"Alas! A Woman That Attempts the Lens": Gender and the Art of Adaptation in Margarida Gil's *Relação fiel e verdadeira*

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Abstract: In 2021, Margarida Gil's debut *longa metragem, Relação fiel e verdadeira* was finally released on DVD by the Academia Portuguesa de Cinema, thirty-four years after it premiered. In 1987, it had met with a predominantly negative critical reception from the mainstream press, an unfortunate fate for a film that was not only pioneering for its subject matter and cinematography but was also Portugal's first screen adaptation by a woman director of a female-authored text. This article explores some of the dominant questions surrounding the gender politics of Gil's film and women's position in Portuguese cinema culture in the early 1980s. I argue that the film reterritorializes the literary adaptation genre, which was a mainstay of national (male-authored) heritage on screen, not least through the ways in which Gil uses mirrors and reflections to install, and empower, a resistant and interrogatory feminine perspective in key images and scenes.

Keywords: Portugal, film, feminism, 1980s, auteurism

"A maneira como liquidaram o filme, era esquisitamente violenta" (Castro 120–21). Margarida Gil characterizes the critical response to her first full-length fiction film, *Relação fiel e verdadeira* in 1987, in terms of an unusual degree of violence. At the time she made the film, Gil was an emerging cinema and TV director and a former member of the Grupo Zero cinema cooperative that was based at the Teatro

da Cornucópia. Although Gil had worked extensively in a variety of film crew roles, such as continuity, acting, and editing, *Relação fiel e verdadeira* represented her first attempt at directing her own full-length film. Funded by IPC (Instituto Português de Cinema) and a coproduction with RTP (Rádio e Televisão de Portugal), the script was written in collaboration with Gil's filmmaker husband João César Monteiro, with further creative input from the poet Luiza Neto Jorge. It met with considerable critical acclaim internationally, including at the Venice Film Festival. But in Portugal, it met with such extreme critical opprobrium that it was consigned to oblivion for more than three decades. Only in 2020 was it streamed by the Cinemateca and then released for circulation in a DVD edition by the Academia Portuguesa de Cinema in 2021. Although it is now widely recognized to have been a victim of injustice, the negative reaction that greeted the film in the 1980s was unfortunate not least because it signaled the suppression from history, and from a more lasting exhibition circuit, of a landmark moment in Portuguese women's film.

One reason among many that I refer to it as a landmark is that *Relação fiel e verdadeira* is Portugal's first ever screen adaptation by a woman director of a female-authored text. It relies on a source dating from 1679, a confessional, autobiographical text written by a nun in Xabregas near Lisbon, Antónia Margarida de Castelo Branco, who later became Soror Clara do Santíssimo Sacramento when she entered the religious life, at the Madre de Deus de Xabregas Convent, to escape a violent and oppressive marriage. The original manuscript was entitled *Fiel e Verdadeira Relação que dá dos Sucessos da sua Vida a Criatura mais ingrata a seu Criador por Obediência de seus Padres Espirituais.* It was republished in a modern edition in 1983 by João Palma-Ferreira. Learning about it from a newspaper article gave Gil her inspiration to visit its editor and consider a film version.[1] Gil describes the finished film-text relationship in the following terms: "uma adaptação libérrima, passei-a para actualidade do Norte de Portugal, um norte barroco, entre Minho e Trás-os-Montes" (Castro 228).

[1] Palma-Ferreira's 1983 edition is simply entitled *Autobiografia 1652–1717.* Ana Isabel Soares's thorough account of Gil's work in *Women's Cinema in Contemporary Portugal* gives an enlightening explanation of Gil's reversal of the word order in the original title. It was changed from *Fiel e verdadeira relação* to *Relação fiel e verdadeira* to provide ironic emphasis on the extent of the "truth" and "fidelity" governing the relationship we are about to witness, while continuing, as the original does, to play on the double meaning of "relação" as both an account and a relationship (Soares 46–47).

The art of literary adaptation has a long history in the Portuguese cinema canon. As Patrícia Vieira notes, the Estado Novo's Lei de Cinema from 1948, enacted under António Ferro as director of Salazar's SNI (Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional), explicitly envisioned a particularly close relationship between cinema and great Portuguese literature, making adaptation a high value category for allocating FCN (Fundo do Cinema Nacional) funding. As Vieira puts it, "according to Ferro, the masterpieces of national literature would aid Portuguese cinema to overcome what he saw as its main flaws" (58). Indeed, Ferro perceived cinema as more useful than literature as a form of mass communication (58) such that "films inspired by literary works from the past, adaptations of novels or plays with historical plots and dramatizations of author's lives fused two of the most promising aspects of Portuguese film production, namely using literature and history as inspiration" (Vieira 61).

