



9TH IRISH  
ANNUAL PSYCHOANALYTIC  
FILM FESTIVAL

**Freud's Question: What Does a Woman Want?**

2–3 February 2018

SCHOOL OF NURSING, DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY, GLASNEVIN

# Programme

## Friday 2 February

**17.30 – 18.10**

Opening Address: *In Conversation...*

**Ailbhe Smyth** is a noted activist, feminist, socialist and academic who has been a prominent figure in radical politics in Ireland for many years. A board member of the Equality and Rights Alliance, Ailbhe is now Convenor of the Coalition to Repeal the 8th.

**Dil Wickremasinghe** is a social justice, mental and maternal health campaigner, and podcaster. Formerly of Newstalk's *Global Village*, she is a director of Insight Matters, [www.insightmatters.ie](http://www.insightmatters.ie)

**18.15 – 20.15**

Parallel Screenings

Theme: *For the Bonds of Love are Ill to Loose...Mothers/Daughters.*

***Mildred Pierce*** (Presenter: Liz Monahan)

Directed by Michael Curtiz, 1945, 111 minutes.

"A superbly nasty noir, one which plays havoc with the era's ideals of maternal devotion". Throbbing melodrama doesn't come with more conviction. Mildred Pierce explores women's desires in a candid portrayal of the role of the mother.

Famously in this 1945 Oscar winning movie starring Joan Crawford, she argued with Michael Curtiz, her director, about her use of shoulder pads. They became friendly during filming and afterwards she presented him with a set of gold-plated shoulder pads as a memento.

This is the only film for which Joan Crawford won an Oscar, and is notable for the fact that she is the lead in this film noir. More than a hardboiled thriller this is a classic "woman's movie", based on James M Cain's 1943 novel which advances feminism by appreciating the difficult lives led by women.

### ***Grey Gardens* (Presenter: Tina Kinsella)**

This documentary follows the lives of two reclusive women, mother and daughter living in a crumbling mansion in East Hampton, New York. The mother 'Big Edie' is the aunt of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, and 'Little Edie' is of course her cousin. The film documents the story of their relationship, a tale that is both heart-warming and tragic.

### ***All About my Mother* (Presenter: Therese Maguire)**

Pedro Almodovar's curiosity about women and what it means to be a woman is vividly evident in his 1999 film *All About My Mother*. His admiration for woman and the many guises of what it can mean to be a woman are continually conveyed. We see loving mothers, rejecting mothers, transgender males, prostitution, cosmetic surgery, violence, girly chit chat and much, much more. His women are not shrinking violets, they are strong, plucky characters who navigate courageously through the tough grind of their lives.

Rosa is a nun who is pregnant to Lola. Lola is male to female transgendered but has not yet physically transitioned. What does this tell us about Rosa's sexuality? Can we say that she is gay, straight, bi-sexual or something else? Manuela mourns her dead son, Esteban, and in an attempt to fulfil her dead son's wish, she goes in search of the father who knew nothing of his son's existence. The father is Lola. Agrado is male to female transgendered. He has spent considerable sums on cosmetic surgery; 'it costs a lot to be authentic, to become the thing you dream of becoming' he says. With these complex characters and relationships playing out on screen against a backdrop of *All About Eve* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Almodovar invites us to explore the ideas of femininity, masculinity, gender identity, sexuality and desire in brave, gritty women who are considerably more than passive objects of desire.

**20.15 – 21.30**

**Wine Reception with Light Supper**

# Programme

## Saturday 3 February

**10.00 – 12.00**

Parallel Screenings

Theme: Joyce's 'Vaulting Feminine Libido' on celluloid.

### *Turn Me on Dammit*

(Presenters: Michele Sludds-Hickey, Caroline West)

*Turn Me On, Dammit!* is a coming-of-age Norwegian film by Jannicke Systad Jacobsen which uses a genuine bittersweet enjoyment to portray, patiently, the ungovernable hormones of an adolescent girl. It is a charming and wistful story of one single girl endeavouring to negotiate the impulses she feels are unique to her. Soft-eyed Alma (Helene Bergsholm) is a libidinous 16 year old girl who hates the backwater mountain village where she lives, ceaselessly daydreams about sex, masturbates eagerly on her kitchen floor and ultimately doesn't suffer as a result. Her sexual outlet is a phone-sex hotline where Stig (her favourite operator) calls her to ensure she is OK after a call is cut short. In fact, whilst masturbating her call is cut short due to the unexpected return home of her mother.

Alma lives with her single mother in the remote small town, Skoddeheimen, where locals need to take a bus over the mountain to grocer shop. Such is Alma and her friends' discontent that they regularly give the finger whilst passing the sign bearing the town's name. Alma mostly fantasizes about Artur, her cute, choirboy schoolmate, who seems unable to approach her and who also is the target of Alma's friend's affection. Having been poked in the leg, unexpectedly, by Artur's penis outside a party, Alma later relays this to her friends. When Artur denies he's done this, Alma becomes a social exile and the figure of ridicule, gaining the nickname "Dick Alma".

