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REVISTA DE ESTUDIOS CINEMATOGRÁFICOS

NOTEBOOK

Female Archetypes and Star System

IN SPANISH FILM HISTORY

DIALOGUE

Teresa Gimpera

RESCUING
SPANISH
MODERNITY

(DIS)AGREEMENTS

When Fire Rises Up From the Soles Of Your Feet

CREATIVE EXPERIENCES
OF THE ACTRESS
IN SPANISH CINEMA

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FEMALE ARCHETYPES AND THE STAR SYSTEM IN SPANISH FILM HISTORY*

NÚRIA BOU
XAVIER PÉREZ

As pointed out years ago by Edgar Morin (1972), archetypes in cinema are associated with the faces of the stars who, in the early years of the medium, portrayed the same prototypical characters repeatedly with the implicit strategy of cultivating audience loyalty. In the case of actresses, the various representations of the female (from the virgin ingénue to the *femme fatale*) evolved over the years to a point where the *bad girls* were no longer so diabolical, nor the *good girls* so angelical. During the first half of the 20th century, despite the initial power of influential film industries like the French, Italian and German, the Hollywood star system ultimately became the main point of reference for the production of female archetypes associated with particular stars. Many years later, Molly Haskell (1973) and Marjorie Rossen (1973) introduced a critical feminist reading of the archetypes portrayed by the actresses of Hollywood's Golden Age. Since then, film stars and the archetypes they have represented have been studied through various lenses, including feminism (Haskell, 1973; Rosen, 1974; Hollinger, 2006), psychoanalysis (Gledhill, 1991), gender studies (Studlar, 1996; Studlar, 2013), and reception theory (Hansen, 1986; Dyer, 1987; Stacey, 1994; Mayne, 1993; Staiger, 2000). The fact that contemporary film stars have to exhibit different identities, portraying an "elastic self" (King, 2003), as if they needed to destroy—or play at destroying—some of the principles associated with the notion of the archetype invented by classical cinema, makes it clear that the history of film stardom is a process of iconic mutations in perpetual motion.

The short methodological arc linking film stars to particular archetypes is not as easy to trace in studies of Spanish cinema. A monograph published in the early 1990s, edited by Vicente Sánchez-Biosca and Vicente Benet (1994) for the journal *Archivos de la Filmoteca*, constituted perhaps the first comprehensive attempt at scholarly reflection on the film star in Spain, but neither the

question of archetypes nor the specific context of Spanish cinema was the focus of the monograph. There is thus an appealing field of research for developing our understanding of Spanish cinema through the intersection between the recurrent archetypes that have defined Spanish film production and the stars who have portrayed them. In this context, the recent proliferation of studies drawing on feminist film theory, which attempts a critical review of the role women have played in the configuration of cinematic imaginaries, offers a wide range of possibilities for exploring some of the representations of women in Spanish cinema (Labanyi, 2000; Gil Gascón, 2011; Feenstra, 2011; Rincón Díez, 2014; Nash, 2014; Morcillo, 2015; Losilla, 2017a; Losilla, 2017b), although the concept of the star has rarely been a focus of attention in these studies.

Santos Zunzunegui (2005: 142) confirms that "there have not been many attempts to evaluate the specific weight that actors have had in the historical development of Spanish cinema," and in a footnote he references some studies of male actors like José Isbert (Pérez Perucha, 1984), Alfredo Landa (Santos Zunzunegui, 1993) and Antonio Casal (Castro de Paz, 1997). Zunzunegui does not cite any studies of actresses, reflecting a gap in the literature in relation to Spanish female stars. In the 21st century, thanks to the increasing interest in star studies in the academic world (Shingler, 2012), different approaches to studying stars have emerged, with the analysis of Spanish film actresses by authors like Eva Woods Peiró (2012), who explores the "white gypsies" portrayed by Raquel Meller and Imperio Argentina, and Kathleen M. Vernon (2016), who examines the importance of the voice in the identity of the actress Gracita Morales. Vernon's study forms part of a book that explores different acting styles in Spanish cinema, *Performance and Spanish Film* by Dean Allbritton, Alejandro Melero and Tom Whittaker, which includes two chapters on specific actors (José Luis López Vázquez and, as mentioned above, Gracita Morales). Another collection, *A Companion to Spanish Cinema* (2013), includes a section on "Stars as Cultural Icons", featuring an article by Katherine Vernon and Eva Woods titled "The Construction of the Star System", and another by Tatjana Pavlovic, Chris Perriam and Nuria Triana Toribio titled "Stars, Modernity and Celebrity Culture", two particularly significant contributions to scholarly study on Spanish stars. Finally, it is also important to note that this journal, *L'Atalante*, which has taken an interest in performative questions since its issue 19 (Hernández Miñano and Martín Núñez, 2015), included an article in issue 23 titled "Desire and Eroticism in Dictatorial Times" (Bou, Pérez, Hernández Pérez, 2017), focusing on the tension between female performances and censorship under the Franco regime. The same area of research was explored extensively in the book *El cuerpo erótico de la actriz bajo los fascismos. España, Italia, Alemania 1939-1945* [The Erotic Body of the Actress under Fascism: Spain, Italy, Germany 1939-1945] (Bou, Pérez, 2017), which drew on the tradition of star studies to explore the contradictions between stardom and censorship in the work of the most prominent actresses of Europe's fascist regimes, including the Spanish stars Imperio Argentina, Ana Mariscal and Conchita Montes.

THERE IS THUS AN APPEALING FIELD OF RESEARCH FORDEVELOPING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF SPANISH CINEMA THROUGH THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN THE RECURRENT ARCHETYPES THAT HAVE DEFINED SPANISH FILM PRODUCTION AND THE STARS WHO HAVE PORTRAYED THEM

In this complex field of analysis, the system of production that gave rise to the fame of the greatest divas of the big screen is of vital importance. In this respect, it is clear that from the outset the Spanish film industry took note of the Hollywood

star system (although in its early years there were no major Spanish studios that could construct a star system like the one that existed in the United States), and studios like Cifesa and Suevia promoted their stars in a manner that imitated the American model (Benet, 2017). Marta García Carrión (2017) draws the revealing conclusion that the popularity of actresses like Raquel Meller in the 1920s reflects a culture of stardom among Spanish filmgoers that was evident in the magazines and newspapers of the era. Meller, who was known as an international star in Spain, offered the country its first archetype of the modern woman, portraying characters that were psychologically extremely complex. Along the same lines, with the consolidation of the Spanish film industry in the Franco years, actresses like Amparo Rivelles, Conchita Montenegro and Sara Montiel represented different female archetypes over the course of their respective careers both in Spain and abroad, demonstrating that they could portray characters that subverted (sometimes quite explicitly) the qualities of the passive, domestic and servile female archetype dictated by the fascist regime.

Mary Nash suggests that "archetypes are extremely important cultural artefacts because they establish ideal models that mark collective beliefs with a huge impact on social practices" (2014: 189). In this sense, Nash underlines the importance that the regime gave to the creation of a domestic, submissive, maternal archetype, stigmatising women who could not conform to this dominant model. It is undeniable that female characters in Spanish cinema departed from the Falangist parameters, and some stars were occasionally or even regularly able to portray women whose personalities slipped out ofthe boundaries of the model they were supposed to represent. It would be impossible to argue that there may have been a revolutionary star who set out to challenge or tear down the hegemonic archetype, but there are numerous cases of actresses who, by creating their own repertoire of gestures or portraying characters in implausible stories (usually melodramas inclined towards exaggeration), were able to expose new discursive spaces that resisted the patriarchal logic.

Vicente Benet (2017) points out that two of the most successful Spanish stars of the late 1940s, Amparo Rivelles and Aurora Bautista, made their names in a cycle of historical films and melodramas in which both played characters of great strength and personality. From *Madness for Love* (Locura de amor, Juan de Orduña, 1948) to *Agustina of Aragon* (Agustina de Aragón, Juan de Orduña, 1950) in the case of Aurora Bautista, and from *The Duchess of Benamejí* (La duquesa de Benameji, Luis Lucía, 1949) to *Dawn of America* (Alba de América, Juan de Orduña, 1951), in the case of Amparo Rivelles, the active, vibrant and strong-willed characters these actresses played dazzled both male and female spectators of the era. In an article published in 2002, Jo Labanyi argues that at the end of the 1940s, just when female stars had begun adopting a more empowered persona, there emerged "a dissident art film movement, based on Italian neorealism, which broke away from the mainstream cinema of the previous decade. This meant the abandonment of the big female stars of the 1940s and the rise of a new set of social themes primarily targeting an academic—andtherefore male—audience [...]. The result was a group of films that achieved their effects not through pleasure, but through ideas. This might have been an advance in political terms, but for the representation of women it constituted a step backwards" (2002: 59).

Labanyi's argument suggests that even in the early years of the Franco regime there were female film stars portraying women with strong personalities. But in the later years of the dictatorship, new stars appeared who built on the achievements of Bautista and Rivelles. In the 1950s, a noteworthy example is the series of musical melodramas featuring Sara Montiel, beginning with the box office success of *The Last Torch*

Song (El último cuplé, Juan de Orduña, 1957). Similarly, Emma Penella starred in a series of films in the 1950s and 1960s, from *Fedra* (Manuel Mur Oti, 1956) to *La cuarta ventana* [The Fourth Window] (Julio Coll, 1963), in which she portrayed characters whose distaste for the values of the patriarchy became increasingly visible. The liberated spirit that Raquel Meller had begun to forge in the 1920s, to which Sara Montiel added an air of sophistication, ultimately found its "icon of modernity" in Marisol (Labanyi, Pavlovic, 2013: 323), and the height of the developmentalist period of the regime saw the success of Rocío Durcal and Concha Velasco. Although the female bravado of these last two stars was normally transformed by the end of their films into conventional submission, they nevertheless portrayed women who sought different archetypal models to attract both female and male audiences.

In her book *La mujer en España. 100 años de su historia* [The Woman in Spain: 100 Years of Her History], written in 1963, the Spanish feminist and intellectual María Laffitte argued that "´[t]he appeal that the cinema holds for young Spanish women—young Spanish men are irrelevant—is immense." In relation to actresses who move on from the stage to the screen, she remarks: "The new wave strives to achieve a certain mobility, among other things, an ease in the gestures and postures not used on—or, of course, off—the Spanish stage. The Spanish woman is shy and has generally been raised with a singular sense of modesty, an attitude that was reflected in the theatre. The new type of actress sets out to play her role with a greater confidence in her movements. But rather than reflecting the youth of today, who have acquired more freedom in their gestures, she seems to copy the exaggerated dynamism of certain foreign actresses, which look extremely artificial when adopted by a Spanish woman" (Laffitte, 1963: 344). Although critical of a certain mimicry of the gestures of foreign actresses, Laffitte suggests that Spain's female film stars subvert the Franco regime's dictates on how women should behave. In this sense, it is unsurprising that her chapter titled "The Actress" should begin with a full-page picture of Conchita Montes, about whom she writes: "The prototype of the evolved actress, spearheading the new wave, is Conchita Montes. She has a degree in law, a lively intelligence [...] and has translated several plays from English and French into Spanish, some of which she has performed in herself" (Laffitte, 1963: 343). This conception of a "prototype of the evolved actress," which Laffitte identifies not only with Conchita Montes but also with other stars like Aurora Bautista, Sara Montiel and Concha Velasco, points to the emergence of a different type of femininity (not passive or submissive, but with an independent voice), which, although it may not have been within reach of every "real woman", was offered as an alternative possibility to the spiritual, homebound, "modest" image endorsed by the Falange.

Laffitte describes a model of intelligent, independent, creative woman—like Ana Mariscal—who knows how to move in spaces that had

THE LIBERATED SPIRIT THAT RAQUEL MELLER HAD BEGUN TO FORGE IN THE 1920S, TO WHICH SARA MONTIEL ADDED AN AIR OF SOPHISTICATION, ULTIMATELY FOUND ITS "ICON OF MODERNITY" IN MARISOL, AND THE HEIGHT OF THE DEVELOPMENTALIST PERIOD OF THE REGIME SAW THE SUCCESS OF ROCÍO DURCAL AND CONCHA VELASCO. ALTHOUGH THE FEMALE BRAVADO OF THESE LAST TWO STARS WAS NORMALLY TRANSFORMED BY THE END OF THEIR FILMS INTO CONVENTIONAL SUBMISSION, THEY NEVERTHELESS PORTRAYED WOMEN WHO SOUGHT DIFFERENT ARCHETYPAL MODELS TO ATTRACT BOTH FEMALE AND MALE AUDIENCES

traditionally been exclusive to men. This "prototype" also responded more or less consciously to an assertion of the right of women to be able to explore the patriarchal logic in a way that may sometimes even be critical. It could be added that Laffitte's "prototype" is equivalent to a female archetype whose centrality, strength and awareness could be classified as "feminist". Susan Martin-Márquez suggests that "in the context of Spain, the phrase 'feminist cinema' could only be considered an oxymoron" (1999: 2), but as she demonstrates in her book, it is possible to identify "alternative approaches to gender difference" (1999: 5) that would contribute to the creation of a "feminist discourse". Until the end of the dictatorship, the female film star by definition represented a personality that radiated modernity both on and off the screen.

Heide Schlüpmann (2010: 15) argues that since its consolidation in the 1920s, the image of the female star in film industries all over the world was by default a "new woman" who conveyed new possibilities of female behaviour to audiences with the greatest of ease. Schlüpmann maintains that the modernity that actresses expressed could not be associated with any single way of being a woman: "She (the actress) presents femininity as nonunitary." Cinema thus opened up the possibility of seeing the woman as more than just a single, predetermined model and, for narrative purposes, foreshadowed one of the key feminist theories of the 1990s: the subject is complex, polymorphous and contradictory, and cannot be treated as monolithic (De Lauretis, 2000: 90).

Richard Dyer (2001: 29) asserts that "the analysis of images of celebrities reveals a society's complexity, contradictoriness and difference." In this sense, Heide Schlüpmann's observations are perfectly applicable to a modern, pluralist construction of the careers of Raquel Meller, Imperio Argentina, Amparo Rivelles, Conchita Montes, Aurora Bautista, Conchita Montenegro, Carmen Sevilla, Sara Montiel, Concha Velasco and Marisol, cinematic models of a new femininity, despite the conservative context in which they moved.

The tension between the female archetype fostered by the patriarchal imaginary and the resistance to that patriarchy through the actress's subjectivity marks the whole history of a film industry scarred by the long years of the Spanish dictatorship. The articles compiled in this edition of *L'Atalante* cover certain aspects that expose this contradiction underpinning the Spanish star system and invite readers to reflect on it.

On the one hand, it is important to bear in mind that the archetypal image of a star always extends beyond her presence on the screen. Film stardom does not end when the projector stops but spills over into the public appearances of the celebrities concerned. One of the first stars that the Francoist ideology attempted to construct in accordance with its standardised pattern was probably Conchita Montes, a woman who had never worked in cinema before her appearance in *Carmen fra i rossi* [Carmen Among the Reds] (Edgar Neville, 1939). In their article titled "Dramatic Expression in *Carmen fra i rossi:* Conchita Montes, the First Female Archetype of the Spanish Civil War", Gema Fernández-Hoya and Luis Deltell reveal how the efforts of the fledgling film industry of the Franco regime to turn Montes into an emblematic representation of the woman fighting for the national cause came into conflict with the approach of an actress who, in her public life, never completely fit the mould the dictatorship sought to make for her. While her début as a film star (and co-author of the screenplay) might have led the Francoist ideologues to believe that she would be the perfect emblem to convey their National Catholic values, Montes's participation in the promotion of her own image and her anything but submissive relationship with the press clashed with such simplistic expectations. As the article demonstrates, a history of film stardom in Spain and of the archetypes that underpinned it needs to be compared against the film industry's

process of manufacturing stars, but also with the contrasting perspective that the stars themselves can offer. In this sense, rather than a "star of the regime", Montes could be viewed as an actress for her audience, less ideologically defined and more versatile.

The area of film genres is another vast field that informs the actress-stardom relationship. Given that the way the Spanish star system was organised at the beginning of Franco's dictatorship was clearly imitative of the Hollywood model, it should hardly be surprising that each actress would create her own specific image within that system. However, the film studio model also allowed for movement between genres, and such movement offers a fascinating opportunity for reflection on the critical enrichment of pre-existing archetypes. The article by Jo Labanyi that opens this monographic issue, "The Complex Relationship between Female Agency and Female Desire: Aurora Bautista and Amparo Rivelles", offers a detailed exploration of the opposing trajectories of two actresses who were essential to the organisation of female stardom at CIFESA, one of Spain's biggest studios. Bautista made her on-screen début in the genre of the patriotic historical film as Juana la Loca in *Madness for Love* (Locura de amor, Juan de Orduña, 1948), with the emblematic encapsulation of an archetypal model that would be hugely influential on the historical film genre in those years. However, the versatility of the star system based on the Hollywood model allowed her to enter territories of intimacy associated with pure melodrama in the film *Pequeñeces* [Trifles] (Juan de Orduña, 1950), shot just two years later. Amparo Rivelles, on the other hand, went in the opposite direction, shifting from a quintessential melodrama in *The Nail* (El clavo, Rafael Gil, 1944) to embrace the patriotic model (by that time abandoned by Bautista) in her fiery performance as *The Lioness of Castille* (La leona de Castilla, Juan de Orduña, 1951). Such cross-contaminations between genres reinforce rather than undermine the expressive potential of the big stars of Spanish cinema under Franco. However, as Labanyi explains, they should also be understood in terms of their potential ideological consequences (in relation to feminist theory): sometimes, submission to a conventional view of the woman as a victim or passive subject prevails; but in other cases, this shift serves to explain the empowerment of a star who unrestrainedly defies what the Francoist patriarchy expects of its female characters.

THE GENRE THAT MOST CLEARLY FACILITATED THE INTRODUCTION OF AN ELEMENT OF DISRUPTION INTO THE COMFORTABLE IDEALISED MODEL OF THE FRANCOIST WOMAN IS *FILM NOIR*. AS NURIA CANCELA EXPLORES IN HER ARTICLE, "THE INFLUENCE OF AMERICAN CINEMA ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE *FEMME FATALE* IN SPANISH CRIME FILMS OF THE 1950S", THE FEMALE CHARACTER INTRODUCED BY THIS GENRE REPRESENTS ALL THE BEHAVIOURS THAT THE SPANISH WOMAN WAS EXPECTED TO REJECT, BUT THE FASCINATION WITH THE *FEMME FATALE* ARCHETYPE IN INTERNATIONAL CINEMA, OVERTAKING THE EXOTICISM OF THE VAMP ARCHETYPE THAT PRECEDED IT, WAS PRESENTED TO AUDIENCES AS A MODERN-DAY EPIPHANY OF A LIBERATED WOMAN WITH AN INDEPENDENT PERSONALITY

The genre that most clearly facilitated the introduction of an element of disruption into the comfortable idealised model of the Francoist woman is *film noir*. As Nuria Cancela explores in her article, "The Influence of American Cinema on the Performance of the *Femme Fatale* in Spanish Crime Films of the 1950s", the female character introduced by this genre represents all the behaviours that the Spanish woman was expected

to reject, but the fascination with the *femme fatale* archetype in international cinema, overtaking the exoticism of the vamp archetype that preceded it, was presented to audiences as a modern-day epiphany of a liberated woman with an independent personality. What the regime's censors would normally only allow in foreign films found an expressive niche in the context of the Spanish crime film of the 1950s. As Cancela suggests, through the conventions of this genre female stars portrayed an autonomous reality with alternative values to the immaculate, prefabricated dignity of the Francoist woman.

WHILE THE SO-CALLED *FANTATERROR* OF THE 1960S AND 1970S OFFERED A FORETASTE OF THE HORROR HEROINE'S SUBVERSIVE POTENTIAL TO DESTABILISE THE TRADITIONAL BEHAVIOURS OF SPANISH WOMEN, THE CONTEMPORARY *[REC]* SAGA REFLECTS THE UNIQUE EVOLUTIONARY PATH THAT THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HEROIC FEMALE CAN TAKE IN THE HORROR GENRE

Other genres also established models to promote a female image that broke with the standards of behaviour expected of women in Spanish cinema under Francoism. In the case of comedy, the article by Maria Adell and Sergi Sánchez, "Lina Morgan: The Archetype of the Explosive Ingénue in Spanish Cinema of the Late Francoist Period", explores how one female star was ablemake a consciously adopted character her own through an exaggerated naivety that broke with the standards of the period. As the authors show, Lina Morgandid just this through an explosively creative repertoire of gestures that subvertedthe political standards of good behaviour, thereby laying claim to a territory of creative autonomy that established a popular archetype remembered for qualities that were anything but normative.

This elevation of a female archetype above all the pre-existing limitations imposed by the industry has also been possible in the horror genre. While the so-called *fantaterror* of the 1960s and 1970s offered a foretaste of the horror heroine's subversive potential to destabilise the traditional behaviours of Spanish women, the contemporary *[REC]* saga, analysed from this perspective by Juan Medina-Contreras and Pedro Sangro in their article "From the 'Final Girl' to the Emancipated Heroine: Female Archetypes in the *[REC]* Saga", reflects the unique evolutionary path that the construction of the heroic female can take in the horror genre. One of the ways this is expressed is in the significant change of tone represented by the shift from the view of the heroine as the object of a recording controlled by an external camera to the destruction of that camera and the attribution of an active subjectivity to the female gaze. The analysis of the evolution of this model of heroine, not only in the saga itself but in the general corpus of horror films, contributes a contemporary dimension to this monograph, confirming that film genre conventions are subverted more today than ever in the interests of female empowerment.

But this kind of resistance to traditional expectations is not limited to the malleable structures of mainstream genres. The monograph closes with an article by Kathleen M. Vernon that studies a subtler (and seldom explored) form of challenging the institutional mode of representation: the voice of the female star, when presented as problematic or different. The article considers "dissonance" in relation to the neutrality of the female voice, which was subject to a Francoist production model whose insistence on the supposed effectiveness of dubbing condemned certain actresses (such as the famous case of Emma Penella) to the desexing sterility of voices that so often replaced their own. Vernon's article considers two foreign stars, Geraldine Chaplin and Cecilia Roth, who became

emblematic embodiments of female archetypes in Spanish cinema in spite of (or perhaps because of) their vocal dissonance in relation to the sterile neutrality of the dubbed voice. Chaplin had a magnetic force as an irreplaceable presence in the films of Carlos Saura, and the complexity of her voice (sometimes dubbed, sometimes presented as foreign, always betraying her accent even when the character she played was Spanish) reflects the power of the actress's real voice in the establishment of a uniquely feminine quality that has proved to be enduring. Cecilia Roth, on the other hand, for the post-Franco Spanish cinema represented so well by Pedro Almodóvar, would represent a process of overcoming the prejudices that led the director himself to dub her voice (or neutralise her accent) in his first films. The decisive tone of her voice, to the extent that Spanish cinema has normalised the recognition of diversity, raises the question of the ultimately enriching nature of vocal identity in a contemporary construction of film stardom free of prejudices and embalming routines.

In short, the articles in this monograph demonstrate that the cinematic archetypes portrayed by Spanish female stars offered (and continue to offer) a malleable image of femininity that is anything but monolithic, reflecting the modern, subversive nature of such complex representations. With this in mind, this issue of *L'Atalante* also features a long interview, conducted by Marga Carnicé and Endika Rey, with a key actress in the Spanish cinema of the past fifty years: Teresa Gimpera. Also featured in this issue are contributions by two major figures in contemporary acting, Bárbara Lennie and Irene Escolar, in a dialogue with Gonzalo de Lucas and Albert Elduque in the *(Dis)Agreements* section. Both these sections offer a very clear picture of these actresses active, self-aware, rigorous approach to the profession, characterised by an ambition to expand feminist discursiveness and replete with cultural significance, which has not only produced archetypes that have endured in the collective memory of their audiences, but has also nuanced them in diverse ways through the adoption of a creative responsibility that is passed on—andfor that very reason enhanced—from one generation to the next. ■

NOTES

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FEMALE ARCHETYPES AND THE STAR SYSTEM IN SPANISH FILM HISTORY

Abstract
Based on the view of the history of film stardom as a process of iconic mutations in perpetual motion, this article reviews the academic literature on the analysis of female film stars in the context of Spanish cinema. It finds that over the decades Spanish stars have represented diverse archetypes of modernity in different film genres. This finding is especially significant for the Francoist period because the female stars of that era often subverted the qualities of the passive, domestic and servile archetype dictated by the fascist regime. Through their own voice or repertoire of gestures, female stars were able to reveal new spaces of "feminist discourse" (Martin-Márquez, 1999) that resisted the patriarchal logic.

Key words
Archetypes; Film genres; Female stars; Modern woman; Spanish cinema; feminist discourse.

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ARQUETIPOS FEMENINOS Y *STAR SYSTEM* EN LA HISTORIA DEL CINE ESPAÑOL

Resumen
Teniendo en cuenta que la historia del estrellato cinematográfico es un proceso de mutaciones figurativas en perpetuo movimiento, el artículo rastrea la bibliografía académica existente en el estudio de las *stars* femeninas en el contexto de la cinematografía española. Se demuestra que a lo largo de las décadas las estrellas españolas representan, desde diferentes géneros cinematográficos, distintos arquetipos de modernidad. Esta constatación es relevante sobre todo para el periodo franquista porque las estrellas estaban transgrediendo los atributos del arquetipo pasivo, doméstico y servil que dictaba el régimen fascista. A partir de una gestualidad o voz propia las *stars* femeninas podían visibilizar nuevos espacios de «discurso feminista» (Martin-Márquez, 1999) que se resistían al logos patriarcal.

Palabras clave
Arquetipos; géneros cinematográficos; *star* femenina; mujer moderna; cine español; discurso feminista.

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NOTEBOOK

FEMALE ARCHETYPES AND THE STAR SYSTEM IN THE HISTORY OF SPANISH CINEMA

THE DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FEMALE AGENCY AND DESIRE: AURORA BAUTISTA AND AMPARO RIVELLES*

JO LABANYI

INTRODUCTION

This essay discusses two Spanish female stars of the 1940s and 1950s, Aurora Bautista and Amparo Rivelles, who worked in two of the major film genres of the time: melodrama and the patriotic epic based on episodes from national history. I will examine performances by each of them in one film from each genre. My focus will be on the tensions between female agency and desire, exploring the different and shifting relations between the two, for it is not easy to make them coincide.

As Christine Gledhill has noted (1991: xv), the concept of desire was introduced into cinema studies by psychoanalysis. Early feminist film criticism, grounded in psychoanalysis, focused heavily on Hollywood melodrama, not only because the genre tends to depict female victims but also because it has been defined as an expression of the repressed. Peter Brooks (1976), studying 19th century melodrama, famously justified the genre's expressive excess on the grounds that it obliged audiences to confront unspeakable emotions. In recent decades feminist criticism—not just in film studies—has tended to talk not so much of female desire as of women's agency. This shift has accompanied a (partial) move away from psychoanalytic frames of reference, which suppose that desire is the expression of an authentic inner self, to the performative notion of identity consecrated by Judith Butler (1990). That is, identity not as inner emotion but as what one does, with actions seen as strategically chosen even in situations of disadvantage. Agency is explicitly foregrounded in the patriotic epic, which, in the case of early Francoist Spain, curiously tends to have female protagonists who occupy major public positions despite the fact that, at the time, women had lost all the rights won under the Second Republic and were subjected to a retrograde ideology of domesticity.[1] In practice, of course, films rarely adhere to one genre alone but mix different generic con-

ventions (Staiger, 2000: 61-76; Neale, 2000). This essay will examine the ways in which melodrama, with its focus on private emotion, infiltrates the patriotic epic. It will also explore the opportunities for agency granted to the female protagonist by melodrama, contravening the genre's association with female victims.

For Aurora Bautista, I will analyze the patriotic epic *Locura de amor* (1948, directed by Juan de Orduña) and the melodrama *Pequeñeces* (1950, also directed by Orduña); for Amparo Rivelles, the melodrama *El clavo* (1944, directed by Rafael Gil) and the patriotic epic *La leona de Castilla* (1951, again directed by Orduña). All four films were produced by Cifesa, to which Bautista and Rivelles were bound by exclusive contract at the time.[2] This choice of films allows me to consider one case of an actress who made her name in the patriotic epic and moved, in her next film, to melodrama (Bautista); and one case of an actress with an established trajectory in melodrama, who subsequently starred in a patriotic epic (Rivelles). I will be interested in how the different star image of each actress carries over into their performance when they move to another genre, producing a disturbance. In one case the disturbance is positive for the representation of female agency; in the other, it is negative. While desire and agency align at key moments (of longer or shorter duration) in the two melodramas studied, in the two patriotic epics analyzed they become increasingly out of sync. Although Rivelles' career began earlier, I will start with Bautista because the second of her films studied precedes that of Rivelles, and because her contrasting roles in what were her first and second films provide the most striking example of the effect on the relationship between agency and desire of an actress's star image created in her previous work.

In analyzing these films, I follow Janet Staiger's notion of «perverse spectatorship» (Staiger, 2000) which recognizes that spectators' responses do not necessarily accord with dominant morality.

AS JACKIE STACEY (1994) HAS SHOWN IN HER STUDY OF BRITISH FEMALE VIEWERS OF HOLLYWOOD MOVIES IN THE 1940S AND 1950S, THE RESPONSE OF FEMALE SPECTATORS TO FEMALE STARS IS ONE OF DESIRE AS WELL AS IDENTIFICATION, WITH IDENTIFICATION TENDING TO BE FOR STARS WHO WERE NOT LIKE THEMSELVES BUT REPRESENTED DESIRABLE POSSIBILITIES THEY DID NOT HAVE

I adopt Staiger's definition of perverse spectators as those who «[find] their own pleasures» (Staiger, 2000: 32). I will be particularly interested in the pleasures that female spectators of these films may have found in responding to the performances of the actresses discussed. As Jackie Stacey (1994) has shown in her study of British female viewers of Hollywood movies in the 1940s and 1950s, the response of female spectators to female stars is one of desire as well as identification, with identification tending to be for stars who were not like themselves but represented desirable possibilities they did not have. This is especially pertinent to Spain in the 1940s and 1950s when many possibilities were denied to women in particular.

AURORA BAUTISTA

Locura de amor was a spectacular box-office success, at least in part thanks to the fact that its patriotic epic format is undercut by its melodramatic plotline. It tells the story of Queen Juana I of Castile, daughter of Isabel la Católica, popularly believed to have been driven mad by the infidelities of her Flemish husband, Felipe el Hermoso (played by Fernando Rey), initially royal consort but ruling Castile jointly with her as Felipe I from 1506, two years after Juana's accession to the throne on her mother's death.[3] While most early Francoist patriotic epics have a (usually fictional)

BAUTISTA BEGAN HER CAREER IN THE THEATER AND HER DECLAMATORY ACTING STYLE SUITED THE POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE OF THE PATRIOTIC EPIC. IT ALSO SUITED THE EXPRESSIVE EXCESS OF MELODRAMA, EXCEPT THAT IN THIS CASE HER GESTURES DO NOT CONVEY DESIRES THAT CANNOT BE VOICED, FOR JUANA FORCEFULLY DECLARES HER DESIRE FOR FELIPE, TO HIM AND TO OTHERS

romantic subplot—or in the case of the first to be filmed, the 1944 Portuguese-Spanish coproduction *Inés de Castro* (José Leitão de Barros), fuse love story and political drama—*Locura de amor* stands out for subordinating the political drama to the love story.

Bautista began her career in the theater and her declamatory acting style suited the pomp and circumstance of the patriotic epic. It also suited the expressive excess of melodrama, except that in this case her gestures do not convey desires that cannot be voiced, for Juana forcefully declares her desire for Felipe, to him and to others. In loving her husband, she is doing what wives were supposed to do. But she is placed in a double bind by the fact that her public role as queen, while giving her political agency, requires her personal desires to be subordinated to reasons of state. In the early Franco period, wives were encouraged—by their confessors and advice columns—to avoid undue expression of desire and to resign themselves to their husband's infidelities. Juana is likely to have struck a chord with many female spectators of the time married to unfaithful husbands for her refusal to suffer Felipe's philandering in silence.

Juana's story is told in flashback from a narrative frame in which her loyal courtier Álvar de Zúñiga, played by Jorge Mistral, recounts her life to her 17-year-old son, the future Habsburg Emperor Carlos V. Newly arrived in Spain in 1517 from his upbringing in Flanders, Carlos has come to take up the throne of Castile and Aragon, to which he had acceded as Carlos I on the death the previous year of Juana's father, Fernando el Católico.[4] Fernando had been appointed regent on Felipe's death, shortly after being declared king, in 1506. We return to this narrative frame—whose opening depicts Juana as definitively demented—at several points in the film, including the end, which has the effect of confirming Juana's madness and thus encouraging viewers to feel that her removal from power was justified. This contradicts the insistence of her supporters throughout the film (echoed by recent historians; see Aram, 2016) that she was not mad but the victim of a political conspiracy as well as of Felipe's infidelities. Indeed, the body of the film, told in flashback, depicts her not simply as a victim but as possessing the agency to impose her authority at key moments.

The flashback starts with Álvar recounting how he took the news of Isabel la Católica's death to Juana in Brussels, cutting to a jewel-bedecked Juana engaged in banter with her ladies-in-waiting about that night's fiesta, in what we are told is Europe's merriest court (Figure 1). Despite the film's reminders of her austere Castilian upbringing, she appears fully adapted to Flemish pleasures. She also shows agency by insisting on going alone to the hunting lodge to tell Felipe the news—only to find him carousing with a lover. We fast-forward to Juana and Felipe's arrival in Spain, with Juana again waiting for Felipe's re-

Figure 1

Figure 2

turn from a hunt, which is revealed to be a cover for an amorous *rendez-vous* at an inn with the innkeeper's alleged niece (Aldara, played by Sara Montiel), who turns out to be the daughter of the penultimate king of Granada, bent on killing Juana as the daughter of the Castilian queen who conquered the Muslim Kingdom of Granada fourteen years before—a fictional subplot in the best melodramatic tradition.[5] Waiting for Felipe's return, Juana recalls the words of love spoken by Felipe to the lover she surprised him with in Brussels. But, when Felipe appears, she switches to ecstatic happiness, the camera closing on her as she declares that she hears her mother at night telling her to think of her duties but «yo pienso en ti» («I think of you»), and to love your people but «yo te quiero a ti» («I love you») (Figure 2). This is not so much melodrama's conversion of politics into a family drama (Elsaesser, 1987) as the patriotic epic's sabotage by Juana's prioritization of private emotion over public duty. Juana is also sabotaging the fascist doctrine of the subordination of individual desires to service of the state that was instilled into Spaniards in the early Franco period (by Sección Femenina in the case of women). Some Spanish women are likely to have relished Juana's refusal to subscribe to that doctrine.

While the film makes it clear that Juana's prioritization of personal desire diminishes her political agency as queen, it does not erode her agency in personal matters: she goes alone at night to surprise Felipe with his lover at the inn, mocking him by catching him out with his own lies. Even Felipe admits her valor. And she remains capable of displaying the appropriate majesty at public ceremonies; it is she as queen, and not Felipe as consort, who from the throne thanks the city of Burgos for its welcome. It should also be noted that Felipe expresses jealousy at Aldara's evident love for Álvar; Felipe too is driven by personal emotion. But Juana's noble supporters abandon her cause, convinced she really has lost her reason, when, having come to plead with her to oppose Felipe's plan to have her declared unfit to rule, which they feel will provoke civil war, Juana dismisses them, concerned only with finding out which of her ladies-in-waiting has written the letter to Felipe that Aldara, the letter's author, has slipped into her possession. In a poignant moment, she colludes with Felipe's public claim that she has gone mad because, if that is true, then Felipe's infidelity is a figment of her imagination (Figure 3)—only to lapse into hysterical sobs. Her pathetic plea to Álvar—«defendía mis derechos de mujer y me han llamado loca» («I defended my rights as a woman and they called me mad»)—must have resonated with many female viewers denied rights under the Franco dictatorship. What finally provokes Juana into asserting her rights as queen by going to the cathedral to challenge Felipe's attempt

THIS IS NOT SO MUCH MELODRAMA'S CONVERSION OF POLITICS INTO A FAMILY DRAMA (ELSAESSER, 1987) AS THE PATRIOTIC EPIC'S SABOTAGE BY JUANA'S PRIORITIZATION OF PRIVATE EMOTION OVER PUBLIC DUTY

Figura 3

Figura 4

to have her declared insane is Álvar's pointed observation that, if Felipe repudiates her, he can replace her on the throne with another woman. Although motivated by personal emotion, she proves capable of pulling herself together, making a regal entrance down the cathedral aisle, highlighted by being filmed in a long shot from behind so as to frame her with the cathedral's architectural magnificence, then switching to a full shot, with the camera positioned ahead of her, that tracks her resolute advance (Figure 4). As she reaches Felipe's side in front of the throne, she turns to humiliate the courtiers who have backed Felipe's conspiracy with a brilliant display of sarcastic rhetoric. What prevents her from winning the day is not any political incompetence on her part but the trickery of Felipe's Flemish advisor De Vere (played by Jesús Tordesillas) who has replaced the letter incriminating Felipe, which she produces to clinch her case, with a blank sheet—persuading the assembled nobles, and herself, that she has indeed gone mad.

Desire, then, even when for one's husband, is shown to be inimical to political agency. Although it permits Juana to valiantly confront Felipe with his lovers, it ultimately disables her by making her subservient to his desire, even when that desire is to have her declared mad. The film's final reconciliation, as Felipe, on his deathbed, begs Juana's forgiveness and fantasizes about how happy he could have been with her, plays into the early Francoist rhetoric that encouraged wives to tolerate their husbands' infidelities as a way of winning back their love. While some female spectators may have found this end edifying, others may have found cathartic the moments when Juana throws her unhappiness in Felipe's face. The film is an emotional roller-coaster, requiring Bautista to run through a repertoire of extreme emotions that earned her a three-year contract with Cifesa for the unheard-of sum of one and a half million pesetas.

Her role in her next film *Pequeñeces*, where she plays a callous aristocratic serial adulteress, could

DESIRE, THEN, EVEN WHEN FOR ONE'S HUSBAND, IS SHOWN TO BE INIMICAL TO POLITICAL AGENCY. ALTHOUGH IT PERMITS JUANA TO VALIANTLY CONFRONT FELIPE WITH HIS LOVERS, IT ULTIMATELY DISABLES HER BY MAKING HER SUBSERVIENT TO HIS DESIRE, EVEN WHEN THAT DESIRE IS TO HAVE HER DECLARED MAD

not be more different. But the two films share the use of sumptuous costume to stress the female protagonist's agency. The regal costumes in *Locura de amor*—designed by Manuel Comba, responsible for the costume designs of over eighty historical films, mostly costume dramas like *Pequeñeces* (Gorostiza, 1997: 51)—do much to bestow agency upon Juana as she glides her way through Sigfrido Burmann's spectacular set designs. Building on the same recipe for success, Cifesa's pre-publicity for *Pequeñeces* emphasized her nineteen costume changes, designed down to the underwear by top fashion designer Pedro Rodríguez in fabrics current in the period depicted (1870s). As Cifesa proudly announced, the film's costumes took up four hundred thousand pesetas of its total budget of seven million, compared to the total budget of four million for the already lavish *Locura de amor* (Labanyi, 2007: 244). *Pequeñeces* was approved by the censors, despite its female protagonist's truly shocking behavior, because it was an adaptation of the 1890 novel of the same title by the Jesuit Padre Coloma—a diatribe against the immorality of the late 19th century aristocracy. Female spectators familiar with Aurora Bautista's role in *Locura de amor* as a queen wronged by her faithless husband are likely to have responded with a sense of sweet revenge to the gusto with which, in this next film, she plays the part of an adulteress who toys heartlessly with her lovers (not to mention her husband). At the same time, Bautista's regal role in the previous patriotic epic spills over into her performance in this melodrama, where her agency—enhanced through her power-dressing—is placed at the service of sexual gratification.

The film is marred by an incoherent political backstory to the activities of both the female and male protagonists. Curra is part of the aristocratic conspiracy to remove the liberal Amadeo I from power and restore the deposed Isabel II to the throne; the film covers the period 1873-1874. Her second lover in the film—Jacobo, played by Jorge Mistral at his glamorous best—is involved in an unexplained Carlist plot (the action coincides with the third Carlist War of 1872-1876) in which his paymasters order his death. Viewers are given no historical information to help them understand this political backdrop, whose sole function seems to be to suggest that politics is dirty. The focus is on the business of saving one's soul, through the negative examples of its female and male protagonists whose immorality occupies the whole film until Curra's repentance in the final scene. The sumptuous costumes and the magnificence of Sigfrido Burmann's set designs for the aristocratic interiors offer visual pleasures that work against any moralizing intention—as do the love scenes with Curra and her successive lovers, offering Spanish audiences more passionate kisses than they were used to seeing in Spanish films of the time. The low-necked gowns of Curra and her fellow female aristocrats, and particularly of the French courtesan Monique, played by Sara Montiel, also displayed on screen more female flesh than was standard. It is hard not to conclude that Orduña, who specialized in big-budget spectaculars, took on the film because those moralizing intentions gave him license to depict an eroticized glamor.

VIEWERS ARE GIVEN NO HISTORICAL INFORMATION TO HELP THEM UNDERSTAND THIS POLITICAL BACKDROP, WHOSE SOLE FUNCTION SEEMS TO BE TO SUGGEST THAT POLITICS IS DIRTY. THE FOCUS IS ON THE BUSINESS OF SAVING ONE'S SOUL, THROUGH THE NEGATIVE EXAMPLES OF ITS FEMALE AND MALE PROTAGONISTS WHOSE IMMORALITY OCCUPIES THE WHOLE FILM UNTIL CURRA'S REPENTANCE IN THE FINAL SCENE

What definitively undercuts the film's ostensible moral message is the performance of Bautista, who brings to her role as the scandalous

Curra the majesty of her regal role in *Locura de amor*. Like Juana in the previous film, Curra glides through the opulent interiors, but, unlike Juana, she does not lapse into moments of pathos but maintains her haughty arrogance throughout. Her use of her parasol as a prop, emphasizing her resolute stride, is magisterial (Figure 5); she is a woman who knows what she wants and will stop at nothing to get it. As her husband says: «Pero, ¿quién es capaz de parar a mi mujer?» («there's no stopping my wife»). She imperiously gives orders to all and sundry, including her husband. Bautista's histrionic acting style, suited to the emotional extremes of Juana, is perfect in this film in which everyone in Madrid high society is playing to the

Figure 5

Figures 6 (above) and 7 (below)

gallery and hiding their real intentions. The sarcasm that Juana had used against the rebellious nobles in the previous film is here deployed to humiliate others into submission. Her use of a double-voiced discourse whereby viewers can see that her words are insincere, but her lovers cannot (despite the fact that her second lover Jacobo is a scoundrel who also resorts to deceit), is a tour de force. She uses her sexual charms to cajole her lovers into satisfying her whims—including sending her first lover Juanito (played by Ricardo Acero) to a certain death by obliging him to challenge to a duel the editor of a newspaper that had slighted her, remarking callously to him that the editor is known to be a crack shot with a pistol. The editing cuts from her meeting with Juanito on the morning of the duel (feigning concern for him but wheedling out of him her compromising love letters) to her radiantly proceeding to the ball in her honor that night, unmoved by the news of Juanito's death (Figure 6). A similar edit highlighting her callousness cuts from her agreeing, supposedly upset, that her son will be better off back at his Jesuit boarding school than spending the vacation at home—the boy has just surprised her in Jacobo's arms (Figure 7)—to her exaggerated gaiety at another ball, flirting publicly with Jacobo.

Figure 8

The film mocks her cuckolded husband with comic music, showing him to be mostly concerned with eating and as uninterested in their son as she is. But it is her lack of maternal love that condemns her, no doubt producing an ambivalence in those female spectators who may have admired her audacity in flouting moral restrictions but for whom maternal feelings would have been sacrosanct. Her lack of interest in her son throughout makes unconvincing her final repentance when she is punished with his death, as he falls into the sea in a tussle with a boy who he has been told (incorrectly) had called his mother a whore. The Curra that stays in viewers' memories is not the Mary Magdalene figure that appears in extreme close-up in the final shot (Figure 8), but the pleasure seeker who does not care what others think and who even her detractors admire for her valor: she fearlessly goes to find Jacobo at the rendezvous to which he has been summoned, having been told by him that his life is in danger. The film's high point is the *noir* carnival scene when Jacobo is stabbed in her presence, with her stole left impaled on the railings in a graphic metaphorical use of *mise-en-scène*. Having up to this point successfully combined agency with desire, from this moment she will lose both, as high society shuns her after this murky episode, and she finds herself bereft of the one man she had truly desired—the two of them perfectly suited in their disregard of moral norms.

Casting as the two baddies of the film (Curra and Jacobo) two leading stars whose good looks are enhanced by glamorous costumes was bound to work against the film's moral message. The powerful agency exercised by Curra throughout—until the Jesuits get her at the end—is enhanced by the imperious performance style that Bautista brought with her from her initiation into film acting in the patriotic epic genre. Paradoxically, going against generic expectations, her role in the earlier patriotic epic was that of female victim, while

her role in *Pequeñeces*—a melodramatic costume drama—is that of a woman who gives orders to everyone and especially to men.

AMPARO RIVELLES

El clavo was Rivelles' eighth film, having starred in comedies as well as melodramas. Together with the earlier *Malvaloca* (1942), the success of *El clavo* would establish her as Spain's leading star of 1940s film melodrama. The film adapts the 1853 gothic novella of the same name by Pedro Antonio de Alarcón, simplifying its narrative structure and making the female protagonist betrothed, rather than married, to the man she murders by driving a nail through his skull—probably because the murder of a husband would be unacceptable to the Francoist censors. The film also softens her guilt by making her betrothed a slave-trader. Her crime is revealed only towards the film's end, at her trial, whose presiding judge is, by a twist of fate, the man she had met five years before on a stagecoach, resulting in an idyllic romance that determined her to rid herself of her loathsome wealthy fiancé (forced on her by her father to pay off his debts). She is in fact two characters in one, not a case of split personality but the same person in two different situations: Blanca, the beautiful young woman traveling incognito who Javier (played by Rafael Durán) falls in love with; and Gabriela, the murderess. The two come together at the trial in a sensational revelation, as Javier discovers that the author of the crime he has been investigating, after spotting a skull with a nail driven through it in the local cemetery, is his beloved, who he wrongly believed had jilted him five years before.

The first part of the film shows Blanca's gradual transformation from aloof mysterious stagecoach traveler—her eyes shaded by her wide-brimmed hat and stiffly refusing Javier's overtures, believing herself doomed to lovelessness (Figure 9)—to vivacious young girl with a thirst for life. Her initial rigid posture gives way to fluid body movements, as she starts to take the initiative in the relationship with Javier after he rescues her from assault by night-time carnival revelers, though stiffening up again when Javier asks about her life. We cut from this night-time scene to brilliant sunlight, with Blanca—now in a bright gingham dress and her hair down—having packed a hamper for a picnic with Javier in the countryside (Figure 10). When they take refuge from a sudden

Figures 9 (above) and 10 (below)

storm in a nearby farmhouse, she gaily changes her soaking dress for the peasant clothes offered by the farmer's wife, in the same room as Javier does the same (we only see the closed door to the room); the scene ends with her putting her head on Javier's shoulder, the peasant clothes freeing her from her inhibitions. Up to this point, Blanca's gradual acceptance of desire has given her a growing agency.

However, when Javier asks to marry her so she can join him in his new position as judge, she freezes, her eyes turned to the camera; retrospectively, we realize this is the moment she decides to rid herself of her betrothed. Having promised to meet Javier in a month's time, when she will accept his offer of marriage, Blanca disappears out of the film till Javier bumps into her five years later in Madrid, where he has come (unbeknown to Blanca) to ratify the warrant for Gabriela's arrest as presumed murderess. Although Blanca is able to explain the misunderstanding that led Javier to think she had jilted him, she is now presented as a forlorn figure waiting for Javier's unlikely return. She has given up on both desire and agency.

Cut to the courtroom as Gabriela's trial for murder begins. She enters veiled and, standing before Javier as judge, throws back her veil, triggering a series of dramatic close-ups as Javier recognizes her and she confronts him directly with her gaze. At precisely the moment when, facing the death penalty, one would expect her to lapse into helplessness, she asserts her agency by turning her public confession into a lengthy self-defense: «Antes de morir, quiero que me oigan [...] Mi confesión será mi defensa» («Before I die, I want to be heard [...] My confession will be my defense»). When her narrative gets to her murder of her fiancé, we switch to a dramatized flashback, introduced by her announcement that she had decided to «defender mi felicidad» (defend my happiness). Eliding the moment of the crime, the film cuts from her angry confrontation with the fiancé, in which she voices her hatred for him, to the morning after as she is awoken by a servant saying her fiancé is dead. In a glamorous satin nightdress, hair draped over her shoulders, she is the perfect Hollywood image of desirability, awakening to a new life ahead (Figure 11).

Her spirited courtroom confession casts her as triumphant at the moment of being sentenced to death, the unspeakable having been spoken. The confession is directed to Javier, as a declaration of love (Figure 12). Her spirit remains unbroken as she awaits execution in jail. Javier secures a commutation to life imprisonment just in time and, as she is taken off to prison, promises he will stay nearby to ease her plight. One has to ask how female viewers, at a time when marriage was a life sentence with the dictatorship's repeal of the Republic's divorce law, would have responded to Gabriela's unrepentant confession of her crime, committed to «defend my happiness». The repeat-

Figure 11

Figure 12

ed close-ups of Rivelles' delicate facial features make it impossible not to identify with her. The realization of desire is no longer an option for Gabriela at the film's end, but she has the satisfaction of having made her case in a public court of law.

The casting of Rivelles in the patriotic epic *La leona de Castilla* as María Pacheco—the widow of the leader of the 1520-1521 Comuneros' Revolt against the centralizing measures of Habsburg Emperor Carlos V, who takes on the revolt's leadership on her husband's execution—must have been found incongruous by spectators who had followed her career as a star of melodrama, known for her image of vulnerability mixed with erotic passion. Her performance received negative criticism for her strident oral delivery, contravening the intimate acting style for which she was known.[6] Rivelles herself later said she should not have accepted the role, expressing her discomfort with the director Orduña's insistence that she shout her lines (De Paco, Rodríguez, 1988: 49-50). The undermining of the film's primary political drama by its melodramatic subplot, in which she falls in love with a nobleman on the enemy side, causing the death of her son and her own downfall as well as that of Toledo, is the fault of the source text on which the film is based: the modernist poet Francisco Villaespesa's 1915 verse drama *La leona de Castilla*, which invents this romantic storyline.[7]

The film begins with a prologue that—like the narrative frame of *Locura de amor*— makes it clear that the female protagonist will lose all the agency she had previously enjoyed as a political leader.[8] We move from the stone plaque commemorating her prowess as «Lioness of Castile» in a ruined graveyard (in reality, she was buried in Oporto Cathedral) to the moment of her death in a poorhouse, prostrate with unkempt long gray hair. At her deathbed are loyal retainer Lope who had accompanied her into exile in Portugal and, newly arrived, the enemy nobleman to whom she was attracted, the Duke of Medina Sidonia (played by Virgilio Teixeira). As Lope reminisces with Medina Sidonia about the Comuneros' Revolt, we transition to the film proper, whose narrative starts the night before the battle of Villalar at which Padilla (played by Antonio Casas) is defeated.

