

Concept Paper

Exploration of the Historical and Social Significance of One of the First Cinematographic Devices Based on Gender Roles in the Andalusian Environment

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Abstract: In 1914, *El Noticiero Sevillano* and other Spanish newspapers published a piece about the Cinémhymen, a cinematographic device designed to capture and sell images of prospective wives. This article explores why this advertisement was not considered derogatory and examines the construction of a patriarchy during a time when the term “feminist” was already appearing in the Spanish press. In our methodology, we analyzed the name of the device and the business, both based on the word Hymen, used a bibliographic review of Spanish feminism of those years, and researched the film technology of the time. The Manzano’s pyramid of oppression served us in establishing the control operations underlying the advertisement. Our study reveals the patriarchal principles of Cinémhymen, which stigmatized women once they conformed to the expected role. The objectifying gaze present in Cinémhymen provides insight into the progression of patriarchy in a visual world that subjugates women. The camera could see through the female masquerade (as Joan Rivière explained) and explore the “true” body underneath, the very core of the female (or what is considered to be). In some ways, Cinémhymen serves as a precursor to the current subjugation seen in online pornography and represents a distorted evolution of the panopticon principle as applied to women.

Keywords: cinematograph; gender and society; feminism; semiotics; patriarchy; surveillance; masquerade



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1. Introduction

On 7 March 1914, the newspaper *La Correspondencia de Valencia* (Figure 1) published on its front page an article with the suggestive title “El cine y el matrimonio” (Cinema and marriage). Three days later, it would appear in *El Noticiero Sevillano* on page 3, and on March 13, also on the front page of *La Crónica Meridional* in Almería. It is plausible that the article was featured in those three newspapers, given that the editor and journalist Francisco Peris Mencheta possessed a newspaper in Seville, another in Valencia, and a news agency that supplied information to the newspaper in Almería during that period. This article discusses how cinematography was used by a Barcelona-based business to offer matrimonial services.

After 1896, the cinematograph gained prominence in the main Spanish cities, to later spread throughout the nation, being considered from its early age as an instrument to spread knowledge. This would lead to the creation of the Cinémhymen business since its customers could access the images of their loved ones taken on the sly to know the “true” life and nature of the person they had fallen in love with, or with whom they wanted to marry.

This new invention, according to its creators, would be based on the “relationship between the cinematograph and emotions”, as the title of the article already announced:

“CINEMA AND MARRIAGE.

A friend of mine, recently arrived from Paris, brought me a precious document, which he assures me he received at his hotel when he told the person in charge of the ‘comptoir’ his name, origin, etc., and his bachelor status. The document in question, literally translated, reads as follows:

‘Maison Truck and C° Limyted [sic].

Esteemed customer,

We have the honor of offering you our services. For this purpose, under the suggestive and symbolic title of “Cinémhymen”, we have just founded an ultra-modern and trustworthy business based on the close and necessary relations of the cinematograph and emotions. The time has come for marvelous inventions to be essential in preparing human happiness.

Now that insidious agencies are approaching you, proposing to unite your life at random with that of any of your enrollees or, perhaps, your relatives or unofficial friends, without even giving you time to appreciate it, we propose to enlighten you most completely and sincerely about the person who may attract your attention. Thanks to us, you will be able to get to know her much better than by having a superficial conversation or by the vague information usually shared in such cases.

Has it not been said a thousand times that the cinematograph is a potent aid for those who know how to use it? Well, this is the principle of the “Cinémhymen”.

You only have to indicate to us the person you are interested in. With exquisite tact, which is the specialty of the house, we will immediately set out on the campaign to provide you, at the end of eight or fifteen days—according to the agreed rate and concerning the person indicated by you—with a series of “impressed” films without her being aware of it, which for you will have the invaluable advantage of allowing you to appreciate the truth of her expressions, occupations, means of life, her qualities and defects, in short, we put you in a position to see and appreciate her true character and genius, since the scenes of her intimate life will be more expressive for you than the studied attitudes and insipid conversations of polite society.

We guarantee the accuracy and discretion of such films. We will provide you with the necessary material so you can screen them when you see fit and calmly reflect on what your eyes see, which will facilitate the sure means of choosing a good wife.

The advertising rate is agreed upon in advance in each case.

In the hope of receiving your orders and that you will circulate our offers among your friends, we remain yours faithfully s.s.q.b.s.m.¹, Trunk and C°.’

What do you think of this agency, readers? I suppose that, like me, magnificent; so much so that I believe that it will not be long before all you bachelors, bachelorettes, widows, and widowers will receive a similar circular, offering you the services of the branch in Barcelona, whose address I am managing, with the project of supplying films to applicants of both sexes, since I do not think it logical—and more so in these times in which feminism is trying to impose itself,—that these great applications of modern inventions are only for the benefit of men.”

(*La Correspondencia de Valencia*, 7 March 1914, p. 1).

The text supporting the presentation of “the ultra-modern Cinémhymen house” is revealing because of the multifaceted interpretations of the imaginary that sustains this possible business. If consumers are fond of it, what moral fiber compels them to use these services? Perhaps the economic benefit stems from the potential to sell or rent cinematic artifacts, offering a visualization of something concealed in the environment or the actions of the future bride. These questions led us to define the following objectives:

Regarding the cinematograph as a tool, what imagery supports its technical possibilities and visual results when the advertisement is published? On the other hand, was the cinematograph possibly to be a reliable tool of truth? Technologically speaking, to what extent could it scrutinize interior spaces based on the external positioning of a camera?

In examining the portrayal of women through the male perspective, we aim to explore how the concept of the mask linked to femininity (Rivière, 1929) serves as the basis for

Cinémhymen's credibility as a company. This entails an analysis of the company's name, the feminist environment of the era, and Cinémhymen itself as a product of previous biopolitical surveillance systems (which includes the breach of intimacy and violation of the body's intimate parts through cinematic means).

