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DOI

[10.1525/fmh.2024.10.2-3.145](https://doi.org/10.1525/fmh.2024.10.2-3.145)

Publication date

2024

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Feminist Media Histories

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Citation for published version (APA):

Saccone, K. (2024). "Wrath, Witches, and Wondrous Women": A Curated Program of Lost Films. *Feminist Media Histories*, 10(2-3), 145-158. <https://doi.org/10.1525/fmh.2024.10.2-3.145>

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“Wrath, Witches, and Wondrous Women”

A Curated Program of Lost Films

ABSTRACT Responding to the widespread material loss of silent films today, this article constitutes a playful exercise in curating a selection of nonextant films directed, written, and produced by early women filmmakers. After an introduction to the exercise, which sets up the feminist and film curatorial stakes of such an endeavor, I present my thematically organized film program (curatorial statement and program notes) to the reader. Drawing together films by women who worked in Peru, Croatia, Egypt, China, Mexico, Poland, and the United States, I argue that curating lost films not only makes space for a more inclusive picture of women’s contributions to cinema history; this exercise is also a call for more imaginative approaches to feminist film and media curatorial practices. **KEYWORDS** Aziza Amir, Cándida Beltrán Rendón, feminist film historiography, film curating, lost films, Maria P. Williams, Marija Jurić Zagorka, Mary MacLane, Nina Niovilla, silent cinema, Stefanía Socha, Yang Naimei

INTRODUCTION

In summer 2022, I began the curatorial research for a theatrical film series dedicated to silent-era women filmmakers to mark the Women Film Pioneers Project’s ten-year anniversary as a public digital resource hosted by Columbia University Libraries.¹ As the project manager of WFPP since its online launch in October 2013, one of my goals as curator was to highlight the global scope of the website, and thus also of women’s behind-the-scenes participation during cinema’s first two decades. I pored over every career profile published on WFPP, mapping out selected extant films by country and listing potential cross-national pairings. I spent hours emailing with archivists about formats and material conditions, watching digital screeners, and conducting further research into certain women and films. Energized by what I was seeing—a maritime adventure from Poland, a cross-dressing comedy from Czechoslovakia—I was also always aware of what I was *not*

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FIGURE 1. Photograph of Mexican filmmaker Adriana S. Ehlers in 1922, taken by Agustín Casasola. All of the films that Adriana produced and directed with her sister Dolores are considered lost today. Image source: National Photo Library, The National Institute of Anthropology and History of Mexico. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. <http://mediateca.inah.gob.mx/repositorio/islandora/object/fotografia%3A261709>.

watching: it is now widely accepted that only about 10 to 20 percent of global silent filmmaking actually survives, and my research continually revealed how this absence doubly affects historical media produced by women and other marginalized groups, especially nonwhite women.² How could I be an inclusive feminist curator and showcase silent cinema's diversity in the face of so much material loss? (see fig. 1).

This question continued to haunt me as I scheduled titles and wrote program notes.³ While the WFPP anniversary film series showcased surviving films from as many countries as I could include within the bounds of

a two-week theatrical program, in these pages I want to ask a slightly different question: What could the act of curating lost films look like? Inspired by Allyson Nadia Field, who has incisively argued that if we wish to “expand the canon of objects we study, we have to find ways to engage with nonextant works,” I strive to reclaim this material loss as part of my own feminist curatorial practice.⁴ In the exercise that follows, I embrace what Field has called film history’s “absent majority” in order to present works by women filmmakers from around the world.⁵ My offering is also inspired by Katherine Groo, whose plea for film historians to “respond creatively to the flames and cinders” at the heart of film history is a provocative invitation to move away from empirical models of historiography.⁶ While surviving “historical artifacts” (epitomized by the archival 35 mm print) remain immensely important for the ongoing feminist film historiographical project, as Jane M. Gaines and Monica Dall’Asta have shown, there is also no denying what we have already lost: thousands of films by silent-era women editors, directors, producers, screenwriters, title writers, colorists, and camera operators that will likely never be seen again, much less handled, touched, and physically appraised in archival or scholarly domains.⁷ In other words, while these films were, at one point, present and viewed by audiences (at least in theory), they no longer exist for us today, an absence that now provokes speculation, imagination, and creativity.⁸

