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# Screen Memories: The Audiovisual Heritage of Turkish Migrant Women in the Netherlands Across Political Film, Video, and Television

## Abstract

This article explores the counterhegemonic uses of audiovisual media —such as film, video, and television— by migrant women workers, specifically focusing on the media tactics of self-representation used in the intersectional feminist activism of migrant women workers from the Turkish Republic in the Netherlands from 1975 to 1985. Through comprehensive archival research, it aims to historically contextualise and critically evaluate the archival conditions of this marginalised audiovisual heritage. Drawing on archival presences of extant film and television material as well as archival absences, such as lost and abandoned projects, the paper proposes to reconfigure the ‘audiovisual heritage’ of underrepresented communities at the intersection of race, gender, and class, whose archival presences are contingent, arbitrary, and fragmented. To address the specific condition of archival paucity concerning the audiovisual heritage of migrant women workers, the paper concludes with the new perspectives opened by a feminist media historiography of open questions, critical fabulation, and counterfactual speculation.

## Keywords

Media History | Television History | Feminist Historiography | Archives | Migration

## Introduction: An encounter via the screen

Play. Wrapped in an air of melancholy, a young woman is pensively staring into the distance. The rustling leaves of trees surround her. With an elegant yet decisive demeanour, she turns to the camera, as it closes up on her face, and starts singing: ‘*Çok uzaklardan geliyoruz, çok uzaklardan*’ (We come from very far, very far). As emotion noticeably grows on the woman’s face, her singing evolves from a somewhat timid to a determined tone. Her gaze back to the camera is undaunted. The song reinscribes her single body as a multitude: She enunciates the collective voice of migrant women, who came from ‘very, very far.’ As such, her body and her voice are encoded with difference. Pause.

This fragment is from the prologue of a television documentary that aired in 1984 on Dutch public television.<sup>1</sup> It was made for the series *Medelanders Nederlanders* [roughly *Fellow Inhabitants of the Netherlands*], which focused on the lives of ‘ethnic minorities,’ including Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, Antillean, and Moluccan people.<sup>2</sup> Seen within this context, the prologue simulates an encounter, evidenced in the camera’s movement as it literally gets closer to the young woman. It dollies forward as she takes a few small steps towards us. The television screen thus becomes the site of a ‘meeting’, as if we are stumbling upon this young Turkish woman. Such aesthetics of encounter pervade the rest of the documentary. Following the prologue, the documentary shifts from the poetic mode to the observational, portraying the lived experiences of Turkish women in Dutch society. We are soon introduced to another young protagonist, and via her journey we get to meet others. As the women narrate their stories, the camera mostly remains at an observing distance without much intervention, encouraging the audience to listen closely. It could thus be argued that the documentary attempts to undermine the markers of difference, setting up the television screen as the site of an amicable encounter. In this way, the documentary stands out as a significant archival object, not only bearing witness to the everyday struggles of migrant worker women from the Turkish Republic, but also fostering broader awareness through televisual broadcast.

By analysing such finds in the Dutch archives, this paper explores the archival representation and counterhegemonic utilization of audiovisual media —including film, video, and television— made by and for migrant women workers. It specifically concentrates on the media tactics of self-representation employed in the intersectional feminist activism of migrant women workers from Turkey in the Netherlands between 1975 and 1985, a period marked by growing national and transnational political activism. Despite the vibrant political activity in this time, not much is known about how migrant women’s movements used the moving image for political purposes.

At a global level, this decade also saw growing activity and appreciation of women’s filmmaking and film criticism.<sup>3</sup> Women’s film festivals emerged and spread, with the First International Women’s Film Festival organised in New York in 1972 —‘a crucial year for the wider feminist cinematographic culture.’<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, women’s film festivals successfully spread, including to Canada (Toronto, 1973), Germany (Berlin, 1973), France (Paris, 1974) and Iran (Tehran, 1975).<sup>5</sup> Coming out in 1973, Claire Johnston’s ground-breaking essay ‘Women’s Cinema as Counter-Cinema’ spelled out the ‘strategic use of the media, and film in particular’ as being ‘essential for disseminating our ideas.’<sup>6</sup> Looking at the emerging filmmaking practices by women in that period, Johnston saw a widespread

willingness to relate women's own experiences, with 'little or no intervention by the filmmaker.' She wrote, 'film is a very powerful way to express oneself.'<sup>7</sup>

In the Netherlands, the second half of the 1970s saw a growing interest in women's film, with occasional film and video screenings at annual women's festivals, followed in the late 1970s by special daily or weekly screening programmes dedicated to films by women at festivals, cinemas, and other cultural centres.<sup>8</sup> In this context of growing attention, the first women's film festival was organised in 1980 by the women's film collective Cinemien, which was established in 1975.<sup>9</sup> While the history of these debates, initiatives, and collectives needs to be further researched, the question of how migrant women's collectives were positioned in this wider landscape of women's filmmaking, programming, and curating remains pressing. This article aims to zoom in on this history, tracing as far as possible the archival presences of migrant women from Turkey. This task requires taking margins to the centre, to trace the counter-memories and counter-histories of migrant women's media practices.

Earlier research into the media representations of migrant women from Turkey revealed that 'migration coverage is saturated with moments of Othering.'<sup>10</sup> In detailed study, media scholar Andrea Meuzelaar showed how, in the Netherlands, television played a crucial role in perpetuating racialised stereotypes of Muslim women with a migration background.<sup>11</sup> Crucially, archives sustained the circulation of these stereotypes, as tagging and keywords in archival metadata were significant factors in the ways these images were retrieved and reused by mainstream broadcast over the years.<sup>12</sup> In the face of this, the question remains whether there is other audiovisual material in archives that undermines such stereotypical representations. There is thus value in shifting focus from widely circulated, mass media representations to audiovisual tactics of self-representation.

Researching these audiovisual tactics of self-representation, however, requires an openness, primarily to resist the rigid understandings of certain genres, formats, and modes of distribution. In their introduction to the volume *Feminist Worldmaking and the Moving Image*, Erika Balsom and Hila Peleg underline some of the commonalities in a seemingly disparate world of moving image works by women and for women:

documentary and experimental film and video both depart from the representational protocols of the mass media, exploring the epistemological, political, and aesthetic possibilities of the moving image in ways that dislodge the received ideas and make space for the conveyance of other voices, stories, and images – including the voices, stories, and images of others.<sup>13</sup>

These are marked by the use of non-professional equipment (such as portable video-cameras and amateur film formats) as well as embracing ‘nonstandardized and often noncommercial modes of distribution and exhibition, favouring nontheatrical contexts such as educational, artistic, and/or activist spaces.’<sup>14</sup> Crucially, in such spaces, ‘screenings can serve as a catalyst for discussion, nurturing sociality and discourse in ways that contribute to the formation of counter-publics.’<sup>15</sup> In light of these functions of documentary, film, and video, there is value in excavating audiovisual archives to unearth not only such marginalised formats, but also to map out the nonstandardised and noncommercial modes of distribution and exhibition, such as film clubs, educational screenings, or activist spaces. Furthermore, adapting Balsom and Peleg’s emphasis on how screenings can serve as a catalyst for discussion of archival research, there is value in spotlighting archival finds, including the moving images surviving in major memory institutions, to activate and appropriate them *at present* as catalysts. The purpose of this is first, to interrogate the absence of migrant women’s intersectional feminist activism from the Dutch cultural memory, and second, to mobilise memory activism to retrieve lost objects, histories, and memories. With these in mind, some of the questions that guided the research process of this article were: Can we activate the televisual representations of migrant women workers that challenge stereotypical representations? And, more importantly, can we try to attain a more holistic map of archival holdings concerning the media practices of migrant women’s movement from Turkey? What do other archival finds reveal about the role of visual media practices in the intersectional feminist activism and worldmaking of migrant or exiled women? Finally, what can these artefacts and their archival status teach us about the present?

