

International Journal of Human Sciences Research

Acceptance date: 15/05/2025

Submission date: 23/04/2025

THE SCOPIC REGIME OF DOMESTIC WORK: AN APPROACH PSYCHOANALYSIS OF *CINDERELLA* (1950)

Sandra dos Santos Vitoriano

PhD student University of Brasilia. Institute
of Psychology. Postgraduate Program
in Clinical Psychology and Culture
Brasília - Federal District
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/7486635423395676>
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7561-2568>

Carla Sabrina Xavier Antloga

Professor Dr. University of Brasilia. Institute
of Psychology. Postgraduate Program
in Clinical Psychology and Culture
Brasília - Federal District
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/1693120835730857>
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4105-6708>

Roberto Luis Medina Paz

University of Brasilia. Institute of Letters
Brasília - Federal District
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/8931140252408340>
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2388-3697>



All content in this magazine is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).

Abstract: This study investigates the different structures of the gaze (maternal, animal and masculine) and their implications for the representation of female domestic work in Disney's *Cinderella* (1950). Based on the Lacanian psychoanalytic theory of the gaze, in dialogue with feminist contributions on domestic work, we analyse how these visual structures operate in the film narrative to naturalize, sublimate or promise transcendence of female work in the domestic space. Using a methodology of film analysis with a psychoanalytical perspective, we examine representative scenes that show how: (1) the vigilant maternal gaze institutes domestic work as punishment and submission; (2) the animal gaze functions as an identificatory support and sublimation mechanism; and (3) the male gaze operates as a promise of individual transcendence of domestic work. The results reveal a complex scopical regime that simultaneously reinforces the naturalization of domestic work as feminine and offers imaginary ways of psychic compensation for its exploitation, providing elements for understanding the psychic mechanisms that sustain the cultural representations of this historically devalued domestic work.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis; Animated cinema; Domestic work; Gaze; Gender representations.

INTRODUCTION

The study of cinematographic representations and their socio-cultural implications is a fertile field for analyzing the ways in which gender constructions are naturalized through cultural products. In this context, Disney productions constitute a privileged corpus, both because of their global reach and because of their influence in shaping children's imaginations.

When I revisited *Cinderella* (1950), I was struck by the centrality of domestic work in the film narrative. Among the classic Disney productions, *Cinderella* presents women's

domestic work not as a mere detail, but as a structuring element of the plot and of the protagonist's own identity.

The relationship between *Cinderella* and housework is viscerally constitutive of the character. Unlike other Disney princesses, known for their beauty or kindness, *Cinderella* is introduced to the viewer through a meticulously detailed sequence of household chores. This narrative choice establishes the protagonist's social place and the conditions of her existence. This representation highlights not only its manifest content, but also the psychic mechanisms it mobilizes, in particular the structures of the gaze that organize the perception of female domestic work.

Based on this observation, this study proposes a psychoanalytical approach to the different structures of the gaze present in *Cinderella* (1950), investigating the implications for the representation of female domestic work. To this end, we seek support in the Lacanian theory of the gaze, articulated with feminist contributions on domestic work, to investigate how three different visual structures - the maternal gaze, the animal gaze and the male gaze - operate in the film narrative to naturalize, sublimate or transcend female labour in the domestic sphere.

The central question guiding this investigation is the following: how do the different regimes of the gaze (maternal, animal and masculine) operate in the visual and narrative construction of female domestic work in the film, and what psychic mechanisms do they mobilize in the naturalization, sublimation or promise of transcendence of the work? This question unfolds into specific questions about how each structure of the gaze constructs particular meanings around domestic work and how, together, they form a coherent system that both reinforces and symbolically compensates for the feminization of domestic work.

THE PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY OF THE GAZE

The psychoanalytic theory of the gaze has its roots in Freud's writings on the scopic drive, but it was with Jacques Lacan that this dimension gained centrality in this investigation. The Lacanian distinction between the eye and the gaze has reconfigured our understanding of cinema. In "The Seminar, Book 11: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis", Lacan states that "the eye and the gaze, this is for us the *schema* in which the drive manifests itself at the level of the scopic field" (Lacan, 1988, p. 74). This distinction is crucial to understanding how the scopic drive operates beyond the conscious control of the subject. The fundamental shift in the Lacanian conception is that the gaze is not on the side of the subject who sees, but on the side of the object seen - it is that point of light that interpellates the subject from the field of the Other.

