

NEW PROTAGONISTS FOR NEW TIMES: THE TELEVISION DRAMAS OF JOSEFINA MOLINA AND PILAR MIRÓ FEATURED ON NOVELA DURING THE SPANISH TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

NATALIA MARTÍNEZ PÉREZ
SONIA DUEÑAS MOHEDAS

I. INTRODUCTION

The Spanish transition was not only a process of political transformation through which Spain closed the chapter of Franco's dictatorship and embraced democracy, but also a moment marked by profound social and cultural change. Women were significantly affected by various legislative measures, such as the legalisation of divorce (Law 30/1981, 7 July) and, a few years later, abortion (Organic Law 9/1985, 5 July), which recognised their rights and improved their quality of life. However, the transition to democracy was characterised by improvisation and uncertainty (Quirosa-Cheyrouze, 2007). The various left-wing organisations that constituted most of the anti-Francoist movement played a key role during this period, as they mobilised the public to prevent the continuation of the dictatorship and the implementation of political projects aimed at preserving the regime after Franco's death by limiting democratic reforms

(Juliá, 2006). The new political system was created through negotiations between the more reformist sectors of the regime and the leaders of major anti-Francoist parties, in a climate dominated by the pursuit of consensus (Pinilla García, 2021).

This consensus has been described as the central concept underpinning the negotiations that enabled the establishment of the new political system, which was the product of agreements between different political groups that made significant concessions to secure a negotiated solution and lay the foundations for democratic government (Ortiz Heras, 2012). On the other hand, some contemporary historians argue that the political elite resorted to consensus only after they realised they could not impose their political agendas unilaterally (Field, 2011). The concessions and agreements made by the various actors involved in the negotiations were therefore pragmatic and strategic decisions, motivated in part by the desire to secure a prominent role in the new political or-

der. Moreover, the pacts that facilitated the consolidation of the democratic system were reached without the participation of significant segments of society or even the grassroots members of the parties involved in the agreements (Aróstegui Sánchez, 2007).

The media played a highly significant role during the transition to democracy, “[n]ot only through their editorial line and their focus on coverage of political action [...], but also by prioritising the visual documentation of that activity” (Tranche, 2016: 121). The media played an irreplaceable role in the process, as cinema and television journalism was crucial to “the canonisation of the transition” (Sánchez Biosca, 2016: 75). During these years, television pursued the task of educating the public about democratic principles. Although previous research (Siles Ojeda, 1998; Loma Muro, 2013; Martínez Pérez, 2016; Gómez Prada, 2019) has explored the filmographies of Josefina Molina and Pilar Miró (two of the first women to graduate from Spain’s official film school¹ and among the most important directors in Spanish film history), their work in television has received very little scholarly attention. The aim of this study is to fill that research gap with an analysis of the literary adaptations written and directed by Molina and Miró for the program *Novela* (TVE: 1962–1979) during the period of the transition (1974–1981): Miro’s *Los enemigos* [Enemies] (1974) and *Pequeño teatro* [Little Theatre] (1977); and Molina’s *Aire frío* [Cold Air] (1974) and *El camino* [The Path] (1978). The analysis examines the democratic and feminist discourses proposed by the two directors, which in turn reflected and contributed to the political and social transformations of the period. In addition, this study facilitates the recovery of forgotten visual documents, as these dramatic productions are thought-provoking and valuable not only in terms of their content but also from a formal perspective. The research method adopted for this study consists of a gender-based textual analysis. The produc-

tions were viewed at the RTVE Documentation Centre, the only location where this material is available, and thus the corpus is limited to the only adaptations that the two directors made for the program *Novela* during the period. The RTVE archives have played an important role in this research, as some of these container programs, which consisted of numerous episodes, have been de-catalogued or have disappeared.

2. TELEVISION DURING THE SPANISH TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

Television was especially significant during the historical period of the transition, as the small screen underwent major transformations starting in the mid-1970s. Specifically, TVE² implemented various initiatives that on the one hand sought to erode the values that Francoism had instilled in Spanish society, and on the other assigned symbolic prominence to the new system of freedoms in order to legitimise and consolidate it (Palacio, 2012). TVE attempted to confront the country’s most conservative sectors that feared their own political decline, for example, by adopting a serious approach to news coverage of the Antocha massacre in January 1977, underscoring the unacceptable nature of violence as a political tool. It also promoted the idea that elections were an occasion for celebration by broadcasting variety shows and entertainment programs on election nights. As Bustamante suggests, TVE was consolidated in the 1970s as the definitive media outlet in Spanish society (2006), as television became the most popular media format and the leading cultural industry in terms of investment, although even during the Franco regime the medium was not conceived of as “high culture or [...] a platform for revanchist propaganda” (Ibáñez, 2001: 67).

While in the 1950s the number of television sets in Spain is estimated to have been around 600 (Díaz, 2006), by the first general elections of 1977 the figure had already reached eight mil-

lion, of which only 10 percent were colour devices. In this regard, television in the 1970s “had a very established programming model resulting from the medium’s particular evolution, which, thanks to technical advances and the professionalisation of its employees, came to approximate audience preferences” (Antona, 2016: 9). However, technological innovations resulted in the incorporation of new dynamics that continuously reinvented the broadcaster into the 1980s (Berdón Prieto, 2024).

