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Joana, a Romantic Woman-as-Witch Heroine in the film *O Crime de Aldeia Velha* (1964) by Bernardo Santareno, Manuel de Guimarães and José Carlos Andrade

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Abstract: Arminda de Jesus was brutally beaten to an inch of her life and then burnt alive. It happened on the night of February 25, 1933, in the place of Oliveira, village of Soalhães, in the municipality of Marco de Canavezes, in the Porto district. Though by all accounts, Arminda was a well-liked, caring rural mother of two young children, she met a gruesome end at the hands of Joaquina's male relatives, her life-long neighbours. Joaquina was a long-time afflicted when she accused Arminda of being the demonic woman-as-witch harbouring the Devil tormenting her. (Coutinho e Pinto, 1987) In 1964, Manuel de Guimarães directed the film adaptation of Bernardo Santareno's 1959 play *O Crime de Aldeia Velha*, adding to the stories about this infamous historical event. Our paper describes how Santareno, Guimarães and Andrade (re)created Arminda de Jesus as Joana. She was the prettiest girl in the village who bewitched all men with her beauty and inversionary behaviour. These attributes precipitated her demise at the hands of the older women in the village. Our analysis of the film narrative illustrates Santareno and Magalhães' counter-memorialisation of Arminda de Jesus and the events that led to her violent death in this mnemonic (re)imagination of her as Joana, a Romantic woman-as-witch heroine, here, a woman victimised by other women. (Driver, 2020).

Keywords: the burnt-alive woman of Soalhães, counter-memory, *O Crime de Aldeia Velha*, the Romantic woman-as-witch heroine

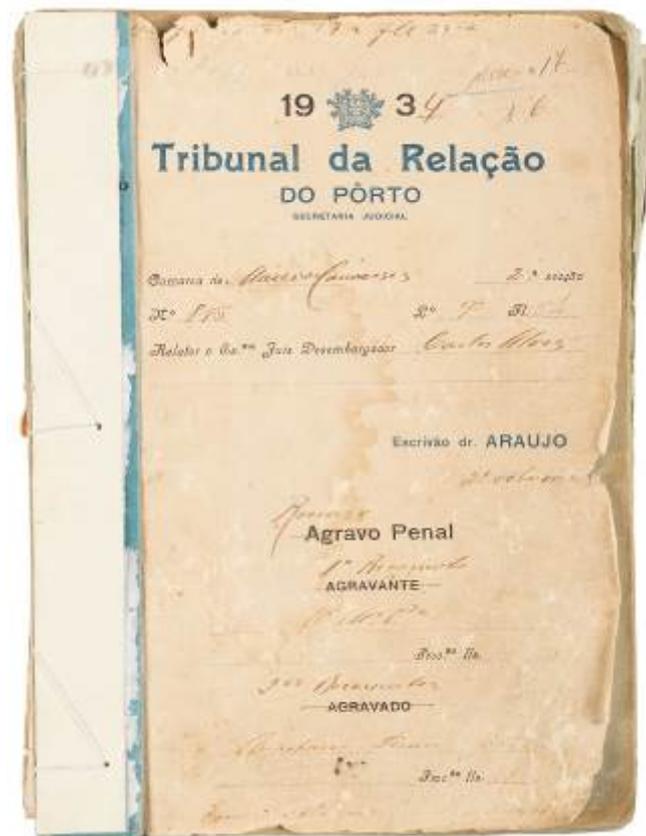
Resumen: *Arminda de Jesús fue brutalmente golpeada hasta dejarla muerta y luego quemada viva. Ocurrió la noche del 25 de febrero de 1933, en "Lugar de Oliveira", aldea de Soalhães, en el municipio de Marco de Canavezes, Oporto. Aunque, según todos los indicios, Arminda era una madre rural cariñosa y querida de dos niños pequeños; encontró un final espantoso a manos de los parientes varones de Joaquina, sus vecinos de toda la vida. Joaquina estuvo afligida durante mucho tiempo cuando acusó a Arminda de ser la mujer demoníaca-bruja que albergaba al Diablo que la atormentaba (Coutinho e Pinto, 1987). En 1964, Manuel de Guimarães dirigió la adaptación cinematográfica de la obra de Bernardo Santareno de 1959 O Crime de Aldeia Velha, añadiendo historias sobre este infame acontecimiento histórico. Nuestro artículo describió cómo Santareno, Guimarães y Andrade (re)crearon a Arminda de Jesús como Joana. Era la chica más bonita del pueblo que hechizó a todos los hombres con su belleza y su comportamiento inverso. Estos atributos precipitaron su desaparición a manos de las mujeres mayores del pueblo. Nuestro análisis de esta película ilustró la contramemorialización de Arminda de Jesús por parte de Santareno, Magalhães y Andrade, y los eventos que llevaron a su muerte violenta en esta (re)imaginación mnemotécnica de ella como Joana, una heroína romántica de mujer bruja, aquí, una Mujer victimizada por otras mujeres (Driver, 2020).*

Palabras clave: *el quemada viva de Soalhães, contramemoria, O Crime de Aldeia Velha, la heroína romántica de la mujer bruja*

According to Pedro Paiva's seminal work on Portuguese witchcraft historiography, Portugal is a country of superstition and witchcraft, but without witch hunts. However, on a late Saturday night, February 25, 1933, in the place of Oliveira, village of Soalhães, municipality of Marco de Canavezes, district of Porto, a woman perceived by her relatives, friends and neighbours as being under the Devil's influence, i.e. a demonic woman-as-witch, was fatally hunted down.

The trial of such an unusual and macabre crime occurred on May 30, 1934, at the Porto Judicial Court. Most of what is known about this case can be found in the surviving court records, which are presently part of the Emblematic Judicial Process's permanent exhibit at the Palace of Justice in Porto.