As Quinet (2002) points out, "in the scheme of the constitution of the object based on the subject's relationship with the Other, proposed by Lacan, the modalities of the anal and the scopic of the object *a* are connected" (p. 205). This connection makes it possible to see how the anal drive (linked to control, to work) and the scopic drive (linked to the gaze) are intertwined in the structuring of desire - an aspect that is especially relevant when analyzing representations of domestic work in a scopic environment.

The Lacanian contribution allows us to understand cinema as an active device that establishes its own scopic regime. McGowan (2007) explores how the cinematic experience provides an encounter with the gaze as object *a*:

It's not the subject's gaze on the object, but the gap within the subject's apparently omnipotent gaze. This gap within our gaze marks the point at which our desire manifests itself in what we see. What is irreducible to our visual field is the way in which our desire distorts this field, and this distortion makes itself felt through the gaze as object. (p. 6).

McGowan also explains that "the gaze is the *objet petit a* of the scopic drive... It is a lost object from which the subject separates in order to constitute itself as a desiring subject. As such, it acts as a trigger for the subject's desire, not as the desired object, but as the object-cause of that desire" (p. 06).

In this way, the scopic notion goes beyond the metaphors of the mirror, the eyes, the pupil and the image that individuals throw themselves into when they are in the field of vision and therefore looked at face-to-face, generating a certain dialectic of the gaze and desire in intersubjective relationships and denoting that the scopic drive is exerted through the subject and the other. In other words, by looking into the eyes of others with their signifiers, we seek to endure this signifying gaze of the other. Therefore, it is looking, looking at oneself and being looked at in the face of the greatest anguish - desire. In homology, cinema is in the interregnum of also looking at us and scrutinizing us.

LOOKING AND CINEMA: FEMINIST CONTRIBUTIONS

The intersection between the psychoanalytic theory of the gaze and cinematographic analysis takes on another dimension by incorporating feminist contributions. For Laura Mulvey (1975), in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", classic narrative cinema is organized from the male gaze, positioning the spectator in the place of a voyeur who extracts visual and sexual pleasure from the objectification of the female figure.

Mulvey articulates how power relations structure visual pleasure: "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been divided between active/masculine and passive/feminine. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is stylized accordingly" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 808). This observation is crucial to unders-

tanding how Cinderella is positioned as an object of both work (for the stepmother) and desire (for the Prince).

Kaplan (1983) offers another important nuance: the gaze is not inherently masculine in essence, but historically constituted as such through specific social and cultural devices. Doane (1991) observes the paradoxical position of women in classical cinema:

the organization of the gaze in classical cinema gives ample representation to the woman - she is always there to be looked at. But it is precisely her visibility that confronts the male subject with the precariousness of the relationship between the visible and the knowable (p. 46).

The representation of women's domestic work thus operates in a complex visual economy in which women are simultaneously hypervisible in their work and invisible in their value.

PSYCHOANALYSIS, DOMESTIC WORK AND GENDER

Although there is a rich tradition of psychoanalytic analysis of domestic work, especially in its intersections with feminist theory, this research debates this field, specifically exploring cinematic representations of these relationships through the Lacanian theory of the gaze.

For her part, Kristeva (1980) associates domestic work with the realm of the abject, identifying it as a purification ritual that re-establishes the boundaries between the pure and the impure:

Abjection, recognized as inherent to the fragile and impossible alteration of the ego, therefore recognized as welded to narcissism, has something domesticated about it in Proust. Without belonging to the realm of the 'proper and clean,' or the 'self-evident,' it constitutes a scandal of which one must recognize, if not the banality, at least the secrets of a revealing snob (Kristeva, 1980, p. 20).

Chodorow's (1978) perspective shows how domestic work is transmitted intergenerationally through identificatory processes in the relationships between mothers and daughters:

In what follows, I argue that the relationship with the mother differs in systematic ways for boys and girls, beginning in the earliest period. The development of motherhood in girls - and not in boys - results from differential object-relational experiences and the ways in which they are internalized and organized (Chodorow, 1978, p. 91).

Federici (2019), in a historical-material approach, observes that domestic work is both essential and invisible:

The struggle of immigrant domestic workers for institutional recognition of 'care work,' for example, is very important from a strategic point of view, because the devaluation of reproductive work has been one of the pillars of capital accumulation and the capitalist exploitation of women's work (Federici, 2019, p. 32).

