



Title Feminine identity as the site of struggle: The confrontation of different models of femininity in contemporary Spanish cinema directed by women (1990-2005)

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**Feminine identity as the site of struggle: the
confrontation of different models of femininity in
contemporary Spanish cinema directed by
women (1990-2005)**

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Bedfordshire
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2009

ABSTRACT

The last two decades have witnessed an unprecedented incorporation of women within the Spanish film industry. This is part of a general increase in newcomers since the beginning of the 1990s, when the industry was undergoing a deep restructuring. The media has celebrated this incorporation of women filmmakers, recurrently referring to their different sensibility, a feminine perspective noticeable in their films. Despite the socio-cultural interest of this incorporation, no thorough study of their work has been completed.

This research project surveys the extent and scope of these women's incorporation within the industry, and explores the varied ways that their films engage with the main discursive trends that define femininity in Spanish cinema and mass media. Femininity is broadly understood here as the socio-cultural interpretations of what constitutes 'correct womanhood', but, also, discursively: as the space of struggle wherein individual (fictional) women engage with these constructions, by contesting and / or adopting some of their elements. Further attention is given to the ways that these new filmmakers's films engage with traditional and modern formulations of femininity, as articulated in implicit relation to, respectively, Francoism and postfeminism.

In the core chapters, several detailed analyses are given of especially relevant films by these women, using a critical discourse analysis approach. These chapters address topics that are foregrounded in these

women's films and that have been central to feminine experience, namely: the family and motherhood, romanticism and sexuality, and the 'Other'.

From the study it emerges that these women's films adopt a different perspective if only because they often render visible discriminatory behaviours (e.g. discrimination at work) and representational practices (e.g. the sexual objectification of women). Regarding their treatment of the aforementioned 'feminine themes' (i.e. family and romanticism), these filmmakers self-consciously engage with the conventions that have constructed femininity in the media.

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LIST OF SPECIFIC ABBREVIATION

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

JCE: Joven Cine Español

MJCE: Mujeres del Joven Cine Español

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the many people who have, in different ways, supported and encouraged me in the course of this research project. I would like to thank, firstly, all at the University of Bedfordshire, especially everyone at RIMAD. I would like to thank my supervisor, Carlota Larrea, for her years of support and advice, and for keeping her faith in this project, even when mine was wavering. Thanks are also due to Claire Walsh for her helpful feedback on chapter 1.

For an early conference paper on the status of gender studies in Spain, I contacted several professionals who, very kindly, provided me with all that I needed. For materials and information, I would like to thank the groups Seminari d'Investigació Feminista, at Universidad Jaume I de Castellón, and Dones i Textualitat, especially Meri Torras, at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. For information and advice, I am further indebted to Jacqueline Cruz, María José Gámez Fuentes, Pilar Aguilar and María Suárez Lafuente.

Finally, I would like to extend my warmest thanks to all my family and friends in both Spain and England for all their support and encouragement, and for tolerating my endless elaborations and refinements of this thesis. Thanks especially to Toby Dyter for his support, his careful reading of this text, and his editing of my less-than-perfect prepositions. Needless to say, however, the responsibility for any remaining errors is mine alone.

INTRODUCTION

Identity and gender are two key concepts in contemporary cultural debates in the West, and Spain is not an exception but an exaggerated case. With the speed of changes that followed the end of Franco's dictatorship, the re-drafting of Spanish national identities became a central concern of both political debates and cultural manifestations. To a lesser extent, gender identity was also an issue, especially as changes in the situation of women came to deeply transform cultural and social ideas about femininity (broadly understood as personal and cultural interpretations and manifestations of what constitutes 'performing womanhood correctly').

The 1990s period, with which this study of the films of contemporary Spanish women filmmakers is concerned, stands as a decade of consolidation for democracy and of the rights and situation of women. By many socio-political and cultural accounts, the 1990s were constructed in relation to the previous decade¹. If 1992 is often taken as a landmark and a symbol of the 1990s, 1982 marks, for many, the beginning of a new period, since it stands as the end year of the Spanish transitional period from dictatorship to democracy.

The year 1982 saw the first 'truly free' democratic elections, celebrated without the ghost of the dictatorship (after the recently failed *coup d'état*). In this decade, socio-political discourses were often articulated through ideas of change, such as 'catching-up' with Europe, constructing a tolerant

multi-national state, and achieving formal and practical equality for marginalised groups. Regarding the situation of women, since the late 1970s, legal regulations underwent a deep re-structuring; many basic feminist demands were met, such as equal employment and education rights, the legalisation of contraception (1979), divorce (1981) and (in very specific situations) abortion (1985). However, other more radical vindications were not met, and this legal re-structuring did not easily translate into practical changes. Discourses of change, articulated in relation to Francoism (the past) and Europe (the future), inevitably impacted on the Spanish film industry.

1992 stands as the landmark of the 1990s because of the Olympic Games in Barcelona, the Great Exhibition in Sevilla, and the granting of European City of Culture status to Madrid – all in the fifth centenary of 1492. Despite growing political discontent and the looming shadow of another economic crisis, 1992 was officially constructed as marking the 'coming of age' of Spain, the culmination of the modernisation process and, also, as proof of the multi-national pluralism and the international projection of Spain (Kelly, 2000: 33-4). This celebratory tone also permeated accounts of the situation of women (as it still does), and the media often constructed women as the winners of society, celebrating the 'feminisation of culture' (as they still do).

Whereas, socio-politically, the 1990s was a period of consolidation, it has been considered as a period of deep transformation for Spanish cinema. This period and these transformations are, moreover, still ongoing. On one hand, technological, cultural and politico-economic changes occurring since the late 1980s (e.g. European Union legislation, and the important involvement of international groups in Spanish media) have impelled a deep re-structuring of the film industry. On the other hand, the incorporation of a considerably large number of new filmmakers during

the 1990s has aided discourses of renovation and diversity of Spanish contemporary cinema.

Within this group, the emergence of a considerable number of female directors has attracted media attention. Although still a minority, their incorporation within the industry gains further significance due to the low number of women directors hitherto. Capitalising on their sexual difference, the media have celebrated their incorporation as a sign of both an equalitarian society and of the diversity of Spanish cinema. The 'mirada femenina' / 'feminine perspective' has become a catchphrase often associated with their work.

Indubitably, these filmmakers often focus on female protagonists and address gynocentric themes. But are they really offering new ways of looking at and representing women? What does a 'feminine perspective' mean in these contexts? How are their films different, if they are different at all, in relation to other cinematic and cultural representations of femininity? What are the values about femininity privileged in these films? In relation to the situation of these directors within the industry, are women filmmakers really so popular, powerful or influential that we can talk about a feminisation of cinema? These are the kind of questions that initially inspired me to undertake this research.

Aim and objectives

The main aim of this research is to study how femininity is represented and problematised in the works of these women filmmakers from 1990 to 2005. Considering the recent incorporation of women directors into the industry, I will also analyse, although secondarily, what position these filmmakers occupy within the film industry. This is an aim that initially I

had not intended to address, but that the chosen methodology compelled me to explore when observing the industrial dynamics that shape the type of cinema produced. My objectives are to assess:

a) what position these directors occupy within the industry and how that position affects the type of cinema that they produce;

b) how their films interrogate and contest cinematic convention regarding cultural representations of femininity and engage with socio-cultural changes in the situation of women;

c) what types of female models and subjectivities are offered in these films and how new feminine subjectivities are inscribed cinematographically;

d) and to what extent we could define the perspectives adopted in these films as feminine and / or feminist.

The study will thereby focus on how these films engage with cultural themes (e.g. romance), social issues (e.g. violence against women) and filmic representational conventions (e.g. sexual objectification) that are socio-culturally associated with women.

In order to frame their work, I will adopt a comparative approach towards media and other filmic representations of femininity, especially in relation to films by contemporary male filmmakers.

Despite a variety of thematic concerns, many of the films directed by these contemporary women filmmakers have addressed in their narrative the problematisation, search for or reconstruction of female identity. This has been acknowledged in several studies (e.g. Camí-Vela, 2005; Zecchi,

2004) but has not yet been explored in any depth, despite its obvious interest from a cultural studies perspective. This is a gap that I intend to address in my study.

This research is mainly necessary for two reasons. Firstly, because of the absence of studies of representations of femininity in contemporary Spanish cinema (a subject which is notably better studied in literature) and, secondly, because of the urgent need to analyze how socio-cultural constructions of femininity have accommodated, and interacted with, the rapid and profound social changes in gender relations and the situation of women in the last two decades.

A gender approach to Spanish cinema has become more prominent in Spanish and Anglo-American academia since the 1990s. Many books published in this area are anthologies, with an academic bias, and tend to cover a wide period of time (e.g. Marsh and Nair, 2005) and combine literary and cinematic analyses (e.g. Ferrán and Glenn, 2002). But whereas in the UK cinematic studies normally apply a cultural studies methodology, strongly marked by feminist film theories, most Spanish studies assume a content analysis approach (e.g. Aguilar, 1998).

Despite their interest, few of these books focus on contemporary cinema and, moreover, they are generally collections of essays that study a specific director, theme or film. The fragmented character of many of these studies means they fail to provide a general overview of the main discursive tendencies in the ways of conceiving femininity in Contemporary Spanish cinema. It is my hope that this study could go some way towards 'de-fragmenting' this field.

Regarding the work of contemporary Spanish women filmmakers, studies of their work have increased in this decade. There are several articles that

have analysed specific aspects of their work or situation (e.g. the common gateways into direction, in Monterde, 1998; their representation of sex, in Camí-Vela, 2005a; their representation of men, in Zecchi, 2006) and many that offer a general account of their work (e.g. Santamarina, 1998; Selva, 1998; the epilogue of Martín-Márquez, 1999; Díaz and Cerdán, 2002). Adopting various approaches, there are also many articles that focus on a specific film or director (e.g. Triana-Toribio, 2006; Martín-Márquez, 2002).

Contrastingly, there are only two books centred exclusively on the production of contemporary Spanish women filmmakers. Lasala's non-academic and somewhat lax essay (2003) is the only one that attempts to offer a systematic content analysis of their films. Camí-Vela's compilation of interviews with these women filmmakers (2005) is, however, indispensable as an auxiliary aid. Barbara Zecchi, one of the main researchers to have published work about these women directors, announced that she was finishing a book about the cinema of these women filmmakers in one of her articles (2006) but, to date, this book has not yet been published.

Clarifications and limitations

In the process of elaborating and conceiving this study, several questions have arisen regarding the criteria adopted: why have I focused on this chronological period? What should I consider a Spanish film directed by a Spanish woman? Why am I only focusing on women directors?

The answers to the first two questions are more pragmatic than theoretical. I have chosen this chronological framework because, roughly, it corresponds to the period of normalisation of the entrance of women directors into the Spanish industry. But the dates are not fixed. A few

women filmmakers, included in this study, had already debuted during the late 1980s (e.g. Ana Díez and Isabel Coixet), but studies such as those by Camí-Vela (2005) and Heredero (1998) consider them as part of the newcomers since they developed their careers during the 1990s. I have chosen 2005 as a cut-off point because it allows me to compare how their representations of women have changed over the last 15 years.

Spain being a multi-national state and cinema an international industry (especially nowadays), a trickier question is what I have considered a Spanish film directed by women. In general, I have followed the trend of existing studies (e.g. Camí-Vela, 2005; Heredero, 2003) by taking as Spanish those feature films directed by women who, regardless of their nationality (e.g. Manana Rodríguez is Uruguayan), work regularly in the (multi-national) Spanish film industries and who have started their careers in the period given. Therefore, I have also included those of their films that are shot in English, set in a foreign setting and / or with a foreign artistic team, but only when they are Spanish productions or co-productions, for example, *Mi vida sin mí* (Isabel Coixet, 2003, Spain and Canada) and *El último viaje de Robert Ryland* (Gracia Querejeta, 1996, Spain and UK). And I have also considered films co-directed with a man.

Although my main focus has been on fictional feature films, I have also considered filmic documentaries, taking into account the increasing interest in this genre and the fact that many of them are focused on issues especially related to women (e.g. women in history). Unlike Camí Vela (2005), I have not considered within this sample animation films, since they are fundamentally different in many ways regarding industrial practices, target audiences, and narrative and thematic concerns.

Following these criteria, and with the help of the existing bibliography about the subject and the official reports² and database of the ICAA

(*Instituto de Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales*), I have compiled a thorough list of the feature films directed by women directors since the late 1980s. In my list, I have recorded the incorporation of fifty women directors who have directed over one hundred feature films from 1990 to 2005³. Although I do not consider this a definitive list, I believe it is reasonably approximate. In Appendix 1, I indicate clearly the few films that I have not been able to access (around a quarter of the sample).

Due to the large quantity of films mentioned in the study, and for the sake of brevity, I refer to the films by their original titles (generally Spanish) in the body of the text. Moreover, I have also omitted the name of the director and the year of production when I have judged that there would be nothing to gain by indicating them, for example when giving examples. Appendix 2 is a list of the films that, while not being the focus of this study, are mentioned in passing; in this list, I include the year, director and title translation of the films. In appendix 1, I include that same data for the films directed by contemporary women filmmakers.

The third question is fundamental to the conception of this study: Why have I only focused on the work of women filmmakers?

My reasons for this are varied. Firstly, with their focus on female characters and their interest in gynocentric themes, these works provide a fruitful ground for reflection upon gender issues in Spanish cinema. Furthermore, as will be analysed in chapter 4, some of these filmmakers have occasionally expressed their dissatisfaction with conventional ways of representing women and, therefore, one could expect a different way of approaching these representations from them. Whether and how they are constructing femininity 'differently' are indeed central questions for this study. By this, I mean that I do not take this for granted, although I mostly argue that, somehow, they do. Since I do not want to define their

cinema exclusively by this experience of difference, however, I have consciously avoided the term 'women's cinema', which would suggest some sort of typological difference (e.g. genre).

Since cinema is a collaborative enterprise, one could argue that the fact that the director is female does not necessarily have any impact on the end result. This could be a reasonable argument; but it is not warranted in this case, since these women mostly exert a considerable level of creative control over their films, most of which they have written as well as directed. Although I will not adopt an authorial perspective, I depart from the premise that the subjectivity inscribed within the text is conformed by the socio-historical experience of, among other things, gender difference. I am also focusing on their productions since they tend to be overlooked in many of the existing studies of contemporary Spanish cinema, especially in Spain.

Methodology and structure of the study

Discourse analysis as a methodology departs from post-structuralist thought and, especially, from Michel Foucault's theories about the formation of subjectivity within discourse. Discourses collaborate in the constructions of 'truth effects' (understood broadly as the authoritative statements that construct ways of perceiving reality); several discourses compete to offer different versions of reality and, in the interplay of people with discourses, individual and collective identities are constructed. Media discursive statements (e.g. a woman's magazine article) are understood as participating in broader discursive formations (e.g. media constructions of new femininities) and as shaped by the discursive practices of that specific media form (e.g. the centrality of direct and indirect advertising).

My interest in this methodology especially springs from its focus on the production of group identities within socio-historically located cultural discourses, on the modifying interplay between discourses, and on the weight of discursive practices in the shaping of media texts. This methodology serves the purpose of analyzing constructions of femininity in contemporary Spanish cinema and how they engage with social and other media constructions of femininity. In chapter one, I will offer an overview of those Foucauldian theories that apply to this study and a detailed explanation of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and how I will apply it to this study.

Chapter 2 and 3 are, by comparison, fairly eclectic chapters that seek to offer contextual overviews within which to frame the analyses of women filmmakers' films.

Chapter 2 focuses on how Spanish media and social discourses tend to construct femininity. To analyze models of femininity with a traditional bias, and due to the temporal proximity of Franco's regime, I will offer a brief overview of how Francoist normative femininities were constructed in official and media discourses. I will approach media constructions of new femininities through the lens of Anglophone studies, which have described them as postfeminist. This approach is justifiable due to the internationalisation of media and the consequent transference of values about femininity; furthermore, it is deemed necessary due to the scarcity of critical cultural analyses about this subject in the Spanish context.

Chapter 3 offers an overview of the contemporary situation of the Spanish film industry and how its dynamics are shaping contemporary cinema; I will also analyse the work of the new directors who started their careers during the 1990s and the early years of this decade⁴ and their cinema.

These filmmakers have often been studied as a group (e.g. in Heredero's studies) collectively christened as *Joven Cine Español* (JCE) / *Young Spanish Cinema* by Caparrós Lera. Although this is an arguable term, I will, for want of a better one, use it in this study.

The following chapters focus exclusively on the work of contemporary women filmmakers. Chapter 4 directly relates to the previous chapter, and offers an overview of the situation of women directors in the film industry and the recurrent stylistic and thematic features and trends that shape their cinema. I will also discuss their media reception, with its emphasis on a 'feminine perspective'. Since I am adopting a comparative approach in relation to the representation of femininity in the JCE, I will use another abbreviation to refer to their cinema or to them as a group, *Mujeres del Joven Cine Español* (MJCE) / *Women of the Young Spanish Cinema*. This seems necessary for the sake of clarity and brevity.

Chapter 5, 6 and 7 focus on how the MJCE directors have constructed femininity in their films. I will analyze how their films represent the family and the mother (chapter 5), female sexuality and romance (chapter 6) and the 'Other' (chapter 7). I have focused on these three thematic clusters because, firstly, they have been and still are recurrent thematic concerns in Spanish cinema; and, secondly, because, they have been historically important issues in constructions of femininity. In each chapter, I will first offer an overview about of the MJCE directors approach these subjects, followed by detailed analyses of a few more-or-less exemplary films.

1. FEMININITY AS DISCOURSE: METHODOLOGY AND THEORY

This chapter explores theoretical approaches to the concepts of femininity, discourse and identity, which are central to this study. I will explain my methodological approach, which adapts Critical Discourse Analysis (hereafter, CDA) to the analysis of these fictional cultural manifestations.

Definitions of both femininity and discourse are contingent. Femininity is a slippery term that has been thought about and valued in very different ways depending upon the intentions and theoretical inspirations of different feminist theorists. Different ways of thinking about femininity – often conceptualised as myth, as ideology and as discourse – are partially determined by different understanding of identity. In the first part of this chapter, I will offer a brief overview of these different approaches and I will advance a functional definition of femininity as discourse, explaining the suitability of this approach for my study.

Discourse is an ambiguous term that has been defined differently according to the discipline (e.g. critical linguistics, narratology). Generally, within academia, it has been thought of as 'language in use' (language here being understood as any signifying system). Those that adopt this approach generally agree with the post-structuralist interrogation of the separation of representation from reality. The ambiguity of the term springs partially from the variety of theorists that have made it a central concept of their thought, as is the case with Foucault and Habermas, to

name only two canonical theorists with substantially different understandings of discourse. Even within Foucault's theoretical corpus, the meaning of discourse remains ambiguous and polysemic, as I will discuss in the second section of the chapter.

The third section explains the theoretical tenets and methodological tools used in this research project. When applied to the study of media, CDA has:

- Been especially concerned with the analysis of 'factual' media – those claiming to report or document reality – and it has especially focused on linguistic analysis;
- Often considered production and reception processes. For example, Talbot points out that "(d)iscourse is not a product; it is a process. To analyze it we need to look at both the text itself and the interaction and context that the text is embedded in" (2007: 10). This has led many discourse analysts to reject studies focused on textual analysis as insufficient¹;
- Normally been applied to the study of texts that reinforce and constitute generally dominant ideological discourses.

My decision to adopt a CDA approach may seem therefore unorthodox, since my research here departs from a textual analysis of fictional feature films produced from a more-or-less marginal enunciative position, that of women filmmakers within the Spanish film industry. But my methodological interest in CDA springs from its theoretical backing and its foci on power and (cultural) identity as constituted by and constitutive of discourse, which have resulted in a series of methodological tools that have opened up interesting ways of approaching texts.

1.1. The elusive character of femininity: a revision of its conceptualisations

1.1.1. Femininity and feminism

Before the formation of feminism as an organised movement, several thinkers referred to issues associated with the discipline and ontology of femininity. For example, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1772), Mary Wollstonecraft warned about the narcissistic and dependant inclinations of femininity and about the infantilising character of the doctrine of femininity.

Nevertheless, it was not until the development of second-wave feminism² that femininity took central stage. Femininity stood then as a target that created a common-front against which feminists could rebel (Thornham, 2001: 31). With its foci on the personal as a political field and on androcentrism as a central pillar on the perpetuation of sexism, feminist theorists tried to separate the natural from the cultural in the constitution of 'woman'. This was when the conceptual separation between gender and sex came into being. In this context, femininity – understood as the normative model of gendered behaviour for women – was often seen as one of the most important mechanisms through which women were impelled to take up the role and location that patriarchy assigned to them. Sometimes women were understood as complicit in their own oppression in, for example, Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*; and at other times, as victims of it, in, for example, Millet's *Sexual Politics* (Thornham, 2001; Hollow, 2000: ch.1). An authentic feminist identity (able to unleash our 'true' selves) often came to stand as the alternative to conventional femininity. And this became the core of a popularised image of Second Wave feminism, which was endowed with the role of moral police

(Brunsdon: 1997; Hollows, 2000: 9 and ff.). Those that censured femininity often based their claims in two pillars; firstly, that femininity is in itself inferior to masculinity, insofar as it has been irremediably constructed as such, and consequently modern women should renounce (supposedly) 'feminine' values in favour of (supposedly) 'masculine' ones; secondly, that femininity is a mask, but one that veils an authentic femaleness (often conceptualised as benign, in opposition to a malign maleness) (Hollows, 2000: 9 and ff.).

With the fragmentation of feminism, some contemporary feminists tend to adopt a more relativistic point of view and while some praise the virtues of femininity (e.g. Baumgardner and Richards: 2004), others adopt a non-condemnatory tone, taking a reserved attitude in a subject liable to offend or to exclude some women (e.g. an attitude adopted by the above mentioned media analysts, Hollows and Brunsdon). Still other feminists warn about the dangers associated with the enactment of femininity (e.g. Naomi Wolf, Bartky).

A new theoretical tendency, originating in post-structuralist theories, is more interested in destabilising the binary opposition, still maintained within the former attitudes, between masculinity and femininity. As Sturken and Cartwright maintain:

[B]inary oppositions are reductive ways of viewing the complexity of difference and, as philosopher Jacques Derrida has argued, all binary oppositions are encoded with values and concepts of power, superiority and worth. Hence, the category of the norm is always set up in opposition to that which is deemed abnormal or aberrant in some way, hence other. Thus, binary oppositions designate the first category as *unmarked* (the 'norm') and the second as *marked*, or other. The category of femininity is marked, and commonly understood as that which is not masculine (unmarked, most obviously in the way that the term 'man' stands in for all humans), while in reality these distinctions are often blurred and people can

be understood to have aspects of both (2007: 104) (original emphasis)

Pushing for a discursive disintegration of the categories of femininity and masculinity, 'queer theory' tries, beyond its obvious remit, "to disrupt and destabilise rather than to advance alternative truth claims" about gender (Gill, 2007: 69). Judith Butler's widespread theories (2006) have contested the cultural distinction between sex as natural and gender as socially constructed, a hitherto basic tenet of feminist practice and theory. She remarks that this separation is a corollary of a structuralist way of conceptualizing around binaries that do nothing to break the hierarchical system organised around the values attributed to the feminine and the masculine. Direct correlations between the male sex and the masculine and the female sex and the feminine are established as 'common sense', naturalising those links. Another fundamental tenet of her theory is that femininity (and masculinity) are performative, not what we 'are', but what we 'do'³.

1.1.2. Towards different conceptualisations of femininity

Hitherto, I have offered a very brief explanation about the loci of femininity within the history of feminism(s). But what are we speaking about when we refer to femininity? As Hollows affirms 'femininity remain[ed] largely untheorised and self-evident" in many works of second wave feminists (2000: 17). Today, femininity is overall understood as the (normative) model of behaviour and of physical presentation that women *should* acquire in a given society. It is therefore conceptualised as socio-historical and culturally contingent⁴, although of course it has not always been. For example, Susan Brownmiller (1986) conceives femininity as universal (i.e. not as socio-historically located) and as a self-contained

identity feature: femininity is only conceived in relation to its opposite, (universalised) masculinity, without acknowledging its articulation with a network of other identity factors such as race or class. She understands femininity as the 'other' of masculinity that justifies and gives coherence to it (4 and 59). Femininity is used as an umbrella term to describe the strategies that encourage women to construct themselves as vulnerable and weak, unthreatening and reassuring to men (33); men impose femininity upon women (24). Following this logic, femininity is understood within a binary opposition, always understood as lacking (3). She remarks upon the ambiguous nature of the term, "inconsistent at the same time [that it is] minutely, demandingly concrete, a rigid code of appearance and behaviour defined by do's and don't-do's" (2). Defined sometimes as a craft and sometimes as an aesthetic, she also acknowledges the pleasures of femininity (6).

Within a Cultural Studies tradition, Hollows explains the fluid meaning of femininity when conceived not in isolation but as articulated and intertwined with other identity factors:

Femininity is not only made to mean different things over time, but also within any historical moment, there will be struggle over the meaning of femininity. For example, white middle class femininity has not only been privileged over other forms of feminine identities, but only gets its meaning through its difference to forms of feminine identities which have been labelled as 'deviant' or 'dangerous', identities which have usually been identified with black and white working-class women (2000: 31)

These different definitions lay their basis on different conceptions about identity and gender. I will now offer a brief account of three influential ways of understanding femininity, -as an ideology, as a myth and as a discourse-, expanding especially on the third conception, with which I concur.

1.1.2.a. Femininity as ideology

Within cultural theory, the word ideology is inextricably connected with Marxist theorists (especially Althusser and Gramsci) and especially concerned with class relations. To offer a somewhat simplified description: ideology is conceived as a coherent and omnipotent discourse that serves the purposes of an authoritarian and repressive power, imposed from the top to the bottom sections of society. Ideology, seen as a false construction of 'reality', hampers the emancipation of a 'free' subject and stops him/her from seeing reality. Subjects are drawn into adopting ideology through (discursive) interpellation (Althusser). Gramsci's theory of ideological hegemony explores the idea that the only way to win consent, and thereby perpetuate a status quo, is to wrap ideological messages in discourses of common sense, 'naturalising' what is ideological. In more recent years, as Mills points out, such theories of ideology seem to have fallen out of grace (1997: 30), among other reasons, because they did not leave much space for agency (and certainly, left it untheorised). These are nevertheless the historical sources from which discourse theory departs.

During the 70s, as Grimshaw (2005) describes, femininity was often seen as a type of ideology (i.e. as negative and at the service of a dominant and patriarchal power) imposed over a victimised female subject. Some theorists⁵ appealed to the liberation of a 'true' female self, entrapped by the conditioning and manipulation of a patriarchal socialization. The authentic female self, hidden behind the false mask of femininity, was already *there*, waiting to be liberated. This was more or less the theoretical basis for Brownmiller's conceptions of femininity (described above).

1.1.2.b. Femininity as myth

The concept of Myth, as theorised by Roland Barthes in his 1957 book *Mythologies* (1984), is directly related to the concept of ideology, and can be understood as a development of it⁶. Unlike ideology, myth is (consciously theorised as) historically located and constituted through interaction with the reader. Furthermore, it is not considered as a lie, but as a construction of reality that has become naturalised: "Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing; it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion" (ibid.:129).

The myth is "formless, unstable...whose unity and coherence are above all due to its function" (119). Reiterated in different sites (120), myths (e.g. those of femininity) constitute the commonsensical wrappings of an ideology (e.g. patriarchy). They come across, interpellating the 'reader', as "a notification and like a statement of fact" (124), creating 'common sense'⁷.

Myth is thus understood as a process of signification that serves a 'will to power' – that, for Barthes, of the bourgeoisie (141), which, aiming to construct a 'regime of truth', erases all traces of its (social) construction and renders it natural: "Myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal" (142).

Femininity as a myth emphasises more the coherent constructions of the image 'woman' (as a sign) and the functions it serves, but on some level leaves untouched the articulation between 'woman' and actual women (as socio-historical subjects)⁸. This approach has served as theoretical inspiration for studies such as those of Myra Mac Donald (1995), who analyses myths about femininity commonly reproduced in the mass media,

and Claire Johnston (2000), one of the most important feminist theorists of the 1970s. Johnston explored the reproduction of myths in cinema; she held that cinema reproduces “the ‘natural’ world of the dominant ideology” (29) and called for the creation of a women’s counter-cinema that, consciously playing with the established cinematic myths, would subvert them, deconstruct them, and denaturalise them.

1.1.2.c. Femininity as discourse

Like myth, discourse is articulated in relation to the concept of ideology, being influenced by it but contesting many of its founding principles. Mills (1997) summarises in her book the main traits of discourse and its main differences from ideology. Contrary to ideology, discourse is understood as fundamentally constitutive of reality and of identity (ibid.: 15). Discourse is socio-culturally and historically located and, thus, *is* the subject (i.e. there is no ‘true’ self awaiting release from the constraints of ideology). Unlike ideological messages and myths, discourse is not coherent since it has a “conflictual nature [...], that it is always in dialogue and in conflict with other positions [;] ideological struggle is the essence of discourse structure” (ibid.: 14).

Discourse theory distances itself from the immobilising stance of theories of ideology. Discourses only work in interaction. They are partially constituted by power but they are also the ‘stage’ for the ‘play’ of relations of power, as will be further analysed in the next section. As Mills remarks, applying it to the example of sexism:

[W]hilst within an ideological view sexism is an oppressive strategy employed by men to bolster their own power, within a discourse theory model, sexism *is* the site of contestation; it is both the arena where some males are sanctioned in their attempts to negotiate a

powerful position for themselves in relation to women, but it is also the site where women can contest or collaborate with those moves (ibid.: 45)

Since the late 1980s, several feminists have used Foucault's notion of discourse in order to analyze femininity. From this perspective, they have stressed the performative character of femininity. It is not, anymore, the free-floating entity to which Brownmiller refers. Femininity is a process, a practice (rather than something that comes from 'outside'): "We are born male or female, but not masculine or feminine. Femininity is an artifice, an achievement, 'a mode of enacting and re-enacting received gender norms which surface as so many styles of the flesh'"⁹ (Bartky: 1990, 65)

Feminists have used Foucault's theories in two main ways. Some like Bordo (1989) and Bartky (1990) – being more influenced by his earlier works (especially *Discipline and Punishment*) – have focused more on the disciplinary power of discourses aimed to create a female 'docile body'¹⁰. Bartky analyses the (disciplinary) practices with which women engage in order to acquire a 'normative' femininity, while Bordo explores body-image illnesses (e.g. anorexia) as the stages where ill women struggle against the impositions of femininity, embracing its practices to the extreme (e.g. total 'control' over one's image)¹¹. But, their accounts give a sense of inevitability. They emphasise more the normative ideological level of the discourse of femininity, without paying much attention to its potential for resistance.

The space of agency within the discursive is the area that interests other feminist theorists, such as Dorothy E. Smith (1990) and Judith Butler, who are more influenced by Foucault's last works¹². In those, "[h]e complements his earlier analysis of technologies of domination,[...], with an analysis of technologies of subjectification", linked to the concept of 'technologies of the Self' understood "as a certain number of practices and

techniques through which individuals actively fashion their own identities” (McNay, 1992: 3). This by no means implies a complete ‘freedom’ to tailor ourselves as we please; the limits are set by the discourses of femininity and even when rejecting some of its aspects, this is done within the terms established by these discourses. Even though practices are always determined by the social context¹³, this theoretical orientation allows some elbow-room for agency.

Smith offers an exploration of the discursive workings – the *modus operandi* – of femininity and defines femininity in the modern era as a ‘textually mediated discourse’ and approaches it:

[A]s the actual social relations of a discourse mediated by texts in which women are active as subjects and agents [...] While the focus is on social relations extending beyond the reach of any particular individual, women participate actively in them in a characteristic dialectic: people’s actual activities as participants give power to the relations that ‘overpower’ them [...] Women are not just the passive products of socialization; they are active; they create themselves. At the same time, their self-creation, their work, the uses of their skills, are co-ordinated with the market for clothes, makeup, shoes, accessories, etc., through print, film, etc. The relations organizing this dialectic between the active and creative subject and the market and productive organization of capital are those of a textually mediated discourse (1990: 161)

Discourse theory has also influenced some film theorists. When Teresa De Lauretis (1997) advocates for a cinema that unveils the contradictions that ‘women’ (as socio-historically located subjects) experience when confronted with representations of ‘woman’ (as the myths of femininity), she seems to be calling for a cinema that represents the workings of the discourses of femininity and is concerned with presenting a subject in conflict.

As is obvious in this brief explanation, ideology figures as a central concept within discourse analysis theories. But, within this frame, it acquires a different meaning. Ideologies are carried, reproduced, contested and/or reinforced by discursive practices (Van Dijk in Jaworski and Coupland, 1999: 495). Ideology is understood as something similar to Foucault's "forms of power/knowledge, used to justify the actions of persons or groups and which have specific consequences for relations of power. As such [discursive] ideology is not to be counterpoised to truth. Ideologies are structures of signification that constitute social relations in and through power" (Barker and Galasinski, 2001: 25). They are simultaneously productive and repressive in the constitution of reality and identity. In processes of subject formation, ideologies try to fix the meaning of, for example, 'woman' (ibid.: 42); on the other hand, discourse constitutes the stage where struggles over meaning are developed.

In sum, femininity as an ideological construction is seen as imposed from above and as 'total' and coherent; understandings about femininity as myth and as ideology address questions about 'normative' femininity – albeit with the (unwilling) consequence of granting it a higher visibility and anchoring its meaning. On the other hand, discourse theory emphasises the width, the chaos of possibilities (that springs from the instability of meaning) of the 'experience of femininity', without failing to observe the limitations imposed by the boundaries and rules of its discourses. The emphasis is on the fluid character of the construction of meaning, and, when studying textual manifestations of femininity, considerations of inherent contradictions and textually created spaces for resistance are as important as the mapping of the constraints of femininity. The stress is more on "how different discourses present their versions of the social world" than in "getting at the truth of an underlying social reality" (Tonkiss, 1999: 249).

In the 1970s, media studies informed by a feminist perspective sprang from an intellectual climate dominated by ideological theories; the departing point was that the ideology of femininity, spread through mass media and popular literature, was imposed upon 'real women', constraining them. With the cultural turn at the end of the 1980s, and especially within Cultural Studies, this concept became more complex, blurring the distinction between representation and reality. For Van Zoonen "Media forms ... work to construct what it means to be a woman in specific historical and geographical contexts, meanings that are often contradictory and contested" (quoted in Hollows, 2000: 22).

1.2. Foucauldian discourse theory

Morey (1990) argues that, when developing his theories, Foucault's core motivation was to explore the formation of 'subjectivity' within discursive interplay. He therefore studied two features associated with this: the constitution of *knowledge*, conceived as ways of 'ordering' human experience; and the workings of *power*, conceived as mechanisms for sanctioning, naming what is 'normal' (i.e. sane, good, and self-same) and 'abnormal' (i.e. mad, bad, and Other) (1990: 20-21). In this section, I will explore the theories of Foucault and his followers around two axes of especial relevance to my study: firstly, the confused meaning of discourse (and its associations with knowledge and power) and, secondly, questions of subjectivity and identity.

1.2.1. The entangled meaning of discourse

The meaning of the term 'discourse' is fluctuating and versatile. Discourse is, generally, understood as the stage upon which meaning is created, as the site of the struggle over meaning and, concurrently, as the linguistic result of that process¹⁴. Discourse, as a process, emphasises the role of the reader as much as the producer, both conceived as social subjects that possess a type of shared knowledge and conventions (i.e. about the textual and cultural).

Foucault used the term to denote different ideas:

Instead of reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word 'discourse', I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements (quoted in Jaworski and Coupland, 1999: 2)

These definitions are in themselves pretty open; the unsystematic way in which Foucault used the term has continued with his followers. For the purpose of this study, and departing from this quote, I will offer a (functional) differentiation of these different uses.

But first, it is necessary to clarify that a *statement* is understood as "a particular discursive event from within the various possibilities opened up and shaped by a discursive formation" (Barker, 1998: 14). Thus, for example, we can understand the object films of this study as particular discursive events; they are statements that 'talk' about femininity in a particular way, reworking some aspects of it that circulate in contemporary Spanish culture, whilst 'silencing' others.

To return to the aforementioned quote, in the first meaning of discourse proposed by Foucault – as 'the general domain of all statements' – it

stands as the explanation of 'reality'. Reality is conceived as ontologically unattainable, and only accessed through discourse. Discourse is the process and the stage where experiences are ordered and classified, creating a socio-historically contingent and constructed system of meaning that we identify as 'reality'¹⁵. A discourse analysis is interested in enquiring what those explanations of reality are, and which relations of power they serve.

In its second sense – i.e. as 'an individualizable group of statements' – Foucault may be referring to what have been termed *discursive formations*. A discursive formation is a combination of discursive practices (see below) associated with a specific institution (e.g. schooling system, audio-visual media) that serve to conceptualise and order, to map the territory of the 'sayable', and to create knowledge around specific issues (e.g. gender differences). It also refers to the group of statements resulting from those practices. Furthermore, the defining features that bring together a group of discursive events as belonging to a specific discursive formation are that they "refer to the same object, share the same style and... support a strategy... a common institutional, administrative or political drift or pattern" (Cousins and Hussain quoted in Hall, 1997: 44).

This is the use that several feminists have adopted for analysing certain femininities (e.g. the analysis by Rose (2001) of Victorian media femininity¹⁶). For Van Zoonen, gender could be thought as a particular discourse¹⁷. Nevertheless, in my opinion, it is more useful to approach femininity as constructed by the interplay of different discursive formations about appropriate 'womanhood' (e.g. Catholic femininity and media femininity in 1940s Spain) that interact amongst themselves and with other discursive formations (e.g. official discourses of Spanish identity in 1940s). Furthermore, as a process, femininity is 'enacted' very

differently by very different people¹⁸. If we understand discourses of femininity as the socially constructed systems of representation that explain how women (as gendered beings) should inhabit the world, offering a set of models, we should acknowledge the contradictions and non-unitary character of these constructions.

For example, the 'feminist' identity that some Second Wave feminisms offered could be understood as a type of discursive formation, articulated in relation to popular cultural constructions of traditional femininity but different from them. Despite sharing the same 'object' of reference, namely 'ideal' constructions of womanhood, they respond to different political motivations and elaborate different discursive styles. This meaning of discourse should not, however, be conceived as a type of ideology and neither as self-contained.

When studying a specific discursive formation, we may be able to detect the organising (structural) principles that give some sort of coherence to it, the "dominant value system that has become naturalised as common sense" (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999: 7). Other theorists have called this *orders of discourse*, understood as those micro and macro-social ideas that act as axes in the conceptualisation of a specific social domain or social practice, and become naturalised as common sense at a specific historical moment (Barker and Galasinski, 2001: 69; Schrøder, 2002: 107)¹⁹.

For example (and as a general approximation) in the case of contemporary Spanish culture and media, femininity has often been thought within the dichotomy of traditional / non-traditional, a dichotomy that prevails as an organising principle in many of the analysis that I have consulted about gender representations. During the Transition to democracy (and engaging with the use of tradition that Francoist ideology

displayed), tradition often became a 'negative' feature associated with Spaniards, while the modern was constructed as a positive feature associated with an admired 'other', especially with Europe (which could partially explain the high level of social consensus in Spain regarding entry in the EU)²⁰. And this is still today a common organising principle of many cultural and media manifestations (although other contradictory discourses uphold different perspectives).

The third meaning of discourse proposed by Foucault – a 'regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements' – seems to refer to a delimited, systematised and regulated discursive processes that other theorists have termed *discursive practice*. Foucault remarked upon the dynamic character of discourse, and insisted on not "treating discourse as a group of signs...but as practices that systematically form the object of which they speak" (quoted in Talbot, 2007: 12)²¹. Applying this to the analysis of media, Fairclough emphasises this dynamic dimension of discourse, understanding discourses practices as:

[T]he ways in which texts are produced by media workers in media institutions, and the ways in which texts are received by audiences [...], as well as how media texts are socially distributed. There are various levels of sociocultural practice that may constitute parts of the context of discourse practice. I find it helpful to distinguish the 'situational', 'institutional' and the 'societal' levels – the specific social goings-on that the discourse is part of, the institutional framework(s) that the discourse occurs within, and the wider societal matrix of the discourse. Discourse analysis can be understood as an attempt to show systematic links between texts, discourse practices and sociocultural practices (1995: 16-17)

In the context of this study, cinematic constructions of femininity in contemporary Spanish cinema should be studied offering attention to a compound of discursive practices, involving spheres such as the modes of production, distribution, consumption, the social map and uses of cinema, etc.

This overview about the different understandings of discourse already indicates many of the methodological principles that should be adopted in a discourse analysis, analysed later. But it is first necessary to qualify two other concepts, closely knit together with discourse: power and knowledge. For Foucault:

(W)e must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that come into play in various strategies [...] Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power (1998: 100-1)

Unlike (Marxist) ideology, power is thus understood as multiple and completely embedded within society, "dispersed, impersonal and productive rather than simply repressive" (Gill, 2007: 61). Power is ingrained in the constructions of subjectivity, encouraging a self-reflexive and self-policing subject. Discourses are powerful since, often through the constitution of knowledge, they shape (whilst being shaped by) people's subjectivities; but discourse is in itself contradictory and several discursive formations compete to offer a truth effect. Truth refers not to something that 'is', awaiting to be discovered but rather as something that 'becomes', constructed by discourses. From this basis, two other developments follow: specific discourses are liable either to empower or to disempower a specific group (say women); and power is always socio-historically specific, working dialectically with other discursive strategies.

For Barker and Galasinski (2001), each 'identity politics' group (e.g. feminists), having access to discourse, possesses a form of power.

Through a discursive strategy that serves certain interests, they may construct an ideology that tries to fix meaning, to offer subject positions and to create specific truth effects. If identity politics are concerned with disturbing the (hegemonic) balance of power, their strategies are to acquire "the power to name, the power to represent common sense and the power to create 'official versions'", to construct a legitimised world view (ibid.: 56). This does not mean though that all discursive formations have the same 'social reach' (ibid.: 66-67).

As with power, Foucault conceived knowledge as produced by discourse. He understood knowledge "as very specific 'truth games' related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves" (1994: 224)²². This leads us to one of Foucault's main interests, which is central to this thesis (in its exploration of filmic portraits of moments of instability in the characters' identity), and is analysed in the next section: the formation of subjectivity.

1.2.2. The discursive nature of subjectivity and the impetus towards coherence of identity

The subject is theoretically approached from two different perspectives: as the product of the discourses in which s/he is embedded (analysing the double simultaneous process of subjectification / subjection), and simultaneously, as the subject of the statements, the 'I', that shores up the illusion of a stable subject (focusing on the processes of identity formation). For Barker and Galasinski:

Subjectivity is held to be a discursive production and the speaking subject is dependent on the prior existence of discursive subject positions, that is, empty spaces or functions in discourse from which to comprehend the world. Living persons are required to

'take up' subject positions in discourse in order to make sense of the world and appear coherent to others. A subject position is that perspective or set of regulated discursive meanings from which discourse makes sense (2001: 13)

From this, it follows that the subject – as discourses – is completely socio-historically located and is thus always constituted within the practice of discourse.

But does this conception of subjectivity completely cancel the possibility of agency? This is one of the main objections set to Foucault's work (e.g. De Lauretis, 1987). In the previous explanation, an aspect that opens up the door to agency is missing: the exploration of why, being engaged in the same discursive processes, some people take up some subject positions on offer while others reject them.

In his last works, Foucault tried to address this shortcoming and spoke about the possibility of deploying agency through self-reflexivity; that was the main focus of his series of seminars "Technologies of the Self"²³. The technologies of the self were considered one of the several types of technologies that shape subjectivity²⁴ and were those:

which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (1988: 225)

This does not mean that 'we' can tailor ourselves as we please; it rather signals that there is a space for self-transformation, a space located "between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self [called] governmentality" (225). The subject's self-policing attitude may then hinder an easy identification with the subject positions at offer (Hall, 1996: 11)

This may therefore account partially for how a subject – who is engaged in a discursive practice – may or may not take up the subject positions at offer: being self-reflexive. Taking Lacan as an inspiration, Hall proposes another factor to take into account: when impelled towards a discursive subject position, we take it up if it agrees with pre-existent interior representations (Galinski and Barker, 2001: 32). And this is an aspect that directly leads this enquiry towards questions of identity and identification.

Identity should be understood as another dimension of the subject. An identity approach highlights the interplay between agency and social construction in the formation of the subject (Woodward, 2002:3-4).

Identities are discursive-performative²⁵ since they are formed through the re-iteration of acts and discourses with which we engaged. Gender identity is not an exception; it is produced “through the re-citation and reiteration of the ‘Law’ which obliges gendering under the heterosexual imperative.” (referring to Judith Butler’s theories; in Barker and Galasinski, 2001: 87).

Identities are representations of ourselves that we charge emotionally, identifying with some sort of ideal or fantasy. Nevertheless, this identification is always destined to fail²⁶:

Identities are, as it were, the positions which the subject is obliged to take up while always ‘knowing’ (the language of consciousness here betrays us) that they are representations, that representation is always constructed across a ‘lack’, across a division, from the place of the Other, and thus can never be adequate – identical– to the subject processes which are invested in them (Hall, 1996: 6)

Processes of identifications are therefore always condemned to be imperfect. Thus, identities are always ‘in process’. Identity processes could

thus be understood as springing from an impulse towards coherence, aiming to order and to charge with meaning the 'cluster' of representations. This 'order' is always shifting also because identities are "fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions", especially in modern times (Hall, 1996: 4).

As Butler (2006) explains in her epilogue, identity categories are limitless, often contradictory and unstable, and mean different things as they are combined. This is an idea also developed by Stuart Hall through the concept of 'articulation', which "refers to the formation of a temporary unity between elements that do not have to go together. Articulation suggest both expressing/representing and a 'putting together'" (in Barker and Galasinski, 2001: 156). For Hall, the end of essentialism entails recognising this aspect (ibid.). For example, masculinity in an English context may be very distant to masculinity among Australian Aborigines.

In moments of identity crisis, an identity position (understood as the whole 'narrative' of the *I*) "is challenged or becomes insecure, whether at the level of the individual or at the level of the state" (Woodward, 2002: xi). Crises open up fruitful gaps for undertaking processes of transformation. And these spaces are liable to be used for changing well-embedded categories such as femininity and masculinity (Barker and Galasinski, 2001: 37).

As Woodward (2002: ch.2) comprehensively explores, the narratives that we create about ourselves are essential to the formation of (personal and group) identities. With them, we order our experiences (e.g. using the conceptual structure of life as a journey) and create a sort of continuity between our past and our present, adapting the former to keep a sense of coherence with the present. But this narrativisation is a dynamic process

since, as pointed out before, our identities are doomed to constant change. These narratives participate within and are partially informed by public narratives, and for this reason, particular personal identity narratives “can be used to explore the interrelationship between the personal and the social that forms the basis of identity” (ibid.: 29). For example, psychoanalysis has become a type of ‘public narrative’, a ‘popularised’ interpretative framework and narrative structure – vulgarised and widespread in media discourses – that serves as a logical structure to approach our ‘identity’ (ibid.: 33).

In the construction of ‘identity’ narratives, the deployment of symbols becomes an essential aspect (ibid.: viii). They work as ‘landmarks’ that anchor the story and connote a belonging to some identity group. For example, photographs of special events (e.g. weddings, births) become the visual records that sanction an important space of belonging (especially in Catholic cultures) such as the family; for this reason, the use of the family album has been a symbolically charged narrative mechanism in Spanish cinema when questioning this institution (as analysed by Ballesteros, 2001: ch. IX). The use of symbols for the construction of identity narratives gains even more importance in contemporary society, where ‘lifestyle’ – a concept completely embedded within the paradigm of consumption – begins to replace social class as the main type of social grouping and as source of social identity (Machin and Van Leeuwen, 2005: 577).

The establishment of points of similarity and differences with others is another essential device in the construction of identity narratives. With this, the subject sets boundaries that define himself / herself relationally, as is clearly signalled in the linguistic discourse by the use of pronouns (Woodward, 2002: ix). The writing of history (with its construction of origins and traditions) is, in this context, especially pertinent to the

creation of group identities. In this, power dynamics are essential; and they rely more on exclusionary practices (i.e. 'We are not...') than on definitional practices (i.e. 'We are...'), constructing the subject through a *constitutive outside* formed by the Other (Hall, 1996: 4-5)

To sum up, identity is a productive construct that helps people to locate themselves in the world, from which (always shifting) location to make sense of the world, adopting ideals (conscious or unconsciously), and identifying with them. Whereas explorations of concepts of identity – which is partially a self-reflexive construction – emphasise more the active role of the subject in the constitution of the self, a focus on subjectivity seems to emphasise more the (con)formation of the subject within discourse.

