(DIS)AGREEMENTS

BODY AS INTERVAL: THE ACTRESS'S PERFORMANCE IN EDITING*

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introduction

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Recalling some of the few films that have shown the editing room on screen, Nicole Brenez mentions the sequence in *Bellissima* (Luchino Visconti, 1951) where Maddalena (Anna Magnani) walks through a cutting room "depicted as a dark basement where poor exploited young girls are working" (Brenez, 2021: 87). In his article "What an Editing Room Is", Harun Farocki writes:

> Editing studios tend to be found in back rooms, basements, or in attics. Much of the work is done outside normal working hours. Editing is a recurring chore and gives rise to solid jobs, yet each cut is a particular effort and one which draws the editor under its spell, making it hard for him [*sic*] to keep work and life apart. [...] Through this winding back and forth you get to know the film very well. Children who have not yet learned to speak will still notice if a spoon is on the wrong hook in the kitchen. With this kind of familiarity, a film becomes a space you can inhabit and feel at home in. (Farocki, 2001: 78)

Very little attention has been given in film studies to the particular ideas applied to address the specific issues posed by each reel of raw footage in the course of the different versions, tests or experiments that characterise the editing process. Often carried out over months, editing is a process of creative rewriting and discovery of the film that goes far beyond mere technical labour. In this sense, Walter Murch suggests—based on the number of hours the editor spends reflecting on or testing different possibilities—that what editing attempts is "not so much a *putting together* as it is a *discovery of a path*, and that the overwhelming majority of an editor's time is not spent actually splicing film" (Murch, 2021: 31).

But what do we know about all the doubts, reflections and ideas that occur to editors over the course of this long, meticulous, tentative exploration? Although they are inscribed in the film like underground layers (each version always remains,

concealed below the next), they are rarely documented, and scholars seldom ponder or explore filmmaking from this perspective. The idea behind this dialogue is therefore to explore this specific knowledge that tends to be kept concealed inside the editing room, to reflect on actresses' performances on the basis of their composition in the editing process and the new elements that process creates or draws out. Returning to Farocki:

> At the editing table you learn how little plans or intentions have to do with producing pictures. Nothing you have planned seems to work. [...] At the cutting table you discover that the shooting has established new subject matter. At the cutting table a second script is created, and it refers not to intentions, but to actual facts. (Farocki, 2001: 78, 80)

In this process, the editor engages sensitively with the film footage and with the actresses, understanding them—and their bodies—based on their rhythms, pauses, tones or gestures (particularly the most suggestive ones), in an emotional poetics that involves an experience of feeling with them, internalising them or mimicking them—even physically in the act of editing—to be able to put the process into words, out of which arise associations between images and sounds, as well as intervals.

Julia Juániz's editing credits include the Carlos Saura films *Tango* (1998), *Goya in Bordeaux* (Goya en Burdeos, 1999) and *The 7th Day* (El 7º día, 2004), as well as *Alumbramiento* [Childbirth] (Víctor Erice, 2002) and *The Sky Turns* (El cielo gira, Mercedes Álvarez, 2004). Ana Pfaff has edited films by Carla Simón, Carolina Astudillo and Adrián Orr, as well as *The Sacred Spirit* (Espíritu sagrado, Chema García Ibarra, 2021) and *Foremost by Night* (Sobre todo de noche, Víctor Iriarte, 2023). Finally, Ariadna Ribas is a regular editor for Albert Serra—with credits including *The Death of Louis XIV* (La Mort de Louis XIV, 2016) and *Pacifiction* (2022)—and for Elena Martín—*Julia Is* (Julia Ist, 2017) and *Creatura* (2023)—and also edited Neus Ballús's *The Odd-Job Men* (Sis dies corrents, 2021). As the Dostopos collective, Ana and Ariadna have also worked together on *Southern Brides* (Las novias del sur, Elena López Riera, 2023) and both are lecturers in the postgraduate program in editing at UPF-BSM (Universitat Pompeu-Fabra-Barcelona School of Management). ■

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discussion

Could you describe the viewing process and the points of attention or tension that guide your first choices of material? When you start viewing the footage, what elements grab your attention first in the actresses' performances (e.g. gestures, tone of voice, photogénie, relationships with other characters)?

Julia Juániz

I like to be able to get a copy of the script before they start filming. I feel it is essential to establish a dialogue with the director in order to exchange opinions. Based on that premise, I'm also keen on attending script readings, especially for a fiction film, because that's how you can find out what the cinematographer, art designers, etc., are thinking. In that reading/meeting you start getting to know the people on the film crew, which is very useful. I want to have the proximity and confidence to be able to say things. And then I'm in keen on attending the film shoot. I try to contribute something during filming, and I even learn a lot about how they do things. After that, when my work on the film starts, I study the script thoroughly. I study every change of sequence, how it's written, the characters, and I think, if I haven't been told who's acting, which actor for me would be the ideal one for that character... It's like I'm internalising the film. When I'm editing, that part becomes less important and I'm looking at what they bring, what has actually been filmed. I only return to the script if I have a doubt.

