

# **“CAMERAS! CAMERAS! CAMERAS!” WOMEN, ARCHIVES AND STRUGGLE IN CONTEMPORARY GALICIAN CINEMA**

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Over the course of history, forms of resistance to power such as revolts, insurrections, uprisings and rebellions have invariably been relegated to the margins both of official historiography and of visual representations of historical events, from the artworks depicting the battles of the Protestant Reformation to the media footage and photographs of recent decades. These political images of conflict have had to contend with the “visibility struggles” (Boidy, 2017: 1) established in the various systems for viewing history. As episodic, spontaneous expressions of marginalised cultures, they have generally lacked representation, and it is only recent methods such as oral history (Cabana, 2021) that have the power to bring them into the present in order to meet the demand to “activate the visible” (Mirzoeff, 2009: 3) made by political activists whose aims now more than ever require the “strengthening of a presence” (Boidy, 2017: 1).

These movements on the margins of public life form part of a political iconography that Balló and Pintor suggest is comprised of a set of motifs that “appeal to the spectator’s prior knowledge of these staging models and establish fertile ground for reflection on their ambiguity and their communicative and political efficacy” (2021: 201). Included among these motifs is the object of study of this article, which to date has received limited scholarly attention: archival images of women in popular uprisings in the Galicia region of Spain during the period 1970–1995 that have been included in Galician films made in the last two decades. The main aim of this research is to explore how these women have been portrayed in terms of the idea of gesture, as Didi-Huberman and Traverso define this concept. This article also analyses the (re)appearance of these women in images through processes of archival recovery and reuse in contemporary Galician documen-

taries, providing an opportunity to compare two historical periods characterised by different levels of access to narrative construction in peripheral cinema. To this end, the analysis focuses on the gestures of the women who appear in the films *Nación* [Nation] (Margarita Ledo, 2020) and *Os días afogados* [The Drowned Days] (Luis Avilés and César Souto, 2015). These two films are also brought into dialogue with sources contemporary both to the archival images they recover (such as newspaper photographs) and to their own production, through comparisons to other documentaries that also use archival images of these and other social struggles of the late 20th century.

Women have rarely been shown as active participants in revolutionary movements, or uprisings, in the sense that Didi-Huberman (2018) defines this term, constituting a clear case of underrepresentation in the political sphere. As will be explored below, their presence has been confined either to the abstract level of ideas in the form of allegories and idealisations, or positioned in a secondary, dependent relationship with their male comrades. The recovery of images of women in these contexts through operations of memory and archival work forms part of this project to activate the visible based on the gestures of the women who appear in them, which need to be analysed individually.

The idea of analysing the repertoire of gestures shown in these images is particularly fruitful because these gestures serve to give visibility to the uprising as “an ongoing movement” (Didi-Huberman, 2018: 13) that presents potentiality as the activation of desire in the face of power. In this sense, “uprisings emerge from the human psyche as gestures, corporeal forms. Undoubtedly, they are forces which rise up, but above all they are forms that make them anthropologically perceptible, convey them, orient them, put them into practice, render them plastic or resistant” (Didi-Huberman, 2018: 28). Didi-Huberman seems to identify the idea of uprisings with a masculine form, drawing on Bat-

aille’s reading of *Battleship Potemkin* (Bronenosets Potyomkin, Sergei Eisenstein, 1925) comparing man to a volcano—or an erection—that relaxes after it has ejected its lava. From a feminist perspective, the gesture in political protest, situated between an expression of desire and an act of resistance, is directly associated with the concept of *poner el cuerpo* (“to put the body on the line” or “to give the body”) identified by Sutton (2007) in protests such as those of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo.