Figure 1
The Soalhães Trial Record (1933-1934)



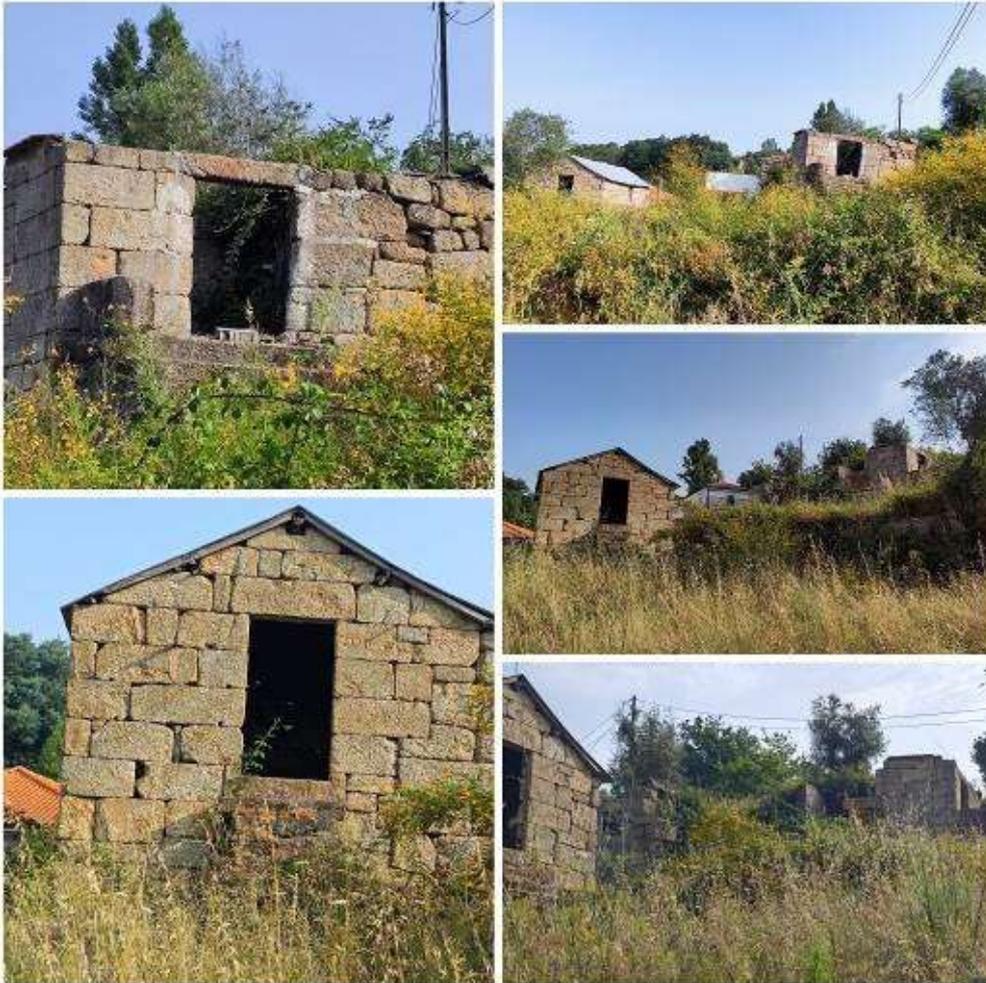
Source: Palácio da Justiça do Porto

In 1987, lawyers A. Pereira Coutinho and Guilherme Pinto transcribed and compiled the court records, along with several contemporary newspaper clips and other relevant sources, in a work entitled *O Crime da Queimada-Viva de Soalhães* published by the Marco de Canavezes Municipal Council. Based on this source, the events unfolded as told by those who witnessed them, as we shall now summarise.

Arminda Alves, also known as Arminda de Jesus Pereira, was born and raised in the village of Soalhães. At thirty-three, she was the mother of two young children, a wife to an immigrant husband in Brazil, a housewife and a farmer. Joaquina Couto, “A Tola,” (The Fool), as she was nicknamed, aged 38, originally from neighbouring Várzea and mother of seven children, had suffered several attacks about three or four years prior when she was working in the field. Arminda had assisted Joaquina during her health crises. They were, after all, very close neighbours, as demonstrated below in the photographs of

the ruins of their homes, still standing in Oliveira, Soalhães, today.

Figure 2
Joaquina's house (the one with the roof) and Arminda's house



Source: photographed by the author

In May 1932, Joaquina experienced several more of these attacks. During them, she would ramble about being a saint and claim that two spirits were tormenting and speaking to her. Concerned, her husband asked their brother-in-law, Anastácio Pereira—who was reputed to be a local wise man—to perform ritual blessings. Following the instructions from the Book of Saint Cyprian, Anastácio used the cross of Christ and burned various herbs to purify the house in an attempt to cure Joaquina or at least provide her with some relief. (Coutinho, 1987)

However, on February 22, 1933, because Joaquina's attacks intensified. It was decided that Olivia Emília from Gaia, a well-known wise woman of Santa Leocádia in Baião, was called to consult on Joaquina's worsening condition. Olivia confirmed that two spirits, good and evil, torment Joaquina. In addition, Olivia assertively concluded that Joaquina's suffering, by God's determination, was, regrettably, a chronic condition (Coutinho, 1987).

Three days later, on the fateful night of February 25, 1933, her closest family members were at Joaquina's house. Conducted by Anastácio, the only one who could read, they were all reciting a prayer from his book of Saint Cyprian, a book widely used in

sympathetic and apotropaic forms of magic to exorcise Joaquina's alleged demons. (Coutinho, 1987, p. 23) The prayer is titled "Prayer for the Devil not to mortify the sick" and goes as follows:

I, as a creature of God made in his likeness and redeemed with his most holy blood, give you a precept, demon or demons, so that your delusions cease, so that this creature will never be tormented by you with your infernal furies. For the name of the Lord is strong and mighty, by whom I quote and notify you that you are absent from this place. I bind you eternally in the place that God our Lord will designate for you; because, with the name of Jesus, I trample you down and push you down and hate you even from the outside. The Lord be with me and with all of us, absent and present so that you demon can never torment the Lord's creatures. Flee contrary parties, which overcame the lion of Judah and the race of David. I bind you with the chains of St. Peter and with the towel that wiped the holy face of Jesus Christ so that you can never torment the living.¹ (S. Cipriano, 1923, pp. 25-26)

Suddenly, Joaquina ordered her sister-in-law Virgínia and her husband to lie on the floor. Though they appeared dead, with no visible breathing, they would seemingly be resurrected shortly afterward. Upon entering that moment, Arminda is also told to lie on the floor, but instead of "dying," she goes into convulsions, screaming, hallucinating, and laughing hysterically. Joaquina, in turn, started shouting to keep Arminda away from her, as she had the Devil with her. Reacting to Joaquina's cries, the male members of the family present there grabbed Arminda and dragged her out of the house in arms. Then, instigated by Joaquina's hysterical commands, they brutally assaulted Arminda to an inch of her life and set her on fire. (Coutinho, 1987)

According to the Report of the Examination and Autopsy of her Corpse, dated March 2, 1933, the coroners João Alvares Pereira Carneiro Leal and Amadeu da Encarnação concluded that:

since the [cranial] fracture was not of the nature to cause immediate death – though it could have caused it later – and knowing, from the information collected, that the injuries caused by the fire were caused shortly after the attack that caused the fracture, the death must have been directly caused by the burns.² (Coutinho, 1987, p. 8)

In other words, Arminda was set on fire while still alive.