In 1976, on the occasion of its twentieth anniversary, TVE conducted a survey through Spain’s Public Opinion Institute to learn what the public thought of television content. Forty-two percent believed that the extra time they spent watching television came at the expense of the time they had previously dedicated to other media formats such as radio. In this respect, Martín Jiménez (2013) points out that both the press and television played an indisputable role in the country’s shift from dictatorship to democracy, although they acted as different agents with specific social influences, not only because of the different products they offered but also because of the audiences they targeted.

In relation to the pedagogical mission undertaken by TVE, Rafael Ansón³ acknowledged that the broadcaster facilitated political reform, although its development was also driven by its technological capacity for influencing Spanish society. Palacio argues that the reform to the public broadcaster took the form of an advertising campaign, with repercussions for the “types of political communication on television” (2001: 100), which conformed to the rules of advertising. Thus, during the transition to democracy, speeches by both reformist and conservative political parties were adapted to televised speech formats, which in turn were influenced by advertising techniques. Television played a key role in consolidating and structuring the nascent political system based on public freedoms, while at the same time defining the main features of political communication.

However, it is likely that neither Rafael Ansón nor the Spanish government had intended to employ other arguments to persuade Spaniards of the virtues of democracy, although the democratic opposition did not demand them (Palacio, 2001). Fictional content constitutes the key form of television programming for studying the characteristics of television of the past (Palacio, 2012). In this sense, the analysis of fictional content from this period is particularly interesting because the imaginary of the transition continues to be visible.⁴ This article focuses on fiction precisely because it can shed light on some of the discourses articulated during the transition, on the understanding that Spain’s move towards democracy cannot be fully understood without considering the influence of the television fiction content broadcast by its public broadcaster.

3. WOMEN AND TELEVISION CREATION: THE ENTRY OF WOMEN INTO PUBLIC BROADCASTING

During the Spanish transition to democracy, women experienced and called for the most significant changes, leaving the regime’s patriarchal system behind to become professionals with rights. Legal reforms—such as the decriminalisation of adultery and contraceptives in 1977, the proclamation of gender equality in the 1978 Constitution, the legalisation of divorce in 1981 and abortion in 1985—contributed to significant improvements to women’s quality of life. It was in this context that the country experienced a resurgence in the feminist movement.⁵ For this reason, another aim of this study is to identify connections between the democratic transition, the television industry and the increasing number of women in creative professions.

Television helped to make visible and accelerate the changes taking place in Spanish women’s lives, which meant that much of its content was led by women both on-screen and in production roles.

Notable figures include journalists such as Carmen Sarmiento, Sol Alameda, Ana Asensio, Rosa María Mateo and Rosa María Calaf, who produced reports for *Informe Semanal* (TVE, 1973-present); Elena Martí, who worked on *Informativo 24 horas* (TVE, 1970–1973); frequent writers such as Gloria Fuertes, and to a lesser extent Carmen Conde; as well as the actress Ana Diosdado, who scripted the series *Juan y Manuela* (TVE, 1974) and *Los comuneros* (TVE, 1978). Notable in the field of television direction is Mercè Vilaret, one of the first female directors at TVE in Catalonia and also a specialist in literary adaptations, whose “(dramatic and documentary) programs reveal the director’s personal writing style and the major themes of her imaginary” (Martí, 2003: 86). Also noteworthy is the presenter and director Paloma Chamorro, who in the 1970s hosted cultural programs such as *Encuentros con las Artes y las Letras* (TVE2, 1976–1977) and *Imágenes* (TVE2, 1978–1981). Two key features of Spanish television resulted from this reality: its importance for the representation of the new roles taken on by women in Spanish society during the transition; and its creation of a new female perspective through the work of these women creators.

As part of an institutional strategy, Televisión Española (TVE) launched various projects that had been in development for months, or even years, and scheduled three consecutive series with storylines that focused on women: *La señora García se confiesa* [Mrs. Garcia Confesses] (Adolfo Marsillach, TVE, 1976–1977), *Mujeres insólitas* [Exceptional Women] (Cayetano Luca de Tena, TVE, 1977) and *Las viudas* [Widows] (Alberto González Vergel, TVE, 1977). “From November 1976 to June 1977, every Tuesday night, TV viewers could watch productions in their homes that took the women’s world as its point of reference” (Palacio, 2012: 170). In container programs such as *Novela*, comprising half-hour episodes broadcast on weekdays, the content seemed to be targeting a female audience; this impression is reinforced by the no-

table number of women writers who worked on the adaptations, such as Carmen Martín Gaité, Dolores Medio, Elena Soriano, Mercè Rodoreda, Rosa Chacel and Ana María Matute. This trend of broadcasting productions written by women “would continue in subsequent years, so that female authors came to represent a significant proportion or even the majority [of writers]” (Ansón, 2010: 364).

