

TIDES

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Abstract

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Masters in Screenwriting

Feature length dramatic screenplay adaptation of the novel *TIDES* by Sara Freeman

Brief Synopsis

After a stillbirth, 39-year-old Mara leaves her life in Montreal, unable to bear the weight of her grief or the presence of her husband, Lucien, or her brother, Paul, and his wife with their newborn baby. Seeking escape, she arrives in a remote Nova Scotia seaside town, population 2,353, where the vast tidal swells reflect her teetering between self-annihilation and self-preservation. As the possibility of connection and the slow return of desire begin to draw her back to herself, scenes from her past unfold, revealing moments of intimacy and estrangement. Through these memories, Mara confronts her grief and begins to carve a new path forward.

Thesis, Themes and Process

In many ways, the novel *Tides* came into my life at a moment of reckoning. As I grappled with questions about identity, autonomy, and motherhood, Sara Freeman's prose collided with my own uncertainties and desires. Her story resonated with my experience of stepping out of the roles I was once expected to fill—wife, potential mother—and embracing a more self-defined existence.

Freeman writes, “Women’s lives, it struck me, were always on a knife’s edge between relationship and alienation, resilience and despair.”¹ This sentiment encapsulates the core of this story: how vulnerable and complex it is to exist as a woman in the patriarchy, perpetually hemmed in by biological and social pressures.

At its heart, *Tides* explores grief and emotional disconnection through Mara. Her journey is largely shaped by her entrapments with the men in her life: her possessive bond with her brother Paul, her estrangement from her husband Lucien, and the quiet, redemptive presence of Simon. As Mara grapples with the profound loss of her child, she is forced to navigate the spaces between isolation and reconnection, autonomy and dependence. The fragmented nature of her memories reflects this struggle, where grief distorts time and perception, and shapes her understanding of self.

As a queer, female filmmaker, I’m drawn to stories that challenge cultural narratives of womanhood, reframing these expectations to reflect a broader, more nuanced spectrum of female experiences. This is not a story of redemption through motherhood or romantic love. It’s about learning to live in the aftermath of loss, finding connection in brokenness, and choosing life beyond grief.

Before graduate school, I was a self-taught screenwriter, a skill largely shaped by my experience as a professional actor of 20 years. Screenwriting revealed my passion for filmmaking, and the two have been inextricably linked ever since. I write with an actor’s heart and a director’s mind. *Tides* will be my feature directorial debut.

Scholars, researchers and fellow filmmakers who wish to read my thesis screenplay can contact me at filmgpa@yorku.ca. Please explain your interest and confirm that it is for personal or private research purposes only, and that you will respect my copyright and not copy, reproduce, or repurpose it in any manner.

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This script is dedicated to my mother, my sister and to all those who identify as women, or who live beyond the confines of gender.

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Introduction and Synopsis

My research explores how grief shapes a woman's capacity for connection, autonomy, and self-reconstruction after loss. Additionally, I examine how grief can be visually represented in film and how isolation functions as a catalyst for redefining identity.

At the centre of this story is Mara, a 39-year-old woman who has stepped out of her previous life, to disappear after having had a stillbirth. Disoriented and numb, she can no longer endure the relationships surrounding her experience. She withdraws from her husband, Lucien, and from her brother, Paul, and his wife with their new baby, who live on the floor below her Montreal apartment, “their joy so firmly lodged beneath her grief.”² She boards a bus that takes her far away, to a tourist seaside town in Nova Scotia: 2,353 inhabitants, a few shops and the water beyond that.

For much of the story’s first half, Mara feels more like a cipher and less of a character, acting like a vessel for grief and self-destructive impulses. She drifts from place to place, staying in various hostels and spending nights passed out blind drunk on the beach or with strange men. Eventually, she finds a more permanent residence in the disused attic of a wine shop, where she takes a temporary job working for Simon, a lonely man whose own family has momentarily stepped out on him. Confronted with the possibility of connection and the slow return of her desires, her character starts to sharpen into focus and the narrative restraint gives way as scenes from her past unfold.

Mara's memories oscillate between childhood and more recent events that lead to her self-exile. The subtle violence of the imagery reflects the guilt and shame surrounding her stillbirth, her devastation over her broken marriage, and the possessive love she harbors for her

brother as he begins his own family. The relationship between Mara and Paul is the engine of this story, and where the deepest tension lies. Her grief is twofold and encompasses the loss of her baby, along with the co-dependent love shared with her brother since childhood.

When Simon's family returns home, Mara is thrust into yet another upheaval. Simon's wife, Charlotte, confronts her, revealing she knows about the affair. Unraveling, Mara shows up at Simon and Charlotte's house uninvited until she is physically dragged out of their home, and out of their lives, for good.

After 8 months adrift in this seaside town, Mara is finally able to embrace her grief—old and new—along with the *possibility* of a new life growing inside her. She turns on her cell and texts Paul that she's alive. Mara boards a bus heading towards a city, the vast road ahead.

By choosing connection over isolation, Mara embraces the complexity of her grief, embodying the film's deeper message: the potential for redemption and healing through human vulnerability. Her message to Paul encapsulates the possibility of a future where grief and joy coexist in an imperfect, yet meaningful, reinvention of self.

Background of Specific Themes

Motherhood vs. Womanhood: Autonomy, Identity and Societal Roles

At its core, *Tides*—both in the novel and my adaptation—examines the societal forces that shape female identity, particularly the pervasive expectation that womanhood is synonymous with motherhood. Mara’s experience of stillbirth places her in direct conflict with these norms, revealing deeply ingrained cultural narratives that equate a woman’s worth with her ability to bear and nurture children. For women over 35, these pressures become even more acute, amplifying Mara’s sense of failure and estrangement. Through Mara’s journey, *Tides* critiques patriarchal norms that define motherhood as an essential milestone of female identity, questioning the rigid frameworks that constrain women’s autonomy and self-worth.

Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity challenges the notion of an innate female identity, arguing that gender is constructed through repeated social behaviors rather than biological destiny.³ Butler critiques the ways in which women are expected to embody certain roles, particularly within the realm of reproduction and caregiving. Mara’s stillbirth disrupts this cycle, she is biologically a mother, yet without a living child, society no longer recognizes her as such. Her grief is compounded by the fact that she does not fit neatly into socially accepted categories of womanhood. Rather than performing the role of nurturer, she becomes an outsider, resisting the expectations placed upon her. *Tides* thus engages with Butler’s argument that gendered identities are imposed and maintained through social norms, revealing the alienation that occurs when a woman does not conform to those norms.

