

**THE UKRAINIAN FILM *BUTTERFLY VISION* (2022) AND WOMEN'S RESISTANCE  
TO WARTIME TRAUMA**

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...in wearing a dissolute, ill-shaped and immodest dress against the decency of nature, and hair cropped round like a man's, against all the modesty of womankind...  
(*The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc*, XIII)

**LEGAL FRAMEWORKS CONCERNING WARTIME RAPE**

We need to investigate individual male rapists' assaults on women (and on some men) in Bucha, in Kigali, in the Kachin region of Myanmar – while also asking whether there have been patterns to those seemingly random acts. (Cynthia Enloe, 2023)

In her chapter “Make Wartime Rape Visible,” Cynthia Enloe critiques the “trivialization of wartime rape” and urges “feminist researchers, lawyers, and forensic investigators” to challenge this “lazy narrative.” Given the broad reach of their medium, filmmakers are uniquely positioned to present stories that can be widely heard and seen. Surprisingly, some of the most compelling works on this topic in the post-Soviet regions are not documentaries driven by “feminist curiosity” but rather fiction films that stand as genuine masterpieces.<sup>1</sup> Maksym Nakonechnyi's debut film *Butterfly Vision* (2021), a film about war time rape, scripted together with Iryna Tsilyk, stands out among these.

For a considerable time, rape was perceived merely as a “crime of honor,” a perspective altered by the Rome Statute. The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory defines “genocidal rape” as “rape as policy” intending to destroy a community.<sup>2</sup> Ethiopia, according to research by Dyan Mazurana and Amnesty International, witnessed rape as a “weapon of war” and “torture and reproductive harm” in “rape camps.” Rape has therefore not only been a weapon of war, but also one of the most effective instruments of colonisation.

As articulated in Article 7 of The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), crimes against humanity encompass acts committed “as part of a widespread or systematic attack

directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack.” The United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide (OSAPG) identifies “genocidal acts” in its analysis framework, encompassing involuntary sterilization, forced abortion, long-term separation of men and women, or other acts carried out with the intention to prevent procreation.<sup>3</sup> This shift in perspective was prompted by the horrific events of the 1990s, both in Africa (Rwanda) and Europe (Post-Yugoslavia). In her dissertation on the systematic use of sexual violence in genocide, Viktoria Nicolaisen describes four goals and effects of rape in her chapter “Deliberate reproduction”:

- (1) Reproduction within the ethnicity/nationality/religion of the father
- (2) To occupy the woman's body so that she cannot reproduce within her own group
- (3) Causing such harm to the woman that she becomes unable or unwilling to bear a child in her future
- (4) Stigmatizing the women so that they will be abandoned by their husbands.<sup>4</sup>

All points will be relevant for our analysis of *Butterfly Vision*.

#### Synopsis and Context of the Film *Butterfly Vision*

*Butterfly Vision* / *Bachennya Metelyka* / *Бачення метелика*, Maksym Nakonechnyi's debut feature film, was produced prior to February 2022, at a time when the assault on Ukraine appeared containable despite the annexation and occupation of Crimea and Donbas. Nakonechnyi, himself a native of Odesa, investigates two divides within Ukrainian society in his film: firstly, the existential and psychological gap between those directly impacted by military conflict or captivity and those who were not, and secondly, the gender divide, which takes on distinctive dynamics during times of war.

In addressing these divides, this article seeks to unravel the historical paradigms of cinematic representations of the shaming of women and their resistance to it. It explores their struggle against both the violent occupation of their bodies by the enemy and societal pressures, including the norms and misogyny that target the “weaker” members of society as scapegoats. For the analysis I chose a distinct visual motif – the shearing of women.

The film's narrative would have taken a different turn had the main protagonist been a man. Lilia (Rita Burkovs'ka), who operates a drone named “butterfly” (*metelyk*), is a female soldier – a circumstance not uncommon in Ukraine. Unfortunately, her experiences during captivity in Donbas, where she endures months of confinement, torture, and sexual assault, has become tragically familiar to the world in the past two years. Following Lilia's return home through a POW exchange, a medical examination reveals her pregnancy, a result of rape. However, the psychological wounds causing her PTSD remain undisclosed and unaddressed.

Upon Lilia's return, her husband Tokha (Lyubomyr Valivots') has shifted towards a radical political direction, aligning himself with a racist "National Patrol" targeting vulnerable minority groups in Ukraine, all captured on film during a mobile recording of the "pogrom." Both Tokha and Lilia's community expect her to terminate the pregnancy, viewing her violated body as a public matter, no longer belonging to her.

Contrary to societal expectations, Lilia, deeply traumatized by the crime, rejects the notion of her person being entangled in political and public discourses. She resents the loss of 'ownership' over her own body, both through the rape and the reactions of her surroundings. Remarkably, the film portrays Lilia's perspective, where the unwanted pregnancy represents a natural consequence of an evil act that cannot be denied but which, in her view, must be endured. Despite societal pressures, she opts against undergoing an abortion.

#### "HAIR CROPPED ROUND LIKE A MAN'S". CINEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS OF BRAVE GIRLS WITH SHORT HAIR

As Olesya Khromeychuk remarks in a Q & A with the cinematographer, Khrystyna Lizohub, the director "surrounded himself with women".<sup>5</sup> Nakonechnyi indeed was backed by a strong line-up of women professionals who contributed to this work: Besides the camerawoman and the scriptwriter, the leading producers are two women from Ukraine, Darya Bassel and Yelizaveta Smith (of the production company Tabor).<sup>6</sup>