### **On the vocabulary and scope**

Migrant women from Turkey in the Netherlands represent a large and diverse group, from women who arrived as family members (such as wives and daughters) of the first wave of male labour migrants to female labour migrants themselves. Over six decades old, the group now contains several generations born and raised in the Netherlands. Crucially, it also encompasses a wide array of political, ethnic, and religious views. It is therefore paramount that any academic study must avoid homogenising this group into any religious, ethnic, and political common denominator. It is equally important to avoid fixed notions of identity and to embrace the various factors that impact performing certain aspects of cultural and gender identity in various contexts.<sup>16</sup>

This article falls within the frame of my wider research into the audiovisual heritage of left-wing (Marxist, socialist, revolutionary) political organisations in the Netherlands by labour migrants and political exiles from Turkey.<sup>17</sup> Its scope is limited to migrant women's feminist collectives with a progressive political and social agenda. Here I focus on HTKB, the first collective founded by migrant women from Turkey in the Netherlands.<sup>18</sup> HTKB stands for *Hollanda Türkiye Kadınlar Birliği* (Association of Women from Turkey in the Netherlands) and its official Dutch title was *Turkse Vrouwenvereniging*. Aiming to reach as many women as possible regardless of their political, religious, ethnic affiliations, or education level, the collective primarily positioned itself as a women's association. The absence of the word 'feminism' in the title may indicate such broad outreach. In the words of founder Maviye Karaman, the primary objective of the association was to raise awareness among Turkish women about their social position.<sup>19</sup> That position, for Karaman, involved a three-fold disadvantage: as women, as migrants, and as workers. Therefore, their fight for liberation must simultaneously be a gender, anti-racist, and class struggle.<sup>20</sup> On this note, earlier intersectional thinkers highlighting the importance of class in gender struggle were influential, especially Clara Zetkin, who appeared frequently on the organisation's pamphlets, posters, and booklets. In many ways, HTKB's intersectional feminist politics highlight the nexus of migration, gender, and class in ways that resonate with the present-day struggles against what bell hooks calls 'white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.'<sup>21</sup>

Growing rapidly to hundreds of members and branches in various cities, HTKB has produced (or contributed to the production of) a substantial body of media —ranging from printed material such as magazines, posters, booklets, and pamphlets to audiovisual material such as slide sets, education films, and documentaries— in its activities spreading over five decades. This material is mostly bilingual (Dutch and Turkish), and sometimes multilingual including Arabic, among others. This article traces the archival presence (and absence) of this (audio)visual heritage. With inspiration from bell hooks, we can read the material as interrogating the visual medium's capacity to create awareness, transform the culture, and mobilise political imaginations that undermine the racial capitalist heteronormative patriarchy.<sup>22</sup>

The main aim of this article is to spotlight the media tactics of self-representation of migrant worker women at the nexus of migration, gender, and class. In the three subsections below, I explain the counter-hegemonic uses of (audio)visual media across three different archival finds. In the process, I also interrogate the archival status of this heritage. In an earlier article, I explained the

complexities around the archival status of what I called ‘the minoritarian (audiovisual) heritage’ – meaning the media production by and about migrant, diasporic, exilic communities.<sup>23</sup> Here, with the findings of that article in mind, I shift the focus to the ‘three-fold disadvantaged’ position of migrant, worker, women, in the words of Maviye Karaman. Seeing the archive not as a simple repository of items, but rather as a ‘site and practice integral to knowledge making, cultural production, and activism,’<sup>24</sup> this article emphasises the archive’s status as historiographic rather than a preservationist technology.<sup>25</sup> Jenna Freedman’s formulation of ‘accidental archivist’<sup>26</sup> points to the highly precarious archival status of community-based activist collections, not only at the level of assembly, but also institutionally and materially.<sup>27</sup> What do the archives contain, and what are archival silences, absences, and gaps? Again, following up one of the main questions in my earlier article, here I ask: What are the ways to *activate* this heritage? What can we learn from archival presences as well as absences? If memory is shaped by institutional practices, it does not suffice to spotlight the very existence of items with a celebratory tone of ‘discovery’. The question is inevitably bound to institutional power, epistemic regimes, and neglect –if not deliberate exclusion or erasure. Thus, how to transform archival practices for social, epistemic, and mnemonic justice remains a key concern of this article.

The first subsection focuses on an activist film –the only complete film surviving in the organisational archives held at the International Institute for Social History (IISH). Labelled in the HTKB archival documents the ‘IKD film,’ this 20-minute observational documentary follows the Great March of the Progressive Women’s Association (*İlerici Kadınlar Derneği*, IKD) in 1979. In a context of increasing political tension leading to the violent military coup of September 1980 in Turkey, IKD endured constant attacks by the military regime and was eventually banned. While it remains unclear how this copy was brought to the Netherlands, archival documents mention the screening of this film in gatherings for cross-border campaigns. This section explores the IKD film primarily as a material witness to the violent coup and to the forced displacement of socialist activists, as a displaced archival object itself. Moving onto the analysis of its aesthetics, I unpack the role of film in mobilizing anti-fascist struggle and feminist transnational solidarity toward emancipatory ends.

The second subsection spotlights scarce archival material relating to the videomaking classes organised by HTKB and argues for the feminist historiographical potential of abandoned, unrealised, or incomplete projects. Changing focus from film as a (so-called) finished product to a series of scripts, scribbled ideas for short scenes, and fragmented dialogues, this section follows the



‘speculative turn’ in the field of critical archival studies, a growing intervention that repositions archival paucity not as obstacles but as the very objects of research. In addition to Balsom and Peleg’s emphasis on ‘plans for unrealised projects’<sup>28</sup> in *Feminist Worldmaking*, the recent volume *Incomplete: Feminist Possibilities of Unfinished Film* more systematically draw attention to the historical value of unfinished, partial, incomplete, unrealized projects in the historiography of women’s filmmaking. From the horizons opened by the speculative turn, the scripts in the HTKB archives provide valuable material for considering what they *might have filmed* if they could. Here again, the intersectional emphasis stands out. The scripts make visible the daily situations where being a woman, migrant, and worker intersect, depicting everyday encounters with and struggles against white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. In that sense, they provide invaluable insight into the feminist worldmaking of this specific cohort. Although some may not self-identify as feminist, these scripts resonate with intersectional feminist concerns —at times dreary, at times joyous.

Third, moving on to national television archives, I will analyse the screen presences of HTKB women and the ways in which the intersectional feminist message is carried across in the television documentary genre. Due to the lack or absence of correct metadata, archival research into migrant women from Turkey in the Dutch archives (the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, hereafter NISV) is a huge task —one which I described in an earlier article.<sup>29</sup> Searching the Dutch broadcast archives using the CLARIAH Media Suite using various combinations of the keywords ‘Turks’ and ‘vrouw’ (woman) reveals a large corpus of findings. In order to filter the findings for this article, I looked for ‘HTKB’ in the NISV metadata descriptions and limited the time period to 1975-1985. Previously in the HTKB’s archives, I had come across several ideas to invite television crew to film the collective, as well as requests by television crews to visit the locale. It remains uncertain whether the documentaries I could locate in the archives are outcomes of these communications; however, there were two documentaries that stood out for their distinctive style. Reminiscent of Johnston’s observations in ‘women’s cinema as counter cinema,’ they clearly challenged the stereotypical representations of migrant women, either through observational techniques that followed women on their daily routine to depict their daily struggles without much intervention, or through participatory techniques that engaged in a dialogue tailored to empower women to speak out, without speaking for them, but rather speaking alongside.<sup>30</sup> For these reasons, these documentaries complement the earlier objects in this article: They make visible the intersectional emphasis in HTKB’s activism and its growing impact on the Dutch national agenda at a wider scale. Therefore, although it remains

uncertain how much HTKB members played a role in the making of these documentaries, I argue that there is value in considering them as the audiovisual heritage of the migrant women workers' movement, for carrying across their counterhegemonic message. As archival objects today, they carry counter-histories and counter-memories that this article seeks to activate.

### **Archival status of migrant objects in-between the past and present**

Before I move on to the analysis, a word on the archival status of these objects is needed. Given the scarcity of scholarship on this topic, I want to further elaborate on the significance of mapping out these histories and heritages for the present. In what follows, I first give an overview of the HTKB-related holdings at various archival institutions, before going on to explain three relevant contexts that these archival finds can respond to.