This critique is intricately woven into Mara's interactions with those around her. Paul's joy over his newborn serves as a painful contrast to her grief, highlighting familial expectations that deepen her feelings of inadequacy. Similarly, her relationship with Simon, a man navigating his own familial obligations, underscores the societal hierarchies that prioritize traditional family structures. Simon's ultimate choice to remain with his wife and child further isolates Mara, reinforcing the societal pressures that tether identity to familial roles.

Sara Ahmed's work on affect and migration offers another lens through which to view Mara's self-exile. Ahmed argues that emotions are not solely personal experiences but are shaped by social structures—certain feelings, such as grief or alienation, push individuals to the margins, while others, such as joy within a nuclear family, are more readily accepted.⁴ Mara's departure is not only an escape from her immediate grief but also a reaction to the unspoken social expectation that she should either "move on" or channel her pain into a redemptive narrative of motherhood. Her retreat into an unfamiliar coastal town mirrors Ahmed's notion of migration as an affective experience; one in which emotions, rather than physical necessity, dictate movement. However, just as Ahmed describes queerness as an orientation that disrupts linear trajectories, Mara's trajectory is not a straightforward path toward healing or reintegration into normative structures. Her exile is both a rejection of imposed roles and a reckoning with their absence.

Mara's internal conflict reflects a broader struggle to navigate autonomy and societal roles. By juxtaposing her grief with the familial fulfillment of others, *Tides* examines the emotional and psychological toll of diverging from traditional paths. The film forces both Mara and the audience to confront the costs of equating a woman's worth with her ability to nurture,

raising vital questions about whether true autonomy can exist within the rigid framework of the patriarchy.

Psychological Impact of Stillbirth and Miscarriage on Identity

Tides' emotional core lies in Mara's journey through grief, particularly how stillbirth has severed her connection to the world and herself. Scenes such as Mara's memory of breastfeeding her nephew highlight complex emotions such as grief, longing and guilt, as well as her inability to process them. This emotional fragmentation is echoed in Claudia Dey's devastating personal essay, *There is No Script When You Experience a Stillbirth*.

"I had no idea how to grieve...there are no instructions. The mother is blamed, though we are sorry for her. What has happened to her is devastating, unimaginable, a vicious fate, but she must have done something wrong or been wrong in some way, somehow. Something inside her was broken, something fundamental."⁵

Dey's reflection encapsulates the societal blame and isolation Mara experiences, reinforcing the idea that stillbirth is not only a personal tragedy but also a profound assault on identity. Cultural narratives often position women as failures when they cannot fulfill maternal roles, compounding their grief with feelings of shame and inadequacy.

Academic research provides a broader context for this lived experience. In *The Construction of Maternal Identity Following Perinatal Loss* researchers examine how women struggle to reconstruct their identities after stillbirth. These women, much like Mara, confront a dual challenge: mourning while navigating a society that demands explanation and emotional fortitude.⁶ For Mara, this grief manifests both as personal anguish and an inability to reconcile

her identity as both a wife and a sister. Her husband's resilience and Paul's happiness only deepen her fractured sense of self and detachment from a world that seems determined to move on without her.

The Psychological Impact of Stillbirth on Women: A Systematic Review underscores the profound emotional toll of such losses, noting that many women experience isolation, self-loathing, and difficulty reconciling their grief with societal expectations. As Campbell-Jackson and Horsch explain, "stillbirth is a unique bereavement as, unlike other losses, grieving parents have never known the lost child and, rather than a part of their past being lost, it is a part of their future that has changed significantly."⁷ These psychological responses align with Mara's emotional detachment and reckless behavior, illustrating how unresolved grief can manifest in self-destructive tendencies. This shift in temporal grief, mourning not only what was but also what could have been, deepens Mara's alienation and underpins her struggle to re-engage with life.

Grief and Motherhood in Feminist Thought

Judith Butler's theories on grief, vulnerability, and relationality provide a compelling framework for understanding Mara's emotional journey in *Tides*, particularly her eventual re-engagement with life through her connections with Jean and Simon. In Butler's view, grief is not merely a private, internal experience but a relational one that exposes the inherent vulnerability of human existence.⁸ Mara's profound connection to her brother Paul, intensified by their shared history and the contrasting realities of his new fatherhood and her loss, deepens her crisis as she feels trapped in an identity formed through that relationship. However, by embracing grief as an

act of transformation rather than mere loss, Mara ultimately untethers herself from this dependency, reclaiming a sense of self beyond her brother's life and expectations. Through this lens, *Tides* challenges traditional notions of autonomy, showing that liberation comes not from severing relationships, but from reshaping them on one's own terms. Butler writes, "Let's face it. We're undone by each other. And if we're not, we're missing something."⁹ This idea of being "undone" by loss is central to Mara's story.

Mara's stillbirth fractures her sense of self, creating a relational rupture that impacts her connections with those closest to her, particularly her husband and brother. As she isolates herself in a small seaside town, Mara's journey reflects what Butler describes as the dismantling of identity, which creates the possibility for transformation. Through her interactions with others, Mara begins to reconstruct her sense of self. These connections, from quiet shared rituals to deeper relationships, embody Butler's view that identity is continuously reshaped through relationality. Rather than returning to the person she once was, Mara's transformation highlights how grief can dismantle old identities and create space for new ones to emerge.

Butler also discusses grief as a political act that challenges societal norms around who is deemed "grievable." She argues that society often places value judgments on grief, determining whose lives and losses are recognized and validated.¹⁰ Women who experience stillbirths or miscarriages frequently encounter societal silence, implying that their grief is less valid because their children never lived outside the womb. This erasure of certain forms of grief is mirrored in Mara's experience. Lucien is devastated by their loss, but he channels his grief into a desire to move forward and rebuild with Mara, while Paul's joy as a new father pulls him toward the future, focused on nurturing a new life. These contrasting responses reflect how society places value on certain milestones like birth and recovery, while sidelining more ambiguous or

prolonged forms of grief. While Lucien and Paul are certainly affected by the loss, their ways of coping diverge from Mara's, unintentionally compounding her isolation.

In *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, Butler emphasizes that vulnerability is not a weakness but a fundamental condition of being human. They challenge the idea that autonomy and strength require emotional invulnerability, suggesting instead that recognizing and embracing our shared vulnerability is key to building ethical and compassionate relationships.¹¹ Mara's journey in *Tides* reflects this idea. Her grief leaves her emotionally exposed, but it is through accepting her vulnerability that she begins to heal. The first instance of this human connection occurs midway through the first act when Mara shares in the daily rituals of the Mexican seasonal workers José and Manuel at the hostel. Their quiet acts of care and camaraderie puncture the emotional detachment that has defined her existence since her loss. This subtle shift in Mara's emotional state deepens over the course of Act II as her relationship with her boss, Simon, evolves. Initially a transactional relationship, it gradually intensifies and eventually compels Mara to confront her past head-on.