Whereas Cultural Studies has focused on 'communal identities', my study will explore questions of the (fictional) articulation between 'communal identities' and 'personal identities', focusing on the construction of the Other and the 'Us' in relation with femininity (an approach that will inform two of the core chapters of this thesis).

1.3. Adapting CDA to the study of fictional texts

Discourse analysis is mainly concerned with the articulation between textual productions (understood in a broad sense), power (Larsen, 2002: 117), and identity. Within discourse analysis, there are several methodological trends (e.g. narratology, speech act theory)²⁷. Nevertheless, many theorists have identified themselves as 'discourse analysts' without further distinction (e.g. Rose, 2001; Tonkiss, 1999).

CDA, often using critical linguistics and studying 'real-life' data, is more closely linked with post-structuralist theory than other trends; politically engaged, it is especially concerned with the (regulated) structures that help to construct a coherent and convincing ideological message (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999: 33 and ff.), and has been mainly employed within cultural and social studies.

Many feminist theorists have also been interested in CDA. Lazar (2007) remarks that:

The aim of feminist critical discourse studies, therefore, is to show up the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities (2007: 142)

And:

Also of concern are issues of access to forms of discourse, such as particular communicative events and culturally valued genres [...] that can be empowering for women's participation in public domains (ibid.: 149)

This is coincident with my study, since, in the chosen films, there is a clear problematisation of 'normative' models of femininity, opening a space for counter-discourses about femininity; I focus on films directed by women in order to explore if they are constructing more 'flexible' subject positions aimed at a feminine 'inscribed' addressee.

In this study, I take many tenets from CDA, and also others from narratology. Whereas the theoretical tenets of CDA provide a solid foundation, setting up the questions to ask to the text, narratology supplies a specialist vocabulary for film analysis.

A CDA study aims to identify the regular structures of a specific discursive formation (e.g. femininity in contemporary Spanish cinema) and how they are contested; and consequently, to lay visible the workings of both 'hegemonic' power and of 'resistant' power, and the construction of social consensus (in this case through the media discourses).

This type of analysis also implies an ideological study of the social (and of the cultural as social) that departs from a political stance (in this case, feminism). Furthermore, it aims to "provide a way of linking up the analysis of the local characteristics of communication to the analysis of broader social characteristics. It can let us see how macro-structures are carried through micro-structures" (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999: 13).

My interest in this particular theory and methodology springs from the way it interrogates the multi-faceted concepts and concerns that I address in this study, such as 'feminine' subjectivity, the denaturalisation of commonsensical arguments about femininity, a feminist interest in the empowerment of women, and the empowerment that springs from accessing 'discourse'.

1.3.1. Stages of the research

The essential foundation of this type of research requires that the researcher should adopt a highly self-conscious attitude (e.g. Lazar, 2007: 152-3; Barker & Galasinski, 2001: 64; Barker, 1998: 10). Questions such as "why I am interested in this subject", "how I am creating and 'ordering' the data to serve certain relations of power and construction of knowledge" should be asked. The researcher has to be aware that we do not unveil but construct meaning (through the process of ordering and

selecting) (e.g. Jaworski and Coupland, 1999: 12-13). This process of self-reflexivity encompasses two aspects.

Departing from the idea that our subjectivities are constructed by discourse, we – as researchers – are unable to escape the conceptual frameworks – the orders of discourse – that have marked our identity. Concepts such as objectivity and neutrality, that have traditionally guided academic enquiry, are articulated around transcendental ideas of truth and reality that have been widely questioned in contemporary thought and that are linked to a widespread relativism, common to post-modernity.

If this is a problem common to many disciplines and methodologies, it is accentuated within qualitative analyses – such as CDA – that rely on the critical ability of the researcher. Once one resigns to the impossibility of objectivity, the researcher needs to be acutely aware of their own process of meaning-construction, identifying what are their own prejudices and assumptions and ‘commonsensical’ beliefs²⁸.

Another point to consider is related to Foucault’s understanding that any (analytical and experiential) enquiry is motivated by a ‘will of transformation’. Since any intellectual enquiry should imply a questioning of what we know and of how we know (how we are ordering ‘reality’), any writing opens up a process of self-transformation of oneself (Barker, 1998: Chap. 4). Thus, before undertaking research, we should consider why we are interested in that subject.

This questioning can provoke anxieties and lead to a sort of immobility and ‘relativism’, cancelling any possibility of political action. This is what Chomsky criticised of Foucault’s theories; Foucault replied that the only possibility of engaging in political action and transformative politics is to be aware about one’s limitations, summed up in two basic tenets: first,

that nobody can make 'real' claims about universal values or truths and second, that personal creativity is not the primary source for the emergence of new knowledge (but that we are 'subjects' of the socio-cultural discourse). Thus, "if one agrees with (1) and (2) above, then the implication follows that one cannot speak in the name of universals but rather can only speak from one's present position in a very uncertain and certainly non-prophetic way" (Barker, 1998: 76)

Departing from this self-reflexive attitude, Schrøder, following Fairclough's work, describes three stages of a media CDA:

'Texts' stand at the core of the model, and are explored largely through the categories of critical linguistics. The second dimension of analysis concerns 'discourse practices,' for instance, the processes through which specific media texts are produced in media organizations and consumed, or 'decoded,' by audiences in the context of their everyday lives. These discourse practices are understood as mediators between certain delimited texts and much wider 'socio-cultural practices,' which constitute the third dimension of analysis. At this third, macro-social level, the discursive phenomena brought to light at the first two levels are adduced in claims about, and interpretations of, the prevailing 'order of discourse' at a given historical time. Thus, CDA has sought to join a linguistic, analytical approach to discourses, in the plural, with a critical, theoretical conception of one dominant discourse, in the singular, following Foucault (1972) (2002: 106)

In my research, I have used these basic steps as orientations. Thus, two background researches are required to complete the second and third states of the textual analyses of the films, spread over chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 2 offers an approximate account of dominant discourses about femininity current in contemporary Spanish culture and media. I will first resort to sociological studies that describe the situation of men and women in Spain, paying especially attention to those that deal with the stereotypes and (ideal) social representations of femininity and masculinity

current among Spaniards; also, to historical studies of how femininity has been discursively constructed in the recent past (since it seems undeniable that the Francoist construction of femininity has impacted upon contemporary Spanish culture and society); and, finally, to studies of media portrayals of women in Spain. This will help me to determine what 'authoritative accounts' regarding femininity are commonly found in Spanish culture and media, and also to offer an approximate account of the system(s) of values about gender (those 'orders of discourse') that these discourses uphold and are informed by.

Chapter 3 establishes a (general) picture of the institutional and industrial context of the contemporary Spanish film industry, and offers a study of how femininity has been constructed in its cinema, offering an exploration of the discursive practices that inform Spanish cinema. In the filmic analyses (chapters 5 to 7), I will not carry out any empirical research of the production processes or audience reception of the chosen films. Instead, supported by this background study, I will consider the textual 'traces' of the production processes and the textual construction of an inscribed addressee. I should address questions of how the specific text is conformed and fits within the visual and thematic codes characteristic of Spanish cinema (in particular, regarding the representation of femininity) and what kind of inscribed addressee is constructed within the text, identifying the subject positions on offer. This is obviously a limitation of the study, but a limitation that springs from Foucault's work. His studies often concentrate on texts offering, rather than a linguistic analysis, a structural analysis that helps to determine the accumulated conventions that justify a world view (Talbot, 2007: 12)²⁹.

These 'background' researches will offer anchorage points for my study, working as 'frames' or 'interpretative contexts' (Tonkiss, 1999: 249). With

contemporary conceptions rebating 'mirror' theories that understand media as reflecting reality, contemporary qualitative research:

has emphasized the mutual constitution of media and modern societies, so that it may not be feasible, methodologically or epistemologically, to compare 'media realities' with any independent indicators. 'Critical discourse analysis' as well as 'discursive psychology' [...], increasingly take as their premise that media content is not so much a secondary reflection as an artefact and a practice in which society is both reproduced and contested (Schrøder, 2002: 100)

As a point of comparison, Schrøder invites the researcher to look at other cultural manifestations, instead of appealing to 'reality' itself (ibid.: 102).

The thorough character of CDA makes this method impractical for dealing with a large number of texts; for this reason, among the over ninety films directed by women during the object period of this study, I focus only on a small selection of films that seem especially pertinent and revealing. As Tonkiss says, in any qualitative research "what matters is the richness of textual detail, rather than the number of texts analysed" (1999: 253). The objective is to choose "fruitful textual sites for investigating how 'ideological common sense' might be articulated" (Talbot, 2007: 46).

Many CDAs aim to assess how the studied 'texts' are unproblematically constituted by the discursive practices that frame them and are 'representative' of the socio-historical and cultural orders of discourse (e.g. Spanish normative system of gender). Indeed, several theorists (Tonkiss, 1999; Gill, 2007) agree with Rose's opinion that embarking on discourse analysis presupposes an interest:

with the discursive production of some kind of *authoritative* account – and perhaps too about how that account was or is contested –

and with the social practices both in which that account is embedded and which itself produces (2001: 142, my emphasis)

My aim, however, is to apply this method in a different way: looking at those films that in some level 'problematise' femininity. Although I may conclude after doing a detailed analysis that some of the films of my sample end up reinforcing 'normative femininity' or a 'new (normative?) femininity', they nevertheless immanently 'propose' a reflection on femininity within them.

1.3.2. Key analytical concepts

For Barker, a Foucauldian textual analysis involves questioning the text:

what are its effects; why this collection of statements and not others; what subject position does it open up; what political interests does it serve; what role does it play in the politics of truth; what specific speakers' benefit can be attributed to it; what are its modes of existence, distribution and circulation? (1998: 14)

Although some of these aspects are difficult to explore (such as the question of the effects of the text), these questions could be translated for a filmic CDA as: detecting inscribed textual cues that compel the inscribed spectator to embrace values that are presented as 'commonsensical' within the text; exploring what subject positions are textually allocated and who the inscribed addressees are, an aspect related to target audiences; looking for traces of production processes in the text (the 'encoding' process) and, although meaning is not created until there is interaction, considering the 'potential meanings' and ideological messages enclosed within the texts (Talbot, 2007: 15).

In order to locate such contents, we should pay especial attention to the following aspects (proposed by Rose, 2001 and Tonkiss, 1999): the intertextual references, the rhetorical organisation of the text (and within that, the variations and repetitions within the text and among texts), the 'truth effects' that result from this, and the points that are obviously disregarded within the texts (the silences).

1.3.2. a. Intertextuality.

Within media textual analysis, intertextuality has become a common analytical point in the study of media. As Fuery (2000: 52) and Galisinski and Barker (2001: 29) point out, the study of intertextuality has become especially visible and analytically interesting with the self-reflexive turn of contemporary thought (and media).

Fuery's classification of three types of filmic intertextuality – completely contained within the text and presupposing a level of intentionality from the producer and consciousness of the reader – offers an initial guide for its study. He speaks about 1) structural referencing, e.g. parodic and subverting borrowings of genre conventions; 2) thematic referencing, not necessarily cinematic but also social, especially if "we adopt the semiotic notion that cultural events are also textual systems" (2000: 51); 3) synecdochic referencing, where a film or a part of a film refer to a larger 'order' (an example could be the 'making of' that accompany many films in their DVD editions) (ibid.: 50 and ff.)

But the type of intertextuality that interests CDA goes beyond this understanding. Within post-structuralism, many thinkers – such as Foucault, Bakhtin, and Derrida – have used different concepts – such as intertextuality, dialogism, and 'difference' (respectively) – as ways of

explaining explain the instability of meaning. In this context, intertextuality rather indicates an intrinsic quality of texts (including media texts) as formed by a "tissue of voices and traces of other texts" (Talbot, 2007: 63). When discursively engaged in a process of meaning construction, we bring into play deferring and distinguishing mechanisms by which we engage with other (social, political, cultural, historical, auto-biographical, etc.) 'narratives'³⁰. Following Derrida's focus on words, we can set as an example the meaning of femininity. In Spain, femininity is socio-culturally constructed as 'different to' masculinity, childhood, and vulgarity, and is associated with gender appropriateness, elegance and, for historical reasons, decorum; while, from a feminist political stance, femininity is often negatively associated with constraint and cultural imposition; personally, it is associated with puberty, 'middle-classness' and an imposed self-consciousness of my own body and body language. Discursively, then, this word eludes definition.

Intertextuality is always a process started by the act of reading, by the actual reader; the expectations, pre-assumptions, knowledge of the actual reader will interact – in an intertextual process – with the text and construct discursive coherence. Applied to media, Fairclough (1995) highlights that an intertextual analysis implies looking "at the text from the perspective of discourse practice, looking at the traces of the discourse practice in the text"; furthermore, "[i]t is a cultural interpretation in that it locates the particular text within that facet of the culture that is constituted by (networks of) orders of discourse" (61). Thus, the study of intertextuality helps to uncover orders of discourse (Barker and Galasinski, 2001: 69; Schrøder, 2002: 107).

Texts are polysemic and each actual reader may adopt a slightly different reading. Even so, this does not mean all readings are possible, since texts generally contained a 'preferred reading'³¹. The preferred reading –

inscribed through textual cues and accommodating the 'inscribed reader' through the creation of, generally, coherent 'subject positions' – sometimes requires the deployment of certain intertextual capabilities that shape a coherent (unified) space for the 'inscribed addressee'. Intertextual references are found on all levels of the textual (e.g. narrative structure or *mise-en-scène*); it is a fruitful concept for the researcher that can help to identify traces of the production process (e.g. the target audience). As an example, we can take Alex de la Iglesia's film, *El día de la bestia* (1996, Spain and Italy). This film is peppered with references to youth culture; its preferred (narrative) 'reading' is somehow ambiguous (is it a bad acid trip?) and, I believe, rather incomprehensible for many (Spanish) elderly people. The film offers 'easy' subject positions for some sectors of international audiences (that are also familiar with those cultural codes) but with extra-spicing for local audiences.

1.3.2.b. The rhetorical organisation of the text

An analysis of the rhetorical organisation of the text aims mainly to discover the 'strategies of persuasion' used to articulate a coherent and completed 'truthful' or/and 'natural' – social portrait (Rose, 2001: 140)³². The persuasive power of a text relies greatly on the way the discourse is organised and in the way the logical sequencing creates spaces to accommodate, gain and 'suture'³³ the (hypothetical) reader. Therefore when analyzing the rhetorical organisation of a text, the textual (logical) structure and the available subject positions become two fundamental considerations. These two aspects help us to understand how 'truth effects' (e.g. ideological messages) are constructed textually.

The accomplishment of discourse comes within its continuity. Therefore, when analysing a text as a discursive event, we need to undertake a

structural analysis and to relate that specific text to the discursive formations within which it participates. Thus, taking the example of *El día de la bestia*, we might look at the text as a discursive event located within the discursive formation of Spanish cinema and its way of dealing with masculinity. When analysing a filmic text, we also need to consider its complex multi-modal character (e.g. by looking at how the dialogue establishes counter-points with the visual). The following analytical categories applied to the study of the text, and also to the imbrications of the text with the rest of the discursive formation, can serve as a guide:

- linearity and sequencing (Galinski and Barker, 2001: 63-4);
- key themes/images and the way they are interconnected (Rose, 2001: 150-1);
- variations and repetitions within the text, not only of images but also of structural devices;
- 'enunciative' authority ('who' is speaking?), considering factors such as double voicing – the hierarchical status and interactions established amongst different textual 'voices' (e.g. in cinema, the narrating voice-over and the characters speech) (e.g. Talbot, 2007; Lazar, 2007: 151 & ff.)
- coherence strategies, with contradiction and complexities thereof (Rose, 2001: 155); one way of constructing coherence that is significant for my study is through a play of differences and continuities with other factors (that may be directly inscribed or 'assumed' in the text), a consideration that also helps to identify the 'subject positions' offered in the text;
- 'common-sense' knowledge, this being the set of assumptions (filling in *lacunae*) that the spectator has to bring into the text to 're-construct' it in a coherent manner

This brings us to a second aspect of the enquiry, that of the 'inscribed' spectator, especially considering two factors: the traces left in the text from the production coding can help to determine what kind of 'target reader(s)' a film tries to attract (see the above example of Alex de la Iglesia's film); and the *lacunae*, since, by bringing a certain knowledge into play, the spectator is invited to 'adopt' certain values and 'naturalised' perspectives in order to (re)construct textual coherence. Talbot explains this further:

Inferences and presupposed ideas are part of the 'commonsense' that a reader needs to draw upon in order to read a text as coherent. They are assumptions about the social world that are set up in such a way that they are not asserted, but readers still need to supply them to make sense of texts. Whether they are noticeable or not depends on the reader [...] The claim of the theory is that, in the act of reading, readers must construct coherence. As readers, we do this on the basis of the cues manifested in the text and our own knowledge and expectations that we bring to that text. Textual cues are a useful starting point when exploring the resources that a reader employs. These, in turns, provide a focus for attending to all the other resources a reader brings in, thus allowing us to look at the construction of social subjects in the act of reading (2007: 51).

If the 'actual reader' conforms (completely) to the characteristics of the 'implied reader', taking up those textual subject positions on offer consciously or unconsciously, they will be textually 'sutured' within the subject position(s) on offer, adopting the ideological message(s) proposed in the text (ibid.: 47). This way of conceptualising the 'reader' also highlights the 'complicity' of the reader in the process of ideological identification. An ideologically coherent 'implied' reader (within a well-oiled text) is necessary to produce the illusion of coherence needed to encourage a process of identification and identity construction (49 and ff.).

1.3.2.c. The truth effects

Having focused on how the text is organised to suture the 'implied' reader within the 'diegetic' moral and ideology, I would like to consider in this section some methods of enquiry for identifying what ideological messages are transmitted by a text. We should remember that ideologies in this context are understood as "structures of signification that constitute social relations in and through power" [Barker and Galasinski: 25], understanding power not exclusively as repressive but also as productive. This analysis should contemplate two approaches.

One, which is more difficult for the analyst since we may 'participate' of that social climate, is to look at the ideological content – e.g. values – carried by the 'commonsensical' knowledge that we are invited to deploy in order to bring coherence into the text. This is what we could qualify as 'the ideological framings' (Barker and Galasinski, 2001: 25); not being part of the main ideological message of the text, these spaces are often more difficult to detect, since they are often 'unmarked'. These are probably the most fruitful area for cinematic analysis: the reader is conscious that the story that is being told is fictional, but often assumes the realism of the background of the story (except in some genres such as science fiction). The verisimilitude of that background is very important to make the film work. For example, in the films object of my study, on most of the occasions, the films portray middle-class urban women (who are rarely 'marked' as such).

A second approach is to focus on the ideological 'gist' of the whole text. We can speak about texts that aim to offer a more coherent ideological message – for example, many contemporary American mainstream movies such as *Independence Day* (Roland Emmerich, 1996, USA) – and other texts – often coming from the margins – that aim to diegetically reproduce

the workings of discourse by complicating and breaking with the 'stability' of meaning. Multi-stranded narratives, for example, have occasionally served this purpose in some films such as the acclaimed *La Soledad* (Jaime Rosales, 2007, Spain), which takes this further by using split-screens.

Nevertheless, we should remember that a textual analysis is an analysis of potentialities. Any discourse (and discursive event) should be understood as a stage for the creation of meaning and therefore also as a 'site of contestation', rather than the space where meaning is fixed.

1.3.2.d. The silences

There are three different types of silences to take into account when analysing texts:

- those aspects of the narrative that are 'rendered unimportant' within the texts. For example, in *Te doy mis ojos* (Icía Bollaín, 2003, Spain)³⁴, a film that portrays a situation of domestic violence, the role of the child is, being instrumental to his parents' story, largely ignored;
- those aspects of the narrative that are not explained because they are assumed as common-sense; it is expected that the reader / viewer will fill these gaps in with their own knowledge (in a conscious or unconscious manner). This is what Fuery (2000: 184) calls *lacunae* ("spots of indeterminacy"). Following the same example, the location of *Te doy mis ojos* in Toledo, a symbol of the 'Old Spain', helps to construct the ideological message of the film;
- the last type, which is probably the most complicated to analyse and maybe more useful for the study of 'institutional' texts, refers to those common features of the discursive formation to which the

text belongs that are silenced within the text (which I called 'marked silences')³⁵. For example, an important aspect of *Te doy mis ojos* is its complete disregard for institutional support networks³⁶.

Over-interpretation is one of the big risks of discourse analysis; for example, it is important to know "where to stop making intertextual connections" (Rose, 2001: 161) and, also, finding silences. A good way of keeping this in place is to reflect upon the films, immersing them in interpretative context (e.g. understandings of femininity in social stereotyping and in the general media, in the Spanish context) and to always remember the location of the text within a discursive formation. This will enable us to keep in mind the limitations and possibilities open to that text (that discursive event), imposed by the context and medium to which they belong, in my case, contemporary Spanish cinema (as industry and as a visual tradition). As Larsen puts it: "What are its [the medium's] particular properties and how do these properties translate into communicative possibilities?" (2002: 120). Fictional texts do not claim to be exhaustive when exploring a subject. They rather tend to offer an emotionally charged construction of the chosen issue.

Among the studies I have consulted about Spanish cinema, I have scarcely found examples that adopt a discourse analysis approach. A clear exception is Santaolalla's study (2007) about the representation of immigration in contemporary Spanish cinema. When describing what aspects she would explore in order to elaborate a complete discourse analysis about this subject³⁷, she signals a set of questions that reflect quite closely the kind of enquiries that I aim to address in my study, although in my case with a focus upon femininity:

1. What are the type of images of immigrants that are found –and ignored – in contemporary Spanish cinema? How are they related to: a) the historical way of representing the immigrant and ethnic difference; b) other ways of representing cultural alterity in Spain (for example, in advertising, press, and television); c) the way these issues are addressed in other film industries; d) other constituent aspects of 'difference' –gender, sexuality, social class – with which it [the image of ethnic and migrant 'others'] interacts in the fictional representations?
2. What are the cultural and ideological discourses from which these images come and within which these images circulate? In which way could the recognition of those discourses help to interpret those images [...]? What type of needs and/or desires do these images satisfy?
3. How do these images and their socio-cultural and ideological contexts contribute to the debates and practices associated with individual and communal identity in contemporary Spain – especially since there are patent tensions between local and global allegiances in this country (including here the post-colonial dynamics)? (ibid.: 466-467; my translation)³⁸

In summary, CDA is "interested in doing-social-analysis-by-doing-discourse-analysis" (Van Dijk, 1999: 460). Fairclough et al. understand that its main objective is "to show the contingencies of existing social arrangements" and encourage the researcher to look into hot spots of contemporary life such as "the need to help people negotiate changing conceptions of gender identities and relationships and achieve social justice in matters of gender and sexuality" (2004: 1).

Although CDA has been more interested in the study of 'objective' genres such as news (Lazar, 2007: 156; Santaolalla, 2007) and has been more focused on linguistic analysis (Schrøder, 2002 :115), this method is also applicable to other genres. As Lazar affirms in relation to advertising, these 'banal' genres may even have a more pervasive social effect:

such banal texts are no less important for critical scrutiny (Toolan, 1997) precisely because they do not invite serious attention, are

fleeting, and yet are everywhere in modern, urban industrialized societies. From a critical perspective, consumer advertising [or cinema] offers a productive site of cultural politics (2007: 156)

2. FEMININITY IN SPANISH MEDIA AND SOCIETY

"Spain is different". What has become an identifiable slogan of Spanish tourist publicity since the 1960s bases the appeal of Spain on its difference. Official discursive constructions of 'Spain' have depended upon and participated in a juxtaposition of traditional and modern values that have been a constant in contemporary Spanish history¹. However, modern Spain prides itself as becoming more 'like' that superior Other, more European (wherein partially lies the cultural significance of 1992, with the Barcelona Olympics and the Great Exhibition in Sevilla).

The speed of change in the situation of women and in culture in general since the 1960s but particularly since the end of the dictatorship (1975) has informed contemporary Spanish society. Whereas we can still find some continuities with the Francoist period (Labanyi and Graham, 1995; Montero, 1995), new models of femininity, influenced by the internationalisation of culture and media, are spreading in the media and in the consciousness of Spaniards.

In this chapter, I will be focusing on the constructions of femininity in contemporary Spanish media, relating them to the socio-cultural situation of contemporary women. This will serve as a comparative standpoint from which to analyze the representation of femininity in the object films of this study.

The first section offers an overview of the cultural and media construction of femininity during Francoism. Considering the temporal proximity of the Francoist period and the homogeneous model of femininity it designed, we should acknowledge that this model has left an imprint on the consciousness of many Spanish women now in their 60s or older, and that it may have marked new models of femininity. It has also left an imprint on contemporary cinema, with films such as *Solas* (Benito Zambrano, 1999, Spain) and *Nosotras* (Judith Colell, 2000, Spain) that have constructed older female characters who correspond to this type.

The second section, based on sociological studies, addresses the situation of Spanish women since the 1990s and underlines the common beliefs that Spaniards have about femininity and masculinity.

In the third section, I will offer an overview of the main characteristics of media depictions of femininity. Against the backdrop of new formulations of femininity articulated in relation to postfeminism, as defined by Anglophone theorists, I will ask if we can speak of a postfeminist femininity in Spain.

2.1. Femininity during Francoism

In this section, I will be looking at historical and media constructions of Francoist femininity. Existing studies mainly focus on the mechanisms and discourses of the normative model of femininity, and especially on the period of the 1940s and the 1950s² when this model was more consistent and more pervasive in the lives of Spaniards.

Legal regulations regarding women's social role started to change towards the end of the 1950s. This was a time of change, with, for example, the

incipient rise of a consumerist economical model and an increase of foreign influences. For this reason, there were also changes in the discourse of femininity, adapting previous elements to the new circumstances. Constructions of femininity in the 1960s are still little studied, although more than the representations from the first half of the 1970s.

Although weakened since the 1960s, many studies remark how the normative model of femininity constructed in the post-war period exerted a considerable influence for most of the dictatorship period (Enders and Radcliff, 1999; Morcillo, 2000). Given that the ideological foundations of Spanish womanhood laid on National-Catholicism, the main element of coherency in a per se very chameleon-like state (Morcillo, 2000: 30), the normative model of femininity did not change excessively in its essential elements in the course of the dictatorship.

The end of the civil war brought to an end the struggle between tradition and modernisation that had intensified in Spain since the beginning of the 20th century. Tradition triumphed and this created a strong contrast with the progressive tendencies, particularly regarding the situation of women, offered by the previous regime, the Second Republic. Tradition became associated with 'true Spanishness' and was constructed as the opposite of the treasonous, foreign values adopted by certain Republican groups. The construction of a suitable model of femininity, opposed to the one that was under construction in the period of the Republic, became a central element of this re-establishment of true Spanishness³.

This became a perfect alibi for refusing any initiative that tried to increase women's autonomy, which were qualified pejoratively as 'feminist'. Feminism was presented as incompatible with femininity and as a dangerous 'contra-natura' foreign tendency. The fear of feminism

permeated governmental discourses and Sección Femenina's speeches, especially during the late 1950s and early 1960s⁴.

The role of women in Francoist Spain was quite well defined, although not free from contradictions and changes during the thirty-six years of dictatorship. Gender difference was a keystone around which Francoist ideology was organised. This dualistic and mutually exclusive differentiation was a central element in the organisation of many essential infrastructures (e.g. the educational system as studied by Aurora Morcillo) and in everyday gender relations, described thoroughly in Martín Gaité's book (1994). As Morcillo puts it:

As the regime (and the Catholic Church) saw it, gender difference constituted the very essence of selfhood; it provided stability and social order to the nation and clarity of purpose to the individual [...]. The state organized political and social relations by using gender as a signifying element of normalization [...]. The formulations of laws, statistics, and definitions of normality and deviance guaranteed and perpetuated the masculine power of the state (2000: 6)

2.1.1. The normative model of femininity

Through the enforcement of laws and the intervention of the Catholic Church (a powerful influence on many Spaniards, also in the Republican years) and the Women's section (Sección Femenina) of the Falange, women's bodies and behaviour were thoroughly regulated. Women were taught servitude, abnegation and altruism, and to be the guards of virtue and morality in the family. Given that family was considered the fundamental pillar of society⁵, their social role was considered essential. Women's 'moral' integrity was carefully guarded, and those that breached these rules were seriously punished⁶. There was a constant control on

women's times of arrival at home and the places they were allowed to attend (Martín Gaité, 1994: 140).

In order to instruct and 'enable' women to fulfil their 'biological destiny' and patriotic obligation (marriage and motherhood)⁷, the Francoist government designed a complex system that thoroughly regulated education, mass media contents⁸, and women's insertion in the public sphere.

Regarding formal education, Catholicism and patriotism were the central pillars; education was regarded as central for creating consensus and acceptance of the regime (Morcillo, 1999)⁹. From primary school, different curricula were designed for girls and boys (after 1945), prioritizing home-care and religion for girls (Muñoz Ruiz, 2004: 116). Women were openly discouraged from enrolling at university, since this did not help fulfil their role as ruler of the household (Morcillo, 1999)¹⁰ and it could even damage their femininity. That 'clever girls do not marry so easily' was a common knowledge spread in the women's press (e.g. Muñoz Ruiz, 2004), as well as in the regime's propaganda (Morcillo, 2000: 45).

Men and women were physically segregated in educational settings (Morcillo, 2000: 41) but not there only. Friendship between men and women was discouraged, and the constant sexual segregation that permeated many aspects of everyday life, and the construction of the other sex as mythical and mysterious (as naturally different although complementary), created a difficult situation when they finally meet in their *destiny*, marriage (Martín Gaité, 1994)¹¹. Catholic beliefs towards sex permeated gender relations. Girls were taught how to interest men while keeping 'decent'¹².

The Sección Feminina of the Falange, “the sole state organization for women charged with the formation of Spanish womanhood” (Enders, 1999: 376), had an important role on the indoctrination of women of all ages, and acted as an important body of social assistance¹³. They took part in the education of women especially through the *Servicio Social*. This was a compulsory and lengthy period of training that aimed to teach adult women how to be *real women*, especially those who were considered at risk of ‘forgetting’ this (such as women who wanted to enter university)¹⁴. Even when they were asking for women’s rights, they argued that equality was not an issue, since they took the natural inferiority of women for granted. The Sección Femenina shared the same ideological motivation as the Falange, this being to keep Spain away from modernisation, which was understood as a threat to fundamental ‘Spanish’ values such as community and hierarchical social structures. Individualism and modernisation were their main enemies, incarnated in foreign influences (Enders, 1999: 376).

The women’s and girls’ press also reinforced this model of femininity. The romantic discourse (with love identified with marriage, and marriage as the only way to acquire happiness) was central in girls’ and women’s magazines and lured women into domesticity¹⁵.

The ideal of women’s character and appearance was also clearly defined and publicised in the woman’s press of the time, as Martín Gaité (1994) studies. Women needed to be simple, without complications (39); always smiling (40); a vulnerable and fragile being seeking her (future) man’s protection (50-1); abnegated, but also mysterious and inaccessible (66-67); adulating and admiring towards their partner’s skills and intelligence (68-9); well-organised to be able to run her house (chaos was an anarchic property and therefore, demonised and ‘pathologised’, and home was thought of as a micro-cosmos that reflected society), but at the same time

complacent and smiling when the man came back from work and gratefully indulgent of men's (and by extension, boys') tendency towards disorder (118-9). Women with opinions were regarded negatively (159). A feminine appearance was a constant requirement, following all the rules regarding decorum in the hairstyle, make-up and garments. Their image had to be decent, with the figure of the Vamp standing as an antichrist (129 et seq.). Spontaneity was associated with the foreign models of American films, and condemned (183).

In the media and elsewhere, women were encouraged to comply with these rules and be 'normal'; 'normality' was often emphasised as a desirable outcome. Those women who aimed to have some individual space were considered to be taking the wrong path (*ibid.*:182)¹⁶. During the post-war period and, arguably, much later, individualism seemed a major ailment; this contrasts with contemporary discourses about femininity, where spontaneity, creative style and sincerity are associated with desirable individuality.

If media and educational messages encouraged women towards marriage and domesticity, laws aimed to enforce this 'ideal'. In the 1940s and 1950s, women were not allowed to work under various circumstances, and the official discourse strongly discouraged the participation of women in the labour force¹⁷. Regulations intended to 'protect woman from work' and impose a multitude of limitations on women's work and independence¹⁸. Women were forced into an infantilised position, being under the supervision and guidance of their guardian, their father or husband¹⁹.

An elevated birth rate was necessary for a country devastated by civil war, and policies that encouraged the rise of natality were set in motion. As Martín-Márquez points out:

Monthly family stipends pegged to the number of children were instituted, and the sum increased dramatically after the twelfth child; additional prizes and benefits (such as reduced fares for public transportation) were instituted for large families. However, those families in which the mother worked were not eligible for stipends (1999: 91).

However, with the progressive 'modernisation' of Spain, this discourse of femininity had to change to adapt to the socio-economical changes.

2.1.2. Towards the dissolution of Francoist femininity

Since the end of the 1950s but especially during the 1960s, Francoist discourses about femininity had to undergo some changes with the end of the autarky and the entrance into a consumerist society. The timid rise of (underground) feminist groups²⁰, the decline in Catholic influence during the 1960s and the aperture of Spain to foreign influences (e.g. through tourism, and international and national migration) led to changes that were to favour women's situation and to undermine patriarchy (e.g. with a timid incorporation to the workforce, though in menial industrial or service jobs, and a slow rise in the number of female university students)²¹. Traditional and modern values about femininity met uneasily, and this permeated the official discourse.

Although undergoing changes, Catholicism and the (patriarchal) family were still considered central to the organisation of Francoist society (Morcillo, 2000: 53-54). However, in Carbayo-Abengózar's opinion (2000), these two pillars of society were to change considerably during the 1960s in a way that not only did not favour but also undermined the government.

With the *Law of Political, Professional and Labour Rights of Women* (1961), women's patriotic role was redefined and they were encouraged to work, with the written permission of their tutor. But their access to the public sphere was understood as an extension of their domestic role, as a way of 'helping' men. The idea that their femininity and their 'natural destiny' (family care and motherhood) should be carefully preserved was constantly reinforced. Those who presented the law were at pains, though, to emphasise that this was not a 'feminist' law (Morcillo, 2000: 67-68).

There was a move from a discourse of sacrifice (happiness was a detestable pursuit during the post-war period²²) towards the celebration of (hedonistic) consumerism, still incipient at the end of the 1950s. For example, during this period, advertisements about domestic appliances and other 'luxury' goods emphasised the importance of simplifying women's life (Morcillo, 2000: 56). Furthermore, "a new woman-as-commodity to appeal to woman-as-consumer was manufactured in the shopper culture" (ibid.: 56). Women's magazines and advertisement echoed the eroticization of the female body and the cult to beauty. But, still "the challenge was to remain a chaste lady behind the makeup mask" (ibid.: 63).

During the late 1950s and especially during the 1960s, opposition to Francoism proliferated. For example, within the clergy, some voices started to adopt a critical perspective towards the treatment of poor people and other injustices perpetrated by the regime and feminism reappeared "from two different positions: within the anti-Francoist movements, led by clandestine political parties, and within the Catholic groups that fought for women" (Carbayo-Abengózar, 2000: 117)²³.

But, in spite of these changes and the upsurge of other more progressive discourses on femininity, the official line regarding femininity changed very little during the 1960s, although it may have lost some effectiveness (ibid.: 118). However, towards the beginning of the 1960s:

There started to proliferate a type of young woman that went dancing, arrived late home for dinner, smoked, used a direct and self-assured language, stopped wearing girdles, was not prepared to have more than two children and considered that keeping virgin until marriage was not only an anachronism but also an act of foolishness (Martín Gaité, 1994: 217, my translation)²⁴.

In November 1975, Franco died. At the time, the legal situation of Spanish women was still very restricted. Through a period of great socio-political and economic instability, the laws that had supported the Francoist regime started to be dismantled. With the approval of the Spanish Constitution in 1978, equal rights were granted to women and men. In the following years, new laws that granted more freedom to women were introduced (e.g. decriminalization of adultery and use of contraceptives in 1978; divorce in 1980; abortion in especial circumstances in 1985). Although formal equality had been achieved, socio-cultural practices were going to be more difficult to change.

In this section, I have tried to offer a short summary of the normative model of femininity during Francoism, qualifying that it was during the 1940s and 1950s that it was in its peak of coherence and effectiveness, and offering a brief description of the changes that it underwent towards the 1960s. But it is important to remember that this model, despite being an influential component, did not encompass all individual and classed formations of female identity. Furthermore, not even in its vogue period, this model was not left uncontested, neither by the media nor, obviously, in practice²⁵. Nevertheless, considering that many contemporary older women were under the influence of this model of femininity, we cannot

forget its importance. Furthermore, although less and less recurrent, this has been a (generally negative) model commonly found in the portrait of older women in Post-Francoist Spanish culture (as analysed by Gámez Fuentes, 2004), such as in some of the MJCE films, for example, Magdalena (Julietta Serrano) in *Nosotras* and Aurora (Rosa María Sardá) in *Te doy mis ojos* (Icíar Bollaín, 2003, Spain).

2.2. Women in Spain today: a sociological overview

The traditional gender division, that was so pervasive during Francoism, still has some influence on contemporary Spanish society although it is clearly dying out. The cohabitation of modern and traditional models of femininity and modern and traditional values and beliefs about femininity are common characteristics of Spanish society and media (as analysed in the next section). In this section, I will offer a general overview of women's situation in the public and private spheres and about (many) Spaniards' values regarding femininity.

As many writers (e.g. Morales and López Sáez, 1996) highlight, it is important, when analysing sociological data, to establish a clear distinction between the values and behaviours of older generations and those of younger generations. Speaking specifically about the family, Castells and Subirats remark that:

To start with, [Spanish] society is very traditional, but it is a dichotomised society between people of 40 years of age or less and people over 50, with a sector of those that are between 40 and 50 years of age who are between two worlds [...] [The patriarchal model of family] is still the majority model, as it is seen in practice, nevertheless this model is in crisis and it is in crisis especially among the new generations (2007: 147, my translation)²⁶

Women's incorporation within the workforce has significantly increased since the end of the 1970s, but it is nevertheless comparatively much lower than in other European countries. For example, Royo Vela et al (2007) point out that there are 52% of employed women – far from the 73% of the UK²⁷. The adduced reasons for this are that most of these women are out of work because they are housewives, in comparison with men, who are mostly out work because they are retired or students (Insituto de la Mujer, 2007?: 29). This shows a clear influence of the familial situation on women's work, a fact that has not changed much since Solé and Goetze (1994: 116) did their study. Nevertheless, Castells (2007: 18) remarks how we should pay close attention to age differences when analysing this data; he highlights that the percentage of working women between 25 to 54 years has significantly increased from 36% in 1986 to 71% in 2006; furthermore, within this broad age range, those who do not work often declare that they aspire to work but that they either do not find suitable jobs according to their preparation or jobs that allow them to simultaneously fulfil their family responsibilities. Work has become an essential element for (modern) young women's self-definition, even more than other traditional feminine elements such as maternity or marriage, and work is constructed as an important source of self-fulfilment and self-realisation (Alberdi, Escarnio and Matas, 2000: 86-91).

The public sphere is still a more adverse environment for women than for men. Women from all the educational levels are especially affected by the higher levels of unemployment (a constant problem in Spain for decades), much more than their European counterparts or Spanish men (Instituto de la Mujer, 2007?: 31-32)²⁸. When employed, women's work is still less valued than men's work, and women are paid about 30% less than their male colleagues, although this difference varies regarding the type of work (ibid.: 37). Despite the higher educational level of women than men, it is still difficult to break the glass ceiling and, in most areas, positions of

responsibilities are given to men (e.g. Castells, 2007: 21). Despite the increasing familial dependency on two salaries, there is still a general belief that men, as heads of the family, have the obligation to work; for women, work is a right and a voluntary choice, and therefore it is often considered secondary (Garrido, 2001:329). This is also often the case among young couples (Alberdi, Escario and Matas, 2000: 167).

Castells understands that this unequal status quo (e.g. salary differences, high levels of sexual harassment at work, etc.) has much to do with the acceleration of changes that Spain has suffered, with a large incorporation of women within work environments where sexist values are still prevalent (2007: 17-22). This situation has made many Spaniards, men and women, aware of the discriminatory dynamics that inform the public sphere (e.g. Castells, 2007: 19; Alberdi, Escarnio and Matas, 2000: 79 and 83).

But unequal dynamics also permeate the private sphere for many women. It is often noted that men tend to dedicate a much lower percentage of their free time than women to the care of the domestic tasks and of children, although men are increasingly 'helping' more (e.g. Instituto de la mujer, 2007?: 29; Royo Vela et al, 2002: 168). Many women's time schedules are thus overwhelmingly saturated. The psychological implication of this situation is no less important, with many women that feel torn between their work and their familial obligations, often feeling they have failed in both (Castells, 2007: 25-6).

These and other social changes have undoubtedly impacted on the family. Spain is still a very communal society and the family (the column of social organisation during Francoism) is still highly regarded. As Rosa Montero explained in the mid-1990s:

The family is what matters most to 83 per cent of Spaniards, followed by work (64 per cent) and then friends (44 per cent). And the Spanish divorce rate is the lowest in Europe. Apart from which only one Spaniard out of every ten lives alone, while the European average is one out of every four. In this sense traditional values have not changed that much. The family has adapted to new times, but it is still fundamental. And it is not just the family but the group, the clan, the tribe, the horde. It seems that Spaniards still care much more about their own kind – the friends, neighbours, and relatives who comprise their tribal network – than they do about the common good of society and the state (1995b: 318)

Much has changed in the last ten years, although the traditional family still stands as an ideal for many. With women's increasing economic independence and awareness and with other social changes, the traditional family is slowly disintegrating, although this is still felt as a recent change. Important changes are taking place within familial structures, such as a decrease in the number of marriages, an increase of divorce rates, a low natality (lower than in many European countries), an increase of individual households (still rare) and with a search for alternative familial and supportive networks (e.g. Castells and Subirats, 2007; Instituto de la mujer, 2007?).

For various reasons, birth rates have fallen dramatically since the 1970s. Maternity is still felt as a strong handicap in the development of women's professional life since it is still often expected that a woman should leave their job after having a child and if staying at work, their work efficiency will decrease and/or their promotional expectations will significantly decrease (Alberdi, Escario and Matas, 2000: 80). Furthermore, as many researchers highlight (ibid.: 237 and ff.; Castells, 2007: 40 and ff.), this is also due to the lack of support that, in the care of children, women receive from their partners and from the social system (e.g. flexible work, scarcity of public nurseries).

These sociological analyses overwhelmingly point towards a diversification in the social role of women (now entering the public sphere, though in inferior conditions), but with few changes regarding gender relations and discriminatory practices.

Another factor to consider is what Spaniards' beliefs about femininity and masculinity are. As in media products, stereotypes of character – understood as psychological characteristics that are commonly assigned to men and women, forming generally a mutually exclusive but complementary system of differences – are still strong among Spaniards of all ages. Whereas stereotypes of role are losing strength among younger people (though are still embraced by older people), stereotypes of character are extremely widespread. So those features qualified as *communion-expressive* features (e.g. caring, understanding, passivity, submission) are commonly understood as more characteristic of women, while those gathered under the label of *agency-instrumentality* features (e.g. ambition, leadership skills, violence) are often associated with men (e.g. Morales and López Sáez, 1996; Plaza, 2005: 43).

The results of another sociological study (Iragui and Delgado, 2002 described by Plaza, 2005: 45-46) that surveyed the social desirability of character features among university students arrived at the same conclusion, emphasizing that the interviewees identified with this stereotyping. Moreover, they detected that the female interviewees regarded instrumental characteristics associated with masculinity (that they did not see themselves as possessing) as more socially desirable than the communal features that they attributed to themselves.

In an earlier study also about young people, Félix Ortega (1996) reaches similar conclusions about the persistence of character features associated with women and with men. But his conclusions contradict Plaza's,

observing that whereas young women presented a more coherent gender identity, men felt more confused about a model of appropriate masculinity and listed negative masculine features (e.g. egoism, ambition, aggressiveness). He also highlights an important development regarding raising the social importance of certain features, central to contemporary work values. In his study, of the stereotypes of character and its appreciation by young people, he points out that they value and identify equally with three characteristics: sympathy (key to achieving social popularity), sincerity (key to individualism and authenticity) and intelligence (key in a meritocratic society). These and other characteristics have come to become a part of women's ideal identity, combining many traditional features (e.g. caring, generous, understanding) now revalorised with these newer features. Nevertheless, Ortega clarifies, this has not really led to a reconsideration of woman's participation in the public sphere, which is still considered men's realm.

In this section, I have aimed to offer a general (and necessarily simple) sociological panorama of the situation of women, emphasizing mainly their situation in the public and private spheres and the difficulties they face when aiming to keep a balance between the two. Many of these sociological issues find an echo in many cultural texts and, also, in the MJCE films, such as *Insomnio* (Chus Gutiérrez, 1997, Spain). As many studies highlight (e.g. Alberdi, Escario and Matas, 2000; Castells, 2007), many women (and men) feel the last years have brought deep socio-cultural changes, and that many are still to come.

2.3. Femininity in contemporary media

Studies of gender and the media are still relatively recent in Spain. They started to develop in the mid-1980s, mostly under the patronage of the

*Instituto de la Mujer*²⁹, and since then a discrete body of work has developed. Nowadays some studies focus on the representation of women and men but the main tendency has been to focus on women exclusively.

Overall, the type of study that predominates adopts a quantitative content analysis approach (e.g. Royá-Vela et al., 2005 and 2007; De Pablos Coello, 2005?) and, occasionally, a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis and audience research (e.g. Red2Red, 2007). Essays that offer general valuations of cultural or media gender representations are also common. Although they offer interesting arguments, they do not often locate those manifestations socio-culturally (e.g. Gil Calvo, 2000) and / or do not offer examples that could illustrate their arguments (e.g. Murillo, 2001).

Television and press are the most commonly studied media, followed by radio, while Internet is still an area widely unexplored³⁰. The area that has received most attention is the study of commercial advertising, followed by studies of the discursive patterns found in women's press (e.g. Plaza's studies; Brenes García, 2004). The study of television serials is still rare, but it is becoming more common with interesting studies such as Red2Red's analysis (2007).

In many of these studies, the main common objective is to evaluate whether or not the mass media adopt equalitarian values. Therefore they mainly focus on two areas, on the participation and roles of women media professionals (e.g. López Díez (dir.), 2005?; Gallego, J., 2003) and, especially, on media portraits of women, in relation to their faithfulness or distortion of the contemporary situation of women. The latter are of more interest for this study; overwhelmingly, they conclude that, despite the increasing visibility that new models of femininity have in the Spanish

media, traditional models are still very visible, a duality that will be analysed in the next sub-section.

The motivation that lies behind many of these studies set a priori a few theoretical problems. Many of these studies lack critical analysis regarding the characteristics of the representation of women (e.g. by not locating them within the historical continuum of media representations) and the conditions that enable these representations (e.g. by not analysing the production stages)³¹. Another remarkable shortcoming is the lack of studies that adopt a comparative approach. Only a few offer a diachronic analysis (e.g. Fajula and Roca, 2001) and even fewer an internationally synchronic comparative stance (e.g. Machin and Van Leeuwen, 2005).

A surprisingly silent subject of study is that of postfeminist femininity. Postfeminism is a recurrent theme and term in Anglophone studies of modern formulations of media femininities. Contrastingly, it is a very uncommon term in Spanish media equivalents, although it is sometimes used in texts about contemporary feminist theories. Whether or not we can encounter depictions of postfeminist femininity in Spanish media is another point that will be analysed later.

2.3.1. The cohabitation of traditional and new models of femininity

In contrast with media representations of masculinity, which are often traditional, media femininities are more varied. Characteristics associated with new femininities (e.g. empowered professional women) are recurrent, especially in some media products (e.g. international glossy magazines). However, many of the studies consulted highlight how contemporary Spanish media still has a strong traditionalist vein, manifested in the pervasive association of women with the private sphere

and with traditional 'feminine' roles and attributes of character, and also in the enactment of gender relations.

In the Spanish media, the private sphere is primarily qualified as a feminine space, as indicated in many studies of printed and televisual advertising (e.g. Berganza Conde and Del Roy Hurtado, 2006; Freixas, Guerra and Peinado: 2001; Royo Vela's different studies³²) and of television drama series (Fernández Soriano, 2001; Red2Red, 2007; Galán Fajardo, 2007).