## GENDER REPRESENTATION, POLITICAL PROCESSES AND VIOLENCE

As a starting point for contemporary political struggles, the French Revolution established the parameters for the inclusion of the image of the Woman,<sup>1</sup> who is barely individualised in images of female revolutionaries. The inclusion itself was ambiguous, as the Woman was used either to represent abstract values such as Liberty or Equality or to identify the *ancien régime* as a female form in contrast to the manliness of the revolutionary process (Juneja, 1996). The Republic is thus represented with the icon of Marianne wearing a Phrygian cap, or as a nurturing mother with multiple breasts suckling citizens who, in France’s Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, effectively excluded women. The Russian Revolution, which adapted this iconography to its popular art tradition, quickly developed a repertoire of male heroic icons. Bolshevik revolutionary graphic art also developed allegorical figures, one of which in particular reveals the impossibility of a monosemous interpretation of the female image as a symbolic element: the rural woman, embodied in the *Baba*, symbolised the obstacles to agricultural production that the revolutionary project confronted in its early years (Bonnell, 1991). Conversely, images that portray women as representatives of revolutionary values use gender to depict themes related to domination and subordination, whereby “the

woman in the image replicates the man's appearance. Both exude physical prowess, but the roles are unmistakably gender-marked, indicating male domination" (Bonnel, 1991: 278).

Although these images belonged to propaganda programs (and are therefore very different from images documenting more modest uprisings and acts of insubordination), they established a model for representing such movements, contributing to the subordination of female participation. The lack of images showing women as agents of political change may be related to the model of representation of women in film, subordinated to a patriarchal framework in which women are presented as objects of violence (Haskell, 1974).

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### THE LACK OF IMAGES SHOWING WOMEN AS AGENTS OF POLITICAL CHANGE MAY BE RELATED TO THE MODEL OF REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN FILM

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In relation to images of women as leaders of uprisings, Barreiro González argues that early cinema functioned as "yet another tool for demonising the involvement of women in political and public life" (2019: 153), portraying activists and suffragettes as objects of ridicule or as madwomen. One example of this is Emily Davidson, whose death while attempting to interrupt the Epsom Derby was filmed by Pathé News and openly criticised in the media. In fact, the trope of the mentally disturbed woman who disrupts public order already possessed a full repertoire of images, which were recorded at the École de la Salpêtrière at the end of the 19th century with the aim of identifying the symptoms of hysteria. To this end, Dr Charcot and his disciples developed a complete iconographic program based on photographs of patients at the sanatorium performing an act of "hysterical 'theatricalism'" in "an authentic prac-

tice of cruelty" (Didi-Huberman, 2007: 367). Some of the attitudes performed by the inmates for Albert Londe's camera came to form part of the social imaginary as gestures that would later be reproduced in acts of resistance by women, in a relative subversion of gender stereotypes: hysteria as a tool for instilling fear or breaking free of repression (Cabana, 2021).

The images that serve as this article's object of study depict actions that are not aimed at transforming the patriarchal order but that do make ambiguous use of it to articulate a collective struggle, often dominated by women committed to the preservation of their livelihood (Cabana, 2021). In the struggles of rural Galician women during the Franco regime analysed by Ana Cabana, the forms of uprising are based on the idea of "acting without appearing to be activists" (Cabana, 2021: 134), involving acts of protest where institutionalised mechanisms such as banners or posters are completely absent. Protests by women are characterised by the act of *poner el cuerpo*, putting the body on the frontline to obstruct, always in coordinated, collective actions:

The performative method of mobilisations led by women is evident in the three cases of conflict analysed: a crowd in front of houses and properties that were going to be expropriated; throngs of women who avoid being stopped and arrested for throwing stones by positioning themselves in front of Civil Guards; and masses of women obstructing the work of mechanical diggers (Cabana, 2021: 131).

Women as bodies on the frontline also appear in Khanna's (1998) analysis of the depiction of their participation in the emblematic film about an uprising, *The Battle of Algiers* (La battaglia di Algeri, Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966). Although women play an important role in the revolutionary process, none of the female characters in this film have a voice, problematising political cinema's relationship with gender, as women are rendered invisible and silent, just as they are in other representations of uprisings.