For me, the first shot I see of the film is decisive; I mean, the first frame, or the first two seconds of any take, whatever they've filmed, it doesn't matter. If I see something special for the film there, I already have something; it's like that image touches me. It's like seeing for the first time: the landscape, if there's a car, you see whether there's colour in the actress's face, how her hair is done, how she's dressed... I always tell my assistants that this first moment for me is sacred. So the way of looking at the footage is very sensitive; I have to do it carefully because I want to understand what I feel, what I think... I look for the emotions.

Based on these first impressions I begin to analyse how the actor performs the role, how she speaks the dialogue, and so on. In the first few

days your assessment might be clumsier, in your choices you use your intuition a lot, all the knowledge gained from what you read in the script, but once you've got a few sequences done you start to understand better what the film is like. I also pay a lot of attention to the actors' gestures, whether they're in character or not. And finally, when choosing a shot, I place a lot of importance on the camera movements, the framing of the shot and the sound. And, above all, ensuring that the direct sound is good. Finally, it is essential that the actresses make me believe them; that I totally believe in what I'm watching.

Ariadna Ribas

The first viewing is crucial; it defines your first impressions and marks the relationship you establish with the material. Most of the time I view everything before I start editing and only then do I decide how to approach the process. Viewing all the raw footage helps me to get a "bird's eye view" of what has been filmed, a better understanding of the evolution of the characters—and the performances of the actors and actresses—and a sense of the ideas behind the execution of each shot. One way or another, the film begins to reveal itself in its most embryonic state.

It's that first viewing that shapes my relationship with the material: what elements seem important to me—sometimes there's something you love, that surprises you and stays etched in your memory—or what things don't interest me as much or that I even sense may end up left out of the final cut. You establish a kind of emotional relationship with these rushes, before you start making a more rational and considered judgement.

At that time I also find it really important to take notes by hand. I recently read that writing by hand helps lock in mental processes in a deeper way and I think it's true. It allows me to connect with what I'm watching and fix it in my memory. I write down by hand what grabs my attention, and I even think the act of writing itself gives me information about what I take note of.

And on a purely practical level, when I'm working with the editing program I highlight every shot that I find interesting in some way in the timeline to differentiate it from the others, as I find it really useful to have these visual guides. It allows me right away to see what I liked, what passed the first filter. In that first viewing I try not to go too far into the details; I try not to lose sight of the overall experience. The more precise perspective comes in the second viewing, when I take more detailed notes about the footage.

When we start editing a scene, often in collaboration with the director, we review the rushes again. And that's where your perception can change. It's interesting to check your notes from the first viewing and discover things you hadn't noticed before or that take on different nuances now.

In general, in the case of fiction films, for me the first and biggest determining factor of whether something works or not is, above all, the acting. The staging and the camera are also important, of course, but what really makes the most impact for me is the actors' performances. When something isn't working, I almost always detect it first in the acting. In general, I can put up with a less precise camera or staging, but if the performance is good, or even if something special, unexpected or unplanned happens, that's what hooks me in. That's what I find thought-provoking. That's the heart of everything.

I realise that, for me, this is sometimes more important than it is even for the director, who is perhaps more focused on camera issues or narrative intentions. As I come into that first viewing of the footage as more of a "virgin", I concentrate on detecting whether it is true, whether something genuine is happening. And when it isn't, the search for that something becomes part of the editing work.

This process is a form of filtering. I would say it's a question not of *improving the acting*, but of re-

moving layers, of trying to get to something more essential, which is exactly what I try to identify right from the first viewing.

All this happens inside the shot, even before we place it in relation to others. There is another dimension: the fact of putting shots in relation to each other creates energy flows, emotional and narrative rhythms that are inevitably connected to the performances of the actors, to their timing, and also to the delivery of the information: what is revealed, what is withheld. The emotional weight of each moment can guide you in one direction or another, depending on what is made known, what can be intuited or what is still kept concealed.

Ana Pfaff

I always take notes right from the first viewing. They're quite intuitive and closely tied to feelings. Sometimes I point out very specific things, like "this line works" or "that gesture has something special about it," and sometimes I just write: "Something is happening here that I don't know how to explain." I even make drawings that only I will understand. It's as if I need to translate what I feel into my own visual, almost corporeal language.

Over time I've sharpened my perception a lot. Now I focus on details that I might not have noticed before: a sparkle in a character's eye, a blink, a slight inclination of the head. We've developed a very keen sensitivity to read the micro-movements of the face. Sometimes I surprise myself by getting obsessed with tiny differences between one shot and another, and I ask myself: "What is happening to me?" But often that's where the key is, where something changes, even if you don't quite know why.

There are some things that can't be put into words. I suppose that's why I sometimes talk about magnetism, gravity. It's a very physical intuition, which doesn't obey a rational logic. I remember a scene in *Alcarràs* (Carla Simón, 2022), for example, where I looked at all the takes and I knew clearly right away which one I wanted. In the film shoot another take had been marked as the good one, but when we looked at it at the editing table it was obvious that it wasn't the one. There's something that only gets revealed there, in the work with the captured image.

It also has to do with how the actors' bodies relate to the camera. If you're filming with camera in hand, the tiniest thing changes your perception: the position, the distance, the space around a body... everything is affected. The camera is also a body, and its movement really conditions the emotion that a scene conveys.