Through Simon, Mara rediscovers her capacity for intimacy and care, demonstrating Butler's assertion that vulnerability, rather than isolating, is central to rebuilding a fractured sense of self. Her healing process defies societal expectations of stoicism and self-reliance, underscoring Butler's idea that resilience is not found in isolation but in the recognition and embrace of interdependence; the foundation of our shared humanity.

By framing grief as a relational process, Butler's theories offer a profound lens through which to understand Mara's emotional transformation in *Tides*. Rather than viewing grief as something to overcome alone, Mara learns that it is through human connections that she

reconstructs her sense of self. Butler's insights deepen the thematic exploration of *Tides*, emphasizing how grief, vulnerability, and interdependence shape identity and offer a path toward healing.

Sibling Bonds: Intimacy, Rivalry, and Interdependence

The sibling bond between Mara and Paul is central to *Tides*, with their shared history and childhood intimacy colliding with their adult estrangement. The rupture in their relationship, amplified by Paul's new role as a father, highlights the complex interplay between sibling rivalry, interdependence, and emotional identity.

The psychoanalytic theory of object relations, particularly as articulated by D.W. Winnicott in *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development*, provides a useful framework for understanding Mara and Paul's dynamic. Winnicott suggests that early relational experiences shape the formation of the self, and that siblings often serve as "transitional objects"—key figures who help mediate the shift from dependence on primary caregivers to autonomy.¹² In Mara's case, her father's abrupt abandonment when she was 11 disrupted this developmental process, causing her to rely heavily on her younger brother for emotional stability. He became a stand-in for paternal security, solidifying a bond of co-dependence rooted in comfort and protection.

However, this dynamic also fostered a blurred boundary between intimacy and rivalry. According to Adrienne Rich's feminist exploration of family dynamics in *Of Woman Born*

(1976), patriarchal family structures often position siblings in competitive roles, particularly when the mother figure is emotionally unstable or absent.¹³ In *Tides*, Mara and Paul's mother, while physically present, struggles with her own emotional volatility, forcing Paul into a pseudo-paternal role that he may have resented but also accepted out of necessity. Mara, in turn, projects both reverence and dependence onto him, seeking refuge in his company during a chaotic upbringing.

Their bond, however, becomes fraught with complexity as they enter adolescence. As noted by Judith Butler in *Undoing Gender*, societal norms around gendered relationships often impose rigid expectations on familial bonds, particularly between opposite-sex siblings.¹⁴ Mara and Paul's closeness is misinterpreted by outsiders, leading to taunting and accusations of inappropriate intimacy. This external judgment introduces feelings of confusion and shame into their relationship, forcing them to question the nature of their bond at a time when they are both navigating the challenging terrain of adolescence.

As adults, their relationship remains strong but evolves into a more distant, emotionally repressed connection once Paul and Mara both enter romantic partnerships. Paul's engagement to Julie and Mara's marriage to Lucien marks a turning point, where the centrality of their sibling relationship is displaced by the formation of their respective nuclear families.

This rupture becomes irreparable following Mara's stillbirth and Paul's simultaneous experience of new fatherhood. This moment crystallizes their emotional estrangement, with Mara's grief creating a gulf she could not bridge. The script's portrayal of Mara breastfeeding Paul's newborn son speaks to Butler's theory of grief and relationality, as explored in *Precarious Life*. Grief, according to Butler, exposes the interdependence of human relationships and the

precariousness of identity when those bonds are broken.¹⁵ Mara's act of breastfeeding Paul's child, while an expression of her grief, also highlights her attempt to reclaim lost relationality through an act of care—a symbolic gesture to fill the void left by her stillbirth. Yet this act, viewed by Paul as a boundary violation, only deepens their estrangement.

Ultimately, *Tides* explores how grief, trauma, and societal expectations fracture sibling bonds that were once rooted in intimacy and interdependence. By examining the sibling relationship through the lens of psychoanalytic and feminist theories, the script highlights the fragile, evolving nature of familial ties and how loss disrupts even the most foundational connections.

Cinematic Influences

The Lost Daughter: A Critique of Traditional Motherhood Tropes

I first watched Maggie Gyllenhaal's *The Lost Daughter* shortly after its release in early 2022, roughly six months before I read *Tides*. The film, and particularly its screenplay, left a lasting impression on me as a filmmaker. What struck me most was the boldness of its protagonist, Leda (played by Olivia Colman), a woman in her late 40s who is both rebellious and deeply flawed. She is unconventional, selfish, and even mean at times yet profoundly sympathetic. Gyllenhaal's adaptation captured a rare and complex portrait of a woman grappling with maternal ambivalence, defying the typical portrayal of women as selfless nurturers.

The film's exploration of the tension between maternal duty and personal desire resonated with me, particularly the way it reframes selfishness not as a moral failure, but as a human response to patriarchal pressures. Leda's past and present struggles to reconcile her identity as a mother with her personal ambitions and desires challenge entrenched societal expectations of motherhood as a woman's primary purpose. Gyllenhaal's radical, unapologetic critique of traditional motherhood tropes offers a perspective rarely seen on screen, one that values a woman's autonomy over cultural ideals of maternal self-sacrifice.

This thematic rebellion echoed in my mind when I first encountered the novel *Tides*. While the plot and characters of *Tides* diverge significantly from *The Lost Daughter*, both stories share a core interest in challenging traditional depictions of womanhood, especially the sanctity and moral idealization of motherhood. Reading Freeman's sparse, poetic novel, I recognized an opportunity to explore similar counter-narratives in my adaptation. Like Gyllenhaal, I am drawn

to telling stories that explore women's identities beyond the roles of caretakers, particularly as they age; a perspective that feels both personally urgent and culturally significant.

As a childless woman in my late 30s, *The Lost Daughter* resonated deeply with my own experience of feeling disconnected from dominant narratives of womanhood. Gyllenhaal's film gave me the confidence to pursue a project like *Tides*, knowing that stories centered on maternal ambivalence, autonomy, and grief have the potential to speak to a wider audience of women. Through *Tides*, I aim to contribute to this ongoing cultural conversation by offering a nuanced exploration of a woman who exists outside of traditional expectations of caregiving, challenging deeply rooted assumptions about what it means to be a woman—and a mother—in our society.