In advertisements, the association of the private sphere with women is reinforced through the high percentage of adverts that portray women developing traditional feminine tasks, and through the common exclusion of men from the private sphere. As Valls-Fernández and Martínez-Vicente (2007) explain in their comparative study of television commercials, the persistence of gender stereotypes is similar to other Western countries in many ways³³. But the most remarkable disparity is that, comparatively, there is still a high percentage of female characters developing traditional roles: "In U.S. television advertising from the 1980s only 5.5% of female characters were shown doing housework; in 2005 the percentage of female characters shown doing housework was 23% [in Spain]" (697). Many of these female characters may, on the other hand, be depicted as modern women (returning from work) who carry on these tasks with pleasure and effortlessly (Sánchez-Aranda et al, 2002: 98).

The representation of women is, then, varied (at work and at home, while working, caring and relaxing in both) but the private sphere is still almost exclusively a feminine reign. Contrastingly, male characterizations are less varied and men are often represented developing traditional roles (at work, socializing with other men) and rarely in non-traditional roles (e.g. cleaning, taking care of children) (Royo Vela et al. 2002: 175). They also

quite often appear in the private sphere but as honorable guests: relaxing in the living room, or getting beautiful and clean in the bathroom (De Pablos Coello, 2005?: 31). When they venture into the kitchen, a clumsy and comic male type – lost in an unfamiliar land and unable to solve the domestic problem at hand – is aided by a helpful and expert female (Sánchez-Aranda et al., 2002: 95-98).

Something similar happens in Spanish television serials, which are highly popular and have displaced American serials³⁴. Women and men share the professional sphere but men ruled it. Women have on the other hand two areas of dominance: home (e.g. caring and dialoguing with children, in charge of house work) and emotional issues (a field in which men are shown as pretty inarticulate) (Red2Red, 2007: 186). However, regarding gender representations, there are marked differences between 'family / community serials' and 'professional serials'³⁵.

Following the Red2Red study, the 'community' series tend to reproduce traditional gender stereotypes and relations, whereas many of the 'professional series' – being those American series analysed in their sample such as *C.S.I : Crime Scene Investigation*³⁶ (Alliance Atlantis Communicactions, Arc Entertainment, Jerry Bruckheimer Television and CBS; 2000 – ; Canada and USA) and *House M.D.* (Heel & Toe Films, NBC Universal Television, Bad Hat Harry Productions, Shore Z Productions, Moratim Producktions and UMS; 2004 – ; USA) – are perceived as doing this far less (2007: 99). Studying Spanish professional serials³⁷, Galán Fajardo (2007) explains that, although they also reinforce character and role stereotypes (e.g. women are more emotional and men are more rational; women are more concerned than men about family issues), they have also focused on issues previously rarely seen in television series, including issues that especially affect women (e.g. reconciliation of private and public life; lesbianism; violence against women).

The persistent association of women with the private sphere is not exclusive to 'fictional' media forms. On the television and radio news, in interviews of professional women (often politicians) there is an emphasis on their familial situation and appearances (Lomas, 2005: 266; López Díez, 2005?: 58) and, when referring to their professional life, on the difficulties they encounter in their work-life (ibid.: 58). Moreover, women interviewees are either chosen as representative of a group (e.g. as mothers) or else they appear as common citizens; contrarily, most interviewed men act as 'experts'. Proportionally, there is an important inequity: 42% of the men interviewed in the news offer professional opinions, against a mere 18% of the women interviewed³⁸ (López Díez, 2005?: 57). None of this is exclusive to the Spanish context though, as Gill's study of the representation of women in UK media proves (2007: ch. 4).

Media products also reinforce traditional character stereotypes even when they represent new types of femininity and masculinity (Lomas, 2005: 272). Those stereotypes that enjoy more visibility are: that women are more caring, emotional and sensitive; that women are more interested in sentimental relationships and are more affected by love issues; and that women are vain and interested in beauty.

Caring features are more associated with women, and the care of children is still understood as a female matter (Valls-Fernández and Martínez Vicente, 2007: 697). For example, Garrido (2001) analysed the printed advertising that appears in *Ser Padres*, one of the leading publications addressed to parents of young children and babies. In this kind of publicity, women are addressed as the main carers and therefore the main consumers. They tend to present women in isolation against blank backgrounds, nurturing and caring for the baby, as if emphasizing that

there is no life behind that relationship (333-337); men on the other hand are represented as protective and as providers (337-9). This traditional division emphasises the mother's expressive role and the father's instrumental role (345).

Women are constructed as mainly occupied with emotional and sentimental relationships. In television serials, when women are the main protagonists of a plot it tends to focus on sentimental, interpersonal affairs (Red2Red, 2007: 47). These female characters have marriage as one of their main aims; and they bring stability, maturity and rationality to their relationships (except when an outburst of jealousy sizes them) (69).

Also:

Features such as braveness, intelligence and the ability to lead are associated with male characters, whereas sensitivity, kindness and a concern with image are often attributed to female characters; those characters that hold authority have a male name, whereas those that are more submissive hold a female name (185, my translation³⁹)

Nevertheless, these character constructions vary, depending on the medium. As a counterpoint, Plaza (2005: ch. 6) observes that, in girls' magazines, the constructed male and female celebrity figures break with those stereotypes. Both, men and women, offer several interesting common features: they are active, dynamic, intelligent and hardworking. But, more interestingly, those characteristics normally associated with women (sensibility, warmth, sociability: communion features) are more often transferred onto the represented men. These sensitive men, in touch with their feelings, mainly talk about their tastes and their personal life; on the other hand, women mainly talk about their work, emphasizing their insecure side and their lack of experience.

Women's lack of experience or insecurity when developing a job is emphasised in different mediums. Already we mentioned how, in the news, when female public figures are interviewed there is an emphasis on the possible difficulties they may encounter in the development of their tasks (López-Díaz, 2005?: 58), something that repeats in these girls' magazines, and that Galán Fajardo (2007: 233) also detects in 'professional serials'.

Ambitious and competitive female characters are often portrayed as negative in televisual serials, but, contrastingly, ambitious and competitive men are positively constructed, as if to point out that this is more in accordance with their nature and role (Red2Red, 2007: 61; Fernández Soriano, 2001: 41). This character stereotyping seems to emphasise women's 'natural' confidence in the private sphere and uneasiness in the public sphere (and the reverse for men).

In this section, I have analysed how in Spanish media (echoing the social situation) there is a cohabitation of new and old models of femininity, and I have mainly focused on the traditional features of these media cultural products. The depiction of the modern woman, more common in certain mediums and certainly in contemporary Spanish cinema, will be the focus of next section.

2.3.2. Postfeminist femininities: international normative models for new women?

The internationalisation of the media is an important consideration for understanding emerging models of femininity and masculinity, since this internationalisation has brought with it the transference of values and models, especially from American culture. Since the 1990s, the adoption

of 'foreign' media formats has become common in Spain, with the launch of Spanish editions of international women's magazines (*Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan*) and with the adoption of televisual formats in programmes such as *Gran hermano* (Telecinco / Telecinco, 2000 – , Spain) and in serials such as *Yo soy Bea* (Fremantle Media International, Grundy Products, RCN and Telecinco; 2006 – 2009; Spain).

When referring to new media (and also, socio-cultural) femininities, postfeminism has become a central and recurrent term in both Anglophone academia and popular culture in the last decades. Contrastingly, this is a very uncommon term in the Spanish context, only found in theoretical assessments about contemporary feminist trends (associated with a new turn in feminist theory that includes Queer and Cyber feminism among others) (e.g. Rodríguez Magda, 2002).

Descriptions of these new postfeminist femininities feel, in my opinion, only partially applicable to the Spanish context, despite claims by these Anglophone theorists that they are pervasive in contemporary Western media. Nevertheless, these Anglophone theories are suitable analytical tools to elaborate a comparative assessment of the specificities of new Spanish media femininities (often only superficially addressed in Spanish studies) and their participation in international trends. In subsequent chapters, this will also serve as a standpoint for analysing MJCE films, which typically portray modern women.

If, with the development of the Second Wave feminism, a type of feminist identity⁴⁰ was constructed against traditional models of femininity, nowadays, new formulations of femininity are articulated in relation to feminism. As Greer ironically explains it in her book *The Whole Woman* (1999):

The future is female, we are told. Feminism has served its purpose and should now eff off. Feminism was long hair, dungarees and dangling earrings; postfeminism was business suits, big hair and lipsticks; postfeminism was ostentatious sluttishness and disorderly behaviour (quoted in Gamble, 2001: 51)

Whereas a 'feminist identity' was always considered marginal, this new postfeminist femininity is often formulated within a popular discourse of the 'renewal' of femininity (Taylor, 2003).

Postfeminism is a slippery term however, with a cluster of (contradictory) meanings. Gamble's introduction (2001) explains how, outside its media manifestation – "women dressing like bimbos, yet claiming male privileges and attitudes" (43) – its meaning is highly contested. She signals two main understandings of postfeminism: as a backlash against feminism (held, for example, by McRobbie, 2006) and as a continuation and interrogation of feminism, associated with other revisionist 'post' theoretical paradigms, such as postmodernism and post-structuralism (this being the meaning that has arrived to Spain). Others propose another common (popular) understanding of it as a term that describes a generational shift in contemporary ways of understanding gender relations (e.g. Mac anGhail and Haywood, 2007: 26; Brunsdon, 2005).

To these understandings, Gill (2007) adds another one: postfeminism as a new 'sensitivity' that marks the surge of new masculinities and, especially, femininities and that has had a direct influence on media and popular culture, abounding in different sites (e.g. 'chick films', advertisements and fashion).⁴¹ If it is true that postfeminism is related to feminism, Gill highlights that, overall, it is "a new discursive phenomenon that is closely related to neoliberalism" (254). She summarises the features commonly associated with postfeminist femininity, which will be further addressed in this section:

the notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; the emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline; a focus upon individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; the articulation or entanglement of feminist and anti-feminist ideas; a resurgence in ideas of natural sexual difference; a marked sexualization of culture; and an emphasis upon consumerism and the commodification of differences (255)

This postfeminist sensitivity does not only affect those women who embrace a more normative feminine appearance, as Holland's (2004) interview-focused research on the construction of 'alternative' femininities (e.g. 'goth' women) reveals⁴².

Gill's first characteristic initially seems not very new. Unlike men's bodies, the feminine body has historically been overall valued by its appearance more than by its function (Macdonald, 1995: 192-194; Smith, 1990: 170-175). Nevertheless, in the last decades, the importance given to appearance has intensified, and an attractive appearance has become the key constituent of femininity and the main source of women's power. Meanwhile, other characteristics traditionally associated with femininity (e.g. caring, now transformed as caring for oneself) have been devalued. Furthermore, a suitable feminine appearance has come to represent a balanced interior life, and neglecting this appearance means to 'unveil' a dysfunctional self (Gill, 2007: 256). Turning her attention at (direct and indirect) advertisements from women's magazines, Macdonald points out how they "replaced skin-care's association with narcissism and beauty with an address to the postfeminist woman: aware, self-reliant, and taking responsibility of her own future and well-being" (MacDonald, 1995: 195).

An important aspect of this new femininity is the way that it is closely articulated in relation to sexuality. There is an increasing emphasis on sexiness (purely located in the body) associated to these new femininities that has even been used for products that target young girls; for example,

in recent years, clothing with the Playboy icon has been designed for very young girls (Gill, 2007: 257). This, combined with the tendency to 'girlify' women in the media – since the 1980s (Bartky, 1990: 66) – has led to a culture that "promotes female children as its most desirable sexual icons" (ibid.: 258). For Tasker and Negra, this has been a formula, on one hand, to mainly represent ageing as something liable "to be erased by cosmetic surgery" and, on the other, to make "the competent professional adult woman", safe (2005: 109). As Levy explains, this emphasis on sexiness has clearly been capitalised upon and impelled by commercial interests:

Making sexiness into something simple, quantifiable makes it easier to explain and to market. If you remove the human factor from sex and make it about stuff –big fake boobs, bleached blonde hair, long nails, poles, thongs – then you can sell it (2006: 184)

Overall, the main novelty is a (recent) shift from a 'sexual objectification' to a 'sexual subjectification', that is also associated with the rise of a 'porno-chic' culture⁴³. There has been a move from representing women as passive sexual objects towards describing them as active and desiring self-objectified subjects (Gill, 2007 and 2003). This could be seen as a positive development from a feminist point of view, but, as Gill (ibid.) highlights, it encapsulates many other problems. For example, among other things, it is expressed through the willing self-commodification of women's bodies and attitudes and it is highly exclusionary: only young, able, heterosexual women are constructed as desiring subjects⁴⁴. Levy (2006) holds that this 'self-commodification' is linked to popular understandings of sex as (sole) source of power and to the above-mentioned 'commodification' of sexiness.

With the increasing emphasis on the (sexy) body, another characteristic highlighted by Gill is how the disciplinary requirements associated with achieving a 'winning' femininity are more pervasive and emphasised in popular discourses. Embracing femininity has always required a high level

of self-surveillance and discipline. MacDonald (1990: 203-4) maintains that in Victorian times, beauty was associated with 'spiritual purity'; contrastingly, since the 1980s, beauty is corporally and formulaically centred and thus, to achieve it a higher level of maintenance and a strict following of self-disciplinary procedures are needed. Magazines, advertisement and makeover programmes pervasively underline people's (especially women's) 'inadequacies' in the realm of sexual behaviour, our everyday habits, our diet and so on, and, subsequently, present these as "amenable to reinvention or transformation by following the advice of [...] experts and practising appropriately modified consumption habits" (Gill, 2007: 262-3)⁴⁵.

Following Mac an Ghail and Haywood (2007), I would add that there is also another less 'private' level of self-surveillance, articulated through the importance of (lay) confession in contemporary popular culture and media (e.g. Reality shows, makeover programmes), which is even more pervasive with the popularisation of new technologies such the internet (e.g. blogs, chatrooms). Applying this to the field of sexuality, these theorists point out how a general ethos of contemporary culture seems to be a quest to 'unveil' (and therefore, discursively, create a normalised image of) the truth of sex. Confession works as a channel for this normalisation and has evolved into a 'striptease culture' (131).

This (private and public) self-surveillance increases the level of self-consciousness and constitutes the subject as self-policing herself. "(I)n a culture saturated by individualistic self-help discourses, the self has become a project to be evaluated, advised, disciplined and improved or brought 'into recovery'" (Gill: 2007: 262).

However, this high level of self-surveillance is disguised and therefore unloaded of its repressive connotations by being combined with a

discourse of individuality, pleasure and free choice. Regarding sexual agency and self-presentation, popular culture, in particular girls' and women's magazines, offer contradictory messages articulated in the language of individualism (e.g. MacDonald, 1995; Whelehan, 2000; Gill, 2007). Women and girls are encouraged to be independent, pleasure-seeking and to 'be themselves', while been asked to work harder in order to improve their image, to monitor their reaction, etc. The objectives are 'to feel better with themselves' and, simultaneously, to construct themselves as 'sexually attractive', to increase their value in the heterosexual market. But, as Gill explains: "(This) cannot account for why, if we are just pleasing ourselves, the resulting valued 'look' is so similar – hairless body, slim waist, firm buttocks, etc." (2007: 260).

Popular discourses (and 'postfeminist' theoretical texts such as Baumgardner and Richards, 2004) that regard individualism as a liberating 'philosophy' are often linked to neo-liberal ideology. They often rely on two founding mainstays, suggesting that individuals are able to construct their identity freely (as in a DIY process): a belief in the 'autonomous' subject free of structural constrains (such as class) and a positive appraisal of consumerism as the means to construct individuality (Mac an Ghail and Haywood, 2007: 5). Those that share these beliefs construct contemporary culture as 'feminised', with (young) women standing as the representatives of social change and as premium social individuals; furthermore, this presupposes that, since women are already 'there', feminism is unnecessary (analysed by Mac an Ghail and Haywood, 2007; and McRobbie, 2006).

Several theorists (e.g. MacDonald, 1995: 90-92; Taylor, 2003) emphasise how celebratory accounts of the individualism of 'new femininities' ignore structural constrains that are still in place and that especially affect subordinated groups. Furthermore they are often articulated through

bending feminist concerns such as women's 'freedom of choice'. While limiting this freedom and the articulation of an individual self to materialistic aspects, they reduce feminist demands for empowerment to 'the power to consume' and are, thus, reductive and exclusionary. Furthermore, Taylor stresses – echoing Bordo's (1989), Bartky's (1990) and Gill's (2003) conclusions – that these arguments show no "awareness of potential punishments that befall those who fail to do their gender 'right'" (2003: 193). Femininity has thus become a "consumer subject position" (ibid.).

Overall, and as many writers have noticed, this 'postfeminist' discursive tendency often reinforces stale gender assumptions, rendering them as quasi-natural. There is a "resurgence of ideas of sexual difference across all media", backed up by contemporary scientific discourses (e.g. emphasis on the 'genetic' map) and the popularisation of self help books that emphasise the differences between the sexes (Gill, 2007: 265). Taylor (2003) argues that often the formulations of 'new femininities'⁴⁶ represent a "nostalgic return to the (patriarchal) feminine" (185) and do nothing to question stale assumptions (e.g. "men are and women appear").

Studying news reports and cinema respectively, Gill (2007) and Tasker and Negro (2005) notice how, since the late 1990s, one theme is recurring in media discourse: 'retreatism'. These representations show a professional woman who decides happily to leave her work (the public sphere) in order to go back to her house to take care of her husband and children, "[staging] the choice to arrive at the traditional as 'empowered' and the 'best' option" (Tasker and Negro, 2005: 108) while re-establishing the 'natural' balance.

Sociologists Mac an Ghaill and Haywood (2007) also detect a return to a system of 'natural' sexual differences. They refer to the way that 'the crisis

of masculinity' is articulated in the media, in a nostalgic appeal to an "earlier imaginary gendered social order, based on fixed biological between 'real' men and women" (19-20). The main argument that runs through their book is that gender has become a 'cultural flashpoint' through which to make sense of and to explain social changes. Although the positive outcome is that gender is a concept discussed in many societies, they are not so optimistic regarding how this has been put to use:

New contexts of gendering [e.g. through cultural imperialism and new technologies] are emerging where older forms of inequality are not only being lived out, they are becoming more intensified. The implication is that a popular gender intelligibility that links biological categories of sex to traditional gendered social roles are being reinforced and strengthened (2007: 248)

But while these (natural) sexual divisions are frequently recurrent in media, they are often 'dressed up' with irony and knowingness, blurring the ideological message intended and "having it both ways', [...] expressing sexist or homophobic or otherwise unpalatable sentiments in an ironised form, while claiming this was not actually 'meant'" (Gill, 2007: 266-267). Sheltered by 'irony' and the polysemic potential of texts (and using different 'masking' devices, such as 'retro' aesthetics) critique is blocked out and women are 'interpellated' to take a contented position and 'get the joke' if they do not want to be labelled as 'stiff' puritans (Levy, 2006; Whelehan, 2000: 67-70):

Thus the new female subject is, despite her freedom, called upon to be silent, to withhold critique in order to count as a modern sophisticated girl. Indeed this withholding of critique is a condition of her freedom. There is quietude and complicity in the manners of generationally specific notions of cool, and, more precisely, an uncritical relation to dominant commercially produced sexual representations that actively invoke hostility to assumed feminist positions from the past, in order to endorse a new regime of sexual

meanings based on female consent, equality, participation and pleasure, free of politics (McRobbie: 2006, 65)

Popular and academic feminist accounts describe the proliferation of media products that appeal to women using tropes previously associated with sexism (e.g. what Gill calls sexual subjectification) combined with tropes associated with feminism (e.g. tropes of 'freedom of choice, 'agency', 'sexual liberation'). Contemporary (Western) societies are 'gender-aware' and feminism is clearly an essential element in postfeminist popular culture.

This 'feminist' presence distinguishes 1990s media from previous decades' media (Gill, 2007; Hollows, 2000). But this does not mean popular media is feminist. Many feminist claims have become a kind of 'common sense' while feminism is overall rejected as no longer necessary, as lacking a sense of playfulness, as not authentic to women's desires, or for other reasons. As explored before, many of the 'ironic' messages common in contemporary media are made at the expense of feminism; these messages (e.g. the launching campaign of 'Wonderbra') are deliberately 'transgressive' against feminism. The acknowledgement of feminism by the media:

has frequently taken the form of a prepackaged and highly commodifiable entity, so that discourses having to do with women's economic, geographic, professional and perhaps most particularly sexual freedom are effectively harnessed to individualism and consumerism (Tasker and Negra, 2005: 107)

This ambivalent approach towards feminism has been pointed out by multiple theorists (e.g. Brunsdon, 2005; Hollows, 2000) and extensively analysed and labelled by McRobbie as a 'double entanglement' (e.g. 2006; 2007).

A perfect example of these 'postfeminist' femininities described in this subsection is demonstrated by Baumgarden and Richards' article (2004) "Feminism and Femininity: Or How We Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Thong". The article opens with an outburst of optimism about the situation of women in contemporary (American) society that echoes neo-liberal discourses about the situation of women as winners of contemporary society (59). Feminism is presented as passé (60) and advocating for an oppressive 'cultural' political correctness that condemns many cultural icons that these 'girlies' consider essential in their identity formation e.g. Barbies (61). Their optimism is unproblematically linked to consumerism and individualism (65). Establishing a clear distinction between 'femininity' and 'masculinity', they (these authors) reinforce a 'naturalised' binaristic system of sexual difference, using (ironically) sexist tropes. For example, they say that what feminists "overlooked in this process of ensuring that women were 'taken seriously' is that some women – and men – are drawn to feminine things (i.e. 'unserious' things)" (61). Showing such irony and contentment with the world, their stance does not allow critique and makes difficult any organised political action. They do not reflect upon when and why (second-wave) feminism became 'old' and about where (new) feminism should go. They seem to be calling for a 'tool-kit' feminism that is only used when a concrete problem arises (e.g. the only political action they mention in the text is a local babysitting scheme). But they reject any feminism that suggests that socio-cultural factors contribute in the formation of gendered subjectivities.

From Bridget Jones to the 'girls' from *Sex and the City* (HBO, Darren Star Productions and Sex and the City Productions; 1998 – 2004; USA), postfeminist femininities have become a popular female profile in Anglophone media and maybe internationally in the West. Yet Anglophone theorists still often adopt a totalising attitude. For example, Gill (2007: 1) claims that she is offering an analysis of the representation of gender in

the West, but throughout her book her examples are from English and US media. If it is true that, with the internationalisation of media and the globalisation of culture, products (e.g. films; programme formats), values and concepts have travelled quickly (in Western cultures, especially), it is also important to remember that the socio-cultural and historical specificities of different societies also play a part, and that these will, through a process of hybridation, modify these 'imported' features. In the following section, I will offer a tentative assessment of new Spanish media femininities against the background of this description of the new 'postfeminist' gendered sensitivity.

2.3.3. Arguments for and against Spanish postfeminist femininities

When assessing how new (Spanish) femininities are represented against the aforementioned description of postfeminist femininities, we can find many similarities but also remarkable differences. As an introduction, let's start with this unconventional quote extracted from an international market research report that Renault used to launch a car that targeted 'modern women'⁴⁷:

Spain:

- Very ecological with a taste for women's liberation
- Desire to break away from conventions and explore the world as she pleases
- Personal expression for herself and her children
- Enthusiasm for technology and innovation

[...]

Great Britain:

- Very independent and free-spirited
- Cosmopolitan: visits other countries and tries foreign products
- Active and dynamic lifestyle: multiple interests, including finance
- Little time for cooking but very attracted to healthy foods
- At times, seeks refuge from a whirlwind life in the serenity of her garden

(Kantar Research, 2000: 164)

Notwithstanding some reservations about these portraits, what stands out in this interpretation of new Spanish women is the desire to change and rebel against conventions, the positive attitude towards feminism (and ecology, surprisingly) and the centrality of family life (at least, children); characteristics that echo the conclusions of several sociological studies (e.g. Alberdi, Escari, Matas, 2000). This description contrasts with the 'isolated' presentation of the British woman who is already 'there', content with her lifestyle.

2.3.3.a. Similarities

As capitalism and consumerism became more consolidated in Spain, discourses about a winning femininity proliferated. During the 1960s, as Spain embraced capitalism and consumerism, the discourses of women's magazines started to address a new woman, a woman who had "a new consideration of her own destiny", emphasizing the new role that women had in society and setting European models as referents (Gallego, 1990: 66-7, my translation⁴⁸). Thus, these early media constructions of new winning femininities were directly linked in Spain to the development of a new feminine subject position, that of the consumer. Women then started to be addressed as individuals.

Since then, the focus on women as consumers has increased (e.g. González Solaz and García Cubells, 2001; Kantar Media Research, 2000) and constructions of (young) winning femininity have multiplied in the media (Sánchez Aranda et al, 2002; Plaza, 2007). This proverbial empowerment has served as an effective mechanism to promote consumption, encouraging the sensation of 'freedom to choose' (among the available products / lifestyles). Threatened by unemployment and living in a society still full of double standards, the social situation of women in Spain cannot really define them as winners of society;

nevertheless, the enhancement of women's rights and opportunities for women in the last 30 years has created that impression (Morales and López Sáez, 1996).

Success, achieved through a 'youthful' beauty and encompassing personal, social and professional positive outcomes, has become a constant element in media representations from girls' magazines (Plaza, 2007) to advertisements (Antón, 2000: 209; Del Moral Pérez, 2000: 256). This construction of personal success, with its clear heterosexual bias, keeps many constants with the past, but what is new is that this winning femininity implies also a social and professional status that comes close to a perfect middle-class model.

In these media representations, then, beauty has become a requirement for traditional (e.g. love) and new objectives (e.g. professional and social success) for women. This new winning femininity is thus anchored to a 'winning' body, achieved through both consumption and careful disciplinary regimes. An intensification of the advisory bias of women's magazines has made discourses of self-surveillance and discipline more pervasive (Murillo, 2001). For example, advice is now given on how to talk to achieve certain objectives, such as getting a boyfriend or a job (e.g. Feliú et al, 1999).

Nevertheless, the makeover paradigm described in the previous section seems less strong in Spanish media. Although 'mild' forms abound (such as the girls' magazine sections of 'Before and After'), the makeover televisual format has not been successful in Spain. With no makeover programmes – like the British *Trinny & Susannah Undress...* (ITV Productions; 2006 – 2007; UK) – in programming at the moment⁴⁹, at least two 'makeover' programmes have been previously launched in Spain, both failing after a few weeks. *El patito feo* (2000) was a hybrid between

a variety and makeover programme, presented by the somehow passé Ana Obregón and, I suspect, targeted towards an older audience. In 2007, an adaptation of an American programme, *Extreme Makeover* (Lighthearted Entertainment and New Screen Entertainment; 2002 – 2005; USA), called *Cambio radical* (Boomerang TV / Antena 3; 2007; Spain), was launched promising a complete surgical makeover. The programme capitalised on Spain being one of the European countries where cosmetic surgery is more common, but it still failed.

Up until now, many of the characteristics associated with a postfeminist sensitivity can be found in this description. But, whereas in the UK and US this new model was propelled by neo-liberalism and a reaction to feminism, in Spain, it comes more associated with consumerism and an internationalisation of the media.

2.3.3.b. Differences

Whereas postfeminist femininities are somehow articulated in relation to feminism, new Spanish models refer, at least partially, to Francoist traditional femininity. I will now explore four main areas of difference between Anglophone postfeminist models and new Spanish media models: the conceptualisation of beauty, the sexualisation of media femininities, the triumph of individualistic values and its ambiguous engagement with feminism.

During Francoist times, women who stood out were not well regarded. Women were meant to offer a decent and demure appearance; this implied an invisibility incompatible with contemporary understandings of beauty. (Self-consciously) beautiful women meant trouble, and beauty was often associated with the demonised figure of the vamp. Things have

changed considerably since then. A focus on women's bodies is a common element of the representation of women in all media⁵⁰ although some studies have signalled a quantitative decrease since the late 1960s (Sánchez Aranda, 2003: 82).

Nevertheless, the negative associations of beauty have not faded away completely in some mediums. In television serials, extremely beautiful women who are a success in the public sphere are often portrayed as failures in their personal life and as ambitious and unfriendly (Red2Red, 2007; Fernández Soriano, 2001). Therefore, ambition is still a well-regarded characteristic among men but a devious and suspicious attribute for women; this is related, at least partially, to the prevailing media and social separation between the feminine private sphere and a masculine-ruled public sphere. Definitely, this is not a feature exclusive to Spanish media. As mentioned in the previous section, ambitious professional women are often represented as misled in *retreatist* Anglophone narratives, which "stage the choice to arrive at the traditional as 'empowered' and the 'best' option" (Tasker and Negro, 2005: 108). However, if, in Anglophone contexts, this is articulated through a 'return' to their natural spheres, in the Spanish context, it is still associated with the still recent incorporation of women within the public sphere.

Another aspect that Anglophone theorists propose as characteristic is the increasing sexualisation of media representations of women, encompassing the sexualised images of women and what Gill (2007) has identified as the shift from sexual objectification to sexual subjectification.

In Spanish media this is somehow different, and the reasons lie partially in historical particularities. With the arrival of consumerism and the progressive liberalisation of women towards the second half of the 1960s, representations of sexy women started to appear in the media⁵¹ and were

associated with the liberalisation of a sexually repressed society. 'Woman' stood for sex in many representations, but women's sexuality was rendered invisible. The construction of women as sexual objects is still an aspect of contemporary Spanish television programmes⁵² and of advertisements though, for some analysts, it is decreasing (Sánchez Aranda, 2003).

The self-objectification of women and the rise of porno-chic in media representations, a feature Anglophone theorists associate with postfeminist identity, have found some echo in the Spanish media. Torres (2004) observes how, during the 1980s, advertising photography started to emulate some pornographic modes of representation (e.g. the *come-on* and *caught unaware* types of shots). These were used in advertisements that primarily targeted female consumers, encouraging women to identify with these self-objectifying characters (434). In television serials, those women who, aware of their sexual allure, self-objectify themselves in order to achieve their objectives are always negatively portrayed (Red2Red, 2007) although the recent success of serials such as *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* (Grundy Producciones / Telecinco; 2008 – ; Spain), with a porno actress and a brothel madam as two of its empowered protagonists, signals towards a change.

The construction of women as active sexual subjects is still felt as a new tendency in the Spanish media. This became a novel feature – though still framed in romantic discourses – in the discourse of women's magazines from the end of the 1980s (Gallego, 1990: 91-92). It was still felt as a novel feature in television programmes during the early 1990s (Martín Serrano 1995: 95). And Lomas (2005) considers the portrayal of female sexual agency as a positive development of *new* advertising that could break with traditional gender constructions. However, the mechanisms that he and others (Sánchez Aranda et al., 2002: 85-89) identify as

characteristics of this represented female agency, (e.g. the active-aggressive women who jumps upon men, the woman who objectifies men and who jokes and comments upon men's sexual inadequacies), reinforce the idea that representations of female sexual agency have to echo the conventions of the representation of male sexual agency.

Following Marina Castañeda, Lomas (2005) speaks about how a widespread way of perpetuating sexism has been reinforcing and understanding femininity and masculinity as mutually exclusive. The stereotypical way that men and women are represented, as associated with different spheres and adorned with mutually exclusive attributes, perpetuates this sexism. A commonly identified recourse used to break with stereotypical gendered constructions in Spanish media is the reversal of roles and character features in advertising, but it nevertheless leaves the gendered divide untouched.

Individualism, linked to Anglophone societies, capitalism and, ultimately, Protestantism, has also become a new value that characterises new generations. But, not yet naturalised, it is still signalled as a 'foreign' ('internationalising') influence by Royo Vela et al. (2005: 17) in the case of advertisements, and by Plaza (2007) in the case of girls' magazines. Plaza further expands his analysis. He pays attention to the desirable values exalted by these magazines (especially in the Horoscopes section). And two (new) features, associated with the discourse of Protestant individualism, are: the importance of effort in order to achieve your objectives ('your future is in your hands') and the importance of dispassionate balance (2007: 100). And this sense of balance is valued over the 'emotional power' that has stereotypically characterised Mediterranean societies, and especially women in those societies (102).

Sociological studies also point towards a change of attitudes in the new generations that valued individualism more highly, a turn noticeable in the 1990s (Alberdi, Escario, Matas, 2000: 13). As Félix Ortega (1993) points out, this individualism – with an aim of self-fulfillment and self-realisation, of independence and autonomy – is a product of an atomised society (i.e. with the weakening of community and the end of the great narratives that impelled people to get involved in communal objectives). And, in this process, located in the “I”, the corporal referent, the sexualised body, becomes a key element for the formation of identity, reinforcing gender differences (16).

Nevertheless, as studied in previous sections, Spain is still a considerably traditional and communal society. Traditional Spanish culture has been characterised by the centrality of community, and family is still a strong institution today, recurrent in media messages.

Regarding the permeation of feminism within mass media representations, there are few references in Spanish studies. Contesting the opinion of those who argue that feminism has impacted on gender representation in advertisements and has been translated to a feminisation of men, Lomas (2005) mainly detects an androcentric tendency in these advertisements. Although representations of ‘feminised’ men (characterised as sensitive and caring and developing traditional ‘feminine’ roles) are visible today in adverts, they are still few and far between:

Contrarily, what we are witnessing in advertising is the incorporation of a new type of woman that embraces masculine models of behaviour, of symbolisation and of consumerism, and therefore, what prevails is an acceptance of values and lifestyles associated with a masculine symbolic order (ibid.: 270, my translation)⁵³

Royo Vela's content analysis of a sample of printed advertisements from 1999 (2002: 175) backs up Lomas' observations⁵⁴. As Del Moral Pérez (2000: 252) sustains, advertisers shelter behind the fact that feminism is not widely embraced in Spain in order to carry on with representational modes that can be understood as sexist. Irony and the following of conventions are two common arguments used when publicists are questioned about offensive advertising campaigns (Sánchez Aranda, 2003: 88).

2.3.3.c. Towards a tentative conclusion

When speaking about new femininities in the Spanish media and assessing if a postfeminist sensitivity informs them, we should take into account, at least, three important factors: the internationalisation of the media and the globalisation of culture; the more traditional bias of Spanish media and society regarding gender relations; and the peculiar history of Spanish feminism.

First, the internationalisation of the media has implied that 'postfeminist' media products (e.g. Bridget Jones films and books) and media formats (e.g. *Cosmopolitan*) have arrived to Spain, enjoying high popular acceptance. The globalisation of culture, so linked to neo-liberal capitalism, has also laid a homogenising layer over, at least, Western cultures. And media products have recourse to those commonalities. Speaking about how *Cosmopolitan* targets its readers selling a type of lifestyle, Machin and Van Leeuwen (2005) explain how lifestyle has become a powerful marker of identity. Identified by a typified appearance that shows an affiliation with a certain set of values and attitudes, 'lifestyles' have become more powerful as markers of belonging to a specific 'interpretative community':

Lifestyle experimentation has taken place among people for whom occupational and economic roles no longer provide a coherent set of values and for whom identity has come to be generated in the consumption rather than in the production realm (ibid.: 577)

Of course, lifestyle as an identity marker is only available to those who can afford it but, as a represented aspiration or dream, it abounds in multiple sides in Spain, as elsewhere.

In both national and international media texts, representations of 'new women' are often imbued by at least, some features of a postfeminist sensitivity. Nevertheless, when importing international products or formats, they have required significant adaptations in order to succeed in the Spanish context. For example, the Spanish edition of *Cosmopolitan* – an extensively studied case – illustrates these required adaptations. After an unsuccessful attempt to launch a Spanish edition in 1976, *Cosmopolitan* was re-launched as late as 1990; constructing a sexually assertive and confident woman as its preferred addressee (a novelty in the Spanish context), it soon became popular among young women. However, the more serious tone of the magazine, with a less playful and colloquial mode of enunciation than other European editions and with a recurrence of informative articles about women's rights and professional opportunities, shows how its format was adapted to better satisfy its Spanish target audience⁵⁵. Furthermore, while some postfeminist features recur in the Spanish media (e.g. femininity as bodily property), others are scarce, somehow altered, or still appearing as a novelty in Spanish media products (e.g. the cult of individualism).

Secondly, while representations of traditional femininities abound in the Spanish media, these coexist with the proliferation of representations of new femininities. Indubitably, the emphasis on one or the other depends on many factors, such as the media format; for example, as studied in a

previous section, 'community serials' in television have tended to be more traditional regarding gender representations than the 'professional serials'. If it is true that the preference for portraying traditional or modern models depends on the type of media, this cohabitation leads inevitably to media discourses that are more contradictory and varied, and which seem to dilute each other. Furthermore, traditional values (such as the importance given to the community and the family) are still strong in Spain, and they interact with more modern values (such as individualism).

Thirdly, the history of Spanish feminism is unlike that of many other European countries. Unlike the UK, it was never powerful enough to be a referent against which to rebel in the construction of new femininities. Cut short during the Republican years, the women liberation movement (as such) developed late, shyly starting in the mid-1960s and only really taking off with the arrival of democracy. It soon suffered a process of fragmentation that partially weakened it and, during the 1980s, it evolved into an institutional feminism. This led to a moderation of its discourses but also to a popularisation of its basic arguments. For a nuanced analysis, refer to Brooksbank Jones (1997) and Carbayo-Abengózar (2000).

Sociological reports celebrate that, nowadays, a big percentage of Spanish men and, especially, women, are remarkably aware of gender inequality (Alberdi, Escario and Matas, 2000: 79⁵⁶), although the feminist label keeps on being rejected (Brooksbank Jones, 1997: 29; Carbayo-Abengózar, 2000: 120-1). Nevertheless, in the mid-1990s, Brooksbank Jones (1995: 387) warned that whereas the feminist explosion of the 1970s had encouraged the acceptance of many feminist beliefs in society, more radical feminist claims have not enjoyed such a popular acceptance. And Baca (1995: 101) clarified that, whereas the acceptance of feminist ideals

at an abstract level is widespread, this has not yet been translated into concrete changes of the behaviours and roles of men.

Regarding the impact of feminism in the mass media, on one hand, it should be said that institutional feminism has had an impact on media representations. If not always successfully, it has impelled multiple recommendations about what is and is not permissible in media gender representations, and has raised consciousness about the social impact of media images. Governmental concerns about the construction of the female body by the fashion industry are propelling new initiatives such as the changing on the clothing system of sizes to accommodate 'realistic' types of women⁵⁷. On the other hand, media texts do not make direct references to feminism, as is not uncommon in the Anglophone media (e.g. Bridget Jones products).

Due to the scarcity of critical studies of the representations of new femininities in Spanish media, and since this is not the main theme studied, the assessment offered here has necessarily been tentative. Nevertheless, we can conclude that representations of new femininities seem to be articulated more in relation to traditional femininities than as a reaction to feminism, and, though coming close in some aspects to the postfeminist model described, the differences are still relevant. The pervasive association of women with the private sphere and 'feminine' stereotypical attributes point out to a more upfront (and therefore identifiable) sexism than to a 'postfeminist' sexism.

Since sociological and media analyses have highlighted the cohabitation of traditional with new femininities in the Spanish context, I have aimed in this chapter to offer a brief and condensed overview of the main characteristics associated with these types (taking as referents Francoist normative models and postfeminist models). Contemporary Spanish films

have indubitably been more interested in portraying femininities that are new but also still shaped by traditional values, as will be analysed in the next chapters.

3. THE CINEMA OF THE JOVEN CINE ESPAÑOL AND ITS INDUSTRIAL CONTEXT

Let us begin with two simple points regarding the filmic representation of women and the situation of women in the film industry. Firstly, in the 1940s and 1950s, the representation of women was often loaded with a symbolic burden that made Woman stand as a Mother-Patria (e.g. Donapetry, 2006), while, since the late 1960s, the progressive liberalisation of (some aspects of) Spanish culture was cinematographically conveyed by an increasing display of the female body (e.g. Ballesteros, 2001: 179). Secondly, from the beginnings of cinema until 1988, there were only ten women directors in the whole history of Spanish cinema¹.

This situation has changed considerably, especially in recent times, but there are still many constants. Despite the entrance into the film industry of a considerable number of women in increasingly creative roles, they remain in a small minority, and discriminatory attitudes from critics and within the industry can still be detected. Regarding representation, the increase in the number of female protagonists has lead many to speak about a feminisation of contemporary Spanish cinema (e.g. Merchán, 2000?), echoing the presumed feminisation of contemporary culture (e.g. as explained by Freixas, 2008). But a different scenario is described by some content analysis studies (Aguilar, 1998; Arranz, 2008): that there

are less female than male main characters, and sexist constructions of male and female characters still persist.

To assess the contribution of these women filmmakers, this chapter will consider the filmic representational context and the industrial context in which they are immersed. I will first offer a historical overview of the representation of women in Spanish cinema. The following two sections then examine the industrial set-up of the Spanish film industry, and the general characteristics of the work of the JCE filmmakers, with particular attention paid to their treatment of gender issues.

3.1. Brief historical review of the representation of women in Spanish cinema since the 1940s

Highly symbolically charged representations of women have abounded in Spanish cinema. For decades, and regardless of the political bias of the film, 'woman' has often been used as a functional symbol for the 'Patria' and the family, and for temptation and redemption. There are only a few studies that approach Spanish cinema from a gender perspective, and these have especially focused on the cinema of the 1940s-1950s (e.g. Gómez, 2002; Ballesteros, 2007) and of the Transition (e.g. Jordan, 2005²; González Manrique, 2006). The few general histories of Spanish cinema have offered hardly any reflections upon these issues (Castro de Paz, Pérez Perucha and Zunzunegui (eds.), 2005; Gubern et al., 1995); and while Martín-Márquez's book (1999) offers interesting insights, it only addresses specific periods. In this section, I will therefore offer a very general overview of the representation of women in Spanish cinema, though it is approximate and simplistic, for reasons of space, and fragmentary, since that is the nature of the existent studies.

In the 1940s and most of the 1950s, the representations of femininity were more coherent and monolithic than they would be in the following decades. In her study of 1940s cinema, Ballesteros explores the contradictions generated by the low socio-political visibility of real women and the high number of strong female protagonists, especially in the then-popular historical and folkloric genre, which emphasised the symbolic centrality of Woman within the patriotic ideology (2007: 365-9).

As an essential element of fascist iconography, which was especially dominant in this first period of Francoism, 'Woman' was symbolically constructed as a fundamental pillar of Spanishness, alongside other essential elements of the National Heritage like wine and music (ibid.: 370). The Nation, the Family and Society were constructed similarly, creating a hierarchical organisation in which 'woman' was an essential, if essentially subordinated, pillar, charged with the responsibility of keeping Spanish morality intact and the family/nation united. This responsibility entailed a passivity based on the cancellation of both their threatening sexuality and active social participation. Women particularly played this role in the rural and folkloric genres, where they were generally directly responsible when social degeneration occurred, as in *La Aldea Maldita* (Florián Rey, 1942, Spain) and *Surcos* (José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1951, Spain). In the historical genre, which became especially important in the second half of the 1940s, the main characters were often female, symbolising a maternal Patria faced with a threatening situation and responsible for reconciliation, notably of Nationalist and Republican parties, e.g. *Agustina de Aragón* (Juan de Orduña, 1950, Spain).

Malleability and submission to male authority were also prominently portrayed as essential female virtues in other genres featuring women as secondary characters; 'bad' women demanded and sought their objectives, e.g. Amparo in *iHarka!* (Carlos Arévalo, 1941, Spain) whereas

good women, conscious of their subjugated position, supported the 'builders' of the nation and bowed to male authority, e.g. Isabel (Blanca de Silos) in *Raza* (Sáenz de Heredia, 1941, Spain) (Gómez, 2002).

In the 1940s, 'bad women' appeared only as secondary characters. Reduced to a cartoon of sin, they represented a social burden, without consideration of sociological or psychological perspectives (Comas, 2004: 86). By the following decade, however, and especially with the 'cuplé' cycle, the secondary 'bad' woman came to the foreground and became the 'gone astray' woman who could be redeemed through death or marriage.

During these two decades, gender representations were heavily symbolised and therefore pretty one-dimensional. But already during the 1950s, a realistic filmic strand influenced by Italian neorealism took force, enhancing the variety of representation of men and, to a lesser extent, women, thereby introducing more complex discourses about gender. With the passing of time and the advent of capitalism, these came to contradict the Francoist model of femininity. Addressing social problems often experienced by young couples, films such as *El pisito* (Marco Ferreri, 1958, Spain), *La vida por delante* (Fernando Fernán Gómez, 1958, Spain) and *Esa pareja feliz* (Javier Bardem and Luis García Berlanga, 1951, Spain) explored the frustrations and illusions of their characters; although the motivations of these female characters were still to fulfil their 'natural' destiny (marriage and motherhood), their portrayals gained a richness that introduced contradictions. Exceptionally, some films such as *Calle Mayor* (Javier Bardem, 1956, Spain and France) opened a discourse about the constraints and castrating effects of gender discourses – especially for women, but also for men.

With the socio-political and socio-economic changes of the 1960s (analysed in chapter 2), Spanish cinema experienced the upsurge of what have been classified as 'new waves' (albeit necessarily different from their European equivalents): the 'Nuevo Cine Español' and the 'Escuela de Barcelona'. The 'Nuevo Cine Español', associated with 'Castillianness' in contrast with the 'Escuela de Barcelona', dwelled on the frustrations and limitations of youths, who were usually male (e.g. *Nueve Cartas a Berta*, Basilio M. Patino, 1965, Spain). In the cinema of the Escuela de Barcelona, with its more cosmopolitan and experimental aspirations, a model of the 'new woman' gained visibility (e.g. the case of Teresa Gimpera).

The representation of women retained many constants from earlier cinema. The essential features of secondary female characters, in particular, were still drawn according to their position regarding the family and men. Nevertheless, things were changing, as films such as *La tía Tula* (Miguel Picazo, 1964, Spain) with its exploration of the frustrations of a single woman, shows. Popular cinema also experienced changes. 'Liberated' women who moved around, had a job and shared a type of female comradeship appeared in some genres such as the romantic comedy; while the 'natural' destiny of their lives remained the same (marriage, children), their behaviours were now less constrained (Triana Toribio, 2003: 76-77).

Despite these changes, many strands of popular cinema (e.g. the incipient horror genre) maintained an openly conservative gendered discourse. Sexual allusions started to proliferate in these popular genres. One of these genres, the Hispanic sexy comedy (or 'sleazy comedy' as Jordan labels it, 2006) reached a high level of production and has been especially studied. Since the late 1960s, the 'sleazy comedy' became a shop-window for the display of the female body, albeit still not completely naked. Following a clearly identifiable formula, these comedies have a sexually

frustrated male protagonist (generally small and unattractive, as typified by the actor Alfredo Landa) who constitutes the apex of a sex triangle, with the other two vertices being a whore and a virgin. Lost in a sea of sexual stimuli, this male character feels pulled between the tempting but corrupting allure of the attractive foreign beauty, who is liberal and complaisant, and the morally superior Spanish woman who, while resistant of his sexual advances, is able to gain him back with her wit and righteousness. The symbolic structure of this type of cinema does not do much to hide its conservative ideology and the apparent social anxieties of the time. As Ballesteros (2001) explains, this cinema:

is a reflection – adopting a comic tone – of the situation of this pre-transitional society: of the tension between relief and repression, between relaxation and continence, between catholic morality and an eroticism transformed into a commodity (179; my translation)³

These tensions and 'sub-genres' did not disappear with the arrival of democracy, and were still strong – with important modifications that included the proliferation of female full-nakedness – during the 70s and early 80s. They continued until, in 1983, the elected P.S.O.E. government implemented the Law Miró, which, among other things, aimed to finish off with these sub-genres that were considered an embarrassing stain on the renovated image of a progressive Spain.

Next to this 'symptomatic' commercial cinema, other more respectable trends also addressed transitional tensions between tradition and modernity. With democracy, filmmakers focused upon subjects and social groups that had not hitherto been portrayed, e.g. young drug addicts and petty criminals in the delinquency genre, and homosexuals – beyond caricature – in the cinema of Almodóvar and Eloy de la Iglesia. In this context, issues related to the reconstruction of gender models and relations became a central concern, and films addressed issues like the crises of masculinity, femininity, marriage and the family⁴.