The integration of these theoretical perspectives has made it possible to understand domestic work as a densely significant practice, intertwined with the formation of female subjectivity, the dynamics of recognition and desire, and the affective economies that silently sustain gender inequalities.

METHODOLOGY

During the development of this research, we opted for a qualitative approach that would allow us to explore the layers of meaning present in the visual representations of domestic work in Cinderella. The methodology chosen was film analysis from a psychoanalytic perspective, using the theoretical support of Bellour (2000) and Žižek (2001), which offers tools for investigating both the formal aspects of cinematographic language and the unconscious processes that structure them.

The choice of *Cinderella* (1950) as the object of analysis is specific. After examining various Disney productions, this film stood out not only for its lasting cultural influence, but above all for presenting female domestic work as a structuring element in the narrative and in the characterization of the protagonist. On our first analytical viewings, we were struck by the minutes dedicated to showing Cinderella doing household chores - an aspect rarely commented on in conventional analyses of the work.

This research focuses on this guiding question: how do the different regimes of the gaze (maternal, animal and masculine) structure the visual representation of female domestic work in *Cinderella* (1950), and through what psychic mechanisms do they operate to naturalize this work as feminine, while offering imaginary compensations for its exploitation? To address this question, we developed a methodological path organized into three complementary stages:

1. **Mapping:** In this initial phase, we watched the film multiple times, identifying and cataloging all the scenes that show visual representations of domestic work. For each scene, we recorded duration, position in the narrative and dominant visual elements. The mapping revealed that the representations of domestic work are mainly concentrated in the first half of the film, establishing the protagonist's identity, before being symbolically transcended. We categorized these scenes according to the structure of the predominant gaze (maternal, animal or male), identifying specific visual patterns associated with each type.
2. **Decoupage:** Once we had identified the most representative scenes, we carried out a detailed breakdown of their formal and narrative elements. We analyzed framing, composition, lighting,

colors, contrasts, sound elements, dialogues and dramatic progression. This decoupage revealed how cinematographic language contributes to the construction of different regimes of visibility for women's domestic work.

3. **Psychoanalytic interconnections:** In the final stage, we mobilized the psychoanalytic theoretical framework to interpret the patterns identified. We sought to identify the unconscious processes that structure the visual representation of housework, such as oedipal dynamics, the processes of identification and projection, and the libidinal economies at play.

For each structure of the gaze (maternal, animal, masculine), we selected particularly representative scenes, seeking a balance between typicality and semantic richness. Throughout this process, we kept analysis notes containing formal observations and theoretical associations, recognizing that the epistemological position of the research influences the analytical reading of the film.

For the visual analysis, we selected frames that visually show the different ways of looking at domestic work. The analysis of these images is not limited to illustrating textual arguments, but is itself a form of visual knowledge production, revealing aspects of cinematographic construction that a purely verbal analysis would not capture.

THE MATERNAL WATCHFUL EYE: DOMESTIC WORK AS PUNISHMENT AND SUBMISSION

The structure of the maternal gaze in *Cinderella* manifests itself mainly through the disturbing figure of the stepmother, Lady Tremaine. In the visual construction of this character, every detail has been designed to transform her gaze into an instrument of surveillance and control. Her eyes, with their feline pupils and greenish irises, often framed in

close-up, establish a scopic regime of relentless surveillance over Cinderella's domestic work.

A particularly revealing scene occurs when Cinderella enters Lady Tremaine's room, who is enjoying her breakfast in bed (scene at approximately 22:11). The visual composition of this sequence reveals a sophisticated symbolic construction of power: the shadow of the windows is projected onto Cinderella, creating the visual illusion of prison bars, while the stepmother, in an elevated position, looks down, assigning her an endless list of household chores. This scene visually translates abstract power relations through cinematographic techniques: the play of light and shadow, spatial positions and perspective angles establish a clear visual hierarchy in the shots adopted.

The animators use a framing equivalent to *plongée* (top-down angle) in the composition of the scene, positioning the point of view close to that of Lady Tremaine, emphasizing her power over Cinderella, represented in a perspective equivalent to *contra-plongée* (bottom-up). Lady Tremaine's feline gaze is not just "evil" in the simplistic sense of children's tales - it is omnipresent, castrating and inescapable, functioning as a materialization of the superegoic gaze described by Lacan (1988): "Is there not, in neurosis, behind the paternal superego, a maternal superego that is even more demanding, more oppressive, more devastating, more insistent?"