This allows us to see María before she is widowed, passionately kissing her husband and with him kneeling adoringly at her feet (Figure 13). At the film's start, she can express desire fully and enjoys the (relative) agency of being the beloved wife of the man who is Regidor of Toledo and leader of the Comuneros' army. After Padilla's execution, she will dress in a series of simple but elegant black costumes and headgear (commissioned from top fashion designer Pertegaz), with her movements becoming stiff and majestic. She insists on riding to witness Padilla's execution, flinching when his head is held up to the crowd but not fainting. Her capacity to assume risk is demonstrated when she and her male traveling companions stop at an inn. On hearing that one of the imperial soldiers who enters the inn is the Duke of Medina de Sidonia, to whom she had seen Padilla entrust some letters just before his execution, she removes her outer garments and

Figure 13

Figure 14

Figure 15

flirtatiously lures him to her room (Figure 14). Repulsing his advances, she poses as María Pacheco's lady-in-waiting sent by her to retrieve Padilla's last wishes; impressed by her boldness, Medina Sidonia hands the letters over. Their mutual respect and attraction is clear.

From this moment, she assumes control of the city of Toledo, refusing to surrender to the imperial army. Finding the city undefended on her return, she orders the troops to their posts with the rallying cry «Cobardes, ¿Dónde están los hombres de Padilla?» («Cowards, where are Padilla's men?»), echoing Agustina de Aragón's famous call to arms in Cifesa's patriotic epic of the previous year, starring Aurora Bautista. Like Agustina, also defending a city under siege (Zaragoza in the War of Independence), she is braver than the men. Only once she is inside her palace, out of public view, does she allow herself to weep. This sets up the contrast between her public role (elected Regidora of Toledo by its council) and her private role (as grieving widow). The spectacular scene of her election as Regidora by the Council of Toledo emphasizes her majesty as she takes up the seat of authority, the camera closing on her as she insists that «solo una mujer» (only a woman) remains faithful to Padilla's cause (Figure 15). Back in her palace, she admits to her son, taking off the chain of office, that she is no longer free to be herself.

When Medina Sidonia is wounded in combat outside Toledo's gates, he is brought into her palace to recover. Her treacherous adviser Ramiro—played by Manuel Luna, whose habitual roles as baddie had included *Locura de amor*—persuades the nobles to demand Medina Sidonia's death (Ramiro has his own designs on María). But she orders Medina Sidonia to be spared, provoking her son's protests. When she reveals her identity to Medina Sidonia, it is clear that both are enamored but she tells him to forget about their meeting at the inn. Her agency as leader of the Comuneros—her authority derived from being Padilla's widow—requires the sacrifice of desire. At this point, the camerawork, focusing on her face when she is alone, shows that she is becoming unsure of herself, torn between love and the demands of political office. Although she will never voice it, desire beings to interfere with her political judgement: rejecting advice, she issues a series of orders that lose her the nobles' loyalty. As Ramiro says to the protesting nobles: «Pensad que es una mujer» («Remember she's a woman»). Rumors circulate among the populace that she is having an affair with Medina Sidonia. Her adolescent son, believing the rumors, rushes

out to fight the imperial troops to avenge his father, with fatal consequences (as in *Pequeñeces*, a mother who departs from her maternal role—or, in this case, is rumored to have done so—is punished with the death of her only son). She now loses her composure and begs Ramiro's help, who responds by trying to rape her (Figure 16). In the nick of time (true to melodrama), Medina Sidonia rescues her, kills Ramiro, and she flees the palace on horseback with him and the only faithful retainer left, Lope (who we saw in the film's prologue). The film ends with her farewell to Medina Sidonia, as she refuses his offer to accompany her into exile, fulfilling her role as Padilla's widow to the last.

María is a complex character. She is undone by the melodramatic romantic subplot, which interferes with her previous political competence. But she never abjures her public position as Padilla's successor by giving in to love. She may have lost political power, but she retains agency in that she herself is responsible for renouncing desire. On one level, the film's message is misogynistic: a woman can't be trusted to exercise power judiciously. But on another level, she fulfils the fascist imperative to subordinate personal desire to public service—something that Juana in *Locura de amor* had signally refused to do. In this respect, *La leona de Castilla* is the less subversive film. In both films, the heroine is ultimately undone not by her emotional flaws but by male treachery: that of Felipe and De Vere in *Locura de amor*; that of Ramiro in *La leona de Castilla*. That partly exonerates their female «weakness», but it could also be read as the films needing to compensate for showcasing heroines who exercise political power by punishing them. Rivelles' star image as heroine of film melodramas predisposes viewers to identify with her in the moments when she is tempted by desire, rather than the moments when she renounces it. In this respect her star image undercuts the agency granted by her political status in the film and by the historical reality of María Pacheco's defense of Toledo.

MARÍA IS A COMPLEX CHARACTER. SHE IS UNDONE BY THE MELODRAMATIC ROMANTIC SUBPLOT, WHICH INTERFERES WITH HER PREVIOUS POLITICAL COMPETENCE. BUT SHE NEVER ABJURES HER PUBLIC POSITION AS PADILLA'S SUCCESSOR BY GIVING IN TO LOVE. SHE MAY HAVE LOST POLITICAL POWER, BUT SHE RETAINS AGENCY IN THAT SHE HERSELF IS RESPONSIBLE FOR RENOUNCING DESIRE

Figure 16

CONCLUSION

By bringing together these four films, I hope to have shown that the relation between female desire and agency can take many forms and that their alignment is unstable. It was particularly difficult to achieve such an alignment in the early Franco period, when women were not supposed to express desire overtly and, if they did succeed in exercising the limited agency available to them, had to con-

ceal it via a cloak of submission to male authority. In the four films discussed we find female behavior that has little to do with how Spanish women were expected to behave at the time. The performances of Bautista and Rivelles offered female spectators a complex range of vicarious emotional experiences that provided outlets for agency and desires that could not be realized in real life, or conversely allowed identification with real-life frustrations. Following Stacey's finding (1994) that female spectators identified with female protagonists who were not like themselves, I suggest that these vicarious emotional experiences were enhanced by the fact that the circumstances of the female protagonists of these four films—a queen, an aristocratic serial adulteress, a murderess, a political leader—bore no resemblance to the everyday lives of female viewers, permitting full imaginative engagement on their part precisely because they knew there was no risk of ever finding themselves in the same predicament. At the same time, as Stacey also found, it was necessary for such protagonists to be embodied by stars who could create the emotional intensity that made such cathartic experiences effective. ■

NOTES

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1 Fanés (1989: 254-255) attributes the prevalence of female protagonists in the early Francoist patriotic epic to Cifesa's need to offer leading roles to the female stars on its payroll, but the epics made by Hollywood studios, which had a much larger roster of female stars, have male protagonists.

2 Rivelles left Cifesa to sign up with Cesáreo González's Suevia Films in 1945, returning to Cifesa in 1949 (De Paco, Rodríguez, 1988: 31, 34).

3 The film's plot follows that of the 1855 theatrical melodrama of the same title by Manuel Tamayo y Baus, including the addition of a fictional Moorish princess as Juana's main love rival. In 1868, newly discovered documents revealed the conspiracy by Juana's husband Felipe and her father, Fernando el Católico, to have her declared insane so as to remove her from the throne (Aram, 2016: 1). Orduña's film dramatizes this political conspiracy, but attributes it solely to the ambitions of Felipe and his Flemish courtiers, as foreign usurpers.

4 The film simplifies historical events, presenting Juana and Felipe as traveling to Spain for her to take up the throne of Castile on her mother Isabel la Católica's death in 1504. In real life, she and Felipe had traveled to Castile in 1502 for her to be sworn in as heiress to the Castilian throne, with Felipe as royal consort. They did not return to Spain till 1506 (Fernando el Católico having acted as regent since Isabel's death), when Felipe, after a battle for political control with Fernando in which the two men signed a pact to have Juana declared unfit to rule, succeeded in getting himself declared king of Castile, but ruling jointly with Juana (Fernando remained king of Aragón). In the film, Felipe is called «king» throughout. The film implies that Felipe's 1506 accession to the throne of Castile meant Juana's dethronement but, in reality, she legally remained queen. After Felipe's death that year, she ruled jointly with her father Fernando as regent, refusing his attempts to get her to renounce the throne. In 1509 Fernando had her confined to a castle in Tordesillas, definitively excluding her from the political power to which she was entitled; she would die there in 1555. Although Carlos was in 1516 appointed joint ruler of Castile with Juana, he maintained her confinement to Tordesillas. The film elides the ignominious treatment of Juana by both Fernando el Católico and Carlos V. Details of Juana's life given in this article are taken from Aram (2016).

5 Aldara voices her desire (for Álvar, secretly in love with Juana who he knows is beyond his reach) and exercises a truly masculine agency in attempting to stab Juana and finally stabbing the Flemish villain De Vere (to stop him killing Álvar). Montiel's expression-

less acting makes an improbable character even more unconvincing.

6 See the notes accompanying Video Mercury's 2009 DVD release of the film. Rivelles' casting in the (minor) role of Isabel la Católica in the 1951 patriotic epic *Alba de América* (Juan de Orduña), made immediately after *La leona de Castilla*, is even more discordant with her association with melodrama.

7 Villaespesa departs from history also by making her son an adolescent who is killed during the Comuneros' Revolt (in reality, he was 4 years old when the revolt broke out).

8 The prologue also reneges on the film's representation of the Comuneros' revolt from the rebels' point of view, by criticizing their parochialism in not accepting Carlos V's imperial authority. This political incoherence probably explains why the film was not awarded the expected top category by the Sindicato del Espectáculo.

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THE DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FEMALE AGENCY AND DESIRE: AURORA BAUTISTA AND AMPARO RIVELLES

Abstract

The essay will discuss four films produced in Spain between 1944 and 1951, two starring Aurora Bautista and two starring Amparo Rivelles. The two films by Bautista involve a move from the patriotic epic genre to melodrama; the two films by Rivelles, a move from melodrama to the patriotic epic. It will consider how their performance style in their earlier work spills over into the later film, producing a disturbance in generic expectations. Following Janet Staiger's notion of «perverse spectatorship», the essay will consider how these four films may have allowed female spectators of the time pleasures that did not coincide with dominant ideology. In doing so, it will pay particular attention to the different, shifting relations between female agency and desire in each film.

Key words

Agency; desire; Aurora Bautista; Amparo Rivelles; patriotic epic; melodrama; early Francoist cinema.

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LA COMPLEJA RELACIÓN ENTRE LA AGENCIA Y EL DESEO FEMENINOS: AURORA BAUTISTA Y AMPARO RIVELLES

Resumen

El presente ensayo analiza cuatro películas producidas en España entre 1944 y 1951, dos de ellas protagonizadas por Aurora Bautista y las dos restantes encabezadas por Amparo Rivelles. Las dos películas de Bautista se desplazan del cine patriótico al melodrama; las dos de Rivelles, del melodrama al cine patriótico. El ensayo tendrá en cuenta la manera en que el estilo interpretativo de las actrices en sus primeros trabajos influye en sus siguientes películas, trastocando las expectativas del género. En línea con la noción de «espectador perverso» de Janet Staiger, el ensayo estudiará la forma como estas cuatro películas permitieron a las espectadoras de la época sentir placeres que no coincidían con la ideología dominante. Para ello, prestará especial atención a las relaciones diferentes y cambiantes entre la agencia y el deseo femeninos en cada película.

Palabras clave

Agencia; deseo; Aurora Bautista; Amparo Rivelles; cine patriótico; melodrama; cine del primer franquismo.

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DRAMATIC EXPRESSION IN *FRENTE DE MADRID*: CONCHITA MONTES, THE FIRST FEMININE ARCHETYPE OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR*

GEMA FERNÁNDEZ-HOYA
LUIS DELTELL ESCOLAR

"Conchita Montes, national cinema's latest sensation, Spanish cinema's innocent bride [...]. Here we have the stately essence of Spanish aristocracy that we've been looking for [...] emblematic of elegant womanliness [...]. Here is the woman we were missing, a representative for the great cities of our Fatherland. This woman is like the essence of Spain, destined, perhaps to be the perfume of Europe"

RadioCinema, 49, March 1940.

On the first *Sábado de Gloria* (Glorious Saturday) after the victory of Franco's forces the film *Frente de Madrid* [The Madrid Front] (Edgard Neville, 1939) was released and screened in Madrid's *Palacio de la Música* cinema. According to the press releases this was no minor film, but a work of huge importance dealing with an accurate representation of nothing less than the Spanish Civil War: "Cinema is a mirror of life [...] Cinema does not invent, it reflects and copies," (*RadioCinema*, 1940). At the top of the cast-list was an unknown actress without any previous experience, Conchita Montes, in the role of Carmen. This character defines one of the fundamental pillars of the popular consciousness under Franco's 'New State', that of service to the Fatherland (Rincón, 2014: 29), and also encompasses the concept of female sacrifice as a route to salvation. *RadioCinema* magazine introduced the promising young actress showing her a full-page photograph wearing an immaculate white dress, a slogan beneath reading: "THE BRIDE". These then were the first steps in the process of establishing a moral symbol (Dyer, 1979, 1987; Marshall, 1997; Gaffney and Holmes, 2007); using cinematic representations of the Spanish Civil War, a genre that might be termed the 'crusade films", to create a feminine archetype suitable for the post-war era: the virgin heroine of National Catholicism.

During the1940's, the screen image of Conchita Montes was splashed across both the print and

advertising media, so supported by the Falangist machine, she became an "authentic Spanish star" (*ABC*, 1942). Following the unquestionable Hollywood paradigm for the creation of screen mythology (Babington, 2001: 3), early Francoism adapted foreign trends in cinematography to Spanish society and its more modest film industry (Benet, 2017: 34). In this way, a 'star' was forged to embody Spanish national values (Soila, 2009: 9), the ambivalent precepts of the Falange's *Sección Femenina* (Women's Section) (Labanyi, 2009; Gámez, 1997), and to coexist with the contradictions inherent between the actress and the characters she played.

The rigid, all-encompassing dictatorship, in a process overseen by the censors, forged its archetypes using the silver screen and magazines dedicated to cinema, directing its attentions especially toward women who comprised the majority audience for cinema and the film press. In this way, Conchita Montes ascended to the pantheon of stars alongside other names such as Imperio Argentina, Amparo Rivelles, Conchita Montenegro, and Aurora Bautista, coming to wield influence far beyond the screen. She became part of a phenomenon that was at once aesthetic, social, and even economic (Kuhn, 2002: 5), judged by some as the greatest cultural expression of a nation (Gaffney and Holmes, 2007: 1).

Throughout the dictatorship, the ideological apparatus of Francoism sought to take an active part in the audio-visual media, constructing stars and presenting them as ideal role-models. In so doing, the regime hoped to influence the thinking of its citizens, giving them object lessons in forms of behaviour and social interaction, defining the roles of women and men, providing a definitive interpretation of reality, and generating an aspirational consciousness amongst the population. This fictional process, reinforced by the press, the radio and advertising, was conceived with the aim of constructing a collective consciousness that was at one with the government's ideals (Rincón, 2014; Álvarez Rodrigo, 2019); and categorising people according to their sex, and ideology, among other characteristics, at the same time as defining the direction of their lives (Dyer,1987: 17).

This article explores how Franco's regime attempted to transform the public figure of Conchita Montes into the new feminine archetype in the wake of the Spanish Civil War. To this end, we will analyse the film, *Frente de Madrid*, in which this actress took a starring role and, ultimately, became hugely important in ways that went far beyond her performance. Furthermore, we will consider how, during the early period of Francoism, the press hailed Montes as the first cinematic personification of the archetypal female Falangist.

Through an analysis of the historic and cinematographic context, this work proposes the hypothesis that, despite the media strategies deployed, the transformation of Concepción Carro into Conchita Montes did not fulfil the regime's expectations, due to the excessive dissonance between the qualities of the actress as a person, and those of the star she was supposed to be as formulated by the dictatorship's ideology.

THE CONVERSION: FROM CONCEPCIÓN CARRO TO CONCHITA MONTES

The process of constructing Conchita Montes as an elegant and cosmopolitan star, presenting an image of a sophisticated Spain that could be exported to the rest of Europe, is entirely bewildering considering that only three years before, Concepción Carro Alcaraz, as she was then known, had been a declared liberal and a republican. No less surprising is that her participation in the film, *Frente de Madrid*, in the role of a Falangist heroine was financed thanks to a state accord signed between the Spanish dictatorship and Fascist Italy (Torreiro, 2009) with the objective of creating a politically and ideologically driven filmmaking industry involving co-productions shot in the Cinecittà studios for subsequent distribution in Latin America.

The metamorphosis of the young actress can be explained by her complicated life-story. In 1934, Concepción Carro had just finished her degree in Law and was working as a critic writing reviews of film releases for the *Diario Madrid* newspaper (Montes, 1944). One year later she obtained a grant to continue her studies and travelled to the prestigious Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York State (Piñon Varela, 2015: 324), to prepare for entry to the diplomatic service. Her first direct contacts with the film industry were sporadic and brief, taking place during a breath-taking vacation trip to Hollywood with Edgar Neville (Gómez-Santos, 1962), her lover and partner on numerous film projects. The very week of her return to Madrid, the Spanish Civil War broke out. Conchita Montes abandoned the Republican zone for France but later came back, entering the Nationalist zone where, in 1937, she was detained and taken to the civil authorities in San Sebastián. There she remained as a prisoner for a month and a half after being denounced as a Republican supporter (Torreiro, 2016: 263). Without a doubt, this experience brought Montes to a point of inflexion in her young life and began the process by which she constructed a new ideological narrative for herself in order to ensure her survival (Franco Torre, 2015: 137-138).

After several anguished months, Montes was offered the opportunity to travel to Rome to start preparing a screenplay for *Frente de Madrid* with Neville as the film's screenwriter and director (Montes, 1944). Neville had been working with the Nationalist radio-propaganda broadcaster *Altavoces de Guerra* (Hernández-Francés León and Justo, 2020) and in the company of Conchita Montes he visited the frontlines at the University City, Madrid. Until now, the fact that he made this trip has passed unnoticed by historians and the only reference to it is found in the writings of Manuel Iglesias-Sarria, a member of the Nationalist forces:

> One day a group of journalists arrived in our trench, amongst them was a woman: Conchita Montes. Accompanying her were Edgar Neville, Sir Walter Starkie. [...] After taking in the view of the besieged city which made a big impression, especially on the Americans, we went back along the covered walkway. [...] The machineguns and mortars began firing quite intensely. [...] Conchita and Edgar, who were very close to me, looked at one another very solemnly, not saying a word. Their eyes did not show any sign of panic. [...] Moments later we were sitting around the fire. [...] Edgar, [...] joked: "this mess" is something you all cooked up with those guys over the other side especially to give us a scare (Iglesias-Sarria: 1987: 109-111).

On arrival in the Italian capital, when the Bassoli brothers (film manufacturers) met Conchita Montes, they agreed with the director that her face was perfect for the role of Carmen, the film's female lead (Aguilar and Cabrerizo, 2018). In the winter of 1939, shooting for the film, *Frente de Madrid* started with the intention to produce two versions — one in Spanish and a second in Italian.

The fledgeling actress knew at first hand the advantages and duties of being a film icon. In the United States she had watched how the major film studios worked and had observed the publicity mechanisms used to promote their stars. In addition, she had personal experience of seeing the stars at work, including Bette Davis, Lesley Howard, and Humphrey Bogart. She had also struck up several long-term relationships with well-known figures such as Charles Chaplin, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks (Ríos Carratalá, 2007; Aguilar and Cabrerizo, 2018), who had shown her the freedom granted by 'star power' (Marshall, 1997). This phenomenon is most clearly demonstrated by actresses like Great Garbo and Norma Shearer (Bou, 2015: 37) and, in fact, is perhaps more commonly found in the European 'star system'. As Ginnet Vicendeau points out, the stars of the Old Continent, despite their success, tended to maintain a certain artisan-like element to their practice, strong links to theatre, and took on much shorter contractual agreements with production companies, all of which translated into greater control over their own image and creative freedom (Vicendeau, 2013). Conchita Montes was to

make good use of these essential insights in both her professional and personal lives, standing outside the narrow view of the Francoist regime.

At only twenty-five years of age, Conchita Montes debuted with two well-known actors, Rafael Rivelles for the Spanish public, and Fossco Giachetti for the Italian audience. Her interpretation of a Fascist heroine of the Falange suggests a closing off from her previous identity, at least in public. Concepción Carro disappeared, sacrificing her ideological convictions to make way for the star, Conchita Montes. This was the necessary tribute to enable her survival and allowed her to return to the beloved Madrid of her memories, the city she abandoned as a suspect and returned to, under the newly installed dictatorship, as a star of the silver screen. Conchita Montes' supposed ideological conversion was her passport to the future, at least until the middle of 1940 when the shadow of her Republican past brought her to the attention of the Italian secret police, suspected of collaboration with British intelligence services (Torreiro 2016: 399).

THE FRAGILE GLAMOUR OF CONCHITA MONTES

A multimodal analysis of Conchita Montes' image as a star through an assessment of her portrayal in *Frente de Madrid* as the archetypal virgin heroine, reveals a consistent 'heterodesignation' in the language used on screen, in publicity and the news media (Rincón, 2014; Bernáldez, 2015). A phenomenon which, in fact, was normalised far further afield than the specifics of the political era that marked the actress's career.

Frente de Madrid is based on Edgar Neville's novel of the same title but it contains a fundamental change, specifically, the role of Carmen is developed to give her a similar level of prominence to the male lead, whereas in the novel he is the unique nucleus of action. In the film adaptation, Carmen is the co-lead, and if we examine the level of care and attention given to the arrangement and lighting of the sequences in which Conchita Montes appears, it is clear she is, in fact, meant to be the true star of the picture. Indeed, the first frames showing Montes, inspired by the classic techniques used for the North American stars of the thirties, highlight her presence exaggerating her fragile, glamourous beauty. As Morin (2005) declares, the face of Montes shines with a goddess-like quality (image 1).

The pre-eminence given to the female lead in the film is extremely relevant, indeed, the Italian title for this film identifies the heroine as the main character: *Carmen fra i rossi* [Carmen and the

Image 1. The first frames showing the actress Conchita Montes in *Frente de Madrid* (Edgard Neville, 1939)

Image 2. *Shanghai Express* (Josef von Sternberg, 1932) and *Frente de Madrid* (Edgard Neville, 1939)

Reds], leaving her soldier boyfriend playing second fiddle, at least in terms of the film's publicity.

Inspiration from the Hollywood repertoire finds its magic in the moment when the heroine smokes a final cigarette before she dies, recalling a scene from *Shanghai Express* (Josef von Sternberg, 1932) and although the female characters portrayed in each film are very different, they both sacrifice themselves for their lovers (image 2). However, while the in the Hollywood movie "neither one of the characters trusts the other, thus when the 'happy ending' comes, Marlene Dietrich muses ironically about this dream factory imposition that creates a pompous moment of happiness portrayed with maximal theatricality" (Bou, 2015: 40), in *Frente de Madrid*, the two main characters do trust each other, and it is a tragic (and ideological) immolation that accompanies the "maximal theatricality".

The film is set in two areas in Madrid: the zone loyal to the Republicans, and the tiny strip in the University City occupied by the Nationalist army. For many years it had been assumed that the film

Image 3. Shots showing the ruins of the Hospital Clínico (Madrid University Hospital) in *Frente de Madrid* (Edgard Neville, 1939)

was shot entirely in Rome, however, a closer look at the footage reveals that the exteriors and the scenes of fighting were in fact shot in the ruins of the Hospital Clínico (Madrid's university hospital) and the *Pasarela de la muerte*, (Footbridge of death) across the Manzanares. As Pérez comments, in the propaganda of early Francoism, the ruins of the University City became the regime's 'place of memory' (Pérez, 2016: 42) (image 3).

The film's plot tells the story of a Falangist soldier, Javier (Alfredo, in the Italian version), who's orders are to go to the capital to deliver important information to one of his superiors who has managed to infiltrate the Republican forces. Having achieved his aim, he makes the most of this dangerous assignment to visit his fiancé, Carmen, a young lady from a well-to-do family who is at home, apparently decorously awaiting the 'liberation' of Madrid. When he attempts to return to his position on the front, a bomb destroys the tunnel connecting the two zones. As a result, he seeks help from the fifth columnist to whom he had recently brought intelligence and is sent to a night club where he must contact a stranger, "an important person [...] the only one who can help you escape Madrid". To Javier's surprise, the spy that can help him turns out to be Carmen, who, under the guise of a cigarette seller, extracts information from the communist militia and relays it the Nationalists using a clandestine radio transmitter located in one of the night club's dressing rooms. An assault by the Reds aggravates the situation, so, Carmen rapidly organises the escape of her lover and then surrenders to her own tragic destiny, waiting beside the radio transmitter until she is discovered. In the meantime, Javier, having reached safety is astonished to hear a voice on the radio — it is Carmen, narrating her last moments. In a desperate attempt to go back to rescue her, he crosses the battlefield and is hit by shrapnel. He dies lying next to an enemy soldier reminiscing about the Madrid of their childhood. Carmen and Javier meet as spirits in the afterlife from whence they contemplate proudly the victorious Spain for which they sacrificed themselves.

The film opens with the image of Conchita Montes, dressed as a bride; she turns to the camera and her gaze illuminates the frame. The camera pans round to show a luxurious room — there is even a grand piano — bathed in sunlight, which tells us not only about the character's personal background but also serves as a vehicle to

Image 4. The opening sequence and following three frames of *Frente de Madrid* (Edgard Neville, 1939)

demonstrate the happiness of her environment. This first scene situates Carmen and the rest of the film's characters, all of whom are allied to the Nationalist side, and is perhaps one of the most comic moments of the film, making a subtle dig at the rituals of marriage (image 4).

In this way *Frente de Madrid* revisits the concept of woman as an allegory for the land, the 'happy fatherland', a concept that draws on associations with fertility and has a tradition in diverse artistic disciplines. The cinematic presentation humanises the events that have befallen Madrid, expressing these through Carmen's character: first, the vivaciousness and joy of the capital under the Republicans, later the suffering caused by the war's violence, and finally the mortal sacrifice and destruction that brings about salvation.

The identification of the female lead with Madrid, rather than the whole of Spain is underscored by the symbolism of this city as the last Republican stronghold (along with the Levante region), and also by Conchita Monte's own devotion to the capital: "I am from Madrid. My parents too… and also my grandparents. Three generations of *Madrileños*. Not at all bad, don't you think?" (Tolcido, 1947). This dedication to the capital is also reiterated by the director: "The cinema and Madrid come together, and they are the two poles of my passion", (Fernández Barreira, 1945) and we see this passion clearly in the screenplay where being from Madrid, being *Madrileño*, links people regardless of ideology and is a means of reaching a peace.

> The portrayal of the female character in *Frente de Madrid* is highly innovative. Carmen manages to combine the everyday, her behaviour entirely in accord with the expectations of the era, with political activism and an extraordinary ability as a strategist, displaying the archetypal star 'superpersonality' (Morin, 2005: 38).

The construction of Carmen's character is in large part down to Conchita Montes herself and this not simply because she co-authored the screenplay. Her own commentaries on the subject have been interpreted by historians as part of a strategy to explain Montes and Neville's departure from Spain and as a public justification of her ideological position, however it is clear that the role was shaped using Montes' own personality as a model. Recalling that, the young woman previously known as Concepción Carro, debuted as an actress with no previous training or stage experience, this is how she herself remembers the experience:

> The truth is that the first film I did was so easy to do. It had a freshness, spontaneity; it allowed me to be how I was. […] The character was very close to my own genuine personality. I think I performed worse in my second film because I no longer had that same spontaneity and I had no acting technique to fall back on […] that's something I had to acquire with study and practice (Vizcaíno Casas, 1976: 71).

This personal testimony identifies the source of Montes' success in the role of Carmen and indeed, her inexperience can only be discerned in certain aspects of her manner on camera. For instance, in the sequences where Montes' character is silent for an extended period, and there is no concrete action related to her own narrative, she reveals a certain timidity. This is certainly due largely to her lack of acting technique or the shock of confronting the camera for the first time "in character" and Montes' inexperience comes through in these scenes in the way she repeats certain expressive gestures, particularly caressing elements of the set, for example, her bridal veil, or the crumpled rag in the scene at the *checa* (secret police HQ). Her particular way of "writing with her body […] what she really wished her character to say", described by Gonzalo de Lucas (2018: 57), referring to other work by this actress, would develop in the coming years as her passion for acting lead her to develop a style that could be moulded to each new role. In this first performance, however, and key to the film's appeal, was that Carmen is the image of Conchita: an intelligent, entertaining, modern woman, a risk-taker, in charge of her own life and, in the public sphere, legitimised due to her intellectual capacities in a world of men who treat her as an equal.

FALANGISM'S IDEOLOGICAL AMBIVALENCE TO THE FEMININE AND ITS REPRESENTATION ON FILM

Frente de Madrid exposes how Franco's regime was deeply indoctrinated by Falangist ideology in the early days of the dictatorship when this movement was at its height. Of prime importance in Falangist thinking was the distinction of human capabilities, qualities, and behaviours from the point of view of the masculine-feminine dichotomy: virility, strength and intelligence contrasted with emotion, sensitivity, and intuition. This framework did however permit exceptions depending on social status and the needs of the Fatherland thus, the traditionally feminine qualities of surrender, sacrifice, and self-denial, could become deeply masculine in the military environment (Labanyi, 2009). José Antonio Primo de Rivera explains this in the following way: "Behold, women, how we have made a cardinal virtue of the virtue of self-sacrifice, which above all, belongs to you. Oh, that we should come to be so successful in it as you are. Oh, that we should come to be so feminine in this respect, so that one day you might call us truly Men!" (Primo de Rivera, 1935).

In this way, the Falangist approach unifies the values of the military with femininity, duly breaking the gender binary and justifying a "masculinised femininity". Furthermore, it approves the activism of women in the public sphere provided that such activities are in defence of a patriotic cause. These ideas enabled the leaders of bodies such as the *Sección Femenina* to simultaneously tell women to go back to their homes and child-rearing responsibilities in order to become the principle vessels to transmit the values of Franco's new Spain, whilst they themselves wielded power in public office (Enders, 1999). Be that as it may, the subjugation of women was imposed from two directions: for the benefit of Spain and of the masculine person, as some of the 'recommendations' of the Falangist *Sección Femenina* dictate: "You must attempt always to be the wheel of the cart and allow yourself to be governed by whomsoever has that duty. Action does not fall to you, spur yourself to comply", (Morcillo Gómez, 1988: 82). As ever, power relations between people must be governed by sexual difference (Scott, 2008).

The inconsistency in Falangist thinking can be appreciated in the numerous writings from the era of the dictatorship which define women at once as "a delicate soul" in which "everything that touches her leaves a mark", and who should be encouraged to live "some distance from people and material things", at the same time as exalting her fortitude in sacrifice: "the independence of the strong woman in the accomplishment of her duties, how she sacrifices her own desires to the will of any who call on her" (Pastor i Homs, 1984: 34). Alternatively, there is reference to woman's intellectual limitations, "the woman is intuitive, in contrast to the man who prefers logic", (Pastor i Homs, 1984: 31-34), whilst highlighting the need for her to hide her cleverness under a veil of emotion (Barrera, 2019). This perversity can be explained in psychoanalytic terms as consisting in women acting out a role of passivity and submission to satisfy the masculine desire for control, while at the same time negating said role, the subordination of women being only a pretence (Kaplan, 1991).

Frente de Madrid fits perfectly into the complicated ideological mould of early Francoism since it amply demonstrates the only gender equality

FRENTE DE MADRID FITS PERFECTLY INTO THE COMPLICATED IDEOLOGICAL MOULD OF EARLY FRANCOISM SINCE IT AMPLY DEMONSTRATES THE ONLY GENDER EQUALITY PERMITTED: THAT OF SUBMISSION AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN THE SERVICE OF THE FATHERLAND AS A VALUE BOTH OF FEMININITY AND THE MILITARY

permitted: that of submission and political activism in the service of the Fatherland as a value both of femininity and the military. Thus, Javier and Carmen represent heroism in the same way: "I fight from this side and you fight from the other, but we fight for the same cause", Carmen asserts. The female lead also complies with the theory of perversion posited by Kaplan (1991): an educated woman, sensitive, with impeccable manners and fragile in appearance, masking her role as a spy and as an activist who, under cover of night broadcasts over the clandestine radio transmitter and has a third, fake identity, passing for a friendly, innocent cigarette seller. In short, all the feminine attitudes taken up by the film's heroine, and as we saw, in large part aimed first at enabling Conchita Montes' performance of the character, are justified by Carmen's own words: "In this war we all have to make sacrifices... and if it's necessary we must risk our lives. [...] At this moment, this is how it is for women too".

As we see, there is a double discourse that could be justified according to context. Even so, certain guidelines were fairly clear: women should avoid active protagonism, "Don't seek to highlight your own personality, help the other to be the one who is noticed", (Morcillo Gómez, 1988: 82); and the impossibility of women participating in armed conflict, since explicit violence, in the Falangist symbolic dichotomy, was indelibly linked to masculinity (Barrera, 2019). In this regard, it is important to mention a common female stereotype of the era, that of *la miliciana* (the militia-woman). This caricature was developed in the years prior to the conflict through cartoons, and in the more conservative elements of the press, to ridicule women members of the militia by assigning them traditionally masculine attributes. In *Frente de Madrid*, we are introduced to an example of *la miliciana* who appears amongst the upper echelons of the Republican army, the part being taken by a corpulent woman characterised by her slovenliness, crude speech, and disagreeable personality.

CONCHITA MONTES' INTERTEXTUAL AND POLYSEMIC IMAGE AS A STAR

Once the film had been approved, the totalitarian media machine went to work creating a star. On the 25th of November 1939, while the film was still in production, Conchita Montes appeared on the cover of the Italian magazine *Cinema*, whose chief editor was none other than Vittorio Mussolini, the dictator's son (image 5). In Spain, on 30th of March 1940, *RadioCinema* announced a double page photo reportage to mark the arrival of the new and much anticipated actress: "a charming star, who, because she is ours, entirely ours, will be able to take the art of entertainment to conquer screens worldwide". The article highlights the distinctive idiosyncrasies of the new star, her cultivation and refinement, far removed from anything that had ever been known before. On the 23rd of March, *Frente de Madrid* was released in Spain and in the same month, *Carmen fra i rossi* was released in Italy where it received a rapturous welcome (Fernández de Córdoba, 1940). The Italian version was later dubbed into German and rebaptised as *In der roten Hölle* [In the Red Hell] where it achieved huge success in January 1943 (*Primer Plano,* 1943). Montes' performance as the 'tragic heroine' received particular acclaim from the German critics: "She won our hears through her elegant beauty and the emotion of her expressions", (Herzberg, 1942).

In Spain, however, the media maintained conflicting positions, although these were more to do with the adjustments going on inside the government than her performance on screen. Some critics considered that the portrait of Madrid occupied by the Republican army was made to seem excessively pleasant, while others defended *Frente de Madrid* as a trailblazer for the newly forged, state sponsored Spanish cinema. One commentator, well-recognised for their intellectual rigour and who held particular sway in the new status quo, praised Conchita Montes for her definitive performance calling it

unaffected, and filled with an "attractive simplicity" in a film that offered some "meaty lessons" (Fernández Flórez, 1940: 6). At the time, the film press defined the actress as "Spanish cinema's feminine sensation, [...] to be consecrated as the first cinema star (everything about her is art, naturalness, and beauty)", (*RadioCinema*, 1940) (image 5).

The publicity surrounding the release of *Frente de Madrid* presenting Conchita Montes as "Spanish cinema's innocent bride" is, however, a long way from the essence of the character she plays in the film. Press commentary over-accentuated the love-life of the female lead at the expense of other elements of her narrative. Throughout the film, Carmen makes her own destiny, she prioritises her work as a spy, takes decisions independently, and her status as a fiancé does not subordinate her. This of course, was at odds with the general direction of the Nationalist cinematic project which attempted to normalize the emotional guardianship of women and the loss of their rights. An identical dissonance is seen between the images shown on the posters advertising *Frente de Madrid* and the actual

THE PUBLICITY SURROUNDING THE RELEASE OF FRENTE DE MADRID PRESENTING CONCHITA MONTES AS "SPANISH CINEMA'S INNOCENT BRIDE" IS, HOWEVER, A LONG WAY FROM THE ESSENCE OF THE CHARACTER SHE PLAYS IN THE FILM. PRESS COMMENTARY OVER-ACCENTUATED THE LOVE-LIFE OF THE FEMALE LEAD AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHER ELEMENTS OF HER NARRATIVE

Image 5. Photo-reportage in *RadioCinema*, issue 49, 30th March 1940 and in *Cinema* issue 82, 25th November 1939

Image 6. Posters for *Frente de Madrid* in Spain, Italy, and Germany

role played by Montes in the film. Advertising images, both illustrations and photographs, released to promote the film in Spain, Germany and Italy uniformly present a picture of Carmen as contemplative, aloof, omnipresent and, at times, sexually suggestive, totally marginalising the ideological activism engaged in by her character (image 6).

In the same way, the photographic montage used by the film distributors Hispania Tobbis (image 7), by an unknown author, includes a prominent image of the female lead presented as an object of desire — asleep, lying in a suggestive attitude, watched over — and gives only a small space at the bottom to a depiction of the character in her more courageous spy persona.

The contradiction between the image of Conchita Montes shown on posters as an impassive, distant, figure and the role she plays in the film as an active, joyous personality filled with resolve reflects the Francoist state's interest in situating women in specific contexts and spaces.

Francoism's ideological apparatus understood the instructive power of film — and the cinematographic press — with its potential to transmit knowledge, emotions, and values. However, it regarded cinema productions as a neutral device, as a reflection of reality.

Image 7. Photographic montage from the catalogue produced by the distributor, Hispania Tobbis

CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN CHARACTER, STAR, AND ACTRESS.

The construction of a star requires contributions from all sectors of the media and any analysis of these many discourses needs to take a multimodal approach (Dyer, 1979: 60). From the cinema reviews to the radio interviews, all parts of the media machine attempted to frame Conchita Montes in the paradigm of Spanish femininity, and as vehicle through which to transmit the values of the regime. It was a complex task as certain magazines, such as *Primer Plano* and *Cámara*, soon began to discuss: "Conchita Montes is no ingenue nor is she a vamp, she is extensively cultured and an expert antiques collector", (Demaris, 1944). Other commentary included: "She speaks no less than four languages, she doesn't play much sport, she doesn't she ride, nor does she have a favourite flower as far as anyone knows" (*Cámara*, 1941). In no uncertain terms, Conchita Montes broke with the standard expectations of the time, both professionally and personally: lawyer, writer, and later on, a screenwriter, translator, businesswoman, and leader of her own theatre company;[1] she renounced marriage and maternity focussing solely on her career as an actress.

In addition, Montes did not cooperate in the construction of the public persona desired by the regime, rejecting media scrutiny: "I'm not unwilling to talk to the press, but I want to be sincere, and I am. Besides, it's not a case of shyness, rather of modesty; I don't like to tell stories about my personal life, because I feel they are absolutely mine", (Carabias, 1954). That her personal identity remained extremely distant from any officially imposed model, was something that troubled a number of intellectuals: "I'd prefer her to be one thing only: either a woman, or an actress, or a writer, or an intellectual" (González-Ruano, 2004: 519). It is impossible not to notice how, in this author's comments concerning his preference for Montes to be only one "thing", among the options he offers her is that of being a "woman". Humour helped Conchita Montes to ease some of the tensions generated by the gulf between societal norms and her own freedoms. She would frequently joke about the content of interviews and imitate the absurdly overblown compliments of the media: "The girl is adorable! Just adorable! She sings, she dances, she writes, she cooks… And you should see her sew! … What a girl!" (Carabias, 1954). This quote gives us a fleeting glimpse of a moment in which the actress attempted to manage her situation, bolstering her own convictions and feelings.

To conclude, we might say that the differences between Conchita Montes' screen image and the real woman elucidate a polysemic star that gave the public layers of meaning to identify and interpret in numerous ways beyond a hermetic archetype. Precisely as David Marshall (1997) pointed out, the dissonances between an actor's on-screen persona and their personality both negotiate and resolve themselves in favour of the dominant paradigm. The media tried to silence or at least moderate Montes' life-choices and attitudes, a reality which, moreover, reflected the double moral standards of the totalitarian state.

There is evidence of doubt in Montes' own mind concerning the roles that the regime systematically aimed to inculcate into the population as coessential to womanhood, and as she herself interpreted in her screen performances. Once the dictatorship came to an end, the actress reflected: "When I'm not on set, I feel like an exile, an exile out of time, and so all that time is not free, but dead [...] but then my conscience starts to berate me, accuses me, because I don't apply myself to all the things that, well, I don't know whether they're important, but perhaps they should be important to me: learning how to cook well, tidying up that bottom draw that's always in a mess, and other things that might be useful", (Montes, 1980). Here, the words of Edgar Morin take on a particular significance: "The star is not only an actress. The characters she plays are

not only characters. The characters of her films infect the star. Reciprocally, the star herself infects these characters." (Morin, 1973: 35).

NOTES

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1 Conchita Montes (1914-1994) acted in 22 films, 8 television productions and 56 theatre productions, she also translated or adapted 23 librettos. She was a theatre entrepreneur, screenwriter, T.V. presenter, theatre director, cinema critic for the magazine, *Diario Madrid*, and worked with *La Codorniz* magazine in addition to various other media outlets such as, *Vértice* and the newspaper, *ABC* among others. In 1989, she was awarded the *Medalla de Oro al Mérito a las Bellas Artes* (Gold Medal for merit in the Fine Arts) in recognition of her professional career.

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DRAMATIC EXPRESSION IN *FRENTE DE MADRID*: CONCHITA MONTES, THE FIRST FEMININE ARCHETYPE OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Abstract

This article studies the creation of National Catholicism's virgin heroine archetype embodied by Conchita Montes in the film Frente de Madrid, the first of what might be termed 'the crusade' genre, released after the triumph of Franco's dictatorship. Different elements of the media contrived to create a cosmopolitan and sophisticated star who would personify both Spanish national values and the perverse ambivalence of Falangist ideology inherent in its construction of gender. Nevertheless, the contrast between the public person and the actress herself constituted a polysemic image that offered the public multiple meanings and interpretations beyond the hermetic archetypes imposed by Franco's 'New State'.

Key words

Conchita Montes; Female Archetype; Spanish Star System; Virgin Heroine; Gestural Style; *Frente de Madrid;* Madrid.

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LA EXPRESIÓN DRAMÁTICA EN *FRENTE DE MADRID*: CONCHITA MONTES, EL PRIMER ARQUETIPO FEMENINO DE LA GUERRA CIVIL ESPAÑOLA

Resumen

El presente artículo estudia la creación del arquetipo de heroína virginal del nacionalcatolicismo encarnado por Conchita Montes en el film *Frente de Madrid*, primera película del cine de cruzada estrenada tras el triunfo de la dictadura franquista. Los diferentes discursos mediáticos colaboraron en la creación de una *star* cosmopolita y sofisticada, que personalizaba los valores nacionales y las perversas ambivalencias falangistas, en lo que a construcción del género se refiere. No obstante, la distancia entre el personaje público y la actriz mostraba una imagen polisémica, lo que permitió al público percibir otros significados y realizar distintas interpretaciones, más allá de los herméticos arquetipos impuestos por el Nuevo Estado.

Palabras clave

Conchita Montes; Arquetipo femenino; *Star system* español; Heroína virginal; Estilo gestual; *Frente de Madrid;* Madrid.

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THE INFLUENCE OF AMERICAN CINEMA ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE *FEMME FATALE* IN SPANISH CRIME FILMS OF THE 1950S*

NURIA CANCELA

INTRODUCTION

The cinematic archetype of the *femme fatale*, with precursors in the vampiresses of the silent era, first emerged and rose to its highest form ofexpression in American *film noir*. The fatal woman is characterised by a combination of seduction and ambition. She is active, intelligent and destructive, with a power derived from her body and her sexuality (Place, 1978). She is a figure associated with crime, death, and deception. As Álvarez López (2006: 70) suggests, cinematic*femmes fatales*are women who use their seductive powers to convince—or trick—men into giving them what they want, which was usually something financial in nature. However, the fatal woman has generally been depicted from a misogynistic perspective that ultimately condemns her to an unhappyend in every film as a way ofstressing the negative depiction of this type of femininity. Indeed, as Place (1978) points out, in Hollywood *film noir*this character type is set up in opposition to the "nurturing woman", who possesses all the female virtues of the era.

In Spanish cinema under Franco's dictatorship, due to a system of censorship that repressed the expression of any kind of behaviour contrary to Catholic morality, the presence of the *femme fatale* as a recurring archetype should have been practically impossible. In *Primer Plano,* the film magazine that served as the mouthpiece for the regime's vision of cinema, the idea of a Spanish version of this character type was almost never mentioned. The archetype was sometimes associated with foreign actresses, but a Spanish actresswould be more likely to be described as a "vampiress", a term with connotations dating back to before the Spanish Civil War, as if Spanish cinema had no contemporary version of the "fatal" seductress.[1] However, although the notion of a Spanish *femme fatale* is conspicuously absent from the film magazines of the era, the boom of

the Spanish crime film[2] genre in the early 1950s facilitated the repeated use of this female archetype. This genre began in Spain with two key films, *Crime Squad* (Brigada criminal, Ignacio F. Iquino, 1950) and *Post Office Box 1001* (Apartado de correos 1001, Julio Salvador, 1950), and it continued through to the mid-1960s. The Spanish version of the genre was clearly based on the Hollywood *film noir* model. The two film traditions thus share a number of common features: the presence of crime, violence and death; a style heavily influenced by realism, expressionism and psychoanalysis; and a narrative development that gradually builds the tension felt by the audience (Medina de la Viña, 2000).

Numerous scholars (Labany, Lázaro-Reboll& Rodríguez Ortega, 2013; Rodríguez Fuentes, 2011; Sánchez Barba, 2007; Medina de la Viña, 2000; Benet, 2012) have highlighted the various similarities between the Spanish crime film and different foreign versions of the genre, as well as some specific features of the Spanish productions associated with the censorship restrictions, such as the reduction of the moral ambiguity, the idealising of the police, and the absence of private investigators (Sánchez Barba, 2007). However, the influence of American *film noir* on one canonical archetype of this genre, the *femme fatale*, has received almost no scholarly attention. Although Sánchez Barba (2007) suggests that the stylistic, expressive and visual presentation of the Spanish "spider-woman" is based on its American equivalent, he does not really explore this question; similarly, Sánchez Martín (2012) highlights the American influence on the genre, but she focuses her attention on narrative rather than symbolic aspects of the archetype. Contradicting these authors, Medina de la Viña (2000) argues that Spanish cinema, with only a handful of exceptions, contains no genuinely treacherous women like the Hollywood *femmes fatales*.

The main aim of this article is to analyse the archetype of the Spanish *femme fatale* through the performances of the actresses who dared to embody it. To this end, it takes a perspective based on star studies, which focuses on the acting styles of individual actors and actresses. This focus is a constant in the work of authors like Richard Dyer (1979), James Naremore (1988) and Philip Drake (2006), and it has even led contemporary scholars like Karen Hollinger (2006) to argue for the need to analyse actresses as authors of the performative *mise-en-scène*. However, the approach adopted here, drawing on the work of Richard De Cordova (1986) and Donna Peberdy (2013), is based on the branch of star studies that relates it to the system of film genres, an approach also adopted by Christine Gledhill (1991) and Andrew Britton (1991). Peberdy takes up this line of research with an exploration of American *film noir* that focuses on acting styles related to certain concerns of cultural studies. To this end, she argues that "it is necessary to move past a definition of performance as solely the actor's movements and gestures to consider it instead as the interplay between actions, diegesis and social context" (Peberdy, 2013: 332). She therefore proposes the analysis of three types of performance that occur simultaneously in this film genre: screen performance, diegetic performance, and social performance. Based on this categorisation, this article examines the performances of the actresses who portrayed the *femme fatale* archetype in Spanish crime films of the 1950s through a detailed comparison aimed at determining the extent to which Hollywood cinema influenced the performative approaches of these Spanish actresses.

SCREEN PERFORMANCE: BETWEEN RESTRAINT AND EXPRESSIONISM

Peberdy characterises performances in *film noir* first and foremost as restrained, drawing on studies by Foster Hirsch (1981) and De Cordova (1986). Hirsch suggests that *film noir* actors and actresses offer performances that are totally stylised, som-

Figure 1. *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, 1944), *Leave Her to Heaven* (John M. Stahl, 1945), *Out of the Past* (Jacques Tourneur, 1947), *No dispares contra mí* [Don't Shoot Me] (José María Nunes, 1961), *¿Pena de muerte?* [Death Penalty?] (Josep Maria Font, 1961), *A sangre fría* [In Cold Blood] (Juan Bosch, 1959).

nambulistic and glacial. De Cordova argues that the restrained performances that characterise this genre are the polar opposite of the "performance as expression" that typifies melodrama. Peberdy analyses what she describes as the restrained performances of male actors like Alan Ladd, Humphrey Bogart and Robert Mitchum. Although she does not mention any example of restrained gestures by a female actor, it is notable that actresses portraying the *femme fatale* archetype, at significant moments such as when they are killing their victims, exhibit an identical kind of restraint: their inexpressiveness is so exaggerated that it might even seem unnatural, and contrary to the norm in classical cinema.

American *film noir* offers paradigmatic examples of this, like Ellen (Gene Tierney) in *Leave Her to Heaven* (John M. Stahl, 1945). In the scene where her brother-in-law drowns, Ellen seems unaffected, looking on with an expressionless look as the boy dies. As Núria Bou suggests, "it seems as if the patient Ellen had been waiting for this moment, and she might even be described as drowning the boy with her gaze" (Bou, 2006: 22). Another example is Jean Simmons's performance as Diane Tremayne in *Angel Face* (Otto Preminger, 1952), who plays the piano impassively, without the slightest hint of concern on her face, while her stepmother suffers the death she has previously prepared for her. Similarly, when the *femme fatale* brandishes a weapon, in most cases she stands up straight and serene with an imperturbable expression and points the gun steadily at her victim, like Phyllis Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck) in *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, 1944), Annie Laurie Starr (Peggy Cummins) in *Gun Crazy* (Joseph H. Lewis, 1950), or Kathie Moffat (Jane Greer) in *Out of the Past* (Jacques Tourneur, 1947).

In such moments of extreme violence, we find the same restrained performances in the Spanish *femme fatale*: Lina (Mireille Darc) in *¿Pena de muerte?* [Death Penalty] (Josep Maria Forn, 1961), Lucile (Lucile Saint-Simon) in *No dispares contra mí* [Don't Shoot Me] (Jose Maria Nunes, 1961) and Isabel (Gisia Paradís) in *A sangrefría* [In Cold Blood] (Juan Bosch, 1959) all hold their murder weapons with the utmost calm, apart from a blink on pulling the trigger in the case of Lucile: a tranquilbatting of the eyelidsas she watches her victim's body fall, believing him to be dead and then approaching him to give him a necrophiliac kiss. Again, like Ellen (Tierney) in *Leave Her to Heaven*, the long duration of the shot of her calm face underscores the unnaturalness of this performance. In other cases, like Isabel (Gisia Paradís) in *A sangre fría*, the restraint is clear while she is holding her gun, although in a final struggle she is the one who ends up dead (Figure 1). An example similar to that of Kathie (Greer) in *Out of the Past* can be

found in Eva (Honor Blackman) in *Come Die My Love* (Manchas de sangre en la luna, Edward Dein and Luis Marquina, 1952), who shoots her former lover—and blackmailer—unperceived by her current love interest, who is also present at the scene of the crime, until he hears the sound of the gunshot. This is thanks to her absolute restraint when she kills him even though she herself is already dying. Isabel (Nani Fernández) wears a similarly unflappable expression when she shoots her lover from her hiding spot in *An Impossible Crime* (¿Crimen imposible?, César Fernández Ardavín, 1954). With the utmost calm and self-control she watches from behind the door, raises her pistol, points between the bars and shoots. The long, hard stares of these women seem to condemn their men to their deaths.