Literary and theatrical adaptation remained important in the different, but still censored, climate of the Novo Cinema generation in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As André Rui Graça observes, these filmmakers identified largely with the expression of high culture favoring what he describes as "trends which already had a prestigious history such as the discussion of the country and its lyrical mirroring on screen," partly through a preference for docufiction and also still through adaptation (60). Given the intellectual, theatrical, and literary influences that were at the roots of Portugal's Novo Cinema, it is hardly surprising that adaptation retained an important position at the heart of male auteurist identity and the kind of art cinema it produced. This was manifested particularly emblematically in the four films that make up Manoel de Oliveira's quartet from the 1970s, *Tetralogia dos amores frustrados*, all of which were adaptations of a kind.[2] However, Gil's source text, a female-authored first-person confession from the seventeenth century, was very far from the kind of romantic and neoromantic works of theater and prose adapted by Oliveira. Rather, her choice of a Baroque source, at the same

[2] Partly in response to the authority and prestige attaching to male literary adaptation, Manuela Penafria references Noémia Delgado in the 1980s deploying a tactic that I would term "gender-strategic adaptation." Citing an interview with Delgado from 2010, Penafria makes clear that after multiple failed attempts to get her fiction film projects financed, including three clearly dealing with women's issues, Delgado made a funding application for a film based on Jorge de Sena's novella *O físico prodigioso,* as a way to deflect the possibility of criticism targeting the "quality" of any plot she had scripted herself (34). As Delgado goes on to outline the changes she intended to make to de Sena's ending, it becomes clear that he would have served in no small measure as a cover story for personal views she could find no other way to express in film. As Penafria puts it: "what Delgado adds to the story is her own philosophy of life as well as her own personal vision of cinema" (35).

time as she chooses not to produce a historical period piece, marks a multilayered, ambivalent, and challenging response to the perceived respectability and safety of the adaptation mode. Not only was the adaptation "libérrima," as Gil put it; it stretches the limit of what might be called an "adaptation" at all.

As Soares notes, "the film significantly reduces the passages of text that it draws on" (47). The film of *Relação fiel* describes the period before Antónia enters the convent, so it focuses on her forced marriage to, and subsequent escape from, a violent and degenerate aristocrat, Brás Teles de Meneses e Faro. He is presented as a bankrupt gambler and womanizer whose family members have been involved in a diamond scandal and lost their wealth following the independence of Angola in 1975. Antónia represents, therefore, his literal, economic salvation through marriage. However, he proceeds, on different occasions, to physically assault her brother, threaten her life, and pawn her inherited goods to pay off his debts. A turning point comes after he allows their baby son to die. Antónia had appeared at first to accept his treatment in a martyr-like, almost masochistic mode but her own growing self-awareness, and the persuasion of her mother and brother, cause her to enter a convent and become a professed nun instead. As the subject of her own memoirs, Antónia then narrativizes her reflections from the confines of the cloister, with the film ending at the point when this literary process implicitly begins. In a sense the film embodies both Antónia's coming to voice through her confessional Bildungsroman-style narrative and Margarida Gil's coming to voice as a film director.

The decision to transpose a seventeenth-century tale to the late 1970s is often cited as a conscious use of ironic anachronism to point up the lack of change in women's freedom and opportunity post-25 April, and this is certainly its effect (Soares 47). However, Gil's own further explanation of the time switch in terms of cost and production pragmaticsis also interesting in terms of how we read the film's predominant mode of aesthetic address. As she tells her interviewer in the "Extras" section of the Academia Portuguesa de Cinema DVD release, "no fundo no fundo, o cinema histórico não me interessava, não havia dinheiro para isso, nunca, isto era um dinheiro escasso. Portanto tive que adaptar. O João [César Monteiro] ajudou-me nisso. . . . Decidi passar para uma atualidade abstrata, o mais abstrato possível, intemporal." This abstract turn is underlined not only by the largely atonal electronic music soundtrack with occasional references to opera, but also by the use of fairly two-dimensional, figurative characterizations. In this

sense, very far from conforming to historically realist traditions of adaptation, the film offers an abstract, allegorical staging, and acting style, for Antónia's "coming to voice," which is heavily reliant on religious, Gothic, and northern regional iconography and ritual.