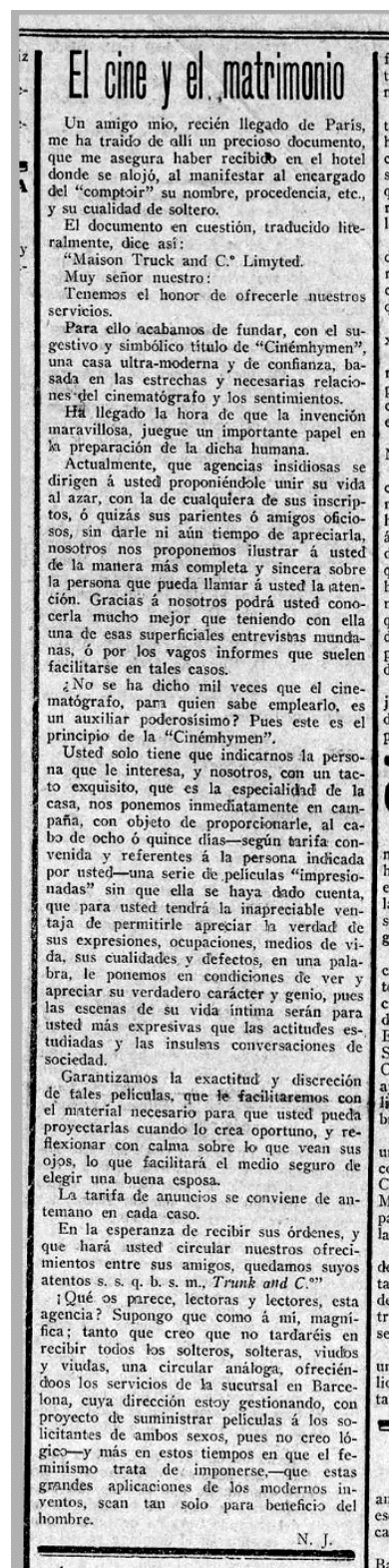


Figure 1. The article "El cine y el matrimonio" (Cinema and Marriage), from the cover of the newspaper *La Correspondencia de Valencia*, 7 March 1914.

2. Materials and Methods

We discovered one of the prints for the *Cinémhymen* article, specifically from *El Noticiero Sevillano*, during previous research covering Seville's silent film-related news from 1896 to 1929. During this research, we generated a database with 8263 records, which supported an openly available doctoral thesis [1]. In analyzing the corpus of news items, an intense phase of discussion on the immanence of medialogical artifacts in the surveillance of women emerged.

On the other hand, the nature of the printed text is controversial. Is it an ad or not? At the end of the text, it says, "The advertising rate is agreed upon in advance in each case", but there is no contact address for either the company mentioned or the author of the text. It is probably a teaser for a future ad. In old newspapers, we often encounter writings not documented as thoroughly as we do today, which presents a challenge. We do not know who the author is. For example, we selected the image from *La Correspondencia de Valencia* because it is the only one with authorship initials at the end: N.J. Reviewing newspapers from that time, we found signed advertisements, unsigned opinion articles, and signed news, which leads us to conclude that authorship is not a determining factor in identifying something as an advertisement.

In any case, given the expression "advertisement rates" referred to at the end of the text, we decided to use the terms "advertisement" and "article" for our research.

Regarding the cinematographic device, the search for *Cinemhymen* in the patent and trademark offices in Spain, under the Ministry of Industry and Tourism, both in Interpat (Patents and Utility Models), Latipat (Latin American patents, utility models and designs), Designs (Designs, Models and Industrial Drawings), and in more recent international classifications, such as Locarno (International Classification for Industrial Designs), is a crucial part of our research. Despite not producing any results, this search is a significant step in our quest to understand the *Cinemhymen*. The article does not provide technical details about the specific cinematographic device used in the *Cinemhymen*. It is possible that devices of different brands, such as the Lumière, Pathé, and Gaumont cameras and projectors, were used for the same purpose. The French Debré Parvo camera, known for taking long shots and being compact, became trendy in the industry. Its appearance in 1910 may have encouraged creativity in using this device for surveillance. However, this is only a hypothesis, as no registered mark linked to *Cinemhymen* has been found. In Section 3.3, we will focus specifically on the impossibility of specific visual hypotheses based on the technological development of that time.

This article results from a more thorough inspection, which can be included within the feminist methodologies aimed at revealing practices of domination and the exercise of media power. It is, therefore, necessary to have a medialogical perspective and a feminist intellectual practice framework focused on the purpose of our research: as an exercise of justice in the face of the invisibilized of history and as a revelation of the deep structure of the dominant discourse [2]. As a methodology, we like to take up Poulain de la Barre's idea: "Everything that men have written about women must be considered suspect since they are both judge and party at the same time" [3] (p. 74). It is interesting how the writings of a man like Poulain de la Barre in the 17th and 18th centuries served as an early form of feminism. It is noticeable that numerous texts generalize about women, yet there are few equivalents for men. Even without explicitly using the term, Poulain's courage to address patriarchal issues is remarkable. Their texts raise the point that discussing generalizations in itself perpetuates injustice. Feminist criticism aims to uncover the unspoken assumptions in texts. We are delving into this field. Although it may seem annoying, "everything" is a direct quote from Poulain de la Barre, who, perhaps, was writing as a person more than a man. It is a bothersome quote. Feminism can be perceived as bothersome because it exposes longstanding injustices. Poulain de la Barre's words remind us that we are all persons.

Since the 1970s, feminists have been working to recover the freedom taken away from them. As Varela says: "The first exercise of power that granted this new freedom was to name and unmask. There was a huge task ahead: to torpedo and dismantle all the

virile fallacies” [4] (p. 130). As a methodological attitude, we align ourselves with this position. The published news reveals a stereotypical reality reinforced by a persistent work of ascertainment. It is in line with the androcentric structure of Western thought that has corseted the feminine essence in clichés for the use and enjoyment of the male.

The uniqueness of this finding has prompted us to conduct a thorough investigation. Firstly, we searched for other similar articles in different newspapers. Then, we identified the theme that emerged from the text and embarked on a bibliographic tour to help us unravel the complexity of the factors in this news article. For this purpose, we have added a technological analysis supported mainly by Debray’s mediology [5,6] and researched the evolution of film formats at the time to check the possibility of the actual existence of this business. Thirdly, as we have already pointed out, the gender readings have provided us with a focus and an understanding of which dimensions to prioritize. After further discussion, our interpretation of the Cinémhymen as a panopticon has evolved. We now understand that patriarchal systems of control and surveillance (such as the Cinémhymen) have become increasingly perverse, complex, and twisted. Fourth, Manzano’s inverted pyramid of oppression has helped detect the control strategies derived from the Cinémhymen [7]. Although not from a feminist perspective, the pyramid illustrates the mechanisms of capitalism, where Cinémhymen is a critical audiovisual production. As Manzano says, “the point is that a system such as capitalism, which requires the collaboration of people from the feeling that they are making decisions freely, requires a very sophisticated or effective set of mechanisms that allow the perpetuation of power imbalances while forming the impression that we are in the paradise of individual freedom” [7] (pp. 229–230).