However, as Peberdy points out, this restraint is sometimes alternated with explosive or expressionisticperformances. Peberdy's theoretical framework draws on the work of Paul Schrader (1972) and Robert G. Porfirio (1976), who argue that *film noir* combines expressionism with realism. Most performances associated with the genre exhibit a contrast between *interiority* and *exterior emotionalism*. In her exterior emotionalism, the *femme fatale* displays her anxiety, often in scenes where she is alone. There are thus occasional examples of *femmes fatales* with mouths gaping open, faces buried in their hands and

Figure 2. Exterior emotionalism: Jane Greer in *Out of the Past* (Jacques Tourneur, 1947), Gloria Swanson in *Sunset Blvd.* (Billy Wilder, 1950), Lana Turner in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Tay Garnett, 1943), Honor Blackman in *Come Die My Love* (Manchas de sangre en la luna, Edward Dein and Luis Marquina, 1952), Malila Sandoval in *Llama un tal Esteban [A Esteban on the Phone] (Pedro L. Ramírez, 1960)*, Emma Penella in *Red Fish* (Los peces rojos, José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1955), Laya Raki in *Closed Exit* (Camino cortado, Ignacio F. Iquino, 1955) Monserrat Salvador in *Fifth District* (Distrito Quinto, Julio Coll, 1958) and Nani Fernández in *An Impossible Crime (¿Crimen imposible?*, César Fernández Ardavín, 1954)

Figure 3. Exterior emotionalism and feelings of guilt: Joan Crawford in *Sudden Fear (David Miller, 1952)*, Rosita Fornés in *Palmer ha muerto [Palmer Is Dead] (Juan Fortuny, 1962)* and María Félix in *Black Crown* (La corona negra, Luis Saslavsky, 1951)

wild-eyed stares that reflect the desperation they feel inside (Figure 2).

As a paradigmatic case of exterior emotionalism, Peberdy (2013: 324) cites Myra Hudson (Joan Crawford) in *Sudden Fear* (David Miller, 1952). With her explosive gestures, Crawford "covers the performance spectrum from subtle understatement to overt paranoia and madness." In Spanish cinema, a similarly wide range can be found in María Félix's performance in *Black Crown* (La corona negra, Luis Saslavsky, 1951). Despite exhibiting the canonical restraint of a *femme fatale*, throughout the film she exhibits expressive gestures like raising her hands to her head after waking from a bad dream. But the epitome of exterior emotionalism is encapsulated in her final gesture in the film: her nightmare realised, she lets out an agonised scream with claw-like hands covering her face, leaving the spectator to assume that only one ending is possible for her: madness resulting from her guilt over killing her husband (Figure 3). This supports Peberdy's theory thatthese gestures of excess and exaggeration are a means of calling attention to the feelings of guilt that plague the characters who exhibit them. Other Spanish examples of

this manifestation of conscience are Eva's (Honor Blackman) unhinged expression when she is struck by a bullet shot by the lover she "betrayed" in *Come Die My Love,* or Silvia's (Rosita Fornés) reaction in *Palmer ha muerto* [Palmer Is Dead] (Juan Fortuny, 1962) when she sees the man she thought she had killed (Figure 3).

DIEGETIC PERFORMANCE: AMBIGUITY AND DECEPTION

A diegetic performance is essentially a performance within a performance in the sense described by James Naremore (1988: 70), where "actors dramatize situations in which the expressive coherence of a character either breaks down or is revealed as a mere 'act'." In this sense, the characters in the story are also "performing" a particular role. Peberdy defines a diegetic performance as one in which the *femme fatale* pretends to be a different person in a way that allows the spectator—and sometimes even the victim in the story—to recognise the theatrical nature of the character's behaviour. A paradigmatic example of this is Brigid O'Shaughnessy (Mary Astor) in *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941), whose first appearance on screen is a diegetic performance in which she poses as a nurturing woman: she comes to the office of the two detectives to explain that she is genuinely worried about her sister and the man she has become involved with. She enters the office with tear-filled eyes and begins talking in a calm tone, but her speech and breathing gradually become faster due to her (feigned) anxiety over the subject matter. Brigid intersperses direct gazes into Humphrey Bogart's eyes to convince him of her concern with downcast looks when she recalls certain events or acknowledges her guilt for not being as kind to her sister as she should. The darting movements of her eyes is in keeping with her apparent distress. Her short silences while she looks away, breaking up the otherwise constant flow of words, appear to be moments when the character is remembering aspects of the role she is playing in her diegetic performance. Sitting up straight, always in the same position, she never makes a single inappropriate gesticulation, like a genuine "good girl".[3]

The "good girl" act for investigators or the police can also be found in Spanish *film noir* in the character of Elena (María del Sol Arce) in *The Unsatisfied* (Juventud a la intemperie, Ignacio F. Iquino, 1961),who offers adiegetic performancewhile walking with a police officer taking her testimony to obtain information on the attempted murder of a friend of hers. When Elena and the officer begin to talk, the hint of a smile appears on her face as she says: "If you like, we can talk on our way to my house. I don't like to stay out late, you know?" In a soft tone similar to Brigid O'Shaughnessy's in *The Maltese Falcon*, she begins chatting. When the police officer tells her of her friend's fatal condition, she reacts with (feigned) surprise: "How could such a thing happen? My God... Poor Susana." She walks on with her hands in her pockets and a downcast expression, only lifting her gaze to look at the officer, as if searching his eyes for reassurance and an explanation for the crime. Her tone, like O'Shaughnessy's, becomes progressively agitated when she says to him: "Please, tell me where she is. I would like to help her." And when the officer replies that it would be pointless as she mayalreadybe dead, she sighs and hangs down her head even more. Like Brigid O'Shaughnessy quietly expressing her gratitude to the private eyes, Elena expresses regret that she is unable to be of more help in the investigation. When

A DIEGETIC PERFORMANCE IS ESSENTIALLY A PERFORMANCE WITHIN A PERFORMANCE IN THE SENSE DESCRIBED BY JAMES NAREMORE. IN THIS SENSE, THE CHARACTERS IN THE STORY ARE ALSO "PERFORMING" A PARTICULAR ROLE

they reach her rooming house and bid farewell, Elena waits at the entrance until the officer has gone. Her sad but kindly expression changes to a deadpan look as she follows his departure out of the corner of her eye. The theatricality of her performance in the officer's presence is thus revealed. In fact, however, its nature as a diegetic performance had already been exposed earlier: while talking to the officer, she shot a sideways glance at a car that signals to her with its headlights, and now that the officer is gone, she rushes over to the vehicle and climbs inside.

Diegetic performances of this kind can be found in numerous other Spanish crime films. In *Cita imposible* [Impossible Rendezvous] (Antonio Santillán, 1958), Mercedes (Mercedes Monterrey) weeps desperately in front of a police officer when he tells her of her husband's death (to which she was an accomplice). In a state of absolute hysteria, she seizes a friend's arm and raises her other hand to her head. The clearly exposed theatrical nature of this display contrasts with her icy indifference and restraint in the following scene when she is conducting a systematic inventory of her theatre. Another example can be found in *Tres citas con el destino* [Three Dates with Destiny] (Fernando De Fuentes, León Klimovsky, Florián Rey, 1954), when Matilde (Olga Zubarry), after preparing to poison her husband, calls the emergency service like a perfect wife. "I don't know what to do. I'm desperate," she says, pretending not to understand why her husband has fainted. She speaks in a fast-paced, nervous manner, frowning and jerking her head from side to side. When she hangs up the phone, her serious, restrained expression returns as she makes another call. "Roberto, it's done," she says into the phone, this time talking to her lover to inform him of her husband's death. She thus displays the expressive ambivalence of the *femme fatale* that Bou (2006) describes in the Hollywood version of the archetype, with facial expressions shifting between extremes of good and evil.

Similar diegetic performances, although without real deaths, butwith hints of crime and feigned tears, can be found in *Los culpables* [The Guilty] (Josep Maria Forn, 1962) and *Red Fish* (Los peces rojos, Jose Antonio Nieves Conde, 1955). In *Los culpables*, Arlette (Susana Campos), with the help of her lover and her husband, arranges the "funeral" of the latter. Faking his death so that all three can be free, she acts out the stereotypical widow: (feigned) tears with a handkerchief in her hand. Dressed in black from head to toe, she keeps her head lowered while watching all the reactions at the funeral out of the corner of her eye. And when they reopen the grave to perform an autopsy, she lets out a desperate scream on seeing the supposed body of her husband, followed by disconsolate weeping on her lover's shoulder. In *Red Fish*, the character portrayed by Emma Penella (Ivón) conspires with her lover to fake the

Figure 4. Faking and overacting: Mary Astor in *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941), Nani Fernández in *An Impossible Crime* (¿Crimen imposible?, César Fernández Ardavín, 1954) and Lucile Saint-Simon in *No dispares contra mí* [Don't Shoot Me] (José María Nunes, 1961)

presence and death of his son in order to gain an inheritance. This "performance" takes place at a hotel where Ivón shows up in the middle of the night, cupping her hands around her mouth and calling out desperately for help because the boy has fallen into the sea. The following day, when the police arrive to search for clues, the process of deception is based on markedly theatrical gestures: they find her weeping, lying face-down on the bed at the hotel; her voice cracks every time she answers a question; and she holds a handkerchief that ostensibly serves to dry her falling tears. However, when the police officer closes the door, her crying stops suddenly, she takes a deep breath and shifts smoothly to an upbeat mood as she remarks: "Well, it's all over now. I'd had quite enough of that stupid cop."

On occasions, the *femme fatale* overacts in her efforts to convince her lover or husband that she is distressed, worried or out of control. Naremore (1988) suggests that certain gestures are perceived by the spectator as part of a diegetic performancebecause they are overacted. In *The Maltese Falcon,* for example, O'Shaughnessy (Mary Astor) breaks down in a melodramatic fit of weeping against the wall in front of her lover, with her head in her hands. This gesture is also used by Spanish *femmes fatales* like the ones portrayed by Nani Fernández in *An Impossible Crime* and Lucile Saint-Simon in *No dispares contra mí* (Figure 4). Such overacted gestures, serving as evidence of the diegetic performance, were imported directly from Hollywood.

There are even cases where the *femme fatale* exposes her own diegetic performance. An example from Hollywood cinema is *Scarlet Street* (Fritz Lang, 1945), in which Kitty March (Joan Bennett) reveals that the love she has professed for her lover has been nothing more than an act. Laughing loud and long, she admits to Chris Cross (Edward G. Robinson), the man she has deceived by pretending to be an innocent girl in love with him, that it was all a lie: "I've wanted to laugh in your face ever since I first met you. You're old and you're ugly and I'm sick of you!" The end of the diegetic performance is marked by a change of register: from restrained expressions and gentle smiles to wild, exaggerated gesticulations. In Spanish cinema, Berta (Elena Varzi), in *The Eyes Leave a Trace* (Los ojos dejan huellas, José Luís Sáenz de Heredia, 1952) undergoes a similar transformation at the moment she reveals that she has only been acting. In this case, the diegetic performance has involved pretending to be in love with Jordán (Raf Vallone) in order to find proof that he killed her husband. In the final part of the film, when she wants to get him to confess, she offers a masterful performance, pretending to read aloud a letter that her husband supposedly wrote on the day he was murdered. Her convincing act, ranging in tone from complete restraint to extreme aggravation, traps the killer into confessing his crime. It is then that she will reveal to him that the "letter" was in fact a blank sheet of paper, and that it had all been merely an act to get him to confess. And here is where the absolute truth comes out: she admits to him that all this time he has disgusted her. "I would even have married you just to keep you nearby [...]. But thankfully, God didn't want me to die of disgust." With their respective confessions, both Kitty (Bennett) and Elena (Varzi) admit to their diegetic performances, and in so doing, abandon them. Now they can speak the truth. And also in both cases, the revelation of their performances and of the fact that they don't love the men they have deceived leads to their deaths at the hands of those same men: one with an ice-pick, the other with a shotgun.

SOCIAL PERFORMANCE: FEMININITY AS A CONSTRUCTION

With respect to the third category of performance proposed by Peberdy, the author argues that in performing their roles, actors and actresses in American *film noir* act out their respective genders

Figure 5. Exaggerated performativity: Rita Hayworth in *Gilda* (Charles Vidor, 1946) and Laya Raki in *Closed Exit* (Camino cortado, Ignacio F. Iquino, 1955)

as a performance in itself, based on the notion of performativity posited by Judith Butler (1990). Femininity or masculinity "is not a choice but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation and punishment" (Butler, 1993: 232). There is thus an "anatomical theatre" that our bodies perform every day; gender is "performed" to a point where that self-conscious performance can turn into parody, fully exposing the performativity of gender. The fact that these representations are commonplace in *film noir*, whose storylines invariably revolve around deceit and disguise, offers the *femme fatale* a particularly fertile territory to explore this exaggeration of gestures.

Rita Hayworth's performance in *Gilda* (Charles Vidor, 1946) offers a paradigmatic case of "over-representation" (Doane, 1991) when the title character appears for the first time on screen with a hyper-feminine demeanour, shaking her long mane of hair and showing off her body with an exaggeratedly seductive attitude. This physical over-presence is very obviously performative. In Spanish crime films, a clear example of this strategy is the character of Cecilia, played by Laya Raki in *Closed Exit* (Camino cortado, Ignacio F. Iquino, 1956). Dancing on a stage in her first appearance in the film, she swings her arms around in constant, wide movements. Her hair also plays a part in the spectacle, as with her hands on her hips, she starts swirls it around wildly. At the end of her number, she holds her hair in her hands and with a brusque movement she covers her face completely with it (Figure 5). This kind of social performance through the movement of the actress'shair can also be found in the character of María del Valle (Inés) in the film *Buenviaje, Pablo* [Bon Voyage, Pablo] (Ignacio F. Iquino, 1959), who even explains her abandonment ofthe man trying to woo her with a brusque movement that lifts her hair off her shoulders while she declares: "It's because I'm a *femme fatale*."

The use of clothing can also help reinforce this performativity. Just as Gilda asks her husband to

Figure 6. Rita Cadillac's imitation of Gilda as Hilda in *The Unsatisfied* (Juventud a la intemperie, Ignacio F. Iquino, 1961)

fasten and undo her clothes because she is no good with zips, the Spanish *femme fatale* Silvia (Rosita Fornés) in *Palmer ha muerto* asks a man to do up her dress. Similarly, while watching a play with her former lover in *Black Crown*, Mara (María Félix) lowers her shawl to reveal her shoulders. The body is thus made visible as a spectacle, emphasised by the tight dresses that accentuate the female figure, which becomes not so much an object of desire as a hyperbolic theatrical representation of a femininity pushed to the point of implausibility. This destabilises the sexed subject, viewed as exaggerated and even as a parody of itself.

Mary Ann Doane (1991) identifies another key moment of over-representation in the legendary final "striptease" in *Gilda*, where the title character dancesaround the stage with wild arm and leg movementsand swaying hips. She appeals directly to the audience with a big smile on her face constantly while she sings. The number culminates with her removing her gloves and necklace. In Spanish cinema, a direct reference to this over-representation in *Gilda* is offered in *The Unsatisfied*: Rita Cadillac plays Hilda, a *femme fatale* who chooses to go out with a man much older than her for financial reasons, who is shown swaying her hips down the hallway of her house. Her performance culminates with a dance in which she takes off her necklace, again in the form of a striptease. From her initial position leaning on the piano she continues her dance around the stage, touching her hair just as Hayworth does, trying to seduce her lover directly, singing into his ear and sitting on his lap. At this point it becomes clear that the resemblance between the two names is no accident: the influence of the American *femme fatale* on Hilda is crystal clear (Figure 6).

With their performative exaggerations, Laya Raki, María del Valle, María Félix and Rosita Fornés all demonstrate Butler's (1990) argument that

AND IT IS PRECISELY IN THE COMBINATION OF THESE THREE CATEGORIES OF PERFORMANCE THAT WE FIND THE CLEAREST SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE PERFORMATIVE MODEL OF THE SPANISH *FEMME FATALE* AND THAT OF ITS AMERICAN COUNTERPART

gender is the dynamic site where the naturalisation of the feminine is displaced, deconstructed or parodied. Obviously, the Franco regime never allowed the foundations of the polarity between masculinity and femininity to be shaken. But the extreme exaggeration of the behaviour of the *femme fatale* implicitly undermined the binary ideology. It was all a performance, a mask, and therefore an attack on the idealised essentialism of the female gender. Peberdy'sconcept of social performancethus combines a series of strategies outlined previously in the other two categories and projects them onto the public sphere. For this scholar, "it is the combination and interaction of the three types that generic specificity emerges" (Peberdy, 2013: 332). And it is precisely in the combination of these three categories of performance that we find the clearest similarity between the performative model of the Spanish *femme fatale* and that of its American counterpart: a screen performance that shifts between the extremes of restraint and expressive gestures: a diegetic performancethat oscillates between concealment and disguise; and a social performance that exposes the female gender as a construction based on over-representation.

CONCLUSIONS

The actresses who portrayed the *femme fatale* in Spanish films were clearly inspired and influenced by the acting style of American actresses, on three levels. From a narrative and iconographic perspective there may be variables that distinguish Spanish crime films from Hollywood *film noir*, but the performancesexamined in this article are unmistakeably mimetic of American models. Just as the Hollywood *film noir* genre promoted the performative excesses of their *femmes fatales*, Spanish cinema established a niche for the exploration of an active and aggressive femininity in opposition to the modesty expected of women in the Franco era. Despite the characterisation of the *femme fatale* archetype as negative by means of her ultimate fall or punishment and a moralising dialogue, female spectators could feel a certain subversive fascination for this figure in direct opposition to the "Angel of the House", the housewife and mother at the service of the nation and the patriarch. The *femme fatale*exhibited a femininity distinct from the model that organisations like SecciónFemenina (the women's branch of the Francoist Falange) sought to construct and assert as the only possible valid option for women. In this sense, Spanish actresses' imitation of the acting styles of Hollywood stars helped to evade the suspicions of the censors, given that it was an archetype based on the Hollywood imaginary and not the Spanish reality.

The different expressions described here in the embodiment of the Spanish *femme fatale*—from the cool, dispassionate gestures to facial and body movements evocative of pretence and theatrical hyper-femininity—demonstrate that the crime genre allowed for the transgression of norms of femininity: a woman could be depicted on screen as active, independent, seductive and, if necessary, wily and deceitful, with the ability to question—or parody—her own gender. Whether they were Spanish or international actresses, they performed with actors associated with the Franco regime, generally portrayed Spanish characters, and existed in a local and therefore familiar context. In this sense, they introduced into the fiction films of the Franco era a kind of behaviour that the film press of the regime would only have wanted to see in foreign films. With their mimetic performances, these *Other* women of the Franco era constructed an *Other* reality, which invited their female spectators to identify with them as intelligent, crafty and spectacular *femmes fatales*. ■

NOTES

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research and development project "Representations of Female Desire in Spanish Cinema during Francoism: Gestural Evolution of the Actress under the Constraints of Censorship" (REF: CSO2017-83083-P).

1 In her analysis of the (very limited) presence of vamps in the magazine *Primer Plano* during the Franco years, Evelyne Coutel (2016) finds certain "cracks" in the official discourse, in which a few actresses subtly vindicate their on-screen treachery in interviews. However, most articles attempt to demonstrate the view of these characters as abhorrent and "un-Spanish".

2 It is important to note that there are subtle differences between the thriller, the crime film, the police film and *film noir*, although the terms are sometimes used interchangeably. The reason for the use of the term "crime film" here is the same one given by Ramon Espelt (1998: 10) in his study of crime fiction in Barcelona: "to adopt a broad, inclusive criterion that encompasses the largest number of films that have explored contemporary crime and the tension between the existence of conflicting forces on either side of the (often disputable) limits of law and order today" (Original version: "Seguir un criteri ampli, inclusiu i que englobés el màxim nombre de films que tinguessin en la seva temàtica el fet delictiu contemporani i la tensió que es deriva de l'existència de forces enfrontades a un i altre cantó de la frontera (moltes vegades discutible) de la llei i l'ordre vigents" [author's translation]).

3 The "good girl" is equivalent to what Place (1978) calls the "nurturing woman": a good-natured domestic archetype and a model of angelical conduct, in opposition to all the devious qualities of the *femme fatale*.

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THE INFLUENCE OF AMERICAN CINEMA ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE *FEMME FATALE* IN SPANISH CRIME FILMS OF THE 1950S

Abstract

The archetype of the *femme fatale*, despite being repudiated by society in the Franco era, was imported into Spanish crime films of the 1950s from American *film noir*. With a methodology drawing from star studies and the analysis of acting approaches in relation to film genres, this study aims to demonstrate the influence of Hollywood on the performances of Spanish *femme fatales*. Based on the categorisationof performances proposed by Donna Peberdy (2013), this influence is identifiedon three different levels: screen performance, diegetic performance and social performance.

Key words

Femme fatale; Francoism; Spanish cinema; *Film noir*; Crime films; Star studies.

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INFLUENCIA DEL CINE NORTEAMERICANO EN LA PERFORMANCE DE LA *FEMME FATALE* DEL CINE CRIMINAL ESPAÑOL DE LOS AÑOS CINCUENTA

Resumen

El arquetipo de la *femme fatale*, pese a ser repudiado en la sociedad franquista, se importa en la cinematografía criminal española de los cincuenta desde el *film noir* norteamericano. Mediante la metodología de los *star studies* y el análisis de la actuación en relación con el sistema de géneros cinematográfico, este estudio pretende demostrar la influencia hollywoodiense en la *performance* de las *femme fatale* del cine español. Siguiendo la categorización de Donna Peberdy (2013), la influencia se observa de manera constante en los tres tipos de interpretación que propone la autora: la *screen performance* —interpretación en pantalla—, la *diegetic performance* —interpretación diegética— y la *social performance* —interpretación social—.

Palabras clave

Mujer fatal; franquismo; cine español; cine negro; cine criminal; *star studies*.

Autora

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LINA MORGAN: THE ARCHETYPE OF THE EXPLOSIVE *INGÉNUE* IN SPANISH CINEMA OF THE LATE FRANCOIST PERIOD*

MARIA ADELL CARMONA
SERGI SÁNCHEZ MARTÍ

In her book *From Reverence to Rape* (1974), Molly Haskell's description of Mary Pickford as the embodiment of the innocent virgin inevitably brings to mind the Spanish actress Lina Morgan. Like other scholars who have explored the female archetypes of Hollywood cinema from a gender perspective (Rosen, 1974a; Studlar, 2013), Haskell views Pickford's ingénue image as a legacy of the Victorian values that prevailed in America in the early decades of the twentieth century. For Haskell, Pickford's success had a lot to do with the American psyche's obsession with the return to childhood as a journey to recover an innocence that is both historical and personal, in which the childlike woman escapes from the dreariness of adulthood to inhabit a time of her own when "everything was still possible and ideal, not yet delimited by sexual or domestic submission" (Haskell, 1974: 61). It was under these circumstances that Pickford became America's sweetheart, the first female star to earn 350,000 dollars a year and eventhe co-founder of her own studio: she was the absolute image of an infantilised womanhood from which she would never be able to escape. While male audiences saw her as a refuge from "new models of female sexual subjectivity" associated with the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution, which gave women the right to vote for the first time in 1920, Pickford's femininity was identified with her asexuality, as a woman "whose youth released her from the demands—including the sexual demands—of adult femininity" (Studlar, 2013: 32).

Just as Pickford, with her porcelain doll looks and cotton dresses, embodied the incorruptible innocence of rural America, Lina Morgan was the rural girl of Francoist Spain who confronts the dangers of the big city, the little orphan outcast, the virgin waiting for her Prince Charming, even one whose charm has faded. Mainstream Spanish comedy in the later years of the Franco dictatorship was a genre defined by archetypes closely as-

sociated with a few specific actors (Pérez Rubio, Hernández Ruiz, 2011: 109), and Lina Morgan was certainly one of them. The Madrid-born actress drew from the tradition of female archetypes described by Haskell insofar as her description of Pickford's rebellious quality, expressed in terms of working-class pride as a rebel who "championed the poor against the rich, the scruffy orphans against the prissy rich kids" (Haskell, 1973: 60), could easily be referring to Morgan in her role in *La descarriada* [Off the Rails] (Mariano Ozores, 1973). Pickford's portrayal of the ingénue archetype has been viewed by some feminist theorists as regressive and reactionary, as Marjorie Rosen argues that "her legend was an insult. With her abhorrence of age and repression of sexuality, she created a monster who denied all femininity or made it repugnant" (Rosen, 1974b; 6). This is an interpretation that could well be extended to Morgan, who has been almost entirely ignored in the academic literature.[1] In opposition to this view, GaylynStudlar proposes a more positive, emancipating reading: Pickford's orphanhood and poverty gave her an independence that freed her from the repression of the conventional nuclear family, because "viewers might revel in Pickford's display of childhood freedom as an alternative space, a site of resistant female pleasures that slip away under the pressure of woman's cultural destiny" (Studlar, 2013: 37).

What was "woman's cultural destiny" in Francoist Spain? For the Francoist women's movement SecciónFemenina, the qualities of the conventional woman of the dictatorship necessarily included "self-sacrifice, authenticity, strength, austerity, justice, joyful discipline, self-reliance, camaraderie and exemplariness" (Gómez Morcillo, 2015: 268). These qualities, which are not really so different from the essence of the innocent virgin described by Haskell, form part of the archetype embodied by Lina Morgan, who nevertheless used the physical exaggeration inherent in comedy as a form of dissidence that was progressively consolidated over the course of her career in the late Francoist period. Morgan's body of work, which could be compared with the American tradition of comedic *ingénues* like Mabel Normand, Colleen Moore, Bebe Daniels, Louise Fazenda or Alice Howell, and with Spanish actresses like Rosita Díaz Gimeno or Josita Hernán (who starred in the original version of *The Complete Idiot* [La tonta del bote, Gonzalo Delgrás, 1939] thirty years before Morgan played the same role in the remake), finds its clearest expression in what Kathleen Rowe calls the "unruly woman".

LINA MORGAN USED THE PHYSICAL EXAGGERATION INHERENT IN COMEDY AS A FORM OF DISSIDENCE

In her feminist approach to "gender and genres of laughter", with objects of study as diverse as the television actress Roseanne Barr and the Muppets' Miss Piggy, Rowe argues that the image of these female comedians is defined by a resistance to the age-old sanction women learn against making a spectacle of themselves, usually by inappropriate exposure of their bodies in public places. Rowe associates this resistance with the concept of the carnivalesque, which the philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin describes as a parody of the social ritual, an inversion of the social hierarchies and a loss of bodily control. The carnivalesque thus offers the seed of comedy understood as a genre of transgression. This article offers an interpretation of Lina Morgan's film career in light of Rowe's theory of the "unruly woman", with a view to demonstrating, on the one hand, how the repressive apparatus of the Franco regime affected her embodiment of the ingénue archetype, and, on the other, the paradoxical complexity of a character tailored to her, in which the tension between innocence and extravagance, puritanism and mischief, expanded the battlefield for her discourse as an actress after the dictator's death, especially

in the theatre and on television, and reflected the contradictions inherent in the social transformation of the regime, particularly with respect to the depiction of women. In this way, this article aims to show that through the progressive adoption of an "unruly" body, Lina Morgan represented naivety as a performative act that undermined the dogmatic stability of the Franco regime.

THE RIGHT TO BE SEEN

The discreet, romantic beauty of the *ingénue* archetype always ran the risk of being invisible. According to Studlar, Mary Pickford represented a girl who was too young to know what desire was, a condition that weakened her sexual potential. Through their independent, resolute attitude towards life's troubles, *ingénues* asserted their right to be seen. Lina Morgan incorporated this independence into her characters with the disadvantage of lacking conventional beauty, a fact that was all the more striking considering that she started her career in the silken, sequinned world of the theatrical revue genre. In keeping with Rowe's "unruly woman", Morgan turned her disjointed body into a wildscream for attention. Of diminutive stature and with a very short, boyish haircut that contrasted with both the voluptuous femininity of showgirls and the demure hairstyles of housewives addicted to the manualsfor good behaviour published by Sección Femenina, Lina Morgan was destined to join the list of secondary female comedians of Spanish cinema, alongside stars as brilliant as Gracita Morales, Laly Soldevila, Rafaela Aparicio, and Florinda Chico. With the possible exception of Concha Velasco, Morgan was the only female comedian of her generation who managed to secure leading roles, starting with *Soltera y madre en la vida* [Unmarried and Mother in Life] (Javier Aguirre, 1969), eight years after her début role in *El pobre García* [Poor Garcia] (Tony Leblanc, 1961), in which she wasn't even allowed to appear with her own voice.

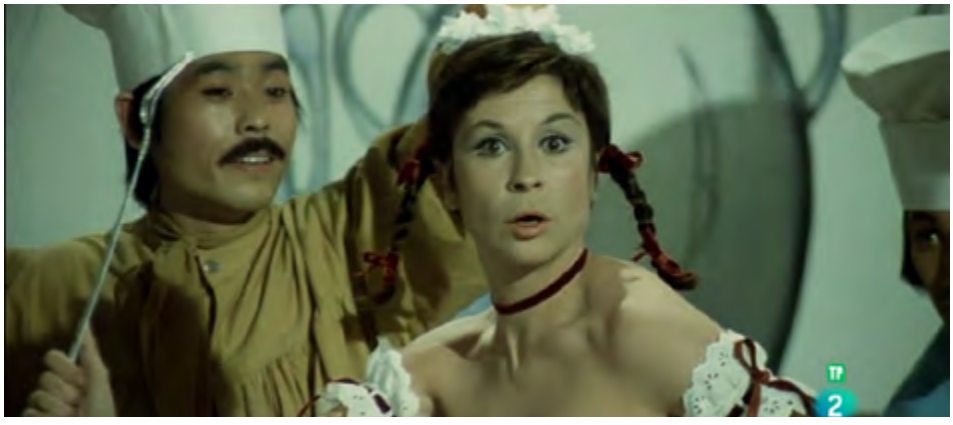
Dos chicas de revista [Two Chorus Line Girls] (Mariano Ozores, 1972), a kind of camouflaged autobiography about her early days in theatre, consolidated the "ugly duckling" archetype that she became known for in the Franco years. "I don't know why people say I'm an ugly duckling, because I'm not," she told Diego Galán in the show *Queridos cómicos* [Beloved Comedians], "I'm a nice, kind, affectionate duckling" (Diego Galán, 1993). Lina

Lina Morgan featured for the sketch *El papá y su niña* [Dad and his *girl]*

Morgan complained that from her beginnings in revue theatre, when the impresario Matías Colsada decided to place her in the last line of chorus girls, she seemed fated to be eclipsed by the statuesque beauty of the women she shared the stage with: "I had a hard time getting my way. Years and years of struggle. Even when I was filling theatres, when I was working with (comedian) Juanito Navarro, there was always a chorus girl in front of me. It drove me crazy" (Gómez, 1985: 35). In a scene characteristic of the actress, during one of the most memorable numbers in *Dos chicas de revista*, she breaks a heel while coming down a flight of stairs, and thenlimps on until her legs buckle while she tries to follow the rhythm of the dance so as not to fall out of step with her conventionally beautiful dance partner. She trips, the zip of her dress gets stuck, she kicks up her legs exaggeratedly, her feather headdress slides down and the feathers get in her way. And the audience laughs because the naive Lina Morgan has made herself visible, claiming her place on the screen as a clumsy reflection of the standard chorus girl.

As Kathleen Rowe suggests, comedy makes a spectacle of the actress's body. In claiming the right to be seen through excess and assertiveness, the comedic *ingénue* is transformed into a powerful force. It should hardly be surprising that in Spanish films of the late Francoist period this empowering visibility of the female through the chaos and anarchy of laughter would be repressed by the patriarchal dictatorship: any attempt at transgression had to be stifled, especially if it stemmed from the code of ethics of the film industry. An actress like Gracita Morales, who co-starred with Morgan in *La graduada* [The Graduate] (Mariano Ozores, 1971), was the exception that proved the rule. Starting her career in the Spanish musical comedy tradition of the *sainete*, which forged a school of acting inclined towards the wild and exaggerated gestures characteristic of the film genre that came to be known as *españolada*, Morales, with the dissonance of a shrill, infantile voice that effortlessly stood out over the expressive strategies of her fellow cast members, personified what Kathleen M. Vernon calls the "comic embodiments of the clash between traditional values and urban modernity" (Vernon, 2016: 81). The extraordinarily unique quality of her voice turned her instantly into one of Rowe's "unruly women" even more obviously than Lina Morgan, who had to develop the explosive eccentricity that became her trademark on the stage gradually over the course of her film career, hemmed in as she was between the rigid morality of the Franco regime and the need to find a style of her own. It was one of those contradictions that Richard Dyer (2001) tells us are so intrinsic to the concept of the star.

The Complete Idiot (La tonta del bote, Juan de Orduña, 1970)



THE VIRGIN CLOWN

Kathleen Rowe's description of Claudette Colbert in *It Happened One Night* (Frank Capra, 1935) is striking in this respect, and the title of the chapter in her book that analyses Colbert's role in the Capra classic is itself significant: "A genre in need of a virgin." According to Rowe, the interesting aspect of the

romantic comedies of the 1930s was their affirmation of a certain set of virtues, such as spunk, the ability to work hard, a sense of independence and the celebration of sexual vitality: "With these virtues, a person could achieve perfect happiness. The inequities of the class system and the oppression of women cease to matter" (Rowe, 1995: 127). Quoting the historian Leonard J. Leff, Rowe suggests that the Hays Code did not so much repress sexual discourse as regulate it, and that regulation, which did not censor, simply placed it in the foreground, at the heart of the romantic friction in the form of metaphors and subtexts. This means, of course, that the obstacle to the consummation of the sexual act is what drives the narrative of *It Happened One Night*. Rowe argues that the denial of the mutual desire between the characters played by Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert falls on the woman due to cultural prejudices, "beginning with the traditional valuation of female virginity and modesty" (Rowe, 1995: 130).

LINA MORGAN TURNS SUBMISSION INTO A SPECTACLE OF HER OWN DESIRE

It is hardly incidental that Lina Morgan should have played a chaste and pure virgin in most of her films. However, for Morgan's characters virginity was something very different from what it meant to the capricious rich woman in *It Happened One Night*: as Aurora Gómez Morcillo reminds us, in Francoist Spain "for working-class women, virginity became part of the dowry [...] Finding a husband was no longer a simple means of survival but a national responsibility" (Gómez Morcillo, 2015: 117). For example, in *The Complete Idiot* (La tonta del bote, Juan de Orduña, 1970), a Spanish version of the Cinderella story based on a play by Pilar Millán Astray, the way the orphan Susana looks is a metonym for her innocence and naivety, virtues that contrast with the hostility of her adoptive mother and the bitterness of her sisters. Armed with two pigtails that make her look like a 1950s comic-strip schoolgirl, she always carries an empty tincan (the source of the film's Spanish title, which literally translated means "the tin can fool") to collect cigarette butts in so that she can give them to a homeless man. Her pigtails will vanish when the necessary kiss has been received: finally, her virginity, and her marriage to a man with newly acquired wealth transforms her into a princess. Money won't be a problem either in *La graduada*, in which she plays Benita, a girl who, after her Aunt Ágata's death and the substantial inheritance that comes with it, travels to Madrid to "complete a crash course in living it up and finding love"; in other words, to free herself from the withering stares of the old women of the town, the corporate image of Francoist Spain, and get herself a boyfriend. In *Una pareja... distinta* [A Different Kind of Couple] (José María Forqué, 1974), when a journalist asks the bearded lady Zoraida whether she is a virgin, she answers in the affirmative, despite the fact that she has a son ("as if I wouldn't be [a virgin]," she adds). In *La descarriada*, Morgan plays Nati García, who works as a prostitute (for a noble purpose: to raise her little brothers) yet keeps her virginity intact. In one scene, she takes on the task of teaching the wife of one of her customers what she should do to make him happy, because "when a man goes looking for something outside, it's because he's not getting it at home." In her own home she stages an improvised performance of what a perfect wife should be, although in reality she is representing a dream of domestic bliss that she herself has yet to put into practice. Welcoming him when he gets home from work, putting on his slippers, giving him his newspaper, making dinner and putting on make-up and perfume to seduce him all form part of a domestic sacramental rite that also includes her future husband as a privileged spectator. Lina Morgan thus turns submission into a spectacle of her own desire.


It Happened One Night (Frank Capra, 1935) / *Esta que lo es...* [This Is It] (Ramón Fernández, 1974)

The enactment of this "good wife's manual" as a piece of micro-theatre reveals how far the Franco regime, like the Hays Code in the Hollywood cinema of the 1930s, was prepared to go to regulate the wayward body of the "unruly woman", often to make her sexual desire much more evident. It is common to see Lina Morgan raising her eyebrows or making an expression of repressed pleasure when the leading man in question demonstrates his gallantry. In *Esta que lo es...* [This Is It] (Ramón Fernández, 1974), Morgan plays Lina, a maid who runs from the altar in disappointment because after being engaged for ten years, her fiancé (Tomás Zori), a fireman addicted to his job, chooses to go put out a fire on the day of their wedding rather than showing up at the church on time. She decides to head south to the town of Huelva to look for her father, a clown she hasn't seen since she was a little girl, and to get there she decides to hitch-hike. It can hardly be a mere coincidence that Lina should imitate Claudette Colbert's famous method for getting a driver's attention, although in this case showing her leg has a purely practical purpose, because Lina is alone and therefore has no travel companion to humiliate. Nevertheless, the gesture still reveals an awareness of the body as a weapon of seduction, even if it only serves to attract an ambulance driver who tuns out to be a sexual predator,groping her in the car and then, on perceiving her reluctance, abandoning her in the middle of the highway shouting: "you sure are weird!" In keeping with the ideological repression of Francoism, the erotic gesture is punished, but on Lina's next stop she will get her reward: Carlos, a chivalrous gentleman (Arturo Fernández) who has just committed a robbery and is fleeing with the money. Based on Rowe's theory, Ellie in *It Happened One Night* and Lina in *Esta que lo es...* have something important in common: both are virgins who hold the power to redeem the lives of their male companions. Although Ramón Fernández's film includes no trumpets bringing down the walls of Jericho between separate beds (Lina and Carlos will share a single bed without endangering the required chastity of the era), Lina embarks on her adventure with the same enthusiasm as Colbert's Ellie. Rowe's observation that "[t]he Ellie character is built out of a tradition of virginity that encompasses independence and strength as well as vulnerability" (Rowe, 1995: 133) could equally be said of Morgan's character. Lina's laughter is "the laughter of maidens", a laughter that "expresses rather than represses [...], finding no role in the world which totally satisfies her" (Wilt, 1980: 179-180). Judith Wilt discusses laughter in some of Shakespeare's plays, and in novels by Jane Austen and George Eliot. As Rowe reminds us, this kind of laughter is also present in romantic comedies. The point is, however, that in contrast to the happy ending for Ellie and Peter (Clark Gable)

in Capra's film, Lina does not end up with Carlos. The police arrest him for the robbery and he can do no more than tell Lina, who cries as they say goodbye, that he has learned to be a better person thanks to her. Before this final scene, Lina once again rejects her fiancé, who comes looking for her at her father's circus, and she also discovers her true vocation in life: to work as a clown. In the end, she is Gelsomina in *La Strada* (Federico Fellini, 1954), a character that Morgan always envied GiulettaMasina for (Yagüe, 2005).

Esta que lo es... [This Is It] (Ramón Fernández, 1974)

THE PARODY OF THE RIDICULOUS BODY

In her most famous sketch with Juanito Navarro, who had Morgan under contract for nine years as his comedy partner, the two stars portray a father and daughter from rural Spain: Navarro holding a walking stick and wearing a beret, white shirt and corduroy vest, and Morgan with her girlish features accentuated with the pigtails and short dress she would subsequently use in *The Complete Idiot*. He was the straight man and she was the clown, contortingherfacial expressions and twisting her speech with the idioms and contractions of a sometimes indecipherable Spanish to get laughs out of the audience. That laughter reflected a contradiction inherent in the way the Franco regime idealised the lifestyle and morality of the rural Spaniard in opposition to the vices of urban capitalist modernity. It was a contradiction that lay at the very heart of the success of what came to be known as "*paleto* cinema" during the regime's developmentalist period in the 1960s and early 1970s. As Luis Moreno-Caballud (2015: 523) suggests, "Francoism appropriated the idea of the *pueblo* (people), especially the rural population, to appropriate its aura of pure and eternal tradition," which would come into conflict with a "modernising" economic and sociocultural process that was essentially bourgeois. The consequence of this contradiction was significant: in Spanish mainstream cinema, poverty completely disappeared. "The problems of the petite bourgeoisie were politelyexplained in the comfort of the home [...]. The Spanish have difficulties, they suffer hardships, but they are no longer poor: they never lack the essentials, and their main problem lies in managing their perfectly adequate paycheque" (Hernández, Revuelta, 1976: 77-78). The urban middle classes couldn't laugh at poverty, but they could laugh at the ignorance, coarseness and uncouthness of the rural population, who in return are always ready to give them a lesson in ethics, good manners and national unity. The *paleta* (yokel) portrayed by Lina Morgan with a clownish quality not only uses a hyperbolic parody to represent the archetype of the innocent girl but also exposes the paradoxical relationship that the Spanish audience had with that archetype.

The careers of Lina Morgan and Paco Martínez Soria (another icon of *paleto* cinema) have a lot in common: both started out in the trenches of the theatre; both had a relatively small number of leading roles in films (15 in Morgan's case, 16 in Martínez Soria's), mostly during the late Francoist

ALTHOUGH ALWAYS ASSOCIATED WITH THE *INGÉNUE* ARCHETYPE, MORGAN NEVER ALLOWED HERSELF TO BE TYPECAST

period; both worked mainly with a single director (Morgan with Mariano Ozores, Martínez Soria with Pedro Lazaga); and both represented that philosophy of life of the common people that was so popular with the staunchest Francoists. "How was I going to learn the lesson if I can't read? I only know how to work," complains the taxi driver in *¿Qué hacemos con los hijos?* [What Should We Do with the Kids?] (Pedro Lazaga, 1967), a film featuring both Martínez Soria and Lina Morgan, in that period when the latter was still only getting supporting roleslike the maid's role she had here. However, while Martínez Soria was able to transfer the stereotype of Uncle Agustín in *La ciudad no es para mí* [The City Isn't for Me] (Pedro Lazaga, 1966) from stage to screen, becoming known for a character that had already been familiar to theatre-goers for years, Morgan was working on a more unstable archetype, much more affected by the changes brought by modernity than the atrophy of tradition. Although always associated with the ingénue archetype, Morgan never allowed herself to be typecast, as she moved in step with the progressive thaw of Francoist morality during the final years of the dictator's life.

Morgan's repertoire of characters was nothing if not diverse. She played a servant in *¿Qué hacemos con los hijos?*, *Las que tienen que servir* [Those Who Must Serve] (José María Forqué, 1967), *La tonta del bote*, and *Esta que lo es...*, a hostess in *La descarriada*, a chorus girl in *Dos chicas de revista*, a petty criminal in *La llamaban «la Madrina»* [They Called Her the Godmother] (Mariano Ozores, 1973), a nun in *Una monja y un Don Juan* [A Nun and a Don Juan] (Mariano Ozores, 1973), a doctor in *Señora doctor* (Mariano Ozores, 1973), a bearded lady in *Una pareja... distinta*, and a country girl in *Los pecados de una chica casi decente* [The Sins of a Nearly Decent Girl] (Mariano Ozores, 1975) and *Un día con Sergio* [A Day With Sergio] (Rafael Romero Marchent, 1975). In contrast with the "ridiculous body", in Aintzane Rincón's words, constructed by Martínez Soria, based on "his clownish way of behaving, his manner of dress, his curtness, his eating habits and a language full of archaic expressions and grammatical errors" (Rincón, 2014: 175), Morgan developed a kind of parody that reduced the character of the *paleta* to an explosion of performativity that Haro Tecglen identifies with the tradition of *commedia dell'arte*: "Much of her work recalls the harlequin: the transformations of soft and expressive caps, the hand gestures, the strolling around the stage, the rapid-fire speech, the blend of cleverness and incomprehension while trying to explain the chaos of the action, the exaggeration and, in short, the mutual understanding with the audience" (Haro Tecglen, 1985: 35). Her sketches with Navarro or the scene in *La llamaban «la Madrina»*, where she repeats the money scam from *Los tramposos* [The Cheaters] (Pedro Lazaga, 1959), offer some good examples of how Morgan relates to the "ridiculous body" of *paleto* cinema. "The poor girl is cross-eyed, uglier than hell, and her legs, just look at her legs," remarks the victim of the scam (Ángel de Andrés), with his beret on his head and suitcases in his hands. "And back home they told me I wouldn't earn a cent here in the city. Just wait till I tell them about this in the old watering hole," he exclaims, after receiving an envelope that he has been tricked into believing is stuffed with cash but is in fact filled with newspaper cuttings. The unruliness of Morgan's body, in a recital of grotesque grimaces, negates the popular idea of traditional Spain as "pure and eternal".

This process of ironic transgression of the edifying tale in *paleto* cinema culminates with *Señora doctor*, which reverses the direction of the country-city journey to celebrate the arrival of modernity in rural Spain with a feminist touch. Before

arriving in the small town where she will hide from the ghosts that haunt her, along with her mother, a nurse (Mari Carmen Prendes), the men that Doctor Elvira Ruiz Marcos had to deal with were atrocious: Federico, her fiancé, rejected her sexually, and her psychiatrist tried to assault her. In her new home, the rural Spanish male is not much better. Ataúlfo (José Sacristán), the veterinarian who tries to woo her, declares himself to be "old-stock Spanish" but suffers from erectile dysfunction, and the three yokels who refuse to have the newly arrived doctor attend them, besieged by prejudices over the idea of having to confess their venial sins to a woman, appear to have caught a venereal disease in the local whorehouse next door. While Elvira's arrival initially destabilises the precarious balance of life in rural Spain, in the end she is responsible for civilising it, like Ellie in *It Happened One Night*, who turns Peter into a new man, correcting all his shortcomings "in the areas of self-awareness, generosity, the pragmatic and erotic" (Rowe, 1995: 133).

THE SOLITUDE OF DIFFERENCE

"Can't you just be a normal woman? Do you have to wreak havoc wherever you go? You're constantly making me look ridiculous," roars Sergio (Juan Luis Galiardo), a former big-screen heartthrob who has fallen on hard times, at Valentina, the small-town girl who has won a contest to spend twenty-four hours with him in *Un día con Sergio*. He blurts this out after she confuses a jug of martini with a jug of water, and the effects of the intoxication turn her into the Lina Morgan of Spain's collective imaginary, gleefully smashing up a restaurant and making a mess of the lobby of a five-star hotel. Here we find the pursing of her upper lip ("she has the loquacity sometimes displayed by Donald Duck, as well as his stretched neck, and his expressions of surprise" [Haro Tecglen, 1985: 35]), the tiny blinks of pleasure, the exaggerated narrowing and widening of her eyes, and the flexible use of her legs. The width of the film screen is not comparable to that of a theatre stage, which Morgan "sweeps across in gaping strides, ploughing over it uncontrollably rather than walking around it; she comes and goes, stands with arms akimbo, and gathers up a billowing skirt to underscore a retort" (Torres, 1979: 19), and she gives the impression that the film screen is simply too small for her, that even while a close-up shot or a long shot may capture the twists of her expressions and of her body, she doesn't have enough space to develop the archetype of the "unruly woman" that she would be identified with in theatre and on television.

Nevertheless, it would seem that in this film, made in the year that Franco died, Lina Morgan fully embraces this archetype, released at last from the repressive codes that domesticated the rebellion of the female body during the dictatorship. While this liberation had begun to emerge in the musical numbers in *Dos chicas de revista* and was consolidated with her clown in *Esta que lo es...*, it was in 1975 that the *ingénue* became truly unruly. This was when Morgan reclaimed the

Un día con Sergio [A Day With Sergio] (Rafael Romero Marchent, 1975)

voice that was her own, at the very moment when the nude scenes that defined the *cine del destape* ("uncovered cinema") of the early post-Franco era would turn the body "into the symbolic site of the political and social tension of the Transition [to democracy]" (Rincón, 2014: 279). Her nudity is obviously of a different type, because her body did not conform to the standards of female beauty in the risqué comedies and the soft porn films that would characterise a certain type of Spanish commercial film in the late 1970s. Suddenly, virginity gives way to the desire to lose it at any cost. In *Los pecados de una chica casi decente*, María detains her boyfriend in a stable until her passion literally consumes him; that is, she kills him (apparently). In *Un día con Sergio*, she agrees to spend the night with her ageing Don Juan, who has been unable to defend her from three womanisers in a disco (she takes care of them herself with her expertise in martial arts), and she even fakes a suicide attempt so that he can get the publicity he needs to sign his next film contract. In the conclusion to *Un día con Sergio*, Lina Morgan's desire to violate the romantic principles of the post-Francoist *españolada* is significant: Valentina rejects Sergio's romantic offer, not to give in to the advances of the village mailman, but to remain locked in a loop of idealised love, now with Alain Delon as the next target. "Alone in my tractor, daydreaming," she exclaims. In *Un día con Sergio* Valentina's return to her hometown does not signify the restoration of the traditional values of rural Spain. On the contrary, the story does not validate Valentina's goodness and purity with a marriage, but with a solitude that embraces difference.

It is in this solitude that we can find the most unique dimension of Lina Morgan's unruliness in her film career. This is not the first time in a film that her character ends up alone. It is significant that in *Esta que lo es...* and *Dos chicas de revista* this solitude melts away on the stage, as if spectacle were the only lover that the actress can tolerate in her dreams. In the first of these two films, as noted above, she finds herself replacing the father figure in the circus, as the clown who catches flies, plays the sax and cries like a baby to the rapturous applause of her audience. Her body, finally disjointed, bids farewell to her male companions without acrimony, drenched in tears. In the second film, she rejects Evaristo (José Sacristán) when he tries to win her back after having told her at the beginning of the film that his father would never approve of his marrying a chorus girl. The proposal comes too late, especially when Catalina has just given up her job in the revue show that has made her famous, and accepted the departure of her stage partner, Alicia (DyanikZurakowska), with a handsome dentist thatshe had introduced to her friend, and who had also seemed to have a romantic interest in her. There is a certain ambiguity in Catalina's tears, as we do not know whether she is crying because she lost her closest friend or because her love interest of the moment ultimately chose Alicia over her. The reconciliation between the two women takes place abruptly during the show, a genuine refuge of happiness where the repressive apparatus of the regime seems to absolve its most popular female comedian—who even performed for Franco at the Royal Palace of La Granja—of her matrimonial obligations. If, as Rowe argues in relation to *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Howard Hawks, 1951), the film's real love story is the one between Lorelei (Marilyn Monroe) and Dorothy (Jane Russell), it seems equally likely that the real love story in *Dos chicas de revista* is between Alicia and Valentina.