The perpetrators of such grotesque crime were not strangers but close relations of Arminda. They were Manuel de Queiroz Correia, forty-eight, a field worker for hire and Joaquina's brother-in-law; Anastácio Pereira, forty-five, a farmer and Arminda's brother-

¹ Tradução livre da autora. Texto no original: "Oração para o demónio não mortificar o enfermo" – Eu como criatura de Deus feita à sua semelhança e remida com o seu santíssimo sangue, vos ponho preceito, demónio ou demónios, para que cessem os vossos delírios, para que esta criatura não seja jamais por vós atormentada com as vossas fúrias infernais. Pois o nome do Senhor é forte e poderoso, por quem eu vos cito e notifico que vos ausenteis deste lugar para fora. Eu vos ligo eternamente no lugar que Deus nosso Senhor vos destinar; porque com o nome de Jesus vos piso e rebato e vos aborreço mesmo do pensamento para fora. O Senhor seja comigo e com todos nós, ausentes e presentes, para que tu demónio, não possas jamais atormentaras criaturas do Senhor. Fugi partes contrárias, que venceu o leão de Judá e a raça de David. Amarro-vos com as cadeias de S. Pedro e com a toalha que limpou o santo rosto de Jesus Cristo para que jamais possais atormentar os viventes. (S. Cipriano, 1923, pp. 25-26).

² Tradução livre da autora. Texto no original: [q]ue não sendo a fractura de natureza a provocar a morte imediata, embora a pudesse originar posteriormente, e que tendo conhecimento, pelas informações colhidas, que as lesões pelo fogo foram feitas logo depois da agressão que provocou a fractura, deve a morte ter tido como causa directa as queimaduras. (Coutinho, 1987, p. 8).

in-law; Francisco de Queiroz Correia, thirty, a farmer, also Joaquina's brother-in-law; António de Queiroz Correia, forty-five, a farmer and Joaquina's husband; and Joaquina and António's son, still a minor, Manuel Correia – portrayed in the picture below. Except for the latter, all were charged and arrested. (Coutinho, 1987).

Figure 3
Arminda's killers



Source: *Jornal de Notícias*, February 28, 1933 – front page

In their court statements, all the defendants insisted that they were very close friends with Arminda and that she was a very good woman, friend, neighbour, and relative, beloved by everyone. They all claimed to want Arminda no harm. They all claimed to have committed the crime, wildly convinced that the emulation by fire would exorcise the Devil that Joaquina told them Arminda supposedly had in her body. They all believed Arminda would come back to life. (Coutinho, 1987).

All defendants were found guilty of voluntary manslaughter and sentenced to up to twenty years in prison or spending the extent of their sentence exiled in one of the Portuguese colonies in the African continent. In addition, they each had to pay equitably monetary compensation to Arminda's family. Joaquina, *The Fool*, however, having been diagnosed with mental alienation during her stereo-epileptoid crises, was declared unanswerable in the eyes of the law for her role as the instigator and for her participation in the gruesome murder of Arminda. (Coutinho, 1987).

The sensationalist exploitation of Arminda's dreadful death at the hands of her friends and neighbours by the mainstream media at the time did not take long. Indeed, the version of the crime reported shortly after on the *Jornal de Notícias* of February 28 and March 2, 1933, presented exceedingly dramatic embellishments and made-up conversations no one could have been purview about the criminal events. There is also a blatant attempt to move and anger the reader by appealing to the sense of Arminda's young children's tragic loss. The journalists further condemn the accused, even before their trial, to be forever remembered as Arminda's vile executioners. They go as far as comparing her murder to an "Auto de Fé" – the emulation by fire of heretics – of the Portuguese Inquisition.

A year later, the newspaper *Primeiro de Janeiro* covered the trial and published two more articles on May 24 and 31, 1934. Their reporting was more consistent with what

was detailed in the trial record, except for the discrepancies regarding the statements made by José Monteiro Alves, Arminda's brother.

Figure 4
“Superstição, Ignorância ou Interesse?”



Source : *Jornal de Notícias*, March 2 1933 – front page

In addition to the articles in the newspapers, other types of publications also focused on Arminda's murder. For example, João Maganão and Hipólito Travassos published two pamphlets about the Crime of Soalhães. While the former reiterates the defendants' claims that Arminda was indeed possessed by the Devil, the latter (re)imagines Arminda as the victim of ignorance and superstition at the hands of the “Feitiçeiros de Soalhães”.