The feminist movement had strengthened since the 1960s, developing problematically within oppositional and underground Leftist groups⁵, and had been one of the factors that encouraged the upcoming changes in gender relations. Several films dwelled on the contradictions faced by many 'progressive' men. Though ready to acknowledge the changing reality, these new men nonetheless found it difficult to adapt their attitude accordingly and renounce their privileges. Cinematically, this crisis was often problematically symbolised by sexually dysfunctional male characters, contrasted with depictions of women in control of their feelings and sexuality (Estrada, 2006). For the Left and the Right, sexuality thus became a battle horse with which to convey ideas about gender relations, while adding a spicy factor that aided the commercial success of the film. This emphasis on sexual representations has been identified as a constant feature that became an identifying aspect of Post-Francoist Spanish cinema abroad (Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, 1998: 112; Ballesteros, 2001: 179).

While the legal framework was being changed, granting long-awaited rights for women, everyday societal practices had not changed as quickly, and still reinforced traditional gender models. This clash created a feeling of disorientation for women, that was explored in filmic representations (Ballesteros, 2001:15). Films such as *¿Qué hace una chica como tú en un lugar como este?* (Fernando Colomo, 1978, Spain) portray female characters that are still following many of the precepts of traditional femininity whilst expressing the frustrations that those traditional models created, such as the lack of responsibility of men in relation with children.

At the same time that women's issues gained cinematic visibility, three women started their directorial careers in cinema: Pilar Miró with *La petición* (1976, Spain) and *Gary Cooper, que estás en los cielos* (1980,

Spain), Cecilia Bartolomé with *Vámonos, Bárbara* (1978, Spain) and two-parts documentary, co-directed with her brother, *Después de...* (1983, Spain) and Josefina Molina with *Vera, un cuento cruel* (1973, Spain) and *Función de noche* (1981, Spain)⁶.

With hardly any female representation in the industry in positions of responsibility, their access into the industry did not come easily. Despite her extended experience as a television director and a teacher at the Escuela Oficial de Cine (experiences shared with Molina), Miró had many difficulties finding funding for her first project, because of her gender (Martín-Márquez, 1999: 148-50).

Primarily focused on female characters, these filmmakers show a clear concern with female issues, reflecting the transitional situation of women and aiming to deconstruct stereotypes (e.g. Zecchi, 2004: 321; Ballesteros, 2001: 30-31). As Ballesteros (2001) highlights regarding Miró and Molina, their first films can clearly be seen to adopt feminine aesthetic models that portray the situation of "a generation of women within the cultural, social and political context of transitional Spain" (31, my translation)⁷. Adopting a testimonial stance, they aim to speak to a generation of women. In *Función de noche*, for example, Lola Herrera claims that this is an urgent need, and she constantly identifies her experience as socio-historically located, common to all the women of her generation.

Breaking with classical narrative conventions, they often experiment with filmic form, e.g. by using unsynchronised sound in some sequences of *Gary Cooper*, and adopt genres frames that were not seen as typically feminine, e.g. *Después de...* and *Función de noche* are documentaries, while *Vera* and *La petición* are historical literary adaptations (Vernon, 2002: 206).

Regarding subject matter, a will to break with previous representations can also be detected. As Martín-Márquez points out in relation to *Función de noche*, these films are concerned with themes that had been addressed by U.S. feminist filmmakers in the 1960s and 1970s, such as:

what our sexuality is, how a mother can hate and need and love their children, how we can tell a boss or a lover or a sexist fool off, how 'it's not our fault', and where our personal struggles are located in and contribute to and are supported by the larger forces that define our historical period' (1999: 206, quoting Julia Lesage)

Despite these characteristics, which bring their films under the banner of feminism, these directors' relationship with feminism was more than ambiguous. Excepting Cecilia Bartolomé, who openly declared the feminist intention of her first film (Parrondo Coppel, 2001: 34-5), Miró and Molina rejected the labelling of their work as feminist⁸.

Despite the temporal distance, these films share thematic concerns with contemporary cinema directed by women. Nevertheless, the differences are significant. In the cinema of the Transition, the model against which the female characters rebelled was clearly defined, i.e. the Francoist model of femininity, as represented by, for example, Andrea's mother in *Gary Cooper...* Moreover, the female characters were 'normative' women: white, middle-class and heterosexual. These are characteristics that distinguish the work of these two generations of filmmakers.

3.2. The Spanish film-industry in the 1990s: institutional and industrial context

If in any context, the institutional industrial organisation reveals what model of cinema is being encouraged and discouraged, this is especially relevant in the case of the Spanish film industry, which historically has been tightly linked with governmental patronage and censorship⁹. In this

section, I will offer an overview of the Spanish film industry seeking the answer to the following questions: what has been the institutional set up since the 1990s, and what types of cinema have been institutionally encouraged? How has the close-knit relation between cinema and television come into being, and how it has affected Spanish cinema formally and thematically? And has the industrial crisis now passed and, if so, what factors have encouraged this?

3.2.1. Institutional and industrial settings¹⁰

When Pilar Miró became the General Director of cinema in 1982, she was determined to undertake a complete makeover of the industry. One of her main objectives was to terminate with the aforementioned embarrassing and reactionary sub-genres (e.g. horror and sexy comedy). Anticipating incorporation into the E.E.C. (1986), she saw the chance to regenerate the Spanish film industry and to encourage the development of an exportable "cinema of quality", within the auteur cinema tradition, that could represent the New Spain abroad. She established a system of subsidies that aimed to support this cinema, often favouring established directors. Her political model influenced the production of a standardised type of cinema of a historical or literary inspiration, often recuperating those writers ostracised during Francoism¹¹. However, these films were not usually attractive for Spanish audiences and so ended up being almost 100% state subsidised. Since the model privileged a system of advanced subsidies, to be returned once the film reached a threshold of benefits, and gave considerable independence to the director, the financial sustainability of the films was less of an issue. The commercial failure of many of these costly films, e.g. *Tiempo de Silencio* (Vicente Aranda, 1986, Spain), brought the treasury of the General Direction near bankruptcy¹². Miró's model was in use until the so-called Semprún¹³ decree in 1989,

which tried to reform the law in order to prevent abuses and corruption¹⁴ that had proliferated hitherto.

In 1989, the Semprún decree hesitantly started a shift – later intensified, especially by a 1997 Law introduced by the P.P. – that privileged objective criteria, e.g. advance subsidies for new filmmakers¹⁵, over the previous, more subjective criteria, e.g. the advance subsidies for films of 'special quality', and that reduced advance subsidies whilst enhancing benefits such as tax relief and other rewards based on box office receipts. These reforms were also linked to other changes:

During the twelve years that go from the Miró Law to the arrival of the PP to power, two protectionist models are in use: the first centred around the figure of the director as artist and creator (propelled by Miró [...]); the second highlighting the role of the producer as entrepreneur (since the moment that Semprún occupied the above mentioned Ministry [of Culture]) (Cerdán and Pena, 2005: 256; my translation)¹⁶

For Vallés Copeiro, the 1990s were indeed a time of deep industrial changes, of equivalent impact and magnitude to those required during the transition from silent movies to talkies. These changes were of three main types: political-economic, with increasing liberalisation creating tension between E.U. and U.S. policies; political-technological, with the development of new and competing multi-media platforms, which became linked with different political groups; and political-cultural, with a re-conceptualisation of cinema as national and technological boundaries blurred, raising problematic questions such as what Spanish cinema is within a multi-national state and within the EU, and what distinguishes cinema from other visual cultural products (2000: 231 and ff.).

Central to this industrial restructuring was the 1993 meeting of the G.A.T.T.¹⁷ when the U.S. exerted considerable pressure for a liberalisation of the circulation of American movies, which clashed with E.U. attempts to

protect European cinema(s). Carmen Alborch, the then minister of culture, began legal reform in order to address three need: adaptation to the demands of increasing liberalisation, creation of protective measures, and satisfaction of criteria required by the then-new EU¹⁸. By the mid-1990s, the Spanish film industry was just starting to recover from the crisis that spanned decades and that, if not prevented, was likely to persist in the area of production due to the weight of American cinema¹⁹. Therefore, while facing the unstoppable process of liberalisation, it was important to contain its impact.

The changes undertaken by Carmen Alborch mainly affected the funding and quota systems. With Alborch, the system of advance subsidies was scratched almost completely, except with new filmmakers and experimental cinema (Riambau, 2003: 59; Pena, 2002: 44-5). This arrangement was left untouched after the election of the PP²⁰ and is still in place today, albeit with a few new purposes, such as supporting projects that take measures to grant gender equality in the area of direction and scriptwriting²¹.

The protectionist quota regulations have also shown a tendency towards increasing liberalisation and a deregulated market, with a continuous reduction in the percentage of screening shares reserved for Spanish and (since 1989) E.U. films²². Simultaneously, while reducing the screening share, there is now more leniency regarding quota infringement, with a significant reduction on the fines since the mid-1990s²³. In 1999, the quota of distribution that had been regulated through the dubbing licences and in use for 40 years, was scratched altogether (Vallés Copeiro, 2000: 248-249).

As Hopewell argued, one of the main problems of the Spanish film industry is that it has always had a small market (1991: 116). Since the

beginning of the decade, however, with E.U. membership and stronger relations with Latin America²⁴, Spain has signed numerous agreements for co-productions in order to open up the market. The politics of co-production are supported by a legislation that provides economic incentives. As a consequence, the definition of Spanish cinema(s) has become blurred, with the concession of the Spanish nationality certificates to films located in a foreign context, spoken in a foreign language and performed by foreign actors, such as *Mi vida sin mí* and *The Ninth Gate* (Roman Polanski, 1999, France, Spain and USA)²⁵.

These developments, combined with the increasing investment from the newly created multi-media platforms, show how government and cinema institutions have encouraged a type of cinema that is less dependent on public funding and more commercially successful. With more emphasis on marketing and profits, the definition of cinema as culture, which was explicit in the 1983 and 1989 regulations, has weakened, in favour of definitions of cinema as industry and as entertainment²⁶. And this understanding has affected the way Spanish cinema is now being commercialised, with an increase in films marketed as blockbusters and commodities (Quintana, 2005: 13-14). Furthermore, it has also influenced the attitude of some filmmakers who, following Almodóvar, have adopted stylistically distinctive media personae and become heavily involved in the promotion of their own films (Benet, 2005: 68; in relation to Coixet, Triana-Toribio, 2006).

3.2.2. The relationship between television and cinema

As governmental financial support decreased through the 1990s, relations between the film and television industries tightened up. In 1990, the I.C.A.A.²⁷ (Instituto de la Cinematografía y de la Artes Audiovisuales) sought the collaboration of the hitherto sole television company R.T.V.E.²⁸,

which committed to regular investments in support of national cinemas. This first agreement did not come into practice, as R.T.V.E. withdraw from its commitment due to financial difficulties that were expected to worsen with the opening of three new television channels. Nevertheless, towards the middle of the decade and against the background of the digital war between different multi-media platforms, several television channels agreed to finance Spanish cinema (for further analysis see Cerdán and Pena, 2005: 267-269; Riambau, 2003: 60-61). These agreements were reinforced by new legislations²⁹. Television companies have since become the main financial source for Spanish cinema (Vallés Copeiro, 2000: 262-4) and, it is now almost obligatory to rely upon their collaboration in order to proceed with a film project (Benet, 2005: 74)³⁰.

Beyond legal obligations, the need to offer competitive programming has fuelled investment. Instead of buying antenna rights for a film, the television channels benefit from getting involved in its production, thereby securing the premiere broadcast and creating positive publicity.

Beyond the financial dependency of cinema on television, the relation between the two has, over the years, extended further, affecting among other aspects cinematic style and methods of promotion. The invisible boundary that separated television and cinema has become blurred both at the legislative level³¹ and regarding the stylistic characteristics that once distinguished them:

The limitations that television has enforced on the audiovisual include the type of narrations that are accepted in their mainstream channels; the number of possible settings for each product; and impositions, for example, on the directors of photography, which have to narrow down the variety of options that they would had considered when conceiving a product for big screen (Cerdán and Pena, 2005: 269; my translation)³²

Following David and Kristin Thompson, Benet (2005: 74-76) lists the televisual stylistic characteristics that he believes have modified the style of contemporary cinema. He concentrates on narrative modifications, such as simplification through repetition of well known and marketable formulas, more redundant and descriptive dialogues that enable distracted viewing (i.e. punctuated by advertisement breaks and other interruptions), and changes to editing and *mise-en-scène* to prioritise the spoken word (to maximise the effect of the dialogue). Although he recognises that cinema needs to pay attention to television models in order to survive within a market economy, he thinks that it should aim to create 'marks of distinction' through the creation of new formulas that try to transcend the televisual mode. Instead, he laments, contemporary Spanish cinema has resorted to including sensationalist and spectacular scenes as its mark of distinction (also explored in his previous article, 2001: 53).

Television is also a publicity platform for Spanish cinema, especially benefiting the films of the JCE. Cerdán and Pena suggest that the relationship between cinema and television has partially relieved the industrial crisis of cinema:

[I]n the last years, the most important transformation of Spanish cinema has mainly been a change in its social image (...) and this [change] has been propped by specific publicity campaigns and by institutional discourses. And this brings us again to the television universe: the television is the audiovisual medium in which most recent generations of film spectators have been formed, its screens are the space where their audiovisual culture has been created, with its own star-system, its genre varieties, its formal propositions, etc.; furthermore, the television has become the perfect publicity springboard for [publicising] films about to be premiered and setting in motion institutional discourses (2005: 271, my translation)³³

This close relationship between television, which is more commercially oriented, and cinema, which can have a more artistic orientation and used to be seen as comparatively independent from market and political

demands, is often denounced. Díez Puertas speaks about the control that the elected political party exerts over television; for him, Spain “lacks a plural, diverse and competitive audiovisual market” (2003: 77)³⁴. With cinema’s increasing dependency on multi-media platforms, cinema has become yet another “medium used to broadcast, rather than the Spanish culture, the ideas, the values and the beliefs of the ruling party” (ibid.: 78, my translations)³⁵. Cinema’s dependency on television is only ‘dumbing it down’ also because it gives television channels input, including veto, in ‘creative’ decisions, forcing cinema to conform to demands to be more marketable and popular. Pena remarks that:

[I]n contemporary Spanish cinema, the figure of the ‘creator’ is not that of a director, a scriptwriter or a producer. No, the one who imposes his/her taste, who takes many of the aesthetic and narrative decisions – especially the latest, we will see – is now an analyst of scripts who works for the marketing department of a television company (2002: 45; my translation)³⁶

3.2.3. The end of the crisis?

Despite the increased free time of Spaniards, cinema started to decline in popularity towards the mid 1960s, joining in a crisis that was simultaneously affecting other European countries (Palacios, 2005: 398). This crisis, which especially affected Spanish films, resulted from a combination of factors such the increasing importance of the television and of other free-time activities³⁷. At the beginning of the 1990s, the situation reached a point of stability that signalled towards some recovering. In this decade, Spanish film production grew from an average of fifty movies per year in the first half of the decade to ninety-one movies per year in the second half (Vallés Copeiro, 2000: 261).

There are various reasons for this recovery³⁸: general economic growth and development of world trade; changes in legislation; development of

the video market; the upsurge of JCE filmmakers that address new themes and adopt new styles that connect better with the main audience group (young, middle class urbanites experienced in the different forms of visual culture³⁹); and increasing demand, partially arising from a restructuring of the exhibition sector with multi-screen cinemas located in shopping centres. Beyond all this, Vallés Copeiro argues that it is the involvement of the multi-media platforms in the production of cinema what has been the determinant factor (2000: 262-3). Cerdán and Pena (2005: 271) concur, but with an important nuance: the collaboration with these platforms has been instrumental in changing the 'social image' of Spanish cinema, creating a favourable context for positive reception. In this respect, the recently created *Academia de las Artes y de las Ciencias Cinematográficas* (the Spanish Academy of Cinema) with its Goya awards (first celebrated in 1987) has further contributed to this rebranding of Spanish cinema (e.g. Pena, 2002)

The debate about the crisis remains open. While celebratory accounts that follow the 'official' line of the popular media can easily be found, many cautious voices remain. Vallés Copeiro (2000: 264 and ff.) remarks that although the crisis has partly been relieved in the sectors of production and exhibition, it remains acute in the distribution sector. Dominated by American majors, which came to have a direct control of this sector in Spain during the 1990s (Ansola, 2003), the tendency has been towards intensive exploitation of blockbusters; backed-up by costly marketing campaigns, multiple copies are distributed when the films are launched, hitting many screens simultaneously. This tendency makes it more difficult for small, independent films to find channels of distribution. Regarding the increase in the audience shares for Spanish cinema (around 13.3% between 1996-2003, against the 7.1% in the nadir year of 1994)⁴⁰, both Fernández Blanco (1998) and Pena (2002) highlight the mirage effect produced by the big success of a few titles that account most of that

percentage. The *Cine español: Tendencias 1996-2003* report, for example, shows how the top ten Spanish films have taken an average 60% of yearly box office receipts in that period (ICAA, 2004?: 12-15). And many of the films that have occupied the top positions in audience distribution tables have been directed by filmmakers that started during the 1990s, which has added to the feeling of optimism about the new generations.

In summary, the 1990s were a bustling period of development for Spanish cinema. With the legislative changes and the subsequent development of tight links with television, the cinema that has been encouraged has been a cinema of entertainment. The changes in the exhibition sector, which have encouraged a change in the popular consumption of cinema (integrated in the entertainment 'pack' that the shopping centres offer)⁴¹, and in sources of funding, now mainly television channels, have significantly impacted on Spanish cinema. In the production sector and in contrast with the 1980s, there is a growing awareness of the commercial reach of films, and of their posterior broadcast on television (with its narrative and formal limitations). Regarding distribution, self-promotion has become very important, sometimes transforming filmmakers into media figures. And it is the filmmakers of the JCE who seem to have benefited most from these changes.

3.3. The cinema of a new generation of filmmakers

As indicated in the previous section, the publicity campaigns that have helped to rebrand the image of Spanish cinema have mainly focused on the work of the JCE. When celebrations about the end of the crisis began in the mid-1990s, a large share of the credit went to the work of these filmmakers, who were praised for connecting well with new audiences (Jordan, 2000b: 191). With the success of films like *El día de la bestia*

non-specialised media turned its attention to the 'new' Spanish cinema (Ansola González, 2003?: 3). The commercial and critical success of the emerging new filmmakers was recognised and aided at several important Festivals, especially at the Goyas.

Since the mid 1980s, there has been a progressive increase in the percentage of debutants: between 1984 and 1989, 15.8% of the total production was films directed by debutants (Herederó, 1999: 11), increasing to 25% between 1990 and 1998 (Herederó, 1999: 12) and reaching 36.5% between 2000 and 2006 (Arranz, 2008: n.p.). This progression accelerated during the second half of the 1990s (Herederó and Santamarina, 2002: 51).

Several factors may have impacted on this increase, such as the changes in the social image of Spanish cinema, encouraged by the media reception of the work of the first new filmmakers of the JCE, not to mention the general recuperation of the industry. But it does not seem incidental that many newcomers started their careers towards the mid 1990s, when the funding legislation changed, restricting funding to the work of new filmmakers and experimental films. Since the Spanish industry was accustomed to reliance on governmental funding, attention turned to those who were liable to receive it. The proliferation of festivals and organisations in support of new cinema is a further factor. For example, Camí-Vela has remarked on the significant role that the association of New Producers (ANP, founded in 1994) has played in the support and promotion of new filmmakers (2005: 26). The role of CIMA, a recently established association of Spanish women working in audiovisual media and cinema, in supporting female filmmakers has still to be seen.

The cinema of the 1990s has been defined by its diversity which contrasts with the perception of 1980s cinema as 'standardised'; diversity has been

understood as the answer to the crisis (as in the opinions expressed in a round table of industry representatives, gathered by Rodriguez-Saona, 1999). Triana-Toribio remarks on how this appeal to diversity has been used as a market strategy to increase the commercial potential of the national cinema(s); diversity has become the tag line to define Spanish cinema since it works as “the banner under which any market trend or any future change can be accommodated” (2003: 145). This discourse intensified with the election of the P.P., when their drive towards liberalisation made considerations of the marketability of cinema more necessary. The arrival of a considerable number of women filmmakers has further reinforced this discourse, as has the distribution of Goya awards in the 1990s, evenly rewarding new and more established filmmakers, social and auteur cinema, and more commercial products (ibid.: 143-147). An important aspect of this diversity is its acceptability, embracing as it does the postmodern taste for ‘anything goes’.

Art-Auteur cinema versus commercial genre cinema was a common model for thinking about cinema in the 1960s and 1970s, when the two were more markedly distinct⁴², but is inadequate for studying contemporary cinema (e.g. Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, 1998: 61; Allison and Jordan, 2005: 31-2). Nevertheless, the Spanish critical establishment cannot entirely relinquish this distinction, and still tends to praise social and auteur cinema over ‘commercial cinema’, as remarked by Triana Toribio (2003: 144), and feels lost when considering works that do not clearly fall in either of these categories as Benet (2005) argues in relation to Enrique Urbizu’s work.

This distinction is embedded within other dichotomies, between cinema as culture – associated with Europe and socially or politically ‘compromised’ cinema – and cinema as entertainment, associated with American genre cinema. The ‘renovation’ of Spanish cinema – under clear pressure to be

more commercial – has entailed a mixing and adapting of popular and traditional Spanish cinematic trends (e.g. costumbrismo⁴³) with American popular culture, genres and filmic styles (e.g. Heredero, 1999; Allison and Jordan, 2005: 32). However, for many critics (e.g. Quintana, 2001 and 2005; Benet, 2001 and 2005; Pena, 2002) this approach to tradition is superficial, in that it keeps the stylistic aspects but not the critical spirit, and this mixture only creates 'pastiche'. Furthermore, the work of the JCE has often been accused of lacking realism and socio-political commitment, which, within Spanish historiography, is often considered an essential ingredient of any worthy cinema. Therefore, the JCE cinema is thought to be missing all those characteristics traditionally associated with Spanish (and, in general, European) cinema.

3.3.1. Cinematic tendencies

In her book about how Spanish cinema has been defined, or 'constructed' by authoritative bodies, Triana Toribio (2003: 143 and ff.) identifies three 'sanctioned' contemporary trends and their respective critical receptions. Firstly, the revival of a transformed type of populist cinema that she calls 'new vulgarities', plus the persistence of two traditional and more well-reputed strands: social realism and 'Europeanised' auteur cinema. To these three trends, I propose a further two that are strongly informed by a postmodern sensitivity and that have gained popular recognition: the cinema of deception and the puzzle film. These categories are neither inclusive of all contemporary Spanish films nor mutually exclusive, since some films, like Amenábar's, can be understood as both as auteur and cinema of deception.

Unlike the 1980s cinema encouraged by Miró's legislation, European-inspired auteur cinema has become less relevant and aspirational for this

'new generation'. Few JCE directors have been accepted as auteurs in the Spanish context. As Triana Toribio argues regarding the rise of 'new vulgarities', this results from changes in the way we conceive Spanish cinema:

Cinema had not overcome its chronic crises and the most commercial solution was to return to the formula that had traditionally proved popular: genre cinema and, particularly, comedy. The rejection of cinema as a 'cultural product' in favour of cinema as 'commercial goods' came hand in hand with a rejection of the Europeanization of the national cinema, since 'European' is usually shorthand for 'art cinema' (2003: 152)

Although some of these filmmakers maintain significant creative control and an auteurist working approach, they generally reject this label because it is associated with a type of aloof cinema that disregards commercial interests (Heredero, 2003). This is not to say there are not still directors who aim to be auteurs (e.g. Alex de la Iglesia or Isabel Coixet), rather that the clear-cut divide between *qualité* and commercial cinema has disappeared. To continue using the contested auteur approach, we would need to reformulate its theories, perhaps thinking more in terms of the type of auteurism displayed by some American Independent filmmakers (e.g. Jim Jarmush) who have indeed been influential for many of these new directors (e.g. Marta Ballebò-Coll and Mariano Barroso).

Another trend that has enjoyed significant critical and industrial acceptance is social realist or social cinema; a cinema considered appropriate for international exportation that is regularly sanctioned by the industry through the Goya awards (Triana Toribio, 2003: 156). As stated previously, many critics have felt that contemporary Spanish cinema, especially that of these newcomers, has lost its edge in moving away from realism (e.g. Heredero and Santamarina, 2002: 84; Heredero, 1999: 19; Benet, 2001). For some, even the films that have been forwarded as social realist, e.g. most of Fernando León's and Icíar

Bollaín's films, are only realist superficially (Quintana, 2005 and 2001; and Pena, 2002). Quintana (2005) argues that the 'timid realism' of these films is representative of the type of 'realist' cinema that is institutionally accepted. This type of 'realist' film tends to: be excessively attached to the script (not letting the world 'interfere' with unpredicted events during shooting); have a melodramatic approach, with an emotive focus on the characters' feelings (thereby making harsh issues easier to digest); offer 'reality effects' (e.g. by depicting contemporary customs or social issues) rather than a serious exploration of reality; and include actors and actresses who, if always professionals, correspond to the typology of the 'common man and woman' by lacking the beauty and sophistication of the star (2005: 16-23).

Although I recognise some of the characteristics that Quintana identifies, his expectations of realist cinema seem a bit shortsighted, considering the Spanish and Western context. As Pena argues (2002: 50), realist approaches in the history of Spanish cinema have regularly entailed some use of metaphorical or genre treatment (e.g. the use of black humour style in Rafael Azcona's scripts) that are far from the documentary-type style that Quintana defends. Furthermore, as Samantha Lay's study of British cinema shows (2002: Chapter 6), all European social realist cinemas have changed since the 1990s; with a diversification of the filmic visual style away from the documentary look, a dramatic and personalised approach to the social maladies that affect the characters (sometimes implying that the individual is responsible for remedying the situation situation), and an approach that concentrates on the problems more than on their origins or solutions.

Following Raymond Williams, Lay discusses the four central characteristics of what realist cinema, as opposed to a cinema of 'reality effects', should include: a secular reflection about what is represented (without recourse

to transcendental explanations); an interest in contemporary life and issues; an intention to include marginalised sectors of society (to cast light on what remains hidden); and, often, a politically engaged attitude from the filmmaker (who intends to offer a specific 'message' about society) (2002: 8 and ff.). Furthermore, she establishes a further distinction between 'realist' cinema and 'social realist' cinema. The key distinguishing characteristics that identify the latter are an interest in exploring contentious social issues (which change with the times) and an exploration about how the location (a rural ghost-town, a post industrial city, etc.) constructs the characters' identities⁴⁴. On this basis, I would argue, against Quintana, that films like *Chevrolet* (Javier Maqua, 1997, Spain) and *La suerte dormida* show that realism is still an important current in Spanish cinema, while films like *Flores de otro mundo* (Icía Bollaín, 1999, Spain), *Heroína* (Gerardo Herrero, 2005, Spain) and *Los lunes al sol* (Fernando León, 2002, Spain, France and Italy) are good examples of social realist films.

An important aspect of many purportedly realist films is their unprecedented exploration of issues that affect women from a feminine perspectives (though not always very appropriately). For example, *Princesas* (Fernando León, 2005, Spain) portrays the psycho-social situation of prostitutes, while *Sólo mía* (Javier Balaguer, 2001, Spain) and *Te doy mis ojos* explore domestic violence.

What Triana Toribio (2003) has labelled 'new vulgarities' is a type of popular cinema that adopts many of the conventions of 1950s and 1960s comedy "del esperpento"⁴⁵, though without its critical stance and with references to 1970s subgenres. This is an eclectic cinema that adapts and juxtaposes different visual styles and gender conventions – generally comedy, with others such as road-movies in the case of *Airbag* (Juanma Bajo Ulloa, 1997, Spain, Germany and Portugal) – and that abounds in

intertextual references (e.g. popular American or/and Spanish television series). This eclecticism can be understood as a mechanism for making this type of cinema attractive simultaneously to national and international audiences.

Blatantly sexist, homophobic and racist, and adopting grotesque humour, this type of cinema suggests a “shameless, and deliberate affront to the liberal middle-class sensibilities of democratic Europe” (Triana-Toribio, 2004: 149); moreover, it appears to react against the ‘purifying project’ initiated by Miró (Triana-Toribio, 2003: 152-3). What Quintana controversially identifies as a common feature of Spanish cinema is indubitably applicable to this trend: its exploitation and deactivation of transgressive elements – especially but not only violence – that thereby become normalised and stripped of their subversive connotations (2001: 15).

The reactionary subtext of many of these films is so blatant that it qualifies less as postmodern irony than as blunt nostalgia. Allison and Jordan see this trend as part of a general conservative cultural reaction:

[T]he hedonism, excessive sexual freedoms and far too permeable moral and sexual boundaries of the 1980s forms part of a wider backlash against the ultra-modernizing, ‘progre’, pro-European ethos associated with Socialist Spain (1982-96) (2005: 111)

As Jordan highlights, these are not the type of Spanish films that are expected abroad, where Spanish cinema tends “to be perceived in terms of European art cinema, a ‘foreign language’ product, invariably subtitled, and sold on the basis of its ‘auteurist’ credentials” (2000: 71). Exportation of this type of cinema, as in the case of *Torrente: el brazo tonto de la ley* (Santiago Segura, 1998, Spain) can only embarrass the Spanish critical establishment, which feels ashamed of this unsophisticated humour and philistinism, whilst overlooking the reactionary sexism and racism of these

films (Triana Toribio, 2004: 155)⁴⁶. Films such as *Airbag*, *Año Mariano* (Karra Elejalde and Guillermo Guillén Cuervo, 2000, Spain) and *Isi & Disi* (José María de la Peña, 2004) perfectly exemplify this trend, which may not straightforwardly include many films but which has gained high visibility through the success of some⁴⁷, and has re-opened ways to anti-politically correct films such as *XXL* (Julio Sánchez Valdés, 2004, Spain). Unsurprisingly, titles directed by women cannot be found in the list of 'new vulgarities'.

As I mentioned earlier, two further postmodern trends, common to western cinemas, can be detected: the cinema of deception and the puzzle cinema. These trends, which started in Spain towards the end of the 1990s and gained impetus thereafter, require another type of spectatorial attitude, often a playful one, and invite the collaboration of the spectator in a constant process of narrative reconstruction. These are films that demonstrate reflexivity in different ways; formally in the first group and regarding character and thematic construction in the second. With the 'new vulgarities', these trends respond, in different degrees, to what Moix has identified as postmodern cinematic features: relativisation of ethical and moral standards, narrative fragmentation that breaks with causality and the rules of tempo-spatial logic, and spectacularisation of violence and narrative 'masculinisation' (Siles Ojeda, 2003: n.p.). These three trends demonstrate the characteristic hybridity of postmodernity and typically, are directed by JCE filmmakers.

The Cinema of deception is a type of 'baroque' cinema that presents a game to the spectator, playing with his/her expectations and perceptions by twisting and complicating the narrative lines. It is self-referential in the sense that filmic language is stressed, breaking the effect of verisimilitude, and because it generally aims less to reflect upon 'reality' than to entice the spectator into the riddle. This sophisticated use of filmic language

results from a visually saturated culture that distrusts reality. Although these mechanisms are not new (e.g. many Nouvelle Vague films adopt them), their extensive exploitation within a single film, aimed less at Art-house than a multi-screen mall setting, is novel. Recently, there have been many films of this type, especially from Hollywood, with *The Sixth Sense* (M. Night Shyamalan, 1999, USA) or *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000, USA) being emblematic. They often require that the film be re-read during or after viewing. In Spain, this trend is typified by Amenábar's films, *Abre los ojos* (1998, Spain and Italy) and *Los otros* (2001, Spain, USA, France and Italy), although there have been others, such as *Rewind* (Nicolás Muñoz, 1999, Spain), *Fausto 5.0* (La Fura dels Baus, 2001, Spain) or the recent *Concursante* (Rodrigo Cortés, 2007, Spain)⁴⁸.

Apart from the 'hard' line of this type of cinema, the use of strategies of deception has become relatively common in much contemporary cinema. Indeed, Quintana identifies this as a common characteristic of the cinema of the 'new filmmakers' that emphasises the deceptive nature of the image and playfully aims to trick the spectator, echoing the general postmodern or post-structuralist distrust of reality (2001:14). For example, in an early scene of *Hola, ¿estás sola?* (Icíar Bollaín, 1995, Spain), the two protagonists – young and 'alternative' women who have run away from home – force the door of a car and enter it. With a juxtaposition of short close-ups and medium shots, we are invited to fill in the unknown and believe that we are watching the two girls stealing a car, but soon we are shown that they are travelling in a car on a transporter-train.

Another type of postmodern cinema that has become more common during the 2000s is the puzzle film. Exploring the commonalities and differences among the different characters (which brings into play questions of group and individual identity), this type of film tends to adopt multi-stranded narratives where different perspectives and approaches

towards, for example, womanhood e.g. *Nosotras*, disenchantment with life, e.g. *Malas temporadas* (Manuel Martín Cuenca, 2005, Spain), or changing relationships, e.g. *Flores de otro mundo*, are presented side by side. This type of film can be seen as a variety of the *choral film* that aims to offer a whole picture about the habits and behaviours of a community⁴⁹. The difference, however, lies in the way the stories are articulated: the different narrative strands are mostly self-contained, but they offer different perspectives upon the same subject.

These films tend to have a 'programmatic' flare to them, and highlight the multiplicity of perspectives, the commonalities and differences between people, the relativity of moral judgements and/or the artificiality (as opposed to the naturality) of social customs. Zumalde (2008) laments that this type of film is a product of the multiculturalism and relativism that have 'contaminated' contemporary thought.⁵⁰

Magnolia (Paul Thomas Anderson, 1999, USA), *Crash* (Paul Haggis, 2004, USA and Germany) and the pioneering films of Robert Altman, are emblematic of this trend. In Spain, where 'choral films' have always been common, this formula has, with more modest intentions than in Hollywood, become quite popular. Blending it with some elements of *Costumbrismo*, films like *Tapas* (José Corbacho and Juan Cruz, 2005, Spain, Argentina and Mexico), *Pudor* (Tristán Ulloa and David Ulloa, 2007, Spain) and *La Soledad* adapt this formula.

Focusing on genre cinema now, a quick look at the situation of contemporary Spanish cinema reveals a reinvigoration of comedy, which had stalled in the 1980s under Miró's politics of cinema *qualité*, and of other genres rare in the Spanish context such as the horror and the thriller. In times of crisis, the recourse to genres shows an interest in adapting marketable formulas.

Comedies are always an easy commercial recourse for producers, and their numbers increased during the 1990s (Jordan, 2000: 184-8); indeed, many new filmmakers started their careers with a comedy (e.g. García Serrano, and Gómez Pereira). Traditional comedy formulas such as the *revista* (variety shows) or *costumbrista* comedies – though adapted to the contemporary context – still have an influence on contemporary Spanish cinema (Cerdán and Pena, 2005: 301). Since comedies often play with the 'war of sexes' or with relationship entanglements, many display suspicious gender politics, where rape is condoned as a silly mishap, as in *Salsa rosa* (Manuel Gómez Pereira, 1992, Spain), and men and women – always very stereotypically masculine and feminine – are eternally doomed to mutual incomprehension, as in *Hasta aquí hemos llegado* (Yolanda García, 2002, Spain).

Among other genres, it is worth noting the reinvigoration of the thriller (including varieties such as film noir, psychological thrillers and the 'delinquency' genre⁵¹), which has acquired more importance in Spanish cinema and literature since the Transition (Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, 1998: 89-92). This genre has enjoyed a thorough renovation, disengaging itself from previous Spanish conventions whilst becoming more abstract and stylised, and closer to its American equivalents (Hereadero and Santamarina, 2002a: 71).

This has always been a traditionally masculine genre, aimed at a male target audience, with male protagonists set in a 'male' world of brothels, drugs and car races. Even when the male protagonists are substituted for female ones, as in *Todo por la pasta* (Enrique Urbizu, 1991, Spain), the films follow these conventions, although there have been interesting variations that portray autonomous female protagonists, such as *Sé quién eres* (Patricia Ferreira, 2000, Spain and Argentina)⁵² and *Nadie hablará de*

nosotras cuando hayamos muerto (Agustín Díaz Yanes, 1995, Spain and France).

3.3.2. Themes, characters and style

In the introduction to her collection of essays, Isolina Ballesteros summarises many of the characteristics of contemporary Spanish cinema:

[I]t is marked by the eclecticism of postmodernity, committed to voice [the perspectives of] marginal groups and to dissolve the boundaries that separate the centre and the margins, elitist and popular art; all in a society that since late-Francoism, and almost without noticing, has joined in the transnational market of late-capitalist consumerism and [a society] in which cultural representations are inevitably associated with a globalising omnipresence of the image and the saturation of the mass media⁵³ (2001: 13; my translation)

Although she applies these characteristics to Post-Francoist cinema, they have clearly come to the fore during the 1990s. In the essays that she dedicates to 1990s cinema, she addresses four central thematic concerns that relate to socio-cultural issues: the spectacularisation of female sexuality; racism and xenophobia (the 'Other'); the lifestyle of (troubled violent) young people, and the search for a family and/or origin.

These are aspects central to the formation and reformulation of identity. Indeed, questions of identity have been central to Post-Francoist culture and cinema, occupying many studies (e.g. Morgan-Tamasunas and Jordan, 1998). But if, from the Transition until the early 1990s, the focus was more on historical explorations of national or communal identity, this has been displaced by a preference for tales of personal identity crisis. This is yet another sign of the 'individualistic' tendency of this cinema. For many critics (e.g. Heredero, 1999), it reveals a lack of interest regarding historical continuity and the past that is prevalent amongst the JCE's

filmmakers, perhaps because most of them were only children when Franco died.

Their cinema is mostly set in the present and often focused on character construction. Especially concerned with 'young' people (youth being a category that has broadened in the last two decades to describe a stance towards life), their characters are often portrayed as individualistic and stuck in their lives, less because of material obstacles than their lack of motivation and clear objectives⁵⁴. Stuck and drifting, they are often constructed either as pastiches of popular culture referents, possessed by a sort of impulsive urge that pushes them towards unplanned and often violent or self-destructive action (e.g. Calpasoro's films) (Benet, 2001:48-49)⁵⁵, or as characters trapped in self-reflexivity feeling paralyzed by hesitation, fears and contradictions, around which many of the dialogues developed, e.g. *Martín (Hache)* (Adolfo Aristarain, 1997, Spain and Argentina) and *La torre de Suso* (Tomás Fernández, 2007, Spain)⁵⁶. Whereas most of the characters in Francoist cinema aimed to fit into society, JCE films give prominence to young people living marginal lifestyles, following a tendency started in the Transition and epitomised by Almodóvar.

Related to such characters, themes like the search for an origin, linked to a need to belong (to a community or a real or alternative family), and the re-drafting of rules that regulate relationships with the 'Other' (e.g. immigrants) feature prominently. These themes are addressed in chapter five and seven of the thesis, where they will be further explored.

As Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas argue, this is a cinema imbued with contemporary values and cultural preoccupations (1998: 52); a cinema that shows a clear "interest in the everyday problems and concerns of a younger generation, of different class backgrounds, set adrift from

mainstream society, looking to their marginal lifestyles and subcultures for emotional support and family structures" (Jordan, 2000: 75). The realist impulse of their cinema is normally dissolved within genre frameworks and lacks a clear didactic intention (Hereadero, 1999: 19-21).

When Jo Labanyi wrote about the postmodern direction that Post-Francoist Spanish culture was taking, she argued for the adoption of a new analytical perspective that emphasises the hybridity of the cultural products rather than searching for national specificities. For Labanyi:

The notion of acculturation, whereby foreign cultural influence is seen as an alien imposition, has been replaced by that of transculturation, whereby the indigenous cultures respond to hegemonic imported cultural models by creating new hybrid forms that are neither local nor foreign but both (1995: 397)

This approach has clearly become necessary for understanding the JCE. When studying their cinema, many Spanish critics are interested in establishing continuities and discontinuities with past filmic trends, emphasizing the eclecticism of the JCE style and the increasing distance that separates it from traditional forms (e.g. Quintana, 2001-2005; and Pena, 2002). They highlight the hybridity of audiovisual codes that refer to and adopt the conventions of video-clips, adverts and other popular cultural forms (e.g. Hereadero, 1999: 24); the interbreeding of conventions from different genres, such as comedy and horror in *El día de la bestia*, and from different cultures (e.g. Jordan, 2000: 75-6); the constant referentiality of JCE films encourages the spectator's complicity but, when taken to the extreme, reduces their representational universe to a cleverly and often ironically articulated list of quotes⁵⁷. Yet what many see as stultifying elements are "inevitably associated with the globalising omnipresence of the image and the saturation of the mass media" (Ballesteros, 2001: 13) and with the transculturation processes to which Labany referred. This hybridity is far from being exclusive to cinema and

has also affected television and advertising; the audio-visual saturation of our culture creates continuity between the different visual 'genres' and lays a homogenising blanket over them all.

Although most JCE films keep traditional narrative forms, these are mixed with popular culture elements that, even if were originally 'alien' to Spain, have now become part of Spanish popular culture (e.g. visual conventions from comics).

As indicated earlier, this cinema moves away from the literary filmic model that had followed many 1980s films and erases the distinction between auteur and commercial cinema⁵⁸. Some of these directors have adopted a confrontational attitude towards critics (who, from their perspective, defended a type of auteur cinema they were not interested in) and a conciliatory attitude towards audiences. Unlike the inconsiderate attitude of auteur directors towards audiences, these directors are conscious of audience tastes, and this leads them, Quintana argues, to adapt their style to reach the public, emulating on occasion television formulae (Quintana, 2005: 12-13).

3.3.3. Portraying women

A common grievance of MJCE filmmakers is that film critics adopt an androcentric stance towards their films, aiming to identify a female perspective (and, thereby, mark their work as 'other than') whilst ignoring the possibility that male filmmakers may imprint a male sensibility in their films (which are thereby constructed as 'normal' and 'universal'). As an example of this situation, Triana Toribio (2004: 155) pointed out how *Torrente: el brazo tonto de la ley* received numerous negative reviews, seeing it as an embarrassment, though this critical rejection ignored the

gender politics that it embraced. The scarcity of perspectives that display gender awareness is also common in academia, leaving aside a few examples that adopt a gender perspective (e.g. Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, 1998: chapter 3). Aguilar's study of the period 1990-1995 (1998) and the study directed by Arranz (2008), focused on the period 2000-2006, are two key studies to approach this issue, although the latter is still a work on progress⁵⁹. None of the existing studies focus exclusively on the work of the JCE directors (although a large proportion of the films considered are directed by them), so this overview applies to contemporary Spanish cinema in general. In this section, I will focus especially on the representation of women in the most popular films of the last years, normally directed by men.

In order to give an account of the representation of gender in contemporary Spanish cinema, there are several aspects that are often taken into account, such as narrative agency and the representation of gender relationships.

Since the subjectivities and perspectives of the protagonists are usually privileged, the question of who drives the narrative is obviously an important issue. In the last two decades, there has been an increase in the number of female leading characters and in the variety of their roles (including the variety of genres in which they appear) (Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, 1990: 125-6). In the consulted studies, around 35% of protagonists are female⁶⁰. In comparison with the 25% given by an equivalent study of popular American cinema⁶¹ (Wloszczyna and DeBarros, 2002: n.p.), this figure does not seem that poor. Nevertheless, this comparison needs qualifying since, if we were to select only highly popular Spanish films, they would be mainly films directed by men, and, as shown by the Arranz's study (2008), directors largely direct films featuring protagonists of their own sex: nearly 80% of the (highly-popular) films

directed by men, have male leads, while nearly 70% of the films directed by women (often with modest audience ranges), have female leads⁶².

But how are secondary and leading female characters represented? Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas highlight optimistically that there are ever more female characters, often in the role of the 'new' woman: "socially, economically and sexually independent" (1998: 128) and also, it might be added, young, professional, middle-class and white. In my opinion, this independence is usually only a background feature of the character (e.g. she is economically independent, and may work, but this is hinted) rather than something constitutive of the character's identity and manifested in her practices.

Other studies reveal a similar pattern. Aguilar (1998: 67-8) and Heredero (1999: 20) demonstrate that the two most common occupations for female characters are prostitute and housewife (with nun and student, in Heredero's study). Moreover, beyond occupation, other definitive features of female characters can undermine their ostensible independence, such as their motivations within the narrative and their social persona within the film.

In Aguilar's sample (1998: 54), only 14% of the female characters are defined and motivated by features other than being daughters, girlfriends, wives or, especially, lovers of the male characters. In Arranz's study (2008: n.p.), only 37.9% of the female characters portrayed in male-directed films moved the narrative forward with their decisions and initiative, and only 10.3% intervene in the resolution of conflicts. Furthermore, few of these characters are represented making decisions beyond love-sex issues: only 13.8%. Although it is true that romantic or sexual motivations are common narrative motors in many filmic narratives, these percentages surely would not emerge from an equivalent analysis of

male characters. Beyond their relationships with men, female characters have a limited social horizon in films directed by men: female characters interact amongst themselves in 38% of the films, positively only 27.6% of the time (ibid.).

These data contrast with the construction of female characters by women directors: 92.3% of their female characters show initiative, 76.9% of the time beyond love-sex issues, in the resolution of conflicts; while 77% of female characters interact amongst themselves, positively 61.5% of the time (ibid.).

A re-elaboration of myths associated with the representation of women (e.g. woman as spectacle, woman as mystery, etc.) is also quite commonly found in Spanish cinema. For example, the tendency to portray women as prostitutes or housewives can be understood as a subtle re-enactment of the mythic Whore / Madonna dichotomy of tempting, wild and potentially destructive sexuality versus protective and angelical asexuality. *Amantes* (Vicente Aranda, 1991, Spain), *Salsa rosa* and *El Lobo* (Miguel Courtois, 2004, Spain)⁶³ are good examples of this. The dichotomy is also reformulated in *Abre los ojos*, with Nawja Nimri as the femme-fatale that causes the destruction of the male protagonist and the angelic, 'dreamt' Penélope Cruz as his psychological comfort; a dichotomy reinforced by their characterisation and scenic presentation.

When making a film under industrial pressure, it is easy to lapse into discriminatory representational conventions, especially with secondary characters, as some women filmmakers have hinted (e.g. González Sindé)⁶⁴.

In conclusion, many popular Spanish films represent women following the representational conventions described above. They are mainly films

directed by men. Between 1996 and 2003, statistics show that films featuring in the 'top ten Spanish films of the year' lists (the type analysed, in another chronological period, by Arranz) attracted around 57% of the total spectators of Spanish cinema (ICAA, 2004?: 15). Of these eighty films, only four were directed by women.

To sum up overall, since the 1990s Spanish cinema has undergone many changes. On one hand, the industry has been deeply re-structured in this decade, having to adapt to new political, economic and industrial circumstances (e.g. the increasing dependency on television, and European laws). On the other hand, a considerable number of new (and visible) directors have started their career. Capitalising on the success of a few of their films, the media (and also the same industry) have constructed them as the answer to the endemic crisis of Spanish cinema. Common media mottos to explain and construct their appeal are their novelty and diversity. And this media message has been reinforced by the substantial and unprecedented incorporation of a large number of women filmmakers. This has also served accounts of the 'feminisation of Spanish cinema' which celebrate that, on one hand, women are more empowered in this industry and, on the other hand, that representations of women are more fair and more numerous. But, as the previous section proves, that is not exactly the case. The next chapter will focus on the work of the MJCE, on their position within the industry, and on the applicability of labels such as feminine and feminist to their production.

4. WOMEN FILMMAKERS IN CONTEMPORARY SPANISH CINEMA

The media has welcomed the incorporation of women filmmakers into the Spanish film industry. Participating in discursive trends that celebrate the diversity of cinema and the growing equality of Spanish society (an essential element of democratic discourses), many media accounts have emphasised their 'difference' (i.e. as women filmmakers) (e.g. Villena, 1997; Muñoz, 1995; Castilla, 1995).

Nevertheless, a quick overview of their work shows that the MJCE films share many similarities with the work of their male counterparts, regarding certain themes (e.g. re-thinking the family), the proliferation of certain genres (e.g. comedy) and the difficulty of clearly labelling their cinema (i.e. as commercial or auteur cinema). Furthermore, they all are affected by industrial pressures that modify the type of cinema they are able to produce. Nevertheless, considered as a group the MJCE films do indeed also present some differences to the bulk of male cinema, most notably in their way of representing women.

In this chapter, I will explore these issues. In direct correlation with the previous chapter, the first and second sections explore their location within the Spanish film industry and the recurrent characteristics found in their works. In a third section, I will assess whether or not we can speak about a feminine point of view in their works, defining what lays behind this label; furthermore, I will ask if their films (and their media personae) can be interpreted as feminist.