In the case of Cinderella, the stepmother embodies this "maternal superego" - a disciplining body that supplants even the absent paternal function, governing not only the protagonist's actions, but her own view of herself.

It is revealing that housework is visually coded as a punishment, directly linked to the Oedipal position that Cinderella occupies in the family dynamic. As the only biological daughter of her deceased father, she attracts the hostility of her stepmother, who uses hou-

sework as a mechanism of humiliation and exclusion from the family's libidinal economy. Work is represented not as a productive or creative activity, but as a mark of inferiority and abjection - a visible scar of her diminished status in the family - a subjugated, excluded, residual family element and, at the same time, an object of enjoyment.



Figure 1- Close-up of Lady Tremaine looking at Cinderella

Note. Detail of the visual characterization: greenish irises and feline expression reinforce the theme of scopic control (scene at 1:02:48).

Walt Disney Productions, 1950.

The structure of the maternal gaze exercised by the stepmother establishes housework as a female activity, but hierarchized by the family oedipal complex: while Anastasia and Drizella (legitimate daughters) are exempt from these tasks, Cinderella (the stepdaughter) is burdened with endless chores. This distinction exposes domestic work as a kind of ritual of exclusion from desire, reducing the protagonist to the condition of an **object object** - that which, in Kristeva's (1980) words, "reveals the inaugural lack on which all being, meaning and desire are founded" (p. 5). By confining her to the act of cleaning, the film operates a double metaphor: purification of the domestic space and the symbolic expulsion of the stepdaughter from the affective family circuit.

THE ANIMAL GAZE AS SUPPORT: IDENTIFICATION, PROJECTION AND SUBLIMATION

As a counterpoint to the oppression of the maternal gaze, the film introduces a second visual structure that we found fascinating because of its ambiguity: the animal gaze. Represented by the mice, birds, dogs, horses and other animals that help Cinderella, this gaze functions as an ingenious mechanism of psychic compensation, offering the protagonist (and, by extension, the child viewer) an escape and sublimation from domestic work. The scene in which Cinderella (minute 03:30) wakes up and gets ready for the day, aided by the birds, exemplifies this dynamic. The small animals transform the morning ritual of carrying the bath sponge, combing hair and sorting clothes into an almost magical experience of cooperation and playfulness. What would otherwise be tedious and solitary becomes, through this narrative device, a celebration of community and affection.



Figure 2- *Animal gaze: cooperation and anthropomorphism.*

Note. The picture shows the animals looking at Cinderella before they start doing the housework (scene at 05:15). Source: Walt Disney Productions.

What strikes us about this narrative strategy is the way in which it simultaneously acts as a consolation and also masks exploitation. On the one hand, it offers genuine emotional relief to the protagonist and, on the other, it normalizes the overload of work through its aesthetization. The charming presence of the helper animals distracts from any reflection on the

fundamental injustice of the situation.

The animal gaze operates through two complementary psychic mechanisms: identification and projection. The animals are carefully anthropomorphized, which allows the viewer to identify with them and their motivations; at the same time, they function as projection surfaces for childlike and playful aspects of the protagonist, preserved despite the oppressive reality of domestic work. As Wells (2009) observes in his analysis of the narrative functions of animals in cinema:

Fundamentally, in this case, the story defines its animal agenda not only through the standard anthropomorphized orthodoxies of Disney characters, but through a mythical filter that legitimizes supernatural and psychological representations of humanity and animals in a way that offers a perspective on both (p. 43).

The dynamic between identification and projection is visually materialized in the picture below (minute 00:00), which captures the ambiguity of the animal gaze as a link between the protagonist's internal world and the external demands of everyday life.



Figure 3- *Non-verbal communication between Cinderella and the horse*

Note. The picture shows a close-up of the gaze exchanged between Cinderella and the horse during the execution of a domestic task (scene at 15:49). The anthropomorphization of the animals is evidenced by the expressiveness of the eyes, facilitating processes of identification and projection on the part of the viewer.

Source: Walt Disney Productions.