Aftersun: Exploring Memory, Childhood Relationships, and Aesthetic Influence

No film in recent years has impacted me more profoundly than Charlotte Wells' debut feature *Aftersun*; a deeply personal and introspective drama about Sophie, a woman reflecting on a childhood vacation she took with her young father, Calum, at a Turkish resort in the 1990s. Through sun-drenched memories and fleeting moments of joy, the film subtly reveals Calum's internal struggles, as Sophie's adult perspective reframes their time together, uncovering the unspoken sadness beneath his warmth and love. I vividly recall sitting in the audience at the film's TIFF premiere, utterly moved yet unable to fully articulate what I had just experienced. Listening to Wells speak afterward, I sensed there was something deeply personal and intentional in her approach to storytelling, something that lingered long after the credits rolled. It took days to fully process how deeply the film had resonated with me, evoking emotions through its exploration of memory, loss, and the fragile bonds between a parent and child.

Upon a more studious second viewing and after reading the screenplay, I gained an even deeper appreciation for Wells' craft. Her ability to balance emotional intimacy with formal experimentation is unique; using mirror imagery and sound laps to connect scenes and deepen the themes of memory and time. What particularly struck me was how these cinematic techniques were already present on the page, demonstrating that her vision began with the written word before it ever reached the camera.

The film's dialogue is equally layered and nuanced. The interactions between Calum and Sophie feel authentic and lived-in, capturing both the tenderness and the unspoken tension that often define childhood relationships with parents. Wells' restraint in allowing emotions to simmer beneath the surface reminded me that what is left unsaid can carry just as much weight, if not more, than overt emotional expression.

Thematically, *Aftersun*'s exploration of memory and fractured perspectives has been particularly influential in my work on *Tides*. The film is less concerned with plot and more invested in how memory shapes identity, especially when looking back on formative relationships from a distance. In *Aftersun*, Sophie's adult reflections on her father are fragmented, coloured by both love and the unknowability of who he truly was. This approach to memory mirrors what I aim to achieve with Mara in *Tides*, as she revisits her past relationship with her brother and confronts how their shared history has shaped her present emotional state.

Tides' structure mirrors this emotional fragmentation, as Mara's memories surface in disjointed, image-heavy fragments, never forming a complete or linear narrative but instead evoking the way grief distorts time and perception. Like *Aftersun*, *Tides* uses memory not as exposition but as an active force shaping the present and deepening Mara's conflict rather than offering resolution. *Aftersun*'s impressionistic, fleeting and at times intrusive approach to

memory provides a reference point for how *Tides* integrates Mara's past into her present. Her memories emerge unpredictably, triggered by sensory details or emotional echoes rather than traditional flashbacks. For instance, when a stranger pulls Mara from the water, she believes it is Paul. Similarly, a childhood memory inexplicably appears on her motel's television screen. These moments blur the boundary between past and present, mirroring Mara's disorientation and forcing the audience to experience her fractured psyche.

Mara's dreams also resist clear interpretation. Initially set in a nondescript space, they convey only the emotional weight of her past before evolving into sharper, more detailed recollections. As the story progresses, these fragments gain specificity, revealing hard truths about her recent and distant past. This non-linear, impressionistic approach invites the audience to engage emotionally, piecing together Mara's story much as she does, reinforcing the theme that memory is not a fixed record but a shifting, unreliable terrain shaped by grief.

Afternoon's sound design also left a lasting impression. Wells creates an immersive atmosphere, where ambient noise and music evoke emotional undercurrents that characters themselves cannot articulate. These techniques have influenced my own desire to use sound and imagery in *Tides* to reflect Mara's interior world, creating a sensory experience that invites the audience to feel, rather than simply observe, her emotional journey. The soundscape will reflect Mara's emotional state—moments of absolute silence in visual chaos, followed by a subtle interplay of natural sounds that reflect the film's connection to the ocean and nature. There will be moments of sonic overwhelm, where grief feels unbearable, followed by moments of complete silence, emphasizing the emotional void Mara is experiencing. The score will weave organic, embodied sounds such as breathing, heartbeats, and voices into a minimalist composition, creating an intimate, visceral experience that mirrors Mara's emotional journey.

Ultimately, *Aftersun* has given me a template for how to approach emotionally resonant storytelling with formal precision. It affirmed my belief that stories exploring grief, memory, and fractured relationships can be subtle yet profoundly affecting. As I continue to develop *Tides* and move towards production, Wells' debut serves as a reminder that the most personal stories, when told with intention and artistry, have the power to resonate deeply with a global audience.

Vagabond: Autonomy and Isolation as Rebellion

I first watched Agnès Varda's *Vagabond* (1985) shortly after reading *Tides*, and the resonance between the two works was immediate. Both stories centre on women who have chosen to live on the fringes of society, rejecting traditional expectations of femininity, stability, and conformity. Varda's Mona (played by Sandrine Bonnaire) and my protagonist Mara are connected in their defiance, embodying a rebellion that is both deeply personal and profoundly political. While *Vagabond* begins and ends with Mona's death, framing her autonomy as a tragic, inevitable march toward isolation and demise, *Tides* takes a different path, finding the possibility of redemption and reconnection by its conclusion. Yet both characters' journeys interrogate the costs and consequences of refusing to adhere to societal norms, particularly those imposed on women.

Mona's existence in *Vagabond* is deliberately rootless. She refuses the structures of work, family, and community that define traditional life paths, instead embracing a transient lifestyle that leaves her vulnerable to the harsh realities of the world. This autonomy is a form of rebellion; an assertion of her right to live on her own terms, free from obligations to others. However, Varda never romanticizes Mona's choices. The film's documentary-style structure

presents her through the perspectives of those she encounters, many of whom judge her harshly. This narrative device highlights the discomfort and moral judgment that society projects onto women who reject conventional roles of caregiving, productivity, and stability.

Similarly, Mara's journey in *Tides* is marked by her refusal to reintegrate into her former life after experiencing profound grief. Like Mona, she withdraws from societal expectations, choosing isolation over engagement. Her decision to leave her husband and disappear to a seaside town reflects a desire to reclaim agency over her life—a radical act of self-preservation in the wake of loss. However, while Mona's journey ends in death, Mara's story explores the possibility of finding connection and meaning on her own terms. This key difference underscores a thematic evolution in the portrayal of women on the margins: while *Vagabond* presents autonomy as a path toward inevitable isolation, *Tides* suggests that autonomy can coexist with human connection, even if it requires a redefinition of what connection means.

The parallels between *Vagabond* and *Tides* extend beyond their protagonists' narratives. Both works grapple with the tension between freedom and vulnerability, particularly as it pertains to female bodies. Mona's autonomy comes at the cost of physical safety as she is subjected to the elements, judgment, and violence. Mara, too, faces the dangers of isolation, both physically and emotionally. Yet, both characters' journeys raise important questions about the value of freedom. Is it worth the cost? What does it mean for a woman to be truly free in a world that constantly seeks to define her by her relationships to others?

