Memory and gender as migrant audience formations: Latin American women remembering cinema and films across borders

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Abstract:
This article discusses the findings of a qualitative research project exploring the memories and habits of cinema-going of an intergenerational group of Latin American women living in Barcelona and Milan. Specifically, it offers a thematic analysis of migrant cinema-memories to read broader practices of home-making, mobility, transnational relationships, and digital ecologies. The article shows that an interdisciplinary methodology, combining feminist audience studies, memory studies and migration research, represents a valuable key to understanding contemporary audience formations. Such reflexive and gendered methods emphasize the potential of migrant memory to overcome limitations of audience research, such as methodological nationalism and fragmentation. It also suggests that a sensory approach to research tools and materials offers a key to overcome the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to fieldwork. In conclusion, the article calls for a broader exploration of migrant cinematic memory as a necessary, interdisciplinary perspective on the transnational and gendered aspects of the contemporary audience experience.

Keywords: transnational audiences, migration, cinema memory, feminist methods, COVID-19

In their foundational *The Age of Migration*, Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller affirm that "global cultural interchange, facilitated by improved transport and the proliferation of printed and electronic media, also leads to migration" (1998: 4). In other words, they argue that in an increasingly globalised, mobile and connected world, the circulation of cultural products (including films) and the formation of *mediascapes* (Appadurai 2010) is inseparable from the migrations of people. These macro-trends find a confirmation in the everyday lives of migrants, with media facilitating the management of long-distance relationships, and

supporting the formation of ideas of home and belonging (Hegde 2016). In this context, scholars agree that globalisation has also transformed the ways in which audiences form and engage with a growing fragmentation of media texts, screens and consumption practices (Ang 1996; Athique 2016). These transformations have also enhanced participatory and mobile practices that coexist with "sedentary" modes of consumption and reception, such as those of cinema and broadcast television (Das and Livingstone 2013).

With this in mind, this article proposes an intimate, gendered and everyday perspective on how fragmented audiences and global mobilities are intertwined. To do so, it discusses the findings of a qualitative research project exploring the memories and habits of cinema-going of an intergenerational group of Latin American women who migrated to Barcelona and Milan. Specifically, the participants have been asked to remember their habits of cinemagoing before and after migration, and to talk about their present consumption of Latin American films, series, and television programs, including during their return visits to the country of origin. By combining feminist audience methods, memory studies and migration research, the essay uses migrant cinema memory to overcome fragmentation and explore the relational, mediated and everyday aspects of media consumption and reception (Livingstone 2004; Livingstone and Press 2006). The ultimate goal of the article is to illustrate how cinema memory adds a holistic and transnational approach to audiences, while contributing to migration studies, with its reflexive and affective approach to migrant women's experiences. Indeed, the situated, ordinary and pleasurable characteristics of cinema memory provide an original take on both micro and macro aspects of migration (Lutz 2010), going beyond the strictly economic sphere (Baldassar and Merla 2014) to address the cultural, the relational and the emotional.

As such, the article breaks into two main sections: the first introduces the study and discusses the theoretical premises and methodologies of the project; the second analyses excerpts from the interviews, proposing a thematic path centred on practices of home-making, mnemonic geographies, transnational relationships, and digital ecologies.

1. Migration, Women, Audiences: Case-study, Challenges and Positionalities

The Study

The study consists of the collection and analysis of 35 in-depth interviews with Latin American women, from ten different countries, who have been living in Barcelona or Milan for at least two years.[1] The interviews were conducted online between April and December 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic prevented on-site fieldwork.

