

Article

Female Filmmakers as Mobile Frontiers and How They Portray Women on the Screen

Adriana Páramo Pérez
Royal Holloway, University of London

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Abstract

‘Feminine diaspora is in itself a signifier that sustains a mode of performance, from the body to another territory, you yourself–other; from the transitive body, in passage, that in the action’s physicality builds an occurrence’. We take this idea that Margarita Ledo explores in ‘Diáspora en feminino e cinema’ (2018) to analyse three works by three female filmmakers who establish different relations with the Galician territory, and how this defines the women that they portray on the screen. Diana Gonçalves shoots *Mulleres da Raia* (2009) (Women from the Border) because she is herself from this territory comprising the Galician-Portuguese border and has crossed it either physically or symbolically many times; in *Elas Contan* (2015) (Women Tell), Monica Mura explores, through the women of Santiago de Compostela, her own fragmented identity between her native Sardinia and the Galician town where she has lived for years; and, just as Ledo does in the article cited above, I, Adriana Páramo, include myself in this exploration of territory and identity as I search for my own sense of belonging divided between London and Galicia in my fiction short film *Galicia. Portobello Road* (2015). In this article I will analyse these three female filmmakers as mobile frontiers who build their fragmented identities in the characters they portray. In doing so, I will look at a national cinema that trespasses limits following Ángel Rama’s (1992) notion of transculturation.

Resumo

‘Diáspora en feminino é, en si propio, un significante que terma dunha modalidade de performance, do corpo para outro territorio, ti mesma-outra; do corpo transitivo, en pasaxe, que na mesma fisicidade da acción constrúe un acontecemento’. Partimos desta idea que Margarita Ledo

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explora en 'Díáspora en feminino e cinema' (2018) para analizarmos tres obras de tres creadoras con relacións diferentes co territorio galego e como isto determina as mulleres que cada unha retrata na pantalla. Diana Gonçalves retrata as *Mulleres da Raia*, porque sendo ela mesma tanto do lado galego como do portugués, traspasou esta fronteira física e simbolicamente moitas veces; Monica Mura explora a través das mulleres santiagueñas en *Elas Contan* a súa identidade fragmentada entre a súa Sardeña natal e a cidade galega que a acolle dende hai anos; e, tal e como Ledo fai no seu mencionado artigo, eu mesma, Adriana Páramo, inclúome nesta exploración do territorio e identidade, xa que afondo no meu propio sentimento de pertenza dividido entre Londres e Galicia na miña obra de ficción, *Galicia. Portobello Road* (2015). No artigo analizaremos a estas tres creadoras como fronteiras móbiles que constrúen a súa identidade partida a través das súas protagonistas, para entender un cinema nacional que traspasa límites, atendendo á idea de transculturación da que fala Ángel Rama (1992).

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Introduction

There have been studies on the cinema of the Galician diaspora from the 20th and 21st centuries as an invigorating device for Galician culture and as a visual historical archive (Castro de Paz 1996; Gómez Viñas 2018; Ledo 2018; Pérez Pereiro 2020). Special attention has been drawn to the recent portrayal of territory in the films catalogued under *Novo Cinema Galego* (NCG), a heterogeneous group of Galician filmmakers reshaping Galician cinema by experimenting with form and making transnational films that sit at the border of mainstream cinema (Pérez Pereiro 2015; Gómez Viñas 2018; Colmeiro 2018; Amago 2019). However, I argue that there is still more to be said with regard to the relationship that filmmakers, specifically female filmmakers, have with territory and how this is reflected on the characters they portray. On the one hand, when it comes to examining territory in the work of Galician women in contemporary diaspora, animator Peque Varela is briefly mentioned and labeled as part of the NCG (Ledo 2018; Gómez Viñas 2018; Redondo Neira & Pérez Pereiro 2018), but other women are excluded from these studies. On the other hand, more attention should be drawn to the effects of contemporary mobility on the creation of the filmmaker's personal identity; we should also look at other possible relations to territory outside Galician diaspora. In this article, I look at three female filmmakers who are reshaping how Galician identity is understood but, perhaps because they have not been catalogued under the NCG, they have been displaced to the borders of recent Galician film studies. I have used the words 'displaced' and 'borders' precisely because I argue that all three embody the blurring of lines. I claim that Diana Gonçalves, Monica Mura, and Adriana Páramo are reshaping the relationship between territory, identity, and filmmaking by being physical and symbolic mobile frontiers. Their relationship with Galicia is different in each case and they also approach filmmaking differently, but all three portray Galician women on the screen and their female characters share elements as mobile frontiers. I will start by analysing the notion of the mobile frontier in relation to the work of these filmmakers. I will then focus on the discussion of my fiction short film *Galicia. Portobello Road* (2015), set and shot in London, as a contribution to the studies of Galician female filmmakers working in the diaspora. In the next section I will look at Monica Mura, who migrated from Sardinia to Galicia, focusing on her documentary *Elas Contan* (2018) that contributes to creating a Galician identity, even though the artist was not born in this territory. Finally, I will explore Diana Gonçalves' *Mulleres da Raia* (2009), a group portrait exploring the Galician–Portuguese border. Gonçalves exemplifies the connections to territory that are not linked to diaspora. By studying both the characters and the cinematic techniques deployed in these works, I will demonstrate how these directors are not just making films but also reshaping the notion of Galician national identity.