## Un Certain Regard

SHARE



"Butterfly Vision" cinematographer Khrystyna Lizogub *Anastasia Vlasova*

### "Butterfly Vision"

**Dir:** Maksym Nakonechnyi, **DoP:** Khrystyna Lizogub

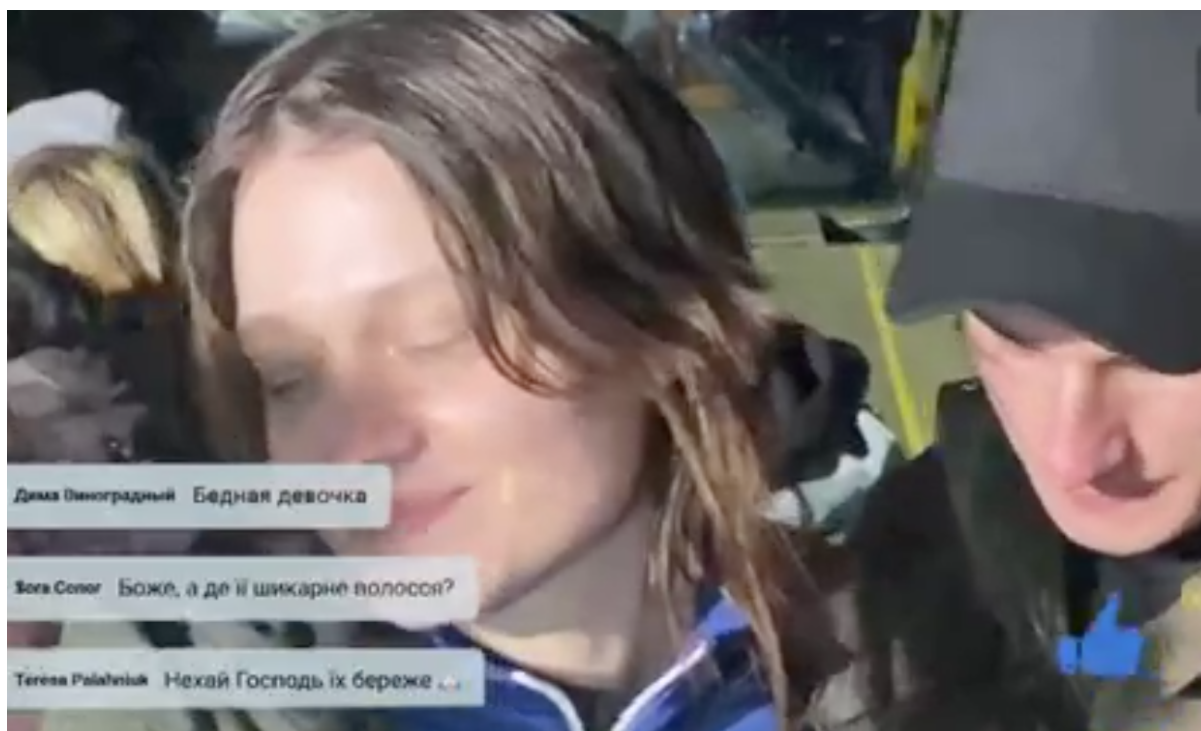
**Format:** 3.4K Arriraw ppen gate with the 1.85:1 aspect ratio

**Camera:** Arri Alexa Mini, Sony FDR-AX1 4K Camcorder, iPhone 11X Pro

**Lens:** Arri Master Prime lenses

Screenshot of the interview with the DOP of the film, Khrystyna Lizohub, for *Indiewire*  
<https://www.indiewire.com/features/general/cannes-2022-cinematography-cameras-lenses-1234725082/3/>

*Butterfly Vision*, shot predominantly with a "handheld camera", the ARRI Alexa Mini,<sup>7</sup> initially resembles a documentary; however soon the film reveals itself to be rich in citations from film history, all interconnected through the central theme of hair. The film explores hair as both a marker of femininity and the vulnerability of the female body.



Reactions on Social Media: Lilia, having disembarked the plane, and in the background, Tokha

When Lilia disembarks from the plane in Kyiv, her disheveled and jagged hair is captured in a social media clip. A comment in the chat queries, “God, where is her gorgeous hair?” Only at the film’s conclusion do we learn the fate of her mane, realizing that she had not been honest with the reporter who inquired about the treatment in captivity, responding with a simple, “It was okay.”

When Lilia is finally on her own, she investigates the inside of her mouth, the marks on her back and other parts of her body. Lilia is struggling to make sense of her bruised and slowly swelling body which does not seem to belong to her anymore, nor to her husband whose touch she avoids. The traces of inimical occupation on her body unfold themselves in front of our eyes in a step-by-step process.

In a shower scene, which was used for the trailer, we see Lilia washing her hair, signaling its centrality to the film’s meaning. Lilia seems to carry out a symbolic cleansing ritual privately, together with other procedures after her captivity, such as medical tests for venereal disease.

The motif of missing hair and cascading tresses serves as a leitmotif that warrants further exploration. The act of cutting hair or shaving one’s head is profoundly gendered and rooted in historical contexts. While for men, it could signify a vow of celibacy as a monk or joining the army, for women who openly displayed cropped hair, it signified shame (to be revisited later). Tracing back through history, women with cropped hair faced persecution, as it was viewed as an unnatural state, deemed “against the decency of nature,” as exemplified by the case of Jeanne d’Arc. She was burned at the stake on May 30, 1431, accused of blasphemy and dressing like a man, as it says in chapter V of the transcripts of the *The Trial of Jeanne d’Arc*:

V

You have said that you wore and still wear man’s dress at God’s command and to His good pleasure, for you had instruction from God to wear this dress, and so you have put on a short tunic, jerkin, and hose with many points. You even wear

your hair cut short above the ears, without keeping about you anything to denote your sex, save what nature has given you.<sup>8</sup>

Jeanne explains at the court that she dressed like a man since she lived among men. After all, she rode a horse and was clad in armor.

## XII

And, the better and more easily to accomplish her plan, the said Jeanne required the said Captain to have a male costume made for her, with arms to match; which he did, reluctantly, and with great repugnance, finally consenting to her demand. When these garments and these arms were made, fitted and completed, the said Jeanne put off and entirely abandoned woman's clothes; with her hair cropped short and round like a young fop's, she wore shirt, breeches, doublet, with hose joined together and fastened to the said doublet by 20 points, long leggings laced on the outside, a short mantle reaching to the knees, or thereabouts, a close-cut cap, tightfitting boots and buskins, long spurs, sword, dagger, breastplate, lance and other arms in the style of a man-at-arms, with which she performed actions of war and affirmed that she was fulfilling the commands of God as they had been revealed to her.<sup>9</sup>

Through her efforts, France secured key military victories and Jeanne herself crowned a King. The combative girl, “with her hair cropped short,” might have rescued her country, yet she still met her fate at the stake. Jeanne's martyrdom was officially ascribed to “relapsed heresy,” as depicted in Georges Méliès' 1900 film – an early work on the subject that achieved international acclaim.



*Jeanne d'Arc* (Georges Méliès, 1900), here still dark hair, as in paintings before

Jeanne was ultimately forced to sign the following „Abjuration“ which did not save her but only exempted her from excommunication:

in wearing a dissolute, ill-shaped and immodest dress against the decency of nature, and hair cropped round like a man's, against all the modesty of womankind; also in bearing arms most presumptuously; in cruelly desiring the shedding of human blood. (*The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc*)

Why did her hairstyle matter? Cara Wilson provides a less known but highly relevant biblical background. In the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 21:10-13) hair is

the corporeal site of mourning, purification, and punishment, such as in Deuteronomy 21:10-14 [...] When you go out to war against your enemies, and the Lord your God hands them over to you and you take them captive, suppose you see among the captives a beautiful woman whom you desire and want to marry, and so you bring her home to your house: she shall shave her head, pare her nails, discard her captive's garb, and shall remain in your house a full month, mourning for her father and mother; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife.