Feminist film scholars have long discussed *Vagabond* as a critique of how society treats women who defy expectations. Varda herself described the film as a portrait of "freedom and its price,"¹⁶ highlighting the paradox that Mona's autonomy is both her liberation and her undoing.

In contrast, *Tides* explores a more hopeful outcome: Mara's journey suggests that while grief and isolation may be necessary stages of self-redefinition, they need not be permanent states. Her encounters with Simon and Jean offer glimpses of connection that do not demand the erasure of her autonomy but instead honor her desire to live on her own terms.

From a formal perspective, *Vagabond's* hybrid narrative-documentary style also influenced my approach to *Tides*. Varda's use of interviews with bystanders to piece together Mona's story creates a fragmented, multifaceted portrait of a woman who remains elusive and unknowable. This technique underscores the idea that women who reject societal norms are often reduced to enigmatic figures, their motivations misunderstood or ignored by those around them. In *Tides*, I aim to achieve a similar effect through fragmented memories, allowing Mara's past to unfold in a nonlinear, impressionistic way. Her interior world is shaped by grief and trauma, but the audience is invited to piece together her story over time, understanding her choices through the lens of memory and emotional rupture.

Ultimately, *Vagabond's* enduring relevance lies in its portrayal of a woman who refuses to be defined by traditional roles, even at great personal cost. Mona's rebellion is both inspiring and tragic, challenging viewers to confront their own biases about autonomy, isolation, and the value of human connection. In *Tides*, Mara's journey builds upon this legacy, offering a more hopeful counter-narrative: one that suggests that freedom and connection are not mutually exclusive, and that the process of grieving and rebuilding one's identity can lead to new forms of community and care.

Nomadland: Redefining Community and Autonomy Outside Motherhood

In *Nomadland* (2020), director Chloé Zhao presents a deeply empathetic portrait of life outside the boundaries of traditional societal structures, particularly examining what it means for women to exist and find meaning beyond motherhood and conventional domestic roles. Fern, played by Frances McDormand, embarks on a journey of grief, survival, and autonomy, navigating a transient lifestyle that challenges the preconceived notions of stability, success, and family. This narrative arc, though distinct from my thesis script, *Tides*, resonates strongly with its central themes and informs my approach to crafting Mara's story.

In *Nomadland*, Fern finds solace and belonging within a transient community of nomads who have opted out of conventional living. Her connections with these individuals are not bound by familial ties but by shared experiences of loss, resilience, and a desire for freedom. This notion of community outside traditional family units is central to both *Nomadland* and *Tides*.

In *Tides*, Mara seeks to disconnect from her previous life and the expectations imposed on her. Much like Fern, she isolates herself in a seaside town, searching for an identity outside the roles of wife and mother. The relationships Mara forms with Jean, the motel manager; Simon, the wine shop owner; and even fleeting interactions with strangers, mirror the transient bonds seen in *Nomadland*. These encounters provide moments of connection that offer Mara glimpses of humanity and self-recognition, even as she resists fully reintegrating into society. Both stories question the cultural narrative that a woman's primary source of fulfillment must come from family and motherhood. Fern's rejection of a traditional home and Mara's escape from her former life reflect a shared desire to define themselves on their own terms.

Nomadland portrays a nuanced exploration of autonomy. Fern's journey is driven by her refusal to remain tethered to a past life that no longer exists, choosing instead to embrace the freedom of a life she actively shapes. Her autonomy, however, is not without its challenges. She must navigate both emotional and physical hardships while maintaining a strong sense of self.

Similarly, Mara's story in *Tides* is one of self-redemption through autonomy. After the loss of her child, Mara's journey is not about reintegration into her old life but about reclaiming her identity outside of motherhood. Her self-imposed exile can be seen as a form of autonomy—a refusal to conform to societal expectations of grieving women or mothers. Like Fern, Mara resists being defined by her losses. Both characters ultimately illustrate the complexities of self-reinvention. Fern finds peace in accepting a fluid, transient life, whereas Mara's journey is about confronting the psychological constraints of her past and choosing whether to re-engage with life.

Visually, *Nomadland* serves as a significant influence on *Tides* in its use of landscapes to reflect internal emotional states. Zhao's depiction of vast, open spaces mirrors Fern's internal desolation while simultaneously offering a sense of freedom and possibility. This approach inspires my use of the Minas Basin's tidal swell as a recurring motif in *Tides*. The ocean, much like the landscapes in *Nomadland*, symbolizes both isolation and salvation, representing Mara's psychological state throughout her journey.

The naturalistic aesthetic of *Nomadland* also informs my approach to sound and cinematography in *Tides*. I aim to create an organic soundscape that includes natural elements—wind, waves, tarps flapping, heartbeats and distant voices—to evoke a sense of place and emotional resonance. Additionally, the use of handheld and wide-angle shots will mirror the

fluidity and grounded realism seen in Zhao's work, capturing Mara's experience in an intimate, unvarnished way.

While *Nomadland* addresses the economic precarity faced by older Americans, it also offers a subtle critique of how economic instability impacts women's autonomy. Fern's choices are shaped by a system that provides little support for those who deviate from traditional life paths. This critique can be paralleled with the societal pressures Mara faces in *Tides*.

Mara's grief is compounded by the expectations placed on her as a woman. Her loss is not only that of a child but of a prescribed future shaped by gender norms. Her journey of self-exile and eventual return is an exploration of autonomy in the face of these pressures. Just as Fern's journey in *Nomadland* challenges the conventional narratives of aging and community, Mara's journey in *Tides* challenges the notion that a woman's worth is inherently tied to her ability to mother or fulfill traditional roles.

By integrating an analysis of *Nomadland* into my thesis, I can better articulate how *Tides* participates in a broader cinematic conversation about female autonomy and the rejection of conventional gender roles. Both films explore the complexities of grief, identity, and belonging while redefining what it means for women to live outside societal expectations.

Connecting Research to My Previous Work

As a Canadian screenwriter and director, I am deeply committed to exploring the intersection of social, cultural, and industrial forces with themes of gender, identity, and relationships. My goal is to craft stories that challenge prevailing beliefs and inspire critical reflection on our current narrative canon. I am particularly drawn to the psychological depth of human stories, often subverting and blending genres to push the boundaries of form. Inspired by vast landscapes and unique terrains, I use these settings to mirror the inner conflicts of my protagonists, creating a dynamic interplay between character and environment.