Mobile Frontiers

Scholars have studied how the directors catalogued under the NCG are rethinking Galician cinema and identity through their experimental

and transnational films, where territory is seen to play a key role (Keller 2018; Ledo 2018). Examining documentary works associated with the NCG, Amago (2019) concludes that:

There is a fundamental contradiction at the center of Galician documentary in the global era. If, as Nichols notes, “documentary as a concept or practice occupies no fixed territory” (1991: 12), in the contemporary Galician context this formal fluidity is held in tension against an opposing and somewhat rigid territorial consciousness. (2019: 96)

Words such as ‘rigid’ and ‘tension’ are used here to explain the relationship between some directors associated with the NCG and the Galician territory. My analysis is inspired by film director Agnès Varda’s claim: ‘I believe people are made of the places they live or have lived in. I believe location inhabits and propels us’ (Michaud & Bellour 1961: 14). It is this sense of ‘propelling’ that I am interested in, when looking at how mobility plays a role in these three female filmmakers’ relationships with territory. I suggest that Gonçalves, Mura, and Páramo blur geographical limits as they move around territories.

Diana Gonçalves is a documentary maker torn between the Portuguese and Galician border known as A Raia (‘The Line’). She was born on the Portuguese side, raised in the Galician territory, and has been moving across both sides throughout her whole life. Monica Mura is an interdisciplinary artist from Sardinia who moved to Santiago de Compostela eighteen years ago and works with Galician and Sardinian women in her projects. I am Adriana Páramo, a filmmaker from Vigo, who has lived in London for more than a decade, visiting Galicia every few months, and who has centered her work on diaspora-related themes. In opposition to what Amago concludes when studying territory and identity in the NCG films, the territorial consciousness of the filmmakers I study here is not rigid but rather fluid and mobile. The EURES (1999), the European agency set up to facilitate employment mobility, states that the old idea of frontier-border is slowly being replaced by the idea of frontier as space of cooperation. In the same way, authors Manuel Trillo and Valerià Paül (2014: 165) argue that ‘[mobile] may be the term that best expresses how to study borders and bordering practices, as they are always in a process of *becoming*, never constant, and continually changing’. Therefore, I call these filmmakers mobile frontiers because they build their identities while being in constant movement across territories, blurring geographical lines. This mobility should be understood in the context of globalization as it affects not only one’s self-identity but also the conformation of national sentiments. Colmeiro looks at how globalization is changing the relationship between the territory of Galicia and its people:

A profound reshaping of the relationship of the land and its people has taken place creating dislocations, hybridities and new glocal realities. This means that the glocal Galicia of today is multifaceted, not just a finite territory [...], a language, an economic market or an enclosed cultural system but a complex deterritorialised crossroads of cultures and subjectivities. Galicia appears, then, as a border culture, a contact zone of migrations, mobile identities and hybridities; with a dispersed, decentralised cultural geography. (Colmeiro 2018: 11)

These filmmakers as mobile frontiers are framed in the context of the globalized and capitalist European Union where freedom of movement is enjoyed at a low cost. I see this as one big difference from past generations of migrants who could not go back or would do so decades later only to finally return. As a fluid cultural exchange was not established in the same terms as today, the construction of mobile identities was not possible in the same way. Although Gonçalves did not migrate as Mura and Páramo did, freedom of mobility also applies to her as she lived through the dissolution of the frontier between Portugal and Spain in the 90s when border controls disappeared.