Shaving one's head is here described as a rite of passage designed for a 'foreign' woman during which mourning and punishment coincide in an act of desexualization and alienation from herself and her family in order to bring about a shedding of her previous identity.

In the New Testament apostle Paul sees woman's hair as “‘her glory’, and thus a means for women to attract attention. Indeed, the covering of a woman's “glory” came to be a sign of her virtue.”<sup>10</sup> These religious ‘arguments’ concerning hair might seem sophistic. In certain cultures, shaving heads is customary – Hindu children's heads are shaved at four and some Hasidic women do it for modesty, wearing wigs.<sup>11</sup>

The term “relapse”, which is applied to Jeanne's actions, is a testament to her unrelenting resistance against all authorities. This complex and rich historical and literary-cinematic intertextual background looms large over Lilia in *Butterfly Vision*. She appears to be the soldier we identify with the most, regardless of our own gender. Unlike Tokha or Soroka, she is the ‘star’ – once able-bodied, now violated but “undefeated,” a modern hero(ine) of Ukraine.

Probably the best portrayal of a tomboyish Jeanne d'Arc was delivered by another “kick-butt queen” from Kyiv, Milla Jovovich, who played the French heroine in 1999 in Luc Besson's *The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc*.<sup>12</sup>



Milla Jovovich, born as Militsa Bohdanivna Jovovich in Kyiv in 1975, *The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc* (1999)

FROM DOVE TO DRONE: HOW A BUTTERFLY REPLACED THE BIRD OF PEACE





Film poster for *Bachennya Metelyka*

In *Butterfly Vision*, hair acts as a “superficial” marker of Lilia’s femininity, contrasting with her typical bulky combat attire or loose sweaters that hide her figure. In the poster, she is strikingly depicted with long hair and a butterfly on her abdomen, indicating gentle contact as the butterfly seems to feed on Lilia’s “nectar”.



The representation of her levitating body is one of a sacrifice – again harking back to religious concepts of an innocent victim, a lamb led to the slaughter. Only her long hair seems to touch the ground, holding her in that precarious balance. Differently from Tarkovsky's scene with the director's mother levitating mid height in the autobiographical film *The Mirror* (USSR, 1975), Lilia's head points to the right.



Maria, the hero's mother (Margarita Terekhova) in *The Mirror* (USSR, 1975) and the dove

While a white dove flies through the room, Maria's head is on the left of the image; she lies on her side and her flowing hair forms a curve with the rest of her body, not affected by gravity. In the Ukrainian film, the butterfly drone has replaced the white dove, the symbol of peace.

Levitating Lilia already has marks of blood on her upper body but due to another flashback shot we know that this is an image of her before her hair – and her strength? – was cruelly cut.



The fist of the torturer – possibly also the rapist's ? – grabbing Lilia by her hair and cutting strands off

However, a more in-depth examination of the shot, taken in the basement where she is held and tormented by Ukraine's enemies, suggests that this scene likely captures her mental state immediately before the assault. The juxtaposition of her vulnerability in this moment challenges the initial image of femininity associated with her tresses.

Soon Lilia will lose her long hair, probably after the rape. We cannot know whether the man who raped her is the same as the one who cut off strands of her hair (possibly, as a form of shaming, or marking her as his object)?

On the poster, the butterfly's wing looks more like a moth's – an effective [nocturnal pollinator](#). Crucially, it becomes clear that the lepidoptera in title and on poster, despite the seemingly innocent symbolism, refer, in reality, to a piece of military equipment – a drone, i.e. another insect, with even less pleasant connotations. The poster underscores the complex symbolic layers of the film as well as the tropes of the (sheared) hair and the drone in connection with the occupation and strategies of sexual aggression. After all, in nature a drone is a male bee in a colony of social bees; the drone does not collect nectar but fertilizes the queen. Is the male drone, masked as a butterfly, attempting to 'capture' the Ukrainian queen bee?

“THIS SHAVEN HEAD WAS THE PURITY OF JOAN OF ARC. [...] IT WAS THE RESISTANCE TO OPPRESSION AND TYRANNY” (JEAN RENOIR)

If Lilia's head is brutally grabbed by her hair for the sake of humiliation, Jeanne is shaven by orders of the church before she is burned at the stake.

The afternoon of the same day, May 24<sup>th</sup>. Jeanne puts on woman's dress

...Jeanne answered that she would willingly wear woman's dress, and in all things obey and submit to the clergy. She was given woman's dress which she put on immediately she had taken off the male costume: she desired and allowed her hair, which had hitherto been cut short round the ears, to be shaved off and removed.<sup>13</sup>

This detail did not find its way into any of the older pictorial representations – until Carl Theodor Dreyer's film of 1928, produced by the French Société Générale des Films.



Cropped hair of a warrior: Renée Jeanne Falconetti in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (Carl Th. Dreyer)

The first approximation seems indeed to have been Dreyer's decision to show Jeanne's cropped hair during the trial which for its time – even if it was the 1920s – was indeed ultra-short.

In a later scene her head is shaved – by the hands of the church, as preparation for her death at the stake:



Jeanne, shaven by a monk, after her “relapse into heresy”

The act of cutting or shaving hair for a film often sparks discussions both on and off the film set, especially when it involves actresses portraying characters like Jeanne d'Arc. This debate gained traction in the popular press, particularly post-war. The loss of hair significantly alters the actress's physical appearance, garnering more attention than changes to a man's hairstyle, both in the eyes of the crew and the audience.

Ira Nirsha, the acting coach for *Bachennya Metelyka*, who advocated for the necessity of trimming Rita Burkovs'ka's hair for the film, even ties this decision to freeing oneself from the colonising effects of acting schools:

I'm proud of Rita, the performer of the main role, she was really brave: she lost and gained weight, cut her hair, trained for the role of a soldier, was in constant search and researched prototypes. The Ukrainian school of film acting does not yet have a system or method. Due to the fact that we were constantly restricted, prevented from developing, Russian and Soviet systems of acting would influence the role.<sup>14</sup>

Has Lilia's decision to crop her hair become not just a form of withdrawal but also a conscious effort by Rita Burkovs'ka and N. Vorozhbyt to "de-occupy" Ukrainian styles of acting, cutting oneself off from Russian acting traditions and counteracting the Soviet cinematic heritage? This transformation is evident in the poster featuring Burkovs'ka levitating under a butterfly or a lucifugous moth, challenging or even reversing the cinematic imagery linked to Tarkovsky's Terekhova and the dove – a symbol of peace that became a cliché after its extensive usage in Soviet propaganda posters during the Cold War period.

