from the visual interest of their films and end up acting as accomplices of the network of terror that the films reveal (Paula Rabinowitz 1994). On the contrary, Sotorra avoids the spectacle of war and its forms of visual violence, and highlights the debates in the female battalion of Kurdish fighters.

Despite women have joined different modern armies and paramilitary forces, films have tended to treat them as the victims of war and violence (Sophie Mayer 2016). Even when they have been portrayed as heroines, they have been nonetheless denied any agency through group submission (Shohat 1996). *Commander Arian* does not really fit this scheme, as the film does not feature a wounded militia fighter in terms of personal or national trauma (Kathleen Scott and Stephanie Van de Peer 2016), nor female fighters following the orders of their male companions. In contrast, the film faces the debate on the need for female participation in wars, a somewhat taboo topic, as participation of women in armed conflicts would collapse some of the ideas of "difference feminism", which consider women as endowed by the ethics of care, rather than of violence.

In the film's opening scene (after the dedication "To Anna Campbell, killed during a Turkish air strike in March 2011. And to all women who fight for change"), the voice-over of a wounded and limping Arian narrates her longing for sharing the happiness and misfortunes of her female companions. The film takes recourse to the political immediacy of a war zone (the city of Kobane) to discuss the lives of the protagonists, as their bodies become a political space in times of war (Mayer 2016). Once liberated, the city of Kobane does not stand for peace but rather acts as a reminder of the conflict, its effects on the urban landscape and particularly, in the scarred body of Arian. Initial images of cures to Arian's body, of a woman cleaning the wounds of a defenseless Arian lying on a carpet, reveal the rawness of pain. The close-ups and detailed representation of the wounded body, however, do not take advantage of pain nor fall into morbidity **Figure 3**. The scene establishes the intentions of a film in which the body takes a starring role: in slowing down to show the vulnerability of the body, the camera shares the slowness of the curing process, and reveals the complexity of the character of Arian. The body becomes a tool to make visible inequality and violence while fighting both. Arian was seriously wounded during the shooting of the film, and Sotorra decided to travel with her to the rearguard and include the resulting material in the film. Her decision was driven by her approach to

filmmaking: “I need to be intimate, and to live with a coexistence with what I want to film. I am not an outside observer, nor neutral. Furthermore, I need to be close to these people in order to capture their voice from a genuine place” (Sotorra 2020). However, she presents a twofold moral dilemma: while trying to avoid showing the fragility of the commander, shooting honestly implied for Sotorra the imperative to reveal what others had been reluctant to show (David MacDougall 2019). As a result, the images of the body of Arian presented in the film depart from fetishistic images of women fighters.

In addition to gender stereotypes, *Commander Arian* also collapses stereotypes of what constitutes heroism and victimization. In a war context, rape is both a weapon and a metaphor of war itself, but for women, rape culture becomes a daily battlefield (Patricia White 2015). In the film, Arian justifies her revolutionary ideals by narrating something that happened back when she was in secondary school: a neighbor was kidnaped and raped, and her subsequent pregnancy triggered a so-called “honor crime” by her family. When women started to organize themselves, Arian decided to take arms with a primary desire: “to free women from slavery” (Arian in *Commander Arian* 2018). Arian is, in this sense, aware of the sexist violence imposed by their enemies of ISIS but also of that which plagues her own society. For Arian, emancipation demands that women obtain an autonomous space to revolt against an imposed destiny by different societies similarly antagonistic to women. Arian’s mission thus implies to overcome a colonial vision, that which, according to Abu-Lughod (2013), targets only certain cultures (“cultures of honor”) with the monopoly of violence against women.

Seven minutes into the film, a first flashback from Arian’s recovery takes the audience to a scene in which Arian vigorously gets out of a car carrying a weapon. The camera, which previously has remained static and at a distance, moves among militia women running, losing the focus **Figure 4**. This contrast between the quietness of the initial refuge, and the activity at the front is not consistent throughout the film, though, as daily life and a reflexive tempo is privileged in both scenarios. Various scenes at the front show women getting their weapons ready, braiding their hair, eating, singing or debating, always with a carefree, laid-back and humorous attitude. Sotorra has noted that reality is different from what we see in Hollywood movies. At the front, most of the time is spent waiting: “...it was very surprising for me to be one kilometer away from an ISIS base and in that war scenario, with our lives at risk, discussions on feminism, on the role of women, or on emotions were taken place” (Instituto Cervantes 2019).