THE STORY DOES NOT VALIDATE VALENTINA'S GOODNESS AND PURITY WITH A MARRIAGE, BUT WITH A SOLITUDE THAT EMBRACES DIFFERENCE

In any case, the evolution of Morgan's archetype constitutes a rebellion against the nude film movement of the post-Franco period, when the

word "*Fin*" ("The End") appears over a close-up of her clown face in *Esta que lo es*…. This wasthe exposure of the female body in a public place in grotesque form, which Rowe tells us is described by Mary Russo as a way of destabilising the idealisation of female beauty, undermining what was commonly accepted about the limits of femininity in a society which, in this case, was in the midst of a major transformation. It is curious that this exercise in the grotesque should coincide with the two films in Morgan's career in which she attempts to distance herself from her reputation as a comedian: *Una pareja… distinta*, where she is presented as a bearded lady who ends up falling in love with her gay friend and landlord (José Luis López Vázquez), and which she has identified on several occasions as her favourite role; and *Imposible para una solterona* [Impossible for a Spinster] (Rafael Romero Marchent, 1975), in which she portrays an overweight woman who is seduced, tricked and betrayed by a dietician (Juan Luis Galiardo). Her sententious farewell ("For a woman, what matters most is not the first love but the last"), refusing to forgive the doctor who abused her, represents the embracing of her independence, alone again, and also her farewell to cinema, to which she would return, without much conviction, on just one more occasion, in *Hermana, ¿pero qué has hecho?* [Sister, What Have You Done?] (Pedro Masó, 1995).

CONCLUSIONS

"I think if I'd been born anywhere else in the world, I don't know, on Broadway, where the musical genres are held in high esteem, I think I would be a really important star, I'd have my own hour on television, like Carol Burnett, but here I don't even get a minute" (Torres, 1979: 20). It would still be a few years before some of the episodes of television series like *Compuesta y sin novio* [All Dressed Up and Nowhere to Go] (Antena 3, 1994) and *Hostal Royal Manzanares* (TVE, 1995-98), vehicles for showing Lina Morgan's versatile comic talent, would draw more than 8 million viewers in the ratings. Morgan had embraced her status as an "unruly woman" on the stage, selling out theatres with shows like *Vaya par de gemelas* [What a Pair of Twins] (1980-83), *Sí al amor* [Yes to Love] (1983-1987) and *El último tranvía* [The Last Tram] (1987-1991). Television and the theatre allowed Morgan to assert herself as a "rebelling body" without having to resort to the nudity that had been established as a standard in Spanish cinema by *cine del destape*.

In a broadcast of the program *Estudio Directo* in 1972, José María Íñigo asked Lina Morgan whether she was an *ingénue*. "In life it's important to *play* the *ingénue*," she replied. This self-awareness of innocence as a masquerade, as a staging to make oneself visible, first to the repressive apparatus of the Franco regime, and then to take refuge from the expectations of the *cine del destape* in her La Latina theatre, which she began renting in 1978 and purchased in 1983, is the key to understanding her unique status as a female comedy star of the late Francoist period. It is when she plays the clown that Lina Morgan creates her own genre, completely separate from ideological negotiations. The politics of the gesture that she put into practice in order to stand out in a film world dominated by male comedians allowed her to create an apolitical body that resonated powerfully with audiences. ■

NOTES

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1 One exception is the unpublished thesis by Mónica Gozalbo (see Gozalbo Felip, M. (2016). *Para una tipología de la actrizcómica del cine español: el caso de Gracita Morales y Lina Morgan*. Doctoral thesis. Castellón: Universitat Jaume I).

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LINA MORGAN: THE ARCHETYPE OF THE EXPLOSIVE *INGÉNUE* IN SPANISH CINEMA OF THE LATE FRANCOIST PERIOD

Abstract

Lina Morgan was the highest grossing female film star of Spain's late Francoist period, and third overall aftertwo male comedians who embodied Spanish masculinity, Paco Martínez Soria and Alfredo Landa. This article offers an analysis of Lina Morgan's career in light of Kathleen Rowe's theory of the "unruly woman". In a historical period when female comedians were relegated to secondary roles, the evolution of Morgan's film career was mediated by the repressive demands of the regime; but at the same time, she sought to subvert those demands through the use of a hyperbolic poetics of the gesture and the body that would find its full expression precisely around the time of Franco's death, in the fields of theatre and television.

Key words

Lina Morgan; *españolada*; unruly woman; comedy; mainstream cinema; Francoist cinema.

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LINA MORGAN. EL ARQUETIPO DE LA INGENUA EXPLOSIVA EN EL CINE DEL TARDOFRANQUISMO

Resumen

Lina Morgan fue la estrella cómica más taquillera del cine del tardofranquismo, solo superada por dos encarnaciones de la masculinidad patria como las de Paco Martínez Soria y Alfredo Landa. El presente artículo pretende analizar la figura de Lina Morgan a la luz de la teoría de la «mujer indisciplinada» formulada por Kathleen Rowe. En un período en el que las actrices cómicas eran relegadas a papeles secundarios, examinamos la evolución de su trayectoria cinematográfica, por un lado mediatizada por las exigencias represoras del régimen, y por otro, aspirando a subvertirlas desde la práctica de una poética hiperbólica del gesto y el cuerpo que estallaría, precisamente, a la muerte de Franco, en los ámbitos del teatro y la televisión.

Palabras clave

Lina Morgan; española; mujer indisciplinada; comedia; cine popular; cine franquista.

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FROM THE "FINAL GIRL" TO THE EMANCIPATED HEROINE: FEMALE ARCHETYPES IN THE *[REC]* SAGA

JUAN MEDINA-CONTRERAS
PEDRO SANGRO COLÓN

Of all film genres, horror is probably the one that most effectively combines the paradoxical pleasure offered by experiencing uncomfortable situations with the liberating potential of tasting forbidden fruit (albeit vicariously). Miguel Ángel Huerta (2019: 175) describes cinema as the ideal device for experiencing a kind of catharsis through exposure to our own fears and phobias in the ritual of the dark theatre. Carlos Losilla subscribes to the same argument, adding that in addition to their phobias, horror film spectators are exposed to their own disturbing or sadistic instincts (Losilla, 1999: 34). In the prologue to a monograph on the theme of women's fears, Desirée de Fez offers a different perspective when she explains that she adores horror films because they allow her to observe her fears from the outside and thus be able to interpret them (de Fez, 2020: 8).

This article analyses the "final girl" archetype described by Carol J. Clover (2015) and its relationship with the monstrous feminine discussed by Barbara Creed (1993), taking the *[REC]* film saga (Jaume Balagueró, Paco Plaza, 2007-2014) as a case study. The set of references invoked by the films' creators is explored here based on an analysis of their female protagonists, the reporter, Ángela (Manuela Velasco), and the character of the bride, Clara (Leticia Dolera), in addition to the role of other female characters who appear in the saga, particularly the sinister child Tristana Medeiros (Javier Botet).

Although women in horror films have traditionally been relegated to the role of victim or survivor, for some time now a new kind of female character who actively and independently takes on the leading role has been gaining prominence. As will be argued here, Balagueró and Plaza's saga constitutes a precedent for this new model of femininity in the genre.

THE *[REC]* SAGA

Shot in just twenty days and with a budget of only two million euros, *[REC]* (Jaume Balagueró, Paco Plaza, 2007) became the second biggest box office success of the year in Spain, with earnings of more than 7.7 million euros. Its critical and commercial success led to the production of three sequels: *[REC]2* (Jaume Balagueró, Paco Plaza, 2009), *[REC]3: Genesis* ([REC]3: Génesis, Paco Plaza, 2012), *[REC]4: Apocalypse*([REC]4: Apocalipsis, Jaume Balagueró, 2014). It also inspired two Hollywood remakes—*Quarantine* (John Erick Dowdle, 2008) and its sequel *Quarantine 2: Terminal* (John Pogue, 2011)—and a graphic novel titled *[REC]: Historias inéditas* (Various, 2012), and there is even a [REC] ride at the PortAventura theme park near Barcelona. Outside Spain, the franchise has taken in more than 61 million dollars (Lázaro-Reboll, 2017).

The saga's storyline maintains narrative continuity in the first two films, as the second begins practically where the first one leaves off. Ángela, a television news presenter, and her cameraman follow a fire brigade on an emergency call in Barcelona in the middle of the night. This leads them to a building on La Rambla, where they are attacked by the residents, who seem to have some kind of contagious infection that is controlling them and making them behave violently. When the protagonists try to escape the building, they discover that they have been locked inside by the authorities. Desperate to find a way out, they dodge various infected attackers until they reach the building's attic, where they find the vestiges of different experiments performed by a priest on a young girl possessed by a supernatural being, which appears to be the source of the contagion.

In the saga's second instalment, a Special Operations team enters the building under the direction of a public health official, who turns out to be a priest as well. They search for the source of the disease in the hope of finding a cure, but the infected residents, who now begin to show signs of superhuman powers, end up decimating the special forces team. The priest, together with the surviving officers, finds Ángela, who appears to be the only person in the building to have escaped infection. However, in the final twist of this instalment, she is revealed to have been possessed and is trying to get out of the building in order to spread the disease.

The third film digresses from the main story. Although its title suggests that it might deal with the origins of the infection, in reality it tells a parallel story in which one of the people infected in the building in Barcelona ends up spreading the possession-disease to the guests at a wedding.

The conclusion to the main story will finally be offered in the saga's fourth instalment. With the intervention of the army, the possessed reporter is taken to a ship at sea so that her condition can be investigated in complete isolation. As might be expected, the infection spreads through the ship's crew, at which point the source is revealed to be a parasite that has been jumping from host to host over the course of the films.

For the two leading female roles in the saga, the creators chose two actresses familiar to audiences who could be said to form part of a kind of "star system" within the Spanish television industry, especially for members of the age group that the films are aimed at. In a way, the actress Manuela Velasco shares certain personal resonances with the character she plays. Introduced to film audiences as a child star in *Law of Desire* (La ley del deseo, Pedro Almodóvar, 1987), Velasco's career began with a combination of sporadic appearances on prime-time TV series and work as a presenter and interviewer on shows like *Los cuarenta principales* (Canal+, 2000-2005) and *Del 40 al 1* (Canal+, 1990-1998; LOS 40 TV, 1998-2017), which made her a familiar face for the film's target audience. Actress and director Leticia Dolera also spent the early years of her career on television, although her fame with younger audienc-

es has come from her appearances on successful series like the daytime show *Al salir de clase* (Telecinco, 1997-2002), the prime-time series *Los Serrano* (Telecinco, 2003-2008), and leading roles in feature films like *Semen, a Love Sample* (Semen, una historia de amor, Daniela Fejerman, Inés París, 2005) and *Chrysalis* (De tu ventana a la mía, Paula Ortiz, 2011).

THE "FINAL GIRL" ARCHETYPE IN THE *[REC]* SAGA

The first part of this analysis will focus on the "final girl" archetype as described by Carol Clover in her book, *Men, Women and Chain Saws* (1993). In broad terms, this archetype evolved from the "damsel in distress" trope that Clover identifies in the slasher subgenre, which could be defined as the last survivor who by the end of the film has managed either to stay alive long enough to get rescued or to confront the killer and bring him down herself, without needing the aid of a saviour (Clover, 2015: 35). In both cases, the distinctive features of this character are her confrontation of the killer alone and hersuperior skill and shrewdness in managing to survive. This often translates into a type of woman who responds to the villain's persecution by shifting from passiveness to decisiveness, reflecting a transition in the character from object to subject, in what has been identified as a kind of heroine for second-wave feminism (Garland et al., 2018: 64-65).

The paradigmatic cases that Clover draws on to explain her theory are the films *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978), *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974), *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Wes Craven, 1984), and the wide variety of films that adopt the same narrative formula. Núria Bou and Xavier Pérez trace the origins of this form of femininity in classical Hollywood back to the film serial *The Perils of Pauline* (Louis J. Gasnier, Donald Mackenzie, 1914), and identify the character of Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) in *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979) as the pivotal moment marking a before and an after in the representation of this female archetype, who now tackles the final monster without male help—although it is important to acknowledge the incidental nature of her sex in Scott's film, given that in the original script Ripley was supposed to be a male character (Bou, Pérez, 2010: 45).

In the filmography of Spanish horror, this type of proactive woman who seeks out a confrontation with evil is not entirely new. Joan Hawkins points to the classic horror film *The Awful Dr. Orlof* (Gritos en la noche, Jesús Franco, 1962) as a precedent that broke with the tradition in the genre by featuring a female protagonist in an investigative role (Hawkins, 2000: 103) who even takes the initiative of offering herself up as bait to trap the evil Dr. Orlof (Howard Vernon). Ibáñez Serrador, in his first production for the big screen with *The House that Screamed* (La Residencia, 1969) also offers an incipient version of the archetype in the character of Irene (Mary Maude), an antagonist in the beginning but a clever final girl in the last third of the film, when she embarks on her own investigation into the mysterious disappearances of her companions in a classic that served as a direct inspiration (Olney, 2014) for films like *Suspiria* (Dario Argento, 1977), where the archetype is clearly consolidated.

In the *[REC]* saga of films, the final girl archetype is evident in the actions of the two main protagonists: Ángela in the first two instalments and the fourth film, and Clara in the third. The stories of both these characters exhibit a number of the features that Clover attributes to the archetype, although, as will be argued here, they also diverge in ways that suggest they may serve as precursors to a new model of a fully emancipated heroine.

Among the features that fit the archetype, the female protagonists of the *[REC]* saga are the last survivors in an apocalyptic scenario and both, in different ways, display the necessary skills either to survive until they are rescued or to rescue them-

THE STORIES OF BOTH THESE CHARACTERS EXHIBIT A NUMBER OF THE FEATURES THAT CLOVER ATTRIBUTES TO THE ARCHETYPE, ALTHOUGH, AS WILL BE ARGUED HERE, THEY ALSO DIVERGE IN WAYS THAT SUGGEST THEY MAY SERVE AS PRECURSORS TO A NEW MODEL OF A FULLY EMANCIPATED HEROINE

selves. Ángela, the story's main protagonist, is the last survivor of the infection that spreads through the building on La Rambla. In the first film, she is literally the last victim of the contagion, and the film ends with the mystery of her disappearance into the shadows. In the second film, Ángela is discovered alive by the Special Operations team, although she herself participates in her own elimination by being possessed by the monster, an unusual point that will be discussed below. In the fourth film she is rescued again, this time by the army, although she ends up in a new situation of confinement with threats of various kinds: now she must escape not only from the new infection victims who are decimating the ship she is being held on, but also from the scientists who want to experiment with her body. Nevertheless, she will be the only woman to survive. In the third instalment in the series, when the infectious outbreak takes over her wedding, Clara manages to escape on her own. However, she will decide to go back to save her husband.

Clover suggests that the shift of the hero role from a male to a female character is accompanied by a symbolic masculinisation of the final girl. Understood from a gender perspective, the horror genre in general, and the slasher in particular, often symbolises conflicts with the patriarchal order. The villain's traditional victims are women and men who break the sexual restrictions associated with their gender. Indeed, in the slasher it is common for female victims to die during or immediately after extramarital sex, and for male victims to do so in ways that are far from manly, and occasionally ridiculous. When it takes human form, the malignant force is generally identified as male. His murderous rage stems from a trauma that is traditionally sexual in nature, and quite often associated with gender identity conflicts, such as in *Dressed to Kill* (Brian de Palma, 1980) and *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991).

On the other hand, from the outset the final girl exhibits a virginal or celibate attitude (Keisner, 2008: 418), and is sometimes even explicitly asexual and androgynous (Rieser, 2001: 377). She also displays a set of traits that are traditionally more often associated with the male gender: skills with mechanics, strategic thinking, leadership abilities, etc. (Clover, 2015: 40). In the end, this masculinisation is symbolised in a *Lacanian* way through the appropriation of the phallic weapon of the monster. Clover draws on statements by the director of *Halloween* to argue that "the slasher resolves it either through eliminating the woman (earlier victims) or reconstituting her as masculine (Final Girl). The moment at which the Final Girl is effectively phallicized is the moment the plot halts and horror ceases. Day breaks, and the community returns to its normal order" (Clover, 2015: 50). Klaus Rieser also points out the use of the phallic weapon, but heinterprets it more as a reaffirmation of heterosexuality in response to the ambiguity of the monster rather than a masculinisation of the female character: "the phallic struggle between the monster and the girl may be seen to signify that she has to accept sexuality on heterosexual and phallic terms [...] after all, she does not turn these weapons against normative masculinity but against a border-breaking monster that is threatening hegemonic gender relations" (Rieser, 2001: 377).

This symbolic appropriation can be found in the *[REC]* saga in the weapons that its female protagonists end up using, which they are in fact shown holding very conspicuously in the posters for the third and fourth instalments, suggesting, if

we accept Clover's logic, an effective hyper-phallicisation. In her battle against the infected who have turned her wedding into a massacre, Clara arms herself with a mechanical saw of huge proportions that seems to allude to the villain's weapon in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Her husband will brandish a sword that looks quite paltry in comparison, and which, moreover, he is hesitant to use. Similarly, on the poster for *[REC]4: Apocalypse*, Ángela appears holding a huge outboard motor at waist-height, which in the film she alone is able to fire up in the final moment.

This masculinisation of the final girl archetype is associated with the gaze of the audience, which has traditionally been understood in this genre to be predominantly male (Chatterjee, 2018: 134). It is not unusual for these types of stories to seek to align the spectator with the killer's point of view in the first sequences of the film and then to adopt the perspective of the final girl, thereby establishing an identification with the character. In his discussion of this approach, Rieser argues that the spectator neverfully identifies with the character because the camera rarely occupies the point of view of the female protagonist, who most of the time is "observed" rather than the "observer" (Rieser, 2001: 385). This idea is also explored by Hajariah and Briandana, whosuggest that the woman in front of the camera is constructed as "the object to-be-looked-at" by the male spectator (Briandana and Hajariah, 2013: 191).

In the *[REC]* saga,the spectator is encouraged to identify with the story by literally taking the point of view of the male characters who accompany the female protagonist on her adventure (Sánchez Trigos, 2013: 302; Rowan-Legg, 2013: 215). The "found footage" technique, a hallmark of the franchise that is used for the first episodes of the saga, involves the use of POV shots that form part of the diegesis, explained based on a metanarrative pretext that enhances the supposed realism: the conceit that the film we are watching is nothing more than raw footage recorded by the camera and subsequently lost by those responsible for the filming (Hardcastle, 2017). Found footage is of course a well-known concept and very popular in the horror genre. Early examples of the use of films shot from the character's viewpoint can be found in films like *Lady in the Lake* (Robert Montgomery, 1946), *Peeping Tom* (Michael Powell, 1960) and even *Halloween*, and the specific idea of found footage is present in films of the genre like *Cannibal Holocaust* (Ruggero Deodato, 1980), *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), *Death of a Ghost Hunter* (Sean Tretta, 2007), *Paranormal Activity* (Oren Peli, 2007), *Cloverfield* (Matt Reeves, 2008), and *The Last Exorcism* (Daniel Stamm, 2010), to name just a few.

IN THE *[REC]* SAGA, THE SPECTATOR IS ENCOURAGED TO IDENTIFY WITH THE STORY BY LITERALLY TAKING THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE MALE CHARACTERS

Ángela is followed tirelessly by her cameraman in the first instalment and by the cameras held by the members of the Special Operations team in the second, immersing the spectators in the film with the intention, expressed by the saga's own creators, of engaging them as if they were playing a video game (Hart, 2014). In this way, when the protagonist looks at the camera or when she addresses her companion, she breaks the fourth wall and involves the spectator, who feels appealed to directly. Actually, there are cases where the camera continues recording when there is nobody holding it, such as at the end of the first film, when the cameraman dies but the camera goes on filming everything in first person, leaving the protagonist alone "in the company" of the spectator (McKeown, 2019: 212-213).

However, despite these features, the female protagonists in the *[REC]* saga display particular traits that push beyond the boundaries of the ar-

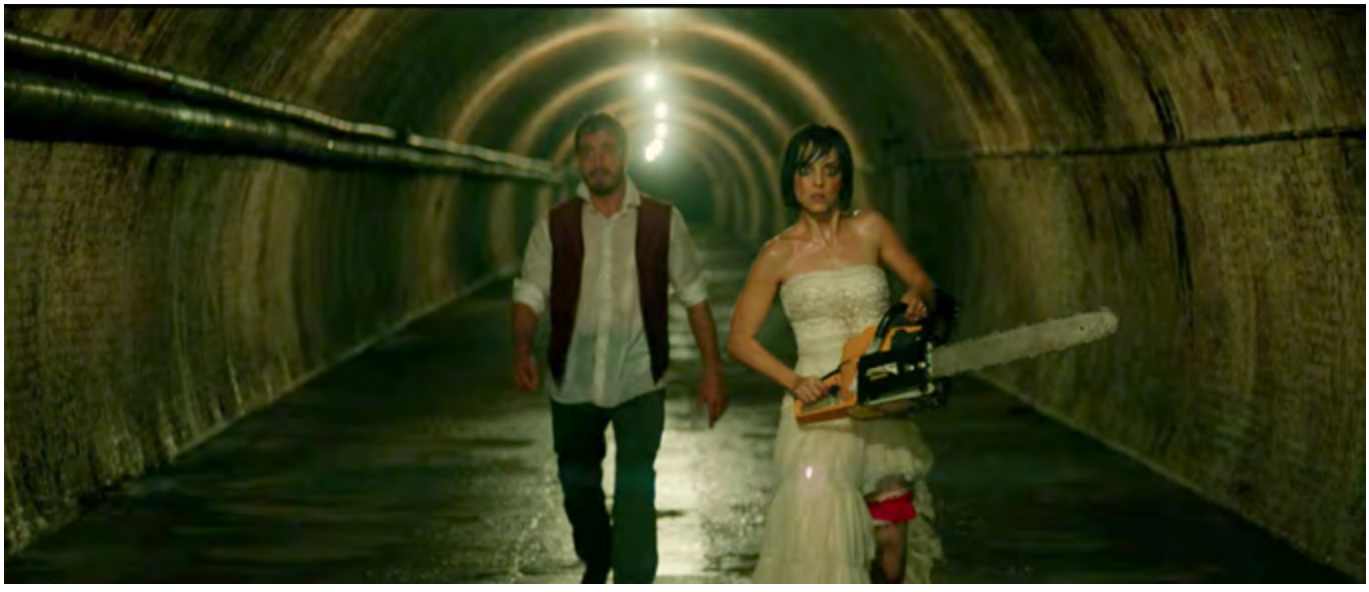
chetype and that ultimately distance them markedly from it.

First of all, the female protagonist is almost never alone. She is always accompanied bysupporting characters, most of whom are male, who adopt a subordinate role to her. As mentioned above, one of these is the obedient cameraman who accompanies Ángela throughout the first instalment, except in the last few minutes. In the second and third instalments, we will always see her in the company of a team of men which, as will be explored below, will include both allies and enemies. The case of Clara is even more obvious in this sense. Throughout her escape she will always be accompanied by the priest who presided over her wedding and/or various friends who are always under her direction. Subsequently, once her husband reappears, she will continue to be the one who takes the initiative to confront the evil, even when one of the infected bites her and she orders her spouse to cut off her arm to stop the infection, despite his obvious hesitation.

Secondly, the phallic symbols that Clover argues are associated with the final girl at the end of her journey are counteracted in the *[REC]* saga by the appearance of signs of femininity, or by collaboration with a male. For example, when Clara picks up the chainsaw in the third film, the first thing she does with it is cut the skirt off the wedding dress she is wearing. In doing so, she exposes a red garter on one leg, a markedly feminine undergarmentassociated withher wedding. Ángela, on the other hand, the only time that she actually holds the huge outboard motor shown in the poster and uses it as a weapon, she does so with the ship's radio technician, a fellow survivor who becomes her partner in the adventure.

The female protagonists in the saga are also distinguished from the final girl trope by their more active attitude towards dealing with the danger. As noted above, the archetypal character is effectively selected by the killer, who chooses a victim who subsequently finds the ability to survive by triggering her masculinised hero dimension in her desperate efforts to escape (Clover, 2015: 60). However, the female protagonists in the saga display none of the passive attitudes expected of the archetype at the beginning of their respective stories. From the very first scene, Ángela adopts a commanding attitude towards her cameraman. Despite some playful depictions of her physical inferiority, such as when she tries

Image 1. The bride arms herself with a chainsaw



on a fire-fighter's uniform that is far too big for her, throughout the film she is the one who orders where to point the camera, who confronts the police and public health authorities that come into the building, and who directs the escape in the final third of the film. Even in the last moments of the first film when their desperate search for a way out leads them to the attic, she insists on filming everything, holding up their escape to examine new clues, like the recording on the tape recorder that explains the origins of the infection. Clara, meanwhile, exhibits a classically heroic attitude when, having just escaped, she decides to turn back at the end of the tunnel, pick up a chainsaw and go rescue her husband on discovering that he has been left behind.

The saga ultimately breaks with the masculinised gaze that characterises its first instalments through the explicit, emphatic abandonment of the found footage technique. This is carried out through two key characters who effectively constitute on-screen *alter egos* of the creators and spectators: the camera operator at the wedding in the third film, and the communications technician onboard the ship in the fourth instalment. The first is presented to the spectator as a filmmakingprofessional who constantly verbalises the marks of the style adopted in the saga up to that moment: the *cinema verité* of the hand-held camera that is an eyewitness to the reality being filmed. When the film abandons the first person, an eloquent detail shot shows his video camera smashed to pieces. In the fourth film, the character of the communications officer, who claims to be a fan of the reporter, tries at one point to spy on her undressing using the ship's security video system. However, the protagonist herself will bring an end to this peeping with a reproving glare at the camera, and later more explicitly when she breaks all of the ship's security recording devices one by one as she flees. This renders explicit the female protagonists' shift from observed object to observing subject, freeing the camera from a male or voyeuristic diegetic gaze and shifting the narrative to a female perspective alternating with the point of view of the film's supporting characters.

POSSESSION AND AUTONOMY OF THE FEMALE BODY/MONSTER

The diabolical being that seems to be the cause of the infection that afflicts the building on La Rambla in the *[REC]* saga has a worm-like appearance. It is only glimpsed for a moment, passing from one host to another in the second and fourth instalments, and at the very end of the story, when it is finally revealed. *Leucochloridium paradoxum* is a parasite in larval form that attacks gastropods in order to reach the stomachs of birds, where it reproduces. In this way, the infected snail loses control of its motor actions. Its inflamed antennae palpitate, revealing the ferocious worm inside it that controls it completely, directing it towards the top of a tree where it will be easy prey for the next host. In the films of the saga, the worm's impact on its incubators, as in the case of the *leucochloridium*, results in the complete annihilation of their free will and in the capacity to transmit the infection, which drives anyone who is bitten insane. In addition, from the second film on, it also appears to vest the infected with various supernatural powers.

In this way, the story combines two complementary dimensions of possession. The first is physical, infectious, parasitic, expressed in redness of the eyes, sores, blisters, vomiting, and other symptoms reminiscent of films like *Resident Evil* (Paul W.S. Anderson, 2002), *28 Days Later* (Danny Boyle, 2002) and *I Am Legend* (Francis Lawrence, 2007) or, more closely associated with the idea of behavioural transformations, the early David Cronenberg films *Shivers* (1975) and *Rabid* (1977). The second is the diabolical dimension, whose most famous precedent is *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973), expressed in the ability to change

Image 2. The phallic body of the creature passes from mouth to mouth

the tone of voice or to walk through walls and roofs, along with an aversion to crucifixes. Both dimensions ultimately reflect the same theme throughout the saga: the use of the female body, conceived of both as a receptacle for parasitic life, and as an object of experimentation by male authority.

The character of Tristana Medeiros is referred to as the "patient zero" of the pandemic. She can only be seen using a night-vision device, and her deformed body is covered in scars and sores resulting from years of torture and experiments carried out by a representative of the Catholic Church (Davies, 2019: 648). Not much more is known about her, and her past is only alluded to in the films through fleeting images of newspaper cuttings, although it is suggested that most of her suffering was not so much the result of her demonic possession as of the attempts to exorcise it by means of a scientific-ecclesiastical force.

In discussing her concept of the monstrous feminine, Barbara Creed points out that films about possessions tend to make use of the pretext of exorcism to explore taboos and behaviours that are considered obscene or contrary to the patriarchal order, which are generally presented as monstrous yet perversely appealing to a gaze that is, once again, predominantly male: "It is not unlike a ritual of purification in that it permits the spectator to wallow vicariously in normally taboo forms of behavior before restoring order" (Creed, 1991: 37). This approach also usually leads to the exploration of themes of a sexual nature. *The Exorcist* is a paradigmatic example of this, as it positions a pubescent girl as the focal point of the possession, an idea that has influenced numerous films with the same theme to the point that it has become a cliché, such as *To the Devil a Daughter* (Peter Sykes, 1976), and even veering into pornographic territoryin cases like *Malabimba* (Andrea Bianchi, 1979) and its successive reformulations. However, as A. S. Monnet (2015) points out, in the case of *[REC]* the stereotype of sexualised possession is subverted. The protagonist, although constantly exposed in front of the camera, barely explores this idea; despite appearing half-naked, Medeiros's body is an anti-erotic image that simultaneously suggests monstrosity and vulnerability, much like other supporting female characters, none of whom are pubescent and all of whom elicit horror not through their erotic or seductive qualities but through their sudden shift from the vulnerable to the monstrous, like the frail old woman and little girl apparently in need of aid who suddenly lunge at the characters who approach to help them.

Clover points out that possession via the mouth is now a cliché in the horror film genre (Clover, 2015: 79). At the end of the first instalment, Ángela and Medeiros meet, and in the epilogue to the second film we are shown the moment when the parasite passes from one host to the next: the creature's phallic body passes from

mouth to mouth, thus alluding to an oppressive force that is male in essence. Monnet highlights the idea of the juxtaposition of these two women ofopposing appearances in this moment of final recognition that renders them equal in terms of the openness of their bodies to the spectator's gaze: "Yet the final scene presents these two women as made strangely equal before the camera by the eerie effects of the green night vision glow. Both are in the dark and unable to see, yet both are visible to the audience and on display" (Monnet, 2015, eBook). In the end, the two women are given the same status of hosts of the monster, and thus in the final instalment of the saga, Ángela will potentially become a new Tristana unless she refuses to submit to the interventions of the male characters on her body.

The fourth film begins chronologically after the end of the second; Ángela has killed young Medeiros to take her place both as the malignant force that seeks to spread its infection and in relation to the thematic focus of the film: the use of the female body as a site of experimentation by men. After the shock of her liberation, Ángela wakes up chained to a bed. A doctor injects her with a tranquilliser without her consent. In the ship-prison where she is now being held there is only one other woman, an insane elderly lady who very quickly falls victim to the infection. Once they discover the content of the video recording showing the transfer of the parasite from one host to another, all the men on the ship's crew—both friends and enemies—turn on Ángela and try to seize control of her body against her will in order to extract the parasite that they mistakenly believe dwells inside her. Christopher Sharrett draws on the example of *Rosemary's Baby* (Roman Polanski, 1968) to make the point that although the horror genre presents the subversion of society's patriarchal values more honestly than any other, control of the female body always emerges as a recurring theme (Sharrett, 2014).

This point is especially important because it encapsulates the whole meaning of the saga and the evolution of the final girl and monstrous feminine archetypes. At this moment, the story adopts a markedly ambiguous perspective that positions the men's gaze and the woman's will in relation to her own body in opposition with each other. The men, both allies and enemies, all seem to agree on the need to extract the parasite that they think is inside Ángela. The spectator, who does not yet know at this point that the parasite has passed from her to another host, and who still has the memory of the possessed Ángela who killed all the rescuers in the second film, cannot help but agree with the men's perspective. The audience's gaze is thus very clearly positioned, only to be abruptly subverted shortly thereafter: Ángela manages to escape from all her oppressors, taking control not only of her own body but of the whole narrative; she smashes the security cameras set up to observe her as an object of study, an act that in a way symbolises her emancipation from the saga's original premise, with the use of the found footage style that positioned the female as an observed object rather than a subject of the story;

Image 3. Attempt to extract the parasite against the protagonist's will

she reveals that she is not the demonic monster's host as everyone—including the spectators—suspected; and in the final confrontation she makes it clear that she is capable of repelling the monster by her own means, ultimately to reclaim her freedom and even liberate her collaborator/fan in the process.

CONCLUSIONS

Balagueró and Plaza's saga offers a revision of the final girl archetype and adapts it to an emancipatory logic that has become increasingly prominent in cinemain the second half of the last decade. Ángela in *[REC]* emerged alongside the female protagonists of *Mad Max: Fury Road* (George Miller, 2015), *Rogue One* (Gareth Edwards, 2016), *Arrival* (Denis Villeneuve, 2016) and *Annihilation* (Alex Garland, 2018) in other genres: self-sufficient female characters with no love interests, who subvert the tropes of the genre to establish a leading role on their own terms and who appeal to a gaze that is postulated as neither male nor female.

The films of Balagueró and Plaza thus propose a new female archetype that represents a logical evolution of the final girl: an emancipated heroine whose qualities are not the product of any inheritance or mythical lineage; women who, without abandoning their feminine qualities, confront obstacles with the same determination as traditional male heroes, and offer a more egalitarian representation of gender roles. ■

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FROM THE "FINAL GIRL" TO THE EMANCIPATED HEROINE: FEMALE ARCHETYPES IN THE *[REC]* SAGA

Abstract

The *[REC]* saga is one of the most successful franchises in the history of Spanish horror. In this article we argue that this saga sets the precedent for a new female archetype that goes beyond the traditional "final girl". The depiction of resolute female protagonists who confront their enemies on their own, voluntarily and without the need of male help, offers a new vision of femininity similar to those offered by other films of the late 2010s. In this way, *[REC]* is a franchise that subverts traditional horror tropes while honouring their influence and legacy.

Key words

[REC]; *Monstrous Feminine*; *Final Girl*; Spanish Horror; Jaume Balagueró; Paco Plaza.

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DE LA *FINAL GIRL* A LA HEROÍNA EMANCIPADA: ARQUETIPOS FEMENINOS EN LA SAGA *[REC]*

Resumen

La saga *[REC]* es una de las franquicias de mayor éxito en la historia del terror español. En este artículo argumentamos que sienta el precedente de un nuevo arquetipo femenino que va más allá de la clásica *final girl*. La representación de protagonistas femeninas decididas que se enfrentan solas a sus enemigos, de forma voluntaria y sin necesidad de ayuda masculina aporta una nueva visión de la feminidad que acompaña a otras producciones de la segunda mitad de la década de 2010. *[REC]* es, de esta manera, una franquicia que rompe con los estereotipos tradicionales del terror al tiempo que honra su influencia y legado.

Palabras clave

[REC]; *monstrous feminine*; *final girl*; terror español; Jaume Balagueró; Paco Plaza.

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DISSONANT VOICES, ARCHETYPES AND IDENTITY IN SPANISH CINEMA*

KATHLEEN M. VERNON

Most discussions of archetypes in cinema, especially in relation to female performers, begin with the linkage of physical features—body size and shape, facial structure, skin and hair color, youth versus age—with specific film roles. In her pioneering study of female stars and the women who watch them, *From Reverence to Rape*, Molly Haskell writes of the "tyranny of type", embodied in "such instantly recognizable types as the 'virgin' (fair-haired and tiny), [and] the 'vamp' (dark and sultry, larger than the 'virgin,' but smaller than the 'mother')" (Haskell, 2016: 46). Less considered in studies of the development and imposition of film archetypes, until recently, is another physical attribute, the sound, texture and quality of the actor's voice. The British critic, Martin Shingler, while affirming the continuing importance of beauty standards and "photogeny" as prerequisites for film stardom, also devotes attention to the question of "phonogeny", highlighting the impact of the voice "as a distinctive and defining feature of the star's persona" (Shingler, 2012: 72-82), as evident in the careers of performers such as Bette Davis, Marlene Dietrich or Greta Garbo.

In the context of Spain, and Spanish film history, one area where the associations between voice, vocal type and archetypes have been codified and enforced is in the dubbing industry. Although viewed as an inheritance of Francoism, and the 1941 law that imposed the obligatory dubbing of all foreign language films into *castellano*, the practice has persisted to the present day, arguably the result of ingrained habit among spectators and the influence of an economically potent dubbing industry.[1] Alejandro Ávila, in his various publications on the history and practice of dubbing in Spain, offers a series of tables and typologies that illustrate the direct correspondence between film roles and vocal types and characteristics. Thus for the "male protagonist" casting conventions call for a voice that is "deep and seductive", while the

ONE OF THE LASTING CONSEQUENCES OF THE PERVASIVE PRACTICE OF DUBBING IN SPAIN HAS BEEN THE IMPOSITION OF A VOCAL ORTHODOXY AND DEMONSTRABLE STANDARDIZATION AND TYPIFICATION OF VOICES, ESPECIALLY ALONG GENDER LINES, IN SPANISH ORIGINAL LANGUAGE FILMS

voice of the "male antagonist " is deemed "deep" but "less attractive". Likewise, for the"female protagonist" her voice is described as "sweet and feminine", with her female antagonist counterpart said to possess a voice that is "somewhat deep and more affected" (Ávila, 1997: 67; Ávila, 2000: 124). Age and racial identities and types are also accounted for with the inclusion of descriptions of the qualities of "mature voices" and those of "men of color", marked by a "deep and rough voice" (Ávila, 1997: 67; Ávila, 2000: 124). In her study of the dubbing industries in Germany and Spain, Candace Whitman-Linsen reports with some surprise about the predominance of such prescriptive conceptions of character and vocal type in the hiring decisions of dubbing studios, over requirements that the dubbing actor have a voice similar to that of the original actor. She writes that "the widespread tendency is to provide an original film character who embodies, for example, a strong, rough type with a deep, manly voice, regardless of whether the original actor possesses such a voice or not" (Whitman-Linsen, 1992: 42). She warns of the dangers of vocal stereotyping, with audiences "encouraged to see all beautiful actresses with similar (or even the same) sexy voices, all cowboys with husky, virile voices and types intended to be funny with a squeaky little voice" (Whitman-Linsen, 1992: 42).

In previous studies I have argued that one of the lasting consequences of the pervasive practice of dubbing in Spain has been the imposition of a vocal orthodoxy and demonstrable standardization and typification of voices, especially along gender lines, in Spanish original language films (Gubern and Vernon 2012; Vernon 2016). Perhaps the most extreme example of the application of such canons and norms is found in the career of Emma Penella. Celebrated as "the best and most famous Spanish actress of the present day" in a 1958 issue of the fan magazine, *Idolos de cine*, Emma Penella's stardom and acting prowess were achieved despite a limitation that would seemingly have disqualified most performers. An article devoted to "The Voice of Emma Penella", published the same year in *Radiocinema*, points to the fact that during the first decade of her film career Penella's voice was routinely dubbed by professional dubbing actors. The author, Adolfo Gil de la Serna, alludes to the dual justification for the suppression of her voice: that her voice was judged incompatible with recording technology, as insufficiently "microphonic"; while its texture and timbre were considered unaesthetic and unfeminine, if dangerously attractive, "rapsy, and perhaps too deep for a woman but powerfully attractive" (Gil de la Serna, 1958). Although Juan Antonio Bardem notably restored her voice for her performance in *Cómicos* (1954), Gil de la Serna complains that the practice persisted, with "directors with proven artistic reputations, such as Mur Oti, Sáenz de Heredia, Ruiz Castillo, Ladislao Vadja, etc., [who] continued to require that Emma Penella's voice be dubbed, thus giving us the star's physical presence but depriving us of her unmistakable voice" (Gil de la Serna, 1958). Among mid-20th century Spanish female film stars Penella stood out for her womanly curves and exhuberantly sensual physique. Hinting at other reasons behind the suppression of Penella's voice, it may be that the convergence of an over-present body and a voice that defied conventional gender categories confronted cultural gatekeepers (and viewers) with a sensory overload.

RECLAIMING THE VOICE: CECILIA ROTH AND GERALDINE CHAPLIN

While Penella would eventually regain her voice in later films (at the price of persistent typecasting as a prostitute or other woman of easy virtue), the barriers to the emergence and development of performances and performers that would challenge the "tyranny of types", in terms of non-standard voices and identities, remained. Although the constraints they faced were of a different order, the Spanish careers and filmographies of Cecilia Roth from the 1970s through the 1990s and Geraldine Chaplin in the 1960s and 1970s are revealing with respect to the shifting attitudes toward vocal diversity in cinema and its role in the telling of complex stories. Similar to Penella, Roth and Chaplin were the object, in a number of their Spanish films, of intralingual dubbing, described by Abé Mark Nornes as an "unusual and unusually domesticating" form of vocal replacement (Nornes, 2007: 193), in which the primary goal is not to assure the intelligibility of foreign language dialogue but to provide the "correct" fit between voice and body, vocal type and archetype, and actor and role. In line with the normative vocal conventions described by Ávila, female voices ("sweet and feminine") in particular were held to a narrow range, with a preference for a smooth and polished sound from which any excess or noise has been eliminated.

In information theory, noise refers to any factor that filters, disturbs or interferes with the communication process, and in the cases of Roth and Chaplin, that factor was their native accents in Spanish. As an audible marker articulating the relationship between voices, bodies and identities, as well as the social, cultural, economic and hierarchies they express, accent has played a multilayered, if not always acknowledged, role in cinema history. Accents were a factor in spurring the initial development of the dubbing industry in Spain, as a response and solution to the challenges posed by the Spanish language films of the early sound period produced in Hollywood and Joinville, France, with their multi-national and accentual casts of Spanish speakers, as Spanish Peninsular critics and audiences rejected the sound of Latin American accents.[2] Diego Galán (2003) writes of a temporary truce in the accent wars during the mid-20th century, given the surge in cross-Atlantic traffic in film stars, from Jorge Negrete and Carmen Sevilla to Sara Montiel, Hugo de Carril and Jorge Mistral, and the growth of Spanish-Latin American coproductions beginning in the late 1940s. By the 1970s, however, the situation had seemingly regressed, with accentual barriers back in place. During the 1980s and 90s, he reports, Latin American films had disappeared from Spanish screens and the few that did circulate were the object of intralingual dubbing.[3]

Thus, when Cecilia Roth arrived in Spain from Argentina in 1976, she confronted the challenge of making her way in a foreign film industry in an era in which, according to the actor, "the accent thing was so ingrained in Spanish cinema, that no one with less than perfect Peninsular Spanish could act" (Guerra, 1998: 39). According to the eldoblaje.com archive, Roth was dubbed in at least four of the films she made in Spain between 1976 and 1981.[4] Although she spoke in her own voice in now celebrated cult film, *Rapture* (Arrebato, Iván Zulueta, 1980), her accent was made an issue in the story: first with reference to the demand to dub her performance in the protagonist's B-movie horror *opera prima*; and later in his scornful imitation of her Argentine accent and elongated vowels. In a series of published conversations, she details her strenuous efforts to perfect the required accent: "It worried me a lot. I got diction lessons and I even became a bit schizophrenic. I started to mentally convince myself that I had been born here, trying to burn that idea into my brain, because all the characters I had to play were Spanish [...] They had nothing to do with my own story" . Being dubbed, she concludes, "was my fate. Even Pedro decided to dub me in *Pepi, Luci,*

Bom and Other Girls Like Mom (Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón, Pedro Almodóvar, 1980) (Guerra, 1998: 39). In that film, released in 1980, in a role identified as "girl from the 'Bragas Ponte' ad ", Roth appears in three brief sketches touting the marvelous properties of "Ponte Panties". The first of several such parodies of the audio-visual codes and conventions of advertising discourse (Roth would appear in another for "Café el Café" in *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* [¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?, Pedro Almodóvar, 1984]), the Ponte ads portray Roth as a thoroughly modern young woman whose various romantic and physical needs are well served by the transformative powers and capacity of her panties. While Roth supplies the suitably exaggerated, visually expressive performance, the voice and delivery—highly musical and laden with paralinguistic sighs and pauses—is supplied by voice actor Ana Ángeles García.[5]

For her next film with Almodóvar, *Labyrinth of Passion* (Laberinto de pasiones, 1982), Roth would graduate to the protagonizing role of Sexilia, the nymphomaniac daughter of a specialist in assisted asexual reproduction. In it Roth generally succeeds in neutralizing her Argentine accent. As if to confirm her auditory Spanishness, Roth is positioned in contrast to the Argentine psychiatrist, Susana (Ofelia Angélica), as her comic and linguistic foil. In their study of Roth's films in Spain before her return to Argentina in 1985, Carmen Ciller and Manuel Palacio are highly critical of the failure of the Spanish cinema industry to provide a receptive space for artists like Roth to develop their careers: "As a foreigner she is subject to the amputation of part of her body, namely her voice. In some films, with the excuse that Spanish cinema doesn't accept accents that aren't from Valladolid, she is dubbed; in others, including 'art cinema' productions, she is obliged to erase all traces of her Argentine accent and dialect and to adopt a neutral Spanish that to spectator ears could be from anywhere or nowhere" (Ciller and Palacio, 2011: 345).

Thus, the sound of Roth's voice in Spanish cinema (that is, cinema made in Spain) is all the more striking in Almodóvar's 1999 film, *All About My Mother* (Todo sobre mi madre). In reality, it

Image 1

was not the first time Spanish film-goers had the opportunity to listen to Roth's "original" voice, especially given the wide distribution of two Argentine-Spanish coproductions directed by Adolfo Aristarain, *A Place in the World* (Un lugar en el mundo, 1992) and the Goya-winning *Martín (Hache)* (1997), not to mention the case of María Luisa Bemberg's biography of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, *I, The Worst of All* (Yo, la peor de todas, 1990) in which Roth memorably lent her voice to the Vice-Reine played by Dominique Sanda. Nevertheless, it was certainly the first time audiences heard it in a film by Almodóvar.

Roth's voice is front and center in her character's first appearance in *All About My Mother*, as she identifies herself in a telephone call to her counterpart at the National Transplant Organization: "Soy Manuela, Ramón y Cajal". No last name is necessary, her identity immediately evident in the distinctive sound of her warm and husky voice, a mature vocal instrument miles, and years, away from that of the frothy ingénue heard in *Labyrinth of Passion*. In his study of the semiotics of the voice in cinema, Theo van Leeuwen (2009) offers a useful descriptive and analytic framework for evaluating the impact and implications of different vocal types and textures. He questions the division established by Roland Barthes and Kaja Silverman between the communicative and sensorial functions of the voice, what Silverman identifies as "meaning and materiality", insisting that the voice and its meanings can only be understood as the product and expression of corporeal experience (van Leeuwen, 2009: 425). Nevertheless, there are voices and vocal types that more clearly embody that materiality as well as the traces of personal history. The husky or "rough" voice of an actress like Roth, or Penella, is generally read by listeners as the product of "wear and tear, whether as a result of smoking and drinking, hardship and adversity, or old age" (van Leeuwen, 2009: 429). As such it is the opposite of the more standard, smooth, polished and "clean" voice—an exact characterization of the conventional, feminine voices deployed in film dubbing and TV commercials in Spain, an example of which is heard in the "Bragas Ponte" segment in *Pepi, Luci, Bom*. In certain cultural contexts, notes Van Leeuwen

Image 2

(429), voices with grain and history are prized as bearers of wisdom and/or an especially potent emotional charge. We might point, by way of illustration, to the aurally charged moment of her son Esteban's death, marked by Manuela's shattering and visceral cry of pain. In *All About My Mother* these connotations of experience and hard won wisdom bind to Roth's performance, lending gravity to her portrayal of the sorrowful, but not resigned *mater dolorosa*.

There is, of course, another striking feature of the character's voice that owes to the recovery of the actress's "native" accent and with it Roth's Argentine identity. In his brilliant study of *All About My Mother*, Juan Carlos Ibañez (2013) traces the incorporation of Roth's (born Cecilia Rotemberg) own biography—her early formation in the flourishing experimental theater scene in Buenos Aires, her flight in 1976 from direct threats to her family in Argentina and subsequent exile in Spain along with her parents and brother—as an intertext in the film. Thus in the film Roth reclaims not just her voice and accent but also the links between personal identity and collective history. Accent, as Hamid Naficy notes, in addition to its role as a marker of "individual difference and personality", is also "one of the most intimate and powerful markers of group identity and solidarity" (Naficy, 2001: 23). Roth's vocal performance in *All About My Mother* exploits that intersection to powerful ends, creating a complex character that explodes the constraints of conventional female archetypes.

In contrast to the linear tale of the suppression and ultimate rediscovery of Cecilia Roth's voice in Almodóvar's films, that of Geraldine Chaplin's voice in the films she made with Carlos Saura is a more complicated and layered story. Chaplin appeared in eight films with Saura between 1967 and 1979, beginning with *Peppermint frappé* (1967) and ending with *Mama Turns 100* (Mamá cumple 100 años, 1979). She was dubbed into Spanish in four of them; in five she plays a non-Spanish character and speaks in her own, accented, voice in Spanish—although there are overlaps, since in at least three of the films she plays dual roles. And in two, *Cría cuervos* (1976) and *Elisa, My Life* (Elisa, vida mía, 1977), she speaks in her own voice while playing ostensibly Spanish characters.

The Spanish press paid a good deal of attention to Chaplin and also to her accent, she the daughter and grand-daughter of Anglo-American cinematic and literary royalty and the ultimate cosmopolitan "mobile voice" (Whittaker and Wright, 2017: 3), acting in three languages, and fresh off her role in *Doctor Zhivago* (David Lean, 1965).[6] Characterizations of her voice in interviews and critical appraisals of her vocal performances were, not surprisingly, mixed: "Geraldine, blonde voice between whisky and American tobacco" ("Película americana", 1978); "[She] speaks a USA-filtered Spanish, sweet, velvety, sometimes irritating" ('Hija de Charlot', 1974); "soft little accent that is almost Spanish" (Manzano, 1976).

Chaplin's own evaluation of her native English highlights a certain indefinability: "In the US they say my accent is too British, but then in England the opposite happens [...]. I think my accent is from nowhere" ("Hija de Charlot", 1974). If, as socio-linguist Rosina Lippi-Green observes, "accent can only be understood if there is something to compare it with", to the extent that your speech is different from my speech, and "your prosodic features and phonology mark you as someone from someplace else" (Lippi-Green, 2012: 44), then Chaplin provides an example of a permanent someplace, or even, no place, else. Questioned on her accent in Spanish, specifically her self-dubbing in her final post-synchronized sound film with Saura, *Honeycomb* (La madriguera, 1969), she replies: "I've been told that the dubbing I did for *Honeycomb* wasn't very good, but I do not have a very good ear for Spanish, so I think it's pretty good" (Olid, 1971).

Chaplin and Saura would put these dislocating and disruptive qualities of her accent to work in

films such as *Peppermint frappé* and *Anna and The Wolves* (*Ana y los lobos*, Carlos Saura, 1973) where her voice accentuates the characters' unsettling allure and exotic threat that provoke the male protagonists to destroy and expel the foreign body from the national organism. These effects are on clear display in her dual performance in *Peppermint frappé* in which as the duplicitous Elena she keeps her voice while donning a blonde wig, while being dubbed in the role of the mousy office assistant Ana.[7] Julián, (José Luis López Vázquez), a provincial radiologist and Elena's husband Pablo's (Alfredo Mayo) childhood friend, is dazzled by the latter's glamorous and much younger foreign bride, whose fashionable clothing, false eyelashes and other enhancements correspond to his own fetishistic obsession with the images and objects of an idealized female beauty. With Elena remaining beyond his reach, he instructs Ana in a seemingly willing makeover that positions her to replace Elena after Julián's murder of the couple. If Roth's Argentine accent functions as a marker of authenticity and the immutable bonds between voice and identity, Chaplin's accent points toward more ambiguous meanings.