## A METHOD FOR THE POLITICAL GESTURE

Any reading of the political representation of the subjugated comes up against the inability of visual analysis to deal with modes of political representation, as Boidy argues in his proposal of a “political iconology” to analyse representations of political movements that suffer from “visibility struggles” (Boidy, 2017: 9). For the purposes of this research, the construction of a “cultural history” (Didi-Huberman, 2018), whereby images from the past are interrogated from the perspective of the present when they are recovered, is a particularly interesting notion. In this sense, what is needed is the establishment of “a genealogy arising from bodies in movement, which is revealed in an unpredictable way; a genealogy of gestures of emancipation” (Didi-Huberman and Traverso, 2023: 26). With the aim of developing this cultural history of bodies in movement, drawing on Aby Warburg’s conception of “cultural science” (2010: 3) in his *Mnemosyne Atlas*, Didi-Huberman proposes a methodology that requires us to “look at an image dialectically: if there is one figure, we must seek out the others that it addresses and that respond to it; we must see the background from which it stands out, in the dual sense of ‘differing from’ and ‘deriving from’; we must dialectically temporalise a cultural history” (Didi-Huberman and Traverso, 2023: 39). This relational element—between bodies, and between images—and its temporal dimension are present in the way contemporary films recover archival images, in an apparent effort to answer the question posed again by Didi-Huberman in the case of images of uprising:

Should a political anthropology of images not also be based on the simple fact that our desires need the force of our memories, on the condition that we give them a form that does not forget where it comes from and that is therefore capable of reinventing all possible forms? (Didi-Huberman, 2018: 15)

These images of the struggles of the subjugated also respond to the need to preserve an iconographic program of the working class, as Georges Sorel had already recognised in the early 20th twentieth century when he argued that language was insufficient and called for “collections of images which, taken together and through intuition alone, before any considered analyses are made, are capable of evoking the mass of sentiments” necessary for the triumph of socialism (Sorel, 2004: 113). As Hesmondhalgh suggests, the working class has often been stigmatised or demonised, but in other cases there has simply been a lack of media attention to the lives, attitudes and values of working-class people, resulting in a “failure of underrepresentation” (2017: 21). Cinema can be an ideal medium for representing these gestures because, as Agamben argues, “a society that has lost its gestures seeks to reappropriate what it has lost while simultaneously recording that loss” (Agamben, 1993: 137).

In view of the above, and adopting the “pragmatic thinking” proposed by Balló and Bergala when approaching cinema’s visual motifs by moving “from objects to ideas” (2016: 11), this exploration is founded on a correspondence identified between three images in *Nación* and *Os días afogados*. Film analysis is thus used here as a surgical tool (Castro de Paz, 2002) that facilitates the dissection of the different layers of meaning in the images based on the concept of political iconology proposed by Boidy (2017), as well as the analysis of composition and editing of the shots, comparing how gestures are presented in the archival images in order to discern their political meaning and potency.

The first of the images analysed here is from *Nación*, in which Margarita Ledo recovers archival material that includes footage filmed by Galicia’s regional public television broadcaster of police officers forcibly dispersing a protest by former workers at the Regojo/Telanosa textile company in the municipality of Redondela in the mid-



Image 1

1980s. Amid the chaos of moving bodies created when the officers attempt to take over the space, one specific confrontation is visible: a woman who, instead of fleeing from the violence, confronts a police officer who is armed with a baton (Image 1).

As part of an anti-patriarchal discourse aimed at reconstructing an alternative history to the hegemonic narrative, throughout her film Ledo uses other archival images that transport us to different conflicts notable for the presence of women: most significantly, the workers' protests at the Pontesa ceramic factory (also in Redondela) in the early 1990s, but also the demonstrations at the Odosa cannery on A Illa de Arousa in 1989, and the protest in the mid-1970s by the villagers of As Encrobas (in the municipality of Cerceda) in opposition to the expropriation of their land by the energy giant Unión Fenosa for a lignite mining project. For this last case, the filmmaker recovers a photograph taken by the reporter Xosé Castro that shows another confrontation

between women and law enforcement agents, where the women form a human barrier in an effort to block the entry of soldiers of the Civil Guard, who are armed with rifles (Image 2).