There is a kind of red line that I always keep in mind: the moment you can tell that the actor is conscious about what they're doing. It can be a tiny gesture, a slight change of the gaze. Between two almost identical shots, one is true and the other is self-conscious. And it shows. The take that isn't "acted" consciously is always more powerful. I wouldn't know how to explain it technically, but you can feel it. I'm not thinking so much in terms of character construction, but in the emotion that resides in a gesture, a silence, or a reaction.

That creates a very profound connection with the films I edit, not in terms of authorship, but in terms of vision: of how I see people, the world, through editing. And sometimes I wonder: Do I feel these films are mine because I choose to work with directors I connect with? Or is it the process itself that makes me inhabit these stories until they become a part of me? I'm not sure, but I do know that there's something of that embodied empathy, that emotional immersion, that stays with you.

In your daily practice, how do you deal with differences in acting registers? How do you manage to find the character among the different tones or nuances of each actress? How do you negotiate between what you imagined and the actual material?

Julia Juániz

In general, the actors in the films I've had to edit have been very good. I haven't had the need to start from scratch or change something completely. I've always started with what was there, and I feel it had a correlation with what was in the script. Even so, when you're editing you construct the characters with a particular rhythm and tone of voice for each film, so what I look for in an actress is for her to move me and allow me to see what the character is thinking, and often I have to make that visible. As an editor I can't just cut the shot anywhere; I have to base my decisions on the character's emotions or on what she wants to convey, what she's thinking about when she's looking at something, and so on. Sometimes I really like it when an actress or actor is acting or looking one way and you're feeling or seeing something else. For example, whenever I worked with Carlos Saura, he would always tell me the same thing: "Julia, you're holding two films in your head, not one." He was very funny because I would tell him what I saw in certain things, multiple meanings, and he would laugh. He was a lot of fun, although he always seemed very serious. But I always remember that he would often say to me: "Julia, you're holding two films; people aren't going to get both of them." But I have to edit the films so that people can get all the details of the actors and the whole narrative using different structures and ways of storytelling.

For me, spectators have to be active; they have to discover things little by little, which means I have to hide, conceal, supply the information little by little and never in a repetitive way.

Ana Pfaff

For me, in editing, a key part is being very attentive to the bodies as expressive material, not only in the narrative, but also in the moods, in moments that are almost choreographic. It's important to find the specific qualities of the characters through their use of gestures, the way they move, walk, touch. Everything that allows us to discover something of their identity.

For example, in the film I just finished editing, *Romería* (Carla Simón, 2025), one of the big fears, or what we talked about a lot with Carla, was whether the protagonist was too "soft", whether she looked like a naïve kid, more of an observer than an active agent. In the casting we had other options: a girl who was more stunning, more sexualised, with a different power. And during the editing process the doubt came up: what would the film have been like if we'd chosen the other girl? It was interesting, because the actress we finally chose has something really lovely and specific, although she's not the type of actress that tends to predominate in films today. She has a very particular way of walking. I remember that at first, while looking at the rushes, I talked to Sergio Jiménez (the other editor) and we said: "She looks a little clumsy here coming out of the water," but we thought it was great that she looked like that.

And, in the editing, keeping those moments was key. For example, if at one point you walk in a special way, it's better than if you did it the "right" way. Or if you have a peculiar gesture, like touching your nose in a strange way or sitting differently, those things are essential to the construction of that unique character. Ultimately, those gestures are what prevent us all from just being clones.

In terms of sensuality, the mother's character had a part that was worked on much more in that sense, due to her relationship with the father/cousin. Although there are nude scenes, their function wasn't to sexualise the naked body but to normalise it, in the context of an era (the 1980s), of the hippie movement, of a naturalism aimed for in the mise-en-scène. I remember that various people in the sector, such as sales agents or distributors, commented that they didn't understand why the naked body was shown so much at certain moments. But our intention was precisely to normalise the female body in a context that wasn't sexualising it.

Physical and emotional transformations like this are revealed above all in the editing. In *A nuestros amigos* [To Our Friends] (Adrián Orr, 2024), for example, we can see clearly how the body of the protagonist, Sara, changes over the course of four years, how her energy becomes softer, how her femininity is transformed. Or in *Facing the Wind* (Con el viento, Meritxell Colell, 2018), Mònica García's body at the beginning is very tense, very hard, and then slowly begins to open up. The editing follows this change: at first, close and fragmented shots; at the end, more air, more space, more time.

In *Summer 1993* (Estiu 1993, Carla Simón, 2017) the casting was crucial. Carla looked for a girl with an emotional darkness, like her at that age. Laia Artigas had that look, that tension. In the editing, we often picked up odd spontaneous gestures that weren't part of the action, but that added a look of truth. Some people even said: "The girl doesn't smile in the whole film." And that was just what we wanted to bring out: that contained emotional tension, which is finally released in the last scene with crying. That crying is a beginning, not an ending.

For me, editing is always an empathetic task. Sometimes I notice how my body reacts physically while I'm looking at the footage, as if I'm mimicking it unconsciously. It's a way to connect with what's happening, not to get stuck on the narrative level. I talk a lot about feelings of weight, gravity, almost like they do in dance. About rhythms, accents, intensities. In the end, this whole process has to do with how we inhabit the film from within. Editing isn't just organising a story: it's understanding how the bodies that inhabit it feel, how they transform and how they transform us too.