This paper seeks to explore how Gil brings these influences and possibilities together to territorialize the masculine field of literary adaptation for women. And as a corollary of this, I ask how far her experience is indicative of what women faced as aspiring directors and would-be auteurs in the 1980s. Margarida Gil (b. 1950) belonged to a group of women who worked in a range of different film crew roles, in the postrevolutionary context of the late 1970s and the cooperative era. These included Margarida Cordeiro (b. 1938), Noémia Delgado (1933–2016), Solveig Nordlund (b. 1943), Manuela Serra (b. 1948), and Monique Rutler (b. 1941). Auteurist models of cinematography had come to predominate in Portugal in the 1960s with Novo Cinema, drawing noticeably on the French Nouvelle Vague and generally aligning itself with opposition to the Estado Novo regime. Auteurism was axiomatic to the Centro Português de Cinema (CPC) cooperative, which was set up and funded by the private, philanthropic Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian in 1970. Margarida Cordeiro and Noémia Delgado both became members of the CPC, although Delgado was subsequently expelled (Castro 53). Even before the Revolution of 1974, the CPC had begun to lose its power as a filmmaking body on account of the relatively low budgets it commanded in comparison with the IPC (Instituto Português de Cinema), which the Caetano government had founded in 1971 in an attempt to undermine the CPC's independent influence over film output. The CPC remained in existence after the 25 April Revolution in 1974, but it fragmented into a series of broadly socialist film cooperatives with a range of political allegiances. During the Gonçalvista period and the PREC (Processo revolucionário em curso), these cooperatives were often in sharp conflict with the IPC, which had proceeded to take a radical Marxist turn driven by top-down MFA (Movimento das Forças Armadas) cultural policy (Cunha 179–81, 184–85).[3] During the IPC's era of high militancy, the auteurist men of the Novo Cinema generation, most of whom remained in the CPC, or in the new cooperatives that sprung from it, found themselves marginalized.

[3] Excellent histories of CPC and IPC relations, pre- and post-1974, are provided in Paulo Cunha's *Uma nova história do Novo Cinema português,* 160–78, and specifically post-1974 in José Felipe Costa's *O cinema ao poder!* My own account here draws substantially on their findings.

As André Rui Graça describes it, the end of the Gonçalvista radicalism of 1975, and the relative normalization brought by democracy and the new Constitution in 1976, allowed the former Novo Cinema generation to regain the power they had temporarily lost during the PREC, and to resume filmmaking in ways comparable to what they had previously enjoyed (80). The decade of the 1970s thus seemed to come full circle, from auteurist Novo Cinema, through the cooperativist era of warring militancies, back to a highly individual, internationalized, and once again auteurist "Escola Portuguesa," an art cinema with its roots in the old Gulbenkian-funded era of independence from commercial interests, market forces, and adherence to audience expectations. What became loosely known and internationally marketed as the "Escola Portuguesa" in the 1980s and 90s therefore enjoyed considerable continuity with the Novo Cinema generation, constituting a "heterogeneous group of filmmakers that continued to make authorial cinema or followed in the footsteps of the references from the previous decade" (Graça 80). The sheer durability and longevity enjoyed by this Novo Cinema generation thus became a significant factor for the way in which Portuguese cinema reinvented itself as a new "Escola" into the 1980s and beyond. Furthermore, the very internationalization of the "Escola Portuguesa," heavily focused as it was on Manoel de Oliveira and a small coterie of others, seems to have further sedimented the masculinization of national auteurism at home. In this way, the originary homosocial gendering of Novo Cinema continued to make an impact, as part and parcel of an established and ongoing cinematic tradition, which was now set to reinvest powerfully in (male) auteurism as a badge of national cinematic identity, repackaged for dissemination abroad, and also retroactively reinforcing the foundational importance of Novo Cinema, which it claimed as it roots (Graça 80).

In the early 1980s the minister for culture (1982–83) Francisco Lucas Pires coined the notorious descriptive terms "filmes para Bragança" and "filmes para Paris" to establish a distinction between popular cinema with a wide—including regional—domestic appeal, and aesthetically distant art cinema, considered elitist and inaccessible, not designed for consumption in Portugal, and therefore characterized in terms of likely Parisian appeal (Cunha 14). The few women filmmakers who were working in Portugal during this period were not readily welcomed into either the "Bragança" or the "Paris" camp, although they usually enjoyed greater success at festivals abroad than at home. The late 1970s witnessed

two pioneering women—Margarida Cordeiro (with her husband António Reis) and Noémia Delgado—venturing into documentary cinema. Only in the 1980s did women such as Margarida Gil, who had served their apprenticeships during the mid-1970s film cooperative era, begin to make the kind of *longa metragem* fiction films conventionally associated with building a career as a director, giving expression to individual artistic visions, and aspiring to "auteurist" status.

