

Cinema, theater and Covid-19: the creative process of *Even though it is night*

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Resumo

O artigo propõe uma análise da criação em grupo do curta-metragem *Even though it is night*, com especial foco nas materialidades suscitadas pela abordagem multidisciplinar e pelas contrariedades provocadas pela pandemia Covid-19. Conduzindo a investigação mediante perspectivas teóricas elaboradas por Cecília Salles, a análise genética estende-se também à contextualização geográfica, social, temporal, ética e referencial. São colocadas em evidência práticas e posicionamentos artísticos de criadores que influenciaram esta criação, como Peter Brook, João Canijo ou Yorgos Lanthimos.

Palavras-chave: Processos de criação; Criação em grupo; Multidisciplinaridade; Cinema; Teatro.

Abstract

The article proposes an analysis of the group creation of the short film *Even though it is night*, with a special focus on the materials raised by the multidisciplinary approach and the setbacks caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on the theoretical perspectives elaborated by Cecilia Salles, this genetic analysis also extends to geographical, social, temporal, ethical, and referential contextualization. It highlights artistic practices and positions of creators who influenced this creation, such as Peter Brook, João Canijo, or Yorgos Lanthimos.

Keywords: Creation processes; Group creation; Multidisciplinary; Cinema; Theater.

Introduction

Until I started studying them, materialities had never been evident to me as the DNA of creation itself. Yes, they are the very organs of the work, but I had always seen them as replaceable in the context of any creative process: more machine parts than the genetic code of the final result. *Mea culpa*. The infinite interpretations that a simple analysis of any materiality can generate are one of the great fascinations that I learned in the UAlg/PUC-SP Creative Processes master's degree. It motivated me to find, within my portfolio, a project that could not only serve to support future projects, but also analyze certain particularities of the intersection of materialities that I used throughout my career. In the conclusion of their article “Audiovisual interactions and creation processes: a field of experimentation”, Wagner Miranda Dias and Cecilia Almeida Salles highlight:

(...) interactions with audiovisuals generate a vast field of experimentation, as they involve explorations of archives as well as the erasure of boundaries between the creation process and the object shown publicly. These are issues linked to production processes, not works. We argue, therefore, that these are artistic proposals that require the perspective of process criticism to shed light on their complex singularities.²

With this perspective in mind, I concluded that analyzing the creative process of the short film *Even though it is night*, which I directed in 2020, would be the most appropriate. In this, more than in any other of the processes in which I participated, the materiality of the word, narrative, image, sound, relationships, bodies, and even authorship, have traits that extend far beyond the person who directed it. However, which materiality to choose? What specificity could offer an enriching perspective, within the panorama already established by the aforementioned researchers? It is necessary to frame the “production processes” of the work itself to single out an aspect that can be studied in depth:

The focus of attention is, therefore, the process through which something that did not exist before, as such, comes into existence, based on certain characteristics that someone offers you. An artistic artifact emerges through a complex process of appropriations, transformations, and adjustments. The genetic critic seeks to enter into the complexity of this process. The big question that drives genetic studies is understanding the fabric of this movement.³

I have been developing parallel research in terms of training for/through Cinema, mainly in the Algarve: the southernmost region of Portugal. This is more than the natural continuation of my professional journey: it is the result of a process of self-reflection on the different artistic areas, collective structures, and personalities with which I have collaborated in the last decade. Cinema itself depends on a series of transdisciplinary relationships between its materialities and our consciousness: ethical, social, temporal, spiritual, and intellectual. This is one of the reasons that makes it “the art form of our time”:

2 DIAS, W. M., & SALLES, C. A. **Interações do audiovisual e processos de criação**: um campo de experimentação. *Significação*, 47(54), 2020, p. 121-140.