Figure 5

A mulher queimada viva por ter o diabo no corpo by João Maganão – Cover



Source: Livreiro Monasticon

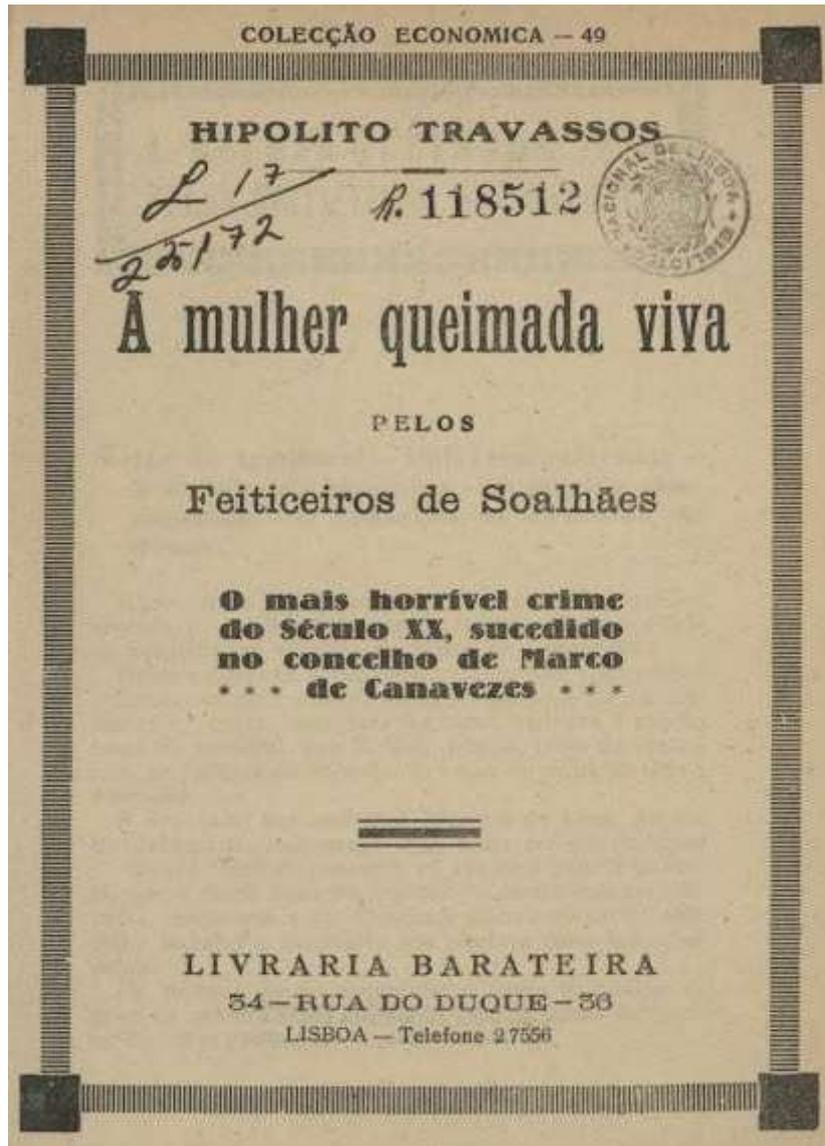
Since then, the parish of Soalhães has become known as the “Terra do Mata e Queima” (the land of kill and burn). While that moniker has prevailed, the cultural memory of Arminda de Jesus has been (re)imagined into almost unrecognisable oblivion over time, mainly due to Bernardo Santareno. First in his play *O Crime de Aldeia Velha* and subsequently in the play’s film adaptation of the same name. Although Arminda de Jesus, the historical woman-as-witch, and Joana, Santareno’s romanticised fictional (re)imagination of Arminda, share the same tragic end of life, they could not be more different, as we shall discuss next.

Twenty-six years after the crime of Soalhães occurred, Santareno wrote the play staged by the Experimental Theatre of Porto from December 1959 to February 1960, based on his childhood impressions of this crime. (Risso, 2015) Then, in 1964, Manuel de Guimarães adapted Santareno’s play in a black-and-white film of the same name. The screenplay was written collaboratively by Manuel Guimarães, Bernardo Santareno, and

José Carlos Andrade, while the dialogues are solely by Santareno himself. Directed by Manuel Guimarães, an artist and filmmaker with neorealist influences, this film version of Santareno's play is considered one of the main works of the "Cinema Novo Português" (New Portuguese Cinema). The production featured well-known Portuguese actors of the time as well as the French actor Barbara Laage in the lead role, with her voice dubbed by Portuguese actor Maria Barroso.

Figure 6

A mulher queimada viva pelos Feiticeiros de Soalhães by Hipólito Travassos – Cover



Source: Biblioteca Nacional (digital)

Although our objective is not to conduct a comparative analysis of the play and the film nor to adopt a film theory approach, we aim to provide an overview of Santareno's counter-memorialization of Arminda de Jesus through his (re)creation of her as Joana. Nonetheless, we find it necessary to contrast certain aspects of the play and the film to better understand Joana's portrayal as a woman-as-witch in the latter. Furthermore, Santareno retained much of the dialogue between the two mediums, prompting us to reference key lines from the play to highlight critical moments in the film.

After reading the play and watching its film adaptation, one can quickly establish that the film maintains the general plot of the play but adjusts it to the possibilities and needs of a film narrative. Moreover, Guimarães, as the film's director, adds some elements of his personal and artistic vision of the "Estado Novo" in Portugal at the time. For example, Jorge Palinhos points to the fact that at the beginning of the film, curiously, a subtitle states, "This story takes place in the last century." However, the crime occurred in 1933, thirty-one years before the film's production. (Palinhos, 2013) Another example is that in the play and the film, unlike the horrendous events previously outlined, which occurred in the winter, the action takes place in the summer. Also, no precise temporal or place references are offered in connection with Arminda's murder in Soalhães.

Also, according to Palinhos, in the film, contrasts of light and shadows are used to create ghostly environments. In what Palinhos thinks is a clear political statement, Guimarães' excessive visual metaphors suggest that violence is the result of a society of repression in which its primary victims become the main executioners. It is reflected in the representation of the older rural women of the village, who are conservative, controlling and trapped in obscurantism while also deprived of political and social rights. (Palinhos, 2013, p. 446) We also find this to be Santareno's critical approach to the same ignorant superstition that led to Arminda's murder three decades earlier. In this way, we can infer that he believed nothing had changed in the Aldeia Velhas of twentieth-century Portugal.

It follows that in both the play and the film, right from the beginning, the intermingling of religious zealotry with the profane underlining of the prevalent superstition in the village sets the tone of the whole plot. In the play, for example, in Act I, scene IV, dressed all in black, Zefa, a seventy-year-old woman, reminds her neighbours that for twenty years since the death of Father Guilherme, who was nasty and a womaniser, no priest has stepped foot on that village again. Arguing that the village has been cursed by the ghostly cries of innocent souls, following Father Guilherme's sinful behaviour, Zefa supports her belief to her companions by saying that she does not remember seeing so many young children die in that land as in the two years before the priest's death. The conversation goes as follows:

Custódia: It is said that you could hear children crying here, so clearly [...] Some think they were the souls of the innocent ...

Zefa: They said, they said this: that God condemned Aldeia Velha to pay, with the blood of the little boys, for the sins of Father Guilherme... which were countless!³ (Santareno, 2017, p. 26)

Another one of the older women in the village, Rita, sixty, compounds her friend's argument by highlighting all the preternatural entities and events she perceives have been menacing the village in the last twenty years. She laments:

In all this time, the devil took over this land: Aldeia Velha swears by the devil! ... Tell me all of you: in the time of our youth, were there werewolves in these places, as there are today? And witches? When, in old or new times, was there such an evil eye in

³ Tradução livre da autora. Texto no original: Custódia: Diz que se ouvia aqui um choro de criancinha, tão claramente [...]. Há quem pense que eram as almas dos inocentinhos...; Zefa: Diziam, diziam isso: que Deus condenou Aldeia Velha a pagar, com o sangue dos meninos, os pecados do padre Guilherme... que eram sem conto! (Santareno, 2017, p. 26).