In my editing process, it's also important to point out that I usually work on the voice separately from the image. Working with voices and tone is something we always focus on. We've also discussed this with Carla, because in her films—especially when we're working with non-professional actors—we need to do exhaustive work on the audio. In *Alcarràs*, this was key: when working with non-professional actors, you have to find the exact tone for each one. Sometimes a take wasn't perfect, but it was genuine. With actresses like Ana Torrent or Lola Dueñas you can refine it more, because the control they have of their bodies and emotions is impressive. But the challenge is to balance everything so that nobody is "out of tune". In *Foremost by Night* (Sobre todo la noche, Víctor Iriarte, 2023), one of the most delicate parts was working with the voice-overs. At first, I thought it would be necessary to re-record them, but finally we managed to integrate them by editing word for word, with a lot of attention to the tone. This painstaking work allowed the voice to accompany the image without undermining its emotional force.

For the acting, I like to use timeline blocks, which in my case is a list of responses or lines, just for the audio. Some people work on it based on the visuals, but I don't. For the visuals, I go to the rushes and work with complete takes, maybe because I find it more immediate to see what is visually interesting in one take, while the audio is something more abstract and difficult to identify in each one. That's why I review the audio takes over and over, comparing tonalities and checking for nuances. In editing, we often dub the actors with their own lines, which opens up a range of possibilities. The visuals are enhanced by the different audio ver-

sions; we can tweak and fine-tune the tonalities in the performance, and that, for me, is crucial.

Ariadna Ribas

Sometimes I think my work is similar to acting. I ask myself: "Would this character do this? Would they act this way?" If something doesn't fit with its moment of action, we cut it. That logic gives me a lot of clues about the characters. I remember, for example, that the first assembly cut for *Julia Is* (Julia Ist, Elena Martín, 2017) was put together quite quickly, adhering very closely to the script. That allowed me to identify something that usually happens in the first viewings: the story tends to be told from outside rather than inside the character. It's common for the first cuts to prioritise clear understanding of the story, even though some attention may be given to the acting. But the focus is usually on the structure, on external time rather than on the internal experience.

With *Julia Is*, I noticed it especially in the treatment of time: the boredom, the character's worries, everything was observed from a distance, from outside the character, through descriptive actions. So we began working on shifting this: slowly moving into the point of view of the character, to tell the story from her place in time. It was a great learning experience. For the first time, I felt that the editing was transforming the film completely, bringing it emotionally closer to the character.

I took advantage of something that at first seemed naïve to me, but that proved very useful: since the film was highly autobiographical, I asked Elena about specific aspects of her experience. "How did you feel when you arrived in Berlin?" and "How did you feel about your return to Barcelona, after everything you'd experienced on the Erasmus [exchange program]?" That helped us a lot, for example, to find the ending. We had tried some endings where the protagonist resolved or closed certain plotlines or conflicts that arise throughout the film, but something didn't seem to fit. After going over it a few times we sat down with Elena to talk. I asked her that question about how she had really felt about her return, and her answer was: "I just felt unsure about what to do with my life." That helped us understand that the ending needed to be much more open than what we were initially aiming for. So the key to that and other decisions was to draw from the real experience, from the character.

In *Creatura* (Elena Martín, 2023) Elena also plays a leading role, and it is again a film very much focused on the character. Because I had worked with her a couple of times, I knew her a little better as an actress, and that's where another job begins: detecting acting "tics" and neutralising them. For example, systematically hesitating when speaking to make it seem natural, or making gestures like raising your hand to your head to express intense thought; when they become automatic, these things become clichés. We talked a lot with Elena because she is also very interested in looking at these things, and she herself was surprised to see how they worked. But it's interesting to understand them in order to avoid them.

In *Creatura* there was also a very rich and complex mix of actors: natural, professional, performers with backgrounds in the theatre or the circus, from television series, children with no prior experience... And that requires careful tonal fine-tuning. Oriol Pla, for example, can go from clowning around to an intimate register in the same scene. Elena has quite a natural presence, but with certain marked gestures (or "tics", as I said before) that can sometimes appear, which we decided to soften. Theatre actors tend to emphasise the text and with children it's hard to film long takes or do exact repetitions... they work through play. All of this conditions the editing style. In the scenes with children, for example, we had to work with shots of shorter duration, using elliptical cuts and even montage sequences with music. In the childhood section of *Creatura*, this was very clear: the pacing was more fragmented, more energetic. On the other hand, in the adulthood section, with professional actors,

with more control and precision, the approach could be measured and contained. This radically changes how you treat time, the points where you cut, the construction of the action.

The same thing happens in Albert Serra's films. You've got professional actors together on the set with people with no training in acting, performers and people with backgrounds in other fields. The question is how to unify these styles without erasing the differences and the particular and interesting qualities of each one, to ensure there is a dialogue, an internal coherence. This doesn't mean that everyone has to be in the same register, but it does mean that they need to be able to coexist.

Interestingly, I've found one element that occurs a lot with all of them: difficulties with controlling their hands. Actors' hands are a whole world of their own. If you don't give them something to do with them, they become a problem. It may be that when they make an effort to say their lines, that effort tends to be expressed physically, often through redundant gestures.

In *The Death of Louis XIV* (La Mort de Louis XIV, Albert Serra, 2016), for example, with Jean-Pierre Léaud, some shots had to be cut out for that reason: his gestures were exaggerated, affected. Sometimes we even used masking (image editing) to keep his hands still. When they're used to highlight something that should be happening internally, gestures become obstacles.