A similar gesture can be found in another significant recent Galician film, *Os días afogados*: a group of people, including a significant number of women, trying to block the passage of the Civil Guard. As in the case of the protest in As Encrobas, the context is an eco-social conflict: the film deals with the flooding of the villages of Acedo, Buscalque and O Vao (in the municipality of Lobios) and Reloeira (in Entrimo) due to the construction of the Lindoso Dam on the Galician border with Portugal. Shortly before the evacuation of the villagers in 1992, amid hunger strikes and demonstrations, another similar image was captured, with the added force of speech in this case, showing a woman shouting: "Cameras! Cameras! Cameras!" (Image 3).

In this repeated gesture conveying the dispute over a space, along with the reference to the presence of film devices to document what is happening, we find a reflection of the visibility struggles mentioned above, as well as a possible correction to the apparent absence of women in such contexts. However, to achieve Didi-Huberman's idea

Image 2





IN THIS REPEATED GESTURE CONVEYING THE DISPUTE OVER A SPACE, ALONG WITH THE REFERENCE TO THE PRESENCE OF FILM DEVICES TO DOCUMENT WHAT IS HAPPENING, WE FIND A REFLECTION OF THE VISIBILITY STRUGGLES MENTIONED ABOVE, AS WELL AS A POSSIBLE CORRECTION TO THE APPARENT ABSENCE OF WOMEN IN SUCH CONTEXTS

of constructing a cultural history, bodies and images of past and present must be placed in relation to each other. In doing so in this case, another, invisible gesture is revealed: the act of the filmmakers who recover archival records of other struggles and bring them to the attention of the public once more. This is a common practice in Galician cinema, found in earlier films that have used footage of the protests against the Regojo textile company in *O imperio téxtil* [The Textile Empire] (Cuchi Carrera, 2003), the fight to save the village of As Encrobas in *As Encrobas: a ceo aberto* [As Encrobas: In the Open Air] (Xosé Bocixa, 2007) and various eco-social or labour disputes. In Spanish cinema more broadly, gestures and conflicts of this kind

are documented in films such as *Land Underwater* (Urpean lurra, Maddi Barber, 2019) and *The Year of the Discovery* (El año del descubrimiento, Luis López Carrasco, 2020). Contemporary Galician cinema also includes explorations of the 1977 demonstrations against the opening of a nuclear power station in Xove in *CCCV – Cine Clube Carlos Varela* (Ramiro Ledo, 2005), the aforementioned Orosa protest in *Doli, doli, doli... coas conserveiras. Rexistro de traballo* [Doli, Doli, Doli... With the Canning Factory Workers: A Work Record] (Uqui Permui, 2010) and the strike in the port city of Vigo in *Vigo 1972* (Roi Cagiao, 2017). Significantly, these films trace a timeline connecting the frictions of the final years of the Franco regime and the subsequent transition to democracy with others associated with the establishment of Spain's autonomous regions and the country's entry into the European Union, events marked by conflicts between different narratives.

The aims of this research are oriented towards identifying the implications of these political gestures (particularly in the productions cited, but also in other Galician films over the last two decades), which occurred in the context of social conflicts and disputes over the narratives constructed to explain them. To this end, a method

is needed that will allow us to examine the gestures being enacted both in front of and behind the camera. As Ingrid Guardiola points out, images “need to be considered in relation to the contexts in which they circulate and their uses—both those predetermined by the author and those activated by the viewer” (2019: 29). The use of archival material in these films gives it a creative reception and a new opportunity for circulation. In this way, in its new context the original image is affected by the “archive effect”, which Jaimie Baron (2020: 138–39) associates with our awareness of the disparity be-

Image 3



tween images identified as archival and those created for the new film; but it is also by the “archive affect” produced by this temporal disparity at an emotional level: “not only do we invest archival documents with the authority of the ‘real’ past, but also with the feeling of loss” (Baron, 2013: 37).