Aldeia Velha? ...⁴ (Santareno, 2017, p. 27)

In the film, the superstition of the older women of Aldeia Velha is far more amplified. Right in the opening scenes, the older women of Aldeia Velha are introduced to the viewers while practising a ritual of apotropaic magic and divination – which reoccur in several other instances throughout the film, but it is not in the play. In the dead of night, a group of older women from the village, all dressed in black cloaks, forcibly hold down a young man named João under a tree. Among them is his mother, Maria da Cruz. Another older woman, Zefa, their seemingly anointed leader, performs the blood sacrifice of a raven. After dipping her finger into its still-warm, bloodied corpse, she bestows the sign of the cross on a young man's forehead, chest and hands, emulating Christ's wounds on the cross while reciting a made-up prayer asking for God to rid this poor young man of his infatuation for Joana.

Figure 7

The older women of Aldeia Velha perform an apotropaic ritual



Source: *O Crime de Aldeia Velha*, 00:01:09 – 00:02:13

Santareno's (re)imagination of Arminda de Jesus as a Romantic heroine, in both the play and the film, is Joana. A 25-year-old, she is the most beautiful young woman in Aldeia Velha. However, several other aspects of her inversionary behaviour amplify her physical beauty. A pious Christian and a good and caring neighbour and friend, she is orphaned, has no relatives and lives alone. She also manages and maintains her small farm by herself. Furthermore, unlike the other young women in the village, Joana has no interest in getting married or having children, which arouses the envy and resentment of the young and older women in her village. Joana is too attractive and has no man to curtail her in her lifestyle or warm her bed.

Her inversionary behaviour makes her most desirable to the men of Aldeia Velha, particularly Rui and António, for as a Romantic heroine, Joana is part of a love triangle. Everyone in the village knows that Rui and António are Joana's suitors. Rui is a more mature, sophisticated man. A rider and a man of more means, Rui is also more passionate and desirable. Whenever he sees Joana, he tries to take her for himself at all costs, but to no avail. Though the sexual attraction is intense and mutual, Joana resists and turns down his advances. António, on the other hand, is milder-mannered and is respectful of Joana.

⁴ Tradução livre da autora. Texto no original: Neste ror de tempo, o demônio tomou conta desta terra: Aldeia Velha faz juras pelo diabo! ... digam-me todas: no tempo da nossa mocidade havia, por estes sítios, como há hoje, lobisomens? E bruxas? Quando, em tempo antigo ou novo, houve em Aldeia Velha tanto mau olhado?... (Santareno, 2017, p. 27).

He desires her, too, but only as his wife. He wants to see her respected and the mother of his children.

Nevertheless, Joana remains unattainable. Despite acknowledging and battling with her growing sexual desire, she turns down both her suitors. Joana will marry neither of them. Indeed, she fiendishly instigates Rui and António into an axe fight. The fight between the two suitors is accompanied by a shot of an enthralled Joana smiling as if amused by the violence she is witnessing. António and Rui die, resulting in what Palinhos suggests is a form of Joana's sexual castration. Just like that, she eliminated both external sources of her temptation and desire in one failed axe swoop. (2013, p. 445) In fact, Joana attests to her true feelings about men in Act II, Scene VII when confiding in Father Júlio she says:

[...] And the men, like dogs, always sniffing around me, drooling greedily, with their bulging eyes brighter than a firebrand... ah, Father Júlio, when I see them like that, I feel disgusted with them; I feel so angry with them that... oh, at those times, I could kill them, with my bare hands!! [...] ⁵ (Santareno, 2017, p. 115)

The wrath of the Aldeia Velha falls swiftly and mercilessly on Joana, to whom they attribute a demonic possession capable of making the two men succumb. Similarly, in Act I, scene XIII, Zefa yells out:

They're dead. It was you, Joana!! You have the devil in your body, woman! The devil has taken possession of you... Possessed, possessed! You are possessed by the devil, Joana! [...] Like your mother... possessed like your mother!... ⁶ (Santareno, 2017, pp. 67- 68)

Joana's inversionary form of behaviour results in her explicit, raw, untamed feminine power. It seemingly bewitches men, is envied by her younger peers, and is deemed by the older women of Aldeia Velha as being of preternatural origin. To them, Joana's brazen femininity of the Devil is corroborated by her lineage. In other words, if her late mother had had an established reputation for being a witch, Joana, her daughter, had also to be under the Devil's influence. Again, in the play, in Act I, Scene V, Rita elaborates on the rumour, which is presented as a matter of fact:

[...] Everyone in Aldeia Velha, everyone!, said that your mother was a witch, that she cast the evil eye... [...] Even the dogs, even the cats, even the stars in the sky, even the wind and the water in the river ... they knew that! ⁷ (Santareno, 2017, p. 31)

It suggests to us that Santareno was quite knowledgeable about how a woman, knowingly or unknowingly engaging in inversionary forms of behaviour, could become perceived in her community as a woman-as-witch, just like Joana and her deceased

⁵ Tradução livre da autora. Texto no original: [...] E os homens, como cães, sempre em redor de min, a babarem-se de gulosos, com os olhinhos arremelgados mais vivos que um tição... ah, padre Júlio, quando os vejo assim, sinto nojo deles, tenho-lhes uma raiva tão grande que... ai, nessas alturas, eu era capaz de os matar, por minhas próprias mãos!! [...] (Santareno, 2017, p. 115).

⁶ Tradução livre da autora. Texto no original: Estão mortos. Foste tu, Joana!! Tu tens o diabo no corpo, mulher! O demónio tomou posse de ti.... Possessa, possessa! Tu estás possessa do diabo, Joana! [...] Como a tua mãe... possessa como a tua mãe!... (Santareno, 2017, pp. 67-68).

⁷ Tradução livre da autora. Texto no original: [...] Toda a gente em Aldeia Velha, toda a gente!, dizia que a tua mãe era bruxa, que deitava mau olhado... [...] Até os cães, mais os gatos, até as estrelas do céu, até o vento e a água do rio... sabiam isso! (Santareno, 2017, p. 31).

mother.