Sotorra’s camera becomes a meta-participant, contributing to the illusory effect of everyday life that emerges from the director’s intimacy with her subjects. Joan González, director of the documentary film festival DOCS Barcelona, has noted that “Alba Sotorra is a film director who manages to achieve invisibility. You end up asking yourself how on earth the camera is shooting what it is shooting” (Nit a la Terra 2017). Such a strategy results in the effacement of

authorial marks in favor of an alleged transparency, a closeness to the subjects that has actually been underscored as a trait of the work of different Spanish film directors (Wheeler 2016).

The final montage of *Commander Arian* was the result of a collective process of negotiation among the director, members of the YPJ, and film editor Jesper Osmund. Sotorra edited 20 min of the material shot on her first trip to the area and showed it to her subjects, who did not like it. In a second phase, Osmund's criteria ("I had to tell the director all the good things I could, but also that I didn't see a film, only half a film. [...]") gained influence. After a few meetings, Sotorra "chose to listen, smuggled herself into the war zone, filmed for another four weeks and returned, thank God!" (European Documentary Network 2019). Such process of collective editing overcame a mere "gazing and speaking", and got closer to "listening and seeing", a practice in line with transnational and feminist ethics capable to generate empathies (Scott and Van de Peer 2016).

In the three years that passed since the first and final footage, the events threaded in this reflexive story entered the media memory of a large part of international audiences. On a daytime debate among companions, one of the YPJ fighters called Sozdar expresses her doubts about continuing the fighting. Arian and the rest ask her a key question, one which any feminist would ask her or himself. "What kind of life do you want to live? The life of a slave? [...] A life in which no one values you as a woman? Or a life that, while difficult, belongs to you as a woman?" (Arian in *Commander Arian* 2018). If war films have been a key space in the articulation of ideas about masculinity as noted by Tasker and Atakav (2010), *Commander Arian* infuses new air to the genre with a group of Kurdish women at the trenches of Syria, women who reframe representations and discourses about what it is to be a woman without anyone answering for them.

Conclusions: a third discourse cinema

In the seminal *Orientalism* (1978), Said argued that colonial control spread to any cultural representation, resulting in a ubiquity that camouflaged it. For her part, Shohat (1996) has underscored the patriarchal character of colonial representations. Under the theoretical umbrella of both Said and Shohat, Ponzanesi (2019) has theorized a postcolonial cinema, a framework that certainly serves to describe Sotorra's work. In the two films analyzed in this paper, Sotorra displaces both patriarchy and Eurocentrism and allows the emergence of uncommon identities and gender relations on screen. In this task, she is assisted, in front and behind the camera, by Djalal and Arian, who become antidotes against hegemonic representations of Afghan, Kurdish and Syrian women and men in the (albeit growingly fragmented) mediascape.

Sotorra locates the characters of *Game Over* and *Commander Arian* in war conflicts (Afghanistan and Syria, respectively) which have been often constructed as cinematic topologies that perpetuate and legitimize gender and colonial power relations (Shafik 2012; Mohanty 2003; Abu-Lughod 2002). In contrast, Sotorra reinterprets this backdrop: with masculine warmongering

subjects that collapse into crisis and feminine fighter subjects resistant to vulnerability. For Djalal, war begins as a mechanism of cultural simulacrum that informs his masculinity and configures precarious video-performances as *Lord_Sex*, but the film challenges the very articulation of colonial and imperialist masculinity created by the machine of audiovisual ideological production. We are left to wonder whether the "real" war presented in Djalal's footage emasculates him or, rather, serves to establish a non-hegemonic masculinity, capable to integrate the dimensions of care and heterocentrism, as in other contemporary productions (Núria Araüna, Iolanda Tortajada and Cilia Willem 2018). In contrast, the YPJ militia fighters in *Commander Arian* are presented in a process of hardening through war, far from a stereotypical masculinization of the female fighter characters (Tasker 1993) and the iconography of action films heroes. Thus, even under the pedagogical guidance of Commander Arian, a bloody and violent war is resignified as an opportunity to overcome the colonial oppression of their nation, and specifically, their oppression as women. Going beyond the do-goodism consensus around pacifism, Sotorra takes the audience deep into the complex debates of the YPJ fighters and their capacity to think critically about the emancipatory uses of violence, especially in contexts where enduring violence is not a choice. Against the grain of a "colonial feminism" that, especially after September 11, has gained public attention by exploiting women's rights in order to justify colonial policies and islamophobia (Abu-Lughod 2002), Sotorra's films propose a Decolonial Feminist rupture with the frame of Oriental War. As spaces of relation—even conflictive relations—, Djalal and Arian's warfare contexts become spaces of transformation and of modulation of gender identities.

