

# In the Fictional Shadow of Post-Production? The Silenced Creative Community and Gender Hyper(in)visibility Among Film Editors in Contemporary Russia

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abstract: In this essay, I analyse the autobiographies of three female Russian editors in order to explore the issue of editors' invisibility in the Russian filmmaking community and among average cinemagoers by tracking editors' own reasoning for this matter. Here, the invisibility is understood as average audiences' failure to recognise the creative input and agency of film editors, fueled by the lack of attention from festivals and professional film critics. In addition, this essay attempts to assess the relations within the professional community of editors and filmmakers at large by commenting on any potential linkages of the (self) identification of the female gender to the hierarchies within the community. My guiding question is whether there are any similarities or analogies between the hierarchisation processes and practices within the narrow professional community and the hierarchised relations among all the Russian filmmakers or within the today's Russian gender ecology.

Keywords: Anna Mass; Dasha Danilova; Julia Batalova; Andrei Zviagintsev; Anna Melikian; Vasilii Sigarev; Boris Khlebnikov; Avdot'ia Smirnova; editor; female editor; rezhisser montazha; editor's agency; gender relations; gendered hyper(in)visibility.

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## Introduction

On January 23<sup>rd</sup> the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) announced the nominees in the 24 categories for the 2018 Oscars. Among the Best Foreign Language Film nominations is *Neliubov'/Loveless* (Andrei Zviagintsev, 2017, Russia/France/Germany/Belgium). Zviagintsev's global recognition has been growing since his first feature *Vozvrashchenie/The Return* (Andrei Zviagintsev, 2003, Russia) appeared on global festival screens in 2003. While his mainly unknown actors and actresses become internationally known through the films, global screenings barely made any difference on Anna Mass, the well-known Saint Petersburg-based film editor of all his films: *Izgnanie/The Banishment* (2007, Russia), *Elena/Elena* (2011, Russia), *Leviathan/Leviathan* (2014, Russia). It was only in 2018 that she was invited to join AMPAS<sup>1</sup>. One should not consider this statement an indictment of the directors or producers of any of the films she has been involved with: it is only mentioned to problematise the position of editors and to demarcate two symbolic camps: filmmakers who are heard and seen, and those crew members who stay in the shadows.

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth clarifying that Anna Mass is not a professionally unrecognised. By the time of invitation to join AMPAS she has been already awarded by, for example, the Golden Eagle (2015) for her work on *Leviathan* by The Russian National Academy of Cinema Arts and Sciences.

The star system and the worldwide ubiquity of the auteur approach enhances the visibility of principle actors, directors and producers (see Lucia and Porton 2001:1). In contrast, editors such as Anna Mass do not appear in the films' promotional activities, while, I argue, perform a role of "virtual" co-directors (ibid.), deploying their creative sensibilities to produce intuitively nuanced film assemblages (ibid.). They have their unique, intimate response-ability to the material, which I understand as the (new materialist) "possibilities of mutual response" when a film editor activates their embodied "lived" gendered subjectivity and her/his experiential knowledge in relation to or with the raw material of the film material, screenplay and script (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012:55). The scope of response-ability includes

the ability to determine the film's narrative pace, speed up or slow down time, heighten emotions, develop dramatic subtexts, construct an actor's best performance by selecting shots from many different takes, enhance the dramatic or comedic tone by holding on a shot (knowing when not to cut can be an important as knowing when to cut), and, from time to time, actually create important scenes that weren't even in the original script. (Lucia and Porton 2009:1).

Drawing on the assumption that a film editor has substantial creative agency and is responsible to the material, this essay discusses the invisibility problem in relation to the specificities of film production in Russia, drawing on insights of its members, including their view of and interpretation of historical underpinnings and other factors, potentially symptomatic of wider socio-political currents. Assuming that the reasons for the editors' invisibility are complex and multilayered, one may hypothesise that detailed explorations of each of the factors would stream far beyond the scope of this essay. Hence, I aim to suggest a range of trajectories worth of further / future research.

