

[CFP for Comparative Cinema 18: The audiovisual thinking process in contemporary essay films](#)

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The audiovisual thinking process in contemporary essay films

Guest Editor: Lourdes Monterrubio Ibáñez

Born out of modern cinema, the essay film departed from the dominant forms of fiction and documentary cinema in order to explore an unknown territory defined by subjectivity, hybridization and reflection, evolving to become “a form that thinks,” as Jean-Luc Godard defined it. The final decades of the 20th century witnessed the consolidation of the essay film, which was enabled by postmodern thought and culture, as well as by the development of video recording technology. In this mode, works by Chris Marker, Roberto Rossellini, Orson Welles, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Jonas Mekas, Harun Farocki, Agnès Varda, Wim Wenders, Guy Maddin, Peter Watkins, Chantal Akerman, Alexander Kluge or Johan van der Keuken, among many others, developed a practice of audiovisual thinking for which Godard’s *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-1998) could be considered the epitome, marking a turning point that also took place at the century’s end. Over the last twenty years, this essayistic practice has proliferated due to the digital revolution, facilitating diverse experiences of subjectivity and intimacy, and multiplying the possibilities of audiovisual editing; that is, of the very thinking process that defines this filmic form. Taking this itinerary into account, the 18th issue of *Comparative Cinema* proposes to address the specificities of the audiovisual thinking process in the contemporary essay film.

The most notable studies devoted to the essay film have established its key traits – the audiovisual expression of the thinking process and the self-reflexiveness of subjectivity – and its specificities – issues related to its genealogy, historical path and bond with the literary essay – allowing for the consolidation of this research area. Several edited volumes have been decisive in this regard, including: *L’essai et le cinéma* (Liandrat-Guigues and Gagnebin, 2004); *La forma que piensa* (Weinrichter, 2007); *Jeux sérieux. Cinéma et art contemporains transforment l’essai* (Bacqué et al., 2015); and *Essays on the Essay Film* (Alter and Corrigan, 2018). Beyond these collections, numerous authors have studied the growing corpus of essay films from various perspectives, producing key monographs such as: Laura Rascaroli’s *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film* (2009) and *How the Essay Film Thinks* (2017); Timothy Corrigan’s *The Essay Film: From Montaigne, After Marker* (2011); David Montero’s *The Essay Film as a Dialogic Form in European Cinema* (2012); Josep Maria Català’s *Estética del ensayo. La forma ensayo, de Montaigne a*

Godard (2014); and *Nora N. Alter's The Essay Film After Fact and Fiction* (2018), among others. The most recent collections already show the breadth of approaches through which contemporary practices of the essay film can be analyzed: *The Essay Film: Dialogue, Politics, Utopia* (Papazian and Eades, 2016), *World Cinema and the Essay Film* (Hollweg and Krstic, 2019), and *Beyond the Essay Film: Subjectivity, Textuality and Technology* (Vassilieva and Williams, 2020) number among a growing field.

The 18th issue of *Comparative Cinema* invites contributors to analyze the manifestations of the contemporary essay film in relation to its audiovisual thinking process from a comparative perspective, which addresses the comparative analysis of different essay films, in search of the connotations, tendencies, specificities and evolution of this audiovisual form in the 21st century. Analyses may include, among other aspects:

Subjectivity: the inscription of subjectivity in the essay film has been an issue of key concern during the 20th century, partly as a discursive need for the consolidation of this audiovisual form. Does the contemporary essay film present new tendencies, needs, or methods in this respect? Are new expressions of subjectivity emerging, such as multiple or collective subjectivities?

Materials and procedures: the hybridization of materials in the essay film mostly included analogue, digital and photographic supports, as well as the relevant presence of found footage. With regard to audiovisual procedures, the voice-over, for instance, has been a common element of the essay film of the 20th century. Does the contemporary essay film introduce new materials or generate new hybridizations? Are animation or infographics incorporated to a greater extent in the essay film today, and do they serve specific aims? Are new procedures appearing to replace the voice-over and to what purpose?

Subject matter: the essay film has covered a range of topics during the 20th century, suggesting an evolution from the social and political to the personal and intimate. Are new trends or hybridizations of subject matter emerging in contemporary essay films, as for instance in terms of emotional reflection?

Artistic practices: by the end of the 20th century, the essay film had been consolidated in the museum space. Which specificities does audiovisual thinking present in these expanded practices? Has there been an evolution in this regard over the last two decades?

Dialogism and critical thinking: the essay film has been defined by its dialogic characteristics and its capacity for critical thinking both on the part of the author and of his/her spectator. Have contemporary practices seen an evolution or greater depth in these aspects?

Comparative Cinema invites the submission of complete articles addressing the audiovisual thinking process in contemporary essay films from a comparative perspective, which must be between 5500 and 7000 words long, including footnotes. Articles (in MS Word) and any accompanying images must be sent through the RACO platform, available on the journal website.

Timeline:

Deadline for submission of complete articles: 01/10/2021

Peer review: 01/10/2021-15/11/2021

Final copy deadline: 31/01/2022

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Lourdes Monterrubio Ibáñez currently develops the research project EDEF - Enunciative Devices of the European Francophone Essay Film, at the Institut ACTE, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and Innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 896941. Author of the monographic book *De un cine epistolar. La presencia de la misiva en el cine francés moderno y contemporáneo* (Shangrila, 2018) and editor of the monographic issue *Epistolary Enunciation in Contemporary Cinema* (Área Abierta, 2019), her publications on the essay film include: "Correspondências by Rita Azevedo Gomes. The Complex Hybrid Image of Contemporary Epistolary Cinema and Contemporary Essay Film" (Visual Studies, 2020), "Enunciative Devices of the Contemporary Spanish Essay Film. Evolution of the Essayistic Subjectivity and its Thinking in Act" (Studies in Spanish & Latin American Cinemas, 2019) and "La Morte Rouge (soliloquio) by Víctor Erice. From trauma to fraternity: the interstice between reality and fiction" (book chapter in *Itinerarios y formas del ensayo audiovisual*, 2019).

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