4.1. Position within the industry

From the beginning of cinema until 1988, a shockingly low number of women directed feature films. Several names are generally recognised, however, although this list should be considered provisional¹: Helena Cortesina in the early silent period; Rosario Pi in the Republican years; Ana Mariscal and Margarita Alexandre in the 50s; Pilar Miró, Cecilia Bartolomé and Josefina Molina in the period of the Transition and still working in the 1990s; plus six others during the 1980s: Isabel Mulá, Virginia Nunes, Pilar Távora, Cristina Andreu, Isabel Coixet and Ana Díez.

Since then, and especially in the second half of the 1990s, there has been an important incorporation, with almost fifty women directing their first feature-film in the period studied (1990-2005). Following Arranz's study (2008), the percentage of women directors entering the industry is comparatively low, with only 17.08% of films directed by debutant women directors between 1990 and 1998; moreover, this has since decreased to 10.04%². Since 2007, the enforcement of positive discrimination measures aims to lay the bases for a better future for women working in the industry³.

In this section, I will address several questions regarding their incorporation and subsequent position within the industry, advancing some tentative answers to the following questions: what have been the favourable factors for the incorporation of women directors? Do women experience more difficulties to launch a project? Is the Spanish film industry a discriminatory work environment?

The first question can be partially answered by the same arguments that explain the general increase of new filmmakers entering the industry during the 1990s, as explained in the previous chapter. Even so, few

women filmmakers had entered the industry in other periods of renovation, such as during the 1980s, and therefore another factors should be taken into account. Filmmakers such as Bollaín and Lesmes (in Camí-Vela, 2005: 52 and 108) explain this incorporation as a (logical) result of the socio-economic changes that have impelled more women into work (including in areas that previously were male preserves) and higher education. Beyond these general socio-cultural changes, other two favouring factors may have also aided their incorporation, as the directors themselves suggest.

Firstly, the importance of visible precedents is a factor to consider. On several occasions, some of these filmmakers have spoken about their insecurities to author filmic narratives. This echoes the media discursive tendency to focus on the common insecurity of professional women (discussed in chapter two); but, significantly, in the MJCE declarations, they have highlighted the social sources of this insecurity, arguing, for example, that the 'soft Spanish sexism' has had an impact in women's self-esteem⁴. In this regard, the existence of previous referents plays an important role, offering encouragement (c.f. Chus Gutiérrez and Dolores Payás, Camí-Vela, 2005: 89 and 125). Thus, it is not surprising that, at least on two occasions, they have dedicated their films – Marta Balletbò-Coll in *Sévigne: Júlia Berkowitz* (2004, Spain) – and their writings – Rosa Vergés in Heredero (ed., 1998) – to the most visible female director of Spanish cinema, Pilar Miró⁵.

Secondly, another factor is the general increase of women working in other areas within the film industry. With this incorporation, the industry has presumably become less of a male environment. Still, as some filmmakers have declared (e.g. Manana Rodríguez and Silvia Munt, Camí-Vela, 2005: 177 and 353), the Spanish film industry (which is relatively small, and where those at the top tend to know each other) remains a

very male industry, especially in executive positions. At least, from the perspective of some of these filmmakers, this is experienced, if not as a problem, as a determinant of women's situation in the industry.

Although these factors may have partially facilitated women's incorporation within the industry, then, it has been neither easy nor quick and is still paved with difficulties. Many experts have highlighted their slow advance within the audiovisual industries; many of them worked as scriptwriters, casting directors, actresses, and/or, overwhelmingly, as short filmmakers, before directing their first film (e.g. Martín-Márquez, 1999: 279; Camí-Vela, 2005: 21-23; Monterde, 1998: 16-19). This has been their main route into directing and remains, for many, their regular job while directing is generally a side activity (e.g. Dolores Payás, Daniela Fejerman and Ángeles González Sindé as scriptwriters)⁶.

In relation to their male counterparts, it is surprising that many of these women first directed in their thirties or their forties after developing a solid trajectory (the youngest of the debutant women from the 1990s was older than almost all of the male debutants). For Monterde, this is a sign that, before undertaking their first directorial role, these women have had to extensively prove their capabilities in order to overcome ingrained prejudices (1998: 17).

But if debuting as directors is a difficult task, the biggest challenge is to keep on making films. Of the fifty-three directors listed, only fourteen have established careers as directors with three or more films premiered⁷. A few enjoy considerable critical and commercial success nationally and, sometimes, internationally (e.g. Icíar Bollaín, Isabel Coixet, Gracia Querejeta). But, overwhelmingly, most of them have not been able to find financial backing for their second or third project⁸. However, some of

those that started their career in the last years of the period studied are likely to go back behind the cameras.

Confronted with this information and the fact that few of their films reach the 'most watched films of the year' lists, it seems clear that, for women, the difficulties in accessing a directorial role and, even more importantly, in developing a consistent and successful career as directors are greater than they are for men. Unless we argue for a lack of quality or dedication, two factors that appear too simplistic to be considered, this raises the question of whether or not the Spanish film industry remains a space where discriminatory practices prevail.

Arguing against this hypothesis, we could adduced that these discriminatory practices are not specific to the film industry but to the discriminatory dynamics of Spanish society in general and of audiovisual industries in particular. Since the demands that media industries put on their workers have hindered the possibility of making a professional career compatible with family life (which is still a woman's preserve, especially in Spain), some of these directors may have 'chosen' to desert this line of work or to space out their projects⁹. A second counter-argument could be that the MJCE films are simply not commercially orientated enough and therefore, are unattractive to investors. These are definitely factors to consider, but they still cannot adequately account for the complexity of this situation.

A factor that may explain the position of disadvantage from which women directors depart when undergoing a project is that they are granted very low budgets; lower than the average and not only, as is common practice, for their first projects (Monterde, 1998: 22). This is an aspect that several directors have denounced, attributing it, on some occasions, to the 'distrust' with which many producers approach their work. As Chus

Gutiérrez declared: "It takes us twice as long to get financing and, on top of that, we only get a fourth of what male directors get. The producers have a subtle lack of confidence in us" (Silió, 19-06-2007, my translation)¹⁰.

Nevertheless, this situation is not exclusive to Spanish filmmakers. In a recent article about the work of women filmmakers in the West, Kaplan remarks how women filmmaker experience much more difficulties than men in accessing funding and resources, with the situation nowadays being more challenging for women than it was back in the 1960s. Furthermore, the pressures to be commercially successful while original have increased considerably, hindering both men and women's careers (2003: 27).

Observing the type of projects that the MJCE have generally developed (with no big stars, with narratives generally located in the present or the recent past, with a single location within Spanish territory, no special effects, and so on), it is clear that they have neither enjoyed nor (arguably) 'needed' big budgets for the realisation of their films (although they often complain about the tight time schedule they have, due to a lack of resources). But the consequences associated with a low budget spring beyond the 'quality' production of a film and relate to the complicated organisation of the Spanish film industry.

Ansola (2003), among others, highlights a lack of promotional publicity as the main problem of Spanish films. With up to 50% of the large production budget of an American film allocated for publicity, the Spanish equivalent – with much tighter budgets – is 12% ,with many films allocated far less (Casado, Merodio and Jimenez, 2007: 394). Their competitive potential in the Spanish market, which is saturated with American films and due to the progressive shortening of the exhibition

periods that makes publicity a fundamental element in the success or failure of a film (*ibid.*), is thus quite low.

A low budget has a further consequence in relation with the distribution of a film. Since the 1990s, the pressure of American *majors* has worsened the situation of the Spanish distribution sector, so that, if no money from the production budget is destined to promote a film, distribution companies become more reluctant to accept it or to invest much money to ensure a broad distribution. This was what Nieves Maroto, one of the distributors from Alta Films (an important distribution company of Spanish films), declared in her speech at the I CIMA encounter¹¹. Maroto – as a distributor – identified two problems with MJCE projects: the generally low production budget of their films and their reluctance to develop ‘big projects’.

Regarding the first aspect, Maroto emphasised the financial risk attached to distributing a film that has hardly received any promotion in its production stage. Facing a costly marketing campaign to launch the film, the distribution company generally only receives the benefits from the short-life span of a film’s theatrical exhibition, since the rights of video and international distribution are normally held by other companies¹². Maroto remarked that 100.000 spectators¹³ constitutes the benchmark that a distributor considers as minimal to count a film as commercially profitable, and emphasised that many of the MJCE films do not reach this minimum.

The information available in the films database at the Ministry of Culture, if accurate, confirms that few of their films reach this benchmark¹⁴. Still, this is a circular argument: are their films commercially unsuccessful because they do not receive promotional support due to their low budgets? Or do their films receive low budgets because there is not much faith that they will be commercially successful? Definitely, the women

directors that have openly declared that producers do not trust women's projects enough are two 'safe' bets: Icíar Bollaín¹⁵ and Chus Gutiérrez. Furthermore, many Spanish films, including those that academics and critics have turned their attention to and those directed by male directors with a 'constant' trajectory, do not attract the 100.000 spectators (for example, several films of Mariano Barroso and Daniel Calpalsoro and all the films of the critically praised Marc Recha).

The second fault that Nieves Maroto identified in the cinema of these directors is their lack of ambition; using her words, they do not aim to make 'big films'. Rather than passing a judgement on the quality of these women's films, Maroto was speaking about commercially unambitious films that do not target large audiences¹⁶.

Observing the type of cinema that these filmmakers make (developed in the following section), I cannot but agree with Maroto. Their films tend to develop traditional narratives, far from the more commercially attractive post-modern baroque style of Amenábar or Almodóvar. They are often qualified as 'cinema of characters', 'cine *costumbrista*' or / and as 'cine *intimista*'; qualifications that are often associated with a lack of commerciality¹⁷. Many of them cannot be easily classified using a 'genre' system and they usually neither rely upon big stars nor include spectacular 'attraction' sequences of sexual or violent content.

Furthermore, with 1) changes in exhibition practices (e.g. with cinema-going becoming primarily an element of the entertainment 'package' of the shopping mall experience, and with the progressive closing down of art houses theatres), 2) the increasing tendency among production companies to invest in fewer and more 'ambitious' projects, and 3) the pressure exerted from television companies (which are often essential sources of financing and promotion, and tend to demand narratives that

maintain a certain accelerated rhythm and certain 'formal' characteristics), the type of cinema that these filmmakers and many other Spanish male directors make might become an 'endangered species', at least within commercial circuits¹⁸.

In conclusion, it emerges from these data that many of the MJCE directors do indeed occupy a marginal industrial position. Despite working within commercial circuits, they tend to carry out very personal and often commercially uncompromising projects, usually written and directed by themselves and addressing non-commercial subject matters (e.g. immigration¹⁹). Notwithstanding the weight of discriminatory practices in the low budgets granted to their films, the reason why they generally occupy a 'marginalised' position may also be associated with the market-driven demands that are shaping Spanish cinema. This reasoning must, however, remain tentative, without a more thorough research into the industrial dynamics of the film industry.

4. 2. Characteristics of their work

In this next section, I will be focusing on recurrent features of the MJCE films, establishing direct comparisons with the general tendencies of the JCE group and focusing on the same themes explored in the previous chapter: the stylistic characteristics of the MJCE films, their dominant themes and their character constructions.

4.2.1. Stylistic characteristics

Of the five common trends of contemporary Spanish cinema described in the previous chapter, the MJCE directors only tend to adopt the most classical trends (i.e. auteur cinema and social realism) and only a few of

their films follow the post-modern strands. *Lluvia en los zapatos* (María Ripoll, 1998, Spain and France) and *Utopía* (María Ripoll, 2003, Spain and France) count as mild examples of a cinema of deception, while *Nosotras*, *El grito en el cielo* (Dunia Ayaso and Félix Sabroso, 1998, Spain) and a few others count as puzzle films.

Some of these directors clearly have 'authorial' aspirations (e.g. Gracia Querejeta, Isabel Coixet) and others, if eclectically, engage with social realism (e.g. some of the films of Icíar Bollaín and the latest films of Chus Gutiérrez). But many follow the (more humble) Spanish cinematic tradition of 'costumbrismo', within loose genre frames. Their films indeed have often been labelled as 'intimistas' (Camí-Vela, 2000: 29) and 'costumbristas'.

For Cerdán and Pena (2005), 'costumbrismo' is a trend that has received a extreme 'make-over' in the JCE cinema, transferring its focus from a nostalgic representation of a reality that is about to disappear (e.g. Edgar Neville's films) to the habits of contemporary youth. When analysing this change, these authors remark that:

This new manifestation of 'costumbrismo' emphasizes the quotidian, and it is not by chance that three of the films that more clearly adopt this new tendency have been directed by women: *Hola, ¿estás sola?* [...], *Tengo una casa* [...], and *Retrato de mujer con hombre al fondo* [...]. These three films opt for a minimal story in which the interaction and the psychology of the characters – shown through their behavioural habits within the parameters of normality – constitutes the foundation of the narratives (298; my translation)²⁰

In my opinion, genre classification, using 'Hollywood genres', is difficult to apply to many Spanish films and, indeed, many MJCE films are not easily classified. For example, *Tengo una casa* (Mónica Laguna, 1996) and *Hola, ¿estás sola?* have been qualified as both 'comedies' and 'road movies',

while falling uncomfortably in either category. Adopting a different stance, Zecchi (2004: 327-8) remarks that the main MJCE genres are: the comedy (especially concerned with ways of dealing with men and role-reversal situations), the thriller (with resolute female protagonists), the musical (engaging with a traditionally Spanish genre, the 'cine folklórico', whilst subverting the role of women within it) and historical films (with female protagonists).

It is true that a significant number of MJCE films could be classified as comedies and that many, especially those from the first half of the 1990s, adopt the sex-war theme. Some examples are *Boom, Boom* (Rosa Vergés, 1990, Spain and Belgium), *Puede ser divertido* (Azucena Rodríguez, 1995, Spain), *Cómo ser mujer y no morir en el intento* (Ana Belén, 1991, Spain), *Pon un hombre en tu vida* (Eva Lesmes, 1996, Spain) and *Muere, mi vida* (Mar Targarona, 1996, Spain). There are only a few thrillers such as *Sé quién eres*, *El alquimista impaciente* (Patricia Ferreira, 2002, Spain and Argentina), *Palabras encadenadas* (Laura Mañá, 2003, Spain), *Utopía* and *Todo está oscuro* (Ana Díez, 1997, Spain and Portugal). From my perspective, there are no musicals since the two examples Zecchi sets *La Moños* (Mireia Ros, 1996, Spain) and *Alma gitana* (Chus Gutiérrez, 1995, Spain) include some musical attractions but do not follow the conventions of the genre. And, although several films look back at the recent past, they are not historical films as such, with the exception of Isabel Coixet's rarity, *A los que aman* (1998, Spain and France), since they lack the main attractions of this genre: an evocative *mise-en-scène* and a nostalgic approach.

Díaz López and Cerdán (2002) offer a more accurate explanation when they assert that many of the MJCE films could be classified as eclectic approaches to comedy and melodrama that articulate the narratives around an exploration of domesticity and quotidian habits (85-87).

Indeed, these are recurrent features of the MJCE films, as is an interest in creating an emotional map of the characters. For example, *Héctor* (Gracia Querejeta, 2004, Spain) narrates the story of a teenager, Héctor (Nilo Mur), who, after the sudden and obscure death of his mother, moves in with his aunt Tere (Adriana Ozores) and her family; primarily narrated from Tere's point of view, the film is constantly punctuated by domestic details that flesh out the characters' developing relationships (e.g. the smoking on the balcony, that becomes a sort of space for intimacy between the two main characters).

4.2.2. Characters and themes

As Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas argue, there has been an increase in female protagonists in contemporary Spanish cinema (1998: 125), with female characters often conforming to the 'modern woman' prototype (professional and / or economically independent; sexually active, etc.) (129-130).

In the MJCE films, this type of protagonist is the most commonly found. They typically portray women who run their own lives and make decisions beyond love related issues (something still uncommon in Spanish cinema). Though in a minority, there are a considerable number of films that also portray male protagonists, normally sharing the leading roles with a female character, e.g. *Poniente* (Chus Gutiérrez, 2002, Spain) and *Sé quién eres*. Secondary male characters tend to be unidimensionally characterised, often as unreconstructed men, for example in *Puede ser divertido* and in *Me llamo Sara* (Dolores Payás, 1998, Spain).

As is usual in JCE films, the MJCE films from the 1990s often focus on young characters. However, there are also a large number of middle-aged

female characters, aged 30 plus, which enables the exploration of different issues. Unlike the many JCE films that focus on marginal characters, these films often focus on female characters who stand for 'average' women (often white and middle-class); beyond the type of characters portrayed, this relates to how the characters are portrayed, always within the parameters of 'normality'. For example, Patricia's character (Lisete Mejía) from *Flores de otro mundo* and Perla (Mariola Fuentes) from *Poniente* are two characters that occupy marginal social positions; Patricia is a Dominican immigrant who has married a rural man and settled in a traditional small village, and Perla, a secondary character, is a single mother who lives in a rural Andalusian area and works as a stripper. But, unlike many films that portray sex workers or women immigrants, these characters are fleshed out with details of their 'normal' life (cooking, relaxing with friends, etc.) and, although they are marked by the marginal positions they inhabit, they are not reduced to them.

Although their professional activities are not often foregrounded, the 'role-model' to which these characters aim or conform is the economically independent woman. In many cases, the protagonists are urban middle-class professionals (e.g. *Me llamo Sara; Boom, Boom*), and to a lesser extent, women of modest but independent means (e.g. adopting 'alternative' life-styles in *Tengo una casa* or *Hola, ¿estás sola?*). Those who are economically dependent explicitly aspire to change this (e.g. *Héctor, Puede ser divertido, Te doy mis ojos*), and sometimes live this dependency and the consequences that developed from it with extreme anguish, such as Andrea (Mercedes Sampietro) in *Nosotras* and Lola (Adriana Ozores) in *El palo* (Eva Lesmes, 2001, Spain).

In many of MJCE films, the independent protagonists are free from material restraints, enjoying an autonomy that, despite being grounded in their social and/or professional status, is rarely directly associated with it.

As Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas remark, this is a common feature in the representation of female characters in Spanish cinema, facilitating the development of narratives that focus on:

the psychological and philosophical problems associated with a range of female experiences, but [with the downside that] they fail to address the more pragmatic obstacles to female autonomy, which are the reality for the vast majority of women (1998: 129-130)

A smaller number of MJCE films consider the limitations imposed by the time constraints, status anxieties and / or financial difficulties that their protagonists experience. For example, *Cómo ser mujer y no morir en el intento* and *Insomnio* reflect upon the difficulties of balancing work and private life, the former portraying the lack of collaboration from men, and the latter emphasizing the anxieties that the overworked Eva (Cristina Marcos) feels about being a bad mother. And several films touch on the financial difficulties experienced by their protagonists (e.g. *La Moños*, *Nosotras*) but none foreground it as much as *El palo*. In this comedy, the group of female characters find themselves in desperate financial difficulties that compel some of them to engage in unsatisfactory relationships; as an alternative, they plan a bank robbery.

In spite of their autonomy, many of these characters struggle with the psychological and social positions that they occupy, reflecting on the social and sometimes media representations that compel women to adopt certain roles and perspectives (e.g. in relation with heterosexual relationships) (Selva, 1998: 38).

As in Hollywood, there has been a general increase in contemporary Spanish films that portray groups of women friends. As Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas argue, although in some of these films the importance of friendship comes to replace the focus on romance:

(m)ost commonly, the cinematic representation of female complicity is represented within the context of comedy and continues to focus on female strategies for dealing with various products of the social legacy of patriarchy such as the intransigence or unreliability of unreconstructed men. (1998: 133)

The MJCE films follow this description, although with a change on emphasis: in most of the films that address this issue, friendship displaces the importance of romance. The emphasis on female bonding as a means of dealing with unreconstructed men is mainly found in their production from the 1990s (e.g. *Boom, Boom, Pon un hombre en tu vida*); but more commonly, friendship is portrayed as refuge for the characters in films where relationships are only a secondary subject, for example *Hola, ¿estás sola?* and *El Calentito* (Chus Gutiérrez, 2005, Spain). In films that foreground female friendship, it is not uncommon that they use an ensemble protagonist cast (e.g. *El palo, Muere, mi vida*). The MJCE focus on positive relationships between women, that Santamarina (1998: 30-1) and others have also highlighted, contrasts with the general tendency of contemporary Spanish cinema (as described in section 3.3.3.).

Many of the MJCE construct their narratives through the interaction of women from different social status, lifestyles, etc, creating counter-points among them. In this way, they often contest unified images of femininity. As Gámez Fuentes points out, in relation to literature, the cohabitation of different voices allows "the revision of female 'positionings'", with several characters that:

interact with the perspectives and visions of the protagonists, creating among them a subjective and historical landscape that recognises and revalorises the importance of particularised differences for the feminine narrative project that gathers them, without, however, exploiting them [e.g. for sanctioning the protagonist's stance]. (2004: 177, my translation)²¹

There are, of course, exceptions in which one point of view is the one that is overwhelmingly approved within the narrative (e.g. *Puede ser*

divertido). A few films include traditional mothers, constructed in relation to Francoism, in a 'caricaturesque' way and therefore they lose the chance of exploring the contradictions of traditional femininities (e.g. *Nosotras, Te doy mis ojos*). As Gámez Fuentes (2004) has highlighted, this is extendable to other contemporary films such as *El pájaro de la felicidad* (Pilar Miró, 1993, Spain) and *Todo sobre mi madre* (Pedro Almodóvar, 1999, Spain and France) (43).

As Selva (1998: 43-44) also argues, what links many of the MJCE films is their will to break with myths that have constructed *Woman*. They achieve what De Lauretis (1997) argued, in 1988, women's cinema should aim to do, not to deconstruct but to reconstruct narrative and visual pleasure, in order to produce the conditions of visibility of women. Women's cinema should enact the contradiction between *women* as socio-historical subjects and *Woman* as a sign constructed through and within Western culture. This is something that, she argued in another article, some films such as *Giulietta degli spiriti* (Federico Fellini, 1965, Italy and France) have been able to achieve, incorporating within their narrative a character that stands for 'Woman' and a character, Giulietta (Giulietta Masina) that endorses the contradictions 'real' socio-historically located women face (described in Chaudhuri, 2006: 63).

While exploring common themes to the JCE cinema (e.g. the family as an unsatisfactory or unsatisfied locus of belonging), these filmmakers generally privileged a female perspective. In this regard, we can detect three common trends in their films that explore:

1) social issues and dynamics that especially affect women, for example, sexual harassment in *Me llamo Sara*; discrimination and sexism in *El palo* and *Insomnio*; the prejudices that immigrant women face in *Extranjeras* (Helena Taberna, 2003, Spain) and *Flores de otro mundo*;

2) the recent past, inscribing women as historical subjects. For example, *Yoyes* (Helena Taberna, 2000, Spain, France and Italy) and *Elena Dimitrievna Diakonova: Gala* (Silvia Munt, 2003, Spain) focus on (in)famous women; *Los baúles del retorno* (María Miró, 1995, Spain) and *La vida perra de Juanita Narboni* (Farida Benlyazid, 2005, Spain and Morocco) refer to post-colonial development in North-Africa; and *Entre rojas* (Azucena Rodríguez, 1995, Spain) and *El Calentito* explore the experience of dissident / alternative women during the Transition²²;

3) and, in a greater extent, femininity; in this regard, these films offer psychological portraits of characters who, under distressing circumstances or through their engagement with a female 'other', feel compelled to reassess their identity. Some examples are *Retrato de mujer con hombre al fondo* (Manana Rodríguez, 1997, Spain), *Nosotras, Sévigné* (Júlia Berkowitz) and *Amor de hombre* (Yolanda García and Juan Luis Iborra, 1997, Spain).

As previously indicated, works that explore questions of identity have abounded since the Transition. This has been particularly evident in women's cultural production, where re-assessing identity – as traversed by race, gender, sexual orientation, and so on – has been a central theme (Ferrán and Glenn, 2002). 'How to do femininity' is actually a common concern of many contemporary films directed by women, as Brunson notices in relation to 1990s British films with narratives that "engage with changing ideas of appropriate femininity, reiterating the impossibility of 'having it all'" (2000a: 176).

In the MJCE films, these identity struggles assume different forms. Often, there is a confrontation of characters that personify different models of femininity, emphasizing generational and class differences such as in

Costa Brava (Family Album) (Marta Ballebò-Coll, 1995, Spain) and *Nosotras*. On other occasions, more according to post-modern stances (i.e. the power of choice, self-reflexivity, relativity, the validity of different points of view), these identity struggles are represented as personal processes of self-analysis and change (*Retrato de mujer con hombre al fondo* and *La suerte dormida*). Sometimes, the importance of 'community' (an essential pillar of Spanish culture) is emphasised either with portraits of groups of friends that constitute a space of affirmation and belonging for the protagonist(s) (e.g. *Amor de hombre*, *Me llamo Sara*) or within the frame of an uneasy relationship between the individual and a small community, such as in *Sexo por compasión* (Laura Mañá, 2000, Spain and Mexico).

To sum up this section; formal and narrative experimentation is less of a concern for MJCE filmmakers (with a few exceptions, e.g. *Sexo por compasión*). Regarding themes and characters, their films are especially concerned with strong female characters and gynocentric themes. Inscribed within their preoccupation with identity, issues that have been closely related to feminine identity, such as heterosexual relationships linked to romance, and sex and maternity, are often addressed in the MJCE films, offering perspectives and ways of representing them that move away from conventional approaches. These will be aspects that I further explore in the following chapters, through detailed filmic analyses.

4.3. Feminine and Feminist cinema

4.3.1. Issues around labels

This section explores how the 'feminine perspective' label (and its derivatives, such as 'women's cinema' and 'feminine sensibility') have been

understood and used by the critical establishment, what the MJCE filmmakers think about this, and what are its dangers.

In specialised and mainstream press, and at festivals, two recurrent approaches, also common in literary contexts (Freixas, 2000: 38-40), have been adopted when considering MJCE directors and their works.

Firstly, their presence is either erased or reduced to a 'token' representation. For example, Pena's assessment (2002) of the cinema of the 1990s acknowledges the importance of the upsurge of new directors while failing to notice the unprecedented incorporation of women filmmakers; furthermore, in his whole assessment, he only mentions Icíar Bollaín's name and neglects to give credit to Nuria Villazán's role as co-writer and co-director of the praised documentary *Monas como la Becky* (Nuria Villazán and Joaquín Jordá, 1999, Spain)²³.

Secondly, they are lumped together in contained spaces dedicated to them such as women's sections in festivals. For example, in the I CIMA Encounter, the director and scriptwriter Ángeles González Sindé recalled her recent experience of chairing a round-table in a festival. Able to choose the guests-speakers, she proposed a group of professionals from diverse fields of filmmaking. She suggested a title and theme that reflected and benefitted from this variety, but the festival organisers decided to change it to 'La mirada femenina' / 'A feminine perspective', to capitalise on the gender of the guests²⁴.

Either way, they are constructed first as female subjects and only secondarily as directors. As the directors have often complained, the 'feminine perspective' has become a tag line almost always associated with their work. Regardless of the positive or negative connotations intended, this has become a stigma for their works. Even when meant

well, critics have tended to abuse the term – often disengaging it from any suspicion of feminism – without offering further qualifications about what it means, and without realising the affront it may entail, considering that the (gendered) perspective offered in men directors' work passes unnoticed (as universals do). For example, in Caparrós Lera's book of reviews (2001), he covers four MJCE films: *Lluvia en los zapatos*, *Cuando vuelvas a mi lado* (Gracia Querejeta, 1999, Spain), *Yoyes and Flores de otro mundo*. Except *Yoyes* (valued negatively), he praises the three other films and remarks that they show a 'feminine sensibility', although he deems it necessary to clarify that they are not 'feminist'. Contrastingly, he does not mention – like so many others – the masculine perspective of other films that he reviews, for example, *Gladiator* (Ridley Scott, 2000, UK and USA).

Aware of these dangers, most of the existing studies of MJCE films keep a precarious balance between emphasizing their diversity whilst exploring their work as a group (e.g. Santamarina, 1998; Selva, 1998; Díaz López and Cerdán, 2002). They understand that to emphasise their gender difference generally favours the perpetuation of an androcentric logic, following which maleness is universal and therefore unmarked, and femaleness is singular and necessarily underlined.

These writers' reservations about finding similarities between the MJCE films are also based on the declarations of the directors, who, following the steps of their predecessors, Miró and Molina, refuse to be gathered under the 'woman's cinema' label. However, as Camí-Vela suggests (2005: 31-2), this rejection is not as straightforward as it initially appears. While women directors, she clarifies, tend to reject this label because, being a limiting category, it marginalises them, they also generally agree that their way of looking and making cinema *is* conditioned by their gender, and that they tend to avoid certain dominant and sexist modes of

representation (particularly, in the representation of sex and female bodies)²⁵.

In their declarations, their responses to the question about what they think about the labels 'feminine perspective' and 'women's cinema' are varied, not necessarily negative, but often nuanced. Their main argument is that the emphasis on a 'different perspective' can only reinforce androcentrism (e.g. Bollaín in *ibid.*: 60). Four other common objections to these labels are: that they privilege gender difference over other identity categories, increasing its importance (e.g. Azucena Rodríguez, in *ibid.*: 164-5); that they create a direct, naturalising and exclusive correlation between women and a feminine sensibility, as if all women and no men were feminine (e.g. Ana Díez, in *ibid.*: 82); that they homogenise women's works and erase the multiplicity of perspectives that women have (e.g. París in *ibid.*: 367); and, finally, that they serve as an excuse for treating women directors as interchangeable, erasing their individuality (Gutiérrez, 2004: 14). In an ironical tone, Bollaín goes further, by questioning if all the fuss about 'feminine perspectives' may spring from the 'discomfort' that it could cause, now that "everything is so well organised and so well explained, with every stereotype settled down" (Bollaín, in Heredero ed., 1998: 52; my translation²⁶).

In a book dedicated to the analysis of the 'women's literature' label in Spain, Laura Freixas (2000) repeats some of these arguments, proposes others, and highlights the risks attached to these labels. She explains that women writers have historically rejected these terms because they not only have been applied to literature written by women, but because they also implied, as a matter of fact, that 'women's literature' could only be of any interest for women, and that it was necessarily about women, since the feminine is particular while the masculine is universal (201). Nowadays, publishing houses are aware of the potential of selling and

marketing 'women's literature' as a 'subgenre' by women, for women and about women, given that women are the larger collective of readers (37-9) and that it has become a fashionable trend (50). In the case of cinema, a few of the MJCE films have been clearly targeted at women and sold as such, capitalising on the feminine perspective topic. Two clear examples are *Puede ser divertido* and *Me llamo Sara*, films that will be studied in the next chapters²⁷. But, in general, it does not seem that the commercial appeal of 'women's cinema' is pronounced enough to be extensively exploited.

Focusing on the connotative meanings of these terms (i.e. women's literature, feminine perspective, and other derivatives), Freixas remarks that, in critical texts, they are often loaded with negative associations (treated as a minor genre, linked to simplicity, clichés, sentimentality, etc.) (ibid.: 72-3). In MJCE films, the value attached to these terms depends on the critics' perspective, some using it positively and others negatively; contrastingly, the term 'feminist' is rare, but straightforwardly negative. Although a thorough exploration of this issue would require further analysis²⁸, what stands out for the reviews consulted is the ambiguity of the term, the way it is applied unproblematically to women's films, and its recurrence.

When Camí-Vela conducted the interviews gathered in her book (first edited in 1999) and that have been recurrently quoted in this section, the stance of (most of) these filmmakers about their adoption of a 'different perspective' was hesitant. Since then, the situation has changed. In 2006, a group of women directors created the association CIMA, which groups together women from the audio-visual industries, among them many directors. Among their objectives, they aim:

to promote a more realistic and less biased representation of women in the mass media which would help to dignify the public

image of women and would help to create images of reference for the new generations of women²⁹

Instead of rejecting the existence of a 'different perspective', they defend the social necessity of a change of perspective, implicitly saying this is a perspective that they adopt (notwithstanding their aforementioned objections to being labelled). Their interest in exploring whether or not women filmmakers offer a different perspective regarding gender representation, and what its characteristics might be, has lead CIMA to collaborate on two related projects. One, the fruit of their initiative, is the previously cited study by Arranz et al. (2008). The other is the documentary *La mirada ausente* (Frank Toro, 2009, Spain), which gathers together the testimony of well-know Spanish women filmmakers³⁰.

4.3.2. Defining a 'feminine perspective'

Despite being such a commonly used expression, the connotations associated with a 'feminine perspective' in cinema remain largely undefined. Those film analysts who have studied the MJCE films remark that they offer a different perspective because they "focus on gender politics and the thematics of womanhood" (Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, 1998: 124); they cast light on areas that are not usually represented (Santamarina, 1998 and Selva, 1998), they search for new themes and forms (Díaz López and Cerdán, 2002); and they represent how women see and are in the world (Selva, 1998).

In literature, where women writers have a longer tradition, this has been better defined. Freixas (2000) dedicates a chapter to summarising the studies that explore the commonalities between women writers (generally located in a specific group or period). Following Gilbert and Gubar, she explains that women writers often offer revisions of patriarchal cultural

constructions of femininity, which entail a focus on predecessors (real or mythical) and the confrontation of female characters that adopt opposite roles (that, broadly, can be qualified as the rebel and the conventional woman) (ibid.: 166). These basic commonalities are liable to develop different manifestations since they entail an engagement with dominant formulations of femininity, which are always socio-culturally contingent.

Freixas also analysed the stance of the French theorists Kristeva, Irigaray and Cixous who, aiming to escape essentialism, define 'woman' as a psycho-social position, and therefore move away from direct correlations between literature written by women and the adoption of a 'feminine perspective'. Nevertheless they also recognise that, since women often occupy that position, their literature tends to present some common features. Kristeva remarks that many women writers offer in their works reformulations of the way that love has been conceived; that there is an undercurrent of emotional tension in their writings; and that formal considerations are less of an issue for women (ibid.: 174). Focusing on style, Irigaray and Cixous – who both conceive the 'feminine' as 'multiple, discentred and undefinable' – define the differences between a 'feminine' and a 'masculine' perspective thus:

Whereas the visual, the conceptual, the metaphorical, the desire to name and to possess are common [features] of 'masculinity', [...] the gestural, the tactile, the metonymic, the associative, the desire not for property but for proximity are feminine (ibid.: 175, my translation)³¹

Since women share some similar experiences (different to men's), Freixas concedes that contemporary and past female writers construct more varied female characters than in men's literature and address themes often disregarded in men's writings (e.g. female friendship and mother-daughter relationships became literary subjects mainly towards the mid-XXth century, especially in women's works). She nevertheless rejects the

existence of a distinguishable style, of a 'feminine writing', although she concedes that many writers privilege other sensorial experiences than the visual and that their narratives are less unidirectional and more dispersed (ibid.: 207).

Although the thematic and characterisation issues that these writers identify as common in women's literature (e.g. reformulations of love, the search for real or mythical predecessors) are also present in many MJCE films, the stylistic differences described are somehow more difficult to apply to cinema, a medium that relies so heavily in visual communication.

In her assessment of women's films in the West during the 1990s, Kaplan's conclusions (2003) also open routes of enquiry about the existence of a (socio-culturally located) 'feminine perspective' in cinema. She emphasises that women's films aim to break with unified images of 'woman' or correct 'womanhood' (i.e. femininity) and offer a counterpoint to:

prior images and stereotypes, as well as in relation to the history of imaging minorities, rather than aiming to produce any new 'truth' about minority groups. Women filmmakers are producing new ways of seeing, new readings of the past, as well as new images of inter-racial looking relations. They seek to intervene in the imaginary, to change how images are produced, rather than to present minorities 'as they really are' (21)

Although with a less of an emphasis on colonialism and racial issues (which only some have explored), Spanish directors are often interested in these aspects, and also in another theme Kaplan identifies as common, the exploration of 'subjectivities in between'.

For Jordan and Morgan-Tamasunas (1998: 133-6), the representation of a feminine subjectivity has become more common in Spanish cinema in general, although many of their examples are women's films. In this context, they identified some strategies that have been used to better portray feminine subjectivities and to aid the cinematic identification of female spectators. These include an emphasis on representing situations of complicity among women; the representation of intimate details that denote the most inner emotions of the characters and cast light upon normally unrepresented aspects of people's behaviour; the recourse to autobiographical narratives; an emphasis on formal devices that reinforce spectatorial identification with – rather than distance from – the characters; a focus on characters that find themselves in situations of crisis or extreme tension; and an interest in portraying the female body as a physical, psychological and / or symbolic space.

Many of the characteristics described here can also be applied to many MJCE films (although not all or even most occur in the same film). In my opinion, what appears as different in the MJCE production is as important and as subtle as the fact that they generally display gender awareness in their way of narrating. This implies that they often construct femininity as a site of struggle (if not always foregrounding this), openly engage with certain (sexists or patriarchal) ways in which female characters have been constructed in Spanish culture and society (e.g. sexual objectification), and put diverse, autonomous and complex female characters at the centre of their narratives. This also inclines them towards certain themes (e.g. the revaluation of women's role in history) and pushes them away from certain trends (e.g. neo-vulgarities). Formally, like most Spanish cinema, they tend to use strategies of identification rather than of alienation (unlike what was common in the feminist cinema of the 1970s). Furthermore, although stylistic considerations are central to their will to

subvert certain conventions, most of their films avoid formal experimentation.

4.3.3. A feminist perspective?

In the West, 'feminist' is an undesirable adjective, loaded with negative connotations, from which women generally dissociate themselves³². Women creators are no different; although they explore women's issues from a perspective grounded in gender awareness, they disown feminism (Carbayo-Abengózar, 2000: 121). This was clearly the case of Josefina Molina and Pilar Miró during the Transitional period; Ballesteros explains that their rejection of the term sprang from the negative connotations that the critics invested in it, understanding it as men-hating (2001: 46-7).

However, many MJCE directors have a different perspective. Whereas some of them defend and identify with feminism (Dolores Payás, Daniela Fejerman and Inés París, in *Camí Vela*, 2005: 128 and 363), most feel neither the need to disown feminism nor the need to label themselves as such, leaving the spectator or the critic to decide for themselves (e.g. Bollaín and Mañá, *ibid.*: 61-2 and 115).

Regardless of their self-definition, many of these filmmakers have adopted a public feminist stance by creating and / or joining to CIMA³³. This organisation has two main aims: to affect a change in the way that women are represented in audiovisual media, and to encourage an increase in the number of women in roles of responsibility in the audiovisual industries. In order to pursue these objectives, they aim to serve as a referent for women who are now starting to develop their careers in these industries, and, overall, to work as a pressure group, making sure that the newly established legal measures of positive discrimination (e.g.

to reach parity in committees that select television programming in public channels) are correctly applied.

Their feminist stance follows the parameters that define contemporary Spanish feminism. This has mainly been an institutional feminism preoccupied with the application of laws and divided into organisations that have very specific objectives or / and target groups. Brooksbank Jones noticed that this type of feminism was becoming very prominent during the 1990s (1997: 32). Characterised by a faith in the enforcement of laws for equality, their approach could be qualified as 'liberal feminism' (Van Zoonen, 1996). Van Zoonen explains that this approach to media departs from the belief that a higher number of women in media senior positions would entail a more equalitarian representation of women (denaturalising gender). Assessing the Anglo-American contexts, Van Zoonen concludes that this type of measure has not had the desired outcome and that, instead, the media has created a new stereotype of 'femininity', the super-woman, and that, despite the increase of women in executive positions, the media has not changed their discriminatory practices much. In the Spanish context, the consequences of the enforcement of these laws and the pressure CIMA may exert are still to come.

Leaving aside considerations about the feminist stance of many MJCE directors, another issue to consider is whether or not their films can be understood as feminist. If we follow Smelik's broad definition, which states that a feminist film is one "which represents sexual difference from a woman's point of view, displaying a critical awareness of the asymmetrical power relation between the sexes" (2001: 1), then the answer is yes. But, of course, the meaning of 'feminist cinema' and the characteristics associated with it are richer and, often, surprisingly closer to the aforementioned definitions of a 'feminine perspective'.

Drawing from feminist film theory of the 1970s and 1980s, Ballesteros (2001: 49 and ff.) summarises the main features associated with 'feminist cinema' in her analysis of Pilar Miró and Josefina Molina's films. Some features that Ballesteros describes are applicable to the work of many MJCE films. She explains that feminist films are often concerned with representing processes of self-discovery (often shaped within an 'autobiographical' narrative or as documentaries), addressing the experiences of a socio-historically located collective of women through the individual character's psychological journey. Their characters normally differ from the 'ideal' beautiful women of classical cinema, and are stripped of their glamour and seductiveness; instead, they are represented as average women, constructed through an emphasis on everyday details of their lives (with their contradictions, small routines and struggles).

Nevertheless, some other features identified by Ballesteros are difficult to apply to the bulk of the MJCE films. Regarding audience identification, Ballesteros explains that 'feminist cinema' is normally directed towards a female audience with a 'political' or ideological commitment, and that, even when that is not the case:

The director and her film assume or hope for the complicity of an audience who is interested in or identifies with the feminine experience and aspects related with [woman's] biological essence, her situation in society, her aesthetics, the spaces that she inhabits, her rhythm of live, etc. (ibid.: 50, my translation)³⁴

Although it is true that most of the MJCE films call for this type of identification at some points of the narrative, only a small number of them make this the pillar of the film.

Furthermore, as Ballesteros remarks, feminist cinema has often been identified as interested in experimenting and subverting classical narrative conventions. Often constructed against the 'unifying' nature of classical narratives, feminist films offer non-linear narratives with the use of

unsynchronised sound and open endings. Although many sequences found in MJCE films move away from or deconstruct conventional ways of representing femininity, helping to demythologise it (another characteristic pointed out by Ballesteros), they tend to adopt classical narrative frames and avoid experimentation.

Following Kaplan, Donapetry (1998: 5) identifies three main types of feminist films: those that portray feminine subjectivities, addressing issues such as the problem of women to find an enunciative position; those that deconstruct classical patriarchal narratives, exploring how women have been represented; those that explore the situation and roles of women within history, unveiling how they have been silenced. These types, or using a better term, approaches, can also be found in the MJCE films, as pointed out previously.

Since many of the MJCE films only represent situations of 'asymmetrical power relations between the sexes' in some isolated sequences without placing them at the centre of their narrative (e.g. in one of the opening sequences of *Los baúles del retorno*), and since the feminist content of a film depends extremely on the readers' interpretations, I prefer to identify these films as displaying 'gender awareness' rather than as feminist films. Furthermore, with the intense theorisation of feminist cinema, the term today carries many layers of meaning, with multiple characteristics associated with it, which, in the case at hand, rarely coincide in one film nor become the only ones relevant in a film.

In the following chapters, I will focus on how the MJCE address certain issues, closely related socio-culturally to femininity and often recurrent in their work. I will also further developed the issues addressed in these chapter in relation to films that are analysed on detail following a CDA methodology.

5. 'HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS'...BUT WHERE IS HOME? CONSTRUCTING NEW FAMILIES, PORTRAYING MOTHERHOOD

Traditionally, family and motherhood have been presented as the 'natural' destiny of women in Western cultures. This was particularly true of the Francoist period, when official discourses were characterised by a rigidly defined normativity of social roles and the available socially-accepted roles for women were narrow and located within the family.

With the rapid modernisation of Spanish society and its radical political changes, however, this situation has changed. Since the Transition, the traditional family has slowly dissolved with an increase in divorce rates and single parent households and a decrease in marriages and birth rates. Sociological texts such as Castells and Subirats's book (2007) show that new family-like structures / *chosen* families (e.g. webs of single or divorced mothers who create a support network between themselves), non-traditional families (e.g. married homosexual couples, single parents, re-married couples) and ways of understanding relationships (e.g. the LAT or Living Apart Together model) have proliferated in recent decades and have come to problematise common understandings of family. This is indeed a dramatic change; in a country where only twenty years ago the traditional family (i.e. married couples that live with their mutual children who are under 25 years old) was the rule, Castells nowadays suggest that this type of family may count for less than 7% of Spanish households¹.

Despite all these changes, or maybe because of them, 'family' appears in all contemporary surveys as one of the main aspects of life that Spaniards value. Nevertheless, this aspiration is in itself contradictory. As Castells remarks it shows "the yearning for the family that they come from, but it is a yearning that does not match [...] with the reality of the household that they live in" (2007, 42, my translation)². Until recent generations, most Spaniards had grown up in traditional households, living with their biological parents. As with traditional models of femininity and masculinity, the traditional (often patriarchal) family remains an initial group identification that many young adults have often learnt, but one that is often invalid and / or dissatisfactory as a model for the creation of their own families and of gender identity. Even if it were desirable, the old 'ideal' is no longer particularly viable, as infrastructural changes – such as a greater incorporation of women within the workforce, the collapse of cultural consensus builders such as religion, the raise of immigration, which is changing the socio-cultural shape of Spain, and so on – have undermined the stability of many pillars that supported that old order.

In Spanish cinema, the family has been a common theme for decades. This focus has continued in the work of the JCE directors. The MJCE have also explored this subject, focusing especially on the role of women within the family. In this chapter, I will address three interlinked themes: the family, mother-daughter relations, and the search for precursors or symbolic mothers. I will do this with particular reference to two films: *Me llamo Sara* and *Elena Dimitrievna Diakanova: Gala*.

5.1. Family

Talking about the family in contemporary Spain or Spanish culture always requires making reference to the Francoist past, when it was the essential pillar of official discourses and society. Legally, it was defined as "the

primary natural unit and the foundation of society" (quoted in Brooksbank Jones, 1997: 75, my translation). For this reason, the representation of the family became an important element in the cinema of those who opposed the regime (and contested the family as an ideal), as much for as those who subscribed to the dominant ideology (e.g. Ballesteros, 2001: 270 – 271). From the 'costumbristas' depictions of families from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s (e.g. *Surcos*) to the more metaphorical and cryptic portraits offered mainly by oppositional directors during the pre-transition and transitional years, the family has been a common concern of Spanish cinema (e.g. *El jardín de las delicias*, Carlos Saura, 1970).

Indebted to the cinematic past and reflecting upon the sociological changes, the family is still laden with meaning in contemporary Spanish cinema (Heredero, 2002: 64-65). Familial issues work as the motors of many narratives offered by veteran filmmakers – e.g. Gerardo Herrero in *Los aires difíciles* (2006, Spain) – and newcomers – e.g. Chiqui Carabante in *Carlos contra el mundo* (2002, Spain) or Mariano Barroso in *Éxtasis* (1996, Spain).

Interest in the family is not limited to cinema. Many of the highly popular television series produced in Spain during the 1990s and since have focused on family dynamics (e.g. *Red2Red*, 2007). And, as in cinema, families that are alternative or re-constructed are increasingly prominent on the small screen, for example in *Ana y los siete* (Star Line Productions / Television Española; 2002 – 2005; Spain). Still, regardless of the type of family represented, televisual representations are generally conservative regarding gender-specific familial roles and dynamics (as the analysis in chapter 2 suggests).

By comparison, familial issues as presented in contemporary cinema are more varied, with more interest shown in addressing the problems of the

family at the turn of the century. These films dwell on the dissatisfaction that the characters feel with the family, exploring issues such as the persistent but waning authority of the patriarch, the lack of communication and resentment felt by both parents and children, who feel dissatisfied with their relations and assigned roles within the family, the problems of single-parents households, generational differences, conflicts within interracial and transnational families, and the preference for the 'chosen family' over the biological family (Ballesteros, 2001: 277).

As Ballesteros (2001) explores, films such as *Familia* (Fernando León, 1997, Spain and France) or *Éxtasis* use *mise-en-abîme* narrative mechanisms in order to stress the representational character of familial institutions, constructing stage plays in which family members are forced to play roles that do not satisfy any of them. This is, she highlights, an international tendency. These films stress, on one hand, the artificiality of a familial model that was defined within Francoist thought as a 'natural unity', and, on the other hand, the unviability of this model within contemporary society, which has experienced so many political, economic, cultural and psycho-social changes.

In the cinema of the JCE directors, mistrust of the traditional family – defined, more often than not, as patriarchal – is often reinforced by the validation of family-shaped structures that function as webs of support and sites of belonging for the characters. Occasionally, these 'alternative' families are presented directly in contrast to 'natural' families, like in *¿Por qué se frotan las patitas?* (Álvaro Begines, 2006, Spain) or *El Calentito*.