Increasing international scholarly interest in re-establishing film editors as the subject of media and multidisciplinary studies echoes the Russian professional community of editors' desire and agitation for wider recognition (see Belov 2016). Importantly, in 2017 the editor Artem Baryshnikov (*Otkroveniiia/Revelation* (Aleksei Krasovskii, 2011, Russia); *Kollektor/The Collector* (Aleksei Krasovskii, 2016, Russia), led a group of activists in launching a new digital platform for professional editors, including the [The Russian Editor Interview](#). Editors followed this in summer of 2017 by petitioning various national film festivals and Russian film critics, with the aim to draw attention to the unfair omission of editors from festival nominations. Among other aspects, it highlighted that "no festival which gives awards, should overlook any profession directly connected to cinema. The role of film editors in the creative process of production is no less important than that of script-writers or directors, cameramen or composers" ([The Film Editor Interview Petition 2017](#)). This oversight is, in my view, metaphorically comparable with the mechanics of gender roles, where females, historically assigned to the private sphere, have been overlooked or underestimated with regard to their input into social well-being, while males, primordially occupying the public field (e.g. actors, directors and producers), are clearly audible, visible

and appreciated (see Temkina and Zdravomyslova 2007; Temkina 2012). Intrigued by the reasons for this, specifically among filmmakers, I will explore the phenomenon of the editor's invisibility and approach the question even more specifically by focusing on the experience of female editors in contemporary Russia. This approach is driven by my curiosity about the potential double-burden of professional invisibility experienced by female professionals in the digital laboratory, and the similarity of power relations (if any) between female and male editors, and between editors (irrespective of gender) and other filmmakers, specifically, directors.

## Research Design and Methodology

To combine my feminist scholarly attempt to track both inter- and intra-connected webs of power, which have fashioned and now sustain the editor's invisibility in Russia, and to compare them with the hierarchical processes and practices between female and male professionals, I chose to conduct thematic ethnographic observations. This is understood as a qualitative research method, based on ethnography and focused on "lived" experiences or "lived" cultural forms (Thornham 2000: 100-102). Using ethnographic observations to trace the status quo and shifts within it (Visweswaran 1997: 592), I aim to give my interviewees space to articulate their "lived experience" as professionals and as gendered subjectivities. To the extent that it is possible, I aim to minimise the researcher's (i.e my own) involvement into their narrative-building. As a result, the interviewees will establish their own discourse of (gendered) cooperation within their professional community. The choice is led by my assumption that the field has been historically overlooked and, as a result, is relatively under-theorised. For example, quantitative question of "percentages of female editors in contemporary documentary and drama film productions" and qualitative interpretations of how these numbers in historical perspective vary over the course of film history and why are still unanswered and construct a gap in theorising film editing (e.g. Pearlman and Heftberger 2018). Consequently, its re-establishment has to start with basic - though not simplified - empirical encounters with the material. My primary task is to shed the light on editors' self-positioning and self-understanding as professionals in the Russia film industry, through experiential lenses of female professionals. Dasha Danilova, the permanent editor of Vasilii Sigarev, a Russian script writer and film director, figuratively and ironically compared editors with transmitters of directors' visions and emotional intentions into the readable screened narratives (Danilova 2017). My aim is to copy this metaphoric logic of Danilova's comparison and transmit my interviewees' interpretations of the issue to the wider public, filtered through my scholarly interests. I consider my interlocutors as my co-authors, while bearing in mind that this does not discard or diminish researchers' responsibilities and interpretive authority.

For purpose of this research, I interviewed three editors, Julia Batalova,<sup>2</sup> Dasha Danilova,<sup>3</sup> and Anna Mass, though I regarded the process as more akin to co-operation for reasons I will outline below. The attached professional credits of my interviewees are not exhaustive, but highlight a few projects which may be recognised by international readers. The essay's structure follows the arguments made during semi-structured individual interviews with Batalova, Danilova, and Mass, and one joint conversation with Batalova and Danilova. The data comprises my ethnographic observations stored as notes taken during the fieldwork.<sup>4</sup> These editors mainly work in auteur, “smart mainstream” and mainstream cinema, and as Karen Pearlman formulated it “there is no question of the validity of their answers” (Pearlman 2009: 1). It should be borne in mind that all our conversations were led by thinking about film editing within the scope of auteur cinema.

The reason for the silencing of editors in scholarly, critical and professional filmmaking communities might be similar worldwide (or at least where the industry is at comparable levels of development). However, since the interviewees primarily developed and experienced their gendered and professional selves in Russia, I would prefer to interpret the results as Russia-specific.