The ongoing decolonisation of the film history of Russia<sup>15</sup> and the exploration of Ukrainian cinema heritage highlights the diverse origins of figures in 1920s French cinema, often labeled as "Russian," however today we would call them Polish, Jewish, Baltic-German, Caucasian, or Ukrainian.<sup>16</sup> Many producers hailed from Ukraine. For instance, *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* was produced by a studio founded by emigrés from the Russian Empire. In 1920, with a capital of 1,000,000 francs, Ermolieff-Cinéma was established, evolving into Société Albatros under leaders like Alexandre Kamenka, a native of Odesa, Ukraine. Kamenka's studio became a key player in the French silent film era, significantly contributing to projects like Abel Gance's *Napoléon* and relying on a cosmopolitan crew with cameraman Rudolph Maté from Kraków or inventor of the lighting grid Simon Feldman, also born in Odesa.<sup>17</sup>

#### ACTING (OUT)? FALCONETTI AND BURKOV'SKA



Falconetti's tears in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* by Carl Th. Dreyer

Rumours of Dreyer tormenting Falconetti to elicit tears and pain for Jeanne's portrayal persisted despite the studio's accomplishments. This unsubstantiated narrative highlights the alleged sadistic or tyrannical methods of male film directors in the early days of "high film art," frequently associated with claims of genius.

In this context, cropped hair represents a juncture of violence and performativity in art. Jean Renoir, in his 1968 article „Dreyer's Sin,“ highlighted the deep effect of shaving Falconetti's head on the Danish director and its subsequent influence on the film's production.

When Dreyer asked Falconetti to have her head shaved to play the part of Joan of Arc in prison, he was not asking for a sacrifice for a mere external truth. I think that primarily this was an inspiration for Dreyer. The sight of this admirable deprived of its natural adornment plunged Dreyer into the very heart of this subject. This shaven head was the purity of *Joan of Arc*. It was her faith. It was her invincible courage. It was the resistance to oppression and tyranny; it was also a bitter observation of the eternal brutality of those who believe themselves to be strong.

Renoir's post-war comment on the "shaven head" as "the resistance to oppression and tyranny" and "the abstraction of the whole epic of Joan of Arc" suggests a dual interpretation.

Firstly, Jeanne d'Arc, historically known for her defiance against political and institutional oppression, symbolizes a broader resistance that extends beyond her personal struggles. The shaven head, in this context, becomes a visual representation of her defiance and refusal to submit to oppressive forces.

Secondly, the abstraction of the epic of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* emphasizes the gender-related aspect. Jeanne's shaven head, stripped of traditional feminine adornment, becomes a symbolic abstraction of herstory. It transcends the specifics of her historical narrative and resonates with universal themes of courage, faith, and resistance against gender-based constraints.

The act of cutting her hair, a signifier of her femininity, becomes a visual metaphor for breaking free from societal expectations by challenging gender norms.

This is why Jeanne's "resistance to oppression and tyranny" through shedding external "adornment" is the paradigm we are most interested in. *Burkovs'ka* treads in the footsteps of this unadorned woman as she asks that her hair be shorn, embodying the roles of both female warrior and martyr in contemporary Ukraine. However, Lilia is a warrior with cropped hair – without the traditional *chub* or *oseledets* of the Ukrainian Cossack. This new persona leaves hardly any space for a husband who finds it difficult to reestablish his role opposite his soldier wife challenging the traditional gender balance.

#### THE ROLE OF HAIR IN NATIONAL FORMS OF GENDERED SHAMING

In his essay "Le péché de Dreyer", Renoir accentuated the impact of Falconetti's bare skull on present-day viewers:

This shaven head said all this and much more to Dreyer. It was and remains the abstraction of the whole epic of Joan of Arc. What is miraculous is that this is also the case with the spectators who continue to come and purify themselves in the pure waters of Dreyer's Joan of Arc. ("Le péché de Dreyer")<sup>18</sup>

In his 1968 comment on "the resistance to oppression and tyranny," Renoir might also be hinting at something else, possibly alluding to recent interest in a sensitive period of French history. Shaving women's heads as a form of punishment was not exclusive to the 15th century. Public shamings of women accused of collaboration at the end of the Second World War were executed as radical and visible, yet simultaneously reversible changes to the women's public appearance, specifically their hair.

Shame and shaming have been theorized as a gendered emotion, given women's role to be treated as the objects of shaming activities and narratives in patriarchal societies. In France, the liberation is followed by an *Épuration* in its two forms, *légale* and *sauvage*, the wild one entailing rituals of shearing women's heads.<sup>19</sup> In her dissertation, Cara L. Wilson connects shame and shaving or shearing, *honte* and *tonte*:

Existing historical and literary scholarship on the *tondues* explores the *tontes* as a form of gendered violence on the female body. Ultimately these studies portray the manner in which the divisions in France's national identity between collaboration and resistance are inscribed on the female body. The frantic quest to punish female collaborators and thereby purify the country of the shame of collaboration betrayed a desire to rebuild a unified national identity of heroic resistance through the summary judgement and punishment of the *tondues* as a national scapegoat. The *tondues* have also been used to question the myth of the Resistance that was established in the post-war era as a way to solidify France's national identity as a country of heroic and morally superior resistants. While the *tondues* were punished for representing the "honte" of French collaboration with Nazi Germany, in the years following the war, the *tonte*, as a form of gender-based



violence, would come to represent the “honte” of the Liberation entrenched in patriarchal values and masculinist anxiety.<sup>20</sup>

The theme of “inscribing” shame “on the female body” is a central focus in our analysis of *Butterfly Vision*, prompting us to explore where women in times of war stand in the face of threats, accusations, and other challenges related to their gender. This extends to the potential accusation of 'collaborating' with the enemy, particularly if a pregnancy occurs.

#### THE HISTORICAL PARADIGM OF THE PIXIE AFTER WORLD WAR II: TO GIVE UP WHAT COULD “DENOTE YOUR SEX, SAVE WHAT NATURE HAS GIVEN YOU”

An essay in the 1932 English language edition of the trial proceedings of Jeanne d’Arc underscores the challenge of comprehending the phenomenon of Jeanne:

The Maid's followers believed that she came from God and adored her as a prophet, saint and military idol. The Burgundians and English were stricken with fear at her success and when she was captured condemned her as a witch and apostate. The Roman Catholic Church has canonized her as a saint. Mr. Shaw has hailed her as the first Nationalist and the first Protestant. Other interpretations of her personality are as completely far apart. Every book about her adds to the controversy.<sup>21</sup>

The drama *Saint Joan* (1923) by G.B. Shaw mentioned above experienced a revival in Otto Preminger's film, where, in 1957, he cast Jean Seberg in her first role. Now, the act of hair being “cut short above the ears” (1431) took on a different meaning. It harked back to the provocation of the absence of a differentiating sign, the lack of something "to denote your sex, save what nature has given you."