As typical of any migrant archives, the HTKB archives are scattered and fragmented, if not marginalised. Currently, IISH holds the most complete collection of HTKB documents, donated to the institute by the organisation itself. The collection at IISH largely consists of paper archives, ranging from legal documents such as foundational statutes to important organisational material such as meeting minutes and annual congress reports. Furthermore, paper trails on cultural activities, educational programmes, 8<sup>th</sup> March (International Women's Day) activities, and major political actions such as Tuschinski Film Theatre workers' action, are well preserved.<sup>31</sup> These documents provide invaluable insights into intersectional feminist organising. The collections also contain a tremendous number of newspaper clippings on topics that HTKB closely followed in the public discourse, including racism; the legal standing of migrant, Black, refugee women in the Netherlands (*ZMV-vrouwenbeweging*); and the Kurdish struggle in the Turkish Republic. While the visual material is limited, an almost complete set of its bilingual magazine *Kadınların Birliği / Turkse Vrouwenkrant* (the Turkish and Dutch titles are different, translating respectively as *The Unity of Women* and *Turkish Women's Newspaper*) between 1979 and 1988 is safeguarded. The photographs and publications are largely preserved in another archival institution, namely Atria: Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History (hereafter, Atria), also located in Amsterdam. In addition, NISV contains documentaries tagged with HTKB. The archives of Migranten Televisie Nederland (also scattered across various institutions in Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam, and other cities) contain HTKB-related material.<sup>32</sup>



The archival study of this heritage is not driven by an impulse to ‘discover.’ Rather, following Chandra Talpade Mohanty, it seeks to mobilise a transformative dialogue with the feminist past ‘because of its ability to catalyse the present.’<sup>33</sup> Three contexts are implicated here. First is the historiography of feminist activism in the Netherlands. Activating this heritage is crucial to mapping out the vibrant network of intersectional and internationalist political activism of migrant women, roughly from the 1970s to mid-1990s, known as Black Migrant Refugee women’s movement (hereafter BMR, known in Dutch as *Zwart, Migrant, Vluchtelingen vrouwen beweging*, abbreviated as ZMV). Similarly, the work of Black Migrant Refugee women’s movement remains mostly invisible and unknown today.<sup>34</sup> This movement, Jouwe explains, used ‘Black’ as a political and relational term to refer to ‘(a) solidarity among non-white women; (b) engaging in a common struggle, sharing a colonial past and being victimized by racism; and (c) critiquing the dominance of white, middle class, heterosexual norms of mainstream feminists.’<sup>35</sup> Jouwe places the activism of HTKB within this intersectional feminist activist moment, underlining the political, intellectual, and organisational legacy of these diverse groups of women of colour.<sup>36</sup> In this context, HTKB increasingly found common ground with other women’s organisations and collectives in the Netherlands. They collaborated with Dutch feminist organisations and also addressed governmental bodies, labour unions, NGOs, and transnational platforms such as the UN to improve the position of migrant, working-class women. Archival documents reveal how their paths crossed with other migrant women’s organisations: for example, Chilean women who fled the coup after 1973, Iranian women who took refuge in the Netherlands after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the Surinamese and Antillean women who migrated to the Netherlands after decolonisation, Palestinian women, as well as labour migrants from Morocco. This impressive solidarity network of intersectional feminist activism is yet to be systematically researched and mapped out. While the history of the intersectional feminism of Turkish women in the Netherlands is a rich topic that deserves its own study, this paper is a first attempt to mobilise scholarly interest, as well as archival research, artistic engagement, and other methods such as oral history and memory activism.

Second, in the context of Dutch media history, there is an urgency to study and *activate* this audiovisual heritage for epistemic and mnemonic justice —especially the archival holdings that promote a counterhegemonic narrative challenging the stereotypical images of migrant women marked by difference. In an earlier article, Elif Rongen-Kaynakçı and I have defined ‘activating’ on two levels related to audiovisual artefacts. At its initial stage, this involves ‘excavating’ the archives to

rediscover marginalised artefacts that remained invisible and inaccessible due to problems of incomplete or incorrect information, misidentification, and abandonment. Subsequently, artefacts thus unearthed must be ‘spotlighted’ through making them ‘accessible for further viewing, exhibition, and research as a way to challenge, subvert, or complicate’ existing (audiovisual and historical) knowledges.<sup>37</sup> We wrote that ‘derived from *active* and *to act*, the word addresses the dormant potency of the archival moving image artefact to be awakened, set in motion to effect change.’<sup>38</sup> How did migrant women’s movement use film, video, television, and other forms of media for political activism *then*? And how do we activate this heritage *now*?

Similarly, in the national narratives of television history, the screen presences of minoritised, ethnicised, and racialised groups – labour migrants, political refugees, and other diasporic and exilic communities – are largely overlooked, which maintains the overwhelming silence about these histories in collective memory and public discourse in the present. This is particularly striking considering the large number of initiatives set up by ethnicised and racialised groups, including television, print journalism, and radio. The report ‘Mapping Minorities and their Media: The National Context – The Netherlands’ listed hundreds of ‘multicultural broadcasting organisations,’ ranging from television to radio, and organisations that combine the two.<sup>39</sup> While there was such vibrant production throughout the 1980s and 1990s, what are the reasons that this audiovisual heritage remains unseen, unheard? What is the current archival status of these audiovisual initiatives? In the face of persistent racialised and ethnicised stereotypes of migrants, disseminated by the mainstream media, the lack of interest in these platforms of self-representation is notable. In this context, there is an increasing urgency to attend to these images of self-representation as instances of critical intervention into the public discourse *then* and *now*.

Third, in the context of feminist media historiography, there is a lot to learn from studying migrant, displaced, diasporic, and exiled women’s archives. In this article, I evaluate my archival findings within the frame of recent scholarship that cultivates gaps and silences as prompting multiple narratives that encourage us to diverge from established knowledges. Admittedly, the archives are always already problematic when it comes to safeguarding the cultural heritage of migrant communities. In the words of Verne Harris, they are ‘ghosted’ by archival institutions.<sup>40</sup> This is even more the case when seeking the archival registers of self-representation. Mostly the archives of migrant political organisations are lost, ruined, absent, if not scattered, precarious, or fragmentary at best. How do we deal with these archival lacunae, and what are some innovative

ways to write histories of absence, erasure, silence, and loss? Instead of turning away from telling these histories, recently feminist historians have argued that fragmented archives are symptoms of the violence of the archive,<sup>41</sup> as well as the arbitrariness and contingency of historical knowledge. Following Jane Gaines, I am interested in ‘the historical conditions of unknowability.’ The question, ‘which knowledges are allowable at what historical junctures, and which are decidedly unwelcome?’<sup>42</sup> sheds light on the reasons behind archival lacunae and the epistemic violence of the archive.

Recently, in the field of critical archival studies there is growing interest in what to do with archival silences, absences, and gaps. Along with Gaines, Allyson Nadia Field and Saidiya Hartman have spelled out alternative methods for working with the paucity of evidence and forging novel ways to account for the obfuscated aspects of media history.<sup>43</sup> In the introduction to the double issue of *Feminist Media Histories* journal, Allyson Nadia Field writes: ‘Shifting where we look—even to what we cannot (or no longer) see—can be a radical, necessary gesture of resistance to archival gaps, lacunae, redactions, and blind spots.’<sup>44</sup> This shift ‘is not a capitulation to the archive’s silences, though it acknowledges the limitations of the historical record.’ Rather, it is a process of opening the field, ‘to recognize the many actors involved in the production of historical knowledge.’<sup>45</sup> For example, Hartman’s method of ‘critical fabulation’ imagines ‘what *might have happened* or what *might have been said* or what *might have been done*’ to displace the received or authorized account.<sup>46</sup> ‘The intent of this practice,’ Hartman writes, ‘is not to *give voice*’ to the absences (as in speaking for them), but rather to *imagine* what cannot be verified and to acknowledge the cause(s) of such absences. This is, Hartman concludes, ‘a history written *with* and *against* the archive.’<sup>47</sup> Putting my archival encounters in dialogue with these recent perspectives on speculative method,<sup>48</sup> I argue for the potentials of a question-driven, ongoing, open feminist media historiography concerning the self-representation tools and media tactics of migrant, displaced, diasporic, exiled women’s collectives.

### **Audiovisual tactics and political uses of film, video, television**

In the early days of HTKB’s activism, the most pressing issue on their agenda was to break isolation and foster empowerment. To this end, HTKB provided a community of care, ranging from free childcare, legal advice, health education, to classes on personal development such as sewing, the

Dutch language, and literacy. Among the social events offered to members, film screenings were named a few times in the archival documents at the IISH.