JCE films abound in young characters who, experiencing feelings of loss for absent, dead or distant parents, are shown searching for self-definition. Both Heredero (2002: 65) and Quintana (2001) suggest that the constant exploration of this feeling of orphanhood may manifest, in

general, a lack of guiding references and roots and, in particular, a lack of connection with the Spanish cinematic tradition, that these new generations of filmmakers feel. Furthermore, for Quintana, it is clear that this "feeling of orphanhood [is] the corollary of the crisis of ideologies" (ibid.: 14, my translation).

Except in its more intense focus on women's location and their problems within the family, MJCE films do not differ much from the films of their male counterparts in their treatments of family issues. Several of their films construct the family as a locus of secrets that, returning from the past, destabilises the present of the characters, for example, *Los pasos perdidos* (Manana Rodríguez, 2001, Spain and Argentina) and *Para que no me olvides* (Patricia Ferreira, 2005, Spain).

This theme has especially shaped Gracia Querejeta's films. Her four feature films of this period centre on exploring the deficiencies of family life, with special emphasis placed on the return of a repressed past (embodied in a character who irrupts into the life of the main characters) that has been a weight dragging upon their present lives; confronting the repressed forces the characters to re-construct and to re-think their present as much as their past. Two of her films focus especially on women characters: *Cuando vuelvas a mi lado* and *Héctor*. For example, *Cuando vuelvas a mi lado* presents the journey of three adult sisters to the places of their childhood in order to deliver their mother's ashes to three people. This journey forces them to re-encounter and re-define their relationships, which are still overshadowed by a mysterious past in which the romantic-obsessive love of their mother drove her to madness and in which their father disappeared, leaving the Electra Complex of the eldest daughter, Gloria (Mercedes Samprieto), unresolved. Through the use of flashbacks that interweave with the journey of the sisters, the

resolution of the mystery only unfolds at the end of the film, which opens a new stage (as an isolated voiceover puts it) for Gloria.

To sum up, the representation of family issues has served as an arena for acting out the multiple changes that Spanish society has experienced since the arrival of democracy. Furthermore, it has served as a stage for representing the social encounter of traditional and more modern values, not only between different generations but also within each individual. For all this, the 'search for the lost family'³ also shows a yearning for home.

5.1.1. *Me llamo Sara* (Dolores Payás, 1998): Alternative families for the modern woman

Me llamo Sara is a testimonial film that aims to speak about, and to, women from the point of view of a woman director. The film centres on a period when the main character, Sara (Elvira Mínguez), undergoes a reconstruction of her identity; in the process, the reaffirmation of her spaces of belonging, such as 'family' and 'women', plays an important part.

This low budget film features well-known secondary actors and actresses (e.g. Chete Lera, Vicky Peña, Eulalia Ramón and Elvira Mínguez, who is here given her first leading role⁴). It is the third film by *In Vitro*, a small Catalan production company which has mainly produced 'intimista' films, its most famous film being *La Soledad*⁵.

Being a 'film of characters', the film relied on critical recognition and was presented at several foreign festivals⁶; a year later, it was launched commercially. Although the reviews were not negative, it drew less than 19,000 spectators in Spain⁷. Nevertheless, it was sold to Spanish and

Catalan public television networks, and also found a distributor in France⁸, where the film was expected to be well received since it fitted better within the French filmic tradition (Camí-Vela, 2001: 130).

As the title suggests, the film is a first-person account of Sara's experience and feelings, and is constructed exclusively from her point of view, with her character inscribed in nearly every shot, either through her presence or through the inclusion of multiple p.o.v. shots, dream sequences, voice-over interior monologues and subjective sound. These filmic mechanisms are used to encourage identification with the protagonist, which is, narratively, the only subject position offered to the spectator. Focussing on a year in the life of a middle-class and middle-age woman, it tells the story of her experiences as she enters onto a new stage in life – maturity – and tries to come to terms with her own ageing and mortality⁹.

Sara has just turned forty, and feels content with her life. She enjoys a supportive group of friends, a stable economic and professional situation, a good relationship with her teenage daughter Gina (Elena Castells), and a convenient part-time partner, Adrián (Francois-Eric Gendron). But several problems come to disturb her placid existence. Drawing a psychological map, the narrative offers a tableau of Sara's experiences regarding her body's transformation, her sexuality, her friendships, her noncommittal relationship with Adrián, her deteriorating relationship with Gina, the death and fallibility of her father, and so on. With these developments, Sara starts re-thinking herself. Constructed episodically, the film maintains two loose narrative lines, dealing with the problem of Gina's stalker, and Sara's affair with a young student, which starts affecting her relationship with her daughter and with Adrián.

Although not occupying central stage, the representation of the family in this film offers interesting reflections upon common treatments of the

family in contemporary Spanish cinema. As in other MJCE films, the character's *chosen* family is more important than the family of origin. Sara's preference for these new structures of support is narratively related to her changing way of understanding relationships.

The opening credit sequence introduces how family and female identity will be addressed in the film. Mainly constructed through Sara's p.o.v. shots of a dim staircase and entrance to her flat, the sequence introduces Sara as she arrives to her flat, where her friends have prepared her a surprise birthday party. The voice-over opens soon after she enters the flat and her eyes (and thus the camera) are covered with a translucent piece of cloth. As the title of the film appears superimposed over her p.o.v. shot, Sara presents herself: 'I am Sara. And I am scared of darkness. Because I stop existing when there is not light. I lose myself. I do not know who I am. Maybe [...] only a scared woman'. With these words, the credits fade to black; the opening sequence opens with a shot of Sara removing the blindfold and smiling as she sees her friends, Gina, and Adrián, who are shown in a p.o.v. panning shot. In this long sequence, each secondary character is presented in turn as they interact with Sara.

From this opening, Sara's identity becomes the central focus of the film and will be defined relationally; her loved-ones come to be constructed as a net of support that stops her from falling into 'darkness'. Her friends, Gina and Adrián function together as Sara's family, and the film comes to offer a small repertoire of ways of thinking about the family (as it also does with the theme of female sexuality).

The role of Sara's family of origin is small, but significant. In the first sequences, as her father rests in hospital, she praises her parents as a good couple that still make love after many years together, and her father

as an 'inquiring traveller', a determined and hard-working man, and 'the last gentleman'. In her personal mythology, her parents' relationship and her father's gentlemanliness occupy a privileged space. Her father's death brings with it a surprise that shatters Sara's mirage; at her father's funeral, his long-term mistress turns up. Outraged and incredulous, Sara resists acknowledging the truth, but her mother remarks that 'he was a man like any other', and thereby pushes him off the pedestal that Sara had constructed for him.

In itself, this narrative line does not receive much further development or emphasis. Beyond its relevance as an event that contributes to Sara's anxieties about the passing of time, it also works as a counterpoint to Sara's relationship with Adrián and a channel for her contradictory feelings about this. Exclusively told from her point of view, their relationship is constructed as a convenient relationship with no moral obligation to stand by each other. As she seeks his support regarding Gina's stalker, Adrián either downplays her worries or leaves the house; and when he refuses to have sex with her after her dad's funeral, Sara dispatches him to his house and has phone sex with her younger lover instead. As she confesses, not without a dose of irony, in a voice-over insert at the beginning of the film: 'Adrián and I make an exemplary couple. We have been together for years and we have managed not to share anything. Quite an achievement'.

The question of how to conceive relationships after the changes in gender roles is one of the topics addressed in the film. Sara discusses this with her friend Simón (Chete Lera), and with the group of her female friends, but not with Adrián. As if it was common sense, their discussions – and the narrative treatment of relationships – are trapped within a dichotomy: a noncommittal relationship allows the individuals to be 'free' but brings as a consequence the lost of security; on the other side of the coin,

conventional – i.e. marital – relationships may provide support, but hinder individual freedom and self-fulfilment. This dichotomy is articulated in terms of choice. Sara clearly opts for the former. When Simón encourages her to settle down in a stable relationship that would, he says, offer security to her and her daughter, she replies: 'Dad, mum and the kids...I do not fancy it. You are becoming conventional and puritanical'. Among Sara's friends, only two are described in a conversation as being or having been married: Teresa (Pepa López), who suffers a deep depression because her husband abandoned her for a younger woman; and Susana (Eulalia Ramón), who is sexually dissatisfied, unhappy, and undergoing psychoanalytical treatment. Incidentally, Susana's presentation-scene consciously emphasises her construction as a sexual object of desire that, we soon discover, is ironically devoid of sexual satisfaction¹⁰. In contrast, the two women friend-characters that receive most treatment are both clearly out of the heterosexual economy, and are presented as happy and self-fulfilled: Julia (Jeannine Mestre) is a lesbian woman, though narratively this is only nominal, and Matilda (Carmen Fortuny) is a heterosexual woman in her late fifties or sixties who has decided to stop having sex altogether, though without renouncing sexual satisfaction.

Sara's relationship is completely constructed as being located outside two elements that have sustained conventional ways of thinking about the family in the last centuries and which have wrapped up many relationship narratives: the heterosexual economy and the romantic discourse. It is a modern relationship that works outside the logic of the family. Sara seems content with her relationship at the beginning of the film. But, contradictorily, she ditches Adrián for the same reasons that she seems to value their relationship; after finally talking openly with him about her fling with the young student, Adrián says that he suspected it and he does not mind as far as he is still 'her man'. He only re-appears again in the last

sequence when her voice over comment suggests certain openness about the possibility of getting back together.

Sara's (shattered) idealisation of her parents' relationship, and her reflections regarding her own relationship with Adrián, embody contradictions that spring from her self-confessedly puzzled struggle to establish new ways of dealing with gender relations. A self-declared daughter of feminism, Sara's contradictory opinions about relationships show the tensions that result from putting certain ideals into practice. As Gámez Fuentes observes in connection with Miró's *Gary Cooper que estás en los cielos* (1980), a film that is similar to *Me llamo Sara* in more than one way, the cohabitation of emancipatory with traditional discourses about women create tensions when women try to act out the emancipatory discourses (2004: 148).

Sara's friends complete her family, supporting her, emotionally and practically. Sara only discusses her problems, finds solace and gets advice from her friends. In the metaphorical terms of the opening sequence, they take her out of darkness. Her friend Julia is her main support in the narrative; she guides Sara through the legal procedures to put forward a complaint against the stalker, and provides her with emotional solace when she breaks down. After this, Sara seeks shelter at the house of her friend, Matilda. Her birthday parties, filled with her friends, open and close the film. In the final sequence, she describes them as 'her landscape', constructing them as the locus where she belongs.

Although Sara has female and male friends, the type of interactions she holds with each group is different. Her female friends interact as a forum of debate where they exchange opinions about, especially, relationships with men and sexuality. With Julia and Matilda, she develops closer individual interactions, always framed in a relaxed and relational

environment. Contrastingly, her relationships with her male friends, Pancho (Ángel de Andrés) and Simón, contain an element of sexual attraction (both of them lightly ask her to be with them), and are constructed within a prescriptive mode of address that uses assertion more than suggestion. Both want to exert (benevolent) control over her: when Sara explains she is not using any contraception, Pancho, also her gynecologist, asserts 'I will tie up your fallopian tubes then'; and when she tries to discuss her frustrations about her daughter with Simón, he prescribes that she should find a man who takes care of them. In combination with Adrián's uncommitted and uncommunicative portrait, and with other male figures who stand as patriarchal symbols (i.e. the policeman and the judge), the feminine and the male worlds are constructed as communicatively different. Men's intentions and emotions, especially those of Adrián and her young lover, are mostly left unexplored, in an inversion of the classical filmic motif of 'women as mystery'.

Contrarily, the female world is constructed as a harmonious space of solidarity where women of different ages, sexual orientations and generations find shelter with each other. Soon after returning from her retreat with Matilda, in a sequence full of ambiguity, it is suggested that even the class gap does not hinder this solidarity. Sara runs into the street after finding her house vandalised by the stalker; in the streets a voice off breaks through the subjective sound of her magnified heartbeat mixed with the music. It is a homeless lady with whom, in a previous sequence, Sara had exchanged uneasy gazes, and who supposedly has come to represent Sara's fear of ageing. The lady's request for a cigarette breaks through Sara's agitated state; the subjective sound stops and the music stabilises as they sit together on some steps, smoking, without talking.

Furthermore, this 'special' link among women is shown as extending through history. When teaching Virginia Wolf's *A room of her own* in her

literature class and confronting a female student who questions the importance of Wolf's remark nowadays, Sara argues for the importance of acknowledging women's own history and establishes a genealogical line of continuity between them and contemporary women ('Without them, none of us would be in this university room'). As Camí-Vela (2005a) remarks:

At a personal and a collective level, *Me llamo Sara* vindicates breaking away from the relationship of the woman for the man structured by a patriarchal system; and at the same time, it proposes a personal and political movement of association between one woman and another; an association that Janice Raymond describes with the term *Gyn/ affection* and which consists of 'the state of influencing, acting upon, moving and impressing; and of being influenced, acted upon, moved, and impressed by other women' (2005a: 77, my translation¹¹)

Her daughter, Gina, is the final element in her family. At the beginning of the film, their relationship is open and relaxed, a 'friends' relationship. But as the film advances and Sara starts falling apart, Gina, who is in her mid-teens and pressured by the constant harassment by the stalker, registers a similar process of personal instability. Undergoing a difficult period in the formation of her identity (e.g. sexual initiation, the search for a father), Gina stands against her mother, constantly challenging her. For example, in several sequences, Gina judges and sneers at Sara for having an affair with a younger man and cheating on Adrián. She is also angry at Sara's decision to raise her alone. Their relationship is defined as an ongoing negotiation, albeit one going through a rough patch. For example, Sara agrees not to bring her young lover to their house when Gina is at home, out of respect for her objection.

But Sara also refuses to be reduced to her maternal role. She stands her ground and forces her daughter to take her needs into account. She expresses her frustration with Gina to Simón ('She is making my life a living hell'), and demands that Gina respects her little foibles (e.g. Gina must not borrow her clothes). She resists being forced into the position of

a silent interlocutor, within which mothers have often been symbolically trapped. Gámez Fuentes describes this position:

In Western history, it has always been assumed that the mother has the capacity of knowing the answer to any of her child's demands, insufficiencies and / or desires. [...] [In both Francoist and democratic hegemonic narratives about motherhood] the mother is forced into the subject position of the one who knows the Answer, without being given the possibility of verbalising her own conflicts and demands. This is the position labelled as the 'silent interlocutor' (Gallop, 1982: 115), since the mother is placed in a *locus* where she does not have the possibility of modulating her own desire (2004: 56, my translation)¹²

In this way, the film breaks with common cultural preconceptions associated with the myth of the 'good mother', which Larrea describes, in reference to other films, as "the supposed 'natural' or intuitive ability that mothers have of navigating seas of emotions and relations; maternal unselfishness and, consequently, abnegation for those that surround her; and the total suppression of an active sexuality" (2005, my translation)¹³. Sara's experience of motherhood contradicts this mythology. Nevertheless, she is judged as a bad mother exactly for one of these reasons. In one of the sequences, Sara meets with a judge in order to ask for the stalker's arrest. In alternating medium shots of the judge and of Sara with Julia standing behind her, this sequence, echoing Sara's visit to the police, emphasises (patriarchal) authorities' downplaying of sexual violence. The judge plays down the stalker's ignominy when he equals his harassment of Gina (e.g. leaving humiliating and threatening message on her answer machine, masturbating on the telephone) to Sara's phone sex conversation with her young lover (recorded, since the line was tapped). Doubting her capacity to be a 'good mother', he flattens her agency and determination. Her sexuality is thus constructed as deviant, and equal to that of the stalker. Only the support of Julia prevents the judge from dismissing the case.

Within the narrative, Sara's friends, Adrián and Gina collectively come to function for Sara as an alternative family. In compartmentalised roles, they occupy the symbolic locus that for women, the (ideal) traditional family used to occupy, especially within the recent Spanish past. In this mythic construction, Castells and Subirats (2007: 255 and ff.) argue, the traditional family – wrapped in a discourse of love – is supposed to cater for women's needs for reproduction, for affection and sex, and for protection and security. As is increasingly common for contemporary Spanish women after the impact of equalitarian ideas and practices¹⁴, Sara has opted to separate these needs from the traditional family and, through compartmentalisation, from each other. She has chosen to be a mother on her own; Adrián offers her affection and sex, but does not provide her with any feeling of security or practical support; her friends compensate for these lacks; and her job frees her from financial dependency on a husband.

In summary, regarding common ways of representing the family in contemporary Spanish cinema, *Me llamo Sara* is a representative film that, even if only secondarily, addresses issues such as the discrediting of the traditional family, the preference for the *chosen* family, and the problems of single-parent families. It particularly offers interesting (if over-simplified) insights into how the sociological changes in gender relations have affected ways of thinking about the family. Also, in this respect, Sara is constructed as an exemplary 'new woman', offering a model of womanhood that is directly indebted to feminism (particularly the feminism of difference). In form, content and intention, as much as in the construction of the character, *Me llamo Sara* is a film that engages with feminism.

As transpires from the analysis offered so far, the construction of Sara's character lays out a mosaic of themes that have often preoccupied women

creators (as explored in chapter 4): the revalorised association of women's psychology with the private sphere, capitalising on the depiction of quotidian events (e.g. cooking, relaxing, getting ready in the bathroom); the exploration of a varied and non-phallogendrant female sexuality that contests common representational conventions (further analysed by Camí-Vela, 2005a); the vindication of actual and symbolical association between women; women's subjectivity as partially formed by their corporeal experience; the defence of motherhood as simultaneously enriching (e.g. the multitude of sequences that dwell on the complicity between Sara and Gina) but prone to the dangers of role reduction; the impact of patriarchal practices and institutions in the life of women; and the difficulties of re-drafting gender relations to adapt to changes in women's roles and situation. As indicated in chapter 4, many of these themes are indeed commonly found in the films of the MJCE, although rarely in such a concentrated (and predictably superficial) feminist manner.

This film's engagement with feminism is pervasive not only in the construction of Sara but also in the discursive types with which it engages. From the director's declarations in Camí-Vela's book of interviews (2005), *Me llamo Sara* is clearly informed by autobiographical material, and has a testimonial intention. This is also made evident in the marketing caption that accompanies the title in the film poster: 'Por fin, alguien habla de nosotras' / 'At last, someone talks about [feminine] us'. A self-defined feminist, Payás states that her intention was to offer a realistic portrait of the experiences of women who, at a certain moment generally around the threshold of their forties, become aware that they are entering a new stage in their lives, entering maturity:

As I was becoming older, the idea of saying something about [feminine] us slowly formed in my mind. Because all the representations that I was seeing about us seemed to me distorted, banal, frivolous and of little interest (ibid.: 131; my translation)¹⁵

In its testimonial intention and general ethos, the film is more related to the films by women directors during the Transition than to the perspectives adopted in the films of the MJCE. As in *Función de noche* and *Gary Cooper*, the character embarks on a process of self-assessment that is presented as characteristic of a group of women, among whom is the director. *Me llamo Sara* shares many of the characteristics and feminist tendencies that Ballesteros notices about *Función de noche* and *Gary Cooper*:

The command over the voice and the image, the self-analytical, confessional and testimonial tone of the discourse, and the will of delivering it to the audience as an example and a result of a personal and simultaneously historical context, is a way of doing ideology, of defending that the personal is also political (2001: 49; my translation)¹⁶

Nevertheless, a remarkable difference stands out between these films and *Me llamo Sara*: Sara is not embarked on a search for her own authenticity. In *Función de noche*, it is constantly stressed that the cultural burden has hindered Lola Herrera's full development and has stopped her from being her true self; she says in a specific moment that 'they have cheated me' and expresses that her conditioning has been such that she is now unable to enjoy her sexuality and her life. Whereas Herrera feels 'trapped' by the mystique of femininity and is unable to disentangle her true self from it, Sara enters a process of re-assessment and re-ordering of her fragmented identity, triggered by the changes in her body, the death of her father, and the exploration of sexuality and the threat of (patriarchally condoned) sexual violence. She feels the imprints of time, life and society, but, as she says, she 'just keeps on going', re-negotiating with the others and within these interactions, and re-drafting her identity (in the closing voice-over monologue). A comparison of these two films, with their shared focus on femininity and exploration of the 'I', indeed offers an interesting site for exploring the changing cultural conceptions of (gender) identity.

These films significantly differ in another regard. Sara's relationship with her mother passes through reconciliation and understanding, particularly after her mother posthumously discovers her husband's infidelity; after Sara's mother forces her to accept that her father was not the ideal man she had constructed, Sara comes to support her mother and to listen to her feelings, bestowing her with a voice and attending to her needs and feelings. Contrastingly, Andrea's relationship (Mercedes Samprieto) with her mother (in *Gary Cooper*) is confrontational and shows a complete distancing from a mother who, by compelling Andrea to embrace 'proper' femininity, censors her behaviour.

Me llamo Sara also conforms to many of the characteristics that Everett (2007) describes as characteristic of contemporary autobiographical cinema directed by European women directors. The autobiographical genre, a common site for women writers, is often inspired by personal searches by the director/writer for her identity, which, unlike in *Me llamo Sara*, tend to look back to the past and explore the relationship with the mother to explain the character's present identity. Narrativizing her or the character's experiences, these texts re-affirm the importance of the 'I' and re-valorise women's experiences. Interestingly, autobiographical narratives have been used as a contesting "site for renegotiating the history of women's representations" (127), as this film does regarding, for example, the way women's sexuality is culturally constructed. Filmic and literary autobiographical texts share many traits, such as their use of circular and open-ended structures with "continuous explorations of the self [...] marked by the same shifting viewpoints and the same desire for understanding, reparation or reconciliation" (128). Without conforming to many of these characteristics, autobiographical experiences have informed several films of the MJCE, such as *Los años oscuros* (Arantxa Lazcano, 1993, Spain) and *Entre rojas*; on the other hand, films such as *Héctor* or

Sévigé have adopted many of these characteristics, despite not being directly inspired by the directors' personal experiences.

Because of the clutter of 'feminine' issues, and despite the careful performance of Elvira Mínguez in the first leading role of her career, the character of Sara remains woefully generic. This lack of particularity, which could have fleshed out the character, constructs Sara as a woman who, in my opinion, is not convincing. Despite speaking from a very specific location (i.e. that of a middle-class, feminist, well-educated¹⁷, white, urban woman), the film lays a homogenising layer over women's specificity. This is especially clear in its construction of the homeless lady who, having a limited instrumental role for Sara, is unproblematically constructed as part of the 'circle of solidarity'. It also naturalises gender differences, constructing an unbridgeable gap between the sexes. Unlike many MJCE films that engage more subtly with located women's problems, *Me llamo Sara* vindicates a model of femininity that consciously and programmatically engages with some strands of the feminism of difference, notably in its way of understanding the family and gender relations.

5.2. Exploring motherhood

As with representations of families, filmic representations of mother figures come laden with meanings. On the one hand, they carry the legacy of the representational tradition of mother figures in Spanish culture and, specifically, of the Francoist construction of motherhood (e.g. Gámez Fuentes, 2001). On the other hand, in a 'gender-aware' society, they also enable engagement with popularised feminist ideas.

These concerns manifest in the MJCE films subtly. Although their films rarely focus on motherhood or on adult children's relationships with their mothers, these are common background features in the construction of the characters. As is common in contemporary cinema, few of their films show any particular interest in exploring relationships between mothers and daughters (*Hola, ¿estás sola?* and *Héctor* being two interesting exceptions).

In their 1990s narratives, the experience of motherhood was largely ignored, or merely portrayed as a background feature hindering the development of the (generally young) female characters. For example, *Cómo ser mujer y no morir en el intento*, *Retrato de mujer con hombre al fondo* and *Puede ser divertido* portray mothers who hardly interact with their children, and who perceive motherhood as a component of the dissatisfactions of marriage and as a difficulty for their sentimental or professional self-fulfilment. These are films that are marketed at women and are meant to be representative of the 'modern woman', a woman who values her position in the public sphere. To different degrees, and without suggesting that they are feminist films, these films engage with popular feminist ideas.

For example, *Retrato de mujer con hombre al fondo* focuses on the life of Cristina (Paulina Gálvez); a young divorce lawyer who tends to adopt a utilitarian attitude towards relationships, in both her personal life and also with her professional advice. When she meets Diego (Bruno Squarcia), her uncompromising stance undergoes a process of revision. As she hesitates about getting involved in a relationship with him, her doubts are framed in relation to Marisa (Myriam Mézières), the wife of her business partner. She is constructed as Cristina's mirror, reflecting an image of a possible future that Cristina decides not to pursue at the end of the film¹⁸. Marisa, a middle-aged mother of two young sons, is going through a depression,

drinking too much, and feeling sorry about her unfulfilled life. Having abandoned her artistic vocation in favour of marriage and motherhood, she regrets her decisions and resents her situation, as she admits to Cristina. Although the film does not offer a deep reflection upon motherhood, maternity is clearly constructed as an (potential) obstacle for women, and as not (necessarily) fulfilling.

Feminist attitudes towards motherhood have been varied and contradictory since the Second Wave. In her article about American cinema, Golombisky (2001) summarises these different attitudes. She argues that the first manifestations of Second Wave feminism tended to privilege women's integration within the public sphere and, as a side-effect, devalued women's contribution in the private sphere. But, parallel to the fragmentation of feminism, feminist perspectives towards motherhood started to become more varied and "[w]hile some feminisms credited female reproduction for women's oppression, others appropriated the Mother as the consummate symbol of women's power, albeit a power corrupted by the patriarchy and capitalism" (2001: 68). This diversification in the theoretical stances towards motherhood has persisted until today.

In the same way, representations of motherhood in the MJCE films have become both more varied and more numerous since the end of the 1990s. To some extent, this inevitably follows from the directors' increasing interest in the portrayal of older female characters. These more recent films explore different experiences of motherhood, breaking from conventional uni-dimensional constructions, as we have seen in *Me llamo Sara*. They portray, for example, women who are dealing with the lost of their child – in *La suerte dormida* (Ángeles González Sindé, 2005, Spain) and *Sévigé* –, women who do not love their children (*Nosotras* and *Gala*), and women who struggle to keep a balance between work and motherhood (*Insomnio* and *Poniente*). In these films, motherhood is

constructed ambivalently, as a source of both satisfaction and anxiety, but always as something that comes to intrinsically mark the identity of the characters, not only personally but also socially.

For example, *Nosotras* is a puzzle film that sketches the experiences of fourteen (white) women from different generations and classes regarding relationships and motherhood. One of the most relevant characters, the middle-aged, middle-class housewife Andrea (Mercedes Samprieto), is portrayed interacting with her psychologist, and through inserted flashbacks that illustrate her narration. The clinical space is the only place where Andrea can assert her voice. This is made clear through the contrast between the attentive psychologist, in the diegetic present, and the flashbacks of both the distracted and disdainful husband and Andrea's superficial friends. She finds a sympathetic listener in the psychologist, with whom she can say what she calls 'the unspeakable': her dislike for her children and her experience of psychological and physical abuse by her (stereotypically) sexist husband. Constrained by middle-class mythologies of 'the happy family' and naturalising discourses about motherhood, she has not been able to find a sympathetic listener previously. After her attempted suicide, she voices her dislike of her two 'difficult' sons (the flashback sequence portrays them as violent neo-Nazi teenagers) and narrates how, after their detention for attacking a homeless man, she was socially ostracised and 'blamed' for their crime, as a bad mother, in newspapers.

Like other contemporary Spanish films, such as *Solas*, a few MJCE films also portray pregnant women in narratives that close with the birth of the child (e.g. *Puede ser divertido*, *Sexo por compasión* and *Muere, mi vida*). Zecchi (2005a) sees some of these films, and other contemporary Spanish films, as participating in hegemonic 'pronatalist' discourses often found in the media. In the context of an alarmingly low birth rate in Spain, she

argues that these discourses, "either through the glorification of procreation or through guilt and fear, promote maternity again as the *sine qua non* for an integral fulfillment of womanhood" (147). However, I disagree with her claim that the films glorify the patriarchal institution of motherhood (148). In my opinion, these films use symbols of the traditional family in order to subvert it in favour of new familial structures¹⁹. Indeed, Zecchi recognises this point in her analysis of *Solas* and *Puede ser divertido*, but argues that it is invalidated by another factor:

Nevertheless, despite the obviously subversive intent, the two films fail to offer a real alternative to patriarchal discourse because they both end up glorifying precisely what they are condemning. Maternity is treated in both cases as the solution – a way out of solitude, of emptiness – with the baby possessing the power to redeem, pacify and unify. In other words, the law of the Father becomes the law of the Son and the chain of patriarchal submission is maintained intact (ibid.: 152)

Whereas, for Zecchi, both films offer a definitive solution to the characters' feelings of emptiness and solitude, at the very end of the film, through the experience of motherhood, in my opinion, the films instead emphasise the process of 'healing' that the characters experience during the development of the narratives. In *Solas*, María (Ana Fernández) experiences a process of healing through her re-conciliation with her mother Rosa (María Galiana), finding a space of support and recognition. After considering abortion, María's acceptance of her pregnancy is closely linked to her acceptance of her mother, Rosa. In *Puede ser divertido* (further analysed in section 7.3), Alicia (Mercè Pons) and especially Carmen (Ana Torrent) undergo a recuperation process through the development of their friendship; it serves as a space of belonging that comes to fill the space of traditional relationships. Through the childbirths in the last sequences of the films, motherhood is constructed less as the solution to the characters problems than as the 'sanctioning' of the

alternative families that the characters have constructed after showing their dissatisfaction with traditional structures.

My disagreement with Zecchi's arguments (2005a) comes from an emphasis on different aspects of the narrative rather than from utterly different readings of the films. And this emphasis changes the way we perceive the ideological message of the film. Zecchi affirms that these films uphold a reactionary discourse which compels women to embrace motherhood as the source of their fulfilment. In my opinion, although neither of these films can be considered feminist (neither in the discursive type nor in the message), the emphasis on women's support as a remedy for feelings of alienation – commonly found in MJCE films – revalorises a type of relationship that has often been ignored in cinema.

As with experiences of motherhood, the relationship with the mother remains in the background of MJCE films. But, as Gámez Fuentes explores in her book dedicated to the representation of mothers in Post-Francoist literary and filmic texts (2004), mother figures have been central to contemporary Spanish culture for their function within the narrative, rather than for their quantity or protagonism. She highlights how they have been a channel for negotiating the tensions between the democratic present and the dictatorial past²⁰. She identifies three common ways of constructing the mother: the abjected mother²¹, the mother as the (Francoist) 'other' against which the characters define their gender identity, and the mother-daughter relationship as a site for negotiating differences and similarities with the past. The first and second types were especially common during the Transition. The first type is almost nonexistent in contemporary cinema, however, and so can be ignored.

The second type of mother remains, still relegated to secondary roles, as the traditional model against which the female character has to define her

post-Francoist femininity (e.g. in *Gary Cooper*). These representations reproduce the general tendency of democratic discourses to reduce the past to a homogenous image against which to construct a different present. The mother comes to stand as the representative of a past from which the democratic present congratulates itself for having moved away; this nevertheless reinforces a facile image of the past and of the role of women within it. These films thus overlook the complexities and contradictions that also existed within this period. Although not directly linked with the Francoist type of femininity per se, this is a pervasive type that is still in use in contemporary Spanish films, and in MJCE films such as *Tomándote* (Isabel Gardela, 2000, Spain) or *Boom, Boom*.

In these films, the mother stands as a social force, coming from the past, that compels the daughter to embrace traditional femininity. There are, however, several MJCE films that do not follow this pattern and give more importance, though still secondarily, to the adult protagonists' relationship with their mothers. These mothers do not conform to traditional types of femininity. Quite the opposite; films such as *A mi madre le gustan las mujeres* (Inés París and Daniela Fejerman, 2002, Spain), with a middle-class turned-lesbian mother, *Héctor*, with a drug-addicted prostitute mother, and *Sévigé* or *Hola, ¿estás sola?*, both with absent mothers, all portray mother figures that may be considered 'bad mothers' by traditional standards. But, without demonising her, these films construct the mother as a psychic locus from which her children's conflicts originate but also from which, through a process of reconciliation or acceptance, many of her children's problems can be resolved.

The third type of mother described by Gámez Fuentes is also rarely found in the MJCE films. Using mother-daughter relationships to explore continuities and discontinuities between the past and the present (e.g. *Nadie hablará de nosotras cuando hayamos muerto*), these narratives

offer another more enriching type of mother figure that contests the homogenous construction of Francoist motherhood (and, by extension, of womanhood).

Furthermore, some MJCE films offer a revision of the role of women in history. Stretching the reading, these figures can stand as symbolic mothers or, at least, precursory models of alternative femininities. Feminists and many cultural texts produced by women have tried to recuperate the role of women in history. Brooksbank (1997) establishes a distinction between two different approaches, genealogical and historical:

Equality feminist histories are designed to highlight the achievements of previously undervalued women in order to affirm all women's equal worth in relation to men. [Conversely, genealogies] seek to address the obliteration over time of the mother-daughter relationship not in order to demonstrate a (equal or unequal) relation to men, but in order to reaffirm women's existence on their own terms. (153)

Following this distinction we could understand that a historical approach seeks to instate 'heroines', equivalent to the 'great bearded men' of history, whereas a genealogical approach explores women's experience, whether or not they are famous, thereby establishing a continuity of female subjectivity.

Both approaches can be found, sometimes within the same film, depending on the eyes of the spectator. Only two films focus on established historical figures (*Gala* and *Yoyes*) while others explore the experiences of ordinary women who participated in moments of established historical importance such the Spanish Civil War in *Mujeres en pie de guerra* (Susana Kosha, 2004, Spain) or the widespread emigration of the 1960s in *El tren de la memoria* (Ana Pérez and Marta Arribas, 2005, Spain). Inscribing 'ordinary' women's subjectivity into history, *El Calentito*,

Entre rojas and other films offer personal versions of history, often informed by the filmmakers' personal experiences.

Many of these are documentary films, a genre that has experienced a revival in the last ten years (e.g. Seguí, 2007). Martínez-Carazo says that contemporary Spanish documentaries show a particular interest in offering historical revisions that reveal the changeable and ineffable nature of history, and the way that the past is constructed by and for the present (2005: 268). This is certainly true of the documentary film *Gala*, in which the filmmakers dispute the significance of this figure amongst themselves and in relation to historical constructions of this woman.

A brief analysis of this documentary will serve us as an example of the search, suggested by some MJCE films, for alternative historical models of femininity that can function as symbolic mothers.

5.2.1. Searching for alternative historical models of femininity in *Elena Dimitrievna Diakonova: Gala* (Silvia Munt, 2003)

Elena Dimitrievna Diakonova: Gala is the first feature-length film directed by the prestigious Catalan actress Silvia Munt. The title indicates that the film aims to explore the personal identity of this Russian émigré (*Elena Dimitrievna Diakonova*) as much as her historical identity (*Gala*). Framed in the context of the centenary of Salvador Dalí's birth, the film received the support of the Catalan government, its national television, and the Fundación Gala-Dalí²², and, maybe for this reason, it especially dwells on the relationship of Gala and Dalí and their years in Catalonia.

Munt was especially interested in this subject because Gala and her relationships, especially with Dalí, stand as a challenge to conventional

ways of constructing femininity and relationships, even today (Camí-Vela, 2005: 354-5). As Munt researched the subject, she came to realise how the image of this complex and mysterious woman, who defied the conventions of her time, had been manipulated and demonised by history (a history, that it is implied, has been narrated by men). A reassessment of Gala's (socio-historically constructed) immorality indeed stands as the central idea of the film and also informs the media declarations and promotional statement of Silvia Munt (e.g. Peláez, 2003). Opening the polemic about her figure, the very beginning already hints the approach the film takes in gathering multiple, international, heterogeneous and contradictory points of view. In the credit sequence, the contradictory voice-over statements of three unidentified people are expressed over the credits; one in particular voices Gala's opinion that original sin was in society rather than in the individual.

The film is constructed as a metaphorical and physical journey. First, it is a biographical journey, chronologically and episodically structured, to the socio-historically located places where Gala lived and her character developed, such as the Paris of the Surrealists after the shock of the First World War. By using a multitude of shots of different forms of transport (entering a new location through tunnels, under bridges and so on), the film emphasises the cultural transitions that Gala had to undergo in her life. Secondly, the film foregrounds the physical journey that the filmmakers actually took, by recording images of the crew traveling on trains, boats and other transports. Emphasizing the production process of this narrative serves as a constant reminder of the constructed character of any narrative (including history itself). Thirdly, through the discussions of the members of the crew and the contradictory opinions expressed by the interviewees about Gala, the film invites the spectator to embark on a journey of self-questioning, not only about Gala but also about why

certain attitudes towards sex, ageing, relationships and so on are socially condemned, especially in women.

This research documentary combines evocative elements (e.g. archival footage, photos, and shots of the places where she lived, accompanied by voice-over readings from the letters and autobiographies of Dalí, Paul Éluard, Gala and her friend Anastasia Tsveltaeva) with actual interviews of pundits and people who knew her. The variety of voices that are invited to participate in the construction of Gala's portrait includes experts from a wide variety of fields (e.g. a Russian psychologist; people from the art world; Gala's and Dalí's biographers). But, emphasizing the personal side of Gala, considerable credit is given to ordinary people who personally knew Gala and Dalí, such as their servants in Portlligat and Cadaqués, people from those villages, and their friends and lovers. Although Gala's words are scarcely voiced in the film (probably because not many of her letters remain), her subjectivity is inscribed through an unconventional mechanism: by including interviews with a card reader, a phrenologist and other experts from discredited epistemological fields that Gala fervently believed in.

Intertextually, the film contests and complicates the multiple prejudices that surround Gala's image and that, although not directly named, overshadow the film. Among other subjects²³, these popular criticisms include socially thorny issues, especially regarding 'proper' femininity. For example, if she has been blamed for being a bad and 'unnatural' mother to her daughter, Cecile Éluard, the film explores what the arrival of the child, just as Éluard's artistic vocation was getting recognised by the thriving and nascent circle of the surrealists, meant for the young Gala, who, having always aspired to be in the midst of creative environments and having supported Éluard's aspirations from the very beginning, was socially isolated by the responsibility of motherhood. To give another

example; contesting ideas about her manipulative and avid sexuality, which upseted her relationship with Éluard, the film refutes the accepted idea that Gala compelled Éluard to be in an open relationship, and shows instead that this was his idea. It also refutes that she attached herself to famous husbands, highlighting instead how she intellectually and practically supported their careers from the very onset, and almost suggesting that Éluard and Dalí created art at least partly because Gala had 'created' them²⁴.

The crew members, who function as the 'vox populi', also discuss these issues. In these discussions, (generally female) members of the crew often highlight how Gala's actions were especially condemned because she did not follow (gender) conventions and did not correctly perform 'femininity'. In some of their observations, they directly compare their attitudes towards life with hers, identifying her as a positive role model in many aspects of her behaviour, especially in her daringly defiant attitude towards rigid gender conventions that, even in her alternative social circles, were still dominant (as shown by Breton and Buñuel's attitude towards Gala). In this way, Gala stands as a precursor of the modern woman and as an alternative symbolic mother.

Although these discussions have been criticised as 'mumbling' diversions (A.F.S., 2003), they are actually essential to the documentary. It may be true that they are 'mumbling' – and, often, banal and prosaic – discussions, but they are thus marked as authentic, and they invite the spectator to embark on a journey that is meant to challenge common opinions, not just about Gala but also about femininity and relationships in general. *Gala* shares elements with recent 'performative' documentaries that appeal emotionally to the spectator, stress the subjective construction of certain 'realities', and "animate the personal so that it may become our point of entry to the political" (Nichols, 2001: 137). Furthermore:

These [recent] performative films on gender and sexuality step away from a specific political agenda, issues of social policy, or the construction of a national identity to enlarge our sense of the subjective dimension to 'forbidden' lives and loves. At their best they generate a feeling of tension between the film as a representation and the world that stands beyond it. They give us a sense of incommensurate magnitudes: a film represents the world in ways that always leave more unsaid than said, that confess to a failure to exhaust a topic through the mere act of representing it. The world is of a greater order of magnitude than any representation, but a representation can heighten our sense of this discrepancy (ibid.: 158)

In summary, in this chapter I have offered a brief analysis of the representation of the family and the mother in the cinema of the MJCE. Since my research focuses especially on films that offer revisions of feminine identity, I initially approached representations of the family and the mother as imaginary spaces of belonging.

As analysed in chapter 1, an essential element in the construction and reconstruction of personal identity is the network of relations of belonging that people establish within wider social groups, which ideally provide a space of stability and of continuity between the past and the future. In Spanish society, the family has been a fundamental site of belonging and still stands as an essential pillar of our collective mythology. Motherhood and the relationships between mothers and daughters have also been hot issues in feminist theory and a common subject of women's literature.

Analysis reveals that the MJCE films, especially those from the 1990s, adopt a sceptical and critical attitude towards the traditional family, yet still show a yearning for family-shaped structures, albeit favouring alternative familial constellations. Contrary to what might be expected, until the end of the 1990s, there is a scarcity of sympathetic representations of mother figures and little reflection upon the experience

of motherhood. In this sense, the approach generally adopted in the MJCE films is consistent with the general tendencies of contemporary Spanish cinema.

Me llamo Sara and *Elena Dimitrievna Diakonova: Gala* both address these issues within the frame of constructions of femininity. They invite the spectator to embark on a process of questioning gender identity, in *Me llamo Sara* through identification with the protagonist in the film's testimonial narrative, and, in *Gala*, through a socio-historical and psychological journey to understand this controversial character who challenges common morality and normative femininity.

6. MATTERS OF THE HEART. SEXUALITY AND LOVE

Love and sexuality are obviously central to the way feminine identity has been defined and representations of these have been of particular interest for cultural gender studies. As other writers have noted, recent Spanish women filmmakers adopt counter-normative perspectives when addressing these issues. The objective of this chapter is to analyse how they approach them, focusing especially on a discourse analysis of *Te doy mis ojos* as a particularly apt example.

6.1. Sex and sexuality

Post-Francoist Spanish cinema is internationally associated with explicit representations of violence and sex (Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, 1998: 112). In the Transition, representations of sex clearly served the purpose of vicariously relieving the libido of a society indoctrinated in an anti-sex ideology, becoming almost a commercial imperative during the 1980s (Ballesteros, 2001: 178-180). They also had a political dimension; for example, some films created a space of visibility for groups which hitherto had been repressed and established parallels between the marginal sexual position of the characters and their marginal political stance (ibid.: 93). Cinema, and especially Almodóvar's work, served as a banner to project internationally the image of a 'New, Modern Spain'.

These sexual representations have often been so extreme as to be qualified as quasi-pornographic by Melero speaking about late 1970s

films¹ (2004) and Camí-Vela (2005a: 71) and Ballesteros (2001) on films from the following two decades. For Ballesteros, 1990s films often adopt the conventions of heterosexual pornography, playing with its iconography – e.g. orgies and sadomasochism – and its ‘structures of progressive visibility’, i.e. 1) exhibition of the female sexual organs, 2) simulated and implied penetration, and 3) simulated and implied fellatio and male ejaculation². But, unlike pornography, male nudity is rare; the films capitalise instead on the naked female body, which is often visually fragmented and glamourised, and which serves as the signifier of female desire (2001:180-183). As in mainstream heterosexual pornography, these sequences are clearly constructed for a male spectator (Camí-Vela, 2005a; Aguilar, 1998)³.

Although Aguilar and Ballesteros’ studies refer to the representation of sex in 1990s cinema, they often focus on the production of ‘veteran’ directors who are especially interested in exploring sex (e.g. Vicente Aranda, Juan José Bigas Luna and Pedro Almodóvar). What remains unexplored is if the directors of the JCE continue these tendencies or if they offer other ways of representing desire and sex⁴.

A different perspective is clearly offered in the work of women directors from the JCE, who have often expressed their dissatisfaction about conventional ways of representing sex; for example, they have rejected how female sexuality is represented as phallo-dependant and mechanical (e.g. Dolores Payás in Camí-Vela, 2005: 125-6) and the female body is exposed and fetishised in cinema (e.g. Iciar Bollain, in *ibid.*: 60). In their films, they have generally avoided and sometimes contested these conventions.

Rather than offering explicit representations of sex, their films instead reflect upon heterosexual female sexuality⁵, although it is rarely the main

issue addressed, except in *El dominio de los sentidos* (Judith Colell, Isabel Gardela, Núria Olivé, Teresa de Pelegrí and María Ripoll, 1995, Spain), *Sexo por compasión* and *Sexo oral* (Chus Gutiérrez, 1994, Spain). A few films inscribe reflections upon lesbian desire, albeit only secondarily (e.g. *El dominio de los sentidos*). Marta Ballebò-Coll's films, which foreground lesbian subjectivity, are exceptional in their deconstructive treatment of the lesbian as 'othered' and will be further analysed in the next chapter.

Contrary to what is common in 1990s cinema (Aguilar, 1998: 83 and ff.), their female characters discuss, often with other women, sexual desires, fantasies and frustrations, addressing issues that rarely receive cinematic attention. For example *Entre rojas*, set in 1974, portrays the life of a group of women political prisoners, and, in a sequence that suggests the changing attitudes towards female sexuality of the time, one of the characters expresses her delight at having discovered her clitoris.

Focusing on the game of seduction or on post-sexual situations (e.g. *El palo*, *La suerte dormida*), sex is often condemned to ellipsis, for example, in *Iris* (Rosa Vergés, 2004, Spain) and *Costa Brava*. When these filmmakers represent sexual situations, there is a clear reservation about lapsing into certain conventions. If sexual sequences are typically constructed as penetrative, led by men who are moved by a primal sexual urge and presented as rough, short and 'finished' (with the lovers reaching the climax) (Aguilar, 1998: 76 and ff.), women directors move away from these conventions. In their films, the sexual act is often a consequence of a female desire built up slowly through the narrative, and the beginning and/or end of the sexual encounter (also often penetrative) is often omitted, emphasizing the process.

Similarly, they also move away from conventional ways of using nudity. They include male and female nudity equally and quite often in non-sexual

situations (e.g. the penitent body of Lola, played by Elisabeth Margoni, in *Sexo por compasión*). Unlike traditional representations of heterosexual male desire, films such as *Yoyes*, *Sé quién eres* and *Utopía* portray the naked male body, without objectification – neither lingering on nor fragmenting it.

Then again, there is a rare but nascent tendency to self-consciously reverse the male gaze in contemporary Spanish films (Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, 1998: 138), including some films directed by women such as *Km. 0* (Yolanda García and Juan Luis Iborra, 2000, Spain), *Retrato de mujer con hombre al fondo* and *Costa Brava*. For example, *Muere, mi vida* ironically constructs a *mise-en-scène* of desire that borrows elements from pornography (e.g. sliding yogurt over the woman's mouth and chest, which, comically, is fully clothed), while the semi-naked male body is fragmented and constructed as a 'spectacle' -as one of the characters affirms – for both an implied and a literal audience: the desiring spectator and the group of ex-girlfriends that, hidden, observe the encounter.

In contrast with the Spanish cinematic tradition that often masks the aggression of sexual assaults with a humorous or sexy treatment (for a nuanced analysis see Zecchi, 2007 and Aguilar, 1998: 90 and ff.), these directors rarely portray sexual violence and, when they do, they do not treat it in such a way (e.g. *Palabras encadenadas*, *Iris*).

What most distinguishes their representations of sex and desire is that they are rarely constructed as 'de-contextualised'. Shaped by regulated conventions, in Spain as elsewhere, mainstream sexual representations rarely reflect upon the way that the sexual act and the mechanism of desire are linked to the psychological location of the characters. For Williams, sex and violence are *primary attractions* of popular cinema, primarily because they solicit bodily reactions from the spectator as no

other representation does (2008: 63-4). It could be added that those sexual scenes which are constructed as interludes – bracketed through the use of music, the *mise-en-scène*, and so on – better serve this purpose, though at the expense of narrative value. To elaborate upon Ballesteros's argument, this bracketing is common to the representations of sex in both pornographic and many mainstream Spanish films. Sex hereby becomes a 'mythical construction', expressed in a vacuum and therefore universalised:

Pornography, like marriage and the fictions of romantic love, assists the process of false universalising. Its excesses belong to the timeless, locationless area outside history, outside geography, where fascist art is born (Carter, 2000: 534)

Contrastingly, in the films of these women directors, sexual situations are often completely embedded within the narrative; showing, for example, the character's insecurities in *A mi madre le gustan las mujeres* or the intimate gestures of a established couple in *Yoyes*. Rather than presenting a sexual fantasy for the spectator, they offer a reflection upon the workings of the desire of that specific character, as I will shortly argue in the analysis of *Te doy mis ojos*.