Still, those roles and vocal practices remain within the norm, domesticating dissonant voices and accents through dubbing or the alibi provided by the character's foreign origins, consistent with the archetype, in Chaplin's words, of "the typical, dangerous foreign woman" (Manzano, 1978). Instead I will focus here on the two films/performances where Chaplin's characters "read" as Spanish but speak as "someone from someplace else". In the first film we again see and hear Chaplin in two roles, as the film's child protagonist Ana's (Ana Torrent) memory image of her deceased mother, María, and also in a series of recurring monologues giving dubbed voice to the thoughts and recollections of the adult Ana,

Images 3 and 4

Image 5

some 20 years into an unspecified future. Most of the mother's appearances in the film have a ritual quality, based in repetition, the mother always in the same dress, with the same pulled-back hair style. Similarly, the dialogue between mother and child consists of variations on a mock-serious exchange over the late hour and the little girl's inability to sleep, her own Proustian *drame du coucher* that is ultimately playful and reassuring. Other scenarios present the child as witness to harsh, adult realities: an unhappy marriage to a neglectful, philandering husband, the physical torture of painful illness and death. In each of these six (five with dialogue) scenes, Chaplin's character speaks in her own, English-accented voice. The question of why she does not sound like the other characters and family members, such as her sister, Paulina, played by Monica Randall, is never addressed.

The disruptive effects of Chaplin's voice arguably lie elsewhere, ultimately independent of its foreignness, as evident in the three monologues delivered by Chaplin as the adult Ana. Both the performance and staging of the monologues propose an unsettling reflection on notions of same and different, self and other. Although the roles of mother and daughter are played by the same actor, the adult Ana's discrete make-up, shoulder length-bob and frank address to the camera convey a sophisticated modernity that contrasts with her portrayal of the mother María, a clear marker of generational change perhaps more acute in the context of (a projected) post-Franco Spain.[8] The first monologue notably follows a kind of dissociative fugue experienced by the child Ana and conveyed visually by her literal splitting in two, with one Ana standing on the park-like grounds of the

family home watching another tiny Ana positioned on the roof of the tall apartment building across the busy and noisy street. In the second half of the sequence, the girl descends a stone stairway on the property to a subterranean storeroom where she extracts of a tin of baking soda that she believes to be poison from its hiding place. She puts a pinch of the powder on her tongue and quickly spits it out, carefully closing the container and in that moment a female voice rises on the soundtrack, initially unsourced and unidentified. The voice recounts a memory of the day she first saw the tin, uncovered during a session of house cleaning with her mother ('mi madre') whose instructions she quotes: "Ana, tira esto a la basura ". As if responding to the command, the child turns to look directly at the camera as it pans right, coming to rest on a close-up of Chaplin as the adult Ana, shot before a plain gray wall. Against the visual continuity established by the camera work, everything else about the scene is disjunctive. We witness the collapse of temporal boundaries, as present and future converge in the narration of a remembered past, and identities too are scrambled as a future Ana assumes her mother's voice to directly address her present self. The illusion of a unified filmic space fractures in the wake of the unexplained transition between the dark space of the jumbled storeroom and the gray, context-free background reminiscent of a portrait studio; between the traffic sounds and crackle of the paper in the baking soda tin in the first half of the scene and the subsequent drop off in ambient sound that foregrounds the closely miked voice of the onscreen speaker. Another discordant note is struck in the sound of that native Spanish voice, strongly sibilant, somewhat theatrical, that bears no resemblance to either the voice of Chaplin as the mother or the naturalistic vocal performance of Torrent as the child Ana. There is no dubbing credit for the role listed in in the standard filmographies for *Cría cuervos* or in eldoblaje.com but the source and identity of the adult Ana's voice,

THE DISRUPTIVE EFFECTS OF CHAPLIN'S VOICE ARGUABLY LIE ELSEWHERE, ULTIMATELY INDEPENDENT OF ITS FOREIGNNESS, AS EVIDENT IN THE THREE MONOLOGUES DELIVERED BY CHAPLIN AS THE ADULT ANA

provided by Julieta Serrano, were hiding in plain sight on the latter's IMDb listing. Serrano had appeared in a handful of films by the mid-1970s—most notably the brilliant *Mi querida señorita* (Jaime de Armiñán, 1972), and she featured in a small role in Saura's *Cousin Angelica* (La prima Angélica, 1974)—but was known primarily for her work in the theater. Serrano is not a professional voice actor and the voice she lends to Chaplin's character notably departs from conventional vocal typologies described by Ávila, and reflects instead the experience and confidence of an artist accustomed to occupying center stage. Rather than proposing a seamless fusion of voice with character, the performances acknowledge the artifice inherent in the film's layered play of identities and the mediations embedded in the dubbing process itself, that, according to Michel Chion, "produces a palimpsest beneath which there runs a ghost text" (Chion, 1999: 154).

Saura's and Chaplin's next film shifts from a focus on the mother-daughter (or daughter-mother) relationship in *Cría cuervos* to the bonds between father and daughter. Eschewing the use of dubbing, *Elisa, My Life* nevertheless continues to explore the dramatic possibilities of vocal sound, parsing the multiple meanings and effects of the voice via a series of alternating voice-over sequences that vocalize the "memoirs" of Elisa's father, Luis, played by Fernando Rey. The film opens to the off-screen narration voiced by Rey over the shot of a rural road traversed by a single car, but the words—detailing the daughter's (Geraldine Chaplin) alienation from her father and failing

marriage—express the perspective of Elisa, whose visit is the pretext for the story to follow. A similar form of ventriloquism characterizes a subsequent scene in which Elisa enters her father's study and approaches his desk and the hand-written pages lying there. The audio-visual staging is artful and unsettling: the piano melody of Erik Satie's *Gnossienne No. 3* on the soundtrack; the camera eye ranging over the objects and photographs on the desk; and Chaplin's voice rising from a barely heard murmur to full intelligibility as she reads from the pages, her words unmatched to moving lips until we glimpse her reflection in the framed photo of Elisa and sister as children, with the child Elisa played by Ana Torrent. Marsha Kinder proposes the evocative term re-envoicement, which she borrows from Bahktin, when dealing with related instances in Almodóvar's cinema. Defined by the Russian theorist as the act of combining "voices of authority" with "one's own internally persuasive voice" (cited in Kinder 284) , the concept also illuminates the contest, both artistic and existential, between father and daughter to claim the voice and control the story of a family and its individual members' past, present and future.

A writer and translator, Luis wields the voice as the expression of his creative agency, and the film likewise enlists a host of classic Spanish literary authorities, including Calderón, Gracián and Garcilaso de la Vega, the latter the source of the film's title and the co-protagonist's name. In the figure of Fernando Rey, one of Spanish cinema's most recognizable voices, the character activates the dual power of the voice as vehicle for language and source of meaning and also as embodied vocal sound. (Regarding the actor's voice, the director alludes to his own attempts to control the means of vocal production: "The first day I told him [Rey] to forget that professional, serious and aristocratic tone that he usually conveys in his performances" [Hidalgo, 1981: 82]). Elisa/Chaplin's struggle to sustain and project her "own internally persuasive voice " is complicated by the power differentials inherent to familial and gender hierarchies, on the one hand, and on the other by the highly specific aural reality of her accented voice in Spanish. In fact, in both *Cría cuervos* and *Elisa, My Life* we observe in Chaplin's performances the split between the uncanny power and authority of Chion's "acousmatic" effect, the voice unmoored, if momentarily, from a visible source, and the accent that ties it to a particular body and bodily image. In Silverman's account, these positions designate diametrically opposed binaries, the first identified with the male voice-over, situated outside the diegesis, "privileged to the degree that *it transcends the body"*, and thus in close proximity to the enunciating cinematic apparatus, and the female voice, enclosed and subordinated within the narrative, distant from power and authority (Silverman, 1988: 49). Posing a challenge to this gendered scenario of disempowerment, the penultimate scene of the film stages the daughter's apparent triumph, following the death of her father, in wresting control of the narrative voice-over. A slow pan of the empty rooms of the house leads to the study where Elisa sits writing at her father's desk. As her pen inscribes the words on the page her voice is heard repeating the opening monologue, reclaiming the control of the voice and the right to shape and tell her own story. This authority would appear to extend to the film itself, as her narration further presides over a reprise of the opening shot of an empty road and a single car on the open horizon.

IN THE FIGURE OF FERNANDO REY, ONE OF SPANISH CINEMA'S MOST RECOGNIZABLE VOICES, THE CHARACTER ACTIVATES THE DUAL POWER OF THE VOICE AS VEHICLE FOR LANGUAGE AND SOURCE OF MEANING AND ALSO AS EMBODIED VOCAL SOUND

It is significant that the best known studies of Saura's cinematic corpus are generally silent on the matter of Chaplin's voice.[9] It would appear that for the majority of scholars, voice and vocal sound continue to be considered surface phenomena and mere support to verbal expression and meaning, divested of their material links to personal or collective identity, experience and origin. One striking exception is an essay on the director by Spanish critic Juan Hernández Les (2013).[10] Focusing on what might be termed Saura's "Chaplin period", he identifies a shift in both subject matter and style which he attributes in large part to the influence exercised on the director by "the existence of an actress like Geraldine Chaplin" (Hernández Les, 2013: 131). In considering the sources of that impact, he singles out the effects of "her ambiguously delocalized accent [...], the singular, different and monstrous speech of Geraldine Chaplin" (Hernández Les, 2013: 131), a way of speaking, he continues, that is "an invitation to the void, to that yet to be seen, to the unknown [...] to horror" (Hernández Les, 2013: 132). Although the critic does not fully develop the implications of this characterization, what his comments foreground is the power of Chaplin's voice—and the vocal practices generated around it—to unsettle stable notions of temporal and spatial coherence, as well as narrative identity and authority.

While keying on the threats posed by Chaplin's dangerous allure, thematized, as we have seen, in several of her film roles, Hernández Les (2013) also taps into a more generalized dread of the "monstrous" feminine archetype. Such hyperbolic forms of "othering" of the female voice echo a common response to women who challenge established norms and boundaries, "their voices categorized as 'noise' or unwanted sound [that] disrupts the sonic environment and [...] is often perceived as dissonant and jarring" (Ehrick 2015, 14) . In the cases of Chaplin and Roth, accent carries the marker of foreign origins but its sonic difference pulls us away from pure meaning to materiality: "It appears as a distraction, or even an obstacle, to the smooth flow of signifiers and to the hermeneutics of understanding. [...] [A]ccent suddenly makes us aware of the material support of the voice" (Dolar 2006, 20) . As another form of vocal excess, accent, like the sensual texture of Penella's voice, resonates through and in spite of the constraints imposed on the actors' performances to generate readings that challenge well-worn narratives of gender and identity.

NOTES

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1 The normalization of other national languages in the Peninsula has expanded the practice of dubbing of both films and TV series from exclusively in *castellano* to include *català*, *euskera* and *galego*.

2 See Vernon, 2019 for a discussion of the so-called 'war of accents' in the Spanish language versions of the late 1920s and early 1930s and the first decades of Spanish TV.

3 Galán cites the egregious examples of Torres Nilsson's 1968 film *Martin Fierro* or Raúl de la Torres's 1970 film *Crónica de una señora* in which Graciela Borges, 'the typical woman from Buenos Aires [...] spoke in an orthodox accent from Valladolid (la típica porteña [...] hablaba en un ortodoxo vallisoletano)' (Galán, 2003).

4 For an analysis of a selection of Roth's early films in Spain, see Ciller and Palacio (2001).

5 The entry for García on eldoblaje.com indicates that she is the *voz habitual* of Kristie Alley and more recently Christine Baranski and Jane Lynch. There is also a voice sample of her reading for an advertisement for 'Lentes progresivas Varilux'.

6 The oldest child of Charlie Chaplin and Oona O'Neill, Geraldine Chaplin is also the granddaughter of playwright Eugene O'Neill.

7 Her appearance as Ana proposes a kind of visual reprise of her breakout role two years earlier in *Doctor Zhivago* (David Lean, 1965) as the young wife of the title character cast aside for the blonde and captivating Lara played by Julie Christie. But in her split performance in *Peppermint frappé* she seemingly assumes both roles. Ángela González is identified in eldoblaje.com as the voice of Ana. There is no voice credit provided on the site for *Stress es tres tres* but a participant on the site's Forum (http://www.foroseldoblaje.com/foro/viewtopic.php?t=44309) identifies González is the likely dubber for that film as well.

8 Despite the parallels with the use of a similar, dual role device in *Peppermint frappé*, the contrasts between the two characters played by Chaplin in *Cría cuervos* are subtle in contrast to the more exaggerated archetypal positioning of the seductive blond foreigner Elena versus the provincial *soltera*, Ana in the earlier film.

9 Among the monographs, Brasó (1974), D'Lugo (1991), Oms (1981), Sanchez Vidal (1988). In contrast, as we have seen, the daily and weekly press were more attuned to these questions. Specifically with regard to *Cría cuervos* opinions were divided on the effect of Chaplin's accent. While generally celebrating the actor's performance Joaquín Arbide finds 'the magnificent acting of Geraldine Chaplin may be somewhat tarnished by her distancing accent (la espléndida interpretación de Geraldine Chaplin quizás se vea empeñada a veces por su acento distanciador)' (?) . In contrast, Lorenzo López Sanchez, writing in *ABC*, laments the loss of her original voice, when 'dubbed in the shots in which she plays young Ana, Chaplin trades a confident diction for the charming sweetness of her accent in other scenes ([d]oblada en los planos en que interpreta a Ana-joven, trueca la seguridad de la dicción por la encantadora ternura de su acento en las otras escenas)' (López Sánchez, 1976).

10 One further exception is the 2014 article by French critic Arnaud Duprat de Montero. He reads the multiple and varying instantiations of Chaplin's voice in Saura's films—original or dubbed, heard in dialogue or voice over and off—as the textual traces of their evolving creative collaboration, and the expression of 'frictions creatrices' (Duprat de Montero, 2014: 3), by turns harmonious or discordant.

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DISSONANT VOICES, ARCHETYPES AND IDENTITY IN SPANISH CINEMA

Abstract

Most discussions of archetypes in cinema, especially in relation to female performers, begin with the linkage of physical features with specific film roles. In her pioneering work on female film stars, Molly Haskell writes of the "tyranny of type," embodied in the figures of the blond and innocent virgin and dark haired, seductive vamp. Less studied in discussions of film stardom and performance is the role of voice and vocal types. In Spain the associations between vocal type and archetypes have long been codified and enforced in the nation's potent dubbing industry. The result has been the imposition of a strict vocal orthodoxy and demonstrable standardization and typification of voices, especially along gender lines, that extends from dubbed foreign language films to Spanish original productions. In line with normative vocal conventions, female voices in particular were held to a narrow range, with a preference for a smooth and polished sound from which any excess or noise has been eliminated. Nevertheless, the Spanish careers and filmographies of Cecilia Roth from the 1970s through the 1990s and Geraldine Chaplin in the 1960s and 1970s are revealing with respect to the shifting attitudes toward vocal diversity in cinema and its role in the telling of complex stories.

Key words

Stardom; Voice; Gender; Dubbing; Cecilia Roth; Geraldine Chaplin.

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VOCES DISONANTES, ARQUETIPOS E IDENTIDAD EN EL CINE ESPAÑOL

Resumen

La mayoría de los análisis sobre los arquetipos en el cine, especialmente en relación con intérpretes femeninas, parten de la asociación de los rasgos físicos con roles cinematográficos concretos. En su innovador trabajo sobre las estrellas de cine femeninas, Molly Haskell habla de la «tiranía del tipo», encarnada en las figuras de la virgen rubia e inocente y la *vamp* morena y seductora. Algo menos estudiado en los análisis del estrellato y la interpretación cinematográficos es el papel de la voz y de sus diferentes tipologías. Desde hace tiempo en España, las asociaciones entre los tipos de voz y los arquetipos han sido codificadas y aplicadas en la potente industria nacional del doblaje. El resultado ha sido la imposición de una ortodoxia vocal estricta y de una demostrable estandarización y tipificación de voces, especialmente en términos de género, que abarca tanto las películas extranjeras dobladas al castellano como las producciones nacionales. En línea con las convenciones vocales normativas, se ha confinado a las voces femeninas en particular a una gama muy limitada, dando especial preferencia a un sonido suave y refinado del que se ha eliminado cualquier exceso o ruido. Aun así, las carreras y filmografías españolas de Cecilia Roth desde los 70 a los 90 y de Geraldine Chaplin en los 60 y 70 revelan un cambio de actitud con respecto a la diversidad de la voz en el cine y su papel en la narración de historias complejas.

Palabras clave

Estrellato; voz; género; doblaje; Cecilia Roth; Geraldine Chaplin.

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DIALOGUE

RESCUING SPANISH MODERNITY

A dialogue with

TERESA GIMPERA

TERESA GIMPERA
RESCUING SPANISH MODERNITY

MARGA CARNICÉ MUR
ENDIKA REY

The first movie-screen image of Teresa Gimpera was in a photo portrait: a close-up in black-and-white showing her looking off-frame with a caption describing her as a "new victim". It is the opening to *Fata Morgana* (Vicente Aranda, 1965). A few sequences later, her motionless photographic image appears again, only this time she looks down on her audience from above in a wide shot in the form of a gigantic billboard. Her figure will be immediately cut out by a group of youths obsessed with the model Gim—as her character is called—and only after the theft of her plastic-coated body will we witness the first live appearance of the actress herself in colour: in the middle of the frame, dressed in red and sporting her trademark mane of blonde hair, listening intently to the instructions of a man explaining a mysterious plan. Gim interrupts him to say: "I don't think I'll go. I've thought about it and I'm staying".

Barely ten minutes into the film, Gimpera has already gone from surrendering her image to controlling it, from having it stolen to claiming possession of it, from being a potential victim to becoming the likely heroine. Both her portrayal and her refusal stand out for their association of the actress with a representation of femininity quite different from anything on the Spanish scene of that time: the archetype of the sophisticated, independent woman whose attitude generates a strange yet familiar atmosphere of transgression and modernity. In this sense, in 1969 the Spanish newspaper *ABC* described this new female ideal introduced by Gimpera as a "representative of an emancipated class, European style. Her face and her image, unprecedented in the usual catalogue of film stars, have contributed [...] to the creation of a Catalan female archetype that has effectively replaced the Andalusian woman that completely dominated Spanish cinema in the 1940s and 1950s, and even part of the current decade" (Harpo, 1969: 30). This Catalan woman, inseparable from the city and the idea of Barcelona, of nights at the Bocaccio nightclub and the *Gauche Divine* movement, a mother of three children but with her own freedom, did not limit herself to starring in the alternative films made by her Barcelona School colleagues, as she travelled weekly to Madrid to shoot popular mainstream films, and to the many other countries where she became one of the few essential Spanish faces through

her work in all kinds of international co-productions. The filmmakers she worked with included Suárez, Garci, De Sica, and Erice, and she even did a casting call for Hitchcock. More than 100 titles bear witness to the fact that her film career was no mere accident, even if she herself has always insisted that she is more a working woman than a movie star.

Although we have introduced and considered her here as a voice, Gimpera the actress also gave the Spanish star system "the docile appeal of a face" as a line about the fictitious Gim in *Fata Morgana* describes her. Jean Epstein—who defined photogenicity as what differentiates cinema from the rest of the arts—once said that "only the mobile and personal aspects of things, beings, and souls may be photogenic, that is, may acquire a higher moral value through filmic reproduction" (Epstein, 1989: 339). Teresa Gimpera is a personality imprinted like a stamp on all of her films, one that transcended her persona to become an icon. Hers is an impossible beauty amplified by filmic reproduction, but also by her particular understanding of cinema. At the same time, she is also an actress that it is impossible to look away from, and a woman who, at close range, still knows perfectly how to make herself seen and heard, in her own words, with a seductive instinct that is not just physical but also intellectual, "above all by using my brain, my tone of voice, warmth and sincerity, and knowing how to get close naturally" (Gimpera, 2003: 33-34). This is exactly what we found when we interviewed her in Barcelona one autumn morning in 2020: the genuine personality of a woman who has lived a thousand more lives than her anonymous contemporaries without ever losing her extraordinary, invisible centre of gravity. It is the mild-mannered, human intimacy of an actress who happily met with us without a mask or mascara. ■

Image 1. *Fata Morgana* (Vicente Aranda, 1968)

In Spanish cinema in the 1960s, you were known for playing sophisticated women. You came from the world of advertising and fashion, Vicente Aranda and Gonzalo Suárez created *Fata Morgana* for you, and after that you effectively appropriated the name of your character in that first film, Gim. Who is Gim and who is Teresa Gimpera? What influence do you think your identity and personality had on your beginnings as a film actress?

When I started becoming known as an actress and I arrived in Madrid, they wanted to change my name because they said I could never make it big with a name like Teresa Gimpera. They wanted to call me Mari Pili or one of those absurd artistic names they used to give actresses in those days, and I refused. I told them that Brigitte Bardot, for example, was a ghastly name and yet she was having a lot of success in France. I wasn't thinking about making it big, but about myself. The importance of keeping my name is something I value especially now, after all these years. On the other hand, Gim is the name that I often sign with, and I'm also Gim, or Gimpie, to my friends. That's what they called my kids at school, "the Gimpies".

Before making films, I worked in television and appeared in a lot of advertising. I was known as the "girl from the telly". As I've always been a very hard worker and found that I was good at it, I decided to invest in my own image. That was how I met Leopoldo Pomés, who I went to for help to make my image more sophisticated, because he knew his work and I liked him. People think that he discovered me, but in reality it was the other way round. Perhaps because of all this, I got the on-screen image of the sophisticated woman right from the start, although I would later do things that had nothing to do with sophistication, like horror, the odd art film, or *The Spirit of the Beehive* (El espíritu de la colmena, Víctor Erice, 1973), where I appear without make-up.

In any case, I've always said I was an actress by accident. When I was seventeen I thought that I'd never put on high heels or make-up. I was a sporty girl, with a love of the outdoors. I wore plaits in my hair and the thought of sophistication never even crossed my mind. But I started working as a model because everyone told me I was very photogenic, and that is very important. I've had my own agency where beautiful girls have come to train, but beauty is a different thing altogether. Being photogenic has to do with knowing how to look, how to win people over, whether you're laughing, crying, or looking sad. And that was something I could do innately since I was a child.

Your story is interesting because you've been an actress, but also a businesswoman. You have an awareness of the machinery from the inside, but

Image 2. *The Spirit of the Beehive* (El espíritu de la colmena, Víctor Erice, 1973)

also from the outside. In 1985, you founded your company, Gimpera Models, which is still active, and you've always advocated for the mediating role of the model in advertising, smashing the myth of the model as an object of consumption or a body without a voice. In fact, you often mention your recollection of the first time you had dialogue in an ad and could talk on camera. Do you still remember those first lines? Did you try to take this idea of the model with her own voice into cinema as well?

I remember it perfectly. It was an ad for stockings. I shot it with Leopoldo Pomés, and I had to say: "Bending down all day for these little devils; just as well Rodiflex stockings have me covered because with their tension band they stretch out first and then shrink back to normal. Rodiflex Platinum stockings!" [laughs]. It wasn't common for models to speak, and I was much more frightened than excited about doing it. Bear in mind that I started out in a film and television industry that was very basic. If you advertised a drink you showed the bottle and pretended to drink it, as if the spectator was stupid. And film sets were very different in those days: there was no make-up artist and you had to bring your own wardrobe. Whenever they called me I always asked: "What is the target audience for this? Middle class, upper class...?". This, for example, was something that I always took the initiative on: to choose my own wardrobe based on the information I was given. I would always take a little suitcase with me with several wardrobe options; people still talk about that suitcase today. Working with me was easy: I had ideas and I contributed things without having to have much explained to me. So ad offers came to me in droves. I did ads for everything, because at that time I had already had two of my three children and I needed the work. They say I appeared on TV more than Franco did, and that might be true. That's why I was already so well known when I started doing films.

One day, after a fashion parade at the Ritz, Gonzalo Suárez was waiting for me at the exit. He told me that he wanted to write something about me and suggested making a book of photographs that would tell a little of my story. I didn't know him and I thought he was trouble. Some guy waiting for you at the exit to a fashion parade offering such a weird job? But then I found out that Gonzalo was a writer and a journalist, and that book ended up being the screenplay to *Fata Morgana*: the story of a very well-known woman in a city under an atomic threat, but also partly my own story. I'd been offered film roles before, but they were projects that didn't interest me at all. One, for example, was the story of the Spanish national police. *Fata Morgana* was my first film, and it was tailor-made for me, I have to admit.

The fact that an actress's first film should contain such clear autobiographical elements seems to point to the magnitude of the star as a central pillar of the project. What kind of influence did you have on the process of making that film, which today is considered the major precursor to the Barcelona School?

At first, the film was being co-directed by Gonzalo Suárez and Vicente Aranda. They paid me what I asked for (in those days they would offer me for a film what I would make on three ads), so I accepted. But shortly after we started, I asked how much it would cost me to pull out [laughs]. I'd never done anything like it. I was used to having a camera in front of me and looking straight into it, and here suddenly in one scene I had to start banging on doors and shouting in St. James' Square, with everyone watching me. I experienced the most awful embarrassment and fear and felt that I didn't have the training for it. Personally, I've always had a complex about not feeling I had enough training. I never took classes in acting, or elocution or anything, and that always makes you feel a little insecure. You go to England and there they teach the actors to do everything: to sing, to dance... But here it was, and still is, a little like "whatever works". When I started acting in films

I felt quite helpless, quite exposed. And on top of it all, I had two directors giving me contradictory instructions. Anyway, when they told me what it would cost for me to pull out I decided to stay, but I did ask to be directed by only one person. That was how Vicente ended up directing. I wasn't happy about it because it had been Gonzalo's idea and they ended up cutting him out of the project. But for a novice like me, being guided by two directors was impossible. I needed to know which direction I should be taking.

You talk about insecurity and inexperience in your early days, yet the impression given by your presence in your films in the late 1960s is that you were already well established when you started in cinema. Your characters often have your name, Teresa, and that is a feature commonly found in the filmographies of actresses whose personality transcends the roles they play. Do you think that was true in your case?
It's true that when I started doing films I'd already established the image I would have later, but it wasn't constructed in cinema itself, where I had no experience. On the set of *Fata Morgana* I asked for permission to go have lunch with the lighting technicians because I didn't know what a production manager was. A film has a hierarchy that isn't easy to understand, and I didn't know a thing. I was very used to the camera, but not to moving around and acting in front of it, and I was certainly not used to looking anywhere but directly into it. In advertising you always look at the camera and in films you never do, and that requires a complete change of mentality.

It is true that in those early days of doing films I participated in the creation of the character in the sense that the characters were based on who I already was, women with my style and way of dressing. *Fata Morgana* was me, and then when I started working in Madrid I took my own clothes with me because I didn't like the clothes they had for me. I've always been like that. I've tried to determine my own style and everything I've done has been by myself. I've hardly ever had an agent and the roles I've taken have always been through direct calls. That's why when people have asked me whether I felt like a "female object" I've always said no. In our line of work, they [the directors or producers] are the ones that need you.

When you received the Nosferatu Award at the Sitges Fantasy Film Festival in recognition of your work in titles like *An Open Tomb... An Empty Coffin* (Casa de las muertas vivientes, Alfonso Balcázar, 1972) and *Creation of the Damned* (El refugio del miedo, José Ulloa, 1974), in your acceptance speech you thanked your family, who you said had given you the physical genes that made you successful. You've always spoken in a very aloof way about your own beauty and you've advocated personal values as essential supports for your work. How do you feel these two aspects combine in the pursuit of an artistic career?
When I watch myself now in those films I see that I was pretty, but at that time I wasn't really aware of it. It's true that I come from a family with lucky genes, but also with a very good culture. As you get older you realise that intelligence and training are what matter most for any job. My parents were teachers on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War, and I'm a concentration camp survivor. My mother went to France in 1938 to work as a teacher to fifty civil war orphans. My point in mentioning all this is that I wasn't from the traditional family that would say "my daughter is the prettiest girl in the neighbourhood". I also never had the body of a mannequin, a catwalk model's body, which requires very specific measurements. I used to drive [fashion designer Manuel] Pertegaz mad because I've always been very wide here [points to the torso] and I've got a bust. I weighed 52 kilos and I was slim, but one day when I was wearing a tight corset Pertegaz said to me: "Miss Gimpera, hide the sex appeal, please". I said to him, "Mr. Pertegaz, if you don't like it, I'll leave", because he created his

designs around your body, but he said no, that I should stay, "because the ladies really like you".

People have always said that you are an actress who has appealed not just to male audiences but to women as well. When you started working on films, at the age of nearly thirty, you already had a recognised career as a fashion icon, you were married and you had three kids. Do you think your personal circumstances helped women identify with you? Did you have a desire to reach a female audience?

I've been fortunate enough to be popular with all audiences and I think that women did indeed like me. Everyone knew I had three children because I never hid it and I've been an honest woman; I never got up to any nonsense. I think that made people see me as a normal, familiar person. I wasn't aware of any desire to reach a female audience, mainly because I was a very insecure woman. As a child I was insecure because I was skinny; the first catcall I ever got in my life was that I looked like Olive Oil from *Popeye*. I also remember that my father could wrap his thumb and index finger around my arm. And later, when I started working, I had a complex because I thought I'd started in the industry too late. When I started I was 23 or 24 years old and I thought I was too old, that I wouldn't last two days. There were very young people there and I thought I could never have a career like the one I've had. In those days, I was very insecure. In a way I only started living at the age of 35, in the days of the Bocaccio [nightclub].

Your on-screen persona also draws on your identity as an icon of Barcelona modernity. Not only in relation to the cinema, but especially in the intellectual and cultural context of the so-called *Gauche Divine*, a movement for which you have been considered a "muse". You have always been recognised as an image of the Bocaccio, thanks to the emblematic photo session by Oriol Regàs, but it is rarely mentioned that you were one of the nightclub's founders and shareholders. What influence do you think belonging to that cultural context had on the modern characters with a foreign air that you brought to the big screen, especially in the mainstream films of the Franco years?

More than a muse I like to say I'm the *pubilla* as we say in Catalan [laughs]. Oriol Regàs and I were the first to put money into the Bocaccio. We were lovers in those days, and we were part of an intellectual group made up of people who were all very different, except that we were all anti-Franco. They called us the *Gauche Divine*, and we were also the *gauche qui rit* [the "laughing left"], and the truth is that a place like the Bocaccio helped us all, whether we were pretty, rich or working class. We were all married but not always to the ones we loved. Women could start being sexually liberated thanks to the contraceptive pill and for me that was like really starting to live. We were obsessed with being free, with being able to do whatever we wanted. We could fall in love without fear of ending up pregnant. It was the time that I felt more confident and freer, and it was then that I told myself I was going to be my own boss.

That atmosphere had a big influence on the characters I played in films, on that woman they saw in me that you describe as sophisticated and modern with a foreign air. Living in Barcelona in the 1960s had an influence because there was an incredible transformation, a big shift towards the modern. Then you'd go to Madrid and it was a shock, like being in a different country. Even the Bocaccio there had nothing in common with the one in Barcelona. Here the scene was young, liberated and diverse, while in Madrid it was full of old actors. Even the clothes they wore were more old-fashioned. I suppose that all that meant that in the films I made in Madrid, they saw the mark of modernity in me right from the outset. They often made me speak in French, as if to make it clear that I was a well-travelled and educated woman. I think it's a little how I was, but also how they

imagined me. For example, they always cast me as a haughty upper-middle-class girl, when I'd never been rich in my life. Somehow outsiders saw me as a model of success. And that's something that has happened to me often, not just in films.

There is an aura of success in the beauty that you represented in 1960s cinema: female characters in an urban environment, in the workplace and with professional prestige, often contrasting with the limited qualities of the male characters. And in fact it is significant that your career is notable for the diversity of your films, from European co-productions to art films, to the stereotypically Spanish mainstream films or *Españoladas*. In those mainstream films you generally added an element of modern eroticism that was both unattainable and familiar, a kind of Spanish Swede who allows herself to be wooed by the characters played by López Vázquez, or who sees Juanjo Menéndez as the single man of her dreams or Arturo Fernández as the perfect ladies' man. We're thinking here of films like *Cuidado con las señoras* [Careful with the Ladies] (Julio Buchs, 1968), *Novios 68* (Pedro Lazaga, 1967) and *Cómo sois las mujeres* [Oh, You Women!] (Pedro Lazaga, 1968). What were those contrasts like for you?

It sounds terrible to say it, but I'm not an actress by vocation. All my intellectual friends in Barcelona, who were all very rich and spent all their time partying at the Bocaccio, would complain because I made films that weren't at all sophisticated or intellectual. And I would say to them: "Will you pay me all the money I need every month?". And that was the truth. What I wanted was to work, and although I enjoyed being an actress, my attitude was very pragmatic. That also applied to my performance. They cast me as a murderer? So I'm a murderer. They call me up for a Western? So I'm a cowgirl. Other actresses like Serena Vergano were more selective, but she, for example, didn't do much outside Barcelona. In Hollywood no doubt you could pick and choose, but in Spain you had to take what was on offer. Working abroad helped me, but I would do it simultaneously with working here: I would shoot a bit of a film in London and another bit in the north of Spain in the same week. That's why I have a hard time remembering some of my films, because I have a heap of titles over an incredibly short range of dates. I made more than 100 films and in very little time. Having three kids and sleeping on aeroplanes, I barely even had time to see my films in the cinema in those days when I was working. So I don't remember everything I've done and sometimes in interviews I have to ask: "Do I die in that film or not?".

[To refresh our interviewee's memory, we recall and view a few scenes together. In comedies, which often deal with the battle of the sexes, her seductive characters depict that international beauty mentioned above, Spanish yet foreign, unattainable for the male characters around her, and yet familiar to the female audience of her generation. In one scene in *The Playboy and His Sprees* (Las juergas del señorito, Alfonso Balcázar, 1973), her character, Mónica, an elegant and mysterious painter, attends a male fashion parade to choose a model for her next painting. In a film that depicts the relentless seductions of the Spanish ladies' man, Gimpera's is the only female gaze that reverses the direction of desire as she ends up devouring a helpless Arturo Fernández with her eyes while he poses. As a spectator of her own pleasure in the shot and of herself on the screen from another time, Gimpera offers us a moment of rediscovery and astonishment in response to footage she watches now as if seeing it for the first time, occasionally recognising details of the production and pieces of wardrobe. "It's like watching a dream...". The scene in question leads us into further discussion.]

How do films that were supposed to be romantic comedies present the relationship between a masculinity as traditional as that of the Spanish "little man" depicted in the comics of the period and a femininity as European and modern as yours?

Image 3. *Las secretarias* [The Secretaries] (Pedro Lazaga, 1969)

They took off my high heels! I made more films barefoot than with shoes on. My co-stars were usually very short men, and I'm 5 foot 8. But look, they were good actors… Sometimes we only remember them for these films, but they've done some very important things too, like López Vázquez in *The Phone Box* (La cabina, Antonio Mercero, 1972). The thing is that because they didn't speak any other languages, they couldn't work abroad and that really limited them. Because I had travelled, I could speak other languages. Travelling is so important. There were other actors like Arturo Fernández, who always tended to play the role of the ladies' man because, of course, he had a style that the others didn't have. A few years ago we worked on television together and I remember the only thing he carried in his pocket was his ID card, so that nothing would mark his slim silhouette. I remember him well; we also played a married couple in the film *Cómo sois las mujeres*, where I start working instead of him and I end up making more money than him. It was a time when women began emancipating themselves and recognising their own importance, and in my opinion, that happened the moment we started working. Most women of my generation did nothing more than get married, have children and stay at home, and you can tell me what kind of experiences you can have doing that.

Some of your films capture the tension in a way embodied by the women of your generation, between the weight of tradition and the yearning for progress. On the one hand you were an icon of modernity, but on the other you also portrayed a type of femininity consistent with the social constraints of Francoism and the reality of many Spanish women of the time. That tension is expressed in storylines that address conflicts like the rivalry between women of different generations or taboos like extramarital sex and abortion. In *Las colocadas* (Pedro Masó, 1972), where you play an executive's young lover who has an abortion for love, you are an object of envy for the characters played by María Asquerino and Gemma Cuervo. A similar case is *Las secretarias* [The Secretaries] (Pedro Lazaga, 1969), where you lead a mutiny among the female workers at a company that has decided to fire an old-fashioned secretary (played by Mary Carrillo) who hates you because she cannot compete with your level of training. Through your roles, Spanish cinema seemed to be searching for solutions to the tensions of a change of era and of a generation of women, the generation of Franco's National Catholicism that was resisting its own disappearance and viewing you with hatred, while you look back sympathetically, adopting a supportive, conciliatory leadership role that seems to point to the need for care and solidarity among women. Why do you think Spanish cinema classified you as this type of modern woman and as a leader? Do you think it is an accurate impression of the type of characters you brought to the big screen?

I think they gave me those roles because they saw me that way. It wasn't that I looked for them, but if they wrote those scripts thinking of me it's because I was able to give those characters a freer or more emancipated quality. I remember that in *Las colocadas* my boss got me pregnant, and he was a married man, so I ended up dying in an ambulance because in those days the only thing a character like that could do was die. I must have done it very well because when I finished the scene the whole film crew broke down in tears. I vaguely recall that there was some mention of abortion, in some "mysterious" sequence where I talk to a friend, but the truth is I don't remember very well. There was censorship, but there were also things that could get past it [in the film, abortion is mentioned off-screen]. Maybe they offered me these kinds of roles because they saw me as different from other women. I was married and had kids, but I was also a liberated woman. In those days, people had started talking about divorce and separation, but in reality there were very few people who were actually doing it, and by then I was with Craig [Hill, her second husband]. Maybe I was one of the few separated women with a lover, and it was becoming increasingly clear in the film roles that the female characters wanted their freedom. Because although it was still very difficult to represent due to a question of attitudes, it was there. For example, Gonzalo Suárez and Vicente Aranda were ahead of their time, but they came from a culture that deep down also looked down on or undervalued women. They needed women because they made things pretty, but not because they respected them.

I'd forgotten about those scenes in *Las secretarias* where I declare my solidarity with Mary Carrillo and ask her to be friends; thank you for reminding me. Leadership among women is something I also experienced on the set, when Pertegaz and others gave me roles as leader or spokesperson and I was responsible for giving instructions to the rest of the models. They must have taken me seriously as a model. There were also times when some actresses would ask me for advice. When I worked with Rocío Jurado on *La querida* [The Beloved] (Fernando Fernán Gómez, 1976), she often asked me about intimate things related to married life. In those days there was a different mentality; she went everywhere accompanied by her mother, and she told me that she could only see her boyfriend in the car. We lived in a constricted world. You have to bear in mind that many women of my age got married around the same time as I did and stayed that way. They didn't have any experience of anything. I had a friend whose father died, and her mother didn't even know how to sign a bank cheque...

In relation to your conscious and critical point of view on the stories you were asked to act in, as well as your understanding of the machinery of the industry, tell us about the place you had as an actress, generally in leading roles, in the decisions related to your scenes. Did you have decision-making or veto rights in relation to aspects of the script and your characters with the screenwriters or directors? Did you always get all the information on what you were going to do on the film shoot?
Everything I said was because it was written in the script. Sometimes you could suggest some detail to the director and if he liked it he would include it, but as a general rule you didn't offer your opinion.

In fact, one of the few problems I've had with a producer was a conflict with Pedro Masó over one of the best interviews I've done in my life, which I did with Baltasar Porcel for the newspaper *Destino*. He asked me about the films I had made in Madrid, and I told him that I thought they were terrible, that they all had really stupid scripts. I was delighted with the interview. When it was published I got a telegram from Masó saying: "Teresa, you don't need to come back. Contract cancelled" [laughs]. Masó would make me sign contracts for three films a year without knowing what films I was going to be in. I insisted that he had to let me

read the scripts first, because that was essential for an actor, and he refused. That's why we ended up mad at each other.

Other times, you may find that what you imagine while you're reading the script is different from what the director ultimately looks for in your character. That happened to me on *La ocasión* [The Occasion] (José Ramón Larraz, 1978), which was almost a pornographic film. The script should have been thrown out; it was about a middle-class woman who meets a tall, very handsome hippie and falls in love with him, and this is her first experience of sex. What happened is that later, during filming, everything was a lot raunchier than it was in the script. I discussed it with the director on the set and he said: "Don't worry because I'll cut it out in the editing room". But when I went to Madrid to dub the film he hadn't cut a thing and that was when I said: "it's over". I gave up on cinema and went to Begur, on the Costa Brava, to open a restaurant. When the censors started to lighten up, nude scenes became commonplace and it all went crazy. That's why I stopped doing films. It wasn't because I was embarrassed by the nudity, but rather because of the lack of good taste. Not too long ago I did a nude magazine cover, with perfect lighting. I wouldn't even be embarrassed to strip off now if a good director suggested it. I'm in favour of showing your age and of not concealing the beauty of older people. But what was going on in those days made no sense.

The era of nudity involved, as you suggest, a poorly managed openness to eroticism. Instead of an advance in the narration of women's desire and sexuality, your experience would suggest the construction of a salacious cinematic image where the actress's body tends to be objectified, even against her will. In the 1970s you had already won the Lady Europa contest and we could say that you were considered a sex symbol. How did you experience the exposure of your body, both inside and outside the industry, in a context defined by the emergence of a sexuality that had been repressed for so long, and in general oriented towards the satisfaction of male desire? Do you think that the weight of long years of moralistic censorship had repercussions as well on audience reception?

In the profession I was lucky because I've always seen things coming. When I won Lady Europa, the man who ran the festival invited me to dinner—because in those events you were always invited to dinner, not to lunch—and he started touching, asking me how much it would cost, how much money... I ran out. There were also a few occasions when I was offered "help" to get into more important films and I replied that that would be prostitution. At the agency, when we trained girls, we always told them to ignore those kinds of proposals because they're swindles.

As for the audience, I received mainly anonymous letters commenting on what I wore. I remember one that I found very funny. I was doing a television show where I wore a rather low-cut dress and an anonymous person wrote to me saying: "How could you possibly go around showing what only cows are allowed to show?" I also had an unpleasant experience in *Tuset Street* (Jorge Grau, Luis Marquina, 1968). We were filming one night here in Barcelona, on the street Carrer Robadors, with the camera hidden on a balcony. I had to walk through the crowd, and all the men in the street touched my behind. I had to walk into a bar, which is where the production crew was waiting for me, and a prostitute there pulled me by the hair and told me: "Now you're young and thin, but you'll grow old and fat". In any case, the worst thing that happened to me was when I was working as a model and my 10-year-old son was told at school that I was a "whore". I suppose that the boy that told him that must have heard it at home, and that struck me as awful.

In those days there was still censorship, but I never had problems related to erotic content because at that time they really didn't let you do very

Image 4. *Una historia de amor* [A Love Story] (Jorge Grau, 1967)

much. It was the director and the scriptwriter who had the most problems because they were the ones who had to go through the prior screening process and get the censors' approval of the script. There was one director who would make two versions of his films: one for Spain and the other for more open countries, but I never worked with him. As for freedom of expression... Ahh! [sighs] In interviews I did have to pretend and say a bit of what they wanted to hear. Especially in the interviews I did in Madrid. I didn't have too much of a problem with it though, because pretending has always been something innate to me. Even at the beginning of my career, when I had a blow-up at home with my first husband (things I don't want to go into), I would arrive at the studio and they would say to me: "Oh, Gimpera, you're great, you're always smiling!". And I would think: "If you only knew".

"My job is to smile", says Gim in *Fata Morgana*. You talk about acting and pretending as something innate to you, and you say you've never followed any specific method as an actress, but have you preferred any particular directing approach or filmmaking style that has helped you to take direction? On the one hand, leaving aside the psychological or intellectual work of acting, and considering the actress's agency to be everything related to her image, her voice and her gestures, what effect did being dubbed have on you? In the 1960s and 1970s, direct sound was rare and in a lot of films your characters didn't have your real voice.

My method has always been totally intuitive. I always say that my brain is in communication with my body, and at every moment I know how to behave, but it isn't something I have to think about; it's automatic. It's intuition and versatility. So when I did a film I hardly ever really put myself into the character. In *Una historia de amor* [A Love Story] (Jorge Grau, 1967), for example, my character was giving birth and I had already had three children by then, but I didn't use my own experience for the film. There were films where the character had more of me in it, like *Fata Morgana*, but I've never seen myself portrayed in any film just as I really am. Directors generally haven't had much trouble working with me because I've always worked a lot by instinct. My expressions came naturally; they didn't direct me to do them, and repeating scenes over and over again was something that happened

to me very rarely. In any case, as I said before, I've always been very insecure about not having any training. That's why I've hardly done any theatre.

As for direction, what I've always liked is having the director in front of me. I've never liked when directors work from the monitor. Maybe it's because I was very used to [working with] photographers. In this sense, Pomés was the one who helped most to get things out of me that I didn't even know I had inside me. A bit like in *Blow-Up* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1966). I liked directors who encouraged you, and who would tell you if you didn't do it right. Directors at your side, like a guide. There were some who would help you and others who wouldn't. Gonzalo Suárez, for example, was fantastic, because he was also an actor. I also loved Pedro Lazaga: I didn't like the films we did together but as a director he was excellent, always helping, never angry. I've also always really liked working with new directors because they do it with so much excitement and enthusiasm... even if they get it wrong. The worst is working with someone who thinks they know it all.

Image 5. *Una breve vacanza* [A Brief Vacation] (Vittorio de Sica, 1973)

As for dubbing, in the films I did in Madrid they dubbed me partly because of my accent, because it wasn't Castilian enough. I never worked on a film with direct sound until *The Spirit of the Beehive*, where what I said on the set is what you hear in the film. In those stereotypically Spanish films you mentioned before, I didn't care whether they dubbed me. It was practically a norm by then and I never even thought about it because I'd finish one film and the following Monday I'd start on another. But there was one case of dubbing that did bother me: in *Course Completed* (Asignatura aprobada, 1987), where José Luis Garci dubbed me without telling me. I called him up and said: "When am I doing the dubbing?". And he replied: "Don't worry, I'll let you know". And then I came upon that strange voice in the cinema... It was my fault for not including it in my contract. I should have put in a clause stating that I had to do my own voice. It's a shame because we rehearsed for a week before filming and it had some really nice dialogue, very *sotto voce*, very intimate. The character was really interesting, a female painter with a young lover. The script was very good, and the film was even nominated for an Oscar. But I was really annoyed. There are a few directors I've worked with, and one of them is Garci, whose real desire, what they would really like, is to be actors. To show off. They really are *prima donnas*. They have a kind of leading-role complex. On the other hand, De Sica, for example, who had been an actor himself, was brilliant. First he would do the scene for you himself, and then you only had to copy it. It was quite incredible. And when we were shooting inside a church, for example, he would start reciting things so that the extras wouldn't get bored and he'd keep everyone entertained.

It's a shame because the truth is that your character in *Course Completed* was very interesting.

There was a whole speech about how quickly life passes and about recognising the image of maturity that really required the actress's own voice. You mention your experience with Vittorio De Sica. You've always said that you've done very few casting calls in your career. One was for De Sica. The other was for none other than Alfred Hitchcock.
The Hitchcock casting was an incredible story. An American journalist had done an interview with me about beauty and a little column with a picture of me came out in the American press. He was looking for an actress to play Juanita de Córdoba in *Topaz* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1969). I already knew that my accent in English didn't sound South American; it was more Nordic. And after reading the book and doing some research I thought I wasn't right for the part. But I went anyway. Everyone said to me: "Of course, Hitchcock, because you're blonde...!" But no. They made me a brunette.

I remember that Milan airport was shut down and I got to Hollywood twenty-four hours late, and I was travelling alone. I was so nervous... On the flight I kept waking up and repeating my lines in English. When I arrived, Hitchcock asked me: "Would you like a coffee?" And I replied that I'd prefer a *carajillo* [coffee with a dash of brandy], but nobody knew what it was [laughs]. I was used to the Spanish film industry, where at most you would get a sandwich, and suddenly I had a car waiting at the door, a "dialect coach" for my English, accommodation at the Beverly Hills Hotel, all first class. The day of the audition there were even stand-ins on the set, which I'd never had before. They assign you one who is your height so you don't get tired. It was also a shock to see the costume designer, Edith Head, this woman who had won so many Oscars. Inside the studios there were a lot of bungalows and costume design had its own one. I went in and I had two brand new dresses to choose from: one maroon and the other yellow. They treated me like a star. Hitchcock came over to make-up and gave orders to give me olive skin and a black wig. And before doing the audition I had to sign a six-movie contract with Universal if I was chosen.

And in the scene, the first thing I had to do was serve a glass of brandy, and that was a baptism of fire because when you're nervous your hands shake. But I got it perfect. Hitchcock came over and gave me instructions after the first take. "And now we're going to do it this way, and this way", until he came right up to me in a close-up. He wasn't especially friendly; he was very cold. When we finished he said: "Thank you very much, Mrs. Gimpera. Have a nice trip home". And then, on the flight back, I got drunk [laughs]. On the flight they started offering champagne and that was how I released the tension. I remember that when we took off I saw all the lights of Los Angeles and my eyes filled with tears. Such a pretty thing, so beautiful... And you know, I've gone back to the city many times, but that memory... Then they sent me a cheque for an amount similar to what I would have been paid to do a film here in Spain. But I'd known beforehand that it wasn't going to work out with Hitchcock. Not for that film, at least.

How curious that Hitchcock would turn you into a brunette. The women you've played reflect the type of European actress more typical of the French New Wave, but your screen image was sometimes shaped by that idea of the Hitchcock blonde. An example is your portrayal in *The Exquisite Cadaver* (Las crueles, Vicente Aranda, 1969), with that hair bun reminiscent of Kim Novak's in *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958). Did you have any inspiration for your acting or style when you began your film career? Is it true that you've sometimes been compared to Grace Kelly?
Yes. In fact, at the time that Grace Kelly got married, I was bold enough to send a letter to the Palace of Monaco, saying that if Ms. Kelly ever wanted to make film again I could serve as a her double because people in the street always told me I looked like her. At that time I wasn't an actress, just a model, but I thought that if I got into films I'd probably find a job. And I got a reply! They said thank you very much, but Her Highness does not intend to return to the screen.

The members of the Barcelona School used to joke with me in the beginning, telling me that I looked like Doris Day. But they said it just to rile me. When I met Craig, he told me that I reminded him of Marlene Dietrich, although he was referring not to her public image, but her private persona. They had been lovers and he'd lived with her for a year, when he must have been around twenty-five and Marlene around fifty. And apparently Dietrich's personality was a lot like mine. I remember he told me that people thought Dietrich was just as sophisticated in real life as she was on screen, but that she also liked to cook, hang around the house, do household chores, things that have nothing to do with the lives of the stars.

Listening to you gives the sensation that you feel more in tune with art films and defining projects of your generation. What is your opinion on films that are perhaps more marginal but nevertheless ground-breaking and controversial? For example, *Aoom* (Gonzalo Suárez, 1970), which was screened only at the San Sebastián Film Festival and which was praised by Sam Peckinpah, but despised by Fritz Lang, President of the Jury (according to Gonzalo Suárez, he shifted his eye-patch onto his good eye so he didn't have to watch it). It is a visceral film, with constant tracking shots and close-ups on your face that are almost sensual. Did you see yourself as breaking new ground when you worked on films like these?

Yes, of course. Even though there wasn't any money in them they were much more fun to make. I'm thinking for example of *El hijo de María* [Son of Mary] (Jacinto Esteva, 1973). I played Joseph and Núria Espert was the Virgin Mary. In the end I took off my jacket and wig and revealed that Joseph was really a woman. I really liked the way films were made in Barcelona. It was a pleasure because you'd be reunited with a world you already knew. For example, in the scene of the last supper, everyone there was a friend of Jacinto's. For that film I signed a contract for a million pesetas if the film made any money, and as it didn't, I never got a cent [laughs].

As for *Aoom*, I'm really glad that you've brought that film up. I feel it was such a shame that Gonzalo didn't have more resources for a good production because the idea was wonderful, but there wasn't any money in that one either. We shot it in Asturias and when we were hungry they'd tell us to pick apples off the trees. In the film Lex Barker played my lover and that's when I realised just how bad some American actors are. It was an improvised, unscripted scene where we had to fight and he was terrified. The whole time he was saying: "I don't know what to say!" I just kept telling him: "Just argue with me!" When I did films like *Aoom*, where I was in front of the camera the whole time and facing all kinds of situations one after the next, I did have the feeling of constructing something based on my own persona; I wasn't just pretending.