It is important to note that these women writers already had a considerable or even predominant presence on television during the dictatorship, suggesting that the interest in attracting female audiences may have precursors in periods prior to the democratic transition. These adaptations were based on fictional works framed “in the most important genres of the period (television plays, dramas in instalments and dramatic series, the latter developed and produced with techniques specific to the small screen)” (Chicharro-Merayo & Gil-Gascón, 2022: 119).

Many of these programs were produced in the second half of the 1960s and the early 1970s, and they were developed by young directors trained at Instituto de Investigaciones y Experiencias Cinematográficas (Spain’s official film school in Madrid) who found their place making fiction for TVE’s second channel (Segunda Cadena) that transformed the narrative and formal style of television (Palacio, 2001). This study focuses on the fictional productions of Pilar Miró and Josefina Molina because their work provides an opportunity to explore the ideas proposed by these directors. Miró, Molina and Cecilia Bartolomé are often mentioned in audiovisual studies focusing specifically on the film industry, as they were the first women to graduate from the country’s official film school (García López, 2021), although many other women also worked in television, such as Paloma Chamorro, Pilar Herrero, Milagros Valdés and Lolo Rico. Academic research on these directors has focused primarily on their film work, overlooking their time in television or viewing

THESE CREATORS DEMONSTRATED THE NEED TO LIBERATE WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION, FOLLOWING THE PERIOD OF REPRESSION AND INEQUALITY IMPOSED BY THE FRANCO REGIME

it as a formative stage prior to their filmmaking careers. These creators demonstrated the need to liberate women in the context of the democratic transition, following the period of repression and inequality imposed by the Franco regime. As Guichot-Reina points out, they thus offered viewers new female role models in television fiction that exposed issues such as “gender discrimination and the unjust realities they faced by virtue of their sex” (2024: 131), with the aim of breaking with perpetuated gender stereotypes and proposing changes in favour of equality both to Spanish law and to the very structure of Spanish society.

4. MIRÓ AND MOLINA’S ADAPTATIONS IN NOVELA

Novela was a “container program” on air from 1963 to 1978, consisting of 42 half-hour episodes. It was broadcast on weeknights, Monday through Friday, in keeping with the serialised continuity of its stories, which often extended over multiple episodes. The stories were based on widely popular literary works; Pilar Miró and Josefina Molina⁶ chose to adapt texts by renowned women authors such as Carmen Martín Gaité, Ana María Matute, Mercè Rodoreda or Rosa Chacel, thereby giving visibility to women’s literature (Ansón, 2010: 364) while at the same time appealing to female viewers with dramas featuring prominent or narratively significant women characters. From 1974 to 1978, Miró and Molina made four five-episode dramas between them. *Los enemigos* (Pilar Miró), broadcast from 18 to 22 February 1974, was an

adaptation of the Russian classic “The Duellist” (Bretior, Ivan Turgenev, 1847). Set in the 19th century, the story tells of a German nobleman (played by Antonio Canal) who becomes caught up in a confrontation with his best friend during his time in the army over his feelings for Masha (Emma Cohen), a character who introduces romantic elements into the narrative. Broadcast just a few weeks later, from 25 to 29 March 1974, Molina’s *Aire frío* was based on the play of the same name by Cuban writer Virgilio Piñera. In it, Lola Cardona plays Luz Marina, a woman of exceptional fortitude who manages her household and family, the Romagueras, throughout the decades of the 1940s and 1950s. Miró would not return to *Novela* until 1977, when her adaptation of Ana María Matute’s 1954 novel *Pequeño teatro* would be aired from 7 to 11 March. This story is set in a coastal town in the Basque Country, where a foreigner captures the attention of a young woman named Zazu (Fiorella Faltoyano). Finally, Molina’s *El camino* (1978) was broadcast from 17 to 21 April 1978. This big-budget adaptation of the popular novel of the same name by Miguel Delibes won the Award for Best Direction at the 15th Prague International Television Festival that same year. Set in the small village of Molledo in the Cantabria region during the period after the Spanish Civil War, it portrays the lives and customs of the villagers.

4.1. Visual Style and Narrative Features

The dramas analysed here are rife with distancing and metafiction elements, demonstrating a clear desire to play with the narrative rather than adhere strictly to classical staging. However, expressive editing is notable in sequences such as the duel between the protagonists in *Los enemigos*, Lutchkov and Kister, where Miró uses a panoramic crane shot to tilt down over the scene. The agile mobility of the camera in her productions based on tracking shots and numerous short close-ups constitutes a distinctive visual style that fluidly accelerates moments of heightened narrative ten-

sion. In *Pequeño teatro*, she uses zoom-ins to bring viewers closer to the characters, allowing the audience to invade their space, especially in the case of Zazu, who is given greater visual and narrative prominence through her voice-over, which is the only one we hear. With a greater number of introspective scenes, this production is notable for the use of symphonic music, which enhances the dramatic tone of the narration.

Bearing in mind that they were filmed in a studio, both these productions reveal the importance Miró places on the composition of shots and framing (particularly depth of field), replete with details and a *mise-en-scène* which, though simple, features opulent sets in keeping with their narrative contexts. The depiction of high society through rich, luxurious fabrics and furnishings that adorn the rooms of the houses is further magnified by the large number of extras on the set.