In this climate, three women who had worked in the film cooperatives of the 1970s—Grupo Zero in the cases of Margarida Gil and Solveig Nordlund, and Cinequipa in the case of Monique Rutler—ventured into their first *longa metragem* film projects. These were Nordlund's *Dina e Django* (1980), Rutler's *Jogo de mão* (1983), and Gil's *Relação fiel e verdadeira* (1987). It is noteworthy that all three of them, in different ways, made films that highlight violence against women in Portugal, continuing postrevolution. All three of the above films were also treated harshly by the cinema press of the day, making it harder for their directors to obtain further financing in Portugal. The pioneering Noémia Delgado had suffered a similar fate. Her constant attempts to get funding for her longa metragem fiction projects in the 1980s proved unsuccessful until she finally gave up, as detailed in Penafria's meticulous account of her career (32–40). Manuela Serra and Margarida Cordeiro also experienced ultimately insurmountable logistical and financial challenges in maintaining a profile and an output in film work in the 1980s (Castro 102–4, 190–94). Carla Baptista and Ana Prata's state-of-the-art analysis from 2020 draws on the statistics in Ana Catarina Pereira's foundational study covering 1946 to 2016, *A mulher-cineasta*: *Da arte pela arte a uma estética da diferenciação,* to conclude: "Another indicator that characterizes women filmmakers is the percentage of women that only directed one movie. Of a total of eighteen women filmmakers, eight of them (44%) only directed one movie. This is an indicator of how established women are in the industry, and almost half of women directors only had the experience of doing one film" (221).

One of the most striking aspects of *Cineastas portuguesas*, the pioneering volume of interviews conducted by Ilda Castro in 2000, is the degree of overlap and similarity in the personal recollections of these women about the 1980s. All six of the interviews with Cordeiro, Delgado, Gil, Nordlund, Rutler, and Serra make it clear that in the 1980s they experienced significant difficulties trying to break through as individuals, beyond the cooperative context, with only Nordlund and Gil continuing to make films into the twenty-first century. While the film-

working experience of this 1980s generation of women was hugely varied and extensive, this moment of accession to the role of film director, developing the type of personal creative vision conventionally associated with the prestige of art cinema auteurism, seems predictably to have been the point at which the glass ceiling descended. With respect to *Relação fiel*, specifically, Margarida Gil recalls, the critics

> apanharam uma rapariga a fazer o primeiro filme, ousando desafiar todo o discurso correcto a todos os níveis, nos anos oitenta; e nesta altura tinha chegado a reaparecer cinema narrativo, com o Joaquim Leitão. . . . Estava tudo muito interessado em que se começassem finalmente a fazer filmes "normais". E aparece aquela anormalidade completa! Completa! . . . É que ia contra tudo, contra tudo, contra tudo. Portanto, era fatal. (Castro 221)

A significant aspect of the "tudo" that *Relação fiel e verdadeira* was "contra" concerned the unspoken but powerful relationship, noted above, that had always bound literary adaptation to the history of masculine auteurship and national self-reflexivity. Where the "film d'art" was the auteurist domain par excellence, then, as Graça notes, "the cultural prestige stemming from the *film d'art* (as well as its variants) was made possible by the fact that it resorted to both established literary authors and national cultural heritage" (50). The concept of the cinema auteur as the sole creative progenitor of the film has always been deeply mired in the genius myths surrounding the single authorship of literary classics. If as Sally Faulkner claims in her seminal study of Spanish cinema adaptation, "literary adaptations also highlight issues of authorship in the cinema" (164), part of what proved "fatal" for *Relação fiel* was probably precisely its choice of the "vaca sagrada" of the literary adaptation genre as the medium through which to territorialize women's directorial perspective and female historical voice. For this reason, it offers a revealing test case for how women in the 1980s negotiated the preordained gendering of auteurism and its special, often nationally inflected relationship with adaptation.

In her interview with Castro, Gil refers to the film's being poorly received in Portugal for two main reasons. It did not present accessible, narrative realism for its audiences, conforming to the demands of the "filmes de Bragança" and "filmes

normais." And insofar as it inclined more toward the "Paris" camp, it was scapegoated for the sins of Manoel de Oliveira by those domestic audiences who were not Oliveira fans, and it was regarded as too derivative of Oliveira by those who potentially were. As Gil recalls it:

> Foi muito maltratado pela crítica da altura. Alguns voltaram atrás, mas isso prejudicou irrevogavelmente o filme. . . . O próprio distribuidor, o Tenente Coronel Luís Silva, da Lusomundo, que gostava muito de mim, alias, disse-me: "Acho que a Margarida está a levar pelo João César [Monteiro] e pelo Manuel [*sic*] de Oliveira; não se atrevem a bater neles e batem em si". Porque aquela violência, a maneira como liquidaram o filme, era esquisitamente violenta. Era fatal que provocasse aquela estranheza que, lá fora, foi tão valorizada, mas cá dentro não foi perdoada. (Castro 221)

Most of her critics at the time did indeed highlight the Oliveira issue, primarily considering the influence negatively and continuing to pick the fights initiated nearly a decade earlier, around Oliveira's *Amor de perdição,* about the proper use of public funding for film subsidies.[4] A peculiarly choleric extreme was represented by Eurico de Barros, who refers to the film as "um subproduto comatose da linhagem Manoel de Oliveira" that lacks "simples verosimilhança humana e emocional" (15), pointing to Gil's obvious rejection of realism and naturalistic acting. Similarly, if less negatively, exploring the Oliveira resonances, Augusto M. Seabra notes, "em nenhum outro filme português recente será tão evidente a influência de Oliveira, na composição da cena, na relação com o texto." For Seabra, Gil remains derivative of Oliveira, because "limita, precisamente, aquilo que distingue este filme dos de Oliveira: a violência passional do relato," blaming her failure to find "os corpos e as vozes necessárias" to portray this incipient violence.