3. Results

3.1. Connotations of the Term

The creators of Cinémhymen themselves will refer to their business as “suggestive and symbolic”: by uniting two lexemes in the same term, they will achieve a compound noun in which symbol and suggestion become relevant. Thus, an ideological background appears that is neither gratuitous nor casual, highlighting the cultural conventions that sustain both lexemes.

The definition of a sign as anything that can be considered as a signifying substitute for another and interpreted at the same time as a code that signs transmit specific information in the expectation of a particular reaction [8] applies to the term Cinémhymen and would redound to the idea of the perpetuation of romantic love as a justification for female control and subjugation. The neologism provides information rich in semantic connotations, directed to speculation about the supposed indomitable feminine nature and the susceptibility of its revelation thanks to a technology of male domination.

As the Greimasian theory of communication reminds us, there is no such thing as neutral information, and the persuasion of the receiver will be crucial [9]. The term “Cinémhymen” is meant to persuade male clients that the offered service will enhance their masculinity by symbolically allowing them to break through female intimacy. Like metaphorically breaking the hymen, this breakthrough will enable them to make moral judgments. For communication to be effective, the message must be accepted as accurate, leading to the execution of a given action. That is why the text insists on its truthfulness by referring to the business as capable of allowing one to see and appreciate the true character and genius of the chosen woman: that will be the client’s benefit.

The union of the two lexemes links the technological advance of the image represented by the cinematograph with a bodily space of female intimacy (hymen, but written in English or French as Hymen), suggesting that just as the cinematograph was the window to knowledge of the world, the Cinémhymen will be the window to the knowledge of the unfathomable female truth (through the breaking of the hymen as the traditional sign of the loss of the woman’s virginity). Thus, just as the hymen is a social construct and an artifact of power, its terminology reflects the very exercise of power. The idea of breaking

into female intimacy to verify virginity is linked to the invasion of a woman's private space when a Cinémhymen film checks her decency. The equivalence of these meanings suggests that the name "hymen" was not selected randomly.

According to the Royal Spanish Academy, the hymen is the "membranous fold that reduces the external orifice of the vagina while preserving its integrity"; therefore, it is supposedly the guarantor of female virginity. In this sense, the phonetic use and its meaning in the choice of the name of the new invention are not trivial since (1) it takes part for the whole, (2) it introduces the lexeme "hymen" (with a "y" that, in Spanish, gives the connotation of the prestige of a foreign brand and show its origin from English or French, which we can check underlined with the tilde "´" in "ciné"). So, the woman is reduced to her reproductive and pleasurable functions for the man. However, therein also lies the advertising power of the word. The name itself is a symptom of the surveillance that patriarchal culture exercises over women:

As Martín-Leal explains, the examination of women's hymens in the name of science or medicine, without their consent and with no way to verify the accuracy of the process, exposes them to both public and private scrutiny. Likewise, the concept of Cinémhymen, which involves filming women without their consent and violating their privacy, perpetuates this oppression. Additionally, the stolen images are publicly displayed, similar to the public display of a bloody handkerchief on a gypsy wedding night [1] (p. 417).

The symbolic importance of preserving the hymen in many societies responds to a social concern for linking heredity and genetics. The hymen is the guarantor of male transcendence through the control and submission of women. Hymen also refers us to Hymenaeus, the Greek god of marriage that will give a name to the female genitalia with greater ideological, guilt, and cultural load and that fetishizes vaginal penetration and magnifying the first sexual act. Both the arts and literature have contributed to the cultural anchoring of this concept, which even maintains in its acceptance by the Royal Spanish Academy the adjective "integrity". The intimate space becomes passable, and the sacredness of the virgin approaches (the aura was near and far, as Benjamin would say), fading her aura [10]. We have also contemplated the possibility that the term Cinémhymen carries some typographical error, such as the m between cine and hymen originally not existing. However, the numerous times the term appears repeated in the news leads us to discard this hypothesis and see "m" as the continuity of cine in cinematograph.²

3.2. Feminist Awareness: Understanding the Significance of Cinémhymen

3.2.1. Cinémhymen: Unmasking Women

The Cinémhymen aims to uncover the hidden feminine nature and presents itself as an irresistible opportunity. It suggests that women will be deprived of their supposed mask—a tool used by men to maintain power, and reveals it as an ideological maneuver. The background behind this use of the cinematograph will be to confirm the traditional and cultural idea that women wear masks, as described by Joan Rivière [11,12], an idea that the postulates of psychoanalysis would support.

Freud artificially linked femininity to the enigmatic, and the belief in the supposed mask would underpin a new business: uncovering the "true feminine nature" by stealing women's images. On the other hand, the idea of masquerade coined by Joan Rivière [11] aims at self-defense against the reprisals that any woman could suffer for wanting to play roles attributed to men [13]. Moreover, this mask, which the author will also identify specifically with the feminine, will be the one referred to, between the lines, in the text of the advertisement to justify the advantages offered by the product: without being aware of it, the customer will be able to "appreciate the truth of her expressions, occupations, means of life, [...] since the scenes of her intimate life will be more expressive for you than the attitudes studied and the insipid conversations of polite society".

However, Rivière would not differ from her colleagues in relation to the essentialist that they would define as feminine. The announcement of the Cinémhymen, 15 years earlier, would coincide with these postulates by emphasizing that the service offered to

their clients would provide them with the images of their beloved ones reflecting “their true character and genius”. This takes for granted that they would never show themselves as they really were since, in society (then in public and not in private), their attitudes would be “studied”, meaning that they would be voluntarily artificial and their conversations “insipid” or, what would be the same, trivial, in order to mislead about their authentic opinions, in case they were granted to have them, since lying is a woman’s game [14].

