

**Imagining Freedom. A Conversation with Mohammad Rasoulof**

edited by Dario Cecchi

This conversation with Mohammad Rasoulof examines freedom as the central concern of artistic practice under censorship. Distinguishing between freedom from external control and freedom as the capacity to act, the conversation shows how both are constrained in a totalitarian system that shapes perception and suppresses truth. Rasoulof's cinema constructs spaces where characters confront decisive choices, staging freedom as an existential and ethical act. Metaphor evolves from a protective device into a means of revealing alternative possibilities of life. Artistic creation thus becomes inseparable from resistance: even silence is political, and filmmaking turns into a practice through which individual and collective freedom can be imagined, asserted, and enacted despite systemic repression.

**The Destiny of Freedom**

Roberto De Gaetano

The essay traces the evolution of freedom from ancient tragedy to the modern novel and comedy. In Greek tragedy, freedom coincides with accepting necessity and destiny; with Christianity and modernity, will and responsibility become central, making action ethically imputable. Modern tragedy absorbs guilt, while the novel exposes the illusion of individual autonomy, revealing freedom as mediated and often negative. Comedy, instead, stages liberation through social reconciliation or, in its purest form, affirms a radical, pre-volitional freedom coinciding with life itself.

**Aesthetic Freedom and Improvisation**

Alessandro Bertinotto

This article examines aesthetic freedom through artistic improvisation. Beyond mere rule-breaking or self-legislation, improvisation shows freedom as the situated practice of generating and transforming norms in performance. Against the view that habits limit freedom, it argues that embodied skills are plastic and enabling conditions of agency. Improvisation is neither creation

ex nihilo nor repetition, but a practice where freedom is enacted, tested, and renewed in interaction.

### **The Freedom to not Conform: Traces of an Italian Nouvelle Vague**

Davide Tovani

While the collective momentum of the late-1950s and early-1960s New Waves did not fully emerge in Italy, already shaped by Neorealism, this essay argues that traces of a similar impulse can be found in 1960s Italian cinema. Through a selection of often overlooked films, it highlights forms of cultural and generational freedom expressed in both theme and style, revealing the subversive energy at their core.

### **Margins of Freedom: bell hooks and Certain Contemporary Artistic Practices**

Gianpaolo Cacciottolo

Among the most incisive voices of international feminism, bell hooks links race, gender, and the body to a broader reflection on individual freedom. Her thought resonates with contemporary art practices that address exclusion and marginalization. This paper explores connections between hooks and artists such as Theaster Gates, Simone Leigh, Carrie Mae Weems, and Tania Bruguera, focusing on blackness, home as resistance, and teaching as a practice of freedom.

### **Beyond Reasonable Doubt: Freedom and Justice in True Crime Series**

Diletta Cenni

In recent years, true crime has become central in Western media, yet remains understudied. This article reads its contemporary evolution through freedom as a narrative and participatory category. Tracing a shift from alignment with judicial power to critiques of wrongful convictions, it analyzes *Serial*, *Making a Murderer*, and *Il caso Yara*. It argues that platforms foster counter-narratives and civic engagement, while questioning the limits imposed by the “Netflix model.”

## **The “Camera in Hand”: Carole Roussopoulos’ Videographic Practice** Simone Cangelosi

This essay explores the work of Carole Roussopoulos (1945–2009), videomaker and founder of the French collective Vidéo Out. From the 1970s, she documented feminist, workers’, anti-imperialist, and LGBTQ+ struggles, teaching activists to use video and screening films in public spaces. In 1982 she co-founded the Centre Audiovisuel Simone de Beauvoir. Her *vidéo légère* embodied the 1968 utopia of counter-information, challenging TV monopolies and amplifying marginalized voices.

## **What Can an Image Do?: On Contemporary Political Cinema** Dario Cecchi

This article reconstructs the historical–philosophical roots of political cinema, from Friedrich Schiller’s aesthetic education to Immanuel Kant. Freedom emerges not as a theme but as a structural feature of art. Following Pietro Montani, political cinema is a paradigm reshaping public space and spectatorship. Engaging Giorgio Agamben, it argues that contemporary cinema, especially in crises, stages freedom as a shared, unfinished possibility.