My readiness to develop new work aligns with a broader cultural shift toward amplifying stories authored by queer women and non-binary artists. In recent years, there has been a necessary reckoning with how we consider and portray gender. This evolving landscape inspires me to create now more than ever, as both culture and industry increasingly recognize that queer women and the full scope of our experiences are essential to cinema.

My desire to contribute to this shift is deeply personal. As a queer female filmmaker, I am invested in broadening the narratives available on screen, crafting stories that reflect the nuances and complexities of marginalized identities. Growing up, I rarely saw representations of queer women or complex female protagonists in mainstream media. Instead, I encountered reductive portrayals that flattened the diversity of women's experiences and reinforced traditional gender norms. This gap in representation influenced my short film *Bing! Bang! Bi!* (2020), which explores identity through the lens of a bisexual protagonist navigating the challenges of life as an artist. Through humor and vulnerability, the film seeks to challenge binary notions of sexuality and celebrate fluid identities. I continued to explore gender norms as

related to female rage in my second short film *Between Realities Along the Edge of Time* (2021), which examines how women's anger is often suppressed due to patriarchal expectations. The film portrays how bottling up rage becomes a survival mechanism in a society that stigmatizes female expressions of aggression.

Both short films interrogate the tension between personal identity and societal expectations, a theme that evolves further in my thesis feature *Tides*. In *Tides*, Mara's journey reflects a struggle for autonomy that echoes the experiences of the protagonists in my earlier films. Her emotional repression and gradual unraveling parallel the exploration of female rage and identity, where the characters grapple with societal pressures that dictate how women should behave. These intersecting themes of identity, autonomy, grief, and societal expectations—have become central to my filmmaking, underscoring a continued desire to challenge traditional gender roles and narratives in contemporary cinema.

As an actor and producer, I have worked in the entertainment industry for over two decades, bringing stories to life across theatre, television, and film. My work on screen has always been deeply collaborative and a constant process of engaging with characters and their motivations. This approach has enriched my transition into writing and directing, allowing me to channel those same instincts and skills into shaping my own narratives. To date, I have written and directed two Canada Council for the Arts' supported short films, *Bing! Bang! Bi!* (2020) and *Between Realities Along the Edge of Time* (2021), and co-written *The Way Out*, a horror-western feature that was selected for the Mubi/WScripted 2022 Cannes Screenplay List.

My screenplay adaptation of *Tides* expands on my earlier narrative films and moves into more complex themes and subject matter. *Tides* reflects my ongoing preoccupation with stories that center on women navigating liminal spaces; whether physical, emotional, or psychological.

The themes of grief, sibling dynamics, womanhood, and motherhood are both universal and deeply personal, offering me the opportunity to explore how identity is shaped through relationships and loss.

A key ingredient in my evolution as a screenwriter has been time, a realization that became particularly evident during the development of *Tides*. In the early drafts, I was preoccupied with staying faithful to the source material in every scene. But as I gave myself more time to sit with the narrative, I began to strip away what felt redundant and focus on Mara's emotional journey.

With age, I've learned to take more time to develop my ideas and refine my vision. Early in my career, projects moved quickly, with short films completed within a year. However, writing a feature screenplay demands patience and discipline. The long-form structure requires a deeper understanding of character arcs, thematic development, and pacing. In adapting *Tides*, I committed to a process that wasn't rushed, allowing the material to evolve organically through multiple drafts and insightful feedback over an extended period.

From Novel to Screenplay: Navigating the Process of Adaptation

Adapting Sara Freeman's novel, I faced the task of transforming an interior, poetic text into visual, dramatic language. This required me to think differently about storytelling, moving beyond internal monologues and abstract imagery to craft scenes that capture emotion through action and dialogue.

One of the key lessons I learned during this process was the importance of *Translation* over *Transposition*. Guy Gallo's framework of *Transposition vs Translation* helped clarify the nature of adaptation for me. In *Transposition*, the goal is to remain as faithful as possible to the source material, thereby preserving its plot, characters, and thematic elements in recognizable form. However, I realized that my approach would need to lean more toward *Translation*, where the emotional truth of the novel is preserved, but the structure and narrative are adapted to fit the unique demands of cinema. This meant that my task wasn't to transpose every plot point verbatim but to capture the emotional core and essence of Freeman's work, allowing it to resonate with a new audience in a new medium.

This became especially clear when I considered the emotional journey of the characters. For instance, Freeman's novel explored Mara's internal world through fragmented third-person narration, but this would not transpose directly to the screen. Instead of trying to replicate those poetic moments into dialogue, I looked for ways to visually capture Mara's emotional state. One of the most powerful visual motifs that emerged was the tidal swells off the Bay of Fundy, which I use to symbolize Mara's psychological shifts. Through this motif, I can translate the emotional

landscape of the novel into something that speaks directly to the audience, without relying on the more abstract elements of the book.

As a Canadian filmmaker adapting a Canadian author's novel set between Quebec and the American East Coast, I recognized the pivotal role that language and location play in shaping the narrative's authenticity and broader cultural relevance.

The story centres on Mara and Paul, Quebec natives whose linguistic and cultural identities are shaped by their unique family dynamic. Their mother is anglophone, and their father is francophone—a cultural divide that becomes a significant emotional fault line in their upbringing. In adapting the novel, I chose to maintain and emphasize the linguistic divide, particularly in the way Mara and Paul interact with language as a means of connection and rebellion. In more recent drafts, I incorporated Quebec French throughout the script, especially in scenes that explore Mara's memories. I felt it was crucial for the characters to oscillate between English and French, not just as a cultural marker but as an emotional tool. For example, I made the creative choice for them to speak French when attempting to distance themselves from their mother, who refers to French as the "language of the oppressor" following their father's abandonment.¹⁷ This nuanced use of language became essential in reflecting the psychological and emotional ties within the family, while also honoring the complex cultural landscape of Quebec.

While Freeman's *Tides* is set in a fictional American seaside town called Rome, my adaptation relocates the story from the American East Coast to the South Shore of Nova Scotia. This creative decision was driven by my desire to root the narrative within a distinctly Canadian cultural and geographical context. During a research trip to the region and a meeting with Screen

Nova Scotia, I became committed to showcasing the province's breathtaking landscapes, which provided a rich visual and thematic backdrop for the film. Key locations like the pub in Chester, the beaches near Liverpool, the harbour in Lunenburg filled with American tourists, and the Minas Basin near Wolfville with its world-renowned tidal swells, feature prominently in my adaptation. Every 12 hours, the Atlantic Ocean's 20-foot swell fills and empties the basin. This natural phenomenon serves as a recurring motif in *Tides*, reflecting Mara's precarious emotional state, caught between self-preservation and self-annihilation.