Jacques Lacan will take up Rivière’s idea of masquerade but exemplify it as necessary in the state of absence of the phallus. Both authors imply the idea of a “being or ontological specification of femininity before the masquerade, a feminine demand or desire that is masked and can be revealed” [15] (p. 120). Furthermore, the notion of a mask is also linked to the supposed need for women to hide their evil nature [16]. The idea that women are inherently wicked was refuted by Christine de Pizan in 1405 in her work *The City of Ladies* [17]; however, instead of disappearing, it was reinforced with the printing in 1486 of the code *Malleus Maleficarum* by the German Dominican friars Heinrich Kraemer and Jacob Sprenger, with which the misogynist discourse on female inferiority and malignity was strengthened [18] (p. 128).

As Puleo reminds, “If the world could be without women, (...) if the malice of women did not exist (...) the world would be free from innumerable harms” [19] (p. 46). Thus, in the collective unconscious, this idea of an innate evil in women that will justify the objective of the Cinémhymen will be engraved: to make known the true nature of their beloved. With this purpose in mind, this new business is advertised at least in these three newspapers, but only in *La Correspondencia de Valencia* does the signature N.J. appear.

The publication about the Cinémhymen ended with an extremely interesting apostille for what it evokes, connotes, and eludes, but we smell at ground level. It hints at something beyond what is explicitly stated, as if we are searching for clues in the unseen, and only our sense of smell can perceive it, not our intellect. The services were also offered to women in a context where the news of the first suffragettes was known: the author supplies “films to applicants of both sexes since he does not believe it logical—and more so in these times when feminism is trying to impose itself—that these great applications of modern inventions are only for the benefit of men”. This statement shows that the main target of the business was men, and because the feminist struggle began to become visible in those years (thanks to its forms of agitation), it was forced to address customers of both sexes.

As Manzano explains, if we assume that the current capitalist system is the one that offers the most resistance to change, it is because “it has been able to take all previous resistances, improve them, and complete them until achieving a very effective capacity to annul intentions of social transformation” [7] (p. 230). This sentence also characterizes patriarchy, and the apostille is the machination to annul intentions of social transformation (a protest), with the argument of including women in the possible clientele. The inverted pyramid of oppression is clarified as follows:

“Nothing happens (invisibilization). If it were to occur, it is not an injustice [interpretation] because the cause is not human (naturalization), the consequence does not fall on humans (reification), it is fair (inversion), what is relevant is something else (perspectivation), or it is a false observation (delegitimization). If it is interpreted as injustice, it is not attributable to the system [channeling] because it is the human group itself that generates the damage (victimization); it comes from outside the system (external agent), while the system already has ways to overcome the injustice (tokenism). (...) Let us assume that people feel the inevitable need to do something; in that case, relevant instruments are provided that do not threaten the order [domestication] by encouraging isolated individual actions (individual transcendence) or by precisely defining permissible group actions (limitation of collective action). If this finally does not work either, the movement is stopped directly [repression]” [7]. (p. 247)

On the other hand, what were the fears behind the ad’s inclusion of women as clients? Revealing the hidden history implies making the mechanisms of power visible in the

imagery that saw the birth and dissemination of this advertisement. The apostille to *Cinémhymen* appeals to the ideological panorama of the time: to feminism, that “unloved child of the Enlightenment” [20] (p. 8), which stands out for asking “impertinent questions” [4] (p. 14), precisely for revealing the hidden and silenced history, and recovering women’s texts and contributions. In this sense, as Varela says, “the work of recovering our history will add to the genealogy of feminism names, actions and texts unknown until now” [4] (p. 15), and we would add the analysis of a device of oppression, following Manzano’s line [7]. With the apostille, possible criticisms about the unworthiness of the invention would be neutralized: is there a fear of awareness of women who might be affected by the very idea of a *Cinémhymen*?

Becoming aware of the discrimination of women implies a methodological bias where big and small lies on which the stories of our history, our daily details, and our projects are based come to light. The *Cinémhymen* cannot be understood as a micromachismo³, but the apostille can because, under democratic and technological signs, an ideological maneuver of control is diluted and becomes subtle. The apostille implies the possibility of an “awareness” and turns out to be an immediate neutralizing reaction to possible actions against the unworthiness of the invention. As the journalist includes both men and women as potential clients, the possible feminist attack would vanish.

The apostille turns out to be an interpretation aimed at invisibilizing the unworthiness of spying on women’s intimacy, and it does so by a specific inversion: women can also be clients and spy on a man with the *Cinémhymen*! A hymen and a man? We do not find this handling of information credible. In Manzano’s terms [7], the apostille says it is not an injustice (interpretation) but fair (inversion).

Awareness involves “being aware that our rights have been stolen from us and we must strive to recover them” [4] (p. 19). By becoming aware, one can perceive the “traps” that confuse the masculine with the universal, as Mary Nash explains [4].

We thus adopt a feminist stance because “feminism is the flashlight that shows the shadows of all the great ideas gestated and developed without women and sometimes at their expense: democracy, economic development, welfare, justice, family, religion. . .” [4] (p. 21). These are shadows cast by an article we read in a newspaper (*El Noticiero Sevillano*) in a city (Seville) at a time when news of the crucial social effect of the second wave of feminism has arrived.

3.2.2. Context of the Feminist Struggle Prior to the Publication of the Article

In 1869, the feminist movement split into two American suffragist associations after recognizing women’s right to vote for the first time. Pro-suffrage advances were slow, so in 1890, the two wings of American suffragism converged. “In 1910, they organized massive parades in New York and Washington” [4] (p. 50). Journalism echoed these initiatives. There was frenetic activity until they obtained support from the president in 1918, and by August 1920, women could already vote in the U.S. presidential election.

The news of *Cinémhymen* was printed, far away geographically, amidst the echoes of suffragism. The cultural coordinates that gave rise to the apostille allow us to see, as in a fractal, levels of observation of the local imaginary in transition with more global movements.