## **Three Colors – Blue: Chromophony of Feeling** Luca Venzi

This essay aims to explore chromophony in *Three Colors: Blue* by Krzysztof Kieślowski. Through a rigorous interplay of blue, black, and white with recurring musical motifs, color and sound detach from objects to become autonomous expressive forces. In their vertical convergence, image and music render grief audiovisually perceptible, shaping an abstract form of feeling and the fragile and liberated possibility of renewed life.

## **Plural Meaning: Freedom and Editing in Péter Forgács’ Cinema** Ambra Benvenuto

This essay reads Péter Forgács’s *Wittgenstein Tractatus* (1992) as an essay film where freedom is both form and concept: freedom from prescriptive narration and to open interpretation. Through modular montage and found footage, it disrupts linearity, restoring images’ potentiality. Recurrent gestu-

res invite active spectatorship, staging meaning as an open process between images and gaze.

**“All guarantees are provisional”: the crisis of freedom in  
*The Plot Against America***

Matteo Berardini

In his introduction to Gervasini's *Se continua così*, Gianni Canova notes a «congenital contiguity between utopia and dystopia», each contains the seeds of its opposite. Democracies, likewise, harbor potential autocracy, as crises can trigger their self-destruction. In terms of freedom, this creates a paradox where being “free to” can limit “freedom from.” Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* exemplifies this via alternate history. This essay analyzes Roth's novel and HBO's 2020 miniseries, showing how Simon and Burns translate the dystopian core into a format resonant with contemporary political anxieties.

**The Precarious Freedom of Post-2003 Iraqi Cinema: *Ahlaam* by  
Mohamed Al-Daradji**

Simone Evangelista

After decades under Baathist control, Iraqi cinema gained limited freedom after 2003. In this context, Mohamed Al-Daradji's *Ahlaam* (2005), shot in Baghdad amid conflict, depicts three psychiatric patients amid Saddam-era oppression and the Anglo-American occupation. The film portrays daily life fractured by war, staging an illusion of freedom that mirrors Iraq's fragile reality. This article analyzes how the film links civil and political aspirations with new artistic freedoms emerging under extreme production conditions.

***Slave Rebellion Reenactment*: For an Embodied Rewriting of American History**

Giulia Terralavoro

Consensus is often shaped by controlling historiography to legitimize power, yet contemporary art challenges such dynamics. Dread Scott's *Slave Rebellion Reenactment* (2019) revisits the overlooked 1811 German Coast Uprising, confronting its marginalization in US history. Documented by John Akomfrah, the work endures beyond the event. This research exami-

nes the reenactment as a means of bringing suppressed history into public view and analyzes how its visual strategies convey the project's overtly political nature.

### **Presentifying Terror: The Virtual Eye of *Silver Cord***

Tania Gallinaro

Emerging from an unpredictable event, Tiyaam Yabandeh's VR short *Silver Cord* (2024) explores freedom in perception, representation, and experience. Inspired by a real attack on a Kabul maternity ward, it adopts a prenatal viewpoint, immersing the spectator in the scene. This article examines how VR transforms narration into embodied "storyliving," redefining gaze and spectatorship. By dissolving distance and resisting censorship, *Silver Cord* frames viewing as an ethical space where freedom is negotiated through exposure, vulnerability, and choice.

### **Freeing Images: Kamal Aljafar's *Recollection***

Samuel Antichi

This article examines Kamal Aljafari's *Recollection* (2015) as a critical intervention on archival images. Using footage from Israeli and Hollywood films shot in Jaffa (1960s-1980s), the film removes protagonists and narrative, foregrounding spaces and marginalized figures. Jaffa, erased from Palestinian history after the Nakba, re-emerges spectrally. Rather than creating new images, Aljafari exposes existing ones' conditions, reclaiming them as decolonial memory and reconfiguring the archive as a space of cinematic justice.