## An Editor: A Self-Reflexive Definition

Before I move on to discuss invisibility, I would like to present one detail related to my interlocutors' terminology and the self-reflexive definition of their profession. If one fulfils any discourse-related research on auteurist fiction film editing in contemporary Russia, one can encounter two expressions. In contrast to historical terms such as “skleishchitsa” (gluer) or “montazhnitsa”, I will employ “rezhisser montazha” and “montazher”. These two terms do not have a fixed qualitative connection to the historical epoch-specific and specialised term “montage”, which refers to the Soviet editing tradition of the 1920s, led by “a rapid alteration between sets of shots whose signification occurs at the point of their collision” (Hayward 1996: 79-80), and which is often contrasted with deep-focus editing practices (Drubek 2012: 346-353). In my view, the term “rezhisser montazha” generally refers to a professional who authorially and creatively builds the flow of a film, and sets the rhythm by assembling the raw material of shots, often also drafting music aids. These are primarily sustainable partnerships-tandems of editors and directors in auteur cinema, for example Sigarev and

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<sup>2</sup> *Vse umrut a ia ostanus'/Everybody Dies But Me* co-edited with Ivan Lebedev (Valerii Gai Germanika, 2008, Russia), *Poka Noch' Ne Razluchit/Till Night Do Us Part* (Boris Khlebnikov, 2012, Russia), *Aritmiia/Arrhythmia* co-edited with Ivan Lebedev (Boris Khlebnikov, 2017, Russia, Finland/Germany), *Kokoko* (Avdot'ia Smirnova, 2012, Russia).

<sup>3</sup> *Volchok/Wolffy* (Vasilii Sigarev, 2009, Russia), *Zhit/Living* (Vasilii Sigarev, 2012, Russia), *Ogni Pritona/Brothel Lights* (Aleksandr Gordon, 2011, Russia), *Zvezda/Star* (Anna Melikian, 2014, Russia), *Matil'da/ Matilda* (Aleksei Uchitel', 2017, Russia).

<sup>4</sup> The interviews took place in Saint Petersburg and Moscow in October and November 2017. The original language of conversations is Russian, translated into English by the author-researcher.

Danilova. However, for practical reasons the Russian-speaking professional community often replaces it with its shorter version – “montazher”, which does not imply any condescending attitude. The use of the term “rezhisser montazha” is significant since “rezhisser” (literally, “director”) implies and explains the depth and significance of film editors’ creative input into films, especially when one observes auteur cinema. Since the English language does not demand a choice, the essay employs the term “editor”, omitting the qualifier “film” or “senior”. In my opinion, one may conclude that “senior editors” or “rezhissery montazha” are the diplomats who translate the communication between the creative agency of directors and the technical crew members, that is “montazhery”.<sup>5</sup> In this vein, three interviewees are “senior editors” or “rezhissery montazha”.

Searching for a working definition of “rezhisser montazha”, I explored interviews with Arthur Schmidt, Thelma Schoonmaker, Tim Squyres, Christopher Tellefsen, Alam Heim, Joe Hutshing, Pietro Scalia, Dylan Tichenor and Walter Murch (see Chew et al. 2009: 5464; and LoBrutto 2009: 43-47) as well as Roger Crittenden’s *Fine Cuts: The Art of European Film Editing*.

Instead of basing my definition on theoretical studies of editing, I focus on interviews with active film editors, who work on feature films. Hence, the definition may not be applicable in, for instance, documentary filmmaking, or from a historical perspective, where editors are actual “cutters” or “montazhnitsy” and “skleishchitsy” (see Izvolov 2018). Moreover, I intentionally did not separate the material which led me to this definition according to its geopolitical relevance. Since the focus of this essay is the affective and embodied/enacted apprehension of the editor, I did not pay specific attention to the technical specificities of industries to which interviewed film professionals belong.