The transnational composition of the sample is functional to survey the "cultural proximity" (La Pastina and Straubhaar 2005) and "hybridity" (Canclini 2005) of Latin American media, which tend to establish transnational "cinematic contact zones" (Pérez-Melgosa 2010) and cross-border "identity maps" (Holmes 2012). In other words, transnational media infrastructures and modes of circulation typical of the Latin-American

region encourage the adoption of "transnational lenses", an aspect that is further emphasised in the personal experience of migration of the participants. Though Spain and Italy are relatively recent destinations of international migration, Milan and Barcelona are Southern European "global cities" (Sassen 2007) in which Latin American residents represent the second biggest group of extra-European nationals (ISTAT 2019; INE 2019). This presence has steadily grown in the last 20-25 years, resulting in a migratory flow characterised by femininization (Floya and Lazaridis 2000), multiple migratory channels (work, study, family reunion), and a complex history of exchanges between Catalonia, Italy and the Latin American continent (Díaz, Cuberos and Castellani 2012; Guzardi et al. 2020). A comparison between Milan and Barcelona is also motivated by aspects of linguistic difference, which influence the access and experiences of cinemagoing, particularly in relation to established traditions of dubbing in Catalonia, Spain and Italy.[2]

As such, the project methodologically engages with Steven Vertovec's notion of "superdiversity" (2007) and specifically with his understanding of transnational migration as the product of intertwining regulatory channels, routes, temporalities, and social positionings. Indeed, the group of interviewees is heterogenous not only in terms of origin, but also in relation to their class and cultural background, professional status, and time of permanence in Europe. However, as a result of snowball sampling, the interviewees have in common an averagely high level of education (high school diploma/degree), and have all lived, at least for a period of their life, in a large Latin American city. For all these reasons, the sample does not mean to be representative of the Latin American population in Barcelona and Milan and its habits of cultural consumption, but rather reflect the diversity of experiences in international contemporary migration.

Aims, Methods and Tools

The study's main goal is providing a nuanced perspective on migrant women's everyday relationship with media, beyond binary patterns of in/visibilization characterising most of their representations. Even though global migratory flows are increasingly feminized (Castles and Miller 1998; Sassen 2007), with gender articulating several flows of capital and labour (Phizacklea, 1983; Ehrenreich and Horschild 2002), media are disproportionately populated by stereotypical and essentialist narratives about migrant women, usually depicted as co-dependent or as Others (Mattoscio and MacDonald 2018). Feminist scholars have also pointed to the persistent characterisation of women as passive followers of their (male) partners, including in migration scholarship (Morokvasic 1984; Kofman 1999). More recently, research on digital diasporas (Candidatu, Leurs and Ponzanesi 2019), transnational families (Parreñas 2011; Madianou and Miller 2012), and migrant media participations (Georgiou 2014) has shed light on the rich "cultural politics, social dynamics and lived geographies of migrants [that] are entrenched within media worlds" (Hegde 2016: 3). However, the primary focus of these studies on the digital and the participatory has somehow left behind aspects of consumption and reception, especially in relation to "traditional" media like the cinema. This could be explained with cinema's historical role in

disseminating vernacular forms of ethnicity and nationality (Morley 2000) which encourage an identification of the cinematic audience with a sedentary and unified (national) collective. Indeed, while the encounter between the globalising tendencies of the film industry and local film cultures makes evident that films and infrastructures are mobile and in constant circulation (Acland 2003), cinema audiences remain generally bound to particular ethnic/national groupings and locations, with studies mostly concentrating on specific local contexts like a venue, a neighbourhood, a city or a nation. Though recent investigations on diasporic audiences have enabled "the deconstruction of the national as a prime category of analysis" (Smets 2013: 104), forms of "methodological nationalism" (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) and bounded concepts of identity and ethnicity (Madianou 2013) are still preventing a consistent engagement with audience movements. As this article aims to demonstrate, a gendered and migrant perspective on the cinematic experience contributes to reveal forms of "everyday transnationalism" (Vertovec 2009) and their influence on contemporary audience formations. In other words, by approaching cinema-going and film consumption "as a social practice" we can understand how "the global is performed, reproduced, and contested within the material specificities of everyday life" (Hegde 2011: 6).