Sotorra explores and focuses on the hybrid zone between the front-line experience, the rearguard, and the (return) home of her subjects. Arian and Djalal undertake movements in opposite directions, expressed in their bodily performances. Djalal, an actor dressed for the theater of war, undresses and takes distance from the conflict, while a wounded and naked Arian recovers and regains her physical and emotional leadership. Both films establish a continuity between public and domestic spheres, a key concern for feminism. In *Commander Arian,* domesticity is appropriated and constructed by women through care, sorority, and abundant intellectual debate. For its part, the domestic sphere in *Game Over* is a middle-class refuge, and yet, it is the place where one learns about war through popular culture and children's games.

Just like Arian and Djalal, Sotorra places herself in a liminal position, one that, beyond gender roles, is easily attracted to war: "It was the spirit of Djalal that possessed me. When I saw myself dressed as a soldier in the middle of the Syrian war, I thought 'What the hell am I doing here?' There was something about that time chasing Djalal and his obsession with war that affected me deeply" (Sotorra 2020). Sotorra abandons her familiar context and gets emotionally involved with her subjects, but skews voyeuristic approaches and an exotic exploitation of alterity. In fact, the protagonists, complex and contradictory individuals, narrate their stories from their own personal spaces and using their own language. The type of close relationship that Sotorra

aims to obtain with her subjects is attested by her decision to include the main characters as co-directors of the films. In addition, Sotorra's emphatic observation does not totally efface authorial marks: non-intervention does not mean that we do not see through her gaze, but rather than the director privileges "showing over telling". The ease with which her characters appear in front of the camera, even in the most intimate situations, evince the fact that Sotorra is no outsider, but somebody accepted in these groups. Her work thus established itself in a "third discourse" of non-fiction cinema (Scott and Van de Peer 2016) that allows a type of communication based on empathy and that is able to bridge differences among creators, subjects, and audiences.

As pointed out at the beginning of this paper, colonial representations of gender in our mediascape are not new. However, there is a lack of academic attention to this question in the Spanish non-fiction cinema context. The work of female filmmakers such as Sotorra bring up the discussions about modes of production and strategies of representation in the field of Spanish non-fiction cinema. Upcoming research should include other female filmmakers, such as Sally G. Dewar, Silvia Navarro and Irene Gutiérrez, who have recently focused on building an empathic dialogue between gendered subjects and the present and troubling history of Iberian colonialism.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Alba Sotorra who kindly agreed to be interviewed, as well as to Xavier Ortells for not just translating this article, but also giving us invaluable feedback on earlier versions.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This article was supported by the research project "Articulaciones de género en el documental español: una perspectiva interseccional", Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación of Spain [PGC2018-097966-B-100], and "Memoria audiovisual del feminismo español (1975-2020)", Fundación BBVA [Leonardo grant].

Notes on contributors

Anna Fonoll-Tassier PhD candidate at the Department of Communication Studies of the Rovira i Virgili University (Spain). She takes a multidisciplinary approach that encompasses the fields of visual culture, gender, and anthropology, given her training. She holds a Media Studies BA degree, an Anthropology BA degree and a master's in Advanced Research in Anthropology. Her doctoral research is focused on production modes and strategies of representation in Spanish

contemporary feminist documentary filmmakers, with special interest in postcolonial, decolonial, migration and transcultural narratives.

Laia Quílez Esteve PhD in Media Studies, is a researcher and a professor at Rovira i Virgili University (Spain). Her research focuses on the study of documentary representations of memory and postmemory of mass traumas (in particular Latin American and Spanish dictatorships). She led the project "Second Degree Memories: Postmemory of the Civil War, the Franco Dictatorship and the Transition in Contemporary Spanish Society", and she currently directs the project "Gender Articulations in Contemporary Spanish Documentary: An Intersectional Perspective".

Núria Araüna Baró Lecturer and researcher at Rovira i Virgili University (Spain). She holds a Media Studies BA degree, an Anthropology BA degree, a master's in Creative Documentary and her PhD dissertation on gender representations and love relationships in Spanish music videos was awarded by the Catalan Audiovisual Council. Her current research focuses on the representation of recent memory in non-fiction genres (mainly social movements and feminist strategies'). She currently directs the project "Audiovisual Memory of Spanish Feminism", funded as a research-creation Leonardo Grant.