During my discussion with Anna Mass it immediately became clear that she felt uncomfortable with “rezhisser montazha”, since this is not a term she would usually use. For practical reasons the Russian-speaking professional community often abbreviates it to “montazher”, which does not undermine the professional importance of the role. The need to remark on the abbreviation proves significant when Julia Batalova, who nearly always used the word “montazher”, clarified that the ideas she expressed during the interview were precisely related to “rezhisser montazha”, not to what she called a “chelovek-knopka” / “button-person”, “technical grades” (Stollery 2009:380) “a donkey”, as Sabine Mamu said in her conversation with Roger Crittenden (Crittenden 2005: 52). What one should understand under these tropes is a piece of niche slang referring to a professionally trained worker on a film or other project requiring editing, who works with haptic materials, and “assembled it as Lego pieces” as Anna Mass put it, according to the clear instruction provided by clients, including producers, directors, and “rezhissery montazha”.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This idea was not entirely supported by the interviewees, but that is the vision I extracted from the discussion with them.

<sup>6</sup> Discussing nonaudiovisual sense experiences films represent Laura U. Marks suggests that haptic images “invite the viewer to respond to the image in an intimate, embodied way, and this facilitate the experience of other sensory impressions as well. These sense experiences are not separate, of course. They combine to form ... our sensory experience of place. More fundamentally, they inform each person’s sensorium, the bodily organisation of sense experience” (Marks 2000:2).

To Mass and Batalova's definitions, one could add that of Vladimir Mogilevskii, the Russian media artist, photographer and editor of Zviagintsev's *Vozvrashchenie/The Return*. In his interpretation, "montazher" is close to my earlier definition of "rezhisser montazha", with the further clarification that "rezhisser montazha" is an editor who takes an active part in the pre-production process, is present on set, and has the highest authority in the post-production process (Abramova 2013). In this case, I can conclude that my interlocutors and Mogilevskii's definitions of "rezhisser montazha" and "montazher" differed, but not tremendously. The core is that Mogilevskii seems to embed an editor into wider creative and production relations than those of the editor with director.

Furthermore, when I asked my interlocutors to define an 'editor', they saw it as a self-reflexive exercise and included some metaphorically articulated ideas, highlighting the very process of film-editing as affected and haptic (see Marks 2000). For instance, Anna Mass discusses how editors may have additional creative input via collaboration with film directors:

У всякого режиссера есть свое видение, которое может быть несколько размытым, или же напротив - очень четким с эмоциональной и визуальной точек зрения. Как бы то ни было, что происходит, когда материала недостаточно, чтобы точно транслировать это видение? В такой ситуации режиссер монтажа может найти способ, как сконструировать и собрать фильм несколько иначе, обнаружить новые вариации, изменяя аудиовизуальную конструкцию эпизода.

Any director has a vision, which can be slightly blurred or, on the other hand, emotionally and visually very precise. However, what happens if there is not enough visual material to accurately transmit such a vision? At the same time, what if an editor finds a way to assemble and construct the film slightly differently, by changing the construction. (Mass 2017)

Subsequently, Dasha Danilova also used a figurative and emotionally charged comparison with a transmitter. Furthermore, she neatly proposed a symbolic image of (auteur) cinema, and described chaotic and yet-to-be assembled material and her directors and her work in any new project:

Что есть фильм и материал, который еще только предстоит собрать? Это лоскуты материи, разнородные кусочки ткани. Задача режиссера монтажа - собрать эти лоскуты и кусочки так, чтобы конечная материя фильма была гладкой и однородной, помочь режиссеру заметить чужеродные обрывки, ошибочно закравшиеся в канву.

What is a future-film and the yet-to-be assembled shots? They are patches, heterogeneous pieces of fabric. The task of an editor is to assemble these patches and pieces so that the final fabric is smooth and homogenous, to help a director to notice inappropriate material (Danilova 2017).

Danilova's comparison of editing with sewing, is, in my view, comparable to the description of early editing practices given by Giuliana Bruno, who closely studied the films of Elvira

Notari and the subsequent film manufacturing. Looking at the photographed practises of the Napolitan film post-production Bruno wrote:

As the iconography makes evident, in both its form of labour and spatial location, assembling resembles sewing. ... Like a dressmaker, the woman editor cuts and puts together pieces of film text(ure)s. ... The language used to describe women at work in Napolitan film production companies is directly related to sewing and feminine activities. The film is described as a long *nastro* (ribbon) that is wrapped up on a reel, called a *rocchetto*, a sewing term (Bruno 1993: 106-108).

The trope of sewing, applied by both Danilova and Bruno, correlates with the vision of Yann Dedet, where he explains that the editor has to “focus on a centre – the shot from the rushes which speaks to him (me) – and little by little I extended, maybe too fast but sometimes it has good results because it provokes interest in the rest of the rushes” (Crittenden 2005: 22). Does not this methodology symbolically recall the process of knitting?

