

International conference celebrating the 10 year anniversary of *Genre en séries*
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France's #MeToo in Film and Media: Establishing an academic research subject

Created in 2015, the *Genre en séries* journal has set itself the goal of exploring the way gender operates at the crossroads of media cultures. From the onset, its ambition was to participate in the late assimilation of these approaches and tools of analysis by film and media studies within the French academic context by collectively paying attention to issues of power dynamics, social structures and norms at work in media cultures.

Two years later, the rise of the #MeToo movement and its various avatars – like #MeToo Incest¹ or #MeToo Gay – within and beyond Hollywood, on an international scale (Chandra and al., 2021; Cavalin and al., 2022), only confirmed the urgent need to bring to light and establish as a real research subject the dynamics and mechanisms of domination, of harassment, of aggression, of control and of violence long prevalent in the cinema industry – and, more broadly, in all media.

This need was partly addressed in the English-speaking world. In the film industry, a healthy awareness resulted in new professional regulations. Within academic research, long-term research projects had already been initiated before #MeToo in order to look objectively at the working conditions of women by combining the methodologies of statistical analysis and oral history².

It is however obvious that much remains to do in France, whether in the field of film-making and distribution or in the field of academic research. The status of cinema as 'Art' within French culture still has discernible consequences on discourses and portrayals onscreen, as well as on practices and mindsets: the French #MeToo needs to be understood within these contexts of hierarchy and cultural legitimacy.

At this very moment, Judith Godrèche and many other workers in the French artistic and cultural fields, but also anonymous victims, or women perceived as less 'legitimate' and therefore less listened to (Souffrant, 2022), such as reality-TV personalities (Villanova, 2024), struggle to be heard and to participate in effective changes in modes of production, cooperation and work practices. Other testimonies have preceded Godrèche's, whose autobiographical novel published in 1995 already referred to the abuse she was subjected to, and the "Depardieu affair"

¹ A study day on this topic was organized by the French research lab IRCaV in 2022 : <https://ircav.fr/event/metooinceste-regards-pluriels-sur-une-campagne-de-mobilisation/>

² We can refer, for instance, to the project « Calling the Shot: Women and Contemporary Film Culture in the UK », whose goal was to study women's labour and the obstacles to which they are confronted to within the UK film industry, through a detailed statistical analysis of British films from 2000 to 2015. Sexual harassment emerged as a constant thread in the interviews led with 50 women working in six key professions of film production : <https://callingtheshots138740090.wordpress.com>.

was not the first scandal to expose the French cinema industry³. The media coverage surrounding those two cases marked a turning point in the sense that they widened the small opening made by the ‘Polanski case’.

This opening happened when Roman Polanski gave up on presiding the Cesar in 2017 following a petition asking for his destitution. For the first time, a French film institution had to acknowledge feminist activism that resulted in a strong reaction within public opinion. But no real reassessment of the profession followed. What’s new about the Godrèche and Depardieu cases is therefore that they have helped to publicize (before justice takes its course) the omerta and impunity by bringing unprecedented attention to the public denunciation of systemic trends that have a lot to do with French cultural mechanisms of bourdieusian distinction that exclude women from the position of subjects (Coquillat, 1982; Burch & Sellier, 1998; Krakovitch & Sellier, 2001).

Those specificities of French cinema must therefore be questioned, documented, historicized in relation to other arts and media (television, journalism, literature, theater, etc.) and to other national contexts, such as the United States’. With this in mind, it matters that the academic world in general – our field is not devoid of sexual and gender-based abuse, that several recent scandals have exposed – and the social sciences and humanities in particular, make a contribution to public debate and collective examination of those – gendered, artistic, cultural, media, institutional – practices perpetrated in complicit silence up to now. Revisiting films henceforth perceived as questionable by replacing them into context seems to be a necessity if we are to build and pass on a watchful, sharp memory.

For those reasons, for the 10 year anniversary of *Genre en series*, we wish, as other fields before us⁴, to make inroads into this investigation in cooperation with academic societies in film and media studies, but also with collectives, professional organizations and civil society. In line with several other research projects begun recently⁵, we invite the research community in human and social sciences to explore the numerous issues, questions and challenges raised by the French #MeToo in the context of an international conference set to take place in Paris in November 2025.

³ Let’s not forget the support given to Jean-Claude Brisseau by a large section of the auteur film industry in the early 2000s.

⁴ Several theses have initiated this investment:

- in Literary Studies: Mathilde Hinault, "L'écriture du viol de 1945 aux années #MeToo : une histoire de luttes" (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, since 2022); Pauline Schwaller, "Réécrire les mythes grecs à l'ère #MeToo : entre phénomène littéraire et phénomène de société" (Université de Lorraine, since 2023).