ORCID

Anna Fonoll-Tassier https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9254-8230

Núria Araüna Baró https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1997-2833

Laia Quílez Esteve https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6696-2569

References

¡las Sandinistas!. 2018. Film. Directed by Jenny Murray. Nicaragua and USA: Alpha Dogs, MCRM Productions.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2002. "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others". *American Anthropologist* 104 (3): 783-790. doi:10.1525/aa.2002.104.3.783.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2013. *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1990. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy". *Theory, Culture & Society*7 (2): 295-310. doi:10.1177/026327690007002017.

Araüna, Núria, Tortajada, Iolanda, and Cilia Willem. 2018. "Portrayals of Caring Masculinities in Fiction Film: The Male Caregiver in Still Mine, Intouchables and Nebraska". *Masculinities & Social Change* 7 (1): 82-102. doi:10.17583/mcs.2018.2749.

Arranz, Fátima. 2010. *Cine Y Género En España*. Valencia: Cátedra, Publicacions Universitat de València.

Banet-Weiser, Sarah. 2018. *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny*. Durham: Duke University Press.

The Battle of Algiers, 1966. Film. Directed by Gillo Pontecorvo. Algeria and Italy: Cashbah, Igor Film.

Beltrán, Mary C. 2005. The New Hollywood Racelessness: Only the Fast, Furious, (And Multiracial) Will Survive. *Cinema Journal* 44 (2): 50-67. doi:10.1353/cj.2005.0003.

Butler, Judith. 2006 [1990]. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Camí-Vela, María. 2014. "Directoras de Cine En Cataluña: Un Recorrido Histórico". *Zeitschrift für Katalanistik/Revista d'Estudis Catalans* 27: 27-45.

Commander Arian. 2018. Film. Directed by Alba Sotorra. Spain: Alba Sotorra S.L., Televisió de Catalunya - CCMA, RTVE, Boekamp & Kriegsheim, Dogwoof.

Connell, Raewyn W. 1990. "An Iron Man: The Body and Some Contradictions of Hegemonic Masculinity". In *Sport, Men and the Gender Order*, edited by Michael A. Messner and Donald. F. Sabo, 83-95. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Elston, Cherilyn. 2020. "*Nunca Invisibles*: Insurgent Memory and Self-representation by Female Ex-combatants in Colombia". *Wasafiri* 35:4, 70-78. doi:10.1080/02690055.2020.1800254.

European Documentary Network. 2019. EDN *Member of the Month – Jesper Osmund*. Accessed 27 March 2020. http://edn.network/news/news-story/article/edn-member-of-the-month-jesper-osmund/

The Expendables 2. 2012. Film. Directed by Simon West. USA: Nu Image, Millennium Films, Lionsgate Films.

Fernàndez Aragonès, Aina. 2020. "Women, Body and War: Kurdish Female Fighters through Commander Arian and Girl's War". *Media, War & Conflict*, August 2020: 1-17.

Game Over. 2015. Film. Directed by Alba Sotorra. Spain: Promarfi Futuro 2010, Gaia Audiovisuals, Televisió de Catalunya - CCMA, RTVE, Loto Films, Dirk Manthey, DocsBarcelona.

García Saiz, Lorena. 2019. "Luces y sombras de la economía feminista. Repaso desde sus bases hasta la actualidad". *Dossiers feministes* 25: 113-130. doi:10.6035/Dossiers.2019.25.8.

Goldstein, Joshua S. 2001. *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Grewal, Inderpal, and Caren Kaplan. 2002. "Postcolonial Studies and Transnational Feminist Practices". *Jouvert: A Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 5 (1). Accessed 3 April 2020. https://legacy.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v5i1/grewal.htm

Guerrillera. 2005. Film. Directed by Frank Piasechi Poulsen. Denmark: Zentropa Real ApS.

Innes, Sherry A. 1998. *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture.* Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press.

Instituto Cervantes. 2019. *"Comandante Arian": Entrevista a Alba Sotorra*. Spain: YouTube. Accessed 30 May 2020. https://youtu.be/ZGv4CyQ0A1c

Jeffords, Susan. 1994. *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Kimmel, Michael S. 1993. "Invisible Masculinity". *Society*, 30 (6): 28-35. doi:10.1007/BF02700272.

Kurdistan, la guerre des filles. 2016. Film. Directed by Mylène Sauloy. France: Magneto Presse.

MacDougall, David. 2019. *The Looking Machine. Essays on Cinema, Anthropology and Documentary Filmmaking*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Mayer, Sophie. 2016. *Political Animals. The New Feminist Cinema*. London: I. B. Tauris.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 2003. *Feminism without Borders. Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. London: Duke University Press.

Nagib, Lucia. 2006. "Towards a Positive Definition of World Cinema". In *Remapping World Cinema. Identity, culture and politics in film*, edited by Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim, 30-54. London: Wallflower.