As Varela reminds us, Valcárcel points out two significant contributions of suffragette feminism: the word solidarity (to replace fraternity) and the methods of current civic struggle with a vocation of nonviolence [4] (p. 51). “The demonstrations, the interruption of speakers through systematic questions, hunger strikes. . .” innovated the forms of agitation in the media and, hence, the reason for the apostille. The suffragettes had already spoken of feminism. According to Sojourner Truth’s 1850 speech on the supposed weaknesses of women,

“Suffragism fattened day by day, and the last years of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a continuous thinking and rethinking, strategizing and modifying them on the fly for a feminism that was consolidating and to which diverse women were arriving and aggrandizing it” [4]. (p. 57)

On the other hand, in 1914, on the same day and month that the *La Crónica Meridional* of Almería published a text about the Cinémhymen, *El Noticiero Universal* of Barcelona reported on the activism of the suffragettes. Mary Richardson had made an attempt against the painting *The Venus in the Mirror*, exhibited at the National Gallery in London. The painting was slashed at least five times with a meat chopper. The Spanish press reported on the incident, using the same insults that would later be directed toward feminists.

“After the nonsense of Mistress Pankhurst and the last unspeakable exploit of Miss Richardson, the English suffragettes deserve no respect or consideration. It is no longer possible to consider them as having the necessary mental balance. They are neither intellectuals nor have common sense. This Miss Richardson must be a mop who has not been to school. Uglier than a Goya’s witch and with a mind harder than granite. That same Richardson must undoubtedly be very ugly. She must be the opposite of Velázquez’s Venus, hence her hatred of the celebrated work of art [...] she had considered her repulsive type and ridiculous face, and she stabbed at the painting in desperation. It is the repetition of the famous fable of the old woman who, seeing her ridiculous face, shattered the mirror”. (*El Noticiero Universal* 1914, pp. 3–4)

Within the women’s socialist movement, in 1907, the German Clara Zetkin organized an International Women’s Conference. It was the time of Emma Goldman’s media activism, who affirmed, more than the suffragettes’ right to vote, an anarchist and feminist position that is very contemporary. “For her, the important thing was to create a revolution from the women themselves, not so much from the conquest of power as from the liberation from the weight of prejudices, traditions, and customs” [4] (p. 80).

Meanwhile, at the time of the news, some achievements had already been made in Spain: Concepción Arenal as the first woman to enjoy higher education in Spain, continued denouncing the subaltern position of women with her work *La mujer del porvenir* [21], a facet that Pardo Bazán would also develop: “Society labeled her, by way of insult, as heterodox, atheist, pornographic, naturalist and feminist” [4] (p. 138).

Teresa Claramunt, a prominent activist of the Spanish Libertarian Movement in 1899, also wrote about the unreasonableness of the term and the concept of the “weaker sex”.

In 1883, the first strike of women workers began in Sabadell. In 1900, the Spanish government passed the first labor law, which granted women and children the right to work. Additionally, women were allowed to attend university. Although the first feminist public act in Spain would not happen until the spring of 1921, the first initiative on the right of women to vote would arrive in 1907, but only nine deputies would vote in favor.

On the other hand, this feminist vision would adopt the term “patriarchy”.

“Already from the nineteenth century, when the theories that explain male hegemony in society as a usurpation begin, the term patriarchy is used as a key piece of their analysis of reality [...] Analyzing patriarchy as a political system meant seeing how far the control and domination over women extended” [4]. (pp. 176–177)

However, today, the term patriarchy has become popularized and is more common than in the times of the Cinémhymen. As Varela says, it is already clear that “the fundamental objective of feminism is to do away with patriarchy as a form of political organization.” [4] (p. 179) It is a network of relations that exercises power, not essence or immanence. According to Rosa Cobo, a patriarchy is nothing other than a system of inter-classist pacts between males [22]. In addition, politics is the environment where patriarchal agreements are often established. So, the body in the Cinémhymen is political; it is the exercise of power.

3.3. *The Cinematographic Mediological Context at the Time of the Cinémhymen: Technological Constraints*

The most relevant change of the arrival of the cinematograph to the different European cities was related to its conception as a device for the construction of realities [23]. It modified the perception of time and space, which led, among other things, to an opening to the literature on the very fact of watching the screen, as occurred, for example, in the tragic plot of “La enlutada” (“Woman in mourning”) by Zamacois [24], where a widow relived in the cinema the images of her deceased husband and son. In terms of openness to other realities, we find it interesting to rethink how the medium creates the context in a case such as Seville as seen through a newspaper. This idea forces us to analyze the interface, and not in a mathematically given way, but as intangible elements of transmission within the mediological line described by Debray. Here, the pretended immediacy (of the time) is essential to unravel what the clientele thought about the technological possibilities of the Cinémhymen.

With the Cinematograph, for the first time in history, humankind had the lives of others at its fingertips in real-time because the incipient production companies “printed” the films and projected them practically simultaneously. All this would provoke changes in thinking and in the way of conceiving one’s reality. Through the newspapers, the public became aware that immediately after the recording, they could see the images projected:

“TEATRO CERVANTES. The Great Collection of New Views to be exhibited in the Cinematograph contracted by the company of said Coliseum has arrived in Seville. On Tuesday, the 26th, the machines and the material arrived to take the Views of the Bullfights, Horse Races, and Ribbons and others of the many celebrations that are to be held in this Capital next April, whose Views will be presented to the public 24 h after having been taken”. (*El Noticiero Sevillano*, 27 March 1899, p. 3)

Moreover, the cinematograph would also provoke a revolution of the senses, as Germaine Dulac would express when referring to the first projection of the arrival of a train at the Vincennes station, in which “a new emotional sense” appeared, a contribution that was already in our unconscious, and that made us understand the visual rhythms [25] (pp. 90–91).

Screening films would allow the public to experience a new reality that might seem more convincing than the one they experienced in real life. This fact made the Cinémhymen an ideal platform to explore the technological possibilities that could stimulate the viewers’ minds.

However, the size of the cinematographic apparatus would make it difficult for it to go unnoticed, which, coupled with the camera’s rapid approach to a woman’s intimate space without her guessing, does not seem plausible to us at the time. The close-up zoom was not as developed as one might think based on our current mentality and knowledge. Nor were there other technical possibilities that would make what the text promised a reality, as we will discuss shortly.

4. Discussion

4.1. *The Ideological Apparatus of Surveillance: From the Panopticon to the Cinémhymen*

According to Foucault (2003), we discovered that power permeated everything; that it was predominantly diffuse; and that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was anchored in the body and sexuality, the central node where the control of the individual takes place, with the ideological objective of the improvement of the species (in the biopolitics of populations) [26]. It was no longer a matter of sanctioning and taking life through the law, which the sovereign power carried out. Instead, a disciplinary power was exerted. In this way, an area conceived as private was reactivated socially. In other words, the spaces we considered private were actually where the public was constructed.