A director-auteur is, therefore, presented as the creative force who offers an alternative sophisticated universe with its own laws, emotions and logics of power (Bazin 1967; Barber 2015; Bordwell 2007; Hayward 1996), but, importantly, does not monopolise creativity and is open to collaboration and ‘second opinions’. This artistic meta-medium narrates itself with numerous shots, takes and collocations, further encircled and pierced by sounds. In this vein, an editor is an attentive, patient, responsible and jewelry-accurate proofreader and a translator of the director’s inchoate language into something comprehensible by cinema-goers. These translators are not passive technical figures, especially when it comes to the tasks of literary translations. According to the interviewees, they do have creative agency and are aware of its significance: they constitute “the second opinion” in Julia Batalova’s term (Batalova 2017), though neither an average spectator nor a non-specialist reviewer may always be able to trace it within the totality of the film’s creative negotiations. The (only) feasible tool for input-tracking which comes to my mind at this stage, is to approach each creative case with interviews, conversations with perhaps, both the director and editor.

All the interviewees compared themselves to an assistant or a helper, implying some degree of being a co-creator or collaborator. In my view, this is a noticeable improvement on the self-deprecating ideas of women who share the Soviet background and undervalue their inputs (see Attwood 1993: 213-214). Discussing gender relations in the 1980s Soviet film industry with female directors, camera-women and scriptwriters, Attwood quotes an unspecified journalist: “ideas about masculine superiority run very deep... even emancipated women sometimes betray a tendency to recognise masculine properties of intelligence and character as standard (Attwood 1993: 214). Such a standard does not seem to be part of my interlocutors’ vision. They do label themselves as intuitive helpers, but they do not mean that to coincide with a wider social definition of a helper, often assigned a feminised set of qualities and patterns of emotional behaviour (Ahmed 2004). Rather, they are intuitive helpers who are simultaneously responsible for making sober solid decisions, including



correcting the mistakes and failures which naturally occur in tremendously complicated pre-production and on-set filmmaking procedures and processes.

As Danilova and Batalova put it, curing “a broken toy” of a future-film depends on the editor being attuned to the emotionally constructed image of directors. The way editors deal with specific directors seems to be a route to understand of each creative pairing. Articulating the same ideas with Danilova, Batalova and Mass, Sabine Mamou philosophises in her conversation with Crittenden:

... how do you deal with the director, with his anguish? I’m not even talking about how you deal with yours, but how do you deal with theirs. How can you be in sympathy with him, not suffer too much from his anguish. Make silence so he can say what he think of what you did. Who knows if the cut is good - who knows? It’s fashion, and it’s not only the director (Crittenden 2005: 52).

What one sees now through the interlocutors’ narrative is the explicitly emotional nature of a director and the rational hand and sober mind of an editor. Staying in the shade, editors fulfil a conventionally masculine role of making precise decisions and rationalising cine-stories.<sup>7</sup> Simultaneously, when one turns to the description of the very process of editor-thinking one notices the high frequency of such words and collocations as “intuitively” or “not able to explain”, “not possible to teach the professional of precisely “rezhisser montazha” because “the process is non-verbal” (Batalova 2017). Nevertheless, Batalova definitely did not intend to “terminate discussion rather than to open up inquiry” as Donald Schön put it in defining the intuitive process of film editing (Schön 1991). Marking the process as non-verbal she highlighted that the discussion may address meta-processes and affects and may not be technical. That fact may hint at the interviewees’ lack of similar self-reflexive experiences. On the other hand, the difficulty of rational apprehension of the intuitive may be rooted in the very puzzle of the materiality editors work with, that is the materiality of filmic rhythm, assembled with non-verbal registers. The fact that rhythm is intangible and invisible, compared to the equally intangible, but more graspable choice of colour palette or sound-track, is possibly why it is hard to measure the degree of agency each editor experiences. Films are artistic media with affectively charged material, though not perceptible agency, editors directly work on their agentic materiality, on the very ontology of films,