In this framework, memory provides the key to explore migratory and audience experiences, taking advantage of the gendered and multidirectional quality of remembering (Rothberg 2009). The study particularly engages with a "life story methodology" (Bourdon 2011) that collects "transnational memories" (De Cesari and Rigney 2014) which are formed at multiple locations and in different contexts. As a result, the cinematic experience is framed in terms of a "travelling culture" (Clifford 1992) emphasizing on the mobility and exchanges between people. This "travelling" and "multi-local" approach doesn't mean to replace or neglect the importance of research conducted "in place", or deny the relevance of the nation in aspects such as policy and legislation. Rather, it aims to offer a complementary view on the local, one that accounts for the transformative dimension of mobility across borders and in-between places. As a subcategory of cultural memory, 'cinema memory' entertains a complex relationship with time and place, shifting between the individual and the collective, the public and the private, evoking affective relationships with places, people, and films (Kuhn 2002 and 2011). This aspect enables the understanding of the affective and relational dimensions of cinema-going, in which the public and the private, the domestic and the urban experience are intertwined. In addition to this, 'cinema memory' offers opportunities for cross-media analysis because personal memories can gain social relevance only through media representation and distribution (Erll 2011: 113) and their analysis is inseparable from the media ecologies in which they are embedded and articulated (Reading 2016). In the specific case of this study, the 'mediation of memory' resurfaces at two main levels: since the interviews have been conducted online, memories were formed in the digital, mediated space of the video call; at the same time, participants mentioned the everyday use of other media such as television, streaming platforms, ICTs and social networks in relation to their memories of films and movie-going.

In order to explore this array of topics and address the complex media ecologies developed by the study, I have adopted a methodology and theoretical framework that puts into dialogue two areas of audience research that haven't been systematically integrated so far: feminist audience research in cultural studies,[3] and the study of cinema memory in New Cinema History. On the one hand, feminist scholarship has mostly adopted ethnographic methods (i.e. interviewing and/or participant observation) to study the gendered aspects of media reception and consumption, with a particular focus on processes of identity formation, the everyday, and the public/private divide (Cavalcante, Press and Sender 2017). On the other hand, New Cinema History acknowledges the importance of archival sources and oral histories, namely audience memories, when seeking to unpack the past and present socio-cultural circumstances of cinema as a commercial institution and popular form of entertainment (Maltby 2011). The combination of these two approaches is particularly beneficial, as they allow the exploration of first-hand experiences, emphasising on reflexivity, pleasure and processes of identity negotiation. Moreover, while feminist audience research concentrates on the everydayness and ordinariness of the cinematic experience, the methods of New Cinema History allow for a bottom-up historicising, in which women circulate and make meaning, avoiding risks of "cultural presentism" (Morley 2015). The combination of these two scholarly approaches also overcomes some methodological and theoretical impasses: a focus on reflexivity and mobility counteracts the tendency to "geographical monocentrism" (Biltereyst and Meers 2016: 16) of the New Cinema History; at the same time, the attention to migration and memory provides a corrective to a tradition of feminist audience scholarship that concentrates on white, Anglo-American and middle-class subjects, that results often in "a populist" view of mass culture (Valdivia 2000; Parameswaran 2003).

Borders, Positions and Pandemic Immobility

Migrant memory often speaks from and about the liminal space of the border, intersecting with histories of displacement, inequality and emotional disruption. The discussion of cross-border memories produces political and epistemological tensions (Mezzadra and Neilson 2012), which require to overcome "media-centrism" (Morley 2017: 8) to place our research "in the midst of people, in a historical, peopled, subjective/intersubjective understanding of the oppressing <- -> resisting relation" (Lugones 2010, 746-747). This means also assessing my positionality in the study, as an academic working in an institution of the Global North, with a personal experience of migration. By following Patricia Hill Collins' invitation to "trust my own personal biography as a significant source of knowledge" (1986: S29), the partiality of my "standpoint" (Hartsock 1983) becomes an opportunity to acknowledge the proximities and differences between the interviewees and me. Indeed, the variety of migratory experiences surveyed in the study inevitably produced "situated knowledges" (Haraway 1988) that somehow clashed with immobilities and new perceptions of movement and temporality experienced during the months of data collection, marked by the COVID 19 pandemic. Our different geographical locations made evident the "disparities