Image 6. *The Exquisite Cadaver* (Las crueles, Vicente Aranda, 1969)

In these art films, your characters also tend to attract storylines of collusion and escapism in female characters who seem to want to break out of a backward and repressive atmosphere. In *The Exquisite Cadaver*, for example, you are a wife who reveals her true self and leaves her husband to make friends with Parker (Capucine), the woman who was blackmailing him, and run off with her. In *Una historia de amor*, your character does not judge Sara (Serena Vergano), your sister who is in love with your husband. In these characters there is a certain desire for transgression that is often made possible by the personalities of the actresses. Simón Andreu, the male lead in *Una historia de amor*, spoke recently about working with you both and claimed that "If you didn't tread carefully, they would eat you alive. But it's a pleasure for an actor to be eaten by actresses".[1] What do you think of this assertion of Andreu's and this interpretation of the roles?

What you observe about the ending to *The Exquisite Cadaver* is very interesting; indeed, it could be that my character is a liberated woman who goes off with a friend to punish her husband. I had always interpreted it as a suggestion of lesbian love between my character and Capucine's, but you have given me another way of understanding it that is also feasible.

As for *Una historia de amor*, that film was an experience I loved because after so much sophistication I was playing a pregnant woman, almost without make-up, and with a huge belly. It's something that happened to me again years later in *La guerra de papá* [Dad's War] (Antonio Mercero, 1977), where Mercero wanted me to look like a wreck and he gave me a wig, a bathrobe that was too tight for me, some typical housewife dresses that didn't really fit me… and I didn't care. But going back to what Simón said, I'm grateful for his words, but I find that in *Una historia de amor* my performance was very poor. I was frightened because it was one of my first films and I was working with Serena Vergano, who for me was a genuine actress, recognised in her country, and I felt uncomfortable.

We've spoken about relationships with actors and with directors, but not with other actresses. Throughout your career you've worked with a lot of stars, both Spanish and international. In a highly misogynist historical context, where rivalry between women was encouraged both on and off screen, what were the working relationships established between actresses like? Was there any actress you particularly admired either in Spanish cinema or on the international scene?

I became very good friends with Claudia Cardinale, who co-starred with me in *The Legend of Frenchie King* (Les pétroleuses, Christian-Jaque & Guy Casaril, 1971). I also developed a great friendship with Capucine while we worked on *The Exquisite Cadaver* together. She was a wonderful woman and her suicide was a big shock to [Catalan photographer] Colita and to me. Among Spanish actresses I particularly admired the Gutiérrez Caba sisters, Julia and Irene, and also Emilio, whom I worked with. They were people who came from a family of actors and they knew a lot about acting. I only ever had problems with actresses who were real *prima donnas*. In those cases there really was more rivalry. My relationship with Sara Montiel, for example, was impossible. We worked together on *Tuset Street* and we shot a part of it in the Bocaccio. They had to stop filming because a podium collapsed with Montiel standing on it. They had put too many spotlights on it and it gave way under the weight. She got really angry. She was already annoyed with the lighting they were using on her because Jorge Grau wanted to portray her as an ageing star and they were using a low light that didn't make her look good. Actually, low light doesn't make anyone look good. They ended up firing Grau and replacing him with Luis Marquina. In any case, my problem with Sara was that she had a kind of complex with me. One day we had a scene together and when they were filming her I did my dialogue with her to support her. When it was time to shoot my close-up she left and I had to do the scene talking to the wall. That didn't seem to me to

be what a good actor should do. Apart from being a snub, I think it shows a lack of professionalism.

Furthermore, Sara Montiel's character in that film, Violeta Riscal, also has a certain rivalry with your character, Teresa. There is a moment where you ask her whether you've met because you think you've seen her before in a hairdresser's, and she replies "well, I don't ever remember you doing my hair" as if to suggest a class difference between your characters and, in a certain way, a difference in terms of the types of stars you each are. In *Tuset Street* she represents El Molino, the music hall that stands for vaudeville's resistance against its own disappearance, and you are the image of the Bocaccio, the freshness of modern Barcelona night-life. Although the age difference between the two of you at the time of filming was not significant, you embody two very different eras—and in a way two very different Spains. Do you agree with this observation? Do you think the star system of that time is very different from today's?

In *Tuset Street*, Sara Montiel was supposed to be a former star whose career was over, and she refused to play that role. I didn't understand how one of the most important Spanish actresses in the world could have a complex like that. Personally, I think rivalry between women existed then and will always exist, but this was really an absurd rivalry. I've also noticed that lofty and distant attitude in other actresses, like Brigitte Bardot, who worked with me on the film *The Legend of Frenchie King*. You'd say something to her and she wouldn't even answer. She always went around with an entourage of God knows how many people because she couldn't be alone and she would be outraged if they didn't recognise her in a bar. She was a bit unbearable. She put in her contract that she could control all the close-ups in the film, and in the only close-up of me, I look cross-eyed [laughs]. She was very pretty but very insecure and a little stupid, and I've never been able to bear that combination. That's a diva for you; I've never been one myself.

What I admire more about anyone who achieves stardom is privacy. I think that the moment someone sells their personal life they lose all the mystery and prestige and can no longer be considered a true star. In this sense, I really like contemporary stars like Penélope Cruz, a good actress who has made it big in the United States and Italy, and who, in addition to working hard for it, has kept her personal life private. It's one thing to entertain the public and quite another to entertain on TV with nonsense.

The press respected me because I made them respect me. I've never sold anything and in fact I took the magazine *¡Hola!* to court when my son died because they put me on the cover crying, with make-up on, and it was a still-frame from one of my films. It has been important for me to be able to control my image, and I've been very careful with it because I have a family and I believe respect is very important.

Although you insist that you became an actress by accident, you took part in films of great importance to the history of Spanish cinema. Is there one in your filmography that you feel especially proud of? And one that you regret not having done or having rejected?

One of the films I feel proudest of is *The Spirit of the Beehive*, which was the hardest role I've played in my whole life. On a day off during filming, Fernando [Fernán Gómez] asked me "Teresa, what are we doing in this film?" Because we didn't understand a thing [laughs]. There was no way that Víctor Erice could explain things to you; he didn't know how to make things clear. I remember him grabbing me and moving me around like a doll and one day I had to stop him and say: "Tell me what it is you want me to do". But the trouble was he didn't know how to explain it to me. I gave him one week more than was in my contract and stayed on to work more days than I had to for free because I could see the poor man was overwhelmed, and it was a film that really was worth making. I'm proud to have done it and I'm thrilled

that it is included in that American book of the *1001 Movies You Must See Before You Die*.

And out of the films I haven't done, I think I regret having turned down the leading role in *Peppermint Frappé* (Carlos Saura, 1967). Now I think about it and say to myself: "What a fool I was..." I had signed the contract, but then I made up a story and said I'd signed onto another film in Rome. In reality, I pulled out for love. Craig was in Italy, and as it was hard to find time together I wanted to go and be with him. Saura and [Elías] Querejeta came to the airport to see if they could get me to change my mind, but they didn't manage it. The truth is deep down I'm very stupid; I often allow my feelings to lead me. Now I think it was an opportunity I had that I missed. But anyway, maybe I would have ended up marrying Saura, like Geraldine [Chaplin] did!

It is very clear to us from studying your career that there are a lot of female icons of Spanish cinema of the 1960s and 1970s who would not have existed without Teresa Gimpera. It could be said that you opened the door on the representation of a different type of femininity: a woman more in possession of her time, her abilities, and her desire. Do you feel you have reflected a personal style? And if so, do you view yourself as the creator of that style?
There was a study of advertising that took surveys of upper-middle-class women to find out what they thought of me, and all of them said "Ah, Teresa Gimpera, she's lovely, we really like her, she's fantastic, she's so pretty!" But when they asked them: "Would you like to be a model?" they all replied that they'd love to but that their husbands wouldn't let them. I don't know, I had the good fortune of being free. I've been a hard worker who by luck and by accident was different from most of the women of that time. And deep down I also felt different; I believed I'd lived more. I had travelled, I'd worked on a lot of films internationally, and all of that fills your life in a different way. As for a personal style, I've realised that I've always been very recognisable. In the street everyone still recognises me, so I guess I've changed but not too much. Now that I'm older it's strange, but I've done the odd audition for roles of my age and it turns out that I'm no good at playing little old ladies. A few years ago I worked on a few episodes of the series *El cor de la ciutat* [The Heart of the City] (2000-2009), but I played myself. Just like I did in *Fata Morgana*, my first film. I guess I'm too Teresa Gimpera...

An image of freedom and modernity that women yearn for, but that perhaps they can't attain?
I have some good times now with women of my age, and sometimes I give them a talk on cinema. We have a great time, but we've had very different lives. A lot of women of my generation can't help but tell me: "I've really envied you your life..." Because while I was doing so many things they were at home, waiting for their husbands, who might have had a lover in some other flat somewhere... anyway. Maybe you're right. Maybe I helped a little to rescue Spanish modernity. ■

NOTES

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1 Quote taken from Andreu, S. (guest) (2020, 8 February). Episode #5.23. Talk: Jorge Grau [TB program]. Quintanar, F. (director). *Historia de nuestro cine*. Madrid: "La 2" TV channel.

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RESCUING SPANISH MODERNITY. A DIALOGUE WITH TERESA GIMPERA

Abstract
Dialogue with the actress Teresa Gimpera about her film career. The conversation examines her connection with the world of fashion, the different cinematographic roles that she played throughout her career, her fit within the various types of archetypes typical of the star system of Francoist and European cinema, as well as her personal trace and authorship while representing a free and modern femininity.

Key words
Teresa Gimpera; actress; Francoism; star-system; modernity; archetypes; eroticism; authorship.

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SALVAR LA MODERNIDAD ESPAÑOLA. DIÁLOGO CON TERESA GIMPERA

Resumen
Diálogo con la actriz Teresa Gimpera acerca de su trayectoria fílmica. La conversación repasa su vinculación con el mundo de la moda, los diferentes roles cinematográficos que encarnó a lo largo de su carrera, su encaje dentro de los diversos tipos de arquetipos propios del *star system* del cine franquista y europeo así como su sello personal y autoral a la hora de representar una feminidad libre y moderna.

Palabras clave
Teresa Gimpera; actriz; franquismo; *star-system*; modernidad; arquetipos; erotismo; autoría.

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WHEN FIRE RISES UP FROM THE SOLES OF YOUR FEET: CREATIVE EXPERIENCES OF THE ACTRESS IN SPANISH CINEMA

introduction

GONZALO DE LUCAS

An actress works on the basis of physical qualities through which she constructs her character so that before a word is spoken, the spectator can see or intuit them in her physical expressions. In *Sunday's Illness* (La enfermedad del domingo, Ramón Salazar, 2018), we can discern that Chiara (Bárbara Lennie) was a heroine addict before it is actually mentioned; it is expressed without the use of any kind of descriptive, verbal or explicit psychology, or any exaggeration of gestures, but through a kind of internal embodiment. In *Magical Girl* (Carlos Vermut, 2014), Lennie moves as if she were recovering from a concussion, with an unsettlingly steady tension that could be interpreted as psychotic, alienated, menacing and unpredictable, a wounded character who has been miraculously stitched up and restrained, long before her scars are uncovered. In *Vania* (Carla Simón, 2020), Irene Escolar's pensive expression as she listens silently and attentively in the first group conversation reveals the secret intensity of her infatuation and her suffering, merely by showing how her gaze is turned inward, while conveying her sensitivity to others with eyes whose emotion is neither active nor hopeful, but mournful. Actresses would probably have to connect with experiences—not necessarily experienced in the first person, but at least observed or imagined—to be able to convey this form of autobiography through their own bodies, which should not be confused with the external elements—make-up, costume, hairstyle, repeated gestures—of a characterisation or portrayal. This embodiment involves elements that create experiences and feelings that the storyline itself will not need to spell out, which are integrated into

the actress's way of moving and speaking or in her facial expressions.

This corporeal construction can sometimes occur without movement, in a silence, or in the slightest gesture. The camera, of course, is a vision enhancer that amplifies the tiniest blink or eye movement. The film actress thus tends to prove more creative when she determines that bodily expression within her—a thought, an emotion—through containment, restraint, on the threshold of the visible, although there are moments when her expressiveness rises to more anxious and unstable registers, even to the point of breakdown. In *An Autumn Without Berlin* (Un otoño sin Berlín, Lara Izagirre, 2015), Irene Escolar holds in her screams and silences her desperation, trying to understand and console her boyfriend with dewy eyes that reveal something of the darkness within. In his memoirs, Josef von Sternberg wrote that «[t]o know what to reveal and what to conceal [...] is all there is to art» (Sternberg, 1987: 312). The expression of the invisible also seems to be one of the main tasks of the actress: the manifestation of what cannot be seen, the inner image of the Other or of alterity, presence in pensive form.

This creative work of performers cannot be dissociated from their ways of reciting or speaking their lines. In an episode of *Escenario 0* [Stage 0], the series of film recordings of contemporary plays recently produced for HBO, Irene Escolar and Bárbara Lennie star in the Pascal Rambert play *Hermanas* [Sisters] (Diego Postigo, 2020), where they use poeticised language that never seems artificial or forced, but instead is embodied, lived and felt. It is a tricky combination of poetic and philosophical abstraction and physical reality. This type of register sometimes appears in cinema, but it tends to be limited to very specific, distinctive films. Indeed, one of the challenges in cinema, a medium in which the word tends to be more naturalistic than it is in theatre, is the difficulty often involved in saying the simplest things:

Hermanas (Diego Postigo, 2020)

how to make a simple greeting believable and authentic. In *Hermanas*, words glitter like daggers that wound the actress's bodies. It is a highly representative piece by two young actresses whose work has matured through a restless exploration of the difficult turns of performing, the surgical precision with which an emotion can be triggered, the quest for approaches that are neither neat nor showy.

The history of gestures contains hidden layers and repressed forms, and ideas of figurative transformation, as cinema shows how characters are portrayed on the outside as well, by the way they look, behave, or present—and represent—themselves to others. A study of actresses can reveal the potential of changes of image—in the sense described by Godard in *Changer d'image* (1982): «We need to show resistance of an image to change» / «you can change between images, and what we must show is that "in-between"»—through the appearance of gestural forms that can subvert the iconic and ideological patterns of their era.

In Irene Escolar's portrayal of Queen Joanna the Mad in *The Broken Crown* (La corona partida, Jordi Frades, 2016), despite the extremely conservative approach of the production, the image conveyed is very different from the stereotypical depictions of the character as a symbol of the hysterical woman. Escolar offers an alternative reading that portrays her above all as an intelligent woman struggling with a profound inner turmoil, the victim of a situation that has left her totally isolated and oppressed by the powerful men around her. The power of gestures often remains concealed, neither visible to censors nor assimilated into the ideological hegemony of their era. Aurora Bautista began her career with a histrionic performance of Queen Joanna in *Madness for Love* (Locura de amor, Juan de Orduña, 1948), a role that made her a star. But when we see her many years later in *Aunt Tula* (La tía Tula, Miguel Picazo, 1964) she is a different woman, in complete control of her self-representation. In *Aunt Tula*, where she portrays an apparently frigid, puritanical woman (that is, in accordance with the standards of her day), a divergence or resistance is generated through her body that is perhaps much easier to read today. Rather than deprivation, her restraint hints at a form of control over her own desire and of a refusal to acquiesce, while her entire social context presses her to submit and give herself to her rapist brother-in-law, Ramiro. Great actresses generally take control of their self-representation rather than limiting themselves to being subjected to a psychological depiction and moulded by a desire imposed by others. Such actresses break stereotypes, often in subtle ways, in performances with creative repercussions that are often not fully recognised at the time, but only appreciated years later when their repertoires of gestures have been assimilated even to the point of becoming commonplace. ■

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discussion

1. Does Spanish cinema limit actresses too much to certain stereotypes? What other types of representations could be explored and how could they be developed? Is there a recognisable contrast between the models of other eras and contemporary models?

Bárbara Lennie

Since I always work on the basis of a kind of truth, or an unconstructed or transparent performance, I think what I've been offered most are roles within strictly realist or everyday styles, films that portray reality. Now I'd like to do things different from that. Not for diversion, but to keep growing: I'd like to move away from there and be able to play women a little more distant from me and from the realities I know. If I get offered a film more like what I've done up to now I'd love it, but I would try to change my way of tackling it. In fact, in theatre, actresses have more room to play around, which allows you to jump right into another reality. I see that in Irene's career, for example. In my case, it hasn't really been like that and I'd really like it to be. Lately what has been interesting me most is flexibility: not to lose my commitment to what I do, but to change the place I work from and find a slightly different approach. I wish we could do what Aurora Bautista did, or Victoria Abril, who had some amazing years like that, the way she took possession of her characters and reinvented them.

For example, I'd like to make a film that is profoundly sexual, but well done, something like *Body Heat* (Lawrence Kasdan, 1981). There was something in that film which, looking at it now, is

Hermanas (Diego Postigo, 2020)

really suggestive, especially because she [Kathleen Turner] is a passionate woman. Female desire hasn't been portrayed very often in Spanish cinema, even in films by female filmmakers like Isabel Coixet or legendary films like Julio Medem's work. We still have a long way to go. But now there are series with young women acting, writing and directing their own stories, like Leticia Dolera. I'm also thinking of foreign productions like *Fleabag* (Phoebe Waller-Bridge, Two Brothers Pictures: 2016-2019), *I May Destroy You* (Michaela Coel, BBC: 2020-), *Pure* (Aneil Karia & Alicia MacDonald, Channel 4: 2019), where I do think you find a different depiction of female sexuality. I've just finished *The Mess You Leave Behind* (El desorden que dejas, Carlos Montero, 2020), a miniseries for Netflix that has a lot to say about desire. Bearing in mind that it's an adaptation of a novel and that there were scripts that were already set, I've tried to make a woman who feels desire, rather than one who is the object of a story of desire. I think the erotic genre is great because I love to watch it and I love to read it, but it's hard to do it well.

They say that once actresses turn forty they stop getting interesting film roles, and that's surprising to me, especially because the forties are really a prime mature age for women. That's why you can never let your guard down at all, because an actress's situation is really very precarious. I admit that I only became aware of this quite recently, and I've been arrogant enough to think that actresses didn't need to do anything apart from defending our characters or taking a particular stance with a director or a script. It's important to be aware that you form part of a very big group and that we really need to support one another, with kind of a sense of community.

Irene Escolar

In my case, I've found a variety of depictions of women's conflicts in theatre, as that's where I've had more opportunities to express myself and to work, find or look for things, and also on many different levels. In life we all have a lot of registers, which are revealed when you take off your mask. The acting profession allows you to take off all your masks and go deeper into yourself. It offers you keys to open up things you have inside, but buried, hidden. Theatre makes it possible to do this, to attain more extreme and varied sides of yourself. Cinema tends to delve much more inside a kind of realism, and that's something that Bárbara has done much more of than I have. In fact, *Tell Me Who I Am* (Dime quién soy, Eduard Cortés, Movistar+: 2020), the series I've just finished, which I've been working on for a whole year, is the first time I've felt that I've dealt with conflicts that have nothing to do with young woman issues.

In that quest for alternative or more varied depictions, for me there is an element of personal research that is very important for constructing a character. For example, when I got the first scripts for my role as Queen Joanna of Castile, I felt she was portrayed the same way as always, so I did some research and I read a lot, and I even went to Toledo to meet with a professor who had written a book about her, and who was the only one who saw her with dignity and he explained some extraordinary things about her life. I took this book to the screenwriter, to see whether we could change certain details and at least include some untold things that were documented and had really happened to her. It was very interesting what happened to this woman, but her story has always been told from a very biased point of view. So some of the real facts of her life could be recovered in the film. She had a very hard life and it's very sad that she's always been seen as a hysterical woman or as sexually out of control, when in reality she was a woman who was mistreated by all the men who were close to her. I imagine all the pain she must have felt and the kind of life she must have had. With that in mind, the way I played her was my way of giving her back a little of her dignity.

All of this ultimately has to do with who tells the stories, what stories are shown, and what kinds of women we're used to seeing. I remember that when *The Handmaid's Tale* (Bruce Miller, MGM: 2017-) came out, not long ago, I thought: «Wow, great choice, Elisabeth Moss has a very different look». I surprised myself when I thought: «She's a special woman, really beautiful, but different; she has a different nose...» It was a different kind of look. But after that, and thanks to her, and to other actresses who were also different, we've started seeing other kinds of women. It's something that is gaining ground little by little, so that now we can see an actress like Phoebe Waller-Bridge, who is on *Fleabag* (Two Brothers Pictures/ Amazon Studios, 2016-2019), that extraordinary series where she is the protagonist and where she tells the story. And again, it's about a woman with extraordinary personality and charisma. But the truth is that a few years ago I would have thought it very strange to see a woman like that starring in a series or a film.

Albert Elduque

I think it's hazardous to talk about stereotypes, but in Bárbara's and Irene's work you can identify a recurring character: the young woman who is trying to redefine her life and who goes back to her family for a meeting of confrontation or rediscovery. It's the idea of the daughter who is trying to understand and assert who she is, what she wants and what she can offer the world. In Bárbara's case, the paradigmatic example would be *María (and Everybody Else)* (María (y los demás), Nely Reguera, 2016), whose protagonist lives with her father, who is recovering from cancer, and at the same time she wants to become a writer and is suffering from an existential crisis that moves between her profession, her roots, and deciding where she wants to be. The figure of the daughter is also central, although with variations, in *The Damned* (Los condenados, Isaki Lacuesta, 2009) and *Petra* (Jaime Rosales, 2018). In Irene's case, her character in *An Autumn Without Berlin* returns home to the little Basque town of Amorebieta after living in Canada and tries to rebuild her relationship with her former boyfriend, her father, and an old friend. And there are other examples with actresses of the same generation, like Nausicaa Bonnín in *Three Days with the Family* (Tres dies amb la familia, Mar Coll, 2009) or Núria Gago in *Family Tour* (Liliana Torres, 2013). All of these examples, except for *Petra* and *The Damned*, are the first films by female directors and all of them star actresses of a similar age, which leads me to believe that this kind of role reflects certain generational concerns like family conflicts and the need for freedom. I don't think it's something as simplistic as a stereotype; it is more of a character type that reflects the feelings of an era and the social issues that are being debated.

In the history of Spanish cinema we can find films that deal with the same theme. For example, *Life Goes On* (El mundo sigue, Fernando Fernán Gómez, 1965) is about the confrontation between two sisters who want to rise out of poverty: one sister, played by Lina Canalejas, tries to do it through family sacrifice and moral integrity; the other, portrayed by Gemma Cuervo, by using sex unscrupulously for the purpose of social climbing. It is a struggle that will have a tragic ending. We might venture the hypothesis that in the past these films represented two poles of female identity in a more dichotomous form and with highly charged dramatic dimensions, while in contemporary cinema the conflict is depicted as a process that is more complex and sometimes painful, although not always devastating, that everyone can (and should) get through.

Gonzalo de Lucas

It is common in Spanish cinema, because of the industrial aspect of the medium and the conservative system that tends to control film production, that many actresses get stereotyped, trapped in ideological moulds and recurring tropes.

Hermanas (Diego Postigo, 2020)

Nevertheless, an actress embodies subjectivities that offer alternatives to the forms serving as the standards for their age; for example, these days it is very important to show women taking ownership and control of their desire, rather than being passive objects of the desire of the other (whether that «other» is the filmmaker, another character, or the spectators), or to show a person who has been raised with certain sexual codes discovering or revealing other sexual possibilities within herself, also through contradictions. The physical, bodily, visible manifestation of this work is very important, because actresses are referential images, and their bodies can represent new standards—through gestures, movements, and gazes—and become models for change. I think Irene Escolar and Bárbara Lennie's work is a great example of this, for the way they foreground intelligence and a bold, unique very human sensibility in their openness and in their vulnerability. They are both actresses capable of preserving their inscrutability and mystery; I think artistic activity tends to be closely associated with the capacity to give up or eschew rhetorical and exhibitionist frills, what Buñuel referred to as the aesthetically irreproachable.

2. What types of experiences and transformations emerge when we look at cinema through the trajectory of an actress over the course of her career? Is the entry of more women into the Spanish film industry changing the way it operates?

Bárbara Lennie

When I went on the TV show *Versión española* to present *Petra* with [director] Jaime Rosales, they surprised me with a video compiling images from my career, from *No Pain, No Gain* (Más pena que Gloría, Víctor García León, 2001), my first film, through to the present. I was totally stunned. It was pretty exciting, especially because I don't tend to re-watch my own films. Suddenly you see how you've changed in front of the camera and how your life and your identity have been recorded there in a way. In the end, whether you want it or not, there is something that happens, I mean, that captures you. There is something of your momentum, your soul, your limitations, things you like and things you don't, which cinema, if its gaze has been attentive, has been able to tell. Every woman I've portrayed takes me to a specific moment and a specific experience. In fact, an actor's career often depends on their growth as a person, which is something you can't control. I've often had to ask myself: Why is this not coming to me now, why can't I get it? Well, because I can't. I mean, because in your core, inside you, in your growth, you're not there; you're much more self-conscious than you think, or you're much less expressive than you think. As much as you may sometimes try to go faster, and try to make certain things happen, there is something in this job that doesn't allow you to skip stages. And sometimes it's when you're most relaxed that things start to flow. On the other hand, when I think about some of the films I did years ago, like *Magical Girl*, I don't know how I would do them now, because I'm a different person; the same, but different. That character was very specific and yet abstract. And at the time, because Carlos Vermut didn't share much about how he wanted it to be done, or what was happening to the character, I had to follow my intuition, an act of faith, an image, I'd almost say.

While doing *Escenario 0* we've noticed a big difference between the generation of professionals who are around fifty and the younger directors, both in cinema and in theatre. There is a significant change that has begun, at least in terms of how we connect with each other and the question of status. The structures are changing, the whole operation is becoming more cross-sectional and horizontal, and I like that. But it has been a hard-fought battle. Now a lot of female directors, screenwriters, producers and distributors are bursting onto the scene. I've only worked with one female director, Nely Reguera in *María (and Everybody Else)*, and I found it pretty clear that working with a woman is nothing like working with a man. But I can't generalise either, because I'm sure it's not the same working with Nely as working with Gracia Querejeta or Angélica Liddell, for example. They're all very different. Also, in *María (and Everyone Else)*, a lot of things that I see in myself are depicted. And not just me, but also a lot of my female friends, who identified with it in one way or another. We're seeing the development of a way of thinking about women that was really missing before. It's not clear any more what standards we should follow or what life decisions we should be making, and that's going to change the stories we see in films.

Irene Escolar

After doing so much theatre, whenever I work on a film I find it really enjoyable. One of the reasons is because in cinema you can express things much more subtly than you can in theatre and make them visible. The camera is a very powerful tool, and I really like the nuances you can work with and bring out. In theatre I think it's wonderful

that it's happening for people who are right there and experience it in that moment, although at the same time that can be a kind of limitation. That's why when I look back on my career, there's a lot of performances that perhaps have lasted in the memories of the people who saw them, and in my personal growth and my development as an actress, but they're not preserved for posterity. In cinema, if I'm honest, I haven't done anything that I could say «I'm so proud of that!» Apart from *An Autumn Without Berlin*, but that was years ago now. There aren't many times that I've been able to take risks with what I was doing, except in terms of the opportunities I've been given to do films; where I've been able to move away from naturalism or from dialogue with meaning. Our work also involves imagining parallel worlds, different people, imagining things far beyond your own reality. That's why these days when I see a character like Queen Joanna, so different from me, it surprises me that in such a restrictive production context I could take risks and do some things that I would describe as daring, in the middle of those fits of angst and madness. It's a performance that I feel proud of for having been able to take risks under those conditions.

I feel that there's a very subjective kind of heart to this profession, which every actor has to make their mark on. It's really brave what Bárbara said, about being aware of what you want to do and what you've done up to now, and then deciding on how you'd like to tackle what that lies ahead or what comes next. That means she is an artist in constant evolution and that she is always reconsidering and rethinking things. It's really brave because the usual approach is to take the comfortable option. But I personally like to feel that after doing one thing for a while, I can tackle it from a different angle, to get a different result. That's what it means to be in constant creation, creativity, and self-observation. Acting can be a pretty addictive vocation. In his theory of *Duende*, Lorca talked about a kind of fire that rises up from the soles of your feet. If you reach a point where you feel something like that, you know that you can't let go of it. It's something I feel on every opening night.

Throughout this process, in the possible changes that we can make or that can occur, the person you work with is also very important, because there are even older directors who are much more modern than some young people you might come across... So it has a lot to do with the individual, where they're from, their background, their influences, in relation to yours as well, and in human terms, what implications these have, if any, on the project and how it is conveyed to you.

In my case, I've worked with very few female directors. In theatre, I've worked with Carlota Ferrer, in film with Lara Izagirre, and now a little with Carla Simón. That's not many, really. Although the work dynamics are changing, there's still a long way to go. Because even the men who want to change, and who think about these changes, when they have to be expressed in actions, or in things that would mean a loss for them, or in things where there's a risk involved, it's not so clear that they want to change, unfortunately. This is something we've been able to confirm from experience.

Albert Elduque

Exploring film history through the careers of performers is extremely thought-provoking because it allows you to rethink the categories we normally work with, such as aesthetic movements, filmmakers or producers. In the specific case of actresses, this also entails a gender perspective that is very necessary. The results of such studies are always surprising, because they lead us to films that in other circumstances we would overlook but that acquire a special meaning when considered in light of an acting career. For example, I recently watched the film *Searching for Monica* (El secreto de Mónica, 1962), a Spanish-Argentine co-production directed by José María Forqué and starring Carmen Sevilla. The film tells the story

of a man (Jardel Filho) who arrives by chance in a rural town in Argentina where he discovers his wife's past, reconstructed through the testimonies of various characters. I don't think anyone would identify this film as an important milestone in Forqué's filmography, but it is very interesting to consider it critically in relation to other films starring Carmen Sevilla, because her role as the wife has a mournful quality, something you don't find in either her early films as a young girl who invariably ends up getting married or the erotic comedies she made in the late 1960s. Moreover, in one of the most memorable scenes in the film she dances an absolutely wild mambo, with much more of a high-voltage erotic frenzy than the flamenco performances that had made her famous in the 1950s, in which the seduction has a much more ritualistic flavour. In terms of both the story and the performance, *Searching for Monica*, which from other perspectives would be merely a footnote, emerges as a key moment in Carmen Sevilla's acting career.

Gonzalo de Lucas

You can discover a lot by watching actress retrospectives. To begin with, you can see roles that are very different from the image associated with her, parts that have been forgotten and that may make you more open in terms of the way you normally look at her, focusing on the style of the director. We have a very strong analytical tradition and critical framework for interpreting a film based on its mise-en-***scène***, but tracking an actress's career brings out contrasts and differences that we might never notice without taking this particular point of view. A lot of criticism involves knowing how to choose a potential focalisation, and the more detailed it is the more unpredictable and unbiased it may seem to you. Over the course of her career, an actress can undergo a lot of transformations and image changes, pointing to possibilities, disruptions or iconic transgressions; following her through her films can also provide a better view or understanding of the way she expresses herself, through her body or gestures, and the indirect way she does it (often in a way that could slip the notice of the censors).

Watching an actress retrospective also brings out all kinds of time associations. When I watch *Every Song Is About Me* (Todas las canciones hablan de mí, Jonás Trueba, 2010) now, I remember when I saw it ten years ago, but I also consider it comparatively against subsequent images of Bárbara Lennie. Thanks to the underlying documentary nature of cinema, the relationship between Bárbara and Jonás Trueba at that time, when they were a couple, is inscribed there; the interaction between the man filming and the woman who is filmed. In this sense, it is similar to looking at a family album, to re-viewing the past. But it also becomes clear that Bárbara was a different person at that time, with other experiences, and that is evident in her look or in her way of talking; and at the same time, looking at it comparatively now, you can see her potential for transformation, which in part is inherent to art or poetry, according to the definition of its function offered by Elias Canetti: the guardian of metamorphoses. The work of the actress has this potential, which sometimes is totally dormant in the spectator, and encapsulates or concentrates it in a synthesis of time and a dimension of play that holds an extraordinary power for the audience. This hints at a different history of cinema, involving the transformations of the actors' bodies and the associative memory of their images, the multiple nature of the self.

3. What work methods are there to combine technique with emotion, so that the former doesn't freeze the latter? How can we posit a defence of the poetic word, as recited in *Hermanas*, also in relation to the difficulties that people have today expressing their experiences verbally?

Bárbara Lennie

For that to happen (or we like to think it happens) in *Hermanas*, it's a two-sided job: on the one hand, to be a profoundly technical actor, and have the ability to hold up the script in the mouth alone and to convey it; and on the other, to push all that beyond something merely discursive, excessively rational or excessively poetic, which in the end it doesn't transport you. That's why I think that for a playwright and director like Pascal Rambert, casting is very important. After he directed me in *La clausura del amor* (2015-2017), when he suggested I work on another play with any actress I wanted to, I chose Irene because she has that mix: she comes from a tradition that loves and cares about scripts, about the word, about the almost ritual, sacred space of the theatre; and at the same time she is a very grounded woman and very connected to the contemporary reality. I can't think of many people who are open in these two ways intersecting so organically.

When I say «he or she is a very technical actor», the problem is not that the actor looks technical to me, but that he or she looks bad, and that's why I look at the script. Technique is what allows you to make a script like *Hermanas* work. There are a lot of people who wouldn't even be able to deliver the first line, because here, contrary to what happens in the UK or Germany, we don't have that tradition or that education in our drama schools. But there are a lot of other things that have to do with being a technical actor, especially on a film

Hermanas (Diego Postigo, 2020)

set: knowing how it works, what lighting is for, how to move... All this also has to do with a work technique that can't be taught in schools. In fact, I don't know whether it can be learned at all except on the job, but it could at least be pointed out. When I finished studying in a school after four years, a lot of hours a day, I found that there were a lot of things that hadn't even been mentioned to me. I find it surprising, and I know that in that respect schools haven't changed.

There are a lot of jobs and professions where the importance of technique is obvious. I compare acting to mountaineering, or sports in general, or even performing surgery. In those cases there are things you need to know and you have to keep fine-tuning to get to a particular point: the peak of the mountain, cutting three seconds off your running time... In the acting profession everything is more abstract and it's not so clear where you need to get to or how you should do it. The techniques are many and varied, and fine-tuning the instrument involves sharpening your instinct and your creativity. That obviously involves reading, watching or writing, but also other activities like going for a walk, dancing, cooking... There's a heap of things. Ultimately, actors are like dabblers in everything who go here and there until finally we place ourselves at the service of a director to tell their stories the best way possible. To do that, you need to have as many tools and options as you can, but it's not always easy to know which ones they are and how they should be handled.

In every episode of *Escenario 0* there has been a commitment to the script in one way or another. In the end it has been what has made us stand out most in terms of selecting the plays, always keeping in mind that you're working for a content platform and that they also have to play their cards. In this sense, I admit that I find Pascal Rambert's continued defence of the word amazing. In contemporary theatre and scriptwriting it's almost a last bastion. There are many who feel that silence, or an image, or a body, or even an animal in the scene is more powerful and more stimulating than the word. But Pascal still defends the word and believes in the revolutionary, transformative capacity of discourse. The work process with him is always similar: spending a lot of time alone, at home, working and studying, and then rehearsing for eight to ten days. That's where he begins to intuit the nature of the piece, which is transformed and in reality never ends. Even after a year and a half of touring with *Hermanas*, I don't feel I have the show under control and I still feel giddy before each performance.

Irene Escolar

In the case of *Hermanas*, the biggest challenge is being able to mix the technical and emotional sides. We needed to be very clear that it's a script that you need to breathe in, and obviously you need some technical ability at the level of diction and especially of knowing what you're saying and what you're saying it for. That, you could say, would be one side. And then there's the question of bringing the script alive, in the present, which is always a huge challenge, but even greater in a play of this kind, where you're not speaking in colloquial or realistic language, and the text is highly philosophical and poetic, and every word has weight and can be biting. When we filmed *Hermanas*, all of this had to be done even more in the present, if possible, and even more specific, because we had the camera up very close. We also did it as theatre, but obviously the languages are different. We filmed *Hermanas* one year after we had learned the script, rehearsed, presented the play and taken it on tour. Although we had to review it, rethink it and re-study it, it was already inside us in a very particular way. The script wasn't in our heads anymore; it had really taken root in our bodies. And that enabled us to reach that level in just three days of filming, eight hours a day, and to give it the life, the thoughts and nuances that we wanted. And with a camera up so close that's how it had to be.

The play maintains an emotional charge, a brutal energy at every moment, even when the debate takes a breath there is a load of tension. You need to work with a positively military approach to bring to life a script of this kind, where you never stop changing the line of thought, especially because there were fifteen- or twenty-minute shots, like in the two monologues at the end, where each of us had a camera and we filmed it in one go. We were soldiers of the word, soldiers of our work, even though filming *Hermanas* was profoundly enjoyable on an artistic level, as a life experience and in many other ways. It's hard for an actress to get a script like this one. I see musicians or conductors in an orchestra, who have a score and work for hours and hours to get those notes right. And in a way (and this doesn't always happen), we had to work on a very deep level too, to take strange positions and work with really fierce discipline. Pascal pushes you to the limit so that you leave your rational self behind and whatever resonates is the emotional and physical instrument; you put reason on hold and sustain yourself in the visceral. It's exhausting, but afterwards you feel so proud! I feel they're projects that can go off track if you don't know how to use those tools or you don't have them.

With Bárbara, in relation to *Escenario 0*, we wanted these plays, which were intended for theatre audiences, and which perhaps for that reason exist in a bubble, to be accessible to a different range of people who probably aren't in the habit of seeing productions like these in our language, or these forms of expression and of using language. Because if you don't go to the theatre it's unlikely you'll have access to this kind of verbal register, and I'm thinking here of young people. In our world, the word has been trivialised, and not much value is given to study and critical thinking. That's why the really surprising reception it has had is so valuable to us, because a lot of people have seen it and I don't think I would have

Hermanas (Diego Postigo, 2020)

imagined that there would have been so much interest in this defence of the word. As soon as you enter, the word takes you somewhere else, or affects or excites you and puts you in a different place to what you're used to seeing. It's very hard to find scripts with dialogues that are so intelligent and well-constructed, where the conflicts have several layers beneath them, and not just one superficial dimension.

Albert Elduque

As a spectator, the first time I saw *Hermanas* I felt overwhelmed by the intensity of the dispute between the two protagonists, but when I came back to it I was able to appreciate the dynamics of the confrontation and the quality that each line takes, and even each word, when it is spoken. I think that the words and the communication in the play are constantly transformed, and a key strategy for achieving this are the moments when the protagonists adopt the roles of other people, imitating them, almost embodying them: mixing memories and criticisms, quoting their father, their mother, their friends, and also each other. The monologues almost turn into dialogues where a single voice takes on several characters, to the point where, in some of the final speeches, you can get lost and not know whether Irene is talking as Irene or whether she is still quoting her mother.

Indeed, *Hermanas* is a play that speaks constantly of language, explicitly, often alluding to the power of certain words, like «cliché», which Bárbara uses to describe Irene's feelings, and offering reflections on the appropriateness of a particular expression. In Pascal Rambert's script the protagonists interrogate each other about how they have communicated and how they communicate, or how one communicates in the press and the other communicates in social justice activism. It is the clash between private and public, personal and professional communication: despite their success with articles or campaigns, they aren't able to establish contact with each other when their mother is dying. At a moment when the tempers cool and there seem to be signs of a truce, Irene tells Bárbara that maybe throughout their lives they should have kept quiet now and then and looked at one another more often. I think this constant reflection on forms of communication, the leap between what is said directly and what is analysed, between what is felt and what is articulated, creates some dramatic turns that transform the emotion in each dialogue in *Hermanas*.

Gonzalo de Lucas

Diction and an instrumental mastery of the word—of its rhythms and musicalities—is something that can be found in a lot of Spanish actresses in the first decades of sound films. Merely by listening to them you can see their body, their image. However, in our era, partly due to the use of language in the media, for some time now the specific, embodied power of the word has been homogenised and it has lost its uniqueness (this is something that Pasolini warned about back in the 1960s in relation to common language). In fact, these days a lot of casting calls are made based on Instagram or without even hearing the actress's voice or way of speaking. In contrast with that approach, I remember that Bresson, before seeing a potential casting choice, would call the actress on the phone to talk to her. He needed to hear the voice first, the voice as an image.

The interesting aspect of this situation is that the impoverishment of the technique for performing the word has given rise to a creative way of opening up new forms of diction for actresses. Jean Renoir pointed out that Queen Mathilde's Bayeux Tapestry was more beautiful than the modern «gobelin tapestries because Queen Mathilde had to solve problems of this type: "Oh! I have no red, I'll use ochre; I have no blue, I'll use a colour similar to blue"». Thus, «forced to use direct contrasts, violent oppositions, she was pressured into constantly struggling against imperfection

and this helped her to become a great artist» (Bazin, 1958: 163). Following this idea, which I think is very important, the artistic value of technique is usually stimulated by limitations, not when it is refined to the utmost, as then it tends to turn into an academic, inert and predictable form.

In *Hermanas*, the actresses draw the emotions out of language in its most abstract potential; words serve their characters as introspective and analytical reflections, but at the same time they expose them and reveal them to be vulnerable, without anything sounding antiquated or belonging to the past. This language is very physical, striking, unsettling or moving the spectators. These days people find it increasingly difficult to articulate their experiences and their emotional conflicts with words. Conversely, in *Hermanas* the use of the poetic word as a musical instrument allows each character to construct multiple and even internally contradictory personalities, and to be overrun with thoughts or emotions. The characters gradually reveal themselves through words, which are sometimes controlled and pointed, but other times they simply flow out, as if they were released involuntarily and the characters themselves were surprised to discover what they just said. In this way, rather than a memorised and recited text, the actresses make the script sound as if they were just saying whatever came to their minds at that moment. In this way the sisters release passions they can't control, and also offer glimpses of the unconscious dynamics of their relationship since childhood. Through this use of the word, they remind us of the centrality of language in the act of acquiring knowledge or, in the words of the Spanish poet José María Valverde, the fact that «language is the organ of the inner being; it is that same being when it manages, step by step, to recognise itself internally and to externalise itself» (Llovet, 2000: 159).

4. What kind of training in acting does this experience suggest is needed? What problems and what goals would you highlight in the filmmaking process for actresses, for example, in rehearsals?

Bárbara Lennie

You can come into acting from a lot of places and have very different journeys. Cinema has something really magical and sometimes inexplicable about it, in that someone who never thought of being an actress has something in her personality, in her soul or whatever, that she manages to draw out and transcend, and that makes her able to tell a story better than a trained actress. There are heaps of examples of this in film history. And it's also interesting to see what they do with what they've got, how they transform it, or don't. In any case, there is a general lack of understanding about what it means to be an actor or actress. That's why we don't talk about actors as the centre of a film, because in the end we don't really know what they do, apart from the fact that you see them on the screen and they tell the story. As for my formal training, what has surprised me most and what I've learned the most from is actually dealing with directors. Suddenly you realise that you have to use what you've been studying for years in order to understand the person in front of you who it trying to tell you, very clumsily in general, what you have to do and why. Sometimes they put us in situations that seem to contradict what would be necessary to get something artistically interesting to happen. I've come across very few people who have the necessary patience or listening ability, or who know how to communicate with an actress or actor. And that's necessary to establish a pact: the director likes me to tell their story, but I also like

La enfermedad del domingo (Ramón Salazar, 2018)

them because through their story I can express myself in a way that I couldn't do in life in general. I think that has been the big lesson of all the years I've been working.

You need to think about what kind of rehearsing is best for each film or project. There are a lot of actors or directors who prefer not to rehearse, so as not to start off with a very closed idea about what has to happen. There's this idea in filmmaking that what happens between «action» and «cut» has to be something newly discovered right there, although I think sometimes the decision not to rehearse has to do with the insecurities of actors and directors. In fact, we often miss things because we're too insecure; sometimes in the good take I'm still wound up, and I think if you're more relaxed you can reach different heights. In some cases, rather than rehearsing what helps me is getting to know the director well. For example, for *Sunday's Illness*, Ramón Salazar said to me: «We only have a month to rehearse». And I replied: «Are we really going to rehearse for a whole month, as if we were doing Shakespeare?» Susi Sánchez and I saw pretty intuitively what path to take, but he already had the whole plan worked out and talked to us in terms that instead of helping us ended up blocking us, because he wanted to theorise too much about the script. On the second day of rehearsals, he himself told us that what we were doing made no sense at all. We realised that what would be useful for us would be to find each other, to be able to talk, to share images. It was more about sharing the creative process of the script, and what he had used in order to write it, than working with sequences or text.

Irene Escolar

Perhaps the main thing I've learned over all these years as an actress is patience and above all being calm, not getting too anxious to get anywhere. And also not comparing yourself with other people, but simply trying to set some criteria for your own technique and dedicating time to it. There are a lot of things that I would have been happy not to have

done. Now I think about them and I say: «But they didn't even interest me artistically!» Well, you do them sometimes because you have to eat, obviously, but otherwise I would have invested more time in music, for example, or in all the real training that would have been able to take me in other directions. To be honest, I wouldn't want to be a young actress starting out right now. It looks really hard. What do you invest your time and training in? Do you look for role models? Or do you spend hours working on your Instagram profile and your abs? It's all very confusing. Over time you see things more clearly, but when you're twenty, what do you do? Do you really make an effort? Is that effort valued and encouraged? I think it is much more in other countries in Europe than here, actually. Training is more respected, the pathways are clearer, as is having role models from a young age, and the level is so high that you can only get there if you have or train in some very specific skills. It's very important to be aware of what acting work entails, the capacity for empathy that you need to develop in your professional and personal life.

I get the impression that there is very little rehearsing going on in cinema, because of that idea of not undermining the situations or the actors. But acting work is not generally understood because every actor is also a world of their own. I work better by trying out things that don't work and being aware of that, to get more comfortable with what actually is working, or at least to feel that what I've tried is no good and to let it go. Letting go of your mistakes, because you have to try things and you can do it in so many ways... But it's a whole lot better if you have the chance to rehearse it. In the case of *An Autumn Without Berlin*, for example, we had a rehearsal process because the script was only half-finished. Also, Lara was a new director, very young. Everybody was really excited, but there was also a lot of work to do, so there we were, living in the town. We worked a lot on the dialogues and rethought everything in detail. We weren't rehearsing the sequences so much as carefully choosing the words used to communicate that would allow you to get a good sense of a scene, which is one of the most complicated things to find. So in this case, we needed to build the foundation. Every project has a particular set of needs, above all for the person in charge. When I shot *Vania* with Carla Simón, on the other hand, she had worked a lot on the looks or the ideas for my character, because she had spent a lot of time on that piece and had gone over those thoughts a lot, all the possibilities. In that case, it was as if the performances themselves had been rehearsals, a lot of rehearsals, and through trial and error and getting to know that character with those internal conflicts, the play could come together there, when we filmed it.

Albert Elduque

One of cinema's virtues is that it is possible for actors to come to it from different places, not necessarily from formal training. I'm not referring just to non-professionals, but also to people who have had experience in other media and who for one reason or another end up in front of a movie camera: people who have worked in plays, or musicals, or the circus, or even in television... Everyone brings a certain tradition that connects with the film itself, even clashing with the story being told and challenging the plausibility of the whole. This doesn't necessarily have to be a bad thing. I'm thinking of the example of actresses from folk traditions; I recall an article by Diego Galán in 1970 lamenting the fact that with the supposed economic development of Spain, the flamenco dancers of the past want to be more sophisticated and become actresses, filing down their rough edges in the process. I think that veterans of the stage, like Estrellita Castro or Lola Flores, brought to their roles an emphasis on gestures and intentions that a textbook film star would never adopt. This may destabilise the credibility of the situations depicted, but at the same time it facilitates a clash of art forms, of different languages, techniques and tra-

ditions that ultimately enriches the whole. I don't mean that anything goes, but I think that taking an essentialist approach to what a film actor or actress is or should be can end up undermining the appearance of certain gestures, gazes, or movements... which the contamination between languages makes possible.

Gonzalo de Lucas

I would like to start my answer with reference to the course project that we've been offering for years now at Universitat Pompeu Fabra for the completion of the degree, which requires students to make their own films. From the outset, we wanted to prioritise meeting with the actress and the collaborative work with her (on this point I would like to stress that, as I see it, in film schools a lot of emphasis is placed on the script and the director's storyboarding, but then the actresses tend to be used more as practically interchangeable figures at the service of the storyboard, and films are rarely constructed with or by them). In a creative project, there is usually a consensus to make the most room possible for construction through trial and error; ways of rehearsing and learning to manage and see the body, voice, gestures, and working on the story and the experience of the film through that. Based on these bodily qualities or powers, the actress can express a lot of things—about her past or story—through gestures, movements or gazes, or her way of listening or saying something, without the script needing to add any psychological verbal or explanatory element. All of this is generally seen clearly in the editing, when the actresses are malleable images that can be composed and transformed according to the cuts, the order, the structure and the associations, to the point of being able to construct totally different characters and performances, within the range of possibilities offered by the actress, often in an uncontrolled way.

In the films resulting from this project at the university, since the students have to write and film a part of the project during a single school year, they tend to look for actresses and start working with them well before they have their scripts completed, and so the usual approach is they construct the characters based on the casting rather than the other way round. In this respect, I think not much importance is given—either in schools or in the industry—to the ways a casting call is carried out, as they are usually organised in quite a mechanical way, as a cold test, which almost never involves any kind of experience really connected to the project. And taking a trip in a car with someone is not the same thing as doing a driving test. For this reason, and especially because they are collaborative group films with very small budgets, I usually propose that instead of running auditions they should meet with the potential actress for coffee and see the type of personal relationship—the energy, the connection, the understanding—that arises with her, and also if they have a real desire to film her, to make plans with her. I think that the first thing that a filmmaker needs to check in order to determine whether to shoot a scene or not is whether they have a genuine desire to do it, and that same desire should be triggered in the actress. Otherwise, I'd say it's not worth it. I like to think about cinema based on what happens between filmmakers and actresses, perhaps because my favourite definition of cinema is one of Godard's: «The predisposition for a meeting: that is cinema».

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conclusion

ALBERT ELDUQUE

One of the most enlightening sequences in *Aunt Tula* (Miguel Picazo, 1964) is the bridal shower for Jovita, who is about to get married and move to Venezuela. A dozen friends get together to celebrate the bride with punch and music, and between jokes and jibes they tell secrets, share memories of their own wedding days and, above all, sing and dance together. The sequence plays in part with the stereotype of the gossipy woman, but it goes much further than that, because when they start singing and dancing, sometimes individually and other times in chorus, a strong sense of community emerges, where the individual contributions fit perfectly into the collective partying and dancing.

This discussion for *(Dis)Agreements* was inspired by the idea of thinking about the work of the actress in Spanish cinema based on the careers of Bárbara Lennie and Irene Escolar, and also in relation to theatrical and cinematic traditions. Since they first appeared on the big screen in the first decade of this century, their characters, performances and gestures have been inscribed with generational changes that clash or converse with those of actresses who came before them, like Aurora Bautista. In this way, Spanish cinema's recent history can be reinterpreted through these actresses to draw out new ideas and connections. Comparing them with the icons of the Franco era is particularly thought-provoking. In her book *En cuerpo y alma: Ser mujer en tiempos de Franco* (2015), Aurora Morcillo analyses the identification between the body of the nation and the body of the woman during the dictatorship to consider how on the one hand, the country was conceptualised in female terms, while on the other, patriotic duties were used to exploit women's bodies. Her analysis suggests that actress's bodies can be conceived of as spaces for the inscription of an era: in different characters, performances and gestures, it is possible to read the evolution of a society. This is what can be done with the films of the Franco era, but also with films being made today.