This constant physical movement is also symbolic as identity is based on this mobility. Psychiatrist Joseba Achotegui (2012) claims that an individual forms her/his identity by realizing that she/he feels part of a specific community while seeing differences and not feeling part of other groups. However, when someone migrates, the process of creating an identity becomes more complex. He describes (2020) the 'síndrome de Ulises' or 'Ulysses Syndrome' as the process of grief (losses and gains) caused by the continued separation from the home country that affects the individual's personality, making them feel that they do not belong completely to either country. As a migrant myself, I have always identified this process as having a fragmented identity. When interviewed for the documentary *Between Two Lands* (2020), that explores the migratory grief of Spanish millennials who migrated to the UK in the last decade, I said that I felt like I had my identity divided between London and Galicia, and that this was confusing. However, the conclusion of Mary Louise Pratt's study of the migration movement of Mexicans from Jalisco to Los Angeles has assisted me to see this confusing experience in a positive light:

Working abroad to sustain home often implies dual citizenship in both the literal sense (more and more countries are allowing it) and the existential sense of a kind of doubling of the self into parallel identities in one place and the other. This can be both a fragmenting and an empowering experience. (Pratt 2002)

These three filmmakers manage to transform the confusing experience of building an identity across different territories into an empowering one, because there is a fluid exchange in this mobility. I refer here at Ángel Rama's ideas on transculturation. Rama (1984) claims that transculturation is enabled when the receptive culture is not a passive one. Instead, an active interaction emerges when there is a receptive culture that combines its own features with those of the external culture, thus creating new dynamics. Contrary to what Osvaldo Velázquez Mejía (2012) states, 'Soy esto porque no soy lo otro' ('I am this because I am not that'), I claim that these female filmmakers go through a process of inclusion rather than exclusion when creating their identities. They are this and they are also that, or they are not completely one or the other. These female filmmakers are frontiers with open doors to a dialogue among cultures, and they reflect this in their work for the screen.

The camera serves Gonçalves, Mura, and Páramo as a device to explore their changing identity. Alisa Lebow explores how the camera works not just as a recording device but also as forming part of the changing self in people who move and live across different territories:

The camera is not simply a recording device that captures the experiences of the displacement, it can be a symptom of that very displacement. Here the process of documenting a displaced subjectivity via the cinematic apparatus, or as it used to be called, the motion picture camera, reveals within it the seeds of its own destabilization. (Lebow 2012: 230–231)

These three female filmmakers manage to turn their fragmented identities into an empowering experience by using the camera as a registering device. Gonçalves in *Mulleres da Raia* portrays women living around the Galician–Portuguese border, but the camera is a device to explore her own movement and her own identity. In *Elas Contan*, Mura portrays a group of women who have different types of relationships with the city of Santiago, and by registering their stories on camera, she is building on her own relationship with the town. In the same way, in *Galicia. Portobello Road*, I portray a relationship between a Galician mother who migrated to London and her daughter, and I use the camera to explore my own identity torn between these two territories. Margarita Ledo (2018) explains the relationship between the female body and the camera work as follows:

Diáspora en feminino é, en si propio, un significante que terma dunha modalidade de performance, do corpo para outro territorio, ti mesma-outra; do corpo transitivo, en pasaxe, que na mesma fisicidade da acción constrúe un acontecemento. (Ledo 2018: 92)

Ledo refers to a body passing over from one side to another. These female filmmakers are mobile frontiers and, therefore, their bodies are in constant passage. This geographical fluidity is enhanced by the fact that in two of these filmmakers' works, Mura's *Elas Contan* and Páramo's *Galicia. Portobello Road*, territory is present but not visually seen, so the conformation of their image is left to the audience's imagination. And in Gonçalves' *Mulleres da Raia*, although we travel through Galicia and Portugal, there are no clear visual references to where we are exactly. The way that these female filmmakers approach their filming is intrinsically linked to the way in which they relate their body to the camera. Expanding on Laura Mulvey's (1975) idea of the need to film outside the male gaze –free from patriarchal constraints that have determined how women have been looked at and represented on screen–, Ledo (2021) says: 'o que se chama *female gaze* no cinema é como relacionas o corpo coa cámara, tratar o corpo como un corpo enteiro, non coma un obxeto sexualizado, senón como algo que vai narrándose, e que vai sendo a experiencia deses corpos na pantalla'. Similarly, Gonçalves and Mura use the camera to document women's experiences, allowing them to tell their own stories. Moreover, Páramo lets the actresses decide when to pause their conversation, so tension can grow dynamically, and uses the camera to enhance this.