In fact, I'm currently working on a project, Gabriel Azorín's *Anoche Conquisté Tebas* [Last Night I Conquered Thebes], where we're using this image editing technique a lot to change the actors' hand movements, expressions or other physical gestures, within the shot itself and with image masking, which we believe help a lot to polish their performances.

There is another less visible but equally important dimension: voice and intonation. I like the idea that intonation is "the gesture of the voice". In editing, we work a lot with that: we use lines (audio) from one take with the image of another take. If the intonation is better in one take but, for whatever reason, the visuals are better in another, they can be combined. It's a powerful resource. If we could do the same thing with gestures it would be ideal, but there we come into the realm of visual effects that are much more complex to apply. This ability to tweak the acting through the sound allows us to refine details and enhance intentions. And as many actors have the ability to repeat takes with a very similar tempo, it usually works very well. It's an invisible but very effective tool.

Between revealing and concealing, what role does editing play in the narrative and sensory construction of the body? In the case of female characters, how do you work with the interval between inherited gestures or models and new subjectivities? What lived, aesthetic or collaborative learning experiences with other women have been decisive for your way of editing today?

Julia Juániz

Well, I think that when you do editing, what influences you a lot is your own life and your mental and physical experience of everything, of knowledge, of how you move. Even knowing how to dig in a garden. Those basic things that aren't important to people; to me, they are. If I see someone digging in a garden and doing it wrong, I think it's a disaster. In filmmaking, I ask myself questions constantly; I mean, my job as an editor is always to ask myself things, even if I have no answers. I've got some information, but my head needs to be free as well to get inside the head of the spectator, who doesn't know, and what clues I'll gradually give them to discover.

This means that filmmaking creates tensions and emotions. You have to give the spectators the chance to experience through someone else's body or through other things that they don't have access to in their lives. In my experience, in my editing I always put myself in the other's skin; I embody the character, trying to see life from their perspective, with their subjectivity and complexity. I need to live it and feel it, and to do that what I experience in my own life is very important.

In the editing room, I make decisions based on my own life. For example, with an actress I always try to understand the timing of her lines and pauses, and at the same time I need to understand the character's. So I have to have that character inside me to be able to make good cuts, pauses and breaths. I experience the dialogues through myself, the life experiences I've had with those or similar issues, and from there I work out how I would respond. Normally, I'm very much guided by the timing, the breaths, how the character thinks and takes time to think; that's part of the dialogue. Sometimes, as an editor, you also have to leave that time for the other to think. If a character is giving important information that another character needs to receive, you have to create or construct those pauses and that timing in the editing, because perhaps the actor hasn't given it or marked it. I take inspiration from life, from how people talk to each other, how they express heavy or important news, and I reproduce that in the editing. So I always say that experiences are very important. I couldn't edit anything that went against my ideas, where a woman would be made to look terrible. I think my job is also to educate and to move forward with the times.

Regarding collaboration I can say that in general I have worked very little with other women, especially when I was getting started. In my case, the fact I didn't have a background in film was also a factor; I had studied for a different career, but I was always interested in filmmaking and I got into editing quickly. After four years I became a lead editor. Starting out was hard for me. I began in 1990 in Madrid, and things were very different from now. For example, I'm envious when you [young editors] talk about and show your edits to each other; that's what I would have wanted to do. But back then any other editor would be seen as a rival, and that was terrible. Now it has changed, and I'm really thrilled that it has. I had to learn more on my own and by reviewing the work of other filmmakers. But since my life is filmmaking I always keep studying different narratives: jumping from experimental cinema to classic cinema, and so on. There are a lot of women I've studied that I'm totally spellbound by, including Elena Jordi, Cecilia Mangini, Margot Benacerraf, Maya Deren, Agnès Varda and Chantal Akerman. Every time I see a film of theirs I learn something new.

Ana Pfaff

I can talk about working with the [Deleuzian] interval between bodies based on *Romería*, where it is associated mainly with a question of the era, as it's set in the 1980s, a time when the body represented a site of liberation; it was more uninhibited. Moreover, it's not just the body but also what the characters do. What does the mother do? What does the daughter do? The daughter has a way of doing things that we could say is much more childish, but as I said with Carla, we also liked to question it. Because although the daughter doesn't have this liberated body, it is because of a clear decision: "I'm not interested."

For example, there's a moment when she says: "No, I'm not interested in boys; I don't want to have a boyfriend." There was a kind of assumption that a girl her age had to experience that sexual liberation, but in her case she simply doesn't feel like it at that point in her life. It's interesting how that part is not seen as a "liberation" but as a kind of activism in its own way. That interval is not so obvious; it's subtler.

We started working together with Carla well before *Romería*, on her short film *Lacuna* (Llacunes, Carla Simón, 2016). Her mother's letters, which would later appear in *Romería*, were also in that film. I thought it was a really beautiful short. Carla travels to the places where her mother wrote the letters: from the summer gatherings when she was a child, to the last ones, where she writes, for example, about taking an acid trip or about her wish for her brother to take care of her daughter when she dies. These letters run through a whole life. Carla shot the film with a handycam, reading aloud, but never appearing in the shot. Yet we feel her presence constantly behind the camera. That idea always seemed really beautiful to me: a filmmaker looking for her mother through the act of filming, knowing that she'll never find her, but she does it anyway.