Molina's works, by contrast, reflect a more restrained and traditional approach to staging, avoiding formal experimentation in either the editing or the visual style. She uses a wide range of shot types to provide greater variety in her technical language, but particularly notable is her use of a handheld camera in the wedding banquet scene in *El camino*, projecting a documentary tone intended both to capture the rural customs and folk dances and to convey the poverty and misery of post-war Spain. Molina highlights the rare moments of joy to create a strong contrast with the clear discontent and repression suffered by the villagers. This classical technical approach, which is atypical of her work and may be related to the fact that the production was for TVE's La 1 channel rather than La 2⁷ where Molina worked more often, contrasts with the narrative complexity resulting from the integration of flashbacks, although these require viewers to identify the time-frame through the text itself. In *El camino*, however, this narrative device is indispensable for the effective adaptation of Delibes's novel (Zurián Hernández & Gómez Prada, 2015; Martínez Sánchez, 2022), as the narration of

the story is non-linear and full of analepses inserted to recount the memories of the character Daniel. In contrast to Miró's lavish sets, Molina opts for a natural *mise-en-scène*, filming on location with live sound. This is not the case in *Aire frío*, where the action unfolds entirely inside a family home and is presented in a theatrical style that respects the original text. Molina's visual style in both productions is unquestionably in line with her cinematic work. In her memoirs, she notes that she never differentiated between television and cinematic language: "I approached each of those programs as if it were the film of my life. I used the three or four simultaneous cameras with staging techniques that cinema had already been experimenting with for years" (Molina, 2000: 62-63).

ALL FOUR PRODUCTIONS OFFER AN INTIMATE AND CRITICAL VIEW OF WOMEN'S ACTIVITY INSIDE DOMESTIC SPACES

The fact that the action takes place in interior spaces connects the setting with the private sphere to which women have been relegated in a dichotomous system, while the public sphere is dominated by men (Pateman, 1995). In this regard, all four productions offer an intimate and critical view of women's activity inside domestic spaces, not only questioning the archetype of the "angel in the house", but also reflecting on the institution of marriage—or more specifically, on virginity and honour in the case of *El camino*.

4.2. Female Characters and Thematic Features

The works of Miró analysed here reflect her interest in stories set in the 19th century, whether through the militarism of *Los enemigos* or the drama of *Pequeño teatro*. Even more evident is the pedagogical aim of the former with its emphasis

on dialogue and tolerance over violence—a theme that allowed the director to participate indirectly in the debate of the period on the democratic transition through images and narratives that connected with the political and social concerns of the time and contributed to the construction of a democratic imaginary. *Pequeño teatro* also offers a critique of religious morality, which is also evident in *Aire frío*, functioning as an opportunity for reflection on the Franco regime. Anticlericalism is expressed in the figure of the priest, who is typically associated with worldly pleasures (a feature present in the films of both directors). The clearest example of this appears in *El camino* when the priest questions the very existence of miracles, revealing him to be the least devout of all the story's characters. For women, religious morality becomes a burden they are forced to bear (as it is for Luz Marina in *Aire frío*), or an inherent trait of the provincial mentality (in the case of Zazu in *Pequeño teatro*).

In *Los enemigos*, the character of Masha is the one who triggers the conflict between the two male protagonists, whose friendship contains a homoerotic subtext, but who also represent two opposing models of masculinity: patriarchal and hegemonic in Lutchkov; and understanding, sensitive and pacifistic in Kister. In response to this situation, Masha refuses to be treated as a mere object, yet she flirts with and tests both men, straining their friendship in a clear example of conscious rebellion whose nature becomes clear when it is revealed that she belongs to the Russian women's emancipation movement. Her mixed-race identity and her resistance to the duties imposed by her family and social class constitute an ironic critique of traditional portrayals of women in fiction through a male gaze.

The significance of an oppressive social and political context for women is also evident in *Pequeño teatro*. Miró gives greater narrative weight to Zazu, despite the fact she is not actually the protagonist of the story. Issues such as mother-

hood and religion shape and define this female character, whose psychological evolution is charted in the inner monologue included by Miró: "I've always been searching for something without knowing what, something that screams in my heart. [...] Child after child, walk after walk, some trip to the city, [...] all of it absurd. Until the circle of a dead and empty life is closed." Like Masha, Zazu refuses to accept her fate as dictated by a patriarchal society in which women are viewed as commodities to be exchanged between men. Marcos, a wandering foreigner, represents freedom for her, the possibility of escaping her village. Seeing him as a means of empowerment, she begins a romantic relationship with him. However, Miró's adaptation breaks with the concept of "romantic love", as Zazu is transformed into a sceptical, solitary, gloomy and pessimistic woman who conceives of love as a kind of poison. Her character thus follows a line of depictions of women in other works by Miró who stumble and fall when confronted with events that plunge them into pain and sorrow (Siles, 2006). In short, the female characters in both *Los enemigos* and *Pequeño teatro* are engaged in an internal struggle in patriarchal contexts that oppress them and drive them to loneliness and failure.