Spending time in Nova Scotia allowed me to engage with the authentic accents, personalities, and sense of community that define the region. I was particularly inspired by the province's raw beauty and its deep connection to the sea. By placing the story in Nova Scotia, I wasn't just changing the geography—I was *translating* the emotional and cultural heart of the story into a context that felt more grounded and resonant with my own experience. It became clear that this was the right decision for the film, as the landscapes themselves became characters, supporting the themes of grief, identity, and belonging within the unique cultural tapestry of eastern Canada.

Adapting *Tides* has not just been a technical exercise in translating the book into a screenplay, it has been a deeply personal and creative journey. It taught me to trust my instincts as a storyteller while remaining open to growth through collaboration and curiosity. It also reinforced my belief that the power of adaptation lies in translating the emotional truths of the source material into a form that feels both fresh and authentic. This process, much like my broader artistic journey, has been shaped by intuition, patience, and the unwavering belief that stories have the power to connect us in profoundly human ways.

Artistic Muses: Nan Goldin and Kate Bush

I have long admired photographer Nan Goldin and musician Kate Bush. Their work has ebbed and flowed through my life over the past twenty years, weaving itself into my creative and personal identity. Their influence on *Tides* is profound and multifaceted, shaping not only my artistic voice but also the film's emotional core.

Nan Goldin: A Visual Language of Memory and Connection

I first encountered Nan Goldin's work in 2003 at the Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art, during her first Canadian solo exhibition. I was 21, newly adrift after being asked to leave the conservatory theatre program I had been enrolled in. As I wandered through the gallery, I was struck by the raw, unflinching intimacy of her photographs.



Figure 1. *Picnic at the Esplanade, Boston 1973*.¹⁸

One image in particular stayed with me: *Picnic at the Esplanade*, Boston 1973. A group of trans women sit on a cliff's edge, laughing and eating cake. What moved me most was its lack of voyeurism. These women were not framed as exotic or othered; instead, Goldin captured them in a moment of joy; an ordinary slice of life. The photograph felt like an invitation into their world, an honest depiction of connection and community.

Since that day, I have often returned to Goldin's work, drawn to its complete lack of artifice. Her photographs, steeped in personal memory and lived experience, are snapshots of an intimate, fragile, and deeply human time. Her book *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* has been a constant companion throughout the writing of *Tides*, influencing how I describe what will be seen on camera—the texture of light, the intimacy of faces, the authenticity of emotion. As critic Elisabeth Sussman wrote, “Nan Goldin’s story of urban life on the fringe was the swan song of an era that reached its peak in the early eighties. Yet it has captured an important element of humanity that is transcendent: a need to connect.”¹⁹ This sentiment lies at the heart of my script.



Figure 2. *Couple in bed, Chicago 1977*.²⁰

The visual language of *Tides* reflects Mara's emotional unraveling—a world where memory seeps into reality and grief manifests in physical space. The film will employ three distinct visual styles: handheld, chaotic, and fragmented framing for the present, which gradually becomes more composed as Mara reclaims her identity; balanced, naturalistic framing for the near past, inspired by Goldin's compositions and films like *La Ciénaga* and *Call Me by Your Name*; and static, painterly tableaux for distant memories, influenced by *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* and *Bones and All*.

Kate Bush: The Emotional Undercurrent of *Tides*

Kate Bush's music entered my life around the same time as Goldin's photography, though my connection to it evolved more gradually. While I was familiar with her iconic ballads, it wasn't until last year that I discovered *Cloudbusting*, a song from the album *Hounds of Love*.

From the first listen, *Cloudbusting* became an anthem for Mara. It captures a journey of resilience, renewal, and hope, all emotions central to *Tides*. As with much of Bush's music, a deeply feminine emotionality underpins the song, but *Cloudbusting* stands out for its ability to evoke both sorrow and optimism. Its themes of belief and redemption mirror Mara's emotional arc: teetering between self-annihilation and self-preservation yet ultimately finding a way forward.

Like Goldin's photography, Bush's music possesses a timeless quality that transcends specific cultural moments. Both artists communicate deeply personal experiences in ways that feel universal, embracing pain and vulnerability as intrinsic to the human condition. Their work

reminds me of the importance of creating art that is truthful, emotionally resonant, and unafraid to explore the raw edges of experience.

In *Tides*, Mara's story of grief, isolation, and the search for connection, echoes themes that resonate deeply in the works of Nan Goldin and Kate Bush. Goldin's images and Bush's music have served as artistic muses, guiding me through the emotional landscapes of my script. Their influence has shaped *Tides* not only aesthetically but thematically, reinforcing my commitment to creating a film that is intimate, vulnerable, and profoundly human.

Ethical Considerations

Collaboration with Experts and Organizations

At its core, *Tides* is a story of grief, loss, and self-discovery. To authentically and respectfully portray the lived experiences of women who have endured stillbirth, miscarriage, or birth-related trauma—as well as the interconnected grief of families and partners, I have prioritized thoughtful collaboration at every stage of development.

Early in the writing process, I consulted with a doula who shared insights from her 15 years of experience, having witnessed both healthy births and unexpected tragedies. Additionally, I have engaged with Bereaved Families of Ontario (BFO) Toronto, a charitable organization dedicated to supporting those in mourning. I am currently on their waitlist to train as a volunteer facilitator for grief counseling groups, an initiative that extends beyond research into a genuine commitment to give back. In addition to my academic research, I have also spoken in depth with women in my life who have experienced various forms of birth-related trauma, ensuring that *Tides* reflects the nuances of these deeply personal experiences.

Representation of Minority Groups

Mara, the film's protagonist, is a white French-Canadian woman, aligning with my own cultural and linguistic heritage. Supporting characters, including Lucien (Black) and Simon (Iranian Canadian), are integral to Mara's journey. To continue to develop these roles

authentically, I will collaborate closely with the actors cast in these parts, exploring their perspectives and lived experiences to enrich their characters. I remain open to changes that enhance representation, ensuring these roles reflect multidimensional individuals rather than archetypes.

The fictional town of Rome, Nova Scotia, features a diverse cast that reflects the region's social fabric. These characters are presented through Mara's observations and interactions, and I have taken specific steps to ensure their representation remains authentic and avoids tokenism or exploitation. In the first act, Mara stays at a hostel where several Latin American migrant workers reside at the end of the tourist season. These characters reflect real-life participants in the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP), primarily from Mexico and the Caribbean. To accurately depict this community's experiences navigating issues such as immigration status, isolation, and employer treatment, I plan to consult with the Centre for Migrant Workers Rights Nova Scotia. My team and I will draw from their resources, facilitate actor engagement with real migrant workers, and prioritize casting from within the community whenever possible.