- in Information and Communication Sciences: Laure Beaulieu, "Une rédaction face à #Metoo. Appropriations des idées féministes et évolutions des normes et pratiques journalistiques" (Sorbonne Paris Nord University, since 2018); Warda Khemilat, "De #Metoo au Plan d'action national contre les violences sexuelles et sexistes. Analyse localisée d'un phénomène médiatique transnational" (Université Côte d'Azur, since 2018).

- in English Studies: Mariette Lalire, "Représentations et sexualités féminines: comprendre l'impact du mouvement #MeToo sur les séries télévisées britanniques et américaines" (Université Paul Valéry-Montpellier, since 2020).

- in Legal Sciences: Martin Paumelle, "Contribution à l'analyse du traitement pénal des auteurs d'infractions à caractère sexuel : réflexion au regard du principe d'utilité" (Université de Caen Normandie, defended in 2022); Lucie Longuet, "Les réceptions des politiques de lutte contre les violences sexistes et sexuelles dans l'enseignement supérieur : une étude comparée" (Université Côte d'Azur, since 2021).

We should also mention, in Information and Communication Sciences, the symposium "Media and VSS. Informing, denouncing, raising awareness" organized in April 2023: https://www.sfsic.org/wp-inside/uploads/2023/03/colloque-medias-violences-sexistes-et-sexuelles_programme_fr_num.pdf

⁵ We are thinking in particular of the ANR project "Female Filmmakers and Feminism in the Media (FEMME)": <https://anr-femme.univ-lemans.fr> and the AVISA project "Historicizing sexual harassment": <https://avisa.humanum.fr/>

All talk proposals and suggestions for special contributions (roundtable, workshop, testimony, etc.) will be reviewed in a serious and watchful way by the science committee, formed by editors of the journal and specialists of gender studies applied to film and media. We nevertheless suggest four topics of discussion that seem especially relevant in order to understand the mechanisms and grey areas of the French #MeToo:

- **History**

- Cultural and oral history of the modes of domination induced by working conditions.
- The evolution of reception of cases and media discourse over time.
- Writing French film history before and after #MeToo.
- Reinterpretations and contemporary transmissions of films through the prism of #MeToo.
- Examination of the links between portrayals on screen and power relationships (and abuse) off screen; matters of intersectionality.

- **Media**

- Similarities and differences between media environments.
- Testimonies and public debates related to sexual and gender-based violence.
- Media coverage of cases, scandals and controversies.
- Media legitimacy and cultural hierarchy.
- Film criticism in the face of #MeToo.

- **Transnational perspectives**

- The fluctuating importance of values that structure 'legitimate' taste in different media industries and/or cultural contexts.
- Historical, cultural, legal, socioeconomic and industrial differences and specificities.
- Differences and evolution in the reception of certain international scandals (Allen, Kinski, Polanski, Weinstein, *Last Tango in Paris*, etc.).

- **Institutions and audiences**

- Controversies that have plagued the history of French institutions (CNC, Film Archives, César, Festivals, etc.).
- Which values should the institutions stand for?
- Action/reaction/inaction of institutions in the face of sexual and gender-based violence.
- Mobilization of citizens, activists and public organizations.
- Industry/ audiences dialectics.

Proposals in English or French (a 500 word abstract and a short biography) should be sent before December 10 2024 to genreenseries@gmail.com, with the heads of the journal in cc (thomas.pillard@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr and gwenaelle.le-gras@u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr). An answer will be sent on February 1st 2025 by the planning committee. The conference is expected to last two days and to take place in November 2025 at the Sorbonne Nouvelle University in Paris. It will lead to the publication of a special issue of the *Genre en séries* journal.

Planning Committee:

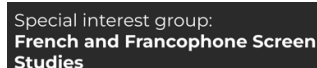
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Ginette Vincendeau (King's College London)

Partners:

AFECCA, Association Française des Enseignants et Chercheurs en Cinéma et Audiovisuel, <https://www.afeccav.org>
AFRHC, Association Française de Recherche sur l'Histoire du Cinéma, <https://afrhc.fr>
ANR Femme, "Female Filmmakers and Feminism in the Media", <https://anr-femme.univ-lemans.fr>
AVISA, "Historicizing sexual harassment", <https://avisa.huma-num.fr>
BAFTSS, British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies, <https://www.baftss.org>
French Screen Studies, <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/rsfc21>
Hystérique*, Association féministe queer intersectionnelle de l'Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, <https://www.instagram.com/associationhysterique/?hl=fr>
#MeTooMédia, <https://www.metoomedia.org>



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