In *Romería*, that idea is transformed. Now it's not just a search for an absent mother, but an attempt to reconstruct and imagine a life: the protagonist's parents' life. There is a shift. In the short film, Carla was filming an absence. In the feature film, that absence is filled with imagination, fiction, desire. It's not just a question of seeking, but of embodying, of living what was never lived. And that transformation seems very powerful to me.

There was a very important moment in the process of editing *Romería*, where Marina's character appears filming with a camera. That element was not in the original script; it was proposed much later on. Carla said: "Gosh, this has to be there. It's important for her to have a camera, right?" Why does Marina take this journey? Because she's a filmmaker. We worked a lot on those moments in the editing: she is shown filming in the beginning, then when she sees her grandparents, and then at last in the final shot. That last shot, with Marina filming her family, was a very significant decision. It wasn't in the first cuts, and when we added it everything took on another dimension. It was necessary to end with that act: that's where the filmmaker is born. When the film ends, we sense that she has accomplished something, but it also raises a question: What does all this mean?

All the footage filmed on the handycam was essential, not only as a visual resource, but as a subjective device. It allowed us to connect Marina with the locations, with the memory, with the reconstruction. In the editing, we were constantly making connections between the parents' past and the daughter's gaze: the cameras, the places, the gestures. All this allowed us to paint those spaces from the perspective of Marina's imagination as well. Working with that device was key to ensuring a resonance with the dream world, with the part of the dream.

I'm also deeply interested in working with archives in relation to the body. In *Southern Brides* (Las novias del sur, Elena López Riera, 2024), for example, we worked a lot with that idea. We talked to Elena about how the wedding becomes a mise-en-scène for the female body: white, pure, on the verge of being deflowered. There is a theatricality in the rite that places the woman's body at the heart of it. With the archive footage we decided to work on very specific motifs: for example, the hands. We started with waiting hands. And the last shot we edited was of a woman listening to the priest, who looks at her hands and makes a hesitant gesture, as if wondering: "What am I doing here?" A tiny gesture that contradicted the idealised image of the rite.

In another sequence, we used a very unsettling video of a visibly nervous bride. The person filming kept on zooming in on her face. We edited all these zooms together to create a growing tension. The camera became something aggressive or invasive. It was a very powerful moment in the film because right at that point they start talking about how to break with the official discourse of love. I thought a lot about *Amateur* (Martín Gutiérrez, 2022), which also works with zooms on his grandmother's body, but with a different idea: an affective, almost tactile zoom. And I liked to think of that same gesture of zooming in as something

that could be intimate or violent, depending on the context.

In *Ainhoa, yo no soy esa* [Ainhoa, That's Not Me] (Carolina Astudillo Muñoz, 2018), there were also some very powerful moments with archive footage. There is a sequence where we hear one of Ainhoa's last letters, written after she'd become very disconnected from life. We edited the letter with night-time shots of her in a bar, filmed with an infrared camera. It created a really ghostly atmosphere, almost like a farewell. Another key scene was when Patxi, Ainhoa's brother, recounts how she died. Carolina made it clear that she wanted to use some footage of them playing in a pool when they were children. What we did was to edit that sequence so that they were always under the water; we never let them out. That created a feeling of confinement, of a shortage of air. Then, when he talks about what was believed to be an accident, we edited all the moments when Ainhoa threw herself over and over again into the water, and the children's game was transformed into something extremely violent. And at the end, when they jump in together holding hands, it becomes a metaphor for the brutal separation of the siblings after her death.

All of this has to do with how the editing becomes a way of contemplating the body, the image, the aesthetic experience. Sometimes what guides you are your own physical reactions. Sometimes while I'm editing, I begin to gesticulate or move my face without realising it, as if my body were responding to what it's watching. That is also part of the reading process. That's why it's so important to try to put into words what you feel when you're editing. Although it can be hard, even if you don't have the exact words, the effort to verbalise helps you to understand what you've experienced, to communicate not only with other women, but also with yourself. To say: "I don't know what has happened to me, but I need to recount it." And by putting it into words, you begin to understand.

In fact, we spend most of the time at the editing table reflecting, talking, doubting. But I don't like the idea of "therapeutic editing" that is often used to describe this, because it implies a one-way relationship. For me it's the opposite: it's about caring. It's not "I listen to you so that you can unburden yourself"; it's mutual support, working together through dialogue, caring and listening. This also has to do with the fact that a lot of us started work outside the industry, editing at home, sharing meals, time and processes, and that creates different types of connections.

Ariadna Ribas

I think it would be really interesting for everyone working in filmmaking—cinematographers, art designers, film crew, actors, etc.—to spend a few days in the editing room to understand what we do and how our work complements and enhances theirs. In fact, on a couple of occasions I've had actors or actresses thank me for the editing work, not because I've "improved" their acting, but because they've understood that editing is a collaborative job that supports and fine-tunes their performance, where we try to get the greatest brilliance out of their work.