Gil herself responds to her critics in a telling interview with Luísa Alexandra Botinas, for *Diário de Lisboa*. On the subject of the Oliveira lineage, Gil retorts,

[4] As Cunha recounts, a climate of hostility toward Portuguese art cinema famously crystallized around the state cinema and RTP funding of Manoel de Oliveira's televised adaptation *Amor de perdição* in 1978, which was judged by many to be excessively generous for an elite work of art cinema with such narrow public appeal to domestic audiences (208–12).

"exteriormente isso pode parecer, mas acho que não tem nada a ver, embora perceba porque digam isso" (23). As Botinas's interview observes in the context of reporting on this event, Gil's film had been selected for the first Festival Internacional de Filmes Realizados por Mulheres, a women's film festival that was being hosted at the Instituto Franco-Português. In this light, the film evidently did at the time claim a degree of allegiance with women's political issues. Indeed, a denunciation of ongoing domestic violence, post-1974, is one of the motivations Gil cites for making the film: "Apesar do fim do fascismo, ainda hoje morrem mulheres vítimas dos mau-tratos perpetrados pelos maridos. Quando estávamos nas filmagens soubemos que uma mulher grávida de cinco meses tinha sido morta à facada" (23).[5] It is notable that Brás's preferred weapon against Antónia throughout the film is a knife. Gil's statement against domestic abuse here makes it all the more ironic that *Relação fiel* fell afoul of Maria Teresa Horta, the most prominent feminist critic of the day, not once but twice, in defense of the feminist orthodoxy prevailing at the time. In her review for *Mulheres* magazine in 1987, Horta criticizes the absence of naturalistic acting and corporeal emphasis in the film, clearly favoring a more realist approach. Writing for *O Tempo* two years later, Horta headlined her review "'Relação fiel e verdadeira': Totalmente falhado," citing an excessive reverence to Oliveira, as she complains that Gil remains "sempre sob a sombra de um Manoel de Oliveira a quem pede cobertura, protecção" (23).

How reverential to Oliveira is Gil, in fact, in her reterritorialization of adaptation for women, when we analyze her aesthetic practices in greater detail? One immediate answer to this lies in her casting of António Sequeira Lopes to play Brás. Sequeira Lopes would already have been known to Portuguese cinema audiences through his role as the hero Simão in Manoel de Oliveira's adaptation of Camilo Castelo Branco's canonical classic of Romanticism, *Amor de perdição* (1978), the third film in his *Tetralogia de amores frustrados*. Insofar as Gil clearly reframes Lopes in a radically antiheroic and even absurdist mode, her approach to Oliveira initiates a subtle commentary upon the naturalized gendered assumptions underpinning his *Amor de perdição*. This decentering of historically hegemonic masculinity is even more evident in the way Gil's film constructs the interactions of the gaze, along an axis that culminates, as one would expect given her source

[5] The theme of domestic violence against women also underpinned Monique Rutler's *Jogo de mão*, which was also slated by the critics earlier in the decade (Castro 123).

text, in a predominance of feminized narrative perspective. And it is this that I would now like to explore as a technique which may be taken to index the extent of Gil's gender innovation. As is common with much of the Oliveira canon, Gil's film is notable for a relative absence of character-based POV shots. At the same time, the seductive and alluring image of Antónia is what frequently dominates the screen. As Ana Isabel Soares has observed, "the camera seems fascinated by Antónia's markedly feminine figure" (47), hence her power over him. Exactly whose perspective is embodied then in this fascination that attaches to Antónia as she dominates the screen?

Are these images of Antónia, the interrogatory, pseudo-objective third person that Soares implies they are with the neutral word "camera" (47, 49)? Are they, as Gil indicates, the view taken by her husband Brás, seduced by her martyred beauty and her luminous, sainted patience? Or are they also, at times, Antónia's own perception of herself and her inner conflicts, indicative of her own shifting states of self-consciousness? I would contend that we witness an alternating combination of all three at different points in the film, forming a sequence through which we may track Antónia's on-screen accession to narrative subjectivity. Where there is relatively little use of directly attributed POV in this film, and the gaze is not very often clearly attributed to a character, the process of viewer identification through the workings of suture is largely obstructed and denied. This accounts, perhaps, for those critics who complained at feeling disorientated by Gil's eschewal of realist techniques. But the source text by the seventeenth-century nun is not the pseudo-objective third-person narration of classic realism. It is a first-person autobiographical confession. In light of this, the 1970s theoretical work of Bruce F. Kawin possesses important insights for our analysis, as he complexifies the POV shot and develops the idea of "first-person cinema" through his conceptualization of the "mindscreen."