In an increasingly vibrant context of political activism, women saw the benefits and outreach advantages of film as a popular, accessible medium. HTKB's recruitment and outreach commission mentions film screenings a few times in their meetings as useful events to reach out to new members, especially the young generation.<sup>49</sup> For example, in an 8<sup>th</sup> March preparation meeting in 1983, one member suggests organising film screenings in north and central Amsterdam prior to the demonstration, to disseminate brochures and attract prospective members.<sup>50</sup> Alongside such outreach activities, HTKB also organised internal film screenings for the political formation and education of its members. Meeting minutes mention several instances in which these screenings took place and had to be paused for a while, recommending that they now start again; however, the titles of the films screened did not make their ways into the archives.<sup>51</sup> There is one exception: a film named in shorthand as the 'IKD film,'<sup>52</sup> is mentioned a few times in the documents, and seems to have played a significant role. Luckily, a copy of this film survives at IISH, as part of the HTIB archives.<sup>53</sup>

### **Film as material witness to displacement and transnational feminist solidarity**

The IKD film is an approximately 20-minute film showing the great march of women organised by the Progressive Women's Organization in 1979 from Izmir and Istanbul to Ankara.<sup>54</sup> In the tense days leading up to the coup, IKD was banned by martial law on 28 April 1979.<sup>55</sup> The film is a compilation of footage recorded at different stages of the march, concluding with a concert and the visit of a selected commission to the Minister of the Interior. Under the oppressive military regime, IKD members were arrested and imprisoned, and their homes were raided. Some members had to flee the country. Facing destruction, the organisation's archives were moved to a secret location for protection. Thanks to its caretakers, the archive survived and is now safeguarded at the Women's Library in Istanbul.<sup>56</sup>

In many ways, IKD and HTKB could be seen as sister organisations, founded the same year and dedicated to women's emancipation through political self-representation. Thus, the military regime's crackdown on IKD occupied the hearts and minds of HTKB members. The IKD film was frequently screened in the wake of the 1980 coup, at countless solidarity events, demonstrations, and protests to mobilise awareness. HTKB organised petitions, fundraising campaigns, and a very effective New Year's campaign to send toys to the children of women political prisoners.<sup>57</sup> In these activities, the

IKD film seems to have played an important role, probably to give some background to the campaigns. However, the film might also have been screened to sow affective engagement. This is the limit of the archives. While the documents do mention screening the IKD film on many such occasions, there is no register nor recording of the motivation or circumstance of the screening, or the impressions, emotions, and responses of the audiences.

I watched the IKD film on a small screen in a small room at IISH stacked with different audiovisual players spreading across many decades and formats. The film is stored in U-Matic format, currently a digital copy that warrants easier and wider accessibility does not exist. The film's journey into the Netherlands is not documented, nor is it possible to find any information on its making in the IKD's own documents, which have been published as an archive book.<sup>58</sup> My analysis of the film below is based on the materiality of the film as a migrant/displaced archival object, a 'material witness'<sup>59</sup> to the violent crackdown on progressive feminist women in Turkey, and subsequently as an actor in grassroots transnational political activism. In the face of lacking information on archival provenance, my analysis focuses on the documentary aesthetics of the film and its potency as a political tool.

As the film portrays the great march of women, it starts with an aerial shot of buses on the road, with red banners attached on at the front, painted with slogans. Then we cut to a static long shot showing crowds of women marching. There are a few of these static long shots and they are invigorating: thousands of women wearing red headbands fill the frame entirely, flowing in from above and out in the bottom—a dynamism worthy of aquatic metaphors. On the soundtrack we hear the slogans chanted by the women as they go: 'IKD will not be silenced! Down with the fascist junta!' These long shots are intercut with close-up images of leaders of the movement giving speeches at various stops along the way. At these moments, the sound shifts to diegetic, on-screen, simultaneous—giving us the opportunity to listen to single-take, uninterrupted fragments of the speech. This shows that the filmmakers probably wanted to get the message across, and the content of these speeches had political and organisational value.

There are also a few invigorating cinematic moments. One scene shows women taking a break, having lunch, and trying to freshen up on—what appears to be—a very warm day. Girls and women of all ages lie on the grass, chilling their feet in water reservoirs, babies are taken care of by groups of women—everything in this scene radiates feminist sisterhood and solidarity on a leisurely summer day. The soundtrack is lively with indiscernible chit-chat, birds chirping, and water running.

The peacefulness of this scene is in stark contrast with the following, in which the busses are stopped by the military police for an identity scan. In the days running up to the coup, such investigations by the police posed a significant threat and could escalate to arbitrary arrest. This scene in the documentary is totally silent. The choice to erase any sound could have been for practical reasons, for example to portray the deadly silence in the bus when the police walk in. Yet on a symbolic level, the absence of sound symbolizes the military regime's crackdown on freedom of expression, political organizing, and, here specifically, the imminent ban on the women's movement. The silence is broken by a mouthful of slogans in the next scene: 'Death to the fascist junta! IKD will not be silenced!'

The ending, showing the arrival of the groups in the capital Ankara, culminates in a celebration where the soundtrack from the concert invades the soundscape of the later scenes, where IKD members visit the minister. The words of the state have no place in the soundscape of the film. In the final scene, the slogans in the audio and flowing crowds of women in the image resonate powerfully. And when the screen fades to black, the slogans continue to reverberate in our ears. Based on its content and form—and this viewing experience—it could be argued that screening this documentary not only served informative purposes, to provide background information on the situation in Turkey and the political stance of IKD against the military coup. It probably also played an important role for its affective power to invigorate feelings of feminist solidarity with anti-fascist struggle. The crackdown on the IKD marks an important moment in the history of HTKB, as it instantly set in motion a certain transnational political action bound for Turkey, the so-called homeland, which overnight became unrecognisable and outright dangerous for many migrants living in the Netherlands, who now became exiles.

### **Video as feminist worldmaking**

In the course of my archival research, I happened to discover that, alongside video screenings, HTKB organised video classes as part of its educational programme to teach members how to make their own video films. Unfortunately, the information in the archival documents remains very limited. It is not clear when, how many times, and for how long these video classes were offered. In an internal evaluation meeting focusing on the activities of 1986-1987, it was noted that the video courses 'unfortunately' had to be discontinued 'despite great demand,' due to the unavailability of the instructor. The disappointment is clear from the tone. It was also stated that 'we will certainly try to



restart this project in due course.’<sup>60</sup> In another, undated document titled ‘Evaluation,’ it was noted that the ‘video group proved to be a great success,’ and that ‘the coming season the lessons have been expanded to a beginner’s group and an advanced group.’<sup>61</sup>

One folder in the archives contains a few surviving materials from the video class.<sup>62</sup> It remains unclear if these are the materials from the classes in question in the evaluation meeting mentioned earlier, or from a later module, if indeed the course was relaunched later. It is also not certain if these are from the beginners’ or advanced module, or a mix of documents surviving from both. From the neatness of the folder, it could be assumed that it compiles material from one class, as there is only one list of participants. The materials are scarce, but still, they provide some insight into the contents of the video class. From the surviving photocopied pages of a textbook, we understand that the series of lectures included basics of film grammar such as cinematography, mise-en-scène, editing, and narration, as well as scriptwriting. Furthermore, it seems HTKB also possessed a camcorder which members could borrow, as a sketched drawing spread on two pages explains the functions of buttons on a camcorder control panel.

Among these documents, I was struck to find pages of scripts, perhaps completed by members as an exercise for the scriptwriting component of the course. It could also be that they formed some sort of a finishing assignment, where the students could put into practice all the skills that they obtained throughout the module. It might be that they were required to write a short script and film it, using the camcorder. On the pages of one of these scripts, a handwritten note provides an amusing peek: ‘*Bu filme emeği geçenlere teşekkürler!*’ (‘Thanks to all those who worked on this film!’). The title of the script is *Hardwerkende Vrouw*, meaning *Hardworking Woman*! It’s unclear who wrote this joyfully self-reflexive small note, but it could be the filmmaker thanking all fellow members or class peers who appeared in her video. It could also be the congratulatory words of the lecturer, who, trying to be polite in a language that they did not master, might have ended up sounding overpolite, thus somewhat ironic. Would this tiny note suffice to argue that these scripts were actually filmed, and if so, where might the final products be safeguarded? If no films exist, does that make the notes less worthy of archival research and a place in the historiography of migrant women’s video production?