of movement" among the participants, but also between us. Asking about the last time they have seen a movie at the theatre revealed changes in the perception of time, with the repetition of expressions like "before all this happened" or "before everything started to close". Relationships with place got affected too (Devine-Wright et al. 2020), with conversations dwelling on the transformations of homes, workplaces, and ways to inhabit the public space. For some participants, especially for those at the frontline of the "care crisis" (Care Collective 2020) (care workers, cleaners and nurses), these ice-breaking questions opened up a space for mutual, "mundane care" (Brownlie and Spandler 2018): some participants took the online session as a chance to be on their own, for others it was a distraction, a break, to discuss something pleasurable and fun like the movies. While these care strategies spontaneously emerged throughout the study, I was increasingly aware of the "sensory" quality of the interviews, a mediated, digital space where the participants and I communicated "as embodied and emplaced persons" (Pink 2015: 75). As such, the loss of on-site fieldwork has somehow been compensated by a more intimate, sensory approach to the analysis of the interviews. A specific attention has been paid to the affective quality of the research materials, particularly of the transcriptions, which helped "to evoke the memories and imaginations of the research" (Pink 2015: 143). Moreover, the transition to fully online and mediated interactions hasn't been particularly complicated in itself: as "media savvy" and highly "connected migrants" (Diminescu 2007), going online made it easier to arrange the interviews around their schedule. At the same time, they made me wonder about the possible exclusions that this format might have produced. As the pandemic continues, these contingencies deserve further scrutiny as opportunities to improve our research methods, encouraging a careful evaluation of the amount of time and emotional engagement that we ask of our informants.

2. Multidimensional Cinema Memories: Histories, Proximities and Identities

This section offers a thematic path through a selection of excerpts from the interviews, moving from more conventional aspects of cinema memory (linked to history and location) to less explored ones, such as relationality, mobility and connectivity. My analysis will follow a biographical structure, starting from childhood memories of cinema-going, to conclude with the discussion of the everyday in the present. Following the suggestion of decolonial feminist François Vergès, in order to acknowledge these multifaceted meanings, I have adopted a multidimensional approach that counteracts segmentation by means of a simple strategy: "[taking] one element to uncover a political, economic, cultural, and social ecosystem" (2021: 21).[4] By using memory and reflexivity as multidimensional tools, my analysis aims to hold several threads at once to reveal the links between issues and meanings, indicating further opportunities for interpretation and investigation.

The Individual and the Collective: Girlhood, History and Heritage

My analysis begins with two memories of childhood experiences of cinema-going:

My aunt took me to see a horror film, and it was terrible. That's not my genre and I would never watch that type of film again. […] We're talking of more than 30 years ago… so I don't really remember the name of the film. [52, Santo Domingo, Ecuador, 24 years in Milan]

Ah, I remember, the first time I went to the cinema… it was when I went on holiday in the capital [Porto Alegre], to visit my aunt and uncle. Of course, in my village there was no cinema, so for me it was like a new world... a giant screen… I was little... I remember this dazzle, when I went to see it for the first time… the different sound... I felt super, eh? [40, Santo Ângelo, Brasil, 7 years in Barcelona]

As these two extracts illustrate, the informants can recall both aspects of the film text as well as the activity of cinema-going per se, in a continuum where individual and social experiences coexist and intersect (Kuhn 2011). Despite the differences of age, country of origin, and location, the interviewees were similarly accessing the 'child's voice' within themselves (Kuhn 2002: 67). These aspects confirm the potential of cinema memory for transgenerational and transcultural analysis, though the "locatedness of memory" (Radstone 2011), namely its bond to a specific place and time, resurfaces in small details. In the second quote, the discovery of the metropolis (Porto Alegre) is linked to the amazement brought by the cinema, which introduces the interviewee to a bigger, new world. The dazzle and excitement in the words of the participant evoke Daniela Treveri Gennari's notion of "memory of pleasure", namely the ability of cinema memory to elicit "a sense of beauty, as well as enrichment and self-esteem, optimistic thoughts and positive feelings" (2018: 42). This is particularly important in relation to the way we approach the study of memory and migration: what feelings does remembering provoke? What kind of engagement do we require of the participants? Moreover, the element of pleasure is also crucially gendered, with the socializing aspect of movie-going (Treveri Gennari et al. 2021: 130-2) producing nuanced meanings:

What attracted me [to the cinema] was going out, wanting to isolate myself from the world, the feeling of being alone but in intimacy with people. […] We would go out in four or five people and after leaving the theatre we talked about the film, and went for a drink. I mean, it's different than being in a house, isn't it? [52, Santo Domingo, Ecuador, 24 years in Milan]

The excitement for "not being in a house", resonates with the classic argument in feminist audience research about the bond between audiences and gendered experiences of the public/private divide. The interplay between the singular and the collective, the public and the private is particularly important in the memories of movie-going linked to a specific

historical period. Indeed, cinema memory offers a powerful stage for 'history as a collective singular' (Erll 2011: 44-5), like in this case, in which an informant from Argentina, told me about her experiences of cinema-going at the beginning of the military dictatorship:

> It was in the first years of high-school. I remember there were these matinees at a theatre near my house […] and all the kids were there, not to see the films, but for the political meetings that happened there […]. We would go to skip school and […] it was very attractive because we were girls... the cinema was the perfect place, you met the guys that you liked, and there was politics. Of course, those clandestine meetings ended because it was sinful and dangerous under the dictatorship. [60, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 28 years in Milan]

The participant, who is still politically active, told me that the night before the interview she shared the same memory with her teenage daughter, who wanted to know about the "politicized times of Argentina". This anecdote highlights two important matters: first, politicization and migration are intertwined processes of subject formation (Gordano-Peile 2017); second, memory and historical remembering intersect with identity (Reading 2011), and in this specific case with girlhood and motherhood. Indeed, through memory cinema and film become vehicles for the transmission of one's own heritage, while affirming a sense of belonging to a (national, diasporic, political, and/or generational) group. Such aspects are also relevant in the making of the relationship between the informant and the interviewer. A good example in this respect is provided by a participant from Peru, who told me about her memories and impressions on the Peruvian film *La teta asustada* [*The Milk of Sorrow*] (Claudia Llosa 2009), that she saw at a screening organised by the Peruvian consulate in Milan:

> The film made me re-live a sad period of Peru. […] It was the period of terrorism with the abuses of women. […] It was quite shocking for me. I am 61 years old now. The film reminded me of how my life in Peru was from the age of 11 until I was 22 years old. […] At the time, I was already a nurse and treated both the terrorist and the policeman. So this film made me go back a little bit there, and feel it. I hope you can see it too... [61, Paramonga/Lima, 29 years in Milan].

While telling me about her feelings, and how the screening affected her and her friends ("we remained silent the whole time"), she was also informing me about the history of Peru, with the invitation to see the film. Given my position in the study of outsider-insider (I am Italo-Colombian) of a younger generation (I am 33 at the time of writing this article), the interviewee acknowledges our distance (in terms of origin and age), but at the same time

uses her memory and the historical, national meanings evoked by Llosa's film to bridge the gap.

The Relational: Geographies, Proximities, Returns

The same participant described some scenes of the same film to explain the urban transformations which occurred in the city of Lima between the 1980s and 1990s. These topographic and geographical aspects are another feature of cinema memory, which exceed the film text to illuminate the multiple bonds that cinema-going enhances between people and place (Kuhn 2004). This is particularly evident in the memories moving across different life stages (adolescence, adult life), evoking different ways of experiencing the urban space. In the case of this informant, life stages are put in relation to the cities (Cali, Bogotá, Barcelona) where she has lived and to different ways of experiencing cinema-going:

> [When I was in Cali], I was a university student, a teenager, and I went to the theatre by foot […]. I was much more rebellious then […]. Later, when you become a professional, you can only go [to the movies] at night. In Bogotá, which is such a big city, going out at night requires a specific security protocol, that even if you're not aware of it, you do it. […] In Barcelona, on the other hand, you can improvise more. […] You can be out of the theatre at midnight, have a drink and then go home without any problem. And this is quite a big difference from the Latin American big cities. […] In Latin America I don't do that. [45, Cali, Colombia, 12 years in Barcelona].

