

## Foreword

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This is not the first occasion on which the journal *Diogenes* has directed its interest to questions of gender: in 2004, issue 208, entitled ‘Myths and Gender’, devoted its consideration to a tool which in France was finally beginning to emerge from universities and from an area of research which was both rare and specialized. Through a range of contributions covering a very broad field spanning both time and geography and involving studies of androgyny, hermaphrodite identity, “third gender” notions, bisexuality or the idea of the neuter among others, this issue of the journal gave a good illustration of the rich range of possibilities encompassed by the concept of gender for rethinking knowledge. The multiplicity of the intellectual trajectories and the disciplines of the specialists who contributed to that volume was equally an indication of the variety of usages of such an approach. When *Diogenes* revisited the subject in issue 225 under the theme ‘New Perspectives in Gender Studies’ which appeared in 2009, the table of contents bore witness to the inclusion of other ideas, notions, or concepts which were extending the range of the field ever more broadly: intersectionality, postcolonial issues, and multiculturalism among others.

As a more recent addition to the list of disciplines addressed from a gender perspective, cinema is often treated in its relationship with gender in a purely French context where wariness to engage runs parallel to lack of understanding and even pure and simple rejection of the matter.

This present issue engages a form of continuity but also variation with respect to the previous volumes: each of its three headline themes (Gender, Globalization, and Cinema) carry equal weight and attention. The multi- and trans-disciplinary vocation of the journal is kept in view in order to apprehend cinema within both national and international contexts through the prism of gender, considered in its broadest acceptance. All the articles aim, in one manner or another, to question the cultural, linguistic, political, and national boundaries governing cinematic expression, and to study the phenomena of disseminations of the transnational and those of intercultural re-appropriation as well as the geopolitical dimensions associated with these.

A ‘transnational’ phenomenon since its creation, cinema did not await its centenary to come to terms with this dimension which has for some time now become an indispensable analytical tool of film studies. If we accept the view of Andrew Higson, one of the earliest specialists of the notion of ‘national’ as applied to the cinema, who has readdressed this matter in a work of the most recent Intellect collection devoted to *Transnational Cinemas* (a collection co-founded by Deborah Shaw who has also contributed to this present issue of *Diogenes*), ‘transnational cinema is not a new

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phenomenon: both the production and distribution of films have been transnational since the very first public showings in the 1890s' (Higson, 2010: 70).

The question of globalization, or what in French is termed *mondialisation* (from *le monde* = the world), as applied to the medium of cinema deserves some attention, if only because of a form of confusion that tends to regard these two terms as equivalents; numerous researchers on the other hand (among whom are sociologists, economists, and philosophers) emphasize that they do not cover the same realities. For the economist Henri Bartoli, for example, 'the process of "globalization" of a practice tends towards generating a whole governed by rules such that the organized whole constitutes a "system". In contrast, a process of "*mondialisation*" weaves multiple links and interconnections between nation-states, businesses, companies in such a way that events or decisions unfolding at one point of the planet reverberate more or less intensely with individuals and collectivities living in other places' (Bartoli, 2000). From a semantic point of view, a sociologist finds that the French version of *mondialisation* continues to refer to the idea of a world in common (*cosmos*) possessing its own unity and order. It is the concrete, social, and natural world which surrounds us and which we inhabit (Freitag, 2010: online). Freitag contrasts this with 'globalization' which for its part 'seems to designate the process and result of an activity of generalization, such as the generalization of regulation by the market or the extensive generalization of certain procedures, certain techniques, certain rules perceived from a strictly operational point of view (Freitag, 2010).

In this volume, these two parallel notions are in a certain sense coalesced together. In the first place it has appeared to us essential to step out from the consideration of national cinematic productions, which is generally how film is treated in publications, in order to render true account of the world in its entirety, whence the decision that all continents should be present and represented, without that limiting in any way reflection on domestic production: the national dimension is contemplated 'from within', but also and especially in its relations with the outside, whatever form such relations might take. Considering this national dimension through the optics of gender adds a supplementary perspective and augments the reflection. To assure this, three analytical approaches have been given particular prominence: those considering film circulation, women directors and their cinema, and gender as associated with cinematic genres.

Regarding the first of these approaches, the issue of film festivals is an essential consideration for obtaining a clear grasp of the movements of films within a globalized/*mondialised* context, taking into account interactions between the countries broadly of the North and those of the South in terms of cinematic forms, financing, approaches to filming, and contents. Through the various processes by which films are circulated as examined in the following pages and articles, questions are raised about specialized events (see Skadi Loist on the LGBT/Q\* festivals), or film reception and audience (see Patricia Caillé on FIFAK: the Kelibia International Amateur Film Festival). Caillé concentrates on a little-known festival to raise questions from a gendered perspective about the motivations, pathways, and links with cinema of the festival-goers and audiences of an event which is minor on the scale of festivals but major for those who attend and who put great hope in it.

For her part, Skadi Loist proposes a 'zoom out' over cinema-related happenings and events throughout the world, with a particular focus whose singularity becomes uniform. Through the history and analysis of the progressive global spread of LGBT/Q\* festivals (which echoes that of the extension of Gay Pride parades to a global scale) studied in her article, she brings out the phenomenon of the mainstream recycling of what initially was a marginal, politically oriented, and scarcely lucrative cinema.

Deborah Shaw's contribution on the films of the Euro-Peruvian director Claudia Llosa sits somewhere between the analysis of festivals and the films of women film-makers, since her subjects for study are drawn from *world cinema*, a branch of the medium supported principally by European sources of finance aiming to provide material for festivals on both the old and new

continents. The potential narrative and ideological consequences of such support as well as the possible, essentially commercial, pick-ups of these realizations are examined by the author in her analysis.