3 SALLES, C. A. **Gesto inacabado**: processo de criação artística. FAPESP, 1998, p. 13.

The film is the first code in which surfaces move, a discourse of photographs, not of numbers. Because it “happens,” it is as historical as numbers are, and because it consists of surfaces, it is as imaginative, as prehistoric, as traditional surfaces are. In this way, a new kind of deciphering arises: the images of a film do not mean a scenic reality as those of traditional images do. (...) So film does not give an account of events but imagines events and makes them imaginable: it makes history always three steps removed from the concrete phenomena. (...) We cannot dismiss the possibility that in the future, existentially significant history will play out before an audience on walls and television screens rather than in time and space. That would be authentic posthistory. That is why film is the “art” of our time and the filmic gesture is that of “new people” with whose being we are not entirely in sympathy.⁴

Taking this into account, I intend to analyze the transdisciplinary relationships built during the long and unique creative process of this short film, until the moment of its recording, particularly in terms of the crossing of theatrical techniques with cinematographic techniques, but also with other artistic expressions. I will contextualize this process within the reality from which it emerged, that of the Algarve cultural and creative sector of the last decade, and in the historical moment in which it materialized: during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in Portugal, due to the limitations it placed on us and the opportunities it instigated.

Context

This creative process can be traced to the specific moment in which I learned about the existence of the salt mines in the Algarve region, specifically in the city of Loulé.

In 2015 I was in the final year of my degree in Communication Sciences. I programmed a fortnightly short film exhibition, I was in pre-production of what would be my first short film (made in an academic context), and I was interning at the audiovisual production company Original Features. As scriptwriting is my preferred area of specialization, working with this company seemed to me the most likely to advance my progress in that area: the main director had been a pupil of Spike Lee and Bryan Singer at UCLA and studied screenwriting at Westminster.

One of the projects proposed to me during the internship was to translate original scripts into the English language, submit them to competitions, or, eventually, save them for international co-productions. One of those scripts was a crime thriller, with a couple of scenes set in a cave. The production already presented the local mines as a possible setting for these recordings. Even though I had always lived in the Algarve, until that moment, I was unaware of the existence of the mines. The context in which they were presented to me immediately contextualized them in my imagination as a setting for Cinema. The script I translated never materialized. I never outlined an idea of my own for that setting - not in the form of a screenplay or under any other type of trace, other than those that memory preserves in mysterious ways. And, a few years later, emerge it did.

⁴ FLUSSER, V. **Gestures**. University of Minnesota Press, 2014, p. 90.

In 2018 and 2019 I met several young Theater students in the context of a contest I created. Students from high schools in the municipalities involved (Faro, Loulé, and Figueira da Foz) were challenged to create, as a team, a short film in a week, in addition to capturing their creative process with making-of videos. To start the week, there was an opening event with performances from local musical artists, who made their original compositions available to be used as the soundtrack for the short films. To debut the short-films and announce the winners, there would be a closing ceremony. There were more than 400 young people registered, 50 short films created, and more than 20 thousand euros in prizes awarded through partnerships with municipalities, film festivals, and independent companies.

To provide these young artists with a next step in their journey, I worked with them on the creation of three short films within the same “narrative space”, but in different chronological times. I used production techniques similar to those of the competition (a week’s time limit between the initial idea and the presentation of the final film), bringing together experienced professionals and young competitors into the technical and artistic teams. These short films, *The Internet killed Chester Bennington*, *Sofia* and *the Fire Guy*, and finally, *Even though it is night*, were a very free exercise in creation, where time constraints took away the pressure of “technical perfection”. We had space to experiment and, above all, to experience the act of creating Cinema with lightness and joy.



Fig.1. Ana Monteiro, Sofia Trilogy Poster, 2023.

Although based on the same “narrative space”, the first two short films were too far apart chronologically to constitute a linear story. I felt the need to create a new short film that served as a thematic and structural transition, thus creating a trilogy. In 2019 I collaborated with some of the young actors from the competition on a photographic project helmed by director of photography Ana Monteiro. The desire to work with these young people in a cinematic sphere began to materialize. At the beginning of 2020, five years after learning of its existence, the idea of using the Mines took shape and context.