A second aim of this exercise is to upend traditional conceptualizations of film curatorial practice predicated on the visible and the extant. From the perspective of conventional film curating, which I broadly define here as the purposeful selection, organization, and contextualization of moving image artifacts for public presentation, there is seemingly no room for the lost film’s “unwatchability.”⁹ Film exhibition favors tangible, physical, and material media artifacts—be they analog film prints, digital files, or DCPs—which are presented to an audience (or, if online, to an individual viewer) in some spatiotemporal configuration usually involving a screen. In the film archival context, the importance of the extant media artifact is no surprise given that, as Caroline Frick has argued, Westernized practices and discourses around cultural heritage, which influenced the development of the film archival field in the twentieth century, rest on the long-term preservation of objects of (often hegemonic) historical and national importance.¹⁰ Today, archival curatorial operations are thus usually shaped by the material and physical constraints of the preserved filmic object. This is especially true in the case of exhibiting silent cinema, where processes of selection, organization, and presentation are determined by the availability of films on a screenable format,

translations of intertitles, and rights clearance issues, among many other material, logistical, financial, and legal contingencies.

My exercise, on the other hand, proposes that neither an object nor screen nor projection have to be the final result of a film curatorial impulse. In this way, I am also inspired by the playful and critical “rearrangements” of expanded cinema and avant-garde exhibition practices, only to different ends.¹¹ Through multiscreen projection, filmless films, light shows, multimedia performances, and more, avant-garde filmmakers have long challenged cinema’s ontological borders, pushing moving image works “beyond the bounds of familiar materials and practices of filmmaking and the traditional theatrical exhibition space.”¹² Following the same “spirit of inquiry” that Sheldon Renan finds in expanded cinema practices of the 1960s, I push the boundaries of silent film curating by moving away from both preserved physical artifacts—and, as Frick would note, cultural heritage notions of possession and presence—and traditional spatial and temporal configurations.¹³ Rather than emphasize the materiality or performativity of the filmic medium, my curatorial reorientation to the textual domain makes space for films and historical makers that can no longer fit within traditional or classical notions of film presentation. It allows a few lost films by women filmmakers, freed from their physical, legal, and material dimensions, to circulate in the pages of *Feminist Media Histories*.

Like traditional film curating, curating lost films involves research, conceptual considerations, and the opportunity to express your intention via a curatorial statement and to contextualize the selected films for the audience via short program notes that attract and inform. The end result here, however, privileges the individual reader’s imagination as they review my description of each film over any visuals on a screen. While an extant image, of course, also does not exclude the viewer’s imagination, the idiosyncratic mental conjuring of the reader is of critical importance here; the selected films, and my chosen framings, can only be activated through the process of reading, but they are curated nonetheless. I thus take an expansive view of (film) curating, in line with the so-called “discursive turn” in recent decades in contemporary art curating, which, following Bridget Crone, sees the curatorial act as something that is “played and produced or produced and played simultaneously,” whether the result is an object-based exhibition made tangible for museum visitors or something more conceptual or process oriented.¹⁴

At a practical level, the creation of this program of lost films still had certain constraints. While temporality does not play a part in my selection—

for example, I have curated two “triple bills” that would be too long for the comforts of the physical theatrical space—I do have certain limitations by virtue of my “venue” of the printed page. Keeping this article’s word count in mind, I have only selected eight films for my program, which is targeted to the readership of *Feminist Media Histories*. Moreover, I set some additional parameters to aid in my research and selection process. First, I only included filmmakers who have *no* known surviving silent films. This precluded highly desired lost films by directors like Germaine Dulac in France and Dorothy Arzner in the United States as well as work by less studied women like Tazuko Sakane in Japan and Elizaveta Thiemann in Russia. In all these instances, however, there are *other* extant films directed, produced, edited, or written by these women that we can (theoretically) still program and access in the archives.