Sex is rarely associated with negative or contradictory emotions like desperation or grief in cinematic representations. Brunsdon (2000a), Johnson (2004) and Williams (2007: chap. 7) have noted with surprise that, since the 1990s, certain films (from different contexts)⁶ are bringing these together, "mak[ing] us realise how impoverished are the gestures and emotions of most cinematic sex acts" (ibid.: 273). Although maybe not with the thoroughness of the films the above analysts addressed, Spanish female directors are also exploring these avenues. The sexual encounters led by Alba (Candela Peña) in *Insomnio* and by Clara (Marta Etura) in *Para que no me olvides* show us other facets of sex: "not sex as pleasure, but sex as a grief-torn attempt at both connection and

obliteration, sex as the expression of pain and anger” (borrowing the words of Brunsdon when describing a British film, 2000a: 173).

In summary, the work of these filmmakers presents a different perspective upon female sexuality that counterbalances the way that it has often been represented in the Spanish context. Sexuality displaces sex from its privileged position in the narratives. Female sexuality is constructed as a flow, in constant process, and multiple, with many sites of desire. When the sexual act is represented, it is completely embedded within the narrative, reflecting upon the character’s psychology, and, sometimes, upon the socio-historical space that the character inhabits. It renders visible the cultural component of sex, and its complexities, and thus distances itself from essentialist and universalising conceptions about female or male sexuality, rendering visible that, for example, a woman who is facing death (*Mi vida sin mí*) does not feel desire, conceive her body, or understand her sexuality in the same way as, for example, a woman who has just giving birth (*Insomnio*).

6.2. Engaging with the romantic discourse

Throughout the history of cinema, romance has been and remains a primordial structuring fantasy. If the romantic tale fetishises love – either when unfulfilled or when satisfied – in a way that has been constructed as *the* transcendental response to the individual’s problems or existential void, (Contemporary) Spanish cinema is often more focused on portraying love realistically.

Portrayed not as romantic but rather as complex dynamics of power, affection and dependency, relationships are central to many contemporary

film narratives – e.g. *Pudor*, *Tapas* and *Lucía y el sexo* (Julio Medem, 2001, Spain) –, including those directed by women.

As many writers have noted (e.g. Selva, 1998; Santamarina, 1998: 33-4; Zecchi, 2004: 332), these directors adopt a sceptical stance towards love (usually heterosexual) and represent relationships, with their satisfaction and dissatisfactions (e.g. *Insomnio*, *Cómo ser mujer y no morir en el intento*), sometimes as a 'nuisance', sometimes as only a possible alternative to loneliness (e.g. *Tomándote*). Most choose to feature it secondarily – e.g. *Los pasos perdidos*, *Juego de Luna* (Mónica Laguna, 2001, Spain) and *Sé quién eres* – and only a few ignore relationships or romantic interests completely (e.g. *Todo está oscuro*).

Nevertheless, there are also several examples of more-or-less orthodox romantic films that narrate tales of nascent love (e.g. *Boom, Boom; Alma gitana*) or struggles to recuperate a lost love or live with its memory, for example, *Cuando el mundo se acabe, te seguiré amando* (Pilar Sueiro, 1998, Spain) and *Iris*. Basically following the narrative conventions of romance, the love story features prominently, complicated by obstacles that hinder its development (e.g. confusions of identity and social or physical barriers) and that defer a happy ending where love overcomes all (Gill and Herdieckerhoff, 2007). For example, *Pon un hombre en tu vida* follows many narrative conventions of romantic comedies: the initial mutual hostility of the male and female protagonists, which plays with their 'irreconcilable' gender differences, only increases when, by an unfortunate incident, they get stuck together (in a near-to-death accident that exchanges their bodies); growing into enjoying each other's company, their romance sparks, only to be deferred once again; finally, the happy ending present us with a man who has changed from being rude and sexist to sweet and considerate.

Even in these cases, love is often complicated by other central subjects – e.g. paternal feelings in *Semen, una historia de amor* (Daniela Fejerman and Inés París, 2005, Spain and UK) – and rarely portrayed as 'naïve' romanticism. For example, *Boom, Boom* engages with many narrative conventions of the romantic comedy (e.g. the lovers who after meeting for the first time are unable to find each other, despite almost crossing paths) but clearly criticises the femininity constructed in the romantic discourse (e.g. women constructed as objects of desire). As in many recent such narratives e.g. *Sex and the City*, the action is driven by the 'new woman' (independent, urban) who is now "divorced from any identification with domesticity [and] belong[s] within the newly feminised city" (Thornham, 2007: 35).

Conscious that romance has been traditionally considered one of the focal points in the construction of feminine identity, a few of their films (e.g. *Puede ser divertido* and *Retrato de mujer con hombre al fondo*) engage with romantic tales only in order to contest them (Díaz and Cerdán, 2002: 86). Since the arrival of democracy, this has indeed been a usual strategy in literature written by women. They directly 'quote' or rework the romantic discourse so vehemently reinforced in the Francoist discourse of womanhood and in Western culture in general in order to cancel it, seeing it as a ruse that compels women into accepting "their position as an object within the heterosexual economy" (Gámez Fuentes, 2004: 130, my translation)⁷.

As well as in women's cultural production, romance has been a focus of feminist theory, especially since the 1970s when:

feminists criticised romantic love as the 'pivot of women's oppression', considering romanticism as a cultural tool of male power to keep women from knowing their condition [...] since its false idealization concealed gender inferiority through the so-called 'pedestal treatment' (Pulcini and Passerini, 2002: 107-8)

If romantic love as presented by these filmmakers is in crisis, this does not seem to be the case in the reality presented by sociological studies. In the West, it seems, the romantic discourse is re-gaining force in recent decades, and has come to function as an anchor that compensates for the loss of other sources of security, as a "secure narrative in unsettled times" (Gill and Herdieckerhoff, 2007: 493)⁸. Castells reflects upon the prevalence of the romantic discourse among Spaniards despite the social changes:

56% of women and 46% of men believe that 'there is someone out there that, on some level, is predestined for each of us (whether we have found him/her or not)'. After thousands of years of domination, conflict and violence between men and women, and in a technological environment in which human reproduction can be replicated in a laboratory, it is remarkable that the idea of romantic love – of that unique person to whom, once found, it is normal to be faithful for the rest of one's life – remains strong, mainly among women. 77% of women and 74% of men believe that 'true love overcomes all'. That feeling of paradise lost – yet still within reach – is maybe what best explains the continuous search for the other, the persistence of the family despite everything, the will to form new families when one has failed, and the bitterness and violence when the crisis arrives (2007: 36; My translation)⁹

It is against this sociological and filmic context that we should understand Icíar Bollaín's description of *Te doy mis ojos* – a film about domestic violence – as a 'love story'.

6.3. *Te doy mis ojos* (Icíar Bollaín, 2003)

Since the mid-1990s, the subject of domestic violence has gained momentum in Spanish sociological, media and political discourses. Wife-beating is not in anyway new, but reported cases sharply increased in the last decade. Rather than denoting an increase in violence, this may signal socio-cultural changes that have affected the way domestic violence is

seen (e.g. not longer as a family/private issue) (Brooksbank Jones, 1997: 97-8). While some think that violence has increased with the increment of women's independence that threatens certain men, Castells and Subirats are more inclined to think that: "it is not that violence is an indicator of the decline of the [patriarchal] model, but that the decline of the model gives a new meaning to the violence" (2007: 139; My translation¹⁰).

The news report almost weekly the murder of a woman at the hands of her partner or ex-partner¹¹. But the problem reaches resonance only with extreme cases. Offering little reflection upon the socio-cultural context of the problem, the incident is often described in isolation and pushed into the minor 'crimes and accidents' (*sucesos*) section of newspapers (Cruz, 2005: n.p.).

Politically, tackling domestic violence has become more of a political objective, especially during the 2000s. Featuring prominently in the electoral programme of the socialist government of Rodríguez Zapatero, this resulted in a comprehensive law for the prevention of domestic violence passed in 2004¹².

In the midst of this flurry of interest around the subject, in which the roles of victim and tyrant are clearly established but being 'othered', rarely explored or problematised, Icíar Bollaín launched her film *Te doy mis ojos*, describing it as a love story: "We [Bollaín and co-writer Alicia Luna] did not want to admit it, but we had to recognise that we were narrating a love story. Domestic or gender violence, domestic terrorism...that is how they call it, we reminded ourselves" (in Gutiérrez Carbajo, 2006: 65; my translation)¹³. After their experience making *Amores que matan* (2000), a false 'documentary' short that put the aggressor as protagonist, they were aware of how polemical it was to address this subject using these unpopular terms¹⁴. However, the film became an audience and critical

success, reaching the benchmark of the one million spectators in Spain and collecting numerous national and international awards (e.g. sweeping most of the major categories of the 2004 Goya Awards).

Although many writers have studied this film, they have generally overlooked the prominence of its love story, focusing instead on the representation of domestic violence (Donapetry, 2007 and Cruz, 2006), on the narrative function of the paintings (Martínez-Carazo, 2007), on its analysis of gender roles (Goss, 2008) and on its symbolic representation of the male body (Zecchi, 2007). Only Palencia Villa, in a short essay about Bollaín's cinema, mentions, without further analysis, the importance of the romantic discourse in the construction of the protagonist's desire (2005: 115 and 117). Cruz meanwhile consciously overlooks this aspect, understanding it as a "problematic element, related not with the film per se but with its promotion" (2005: n.p.; my translation). She suggests that it is misleading to describe this relationship of dependency, domination and submission as love¹⁵.

In my opinion, Bollaín is far from wanting to define what 'true' love is. As Bollaín and Luna have asserted in many interviews, they wanted instead to explore the issues that media reports leave unanswered:

Why does a woman put up with a man who beats her to a pulp, for an average of ten years? Why does not she go away? Not only that *but* how come some maintain that they are still in love? Economic dependency does not explain that one of every four European and North-American women affirm that they have had a violent relationship in their lifetime.

As we were researching the subject, we discovered that one of the main reasons was that they still hope the man will change. Thus, our character is a woman who still hopes that the man who she felt in love with will come through the door...But, who is that man? Why does a profile of the violent man hardly exist? Why do those men mistreat for years those who they claim to love with all their hearts? (Bollaín's statement in La Iguana, 2003?; my translation¹⁶)

Unlike most of the films from the corpus of this thesis, *Te doy mis ojos* is a programmatic social film. Backed up by the extensive documentation that Bollaín and Luna undertook during the writing stage¹⁷, it offers an investigation of the socio-cultural dynamics that underlie this problem, focusing on the role that gender roles and relationships play in this.

6.3.1. Narrative and character description

The film constructs the narrative around Pilar (Laia Marull) and, secondarily, her husband Antonio (Luis Tosar) both of whom embark on a process of self-questioning through the film. The narrative organization hinges around the four final stages of their relationship: the (first?) abandonment –the reconciliation – the struggle – the (definitive?) abandonment. Almost silencing completely physical violence and its scars, the film explores instead the mentalities and psychological effects that drive Antonio to repetitively exert such violence and Pilar to stay.

The first section focuses especially on Pilar. The credit sequence already launches the spectator into the swirl of the conflict. In the middle of a winter night, Pilar rushes tremblingly around her flat, packing a bag and getting her son Juan (Nicolas Fernández Luna) out of bed. Scared and confused, she leaves her house and finds shelter at her sister Ana's house (Candela Peña). In the following sequence, we find out, through Ana's eyes, the reason why Pilar has left her husband. Throughout this section, Antonio will try to regain Pilar, offering her presents (including his enrolment in a therapy group). On her part, Pilar starts a new job in a church-museum. This section introduces all the characters and the interwoven problems that affect the central relationship, i.e. economic dependency and concern for the child; Pilar's lack of voice and her intertwined feelings of love and fear for Antonio; different understandings of the problem as a private or as a public issue. A confrontation of

different models of femininity is staged through Pilar's interactions with her sister and her mother Aurora (Rosa María Sardá).

The second section presents the reconciliation of the couple. Under the auspice of her mother, Antonio and Pilar meet at Juan's birthday party. Soon after, in their first private meeting, by the river, they re-establish their alliance, teaming up against the world ("Screw everything" they shout in unison to the wind). In this sequence, Antonio's discourse is permeated by promises of change. He shows to Pilar a tri-coloured therapeutic notebook where, with analysis of his positive and negative emotions, he aims to learn how to come to grips with his problems. He also appeals to their (romantic) love: "Being together, I can overcome everything...but without you, I cannot do anything". In therapy, Antonio tries to learn to explore his feelings with the help of a therapist (Sergi Calleja). This section finishes with Ana's wedding, where Pilar and Ana quarrel over Antonio.

The third section presents Pilar's return to their home and the re-establishment of their everyday life. As their habits are restored, the menacing manifestations of Antonio's anger escalate, and he often recurs to belittling her. Pilar starts a training course to become an art guide, and develops a new passion. Her growing independence triggers Antonio's insecurity, which, extensively explored in this section, is presented as one of the key causes of his violence. The sequence in which Pilar explains a Kandinsky's painting visually constructs an argument that will be openly reinforced in the following sequence: that Antonio (standing for traditional 'masculinity') channels his fear (a fear of losing her) as violence (a more 'acceptable' emotion for men)¹⁸.

The final section presents the dissolution of the relationship and opens with their second meeting at the river. The sequence is linked with the

previous one, and opens with a dissolve of Kandinsky's painting with the water. Joining Antonio by the river, Pilar explains that a job opportunity has arisen in Madrid; defensively, Antonio replies that she does not need it¹⁹. She tries to convince him to move to Madrid and, recalling their previous sequence by the river, exclaims, this time unaccompanied "And screw everything". Arguing in separated shots, he blames her for wanting to spoil everything and recriminates her that he is doing all the therapist 'parody' for nothing. Trying to build a second bridge, Pilar reads from the tri-coloured notebook his words about how anger feels and she likens it to the feeling of fear. Silently, he takes the notebook, throws it to the river and walks away. After this sequence, Pilar confronts her mother for the first time about why she stayed in an abusive relationship. Tension will rise in the following sequences reaching a peak. In cold blood, Antonio, confronted with Pilar's refusal to give up her interview, turns to physically attacking her. Soon after, she will leave him.

Like Antonio's pet name for her ('titch'), Pilar is characterised as fragile, shy with people, and low in self-esteem (i.e. with a constant need to apologise and difficulty in expressing her opinions). Her body language is contained and she finds it difficult to talk. In the credit sequence, when she faces her sister the only thing she can mumble, while breaking in sobs, is "I am so stupid...I came wearing my slippers". It is not until the third sequence (the first in the graveyard) that the abuse is 'named' (verbalised) by Ana to the discomfort of Pilar, who will not speak openly about it until the end of the film, when she confesses to Ana that she cannot see herself. Much of Pilar's characterisation is based on a detailed attention to her expressions in multiple reactions-shots. Along the film, she will gain confidence, a change that is especially conveyed through the changes in her appearance and in her increasing ability to express her opinion. Her journey is punctuated by the steps she takes towards liberation: the abuse comes to the open in the first sequences (hitherto,

her sister, at least, had been unaware about it); she gets a new job and, through it, moves towards economic independence, towards creating a support circle of friends and towards discovering new interests; progressively, she comes to grips with her situation and several scenes punctuate her slow awakening (e.g. the confrontation with her mother in the graveyard).

Antonio shares with Pilar difficulties in communicating verbally. He is a silent man who, lacking of goals and dreams (as he confesses) and strongly beholding traditional ideas of normality (to which he constantly appeals), lives a life of quiet desperation in which Pilar is his main anchor. His body language (e.g. his folded arms) and his monosyllabic replies aid this image. Through the film, he barely talks to anyone but Pilar and the therapist; he does not even interact with his son, which contrasts with the multitude of sequences that show Juan interacting with Pilar and Ana's husband, John (Dave Mooney) and further sketches his traditional ways of approaching parenthood²⁰. With Pilar, his stance is either pushy and authoritative or tender and romantic. Projecting his sense of inferiority onto Pilar, he belittles her (e.g. sequence of anger outburst by the road). Unable to express any opinion in the group sessions, he loosens up when he meets the therapist in private, unveiling his feelings of confusion and fear. The group sessions are shot with plenty of long and medium shots of the group, punctuated by reaction shots of a silent Antonio who is generally distant with the 'others'. Despite the parallelisms that are constructed during the film between him and this group of men²¹ (e.g. the same arguments: 'she does it to provoke me', 'I just want a normal, quiet life') he detests and does not recognise himself in their image. He will voice this clearly in the aforementioned first meeting by the river; pouring optimism, he is determined to change *with* her help and remarks: "I do not want to reach my sixties and see myself like *those* guys from the therapy, fucked up, bitter and embittering their families' live"²². His

isolation contrasts with Pilar's situation, who enjoys her sister's and friends' support. As in the case of Pilar, the choice of casting, with Luis Tosar as Antonio, reinforces this image because his physiognomy and his recent roles²³.

The film offers an entirely linear narrative, with background information revealed through dialogues. It is consciously and carefully structured through multiple 'varied repetition'. Many sequences find a close echo in another part of the film and present similar characteristics (i.e. location, content, characters), as for example in the two sequences by the river (i.e. the couple speaks about anger and their future). The variations then acquire a symbolic relevance and tend to indicate changes in Pilar's psychology. The first and last sequences of the film, showing Pilar abandoning her house, are clear example. If, in the opening sequence, a confused and scared Pilar escapes the house in the middle of the night, rushing out with a few possessions and dragging her son along, the end sequence varies significantly: she goes into the flat during the morning, with two of her female friends and picks up her belongings, serenely and without rushing around despite being under Antonio's surveillance. No words mediate between them²⁴. The way the sequences are filmed reinforce the circularity of the narrative structure: the film opens with extreme long shots of the streets of an urban neighbourhood and progresses towards the interior of Pilar's flat whereas the end sequence starts inside the flat (with a medium shot scope) and finishes with a long shot from Antonio's point of view in the balcony of Pilar walking down the street with her friends. Two interpretations may be extracted from this structure: this could be happening in any other house and the solution partially lies on the opening up of the problem²⁵.

Another recurrent narrative mechanism is the use of (unorthodox) *mise-en-abîme*. There are two such types of representations within the film: the

paintings and two 'role-plays'. They serve as forecasts of future narrative developments, as visual metaphors of Pilar's subjectivity and/or as 'moments of realisation' for Pilar. Naturally embedded in the film, these representations better serve their function as distorting mirrors. Trapped in the poetic universe of art or spontaneously staged in the role-plays, discourses about (traditional) masculinity and femininity and about (romantic) love become denaturalised. Furthermore, they open space for deeper interpretations of the importance of visual culture and myths for the formation of collective psyche.

6.3.2. Models of femininity

I am not going to further analyze the models of masculinity explored in the film since that is not the focus of the study; but it is worthwhile to note that the film interrogates masculinity as well as femininity, as I have superficially explored in the previous section²⁶.

Regarding the questioning of models of femininity, there are two main points of anchorage: Pilar's interaction with her sister and her mother and the dialogue established between Pilar's story and the paintings that she encounters in the film.

As if her position was replicating the location of the Spanish media consumer that is constantly interpellated by contradictory discourses of new and traditional models of femininity (as analysed in chapter 2), Pilar is located at the apex of a triangular structure regarding models of femininity. She aspires to be someone closer to her sister (i.e. moving away from Toledo, being economically independent and having a job that interests her) but she occupies a position closer to her mother's (i.e. 'pillar' of the family, abnegated and subjugated to her husband).

If Pilar is represented as a traditional (upper-working-class or lower middle-class) housewife, Ana is constructed as a sort of 'opposite', the modern (middle-class) professional woman. Ana works as a painting restorer, is economically independent, well-travelled and opinionated; marking class differences, she lives in the centre of the old town. In the first sequences of the film (e.g. in the cemetery, in the church when Pilar goes for the interview, in the rooftop), Ana takes a pushy and on some level arrogant attitude towards Pilar. She wants to help but forgets to understand first²⁷. She will reproduce Antonio's attitude towards Pilar: she unwillingly 'supplants' Pilar's subjectivity with hers e.g. talking instead of Pilar in the scene of the job interview²⁸. After their argument at Ana's wedding, Ana will not appear again until the end of the film; during this quarrel, Pilar –hitherto employing soft manners and speech – confronts Ana, telling her that she is going back to Antonio and airing long-standing grievances. In these last sequences, when Pilar decides to leave Antonio again, Ana does not express any opinion but only listens and offers her support.

Pilar's mother corresponds to the stereotypical model of femininity prescribed during Francoism. Aurora's characterisation (e.g. dress, manners, the locations she occupies²⁹) emphasises that she is a typical traditional middle-class housewife/widow. The sequences in which she appears open with 'symbolic' items to which she is visually attached and that are associated with traditional Spanish Catholic and familiar culture (e.g. the wedding dress, the family album, the family tomb). All her conversations revolve around paying attention to those details that present an image of an 'united' family. She regards family as a sacred unit. Aurora, like Antonio, constantly appeals to 'normality' as a mantra that erases the chaos of life. Often teamed up with Ana's Scottish husband John, however their interactions invalidate the naturalness of certain 'normal' claims³⁰. Despite being aware of her daughter's situation and

after having suffered (it is suggested) a similar situation, she does not condemn it and even pushes Pilar back to Antonio ("for the sake of the kid"; "a woman is never better alone"). She thus naturalises this type of masculine behaviour as normal, as many from that generation did³¹. Pilar confronts Aurora in the second sequence in the graveyard shortly before she leaves Antonio; Pilar recriminates her abnegation and servitude towards a man who mistreated her³². This is the second confrontation of the three that Pilar faces in the film, after confronting her sister in her wedding party and before confronting Antonio, when she tells him that she has stopped loving him. The sequencing of these confrontations works symbolically to reinforce Pilar's psychological journey.

Cinematographically, we are clearly guided to see Aurora as an 'other' and we are not invited to occupy or to understand her stance. Contrarily, and despite her secondary role, Ana's subjectivity is inscribed in the film in several key sequences. For example, the spectator witnesses the first signs of the abuse and the mercurial nature of Antonio through Ana's eyes. In an early sequence that introduces Antonio, Ana goes to Pilar's flat in order to collect some of her stuff. In a bedroom draw, Ana finds a bundle of A&E reports for Pilar; in a sound off, she hears someone entering the flat. From the other side of the ajar door, Ana nervously listens to Antonio, who believes that it is Pilar inside the room and starts talking sweetly to her. When he opens the door his face and speech quickly switch as he angrily orders her out. Ana functions as a sceptical and puzzled witness, unable to understand why Pilar does not *just* walk out. Thus, she embodies a common stance towards this issue, the perspective of those who, without blaming the victims, are intolerant or impatient with them, for not walking away from it.

In a sequence from the first section, the uncomfortable location of Pilar between these two models of femininity is clearly staged in the rooftop of

Ana's flat, overlooking the old Toledo. Aurora arrives with Pilar's wedding dress (in a M.S. that opens the sequence) when Ana is hanging up clothes accompanied by her sister. While Pilar nostalgically caresses her wedding dress, Aurora tries to convince Ana to reuse it: "Since the ceremony will not be...what it *should be*, at least have some decent photos". Soon, a confrontation between Ana and Aurora starts around what Pilar should do about Antonio. Mainly staged with an alternation of medium shots of Aurora and Ana arguing and Pilar's silent reaction shots, the argument is sparked by Aurora's encouraging comment that Pilar should make up with Antonio and go back home. Outraged, Ana replies that Pilar should ask for a divorce and a restraining order (constructing the abuse as a matter of public concern). Aurora answers that "a woman is *never* better alone" and appeals to the importance of family, remarking that whatever happens inside a relationship is unknown to anyone (marking the abuse as a private issue). Ana's anger increases with this remark and forcefully pushes Pilar to talk, unwillingly belittling her sister while listing her multiple permanent injuries (such as nearly losing an eye)³³. When Ana suggest that if Pilar waits too long before she speaks out it may then be too late, a sustained M.S. of a trembling Pilar follows; finally able to talk – "Shut up both of you" –, she grabs the wedding dress and throws it from the balcony. The sequence finishes with a shot of the dress entangled in the electric wires of the street.

The correspondence between Pilar's situation and the story of the paintings is fundamental to understand Pilar's models of femininity; her approach to these paintings have "a paradoxically liberating effect" on her, despite "reflect[ing] the ring of oppression that history and culture have drawn around the female figure" (Martínez-Carazo, 2007: 394, my translation³⁴)

In the first part of the film (the separation), two paintings are featured: Morales' *La Dolorosa* ('Our Lady of all Sorrows') and El Greco's *Burial of Conde Orgaz*. In these paintings, the only woman that appears is the Virgin Mary, elevated to a mythical status that separates her from the powerful (earthly) men that surround her. The former appears in the sequence when Pilar visits the Church of St. Tomé for a job interview. In a backwards tracking medium shot, Pilar advances through one of the lateral wings of the church, looking attentively at the portraits that hang from the walls. Several p.o.v. shots of famous paintings of eminent clergymen intercalate. Suddenly, she gets caught up in one of the paintings. A sustained close-up of the face of 'La Dolorosa' follows, with a change on the music (Figure 6.1). In a long medium shot of Pilar looking at the painting and Ana standing by her side, Ana wittily whispers "She just realised that she has gone out wearing her slippers!", referring to the opening sequence. This sequence is preceded by the conversation of Ana and Pilar in the graveyard when Ana compels her to divorce Antonio, after mentioning that she has seen the A&E reports; without pursuing the subject of her injuries, Pilar expresses her concern about Antonio's well-being if they separated. Pilar is thereby linked to *La Dolorosa*, the silently suffering mother; as Bollaín remarked, cultural discourses have even regulated how "women had to suffer, like *La Dolorosa*, with the head down and contained tears" (in Gutiérrez Carbajo, 2006: 67; my translation). Elevating her pain and subjugation to her man as her *raison d'être*, she is the ultimate model of Catholic (and Francoist) femininity.

In the third section of the film, when Pilar has returned to her husband in the name of love, two other paintings become prominent: Rubens' *Orpheus and Eurydice* and Titian's *Danae*. Narrating the myths, Pilar recounts these tales where men are the desiring active subjects – in order to reach their beloved, Orpheo 'goes through hell' and Zeus transmutes in golden dust – and women are the passive objects of desire, willingly

waiting for their destinies to be decided by men. The sequence with the latter painting comes towards the end of the third section, after Pilar has started her training course to become a guide and her self-confidence is growing; concomitantly, Antonio's insecurity and jealousy increases. Looking for Pilar in the museum, Antonio finds her explaining the myth and history of the painting *Danae* to a small audience³⁵. Many p.o.v. shots and reaction shots of Antonio convey the uneasiness he feels seeing (without being seen) his wife's public and confident performance; this is especially evident when prompted by a male visitor's question, Pilar explores the representation of Danae's desire (referring publicly to a traditionally taboo subject). Describing it as complete abandonment, as an offering of herself to the god – "en cuerpo y alma" / "in body and soul"³⁶-, Pilar's explanation of Danae's desire works as a projection of the way Pilar understands her own as is clear in the sexual scenes. *Danae* is indeed cinematographically and narratively constructed as a *reflected image* of Pilar (Figure 6.2). Melted through the *mise-en-scène* with *Danae*, Pilar continues narrating the history of the painting, possessed by the Spanish kings: "some of their owners wanted Danae close to them, like Jupiter did [and over a sustained medium close-up of Antonio's shadowy face] But others did like her father, locking her away so no *one could see her*"³⁷. The symbolic and deconstructive weight of this sequence is multi-layered not least in its emphasis on the gaze and the "to-be-looked-at-ness" that permeates all the film and re-emerges in this sequence (as Martínez-Carazo, 2007, especially analyses).

The narrative emphasis that is given to these paintings suggests the effects that cultural discourses have had on the construction of models of femininity, exploring in particular how women's suffering, romantic relationships and women's desire have been represented.

6.3.3. The dangers of the romantic discourse

The impenetrable/hostile man who – it is promised – will change into a sensitive one; the belief in that ‘other half’ who is destined for each person; the championing of a love that ‘can overcome all’, that becomes the ultimate source of happiness and the ultimate meaning of life for the lovers... these are common elements in the romantic discourse (cf. Harlequin novels) with which *Te doy mis ojos* engages. The romantic discourse permeates Antonio’s dialogues and shapes Pilar’s personal mythology; framed by the issue of domestic violence, this discourse is thoroughly questioned and shows that this dream can come at a cost.

Through the ‘varied repetition’ that occurs between two sequences, the formulaic character and persuasive power of this discourse is made evident. In the first sequence, at the beginning of the film, Antonio goes to look for Pilar. Surprising her as she enters Ana’s building, they have a conversation through the door window. Antonio tries to convince her to go back home while holding her face in an oppressively tight medium shot (Figure 6.3): “I am going to change, Titch... I am going to change...I swear this time I will surprise you... What is up, Titch? Do not you love me anymore? ... [she breaks into sobs: “I am scared. I am sorry, forgive me”]... Oh, Titch, you are my sunshine, I cannot live without you, I cannot live without you! ...Come on, Titch, look at me...open that door, open the door!”.

Well into the film, when she has returned to him and the anger outbursts are starting to reoccur, another sequence makes direct reference to this one. Pilar and her work friends – Lola (Elisabet Gelabert), Rosa (Kiti Manver), Carmen (Elena Irureta) and Raquel (Chus Gutiérrez) – are on their lunch break. An annoyed Lola asserts that she has had enough of her new boyfriend Chato. Their conversation develops into speaking about

relationships, chatting in a quite pragmatic and casual way about different aspects (e.g. 'Together Living Apart', internet dating). In the background, the unexpected Chato knocks on the glass door. Reluctantly but with the playful insistence of the others, Lola goes out to speak with him. In a medium p.o.v. shot of them from within the bar, they start arguing and in a quasi-synchronised voice off, Carmen and Raquel mockingly enact their conversation. For an instant we have the illusion that we are hearing their conversation. When Carmen-'Chato' utters: "you are my treasure, you are my sunshine...I cannot live without you, I cannot live! ...I love you, I love you!" and Raquel-'Lola' replies: "Are you going to change?", the camera focuses on Pilar's troubled face. The sequence finishes with Pilar smiling uneasy while in voice off Carmen and Raquel comment "That's it. She is 'in the bag'" – "Until the next time". This constitutes one of Pilar's moments of realization. Her ideas of love become denaturalised when contrasted with the more realistic attitudes about relationships of these women (and also Ana).

Antonio's ideas about love are expressed verbally. Throughout the film, he repetitively insists that he cannot live without Pilar and, when she decides to leave him, he even half-heartedly attempts suicide. With his lack of desire and motivations, of supportive friends or relatives, of passion for work or for anything else, Pilar is the centre of Antonio's life. And he demands the same in return: a complete 'union' (confused with possession) that cancels individuality. If Pilar wants to go to the interview in Madrid, it is because she is 'bored with him' (second sequence in the river); if Pilar does not answer the phone, it is because she is 'not thinking about him' or because she is cheating on him (therapist session). As he explains, prompted by the therapist questions, all he wants is "what is normal between a married couple...that both know where the other is, what they are doing, what they are thinking"³⁸, all this, as the therapist ironically remarks, without even talking about it.

The couple also conceives their union as a source of strength. Transcendentalizing the power of their love, they re-establish their relationship, creating an alliance that excludes everybody else, shouting in unison to the wind "Screw everything" in their first meeting by the river; and in the second sexual sequence, just after Antonio's first anger outburst, they re-affirm their union since 'nobody knows him and her better than each other; nobody loves her better than him'.

Their ordinary ideas about love echo theoretical arguments about the subject. Departing from Sartre's ideas, Segarra (2007?) explains that love has often been simultaneously conceived as a 'prison' and, as a means of reaching transcendence. In the first case:

love is a conflict between the individual freedom of the two lovers; [...] the lover wishes to become, in this way, the 'objective limit' of the other's freedom [...]. The lover does not just wishes to 'possess' the person desired –i.e. to possess his/her body – but also, aims to 'seize his/her consciousness (ibid.: 7)

In the second conception, love (and desire) is understood as a way of "overcoming the limits of our individual 'I' and, in this way, achieving, through the fusion with the other, a transcendence that the individual is lacking" (ibid.: 8; my translations)³⁹

Amongst the proliferation of various understandings of family (as studied in the previous chapter), Antonio's conception conforms to the traditional 'normal' way. As Pulcini and Passerini argue, since the late eighteenth century, with the changing ideas about marriage from a 'functional' contract to a 'romantic union':

The family is called upon to perform the delicate and complex task of fulfilling the individual's need for happiness (which, since the eighteenth century, has become a right, along the right to freedom and equality) without disturbing the public and social life governed by rational and impersonal relations (2002: 100)

Defined as the primordial space of affection, family is also conceived as the enclosed and private space where to 'tam[e] the passions' – including anger? – without disrupting the balance of the public sphere (ibid.).

While Antonio's understandings about love are articulated verbally, Pilar's are constructed through her engagement with visual representations (e.g. the paintings) and through her fetishization of certain objects and experiences (e.g. her wedding dress).

In their article about the discursive structure of new romantic novels, Gill and Herdieckerhoff refer to several theorists who have established parallels between romance and pornography based on the fetishization of certain elements:

Suzanne Moore (1991) suggests that romantic novels "fetishise" particular emotions in the way that pornography fetishises particular body parts and sexual positions. [...] At a broader level, Alison Assiter (1988) suggests that the analogy works because both heterosexual pornography and romantic fiction eroticise the power relations between the sexes, in this way making them not only palatable but also pleasurable (2006: 491)

Pilar's fetishization is especially shown in the sequence of Juan's birthday; at the party, Pilar and Antonio meet for the second time onscreen and, through the use of the music, the exchange of looks and their body language, their mutual desire is conveyed. After the party, Pilar asks Ana how John proposed to her. The question surprises Ana; she cannot remember a specific moment and replies that the idea progressively took shape. Contrarily, Pilar remembers every detail of the moment and emotionally describes it to Ana; she especially dwells on the intimate game that they created, in which they gave themselves bit by bit to each other. Ana's silent reaction shots show her uneasiness, especially when Pilar recalls how he gave her 'his hands'. The subject position privileged in this sequence is clearly Ana's.

Soon after, as furtive lovers, Pilar and Antonio consummate their reconciliation in a lyrical but simultaneously, contextually disturbing sexual scene that enacts this intimate game. Starting with Pilar's p.o.v. shot of the roofs of old Toledo, a sustained medium close-up of a resting Pilar, naked and reclined on Antonio's body, follows; while he caresses her arm, Antonio asks her to 'give him a present such as her ears or nose'. She replies, smiling that she would give him whatever he wants. "Everything, I want it all [...] I want *you* to give it to me", he insists. As he excites and *possesses* her, she makes gifts of those body parts he is requesting from her, eagerly offering at last her eyes and her mouth. Shooting the sexual act in a long static medium shot that contrasts with the dialogue and unsensationally presenting their nude bodies, this scene is clearly playing with the conventions of sexual representations explained in the introduction.

As is also clear in the second sexual scene from which the still used for the promotional poster is taken (Figure 6.4), Pilar's sexual desire is associated with the act of submitting to her adorer, to the construction of herself as his object of desire. But their sexual dynamics are purposely associated to the unequal power relations that also rule other aspects of their relationship and that ground, it is suggested, some socio-cultural understandings of love and marriage that Antonio would call 'normal'. This is clear by the end of their first sexual encounter. After sex, Antonio presses her to go back home and, sneering at her opinion that they should wait until things settle down, remarks that their current situation is not *normal*. This remark is 'sanctioned' by the authority of a marriage judge that, in a sound bridge that links this to the following sequence of Ana's wedding, affirms that "the spouses are obliged to live in the same house"⁴⁰.

Isolating the sexual scene from its context, some writers have, in my opinion, misread this scene (e.g. Zecchi, 2006: 197-8). Especially intuitive but misleading is Paul Smith's reading (2004). In his short critique of this film and connecting this and Danae's sequence, Paul Smith affirms that:

(T)he most disturbing aspect of *Take My Eyes* is the possibility that sexual surrender and domestic abuse are inextricable, at least in Pilar's case. [...] (T)he unintended suggestion that love-making and wife-battering can be hard to distinguish goes beyond dull didacticism, implying that the lessons of love are not so easy to learn as this well-meaning feature would have us believe (ibid.: 66)

Rephrasing Smith's words, I would say that the film *intentionally* draws a connection between certain ideas of romantic love – including the sexual dynamics of female passivity and male activity that are associated with it in multiple representations e.g. in *Danae* – and the unequal power relationships that may develop from it. Pilar's desire and her way of conceiving love –and even femininity – are totally inextricable. And making a simplistic connection between wife-beating and masochistic female desire or the type of sexual desire that women who are victims of abuse (a far from homogenous group) experienced is –within context, dangerously – misleading⁴¹.

Indeed Pilar's total relinquishment extends beyond sex and connects to the hidden masochism of a more seductive discourse, the discourse of romantic love. Having literally and metaphorically given him her eyes and mouth, she ends up losing her own identity; as she says at the end in her conversation with her sister "I could not talk... I need to 'see' myself, Ana. I do not know who I am". As Thornham points out, summarising the conclusions of several studies about romance, this relinquishment is indeed the main attraction of the romantic discourse:

In "A Dream of Thee," Radner (1995) discusses the nature of the fantasy which underpins the romance narrative. "The principal object of the romance," she writes, "might be best summarized as the transformation of [the] loss of 'voice' into a dream of love and

happiness" (Radner 1995, p. 67). In their desire to validate the pleasures of "ordinary" women readers, she argues, feminist critics like Janice Radway have underplayed or denied the masochism which is at the heart of this fantasy. In contrast, she points to "the possibility that it is a masochistic fantasy that is the goal of the 'dream,' a fantasy that culminates not with the evolution of a caring male but with the obliteration of feminine subjectivity" (Radner 1995, p. 99). It is a fantasy whose perverse and disturbing nature is masked, she argues, by the centrality of the romantic paradigm to cultural norms of heterosexuality and, as Walkerdine (1984, 1997) also suggests, to the cultural regulation of female subjectivity (2007: 38)

The 'perverse and disturbing' consequences of that fantasy for Pilar are clearly expressed in the first and only physical violent attack at the end of the film, triggered by her refusal to give up a job interview in Madrid. Unable or unwilling to understand her motives, prattling on about her desire to be looked at by others, he strips her of her clothes and exposes her body – *his* body – on the balcony so the neighbours can be her audience. As in the other sequence with nudity (the first sexual sequence), her female body is constructed as Antonio's possession albeit with very different meanings.

Soon after this attack, Pilar's justification to leave the relationship is, rather than an appeal to the constant abuse, a remark about stopping to love him. It is only through the renunciation to *their* love that she is able to break the relationship and to start searching for her (new) identity. But if Pilar's stance towards Antonio changes at the end of the film, her attachment to the romantic discourse may have not. In the last sequence, when she leaves the house with Rosa and Lola, there is one shot that stands out for its incongruity. In the living room, Pilar picks up only two objects: a photograph of her with Juan and a decorative plate with a fairy tale image, a prince and a princess riding white horses and a castle in the background (Figure 6.5). The attention to this late object (with a five seconds cut-in close-up) is especially enigmatic because this is the first

time the plate appears. It may be a 'trace' from a deleted sequence or it may be intentionally located at the end of the film symbolically. Its meaning is ambiguous but the presence of this clear symbol highlights the importance of ideas of romantic love in the film, something that has been mostly overlooked.

6.3.4. Conclusions

Te doy mis ojos asks more questions than it answers. It asks *why* domestic abuse happens and furthermore *why* some of the women affected still love their abusers, as Bollaín insists in her statement. It seeks to answer how some people (Pilar and Antonio) engage with ideas of love and gender models; in this way, the film reproduces the workings of gender and romantic discourses, understood not as ideologies but as sites of struggle where relations of power are negotiated (as explained in the first chapter).

Denaturalizing certain ideas that are often accepted as 'common-sense' and emphasizing the power of gender representations, the film highlights how gender identities and relations are socio-culturally located. This is a didactic film that explores some of the psychological effects of abuse on the victims (e.g. lack of self-esteem) and the possible mentalities that compel aggressors to hurt those whom they claim to love (e.g. feelings of possession); furthermore it invites consideration of the steps that enable victims to escape (e.g. the opening-up of the problem). Indeed, multiple didactic materials have been produced to aid the use of this film in educational debates about this subject⁴².

As spectators, we are invited to adopt two different spectatorial approaches, understanding the film as a realistic story (e.g. through

emphasis on domestic rituals and intimate games) and/or as a metaphorical story (i.e. through engagement with the romantic discourse and gender representations). While only sketching certain positions (e.g. the child), the film privileges the point of view of three characters: Ana, Antonio and especially Pilar. At different stages, the spectator is invited to adopt their typified subject positions; i.e. the skeptical spectator, the puzzled unreconstructed man, and the voiceless and no less confused woman. Through the interplay among them, all three are thereby narratively contested. Overall, the spectator is thus compelled to make sense of this world from outside, occupying a subject position that can only be understood after feminism.

Whether or not the film is feminist depends on the eyes of the beholder. It undoubtedly fulfills many of the requirements that theorists have identified as common features of feminist films; for example, it displays critical awareness about the unequal power relations between the sexes, it portrays a psychological journey of self-discovery, there is an emphasis on everyday details of their lives, and so on. It fulfills the hopes that Teresa De Lauretis has for women's cinema: it enacts the contradiction between *women* as socio-historical subjects and *Woman* as sign constructed through and within Western culture (1997). Regardless of definition, what is clear is that this film only can be understood in relation to feminism and the issues that it has raised (such as the socio-cultural construction of femininity and masculinity, and the dissolution of well-established barriers between the public and the private spheres).

Located in Toledo (the old capital and symbol of traditional Spain), the film engages with domestic violence reflecting upon how the rapid socio-cultural changes have led to an uncomfortable cohabitation of traditional and more modern ways of understanding gender relations and roles that, in this case, leads to violence. For Cruz (2005: n.p.), the socio-cultural

specificity of the film is problematic since, in her opinion, it gives the impression that domestic violence is caused by the characteristic Spanish machismo and the weight of tradition, and it thereby masks the fact that domestic violence is an international problem that affects equally or in greater measure other countries considered as 'more civilized' such as the UK or Germany. Without disregarding Cruz's reservations, I think the socio-cultural specificity that Toledo conveys is an achievement. The problem is socio-culturally located not because it is exclusive to Spain but because the roots of the problem are different in different countries and because only through a particularized psychological and social construction of the characters (and both of them definitely respond to traditional types), the film is able to break down the spectators' reservations about identifying with the characters. Furthermore, through the use of old classic paintings, the way of conceiving gender relations and love is extended to all old Europe.

Another remarkable aspect of the film is that, until one of the last sequences, it refrains from depicting physical acts of aggressions. The filmic narrative thereby distances itself from media discourses that tend to focus on the final events of physical violence (e.g. in news reports) or on the truculent details of this type of relationship (e.g. in chat shows) and that overall fix the people involved in two clear subject positions – victim and aggressors – that distance 'them' from 'us'.

Furthermore, silencing physical violence facilitates processes of identification not only with Pilar but also with Antonio, both of whom are constructed as something more than just victim and aggressor. Even if the film starts with the clear rendering of Antonio's violence, his characterization is far from demonic. The spectator is compelled to explore his feelings and his difficulties to understand and communicate.

Furthermore, the focus on domestic situations (e.g. the arrivals of Antonio at home) brings the experience of this family closer to the spectator.

Within this closeness, the inscription of initially subtle manifestations of abuse prevents us from following 'Othering' processes common in media discourses. The spectator may identify these abusive dynamics as closer to their own experiences without implying by this that one has closely known or lived a violent relationship. When researching the subject, Bollaín and co-writer Alicia Luna often identified themselves with the abusers' and the victims' dynamics and emotions because: "who does not sometimes mistake love for control? Who is free of establishing power relations with their partner? [...] Who is not scared of losing their partner at some point? And what do we do to ease that fear?" (Bollaín, in Gutiérrez Carbajo, 2006: 64; my translation)⁴³. It is clear that a situation of domestic abuse is something else, far from many spectators' realities, but, through mechanisms that aid identification, the film constructs them within a continuum of emotions and dynamics that may often not be that unfamiliar.

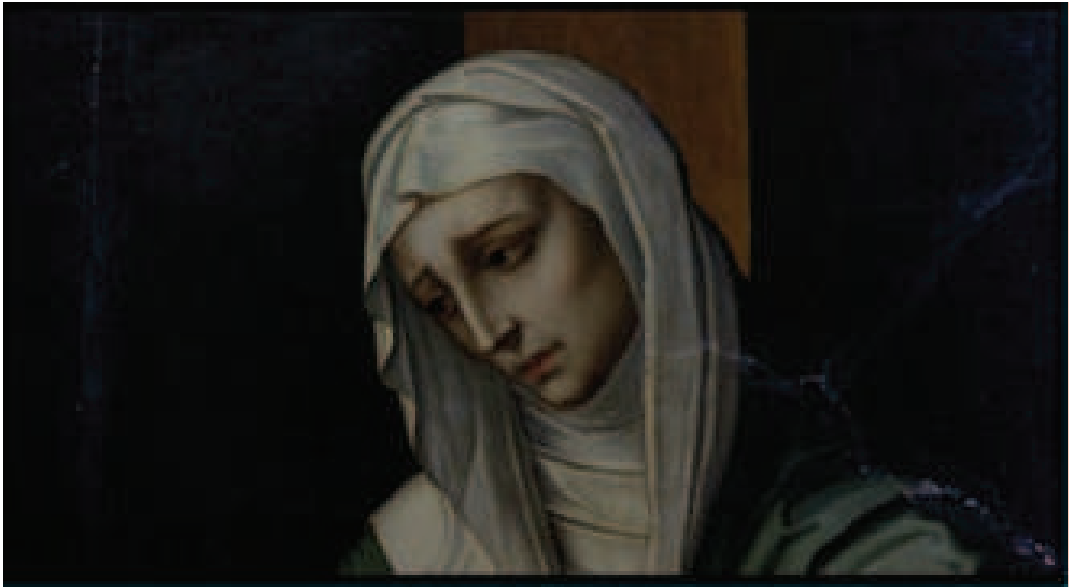


Figure 6.1. La Dolorosa

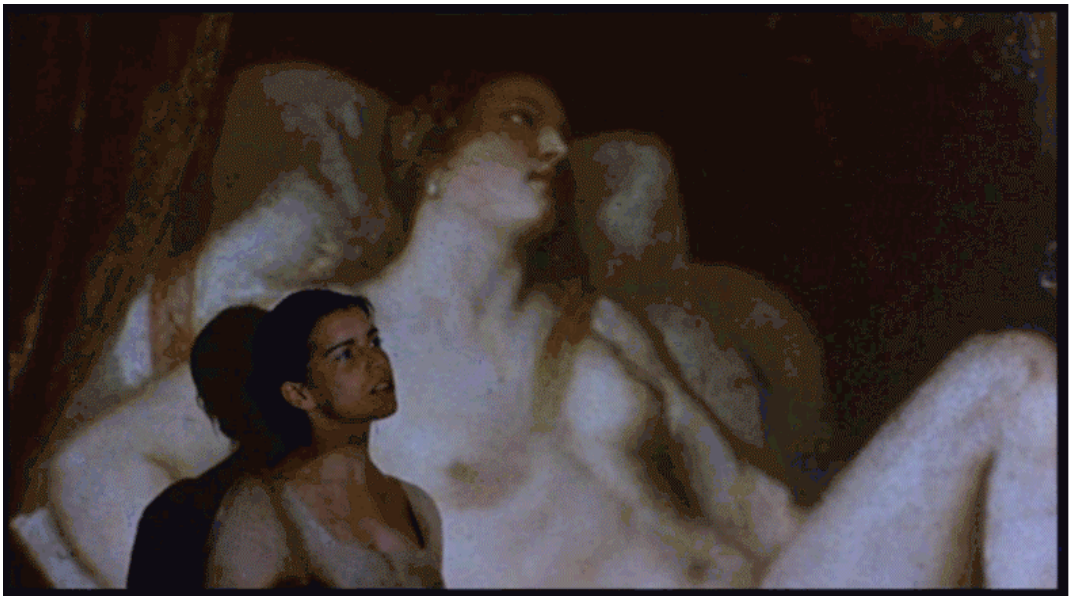


Figure 6.2. Pilar and Danae



Figure 6.3. Pilar and Antonio's first meeting



Figure 6.4. Promotional Poster



Figure 6.5. The decorative plate

7. ENGAGING WITH THE OTHER: THE LESBIAN WOMAN, THE IMMIGRANT SUBJECT AND MEN

The debates leading up to the Constitution of 1978 raised public awareness of issues that affected those groups that, for their generic, social, regional or class differences, had been socially and politically excluded during Francoism; albeit without the level of negotiation expected by certain groups, e.g. Basque nationalists and feminists (Gámez Fuentes, 2004: 113-114; Brooksbank Jones, 1997: 9 and ff.).