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<sup>7</sup> One of the quintessential historical cases of filmmakers’ creative partnerships is the case of Dziga Vertov and Elizaveta Svilova, film editors and director on her own as well as Vertov’s wife and his collaborator. As Pearlman, MacKay and Sutton narrate in “Creative Editing: Svilova and Vertov’s Distributed Cognition”, Svilova seems to be “hidden behind the historical neglect both of women and of editors” (Pearlman, MacKay and Sutton 2018). This narrative highlights that the very partnership of Svilova and Vertov suffers the historical discursive injustice framed by patriarchal gendered roles of a male, performing the leading role in the public domain and a female silenced in the industry shadow. Interestingly, Svilova did receive the recognition of the Soviet State when received the distinguished Stalin Prize for the documentary picture *Berlin / Berlin* (Yulii Raizman, 1945, USSR) as well as The Medal “For Valiant Labour in the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945” in 1946 and The Order of Badge of Honor in 1950 (e.g., #MuzejCSDF). And even though the Svilova’s professional activity was recognized politically, her co-authorship with Vertov, exemplifying a distributed cognitive system in play, were overlooked (Pearlman, MacKay and Sutton 2018).

setting their rhythms. As artistic media, films interact or even co-constitutively intra-act<sup>8</sup> with viewers' embodied subjectivities primarily with its material-discursive tools such as music, colour or rhythm, albeit that the latter is hard to evaluate. The ephemeral, enigmatic, intangible nature of the material editors are responsible for may be one of the reasons why their input is often unseen.

## Professional Curricula as an Accelerator of Editors' (In)Visibility

Looking beyond the difficulty of explaining the enigmatic process of editing, the interviewees drew my attention to a specific sub-theme in the discussion of their public invisibility, that is professional education in general and outdated study curricula of cinema schools in Russia. I felt my interviewees saw current editorial curricula not as imparting an up-to-date skill-set, but more of a conceptual archive of the historical, but outdated visions of what editing used to be. The historical Soviet school of film production which became famous during the era of Dziga Vertov, Lev Kuleshov or Sergei Eisenstein was characterised by what Batalova called "directors with editorial gaze" (Batalova 2017). What she meant is that while drafting the film conceptually and by directing the shooting, directors used to think simultaneously about the montage. According to my interviewees, editing used to be just one of the compulsory courses in the film-directing curriculum: it was seen as a skill of a director him/herself. That is why there is an opinion that earlier directors did not need additional (creative) agencies to assemble raw shots into a film (Savchenko 1960). Instead, directors needed a careful technician to produce "skleika" to a pre-designed plan. Later, in Soviet times authorship in arts, including cinema, was limited or restricted, and editors became a tool of ideology (Savchenko 1960). In my view, when crafting propaganda-charged art, an editor has politically responsive creative agency, which is why the opinion that editing was only a matter of technical skill can be challenged (this challenge, however, remains outside the scope of this essay). All in all, the historical politics of film industry seemed to be attuned to the political status quo and to the understanding of visual culture (films) as ideological machinery, which removed the need for open-ended art. As a result, under the specificity of Soviet spatio-temporality, editors' creative agency stagnated, and editing was reframed as a vital, but technical skill.

Curricula, ideological calls of various epochs and the concomitant reflexive self-identifications of what an editor is were among the factors, listed by my interlocutors as

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<sup>8</sup> Here, I refer to the concept of intra-action, coined by Karen Barad in her *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham & London, 2007). The concept questions existence of pre-established independent agencies and suggests that each encounter of bodies (in the Deleuzian sense) co-constitute subjects and objects. Subjects and objects and their agencies do not exist as separate individual elements.

possible reasons for the current topicality of the discussion regarding their professional invisibility. One reason which, in my opinion, encircles the factors listed above, is the lack of self-reflexive experiences. During the interviews, it was clear that the questions raised were rather new within their professional discourse, but extremely intriguing and, as all the interviewees remarked, worth considering. Drawing on the constellation of factors mentioned by the interviewees and offered by Russian socio-cultural currents I strongly believe that the community of film editors in Russia is consciously moving towards improved suffrage. The initiative to launch a sort of labour union, the *Russian Editor Interview*, and editors' petitions to Russian and international festival committees articulate the social fact: the editors accumulate their collective agency and revisit their own role in film making.

## On Invisibility of Gender and Gendered Dys-appearance Within a Professional Community

Pondering on the institutional and other historically specific (f)actors and powers, which still actualise the conversation about editors' public ghostly existence, I further looked through the interviews searching for cases of editors suddenly appearing in the professional and wider public discourses and, simultaneously, thought about instances where their subjectivities emerge gendered.