Detrimental to women of any age were their inversionary behaviour and socially transgressing emotions, i.e., the failure or deliberate disregard for controlling their negative emotions and wants in socially and gender-appropriate ways. (Broomhall, 2017) For example, being idle, sluttish, adulterous and whorish, and resorting to vituperation, meaning being a scold,⁸ were perilous attributes for a woman or a wife. (Walker, 2003) Scolds' verbal abuse and conflicts with neighbours disrupted the peace and harmony of the community. (Amussen, 2017) From the later sixteenth century onward, the typical scold was a noisy, quarrelsome, brawling, loquacious, sexually insatiable, economically headstrong, backbiting and physically vicious female. Scolding became a crushingly female offence committed by women of lower status against their more fortunate contemporaries or their superiors, thus subverting the expectations associated with them in the social and gender hierarchies. (Fletcher and Stevenson, 1985) As unruly and inversionary women, scolds were branded and punished to assert women's free speech as verbal transgressions. Any woman expressing her views, verbally resisting or obstinately flouting authority in and beyond the household made her dangerously subversive and challenging to the underlying dictate of patriarchal rule. It was also another manifestation of their disordered nature.⁹ (Walker, 2003; Amussen, 1985) Women's unrestricted and raucous diatribes, speaking out heatedly towards neighbours and family in public, were considered perilous and forceful, as wicked or imprudent words could open people to the Devil's influence. They could also quickly become swearing, blaspheming, grumbling, murmuring, defaming, and cursing. (Broomhall, 2017)

Curses, for example, could be articulated hot-headedly or be carefully ritualised acts¹⁰ (Goodare, 2016). Curses were a woman's verbal weapon of significant efficacy. From the recipient's standpoint, angry, threatening or blasphemous words grumbled, muttered or mumbled under a woman's breath might transmute into a physical occurrence. (Millar, 2017) An unwarranted curse would rebound against its author. However, the more justified the curser's anger, the more likely the curse would come into effect for the credulous and the guilty.¹¹ (Davies, 1999) If a neighbour or relative entered economic conflict¹² with a woman and was sent away, perhaps mumbling a malediction, she was

⁸ From the fourteenth century onward, as an adjective, this term was attributed to unsuitable wives and witches alike. It became a strongly pejorative label in its destructive impact, second only to 'whore'. In criminal terms, a scold was an individual liable to prosecution and punishment for continually disturbing the neighbours with contentious behaviour. (Kermode and Walker, 1994) Scolding was an offence of women that could be prosecuted in ecclesiastical courts, where it was a breach of Christian charity, and in both manorial and royal courts, where it was a peace disturbance. When prosecuted in the ecclesiastical courts, the sentence for scolding was penance. The punishments in local courts could be a fine or being carted through the town and ducked into the cucking stool. (Amussen, 1985).

⁹ In Thomas Heywood and Richard Brome's play *The Lancashire Witches* (1634), the local community is disrupted by the inversion of social and familial norms: overbearing wives rule their husbands, children, and parents, and servants their employers. 'This is quite upside-down [...] sure they are all bewitched.' The natural order must have been satanically inverted. When the virtuous wife of Mr Generous starts behaving independently, riding abroad alone and concealing her actions from her husband, it is the first step towards ruin. In the end, the witches are brought to justice. The natural lines of marital and social obedience were restored, and the world turned upside down again. (Fletcher and Stevenson, 1985).

¹⁰ About the religious ritual use of cursing in England and the physical survival of cursing tablets and magical formulae, see, for example, Thomas, 1991.

¹¹ It has been demonstrated that the inhabitants of modern primitive societies can afflict their enemies with aches and pains, vomiting and insomnia, by sheer suggestion. Also, the effect of the voodoo curse upon a person who believes in its efficacy is well authenticated. It is also capable of physiological explanation, for shock can decrease blood pressure and produce dehydration. (Thomas, 1991).

¹² Economic conflict comprises several forms of disagreements around borrowing, lending, buying, selling, begging and obtaining work, as well as any other issues relating to one's financial well-being and a breach

perceived as redressing her grievance. In due course, whenever something went wrong with the said household, she would immediately be thought of and summarily held as being responsible. (Thomas, 1991).

It was pretty likely that some women knowingly exploited their reputations for begging purposes or performed minor spiteful acts of retaliation with the intent that they would be construed as witchcraft by their victims. People would not want to taunt, mock or deny charity to a reputed woman-as-witch if forewarned of a retaliatory threat by witchcraft. (Davies, 1999) Ultimately, a reputation for efficacious cursing could easily lead to a formal charge of witchcraft. As Thomas Cooper asserts in his *The Mystery of Witchcraft*: “(w)hen a bad-tongued woman shall curse a party, and death shall shortly follow, this is a shrewd token that she is a witch.” (1617, p. 275).

Being branded by their peers, neighbours and relatives as envious, resentful, spiteful, boastful, miserable, scolds, peevish, argumentative and anti-social would increase women’s chances of being accused as witches.¹³ Their ill repute would make it much more likely for them to be indicted, arrested, charged and convicted of witchcraft in the short or long run. (Macfarlane, 1970; Bever, 2008) A soiled reputation invited probable cause for many other criminal activities associated with witchcraft. Some examples include recusancy, church negligence, religious nonconformity, unlicensed healing practices and midwifery, petty theft, assault, fornication, prostitution, bigamy, adultery, rape, buggery,¹⁴ drunkenness, scolding, disseminating discordance, cheating and panhandling, arson, piracy, coining and treason, and infanticide (Gaskill, 2000). All in all, the female body has seemingly been at the centre of women-associated crimes. (Read, 2015).

Since women were more likely to be a party to their peers’ and rivals’ conflicts and incidents of inversionary behaviour, a considerable proportion of women formally testified against other women in witchcraft cases (Levack, 2001). A regrettable instance was the trials of mothers and daughters. Roughly a third of the women as witches stated during their inquiries or trials that they had been introduced to witchcraft by an older woman – mother, sister or another member of their community. (Hester, 1992) A mother’s identification of a daughter, or vice versa, as a witch revealed a familial network of women as witches. It also pinned down the demonologists’ argument that witchcraft was a matrilineal genetic inheritance. (Roper, 2004) There is more than enough justification for the authorities to condemn many children to death alongside their mothers. (De Blécourt, 2018).

of charity and neighbourliness. (Hester, 1992) For example, if a woman was not paid for her services or was sent away empty-handed when she came to the door to beg or borrow some butter, cheese, yeast, milk, beer, a piece of equipment or money.