Cutting the Jean(ne) pixie in Otto Preminger's 1957 film *Saint Joan*

The cinematic figure of Jeanne introduced one of the first realized modern pixie haircuts as a distinctive fashion style for a female protagonist, embodied by Jean Seberg.<sup>22</sup> Tragically, Seberg's life ended in a manner akin to Falconetti's – both women committed suicide.

Seberg's untimely death was seemingly provoked by FBI surveillance and persecution through the COINTELPRO operation, driven by her political affiliations with liberal causes and the Black Panthers. The FBI aimed to tarnish her public image by disseminating reports about her unborn baby in the context of an "interracial" relationship. The premature birth of the child, who did not survive, further added to Seberg's woes in the 1970s, when she was blacklisted.

While Falconetti/Dreyer's rendition focused on the universal and national, the power of institutions, particularly the church in France, the post-war vision of Jeanne represented a shift to the international, while strengthening the gender aspect. Women, by cutting their hair, were

staking a claim to equal rights and opportunities traditionally associated with men. This departure was reflective of changing societal norms and had to be adapted for the sensibilities of the 1950s.

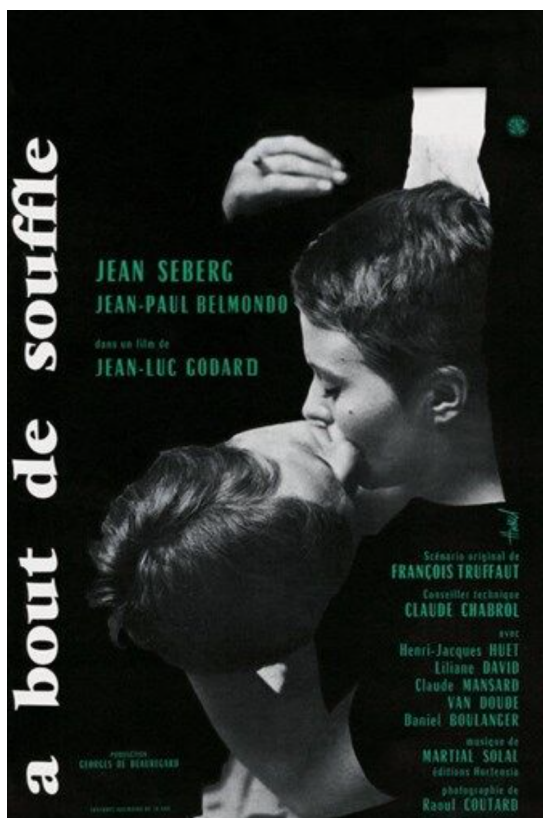
≡ ELLE Les coiffures cultes au cinéma

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Seberg in “The Iconic Hairstyles in Cinema” (“Les coiffures cultes au cinema”) in the journal *Elle*<sup>23</sup>

Jeanne underwent a transformation, becoming a blonde, and casting shifted away from French actresses (Ingrid Bergman took on the role twice, in 1948 and 1954, the latter in a film directed by Rossellini).



Equality in haircuts: The original French poster of *À bout de souffle* (1960)

In turn, the rebelliously spiky hair of the American Seberg played a pivotal role in paving the way for foreign actresses as icons of the French nouvelle vague (in *À bout de souffle*, 1960, directed by J.-L. Godard) and the vulnerable figures of pregnant mothers in urban environments.

Roman Polanski's psychological horror film *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) is also a 1960s film about a pregnancy and the men interfering with it, treating a woman's body as the instrument which helps them to reach their goals.



Mia Farrow as the scared mother-to-be in Polanski's 1968 film



Lilia. The TV calls her the “Undeclared”

In front of the camera, both women examine the marks on their backs. Similar to Rosemary who carries “Satan’s” child, Lilia chooses to deliver the baby.<sup>24</sup>



Rosemary before her hair was cropped (the actress is wearing a wig in this scene)  
**Images of Publicly “Shorn Women”: When the Female Body Becomes Political**

Shaving women’s heads was carried out in France in market places or on stairs which form a scene for the spectacle, sometimes by professionals, at the time by men who had been or claimed to be part of the resistance.



Shaving of women's heads and branding their skulls with swastikas, others watching (Dordogne 1944)

<http://espritdepays.com/dordogne/histoire/epuration-femmes-en-dordogne-1944-1951-1re-partie>

In France some of these so-called *tondues* and “shorn women” were photographed by members of the Allied armies and filmed by GIs in formerly occupied France or in Menton, which was annexed by Italy, occupied for a year by Germany and liberated on 8 September 1944. The disturbing photos taken of women being shorn begs for an analysis from the point of view of a spectacle of gendered violence accepted by the community. Among the photographers was also a woman journalist, the American Lee Miller.<sup>25</sup> Cynthia Enloe reminds us of the difficulties of standing up to “sexist editors”, who at that time helped to maintain a “masculinization of war” which in turn “helped to sustain the fog of war.”<sup>26</sup>

Wilson explains the pivotal role of hair in these rituals:

Thus, I propose to reposition hair as a central aspect of the *tonte* as an innovative way of understanding why the shearing of hair became the chosen punishment for the *tondues*' alleged sexual transgressions. And through my discussion of maternal myths, I understand the punishment of the *tonte* to be a pseudo-religious purification ritual by which the female reproductive body is symbolically cleansed of its “foreignness” and reinscribed into patriotic myths in a patriarchal state (Wilson 2019, 31-32)

Wilson points out a salient continuity between war-time and post-liberation ideologies:

Though there is a tendency to frame the nationalistic rhetoric of the Vichy regime as an aberration, the nationalist rhetoric espoused by the Resistance during and after war also provides a clear example of how women's bodies were considered an extension of the national territory during and after the war. Below, I briefly contextualize the feminized imagery employed by Vichy and the Resistance to show how the two ideologically-opposed movements nevertheless overlapped in their politicization of the female body. In a patriarchal society, the perpetuation and transmission of national identity depends on the fidelity and fertility of the female body. And in Pétain's Vichy, it was considered a moral and political imperative for women to reserve their bodies and their reproductive capacities for French men. (Wilson 2019, 36)

Wilson's analysis highlights how women can undergo a nominal "de-occupation" through the ritual. For the *tondue*, the removal of her hair was an attempt to decontaminate or 'de-occupy' the female body of its Germanness." But her astute analysis of literary and cinematic works reveals that the ritual goes deeper and is more ambivalent:

In the case of the captive woman and the *tondue*, the loss of their hair represented a temporary desexualization of the female body; if hair is considered an instrument of female seduction, the shearing of their hair temporarily disarmed them. And finally, the desexualization of the female body and her alienation from the community due to the shame of her shorn head lead to a temporary quarantine of female fertility.<sup>27</sup>

A quarantine" by getting rid of one's hair is certainly something Lilia is looking for. She turns to her older friend, Magpie (Soroka), who once was a hair-dresser. Magpie offers her to report the rape as a war crime. Notably, Lilia does not take up her offer but asks her to cut her hair, instead.