It was here that the transformation happened: from the “gaseous” state, where materiality exists amorphous and unconcreted, to the “liquid” state, where it begins to flow and take on non-definitive forms. This materialization took place through WhatsApp audios that I sent to Ana Monteiro in February 2020 describing

the scenario I had idealized: several young people, all living within the Mines. What conflict could arise? What ideas were we interested in exploring? Which young people could we work with?

Creative Process - Online

These ideas were being worked on informally until, finally, I created a folder in Google Drive called “Kids in a Cave”, on March 18, 2020:

March 18th

The President of the Republic decrees a state of emergency for 15 days, after hearing the Council of State and obtaining the positive opinion of the Government and approval of the decree by the Assembly of the Republic. The state of emergency includes mandatory confinement and restrictions on circulation on public roads. Disobedience is a crime and can lead to imprisonment.⁵

Mandatory confinement, in addition to social isolation, allowed a concentration of creative efforts: particularly concerning both cinema and theater projects, which I had idealized but never materialized. I read an article in “The Guardian”⁶ about the writing of King Lear during the Plague: It didn't challenge me to create an epic piece, but I felt the invitation to write, without fear, what I had previously left “for later”. “Later” was no longer a guarantee.

In 2018 I participated in an artistic residency for screenwriters called Drama.pt. One of the themes I explored in this residency was the consequences of an education completely alienated from society and the codes imposed by it. The Wild Child⁷, a 1970 film by François Truffaut, and The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser⁸, directed by Werner Herzog in 1974, were the first references I analyzed. Both are based on real events, and the conflict in the films arises when the titular characters are placed in a social context, without having moral, ethical, intellectual, or communicational tools to establish relationships.

When, in 2020, the idea of shooting inside the mines of salt materialized, the exploration of the aforementioned theme reemerged. On March 19th I created a sub-folder called “Moodboard”. Here I intended to start establishing some visual references, but also narrative and methodological inspirations, studying not only films and plays but the creative processes that led to the final artistic objects.

The methodology used by Greek director Yorgos Lanthimos in his 2009 film *Kynodontas*, where he combines dramaturgical and theatrical staging techniques with his cinematographic work, helped to illuminate the path and the issues he wanted to work on:

5 Diário de Notícias. **Cronologia de uma pandemia em português**. Os três meses que mudaram o país. Available from: www.dn.pt/vida-e-futuro/cronologia-de-uma-pandemia-emportugues-os-tres-meses-que-mudaram-o-pais-12259916.html.

6 Dickson, A. **Shakespeare in lockdown**: did he write King Lear in plague quarantine? Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/mar/22/shakespeare-in-lockdown-did-he-write-king-lear-in-plague-quarantine>.

7 Original title: **L'enfant sauvage**.

8 Original title: **Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle**, translation: Each man for himself and God against all.

Yorgos Lanthimos (director): The movie is about various concepts, like the future of the family, how families work, and whether that is going to change. It's about how kids grow up, what Greek families are like, and how they tend to keep children at home and keep them very dependent on their parents. It's also about how great an influence education has, and leaders of social groups in general – whether it be a family, a much greater group, or even inside a personal relationship. How these things can shape a person's way of thinking and make them believe this or that, without it necessarily meaning that either is true. And without the person ever knowing what's really going on around them.⁹

The film has a segmented narrative, more based on moments of conflict between characters with different perspectives. The collaborative work with the actors was essential in building the structure of *Kynodontas*:

Christos Passalis (actor): (...) What we basically tried to do was to remove the sorts of tricks that actors accumulate through their work. (...) We tried to remove these and react to the moment, so to speak. Acknowledging some limitations, of course, given that the story demands we are ignorant of a certain part of the world, which is not the case in our real lives. That's the only area where there was actually a role to act. But that's it, other than that it was only based on reacting to each other.¹⁰

A similar methodology is regularly used by Portuguese director João Canijo who, in the documentary *Work of an actress, work of an actor*, lets the interpreters speak openly about the process that led to the creation of the feature film *Blood of my blood*:

Rita Blanco (actress): We worked tirelessly, rehearsing, and improvising each scene, inventing it little by little, each bit of the story and the story as a whole. When we went to film it was amazing, because we had done so much work already. When we went to film, we took a leap forward that wouldn't occur otherwise, due to lack of time or not delving deeper into the matter. Even with normal rehearsals, this would not be possible. The act of filming seemed so easy that it almost seemed like a disappointment, not in terms of the result. Normally we are so focused, and unnerved: "Is this it?" And in this case, we know so well what to do, that it's no longer unnerving or hard. We arrive and we are no longer acting, we are not too anxious looking for anything, we have already found it.¹¹

These two European directors did not work with Hollywood budgets to produce their works. Quite the opposite: they adapt production techniques to make the most of their technical, human, and financial resources. Finding myself in the position of an independent European director, born in a gentrified region, with an economy focused on tourism and its back turned on its own culture, applying for public funding always seemed like a reality too far from my own. I never felt the need to ask for "authorization" to make Cinema: I am lucky enough to have come

9 PROIMAKIS, J. **Yorgos Lanthimos • Director • The importance of thinking for yourself**. Available from: <https://cineuropa.org/en/interview/109633/>.

10 Ibidem.

11 CANIJO, J. **Trabalho de atriz, trabalho de ator**. Available from: <https://www.filmin.pt/filme/trabalho-de-actriz-trabalho-de-actor>.

across people who felt the same enthusiasm for sharing creative processes and we leaned on each other.

In his autobiography *Shifting Point*, Peter Brook reflects on his film adaptation of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, from a point of view similar to mine: "All I wanted was a small sum of money, in the script; just kids, a camera, and a beach." Living in a country and region obsessed with a fake "sense of freedom", I wanted to take a group of local talented young people 30 meters below sea level: and there, create a world where physical imprisonment would contrast with the freedom of their imagination.



Fig. 2. Diogo Simão, Aunque es de noche, 2023.

To share this specific process with me, I invited the actors and actresses Constança de Mello, Daniel de Jesus, Gabriel Riley, Margarida Lucas, Salomé Rita, and Tiago Leal. Everyone already knew each other, despite not being the same age, they didn't come from the same background or had the same acting training. They had also never worked together, even though Gabriel and Constança were in the same Performing Arts class, at Escola Secundária Tomás Cabreira, in Faro. Daniel is Brazilian and Gabriel is half-American. Everyone lived in Faro except Tiago and Margarida. These different cultural and social relationships and references were key points for several debates, where the sole purpose was to define the position of each of them regarding the central question: what would it be like if they all lived inside the mine? All the communication was done through online calls: in a group or individually with each actor. It should be noted that I had no financial commitment to any of them and filming in the mine was not a guarantee, considering the pandemic we were going through. My serious commitment to the work we would do together was all I could promise them. Quoting master Peter Brook once again, in a 2008 interview about his *Lord of the Flies*: "...if you're a director and you want to be free, you have to make films as cheaply as possible."¹² I wanted to make a free film that wasn't "cheap" from an interpretative, methodological, or artistic point of view. I wanted to create a rich experience for the viewer and, I increasingly believe, that this experience is

¹² *Lord of the Flies (1963)* - Director Peter Brook Interview. Available from: <https://youtu.be/hebwjBhcaQI>.

intrinsically linked to the richness that is experienced and produced during rehearsals and on set.

In April, a series of individual and collective online meetings began, where we all brought ideas to the “table”. I prepared some divisive questions before each session, instigating discussion and noting everyone's perspectives on individual documents for each interpreter. I made use of the different group creation experiences I had, namely the two short films that are part of the same trilogy and several collective theatrical processes in which I had the opportunity to participate. Giving these young actors a voice to create their own “world” within this “universe” made our experience more believable and organic, taking into account the online space in which we found ourselves.