Second, I only included films for which I could easily find the plot summary (written or translated into English) in extrafilmic materials or contemporary scholarship, drawing heavily from work in WFPP.¹⁵ This decision, which unfortunately eliminated films by, for instance, Isabel Acuña in the Philippines and Xie Caizhen in China, was necessary given my desire to make thematic curatorial interventions based on the films and include detailed program notes. Third, my primary focus was the global scope of women’s silent-era filmmaking rather than occupational diversity. Thus, while I use somewhat narrow parameters for behind-the-scenes labor—directors, producers, and screenwriters are my focus here—the following curated program makes room for films and makers outside of white American and Western European cinematographic fields.

In wanting to make the absent feminist film archive present, I also opted to highlight only women filmmakers rather than spotlight them alongside their male contemporaries. I am aware that my program, as anticanonical as it aims to be, ostensibly perpetuates certain issues facing contemporary feminist art curatorial practice more broadly. For example, as contemporary art curator Maura Reilly might note, my program ghettoizes women filmmakers as a special revisionist programming category, and thus implicitly perpetuates the idea of a (silent film) canon made up of men.¹⁶ For Reilly, filling in historical gaps does not fundamentally change the structural inequities and power dynamics that shaped and codified the patriarchal canon to begin with. While I agree, my goal here is also polemical. I pursue a revisionist approach because I believe it is still needed today. It remains central to contemporary curatorial engagement with feminist film and media history

and can still engender productive conceptual considerations. During the selection, organization, and contextualization process, I asked myself how I could frame these films beyond the usual—and often problematic—discourses of (re)discovery; how I could categorize these films and women filmmakers and/or historicize feminist concerns; and how I could attend to issues of sexual orientation, race, and class, for example, as part of an intersectional curatorial approach.¹⁷ These are serious questions in the context of an amusing exercise—an indication, perhaps, that in the face of many different forms of material and historical loss, curators of feminist film and media history have no choice but to be equal parts earnest, critical, playful, and creative.

“WRATH, WITCHES, AND WONDROUS WOMEN”

Curatorial Statement

Featuring films made by women working in Egypt, China, Peru, Mexico, present-day Croatia, Poland, and the United States, this program of eight presumed lost silent films attests to both the global scope of early film production and women’s different contributions as directors, producers, and screenwriters. By no means exhaustive, this program, which includes one double and two triple features, considers women’s work in loose thematic categories that traverse national boundaries and chronological arrangements: “Crime and Punishment,” “Adapting Their Own Words,” and “Love’s Dramas and Tragedies.” Inspired by a “relational approach” to presenting art, which feminist curator Maura Reilly describes as one that uses varied “objects” to create a “polysemic site of contradictory positions and contested practices,” I make no overarching claims about “women’s films” based on these selected titles.¹⁸ Rather, I present these (for now) nonextant films as some of the many different types of stories and perspectives that women of various classes and backgrounds produced as well as some of the many different contexts from which they emerged and perspectives they represented during cinema’s first two decades.

Note on Musical Accompaniment

As Kendra Preston Leonard reminds us elsewhere in this issue, film screenings in the silent era almost always had musical accompaniment, and women musicians worked tirelessly during the period, producing incomplete and lost archives that also require playful and speculative engagement today. Before

reading my curated program, please turn on some music—any music—by a woman or nonbinary artist. Curating lost films does not mean having to discard one of the joys of silent cinema viewing—the ephemeral and contingent nature of musical accompaniment, which shapes spectatorial engagement—or to ignore the legacy of women’s musical contributions to cinema and their invisibility today.