As Faulkner notes in her readings of Spanish adaptation, Kawin's analysis of fictional character subjectivity coins the term "mindscreen" to describe the projection of a character's thoughts or fantasies, as if the viewer were being invited to share the mind's eye of that particular character.[6] According to Kawin's discussion of POV shots, this idea of a "mindscreen" as the inner eye of the mind is to be distinguished from sharing the eyes of the character, as if looking from the

[6] My readings of the "mindscreen" concept here are indebted to Faulkner's enlightening interpretation of its use in Luis Buñuel's films *Tristana* and *Nazarín* (148–56).

viewpoint of what they actually see, (i.e., the explicit subjective shot) or sharing their perspective from the viewpoint of what they might choose to emphasize (i.e., the implicit subjective shot) (Kawin 190). Many of the film's most heavily lit images of Antónia, and those that most resemble the static, dead poses of Catholic hagiography, correspond, I would argue, to the mindscreen of Brás and his fantasies of dominance and submission. It is no coincidence that Antónia appears at her most luminescent on their wedding day. She is also framed (Fig. 1) in a static, iconic pose, recalling a recumbent figure on a tombstone, shortly after Brás evicts her from their car, which has broken down in mud. Heavily pregnant, she is forced to walk for help in pouring rain. She is subsequently, without narrative transition, shown lying flat on the ground, as if already dead, predicting the death of the child she is carrying, which Brás will orchestrate by refusing to go and get medical help for it shortly after birth. At the same time, this shot also ironically predicts the death of her relationship with Brás, a point to which I will return. The way in which Antónia imagines Brás's departure from her life takes the form of a partial image match to this shot, in which he too will be depicted as recumbent.

Figure 1. Antónia pregnant and lying in a recumbent pose evoking death.

In this shot the camera lingers on Antónia for a very long, static take, recalling the iconography of an effigy on a tomb, in which one can eventually, just about, discern that she is still breathing. But the lens then zooms in on a more nurturing and individualizing close-up shot of her, making clear she is still living, with her maid arriving to cover her up with a cloak and taking pity on her. A gesture of care and survival thus interrupts Brás's previous deathly fantasy of her, as well as foreseeing how intrafemale relationships will eventually prove her salvation.

The process of this escape from mental and physical coercion can be tracked throughout the film in four scenes where Antónia is shown looking at herself in the mirror. In the first of these, she overtly predicts what will happen in the fourth and final mirror reflection. In this initial one (Fig. 2), she is informed by a servant that her future husband has beaten up her brother Afonso and Antónia remarks that she would rather shut herself away in a convent than marry a man who has committed such an act.

Figure 2. Antónia learns, through a servant, of her forthcoming marriage.

In this moment of self-affirmation, she addresses the mirror as a space of recognition and expression for her own, nonconforming perspective and voice, in the face of the bad news about her impending marriage, which is delivered by the servant who is brushing her hair. The juxtaposition of these two acts also associates the act of individual self-symbolization via the mirror, with foundational female relationships, and alternative social networks of female information and exchange. In the film's second image in front of the mirror (Fig. 3), Brás surprises Antónia half-naked in the act of washing.

Figure 3. Antónia is surprised by Brás while she is washing in private.

Now that they are married Brás has, in principle, a legal "right" to her body. But the suggestion from her startled response is that he has caught her unaware, in a manner more consistent with the voyeuristic power of the pornographic gaze. Indeed, one might argue that the soft focus of this shot aligns it with the image stock in trade of the softcore porn magazine. In defensively covering up, Antónia is literally asserting the right to "screen" the self. She is claiming her own body back from his gaze, at the same time as she is concealing her incipient act of self-recognition in the mirror. In this sense, then, the mirror as both a common metaphor for mimesis and a surrogate for the lens proves treacherous to Brás by deflecting his visual mastery of Antónia's body, and inaugurating her accession to narrative subjectivity against his will. Brás himself later admits his self-doubts and his suspicions that she is merely pretending to submit to his will, indicating the intensity of his need to fantasize her submission. He later remarks that he doubts not only her fidelity but the clarity of his own mental judgment as he remarks, "ofendo todas as pessoas em que ponho os olhos, ainda que só com o pensamento." As Soares notes, we are indeed "periodically shown the inner conflict that Bras lives with" (48), cast as the superannuated romantic hero, tormented by inner doubts, particularly in his association with the Strauss romantic opera *Salomé* (50).