These three filmmakers have different approaches to filmmaking, but they all explore their identity by portraying other women on screen. Through these portrayals, they construct relationships that go beyond the individual and constitute communities. In a similar way, Nakane states that Naomi Kawase's films transcend the personal:

When it comes to the filmmaker's own body, (her films) show an alternative way of constructing relationships among people, one that

goes beyond the binarism between 'individual' and 'society.' Kawase here intimates that it is possible to form communities which connect to an 'intimate sphere' using a female gaze. (Nakane 2018: 172)

Gonçalves, Mura, and Páramo manage to create a cinema of relationships seen through a female gaze. By being mobile frontiers, their films are portraits of a national group, reflecting on their own identity as well as providing a view of Galician identity as fluid, not constrained by fixed borders.

Adriana Páramo's Fiction

In 2008, when I was twenty-three years old, I went to study a master's degree in filmmaking at the London Film School, and I would stay for eleven years in this city. I consider myself part of the generation of millennials who decided to leave Spain in search of better job opportunities or to improve their education, following the effects of the European economic recession in Spain. The Office for National Statistics ('Population of the UK by Country of Birth and Nationality: Individual Country Data') estimates that, in 2019, there were around 188,000 Spaniards in the UK. It was when I started to live in London that I became more self-aware of my Galician identity, and I explored this through the female characters of my fiction short films. There are also other Galician filmmakers who migrated to London and who explore their identity in relation to territory in their films, such as Álvaro Gago, Peque Varela, and Borja Santomé. In the first short I directed, *Stone Island* (2010), I explored the sentiment of *morriña* or homesickness. I shot it in Santiago de Compostela, after living in London for two years and starting to realise the effects of distance on my relationships back home. In my second short film *Galicia. Portobello Road* (2015), I continued to search for my own identity, divided between London and Galicia. I shot the film in London, in a neighborhood that has been historically linked to Galician migrants. Here, I portray a mother-daughter relationship: María (Mariana Carballal), who has been running the restaurant Galicia in London for thirty years, wants to return to Galicia with her new partner, but her twenty-something year old daughter Celtia (Estibaliz Veiga) cannot come to terms with her mother's decision and tries to change her mind.

It is important to understand the context of the film's location, Portobello Road and the Galicia restaurant, as they reflect patterns of mobility in London. Portobello Road was the neighborhood where a generation of Galician and Spanish migrants settled down in the 60s, together with migrants from other countries, such as the Caribbean. Cañada Blanch, the only Spanish school in the UK (founded by a Galician priest) is also located here. In this street, there is also a mural commemorating the support from the Kensington (Portobello Road's borough) troops to the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, and there are several Spanish shops and restaurants owned by Galicians. Perhaps the most famous of all was the restaurant Galicia, situated on 323 Portobello Road, owned by two Galician families that run the business for thirty years. The Galicia became a meeting point for the Galician and Spanish communities as well as for curious Londoners and tourists – especially after the area became popular and slowly gentrified after the release of the

film *Notting Hill* (1999). I saw this restaurant as a mixture of cultures while maintaining the essence of a traditional *taberna* in Galicia. It was important for me that this was the location of the film because it is a recognizable symbolic spot for the Galician Londoners. When the restaurant actually closed its doors in 2018, a great controversy came about as the singer Ed Sheeran bought it to turn it into a music venue. People were disappointed that the essence of the 'Galicia' would not be preserved. *Galicia. Portobello Road* became a sort of archive for the history of the Galician community in the area. Proof of this is that the film was screened the year the restaurant closed as part of the first event organized by REGA (the Galician organization in the UK, uniting several cultural Galician groups) on the *Día das Letras Galegas* (Galician Literature Day) to commemorate the restaurant's legacy.