Film Program and Program Notes¹⁹

Crime and Punishment

The Flames of Wrath (1923). Dir.: Maria P. Williams [uncredited], prod.: Maria P. Williams (Western Film Producing Company, US), cas.: Maria P. Williams, Frank Colbert, Roxie Mankins.

Produced and likely directed by African American journalist and organizer Maria P. Williams (1866–1932), *The Flames of Wrath* is a crime drama concerning the aftermath of a murder and robbery. Frank Colbert stars as C. Dates, a member of a gang that murdered a rich man and stole a diamond ring in his possession. He buries the ring before being caught and sentenced—by the prosecuting attorney, played by Williams—to ten years in prison. Although he manages to escape prison, the hidden ring is discovered by a young boy who gives it to his brother, leading to numerous complications, a mistaken arrest, and nefarious plots on the part of crooked employers. With the help of a clever young woman (Roxie Mankins), order is restored and C. Dates is caught and pardoned. In addition to comanaging a movie theater with her husband in Kansas City, Missouri, Williams cofounded Western Film Producing Company and Booking Exchange to produce and distribute films for African American audiences. Today, *The Flames of Wrath* is often cited as the first film produced by an African American woman.

Los abismos de la vida (The Abysses of Life, 1929). Dir./prod.: Stefanía Socha, sc.: Julio Alfonso Hernández (Perú Film Company, Peru), cas.: María Reyes Ibáñez, José Giachetti, Leonardo Reyes, Esther Martínez, Luis Sponda.

Born in Poland, theater actress Stefanía Socha (1898–1958) came to Peru in 1926 where she founded a film acting school called Perú Film. *Los abismos de la vida*, which stars her students, was ultimately the only film Socha and the school ever made. According to the press, the film follows Berta, a rich young woman who falls in love with her family’s chauffeur. When she becomes

pregnant, he takes her to get an illegal abortion and then blackmails her father. Complications ensue when Berta's father makes the chauffeur his business partner instead and the abortionist seeks revenge on the chauffeur on behalf of a miserable Berta. By the end of the film, both the chauffeur and the abortionist are dead, while Berta gets her happy ending with her father's assistant. While little is known about Socha's life and career, especially following the transition to sound filmmaking, many of her students (such as Alberto Santana and Mario Musseto) went on to become active directors and actors in the Peruvian cinematographic field of the late 1920s and 1930s.

Adapting Their Own Words

Grička vještica (The Grič Witch, 1920). Dir.: Hinko Nučić, sc.: Marija Jurić Zagorka (Croatia Film, Kingdom of Yugoslavia), cas.: Melita Bohinec, Vera Polak, Renata Miletić.

An outspoken feminist from a wealthy Croatian family, Marija Jurić Zagorka (1873–1957) was an activist, journalist, and writer. The author of many novels and book series, she adapted one of them, *Grička vještica*, for the screen in 1920. Set in the eighteenth century, the film follows a young, independent, and outspoken woman—Countess Nera—as she fights the patriarchal powers in her village and the widespread belief in witches that incited gynocidal witch hunt campaigns. Accused of being a witch herself by the men around her and almost burned at the stake, Countess Nera eventually survives while Jurić Zagorka makes critical connections between women's independence and Croatian nationalism. Often hailed as Croatia's first female journalist, Jurić Zagorka's slim contributions to cinema—in addition to adapting *Grička vještica*, she wrote the screenplay for the lost *Matija Gubec* (1917)—nonetheless remain an important part of her broader career as a feminist, social activist, and politically engaged intellectual.

Men Who Have Made Love to Me (1918). Dir.: Arthur Berthelet, sc.: Mary MacLane, Edward T. Lowe Jr., prod.: George Spoor (Essanay, US), cas.: Mary MacLane, Ralph Graves, R. Paul Harvey.