Molina, on the other hand, constructs characters who gradually break out of the ultraconservative constraints still ingrained in rural Spain when the country's democratic transition began. While its urban centres were being modernised, the villages of Spain remained trapped in a bleak reality defined by the patriarchal legacy of the regime. In *Aire frío*, Molina focuses on Luz Marina, a strong, hardworking woman who fights to support her family financially but is disparaged as a "spinster" by the men in her life. The family pressure makes her cynical about marriage, although in the end it becomes her means of escape from the family yoke that has held her down. Single by her own choosing, Luz Marina learns that marriage is really just "the same collar on a different

dog, because the collar is still the same and squeezes tighter than ever [...]. I've got married, but I still live in the same hovel, I still sew and I still see the same misery." In this context, as a character who must ultimately assume responsibility for both her parents and her husband, Luz Marina reveals the psychological impact on women of the "ethics of care" (Gilligan, 1985) and the guilt they suffer if they fail to live up to it. Molina presents a critique of the duties imposed on women by societal pressure and depicts their daily lives through domestic chores, while leisure and enjoyment are restricted to the radio serials that Luz Marina listens to on her own.

In *El camino*, Molina focuses much of the action on the women portrayed rather than on the actual protagonist of the story, Daniel. Once again, the figure of the "spinster" is present, this time in the form of the Guindilla sisters, two middle-aged women who run a small grocery shop in the village. The older sister, Lola, is a protector of Christian morality who spends her nights ensuring that the young people of the village do not commit any sins by limiting their recreational activities almost exclusively to religious ones. Meanwhile, the younger sister, Irene, suffering the consequences of being abandoned by her beloved, is doomed to dress in mourning attire for the rest of her life as a symbol of her disgrace. These and other female characters form a tableau of rural post-war Spanish women condemned to bitter lives with marriage and motherhood as their ultimate purpose. Molina's intention is not only to offer an open critique of Francoism, the institution of the family and the basic pillars of Catholic morality as forces determining women's fates, but also to present women metaphorically as a unified and uniform collective. All action involving women takes place inside homes and churches, further reducing the size of the private sphere to which they are confined. The scene of Germán's funeral is particularly revealing, as all the participants in the funeral procession are men except for a young

girl named Uca-Uca, a character symbolising hope among the new generations who would be growing up in a democratic country. Other characters given a place by Molina in the story include Josefa, who commits suicide when the man she loves marries another, throwing herself naked into the river and thus exposing her normally concealed body in an act of feminist liberation. The brief frontal shot of her body is remarkable given the political and social context of the production and the fact that it was broadcast during what is now classified as prime time on La 1.

5. CONCLUSIONS

From their beginnings working on television dramas to their final feature films and series, Pilar Miró and Josefina Molina developed themes that resonated with audiences, dealing with politics, youth, generational conflict and the emancipation of women, all of which were essential pieces in the construction of a democratic culture. In this context, a unifying theme that can be identified running throughout the work of these two creators is the feminist perspective or the rejection of an androcentric vision. However, the format of each program significantly influenced the treatment of these themes, and their reflections on gender-related issues varied depending on whether the production was the adaptation of a pre-existing literary text, as was the case with much of their work.

It has been argued here that both creators engage with a set of concerns linked to the living conditions of women, and particularly to the assertion of equal rights and the role of women in history. From a gender perspective, their fictional productions are characterised by their condemnation of sexism in Spanish society and by the complex and rich representations of female characters they offered. Nevertheless, it is worth asking whether the choice of these productions was based on personal preference or whether they

ALL FOUR PRODUCTIONS PRESENT STRONG FEMALE CHARACTERS WITH CLEARLY DEFINED GOALS WHO DO NOT SHRINK AWAY FROM ADVERSITY AND WHO SEEK EMPOWERMENT

were simply assigned these projects because they were women. Indeed, many of these titles were imposed by network executives who assumed that women possessed a greater “sensitivity” or affinity for themes considered feminine. However, even when these titles were assigned by RTVE management, the approach taken by the creators granted them a degree of artistic freedom.

In the works analysed here, the female characters do not occupy secondary roles, nor do they submit to family or spousal constraints; instead, they pursue their dreams and explore their own life projects. They embrace ambitions and desires in opposition to social conventions, in line with Kaplan’s (1998) suggestion that feminist filmmakers seek to deconstruct classical texts and explore women’s narratives. The four fiction productions examined above all present strong female characters with clearly defined goals who do not shrink away from adversity and who seek empowerment, whether by attempting to escape a monotonous provincial existence, like Zazu in *Pequeño teatro*, or by becoming essential supports to those around them, as Luz Marina does in *Aire frío*. Molina herself affirms that she has always sought to portray women from a socially committed perspective: “in my films, series and plays there is always a female character who fights against oppression. I have waged my own battle and highlighted characters who defend their freedom” (Castañeda Ceballos, 1998: 45). From this perspective, Molina’s *Aire frío* takes the view of a woman who yearns for independence, who confronts her parents and brothers while supporting her family economically through her work as a seamstress and teacher.