The short film starts with a sequence of Celtia walking around Portobello Road towards the Galicia restaurant. The story and its characters are intrinsically linked to these locations. However, I show the area only at the beginning and then the camera focuses on the characters, taking the story from the personal to the universal. The main action happens inside the restaurant. Here, María tells her daughter that she is closing the restaurant to return to Galicia and Celtia storms off as she cannot cope with this decision. Then, Celtia comes back to try to change her mother's mind. While they sit eating *filloas*, María tells Celtia that she has made up her mind but she gives her the keys of the restaurant. In *Galicia. Portobello Road*, the story moves forward from the conversation and not from the plot (Saladino 2017), similarly to what happens in Richard Linklater's *Before* trilogy (1995, 2004, 2013). I would add that silences are also crucial. The tension between the characters grows as they face a form of change that affects their identity and this is made visible specially when they keep quiet. Just as Mura and Gonçalves let the women they film tell their own stories, I let the actresses decide on the rhythm of their conversations, allowing them to pause when they felt it was right for the characters. I enhanced this by shooting the scenes in mid-shots where both characters are in frame so that the audience is aware of how they relate to each other. The film ends as we see María in the foreground leaving the restaurant while Celtia is in the background still sitting, holding the keys. As argued in the article 'Galicia, capital Portobello' (Praza Pública 2014), *Galicia. Portobello Road* represents two different identities, two women in between two countries. The camera reinforces the existing tension between the two characters by placing them in the same frame but on separate levels in the field while they carry on different actions.

I have argued how the tension that comes from the experience of migration can turn into something positive. Harriet Cook (2021) maintains that this short film embodies a fluid cultural exchange as two spheres come together, focusing on the contact points and not on what separates them. These two women go beyond their bond as mother-daughter and start to see each other as women in their own right. These characters are a reflection of me as a female mobile frontier. During the years in London, I would travel constantly to Galicia. In this physical going back and forth, my body was in passage, enabling an emotional process. I take Maffia's words to explain the relationship between body and history: 'El cuerpo vivido [...] es el cuerpo donde cada sensibilidad, cada cicatriz, cada estría, cada localización física de las emociones, cada sensibilidad erótica, diseña un mapa totalmente personal que sedimenta como historia' (Maffia 2009: 221).

Actresses Mariana Carballal and Estíbaliz Veiga embody the characters of María and Celtia, who are reflections of my lived body. I created these characters to explore my changing identity with the help of the camera, reflecting on who I was in relation to the territory that I did and did not inhabit.

This hybridity in the characters' identity is also made visible in the language they use. The film is in Galician language, but I also included some words in 'Galenglish', taking as a reference the project run by Xaime Varela, the teacher of Galician language in the Spanish school at the time. The students created a dictionary where they collected the words in English adapted to Galician that they had heard from their elders who had migrated to London decades earlier. As I wanted to portray real characteristics from the generation of migrants from the 60s, I inserted Galenglish words only in the lines María delivers, such as *conashop* instead of corner shop and *chanza* instead of chance. As Varela (2011) puts it, the Galenglish is 'a manifestación de que as linguas cando están en contacto conflúen'. Language in *Galicia. Portobello Road* is another sign of the cultural hybridity that I reflect upon and go through as a filmmaker.

Monica Mura's Moving Image Work

Monica Mura is an interdisciplinary artist and performer working in different media. She was born in Cagliari (Sardinia). After living in different parts of Italy, she moved to Santiago de Compostela almost two decades ago. She has works of different nature (e.g., photography, video, collage), but all her oeuvre revolves around social issues and has women at its core. Mura sits among other interdisciplinary Galician artists working around the same themes and having the body as a driving force, such as Lupita Hard and María Roja and filmmaker Xisela Franco. Mura's work is extensive, but in order to explore her role as a mobile frontier I will focus on her documentary *Elas Contan* (2018). Here, Mura interviews six middle-aged women on their life experiences revolving around the city of Santiago de Compostela. Mura chose women who have a different relationship with the town: some were born there, one went to live there when she got married, and others migrated and then returned. She asked them all the same ten questions. Although we do not hear them being asked, as they speak it is clear that they all refer to the same themes. Some of these are as follows: what did you want to be when you grew up? Who are you today? Any advice for younger generations? The city of Santiago is only directly addressed in the last question: what is your favorite spot? However, they talk indirectly about the town in most of their answers. Mura chooses not to film the locations so that the audience can imagine these places through what the women tell. Fernando Redondo, when analysing landscape in the film *Paisaxes da Capelada* (2017), states that 'a paisaxe só é posible pola ollada que lle outorga forma e sentido' (2019: 119). However, I would argue that in *Elas Contan*, it is the audience's symbolic gaze what creates the landscape of Santiago. Mura (2021) says that by being Italian, she sees Santiago differently than Galician people, but that she wanted to show a Santiago that is not known by tourists and pilgrims that would be full of preconceptions. The audience imagines Santiago not just from the specific places these women mention, but from what they say about their life experiences. Through their testimonies, Mura creates

an emotional map of Santiago de Compostela and, in doing so, explores her own relationship with the city. It is not the first time the artist works around women's testimonies and emotional maps. In other works, such as the video collage and photo exhibition *Sas Diosas* ('The Goddesses'), she prints photos of the last six generations of women from her mother's side and some of their defining objects to build a visual family history. In *Cartografía corporal* ('Body Cartography'), she photographs women with painted golden star maps on their skin, symbolizing their personal history and emotional experiences.