Nit a la Terra. 2017. "Nit a la Terra: Alba Sotorra". 2 July 2017. Accessed 4 June 2020. https://beteve.cat/nit-a-la-terra/nit-a-la-terra-alba-sotorra/

November. 2004. Film. Directed by Hito Steyerl. Germany: Hito Steyerl.

Nunca Invisibles: Mujeres Farianas. Adiós a la Guerra. 2018. Film. Directed by Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. Colombia: CNMH.

Ponzanesi, Sandra. 2019. "Postcolonial and Transnational Approaches to Film and Feminism". In *The Routledge Companion to Cinema and Gender*, edited by Kristin Lené Hole, Dijana Jelaca, E. Ann Kaplan and Patrice Petro, 25-35. New York: Taylor & Francis Books.

Rabinowitz, Paula. 1994. “Cuerpos Nacionales: Género, Sexualidad Y Terror En Los contra-documentales Feministas”. In *Lo personal es lo político. Feminismo y documental*, edited by Sophie Mayer and Elena Oroz, 46-99. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra.

Revista Catalunya CGT. 2019. “La Vida de Les Combatents: Entrevista a Alba Sotorra”. 6 March 2019. Accessed 19 June 2020. http://www.revistacatalunya.cat/?p=729

Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Scholz, Annette. 2018. "Las Invisibles Del Cine Español". *In Cineastas emergentes. Mujeres en el cine del Siglo XXI*, edited by Annette Scholz and Marta Álvarez, 45-67. Madrid: Iberoamericana, Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert.

Scott, Kathleen, and Stephanie Van de Peer. 2016. “Sympathy for the Other: Female Solidarity and Postcolonial Subjectivity in Francophone Cinema”. *Film-Philosophy* 20 (1): 168-194. doi:10.3366/ film.2016.0009.

Shafik, Viola. 2012. “Rituals of Hegemonic Masculinity: Cinema, Torture, and the Middle East”. In *Speaking about Torture,* edited by Julie Ann Carlson and Elisabeth Weber, 162-188. New York: Fordham University Press.

Shohat, Ella. 1996. “Post-third-worldist Culture: Gender, Nation, and the Cinema”. In *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures,* edited by Jacqui Alexander, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 183-209. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988. “Can the Subaltern Speak?”. In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 271-313. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Steyerl, Hito. 2012. *Los Condenados de la Pantalla*. Buenos Aires: Caja Negra Editora.

Straw, Mark. 2008. Traumatized Masculinity and American National Identity in Hollywood’s Gulf War. *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film, 6* (2), 127-143. doi:10.1386/ncin.6.2.127_1.

Tasker, Yvonne. 1993. *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre, and the Action Cinema*. London: Routledge.

Tasker, Yvonne, and Eylem Atakav. 2010. “The Hurt Locker: Male Intimacy, Violence and the Iraq War Movie”. *Sinecine* 1 (2): 57-70.

Toivanen, Mari, and Bahar Baser. 2016. “Gender in the Representations of an Armed Conflict: Female Kurdish Combatants in French and British Media”. *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*9 (3): 294-314. doi:10.1163/18739865-00903007.

Úbeda, Miquel, Cabasés, M. Àngels, Sabaté, Malena, and Tanja Strecker. 2020. "The Deterioration of the Spanish Youth Labour Market (1985–2015): An Interdisciplinary Case Study". *YOUNG*28 (5): 544–563. doi:10.1177/1103308820914838.

Unveiled Views. 2008. Film. Directed by Alba Sotorra. Spain: Alba Sotorra S.L., Women Make Movies.

Van de Peer, Stephanie. 2012. "A Transnational Feminist Rereading of post-Third Cinema Theory: The Case of Maghreb Documentary". *Journal of African Cinemas* 4 (2): 175-189. doi:10.1386/ jac.4.2.175_1.

Van de Peer, Stephanie. 2020. "Selma Baccar's "Fatma" 1975: At the Crossroads between Third Cinema and New Arab Cinema". *French Forum* 35 (2/3): 17-35. doi:10.1353/frf.2010.0013.

Virilio, Paul. 2006. *The Information Bomb*. New York: Verso.

Wheeler, Duncan. 2016. "The (Post-)feminist Condition: Women Filmmakers in Spain". *Feminist Media Studies* 16 (6): 1-21. doi:10.1080/14680777.2015.1137964.

White, Patricia. 2015. *Women's Cinema, World Cinema. Projecting Contemporary Feminisms*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Figures

Figure 1.

Figure 2.

Figure 3.

Figure 4.