Both creators deconstruct the traditional, passive image of female characters by seeking new ways to define their identities. This is significant given that motherhood, which is typically a central narrative of conventional femininity, is subverted in several of their dramas. In none of these titles is motherhood presented as a goal or a life project for the female protagonists. In fact, it is not even mentioned, as the protagonists prioritise other aspects of life, based on the need these central figures have to escape a patriarchal system and an oppressive environment dominated by male characters. The works of Miró and Molina during the Spanish transition to democracy thus not only offered audiences a cultural imaginary aligned with the pedagogical objective of television at the time, but also created a corpus of productions that reflect clearly female themes and concerns. The notable consistency observed across their stories may be attributed to the need for women to re-define and re-signify themselves as subjects within a new social framework. Although they were produced and broadcast in a wide range of programs with substantial differences in terms of the network, production context, and time slot, the motifs and imagery of these dramas and series exhibit a remarkable cohesion despite individual differences between the two creators, due to the fact that both Molina and Miró belonged to the same generation. ■

NOTES

- 1 Molina was the first woman to receive a degree in direction from Spain’s official film school (Escuela Oficial Cinematografía) in 1969, while Miró completed her studies in screenwriting in 1968. This marked the institutionalisation of film studies, giving women access to creative positions in the Spanish film and television sector.
- 2 TVE began regular broadcasting in Spain in 1956, in a climate marked by the Franco regime’s efforts to modernise and open up the nation. In this context,

the objective of the Spanish public broadcaster was to “offer citizens a new and fully developed model of integration and sociability” (Ibáñez, 2001: 67).

- 3 Rafael Ansón served as General Director of the Spanish national radio and television broadcaster, RTVE (Radiodifusión y Televisión Española), from July 1976 to November 1977 and is regarded as the driving force behind the cultural transformation and modernisation of the broadcaster’s television division (TVE).
- 4 See Magaldi Fernández (2023) on biopics about key figures in the Spanish transition to democracy.
- 5 According to Verdugo Martí (2010), the First Women’s Liberation Conferences, held in Madrid in December 1975 and in Barcelona in 1976, marked the rise of the feminist movement in Spain and became a forum for open debate on the issue of discrimination.
- 6 Like other graduates of Spain’s official film school, both directors had opportunities to direct thanks to these drama programs, which had become “veritable laboratories of innovation” (Palacio, 2001: 131).
- 7 TVE’s second channel (La 2), whose broadcasting coverage was limited to Spain’s urban centres, had a more experimental nature and a strong cultural component, whereas the programming on TVE’s first channel, which was broadcast nationwide, “fully adhered to the conventions of mass culture, entertainment and the public sphere” (Palacio, 2012: 9).

REFERENCES

- Ansón, A. (2010). *Novela (1973-1983)*. In A. Ansón, J. C. Ara Torralba, J. L. Calvo Carrilla, L. M. Fernández, M. Á. Naval López & C. Peña Ardid (eds.), *Televisión y literatura en la España de la Transición (1973-1982)* (pp. 363-365). Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico.
- Antona, T. (2016). La programación televisiva del tardofranquismo: la propaganda en las emisiones de entretenimiento y divulgación. *Revista Comunicación y Medios*, 25(34), 8-21. <https://doi.org/10.5354/rcm.v0i34.41633>
- Aróstegui Sánchez, J. (2007). La Transición a la democracia, matriz de nuestro tiempo reciente. In R. Quiroga-Cheyouze Muñoz (coord.), *Historia de la Transición en España. Los inicios del proceso democratizador* (pp. 31-43). Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva.
- Berdón Prieto, P. (2024). El liderazgo de TVE en tiempos de cambio. innovación y dirección frente a la liberalización (1982-1989). *Estudios sobre el mensaje periodístico*, 30(4), 703-712. <https://doi.org/10.5209/emp.98062>
- Bustamante, E. (2006). *Radio y televisión en España. Historia de una asignatura pendiente de la democracia*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
- Castañeda Ceballos, P. (1998). Josefina Molina: soy feminista porque soy mujer. *Meridiana: Revista del Instituto Andaluz de la Mujer*, 11, 42-45.
- Chicharro-Merayo, M. & Gil-Gascón, F. (2022). Home-grown fiction programmes in the late-Franco period and the first transition: Shaping a democratic culture (1970–1976). *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 25(1), 117-131. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549420935894>
- Díaz, L. (2006). *La televisión en España, 1949-1995*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- Field, B. N. (2011). Interparty Consensus and Intraparty Discipline in Spain’s Transition to Democracy. In G. Alonso & D. Muro (Eds.), *The Politics and Memory of Democratic Transition. The Spanish Model* (pp. 71-91). New York & Oxon: Routledge.
- Gómez Prada, H. C. (2019). *La obra cinematográfica de Josefina Molina en la historiografía del cine español: un análisis audiovisual* [Doctoral Thesis]. Universidad Complutense de Madrid.
- Guichot-Reina, V. (2024). Mujeres vistas por mujeres. El compromiso educativo por la emancipación femenina de las directoras de la transición española. *Historia De La Educación*, 42(1), 127–149. <https://doi.org/10.14201/hedu2023127149>
- Ibáñez, J. C. (2001). Televisión y cambio social en la España de los años 50. Apuntes sobre el proceso de legitimación del medio televisivo en la dictadura de Franco. *Secuencias*, 13, 48-67.
- García López, S. (2021). Miradas invisibles. Mujeres en la Escuela Oficial de Cinematografía, 1947-1976. *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 22 (3), 311-329.
- Gilligan, C. (1985). *La moral y la teoría: Psicología del desarrollo femenino*. México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica

- Juliá, S. (2006). En torno a los proyectos de la Transición y sus imprevistos resultados. In C. Molinero (ed.), *La Transición, treinta años después* (pp. 59-79). Barcelona: Ediciones Península.
- Kaplan, A. E. (1998). *Las mujeres y el cine. A ambos lados de la cámara*. Madrid: Cátedra.
- Loma Muro, E. (2013). *Las imágenes de Josefina Molina: de la escritura literaria a la audiovisual* [Doctoral Thesis]. Universidad de Córdoba.
- Magaldi Fernández, A. (2023). Entre la historia y la ficción: la Transición española a través de los biopics históricos. *Área Abierta*, 23(1), 55-68. <https://doi.org/10.5209/arab.86177>
- Martí, M. (2003). Mercè Vilaret. Aproximación a su escritura visual. *Quaderns del CAC*, 16, 63-70.
- Martín Jiménez, V. (2013). *Televisión Española y la transición democrática. La comunicación política del Cambio (1976-1979)*. Valladolid: Ediciones Universidad de Valladolid.
- Martínez Pérez, N. (2016). *Mujeres creadoras de ficción televisiva durante la transición española (1974-1981)* [Doctoral Thesis]. Universidad Carlos III de Madrid.
- Martínez Sánchez, Á. (2022). La adaptación televisiva (feminizada): Josefina Molina y "El Camino". *SERIARTE*, 2, 54-74. <https://doi.org/10.21071/seriarte.v2i.14555>
- Molina, J. (2000). *Sentada en un rincón*. Valladolid: Semana Internacional de Cine de Valladolid.
- Ortiz Heras, M. (2012). Nuevos y viejos discursos de la Transición. La nostalgia del consenso. *Historia Contemporánea*, 44, 337-370.
- Palacio, M. (2001). *Historia de la televisión en España*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
- Palacio, M. (2012). *La televisión durante la Transición española*. Madrid: Cátedra.
- Pateman, C. (1995). *El contrato sexual*. Barcelona: Anthropos.
- Pinilla García, A. (2021). *La Transición en España. España en Transición. Historia reciente de nuestra democracia*. Madrid: Alianza.
- Quirosa-Cheyrouze, R. (2007). La Transición a la democracia: una perspectiva historiográfica. In R. Quirosa-Cheyrouze (coord.), *Historia de la Transición en España: los inicios del proceso democratizador* (pp.13-27). Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva.
- Sánchez Biosca, V. (2016). PCE, Santiago Carrillo: enero de 1977 o el giro sacrificial de la Transición. *Estudios sobre el mensaje periodístico*, 22(1), 49-76. https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_ESMP.2016.v22.n1.52582
- Siles Ojeda, B. (2006). *Pilar Miró (1940-1997)*. Madrid: Biblioteca de Mujeres.
- Tranche, R.R. (2016). 28 de octubre de 1982, una noche para un líder. Radiografía de una imagen para la Historia. *Estudios sobre el mensaje periodístico*, 22(1), 101-123. https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_ESMP.2016.v22.n1.52584
- Verdugo Martí, V. (2010). Desmontando el patriarcado: prácticas políticas y lemas del movimiento feminista español en la transición democrática. *Feminismo/s*, 16, 259-279.
- Zurián Hernández, F. A. & Gómez Prada, H. C. (2015). Josefina Molina, mirada de mujer sobre la mujer y la sociedad. In F. A. Zurián Hernández (ed.) *Construyendo una mirada propia: mujeres directoras en el cine español. De los orígenes al año 2000* (pp. 49-66). Madrid: Síntesis.

NEW PROTAGONISTS FOR NEW TIMES: THE TELEVISION DRAMAS OF JOSEFINA MOLINA AND PILAR MIRÓ FEATURED ON NOVELA DURING THE SPANISH TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

Abstract

This article examines the television adaptations directed and/or written by the Spanish creators Pilar Miró and Josefina Molina during the period from 1974 to 1981 for the program *Novela* (TVE: 1962-1979). The four productions discussed—Miró’s *Los enemigos* (1974) and *Pequeño teatro* (1977); and Molina’s *Aire frío* (1974) and *El camino* (1978)—have been largely forgotten despite their historiographical value. In view of their significant influence on audiences of the period, this study proposes a reflection on the discourses and representations of gender presented in these fictional narratives. From a gender perspective, television during Spain’s transition to democracy played a crucial role in the promotion of new social realities by exploring, questioning and challenging the new roles being adopted by women at the time. The analysis of these dramas can shed light on the feminist discourses articulated by the creators, which may be viewed as a reflection of the political and social transformations taking place during the democratic transition (such as the improvement of the status of women in the Spanish political and social context) with the aim of fulfilling TVE’s pedagogical mission to promote the country’s new democratic values.