Mura edits *Elas Contan* in chronological order as she filmed it and, in most cases, she leaves in the whole answer to the question. As these women talk, Mura films fragmented close-ups of their eyes, mouths, and hands. This fragmentation is not objectifying; instead, Mura is rethinking the talking head interview. Adding on to the ideas about the female gaze, Mura wants the audience not to look at their eyes but to see through their eyes, and not to look at their lips but to speak through them (Mura 2018). Therefore, Mura not only creates an emotional map of Santiago, but she is also reclaiming women's body. When she asks if they found difficulties in being female, three of them said that they did. It is interesting to note that one of the women who said that she did not, had previously said that she had been abused in the past. When these same three women were asked what they wish for, they said that they wish for women to feel free, to walk home without worrying if they are going to be attacked. At the end of each interview, we see the close-up of each woman's hands embroidering. The embroidery work is picked up by the next woman where the previous one left it, until the young girl –who is the last one being interviewed– draws on the design done by them. The golden thread and embroidery are elements that Mura uses in all her work to symbolize tradition and resilience, and here they can also be seen as a link between past and future, tradition and rupture – two sides of the process of identity formation.

Mura (2021) takes inspiration from Agnès Varda's work *Some Widows of Noirmoutier* (2006). In this documentary Varda interviews several widows and asks them about how they experience life after their husbands died. Varda appears physically among the other women on the beach, positioning herself as a widow as well, as her husband had died too. Varda takes the relationship between filmmaker and interviewee further, as there is an exchange of experiences and learnings, something that Mura also achieves in *Elas Contan*. There is no hierarchy between filmmaker and interviewee, but rather women sharing experiences. Mura manages to create a relationship with these women from behind the camera. They open up about their fears and dreams, and as she points out, 'se desnudan sin quitarse la ropa' (2021). As Varda, she also places herself in the film as it starts with a close-up of her own hands, painting the title of the film with a golden marker on the taboret that will then be passed on to the other speakers. Mura made these women aware that, although they were telling their own personal story, they were representing a wider group of women, bearing the history of a country (Mura 2021). This is also what Ledo achieves when she films the female workers of the Pontesa factory in *Nation* (2021). Ledo is not just telling their story but also bringing to the fore the female working-class struggle in Galicia as a nation. In the same way, through the women's experiences in *Elas Contan*, Mura takes the individual to the universal, connecting with Galician history and culture and reclaiming women's rights.

The documentary was premiered in the church of the University of Santiago de Compostela, where Mura also installed a photograph exhibition on the adjacent walls. Mura hung photographic portraits, taken in her native Sardinia, of women holding objects that defined their traditional jobs and customs. Mura created a dialogue between the women from Santiago on the screen, who were also physically present in the room, and the Italian women from her home region on the walls. This is a great example of Mura being a mobile frontier. Not only does she physically travel back and forth from Galicia to Sardinia, but a cultural exchange between these pictures, the film, and Mura herself is enabled through her work. Mura (2021) claims that she does not work with women from Galicia or women from Sardinia; she just works with women. But the artist herself embodies the link between these two territories and communities of women. *Elas Contan* became a multidisciplinary work. Mura points out that the goal of this project is to explore how to collect women's testimonies and it is the women and the place that shape the format she will work with. In 2019, she travelled to Caldas (Galicia) and produced *Elas Contan Caldas*. Here, she took photographic portraits of local women, printed them on fabric, and hung them from the town buildings. Moreover, she went to the Spanish region of Cuenca and did *Ellas Cuentan Huete* (2019), organising an exhibition with these women's personal objects to tell something about their story and their town. Mura reflects about the possibility of having to complete this work during the COVID-19 pandemic and argues that it could have been done as podcasts or video Zoom interviews. However, she also raises her concerns about the challenges of reproducing this project in countries where she would not be familiar with the language, as her relationship with the territory and the people would be more complex. This demonstrates how the artist's relationship with the territory and the subjects of her work is intrinsically linked to her own identity.