¹³ For example, in English witchcraft pamphlets, most English witches were described in print as uncontrolled women who were unable to control their emotions and who gave in to anger to exercise revenge because of their link to the Devil. Women as witches were often described as ‘sprightful and malicious’, ‘monstrous,’ of a ‘revengeful nature’ or simply ‘ill-natured’. It is significant that of the twenty-three witchcraft pamphlets published between 1566 and 1645, only one fails to refer to witches as malicious or vengeful or to indicate revenge, malice, rage, anger or hate as the main reasons for a witch's choice to resort to *maleficium*. With only three exceptions, in every single one of these pamphlets, a witch takes revenge on her neighbours through the power provided by her diabolical spirits. Post-1645, references to vengeful and malicious begin to decrease and almost disappear in the pamphlets from the 1650s and 1660s, returning in the 1670s and 1680s. (Millar, 2017)

¹⁴ Combined with factors such as marital status, age, whether other kin had been accused, relation with the Devil, and economic conflict, a sizeable number of women accused of witchcraft were equally associated with sexual deviance since they were generally perceived to be prone to do so. (Hester, 1992) For a more in-depth discussion, see Hester, *Lewd Women and Wicked Witches*, Chapter 7: “Gender Relations and the Economy,” “Ideology and Marriage: Expectations and Social Control,” and “The ‘Popular Controversy.’”

The cumulative scapegoating of a woman-as-witch may have initially resulted from a falsehood, unsubstantiated rumour or embellishment.¹⁵ However, because of her inversionary behaviour and socially transgressive emotions throughout her lifetime, she would hardly have escaped the constant scrutiny and the fearmongering about her being a witch, hence becoming a perceptible threat to her family and community. (Quaife, 2011) The types of disruptive women who had long been suspected of being witches were more exposed to formal charges from their relatives and neighbours when clergy, landlords, and judges entertained the legitimacy of the alleges. In brief, only time would firm a significant and ubiquitous reputation of any woman-as-witch. (Klaits, 1985; Wiesner-Hanks, 2019).

So is the case with Santareno's reimagining of Joana. Unlike the play, the film adaptation never explicitly labels her as a witch. Instead, it gradually makes the audience, Aldeia Velha and Joana herself, believe that the Devil has possessed her. Through a series of ominous events, Santareno subtly and intentionally shapes Joana's reputation as a woman-as-witch. We will focus on the most relevant of these instances for our discussion.

The first instance pertains to the untimely death of a young mother's firstborn. While Joana was taking care of her neighbour Teresa's baby, he fell ill, and after a while, he died. Though at the time this is a commonplace event, it brings to the memory of the women of Aldeia Velha, all the children who had died twenty years earlier due to the former priest's sinful behaviour. Fearing that a new cycle of misfortunes would occur, this time, swift action must be taken against the apparent culprit by scapegoating Joana. Enveloped by enraged villagers, walking towards Joana while holding her dead infant in her arms, like in Act II, Scene IX of the play, a distraught Teresa utters:

Look... look at my little boy... freezing cold... dead... he is dead!!... They killed him! They killed my son!! It was you, Joana... I gave you my boy, and you... It was you, wicked one!... Do you want to see it?... Do you want to see my son now?... It was you; it was you!¹⁶ (Santareno, 2017, p. 123)

Maria da Cruz reported the next major ominous event. During one of her nocturnal walks, she swears that she saw Joana riding a white horse, half-naked, through the forest on the edge of the village while cackling heartlessly at Rui and António's bodies dangling by the neck from a fig tree nearby. However, this is perhaps another scene for cinematic dramatic effect since it is not part of the play.

The watershed moment, which will seal Joana's tragic demise, happens concerning Florinda's son, the recently appointed Aldeia Velha priest, Father Júlio. At first, he tries to enlighten the population and protect Joana by asking the more experienced fellow priest Cláudio to help him in his efforts to demonstrate to the older women of Aldeia Velha that

¹⁵ Martha J. Reineke (1987) agrees with René Girard (1986), who argues for the pertinence of sacrificial theory to discuss witch hunts, and the women accused of being witches. As scapegoats, they were fatalities of a sacrificial economy. Girard's concept of 'mimetic violence' highlights the failure of personal and social limits when the propagation of pollution markers in communities, such as illness, burgeoned conflict. Once identified as the source of pollution, a single individual would constitute an absolute destabilising threat to everyone else. The sacrificial theory thus asserts that mimetic violence escalates along with surrogate victimisation or scapegoating. Narratives of the witch hunts confirm the same pattern: witches had to be identified and executed to disseminate the violence they had allegedly instilled and restore peace to the community. (Reineke, 1997) For further information about this topic, see, for example, Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, and *The Scapegoat*.

¹⁶ Tradução livre da autora. Texto no original: Vejam... vejam o meu menino... friozinho de gelo... morto... está morto!!... Mataram-mo! Mataram-me o meu filhinho!! Foste tu, Joana... Eu dei-te o meu menino e tu ... Foste Tu, malvada!... Queres ver?... queres ver agora o meu filho?... Foste tu, foste tu! (Santareno, 2017, p. 123)

Joana is not of the Devil. Ultimately, however, he is bewitched by her striking beauty and admits to Joana how tempting she is for him. While taking refuge from the populace in the church, in Act II, Scene VII of the play, Father Júlio and Joana have the following conversation:

Joana: They say that in my eyes, deep down!, there are little pieces of silver... and that whoever looks at them fully will never find rest in life!... [...] That whoever receives the light from these little silver glasses... will soon feel, in the heart, the first chills of death!... [...]

Júlio: It's your beauty, Joana... [...] There are the silver lights in your eyes, Joana!... [...] Joana!... I would be so, so sorry if anything bad happened to you!... It's just that I...¹⁷ (Santareno, 2017, pp. 114 - 115)

Given this disconcerting realisation about Father Júlio, Joana reaches out to his mother, Florinda, one of the older women of Aldeia Velha who was always kind and understanding towards her, indeed, the only mother figure in her otherwise familial barren life. Similarly, to Act II, Scene X in the play, their brief but stirring exchange goes as follows:

Joana: Tell me... tell me..., as if I were your daughter: do you believe, in your heart, that I have a bad thing inside me? that... the devil entered my body, who is with me?...