Key words

Television studies; Spanish Television; Spanish Transition; Feminism; Television fiction; Pilar Miró; Josefina Molina.

Authors

Natalia Martínez Pérez holds a PhD in Media Research from Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. She is a lecturer in the Department of History, Geography and Communication at Universidad de Burgos and a member of the research groups “Television-Cinema: Memory, Representation and Industry” (TECMERIN) and “Society and Conflict: Cultural Studies of Violence” (SYCON). Her lines of research focus mainly on the relationship between feminist studies and television studies. She is the author of several articles published in academic journals such as *Retos* and *Visual Review*. Contact: nmperez@ubu.es

NUEVAS PROTAGONISTAS PARA NUEVOS TIEMPOS: LOS DRAMÁTICOS DE JOSEFINA MOLINA Y PILAR MIRÓ EN NOVELA DURANTE LA TRANSICIÓN ESPAÑOLA

Resumen

Este artículo examina las adaptaciones televisivas dirigidas y/o escritas por las creadoras españolas Pilar Miró y Josefina Molina durante el período comprendido entre 1974 y 1981 a través del programa contenedor *Novela* (TVE: 1962-1979), cuatro obras que, en algunos casos, supone un material olvidado pese a su valiosa contribución historiográfica: *Los enemigos* (1974) y *Pequeño teatro* (1977) de Miró; y *Aire frío* (1974) y *El camino* (1978) de Molina. Debido a la notable influencia que tuvieron en la audiencia de dicho período, se propone una reflexión en torno a los discursos y las representaciones de género presentadas en estas ficciones. Desde una perspectiva de género, la televisión de la Transición desempeñó un papel crucial al tratar de promover nuevas realidades sociales que exploraban, cuestionaban y desafiaban los nuevos roles adoptados por las mujeres de la época. El análisis de los dramáticos permite reflexionar sobre los discursos articulados en términos feministas por las creadoras, considerándolos un reflejo de las transformaciones políticas y sociales que tuvieron lugar durante la Transición española, como la mejora de la situación de las mujeres en el contexto político-social, con el fin de promover los nuevos valores democráticos desde el papel pedagógico que desempeñaba Televisión Española.

Palabras clave

Estudios televisivos; Televisión Española; Transición española; Feminismo; Ficción televisiva; Pilar Miró; Josefina Molina.

Autoras

Natalia Martínez Pérez (Vizcaya, 1986) es doctora en Investigación en Medios de Comunicación por la Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Profesora Ayudante Doctora en el Departamento de Historia, Geografía y Comunicación de la Universidad de Burgos y miembro de los grupos de investigación “Televisión-Cine: Memoria, Representación e Industria” (TECMERIN) y “Sociedad y conflicto. Estudios culturales de la(s) violencia(s)” (SYCON). Sus líneas de investigación parten principalmente de las relaciones entre los Estudios Feministas y los Estudios Televisivos. Es autora de diversos artículos publicados en revistas científicas, como *Retos* y *Visual Review*. Contacto: nmperez@ubu.es

Sonia Dueñas Mohedas holds a PhD in Media Research from Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. She is a lecturer in the Department of Communication at Universidad Carlos III de Madrid and a member of the research group "Television-Cinema: Memory, Representation and Industry" (TECMERIN). Her lines of research focus mainly on film studies and media industry studies. She is the author of several articles published in academic journals, such as *Brumal* and *Artnodes*. Contact: sduenas@hum.uc3m.es

Article reference

Martínez Pérez, N., Dueñas Mohedas, S. (2026). New Protagonists for New Times: The Television Dramas of Josefina Molina and Pilar Miró Featured on *Novela* during the Spanish Transition to Democracy. *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 41, 246-259. <https://doi.org/10.63700/1282>

Sonia Dueñas Mohedas (Madrid, 1985) es doctora en Investigación en Medios de Comunicación por la Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Profesora Ayudante Doctora en el Departamento de Comunicación de la Universidad Carlos III de Madrid y miembro del grupo de investigación "Televisión-Cine: Memoria, Representación e Industria" (TECMERIN). Sus líneas de investigación parten principalmente de las relaciones entre los Estudios Filmicos y los Media Industry Studies. Es autora de diversos artículos publicados en revistas científicas, como *Brumal* y *Artnodes*. Contacto: sduenas@hum.uc3m.es

Referencia de este artículo

Martínez Pérez, N., Dueñas Mohedas, S. (2026). Nuevas protagonistas para nuevos tiempos: los dramáticos de Josefina Molina y Pilar Miró en *Novela* durante la Transición española. *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 41, 246-259. <https://doi.org/10.63700/1282>

recibido/received: 31.01.2025 | aceptado/accepted: 22.12.2025

Edita / Published by



Licencia / License



ISSN 1885-3730 (print) / 2340-6992 (digital) DL V-5340-2003 WEB www.revistaatalante.com MAIL info@revistaatalante.com