The focus of the movie is on Alma's efforts to contend with this unwanted reputation which leads her to run away to Oslo to visit her friend's older College sister. There she realizes that the world is larger than the tiny town of Skoddenheimen. *Turn me on Dammit!* originated as a best selling novel by Olaug Nilssen in Norway and the movie is one of Norway's most recent biggest hits. It is sleepy in tone yet acute about character, and sexually frank but never prurient. Most importantly, perhaps, the movie treats a girl's

burgeoning sexuality as neither epic nor problematic, or mutually exclusive of feelings of love, but rather simply, refreshingly, as one part of maturing.

### ***A Streetcar Named Desire*** (Presenter: Ross Skelton)

Directed by Elia Kazan and starring Vivien Leigh and Marlon Brando.

Originally a stage play written by Tennessee Williams in 1947 at its opening night in New York, the audience, after an initial stunned silence, applauded for a full half an hour, and the play went on to win the Pulitzer Prize. The plot, deceptively simple, is that Stella's new marriage to Stanley is disrupted by a visit from her sister Blanche. Although ostensibly a heterosexual play with hysterical and psychotic themes, Williams, being himself gay, has prompted speculation that it can be read as having a strong gay subtext. (The same can be said of another of his plays, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*.) *A Streetcar Named Desire* is one of the greatest plays in American literature and ranks along with the work of Eugene O'Neill and Arthur Miller.

### ***Belle de Jour*** (Presenter: Brigitte Battalier)

Directed by Luis Buñuel, this movie is an interesting portrait of a young housewife from a conventional middle class background in Paris of the 60's, living a platonic boring relationship with her husband, but also prostituting herself in a brothel as part of what seems to be a divided self.

The film takes us between the borders of reality and dream, a twilight land of unintended zones and masochistic fantasies – and questions what desire drives this young woman throughout her double life and behaviour.

The theme, and the manner in which the movie is structured through mise en scene, color effects, the troubling absence of affect in the actress, offer a fascinating perspective and an intriguing insight into these different unconscious territories.

**12.00 – 12.45**

Lunch

## 12.45 – 14.45 Parallel Screenings

Theme: Other Spaces.

### *Hidden Figures* (Presenter: Jose Castilho)

The incredible story of three African-American women working at Nasa who served as the brains behind one of the greatest operations in history; the launch of astronaut John Glenn into orbit. *Hidden Figures* doesn't try to push many artistic boundaries, but it tells its tale so well that it really doesn't have to. A brilliant story about brilliance in a racist/sexist environment.

### *The Hours* (Presenter: Sarah Meehan)

The Hours beautifully captures the theme of the feminine, as melancholic humours dovetail the subject of same-sex desire spanning and interweaving several generations. Indeed we can ask if desire itself borders instances of melancholia given the opacity and historical connotations of a response to the question; What does a woman want? The plot focusses on three women of different generations whose lives are interconnected by the novel *Mrs Dalloway*. These are Clarissa, (Meryl Streep), a New Yorker preparing an award party for her AIDS stricken friend and poet Richard, Laura, (Julianne Moore), Richard's mother in the 50s, gay and trapped in an unhappy marriage, and Virginia Woolf (Nicole Kidman) struggling with depression and mental illness while trying to write *Mrs Dalloway*.

### *My Brilliant Career* (Presenter: Pauline O'Callaghan)

I nominated this film because, in the same year that Freud wrote up the "Dora" case, (1901), it seems extraordinary that a girl, barely out of her teens, living in the outback of Australia, could have written this feminist coming of age story which captures in such a memorable way the conflict between the pressures to have a conventional married life for a young poor woman, and the strong pull of her ambition to have a "brilliant career". In the semi-autobiographical book on which the film is based, Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin (1879–1954) recounts the life of 16-year-old Sybylla Melvyn, described as a plain-looking and plain-speaking tomboy, who rejects the opportunity to marry a wealthy young man in order to maintain her independence. This film version, directed in 1979 by Gillian

Armstrong – her first feature film – stars Judy Davis, in her first leading role, and Sam Neill. *My Brilliant Career* was nominated for an Oscar, a Bafta and a Golden Globe, and won Best Director for Armstrong at the Australian Film Institute, making her the first of many female Best Director AFI winners.

## 14.45 – 15.15 Coffee

## 15.15 – 18.00 Plenary Session with Guest: Jesse Jones

**Jesse Jones** is a professional artist and academic who uses the media of film, performance and sculpture. She recently represented Ireland at the Venice Biennale 2017 with an installation called “Tremble, Tremble”, which examined the potential of female archetypes to transform reality.

### *Red Road* (Presenter: Marie Walshe)

The movie *Red Road* is a contemporary film set in Glasgow. Jackie is a woman who stares at CCTV screens all day, stupefied into bleak boredom, until one day when she is captivated by the image of a man for whom she develops a disturbing obsession. Lacan says that in cinema it is not so much our vision that is solicited as our gaze that is aroused. Viewers of this film quickly fall under the spell of the gaze which oscillates between the CCTV screen and the cinema screen, between what is seen and what is unseen.

Just as Jackie is strangely aroused by the developing story on her screen, the viewer is disturbingly seduced by this movie’s narrative. As it unfolds, from scopophilia to erotomania and finally to paranoia, questions are raised for us about this gaze and its evocation of a darkly intimate and thoroughly feminine enjoyment.

Cover image:  
Vivien Leigh in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951).  
Directed by Elia Kazan.



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