American feminist writer Mary MacLane (1881–1929) scandalized readers with her frank and raw autobiographical approach—engaging with taboo topics like her own bisexuality—in her books and articles. In 1918, Chicago-based producer George Spoor approached her with a multipicture contract. The arrangement started with an adaptation of her 1910 article

“Men Who Have Made Love to Me,” coscripted for the screen by MacLane (who also starred as herself). The episodic film, like the article, follows MacLane’s interactions with various men, such as “The Callow Youth,” “The Literary Man,” and “The Prize Fighter.” In between each episode, which depicts the men as brutish, boring, and domineering, MacLane talks directly to the audience about the “trouble with all men.” A critical failure on its release, *Men Who Have Made Love to Me* was MacLane’s only foray into cinema.

El secreto de la abuela (The Grandmother’s Secret, 1928). Dir./sc./prod.: Cándida Beltrán Rendón (Mexico), cas.: Cándida Beltrán Rendón, Catalina Bárcena, Milagros Leal.

Based on a story that Cándida Beltrán Rendón (1898–1985) wrote when she was sixteen years old, *El secreto de la abuela*, also scripted by Beltrán Rendón, revolves around a poor orphaned girl named Chiquita (Beltrán Rendón) who sells newspapers in order to support her blind grandmother. When Chiquita becomes friends with a wealthy older man who desires to adopt her, she discovers that her grandmother has a secret: the older man is actually Chiquita’s grandfather! Not only did Beltrán Rendón write the script based on her own story, but she also produced, directed, and designed the sets for the film. Unlike many other early women filmmakers—in Mexico and beyond—Beltrán Rendón was not involved in theater or cinema prior to making *El secreto de la abuela*; she reportedly worked at the town hall in Mexico City as well as at a shoe store.

Love’s Dramas and Tragedies

奇女子 (A Wondrous Woman, 1928). Dir.: Shi Dongshan, sc.: Yang Naimei, Zheng Yingshi (Naimei Film Company, China), cas.: Yang Naimei, Gao Zhanfei, Yan Gongshang, Zhu Fei.

Produced and written by popular Chinese film actress Yang Naimei (1904–1960), 奇女子 takes inspiration from the real-life tragedy of Yu Meiyun, a woman who committed suicide after a difficult life filled with an arranged marriage, prostitution, rich admirers, and the inability to be with her true love. According to one source, in the film, Yang plays a woman in an unhappy marriage who eventually becomes a suspect in a murder committed by her nephew. She is arrested and, on her release from prison, takes up prostitution. She eventually falls in love with a promising young man and hopes to start a new life, but his family disapproves of her. Heartbroken, she

jumps into the ocean and dies. Often credited as the first female producer in China, Yang's film career petered out a few years after the film's release.

Młodość Zwycięża (Youth Triumphs, 1923). Dir./prod./sc.: Nina Niovilla (Nina Niovilla-Film, Poland), cas.: Michał Halicz, M. Świerczyńska, Maria Korska.

Directed, produced, and written by Polish filmmaker Nina Niovilla (1874–1966), *Młodość Zwycięża* concerns a love triangle between Jan, a young sculptor, and two women, Lena and her husband's orphaned niece Irena. When Jan comes back to Poland with Lena's stepson after studying abroad, both she and Irena fall in love with the young artist. While Jan loves Irena, he is forced, after a shameful incident, to run away with Lena, which has tragic consequences for her husband and stepson, but eventually leads to the reuniting of Jan and Irena. Niovilla, who ultimately directed four films and eventually migrated to France, was also the founder and director of a network of film acting schools in Poland until the 1930s.

Laila (1927). Dir.: Stéphane Rosti, prod.: Aziza Amir (Isis Film, Egypt), cas.: Aziza Amir, Wedad Orfi, Stéphane Rosti.

A theater actress turned filmmaker, Aziza Amir (1901–1952) was twenty-six years old when she produced and starred in (and reportedly unofficially directed parts of) *Laila*, which follows the travails of a young Egyptian woman after her lover casts her aside—pregnant—for a foreign tourist. While historians provide different accounts of the film's narrative—some have her dying in a car accident while others have her finding love with the man who saves her, likely the result of the fact that Amir reportedly reedited the film to give audiences a happy ending—*Laila* is considered by many to be the first Egyptian feature film and an important part of the developing national cinema at that time. *Laila* was produced by Amir's company, Isis Film, which she founded with her wealthy husband. She would go on to direct and produce one more silent film in 1933 before transitioning into sound-era screenwriting, producing, and acting.