#### MAGPIE'S HAIRCUT, LILIA'S CAMOUFLAGE AND QUARANTINE

The maiden now unplaits her braids  
And will become a nun...  
("The Kerchief", Taras Shevchenko)<sup>28</sup>

Even if Lilia is in a different position from that of the French women shorn in 1944, we can ask ourselves whether giving up one's hair can indeed have a therapeutic function, and under which circumstances? Lilia's hair is not cut publicly or as punishment. When she asks her friend and co-combatant Magpie (Natalya Vorozhbyt, in real life a writer and filmmaker herself)<sup>29</sup> to perform the cutting – the result is a haircut which indeed resembles the one of Jeanne and her warrior-descendants:





Hair cut by Natalya Vorozhbyt

Above we saw men (members of the WWII resistance) shearing women. In the film *Butterfly Vision*, we see a relaxed as well as intimate women-only episode, when Magpie gives Lilia a haircut and also colours a strand of her hair in green, the colour of military fatigues.

After her hair is cropped, Lilia visually aligns with her husband, differentiating herself starkly from her mother, who wears a traditional feminine hairstyle – the bun, similar to Tarkovsky’s women in *The Mirror* (1975). We also follow her “traditional” female or maternal behaviour, which the actress (Myroslava Vytrykhovs’ka-Makar) displays at the table, serving others:



The dinner for Lilia's return: Tokha, Lilia, her mother

Whereas Lila's mother only sips from the vodka, Lilia drinks it up in one gulp and has more than one glass. Lilia at this point is still pondering the fate of the embryo while she drinks, perhaps hoping that the alcohol will lead to the loss of the child.



Drinking with the lads

Lilia is blending in with the other soldiers. With her green streak (chub) she camouflages herself. All belong to the volunteer Bakhmut Battalion.



Voluntary Battalion Bakhmut

Can the loss of Lilia's tresses be considered a private cleansing ritual? Is she, like the women in France who were shorn by members of the Resistance, ready or even eager to change her outer appearance to stay intact inside and become de-feminized for a little while, as a respite, far away from male attention? It appears that Lilia is consciously choosing this rite of passage as both a physical shedding of hair "touched" by the enemy, therefore impure, and a symbolic act.



Lilia and Magpie after the completed hair cut

To better understand the ritual of hair cutting it is helpful to turn to history again.

#### HIROSHIMA *MON AMOUR* AND OTHER POST-WAR FILMS ON SHORN WOMEN

When we look at the documentary films and photos of the shearing of women, we realize that they have a theatrical moment. They are indeed a ritual, and humiliating as they are, they do not constitute the grave punishment that would have been extended to serious offenses of genuine collaborators. And it surprises us to see that many women shown seem to be enduring the ordeal relatively indifferently.

The topic of shame engendered by *tondues* was picked up by several post-war films, most memorably by Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* (1958). Cara Wilson describes the heroine created by Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais as accepting the shearing of her hair "as a tiny relief" ("a me soulage un tout petit peu") – which in this case is related to mourning her German lover, who was shot in the end of the war in Nevers, her hometown.<sup>30</sup>

For Elle, the lack of hair is not a constant reminder of her transgressions, but rather, the constant regrowth of hair is a reminder that she is still alive and did not die with the rest of her body, which is how she describes the German soldier as he lay dying beneath her. The *tonte* creates a physical state in which she is continuously recalled to the moment of trauma. Previously I claimed that the symbolic punishment of the *tonte* is a regeneration of certain cultural myths that form the foundation of patriarchy and patriotism, and here Elle ultimately manages to subvert her body's inscription into these myths by experiencing her hair as not only the site of trauma, but also as the site of remembrance, or a *folle renaissance*.<sup>31</sup>

We can see that Lilia's story and her short hair finds itself in a paradigm of such film icons as Emmanuelle Riva's shamed Elle (*Hiroshima mon amour*) or as the national heroine Jeanne in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (a catholic martyr since 1920) who was born not far from Nevers, which is the city where the heroine was humiliated and lived in a cellar until her hair grew back – Duras might have inserted this reference to Jeanne's "capita rasa" before her burning.

The late 1950s and the year 1960 appear to have been particularly receptive to unlocking the memory of shaved heads, concurrently breaking away from the social norms of the 1950s.



*Five Branded Women*: Vera Miles, Barbara Bel Geddes, Carla Gravina, Silvana Mangano and Jeanne Moreau (directed by Martin Ritt, 1960)



Italian poster of the shorn woman (*Five Branded Women*, here the Italian title *Jovanka e le altre*)

Public shamings of women accused at the end of the Second World War occurred in many liberated countries, including Italy and Yugoslavia. While I can't provide a detailed analysis here, I would like to let the posters speak to this topic.

Head shaving was often connected to undressing and marking the women accused of collaboration. Most of these films, even if they exploited the sexual topic of so-called “horizontal

collaboration” and included nude scenes, the best films among them stressed the ambivalence of the state women found themselves in during the war.



Poster of five “shorn and shamed” women (*Five Branded Women*)

#### NOT A HORROR FILM

*Butterfly Vision* tells us a story of Lilia’s ability to exercise her free will. Even if the Ukrainian society does not want the public shame of a raped “butterfly”, it affords Lilia the option to decide herself whether to abort or not.



Rosemary (Mia Farrow) is changing while impregnated with Satan's child

The Ukrainian film is not a horror movie where the baby will be a monster in the vein of Polanski's horror film *Rosemary's Baby* but a film about a woman who has seen and experienced more than the people around her – after all, she has the multiple vision of a butterfly. Lilia will give the child up for adoption – we see a couple from Croatia, Liza and Mustafa, receiving the child, overjoyed.

Now, we might also understand why she decides not to report the rape as a war crime, as doing so would mark the child as the daughter of a war criminal. It's worth noting that this decision for Ukrainian audiences must seem debatable now, in light of the internationally known mass rapes in Bucha and many other places.