However, this discussion has shown that there are hazards associated with thinking in terms of these inscriptions. At the least, it is dangerous to do it with the present. Neither Bárbara Lennie nor Irene Escolar feel that they are representatives of a collective movement or an archetype that defines contemporary women. Their work is not merely a series of messages about the society in which they live, as this would be to limit their potential as actresses and, especially, the capacity of their bodies to transform and be transformed. Significantly, a paradigm that both actresses identify in contemporary Spanish cinema is a kind of realism, an anchoring in the world that can sometimes suffocate acting versatility, creative experimentation and continuous learning. Ultimately, this obsession with a realist model can tend towards adherence to a certain pre-existing world of perspectives, actions and situations that are already familiar to us. Theatre, on the other hand, for these actresses is a space open to experimenting, trial and error, for exploration both within and without.

Bárbara Lennie remarks that she would like to play a role in an erotic film. The change these actresses stand for may, in effect, entail the desire of the actress, or even be derived from that desire. The desire can be sexual, but also professional, for knowledge, for learning, for adventure, for movement, for a leap forward. Desire is what makes women's bodies resistant to metaphorical paralysis, to their cloistering as an embodiment of an era. It is what facilitates an opportunity for change, to blow up the existing moulds, to break the rules so that new realities can come to life. The desire at the heart, like a central generator, interconnected, of course, with technique, writing, learning, hard work, rehearsal, and tradition: all of these have been recognised and valued in this conversation, not as constrictive or restraining, but as a trampoline, trapeze or launching pad to jump off from. Like orchestra musicians or conductors with a score, as Irene Escolar suggests, they can become «soldiers of the word».

The personal, desiring spirit is a force for change, but it understands the need of the Other. Emerging over the course of this discussion has been the key idea of incorporating the encounter, dialogue and sharing into the work processes between filmmakers and actresses. This can bring about a break with the vertical models that have traditionally subjugated actresses to the gaze of a male director, which still mark ways of working in the industry and critical approaches to film history. Particularly enlightening in this respect is Bárbara Lennie's self-critical reflection that she has only recently realised that trying out different roles for women is a collective struggle, and that the spirit of community among actresses in the industry is essential for the transformation of traditionally individualist and masculine structures. *Hermanas*, in this sense, could be interpreted as a reflection of this discussion, because it depicts a confrontation between the individualities of two women who have sacrificed everything for their careers, but who have not been able to share their desires with their loved ones: their father, mother, sister. Throughout the play they criticise each other for the emptiness of their individual dreams, and at the same time they acknowledge the need to look at each other.

Actresses have been able to recognise that the transformative spirit of desire is intertwined with the spirit of a generation and with the desires of others, and they probably have seen this much more clearly than male actors have. In the bridal shower scene in *Aunt Tula*, we end up forgetting who is getting married, who is leaving, and without losing sight of the unique qualities of each of the women, we focus on how they talk, have fun, learn, converse and share with each other. It is on this basis that we can view the actress's work as a desire that creates a change, but that is in constant dialogue. And in this way we can reconsider how to analyse their work, but also to ponder our preconceived notions about male actors, filmmakers, and filmmaking, to think of it instead as a site for sharing, as a dialogue in which one sister needs the other to go on living. ■

NOTES

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WHEN FIRE RISES UP FROM THE SOLES OF YOUR FEET: CREATIVE EXPERIENCES OF THE ACTRESS IN SPANISH CINEMA

Abstract

This discussion brings together two actresses (Bárbara Lennie and Irene Escolar) and two researchers (Albert Elduque and Gonzalo de Lucas) to reflect on the work of the actress in contemporary Spanish cinema. Among other topics, they discuss depictions of women in society, ways of working in the film industry, actress-based approaches to film history, aesthetic analysis of acting work, the technique/emotion binary in creation on stage and on screen, and the need for reflection on actor training. The *Escenario 0* series, produced by Lennie and Escolar, and especially the episode *Hermanas*, starring both actresses, constitutes a focal point for the dialogue, and the link between the careers of the two actresses and the traditions of Spanish cinema.

Key words

Bárbara Lennie; Irene Escolar; Female Archetypes; Spanish Cinema; Acting Technique; Actor Training; Gesture; Depictions of Women in Society.

Authors

Bárbara Lennie is an actress from Madrid. Her most notable work includes the films *Every Song Is About Me* (Jonás Trueba, 2010), *Magical Girl* (Carlos Vermut, 2014, for which she won the Goya Award for Best Leading Actress), *María (and Everyone Else)* (Nely Reguera, 2016), *Sunday's Illness* (Ramón Salazar, 2018) and *Petra* (Jaime Rosales, 2018), the television series *Amar en tiempos revueltos* (Josep Maria Benet i Jornet, Antonio Onetti, Rodolf Sirera, TVE, 2005-2012) and the plays *Veraneantes* (Miguel del Arco, 2011-2012), *Las criadas* (Pablo Messiez, 2012-2013) and *La clausura del amor* (Pascal Rambert, 2015-2017). Together with Irene Escolar, she is the co-creator and co-producer of *Escenario 0* (2020).

Irene Escolar is a Madrid-born actress. Her most outstanding work includes roles in the plays *Oleanna* (Manuel de Benito, 2011), *El público* (Àlex Rigola, 2015-2017), *Vania* (Àlex Rigola, 2017-2018), *Un enemigo del pueblo* (Àlex Rigola, 2018) and *Mammón* (Nao Albert, Marcel Borras, 2018-2020), and as director of *Leyendo Lorca* (2016-2017). She has also starred in the films *El idioma imposible* (Rodrigo Rodero, 2010) and *An Autumn Without Berlin* (Lara Izagirre, 2015, receiving the Goya Award for Best New Actress), and the television series *Isabel* (Javier Olivares, TVE, 2012-2014) and *Tell Me Who I Am* (José Manuel Lorenzo, Eduard Cortés, 2020-2021). Together with Bárbara Lennie, she is the co-creator and co-producer of *Escenario 0* (2020).

CUANDO SUBE UNA OLEADA DE FUEGO POR LOS PIES: EXPERIENCIAS CREATIVAS DE LA ACTRIZ EN EL CINE ESPAÑOL

Resumen

Esta discusión reúne a dos actrices (Bárbara Lennie e Irene Escolar) y a dos investigadores (Albert Elduque y Gonzalo de Lucas) para reflexionar sobre el trabajo de la actriz dentro del cine español contemporáneo. Entre otros temas, se abordan las representaciones sociales de la mujer, las formas de trabajo en la industria, los abordajes de la historia del cine a partir de las actrices, el análisis estético del trabajo interpretativo, el binomio técnica y emoción en la creación en el escenario y frente a la cámara, y la necesidad de reflexionar sobre la formación actoral. El proyecto *Escenario 0*, producido por Lennie y Escolar, y muy especialmente el capítulo *Hermanas*, protagonizado por ambas, constituyen puntos centrales del diálogo, así como el vínculo entre las trayectorias de estas actrices y las tradiciones del cine español.

Palabras clave

Bárbara Lennie; Irene Escolar; arquetipos femeninos; cine español; técnica actoral; formación del intérprete; gestualidad; representaciones sociales de la mujer.

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VANISHING POINTS

THE WORK OF THE INVISIBLE, THE INVISIBILISATION OF WORK: THE NEGATION-IMAGE IN HARUN FAROCKI'S FILMOGRAPHY

MIGUEL ALFONSO BOUHABEN

IMAGOMACHY AND REFLECTION-CENTREDNESS

Our "screenified" world is defined by the tension occurring between the hegemonic visuality of the mainstream media and its counter-visual nemesis (Mirzoeff, 2016). The origins of visuality and the regimes of the hegemonic gaze are associated with the authoritarian power of the State and, above all, with visual control systems defined by contemporary capitalism. In this sense, visuality is not always a right, nor does it constitute a free and autonomous act, since there are always state-capitalist codes that determine how we view. This is what complicates viewing in the golden age of the universally "screenified" world of what will be referred to here as imago-capitalism.

However, despite its widespread nature, this hegemonic visuality has not managed to conquer or program all existing screens. There is a whole tradition of resistant and subversive images that counterbalance the dominant visuality with critical perspectives. Vertov's *Kinopravda*; the militant groups emerging from the May '68 protests in France, such as SLON or the Dziga Vertov Group; the militant groups of the New Latin American Cinema, like Grupo Liberación or Grupo Ukamau; the guerrilla television of the 1970s; *cine piquetero* in the 1990s; the video activism of the Arab Spring; the 15-M Movement in Spain, the Occupy Wall Street movement, and the #Yosoy132 movement in Mexico are some of these counter-visual approaches. In previous studies, I have described this battle between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic visualities using the term imagomachy. This notion is useful to describe the confrontation between the oligopolies and institutions that dominate the world of images and the alternative visual communication systems of popular, horizontal, democratic, and critical approaches that seek to deconstruct those visualities in this extreme battle with/from images (Bouhaben, 2017;

Bouhaben and Polo, 2020). This political battle of images is also marked by the struggle between two visual epistemes: ocularcentrism and reflectionism. Ocularcentrism is the traditionally dominant episteme founded on the representation of reality according to the ancient Greek schema of symmetry and the Renaissance schema of image creation from a single point of view. In opposition to ocularcentrism, José Luis Brea (2010) identifies the emergence of a new reflective episteme that problematises the image. This perspective, heir to the collage and the ready-mades of Dadaism, prioritises the reconstruction of representation. In other words, we seem to have entered an era of reflection on representation: the era of reflection-centredness. Other theorists, like Martin Jay, argue that the critique of ocularcentrism is not a postmodern novelty but can be traced all the way back, for example, to Plato, who expresses his distrust of vision when he "warns us against the illusions of our imperfect eyes" (Jay, 2007: 30).

In any case, these two territories of conflict—one between "political visualities" defined by the concept of imagomachy, and the other between "epistemic visualities" characterised by the paradigm shift between ocularcentrism and reflection-centredness—are central to the exploration offered here of the processes of invisibilisation of factory work in cinema. The work of the filmmaker Harun Farocki will be the object of study here for the analysis of two dimensions: the invisibilisation of the factory in the context of imagomachy, revealing the victory of capitalist visuality over popular and democratic visuality; and the innovation represented by the visibility of the factory in the context of reflection-centredness, i.e. as invisibility made visible by the reflective practice of the essay film.

A multitude of fiction films and documentaries have been made about the world of the factory. From different perspectives, they have addressed various issues, but it is difficult to find any documentaries at all that include footage showing the inside of the factories. Such images barely exist; they are removed from our view by the hegemonic visuality. The objective of this study is therefore to evaluate the question of the invisibility of factory work through the film *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* [Workers Leaving the Factory] (Harun Farocki, 1995), a brilliantly executed audiovisual essay by the German filmmaker. This film will be used to explain what is referred to here as the negation-image, a conceptual construct that serves to identify the complex differential relationship between what we see and what we do not see of the factory in the context of imagomachy—the political struggle of images—and reflection-centredness—the epistemic struggle of visual paradigms.

METHODOLOGY

According to visual semiotics, the analysis of images can go beyond their aesthetic or pictorial presuppositions, to consider them in terms of the historical, social, cultural, and political structures that configure them. Images are thus not reduced strictly to their visuality, but are understood to embed the views, perspectives, and imaginaries that make up the culture that produces them. They are not merely visual, because they always contain traces of the invisible: traces of what we want, what we know or what we do in/with/between images (Abril, 2012). In Farocki's film, which uses the film *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory in Lyon* (La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon, Louis Lumière, 1895) as a motif, what we see in the images is politically and epistemically related to what we do not see.

To reveal the invisible of the image, this article adopts an analytical-interpretive method in three stages. In the first, the audiovisual base text, *Workers Leaving the Factory*, is analyzed with the aim of defining what we see and do not see in the image. The second stage involves the analysis of the creative method of *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik*, an audiovisual text that reconstructs and re-

interprets the audiovisual base text. To do this, I explore the method of variations that the film sets in motion and the practices of thematic reflection on archive footage. The third stage is the identification of the concept that underlies Farocki's filmmaking: the negation-image as a concept that defines the reflection on the relationship between the visible and the invisible.

WHAT WE SEE AND WHAT WE DO NOT

Although it was the first film ever exhibited, *Workers Leaving the Factory* does not really mark the beginning of cinema, as it was preceded by a diverse range of visual experiments in the so-called pre-cinema period. Virgilio Tosi (1993) argues that cinema was really born with the scientific inquiries of Janssen, Muybridge and Marey. Román Gubern (2014) goes even further, suggesting that cinema was already present, albeit unconsciously, in the sketches of bison legs in the caves of Altamira. In any case, *Workers Leaving the Factory* appears in every film history book and has the historical distinction of being the first film screened in public. But for this study, what is interesting about this first film is the gap of meaning it opens between what it shows and what it does not, which has undoubtedly shaped the history of cinematography. Thus, this first movement-image, like any image, is the synthesis of what is seen—the network of shapes and colours—and what is not seen—the desires, beliefs, knowledge, and other social, political, and historical devices that form the visual.

We know that what is seen in the film astonished the viewers of its day, who sometimes reacted to the images as if what they were seeing were real. This is the great power of cinema: the satisfaction of the desire for verisimilitude. André Bazin asserts that one of cinema's achievements is to have freed painting from its quest to resemble reality: "Painting was forced, as it turned out, to offer us illusion and this illusion was reckoned sufficient unto art. Photography and the cinema on the other hand are inventions that satisfy, once and for all and in its very essence, our obsession with realism" (Bazin, 1967: 12). This power to capture reality is determined by two visual elements: the quantitative element (the large number of characters appearing on screen, leaving the factory through a door located at the left of the image and through a gateway on the right, walking out hurriedly towards either side of the frame) and the qualitative (the distinction that the details of what we see look more realistic than a painting and, above all, the historical novelty of reproducing movement in images) (Aumont, 1997). However, there are other elements that are not seen: the staging of the workers' actions under the direction of their employer. This departure of workers in the Lumières' film does not hold any charm for the cinema. Jean-Louis Comolli (2010) takes this idea to the extreme to argue that work can only be shown in the cinema in the form of a nightmare. Among the things that we do not see in the image of the workers' departure is the social construction that determines the construction of the images, i.e., a refusal to show working conditions. W .J. T. Mitchell suggests that "the social construction of the visual field has to be continuously replayed as the visual construction of the social field" (Mitchell, 2002: 175). This formula can be applied to the Lumières' film to argue that in its images, the capitalist social construction determines the visual field: the world inside the factory is rendered invisible and only its surface, its façade, is committed to celluloid. However, in the same way, this visual construction configured by the hegemonic power allows the social construction of capitalism itself in a system of mutual visual/social feedback. The images of cinema create clichés that establish the visual hegemony and, in turn, promote the perpetuation of a particular social formation—in this case, capitalism. Louis Althusser alludes to these questions when he writes that "every social formation, at the same

time it produces, and, in order to produce, must reproduce the conditions of its production" (Althusser, 1975: 9). In other words, the social formation configured by the dominant economic-political system shapes what we see and how we see, while the cinema as hegemonic visibility renders any elements that could lead to a critique of the social formation invisible.

What is it that we do not see behind that magic door? What is on the other side of the image behind the backdrop of that gate? What we do not see is inside the factory, its bowels, its essence. This invisibilisation of work and the capitalist system's alienation of labour—which is an irrefutable sign of imagomachy—is the premise underlying the reflection-centred nature of the essay-film *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* expressed in the concept of the negation-image.

THE METHOD OF VARIATIONS AND THE THEMATIC REORGANISATION OF THE ARCHIVE

In *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik*, Harun Farocki returns to the problem of making the factory visible. This interest in the working world has been a constant in his oeuvre, exemplified in audiovisual productions like *Ein Bild* [An Image] (Harun Farocki, 1983), *Die Schulung* [Training] (Harun Farocki, 1987), the *Schnittstelle* [Interface] installation (Harun Farocki, 1995) and the project *Labour in a Single Shot,* created together with Antje Ehmann (Otxoteko, 2017; Blasco, 2015).

This return to the first movement-image in history prompted the German filmmaker to tackle the challenge to make a film about that one motif: leaving the factory. Farocki himself has described his fascination with the investigation of visual motifs as a driving force behind his work methodology: "I had the fantasy that a filmmaker would look at all the existing shots of factory doors in the history of cinema—or at least a representative selection of them—before going out to film that motif the next day" (Farocki, 2013: 307). In *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik,* he implements this method, collecting as many motifs on the subject as he can and then using them to create variations that facilitate reflection. This method of variations refers to the twelve-tone serial technique in music that starts with base material that is then repeated in an altered way, i.e., changing the melody, rhythm, harmony, timbre, etc. Back in the first half of the 20th century, Bertolt Brecht had already hinted at the problem and the method adopted by Farocki: regarding the problem, when he argued that "a photo of the Krupp factories doesn't reveal very much about those institutions" (Zunzunegui, 2000: 81); and regarding the method, when he pointed to the need "to construct a meaningful artifact that would give a full account of what was really going on in the world you wanted to describe, from the use of music [...] to the use of parallel editing" (Zunzunegui, 2000: 81).

Farocki builds on these methodological foundations hinted at by Brecht and takes the base motif of the Lumières' images (Figure 1) to create variations by editing with other footage of workers leaving factories: the workers at Siemens in Nazi Germany, at the Ford Motor Company in Detroit, and in fiction films such as *The Killers* (Robert Siodmak, 1946), *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927) or *Intolerance* (D. W. Griffith, 1916). While putting all

Figure 1. The image-motif. *La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon* (Louis Lumière, 1895)

Figure 2. The capitalist variation. *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* (Harun Farocki, 1995)

Figure 3. The Nazi variation. *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* (Harun Farocki, 1995)

this footage together, Farocki had the sensation that cinema had been exploring the same theme throughout its history: "Like a child repeating the first word that he learned to say for 100 years to immortalize the joy of being able to speak" (Farocki, 2013: 201). In this sense, Farocki seems to suggest that the history of cinema—jut as Whitehead had said that the history of philosophy was a series of footnotes to Plato—is a series of little visual repetitions, reflections, and babbling about the same originary theme.

Within this system of variations on different ways of leaving the factory, where there is something that is repeated (the departure of the workers) and something that differs (the mode of said departure), the focus of this article is on three variations in particular: the capitalist variation, the Nazi variation, and the fiction variation:

The capitalist variation is characterised by the workers rushing to get home, where they literally run out after their shift (Figure 2). These images make visible the Marxist idea that time spent working is time wasted and a time of death: the idea that work alienates the worker, which is why at the end of the day workers race off to embrace their leisure time, which, being oriented towards consumption—the other side of production—is ultimately a simulation of living.

In the Nazi variation, conversely, the workers do not run away. After work they continue with other controlled activities: "Berlin, 1934: workers and employees of Siemens workshops leave the company grounds in columns to join a Nazi demonstration" (Figure 3). Unlike the departure from the factory in the capitalist regime, there is no rushing off to enjoy free time; instead, we see bodies that are completely programmed, their almost military movements regulated. While in the capitalist variation life after work is under market control, in the Nazi variation social life is under military control.

Finally, in the fiction variation, in the case of *Metropolis*, we see the workers housed under the surface of the city so that those above can maintain their way of life. They are unquestionably alienated, walking in groups and exhibiting an almost inert order and regularity in their movements. The fiction variation shows images of alienated workers as a formless, subordinate mass descending underground to begin their shifts (Figure 4).

This arrangement of variations reveals a variety of thematic levels of reflection on the archive that underscores the shift from the ocularcentrist to the reflection-centred paradigm:

Ontological reflection on the archive. The archive is not a closed essence, nor is it attached

to a defined location. In Farocki's work, once the process of combining archive footage is completed, "the end result is accidental and only one among many" (Luelmo Jareño, 2018: 160). Hal Foster (2004) points out that Farocki's use of archive footage bears similarities to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of rhizome. If there are no defined essences in the rhizome, but multiplicities and changes (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004), then the archive is a rhizome: a multiplicity that enables heterogeneous interconnection with other archives. In this sense, the regulating principle of the ontological reflection on the archive would be that any archive can be connected to any other: the archive is not a representation, but a reflection in progress.

Epistemic reflection on the archive. The ontological reflection on the archive carries epistemic implications: the concatenation and synergy of the archives in relation to the motif of work reveals a theoretical form of filmmaking. Volker Pantenburg points out that Farocki's filmography is a form of epistemic reflection on the archive: "Farocki's films can be described as theory made in the cinematic medium, film theory in the literal sense" (Pantenburg, 2001: 20). Along the same lines, Fabiola Alcalá affirms that for Farocki "looking at the images of the other again requires a process of analysis and appropriation that lays its foundations in the cinema of thought" (Alcalá, 2017: 63).

Figure 4. The fiction variation. *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* (Harun Farocki, 1995)

Historical reflection on the archive. The diverse nature of the archive footage used by Farocki—snippets of newsreels, fiction films, documentaries—is suggestive of a kind of refuse which, when reflected on, lays the foundations for the articulation of new stories. Following Walter Benjamin (2005), one of the German filmmaker's intellectual references, it could be argued that Farocki's work bears similarities to the work of the ragpicker, who collects diverse pieces of old, forgotten, and soiled material that is recontextualised, reconsidered, and reflected on to offer a different view of history: to make a flawed but productive interpretation of found footage.

Political reflection on the archive. Farocki reorganises archive footage from a political perspective through the use of critical editing with the aim of exposing and reflecting on injustices and violence in the world. For this reason, "archives do not offer an immediate reflection of the real, but rather, a form of writing mediated by syntax and ideology" (Didi-Huberman, 2007: 3). This reorganisation and political reflection on the syntax of the images reveals certain hidden elements in them that open a door to dissent against the dominant ideas inscribed in them. In our hyper-visual societies, the political artist must develop counter-visual strategies to make the politics of the invisible visible. For example, through relationships where "each image engages in a relationship with the others in a dialogic-critical sense aimed mainly at exposing the dynamics of power" (Montero, 2016a: 192).

Aesthetic reflection on the archive. The transformations of the archive involve a transcendence of the visual material through practices that are not only political but also aesthetic (Foster, 2004). This aesthetic sense of the re-

organisation of and reflection on the archive is associated with the aesthetic practice of collage: "Farocki focuses on this scene and creates from it a cinematographic collage of images taken from various sources [...] searching, selecting, and exhibiting various variants of the same theme, to propose a new reading" (Toranzo, 2018: 2).

Semantic reflection on the archive. These ontological, epistemic, historical, political, and aesthetic reflections on the archive allow the emergence of open readings of the image. Farocki's films facilitate an open interpretation of the image while reinforcing the viewer's reflection through a "reading between the lines" (Alter, 1996) and a "reading between the images" (Blümlinger 2007). This is similar to the "between method" of his mentor, Jean-Luc Godard (Deleuze, 1987), allowing the archive to reveal its off-centred and open nature to generate re-readings with multiple meanings.

Both the method of variations and the thematic reflections on the archive form the methodological foundation for the transformational rules that deconstruct, recompose, and reformulate the Lumières' audiovisual base text. These will also serve as the basis for the conceptual definition of the negation-image offered in this study.

THE NEGATION-IMAGE AS THE INVISIBILISATION OF THE FACTORY, THE WORKER, AND THE COMMODITY

Any outline of the concept of the negation-image must necessarily begin with a consideration of the undeniably intimate, two-way relationship established between cinema and capitalism. The Fordist processes of the early twentieth century made possible a definitive industrial development that facilitated the evolution of film production, and cinema in turn became the hegemonic mechanism for the ideological transfer of the dominant values of capitalism. The Lumières' film marks the meeting of "two dimensions that have configured the modes of operation of industrial capitalism, namely, the Fordist factory as a sublimation of productive capitalism and the cinema as a key tool in the configuration of the hegemonic visuality established in relation to that same productive capitalism" (Montero, 2016b: 314).

It is in this context of the creation of the visual hegemony of cinematic capitalism—at the very heart of the birth of cinema in 1895—that Farocki would launch his film, like a counter-visual bomb, in commemoration of the centenary of cinema in 1995. This exercise in counter-visuality reveals a contradiction: "The first camera in the history of cinema focused on a factory, but after a hundred years it can be said that the factory as such has hardly attracted the cinema; on the contrary, the sensation it has produced has been one of rejection" (Farocki, 2013: 195). In fact, rather than rejection, there has been a profound silencing, a concealment, and an invisibilisation as extraordinary as it has been deliberate. It could almost be argued that, for the contemporary capitalist audiovisual world, the factory—like death—provokes not merely rejection, but almost repulsion. There is no desire to show either the oppressive space inside the factory or the controlled, domesticated, and dominated bodies of factory workers. What Farocki demonstrates in *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* is that cinema's first image is a surface image: an image that hides and negates what happens inside, a reflection, a simulation, a cosmetic device. In this way, Farocki presents a counter-visual reflection with the aim of criticising the visual hegemonic practice of rendering the factory world invisible.

Farocki's creative praxis bears a relation to Theodor W. Adorno's negative dialectic. In a sense, the visible/invisible relationship that Farocki works with is "a difference that is experienced as something negative" (Adorno, 2017: 38), and that has nothing to do with the affirmative dialectic where the visible/invisible would be identified to establish

THE DIFFERENTIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INVISIBILITY OF FACTORY WORK AND THE VISIBILITY OF ITS SUPERFICIAL PRACTICE IS WHAT IS REFERRED TO HERE AS THE NEGATION-IMAGE

a whole. Its objective is to show the negative dialectic between the forms of the visible (the images of the workers leaving) with the forms of the invisible (capitalist exploitation). Farocki is concerned with showing what the camera does not show: "Never forget to show what the camera cannot film" (Farocki, 2013: 306). This "showing what is not shown" is an inevitably counter-visual and counter-hegemonic act, and therefore an act of resistance in the context of the political battle of images, or imagomachy. But at the same time, "the criticism of images through images" (Rodowick, 2015: 191) articulated by Farocki allows him to make the invisible visible through a reflection on this negation of the image, in a reflection-centred shift away from the dominant ocularcentrism. Thus, in the political context of imagomachy—the war of images between hegemony and counterhegemony—reflection-centredness—as a critical reflection of pre-existing images—becomes an emancipatory praxis.

This is the very definition of the negation-image: the reference to an image denied and concealed by the visual hegemony in the context of imagomachy, through a critical and counter-visual reflection on images that correlate to those that can be affirmed and made visible in the dominant visual system. Farocki makes this point clear: "Much good cinema owes its origin to the fact that a person could not show something and so they placed the reproduction of something else in its place, using the strategy of omission to trigger the imagination" (Farocki, 2013: 108). Because he could not obtain images of the exploitation of workers under capitalist conditions of production, he underscored this invisibility and negation through images that are the very accomplices of the invisibility. The differential relationship between the invisibility of factory work and the visibility of its superficial practice is what is referred to here as the negation-image, which is the result of the reflection-centred, counter-visual praxis in the context of imagomachy.

In this sense, the negation-image is the reflection of the archival footage that is already pre-signified by the ideology (of capitalism, Nazism or fiction) to subvert the classical system of ocularcentric representation. The roots of the negation-image can be found in the deconstructive practices of collage and ready-mades that question representation itself and that serve as a foundation for the essay film. In this way, Farocki embraces the shift from the system of representation to the system of reflection on representation. As Philip Lopate (2007) reminds us, one of the essential features of the essay film is precisely this reflection on representation. The negation-image, which is in essence essay-filmic, is thus the reflective unveiling of what is concealed behind the images: the mechanisms of social production that program and encode those images, the official histories and the hegemonic devices, the aesthetic cliches and stereotypes, and capitalist moral values. *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* eschews the strategies of concealment of the visual hegemony to show a different story, to tease out the reality and shed light on areas obscured by commercial interests. The exercise of the negation-image involves the exploration of the absent images in order to create other images: to strip bare what is hidden behind the image (Ardila, 2019), to point to the other side of the images (Montero, 2016a), and to recognise the invisible inside the visible (Elsaesser, 2004).

In this way, the negation-image prompts us to question not only why the factory and its Fordist regulations are concealed, but also why the corporeal dimension of the worker and the commodity is rendered invisible.

What happens inside the factories? From a Marxist perspective, it can be described as the site of consolidation of capitalist relations of production: the factory is the space of regulation of the bodies and movements of the workers in the interests of creating surplus value for the owner. This is why the capitalist visual hegemony does not make it visible. Similarly, from a Foucauldian perspective, it could be argued that a factory is no different from a prison. Michel Foucault suggests that from the 16th to the 19th century there was a series of procedures in place to control and shape individuals into docile subjects: "The body now serves as an instrument or intermediary; if one intervenes upon it to imprison it, or to make it work [...]. The body, according to this penalty, is caught up in a system of constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions" (Foucault, 2012: 11). Undoubtedly, these same devices of confinement used in the prison—the obligations, privations, constraints, controls, and prohibitions—are repeated correlatively in the space of the factory.

Why is the body of the worker not shown? The main reason is that the exploiter does not want to show the exploitation of the exploited. Farocki himself points out that what is shown in cinema is not direct oppression, but symbols on the body: "The determination with which workers carry out their movements has a symbolic character" (Farocki, 2013: 202). In this way, Farocki assumes the Marxist critique that what is made visible—the worker's alienated movements—are the symbolic results of the invisible—the social formation of capitalism. For Marx, the human being is his practical action, his own action projected onto the commodities that he produces and that are appropriated from him by the owner of the means of production, thus triggering alienation (Marx, 1984: 26). And this alienation is precisely what renders the dominant visual order of capitalism invisible.

Why is it that what is produced is not shown? According to Farocki, the commodities themselves created under capitalist conditions of production have the capacity to destroy the world. He thus adopts a paradoxical logic based on the oxymoron "produce to unproduce/destroy". As early as *Nicht löschbares Feuer* (Harun Farocki, 1969), the German filmmaker was extremely interested in the link between productive and destructive forces. In these images of workers leaving factories, we do not see what is produced. For example, we do not see the relationship between the workers and the weapons that they may be producing in the factory: "The military historian Martin van Creveld, who is not a Marxist, considers that the forms of production and organisation of a society correspond to its weapons and its weapon systems. Alvin Foffler, who is neither a Marxist nor a Foucauldian, explains that the maximalist productivity of industry has its destructive correspondence in the atomic bomb" (Farocki, 2013: 113). For Farocki, the goods produced are not visible because they may be destructive.

Why is the place where the workers go after the factory not shown? On this point, it should be noted that *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* is not only a compilation documentary but also a museum installation. This installation led the artist and thinker Hito Steyerl to answer this question. The workers are going "to the artistic space, where the work is installed. Farocki's work is not only, at the level of content, a wonderful archaeology of the (non-)representation of labour; at the level of form, he points to how the factory overflows into the artistic space. The workers leaving the factory have ended up in another one" (Steyerl, 2014: 68-69). The layout of the work in the museum clearly closes the circle of the critique of the invisibilisation of the factory, not only because the museum and the factory are two spaces where

the prohibition against filming is a constant, but above all because the museum has become the privileged space for the projection of the counter-hegemonic visualities of political cinema. Paradoxically, political cinema never approaches the real battlefield: the factory itself. Counter-hegemonic politics only comes to life as an aesthetic device, as a deactivated mask in the museum space.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, I have sought to demonstrate the significance of the film *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* for analysing both the contemporary political-visual struggle—the imagomachy between the dominant visuality and the various counter-visualities—and the epistemic shift from the ocularcentric to the reflection-centred paradigm. It is a reflection on hegemonic images through critical editing and a questioning voice that exposes the processes employed to render the factory invisible. This reorganisation of the dominant visualities involves a new perspective that is non-neutral, radical, and subversive, that takes possession of the view, fights for the right to see and creates counter-visuals. This right is questioned by the practice of rendering the factory invisible through the visual control devices of the dominant social formation—essentially, the cinema and the museum.

The capitalist hegemonic visuality's practice of invisibilisation, perpetrated both by capitalist cinema—which renders the factory space, the body of the workers, and the commodities invisible—and of the capitalist museum—which is a machine that renders its visibilities invisible—bears a relation to other devices of invisibilisation. Among these is the invisibilisation of religion (through the invisibility of God), the invisibilisation of sex (through the invisibility of the obscene), and the invisibilisation of death (through the invisibility of its victims). An interesting line of research for future studies would be to explore whether capitalism—through the invisibilisations of cinema, the museum, religion, sex, and death—imposes a totalitarian scopic regime. This could constitute a new field of research on invisibility where capitalism (the invisibilisation of the factory), religion (the invisibilisation of God), and morality (the invisibilisation of sex) effectively constitutes an invisible eye. ■

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THE WORK OF THE INVISIBLE, THE INVISIBILISATION OF WORK: THE NEGATION-IMAGE IN HARUN FAROCKI'S FILMOGRAPHY

Abstract

The objective of this study is to analyse the phenomenon of the invisibilisation of factory work through the film *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* [Workers Leaving the Factory] (Farocki, 1995). To this end, it examines the operations of what is referred to here as the negation-image, which determines the complex differential relationship between what we see and what we do not see in the factory images used by the German filmmaker, in the context of *imagomachy*—the political battle between images—and reflection-centredness—the epistemic battle between visual paradigms. The concept of the negation-image is explained here in three dimensions. The first involves the analysis of an essential structural feature of the first film in the history of cinema, *La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon* (Louis Lumière, 1895); namely, that in every image there is something we see (in this case, the mirror image of cinema) and something we do not (the factory under capitalist conditions of production). The second dimension is the analysis of Farocki's strategies for conceiving of this film based on the method of variations and the practices of reorganisation of the archives into categories. Finally, the third dimension defines the concept of the negation-image as a reflection on the political-epistemic nexus between the visible and the invisible.

Key words

Film-essay; Archive; Factory Work; Invisibility; Image-Negation; Harun Farocki.

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EL TRABAJO DE LO INVISIBLE, LA INVISIBILIZACIÓN DEL TRABAJO. LA IMAGEN-NEGACIÓN EN EL CINE DE HARUN FAROCKI

Resumen

El objetivo de la presente investigación es evaluar la problemática de la invisibilización del trabajo fabril a través del film *Arbeiter verlassen die fabrik* [Los trabajadores salen de la fábrica] (Harun Farocki, 1995). Para ello, develaremos cómo funciona lo que hemos denominado imagen-negación, que determina la compleja relación diferencial entre lo que vemos y lo que no vemos en las imágenes fabriles con las que trabaja el cineasta alemán, dentro del contexto de la imagomaquia —lucha política de las imágenes— y del reflexiocentrismo —lucha epistémica de los paradigmas visuales. Para dar cuenta del concepto de imagen-negación, vamos a trazar tres ejes. En el primer eje, se analiza una característica estructural esencial en el primer film de la Historia del cine, *La salida de la fábrica* (La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon, Louis Lumière, 1895), a saber, que en toda imagen hay algo que vemos —en este caso la imagen especular del cine— y algo que no vemos —la fábrica en condiciones capitalistas de producción—. En el segundo eje, se analizan las estrategias de Farocki para pensar dicho film según el método de variaciones y las prácticas de reorganización disciplinar de los archivos. Por último, en el tercer eje, se define el concepto de la imagen-negación como reflexión del nexo político-epistémico entre lo visible y lo invisible.

Palabras clave

Cine-ensayo; Archivo; Trabajo fabril; Invisibilidad; Imagen-negación; Harun Farocki.

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SURFACES OF DESIRE: A PORTRAIT OF THE CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE BASED ON *SHIRIN**

PEDRO ALVES

INTRODUCTION

The cinematic experience involves a meaningful dialogue between a filmmaker and a group of viewers, through the sound and vision of a film. Based on a specific proposal, film spectators access a set of information offered for their personal perception, understanding and interpretation. Moreover, the development of a subjective and original understanding of the film also influences the definition and potential of the film itself since it (re) configures the pragmatics and the effects of its materiality and capacity for meaning. Jauss (1982: 116) emphasises that reception processes are necessarily selective, depending on encapsulations and appraisals that simplify the stimulus of the film but at the same time complicate its signifying character. In this way, a film takes shape as a proposal but is reconfigured as an experience, thus involving diverse and complex influences and shifts between the poles of film creation and enjoyment.

Portuguese filmmaker and researcher João Mário Grilo argues that "[t]o really know what a spectator is, take a child to the cinema for the first time. Instead of watching the film [...], watch the child's face. You will then bear witness to the birth of that ghost, which will reappear [...] every time that child returns to the cinema" (Grilo, 2006: 54). With these words, Grilo seems to foresee the film that Abbas Kiarostami would make two years later, set in this context of *dialogue* between filmmakers and spectators through a film narrative. In *Shirin* (شیرین, Abbas Kiarostami, 2008), the Iranian director presents the tragic love story of a princess, based on a 12th-century tale by Nizami Ganjavi (Khosrow and Shirin, 2020). However, Kiarostami tells the story exclusively through sound, thanks to his choice of an unsettling visual strategy: throughout the narration, we see only the faces of spectators[1] who, in a (simulated) theatre, are watching the film (supposedly) projected on the screen in the diegetic space. As spectators

of *Shirin*, we bear witness to the reception rather than the enunciation of the princess' tragic tale. The faces of the female spectators (all actresses) thus offer a phantasmic mirror for the story we imagine and the inner effects we intuit, in response to something we never see. *Shirin* represents an exercise in fiction involving processes of spectatorship that allow us to explore our relationship with films and our bodies, faces and minds as surfaces on which the longings of our existence are expressed. As Gronstad (2013: 30) observes, this film reveals the visceral, intimate, empathic and imaginative dimensions of a collective ritual. It therefore constitutes a necessary and pertinent reflection on the individual and collective processes associated with the cinematic experience and the bidirectional influences that shape them in a particular, subjective way.[2]

THE INTENTIONALITY OF AN IMAGE AND ITS ABSENCE(S)

The configuration of the narrative components of a film reveals part of what the filmmaker is and what he or she wants to say or suggest. A film, like a text, carries the "shadow" of its author: "*A bit of* ideology, *a bit of* representation, *a bit of* subject: ghosts, pockets, traces, necessary clouds" (Barthes, 1975: 32), reflecting "the introspection, cultural concerns, references of its director" (Gutiérrez San Miguel, 2011: 174-175). However, a filmmaker is also defined by the place attributed to the spectators in his or her film, based on different possible types of participation (real, ideal or implicit spectator, defined by the concreteness or abstraction of the cinematic experience). The narrative experience is therefore constructed according to reception processes that filmmakers take into account and mould according to their expressive intentions, requiring spectators to understand, interpret and attribute meanings to the film in accordance with their personality and subjective perspective. Monteiro, invoking Jauss' interactionist paradigm, suggests that "the work does not exist, the work *occurs* in each interaction with the receiver" (Monteiro, 1996a: 135). Casetti (1989: 35) argues that each film "sketches" a spectator (type of receiver), assigns that spectator a "place" (discursive perspective) and makes him or her follow a "path" (critical assimilation of the story and the succession of filmic events and elements).

THE NARRATIVE EXPERIENCE IS THEREFORE CONSTRUCTED ACCORDING TO RECEPTION PROCESSES THAT FILMMAKERS TAKE INTO ACCOUNT AND MOULD ACCORDING TO THEIR EXPRESSIVE INTENTIONS, REQUIRING SPECTATORS TO UNDERSTAND, INTERPRET AND ATTRIBUTE MEANINGS TO THE FILM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR PERSONALITY AND SUBJECTIVE PERSPECTIVE

The *spectatorial* path in *Shirin* is particularly complex, split between the female spectators (characters) it portrays and the spectators (us) who observe them. This path is mapped through diegetic and extradiegetic layers that explore the spectator's place and importance in the configuration and reconfiguration of a film, always based on the way Kiarostami develops the scenes with his actresses (the process is almost as important as the result itself). *Taste of Shirin* (نیریش معط, Hamideh Razavi, 2008), the "making of" for the film analysed here, shows us several moments in which the director gives instructions to his protagonists on how to interpret and represent the moments of a non-existent film to which they have no access (visually or audibly).[3] Kiarostami carefully handles the moments of this imaginary film, asking his actresses for light-heartedness or indifference for the opening scenes (Image 1) and sadness for the final scenes (Image 2), depending on a result that only he knows and imagines.[4] He

Image 1. A spectator's indifferent expression in *Shirin* (Abbas Kiarostami, 2008)

Image 2. A spectator's expression of sadness in *Shirin* (Abbas Kiarostami, 2008)

also indicates to the actresses where to look, what to do with their facial expressions, and what type of posture they should adopt, constantly correcting and adapting the physical and emotional behaviour of his protagonists. In this way, Kiarostami stages the reactions that every film director tries to elicit, based on the work he orchestrates, sketching out his ideal spectator and reception process. However, the Iranian director does so in the context of a film which, since it does not exist, relies on what each actress carries within herself, in order to create the images necessary for our enjoyment of *Shirin*: the images we imagine of the story and the actresses' expressions. Baudry (1970: 395) suggests that cinema establishes a paradox between the reflection of images on the screen and the reflection that comes from those images, originating not in reality understood as the physical world of human existence or the physical filmic apparatus, but in the reality arising from the inner world of the spectator. During the film experience "we are not aware of the emptiness of the screen or the source of the light that illuminates it. We only see the projection of our mind merging with the cinematographic phantasmagoria, turning the illusion into an experience with the conflation of emotions that we will subsequently reflect on" (Portillo, 2011: 112). This is why *Shirin* offers such an interesting combination of actor direction in the context of a fictional story and an invocation of the real inner qualities that define the actresses involved, not only as artists, but also as spectators, women and people.[5]

The film presents an interesting dialogue between image and sound, established through painstaking work with the off-screen space. The idea of the image as a privileged point of contact with a particular story is subverted, since the events of the triangle between Shirin, Khosrow and Farhad are narrated exclusively through the sound; the image only follows the reception of that story by the 114 spectators (113 Iranian actresses and one French actress, Juliette Binoche). In this sense, two types of off-screen space emerge. One, more obvious, is the result of the story's absence from the film frame. The other, also relevant, explores the protagonists' off-screen space: based on their visible expressions and behaviour, we guess at their internal responses (both rational and emotional), gaining access to their private world based on what their public appearance suggests. In this way, the screen offers a partial view of the narrative, allowing the filmmaker to play with "the entire cinematic space, including the soundscape, and the off-screen space where all the misunderstandings, all the apprehensions, and all the

Image 3. Different reactions of spectators in *Shirin* (Abbas Kiarostami, 2008)

desires that cinema cultivates take root" (Bonitzer, 2007: 79). *Shirin* fulfils the idea that "the image communicates only one movement, the movement of the spectator," where "emotion is motion" (Mondzain, 2015: 289). We participate in a guessing game to discern the ideas, emotions, desires, fears, frustrations and other traits of each spectator, based on her facial expressions and body gestures in reaction to the story being told. We imagine the origin and the meanings of a fixed or averted gaze, a trembling or open mouth, a furrowed or relaxed brow (Image 3). The film tells the tragic story of Shirin, but above all it shows us who sees, hears and interprets that story. Over the course of an hour and a half—and maintaining the aesthetic that characterises many of his films (close-ups, fixed camera angles, slow cutting)—Kiarostami gives us the time necessary to observe, intuit and imagine the internal responses of the spectators he portrays. At the same time, the proximity of the camera to their faces allows us into their inner worlds and contributes to a blurring of the mental geography of the cinema where the film is being shown.[6] If "the condition of the spectator is that of a subject who incessantly changes location" (Mondzain, 2015: 246), in *Shirin* that location is at once physical and metaphysical. The female spectators (and the few males) are constantly repositioned without the need for spatial continuity (there are no wide-angle views of the film theatre). In this way, the space is expanded as a symbolic field big enough for all the variables and variations of film reception.

Of particular significance is the way the Iranian director uses and enhances the film's soundscape, the only channel through which we can determine what events the spectators react to. The sound makes use of the space beyond the limits of the screen to contribute to the orientation of the action and to the protagonists' experience of the fictional world. It is worth recalling that "a focus on the ear and sound directly emphasises the spa-

tiality of the cinematic experience: we can hear around corners and through walls, in complete darkness and blinding brightness, even when we cannot see anything" (Elsaesser and Hagener, 2010: 131). While we, as spectators of the film, are relatively blind to the narrative action viewed by the spectators within the film, the sound not only facilitates anticipation or auditory suggestion of the invisible images, but also confirms the reality of those images responsible for the visible reactions of the on-screen spectators. Moreover, the sounds become symbols of the presence of the characters, regardless of whether there is dialogue or not, serving to reinforce the presence of narrative elements in a visual field that is always withheld from us.[7]

Music is also of particular importance to make up for the absence of images to Shirin's tragic story. The film begins with the pages of an old manuscript on which the opening credits appear, linking words, painting and music as elements that seem to give the film a more classical character.[8] On the one hand, the aesthetic used evokes the medieval origin of the story to be told (Image 4), recalling Muhammed ibn Mulla Mir al-Hosseini's illustrations included in the 1591 manuscript (Khosrow and Shirin, 2020). On the other, the music reflects the epic and romantic character of the narrative, with a tune that establishes the emotional and psychological tone of the story and in turn reinforces what is shown (or will be shown) in the filmic representation (Sánchez Viedman and Blanco Trejo, 2012: 16-19). As the story unfolds, the music plays an important role in the representation of the emotional states of the spectators we watch, encouraging a single interpretation due to its literalness and to the fact that the music is always in keeping with what we hear from the narrated action. The musical compositions evoke feelings like love and emotions like fear or anger, generating narrative suggestions based on structures and codes familiar from past film experiences, shared as part of the cultural knowledge that defines us as spectators. When we watch a film we are not *tabulae rasae* onto which the film narrative freely inscribes its rational, sensory and affective content. Our internal construction of the film (visual and sound) is always conditioned by our past experiences, our sociocultural environment and our life history (Tripero, 2011: 36-37). Spectators "make meanings from texts on the basis of the specific assumptions and knowledges that they

Image 4. The manuscript used in the opening credits of *Shirin* (Abbas Kiarostami, 2008)

bring to their encounter with them" (Jancovich, Faire and Stubbings, 2003: 7). This means that our background and our individual and collective context influence our perception, reconfiguration and interpretation of a film, decisively determining the cinematic experience and the meaning of the work. There is no innate interpretation of a film, and therefore, making use of the openness that a film offers for a subjective experience (Eco, 1976), each of us creates one possible life for the film, based on our particular perspective and interpretation, conditioned by everything that has inevitably informed our worldview at the moment of reception and throughout our lives (Staiger, 2000: 193).

THE SPECTATORS ARE THE FILM

In the film reception situation presented in *Shirin*, Kiarostami has the on-screen spectators perceive the imaginary film as a surface onto which to project much of what defines them. At the same time, he leads us, as spectators, to understand the imaginary film according to the reception processes that we intuit in the spectator-protagonists. They are required to appropriate a fictional world, someone else's creation, and transform it into a familiar universe, with personal resonances and inferences. The (non-existent) images capture the attention of the on-screen spectators, not only as a simulation, imitation or duplication, but above all as a "world subjected to the stories that we have in our heads, where we make sense of the characters by comparing their cognitive environment with ours, a world, above all, that we interpret based on the intentions that we attribute to the person responsible for the narrative communication" (Jost, quoted in Monteiro, 1996b: 88). The interpretation of the film also establishes a mediation and provides its protagonists with an understanding of themselves, fostering a subjective appropriation of the narrative universe according to their life situation (Babo, 205: 36). *Shirin* thus becomes a context for a personal and subjective reconfiguration of narrative relationships, states of mind, participants and situations for the on-screen spectators who use the film as a space for self-recognition. In an intimate way, they project their existential qualities onto an external entity that invites them to assimilate its cognitive and affective signs. In this sense, *Shirin* establishes two levels of participation. On one level, it requires an act of projection that allows the protagonists to enter the film, to abandon their individual traits and form part of a shared experience that *objectifies* their subjectivity. On the other level, it establishes a process of identification, pointing towards the inner worlds of the on-screen spectators, who embrace the fictional world and its narrative elements (or at least some of them) and, in this way, adopt the position of an imaginary subject of the action itself (Elsaesser and Hagener, 2010: 37).

The aforementioned projection of the conscious or latent inner world of the protagonists onto the narrated story is not exclusive to the process of a cinematic experience. As Morin (1996: 107) suggests, every human being tends to project aspirations, desires, obsessions or fears onto all things and entities in the definition of a real identity. The organisation of events and elements involves a direction (adopted by the filmmaker) that allows the projection of the subjectivity of the spectator, who accepts the text as his or her own and reconfigures its meanings. It is therefore not surprising that the on-screen spectators of *Shirin* should experience a situation of film reception that offers privileged conditions for the emergence of latent or hidden qualities of their personalities and identities. Although they remain aware of the fictional nature of the film, they immerse themselves in it and are transported to a position closer to the filmic events, allowing a more intense projection of their capacities and qualities—conscious or unconscious—onto elements of the narrative.

IT IS THEREFORE NOT SURPRISING THAT THE ON-SCREEN SPECTATORS OF *SHIRIN* SHOULD EXPERIENCE A SITUATION OF FILM RECEPTION THAT OFFERS PRIVILEGED CONDITIONS FOR THE EMERGENCE OF LATENT OR HIDDEN QUALITIES OF THEIR PERSONALITIES AND IDENTITIES

If the projective movement can be explained in light of the need to deal with desires, ambitions or frustrations that it has not been possible to resolve in real life, this potential also arises in identification, although directed at an affective proximity to something that is close to who we are or what we long for. Sorlin argues that the (secondary) identification process entails "spectators reclaiming what they see as their own, 'putting themselves' in the place of the characters" (Sorlin, 1985: 123), while Mitry suggests that "the spectator's identification (which is like an enhanced belief in the reality of the film) constitutes a kind of renunciation of the self, if only for the duration of the film, to identify with the 'Other'" (Mitry, 2002: 211). The on-screen spectators in *Shirin* follow the narrative journey of a medieval princess who faces timeless problems (love, jealousy, death), easily transferable to or reconfigurable in the real lives of the protagonists. This also facilitates the identification process and the affective movements between the film and the spectator-protagonists, revealing or suggesting their inner qualities. However, identification can also occur in the equivalence between the (visual and/or sound) perspectives of subject-enunciator and subject-spectator. This (primary) identification is associated with a point of view that is neither controlled nor defined by the film receiver, determining the point of access to a universe presented to our senses, which nevertheless limits our participation in the development of the events of the story. As subject-spectators, we identify ourselves from a perspective of projection and reception, thus identifying with the filmic apparatus (Metz, 2001: 63-65). In *Shirin*, the spectators (us) and the protagonists are both witnesses to the same story, but with two fundamental differences: we have access only to the sound of something that the protagonists can also see, and we can only observe them and connect their physical behaviour to the story being told. With the visual aesthetic of *Shirin*, Kiarostami enhances the secondary identification of the on-screen spectators with the characters of the imaginary film, but also our identification with the visible protagonists. The primary identification (with the camera) is also split between the gaze of the women at the imaginary screen and our gaze at the faces of the spectators watching that screen. There are thus two types of projection (diegetic and extradiegetic) of a film on the surface of a screen; two kinds of spectators fix their gaze and project their senses onto a surface, giving rise to the different types of identification. Just as each screen receives the projection of the events and elements that compose the imaginary story and the journey through the filmic universe, spectators use their consciousness as a receptive surface for everything they perceive, understand and interpret, thereby engraving them on their retina and in their understanding and sensibility.