The survey article by Deborah Shepard revisits for this volume a field which she had pioneered around 15 years ago: New Zealand women film-makers active since 1999 are no longer only Pakeha (of European origin) or Maori, but emerge from multiple geographic, cultural, and/or linguistic horizons. The author also compares the initiatives, the films, and the viewpoints of the women directors relating to their cinema and their association with gender issues. If film-makers of both genders of this small Pacific country have often left its shores to try their chances elsewhere (starting with the most famous of them, Jane Campion), Aotearoa, to use the Maori name of this former British territory, now draws to itself immigrants from all regions.

This on the other hand is not the case with the largest cinema industry in the world, that of Bollywood, where nepotism is effectively the accepted thing, to say nothing of the barriers of class, caste, and language, a situation which is the subject of the three films directed by women which Anne Ciecko analyses. In these Bollywood films about Bollywood itself, portraying blockbusters with budgets as elevated as the number of stars in the credits and aiming at world-wide success among a global audience hooked on musical comedies, or in contrast, less costly *auteur* films intended for the cinephile audiences of festivals both in and beyond the sub-continent, these women directors, though themselves products of the system, do not subject to any less criticism, through various film and narrative procedures, the environment which gives them work.

On another continent, Africa, just as marked by the colonial past but where the cinema is much less developed, women directors, sometimes belonging to their peoples' diasporas, are viewing the world and the links between globalization, cinema, and the autonomization of women from an alternative point of view. Through *The Silent Monologue* (*Monologue de la muette*, 2008) of Khady Sylla, a Senegalese woman writer, then film-maker, who died in 2013, and Charlie Van Damme, Odile Cazenave addresses a '*mondialisation* in the feminine' which brings together both the question of the financing of films by the former colonizing countries of the North and the notion of class, by focusing on the 'little housemaids'. Envisaged within a continuum of films made in sub-Saharan Africa by men and women who live there, Khady Sylla's film fits within this group while projecting an individual and original approach.

In the study put forward by Sheila Petty of Fatima Sissani's documentary, *Zahra's Mother Tongue* (*La Langue de Zahra*), the back and forth travel from one side of the Mediterranean to the other of the film-maker and her mother is given flesh in the 70-year-old Kabyle woman who has come to France against her will. In her 'documentary about emigration through the story of (her) mother', as defined by the documentary maker for whom 'my homeland is emigration', Sissani opens up to question the memories of the two countries and their respective and common histories, illustrating by the comings and goings between France and Algeria other forms of circulation of languages, images, and lives.

Memory is also at the heart of the films analysed by Florence Martin<sup>1</sup>, linked together by music. Filmed by women of different generations in the three countries which constitute the Maghreb – Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia – these documentaries about music have in common the aim to revive the memory or memories of songs and musical traditions whose history is strongly linked to that of the individual country, which has become *mondialised* in its particular fashion: whether it be traditional Moroccan folk songs for one of the film-makers, the *mezoued* of Andalusian origin circulating in Tunisia for another, or the reuniting of *chaâbi* musicians from Algiers after they had parted ways in 1962 for the third, these directors bring under scrutiny the cultural heritages of their respective countries and the disappearance then renaissance of these, following trails of singularity within a globalized context over which looms the spectre of uniformization.

If no doubt one cannot speak of the music documentary as a cinema genre in itself, music comedy definitely is one, and it is the Gallicized version of a non-native genre that Renaud Lagabrielle considers. Through the study of three “en-chanted” films of the 2000s, the author examines the French varieties of a tradition born in the United States by taking gender as one of frameworks for reading these comedies which appropriate and perpetuate the stereotypes relating to gender and sexualities without really putting them in question.

Other female archetypes, those of the woman as monster this time, are present and functional in the American remakes of Asian horror movies, dissected by Hunju Lee. Drawing on a corpus of feature-length films little known in France, the researcher shows the variations in the cinematic construction of avenging female ghosts: she emphasizes how these images are based, both in the cultural context of the initial film as in that of the remake, on the different, though in both cases archaic and negative, conceptions of the feminine.

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For those who may still be uncertain of its utility, the contribution provided by applying the tool of gender to film studies is multiple and varied, for it offers a different way of addressing cinematic events, corpora of feature-length, medium or short films, and cinematic genres. Applying it to such diverse cinematographies enables the perception of national particularities, but also of numerous similarities across the approaches, intentions, and constructions of stereotypes, as well as in the desire to present alternatives to dominant images, norms, and discourses.

Rather than seek exhaustively to treat a vast subject with its multiple ramifications, this volume would rather give a platform to voices which are diverse yet often inaudible, and sometimes completely new. And since we are speaking of voices, how can we not think of all those which these articles allow once again to be heard: the sung words of many, both women and men, spectacular music in the style of India, or voices of the past in the Maghreb, the voice of a woman slam-poet in Dakar echoing that of Zahra, the ‘illiterate poet of great culture’, or the voice of another immigrant woman, in Mumbai this time, leaving behind as its sole trace a recording in a video diary discovered after her suicide.

Translated from the French by Colin Anderson

## Note

1. This article has not been included in this issue at the author’s request. The article appeared in the French edition of the journal published by Presses Universitaires de France: [https://www.puf.com/content/Diog%C3%A8ne\\_2014\\_n%C2%B0\\_245](https://www.puf.com/content/Diog%C3%A8ne_2014_n%C2%B0_245)

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