Throughout the conversations, I intentionally omitted questions about gender identities to see whether related issues arose naturally. I had high expectations, considering the intensity of public discussions on gender-related issues in post-Pussy Riot Russia, fuelled by cases, comparable with the now representational Weinstein one. The expectations did not appear to be satisfied and led me to a closer examination and more direct questions.

My interviewees identified as CIS females and, I believe, are universally read socioculturally as such, both within and beyond their professional community.<sup>9</sup> No linkages were tracked to gendered professional hierarchies in our conversations. Therefore, I explicitly asked each interviewee to reflect on their CIS gendered existence in their profession, in return guaranteeing that any quotations would be anonymised in any published text. While they did not specifically request anonymisation, the offer made them feel more comfortable about the discussion. Hence, I made an ethical decision to leave out direct quotations and to leave them as unattributed statements. This decision is based on the fact that the very notion of gender,

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<sup>9</sup> Under CIS gender one understands a person “whose gender identity corresponds with the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth” (e.g., <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cisgender>). No research has been done so far on the relationship of other genders with their film editorial practices. But as I believe gender identities are an important part of creative practices I would like to specify what genders I am discussing in this essay.

discursively bound with ideas of feminism and alike, appears problematic in the neopatriarchal spatiotemporality of today's Russia (see Temkina and Zdravomyslova 2014). In this precautionary anonymisation of responses, I follow the practice of major socially sensitive qualitative studies, and aim to avoid deductive disclosure with its potential politically informed repercussions, although this possibly limits the exactness of the study (see Kaiser 2009; Saunders, Kitzinger and Kitzinger 2015).

Talking about the professional reputation and its gendered implications, one editor observed that the people might approach the question hypocritically from a gender perspective. If an editor is seen as an expert, their gender identification will not be remarked on or taken into consideration. However if a female editor's relationship with the director or producers breaks down, her gender might be used as a weapon against her. Technically, that is the moment when her female bodily image and its perceived attributes become drawbacks to professional success or, to be more precise, the reasons for professional failure. The specificity of this signification process related is analogous to the process of dys-appearance, introduced as a concept by the phenomenologist Drew Leder in 1990. According to Leder, a (human) body tends to stay in backgrounds until a moment when it emerges problematically either physiologically or socially (Leder 1990). Thus, the gendered identifications intersectionally intermingle with categories of (professional) success and failure, in the editors' case commenting on the mechanics of their invisibility. In my view, this imitates/is aligned to / and is comparable to their invisibility in post-production. The notion of hyper(in)visibility was introduced by Jeannine Gailey in 2014 in her book *The Hyper(in)visible Fat Woman. Weight and Gender Discourse in Contemporary Society*. Gailey explained fat as “an apparent paradox because it is visible and dissected publicly; in this respect, it is hypervisible. Fat is also marginalized and erased; in this respect, it is hyperinvisible” (Gailey 2014: 7). I argue that this can be analogously applied to this contextually read notion of gender in my interviews with these – CIS female editors. Gender identities become invisible when there is no professionally-related negative trigger, and they became hypervisible and used as an aggravating circumstance when such a trigger occurs.

Another editor thinks that women-editors do have their own community of independent members. However, this community focuses more on matters such as technical issues, and tends not to address questions relating to gender. In my view, this may surprise any patriarchally charged viewer, who knows that, for example, Mariia Sergeenkova systematically chooses to edit such space-exploration and war films as *Saliut 7/Salute 7* (Klim Shipenko, 2017, Russia) or *Brestskaia Krepost'/The Brest Fortress* (Aleksandr Kott, 2010, Russia, Belarus). Further, she remarked that male identity is more often used within a group of male editors competing for the higher rank in the local professional hierarchy.