This analysis shows how the narrative transcends the mere conventional anthropomorphization of animals. The work integrates mystical and psychological elements to build a more complex representation: a narrative that problematizes not only the representations of animals, but also how they function as reflective devices on the human condition. Anthropomorphization therefore operates not simply as a fantastical and phantasmatic resource, but as a semiotic mechanism that obliquely reflects the relationships between humanity and nature, as well as the symbolic dimensions of these relationships

This structure of the gaze allows domestic work to be sublimated and transformed from an imposed and alienating activity into an expression of harmony with nature and interspecies cooperation. The song that accompanies these scenes reinforces this aspect by presenting work as potentially pleasurable when done with the right mental attitude and with partial sideration of the dramatized reality.

It is significant that this sublimation occurs in the imaginary register, through the fantasy of animal support, and not in the symbolic register, through the social or economic valorization of work. The film *Cinderella* thus offers an imaginary compensation for the real exploitation of women's domestic work, preserving its structural devaluation while providing a psychic mechanism for adapting to this devaluation. Federici (2019) develops a similar argument by analysing how cultural devices that naturalize reproductive work often operate through imaginary compensations that, far from questioning material exploitation, function as psychic adaptation mechanisms that allow structures of domination to continue.

THE MALE GAZE: A PROMISE OF TRANSCENDENCE IN DOMESTIC WORK

The third visual structure identified in *Cinderella* - perhaps the most complex in its implications - is the male gaze. Manifested, *avant la lettre*, through the Prince and the King, this gaze operates as a promise of liberation from domestic work, presenting aristocratic marriage as an escape route from the subaltern condition of a worker whose drives are exploited.

When the prince sees Cinderella for the first time, the montage establishes a visual circuit full of signifiers: the prince looks at Cinderella, who is shown from his subjective point of view. She, in turn, returns his gaze, establishing a connection that completely excludes any reference to the domestic work that characterized her until then. In this magical and desiring moment, Cinderella exists only as an object of desire, her hands, previously marked by work, are now delicate extensions of newly discovered aristocratic femininity.

It's quite revealing that the Prince falls in love with a version of Cinderella completely dissociated from her everyday reality as a domestic worker. In fact, what attracts his gaze is her aristocratic appearance - the fantasy of a social status that has been denied her. The male gaze thus operates as a promise to recognize femininity beyond work, establishing an implicit division: woman-worker (invisible to desire) versus woman-object-of-desire (visible, but not a worker).



Figure 4- *The transforming gaze: first meeting between Cinderella and the Prince*

Note. The picture shows the first meeting of eyes between Cinderella and the Prince during the ball (scene at 50:10). The visual composition emphasizes the male gaze as a transformative element, capable of recognizing a true identity beyond the condition of domestic worker.

Source: Walt Disney Productions.

The structure of the male gaze, in the Prince's case, corresponds to what Mulvey (1975) identified as the "*male gaze*" in classical narrative cinema, positioning the woman simultaneously as a diegetic object (in the Prince's gaze) and an extra-diegetic object (in the spectator's gaze). The significant difference is that, in *Cinderella*, this objectification is presented as liberation from her suffering condition as a domestic worker, which establishes an implicit opposition between being an object of labor (for the stepmother) and being an object of desire (for the Prince). In a broad sense, what is desired is not the object, but desire itself, which is greedy, lacking and insatiable, centered on itself.

And the male gaze in *Cinderella* is not limited to the figure of the Prince. By expanding the analysis to include the King's gaze, we discover an additional dimension that complements and deepens this visual structure. If the Prince's gaze functions, in the foreground, in the register of romantic desire, the gaze of the King, future father-in-law, configures Cinderella within a reproductive economy that transcends individual attraction.

In the scenes where the King impatiently explains his desire for grandchildren at around 51:07, we see how individual romantic desire is intertwined with dynastic expectations. Bell *et al.* (2019) point out how female protagonists in Disney animations are often valued for their maternal potential, i.e. in aristocratic contexts where dynastic continuity is paramount.

A revealing scene of this dynamic occurs during the wedding, when Cinderella loses her shoe again (a deliberate visual echo of the crucial moment in the narrative, worthy of marking in relation to the compulsion to repeat) and the King himself bends down to put it back on her foot. It can only be interpreted as a gallant gesture, according to Federici (2019), as a symbolic transfer of control over the female body. The author argues that historically, changes in the forms of control over women's work rarely represent their elimination, but their reorganization under new power structures.



Figure 5 *The echo of patriarchal power: the king wearing Cinderella's shoes*

Note. The picture shows the king bending down and putting on Cinderella's crystal slipper during the wedding. The king bows but retains power; it's a theater of hierarchy, not equality. The scene reinforces that Cinderella's body is an object of male control, even after the "happy ending" (1:13:25). Source: Walt Disney Productions.