The Cinémhymen responds to an ideology of power that finds the instrument of oppression in the male gaze (in the dominant version of male identity). This gaze is not

an essence but an ideology that tends to justify domination over women since masculine identity, in all its versions, is learned and, therefore, can also be changed [27].

Masculinity has remained hidden, acting in the name of humanity (as is well known, the English word mankind is revealing because it substitutes the concept of human beings for that of men). “This is the reason why historically, it seemed that what was rare, what was analyzable, what had to be defined and studied was feminine, since the masculine was considered the normal, the norm, the unquestionable” [4] (p. 328). The Cinémhymen is her device for approaching “the other” [28] (p. 60).

Furthermore, the importance of Foucault’s writings for third-wave feminism does not escape us, which leads us to the consideration of the Cinémhymen as an (even more twisted) evolution of the principle of the Panopticon. Table 1 shows the process: women modify their behavior, knowing they are under surveillance. This modification tends to adapt the stereotypes of women that appear in the cinema (a mechanism of protection and simulation). The production of cinematic realities influences our behavior at a subconscious level. As these behaviors are known to men, they are presumed to be false, so it is necessary to create an apparatus that watches but prevents women from feeling watched: Cinémhymen.

Table 1. Evolution of control from the Panopticon to the Cinémhymen. Source: the authors.

Panopticon	Consequences of the Panopticon	Cinema and Other Media	Consequences of Adaptation to Cinematographic Models	Cinémhymen
The watched person self-models their behavior because they know they are being watched.	The woman under surveillance behaves according to patterns expected by society.	Expected patterns are established through typologies of women. This fact leads them to adapt to these fictional models.	Adaptation to fictional models means for men that women lie. Such adaptation is a means of defense and protection for women.	In the face of women’s lies, men see the need to know the truth, and therefore, a new system of surveillance is necessary, a system in which the woman under surveillance is not aware that she is being watched.

Foucault dedicated a chapter to the Panopticon in his 1975 work *Surveiller et punir* (*Discipline and Punish*) [26], which significantly impacted the feminist literature of the 1980s once the book had been translated and published in English. The Panopticon is a design that combines architecture and surveillance; it is a device that, seen mediologically, has a fundamental consequence on the behavior and experience of those who feel under surveillance. For mediology, the medium is the message, and this means of control was already advancing a disciplinary society.

Following N. H. Julius, Foucault argued that we are in a surveillance society, and it is crucial to the principle of the Panopticon to achieve social control of the population without specifying its gender or sex. Furthermore, in this sense, the Cinémhymen in 1914 will exemplify this surveillance function exercised by future capitalist societies, which, in our case, will be directed toward women.

However, unlike the Panopticon, in which oppression resided in the knowledge of being watched all the time (even if the prisoner was confused with the wooden silhouettes of the watchmen who sometimes substituted for these workers), the oppression that the Cinémhymen will exert on women will reside in the opposite, in the ignorance of the violation of their privacy. Therefore, the aggression will be twofold. Like the prisoner, the woman is seen, but neither sees nor knows she is captured. With the Panopticon, “the multitude, compact mass, place of multiple exchanges, individualities that merge, a collective effect, is annulled for the benefit of a collection of separate individualities. From the guardian’s point of view, it is replaced by an enumerable and controlled multiplicity; from the point of view of the detainees, by a sequestered and observed solitude” [26]

(p. 185). The woman standing in front of the Cinémhymen is unaware that she is targeted by the power and judgment emanating from surveillance. Her supposed crime is not against society but against the hierarchical masculinity that governs her. It is her indelible stain, her stigma [29]. As Bentham would establish for his Panopticon, the Cinémhymen guarantees that power is visible (the recording apparatus) and unverifiable (the unawareness that one is being recorded), so the presence of the guardian will not frighten because it is unknown in our case.

Again, like the Panopticon, the Cinémhymen presents itself as “the machinery that guarantees asymmetry, imbalance, difference. It matters little, therefore, who wields power. Any individual, taken almost at random, can make the machine work [. . .] Just as the motive that animates it is indifferent: the curiosity of an indiscreet, the malice of a child, the appetite for knowledge of a philosopher who wants to go through this museum of human nature, or the wickedness of those who take pleasure in spying and punishing [. . .]. The Panopticon (like the Cinémhymen) is a marvelous machine that, from the most different desires, manufactures homogeneous effects of power” [26] (p. 186).

Foucault [26] (p. 187) raised the hypothesis that the beast house that the architect Le Vaux had built in Versailles (disappeared during the French Revolution) had inspired Bentham; however, he agreed with his concern for the individualizing observation of characterization, individualization, and the analytical arrangement of space, which would also coincide 123 years later with the purpose of the Cinémhymen.

Despite the differences stemming from the evolution of the control system, the Cinémhymen shares attributions that Foucault ascribed to the Panopticon:

“cruel and wise cage [. . .] figure of political technology [. . .] implantation of bodies in space [. . .] of hierarchical organization, of disposition of the centers and channels of power, of definition of its instruments and its modes of intervention [. . .]. It makes it possible to perfect the exercise of power in several ways because it can reduce the number of those who exercise it while multiplying the number of those over whom it is exercised” [26]. (pp. 189–190)

4.2. *The Gaze as Profanation*

This work has placed us in a triple variant: the exhibition of the objectified woman, the furtive gaze that the man/operator and the man/client exercised on her through the device, and the gender construction that prevailed in both the gaze of the operator and the spectator/client. This text highlights the androcentrism and violence of a culture capable of devising the use of a device to steal images on the sly from women unaware of their condition as treasures within the framework of a capitalist business.