Florinda: I believe Joana! I believe: you are not the same girl. But don't you see? don't you see?! Only those who are blind, completely blind!: Look at Teresa's boy, Rita's son, Maria da Cruz's João... I believe it, Joana!! It's not your fault, perhaps... or perhaps you have tempted God too much... I don't know. But you have the devil in you, Joana!... It's a danger, girl! It's a danger for anyone to come near you, touch you, talk to you... ... Oh, Joana, ask Zefa to take it away, since the priest didn't want to!! Zefa knows how to; she knows...¹⁸ (Santareno, 2017, p. 166)

Zefa, as one of the older women of Aldeia Velha, knows. The older women of Aldeia Velha practice apotropaic rituals and divination; they also administer medicines and cures. They participate in ritual blessings and chants at night. They are also the guardians of tradition and obscurantism. They are the promoters and executors of retribution in Aldeia Velha's repressive society.

Moreover, they know and help spread the belief that Joana's feminine power could only be preternatural or of the Devil. Soon, in the minds of (almost) everyone in Aldeia Velha, Joana suffers from demonic possession. Tragically, Joana herself also knows.

¹⁷ Tradução livre da autora. Texto no original: Joana: Dizem que nos meus olhos, lá no fundo!, há bocadinhos de prata... e que quem os mirar em cheio, nunca mais encontrará descanso na vida!... [...] Que quem receber a luz desses vidrinhos de prata... sentirá logo, no coração, os primeiros frios da morte!... [...]; Júlio: É a tua beleza, Joana... [...] Lá estão as luzinhas de prata nos teus olhos, Joana!... ... Joana!... Teria tanta, tanta pena se te acontecesse algum mal!... É que eu ... (Santareno, 2017, pp. 114 - 115)

¹⁸ Tradução livre da autora. Texto no original: Joana: Diga-me... diga-me..., como se eu fosse sua filha: acredita, do coração, que eu tenho coisa ruim dentro de mim? que... o diabo entrou no meu corpo, que está comigo?...; Florinda: Acredito Joana! Acredito: tu não é a mesma rapariga. Mas não vês? não vês?! Só quem tiver cego, ceguinho de todo!: Olha o menino da teresa, o filho da ti' Rita, o João da ti' Maria da Cruz... Acredito, Joana!! Não será culpa tua, talvez... ou talvez tivesses tentado demais a Deus... Não sei. Mas tu tens o demónio no corpo, Joana!... É um perigo, rapariga! é um perigo chegar-se qualquer um para o pé de ti, tocar-te, falar-te... Ai, Joana, pede à ti' Zefa pra to tirar, visto que o padre não quis!! A ti' Zefa sabe, ela sabe... (Santareno, 2017, p. 166)

Joana believes that the Devil is inside her. That she is “Joana of the Devil.” Joana recognises herself as a sinner, which leads her to her tragic demise.

Next, when confronted by the older women of Aldeia Velha, Joana initially experiences an emotional breakdown and laughs uncontrollably, much like her historical counterpart, Arminda de Jesus. Quite differently from Arminda de Jesus, however, Joana willingly allows herself to be burnt alive in a cleansing fire ritual, as she believes, like most of the others in Aldeia Velha, that it will exorcise the Devil from her and save her soul with the hope of resurrecting purified and unharmed. Like a lamb to the slaughter, the older women and other villagers accompany Joana in a procession to the impromptu sacrificial altar in some castle ruins on the outskirts of Aldeia Velha.

Quite differently from the play, in which Joana is burnt alive solely by the women of Aldeia Velha in Florinda’s kitchen fireplace, as argued by Palinhos, the sequence of Joana’s exorcism by fire is staged in a highly ritualistic way. The journey to the site is portrayed as a long procession of a religious nature, reminiscent of the Stations of the Cross. (Palinhos, 2013).

While most men remain in the centre of the village, others try to stop the older woman from succeeding in their endeavour. Some of the younger men are the ones who help by restraining Joan with ropes and placing her in the pyre. The public attending the gruesome spectacle is arranged in an orderly, almost martial manner. The older women are at the front, wearing smiles of enjoyment at the violence they are perpetrating. All is as it should be and as it always has been. The old ways and beliefs of Aldeia Velha are being preserved. Accordingly, like Joan of Arc’s namesake, Joana perishes in a pyre set alight by Zefa. Joana had to be tortured and immolated by fire to redeem herself for her inversionary form of behaviour.

Figure 8
Zefa lights the pyre



Source: frame of *O Crime de Aldeia Velha*, 01:45: 57

The element of the female figure as an instigator and victim of violence in the film *O Crime de Aldeia Velha* brings us to discuss one final aspect. Santareno, Guimarães and Andrade’s mnemonic (re)creation of Arminda de Jesus, the burnt-alive woman from Soalhães, as Joana, a Romantic woman-as-witch, or “an antagonist labelled a witch,” resulted in what Heather Green calls a “witch film.” Moreover, though the film’s plot is not necessarily focused on witchcraft, magic or the belief in magic, the practice of sympathetic magic plays a significant role in the story’s outcome. (Green, 2021).

What is more, we find that though Joana is “not a magical practitioner in any form”, as she tries but fails to function within the established *status quo* of Aldeia Velha, she does engage in inversionary forms of behaviour. Indeed, Santareno, Magalhães and Andrade’s plot in the film *O Crime de Aldeia Velha* expounds on how:

[a]ccusations of witchcraft are used as personal weapons of revenge (against) a young woman who is charged (of being a witch) after being accused of social disobedience. [...] If she is independent, young and beautiful, she is an easy target. She is labelled as an outsider by her social status, whether defined by religion or living location. She is then accused as a witch due to that status, along with a social misstep. (Green, 2021, pp. 20-21)

In Joana’s case, it is her rejection of the sexual advances made by seemingly every eligible alpha male in the village, which she takes pleasure in instigating, as well as defying the older women in the village with her modern-like lifestyle. Furthermore, in the accused woman-as-witch historical narrative, redemption is generally granted and saved at the last minute by a man who is often a romantic interest. (Green, 2021). However, the same does not occur for Joana. Since she is a mnemonic (re)creation of Arminda de Jesus, the woman burnt alive for having the Devil in her body and who perished at the hands of friends and relatives on a tragic February night in Soalhães, Santareno, Magalhães, and Andrade take the creative license of making Joana meet a similarly tragic and macabre demise. Nevertheless, by (re)creating Arminda as Joana, a woman-as-witch and a Romantic heroine, we find that theirs significantly contributed to the counter-memorialisation of the tainted cultural memory of Arminda de Jesus of Soalhães.

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