One of the first “homework assignments” I proposed was to discuss Brook’s film and Golding’s book. Hence comparisons with the archetypes of the characters emerged, emotional reactions and, above all, intentions towards the ethical issues suggested by viewing and reading the works began to emerge. I held individual meetings with each of them, to find out the specificities of the characters. We forged memories of a period “before” the movie, that were reflected in their dreams, desires, fears, and envy they felt towards their “brothers and sisters”. We discussed artistic expressions that they might be interested in developing in that specific space, what type of materials they would have access to, and what uses they could give them. These conversations and choices allowed us to better frame the personality of the characters we were developing. Then, it was up to me to find the right point of conflict so that all these personality traits we developed could be explored through congruent and filmable actions. There are two records of different versions of the script I wrote for *Even though it is night*, eventually used in a rehearsal context. I never labeled it as a “sacred text”, from which we could not deviate: above all else, it was a map to find the images and emotions we wanted to highlight throughout the narrative.

Another exercise I asked the actors to do, this time individually, was to write a profile of the character we had created together and associate it with a visual work and the lyrics of a song. This was one of the most abstract exercises but with the richest results in terms of interpretative possibilities. The songs chosen by each of them were integrated into a playlist¹³ that was used in in-person rehearsals.

After establishing the characters' points of view about the central issue, we continued to look for points of conflict during group meetings.

The end of May brought a deconfinement full of masks. It was also at this point that I asked the interpreters for a short monologue that represented the work we had done together to create these characters. I also wrote one, in which I tried to capture the essence of the narrative we had co-created. It was in this text that the idea of two antagonistic figures materialized, who trapped young people in the cave, trying to educate them according to an inhuman ideology. Referring back to political speeches, theatrical works, and contemporary music, the text entitled *We Are Here* had a structure built through the stanzas of the secular melody “Auld Lang Syne”. The choice of this song and why it is part of the set of materialities that created this short film would require a more in-depth analysis.

13 Kids in a Cave - Playlist. Available from: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0cHGI2fgrqhA8uH9CX35O2?si=1ee471192e594b82&nd=1&dlsi=a75ac86f14174dd3>.

And, between June and July, the creative process stopped because we had not received a response from the management of mines and the cast was preparing to leave the Algarve to pursue higher education courses in different areas.

Creative Process - Rehearsals

In mid-August 2020, through the support of the Loulé Film Office, we received a positive response from the company that manages the mines. This was the decisive step towards the materialization of the project, which, however, faced several problems. The materialities in evidence, which until then I would consider liquid (due to their constant mutation), were forced to solidify in the face of the inevitability of time.

The first challenge was, exactly, time: we would only have one day available to record inside the mine, with the full support of its team. It was necessary to exit the “online world” and physically work on preparing the shoot, to produce as few errors as possible on set. It became obvious that it would be necessary to rehearse the film before “filming” it. We used LAMA Teatro’s BlackBox as a rehearsal space for two weeks. It was at this stage, certainly driven by the change of space and the need for physical work, that the boundaries between theatrical and cinematographic work became blurred. It is important, therefore, to find a coherent distinction between the two:

In a theater, space is static, that is, the space represented on the stage, as well as the spatial relation of the beholder to the spectacle, is unalterably fixed. The spectator cannot leave his seat, and the setting of the stage cannot change, during one act. (...) But, in return for this restriction, the theater has the advantage that time, the medium of emotion and thought conveyable by speech, is free and independent of anything that may happen in visible space. (...) With the movies, the situation is reversed. Here, too, the spectator occupies a fixed seat, but only physically, not as the subject of an aesthetic experience. Aesthetically, he is in permanent motion as his eye identifies itself with the lens of the camera, which permanently shifts in distance and direction. And as movable as the spectator is, as movable is, for the same reason, the space presented to him. Not only do bodies move in space, but space itself does, approaching, receding, turning, dissolving, and recrystallizing as it appears through the controlled locomotion and focusing of the camera and through the cutting and editing of the various shots - not to mention such special effects as visions, transformations, disappearances, slow-motion and fast-motion shots, reversals and trick films. This opens up a world of possibilities of which the stage can never dream.¹⁴