In the editing process, like in the film I'm doing now with Gabriel, focusing on a single setting (some Roman baths) and in the work with the actors, we spent days reviewing shots over and over again, analysing details. This should be the norm, but often there's no time. Watching a shot over and over doesn't wear it out; it provides an opportunity to explore its nuances. The director and his co-writer, who is a stage creator with a close relationship with the theatre, talked about how during filming the directions need to "pass through the body". For us, the editors, there's a similar process: we have to translate the first impressions that an image (or a sound) gives us. And it's also through the body that we experience so that we can name something, and we name it so that we can better understand what viewing the

material does to us, whether in terms of rhythm, tone or emotion.

For me, it's important to understand what the camera really captures, because the greatest power is not always in the obvious gestures, but in what happens underneath, in what is hinted at or left undone. In Albert Serra's films, for example, there's a lot "left undone", an unlearning that is reminiscent of Bresson and his use of repetition to erase automatic and established gestures.

In Albert's films, there's no traditional narrative, there's no search for the characters' emotional arc or psychologising; instead, there is an approach through the senses—light, sound, rhythm—that envelops the character in states close to paranoia or exhaustion. It was like that in *Pacifiction* (Albert Serra, 2022), for example, where everything was more geared towards creating an atmosphere, constructing something purely cinematic, in the most formal or aesthetic sense of the language: with the use of sound and visual composition, trying to create an ambient density.

There was a character in that film who had to be played by an actress, but on the first day of shooting we realised that she didn't fit the tone of the film. She was a girl from the world of music and fashion, and she gave the impression that she was constantly posing, very conscious of the camera. This didn't square with the method proposed by Albert, and the simple fact of not being part of this dynamic made her very disruptive: she was so out of place that not a single scene could be made with her. We had to cut that character from the film, but in the end another one came in. And it was wonderful, because a completely unexpected character appeared: a trans actress who gave the film a lot of power, and who also had a very good connection with the protagonist, Benoît Magimel. I explain this because I was on the film shoot, I saw the rushes for that first scene, and I was able to participate in that decision. When I'm not on the shoot, I have to work with those things in the editing room, and you have much less room to move there because everything has already been filmed.

In *Creatura,* on the other hand, there is a clear narrative, a well-defined arc and a central subjectivity. That means thinking a lot about how the spectator gets to know the character, how we support that process. Work on the structure is important to determine how time is ordered, how scenes are located to reveal or withhold certain pieces of information about the story or the character, to understand what is happening to her.

Again, in the beginning we had an assembly edit that was closer to the script, where the time jump from the adult Mila (the protagonist) to her adolescence happened quite early. But that meant that the construction of the character was cut very short, and it wasn't very clear what was happening to her, what her conflict was.

We decided to rearrange some of the scenes and provide more emotional information at the beginning—in this first section about Mila as an adult—so that the spectator could understand more about her conflict before entering the teenage section, where some specific situations related to Mila's sexuality are more directly addressed. The goal was to put Mila rather than the couple at the heart of the conflict, so that instead of being understood as something shared by them both, the conflict is viewed as Mila's personal crisis in relation to her body and her desire. All of this was worked on through the editing. And that's where the editing becomes crucial: to deliver the information in doses, to focus the meaning of the scenes (the story you want to tell or what you want to convey), to find the character's timing or decide when we need to go to one place or another in her arc.

Elena and Clara Roquet told me that while writing the script they worked on the structure with the idea of the female orgasm in mind. They had read an article by Britt Marling, who argued that when you analyse the classic structures of films (conflict in *crescendo*, explosion and anticlimax), these narratives reflect an experience

associated with the male orgasm. Stories have always been told from that perspective. What they wondered was: what would happen if we thought about the story from the perspective of the female body and the female orgasm, which is perhaps more of a coming and going than a linear progression in *crescendo*? When we had doubts about the structure of Mila's ages (adulthood, adolescence and childhood), we came back to that idea and that was why we decided to respect the structure of time jumps proposed in the script.

On the other hand, we also tried to be very careful when explaining Mila's sexual conflict. We know that this is a woman who has a problem with her own body, an Oedipal relationship with her father and a bad relationship with her mother. When exploring the question about the origins of this trauma, we found that there was a fairly widespread idea that sexual trauma is always linked to abuse in childhood. And that was how the film read. Instead, the story we were trying to tell is that Mila's trauma is the result of the micro-abuses we are subject to every day as women: the shame imposed on us in relation to our bodies and their free expression, the repression of desire, and so on. We wanted to focus on those little things in the protagonist's life, especially in childhood, to render visible those little signals, those little acts of violence. That was one of the biggest challenges.

In Elena López Riera's *Southern Brides*, the idea is: "I'm going to break that chain of repeated gestures." Because I'm not going to be a mother, I'm not going to get married, I'm not going to play that role I've been told to play… when I was told "when you're a mother you'll understand", right?

For this film, what we did at first was to analyse a lot of material from wedding records, both film footage and photographs. And in the end, what we found overwhelming was the repetition of the same gestures. And not only between photographs, but even within the same photo: in some of them, the groom was accompanied by girls and boys carrying the rings, dressed the same as the adult couple and posing in the same way. In other words, as a miniature reproduction of bride and groom.

There is something that encompasses everything, all of our female identity, any aspect of our lives. We are encapsulated by that gesture that we supposedly have to repeat, although I believe this is in a process of transformation and different models are beginning to be created.

When I studied cinema, I asked myself: how am I supposed to be as an editor? One day someone told me: "Oh, you want to be an editor? You don't look like one." And it got me thinking: how am I supposed to be in order to fit in?