[*Pause the music*]

TO CURATE "DIFFERENTLY"

Reactivating these eight films here is, of course, not the same as discovering and projecting them, and while paratextual materials can give us plot information and

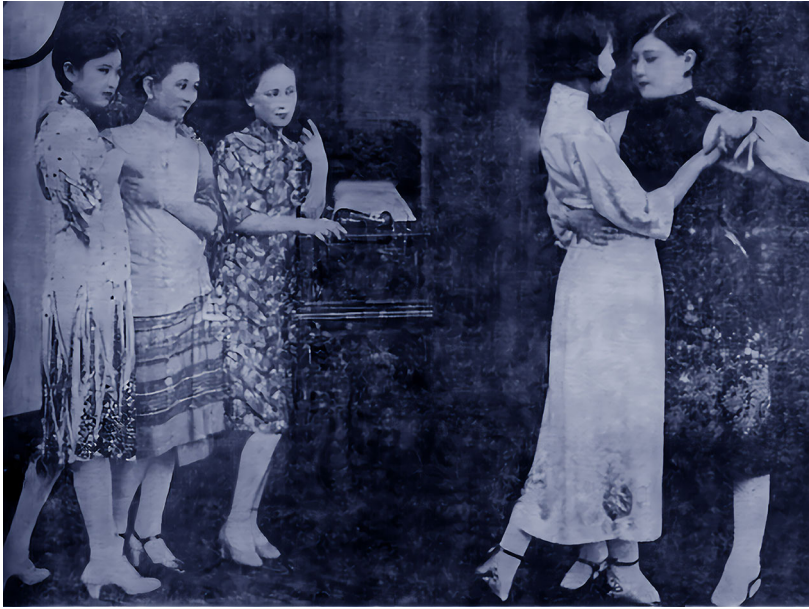


FIGURE 2. Still from 奇女子 (A Wondrous Woman, 1928). Yang Naimei is the woman in the middle. Courtesy of S. Louisa Wei. For more on Yang Naimei, see <https://wfpp.columbia.edu/pioneer/yang-naimei/>.

glimpses of the narrative via stills (see fig. 2), for example, they do not revive onscreen movement or the visual language and tone used to tell the story. But this exercise asks what film curatorial operations can do *with* lost films by marginalized makers, while also embracing their lostness from a playful feminist position. I believe that such labor can foster critical engagement and reflection around both the specific nonextant film and notions of cinematic absence more broadly. In fact, an exercise like this has pedagogical value, and could be used to teach students both how to curate films—research, select, organize, juxtapose, contextualize, and introduce—and about silent cinema history.

The feminist potential to, in the words of Sarah-Mai Dang, “tell stories differently by using our imagination” remains, in my mind, largely untapped in silent film curatorial practice.²⁰ Following the “spirit of inquiry” that guided expanded cinema experimentation, I urge you to consider other ways to curate lost (or fragmented) films—methods that find a balance between the ethical responsibility of the archivist or historian and the creative impulses of feminist filmmakers and artists who have long found ways to engage with historical and material absence via speculative, imaginative, and

creative means.²¹ There are certainly models to draw from: the live theatrical performances developed and enacted by archivists Émilie Cauquy and Clément Lafite to highlight the six short surviving fragments of Germaine Dulac's serial *Âmes de Fous* (1918); and video essays like Barbara Zecchi's "Filling (Feeling) the Void: The Case of Helena Cortesina's *Flor de España*," which reassembles the titular nonextant 1921 Spanish film using others.²² Confronting cinematic absence can be freeing; these reimagined lost films are no longer static entities completely entangled in preservation discourses of historicity and authenticity, for example. They are, to quote Zecchi, "fake, but without pretending that what is fake is real."²³