#### THE OTHER VISION OF THE BUTTERFLY

“For me, Lilya is the general collective representation of female soldiers, of Ukrainian resistance, and of Ukrainian women's ability to overcome victimization,” director Maksym Nakonechnyi stated.<sup>32</sup> Let us unpack this statement.

Initially, there's a perceived imperative that Lilia's body must be purified, as her womb was seen as invaded by hostile sperm, preparing her for further maternal 'use.' This topic surfaces in Vitalii Manskii's documentary, *Eastern Front* (2022) where we follow an Orthodox baptism and listen to an Ukrainian woman how she berates the diminishment of the country's “Genofond”. The significance of becoming a mother for the sake of the nation's continuation is a theme ambivalently echoed in *Butterfly Vision*.

When the film takes a different turn, it emphasizes Lilia's agency over her body and her child. The narrative unfolds with the crucial decision not to undergo a medical intervention,



recognising that such an act would be another form of violence against both her and the embryo. Importantly, it is Lilia's untreated PTSD that prompts her to resist the doctor's touch, evoking memories of being tied by her torturer.

The birth itself plunges Lilia back into the traumatic experiences of torture and rape, revealed for the first time clearly in a flashback after 1.5 cinematic hours, dispelling her earlier public statement that she was not mistreated. The audience is made aware of the intense pain Lilia endures during all medical procedures, juxtaposed with short memory flashes related to the assault on her body in a basement.

Surprisingly, Lilia's decision to have the baby and give it up for adoption emerges as the most humane solution, resisting potential negative consequences of the period of captivity on a female Ukrainian soldier. This choice is not only a reflection of universal “life-affirming”<sup>33</sup> values but also aligns with the ideals of a young state like Ukraine, seeking to distinguish itself from crude separatist nationalisms, resist ideologies of DNA-implants and ward off invaders attempting to infiltrate and occupy the bodies and minds of Ukrainian individuals.

Lilia resists the societal stigma attached to her as a rape victim. The film challenges preoccupations with ethnicity and nationalist concepts of reproduction. In this regard, it stands out as one of the most progressive works from the region in the last five years. It instills hope that humanity can learn, as indicated by the poignant detail of the baby being adopted by loving parents from Post-Yugoslavia. The narrative gestures towards an inability to conceive naturally after traumatic experience and introduces a deeper dimension of the recent history of genocidal rape, showcasing an understanding not only of the female psyche but also our recent history.

I extend my gratitude to Ivan Kozlenko, Irina Schulzki, and Denise Youngblood for their valuable ideas, insights, and constructive feedback.

<sup>1</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Twelve Feminist Lessons of War*. (United Kingdom: Footnote Press Limited. 2023).

[https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Twelve Feminist Lessons of War/cmG9EAAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=%22lazy+narrative%22&pg=PT101&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Twelve+Feminist+Lessons+of+War/cmG9EAAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=%22lazy+narrative%22&pg=PT101&printsec=frontcover). I owe a debt of gratitude to Rachel Morley for providing me access to this text.

<sup>2</sup> Lokaneeta, Jinee, 'Violence', in Lisa Disch, and Mary Hawkesworth (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, Oxford Handbooks (2016; online edn, Oxford Academic, 6 Jan. 2015), 1019. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199328581.013.50>, accessed 1 Dec. 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Nicolaisen, Viktoria, The systematic use of sexual violence in genocide: Understanding why women are being targeted using the cases of Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, (Uppsala University, Disciplinary Domain of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Theology, Department of Theology. 2019), 8. Diss. Uppsala <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1359249/FULLTEXT01.pdf%C2%A0>

<sup>4</sup> Nicolaisen, The systematic use of sexual violence, 24.

<sup>5</sup> "Butterfly Vision: Q&A With Khrystyna Lizogub." Q&A with the cinematographer of *Butterfly Vision*, Khrystyna Lizogub, talking to Olesya Khromeychuk, 15 September 2023. Ukrainian Institute London.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GlyyABXUcyM> [Oct 2, 2023]

<sup>6</sup> <https://taborproduction.com/production/fiction-films/spas.html>. The film is a co-production of Ukraine with the Czech Republic (Dagmar Sedláčková), Croatia (Anita Juka), and Sweden (Mario Adamson and Sergio C. Ayala). („Two Czech Co-productions selected for Cannes,” 14 April 2022, <https://www.filmcenter.cz/en/news/two-czech-co-productions-selected-for-cannes>).

<sup>7</sup> „As for the camera we chose the Alexa Mini because we wanted the camera to be small and comfortable for long handheld shots. Almost all of the film was shot on handheld camera to make it look more documentary, so Alexa Mini was the best decision.“ Chris O’Falt and Erik Adams, “Cannes Cinematography: Here Are the Cameras and Lenses Used to Shoot 49 Films. How I Shot That: The world’s best cinematographers tell IndieWire how they created the look of their highly anticipated features at Cannes.“ *Indiewire*,

May 27, 2022, <https://www.indiewire.com/features/general/cannes-2022-cinematography-cameras-lenses-1234725082/3/>

<sup>8</sup> *The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc* translated into English from the original Latin and French documents by W.P. Barrett with an essay. (Gotham House, Inc. 1932), 332. <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/joanofarc-trial.asp>

<sup>9</sup> *The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc*, 160-161.

<sup>10</sup> Cara L. Wilson, *Tondues, Rasées, Voilées, Défrisées: The Therapeutic Re-memberings of Francophone Women’s Hairstories*, (PhD Dissertation Vanderbilt University 2019), 55.

<sup>11</sup> As Wilson further explains, the practice of hair-shaving and wearing a wig (sheitel) „evolved, from the *halakhah* regarding hair-covering, as a custom that is now primarily practiced amongst Hasidic Jewish communities of Eastern European origins.” Hair was considered as a potential source of impurity while cleaning oneself when submerging in the bath of mikveh (Wilson, *Tondues*, 119).

<sup>12</sup> "I just love watching beautiful women kick butt. It's so inspiring," she says, laughing. " Milla Jovovich: kick-butt queen, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 Sept 2012, <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/celebrity/milla-jovovich-kickbutt-queen-20110926-1kssc.html>

<sup>13</sup> *The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc*, 348.

<sup>14</sup> <https://elle.ua/ludi/interview/des-lyudi-ginut-shchodnya-a-zovsm-poruch--restoran-sukn-takvti-komanda-flmu-bachennya-metelika-pro-kannskiy-knofestival-ta-rosysko-ukransku-vynu/>

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Decolonising the (Post-)Soviet Screen, ed. by Gerritsen, Heleen. 2023. *Apparatus. Film, Media and Digital Cultures of Central and Eastern Europe*, no. 17. <https://doi.org/10.17892/app.2023.00017.359>.