With this in mind, and with the aim of examining these images dialectically and exploring the visibility struggles identifiable in the bodies and the films, the films studied here are analysed on two levels. The first involves studying physical gestures and their presence in the images. What do these women’s bodies do? How are they contextualised in the image? What do they tell us about the history of social struggles in Galicia? The second requires a consideration of the images in their new context, comparing their contemporary use with their original context. Who originally recorded the images? What uses did they have? How do these new films use the archival material? The objective is thus to understand what images such as these can tell us about the role of women in Galicia’s recent history and the dispute over their narrative (and their visibility) today.

## THE VISIBLE GESTURE: THE WOMAN-AS-BARRIER

The images appropriated in *Nación* and *Os días afogados* are similar to others captured by photojournalists such as Delmi Álvarez or Anna Turbau. Margarita Ledo herself has a close association with Turbau, as in her recent film *Prefiro condenarme* [I’d Rather Be Condemned] (2024) she uses Turbau’s photographs of the Conxo psychiatric hospital. Turbau was present at the As Encrobas demonstrations and at the protests against the construction of the *Autoestrada do Atlántico* motorway, and in the aforementioned Regojo/Telanosa confrontation both she and Álvarez documented women forming a human barrier to hold back the security forces. Once again, these images

show the dispute over space and the unequal use of violent force, as the police are usually protected by helmets and armed with batons or rifles while the women wield sticks or umbrellas.

These are recurring images because they record actions that occurred often. They document the phenomenon of *poner el cuerpo* that contradicts any hypothetical notion of the passive condition of women in such contexts. Cabana (2021: 120) suggests that rural Galician women were valued by their communities for demonstrating “disposition”, a capacity for agency in contrast to the passivity and timidity that characterised the woman’s role in other societies. This would mean that the participation of women in collective action during the Franco regime was understood not as a break with traditional gender roles but as the expression of a specific repertoire of protest actions based on “physical presence and public visibility” (Cabana, 2021: 131).

The images reveal that these forms of protest were still common in Galicia in later years—there is a fifteen-year gap between the As Encrobas protests and the Lindoso Dam demonstrations—and were used in industrial labour disputes as well. The threatening agent is the police, who were usually responsible for expelling people from a location, whether public (a road, a railway station) or private (such as properties subject to an expropriation order). Women’s bodies occupy the space and remain there, visible, until the dispute over that space is resolved. This comes close to the visual motif of police violence in public spaces, but here the emphasis is placed more on resistance than on the exercise of force.

In aesthetic terms, this often translates into a simple yet eloquent device for depicting the visibility struggle: prior to the images that document the clash in a single space, the film footage of these confrontations often shows a kind of shot/reverse shot alternating between the people (with a significant proportion of women) and the law enforcement agents approaching the location. It

is usually the police (or Civil Guard) who arrive second. In their efforts to prevent all those bodies from gathering together, they also try to fill the

Images 4, 5 and 6



frame. Power is expressed through control over the visible space, as is made clear in *Nación*: six minutes into the film, Ledo shows us the women of Pontesa gathered at a train station; after one of them looks off-screen (Image 4), two police vans enter the frame (Image 5), followed by images that now show both sides within the contested space (Image 6).

Significantly, the end of this confrontation is left out of the film, as the women are still forming a barrier when we cut to some shots of Nieves Lusquiños, one of the film's protagonists, in footage filmed in the present. In the subsequent scene, from which the first image discussed in this article is taken, there is no shot/reverse shot technique; instead, the film moves directly from a shot of the people (the community) to the conflict shot, with two guards unable to keep the crowd out of a railway station. Once the space has been occupied, the security forces react, bringing in reinforcements to reassert control over the shot.