Could we find a similar freedom in the "fake" by reenacting—casting and staging—a lost film using surviving documentation (e.g., a script, plot summaries) live in a theatrical space or via a commissioned film or multimedia installation? What about experimenting with digital humanities tools to produce data visualizations and museum displays that tell different stories about a lost film's context and history? No longer tied to the projector and screen, could we take traces of these lost films (e.g., surviving stills) outside of the darkened theatrical context into public spaces like streets and parks or onto building facades? What could a festival of lost films look like, through public discussion, writing, and/or visual presentations?²⁴ The feminist curatorial possibilities are endless . . . and our field's "absent majority" awaits! ■

KATE SACCONI is a PhD candidate at the University of Amsterdam where her practice-led research project engages with silent cinema, moving image exhibition practice and theory, and critical-feminist approaches to curatorial labor. Her writing has appeared in *Feminist Media Histories*, *The Moving Image*, *Modernism/modernity*, and Columbia University's Women Film Pioneers Project, and she contributed the booklet essay for the Blu-ray set *Early Women Filmmakers: An International Anthology* (Flicker Alley, 2017). She is also the project manager and an editor of the Women Film Pioneers Project (<https://wfpp.columbia.edu/>) and currently serves on the Women and Film History International Steering Committee.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Maggie Hennefeld and Laura Horak for their generative editorial feedback as well as Carolyn Jacobs, Aurore Spiers, Christian Olesen, and Giovanna Fossati for reading earlier versions of this experiment.

NOTES

1. The Women Film Pioneers Project is an online platform dedicated to advancing research on silent-era women filmmakers through original scholarship and archival resources. <https://wfpp.columbia.edu/>.

2. Maggie Hennefeld, “Breaking Plates: Feminist Archives, Media Fragments, and Film Theory Now!” in *media res*, March 13, 2023. <https://mediacommons.org/imr/content/breaking-plates-feminist-archives-media-fragments-and-film-theory-now>.

3. “After Alice, Beyond Lois: Mining the Archive with the Women Film Pioneers Project” took place from October 25–November 10, 2023, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. www.moma.org/calendar/film/5631.

4. Allyson Nadia Field, “Making the Absent Present: Writing About Nonextant Media,” in *Writing About Screen Media*, ed. Lisa Patti (London: Routledge, 2019), 93.

5. Field, “Making the Absent Present,” 92.

6. Katherine Groo, “Let It Burn: Film Historiography in Flames,” *Discourse* 41, no. 1 (Winter 2019): 31.

7. Monica Dall’Asta and Jane M. Gaines, “Prologue: Constellations; Past Meets Present in Feminist Film History,” in *Doing Women’s Film History: Reframing Cinemas, Past and Future*, ed. Christine Gledhill and Julia Knight (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 17.

8. While this exercise focuses on presumed *nonextant* films, I urge readers to also remember films by women and marginalized makers that survive today, only to remain absent from scholarly discussions and archival exhibition circuits for numerous reasons, from precarious preservation statuses and lack of archival access to institutional disinterest, unknowing disregard, copyright or donor stipulations, and more. Similarly, it remains rare for curators and distributors to engage with fragments, which further obscures a huge segment of film history. (One exception being Kino Lorber’s *Cinema’s First Nasty Women* set, co-curated by the editors of this special issue.) Whether we are aware of these inaccessible and fragmented titles or not, these extant “lost” films should also be understood as part of our field’s “absent majority.”

9. Nicholas Baer, Maggie Hennefeld, Laura Horak, and Gunnar Iversen, eds., *Unwatchable* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2019).

10. Caroline Frick, *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Frick’s critique of the “heritage paradigm” is a powerful reminder of the specific discourses, practices, and legacies that have shaped film archival work today.

11. Gabriel Menotti, *Movie Circuits: Curatorial Approaches to Cinema Technology* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 61.