The description of ordinary, everyday movements like walking to and inside the movie theatre (Treveri Gennari et al. 2020) can also produce emotional, subjective geographies (Ercole et al. 2017), like in the case of another participant from Lima, who described the long journey she took when, as a teenager, went to the cinema with her mother:

> My mother grew up in a district [of Lima] called Lince […] and she wanted to go to the same cinema where she went in her youth. To go there we had to take two buses, […] leaving at six, with the film starting at half past eight, and we would return home almost at midnight […]. On our way, she walked around and she would always say, with a certain melancholy, 'Here is where my friend Fulano used to live' [58, Lima, Peru, 17 years in Milan].

This memory brought the participant back to the familiar streets and places she had walked with her mother, with cinema memory working like a magnet that creates proximity between people and places. These forms of imaginative "co-presence" confirm that distance is not just a barrier to migrants' transnational relationships and practices of home-making (Baldassar 2008; Baldassar and Merla 2016). Distance enhances a contradictory set of emotions, in which a sense of obligation, nostalgia and reflexivity contribute to migrants'

sense of attachment and belonging. However, despite digital technologies increasing the opportunities to recreate imagined and mediated forms of co-presence, physical proximity remains very important for transnational migrants. Specifically, return visits represent a particularly intense experience, with their rituals and priorities. Like in the case of these two Colombian participants, who regularly visit their family in Bogotá, and find time to go to the movies:

> [Whenever I am visiting], going to the cinema is a fixed plan. [...] My parents, for example, no longer live in Bogotá. So when I am there, they come and the whole family goes out, with my siblings, my nephews and nieces... [37, Bogotá, Colombia, 11 years in Barcelona]

> [When I am visiting] I go to the cinema with my nieces. [...] Everything I don't do here [at the movie theatre], I do when I am there with them. We buy huge popcorn and stuff. [...] This is the time I have with them to share these types of things. [40, Bogotá, Colombia, 21 years in Barcelona]

Cinema memory circulates through affects and intensifies relationships with people and places, by participating in complex forms of care circulation. Memory, indeed, "mediates between past and present, home and hostland, as those who return – provisionally or permanently – systematically search for what is familiar [...] to compare what they see with what they recall" (Marschall 2018: 10), as this quote well illustrates:

> I have a photograph of the cinema where I used to go when I was little. [...] I went to see it after almost 25 years, [...] I went there to remember part of my childhood. I mean, it was a wonderful thing, because it was like going back so many years. [61, Paramonga/Lima, 29 years in Milan]

By broadening our understanding of "media as home-making tools" (Bonini 2011), cinema memory, thanks to its extra-textual and affective dimension, illuminates the inter-subjective and relational quality of making home for migrants, like in this example, where a participant told me about a time when her mother came to visit Italy:

> When [my mother] saw the architecture here, she started to talk about Italian neorealism. Of course, she was not using the term neorealism. What she said was that the architecture reminded her of the films she saw from Italy. [...] We made a trip to the main Italian cities, and she said "Yes, this is what I saw in my childhood". Because, as I told you, there has always been a link, a very, very fraternal relationship between Italy and Peru. So, you can see that a lady, a simple housewife, from Peru, who didn't go to university, [...] in her times

[…], saw the images of Italian cinema from that post-war period. And I think we all have seen them. [50 Lima, Perù, 12 years in Milan]

In this quote, cinema, architecture and memory produce a complex sense of belonging, while helping make sense of the distance between a mother and her migrated daughter. In other words, remembering the Italian films somehow built a sense of familiarity and proximity with the place where the participant decided to build her new life.

However, visits are not accessible in the same way for everybody, especially for those who have more recently migrated and are still looking for stability. Despite this, a sense of personal fulfilment and enjoyment characterises the cinema memories of these participants as well, in combination with feelings of longing and hope, that intersect with practices of community-making and resilience. A participant from Guayaquil (Ecuador), a "transnational mother" (Parreñas 2001) who hasn't seen her daughter in two years, is very active (works two jobs, attends language classes and professional courses) and is always looking for cultural activities. In her two years in Milan, she has found her way to attend the cinema, thanks to her network of friends:

> Here, in Italy, my economic situation has totally changed. I mean, I have to think twice before spending 20 euros, 40 euros… the two or three times I've gone to the cinema here, it was by invitation, really. Once I went because a friend gave me some coupons, she's Filipino. […] As I'm not in charge of the children, I take advantage of the fact that I'm alone to give myself the luxury, let's say, of doing so many activities. So it's like a sabbatical, a time to find myself. [45, Guayaquil, Ecuador, 3 years in Milan]

Another participant, a transnational mother too, began to attend the cinema when she moved to Barcelona, with similar motivations:

> In my country [Honduras] I haven't enjoyed the cinema. […] Now, if God allows me, when I visit, I want to enjoy it, and do some of the things that I couldn't do in the 42 years I was there. […] Here it's different, I've enjoyed [the cinema], because I'm alone and I don't have my children. […] But if they come here, I want them to know and enjoy the cinema [with me]. [42, San Pedro Sula, Honduras, 3 years in Barcelona]

As such, cinema memory not only helps recuperating an experience of the past, but enables and supports forms of imagined and physical proximity, that emphasize the relational, affective and imaginative aspects of the cinematic experience.

Digital Ecologies: Mediated and Networked Memories

Cinema memory also intersects with several media ecologies that go beyond the cinematic experience in itself. First of all, the act of remembering is inherently mediated; second, the relationship between cinema-going and film viewing enhances complex forms of "networked memory" (Hoskins 2009) across devices and platforms. A good example is provided by a participant who regularly uses ICTs and 'polymedia' (Madianou and Miller 2012) to re-create moments of intermittent, virtual 'co-presence' with her children, with cinema-going being part of their conversations:

> [My children] tell me that they have seen films that are only advertised here. When I manage to see them in Barcelona, they have already watched them. They always say: "Mummy, I've already seen that one with my aunt!". [42, San Pedro Sula, Honduras, 3 years in Barcelona]

Despite technology allowing them to talk on a daily basis, the content of this seemingly banal conversation underlines a deep sense of distance, stressed by the impossibility to see the same films together, a feeling increased by the different release times between Honduras and Spain. A similar way of re-creating (mediated) proximity through cinema-memory has a very different meaning for an Argentinian participant, who regularly chats with her sister living in Ushuaia, Argentina:

> The cinema was a regular habit, when we studied together […] We shared the same apartment in Buenos Aires, ten blocks away from a movie theatre. […] We always went there and ate out as well. […] My sister is a journalist, so you can imagine that we talked endlessly about all the details of the film, and to this day we do it on WhatsApp. [35, Rio Grande, Argentina, 5 years in Barcelona]

These examples illustrate the intersection of multiple factors (age, motherhood and economic circumstances) in determining migrant women's everyday experiences with cinema and media; at the same time, they highlight the gendered and mediated quality of any "technology of remembering" (Reading 2016). Mediation emerges in the 'memory work' of the participants also in relation to their use of social media and platforms like YouTube. In this respect, memory enables movements across screens and platforms typical of contemporary film-viewing (Tryon 2013; Merrington, Hanchard and Wessels 2020), allowing the re-watching of the favourite films seen in the country of origin. In the case of this participant, this practice intersects with a form of self-care, proving once again the nuanced interplays of cinema memory, media and affect:

> Now [with] the internet, it's all there. Everything is on the internet. You go, you put the title of the film you want and the film appears there.

> *Q: And those are movies that you used to watch in Ecuador, right?*
>
> Yes. I was infected with COVID and I was self-isolating for almost two months. So, I know that to fight the virus I had to stay positive. […] So that's when I started to watch *El Chavo del ocho* (1971-1980) which makes you laugh a lot, and [Mexican] films with la India Maria and Cantinflas. I looked for those films, rather than the Italian ones… I only watched comedies. I was trying to highlight the distracted mind. [52, Santo Domingo, Ecuador, 24 years in Milan]

This quote somehow resonates with the words of Sara Ahmed when she writes that "the question of being at home is always a question of memory" and the "gap between memory and place is embodied in the act of remembering" (2000, 91). Indeed, the comfort and relief offered by comedy is prompted by the memory of seeing films and television in the country of origin; at the same time, it is thanks to the intersection of multiple media ecologies (internet search engines, streaming platforms, and ultimately the video call enabling the interview), that cinema memory materializes in the present.