In the recent volume *Incomplete: The Feminist Possibilities of the Unfinished Film*, the editors Alix Beeston and Stefan Solomon argue for the value of studying unfinished films as a way of doing feminist media historiography. Unfinished films, defined in the broadest sense as ‘abandoned, interrupted, or lost,’ have been largely dismissed as ‘unworthy objects of study,’ or seen as ‘minor

works, of marginal importance to film history.<sup>63</sup> However, Beeston and Solomon argue that ‘unfinished projects (...) offer ideal sites for examining the lived experiences, practical conditions, and institutional realities of film production and consumption.’<sup>64</sup> As such, they stress that studying the incomplete, abandoned, interrupted, lost, amateur, or never-produced films is a form of doing feminist film historiography par excellence, because ‘feminist film historiography itself is an unfinished project, an ongoing and active process that maps out ineluctable gap-ridden knowledge of the past in the terrain of the present.’<sup>65</sup> The archival gaps and silences –or in this specific case of Turkish migrant women’s media history, the incomplete archives– are not reasons to turn away from historiography. Rather, they might better be seen as ‘prompting multiple narratives, none of which can ever pretend to exhaustiveness.’<sup>66</sup>

Earlier in this section, I demonstrated this approach by using the ‘could be’s’ and ‘might be’s’ which are the grammatical markers of possible pasts that are impossible to evidence within the boundaries of archival presences.<sup>67</sup> Here, with this method in mind, I want to go back to the scripts for analysis. In total, there are three surviving in this folder on videomaking classes. It could be said that they all concern daily life situations encountered by migrant women in the Netherlands. In that sense, they provide valuable insight into self-representation. Even though they might be written for a video course, they could be seen as bearing the traces of what they considered important, under-represented, or simply fun. For example, one script portrays an instance of a young Turkish girl at a job interview; another one spotlights gender inequality by showing a woman coming home from work yet having to cook, while the husband is watching television and infuriatingly asking when the food will be ready; and another just chooses to focus on a light-hearted lunch appointment between two women, ending with an image of empty tableware, which could be indexing the pleasurable time spent eating, drinking, socializing. Despite being fragmented, these three pieces of surviving script scribbled in handwriting provide fascinating insight into the lived experiences of migrant women in the Netherlands. They encourage us to think about the possibilities of what they might have chosen to represent should they had the tools for self-representation. In the words of Gaines, this exercise to attend to the gaps in registered knowledge makes one wonder ‘what could have been’ if conditions had been different.<sup>68</sup> For instance, what if more women had had wider access to self-representation? What if film education and production had been more inclusive and accessible? What if the archives of migrant political organisations were considered worthy of institutional preservation by state archives? What if those video tapes had survived? What if...?

Despite archival gaps and silences, piecing together the surviving documents encourages us to imagine that the video classes might have been one way for women to produce their own audiovisual content to screen at political trainings, formation meetings, and/or social events. It could also be that the videomaking was inspired by other video (activist) collectives that HTKB came in contact with, including the feminist film collective Cinemien, Cineclub Vrijheidsfilms, the Palestinian feminist video activist group (which screened their own videos on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1989), and ‘Black women’s video collective Sensimlia’ (which took part in 8<sup>th</sup> March 1987).<sup>69</sup>

In the HTKB archives, there are other, more developed scripts, although it remains unclear if these were penned as film or television projects, or potentially as stage or theatre performances.<sup>70</sup> They seem unrelated to the video classes; they were stored in another folder. It could also be that they were accompanying texts for slide shows, which are mentioned a few times in the documents—for instance, in the minutes of preparation meetings for cultural events and training modules. Considering the scene-by-scene structure and the handwritten consecutive numbers on each scene, this seems a likely possibility. Unfortunately, there are no slides surviving from these shows in the archives, and the questions remain as to what topics were portrayed in these slide sets, what they looked like, and how slide shows were performed with live narration.

This second group of scripts (for the sake of clarity, I will stick to ‘script’ here) contains different styles. One document comprises a series of short scenes or skits, which concern particularly young girls (*meisjes*) and daily instances that they might find themselves in—for example at school, in the street market, cinema and/or walking on the street at night. Another document contains descriptions of 13 scenes in total, which tell a single story, again focusing on the difficulties faced by two young girls growing up in a Turkish ‘guest worker’ family. The descriptions narrate less the visual aesthetics than the key idea and emotions that should be portrayed in each scene, giving fascinating insights into what was considered important, striking, and affective in these attempts at self-representation. The scenes depict nuanced daily situations, such as microaggressions faced by young migrant girls at school, the patriarchal power of the father exerting increasing domination as the girls come of age, and the lack of a social support network should girls encounter emotionally and socially challenging situations. Eventually the protagonist, one of the two sisters, decides to study law as an outcome of her voluntary work as a translator in a women’s collective during free walk-in hours for legal consultancy. Clearly the young girl protagonist is influenced by, or perhaps modelled on, one of the HTKB members. This document is the only one marked clearly with a date: ‘Amsterdam Istanbul 1983.’

The last document in this folder contains a comment indicating that it is a film project. In this treatment, the protagonist is again a young girl who comes to the Netherlands within the framework of family reunion and struggles to adapt to social life with difficulties at school, the language barrier being one major obstacle. The story is about her struggling to negotiate ‘two cultures’ as the morale is foreseen as ‘integration into a society while keeping your own identity.’ The treatment clearly states that the protagonist is modelled on the real-life experiences of such young girls with whom HTKB came into contact. These instances are reminders to avoid fixed notions of cultural identity when looking at this heritage from the present.

Although the dates are uncertain, for HTKB, reaching out to ‘young girls’ became an increasingly important topic in early 1980s. The word *meisjes* seems to be used as a shortcut to describe at least two groups: The school-age daughters of labour migrants, who were brought to the Netherlands usually within the legal framework of family reunion; and later on, the second generation who were born in the Netherlands to Turkish parents. The intersectional analysis was thus expanded to include the category of age. One goal for HTKB was to reach out to these young women and support them to break out of their isolation and empower them to become independent. These projects might have had an aim of reinforcing this goal, especially considering the importance attributed to film as effective outreach media.

As the video classes and the other production materials such as the scripts for potential film and/or television show, self-representation became an increasingly important issue to spotlight the specific experiences of migrant working-class women. Considering the fact that these scripts are modelled on the real-life situations that Turkish migrant women faced, it could be argued that the scripts convey an intersectional perspective that aimed to make visible these unknown, unheard, untold experiences.

### **Reclaiming the televisual heritage**

While the final products of these scripts cannot be found, there are a few television documentaries that arguably correspond to aims of self-representation spotlighting the intersectional experience of migrant worker women challenging stereotypical imagings. In these documentaries, there is a clear intention to give as much screen time and space as possible to the words, stories, and experiences of HTKB members. This section shifts the focus from unfinished, unrealised, incomplete, abandoned projects to broadcast programmes preserved in the television archives of the Netherlands.

My archival encounters at IISH have prompted a deeper study of archival finds at NISV concerning Turkish women. In HTKB documents, there are a few instances that record correspondence with television producers. These examples contain producers approaching HTKB for coverage, or HTKB members discussing the value of using television coverage to spread their message. While it remains uncertain what these correspondences led to, I was intrigued to watch each documentary that my queries yielded at the NISV. At the end of this process, I selected two documentaries which stood out for their distinctive coverage of Turkish migrant women, clearly subverting and transgressing stereotypes.

The first is an outstanding documentary about HTKB from 1981: *Ot ... en hoe zit het nou met Sien? - De slechte positie van Turkse vrouwen in Nederland (Ot... and what about Sien? – The terrible position of Turkish women in the Netherlands)*.<sup>71</sup> It is structured as a visit to the HTKB office, in the form of a friendly chit-chat with its members from various age groups. The camera is in constant close-up, slowly panning from one face to another, as each woman gets to introduce themselves. Ranging from their early twenties to forties, from young women to mothers with kids, from first to second generation migrants, from urban to provincial backgrounds, the group represents the rich diversity of migrant women from Turkey living in the Netherlands. As such, the documentary effectively touches upon the specific issues and challenges encountered by each of them, bringing a wide array of political agenda points to the table.

For example, representing the young girls that HTKB aimed to reach, one interviewee describes how, as a child, she was left behind in Turkey with her grandparents as the rest of the family migrated to the Netherlands for work. Her case highlights the situation of young girls who were disadvantaged in the traditional hierarchy of the family and were thus only brought to the Netherlands when they were old enough to work. ‘Do you like it here?’ asks the interviewer in Dutch, instilling a freezing silence. The interviewee responds in a timid voice, ‘If I say no, then you’ll get terrible reactions. If I say yes, I’d be lying but everybody will be content. To be honest, there is no way I can answer this question.’ The uncomfortable feeling surrounding this brief exchange attests to the experience of women of colour with racism and discrimination – a theme that stood out in the scripts analysed earlier. HTKB positioned itself as an anti-racist organisation, and actively took part in anti-racism and anti-discrimination events, in addition to building solidarity with other women of colour organisations and collectives.<sup>72</sup>

Another interviewee, named Leyla, brings up her experiences to highlight another important point in HTKB's political agenda: the struggle for independent residence permits for women. Leyla explains the situation to the interviewer in everyday language: upon following her husband to the Netherlands, a woman receives a residence permit that explicitly states the status as family reunion, in other words, 'to stay with' her husband. Thus, she is made fully dependent on her husband and her husband's residence status. She describes the potential problems:

The law allows women to apply for an independent permit after three years. If something happens in these first three years, let's say if he abandons her, divorces her, or passes away, this leaves the woman in a difficult situation about her residence status. This would mean, she would have to simply go back to Turkey, or Morocco.