This scene can be interpreted on a deeper symbolic level: Cinderella transits from the control of an oppressive female authority (the

stepmother) to an apparently benevolent male authority (the King), who has a direct interest in her reproductive capacity. This interpretation is supported by Chodorow's (1978) analysis of how patriarchal structures are reproduced through motherhood. The author demonstrates that the social organization of reproduction operates as a system of control over women's reproductive work - work that is often made invisible in dominant cultural representations. In *Cinderella*, invisibilization manifests itself on two levels: both domestic work and the reproductive work that is anticipated for the protagonist are simultaneously obscured by the romantic narrative of "happily ever after".

The signifier of the crystal slipper, the central object in the narrative, thus acquires an additional symbolic dimension. As Zipes (2011) observes in his analysis of fairy tales adapted for the cinema, certain objects function as "transitory fetishes" that visually materialize the protagonists' transitions in social status. It is no coincidence that both the Prince and the King stage the same gesture - putting the shoe on Cinderella's foot - at different times in the narrative, suggesting a continuity between the son's erotic desire and the father's reproductive interest.

The end of the film, with Cinderella's marriage and social ascension, confirms this structure: domestic work is overcome not by its valorization or redistribution, but by its transfer to invisible hands (presumably the palace servants, who don't appear in the film). The transcendence of domestic work is therefore an individual transcendence, not a social or structural one, which preserves the association between femininity and domestic work intact, only excluding the protagonist individually from this equation - at the same time as inserting her into a new form of work: reproductive work.

PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPLICATIONS: NATURALIZING AND COMPENSATING WOMEN'S HOUSEWORK

The analysis reveals how the three structures of the gaze in *Cinderella* form a scopic regime that simultaneously naturalizes domestic work as feminine and offers imaginary compensations for its exploitation. These mechanisms operate as parts of an integrated system that reflects and reinforces wider social structures. Our investigation identified three complementary psychic mechanisms:

1. Naturalization through punishment:

The watchful maternal gaze establishes domestic work as the inescapable destiny of socially marginalized women. This mechanism links domestic work to the oedipal complex and the position of abjection, creating an association between affective rejection and domestic service that is internalized from childhood.

2. Compensation through sublimation:

The animal gaze transforms alienated work into a playful and collaborative experience through fantasy. This mechanism implicitly recognizes the tedious nature of domestic work, but offers an imaginary path to acceptance through sublimation, without questioning its unequal distribution.

3. Individual transcendence through desire:

The male gaze (of the Prince and the King) promises a way out of being a domestic worker. This promise operates not through the valorization or redistribution of domestic work, but through the fantasy of individual escapism through social ascension via marriage.

These mechanisms, when analyzed together, reveal a representation of women's domestic work that is both naturalizing and

consoling - reinforcing its unequal distribution by gender while offering imaginary ways of adapting to this inequality. These dynamics contribute to the persistent cultural acceptance of unequal models for the distribution of domestic work.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The psychoanalytical approach to the structures of the gaze in *Cinderella* reveals sophisticated psychic mechanisms through which the film symbolically represents, naturalizes and compensates for female domestic work. The three structures identified - the vigilant maternal gaze, the sublimating animal gaze and the “liberating” male gaze - form a scopic regime that simultaneously reinforces the association between femininity and domestic work while offering imaginary ways for its individual transcendence.

This research shows how the representations of the 1950s continue to reverberate in contemporary cinematic experiences for children. The visual structures analyzed remain effective even in a context where discussions of gender equality are more accessible. The phenomenon is particularly significant because these structures operate mainly at the level of affect and identification, not at the cognitive or discursive level. Children internalize the association between femininity and domestic service without necessarily understanding concepts such as “sexual division of labour”, absorbing ideological aspects that this work is both socially devalued and natural/naturalized for women.

The results of this research offer conceptual tools applicable to the analysis of other cultural representations of domestic work that operate through similar mechanisms of naturalization, imaginary compensation and the promise of individual transcendence. Such tools can assist educators, parents and producers of children’s content in developing more balanced representations of domestic responsibilities.

We emphasize that this study - limited to a single film and a specific theoretical framework - opens up possibilities for future research. It would be pertinent to expand this analysis to other animations, investigating how the structures of the gaze have evolved over the decades. It would also be relevant to complement the psychoanalytical approach with perspectives from cultural studies, *queer* theory and decolonial studies, exploring how social markers such as race, class and sexuality intersect with gender in representations of domestic work.