The shot/reverse shot technique used in the context of the workers' protest also appears in eco-social protests like the one in *Os días afogados*. In this case, the protest takes place outside a barracks, in a scene showing the arrival of significant reinforcements of Civil Guards. Confronting them, the local residents establish an axis of action that leads to a slow, tense advance by the guards against the human barrier, documented in the conflict shot by the cameras that the woman had shouted for, which continues for three minutes (although with a cut betraying a slight change in camera position), until the scene cuts to a woman who has collapsed to the ground in what appears to be a panic attack, in an echo of the hysterical behaviour captured on film by Londe.

These elements point to a visual arrangement in the editing to represent the same gesture in another eco-social dispute (although the presence of women cannot be discerned in this case due to the distance of the camera): the protest against sand extraction at Baldaio beach included in *CCCV*.



The woman-as-barrier thus emerges as a gesture in the protests conveyed in the film footage of such events, distinct from other repertoires of protest actions visible in the films cited above, such as throwing rocks or hunger strikes.

### THE INVISIBLE GESTURE: POTENTIALITY AND POWERLESSNESS

In line with Didi-Huberman and Guardiola, it was argued above that images needed to be considered in relation to their uses and the contexts in which they circulate. In this sense, the presence in the films analysed here of militant film footage—such as footage of the nationalist activist Carlos Varela Veiga in *CCCV* and *Nación*, and of the Salnés Workers' Union (OTTS) in *Nación* and *Doli, doli, doli*—reveals two objectives common in images of this kind: to document something that is not being documented or is normally documented from other perspectives; and to incite action in response to it. These objectives were pursued by screening the films “in exhibition spaces outside commercial cinema circuits, such as film clubs, union chapters, parish churches or support organisations” (Gómez Viñas, 2016: 76).

The objective of documenting points to the absence of an autonomous point of view. This factor has shaped the development of filmmaking in Galicia, where professional film production only really began in 1989 and an industrial sector was not consolidated until decades later. For this reason, militant, amateur and homemade films played a key role in telling the story of contemporary Galicia, resulting in biased narratives, particularly in terms of political action—as Grandío (2017: 36) notes in relation to the absence of public demonstrations in the media during the Spanish transition to democracy—and the participation of women in that action: “with very few exceptions, we have a press that either denies conflict or presents it as genderless” (Cabana, 2021: 121). Recovery and recycling practices in

Galician cinema circulate old footage in regular cinema circuits and serve to correct, complement or contradict the biased or incomplete historical narratives. *Nación* and *Os días afogados* contribute to this movement with the variety of archival sources both films include.

Both films use TV footage, particularly from Galicia's public broadcaster (TVG), as can be seen in several of the scenes analysed. As noted above, historical researchers (much like militant activists) tend to criticise media coverage of social conflicts, and TVG has been subject to such criticism, perhaps even more so in recent years (Pontevedra, 2022). Significantly, both films use raw footage rather than the news reports as they were broadcast: *Nación* offers a glimpse of the artifice when it shows the reporter repeating her introduction in the midst of the conflict between the police and the Pontesa workers. Generally, the footage filmed is shown with ambient sound, without the narrative that a voice-over might impose on the visuals, suggesting a parallel with the inclusion of Xosé Castro's photographs outside their original context in the news reports on As Encrobas in the newspaper *La Voz de Galicia*. The parallel is made even more evident when Ledo includes images from *Navidades en Puentesampayo* (TVE, 1962), a television feature on the Pontesa factory that is clearly propaganda: in *Nación*, these images appear with music replacing the original soundtrack, thereby eliminating a narration that offers a didactic exposition on the factory's cutting-edge technology.