Diana Gonçalves's Documentary Cinema

Diana Gonçalves, unlike Mura or Páramo, did not migrate, but is also in contact with two territories. Gonçalves was born to a Galician mother and a Portuguese father, both from towns in opposite sides of the territory known as 'A Raia'. This is the border dividing Galicia and Portugal and it is distinguished between the 'Raia húmida' visibly formed by the Minho River, and the 'Raia seca', comprising the land border. The border exists since the separation of Portugal from León in 1139, but it has been mobile and changing, and was only strictly defined in 1864 with the Lisbon Treaty. These territories share common elements, such as climate and farming, and people have always crossed the border for multiple reasons. When asked what a frontier means to her, Gonçalves (2021) describes it as:

Fronteira como política administrativa, unha liña que se traza nuns despachos. Esa liña case nunca se corresponde co espazo vital das persoas que viven aí. O ser humano móvese dun lado a outro e por razóns de subsistencia. Para min a fronteira é un fenómeno complexo e cambiante. (Gonçalves 2021)

Diana was, in fact, born in a Galician hospital only to return to Valença, the Portuguese town where her family was living at the time with

her parental relatives. When Gonçalves was four years old, they moved to Tui, a Galician town on the opposite side of 'A Raia', to live with her maternal grandmother. Throughout her life, Gonçalves has continued to travel between the Portuguese and Galician territories, having family, friends, and projects on both sides.

I analyse here her documentary *Mulleres da Raia* (2009), but I will start by mentioning her previous work, from which *Mulleres da Raia* originated. *Trapicheiras* (2008) is a piece done for the documentary workshop at the Play–Doc Festival, where participants had to tell a four-minute story. As the festival is held in Tui where she grew up, she immediately thought of doing something around this area and the stories she had heard of women crossing the border. Her grandfather on the Portuguese side introduced her to one of these women. In *Trapicheiras*, Gonçalves portrayed Inés's experiences crossing the Portuguese border, smuggling goods to sell them in Galicia at a time of economic shortage. As the director got to know Inés's story, she realised that there was a debt to all women like her because their stories had not been told. She decided to explore this theme further in *Mulleres da Raia*, telling the stories of seven women living on both sides of 'A Raia' (in Galicia and in Portugal), who in the past had no other choice than to become smugglers. Gonçalves claims in the film (2009) that *trapiche* or 'smuggling' became an economic exchange derived from the daily needs. At a time when both Portugal and Spain were under dictatorships (Salazar's and Franco's), most women were alone as their husbands had to migrate to make a living. They found a way of surviving the economic shortage by selling goods such as eggs, fish, or grain to the other side of the frontier. *Mulleres da Raia* adds on to the films created by Galician and Portuguese filmmakers about the territory of 'A Raia': *Os salteadores* (Abi Feijó, 1993), *A Raia* (Iván Castiñeiras, 2012), *Arraianos* (Eloy Enciso, 2012), *Ashes* (Pedro Flores, 2012), and *Noite sem Distância* (Lois Patiño, 2015). However, Gonçalves does this from a female perspective, enabling these women to speak for themselves.

The film is divided into two sections: the women living in 'A Raia seca', the regions among the Xurés mountain range where crossing was easier; and the women in 'A Raia húmida', where crossing was more difficult as the territories are divided by the natural border of the Minho River. To get in touch with these women, Gonçalves, who at the time was living in Galicia, moved temporarily to her grandfather's house in Valença (Portugal), as this was a better location to travel around 'A Raia'. As Gonçalves started to meet these women, she found that they had reservations about discussing their past as smugglers and they would deny it or tell the stories as if they were someone else's. Gonçalves (2021) explains these reservations as a mixture of fear and embarrassment, as the protagonists had to engage in illegal activities in order to survive in the context of the dictatorships, and they felt that this was not something to be proud of. The director approached these women two months prior to starting filming to establish a relationship with them, so that they would feel comfortable talking, and insisted that if they did not tell their stories themselves, others would do it for them (2021). They later told Gonçalves that they had not even shared them with their descendants. In the film, one of the women from 'A Raia húmida' tells how she was incarcerated for trying to pass two bars of soap to the other side and had to sell part of her land to be able to pay the bail. Inés (the woman who Gonçalves had already followed in her first short film) says that she could not go to school because

she had to spend her days on the bridge, waiting to pass, and that many times the guards would stop her and confiscate everything. If, as Mikhail Bakhtin (2012) suggests, the body is a frontier, the minimum possible condition to establish a dialogue, Gonçalves is acting as a meeting point for these women's stories. As Mura also does in *Elas Contan*, Gonçalves manages to make their stories visible by enabling a space for communication. The documentary preserves not only their stories but also this part of history that has not been told. The film acquires even more relevance today as some of these women have already passed away.