The interviewer asks, with evident curiosity, 'What about if *she* wants to divorce?' Leyla replies, 'In that case, the woman has to prove that she has work. The best thing a woman can do in this case is to try to get a residence permit that is attached to her work status.'

In a modest span of 20 minutes, the group interview touches upon questions of motherhood, absence of childcare facilities, language barriers, limited access to education, patriarchal dominance at home and in family, the high rate of illiteracy, and the worrisome situation in Turkey following the military coup. While the women do not agree on all discussion points and take different positions in the debate, they effectively spell out the link between these problems and the disempowerment of women. HTKB aimed at breaking this circle. With the polyphony of different voices, perspectives, languages that it brought together under its roof, the organisation's most important objective was women's liberation, i.e., the empowerment of migrant women through giving them the tools to build their own independence.

How to build this independence? How to empower migrant working-class women whose experiences at school, family, workplace, and whose legal position, were different from those of Dutch women, including Dutch working-class women? Another documentary, in the series of *Medelanders Nederlanders*, shines the spotlight on the importance of self-organisation in the struggle for liberation. Let us pause and rewind to the introduction of this article, to the medium long shot of a young woman pensively staring into water. Surrounded by the rustling leaves of trees, with building blocks catching the viewer's eye far in the background, the woman turns to the camera closing in on



her face and starts singing: ‘We come from very far, very far.’ Her song is based on a poem by Nâzım Hikmet, an internationally renowned poet and playwright, who has been arrested and banished from Turkey for being a member of the Turkish Communist Party. Migration, exile, and the relentless fight for a better future are key themes in Nâzım Hikmet’s literary work. Hikmet considered himself to be the poet of the oppressed: ‘I am the poet of a particular class in industrial society. I speak of the problems, sufferings, and needs of that class.’<sup>73</sup> From this perspective, the young woman’s song not only signals her ‘otherness.’ i.e. coming from very far, but also her working-class position. In its brief prologue, the documentary poetically stages a lyrical encounter with a young migrant woman worker. Although admittedly the image may be experienced as opaque by viewers who do not speak the language or recognise the poetry of Nâzım Hikmet, this opaqueness only simulates a disinterested encounter: One that is unable to see beyond the stereotype. However, the documentary will gradually break this opaqueness. It will introduce the viewer to the world of one such young migrant woman worker and her daily routine, lending a generous ear to her story of struggle and emancipation. This narrative structure of the documentary thus moves from staging an encounter quoting stereotypical iconography towards undermining it.

After this short musical prologue, the documentary cuts to the façade of an atelier. A few young men are exiting its doors. It is the end of the workday. The scene is reminiscent of one of cinema’s earliest memories: workers leaving the factory. A young woman jumps on her bike, and rides to the train station. We hear her monologue on the voiceover: ‘I’ve been working in this confectionary for 7 years. I was 16 years old when I started. I came to the Netherlands when I was 15.’ Being young, a migrant, a worker, and a woman at the same time plays into the story of our protagonist. This short documentary portrays her story of breaking her isolation, negotiating her migrant identity, and feeling empowered after finding out about HTKB. Here again, the intersectional perspective is effectively at play.

At its core, this fascinating documentary spotlights the inefficiency of state-sanctioned projects aiming at the ‘integration’ and ‘adaptation’ of migrant women, such as *buurthuizen* (neighbourhood centres). It is made clear that that these are projects fabricated without actual contact with migrant women, without lending an ear to their needs. Neighbourhood centres may provide language classes and sewing courses, which to some extent help address issues of language barrier and isolation, but they are not designed to ‘liberate’ women through empowering them, giving them a sense of community, a social network of care. For HTKB, this was a key objective, distinct from state-sanctioned projects of integration.

One scene in the documentary portrays a visit to the neighbourhood centre, where a Turkish woman is interviewed about sewing classes. She praises such opportunities provided by the state, yet in the voiceover the protagonist gives a critical perspective, contrasting the top-to-bottom versus bottom-up approach: ‘Of course, these courses are very important, in the sense that they provide some useful skills. However, in women’s self-organisations, there is more. In their own organisations women themselves give shape to the courses, events, activities. Raising awareness is key.’ She explains how she came across HTKB and appreciated this approach: ‘HTKB has its own office, and women can just walk in whenever they want. We try to help them, but more importantly we aim to empower them so that they can stand up for themselves and fight their problems.’

In the scene that follows, the co-founder of HTKB, Maviye Karaman, underlines the specificity of issues faced by women migrant workers, and for this reason, she points to the benefits of self-organisation: ‘HTKB is an organisation set up by Turkish women for Turkish women.’ In an iconic speech, Karaman explains how migrant women workers in the Netherlands are discriminated against on three grounds: as women, as migrants, and as workers. As the documentary concludes, its emphasis on self-representation and self-organisation as indispensable political tools is evident.

These two television documentaries effectively portray the importance the Turkish migrant women’s movement attached to these political tools in its first decade of activism. The question of whether they were made by Turkish women themselves fails to pinpoint their relevance and importance. Further research into the making of these documentaries could shed light on valuable background information about the relationship between the filmmaker and the filmed. However, looking exclusively at the documentary aesthetics, something akin to what Trinh T. Minh-ha calls ‘speaking nearby’ could be observed here: a close collaboration and coexistence of the filmmaker and the filmed extending from the pre-production to filming phases.<sup>74</sup>

When it comes to the televisual heritage, there are other examples that speak to different facets and aims. For example, the series ‘Bizim İçin’ (‘For Us’) was produced by teleac (an abbreviation of ‘television academy’), providing televised educational content for migrant women in their own language. It would be worthwhile researching the main topics and themes as well as the production conditions of this series in relation to the context of migrant women’s feminist activism and its televisual heritage. Similarly, the programme *Paspoort* (Passport), which was broadcast from 1974 to 1993 on national television, produced content for labour migrants in their own language, including Moroccan, Turkish, Italian, and Castilian Spanish. Here again, questions remain as to how these

programmes used, reclaimed, or appropriated the small screen for migrant women's political activism and organisation. As my ongoing archival research has shown, the televisual heritage of this activism seems broad and fascinatingly entangled with other media practices and initiatives of migrant, displaced, exiled, diasporic communities; yet deeper engagement with this heritage remains to be explored in academic research and public discourse.

### **Conclusion: incomplete feminist media histories**

Using 'screen memories' in the title, this article has aimed to spotlight the audiovisual heritage of the Turkish migrant women's movement in the Netherlands. Screen memories, in the broadest sense, refer to the extant images surviving in the archives *as well as* those that have been lost, are waiting to be recovered, and were left unfinished or unrealised for a range of financial, political, psychological, or aesthetic reasons. Screen memories are thus potent *images* of the past as much as *imaginings* of a possible future. The term 'memory' is a deliberate choice to evoke the counter-memory potential and potency of these audiovisual items. Not only humans, but objects also hold memories.

Based on these findings, I have argued for a reconceptualisation of 'audiovisual heritage' to include unfinished film projects, scribbled scripts, drafted treatments, abandoned cinematic ideas, which never transpired into screen media in the strictest sense. Inspired by the recent scholarship compiled in the volume *Incomplete: The Feminist Possibilities of the Unfinished Film*, this perspective opens up promising possibilities for a new media historiography of migrant, displaced, and exiled women's political movements. Considering the archival paucity when it comes to the media activism of migrant working-class women, such an approach is crucial to enabling the telling of these histories.