I think that, in general, female energy—if we can use that term—is allowed a little more room to drift, not to impose, to be able to doubt. Because creativity is not a precise formula. Over time, I keep allowing myself to doubt more, and by doing so I don't feel less self-confident; I feel more. ■

conclusion

DIANA TOUCEDO

It is profoundly revealing to listen to editors with the level of experience of Julia, Ana and Ariadna, whose practice provides an opportunity to continue reflecting on the complexities of editing as a creative act that encompasses and transforms the multiple dimensions, processes and discoveries that a film undergoes in the course of its creation. Despite its importance, editing remains one of the most invisible and least understood aspects of filmmaking. Through their experiences in very diverse films, these three editors offer new ways for us to understand the great complexity of the work of ideation, of sensitive selection and decision-making, of (re)writing footage through gestures, words, bodies and actions to facilitate an encounter between what was conceived and filmed and what now, in the editing room, becomes malleable, sculptural matter. All three share this encounter with us as a living logbook, guided by a constant questioning of the parts that long for a whole that only seems possible by giving one's life and body to the process.

What an editor brings into play in the cutting room is not so different from the performance work of an actress; all three have given us examples of this, together with the moving idea that editing could be calibrated towards a quest for truth, rather than self-conscious expression, as Ana points out. As an editor myself, having also worked on numerous documentaries and hybrid films, I share this idea of a quest for the potential truth that only the film contains. It is one of the editor's great desires. When I edit a film, I don't want it merely to tell a story, or to present a plot, or even to be reduced to a sensory, sonic, or narrative experience. I aspire to turn the film into a spatio-temporal realm that spectators can enter to find a truth, or to come away with a meaning that can only be conveyed in this way, through cinema. And perhaps, in the best-case scenario, to stimulate thoughts and emotions that will prompt a different understanding of the world, and even embody the possibility of being *others*.

Julia shares her constant dedication and even devotion to the questions which, without needing to be answered, underpin her work as an editor. I feel that this constitutes another essential element of our work: an attitude based on doubt, curiosity and careful observation. An attention that doesn't stop at the level of words or meaning, but that operates in more underground realms, touching the intuitive and the unknown, the fragile and intangible, the invisible and the visible all at the same time. I like to think of editing in terms of the performative possibility of a constant becoming, a process of revelation and transformation of forms of knowledge. In this process, women editors work on the expressive richness of gestures, tones of voice, performative registers, production planning or styles, through methods of displacement, relationship or resignification... to see anew, to offer new aesthetic experiences that connect current films with past genealogies, and perhaps also with future ones. In this sense, editing also becomes an act of responsibility. As Ariadna puts it, it names something. And by naming it, editing, as a mode of sensitive thought, contributes to the political construction of the world we inhabit now and the one that is yet to come. ■

NOTES

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BODY AS INTERVAL: THE ACTRESS'S PERFORMANCE IN EDITING

Abstract

This section presents a conversation between three prominent editors of contemporary Spanish cinema: Julia Juániz, Ana Pfaff, and Ariadna Ribas. Drawing on their experiences in fiction, documentary and hybrid films, it offers a collective reflection on editing practices as a mode of sensitive, political, and embodied thought. The discussion touches on aspects such as viewing raw footage, the construction of the actor's performance through editing, tensions between acting registers and directorial styles, working with archival materials, and the affective presence of the body in the editing room. The authors explore how editing can reveal subtle gestures, establish emotional and narrative rhythms, and support processes of subjectivation—particularly in female characters. The text also highlights collaborative practices and ways of inhabiting the editing process through doubt, attentiveness, and care. Editing is conceived of here as a space for listening and rewriting, in constant dialogue with what has been filmed, lived, and imagined.

Key words

Film editing; Acting performance; Interval; Body and gesturality; Subjectivity; Contemporary Spanish cinema; Gender perspective; Archive; Collaborative practices.

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EL CUERPO COMO INTERVALO: LA INTERPRETACIÓN ACTORAL EN EL MONTAJE

Resumen

Este texto reúne una conversación entre tres montadoras destacadas del cine español contemporáneo: Julia Juániz, Ana Pfaff y Ariadna Ribas. A partir de sus experiencias en películas de ficción, híbridas y documentales, el texto ofrece una reflexión colectiva en torno a las prácticas del montaje como forma de pensamiento sensible, política y corporal. Se abordan aspectos como el visionado del material bruto, la construcción de la interpretación actoral desde el montaje, las tensiones entre registros actorales y estilos de dirección, el trabajo con el archivo y la dimensión afectiva del cuerpo en la sala de edición. Las autoras exploran cómo el montaje puede revelar gestos mínimos, establecer ritmos emocionales y narrativos, y acompañar los procesos de subjetivación, especialmente en personajes femeninos. El texto también se detiene en las prácticas colaborativas y en las formas de habitar el montaje desde la duda, la atención y el cuidado. El montaje es aquí concebido como un espacio de escucha y reescritura, en diálogo constante con lo filmado, lo vivido y lo imaginado.

Palabras clave

Montaje cinematográfico; Interpretación actoral; Intervalo; Cuerpo y gestualidad; Subjetividad; Cine español contemporáneo; Perspectiva de género; Archivo; Prácticas colaborativas.

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