THE CATHARSIS OF REALITY IN FICTION

Near the end of the film, Princess Shirin addresses the protagonists directly in a monologue, after Khosrow's death at the hands of his son (Shiroyeh) and moments before her own suicide (the monologue will serve precisely to communicate her fatal decision to "her sisters", the spectators). Shirin declares: "And here we are, Khosrow and I, and you, my grieving sisters. You look at his dead body and you cry. You listen to my story and you cry. Through these tears, I see your eyes. Are you shedding these tears for me, Shirin? Or for the Shirin that hides in each one of you? Shirin who,

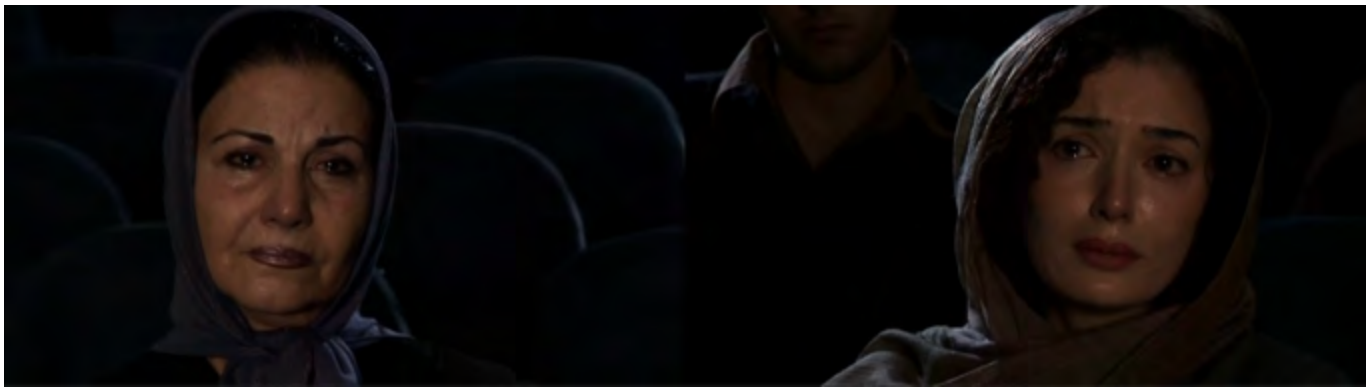

Image 5. Two spectators crying in response to the tragic events of the narrative (*Shirin*, Abbas Kiarostami, 2008)

through her life, received neither any favour nor any attention. She was in love, a love that was never returned. She was lonely and no one believed her loneliness. Upon her death only, they would remember the young girl in love with games, rain and sunshine, a rainbow in her eyes, and tears of seven colours falling on her cheeks." This final monologue of Shirin's is the moment when Kiarostami seems more clearly to acknowledge the whole process of a connection of identity between Shirin, her story, and the women who follow both in their cinematic experience. However, although this relationship is only explicitly acknowledged at this time, the reflections between the film and the on-screen spectators mark the film's development from the very beginning.[9]

The Iranian director also seems to be looking for an experience of representation that will offer film viewers a degree of catharsis and affective fulfilment based on the reality of the protagonists. This raises the fundamental question of the film: which is the true story of *Shirin* (the film)? The story of a princess in search of her love? Or the invisible, incomplete stories that the actresses/spectators hint at in their expressions, looks and gestures (Image 5)? The nature of cinema (and more specifically, of the subjective and emotional experience it provides) possesses certain qualities that bring out unexplored regions of the human heart. The absence of film content (characters, actions, contexts and other elements present in the film) allows the spectator to establish a safe distance from the universe experienced. However, the film replaces the spectator with other characters who act and suffer in our place, so that we can enjoy the narrative journey without any real consequences and without excessive involvement. This is just what Žižek argues, that "by delegating to the other that which exists in the depths of my being, including my dreams and my desires, I open a space where I can have the freedom to breathe; [...] when the other is sacrificed in my place, I have the freedom to continue with my life with the awareness of having paid for my guilt" (Žižek, 2006: 23). *Shirin*'s on-screen spectators seem to be struggling with complicated problems, unspoken frustrations and desires, finding a way to confront and solve them by accepting or rejecting them. The film, "with its true (external) sounds and images, [...] contributes to the development of the phantasmal flow of the subject with a supplementary, imported substance, to give life to the figures of the subject's desire," thereby becoming a "practice of affective fulfilment" (Metz, 2001: 109). *Shirin* suggests the experience of hints of elements that form part of the actresses' lives, but that would rarely have found the opportunity to come to light. In this sense, the film would represent an exercise in freedom and liberation in which the protagonists acknowledge and experi-

ence the full intensity and corresponding emotion of important aspects of their existence.

This type of process of participation in the cinematic experience necessarily evokes the political and sociocultural context of the on-screen spectators. It is a context that influences what Teixeira Lopes (2000: 313) defines as the "affective disposition" of the film receiver; i.e. the state and form whereby we, as individuals, (subjectively) receive a film, mobilising certain attitudes, conventions, norms and perspectives that form part of our identity and are also the result of our belonging to a certain social environment. At different moments in the film, the princess addresses the audience (directly or indirectly) regarding a variety of themes associated with her story: love, hope, fear or discontent. Her words and appeals to the audience do not refer exclusively to the narrative context of the film but are also potentially applicable and relevant to the political and sociocultural environment of the on-screen spectators. Several dialogues and monologues in the film evoke ideas and situations related to the context of women in Iran,[10] giving rise to reflections on its patriarchal family structure (Moradiyan Rizi, 2016: 50), where women are often oppressed by power relations that assign different responsibilities and privileges to men and women. Saljoughi (2012: 519) observes that *Shirin* draws attention to the failure of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 to safeguard the role of women in a collective vision of their society and culture. Moradiyan Rizi (206: 49-50) suggests that many of the representations of heterosexual love stories in Persian literature and Iranian cinema impose feminine ideals such as invisibility, chastity and silence on women, but *Shirin* highlights female individuality through the filmic apparatus, bringing spectators closer to the subjectivity, desire and identification behind the face of each woman. The women watching the imaginary film, with their idiosyncratic and contextual differences, seem to project themselves onto the same story and from that same story they extract a variety of vital resonances and transferences. We follow the narration of the events on the soundtrack, but what the visuals provide is the interpretation of what we hear transferred to the lives of the spectators we observe. Moreover, the gaze of each protagonist seems to reflect a struggle to overcome what prevents her from making her own decisions based on her personal needs and desires (Gyenge, 2016: 138). For this reason, within Iranian culture and society, the experience of Princess Shirin's story offers an affective fulfilment of aspects of life that are yet to be realised, a release of accumulated tensions or a conferral of meaning upon events, facts and elements of the real world that may seem illogical according to the a priori understanding of each on-screen spectator. The positioning of women as protagonists pushes at cultural, social and political boundaries, questioning the factors of female oppression in Iran and providing a catharsis for the woman's condition.

SHIRIN'S STORY, AS A NARRATIVE MODEL WITH AN UNDERLYING VALIDITY FOR THE PERSONAL NARRATIVE OF EACH ON-SCREEN SPECTATOR, ACQUIRES SIGNIFICANCE AS A SUPPORT TO THE SEARCH FOR MEANING UNDERTAKEN BY EACH PROTAGONIST IN HER RELATIONSHIP WITH HER INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL REALITY

CONCLUSION

Shirin's story, as a narrative model with an underlying validity for the personal narrative of each on-screen spectator, acquires significance as a support to the search for meaning undertaken by each protagonist in her relationship with her individual and social reality. Beyond the direct correspondence with facts of each personal reality, Shirin's story

provides the different life stories of the on-screen spectators with structure and significance. What we hear of adventures and misadventures in Shirin's narrative journey we imagine in the situations and life journeys of the women watching her story. In this sense, the women perpetuate and multiply the princess' narrative into multiple versions, taking it as a model for different meanings. Between what the protagonists observe and what we observe of them, *Shirin* establishes a dialogue between two surfaces that define the pragmatic impact of a film: the screen and the spectator. The yearnings of the filmmaker, characters and spectators coexist in the space of an experience that represents the very definition and potential of what it means to *watch a film*. At one point in *Taste of Shirin*, Kiarostami makes this point clear to his actresses, while preparing them for filming: "Now, as spectators, you are going to look at yourselves as actresses." The stories and personal qualities of the actresses, evoked by the Iranian director's *mise-en-scène*, set up a game between the personal and the collective, the public and the private, but also between the simulation of fiction and the documentary record. Fiction and reality are combined in a sense that is not limited to revealing their differences or to highlighting merely metaphorical similarities. *Shirin* exposes the importance of shared narratives and the capacity of cinema to invoke different realities beneath the same surface. In this way, Kiarostami's film helps demonstrate that the entire exercise of cinematographic creation is also always a place attributed to the spectators, who collaborate in the construction of the meanings of a film and of new traces and shadows that create it anew with every viewing. ■

NOTES

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1 Occasionally, male spectators appear in the frame, but always in the background. Thus, the main focus is clearly on the role of female viewers as protagonists of the film.

2 This text is based on the author's unpublished doctoral thesis, *La ficción 'realizada': implicaciones y transferencias entre ficción y realidad en la pragmática del cine narrativo* (2015).

3 The soundtrack that tells the story of Shirin was made in post-production; at the time of filming, the sounds used for the final version of the film had not yet been recorded.

4 Kiarostami explores the interpretive significance associated with the Kuleshov effect, exploiting the fact that we always interpret an image in relation to the visual information that precedes or follows it (and also the sound that accompanies it). It is thus particularly significant that Kiarostami directs the performances of his actresses arguing, among other things, that "the expression of indifference is better suited to the film," as he suggests in *Taste of Shirin*.

5 The use of the inner lives of his actors or actresses during the filmmaking process is a characteristic feature of Kiarostami's directing style and previous filmography (marked by a constant attempt to approximate reality and to uncover the truth of the environments and situations that their narratives explore). In *Taste of Shirin* (2008), Kiarostami confirms this intention several times, when he tells his actresses: "It is up to you to define the film for yourself"; "the more you are yourself, the better it will turn out"; "the best way [to act] is to screen a personal film in your head. If the sadness is something internal, personal, coming from yourself, something that hurt you a long time ago, then your performance will be more genuine."

6 Kiarostami filmed all the shots in the living room of his house, rearranging the space and the extras for each shot of the actresses.

7 When Farhad dies in *Shirin*, we hear crows and wind before the confirmation of what has happened; these sounds also lead us to intuit his probable death. Similarly, the sound of a chisel carving out stone suggests

Farhad's presence in the narrative frame before the narration or dialogue clearly announces it.

8 This classical character, contrary to Kiarostami's usual aesthetic, is defined by the use of matching visual and sound codes, which articulate univocal, non-polysemic and non-dichotomous meanings.

9 At around the fourth minute of *Shirin*, we hear a group of women (characters from the imaginary film) crying over something tragic that happened in the universe of the story. However, we observe the neutral, as yet indifferent expressions of the on-screen spectators, who at that moment are only beginning to enter the fiction world of the film they are watching. The dialogue between the sound and image described provides a natural (and perhaps even inevitable) bridge between the feelings of the women crying (fictional narration) and the women we see (fictional reception). While initially this relationship arises from the novelty of this gap, later it will take on contours of constant emotional proximity between the on-screen spectators and the characters of the film they are watching.

10 At one point, Shirin remarks: "Men get warmed by love. Women get burned. They are the first victims of that fire." A little later, in relation to Shiroveh's violence against his father (Khosrow) and his brothers to seize the throne of the kingdom, Shirin again appeals to the female spectators on this point: "You, my sisters, know this story better than I. This is one more men's game."

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SURFACES OF DESIRE: A PORTRAIT OF THE CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE BASED ON *SHIRIN*

Abstract

A film contains signs of its director's intentionality, determining what spectators can see and hear, but also what is kept hidden from their senses. This entails an idealised conception of the film's reception based on those decisions, decisively influencing the viewer's relationship with the film and the level of engagement with it. The evocation of desires, frustrations and tensions in the individual and collective lives of spectators creates an opportunity to deal with, confront or even resolve real-life issues through the cinematic experience. Thus, in its signifying nature, a film contains the polysemy necessary for new pathways to be revealed for the film and for those who experience it with each viewing. *Shirin* (Abbas Kiarostami, 2008) is a paradigmatic work for this inquiry into the processes and impacts inherent in film reception. Combining the soundtrack of a mythological tale and the performance of spectators (actresses) who relate emotionally to the narrative, *Shirin* offers an open journey through the ghosts of the implicit and explicit realities of its protagonists. Based on an analysis of Kiarostami's film, this article aims to identify and relate different aspects, proximities and distances that comprise the complexity and personal involvement of watching a film, exploring the film screen and spectators as sensory surfaces where the codes for unveiling unfulfilled desires emerge.

Key words

Film: Spectator; Reception; Experience; Face; Screen; Shirin; Kiarostami.

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SUPERFICIES DEL ANHELO: UN RETRATO DE LA EXPERIENCIA CINEMATOGRÁFICA A PARTIR DE *SHIRIN*

Resumen

Una película evidencia marcas de la intencionalidad de su director, determinando lo que el espectador puede ver y escuchar, pero también lo que permanece escondido de sus sentidos. Eso presupone idealizar la recepción fílmica a partir de esas decisiones, influyendo decisivamente en la relación del receptor con el filme y los grados de su envolvimiento con él. Convocar deseos, frustraciones y tensiones procedentes de la vida individual y colectiva del espectador conlleva la emersión de una oportunidad de manejar, confrontar o, incluso, solucionar cuestiones reales a través de la experiencia cinematográfica. Así, una obra fílmica encierra, en su carácter significante, la polisemia necesaria para que, en cada visionado, nuevos caminos se revelen para la película y para quien la vivencia. *Shirin* (Abbas Kiarostami, 2008) constituye una obra paradigmática en lo que concierne a esta indagación de los procesos e impactos inherentes a la recepción fílmica. Mezclando la escenificación sonora de un cuento mitológico y la performance de espectadoras (actrices) que se relacionan emocionalmente con la narrativa, *Shirin* entabla un trayecto abierto por los fantasmas de las realidades implícitas y explícitas de sus protagonistas. A partir del análisis de la película de Kiarostami, este artículo pretende identificar y relacionar diferentes aspectos, proximidades y distancias que conforman la complejidad e implicación vital de ver un filme, indagando la pantalla y los espectadores como superficies sensibles donde asoman los códigos-clave para desvelar anhelos por cumplir.

Palabras clave

Cine; Espectador; Recepción; Experiencia; Rostro; Pantalla; Shirin; Kiarostami.

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AESTHETICS AND DEPRESSION IN LARS VON TRIER'S CINEMA

CARLOS RUIZ CARMONA
MARCO PEREIRA CAMPOS

FROM ART AND DEPRESSION TO LARS VON TRIER'S EXPERIENCE AND MOTIFS

According to Alain Ehrenberg (2009: 8), depression is a very serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, think and act. Depression causes feelings of sadness, pain, and a general loss of interest or pleasure in activities you once enjoyed. It can also lead to feelings of worthlessness or guilt and can trigger a tendency towards self-punishment and provoke suicidal thoughts. During the 1960s and 1970s, self-liberation gained currency as a countercultural movement and it was in this period that public awareness about depression and other mental illnesses began to spread. Since the 1960s, the popularity of psychoanalysis has grown exponentially and depression has come to be recognised as part of the modern individual's constant struggle to achieve self-understanding (Callahan & Berrios, 2004). Modern society offers the individual freedom of choice, but "internal insecurity [is] the price of this liberation" (Ehrenberg, 2009: 12). Depression is one of the most widespread illnesses of the new millennium, affecting millions of people of all ages and genders all over the world.

Depression has become a key theme in many works of art, from paintings of renowned artists such as Francis Bacon or Paula Rego to music like Chopin's *Prelude in E Minor (Op. 28, No. 4, I)*, and literature such as Jean Paul Sartre's *Nausea* (1938). Recent years have seen a proliferation of art works dealing with, exploring or motivated by depression. The aesthetics of depression has also been explored by numerous scholars. In *The Aesthetics of Disengagement*, Christine Ross points to performance and video art where "subjects are imprisoned in time; unable to learn from their failures, self-absorbed, and disengaged

from the other" (Ross, 2006: xvi) and analyses works by artists like Ken Lum, Ugo Rondinone, Vanessa Beecroft and Douglas Gordon. Cinema is no exception, and the representation of the condition in film has varied according to its perception and evolution in the psychiatric field. After the end of World War II in 1945, the need for better diagnoses and treatments became urgent due to the exponential rise in the number of patients suffering from depression (Callahan & Berrios, 2004). The war had devastated Europe and plunged its society into a pessimistic existential crisis. This post-war trauma is in fact a subject in the early films of von Trier, whose academic short films include the despicable Nazi as a recurring motif.

VON TRIER'S FILMS SUBVERT THE CONVENTIONS OF THE MELODRAMA GENRE, WITH AN EMOTIONAL CHARGE ALWAYS ON THE VERGE OF A MENTAL BREAKDOWN

Lars von Trier has frequently spoken openly about several traumatic episodes in his life that influenced his interest in depression. It is no secret that the director has wrestled with anxiety, phobias and bouts of depression from a very young age. In several interviews he has blamed his socialist mother for a lack of parental guidance, leaving him to make his own decisions and create his own rules (Björkman, 2005). Peter Schepelern (2015), a former professor of von Trier's, suggests in an interview with the filmmaker that just as Flaubert *was* Madame Bovary, it could be said that von Trier *is* his female characters. For instance, Justine's vulnerability and depression in *Melancholia* (Lars von Trier, 2011) are clearly a reflection of the director's own struggles. In that same interview, von Trier himself shares that throughout his childhood he believed that when he grew up all his fears would go away, but he was wrong. "It exploded even more," he explains. "That was such a disappointment. An enormous disappointment" (Schepelern, 2015). After this realisation, the director spent many years in therapy and on medication for his anxiety and depression, but in 2007 he sank even deeper. "I was just lying, crying, for a week, just staring at the wall. I couldn't get up. I was so afraid. Fear is hell. It's really hell. The worst" (Heath, 2011). A slow recovery followed and while still very fragile he made the film *Antichrist* (Lars von Trier, 2009). To deal with his condition, the director has often resorted to psychotherapy and medication, maintaining an intimate relationship with them that is expressed in his films in both the narrative and the aesthetics; the hypnosis scenes in *Epidemic* (Lars von Trier, 1987), *Antichrist* and *Melancholia* are reflections of his experience with depression.

Trauma is a recurring motif in von Trier's films, and while the trauma/depression relationship is not linear, it is clear that the traumatic event is a catalyst for the character's depressive episodes. This happens to She in *Antichrist*, after her son's death, while in *Melancholia*, Justine suffers from depression but there is no specific reference to a particular traumatic event. The reactive depression of She contrasts with the existential depression of Justine.

Von Trier's films subvert the conventions of the melodrama genre, with an emotional charge always on the verge of a mental breakdown. In *Antichrist*, a psychological break with reality is suggested in She's violent psychotic episodes. Similarly, social and cultural conventions are deconstructed, inviting debate and, above all, interrogating our perception of the world. Von Trier places his characters in a game between those who accept suffering as their natural fate—the immediate reality of their lives—and those who suffer existentially, alienated from the everyday world.

THE AESTHETICS OF DEPRESSION IN LARS VON TRIER'S CINEMA

Depression as a central and pan-filmic theme in Trier's career has been studied and analysed not from an aesthetic point of view but from a philosophical perspective, focusing on ethical and moral issues, and from a narrative point of view through a cultural and social contextualisation of the disease. It is for this reason that we need to understand how von Trier represents depression through filmic discourse. Can we in fact assume that von Trier's own personal experience with depression informs his films' aesthetics? Is it possible to identify a specific style to represent depression? Does this audiovisual treatment vary in each film or has it remained consistent throughout his career?

Although we have in fact conducted a stylistic and thematic review of his entire filmography, for the purpose of this paper we have selected three films, focusing specifically on two scenes from each film, to argue that von Trier's cinematic discourse is marked by a representation of depression. The three films chosen are: *Breaking the Waves* (Lars von Trier, 1996), *Antichrist* and *Dogville* (Lars von Trier, 2003). According to our analysis, *Antichrist* and *Breaking the Waves* are the two films that contain most of von Trier's essential cinematic elements for the representation of depression. *Dogville*, however, although it also includes recurrent elements from previous films, constitutes an exception in its representation of depression because it introduces new stylistic elements never seen before in his filmography. This exception reinforces the suggestion of a particular stylistic pattern in von Trier's filmmaking.

Our analysis includes a detailed discussion of how the filmmaker uses light, composition, colour, diegetic and non-diegetic sound, and editing to represent depression. The scenes analysed highlight moments of fragility in a character dealing with an oppressive and above all incomprehensible context. In this sense, each scene evokes a psychological failure of the character to deal with the situation within the limits of her abilities in some moments and a reaction of exasperated rebellion against the surrounding world in others. The scenes are analysed by contextualising their place in the narrative, identifying elements of the mise-en-scène, and examining the characters' emotional reactions.

BREAKING THE WAVES: THE EMOTIONAL PROXIMITY OF DEPRESSION

The first scene analysed, Jan's departure (00:34:20 to 00:37:30), concludes the second chapter of *Breaking the Waves*. It is the moment showing the couple Jan and Bess's first farewell, when Jan leaves by helicopter to go work on an offshore oil rig. The scene demonstrates Bess's emotional fragility, as she panics and faints in the arms of her sister-in-law Dodo. Her reaction hints at something that she seems to know already—that without Jan, her life will not be happy again. Jan's departure prompts Bess to keep a calendar to mark his return; this calendar is the subject of the second scene analysed, which takes place between 00:46:20 and 00:48:20 in the third chapter. Bess's depression, which worsens over time, triggers another impulsive reaction: her panic over Jan's departure gives way to rebellion in reaction to the lack of understanding of those around her. Bess is at her mother's house when Dodo arrives from work and is promptly confronted with the disappearance of the calendar. Jan's departure takes place outside, in broad daylight, where the helicopter takes off. This large, empty space is marked by the presence of the cars of the people who, like Bess, are saying goodbye to the departing workers. The scene uses natural lighting that accentuates the greyness of the day, blended in the mise-en-scène with neutral, unsaturated colours of brown, beige and black. The images have a low contrast, resulting in a washed-out

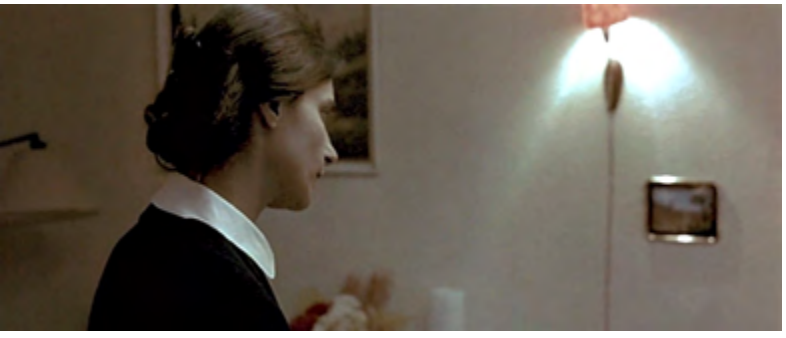

Figure 1. Jan's departure frame sequence II, *Breaking the Waves* (Lars von Trier, 1996) © Zentropa

appearance. There is an extensive use of medium shots and closeups, which vary between subjective and objective angles, and there are no static shots as the scene is filmed entirely with a handheld camera. The editing of this scene uses jump cuts, which intensify Bess's psychological confusion and convey a feeling of extreme unease. The scene uses only diegetic sound and it is important to note the increasing intensity of the helicopter's rotors, whose whirring accompanies Bess's panic; Jan's departure is thus given special significance (Figure 1).

The scene dealing with Bess's calendar, in contrast, takes place almost entirely indoors, at Bess's house, where she lives with her mother and Dodo. The mise-en-scène conveys a sense of discomfort and disharmony, as metaphors for her depressed state. The limited natural light in the scene, which enters through the living room window necessitates artificial lighting, provided by small lamps; yet the house is still dark. Neutral tones, like beige, brown and black predominate, although there are also some red elements, such as the lamp and the plastic flowers on the windowsill that stand out in the image. However, similarly to the previous scene, the colour saturation is low. The contrast is more balanced despite the low clarity of the image. The frame sequence reinforces both the claustrophobic atmosphere and the discomfort and colourlessness resulting from the art direction (Figure 2).

In both scenes analysed, the stark mise-en-scène conveys a sense of realism and reflects the film's naturalistic, documentary aesthetic quality—in contrast to the frames dividing each chapter, in which the landscapes feature extremely saturated colours and a high contrast. The documentary aesthetic is also evident in the use of natural light, conveying the idea of a grey and dull world through the manipulation of the image quality. As shown in the scene of Jan's departure, the day is foggy, given the outdoor environment itself a neutral quality.

Figure 2. Bess's Calendar frame sequence II, *Breaking the Waves* (Lars von Trier, 1996) © Zentropa




THE APPARENT LACK OF AESTHETIC CONCERN LAYS VON TRIER'S FILMIC WORLD BARE AND FOREGROUNDS HUMAN FRAILTY

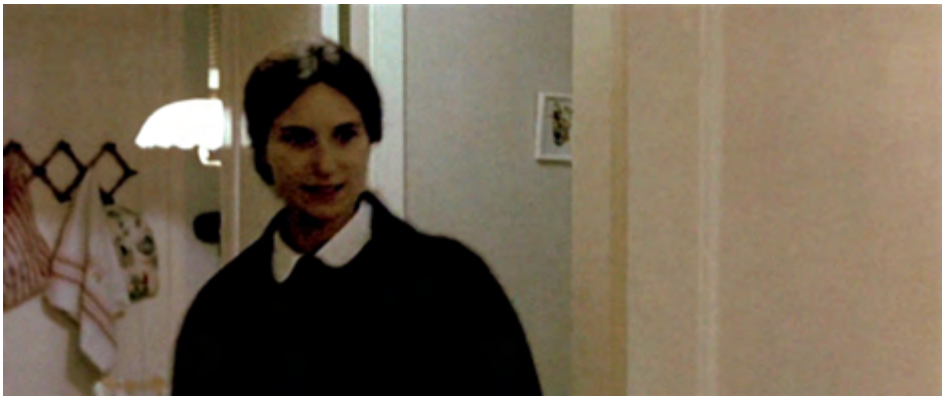
The interior spotlights are discreet, accentuating the realistic look of places such as Bess's mother's house and the village hospital. The colours are practically devoid of saturation and with few contrasting shades which, combined with the lack of image definition and excessive graininess, create a pastel appearance of faded neutral tones ranging from brown to beige and black. This is clear in both scenes, as in the first Jan's and Bess's beige and black jackets dominate the frame while in the second Dodo's black jacket stands out against the washed-out, almost empty beige walls (Figure 3).

The apparent lack of aesthetic concern lays von Trier's filmic world bare and foregrounds human frailty, focusing entirely on the characters' emotions. Medium shots and closeups convey a sense of enclosure, a literal expression of what is not translatable into words, most prominently in the interior scenes. Conversely, the constant variation in the first shots of the scene and the continuous movement of the handheld camera track the performance of each character, so that the action of one character leads to the reaction of the other. Like the first scene, in the calendar scene von Trier constructs the narrative using jump cuts and it is in this change between continuous action and ruptured action that the idea of illusion is constantly deconstructed. Paradoxically, this immerses the spectator much more in the emotional world of his characters, especially Bess. In Jan's departure, the crescendo created by the deafening sound of the propellers is abruptly cut off by the vibrant music that accompanies each chapter. The music contrasts with the dramatic intensity of each scene and evokes a world that is distant and even forbidden to Bess. The aesthetic intimacy and harshness establish a new context representative of depression by highlighting the humanity of the characters; as such, these aesthetic qualities exemplify how von Trier represents depression.

ANTICHRIST: THE EXPRESSIONIST REPRESENTATION OF DEPRESSION

The aesthetic of depression in *Antichrist* is substantially different from the one in *Breaking the Waves*, and these differences are quite evident

Figure 3. Jan's departure and Bess's Calendar frame sequence comparison, *Breaking the Waves* (Lars von Trier, 1996) © Zentropa



in the stylised slow-motion black and white prologue. The first scene analysed, in the hospital (00:06:28 to 00:11:16), takes place during the first chapter, entitled "Grief (Mourning)", and follows the tragedy of the death of She's son. She lies in bed at a mental hospital recovering from the traumatic event. Her slow, slurred speech shows that she is under the influence of heavy sedatives while discussing the details of her treatment with her husband, He, who marks out a position of domination when he declares that he will be treating She outside the hospital. Thus, two important aspects of depression are established: the traumatic impact on She, expressed by her physical and mental devastation, and her self-blame for what has happened. This idea of guilt is taken to the extreme in the story, especially in the second scene analysed, "Self-mutilation" (01:27:33 to 01:29:07), which takes place during the fourth chapter, titled "The Three Beggars". In a cabin in Eden, where She worked on her doctoral dissertation, He is passed out and She picks up a pair of scissors and cuts her clitoris, a visceral representation of her depression, which transforms psychological distress into self-inflicted physical pain.

In the hospital, the set is a room with only one bed with white sheets and a small bedside table. The minimalism of the art direction makes it possible to highlight the bottles of pills, the glass of water and the flower vase. The lighting is artificial, combining the warm light of the lamp, and the cold light of the ceiling illumination. The intensity of this lighting enhances the high contrast of the image together with the saturated colours, very different from the faded tones in *Breaking the Waves*. The image has shades of blue and grey, giving the black that represents the darkness of depression a more intense appearance. Figure 4 contrasts two scenes of extreme suffering for the female characters in *Antichrist* and *Breaking the Waves*, highlighting the differences in the visual representations of depression described above. She's grief can arguably be compared to Bess's traumatised reaction to her husband's departure (Figure 4). As in *Breaking the Waves*, von Trier focuses on the characters' emotions, using medium shots and closeups filmed with a handheld camera. The only exception is in the slow and steady tracking shot of the background, showing plant stems in water, which conveys a supernatural aura of suffering. At the same time, jump cuts compress the action, limiting our view of the emotional reactions of the characters. The scene's final shots are marked by overlapping images: the stems of the plants blend with the letter and all

Figure 4. In the hospital bed and Jan's departure frame comparison, *Antichrist* (2009) and *Breaking the Waves* (Lars von Trier, 1996) © Zentropa


of this is accompanied by a non-diegetic, droning bass sound that drowns out the diegetic noises of the room.

In "Self-mutilation", similar to the hospital scene, the setting, which is revealed to be the floor of the cabin, is stripped of any decorative elements, underscoring the emptiness of the space. The artificial lighting is characterised by warm tones and low colour saturation. The prologue's monochrome flashbacks, which are intercut with scenes in the film's present, have a high contrast. The closeups of She's expression are intercut with her actions in a cropped frame. The handheld camera moves wildly, blurring the image with multiple zooms in and out. In contrast, the slow-motion closeups of the flashbacks are completely stable. Presented together in the montage, the rapid and abrupt shots of chaotic action in the present contrast with the slow pace of the flashbacks in black and white, which convey a certain stillness (Figure 5). The diegetic sound of the scene underscores the hardness of some objects, such as the scissors or the wood of the cabin, and intensifies the character's screams. However, there is very little diegetic sound and, again, it is the non-diegetic sound of droning bass that conveys the dark, abstract atmosphere of the suffering inherent in depression.

While in *Breaking the Waves* von Trier approaches depression through scenic realism, in *Antichrist* he resorts to a metaphorical and expressionist treatment. As noted above, the objects on the bedside table in the hospital scene evoke the central themes of the narrative: depression and nature. Similarly, in "Self-mutilation", the virtual emptiness of the cabin in Eden, combined with the high contrast and colour saturation, enhances the climactic symbolism of the scene. The film's prologue stands out for its stylised imagery, with the use of fixed black and white shots and slow motion, and it contrasts with the following chapters, which show traces of the naturalistic aesthetic adopted in *Breaking the Waves*.

Figure 5. Self-mutilation frame sequence, *Antichrist* (Lars von Trier, 2009) © Zentropa

An aura of depression is created with the use of blue and green tones framed in black. The colours are quite saturated, in contrast to the pastel effect of *Breaking the Waves*, evoking an expressionist quality reminiscent of the Europa trilogy—*The Element of Crime* (Forbrydelsens element, Lars von Trier, 1984), *Epidemic* and *Eu-*

MORE THAN A FICTIONAL REALITY, *ANTICHRIST* IS A METAPHOR, AS THE USE OF COLOUR CREATES THE SETTING FOR A PESSIMISTIC FABLE IN WHICH DEPRESSION IS LYRICALLY EXPRESSED

ropa (Lars von Trier, 1991)—or the miniseries *The Kingdom* (Riget, Lars von Trier, 1994).

More than a fictional reality, *Antichrist* is a metaphor, as the use of colour creates the setting for a pessimistic fable in which depression is lyrically expressed. Trier's fascination with cinematic hypnosis comes into evidence again in an important transition in *Antichrist*, where He puts She into a trancelike state to prepare her for the trip to the cabin. This technique is reminiscent of such films as *The Element of Crime*, where the protagonist himself is under hypnosis, and *Europa*, in which a voiceover "hypnotises" the protagonist and the audience. In *Antichrist* von Trier uses hypnosis to take us into a world that collides with reality. Closeups and the handheld camera convey the character's anxiety, while the saturated static images create an oneiric feeling, especially during the slow-motion sequences. This dreamlike quality evokes a sensory element of the unconscious; von Trier claims that he literally "dreamed up" various images in the film, many of which came to him in Shamanistic trances (von Trier, 2009).

The fluctuation of colour tones in the "Self-mutilation" scene, in which warm tones predominated by brown and beige shift to sepia, stands in contrast to the cold, grey blues in the hospital scene. Flashbacks of the child falling out of the window in the prologue perpetuate the memory of that event with the intensity of black and white. This chromatic duality evokes a feeling of deep sadness that pervades the narrative. The handheld camera's uneven movements and the disorienting jump cuts used in *Breaking the Waves* reflect an approach that is markedly different from *Antichrist*'s abstract style: the hypnosis of stable shots depicts depression as something beyond the comprehensible.

The humanism evident in *Breaking the Waves*, and in *Dancer in the Dark* (Lars von Trier, 2000) or even *Dogville*, seems overshadowed in *Antichrist* by a hostile world where the characters become puppets of their own fate. The slowing down of the action breaks the real time of the image and forces the viewer to experience She's suffering over the death of her son in agonising slow motion. There are still metaphorical images, almost frozen, which stand out because of the artificial light and the saturated and contrasted colours, combining with droning sounds to create a dismal atmosphere. Sound in the film alludes to human nature, like the organic functions of the human body, and to earthly phenomena, like the wind or falling acorns, sounds that are purposefully intensified to evoke alarm and hostility. Similarly, the bass tones convey urgency and anxiety, while vesting *Antichrist* with a supernatural aura.

DOGVILLE: THE AESTHETICS OF ILLUSION IN THE DEPRESSION SCENARIO

Dogville is the first film in the incomplete USA-Land of Opportunities trilogy, also including *Manderlay* (Lars von Trier, 2005). With the main female character, Grace, von Trier breaks the martyr pattern to present a kind-hearted person tested by extreme situations of abuse that will culminate in her sadistic revenge. Throughout the narrative, Grace appears as a self-sacrificing, rather naive and innocent individual. Yet the sadistic vengeful finale reveals a character who takes pleasure in the suffering of others, and who even takes pride in taking part in a kind of primal retributive justice. Even so, the motifs of sacrifice, guilt, and the traumatic experience of the female character, as in previous narratives, are still present in this film.

Figure 6. The town of Dogville, *Dogville* (Lars von Trier, 2003) © Zentropa

Grace finds a refuge in the town of Dogville, an unreal, anachronistic, archetypal space represented by a stage setting. Surrounded by black curtains to simulate night-time and white cloths to indicate daytime, the stage has a black floor marked by thick white lines instead of walls to allow the viewer to see all the actions (Figure 6). The idea of a privacy-deprived community is conveyed in a claustrophobic environment where Grace, who had sought freedom away from her father's abuse, confronts her psychological weakness. Her kindness and willingness to help the community, along with her self-blaming attitude, delay the psychological and physical abuse that will ultimately be inflicted on her by the apparently good and honest folks of the town. It is when Grace is mistaken for a criminal that the townspeople turn voracious and take advantage of her vulnerable situation. This vulnerability contrasts with that of the narratives of the other two films analysed above, however, as in *Dogville* the woman becomes submissive to social oppression.

THE IDEA OF A PRIVACY-DEPRIVED COMMUNITY IS CONVEYED IN A CLAUSTROPHOBIC ENVIRONMENT WHERE GRACE, WHO HAD SOUGHT FREEDOM AWAY FROM HER FATHER'S ABUSE, CONFRONTS HER PSYCHOLOGICAL WEAKNESS. HER KINDNESS AND WILLINGNESS TO HELP THE COMMUNITY, ALONG WITH HER SELF-BLAMING ATTITUDE, DELAY THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL ABUSE THAT WILL ULTIMATELY BE INFLICTED ON HER BY THE APPARENTLY GOOD AND HONEST FOLKS OF THE TOWN

In this way, depression is expressed in the character's inaction in response to her hostile environment, as seen in the first scene analysed, "The Violation of Grace" (01:31:58 and 01:36:33) in "Chapter 6: In which Dogville bares its teeth". Grace is sexually assaulted by one of the townspeople, Chuck, while the police question her whereabouts in the town. Grace refrains from screaming for fear of being arrested, and her fear gives Chuck strength and power. The setting contains a few objects related to the room, such as the beds and the crib (Fig-

ure 7). In the second scene analysed, "Grace's Weight" (02:04:46 and 02:06:44), in Chapter 8, the stage represents Grace's depression as a result of the physical and mental suffering caused by the community's mistreatment of her. Grace's impotence facilitates a routine of harassment, sexual assault, and physical and psychological torture, culminating in the construction by the townspeople of an anti-escape mechanism, an iron wheel made of elements belonging to each of them, such as the shop bell, the garden chains, and a small iron dog collar. Clearly influenced by Bertolt Brecht, the settings in *Dogville* have an extremely theatrical look in their representation of a 1920s American town. The physical world of this narrative is inside a studio, a place that is strange to the viewer but accepted as normal by the characters. The same setting serves as interior and exterior and it is the lines painted on the floor that clarify which is which. Elements such as the dog and the plants, both non-rational, are simply painted there but take on some importance at certain times in the narrative. The dog, whose name is simply DOG, is the one that raises the alarm when Grace arrives in the village. In a symbolic moment at the end of the narrative, it becomes physically real, as if symbolising Grace's own revival. The film's aesthetics hearken back to the naturalism of *Breaking the Waves*, similar in purpose and concept but very different in formal terms. Stripped of cinematic spectacle, it also aims to focus the viewer's attention on the characters and their emotions. While in *Breaking the Waves* the absence of props foregrounds the performance of the actors, *Dogville* takes this idea to more radical extremes. In Bess's inner world, the director found a realm already in conflict with itself ; in contrast, in the small, secluded world of *Dogville* lurks a larger and more disturbing secret: human beings' true characters, their perverse inclinations and twisted thoughts, hidden behind invisible walls. This is *Dogville*'s grand visual metaphor. The dramatic linearity characteristic of *Breaking the Waves* and *Antichrist* gives way to irony and irreverent sarcasm in this narrative, which confronts us with the true essence of human beings in von Trier's eyes.

Figure 7. The violation of Grace frame sequence, *Dogville* (Lars von Trier, 2003) © Zentropa

In a fully controlled environment, artificial lighting is used literally and objectively: spotlights illuminate the action while simulating the town's electric lights or sunlight. The colour range, from brown to beige and white, is slightly more contrasted than in *Breaking the Waves*, but more balanced than the high contrast in *Antichrist*. In contrast to the interludes of *Breaking the Waves* and the hypnotic, slow-motion moments of *Antichrist*, *Dogville*'s image saturation is low. Indeed, the film's various chapters reflect the lack of chromatic harmonisation in its aesthetic treatment. The handheld camera switches between mid-shots and closeups and includes wide shots with occasional zoom-ins and zoom-outs. The aesthetic and narrative construction of the film offers the viewer a sensory experience with natural elements present through sound or image manipulation (as in the case of fog). The influence of the Dogma 95 movement remains evident in the way of capturing the action and in the narrative editing. The aesthetic treatment of depression is somewhat different in *Dogville* but the same traumatic experience involving pain and suffering of a female body remains a recurrent theme throughout Lars von Trier's filmography. In other words, his cinema is characterised by the narrative representation of a cause or consequence of depression, although with aesthetic variations. Figure 8 shows an image of Grace lying after being raped, compared to an image of She, also lying, moments before she cuts her own clitoris in *Antichrist* (Figure 8).

As in *Breaking the Waves* and *Antichrist*, the constant jump cuts reflect von Trier's interest in the emotions of his characters, exacerbating the emotional discomfort and violence of the actions and underlining *Dogville*'s fragmented reality. The feeling of naturalism and realism provided by the handheld camera and the use of focus and blurring are in keeping with the aesthetic principles of Dogma 95. It could be argued that the camera reflects the emotional confusion and haziness of the characters through this blurring technique, as shown in the frame comparison in figure 9, where Grace's panic and stupefaction at the unpredictable, malevolent intentions of the townspeople in *Dogville* is contrasted with the moment of Bess's first sexual encounter with Jan in *Breaking the Waves* (Figure 9).

DOGVILLE'S UNIQUENESS LIES IN ITS CONSTANT ALLUSION TO THE FALSENESS OF CINEMA

In addition to lighting, sound is also used to represent the non-visible elements of the town. However, the aim of the realistic and naturalistic aesthetics is contradicted by the use of non-diegetic sound like narration to point out the hypocrisy

Figure 8. Frame comparison, *Dogville* (Lars von Trier, 2003) and *Antichrist* (Lars von Trier, 2009) © Zentropa

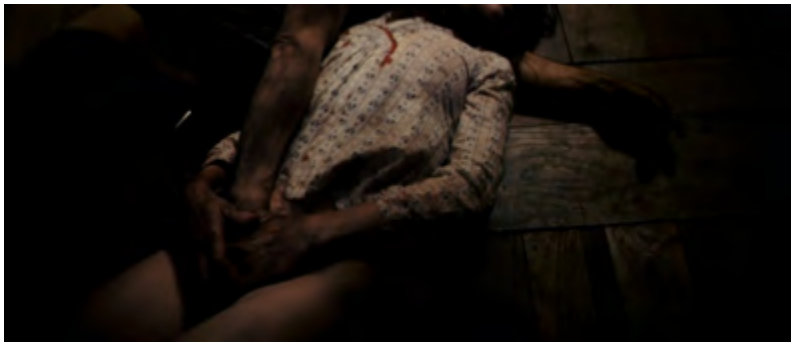


Figure 9. Frame comparison, *Dogville* (Lars von Trier, 2003) and *Breaking the Waves* (Lars von Trier, 1996) © Zentropa

of the people in the village. The film's setting becomes even more confusing and disturbing—with the sound of slamming doors, creaking hinges or the barking of the dog—when it conflicts with the notions of truth and deception that inform the characters' actions in this narrative. Viewers are torn between what they see (Grace's suffering), and what they hear, in a narration that takes apart the moral values of the townspeople. The physical and emotional violence gains more impact with the intensity of classical music. The dichotomy between what is real and what is imagined is evident, but it is the truth of events and the faithful portrayal of a sadistic and depraved society that brings the viewers closer to this world. Von Trier subverts his own pessimism, graphically simplifying the representation of depression: the lines that delimit spaces are the visual representation of the boundaries of goodness, truth, exploitation, or justice, changeable and adaptable to both literal and metaphorical interpretation. *Dogville*'s uniqueness lies in its constant allusion to the falseness of cinema through von Trier's choice of a studio as the only setting for the story.

LARS VON TRIER'S INTIMATE ARTISTIC APPROACH TO DEPRESSION

Von Trier's transgressive filmography presents a series of characters who have been ostracised by tyranny or by a misunderstanding of the world around them, which in a sense outlines his pessimistic view of the world—a representation that takes shape in a nihilistic discourse exploring new ways to objectify the subjective.

Breaking the Waves breaks with the expressionist form of von Trier's previous films and introduces a naturalistic aesthetic in keeping with the notion of purity of cinema advocated in the Dogma 95 Manifesto (1995). This documentary style lays bare the filmic world of the narrative and highlights the emotions of its characters, favouring improvisation by the actors. Von Trier promotes a notion of technical recklessness by exploring the more human side of his characters, which highlights their frailty and brings the viewer closer to them. It is, however, a more positive and perhaps more sympathetic representation. In *Antichrist*, where the characters almost become puppets of fate in the face of the hostility of their world, the representation of depression is raised to a whole new level of pessimism, making it one of his darkest and most violent films. *Antichrist* raises metaphysical questions that challenge our understanding of the relationship between mental illness and a hostile universe and portrays the character's apparent inability to cope with sociocultural circumstances and suffering. The

expressionist aesthetic, which consists of black tones, saturated colours and metaphorical and surreal images, creates a symbolic context for the characters' depressing reality. This aesthetic brings the visuals of the Europa trilogy close to those of the television series *The Kingdom* or even his first short films *Nocturne* (Nyhterino, Lars von Trier, 1980) and *Image of Relief* (Befrielsesbilleder, Lars von Trier, 1982), in which the over-saturation and the use of colour filters, as well as the high contrasts and metaphorical images enhance the lyricism of the representation of depression. *Antichrist*'s return to expressionism reveals a fluctuation in the aesthetics of depression throughout von Trier's filmography, which supports the idea that his depiction of depression is directly influenced by his personal experience with the condition. In both *Antichrist* and *Melancholia*, the action is marked by scenes with a naturalistic tone, although steeped in a clearly expressionist aesthetic, a hybrid state that is present in his subsequent films, *Nymphomaniac: Vol. I* (Lars von Trier, 2013) and *Nymphomaniac: Vol. II* (Lars von Trier, 2013), and more recently *The House that Jack Built* (Lars von Trier, 2018), despite the introduction of new stylistic approaches, such as archival footage or digital animation. The representation of depression in von Trier's cinema is therefore based on two primordial aesthetics, which occur either independently or in hybrid form. *Dogville* and *Manderlay* stand out for their aesthetic uniqueness, like the exception that confirms the rule. In a hypothetical setting, without divisions between spaces or a horizon, Lars von Trier represents depression by embracing the illusion of cinema, challenging viewers to immerse themselves in the falseness of the filmic world.

The ideological ambivalences explored in von Trier's trilogies operate not only as reflections of his own traumas but also as indicators of his emotional state. The two aesthetic poles of the representation of depression offer different understandings of the impact of the disease on the director, as a personal artistic expression, and on the viewer, as an integral part of the cinematic experience. Naturalistic aesthetics offer a more positive side, an optimism on the part of the filmmaker that perhaps suggests hope; in contrast, expressionist aesthetics represent the inevitability of suffering, the useless struggle of pure goodness that is overwhelmed by inherent cruelty, cynicism, and human futility: it is a dark depiction of human existence and a condemnation of humanity.

THE IDEOLOGICAL AMBIVALENCES EXPLORED IN LARS VON TRIER'S TRILOGIES OPERATE NOT ONLY AS REFLECTIONS OF HIS OWN TRAUMAS BUT ALSO AS INDICATORS OF HIS EMOTIONAL STATE

Lars von Trier, born in 1956, is one the great artists whose work is in part an inheritance of the chaos and suffering caused by the Second World War. This tragic event influenced and shaped the pessimistic world view of painters, writers and, most notably perhaps, filmmakers, whose work expresses the social, economic and individual impact of such horrors. Von Trier has maintained a consistent representation of depression throughout his career and his unique approach to the condition constitutes a coherent expression of his experience with the illness that seems to reflect many traumatic events in his life. This close relationship with the mental illness and its cinematic expression makes Lars von Trier one of the most important contemporary directors in the aesthetics of depression in cinema and in art, standing out for his profound, visceral analysis of the human psyche. ■

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AESTHETICS AND DEPRESSION IN LARS VON TRIER'S CINEMA

Abstract

Depression in Lars von Trier's cinema has been studied from a philosophical perspective, focusing on ethical and moral issues, and from a narrative point of view through a cultural and social contextualisation of the disease. This paper explores how von Trier represents depression through his filmic discourse. Is it possible to identify a specific stylistic pattern in his representation of depression? Is his treatment of the theme different in each film or has it remained consistent throughout his career? Can we assume that von Trier's personal experience with depression informs his films' aesthetics?

Key words

Lars von Trier; Art and Depression; Cinema and Aesthetics; Naturalism; Expressionism.

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ESTÉTICA Y DEPRESIÓN EN EL CINE DE LARS VON TRIER

Resumen

La depresión en el cine de Lars von Trier se ha estudiado desde una perspectiva filosófica, centrándose en cuestiones éticas y morales, y desde un punto de vista narrativo a través de una contextualización cultural y social de la enfermedad. Este trabajo pretende analizar cómo von Trier representa la depresión a través de su discurso fílmico. ¿Es posible identificar un patrón específico en su estilo cinematográfico para representar la depresión? ¿Varía su tratamiento en cada película o se mantiene constante a lo largo de su carrera? ¿Podemos suponer que la experiencia personal de Trier con la depresión influye en la estética de sus películas?

Palabras clave

Lars von Trier; Arte y Depresión; Cine y Estética; Naturalismo; Expresionismo

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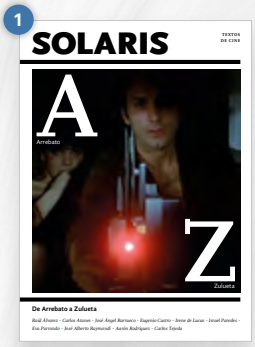

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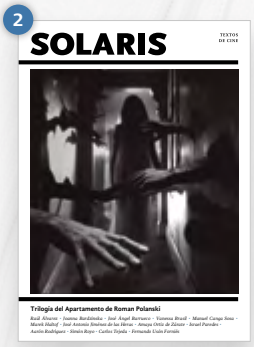

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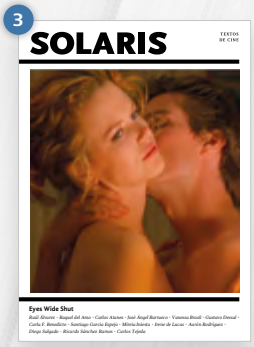

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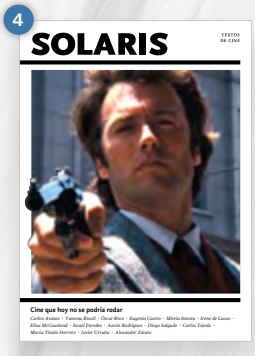

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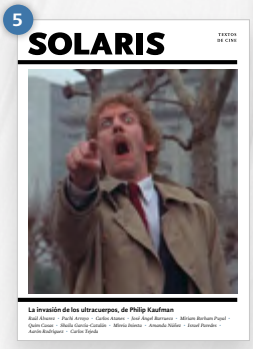

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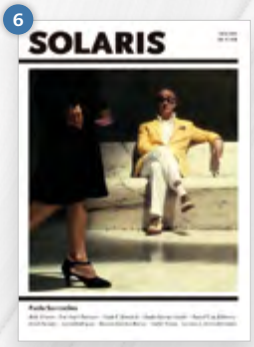

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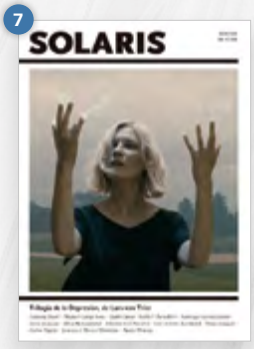

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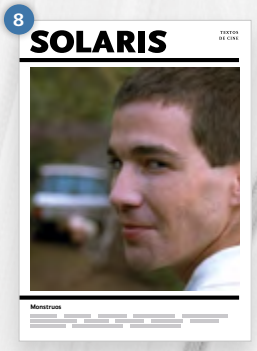

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