The camera in *Mulleres da Raia* is a device used by Gonçalves to make the mobility between the two territories visible. Gonçalves (2021) explains that she did not want to situate the audience on a map as the line is only clear on paper; instead, she decided to communicate a sensation rather than a geographical point. In the first scene, we hear how a radio tunes in and out of Galician and Portuguese stations as a car moves along a road, and we sense that we are moving through different territories. This fluidity continues throughout the film. Gonçalves announces the Raia we are crossing (wet or dry) but she does not specify if these women are in Galicia or in Portugal. We only know this as they speak in Galician or Portuguese. However, this would not be noticeable for someone who does not know these languages. In the film, Gonçalves crosses the borders on her own, the dry side by car, and the fluvial side by boat. She also asks some of these women to take her on the journey they would have made when crossing the frontier (some were already too advanced in age to be able to do this in the film). She follows them with her camera as these women revisit those places. Ledo (2021), when talking about the relationship between camera and body in her film *Nation*, states: 'Eu traballo nos lugares onde as cousas aconteceron. Confío plenamente nos ecos deses lugares e en que funcionan como un dispositivo de memoria e que o corpo reaxe aí'. Gonçalves captures not only how these women move around but also what these places evoke in them. The film ends with a shot of Inés walking down the bridge that for decades divided Portugal and Spain, with guards and border controls. Smuggling stopped when Portugal and Spain entered the European Common Market, so we see Inés walking freely from one country to another on the bridge that she used to cross and that now does not separate the countries anymore. Gonçalves reclaims here these women's bodies and her own as mobile frontiers.

Conclusion

In this article, I have looked at three female filmmakers with different relationships with Galicia and how different approaches to filmmaking reflect the construction of their identities on the women they portray on screen. I have claimed that Diana Gonçalves, Monica Mura, and Adriana Páramo manage to turn their fragmented identities –divided into two territories– into a fluid one. As they move physically and symbolically between territories, they become mobile frontiers, blurring geographical limits and creating transcultural films that expand the notion of Galician identity.

However, as I have already addressed in the introduction, we cannot talk about blurring frontiers and not mention how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting the freedom of movement in a European context at present.

According to Rodríguez (2020), from the end of October 2020, following the restrictions taken by the Galician government to try to stop the spread of COVID-19, 45% of the population in Galicia (1.2 million citizens) could not leave their council and in thirty of them, people were only allowed to meet with cohabitants. This situation persisted for more than five months until the restrictions started to be lifted. According to O'Connor and Portes (2021), London, which has the largest non-UK-born population, lost about 700,000 foreigners (8% of the population) in 2020. Gil Rosendo (2021) uses this data to analyse how after three decades of constant population growth, London sees an exodus of people because of the consequences of Brexit and the pandemic. With the COVID-19 crisis, businesses and specially the hospitality industry, where most foreigners work, closed their doors. With Brexit, access to government benefits or bank credits is not as easy as it used to be, and as a result, many people have decided to return to their home countries (Gil Rosendo 2021). Moreover, after twenty-five years, movement between Portugal and Spain was heavily restricted for months as the borders were closed. As Punzón (2020) states, the frontier became visible once again, with guards coming back to surveillance posts to carry out passport controls. The psychological effects of restrictions to mobility are still being analysed (Prati and Manchini 2021), but studies already show how the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have had a negative emotional impact on the population (Gismero-González et al. 2020; Fundación Lucha contra el Sida y las Enfermedades Infecciosas 2020). In an environment where mobility is restricted, will physical and symbolic frontiers continue to be fluid? I have sought to analyse how the three female filmmakers I examine here enrich Galician national identity by portraying women on the screen who reflect on their mobile identities. It will be interesting to see how contemporary mobility restrictions affect the construction of personal identities and how transculturation will evolve from now on.



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