<sup>16</sup> Natascha Drubek, 2021. „Hidden Figures: Rewriting the History of Cinema in the Empire of All the Russias“. *Apparatus. Film, Media and Digital Cultures of Central and Eastern Europe*. Nr. 13 (December):109-44. <https://doi.org/10.17892/app.2021.00013.284>

<sup>17</sup> Feldman was the technical director of *Fantômas* (Pal Fejös) and *Napoléon* (1927). (<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0271116/>)

<sup>18</sup> „Le péché de Dreyer“, Jean Renoir, Reprinted as " Le Pêché de Dreyer " in Jean Renoir, *Écrits 1926-1971*. Paris. Editions Pierre Belfond. 1974. See also: Carl Theodor Dreyer, *Jesus*. 1972, 307.

[https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Carl\\_Th\\_Dreyer/4zg0AQAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=Jean%20Renoir%20%20Le%20p%C3%A9ch%C3%A9%20de%20Dreyer%20par%20Jean%20Renoir&dq=Jean%20Renoir%20%20Le%20p%C3%A9ch%C3%A9%20de%20Dreyer%20ar%20Jean%20Renoir&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Carl_Th_Dreyer/4zg0AQAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=Jean%20Renoir%20%20Le%20p%C3%A9ch%C3%A9%20de%20Dreyer%20par%20Jean%20Renoir&dq=Jean%20Renoir%20%20Le%20p%C3%A9ch%C3%A9%20de%20Dreyer%20ar%20Jean%20Renoir&printsec=frontcover)

<sup>19</sup> Fabrice Virgili, *La France virile : des femmes tondues à la Libération*, (Paris Payot 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Wilson, *Tondues*, 32.

<sup>21</sup> *The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc*, 307.

<sup>22</sup> Unlike shaven heads or cropped hair, which from the 1940s were associated with war, persecution, deportation, forced labor, captivity, camps, genocide, occupation, death zones, and exploitation, the pixie cut represents a distinct style. In this context, analysing hairstyles in Wanda Jakubowska's Polish camp epic, *The Last Stage / Ostatni etap* (1948), would be insightful.

<sup>23</sup> „Jean Seberg adopte la coupe garçonnette dans « A bout de souffle » de Jean-Luc Godard, film emblématique de la Nouvelle Vague. Sorti en 1960, il reflète l'image de la société où souffle un vent de liberté, où les femmes se permettent de porter les cheveux courts comme Twiggy ou Mia Farrow.“

<https://www.elle.fr/Loisirs/Cinema/Dossiers/Les-coiffures-cultes-au-cinema/Jean-seberg-breathless>

<sup>24</sup> An early motif of a pregnancy induced by Satan can be found in the 1917 Ernol'ev studio production directed by Iakov Protazanov, called *Satana likuiushchii / Satan Triumphant: An ascetic pastor* (played by I. Mozzhukhin) falls victim to the influence of a diabolic portrait and impregnates his sister-in-law, played by Ukrainian actress Natalia Lysenko who later played in French productions, many produced by Kamenka. Olga' Blazhevich's screenplay includes motifs from N. Gogol's 1835 text, "Portret"/ "Portrait", where an impoverished artist acquires a demonic painting to become successful.

<sup>25</sup> How has Miller – who herself was not only raped as a child but also infected by a venereal disease which her mother treated with painful measures – reacted to this shearing? Has she – in her capacity as a surrealist artist or a journalist – tried to interfere or was she just silently documenting the scene as an Allied reporter? How have the shorn ones reacted to a woman recording their public 'shame'? These questions arise have not been answered in the recent exhibitions about Lee Miller, held in cooperation with the Lee Miller Archives, East Sussex, such as in the <https://brightonmuseums.org.uk/event/lee-miller-dressed/>.

<sup>26</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Twelve Feminist Lessons*, 2023.

<sup>27</sup> She continues, „that the nature of the *tonte* as a pseudo-religious rite of purification juxtaposed with the natalist rhetoric of de Gaulle during the Liberation, while not necessarily concerned with the potential fertility of the individual *tondues*, is nevertheless concerned with reappropriating the reproductive bodies of the *tondues* to serve as a symbolic warning to women who do not consecrate their sexuality and fertility for French men and the regeneration of the French nation.“ Wilson, *Tondues*, 56.

<sup>28</sup> ["U nediliu ne huliala ta na shovky zarobliala"](#). *The Poetical Works of Taras Shevchenko. The Kobzar*. Translated from the Ukrainian by C.H. Andrusyshen and Watson Kirkconnell. Published for the Ukrainian Canadian Committee by the University of Toronto Press, 1964. Toronto and Buffalo. Printed in Canada, Reprinted 1977, p. 178 - 181.

<sup>29</sup> She directed Ukraine's 2021 Oscar nominee for best international film, the omnibus *Bad Roads*, which is about a female journalist held captive by a separatist soldier attempting to rape her. In order to prevent him from doing so, the journalist starts a conversation with her torturer. Vorozhbyt often applies black humor in her works.

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<sup>30</sup> „While I frame the *tonte* as a punishment for perceived sexual transgressions, the trauma of being a *tondue* for Elle is intimately connected with and displaced by the death of her lover rather than patriarchal society’s attempts to control female reproductive bodies. During the *tonte*, Elle primarily remembers her grief at the death of her lover and registers the shearing of her hair as relief: “Ça me soulage un tout petit peu...de...ta mort...comme.../ ...comme, ah! tiens, je ne peux pas mieux te dire, comme pour les ongles, les murs, de la colère” (Duras 97). Elle experiences the *tonte* as a rite, a symbolic death, that allows her to accompany her lover into death; the *tonte* is a renaissance into *folie*. Because of this decapillation, she has figuratively “lost her head,” and she finds herself entering a space without reason, a space in which she can continuously remember and mourn her lover.“ Wilson, *Tondues*, 58.

<sup>31</sup> Wilson, *Tondues*, 93

<sup>32</sup> „We thought the title seemed relatable in that it expresses the main idea for the film. Lilya, who’s [sic] callsign is Butterfly, is struggling to keep her own vision of her life and make her own decisions. It also tells us about this special, broader vision of reality that she has after having her traumatic experience – perhaps not because of what she experienced, but a person who’s undergone an experience like Lilya has acquired a different outlook on themselves and the world around them.” (Andrew Murray, “It was a really precious process”: An interview with Maksym Nakonechnyi on *Butterfly Vision*. 22 May 2022. <https://www.theupcoming.co.uk/2022/05/27/it-was-a-really-precious-process-an-interview-with-maksym-nakonechnyi-on-butterfly-vision/>)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.