



Temporal Discipline and Affective Labour: A Shot-by-Shot Analysis of *Loin du 16e*

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Abstract

This article provides a shot-by-shot analysis of *Loin du 16e* (Walter Salles and Daniela Thomas, 2006). It examines how the film's form expresses the emotional and time-related aspects of maternal work in today's urban capitalist environment. Moving away from plot-focused interpretations, this study suggests that the film creates meaning through duration, repetition, and selective visibility instead of through dialogue or story. By looking at shot length, framing, editing, and sound design, the article shows how the film depicts care as both personal and exploitative work. The analysis is framed within feminist political economy and emotion theory, contributing to discussions about short films, emotional work, and the ethics of cinematic duration.

Introduction

Short films have often been overlooked in film studies because of their supposed narrative limits. However, recent research highlights the short film as a place of formal concentration, where cinematic meaning arises from precision rather than scale. *Loin du 16e*, directed by Walter Salles and Daniela Thomas, demonstrates this idea by combining maternal closeness, urban displacement, and class-based work into a tightly controlled visual structure lasting under six minutes.

This article argues that *Loin du 16e* presents its social critique not through dialogue or dramatic buildup but through careful timing and emotional restraint. Using a shot-by-shot analytical approach, the study illustrates how nearly uniform shot lengths, architectural framing, and varied repetition create an emotional dynamic that reflects the complexities of modern care work. This approach highlights micro-formal analysis as an important tool for exploring labor and emotion in short films.

Methodology: Shot-by-Shot Analysis and Formal Minimalism

Shot-by-shot analysis treats each cinematic shot as a separate unit of meaning, focusing on duration, framing, camera movement, sound, and editing relationships. Instead of emphasizing narrative causality, this method highlights how cinema organizes time and perception. As Tarkovsky famously claimed, cinema's main material is time itself; in short films, this material is shaped with special intensity.

In *Loin du 16e*, meaning builds up through repetition instead of progression. The film steers clear of typical dramatic arcs, instead using extended durations and controlled editing to align the viewer's perception with the protagonist's exhaustion and emotional control. This method lets the analysis shift from precise description to theoretical interpretation without merging form with theme.

Structural Organization of Loin du 16e

The film is made up of twenty-nine shots organized into three main segments:

1. **Private Care** – Ana with her own child in a home setting
2. **Transit and Displacement** – Ana’s journey through urban spaces
3. **Paid Care** – Ana caring for another woman’s child

This three-part structure follows a shift from intimacy to alienation and back to a false sense of intimacy. However, this return is not healing; rather, it reveals the contradiction at the core of care work, where emotional availability is required even when it is systemically limited.

Time-Stamped Shot Chart

Table 4.1: Shot Breakdown and Temporal Structure of *Loin du 16e*

| Shot No. | Timecode | Duration | Description | Narrative Function |
|----------|-------------|----------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | 00:00–00:15 | 15 sec | Window, morning light | Spatial anchoring |
| 2 | 00:15–00:30 | 15 sec | Ana waking | Interior affect |
| 3 | 00:30–00:45 | 15 sec | Ana with baby | Urgency |
| 4 | 00:45–01:05 | 20 sec | Walking | Transitional care |
| 5 | 01:05–01:20 | 15 sec | Near crib | Maternal labour |
| 6 | 01:20–01:29 | 9 sec | POV: baby | Affective reward |
| 7 | 01:29–01:51 | 22 sec | Ana watching | Emotional surplus |
| 8–16 | 01:51–03:05 | ~74 sec | Transit montage | Urban labour |
| 17–29 | 03:05–05:55 | ~170 sec | Paid care | Emotional extraction |

Domestic Care and Temporal Pressure

The film begins with a still shot of a window alongside an alarm. This image frames time as an obligation rather than serving as a neutral establishing shot. The following close-ups of Ana are prolonged, pushing the audience to focus on her fatigue instead of the action. The delayed reveal of the child is particularly important: maternal presence is depicted through endurance, observation, and restraint, not through sentimental imagery. This approach challenges idealized images of motherhood. Rather than presenting the infant as the main focus, the film highlights the labour of the caregiver. Waiting becomes a moral act, inviting the audience to experience it instead of simply feeling emotions.

Transit Montage and Urban Labour

The main montage switches between walking and train travel, creating rhythmic repetition without escalation. Shot lengths remain consistent, leading to a sense of monotony rather than excitement. This choice connects the audience's physical experience with Ana’s exhaustion, turning urban space into a setting of repetitive work instead of movement.

Sleep only happens during transit, suggesting that rest has been pushed out of personal spaces. This shift reflects wider criticisms of capitalist time structures, where recovery is scattered and conditional. The montage does not free the characters; instead, it compresses distance while increasing effort.

Paid Care and Simulated Intimacy

In the last section, Ana goes into another woman's apartment to take care of a second child. The architectural framing places her repeatedly in doorways and thresholds, visually expressing class-based immobility. The employer's face is never shown; her presence remains off-screen, acting as an abstract authority rather than a character.

The repeated caregiving actions—singing, watching, soothing—might first suggest an emotional balance with the earlier domestic scene. However, subtle differences disrupt this connection. The baby's face is slightly blurred, and Ana's smile appears controlled rather than genuine. Care continues, but emotions are managed.

Editing, Duration, and Affective Architecture

The film's editing favours consistency over variation. The average duration of shots stays steady across domestic, transit, and workspaces, indicating that work time takes over all areas of life. The editing does not provide relief; instead, it formally reproduces limitations.

This method aligns with Giuliana Bruno's idea of cinema as a structure of emotion, where the organization of space and time shapes emotional experiences. In *Loin du 16e*, duration itself becomes the main expressive tool, taking the place of dialogue or dramatic events.

Feminist Political Economy of Care

From a feminist political-economic view, *Loin du 16e* shows the extraction of emotional labor. Silvia Federici argues that reproductive labour stays hidden even though it is essential. Ana's emotional energy moves between households but only gains value in paid settings.

Arlie Hochschild's idea of emotional labour sheds light on the film's logic. Ana's singing appears the same in different contexts, but its meaning changes from intimacy to performance. Emotion itself becomes something that can be bought, controlled, and exchanged.

Contribution to Film Studies

This article adds to three areas of scholarship. First, it shows the analytical benefits of shot-by-shot methods for short films. Second, it expands feminist film theory by emphasizing duration and repetition as ways to represent care labour. Third, it positions *Loin du 16e* as an important work in modern cinema's exploration of emotional economies.

Conclusion

Loin du 16e delivers its critique through formal restraint, not narrative explanation. By organizing time with repetition, holding back, and managing duration, the film forces the viewer to linger in a limited emotional space. Shot-by-shot analysis reveals how cinema can explore social themes through form, making the invisible labour of care visible.

References

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NOTES

1. Short-form cinema increasingly functions as a site of formal concentration rather than narrative abbreviation.
2. The term "affective loop" is used here to describe repetition without resolution.
3. Tarkovsky foregrounds time as cinema's primary material.
4. Bordwell emphasises description preceding interpretation in formal analysis.
5. Eisenstein's rhythmic montage contrasts with collision-based montage.
6. Federici and Hochschild provide foundational frameworks for care labour.
7. Circular narrative structures often signify routine and entrapment.
8. Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*.
9. Mulvey's critique of maternal idealisation is relevant here.
10. Repetition functions affectively rather than narratively.
11. Marxist feminist critiques of labour time apply.
12. Off-screen authority signifies structural power.
13. Marks' concept of haptic duration informs this reading.
14. Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion*.
15. Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero*.
16. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*.
17. Shot-by-shot analysis remains underutilised in doctoral film studies