“This novel use of the cinematograph would allow for a supposed visual inventory of knowledge, in which, thanks to a tautological equation between observation and knowledge, in the sense that the limits of seeing are those of knowledge, the invention could be considered a technology with aspirations of a vademecum on women as a stereotyped concept. Its interest in intruding into the private space that would allow it the public scenario in which it would be recorded would be equivalent to mapping supposed feelings and behaviors that would result in maps of supposed emotional territories and supposedly feminine behaviors that would allow the client to give his evaluation” [1] (p. 426). The profanation of female intimacy provoked by the intrusion of the furtive and violent gaze, first of the operator and then of the client, will reduce the woman to the segment of her projection, just as Courbet, Candice Lin, and Duchamp will show the headless naked bodies of their paintings and sculptures by focusing on the female genitalia in their exhibition. Similarly, when we consider the root “hymen” in the compound word Ciném-hymen, a connotation emerges. It depicts an intimate part of a woman’s body, isolated from the context, under the inquisitive lens of a camera.

In Gustav Courbet’s pictorial work *The Origin of the World* of 1866, the author subjects the pubis to a very close-up, just as in 1914, where the cinematograph is presented as a new and innovative model of spyglass, capable of subjecting, once again, the woman, visually

violating her privacy. Intimacy about the hymen, moreover, is forbidden to women, given the actual impossibility of seeing their own unless they use a mirror. The invention of the cinematograph as an instrument for seeing is related to a part of the female anatomy, whose existence will have meaning insofar as it is seen to be judged later by its state of integrity or rupture.

“The Cinémhymen would act like the gynecologists who penetrate and scrutinize the female body to produce a logos or scientific knowledge about it, presuming to be the only one capable of providing authentic knowledge about the woman by capturing the visual evidence. (...) Furthermore, if, in addition to the action of seeing, we were to add that what is seen does not want to be seen or is not known to be seen, the veracity of that information would increase since it would lack the possible artifice existing in circumstances in which we know we are observed” [1]. (p. 422)

Likewise, the Cinémhymen could symbolize the extension of the penis that violates female virginity. It would be presented as a form of voyeurism, with the client’s gaze embodying the oppressive gaze of the patriarchy, providing both the thrill of stalking and the excitement of clandestine recognition.

In the invention of the Cinémhymen, we find equivalences with the moment in which the anatomist and, controversially called the father of obstetrics, William Hunter, would abandon the old humanist, speculative, and abstract models in favor of a retinocentric, empirical, and focused model, founded on dissection, direct observation, and its translation, in our case to celluloid tape, isolating the image from the context in which it would have been taken [30]. Up to this point, the debate on the nature of women was based on theoretical issues, but with the Cinémhymen, it would be intended to give it an empirical character. Woman, that “great mystery of nature” becomes accessible to knowledge. She is presented as an object to be discovered, similar to how colonizers treated indigenous people as unknown territories to be conquered. As Showalter pointed out, the result is that we women have not learned what other women before us have felt and experienced, but only what men have conceived about how women should be [31]. which is precisely what would lead this researcher to establish the foundations of gynocriticism.

The Cinémhymen could thus be framed within the scopic regime defined by Martin Jay (2007) insofar as it would not only allow us to see the woman without knowing she is seen but would also be proposed with an epistemological character by describing a visual system constructed by a cultural, technological, and political apparatus [32]. The scopic regime, which equates gaze and knowledge, refers to a non-natural visual order that functions at a pre-reflexive level to delimit the prevailing protocols of seeing and being seen within a culture and at a given time [33]. In this sense, the Cinémhymen mediates between what is seen and the knowledge about what is seen but also deepens the distinction between truth and appearance. In doing so, on the one hand, she recognizes the existence of imagery about what a woman should be and, on the other, that this might not correspond to reality.

In the same way that Jáuregui and Uparella would describe gynecology [33], the Cinémhymen will be presented to us as a scopic regime of penetration, possession, and production of knowledge in which two subjects are intertwined: the one subordinated to a visual epistemology, more object than subject, and the observant, subordinate for whom the space-other becomes comprehensible, apprehensible, and expugnable.

As William Hunter declared himself an explorer of a *Mundus Novus* whose vision would have been denied to others [30], the Cinémhymen would self-publicize itself as a gadget of exploration, capable of offering to the men of 1914 what would never have been offered to any man in the history of Humanity: the grandiose power of knowing female intimacy. Like Hunter and, after him, all gynecologists who can access the physical intimacy of women, the Cinémhymen would offer the possibility of surreptitiously penetrating their behavior and psyche.

Despite the traditional confrontation that psychoanalysis has maintained with theoretical feminism, we cannot fail to see the relationship that the Cinémhymen could present with

Freud's postulates about scopophilia or desire to look, as one of the standard components of sexuality, which will derive from its pathological facet in voyeurism. In this sense, the possibility of seeing without being seen offered in Cinémhymen to its clients would become one of its main attractions. This would also bring with it the objectification of women, represented through a stolen image in the form of a hunt, with a double aspect: the woman becomes an object before the camera operator who will act as a poacher and before the furtive gaze of the client spectator.

5. Conclusions: The Scam or the Pornographic Promise

The gaze, like the message, is never neutral or innocent; it depends on power relations and, at the same time, reproduces those relations. What a society sees or fails to see and how it sees is historically, technologically, and culturally determined. Each culture develops technologies and formulates codes that constitute the way of seeing and making the world visible, allowing its conception, representation, codification, and decoding. Knowing and representing is a natural consequence of seeing, but in this process, a product influenced by history and culture is created through domination [33]. The Cinémhymen is an instrument of domination through the act of seeing. Its functioning would allow us to see and let us know what society has determined. If, in every era and culture, we deploy technologies to make the world visible and, above all, its conception and representation, the Cinémhymen would signify in the Seville, Valencia, and Almería of 1914 that new technology with its gaze and code, showing and perpetuating the existing power relations. Moreover, this visibility system would be projected as an operation devoid of intermediation, as if the image of the recorded woman, torn from the out-of-plane, signified the actual reality.

This unequal relationship between the subject that looks and the object that is looked at will be equated to the unequal relationship between genders in society. The androcentric paradigm of patriarchy is based on this asymmetry and is strengthened in its universality and longevity, emphasizing its coercive and repressive aspects [22]. The Cinémhymen turns the observed subject into an object and subordinates it to the actual subject, the possessor of the inquisitorial gaze that makes the observed object expugnable.

"Vision is always a question concerning the power to see and the violence implicit in our viewing practices" [34] (p. 330). The Cinémhymen offers the opportunity to see what would otherwise be impossible, imposing violence by desecrating women's private space and empowering men in their ability to dominate by making them possessors of secret female images. The Cinémhymen would represent a new mode of voyeurism and predation.