Conclusions

According to Arjun Appadurai (2019), "memory, for migrants, is almost always a memory of loss", yet he concedes that "migration […] leads to a deliberate effort to construct a variety of archives […] which usually take the form of shared narratives and practices" (Appadurai 2019). This "productive" aspect of the mnemonic process sheds light on how past audience engagements condition the present and the everyday. As the analysis of the interviews demonstrates, cinema memories are inherently self-reflexive, relational, and mediated: long-distance and gendered modes of home-making and 'doing family and kin' (di Leonardo 1987; Baldassar and Merla 2016) are sustained by "small worlds of communicative co-presence in the midst of widespread patterns of absence, distance and disconnection" (Urry 2007: 175). All these aspects – transnationalism, relationality and mediation – encourage multiple strands of identity negotiation, at the intersection of gender, class, and ethnicity, confirming the ability of cinema memory to move across media and borders. As such, cinema memory represents not only a powerful means of accessing multi-local histories and socio-cultural meanings of movie-going, but also the affective, material and relational aspects of migrants' everyday life. This concern resonates with and beyond feminist audience research, and specifically with the aim of migration scholarship to study transnational practices, affect and emotions "on the move" (Boccagni and Baldassar 2015). In other words, a mnemonic, reflexive approach to today's fragmented, globalised audiences reminds us that notions of home and belonging are still rooted in the "ordinariness of culture" (Williams 1989), in its pleasures and affective structures.

Biographical note:

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Notes:

[1] The participants were aged between 29-70 years old and were all voluntary migrants, coming from the following countries: Bolivia (1), Ecuador (5), Mexico (3), Argentina (4), Colombia (8), Perú (5), Venezuela (1), Brazil (6), Honduras (1) and Uruguay (1). Recruitment was conducted through snowball sampling. The interviews were conducted in Spanish (except for one in Italian), audio recorded, and transcribed. The analysis was conducted with NVivo, using both inductive and deductive thematic approaches.

[2] Although not specifically covered in this article, in the context of this study, these topics have been considered in relation to the participants' experiences and perceptions of belonging. Scholars have variously explored the role of dubbing in marking notions of post-colonial and racial difference in Italy, Spain and in the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America. See for instance: Bernabo, Laurena. 2021. "Whitewashing Diverse Voices: (De)Constructing Race and Ethnicity in Spanish-Language Television Dubbing." *Media, Culture & Society*. April: 1-14; Audissino, Emilio. 2012. "Italian 'Doppiaggio' Dubbing in Italy: Some Notes and (In)famous Examples." *Italian Americana* 30, no. 1, 22–32; Menéndez-Otero, Carlos. 2013. "Linguistic pluralism and dubbing in Spain." *Mise au point* 5, online https://doi.org/10.4000/map.1374.

[3] It is impossible to summarize here the work conducted in this field since the 1980s. For an overview of the 'feminist agenda' that invested cultural studies and led to an ethnographic, gendered approach to reception studies, see Virginia Nightingale, The 'New Phase' of Audience Research, in her *Studying Audiences: The Shock of the Real* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 69–93. See also: Hermes, Joke. 2013. "Rediscovering twentieth-century feminist audience research." in *The Routledge Companion to Media and Gender* edited by Cynthia Carter, Linda Steiner, Lisa McLaughlin. London: Routledge, pp. 61-70. For a critical and intersectional analysis of the limitations of the field see Parameswaran, 2003.

[4] Vergès' elaboration of multidimensionality is drawn from the work of law scholar Darren Lenard Hutchinson, who proposes an "extension" of intersectional analysis that considers also sexuality, and a "multidimensional", non-exclusionary understanding of the nexus between privilege and subordination. Cf. Darren L. Hutchinson, Identity Crisis: "Intersectionality," "Multidimensionality," and the Development of an Adequate Theory of Subordination, 6 MICH. J. RACE & L. 285 (2001). Available at: https://repository.law.umich.edu/mjrl/vol6/iss2/4.