When the lights go down in the movie theater and the film begins to be projected, something scorches the eye and the gaze. This study therefore shows that visual representations of women’s domestic work are not merely passive reflections of social realities, but active devices in the construction and maintenance of gender inequalities. Unveiling the psychic mechanisms that operate in these representations is a step towards their denaturalization - a necessary, albeit insufficient, condition for their transformation.

REFERENCES

- Bell, E., Haas, L., & Sells, L. (2019). *From mouse to mermaid: The politics of film, gender, and culture*. University of Indiana Press.
- Bellour, R. (2000). *The analysis of film*. Indiana University Press.
- Chodorow, N. (1978). *The reproduction of mothering: Psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender*. University of California Press.
- Davis, A. M. (2006). *Good girls and wicked witches: Women in Disney's feature animation*. Indiana University Press.
- Doane, M. A. (1991). *Femmes fatales: Feminism, film theory, psychoanalysis*. Routledge.
- Federici, S. (2019). *O ponto zero da revolução: Trabalho doméstico, reprodução e luta feminista* (C. Sycorax, Trad.). Elefante.
- Kaplan, E. A. (1983). *Women and film: Both sides of the camera*. Routledge.
- Kaplan, E. A. (2013). *Motherhood and representation: The mother in popular culture and melodrama*. Routledge.
- Kristeva, J. (1980). *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: Essai sur l'abjection*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Lacan, J. (1988). *O Seminário, livro 11: Os quatro conceitos fundamentais da psicanálise* (M. D. Magno, Trad.). Jorge Zahar. (Trabalho original publicado em 1964)
- McGowan, T. (2007). *The real gaze: Film theory after Lacan*. State University of New York Press.
- Mulvey, L. (1975). Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. In L. Braudy & M. Cohen (Eds.), *Film theory and criticism: Introductory readings* (pp. 833-844). Oxford University Press.
- Quinet, A. (2002). *Um olhar a mais: Ver e ser visto na psicanálise*. Jorge Zahar.
- Wood, R. (2006). *Personal views: Explorations in film*. Wayne State University Press.
- Zipes, J. (2011). *The enchanted screen: The unknown history of fairy-tale films*. Routledge.
- Žižek, S. (2001). *The fright of real tears: Krzysztof Kieślowski between theory and post-theory*. British Film Institute.
- Wells, P. (2009). *The animated bestiary: Animals, cartoons, and culture*. Rutgers University Press. <https://dokumen.pub/the-animated-bestiary-animals-cartoons-and-culture-9780813546438.html>

NOTE ON THE USE OF IMAGES

The images from the film *Cinderella* (1950) reproduced in this article are used exclusively for the purposes of academic and critical analysis, in accordance with the principles of *fair use* set out in article 46, item VIII, of the Brazilian Copyright Law (**Law No. 9,610/98**). This legal provision allows “the reproduction, in any work, of small excerpts from pre-existing works, of any nature, or of an entire work, in the case of fine arts, provided that the reproduction itself is not the main purpose of the new work and that it does not prejudice the normal exploitation of the reproduced work or cause unjustified harm to the legitimate interests of the authors”.

All rights to the images belong to the *Walt Disney Company*, which owns the copyright to the works in question. The inclusion of these images is exclusively intended to support the scientific analysis of the scopic regime of domestic work in this production, as they are essential for demonstrating the visual and symbolic elements discussed in the theoretical argument.

The selected frames constitute a minimal fraction of the original work, and their reproduction in no way compromises the commercial interests of the copyright holders. Furthermore, the use of these images is in line with the following criteria established by the fair use doctrine:

1. Purpose and character of use: The use is strictly academic, non-profit, and aims to contribute to the critical and scientific discussion on gender representations in cinema.
2. Nature of the protected work: The images are taken from widely disseminated and commercialized cinematographic works, the partial reproduction of which does not affect their commercial exploitation.
3. Quantity and substantiality: Only small excerpts from the works have been reproduced, enough to illustrate the analysis, but not enough to replace the consumption of the original works.
4. Effect on the market: The reproduction of the images does not harm the commercial exploitation of the works, since it does not replace the need for access to the complete films.

As such, the use of the images in this article is in full compliance with the legal and ethical standards governing the reproduction of copyrighted works for academic and scientific purposes.