In light of this perspective, I analysed three cases of screen memories from Dutch archives. First, I analysed a finished film that was screened to mobilise transnational feminist solidarity across the national borders of the Netherlands against the violence of the military regime in Turkey. Second, I shifted the focus from the 'screened film' to the production and process of making films, spotlighting video classes as claiming control over representation. In that section, I contended that unfinished projects and scribbled scripts manifested the intersectional thinking in migrant working-class women's attempts at self-representation, although they possibly never made their way onto a screen in the strictest sense. The archival material that I used in the analysis of these two cases are

based on the organisation's own archives that are preserved at IISH. Third, moving onto strictly screen media, I investigated the archival presences of Turkish women's feminist activism in the Dutch national television archives (NISV) and examined two broadcast documentaries that aesthetically used the television screen to stage an encounter with the Turkish migrant women that made visible the intersectional dynamics that underlay the feminist activism of HTKB as a political organisation. Here, the screen functioned as an intermediate space whereby such an encounter was constructed to undermine the stereotypical images circulated across other media, reclaiming the television screen as a tool for outreach.

Although a major institution such as the NISV archives contains an abundance of televisual images of Turkish migrant women, screen presences of their intersectional activism remain limited. Furthermore, the images produced *by* Turkish migrant women —in other words, instances of self-representation— are scarce, though this could be partially due to the absence of relevant metadata. Furthermore, a reconsideration of 'authorship'<sup>75</sup> and 'production' might reveal more instances and allow for the acknowledgement of the creative agency of multiple actors, including the women who have been filmed. Trinh T. Minh-ha's concept of 'speaking nearby' is valuable here to overcome the impasse of a limited understanding of auteurism, one that is critiqued by feminist filmmakers as 'oppressive' for downplaying 'how the film is made' and circulated.<sup>76</sup>

The documentaries that I analysed showcase the potentials of this approach, as they mostly combine observatory and participatory modes that prioritize the agency of the women on the screen and their own words. Surely, more research into the production process of these documentaries could explore these dynamics further, through, for example, archival research into 'avant-texts' of these documentaries, such as correspondences, outlines, treatments, or scripts. In the absence of such material, other practices of research, such as oral history, could explore and preserve personal recollections around these screen memories. As such, they could activate lived memories beyond the surviving images in the archives.<sup>77</sup>

Following from this point, last but not least, screen memories point to the pivotal role of *activating* this audiovisual heritage in the present by making it accessible, visible, and audible in the public sphere. Essentially, the question is first and foremost *how* to activate them. How do we mobilise these pasts in a way that goes beyond the simplistic gesture of 'they existed'? While it's important to reveal the existence of past struggles, as Keith Tribe contended, we also need to ask how to move beyond a simple revelation of new findings.<sup>78</sup> While there is value in rediscovering these untold histories, Gaines points to the cruciality

of *how* to tell them in the present in a way that teaches us about our current world. Gaines' claim that 'the difficulty is to know how to tell these women's stories without telling them,' emphasizes the dangers of narrativizing and immobilising them in their pastness.<sup>79</sup>

Screen memories, when mobilised as an encounter —an encounter with the archival presences (extant images, surviving records), as much as absences, silences, and gaps — might prompt multiple narratives about 'what could have happened' as much as 'what happened'. As such, it does not aim at filling in the gaps and silences as a mere 'lost-and-found project.' It is rather an acknowledgement of feminist media historiography as an unfinished project, an 'ongoing and active process that maps our ineluctably gap-ridden knowledge of the past in the terrain of the present.'<sup>80</sup> This article, as it partakes in this ongoing and active process of feminist media historiography, geared towards mobilising the audiovisual heritage of Turkish women's movement in the Netherlands via fragmentary archives, aborted projects, minor and migratory film objects, as well as little-known television documentaries is, in many ways, incomplete. Yet, it makes a modest contribution to rewriting and remembering this history, 'not merely as a corrective to the gaps, erasures, and misunderstandings' in the hegemonic historiographies and archival practices with a past-oriented approach. Rather, through remembering and rewriting these bits of forgotten feminist histories, it aims to stimulate *in the now* imaginations for future feminist worldmaking.

To conclude with the beautiful words by Balsom and Peleg that resonate with this undertaking: there is a certain thrill of 'immersing oneself in the work of fascinating women, to talk about them, to write about them, to share their films, and of being changed by these experiences.'<sup>81</sup> The audiovisual heritage of migrant, displaced, diasporic, exiled women, in the scope of this article, 'pose[s] challenges to the dominant logic of the archive itself, to its criteria of inclusion and exclusion.'<sup>82</sup> Studying and spotlighting this heritage is not a project of rewriting an incomplete past, but of imagining ways to safeguard *the now* —and more nows to come.

## Notes

1. *Medelanders Nederlanders: Turken -3- Esmâ in Nederland*. April 28, 1984. *Sound and Vision*, Hilversum, The Netherlands.
2. "Medelanders Nederlanders" in *Beeld en Geluid Wiki*. [https://wiki.beeldengeluid.nl/index.php/Medelanders\\_Nederlanders\\_\(tv\)](https://wiki.beeldengeluid.nl/index.php/Medelanders_Nederlanders_(tv)).

3. Erika Balsom and Hila Peleg, eds., *Feminist Worldmaking and the Moving Image* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2022), 21.
4. Enrico Carocci, "A counterpublic sphere? Women's film festivals and the case of Films de Femmes," *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 23(4), (2016): 447-453.
5. Carocci, "A counterpublic sphere?," 448.
6. Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema" in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 36.
7. Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema," 36.
8. See for example; "Vrouwenfestival" in *De Volkskrant*, September 16, 1977; *De Telegraaf*, February 16, 1979.
9. "Vier maanden lang vrouwenfilms" *De Volkskrant*, January 4, 1980.
10. Margreth Lünenborg and Elfriede Fürsich, "Media and the Intersectional Other: The complex negotiation of migration, gender, and class on German television", *Feminist Media Studies* 14:6 (2014): 961.
11. Andrea Meuzelaar, "The Emergence and Persistence of Racialised Stereotypes on Dutch Television: Tracing the History of Representation of Muslim Immigrants along the Archival Grain," *VIEW: Journal of European Television History and Culture* 10, no. 20 (2021). <https://viewjournal.eu/articles/10.18146/view.268/>.
12. Meuzelaar, "The Emergence and Persistence of Racialised Stereotypes on Dutch Television."
13. Balsom and Peleg, *Feminist Worldmaking*, 27.
14. Balsom and Peleg, *Feminist Worldmaking*, 28.
15. Balsom and Peleg, *Feminist Worldmaking*, 28.
16. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" in *Transatlantic Literary Studies: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 131-138.
17. Aslı Özgen, "Unsettling borders of archives: Activating the audiovisual heritage of the Turkish community in the Netherlands." *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture* 24: Special Issue on Re-Bordering the Archive (2023). <https://viewjournal.eu/articles/10.18146/view.308>.
18. Since the migration from Turkey to the Netherlands spread over a few decades, the heterogeneity and diversity of the group poses a challenge for the terminology. Seeing identity as a shifting phenomenon rather than a fixed determinant, I prefer to use 'from Turkey' rather than 'Turkish' to signal the diversity of ethnic and religious groups.
19. Pieter Ouderwater, "Maviye Karaman: Een Turks-Nederlandse marxistische feministe" in *Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis 29: Zenobia, Khadija en Dolle Amina's; Gender en macht in de islamistische geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2009), 185.



20. Onderwater, “Maviye Karaman”, 185.
21. bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 231-232.
22. bell hooks, *Reel to Real: Race, Class and Sex at the Movies* (London: Routledge, 1996), 3.
23. Özgen, “Unsettling borders of archives”.
24. Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 3.
25. Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*, 7.
26. Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*, 2.
27. Stefanie Schulte Strathaus and Vinzenz Hediger, *Accidental Archivism Shaping Cinema’s Futures with Remnants of the Past*. (Lüneburg: meson press, 2023), 16.
28. Balsom and Peleg, *Feminist Worldmaking*, 20.
29. Özgen, “Unsettling borders of archives”.
30. Nancy N. Chen, “‘Speaking Nearby:’ A Conversation with Trinh T. Minh-ha,” *Visual Anthropology Review* 8 (1992): 82-91. See also; Jay Ruby, “Speaking For, Speaking About, Speaking With, or Speaking Alongside — An Anthropological and Documentary Dilemma,” *Visual Anthropology Review* 7 (1991): 50-67.
31. In 1982-1983, the cleaning workers of Tuschinski Film Theatre in Amsterdam were handed over to an intermediary company, which meant a worsening of their work conditions and leading to a conflict. HTKB was an important actor to support and organise women workers in their struggle for their rights and better working conditions. See “Stukken betreffende de actie van schoonmaaksters van Theater Tuschinski” Folder no: 266. HTKB Archive, IISH, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
32. Özgen, “Unsettling borders of archives”.
33. Mohanty quoted in Balsom and Peleg, *Feminist Worldmaking*, 32.
34. Nancy Jouwe, “The Black, Migrant & Refugee Women’s Movement in the Netherlands: Standing at the Crossroads,” *Historica* 3 (2016): 3-8.
35. Jouwe, “Standing at the Crossroads,” 4.
36. Jouwe, “Standing at the Crossroads,” 4.
37. Özgen and Rongen-Kaynakçı, “The Transnational Archive,” 78.
38. Özgen and Rongen- Kaynakçı, “The Transnational Archive,” 78.
39. Susan Bink, “Mapping Minorities and their Media: The National Context – The Netherlands”, (n.d.: Mira Media). <https://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EMTEL/Minorities/papers/> (Netherlandsreport).
40. Verne Harris, *Ghosts of Archive: Deconstructive Intersectionality and Praxis* (London: Routledge, 2021), 2.

41. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 7.
42. Jane M. Gaines, *Pink-Slipped: What happened to women in the silent film industries?* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018), 3.
43. Allyson Nadia Field, "Editor's Introduction," *Feminist Media Histories* 8:2 (2022), 1.
44. Field, "Editor's Introduction," 2.
45. Field quotes here from Saidiya Hartman with reference to Michel Rolph Trouillot. See: Field, "Editor's Introduction," 3.
46. Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 26, no. 2 (June 2008): 11. [author's emphasis].
47. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 12.
48. See for example the double special issue of *Feminist media histories* on speculative approaches to media histories: Allyson Nadia Field, ed., *Feminist Media Histories* 8:2 and 8:3 (2022).
49. "Agenda's en notulen van het Algemeen Bestuur en het Dagelijks Bestuur" Folder No: 1-2. HTKB Archive, IISH, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
50. "Stukken betreffende 8 Maart vieringen" Folder no: 258-259. HTKB Archive, IISH, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
51. "Bestuursvergaderingen" Folder No: 1-5. HTKB Archive, IISH, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
52. "Notulen van vergaderingen en andere stukken betreffende de werkzaamheden van de Adviesraad 1984-1985" Folder no: 12. HTKB Archive, IISH, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Also see "IKD Filmi", HTIB Archive, IISH, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Call no: <https://hdl.handle.net/10622/B6EDBFBB-8036-4ECA-AA08-7E223E844DF7>
53. HTIB stands for *Hollanda Türkiyeli İşçiler Birliği*, which translates as the Association of Workers from Turkey in the Netherlands, and in Dutch it is known as *De Vereniging van Arbeiders uit Turkije*.
54. For more information on this march, please see Muazzez Pervan, ed., *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği (1975-1980)*, (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Publishing, 2013), specifically 533–545.
55. Şeyda Talu, "Tarih Bilinciyle Kazanılan Bir Arşiv," in Muazzez Pervan, ed., *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği (1975-1980)*, (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Publishing, 2013), xii-xiv.
56. Şeyda Talu, "Tarih Bilinciyle Kazanılan Bir Arşiv," xii-xiv.
57. "Overige solidariteitsactiviteiten met Turkije" Folder no: 310-312. HTKB Archive, IISH, Amsterdam: The Netherlands.
58. Muazzez Pervan, ed., *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği (1975-1980)* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Publishing, 2013).

59. Introduced by Susan Schuppli, the concept of *material witness* explores the ‘evidential role of matter as registering external events as well as exposing the practices and procedures that enable such matter to bear witness.’ In the words of Schuppli, *material witnesses* are ‘nonhuman entities and machinic ecologies that archive their complex interactions with the world, producing ontological transformations and informatic dispositions that can be forensically decoded and reassembled back into a history.’ See: Susan Schuppli, *Material Witness: Media, Forensics, Evidence* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2020), 3.
60. See: “Evaluatie 1986-1987” in “Notulen gezamenlijke vergaderingen van bestuur en steunkomite 1982-85” Folder no: 13, HTKB Archive, IISH, Amsterdam: The Netherlands: ‘Videocursus is helaas gestopt, omdat de begeleidster wegens drukke werkzaamheden elders niet langer kan doorgaan. Er was voldoende belangstelling en we zullen zeker proberen tot dit projekt t.z.t. opnieuw te starten.’
61. See: “Evaluatie” in “Notulen gezamenlijke vergaderingen van bestuur en steunkomite 1982-85” Folder no: 13, HTKB Archive, IISH, Amsterdam: The Netherlands: ‘video groep is een groot succes gebleken. Het komende seizoen zijn de lessen uitgebreid tot een beginnersgroep en een gevorderde groep.’
62. “Stukken betreffende video- en computerlessen voor Turkse vrouwen” Folder no: 238. HTKB Archive, IISH, Amsterdam: The Netherlands.
63. Alix Beeston and Stefan Solomon, ed., *Incomplete: The Feminist Possibilities of the Unfinished Film* (California: University of California Press, 2023), 10.
64. Beeston and Solomon, *Incomplete*, 11.
65. Beeston and Solomon, *Incomplete*, 10.
66. Beeston and Solomon, *Incomplete*, 12.
67. Beeston and Solomon, *Incomplete*, 24.
68. Jane M. Gaines, “Never,” in *Incomplete: The Feminist Possibilities of the Unfinished Film*, ed. Alix Beeston and Stefan Solomon (California: University of California Press, 2023), 39–61.
69. See: “Stukken betreffende 8 maart vieringen,” Folder no: 258, *HTKB Archive*, IISH, Amsterdam.
70. See: “Notulen gezamenlijke vergaderingen van bestuur en steunkomite 1982-85,” Folder no: 13, *HTKB Archive*, IISH, Amsterdam.
71. “OT ... EN HOE ZIT HET NOU MET SIEN? - De slechte positie van Turkse vrouwen in Nederland,” January 25, 1981, *Sound and Vision*, Hilversum, The Netherlands.
72. In the archival documents, we see recurring correspondence with *Anti-fascisme Komitee Oosterpark* in the early 1980s about taking part in anti-racism and discrimination themed events organised regularly in Oosterpark Amsterdam. See: *HTKB Archive*, IISH, Amsterdam.

73. Talât Sait Halman, “Nâzım Hikmet: Lyricist as Iconoclast,” *Books Abroad* 43, no. 1 (1969): 61.
74. See: Nancy N. Chen, “Speaking Nearby”; Isabel Segù, “Between Nearness and Incommensurability: Andean Women’s Documentaries in 1980s,” in *Feminist Worldmaking and the Moving Image* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2022), 91-117.
75. Balsom and Peleg, *Feminist Worldmaking*, 21.
76. Balsom and Peleg, *Feminist Worldmaking*, 21.
77. In an earlier article (see: “Unsettling borders of archives”), I argued for the value of the mutual process ‘communities activating the archive’ and ‘communities being activated by the archive’ with inspiration from Bonaventure Soh Bejend Ndikung. As of writing this article, I am working on a community event project, which will simulate an encounter between archival objects and community members. My wider research is driven by the question, can these encounters enrich archival provenance? How to store in archives the interactions between communities and archival objects? Can we integrate communities ‘speaking back’ to archives in archival workflows and procedures? Furthermore, there is currently an oral history project led by Saskia Moerbeek tracing the first generation of women migrants from the Turkish Republic and Morocco. The recordings of this project are set to be safeguarded at Atria. These provide invaluable additions for the present feminist historiographical undertaking to explore counter-histories and counter-memories of women of colour in the Netherlands.
78. Keith Tribe quoted in Jane M. Gaines, “Film History and the Two Presents of Feminist Film Theory,” *Cinema Journal* 44:1 (2004): 113-119.
79. Jane M. Gaines, “Film History and the Two Presents of Feminist Film Theory,” 117.
80. Beeston and Solomon, ed., *Incomplete*, 10.
81. Balsom and Peleg, *Feminist Worldmaking*, 32.
82. Balsom and Peleg, *Feminist Worldmaking*, 32.

## Biography

**Asli Özgen** is an assistant professor of media and culture at the University of Amsterdam. Rooted in intersectional feminist and decolonial praxis, her current research focuses on the audiovisual memory of contested pasts, as well as archival and activist practices concerning diasporic film heritages.

Presently, she is working on a book about the audiovisual heritage of migration from Turkey to the Netherlands, with a particular emphasis on the political uses of film in (international and transnational) solidarity networks, as well as the archival status of this material.

**TMG Journal for Media History**

Volume 27 No (1)/2024

**DOI**

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18146/tmg.871>

**PUBLISHER**

Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision

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