This strategy is in keeping with a tradition of feminist cinema identified by Elena Oroz in her discussion of contemporary Spanish independent documentaries: the “critical interrogation of the archive” (Oroz, 2018: 107–108). It also constitutes a kind of amendment to the narrative of the Franco regime, which can also be construed from the inclusion in *Nación* of an excerpt from *Far from the Trees* (Lejos de los árboles, 1972), a documentary by Jacinto Esteva that was censored at the time for its portrayal of Spain as a country marred by

religious extremism and backwardness. And Ledo also sources material from another documentary, as industrial labour in Galicia appears in a scene showing factory workers leaving for the day, filmed by the pioneering José Gil for his film *Talleres Alonarti. Sociedad La Artística Ltda.* (1928).

In the case of *Os días afogados*, the most significant source is home movies. At both the beginning and the end, the film shows a public screening of amateur footage documenting Aceredo's final days before the village is flooded. We see different houses, the village's last festival, and portraits of its inhabitants, all imbued with a nostalgia that is common when home movies are used, but which here becomes something bleaker: this is not a place that has merely changed, but a place that has disappeared.

Once we understand the origins, uses and contexts of circulation of these materials, the strategies used in the films become clearer. Germán Labrador describes the history of modern Galicia as "a history of the gaze" shaped by the triad of landscape-labour-capital. In this triad, given the extractivism imposed on the land and the battles to stop it, "what is viewed and what is withheld from view" are crucial (2025: para. 1). What *Nación*, *Os días afogados*, CCCV and *Doli, doli, doli* all share is an interest in recovering what was withheld from view, though this is achieved in different ways and leads to different results in each case.

In *Os días afogados*, although it uses strategies associated with feminist cinema, women are not the heart of this film: their presence is more prominent in the archival footage than in the present-day images, and their struggle is secondary to the wistfulness induced by the home movies, which is stressed to the point of becoming the film's focus. The film alternates between the past of a few former inhabitants of Aceredo and their lives two decades later. We see them looking at the expanse of water that now covers their village, performing everyday actions—often in silence, alone or in pairs—in a contrast to the ar-

chival footage that shows larger groups and more intense activity, such as farmwork. This structure foregrounds the archive effect and the archive affect: the alternation between present and past highlights the ageing of the faces and the presence/absence of spaces, constructing a sense of loss that is typical of films of this kind.

This feeling also inevitably appears in *Nación* and *Doli, doli, doli*, which similarly include the present-day lives of the women who fought those battles in the past. In this sense, these films reveal both a potentiality (in their efforts to make a social impact) and a powerlessness. The repeated images (and gestures) of uprising or resistance are often accompanied by present-day images of a very different nature: in contrast to the chaos of the past, the present often appears orderly, associated with slow and deliberate actions or seated interviews. The power of these memories serves to condemn a political paralysis, but it does not always succeed in symbolically distancing itself from it.

Elena Oroz points out how feminist gestures involve the use of "strategies of intervention in and critical opposition to dominant cultural narratives in which the male perspective continues to dominate" (Oroz, 2018: 108). In this respect, *Nación* seems to acquire a militant position through its editing—which, as shown above, constructs a critique of certain narratives present in the archival material—and also through what it films in the present: the police reappear in 2017, sharing the frame with the women who formerly worked at Pontesa, who are now gathered outside a courthouse dressed in yellow vests.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the context of visibility struggles, these films work not only with presence but with the codes that mark that presence. In contrast to the collective images predominant in the archive and to the universal Woman in cinematic depictions, *Nación* also aims to individualise its characters, in a com-

plex system involving a distanced mise-en-scène that combines real workers and actresses. The film also highlights aspects of these women's lives that are usually overlooked and explicitly revives the call to action that characterises militant cinema. A typically overlooked aspect is the presence of the iconic Citroën Dyane 6, which Nieves Lusquiños was able to buy thanks to her job as an industrial worker, thus serving as a symbol of freedom. A call to action is made by Nieves herself: workers and actresses shown at the factory lockers are looking at the camera and talking about their experience, but Nieves chooses to use the moment to warn the audience: "Working without getting paid? Forget it. Don't even think about it, please; don't work for free. To hell with that."