During the two weeks of rehearsals, the exercises I proposed were unmistakably inspired by the creative processes, workshops, and theater courses in which I had participated. From confidence-building exercises, space imagination, improvisation with objects that would be on set, and improvisation with music to determine the pace of the action for each character. The big difference between these rehearsals and any other rehearsal of a theatrical play was the work carried out in terms of audiovisual recording. Ana Monteiro had an active presence during these rehearsals, improvising the shots she captured with her Sony A7SII, using

¹⁴ PANOFKY, E. **Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures**. Princeton University, 1936, p. 18-19.

just a 50mm lens: the same combination that we would use to record the short film. There was constant collaborative work between us, as in addition to directing the actors, I was also attentive to the camera work to try to find moments in the recordings that could raise new possibilities. Through this multidisciplinary improvisational work, we rehearsed and recorded the sequence of events that was determined in the script, with any changes brought about by what we were trying each day. These recordings form the short documentary¹⁵, in which I tried to highlight the materialities of this creative process. I also compared some shots that we rehearsed with their final result in the film.



*Fig.3. Diogo Simão, **Aunque es de noche** - Processos Criativos - Rough, 2023.*

The second challenge was opening the group to new people.

We spent a lot of time working to create a sense of family among everyone and a contrary feeling was being generated about the figures who (we decided) had “imprisoned” the younglings in the Mines. The group desired to work with Miguel Martins Pessoa and Diana Bernedo, specialists in the art of mime, clown, the Suzuki method, and physical theater. We had all collaborated with them on different projects and they have always proved to be creative, professional, and capable of awakening original nuances in the artists they work with. The actors accepted the invitation addressed by the entire group, proving to be key players during the rehearsal process and during the filming itself. Bringing proposals for their makeup, wardrobe, and spontaneous improvisation exercises, their characters were shaped through an organic opposition to the “original group”.

In addition to these antagonistic forces, there was the issue of the narrative connection with the other two short films. In *The Internet Killed Chester Bennington*, there is a scene in which an anonymous child is kidnapped by a clown and never found again. In *Sofia and the Fire Guy*, the titular character is a teenager and, for various reasons, out of touch with her social reality. There was an invitation for the actress who played Sofia to join the cast of *Even though it is night*, but it was not possible to make it happen. It was necessary to carry out a casting to find an actress younger than Sofia, but older than the child kidnapped in the first film. During the in-person rehearsal phase, Carolina Santos was cast: a young 10-year-old actress, who had already acted opposite Constança de Mello and whose parents were extremely helpful and present throughout the rehearsal and recording process.

¹⁵ SIMÃO, D. **Aunque es de noche** - Processos Criativos - Rough. Available from: <https://youtu.be/u536Z7EmR-0>

Bearing in mind that we were in a post-confinement phase and any contagion could be harmful, personally and professionally, for anyone involved, the responsibility and trust that the group needed to have in each other was extremely important. Actor Daniel de Jesus, on more than one occasion, called this trust into question with communication failures for which he had no justification. Despite his very important contribution to the creation of the narrative (credited in the film), talent, and artistic instincts, I had to remove him from the cast after two in-person rehearsals, so as not to put the rest of the production in jeopardy. Instead of replacing him with another actor, I let his character's actions be channeled by Tiago Leal, who had developed a personality with similar values, but a closer relationship with one of his “sisters”: which contributed to his characterization.

The actors' ego was not necessarily a problem: but I was often provoked from an intellectual point of view to find better solutions for what I had proposed. My ego may have been, in these situations, a guide for my responses. However, I never stopped challenging the actors to incorporate their ideas into the work, even without discussing them with me beforehand. What emerges in these individual moments within group work is often the core of each character. João Canijo, in an interview about his most recent diptych *Mal Viver* and *Viver Mal* states:

Actresses never stop being themselves. They have training to adapt to circumstances. But they never stop being themselves. So that they can transform later. They transform into characters becoming themselves. There is no other way to be true. But they can pretend. They have the responsibility to build the integrity of their characters.¹⁶

Conclusion

Samuel Mac: You're also a theater director. What would you say are some key differences between directing theater vs. directing film?