Alcoholism/Alcohol Addiction

Upon arriving in Rome, Mara turns to alcohol as a means of numbing her grief. Her reliance on drinking, though not framed as an addiction, creates moments of danger, particularly when she ventures into the water. Her decision to take a job at a wine store is one of necessity rather than dependency, drawing from her past work in the service industry.

This complex relationship with alcohol is established early on in her encounter with Rob at the bar. The scene depicts drinking as both a social currency and a vehicle for disconnection. Mara initiates the exchange by asking about Rob's drink, quickly matching his pace, downing whiskey after whiskey. The interaction carries an undercurrent of performance—she puts on his blazer, lets him touch her, and participates in a rhythm of seduction that neither fully commits to. Rob, in turn, presents his college ID as a relic of a former self, a reminder of the version of him before alcohol took its toll. The contrast between his past and present physicality underscores the consequences of long-term substance abuse, a fate that, at this moment, Mara does not consider for herself.

The encounter ultimately leads to a night with little agency on Mara's part. She allows Rob's advances with vacant compliance, her detachment signaling her grief-stricken state rather than any real desire. By morning, her act of taking his college ID—his proof of lost potential—mirrors her own quiet realization that there is no returning to the past. It also serves as a cautionary memento of the effects of long-term alcohol abuse.

In portraying alcohol use, *Tides* acknowledges the pervasive role alcohol plays in Canadian social culture while remaining sensitive to the realities of addiction. The film does not glorify inebriation, nor does it pass moral judgment on those who turn to substances as coping mechanisms. Instead, it explores grief and self-destruction with compassion. Mara's encounter with Rob exemplifies how alcohol enables both fleeting connection and profound disassociation; an ethical consideration that informs the film's careful depiction of substance use.

Gentrified Communities

Mara and the reader/audience experience Rome at the end of its tourist season, witnessing its transition into the off-season. As the town empties, the economic disparity between its seasonal workers and wealthier visitors becomes apparent.

The film does not shy away from the realities of gentrification. Inspired by firsthand observations during our development trip to Nova Scotia, *Tides* reflects the ways American investment has reshaped rural coastal towns. Conversations with local bartenders and shop owners revealed that many leave during the off-season due to the lack of sustainable employment. Visually, this will be captured through empty storefronts, liquidation sales, and new developments; subtle yet effective indicators of economic shifts.

Ethically, it is crucial that *Tides* approaches this subject with sensitivity, avoiding a romanticized or purely critical lens. Gentrification is not depicted as a simple binary of good versus bad; rather, the film highlights the lived realities of those affected. Mara, an outsider, is neither a savior nor an antagonist within this landscape. Her presence as a transient figure mirrors the seasonal workers she encounters, yet as a white woman she also benefits from the economic structures that displace others. The film acknowledges her positionality without making her the focal point of this issue.

Moreover, the portrayal of gentrification in *Tides* resists overt exposition. Instead of didactic commentary, the film uses environmental storytelling to create a layered, observational approach. This ensures that the film remains authentic to the experiences of those living through these economic shifts while maintaining the integrity of Mara's personal journey.

Conclusion

Adapting Sara Freeman's debut novel *Tides* into a feature-length screenplay has been a profoundly transformative journey at a pivotal time in my life. This project has felt like both a gift—an endless source of inspiration—and a companion, a psychic collaborator that has guided me through a period of immense personal change. The process of adaptation has taken me through countless steps: discovering the novel, securing the book option, developing the script on spec, taking it through this Master of Fine Arts program, signing on producers, attaching lead actors, researching Nova Scotia, and applying for Telefilm Production funding. Each step has deepened my connection to this story, and I remain truly grateful for all that has transpired since I first picked up the book.

In many ways, *Tides* came into my life at a moment of personal grief and transition. As I grappled with questions about identity, autonomy, and motherhood, Freeman's prose collided with my own uncertainties and desires. Her story resonated with my experience of stepping out of the roles I was once expected to fill and embracing a more ambiguous, self-defined existence. The themes explored in the script mirror my own journey, and that connection has been the foundation that has propelled this project forward.

Returning to graduate school at 41, without a prior undergraduate degree, is one of my life's greatest achievements. As an aspiring actor, I chose conservatory training after high school because I couldn't afford a university education. Coming from a family where neither my parents nor my older sister attended post-secondary school, this step has felt both radical and deeply affirming. Re-entering an academic environment at this stage of my life has reawakened my intellectual curiosity and expanded my creative horizons. It has given me renewed confidence in

my ideas and in my potential as a filmmaker to tell stories that challenge prevailing narratives and create space for more nuanced, diverse representations of womanhood.

My short film *Between Realities Along the Edge of Time* explores how women are often expected to suppress their anger to avoid being labeled “difficult” or “aggressive.” *Tides* continues this interrogation of gendered expectations, delving into grief, autonomy, and the complexities of identity outside prescribed roles. At a time when reproductive rights and gender freedoms are under attack, this film challenges essentialist notions of womanhood and seeks to expand the way we understand motherhood, care, and self-determination.

This script, and the eventual film, is a tribute to the women and gender non-conforming allies who have shared their stories of birth, loss, love, and reinvention. It’s for my mother, my sister, and my community of friends, who continue to remind me that there are countless ways to live a meaningful, fulfilled life outside traditional narratives.

As I move forward with this project, I remain committed to telling stories that defy easy categorization. I’m interested in creating films that hold space for ambiguity and complexity, where identity is fluid, and where grief and joy coexist. This process has reaffirmed my belief that the stories we tell have the power to change not only how we see the world but also how we see ourselves.

Tides is a story about memory, loss, and the possibility of redemption. It centers on a woman who steps outside societal boundaries in her pursuit of self-discovery and autonomy. At its core, *Tides* is about the transformative power of human connection—how, in life’s most turbulent moments, we hold one another and find a path forward.

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- Martel, Lucrecia. *La Ciénaga*, drama, 103 minutes, Argentina, 2001.
- Ramsay, Lynne. *Ratcatcher*, drama, 94 minutes, Scotland, 1999.
- Ramsay, Lynne. *Small Deaths*, drama, 17 minutes, Scotland, 1996.
- Varda, Agnès. *Vagabond*, drama, 105 minutes, France, 1985.
- Sciamma, Céline. *Petit Maman*, drama, 72 minutes, France, 2021.
- Sciamma, Céline. *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, drama, 120 minutes, France, 2019.
- Wells, Charlotte. *Aftersun*, drama, 96 minutes, UK/US, 2022.
- Zhao, Chloé. *Nomadland*, drama, 108 minutes, US, 2020.