The aim of this article has been to explore how women in the context and historical period studied were portrayed in the past and the significance of their reappearance through the recovery of archival material. In the films analysed—particularly in Lusquiños's look to camera in *Nación*—the relationship between visible and invisible gestures becomes evident. The visible gesture is the act of women who *poner el cuerpo*, putting their bodies on the line to protest worker exploitation or extractivist abuses, documented in footage that at the time was screened in restricted exhibition circuits (as is the case of militant cinema) or that formed part of narratives constructed from the perspectives of people unrelated to the protests (as in television coverage). The invisible gesture is the work of people such as Ledo, who return our attention to these struggles by bringing them back into the present, taking advantage of the democ-

ratiation of filmmaking in Galicia to settle the dispute over the narrative (with varying degrees of nostalgia), relying on media channels and distribution circuits that are still far from hegemonic but nevertheless allow a level of visibility previously unavailable to projects like the ones analysed here. Nieves Lusquiños directly addresses the audience with her frontal gaze to camera, and through the archive affect, her presence in images taken decades apart evokes the iconology of protest present in the appropriated footage, possibly expressing potentiality, as described by Didi-Huberman (2018), which activates desire (for resistance, for change) in the face of power. Some gestures change, others are repeated, but the struggle is the same. ■

## NOTES

- 1 The capital "W" is used deliberately here to refer to the use of the image of the female that authors such as De Lauretis (1990) have analysed in discussions of the dichotomy between the universal "Woman" in cinematic depictions and the gradual shift towards a plurality of women.

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**IN THE CONTEXT OF VISIBILITY  
STRUGGLES, THESE FILMS WORK  
NOT ONLY WITH PRESENCE BUT  
WITH THE CODES THAT MARK THAT  
PRESENCE**

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## “CAMERAS! CAMERAS! CAMERAS!”. WOMEN, ARCHIVES AND STRUGGLE IN CONTEMPORARY GALICIAN CINEMA

### Abstract

Historically, political struggle has often been portrayed as a male domain. The traditional space for women has been associated with care, reproduction and the household, which explains their stereotypical representation and their limited presence in images of protest that are defined by a masculine iconography of uprising and violence. However, the study of certain contemporary Galician documentaries that make use of archival material reveals the recurrence of a different gesture: the woman-as-barrier, confronting the police as they try to forcibly disperse the protestors. The aim of this study is to define a method that facilitates the analysis of this gesture in the films *Nación* (Margarita Ledo, 2020) and *Os días afogados* (César Souto Vilanova and Luís Avilés Baquero, 2015), but also of the invisible gesture of the filmmakers' appropriation of archival footage of past struggles that brings it back into circulation.

### Key words

Archive, social conflict, gender, cinema, documentary, Galicia.

### Authors

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## «¡CÁMARAS! ¡CÁMARAS! ¡CÁMARAS!». MUJERES, ARCHIVO Y LUCHA EN EL CINE GALLEGO CONTEMPORÁNEO

### Resumen

Históricamente, la lucha política ha sido a menudo retratada como un campo masculino. El espacio tradicional para las mujeres se ha ligado a los cuidados, el trabajo reproductivo y la domesticidad, lo que explica su representación estereotipada o su escasa presencia en las imágenes de protesta, vinculadas a una iconografía machista de levantamiento y violencia. Sin embargo, el estudio de una serie de documentales gallegos contemporáneos apoyados en material de archivo muestra la repetición de un gesto diferente: la mujer como barrera, enfrentándose a una carga policial. En este trabajo pretendemos definir un método que nos permita estudiar este gesto en *Nación* (Margarita Ledo, 2020) y *Os días afogados* (César Souto Vilanova y Luís Avilés Baquero, 2015) pero también el gesto invisible por el que diferentes cineastas incorporan el archivo de luchas pasadas y lo ponen de nuevo en circulación.

### Palabras clave

Archivo, conflicto social, género, cine, documental, Galicia.

### Autores

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