Yorgos Lanthimos: It's a very different thing (laughs). I guess there's a sense of greater freedom in theater in terms of how far you can go with people's behavior. Because there's a certain acceptance that this is theater and not real life. It's much more obvious that there's an arrangement between the viewer and the people in the theater, whereas I find in film you kind of have to be grounded at some level. It doesn't mean you have to make realistic films, but it works in a way that some things need to be truer. And of course, it works very differently, the fact that you actually shoot something and the camera changes everything, that makes it very different. So the performances could be different...you could just shoot a person doing nothing, and that is

16 PORTUGAL, P. João Canijo: “A verdade é a interpretação que cada um faz da realidade”. Available from: www.insider.pt/2023/02/20/joao-canijo-a-verdade-e-a-interpretacao-que-cada-um-faz-da-realidade/.

*transformed through the camera and through editing, and sound.*¹⁷

At the end of the documentary about this creative process, there is a scene where I gave instructions to the actors to imagine a line on the ground that only their voices could cross. On the other side of this line would be “someone” who put their peace at risk. I left the song *Would?* by the band Alice in Chains playing and let them create. While editing, I decided to finish this sequence in black and white, without sound, to place even greater emphasis on the differences between their interpretations and establish a transition to the final scene. In this one, I approach Carolina, who had distanced herself from the original group, and I bring her closer. Young people are scattered around the space, with the wardrobe they would use in the film. The sound and color return, with the music that gave the film its title playing in the room. Based on a poem¹⁸ by San Juan de la Cruz from the 16th century, this version sung by the contemporary artist Rosalía¹⁹, gave rise to an absolute materialization of the characters we created. If each of them is observed individually, we can see the difference between the personalities we developed during the months of the pandemic and the two weeks of rehearsals. If we observe the group, there is an intangible beauty in the communion of their movements. The way Ana Monteiro captured this moment, letting the bodies of the actors and actresses fill the frame, turned the BlackBox into a dreamlike version of the Mine that we hadn't yet set foot on. Vilém Flusser is, once again, able to verbalize a feeling that I was unable to articulate:

*It is banal to regard the cinema as the archetypal womb, that window-less cave that means both birth and death, even though the similarities between cinema and Plato's cave, with the moving shadows on the wall, are so striking that it's impossible to read Plato's myth without thinking of films.*²⁰

This was the last fiction I directed for Cinema. In it, I deepened the organization of different materialities that distinguish and connect creative processes, as well as my methods for directing creations. I was captivated by the talent of the actors and actresses I worked with. I looked for, more than models, creative companions at a time when everyone was trapped inside their own “cave”. The “light” of these revelations was too strong and I returned to the “dark”, where I have been practicing new techniques and ideas. Writing this work was a small return to the “outside”, this time a little more prepared to accept reality as it is and available to materialize, more than dreams, the truth.

17 MAC, S. **Dogtooth!** Director Yorgos Lanthimos Talks The End Of Family, Sci-Fi Connections & Not Setting Out To Make Provocative Films. Available from: <https://theplaylist.net/interview-dogtooth-director-yorgos-20100623/>.

18 GARCIA, S. R. **La experiencia del «deseo abisal» en San Juan de la Cruz:** «Que bien sé yo la fonte que mana y corre. Available from: https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/la-experiencia-del-deseo-abisal-en-san-juan-de-la-cruz-qu-bien-s-yo-la-fonte-que-mana-y-corre-0/html/021b8cd6-82b2-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_8.html.

19 ROSALÍA. **Aunque Es De Noche.** Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6s-MQzPZ6IE>

20 FLUSSER, V. **Gestures.** University of Minnesota Press, 2014, p. 86.

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