12. Jonathan Walley, *Cinema Expanded: Avant-Garde Film in the Age of Intermedia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 10.

13. Qtd. in Walley, *Cinema Expanded*, 11.

14. Bridget Crone, “Curating, Dramatization, and the Diagram: Notes toward a Sensible Stage,” in *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*, ed. Jean-Paul Martinon (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 136. For more on the “discursive turn” in the 1990s, which has become a major part of contemporary art curatorial practice and scholarship, see Paul O’Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).

15. All the women mentioned in this essay, except for Germaine Dulac and Aziza Amir (who reappears in Claire Cooley’s contribution to this issue), have profiles on WFPP.

16. Maura Reilly, *Curatorial Activism: Towards an Ethics of Curating* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2018), 24.

17. For more on this rediscovery/recovery discourse, see Caitlin Quinlan, “Transforming Limitation,” interview with Daniella Shreir, *MAP Magazine*, April 2021, <https://mapmagazine.co.uk/transforming-limitation>; Alix Beeston, “Kathleen Collins . . . Posthumously,” in *Incomplete: The Feminist Possibilities of the Unfinished Film* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2023), 247–48.

18. Reilly, *Curatorial Activism*, 30.

19. Program notes often do not include citations, and I follow that practice. However, since this is an academic journal, I will outline my sources here: my information came from the related WFPP profiles (<https://wfpp.columbia.edu/pioneers/>) with some additional research in the Media History Digital Library, Wikipedia, IMDb, and various digitized newspaper articles. For Yang’s film, I also consulted “A Wondrous Woman (1928),” The Movie Database, www.themoviedb.org/movie/622778; for Jurić Zagorka’s film, I also consulted Lejla Marijam, “Marija Jurić-Zagorka’s The Witch of Grič: Translation and Critical Introduction” (PhD diss., University of Georgia, 2017). https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/marijam_lejla_201712_phd.pdf; for Socha’s film, I also consulted “Los abismos de la vida,” Archivo de Cine de Movilidad [database]. <https://humanidadesdigitales.uc3m.es/s/cine-de-movilidad/item/14060>; for Niovilla’s film, I also consulted “*Młodość Zwycięża*,” FilmPolski.pl [database], <https://filmpolski.pl/fp/index.php?film=22227>; and for Amir’s film, I consulted “Aziza Amir,” *Alex Cinema*, www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/actors/aziza_amir.html; Koen Van Eynde, “Egypt,” in *Women Screenwriters: An International Anthology*, ed. Jill Nelmes and Jule Selbo (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 9–17; and Kay Dickinson, “I Have One Daughter and That Is Egyptian Cinema: Aziza Amir Amid the Histories and Geographies of National Allegory,” *Camera Obscura* 22, no. 1 (64) (April 2007): 137–77.

20. Sarah-Mai Dang, “Unknowable Facts and Digital Databases: Reflections on the Women Film Pioneers Project and Women in Film History,” *Digital Humanities Quarterly* (2020), www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/14/4/000528/000528.html.

21. To name just three: Cheryl Dunye, Garrett Bradley, and Karen Pearlman.

22. Clément Lafite, “La Reconstruction d’*Âmes de Fous* (1918) de Germaine Dulac,” *1895* 2, no. 91 (2020): 82–95; Barbara Zecchi, “Filling (Feeling) the Archival Void: The Case of Helena Cortesina’s *Flor de España*,” *Feminist Media Histories* 9, no. 4 (Fall 2023): 14–27.

23. Barbara Zecchi, podcast interview with Will DiGravio and Emily Su Bin Ko (hosts), *The Video Essay Podcast*, episode 31 (August 1, 2022), <https://thevideoessay.com/episode-31-barbara-zecchi>.

24. Luke McKernan’s experiment, “The Bioscope Festival of Lost Films, could serve as one model. <https://thebioscope.net/2007/12/06/the-bioscope-festival-of-lost-films/>.