A further important refinement of Kawin's theory, which Faulkner productively develops, is the idea of "reflexive perspective" corresponding to a self-conscious mindscreen (Faulkner 135; Kawin 190). Kawin uses this last category of "mindscreen" to posit what he calls "first-person cinema" where the subjective source of enunciation is an off-screen narrator, who is not one of the fictional characters. On one level, of course, Antónia is still appearing as a character in the narrative we are witnessing here. But at the same time, the intrusion of her reflexively self-conscious mindscreen, via the series of on-screen mirrors, signals the process by which, like the original nun in the confessional autobiography, she acquires sufficient perspective to become the first-person, off-screen narrator of her own retrospectively recounted tale, as a means of resisting fictionalization in the fantastical delusions of Brás. Even as Brás appears to imprison her in his sadomasochistic projections, she is given an onscreen perspective upon herself that redoubles, refracts, and disrupts the singularity of his vision, as he tries this time to take over her thoughts and language. This is particularly well illustrated in the third of Antónia's four scenes with a mirror (Fig. 4). It is no accident, in this scene, that she is depicted in the act of writing. She

appears to follow Brás's sadistic orders and takes down a written dictation of his hideous sexual exploits by way of acting as his "confessor." However, through the angling of the mirror above the writing desk, she is positioned here in such a way that she can see herself in the act of writing. While the "real" Antónia in the room is filmed standing upright, the image of her that is cast back via the reflection is skewed or canted relative to the frame of the shot, as if filmed at a Dutch angle, acting as a warning to the viewer that her thoughts and her inner world here are far from identical to whatever Brás might be perceiving. Analogously, there are points in the narrative where she is so horrified by his admissions that she cannot write the words he dictates. In this context, the Gothically redoubled image introduces a note of ambivalent resistance to any outward display of subservience, forgiveness, or willingness to transcribe his words with mimetic accuracy.

Figure 4. Antónia takes a momentary pause from writing Brás's "confession" of his sins.

This process of internal self-witness lays the foundations for the scene in which she asserts her independence from him, as she declares: "fora de ti, Brás, agora sou fora de ti." As she disassociates herself from his words, desires, and ambitions, and refuses to play the social role forced upon her by patriarchal tradition, he slowly walks away from her in the background as if defeated.

When Antónia finally reaches the safety of the convent, she acquires a form of subjective mastery over his haunting specter, and it is this that explains the fourth and final example of mirror encounter in the film (Fig. 5). She walks down the corridor and stops at what appears at first to be a pastoral painting on a wall, reminiscent of the landscapes around her. She touches and feels the painting rather than looking at it, which suggests that her physical relationship with the world is already receding. The painting, however, is actually the front of a wall cupboard

and there is a mirror inside the cupboard door, which she opens. This conventional space of containment is thus transformed into a means of physic escape. It concludes the process of self-reflexive mindscreening that can be traced through Antónia's previous encounters with mirrors. Initially, she looks at herself, and then suddenly she also sees Brás in the mirror behind her, apparently naked and partly obscured by her own dominant reflection in the foreground. But when she turns to face him, he is gone, as if he were now the one being controlled by her imagination and narrative agency. Her mind seems able to free itself of the threat he had once posed.

Figure 5. After she has entered the convent, Antónia sees an image of Brás in the mirror.

Brás's nakedness makes him vulnerable here, as Antónia had been in the second of the mirror scenes. She watches herself in the empowering act of watching him. The mastery this gives her also preempts their final scene together, when she sends Brás away for good. In a sequence that seems to posit an alternative ending, she momentarily acquiesces with his desire to take her back, when he appears under her convent window on horseback and she rides away behind him. But then they reach the shore of a wide body of water (Fig. 6). He lies in the bottom of a small rowing boat. Antónia rocks him to sleep like a child in a cradle, and then pushes the boat out into the water. The shot fades and the water blurs into mist and green landscape, resembling the rural scene painted on the surface of the cupboard she had opened to look into the mirror in the convent. Brás's final rite of passage signals a marriage ending as a kind of death for them both. But the power of figuring this ritual act of closure is hers. His final recumbent position has visual resonances with the scene discussed previously, in which a pregnant Antónia had lain on the grass after Brás had sent her out into the rain. And the moving boat

recalls the ferry across the Styx as well as the boats in the sixteenth-century trilogy of plays by Gil Vicente, the *Autos das barcas,* with its allegorical overlay of purgatory, heaven, and hell.

Figure 6. Brás, after Antónia has cast him adrift in the boat.