In any case, this imagery, the Cinémhymen made visible a violent scopic territorialization, the subjugation of the image of women to the gaze of men as a metaphor for the power relationship between genders in patriarchal culture. With the Cinémhymen, the representation of a woman was sold, not her physical body. Owning that representation as an object outside its environment, as a commodity, was the foundation of the new business model.

The Cinémhymen would also present itself as an opportunity to satisfy gynecoscopic fantasies by interpreting the sale of the images of women trapped in the celluloid tape as a contrived metaphorical modality of pornography. The patriarchy found in it a new formula and technology to reaffirm its dominance. That promise of pornography in the patriarchal mindset led to a device that produced the "truth of sex" (the images captured would be interpreted and cataloged by the male gaze). These images were then used to create fictional representations of sex in other forms of media. Foucault was right: political, medical, and legal institutions operate as abstract machines that produce truths about sex. Although Foucault did not use the notion of gender, feminists developed his thinking to integrate the idea of gender. According to Paul Preciado [35,36], these developments enabled the ideas put forward by Haraway (regarding biotechnology and the Cyborg) and De Lauretis (about the use of cinema as a gendered technology) to come to light. The efforts of feminists were essential because Foucault, in his focus

on institutions like prisons, psychiatric facilities, and academic and educational systems, neglected more “liquid” institutions such as broadcasters and audio–visual production companies. Fiction producers wielded significant influence in shaping gender constructs. For instance, Haraway [34,37] regarded the world of cyborgs as the ultimate imposition of a control system over the planet, representing the final appropriation of women’s bodies in a masculinist war. Haraway also sees something empowering in the fusion of machine and body, i.e., hopeful monsters. De Lauretis (1989) argued that the visual and spectatorial positions established in cinema were more influential than the content shown, shaping our daily behaviors as we consciously or unconsciously emulated what we watched on screen [38].

The Cinémhymen institution creates products using technology to serve patriarchal ideology. Unfortunately, these products objectify women, perpetuating the harmful notion that women exist solely for the pleasure of men. This business operates under the guise of sincerity, but in reality, it perpetuates falsehoods. The images it produces steal female intimacy and present it as capitalist merchandise for the male voyeuristic gaze. The Cinémhymen will exemplify, 70 years in advance, what Haraway will describe as the technologies of visualization that “call forth the important cultural practice of hunting with the camera and the predatory nature of a photographic consciousness. Sex, sexuality, and reproduction are major players in the high-tech mythic systems that structure our imaginations of personal and social possibility” [37] (p. 25).

This will be the imagery that frames the development of the Cinémhymen (probably) scam company and its rationale: verifying whether or not the chosen woman meets the established standard.

Why do we assume that it could be a scam? At the end of our research, we encountered this question, which goes beyond the scope of this article. However, we can provide some hints based on our findings. Nowadays, advanced technology allows cameras to invade people’s privacy without being noticed. However, it is highly questionable whether the camera operators could film without being discovered in the early days of cinematography. We would have to wait until 1965 for the first distribution of Sony Portapak. These video cameras were more portable than those used in television studios [39] (p. 393) [40]. The cinematographic zoom did not seem to allow for the visual explorations of the Cinémhymen operators. Although the first zooms were invented in 1834 for telescopes, they required adjustments when the focal length changed. Until 1902, it was impossible to maintain a clear focus with photographic cameras. However, with 35 mm film cameras, a zoom device that could adjust the lens to zoom in and out was not released until 1932.

In 1914, the 35 mm format became the recording standard (the Lumière cameras included a perforated film of this format), although other formats, such as 28 mm and 17.5 mm, were used [40] (p. 57). It is unlikely that the Cinémhymen could have used a set of movable close-up lenses to avoid detection. However, some men may have imagined this as a potential solution, especially if they were feeling particularly lustful. Moreover, it is suspicious that the news was not published in *El Noticiero Universal*, edited by Francisco Peris Mencheta in Barcelona, where the headquarters of the alleged company Maison Truck and C° Limyted was located.

Despite the compelling arguments presented, we are perplexed that reputable newspapers published a news item on the front page about the alleged fraud, risking their reputation. Nevertheless, and in any case, whether it was a scam or a real business, the ideological and symbolic apparatus that supports it corroborates our position and interest in the Cinémhymen as a strangeness or anomaly that clearly describes normalized oppression of women and the conception of an artifact of domination at the service of patriarchal culture. The key point is that for any fraud to occur, the client must perceive the business as viable and consistent with their previous expectations. These expectations are of interest to us because they are connected to the patriarchal imagination.

We have observed the Cinémhymen as a development of the surveillance system that we began with the Panopticon. Worryingly, the current circumstances that limit women’s

bodies to a collection of pleasure-giving holes, as in the widespread pornography of which Cinémhymen is a horny precedent, are worrisome. From the past to the present, passing through the Cinémhymen, the same oppressive principles evolve, fluctuate, and twist to continue achieving the same domination objectives.

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Notes

- ¹ s.s.q.b.s.m is an abbreviation of a courtesy formula, now in disuse, corresponding to the initials of “Seguro Servidor Que Besa Su Mano” (Sure Servant Who Kisses Your Hand).
- ² If we continue along the lines of the suggestions offered by the term Cinémhymen, we will find games with words that could be dancing in the heads of the customers. About the combination cinema+men (using this time an interpretation from the English language), an allusion is made to the target public to which the invention would be destined. In this sense and in the framework of a hypothetical reading in which we would forget the knowledge of the language, we could read “cinemimen,” in which case we would consider the verb “mimar,” which, according to the Royal Spanish Academy, in its third meaning, means to favor someone, to treat him with significant consideration. And this would lead us, once again, to consider that we are dealing with technology at the service of men, thinking that “my men” also refers to men. Whatever the drift of speculations about this neologism, we return to the idea that the Cinémhymen would be the technology of the moving image designed by and for men.
- ³ The emergence of the term micromachismo serves to raise awareness of mechanisms of exclusion, mistreatment, and indignities. With the evolution of our Western society, “the mechanisms of exclusion are maintained with the perversion that they are more subtle, therefore, more difficult to combat” [4] (p. 189).

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