What is rewarding for me as a feminist researcher in this area is its capacity to shed light on the gendered power hierarchies and corresponding practices existing in the advanced (in gender equality terms) sector of film editing. The insights gained through the ethnographic observations illuminate the mechanics of gendered communication practices within the editors' community. If one views my conversations through the lens of gender, one will see that each gendered representation my interviewees mentioned specifically manifested

the bodily image of female editors “read” by their male and female colleagues. Their bodily images, understood in the poststructuralist feminist as a “corporeality addressed as representation” (Kyrölä 2010: 18), appear as substances in flux read differently in varying circumstances. Although my interviewees argued that they had not personally experienced malleable readings of their gendered identities being turned against them, they did outline the existing pattern of this. This revealed the sustainably functioning gender hierarchy based on discourses of professional success and failure interconnected in flux. Available data shows a relatively progressive female-male employment ratio in film editing in Russia (an approximate ratio of 4:1, according to the *Film Editor Interview Baza Rezhisserov Montazha/База Режиссеров Монтажа/Film Editor Interview Database*, published as an appendix to the *Film Editor Interview e-journal* (The Film Editor Interview 2017). But the study of employment practices showed the hidden hierarchies, labelling female professionals and their bodily images as oppressed “crystallizations of cultural power structures ... connect[ing] the micro-level of corporeal boundaries to the macro-level of societal boundaries” (Kyrölä 2010: 19).

Thus, following the reflexive narratives of three interviewees in relation to their affective gendered overview of their professional surroundings, I can note two logics functioning at different space but being analogous in their core. Accordingly, the first part of this essay reflected the material about the invisibility of editors as creative professionals and co-authors in the eyes of festival committees (Russia-specific) and, consequently, for cinema-goers. Alternatively, invisibility might be applied as a concept related to the gendered identities of editors specifically within their professional community of filmmakers. The editors' community as a professional group experiences the same logics of hierarchical structural formation as the category of (female) gender goes through when a female professional subjectivity faces the activated discourse of professional mistake or failure. The later application is transferable and can be converted into any other case study which deals with professional communication within a group of professionals or their industry at large.

## **Conclusions: Malleable Use of Gender and Reflexive Self-Positioning as a Factor of Resistance**

Three conversations with the prominent editors allowed me to unveil a diverse set of issues related to professional invisibility and the hyper(in)visibility of gender as a strategic category where the discourse of failure is activated.

First of all, the editors' invisibility was revealed as a much more complex issue than it initially seemed. Combining both Russian specificities and the historical trajectories, it

proves itself global since not only Russian, but international film festivals still have no award marking editorial achievements. The Film Editor Interview lists some of them: Shanghai International Film Festival, China, San Sebastian Film Festival, Spain, Byron Bay International Film Festival, Australia, New York Film Critics Circle, New York Film Critics Online, National Society of Film Critics and even Sundance Film Festival.

Next, my attempt to examine the role of gender by interviewing female editors highlighted the lack of self-reflexive practices of oppressed groups (in this case, women) in the Russian (gender) milieu and the flourishing of oppressive micro-practices and micro-agressions, such as gender-specifying accusations in matters of professional failures. The interviewees' interest in my questions made me hopeful of the growing self-reflexivity and its embodiment as action.

Additionally, the global march for justice for women filmmakers, framed and accelerated by #metoo and the Weinstein phenomena, may influence, recognise and encourage the silenced editorial "minorities". Perhaps, AMPAS' invitation to Anna Mass is not only fuelled by her creative involvement in the globally acclaimed films of Zviagintsev. Perhaps, the invitation also embodied a point of intersection between most of the above-discussed factors, exemplifying the strength of the movement both towards gender and professional equality.

The primary issue which the conversations with Anna Mass, Dasha Danilova, and Julia Batalova actualised for me was the need for new approaches to rhythm itself as an equally crucial co-constitutive materiality in line with music, light or colour, and the methodological approaches to its explorations. I believe the possible post-structuralist understanding of cinema as primarily visual texts underscoring their intangible and hard-to-grasp haptic components (what rhythm is) lead both reviewers and cinema-goers to a simplified understanding of the editors' input. I suggest, that the new materialist turn which dynamically overtakes the scientific world may be of specific influence and weight in a campaign for rhythm's re-exploration. Re-visiting, for example, the haptic visuality theories of the 1990s (see Marks 2000) may persuade a reviewer to consider rhythm as something that "invites the viewer to respond to the image in an intimate, embodied way, ... facilitate(s) the experience of other sensory impressions as well" (Marks 2000: 2). Rhythms and a film's flow are also equally narratives, but of a different kind than verbalised ones, inseparable from other sensual film experiences. If it is nearly transferable in words, it must be approached via its materiality.

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