Indeed, if we take the extended Vicentine metaphor to its logical conclusion, Antónia may be read as dispatching Brás across the waters to his final judgment in the eyes of God. Antónia, on the other hand, is about to become the bride of Christ as a professed nun. Only a total renunciation of the flesh has granted her physical safety. The sound of the lapping water in this scene connects it with a recurrent auditory leitmotif throughout the film suggesting the potential for change. This ambient sound of flowing water has been heard repeatedly, and often heterodiegetically, at moments of tension and crisis throughout the film, suggesting amid the oppressive static interiors of the northern churches and mansions, a natural, irresistible flow of time and transformation that may yet prove redemptive.

The film ends with a long close-up take of Antónia gazing directly at the camera and the viewer, as the screen fades to black. This extreme facial close-up in a long take is a relatively unusual and profoundly discomforting shot, which conventionally challenges the viewer to keep looking. Once again, this is a mainstay of Manoel de Oliveira's cinematography, used to notable effect in many of his films, including to interrogate the heroics of the colonial war in his "*Non" ou a vã-glória de mandar.* It is deployed to equally strong effect here by Gil's exposing the religiously incarcerated fate of an abused woman, as Antónia muses on the choice between a dead life and a living death, which her own abject destiny has confronted her with. As she gazes at the camera, she announces: "Vi que estive

viva com a morte, e vi que com a vida, estive morta." Her use of the past historic as she speaks these lines to camera, connotes her own final passage into writing, as her personal story becomes a history. The fact that this is expressed via the inverted parallelism of chiasmus also suggests that a kind of crossing or crossover has been undertaken. At the same time, it mimics Antónia's own situation not only of closure, but also now of enclosure, in the circularity performed by the repetition of terms central to the chiasmic figure of speech. We are still left with the irony, both historical and contemporary, that a woman has locked herself up in order to escape a violent man.

As Faulkner and Liz indicate in an article on Portuguese cinema dating from 2016, "a film made by a woman and about women" was a rarity even then (2). *Relação fiel* effectively reflects an appropriation of one genealogy, Oliveira's, in the name of another, that of female narrative voice and cinematography. It is no accident that Gil dedicated the film to her own mother. Not only is this Portugal's first example of a woman writer being adapted by a woman filmmaker, but the film is also replete with carefully enshrined moments of coded exchange between women, between Antónia, her mother, and their female servants. Could this intrafeminine subtext be where the "true and faithful" relationships really lie? *Relação fiel e verdadeira* has been telling us from its opening sequence to expect a gender battle and a film about transitions.

The film opens with a shot of a stone bridge. A Passion Sunday procession is heading across it, bearing the tortured figure of a purple-robed Christ crowned with thorns and carrying the cross. It meets head-on with a procession coming the other way, bearing a similarly purple-clad Virgin Mary as the Mater Dolorosa. Antónia will also be depicted at various points wearing purple. This scene with the two processions on the bridge cuts rapidly and with no narrative transition to a shot of lapping water, instituting the above-mentioned leitmotif of running water to connote change, and prefiguring the final river crossing, which will bear Brás away from Antónia at the end. *Relação fiel e verdadeira* deals not only with "passion" in the original Greek sense of suffering, but also with a series of crossings, passages, and transitions, appropriated here for female narrative subjectivity and intrafeminine cultural transmission. The film seems to have been envisioned, in many ways, as a transitional film, not least as a bridging moment for Gil herself, making her first fiction feature, and undertaking a journey across the film industry

"line" that traditionally divides the director's privileged individual vision, from the replaceable labors of the crew, to establish her own name independently.

The suppression, by the film critical establishment in Portugal, of Margarida Gil's first feature film, and thereby of Portugal's first female-directed adaptation of a female-authored work, is a striking statement. And it has substantial implications for women's film historiography. The important step taken by the Academia Portuguesa de Cinema in reissuing *Relação fiel* on DVD now opens up key discussions about the reasons for its suppression in the first place, and about the gender political climate of the creative industry and cinema press culture in which this occurred. It also paves the way to new critical readings and the tracing of female historical lineages and connections. I would therefore like to conclude on an open note with two of these, as possible directions for the future. On one level, it offers a moment of transversal bridging back into the analysis of other unduly criticized and suppressed film texts created by women in the 1980s that engaged with gender politics and women's oppression in forms that were not acceptable at the time. I am thinking particularly here of Nordlund's *Dina e Django* and Rutler's *Jogo de mão* as highly comparable with *Relação fiel* in this regard. It also lays down a historical cornerstone for understanding women-on-women adaptation. Margarida Cardoso's *Costa dos murmúrios* presents an obvious point of comparison, given its very similar engagement with the visual installation of female critical perspective and voice. In light of this, it is to be hoped that the re-release and broader reevaluation of historic cinema texts by women, such as *Relação fiel e verdadeira*, and others from that era, will enable a more "true and faithful relation" of the hidden gender histories that shaped women's cinema interventions at every level during the crucial transitional decade after the April Revolution, which was the first decade for women in Portugal "attempting the lens," as filmmakers in their own right.

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