At the same time, some cultural texts focussed on and / or celebrated difference and diversity. The new democratic Spain was to be constructed against Francoism, and many transitional texts challenged the ideas of 'normality' that had been defended in its official discourses.

In cinema, the democratic changes opened access to issues that had been difficult to address hitherto, such as homosexual desire. They also allowed the exploration of subject positions – such as those of terrorists and delinquents – that hitherto had not had much space on the screen except as flat stereotypes. With very varied approaches towards these subjects, films such as *El proceso de Burgos* (Imanol Uribe, 1979, Spain), *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* (Pedro Almodóvar, 1980, Spain) or *El pico* (Eloy de la Iglesia, 1983, Spain) explored these shadowed areas. More than for their quantity or social impact, these films have come to be considered as especially representative of their time, since they caught the feeling of the moment. It is not strange that Almodóvar, who was especially interested in social outcasts and their milieus, became the international emblem of Post-Francoist Spain.

An interest in exploring and celebrating difference and diversity has become a constant characteristic of Post-Francoist culture. Assessing the situation of contemporary Spanish identity in the mid 1990s, Labany (1995) regards this as a sign of the Postmodernist bias of Spanish culture. Heterogeneity has stood as a response to the Francoist Unity that had constructed disruptive cultural forces (e.g. Catalan and Basque nationalism, feminism, international influences), not only as alien to Spain but as anti-Spanish. Thus, cultural texts have participated in the deconstruction of "the concept of unity – and by extension of identity, in the sense of 'sameness' – exposing it as a political manoeuvre designed to suppress recognition of difference" (ibid.: 397). Rather than denying the possibility of holding ideas of national identity, this postmodern deconstruction of identity implies "recognition of the fact that 'Spanishness' is a shifting concept, encompassing plurality and contradiction. And, above all, that identities are strategic constructions: neither inherent nor imposed, but negotiated" (ibid.).

Cultural interest in exploring difference and questioning identity (national, sexual, generic, etc.) as a fixed subject position has, on occasions, resulted in a reassessment of the 'Other'. A key term in the politics of identity, this is a pregnant term that has been used in various forms by theorists pertaining to very different fields (e.g. psychoanalysis, cultural studies). For the sake of clarity, but without aiming to be comprehensive, I will advance a brief, non-theoretical, definition of this term.

As studied in chapter 1, the construction of points of similarity and differences with others is an essential factor in the formation of identity. In this context, the 'other' functions as a (shifting) boundary that helps to define personal and group identities. Thus, the 'Other' is constructed in relation to the 'Self', through a privileging of differences over

commonalities. In cultural narratives of group identities, the relational character of the equation 'Other'-'Self' is often erased, and their (culturally-constructed) configurations are naturalised. The concept of the 'Other' is articulated in relation to ideas of normativity, so that the 'Other' is generally defined by the (normatively sanctioned) Self. Cultural constructions of the 'Other' support and are imbued by asymmetrical power dynamics that place the (silenced) 'Other' in an inferior position. The 'othered' subjects inhabit an ambiguous position, being highly visible as representatives of a type but condemned to invisibility through the processes that have depersonalised them and erased their specificity. According to theorists such as Fanon (in relation to the black subject) and De Beauvoir (in relation to women), dominant regimes of representations may be so pervasive that they become constitutive aspects of the identity of those subjects that are 'othered' by them.

In the previous two chapters, I analysed how the MJCE films reflect upon issues that have been traditionally understood as affirmative mechanisms of definition (e.g. "I am a mother") in the construction of female identity (family, motherhood, love, sexuality). This chapter reflects upon how the MJCE films have engaged with the 'Other', focusing on these negative methods of definition (i.e. "I am not...").

In the first and second sections, I will analyze *Poniente* and *Costa Brava (Family Album)* as representative of a group of films that, concerned with the immigrant subject and the lesbian woman, render visible that 'Otherness' is a socio-culturally constructed category. These 'self-conscious' films draw attention to the prejudices (e.g. 'lesbians are not feminine') and narrative mechanisms (e.g. constructing immigration as a problem) that are at play in socio-cultural discourses. Furthermore, they often narratively defend other approaches to understanding the encounter with difference. For example, some narratively dissolve the boundary that

surrounds the 'Other' through an appeal to the identification, not only of the spectator, but of other characters of the film (e.g. *Flores de otro mundo*). Others celebrate multi-cultural richness, constructing tales in which the encounter with difference is both a nest for both misunderstandings (benign and personal) and personal enrichment, for example, in *Seres queridos* (Teresa Pelegrí and Dominic Harari, 2004, Spain, Argentina, UK and Portugal), *Souvenir* (Rosa Vergés, 1994, Spain) and *Tomándote*. A few films highlight that 'Otherness' is relational, shifting and contingent (e.g. *A mi madre le gustan las mujeres*, *Poniente*); some do it contextually, by exploring the feelings of (hegemonic) characters that find themselves positioned in a situation of Otherness in, for example, *Sublet* (Chus Gutiérrez, 1992, Spain), *Todo está oscuro* and *El tren de la memoria*.

Subsequently, through the analysis of *Puede ser divertido*, I turn to films that construct men as 'Others'. These often offer stereotypical portraits of men that become representatives of an identity group *against* which the protagonist defines her 'gender identity' characterisation, locating men on a different (an often inferior) level. Textually, some fight women's position of 'otherness' through a confrontational mechanism that 'others' men (e.g. *Costa Brava*, *Puede ser divertido* and *Cómo ser mujer y no morir en el intento*). These are mostly comedy films, a genre in which the comic effect often relies on the confrontation of different sexes, on the enactment of a sex-war. In a less confrontational vein, a few films consciously reverse common ways of constructing women in cinema and apply these to men, but abstain from constructing men monolithically and inferiorly (e.g. in *Hola, ¿estás sola?*).

Some films combine different approaches. For example, *Costa Brava* contests common stereotypes that surround the lesbian as an 'othered' subject position (e.g. through the monologues of the housewife); it also

'others' men and heterosexual relationships (e.g. by constructing them as irremediably patriarchal) and simultaneously celebrates multi-culturalism (e.g. by presenting the relationship between the Catalan and the Jewish-American characters as enriching).

The three films chosen for analysis – *Poniente*, *Costa Brava*, and *Puede ser divertido* – also offer interesting reflections upon femininity from different perspectives. *Poniente* establishes a parallel between different forms of discrimination, those suffered by the immigrants and by women. *Costa Brava* participates in some of the tenets of lesbian feminism. And *Puede ser divertido* offers a portrait of its characters as postfeminists.

7.1. The Immigrant Other: *Poniente* (Chus Gutiérrez, 2003)

In *Flores de otro mundo*, the presentation sequence of Milady (Marilyn Torres), the young black Cuban co-protagonist, shows her arrival to the central square of the rural village and focuses especially on the reactions of the local people. Inside the bar, the waitress Aurora (Chiqui Fernández) views Milady's arrival with suspicion and remarks that all of 'them' (i.e. foreign women who marry or enter relationships with 'local' men) are after legalising their situation in Spain and after money. She remarks "I am not against that people...I only say that 'birds of a feather flock together', and each in its own house"; to which a chorus of men reply, also using another proverb: "Whoever marries far from home is either tricked or intending to trick"¹.

Through the use of proverbs, expressions of popular 'common-sense', the film conveys the naturalisation of well-rooted prejudices². Aurora's remarks represent the fears and anxieties towards the Other that many feel³.

Immigration is indeed one of the top social concerns among Spaniards, next to unemployment and terrorism (Santaolalla, 2007: 463; Cavielles-Llamas, 2009: 13). In the last decades, Spain has reversed its traditional status from being a country of migrants, with internal and external migrations in several periods of the twentieth century, to becoming, quite suddenly, the receiver of a large number of immigrants. Since the mid-1990s, the number of immigrants has increased dramatically and their presence has spread all over Spain, reaching small towns and villages. If, during the early 1990s, the immigrant population mainly came from rich European countries (e.g. the U.K. and Germany), this has changed and, since the end of the 1990s, most immigrants have been racial and / or ethnic 'others'; mainly Moroccans, Eastern Europeans (often gypsies) and Latin Americans (Cavielles-Llamas, 2009: 7-9)⁴.

This sudden flux of immigrants has indeed posed a considerable 'threat' to national identities, even for a democratic Spain that is proud of 'embracing diversity'⁵. Beyond questions of identity, it has also meant deep socio-economic changes (e.g. challenges to the schooling system and issues around the distribution of work). Immigration issues have thus become a central issue in contemporary politics and the mass media. Often focusing on the problems that have sprung from this re-structuring without considering its benefits, media reports often encourage a construction of immigrants as undesirable or victimised 'others':

A correlation between racism and social and economic crisis has generated what Balibar calls an 'immigration complex' in the European population, which perceives immigrants and their social conditions as 'a problem' that generates or aggravates whatever other social problems there are [...] They are collectively used as scapegoats, especially due to the immediate association established between the immigrant and delinquency or deviation from the norm (Ballesteros, 2005: 3)

Increasingly since the early 1990s, Spanish films have likewise turned their attention to immigration, often with the intention – not always successful – to contest xenophobic ideas. Ballesteros (2005 and 2006) argues that these films are part of a general European trend that can be considered a new genre with specific characteristics, which will be explored later. *Las cartas de Alou* (Montxo Armendáriz, 1990, Spain) is often considered the first Spanish film to address this subject (e.g. Ballesteros, 2001: 215; Santaolalla, 2007: 463), followed by others such as *Bwana* (Imanol Uribe, 1996, Spain). Whereas early ‘immigrant films’ emphasize the racial / ethnic differences of the immigrant characters, more recent films often aim to dissolve the boundaries between the Other and the ‘Self’, for example, by highlighting the parallels that exist between different ‘marginal’ positions (e.g. *El traje*, Alberto Rodríguez, 2002, Spain) (e.g. Cavielles-Llamas, 2009; Santaolalla, 2003)⁶.

This is also a common characteristic of the MJCE films that have focused on the theme of immigration, such as the documentary *Extranjeras*⁷. As is common in their production, they have given prominence to female characters (a feature that in itself offers an alternative to the typical ‘immigrant film’, which is usually concerned with male characters). They often present characters that are doubly discriminated against, as women and as immigrants. Thus, while proposing a reflection upon discriminatory gender practices, their films recognise these as forms that interact with and are modified by broader, and often more severe, forms of discrimination. Thus, directly referring to common prejudgements about the ‘racial’ woman, the films contest these assumptions and render them as cultural assumptions that help to establish boundaries with the ‘Other’. Instead of foregrounding the romantic involvement between the white local woman and the non-white immigrant, as it is common in immigrant films, their films instead privilege the relationships between women and

explore the 'divisive force of racism' between locals and foreigners (Ballesteros, 2006: 171).

Poniente (West) is the fifth film of the director and scriptwriter Chus Gutiérrez, a filmmaker that has often been interested in exploring experiences of alienation and 'otherness' and both the fear and the enrichment that can arise when encountering difference⁸. The narrative begins with Lucía's father's death and her return to her Andalusian hometown. Burdened by the traumatic memory of the death of her young daughter, her subsequent abandonment by her husband, and the resulting enmity of her father, Lucía (Cuca Esquivano) had abandoned her village years ago, mothering her second daughter alone in an urban area. But the death of her father draws her back and, troubled by her unresolved past, she decides to stay and run her father's hothouse plantation. With little knowledge about agriculture, least of all regarding the current state of agriculture in that area, Lucía enters a conflicted environment, ruled by white men and worked by slave-like male immigrants. As part of her father's legacy, Lucía also inherits an unresolved land dispute with her cousin Miguel (Antonio Dechent). In this hostile environment, she finds solace and romance with the co-protagonist, Curro (José Coronado), a returned Spanish émigré who works as an accountant for the plantation owners and who feels at home among the immigrants. Through the nomadic subject positions of Curro and Lucía (simultaneously Insiders and Outsiders of the community), and their friendships with a local stripper Perla (Mariola Fuentes) and with a Berber immigrant Adbembi (Farid Fatmi), the spectator discovers the internal and relational tensions of the immigrant and local communities.

The film had a considerable audience share⁹ and was generally well received critically. Praised, not least for its ideological message, *Poniente* has become a didactic text used to discuss the issue of immigration in

schools and colleges¹⁰ and has been analysed in many academic papers (e.g. Fresler, 2004; Berger, 2007). Often foregrounding Curro's characterisation, which articulates the parallelisms between Spanish emigrants and immigrants in Spain, these analyses have overall left out the way womanhood is represented.

As is common in European 'immigrant films' (following Ballesteros' analyses, 2005 and 2006), *Poniente* mingles almost documentary-style sequences within a genre frame, melodrama. But the film also breaks with many of the conventions that have defined the immigrant 'genre': it does not eroticise the racial male body; it explicitly rules out the romantic involvement between the white local woman and the racial 'other' (which commonly functions as a bridge to shorten the distances between locals and immigrant), and instead privileges other type of interactions that are often ignored (i.e. the unproblematic friendship between two disfranchised men, Curro and Adbembi, who are also prospective business partners; the work relationship between Lucía, the employer, and the black immigrant worker and prospective new manager); also unlike many immigrant films, that tend to construct immigrant characters as silent, often due to language difficulties, this film portrays an immigrant community that actively resists being silenced (i.e. by organising a strike).

As is common in recent Spanish immigrant films, *Poniente* works to "destabiliz[e] received notions of Self and Other, between Insider and Outsider" (Santaolalla, 2003: 49), but is novel in aiming to do this in a comprehensive way. Like *El techo del mundo* (Felipe Vega, 1995, Spain and Switzerland)¹¹, *Poniente* establishes a parallelism between the experiences of many Spanish emigrants who moved to the 'West' in the 1960s and the situation of discrimination that many immigrants in Spain suffer¹². But the reflection here transcends the issue of immigration, and the film simultaneously interweaves this form of discrimination with

processes of Othering at play in the construction of class and gender difference.

As Ballesteros highlights, immigrant films commonly convey:

[A] sense of (ins)urgency [...] through the coincidence of various marginal (or 'undesirable') positions in society that reinforce the category of otherness [...] In this sense, the multiple marginal positions [e.g. homosexual, woman, poor, old] that the characters assume in fiction reinforce, rather than reduce, the political agenda of these films (2005: 4)

Poniente indeed follows this pattern, but takes it far further. In this film, most of the (sympathetic) characters occupy a position of marginality and alienation within the narrative. Attending to his self-definition, Curro is a "half-Spanish" who feels he comes "from nowhere" and has a precarious job situation; Lucía is a confused urban woman who returns to a rural hometown that she does not recognise and enters an all-male and patriarchal work environment; Perla is a single mother without trade who works as a stripper and is held in contempt by many in her community; Adbembi is one of thousands of dispossessed immigrants¹³.

The film offers a repertoire of social mechanisms deployed to construct 'otherness': the system of double-standards (e.g. regarding paid overtime); the creation of segregated spaces (e.g. the local and the immigrant bars; immigrants are not allowed to rent properties in the village); the social construction of the immigrants as a collective, non-personalised mass (e.g. Lucía's first manager, Paquito, played by Antonio de la Torre, warns her against talking to the immigrant workers); the direct expression of racist and sexist prejudices (e.g. when Lucía befriends a black worker, Paquito assumes that she wants sex); the link between lack of knowledge and powerlessness (e.g. Lucía's dependence upon others, which makes her vulnerable to Paquito's abuses), and so on. Furthermore, the film underlines the construction of Otherness as directly

linked to relations of power (the power to name, the power of money) and, for example, recuperates those 'uncomfortable' historical issues that are often excluded from national narratives (e.g. the history of Spanish emigration).

Poniente reflects upon issues that affect women from different age groups and classes in modern Spain, such as the difficulties of bringing up a child alone and keeping a balance between work and 'personal' life, the pressure of social conventions, sexism, etc. There are three female characters: María (Alfonsa Rosso), Lucía and Perla.

Defined in relation to her family, María is Miguel's mother and Lucía's aunt. Self-constructed as the 'pillar' of the family, she sees how traditional family ideals have crumbled and the world that she knew has disappeared; a very secondary character, she functions as an unsuccessful family mediator and as a fearful witness to the social changes.

Lucía "functions as a third party [between the owners and the immigrants] who observes and judges the racially discriminatory attitudes while (simultaneously) being the target of gender discrimination" (Ballesteros, 2005: 11). In a vulnerable position due to her ignorance of the trade, Lucía's interactions with Paquito – the first manager – are punctuated by discriminatory and patronising comments.

Perla is a single-mother that, as she says, has only known how "to marry, to keep beautiful and to give birth". Abandoned by her husband and with limited job prospects (e.g. working in the hothouses), she opts to work as a stripper in the local club. In relation to Lucía, she represents a woman from another class (e.g. without money, without education) and who is, in relation to María, an 'Other' ostracised for her professional choice.

The relationships between Lucía and the other two women of the film are constructed positively, but only after they have discussed and accepted their differences. Sexist discrimination is inscribed as a type of Othering, among others (more dramatic) types. Unlike other films that privilege gender as the main constitutive element of women's identities (e.g. *Me llamo Sara*) or that privilege one type of womanhood over others (e.g. generally invalidating and silencing traditional femininity), Gutiérrez's film clearly introduces differential elements (e.g. generational, class) among women, who are all sympathetically portrayed within the remit of their respective specificities.

If the film aims to thoroughly dissolve the boundaries that separate the encounter between the Self and the Other, it does no such thing with the related concept of difference. Rather than denying difference, the film celebrates it. For example, this is clear in one of the most underlined sequences of the film, located almost an hour into the film, shortly before the maze of conflicts start unleashing. This sequence, formed by two scenes, directly links to the last comment of the previous sequence, in which Curro invites Lucía to a friends' dinner centred around the Spanish Sunday ritual of cooking a 'paella'. Beautifully shot and accompanied by intense music, this sequence conveys a strange feeling of mixed familiarity and unfamiliarity. It opens with a long shot of the car arriving at a shanty encampment where, surrounded by hothouses and the sea, the immigrants live. Mingling poetic shots of this harsh landscape with shots of Curro and of Lucía surrounded by these 'different' people (e.g. Curro flying a kite with the kids, and Lucía cooking with the other women, who sing and chat in their language), it works to convey the feeling of the characters' ease and feeling of belonging¹⁴. The next scene opens with a long shot of the subsequent sunset and portrays the characters dancing, singing and playing North African music around a bonfire. These and other elements (e.g. the shreds of – undubbed and unsubtitled – Arabic

languages, the ethnic dresses) emphasise, in a poetic manner, ethnic difference, something mostly avoided in the rest of the film; but, simultaneously, the feelings of communion among the characters convey a sense of familiarity. As Adbembi comments to Curro, he feels like he has not for a long time: "like a normal man celebrating a party with a group of friends".

Appealing to common experiences of discrimination and of traumatic (personal and collective) histories shared by women and men and by white and non-white alike, the film approaches Otherness from the subject position of the Spanish protagonists, Curro and Lucía. This obviously facilitates the identification of the target audience (middle-class, Art-house movie Spanish spectators), but since the two protagonists occupy a nomadic position, the boundaries between Self and the Other (in relation to foreignness and femininity) are problematised. As has been noticed (e.g. Ballesteros, 2005: 12; Berger, 2007: 189), the film illustrates Kristeva's defence of the importance of acknowledging the stranger / foreigner in ourselves in order to understand and to accept difference.

Like *Te doy mis ojos*, *Poniente* constructs its meaning on two levels. Loosely based on the violent disturbances in El Ejido in 2000 (one of the most visible xenophobic confrontations to have occurred in Spain), the film constructs a realistic portrait of the tension and clash between the Andalusian locals and the, mainly North-African, immigrant population. Furthermore, it establishes a dialogue with the socio-cultural and economic changes that are shaping contemporary Spain. The locals of the rural and traditional village – metaphorically named *La Isla* ('The Island') – quite suddenly find themselves at the centre of a changing world, affected by global economic dynamics (e.g. the effects of European policies and Moroccan competition are directly referred to in the film) and massive migratory movements which bring about an encounter with difference

that, transformed as 'Other', reinforces discriminatory and alienating dynamics.

Simultaneously, the film proposes an allegorical reflection upon the blurred and shifting boundaries between the Self and the Other, exploring the narrative mechanisms that, by delineating spaces of belonging and exclusion, play a part in the construction of personal and collective identities¹⁵. The marketing caption of the film emphasizes the symbolic charge of the film, promising the spectator "a universal tale about love, the wind, difference, and indifference".

Like *Flores de otro mundo* and *Extranjeras*, *Poniente* responds to many of the characteristics that Kaplan (2003) points out as characteristic of women filmmakers' works in the West. While aiming to break with unified images of women or 'correct womanhood', these films offer a counterpoint and "seek to intervene in the imaginary, to change how images are produced, rather than to present minorities 'as they really are'" (ibid.: 21)

7.2. The lesbian Other: *Costa Brava (Family Album)* (Marta Balletbò-Coll, 1995)

Lesbian women and their desire have often been erased from the screen and from society. As Jordan and Morgan-Tamasunas explained, quoting lesbian theorists Annamarie Jagose, lesbianism:

disrupts dominant patriarchal concepts of gender and sexuality that 'the lesbian is not able to be thought' [...]. Jagosa also argues that lesbianism's outsider status endows it with a powerful transgressive potential. (1998: 139)

And Spain is not an exception. The way homosexuality is perceived by many Spaniards has radically changed in a few years, partially propelled by institutional changes. Illegal until 1979, homosexuality remained a social taboo during the Transition (Melero-Salvador, 2004: 88). If, in the

mid-1970s, a large proportion of the population looked down on homosexuals and thought that homosexuality should be criminalised, this had radically changed by the mid-1990s, and homosexuality had become an accepted reality¹⁶.

Despite its social acceptance, and unlike male homosexuals, the visibility of lesbians and lesbian feminism has had a low profile in Spanish society and media, although this had started to change by the late 1990s (Collins, 2000). During the 1990s, lesbian women were still hardly visible in Spanish television. The first time a woman came out as a lesbian in a Spanish fictional serial was in *Más que amigos* (Globomedia / Telecinco; 1997 – 1999; Spain), in 1997 (ibid.: 135)¹⁷. In a short period of time, lesbian visibility has increased considerably and popular Spanish series that are still running nowadays, such as *Hospital central* (Estudios Picasso and Videomedia / Telecinco; 2000 – ; Spain) and *Los hombres de Paco* (Globomedia / Antena 3; 2005 –; Spain), present prominent lesbian characters.

In cinema, lesbianism has had a slightly higher visibility. During the Transition, when representations of homosexuals became more common in Spanish cinema, a few films represented lesbians, often as "threatening and predatory" (e.g. the vampires of many of Jess Franco's films), as occupying marginal positions (e.g. in Almodóvar's films) or as condemned to a tragic end (e.g. *Silvia ama a Raquel*, Santillán, 1979, Spain) (Melero Salvador, 2004: 89).

In contemporary Spanish cinema, lesbian characters still have a low representation, although they are generally represented under a positive light, with a "tolerant/free-and-easy" stance (Aguilar, 1998: 87). Even though, lesbianism is often represented either as a 'transient' position, or as an act by the characters – e.g. for the delight of the male character in

Huevos de Oro (Juan José Bigas Luna, 1993, Spain, France and Italy) and *Isi & Disi* –, or as a stage, soon to be overcome (e.g. in the psychological journey of the protagonist in *El pájaro de la felicidad*), or else as still associated with problematic or marginal social situations (e.g. *Todo sobre mi madre*). This contrasts with the more accepted representations of male homosexuals and homosexual sex, also in MJCE films, with films such as *Amor de hombre* or *Perdona, bonita, pero Lucas me quería a mí* (Dunia Ayaso and Félix Sabroso, 1996, Spain).

The MJCE films do not stand as an exception and only a few films address this issue. Featuring a cursory treatment of lesbianism, a few films present a lesbian character or characters that, quite accidentally and without implying a fundamental change, experience lesbian desire or sex, e.g. in *Nosotras*. A few other films foreground this subject more, such as *A mi madre le gustan las mujeres*. Rather than focusing on the lesbian relationship (a more risky commercial choice), this comedy concentrates on the reactions of Elvira (Leonor Watling) and her sisters to their mother's announcement that she has a girlfriend (who, incidentally, is a also a foreigner and considerably younger)¹⁸.

As Zecchi argues, in many of these films, lesbianism is presented "as an elongation of feminine solidarity and as a viable alternative to the conflicts presented in heterosexual relationships" (2004: 332). This has indeed been a common feature in many films directed by women that address lesbianism, as Dyer (1990) observes in relation to 1970s European Art Cinema¹⁹. As Gámez Fuentes points out²⁰, this type of representation is problematic since it erases the specificity of lesbian identity and ignores the specific problems and situations that lesbian women face; instead lesbianism acts as an essential element of a feminist 'Utopia' of female solidarity and of anti-hierarchical social relations (2004: 139)²¹.

In this context, Marta Ballebò-Coll's works are exceptional for their focus on lesbian protagonists that live their sexuality naturally, rather than as socially problematic²²; Smith highlights that, in the Spanish context, *Costa Brava* is indeed the first film that treats lesbian love in such a normalised manner (1997: 43). Despite her ambivalence towards the label 'lesbian cinema' (or any other label such as 'women cinema' or 'Catalan cinema')²³, her films are clearly affirmative of lesbian identity and are inscribed in the traditions of lesbian cinema. Shot in English²⁴, like *Costa Brava*, her second film, *Cariño, he enviado a los hombres a la luna* (1998, Spain), is a farcical and post-modern comedy, with science fiction and action elements, that imagines a society without men. Her latest and more mature movie is *Sévigé (Júlia Berkowitz)* (2004); a film shot in Catalan that, making intertextual references to the polemical epistolary writer from the XVII century, offers a reflection upon the difficulties of containing love, sexuality and desire within clear-cut definitions (e.g. 'motherly' or 'lesbian').

Working in the margins of the industry, Ballebò-Coll exerts a close control over her films by writing, directing, (effectively) producing, often distributing, and performing in them; with a very low budget, her films are funded with money raised in unconventional manners²⁵. At least, the exhibition history of *Costa Brava* is also pretty unusual: distributed with only one copy²⁶, the film was first premiered in 1995 in Barcelona; then, it was toured and awarded in international and national festivals (especially of gay-lesbian cinema) throughout 1996; and, finally, after being bought and broadcasted by Canal plus, the film was (very humbly) premiered in 1997 in Madrid, and secured some international distribution, reaching British screens.²⁷

Costa Brava (Family Album) narrates the nascent relationship between Anna (Marta Balletbò-Coll) and Montserrat (Desi del Valle). Anna is a Catalan tourist-guide who struggles to start off a career as a theatre scriptwriter and performer. She has created and performed a monologue-play that portrays a 'housewife' who is initially repelled and later fascinated by her professional lesbian neighbour. Anna's dream is to tour her play in San Francisco and in Barcelona. Montserrat, a North-American Jewish engineer working as a lecturer in Barcelona, feels isolated in a new city and unhappy in her job. Trying to overcome her isolation, she joins a Costa Brava tour, lead by Anna. As they build up a relationship, they have to overcome their problems. First, Montserrat finds it difficult to accept her lesbian identity, trying to escape definition, while Anna feels threatened by Montserrat's self-proclaimed bisexuality. To further complicate their situation, their career paths seem to be pointing towards different geographical destinations. After losing her lecturing job, Montserrat easily finds her dream job in San Francisco. Contrastingly, Anna's efforts to find funding for the production of her theatrical monologue are constantly hampered. Just as Montserrat's departure and their subsequent separation become imminent, Anna receives a fax from the San Francisco festival, accepting her monologue.

Articulated through Anna's voiceover, the narrative is organised around two axes: the diegetic 'reality' (the everyday life of the couple and their professional lives) and the diegetic 'representation' (the monologue).

On the first level, there are strong stylistic differences that establish a clear separation between the lovers' jobs and their shared life. For example, the sequences of Anna's job are always accompanied by the same musical leitmotiv and are mainly composed of shots of her directly appealing to the camera, occasionally with (depersonalised) tourists standing in the foreground (as if locating the spectator 'among' the

tourists²⁸), and of montage-sequences of video home-recordings of the tourist sites of Barcelona. The depiction of their shared life mainly revolves around their everyday habits, conversations and disagreements; furthermore, through narrative repetitions (e.g. their three trips to Costa Brava, which becomes a symbolic space for the couple) and the use of still-photos of the couple (peppered throughout the film), the film emphasizes how the couple are creating a common history (a 'memory'). This becomes especially evident in the last two sequences, where the diegetic present of the couple (hugging by the Sagrada Familia, in their last visit to Costa Brava after Anna's monologue is accepted) is mixed with montage-scenes of previously shown footage of their shared life (e.g. from their first visit to Costa Brava) and with the still-photos that have appeared throughout the film (their 'family album' of the title). Their relationship is therefore constructed as a 'normal', 'stable' relationship, which contests many stereotypes that have surrounded lesbian relationships which are voiced in the housewife's monologue. Contrastingly, Collins and Perriam believe that this way of portraying the couple decreases the subversive potential of the film and constructs their relationship "to ape a heterosexual partnership, cohabiting, emphasizing the importance of monogamy and conforming to notions of what is male/female-specific behaviour" (2000: 218).

As in the rest of Balletbò-Coll's films, and as is common in Spanish cinema (Collins and Perriam, 2000: 217), representations of lesbian sex are avoided in the film, despite the pressures of U.S. distributors²⁹. Contrastingly, there are many underlined moments of tenderness and communion between the characters. The 'absence' of sexual encounters is cinematographically highlighted in a scene that represents the characters first sexual encounter. After declaring their common attraction, the characters enter their car. Henceforward, accompanied by a leitmotiv recurrently associated with their relationship, there are several panning

shots that go from the rocks and herbs on the floor to the car, pausing, each time, just before the camera reaches the car window. This adds a comic/playful dimension to the scene and portrays the dynamics of their relationship; moreover, it clearly plays with the spectator's voyeuristic expectations. In a film that holds a 'normalising' discourse about lesbianism, this narrative solution contains a double advantage: it avoids the spectacularisation of lesbian sexuality and, at the same time, avoids the danger of presenting lesbian relationships as asexual.

Like many other JCE films (e.g. *Familia, Te doy mis ojos*), *Costa Brava* also uses *mise-en-abîme* to contest common social representations of a group or an issue. The comic monologue of the housewife (performed by Anna/ Balletbò-Coll) opens the film and has a prominent position throughout the film, interweaving with the couple's life. It is always shot with medium-long shots of the housewife on a rooftop that has the Sagrada Família (i.e. the 'Sacred Family' church) in the background. Furthermore, it always shows the 'housewife' speaking and looking directly into the camera, while doing traditionally feminine activities (e.g. cleaning, hanging and folding the washed clothes, caring for her nails). In the course of the film, the character experiences a transformation regarding her attitude towards lesbianism and heterosexuality. Initially, she distrusts the 'lesbian' (e.g. having difficulties saying the word and fearing for her children) and proclaims the virtue of her marriage (e.g. great sex, without complaints). Soon, she starts accepting and identifying with her neighbour, while articulating some shy criticisms of her husband. Through this process, stereotypes that surround lesbian women are contested (e.g. the 'lesbian' is feminine, caring for her nails, she does not organise orgies in her house, and she is not a sportswoman but a businesswoman); moreover, lesbianism is directly constructed in relation to heterosexuality, as if both were located on opposite points of a continuum, whereby an identification or acceptance of lesbianism (associated to women's freedom

and liberation) irremediably implies a repudiation of heterosexuality (narratively defined as patriarchal). This becomes more extreme in the following fragments of the monologue, where the housewife articulates a full-blooded critique of patriarchy (which is men's responsibility) that, despite women's superior nature, subdues women and places them on a lower status. Simultaneously, the housewife starts feeling attraction for her neighbour, with whom she ends up having sex that is, in her words, more 'tender' and less of a 'rudimentary satisfaction' than heterosexual sex. By the end, her marriage – initially constructed as ideal – starts crumbling (her husband was also cheating on her), and her lesbian affair reaches a turning point with her lesbian neighbour moving to another city, which leaves open the question of what position the housewife is going to take (is lesbianism going to be a transient position?).

The housewife's acceptance of lesbianism is constructed in parallel to Montserrat's own process of self-realisation. Initially, Montserrat defines herself as bisexual and, once she has become involved with Anna, she struggles with defining herself as a lesbian. For example, the narrative is punctuated by three moments of self-definition, three inserts of still photographs of the couple (in their car) accompanied by Montserrat's voiceover comments. Initially, she rebukes the lesbian label ("I am not a lesbian just because I like to sleep with you"). Later she accepts it although resisting being limited to that option ("I am lesbian...but that does not mean I can't sleep with men sometimes"); prompted by this comment and Montserrat's subsequent date with a work colleague, Anna, light-heartedly, rants about how embarking in heterosexuality implies a lost of autonomy and freedom ("you still think that you'd be better off with a man [...] When you've realised he has blasted your dreams, that he has nullified you as a human being, then you'll have got your security [...] Security through sacrificing your career"). In the third still photo, towards the end of the film and under the prospect of their imminent separation,

Montserrat comes to accept her lesbian identity ("I am a lesbian but...never mind"). As Collins and Perriam highlight "[h]er struggle to own a lesbian identity reflects the power of naming and the fear of social rejection" (2000: 218).

Confronted with their lesbian desire, Montserrat and the housewife embark on a process of acceptance of lesbianism. Unlike the housewife, Montserrat ends up defining herself as a lesbian, if not 'coming out' socially. Although focused on another period, Dyer's analysis of lesbian cinema during the 1970s proves applicable to *Costa Brava*. A personal and/or social process of "CO [coming out] is undoubtedly the narrative structure par excellence" in gay and lesbian fictional films (Dyer, 1990: 252); and, unlike gay films, "lesbian films tend to see sexual identity as itself created in the process of forming relationships" (ibid.: 254). Furthermore, Dyer elaborates this point explaining that the characters' acceptance of lesbianism generally implies an upfront rejection of men and heterosexuality (constructed as inadequate); in these films "men are seen as controlling and defining women's sexuality – having any sexual identity of one's own at all seems only realisable through lesbian relations" (ibid.: 255). In *Costa Brava*, Montserrat and the housewife's processes of acceptance are important narrative threats in the film, and their identification with lesbianism is closely interlinked with their sentimental involvement with another woman and with a rejection of men and of heterosexuality, which is constructed as hampering women's (sexual and personal) identity.

The rejection of men and heterosexuality are clearly related to the influence of certain feminist ideas (particularly Cultural Feminism) in lesbian cinema, which, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, was closely linked to the women's movement³⁰. Although in an untheoretical, comical and subtler way, *Costa Brava* also offers an engagement with feminism;

Montserrat and the housewife's acceptance of lesbianism are directly associated with their will to challenge and to offer resistance to patriarchy (holding men responsible for their oppression). Although men hardly appear in the film, they are described as self-centred, unfaithful and dishonest, controlling, etc. Lesbianism is constructed as a positive alternative to (irredeemably patriarchal) heterosexual relationships.

Unlike some lesbian films that, created by and for a lesbian audience, contained more specific references to lesbian experiences or the lesbian world (e.g. *Go Fish*, Rose Troche, 1994, USA)³¹, *Costa Brava* does not abound in these, including only a few well-known references to the gay world. As the director declared, she aimed to attract a wide audience and compared her film to a mainstream movie with a lesbian theme, *Fried Green Tomatoes* (Jon Avnet, 1991, USA) (in García Nieto, 1995³²).

To sum up: while 'othering' men, *Costa Brava* aims to contest the constructions of lesbians as 'others'. Stereotypical representations of lesbianism (directly voiced by the housewife) are contested through the 'normalised' portrait of the couple's everyday life. Despite being a film of irregular results (with mediocre performances), *Costa Brava* was overwhelmingly praised by critics ready to celebrate a film that was persistently created in the margins of the industry and that adopted a rarely addressed theme and perspective (e.g. García Nieto, 1995; Smith, 1997; Torres, 1997). Surprisingly, despite the clear references to (cultural) feminism contained in the film (even if presented in a light-hearted manner), critics have not even mentioned this component. This contrasts with the critical reception of *Puede ser divertido*, which was criticised as a feminist film, and which, participating of postfeminist trends in media, offers only a very superficial attachment to feminism³³.

7. 3. The Gendered Other: *Puede ser divertido* (Azucena Rodríguez, 1995)

Except for a small proportion of films with male protagonists or co-protagonists (e.g. *Souvenir*, *Héctor*, and *Semen, una historia de amor*), most MJCE films feature female protagonists and focus on gynocentric themes. Secondary male characters thus tend to play an instrumental role in their narratives, often constructed as the romantic or sexual interest of the protagonists or, less often, as friends or family (e.g. the fathers in *Para que no me olvides* and *La suerte dormida*). As secondary characters, many are flat and / or generic portraits of men (e.g. 'traditional' men in *El palo*), and male subjectivity is often silenced in their films³⁴.

Taking this a step further, a few MJCE films, like *Costa Brava* and *Puede ser divertido*, have constructed men as outright 'others'. Other few films defamiliarise common narrative mechanisms that have alienated filmic female subjects and through a process of gender reversal, they locate men in the position of 'other'. For example, in *Hola, ¿estás sola?* the Russian man – named Olaf (Arcadi Levin) by the protagonists – is constructed as a mystery, and as an object of desire that the two protagonists initially share; hardly able to speak any Spanish, Olaf is effectively silent, unable to communicate (even named by others) but, through her lessons, La Niña (Silke) encourages him to access (Spanish) language and, with it, self-representation.

Other films construct the liberated woman through her confrontational attitude towards men, emphasizing gender differences to the point of constructing them as 'quasi-natural' incompatibilities (e.g. *Costa Brava*, *Muere, mi vida*, *Cómo ser mujer y no morir en el intento*). These are often comedies in which the sex war schema is still the main source of comedy, and in which men are effectively constructed as an enemy (often, ultimately defeated). This is the case with *Puede ser divertido*.

Puede ser divertido (It Can Be Fun) is a romantic comedy with the twist that it focuses on the growing friendship between two divorced women in their thirties, Alicia (Mercè Pons) and Carmen (Ana Torrent). In the first sequence, they meet in a hospital after their young sons have got into a fight at school. Carmen, a traditional woman obsessed with romance, feels disappointed with the curse of her life and the end of her marriage. Alicia, a cheerful and loquacious modern woman, decides to change Carmen's life and coaches Carmen in her transformation. When they meet Ángel (Toni Cantó), a handsome pop composer, they decide to share his sexual attentions, without letting him know that it is a shared decision. Well-connected Ángel helps them to get a job, guiding a radio programme designed by women for women, with Alicia as broadcaster. All goes well at the beginning, but, when they both fall in love with him, tension arises and the two friends end up fighting over him.

The ideology of this film contrasts with Azucena Rodríguez's first film, an auto-biographical project that narrates the experiences of women political prisoners in the last year of Franco's dictatorship. As Rodríguez insisted in the promotional interviews and articles published to accompany the launch of the film³⁵, *Puede ser divertido* was an assignment given to her by the producer Alfredo Matas (regular collaborator of the director García Berlanga). Matas' choice of this director is clearly related to Rodríguez's gender. Although the marketing caption daringly appeals to men, the film – as the diegetic radio programme – is a marketing product “by, about and for women”. Rodríguez's promotional declarations presented it as a light, fun comedy, and pure entertainment, nothing to take too seriously. In another context and years after the film, Rodríguez confessed her uneasiness with the gender ideology of the film and consciously recognised the marketing strategy she was dragged into:

I found myself with a script that I did not like and that clashed with my own ideology [...] I tried to rescue a decent discourse for women. Since they are selling us (sic) as a feminine film, then let's try not to be ridiculous (Camí-Vela, 2005: 174, my translation)³⁶

Despite the introduction of a romantic sub-plot, the narrative mainly focuses on the friendship between the two women. Their bond is strongly reinforced cinematographically through the multiple shots of the two characters together, and structurally through many crosscutting sequences that interlink the two characters even when they are in different times. For example, in the sexual sequences, Alicia's encounters with Ángel interweave with Carmen's encounters with him; both are articulated through a third thread, Alicia's interventions in her radio programme in which she explains to the (radio) audience – often looking directly to the camera – how women and men are and how they should think about love and sex.

This film, like *Hola, ¿estás sola?* and *Muere, mi vida*, follows the international tendency of female friendship films that, with the success of a few films such as *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991, USA and France), proliferated during the 1990s. In these films, the friendship between women is constructed as the source of strength of the female characters that undergo a process of transformation (Tasker, 1998: 146); contrastingly, men are the source of narrative problems and, despite the constant reference to them and their presence as secondary characters, they are generally condemned to silence (ibid.: 150-1).

In the poster for the film, which features the two protagonists, smiling and looking directly into the camera while they stand in resolute positions, a threatening marketing caption reads: "Men, for your own good, find out once and for all how women are, think and feel". This sentence also opens the film, in an intertitle that follows the credit sequence, signed by a

"contemporary anonymous writer". The signing of such an announcement emphasizes both its actuality and its construction as a quote, an 'authoritative' statement (whilst anonymous). Within the frame of Alicia's programme, the film is indeed full of (I suspect mostly false and definitely de-contextualised) quotes from popular and well-reputed sources. These banal statements are constructed as 'common-sense' truisms about men (e.g. "Are men a luxury or a need?" by Cher).

Although played down by the humorous tone of the film, this caption sets the tone of the rest of the film: men are portrayed as a unified (desired and irritating) 'other' for women. They are flatly constructed as ineffectual selfish men such as the ex-husbands who are used to delegating their parental responsibilities to their ex-wives; as authoritative types, such as the young motorbike rider who authoritatively demands some money for giving Alicia a ride in the opening sequence; and as objectified and silenced 'fantasy' men such as the Galician 'Humphrey Bogart' impersonator who Alicia 'prepares' for Carmen as a present.

The most prominent secondary male character, Ángel, is indeed the most objectified and silenced character in the film. As the protagonists observe him and comment about him ("he looks like an angel") in a skating rink, he is presented in a p.o.v. soft-focus shot. Soon after, in a shot that with its triangular composition foreshadows the narrative developments, Ángel introduces himself with the words of his song – the film's theme song – constructing himself as a 'fantasy' man (Tarzan –Alicia's self confessed fantasy–, Ricky from *Casablanca*, Peter-Pan). When, a few sequences later, Ángel invites Alicia to his house, she instead deceives Carmen into going in her place. From then on, they start sharing the man, by mutual accord, until they "squeeze every drop out of him", as Alicia says. Their ensuing sexual encounters indeed stage those fantasies that the protagonists had previously confessed to each other. Except in the first

sequences, Angel is reduced to silence, and his opinions about this arrangement are left unrepresented.

Through their relationship with Angel, the film offers a mild critique of the romantic discourse as a female fantasy that never lives up to its expectations, and instead proposes female friendship as source of satisfaction and as the crucible of a new type of alternative family, as analysed in chapter 5.

The protagonists' sexual attitude towards men is represented as aggressive, objectifying and lacking sensitivity and openness towards the other's opinions and desires. This behaviour, often associated with traditional masculinity, has become a recurrent feature in the representation of liberated modern women in many 1990s Spanish films (Aguilar, 1998: 103).

Through passing sweeping statements about men and women, making humiliating comments about men's sexual attractiveness and performance, and objectifying and silencing men, this film naturalises a way of thinking about sexual difference in dichotomised terms. This is indeed a recurrent element in media postfeminist discourses. Embodied in Alicia, the film constructs the desirable model of modern femininity as a postfeminist prototype, a type rarely found in the production of the MJCE (another exception being *Muere, mi vida*).

In the first part of the film, the presentation sequences, the characters are stereotypically portrayed as opposite types of women: modern and traditional. This is a common comic mechanism in many 1990s Spanish comedies such as *Salsa rosa* (Bugallo, 2004: 360). Both women are unemployed although Carmen writes articles in the name of her ex-husband and Alicia is seeking employment. Carmen is constructed as a

classical, sexually frustrated, and disappointed romantic woman, and a perfect housewife who is devoted to her (ex) husband, child and home; Alicia is contrastingly constructed as a care-free, ironic, sexy, and sexually confident woman (and a terrible housewife), who is more interested in a job than in romance or domestic responsibilities³⁷.

The protagonists' contrasting stances towards life are epitomised by Carmen and Alicia repetition of two sentences, respectively 'How awful' and 'It can be fun'. If Carmen represents an abnegated and suffering woman, overwhelmed by responsibilities, Alicia stands as a hedonistic character who seeks pleasure, especially through consumption (e.g. hairdresser visits) and (commodified) sexuality (e.g. erotic phone lines). However, Alicia's celebration of fun is a way of veiling her true feelings; as she confesses, the more she feels down, the more she laughs. In this way, her attitude reproduces a mechanism encouraged in traditional discourses of feminism: to put a pleasing mask over women's uneasiness and unhappiness.

In these presentation sequences, the dichotomy between the two characters is strongly reinforced by their appearance. Alicia's glamorous appearance and obsession with self-care contrast sharply with Carmen's abnegation and her 'careless' look (i.e. baggy, dark clothes, glasses and classical hairstyle). The choice about what is the 'right' model of femininity is clear, so Carmen is compelled to change, and, coached by the experienced Alicia, transforms herself into a new woman. Zecchi argues that the relationship established between these two characters:

reproduces the practice of 'affidamento' ('entrustment') theorized by the Italian feminist group of the Milan Women's Bookstore. This practice associates two women (the woman-who-knows and the woman-who-wants-to-know) in a mother-daughter relationship based on the acknowledgement of their disparity of (female) authority (2005a: 151)

But surely, the type of transformation that takes place is not what Italian feminists had in mind. Under Alicia's guidance, and in a classic postfeminist 'make-over' fashion, Carmen acquires a new sexy wardrobe, changes her hairstyle, and gets rid of her glasses. In a few sequences, she is transformed. When her (physical) transformation is completed, Carmen finds psychological balance; she suddenly starts laughing and becomes vibrant and interested in life (translated narratively by her restored interest in sex). Her external appearance becomes her interior life: once she has 'repaired' her neglected external appearance, her 'dysfunctional' self starts to be healed. Modelling herself as sexually desirable through a process of consumption becomes the essence of this renewal of femininity. If hitherto the protagonists had been defined in relation to their homes and their kids, these spaces and activities become negligible in the rest of the film.

As is common in postfeminist media texts, this new femininity is reduced to female attractiveness and plays down other, no less problematic, features traditionally associated with women, such as nurturing tendencies or demure attitudes (Gill, 2007: 91). Following another characteristic of postfeminism, women are represented in the film as winners of late modernity, able to freely construct their biographies without the weight of structural constraints. The film mainly portrays empowered women in positions of responsibility and visibility. Alicia – a woman without formation and who, in her own words, does not possess many skills other than her loquacity – happily gets a job as the broadcaster of a new radio programme, run and designed by women.

Puede ser divertido conforms, then, to some of the characteristics associated with postfeminist femininity. As many theorists highlight (Levy, 2006; Gil, 2007), postfeminist texts appeal to women by using tropes previously associated with sexist discourses (e.g. women are primordially judged for how they look) combined with tropes associated with feminism

(e.g. the critique of romantic discourse, the prominence of female association as a source of fulfilment, women's empowerment and sexual liberation). Nevertheless, in the film, the protagonists' sexual and professional fulfilment is far from being directly associated with feminism; instead, it is "effectively harnessed to individualism and consumerism" (Tasker and Negra, 2005: 107). In chapter 2, I analysed how the construction of Spanish modern femininity in media texts differs from the Anglophone postfeminist model: in the importance given to the family; in how female sexual agency still was considered as a new phenomena during the 1990s that was mainly conveyed through a reversal strategy where women adopted traditional male sexual attitudes, constructing men as sexual objects and invalidating them as subjects; and how media representations of femininity rarely disavow feminism, and instead tend to ignore it. These are characteristics that also appear in *Puede ser divertido*, a film that some critics have considered (and, thus, negatively assessed) as feminist, appealing to the way it construct empowered women (Torres, 1995). However, as Rodríguez herself assures us the film's only feminist content is its mild critique of the romantic discourse and its defence of female solidarity (in Camí-Vela, 2005: 173-4; in Llopart, 1995).

To conclude; in this chapter, I have offered an overview about the different ways that MJCE films approach the subject of the 'Other'. While some films have sought to dissolve the manichean binarism that *others* and devalues certain groups (i.e. immigrants, women, lesbians), other films, and especially in relation to the representation of men, have reversed it, thereby leaving the binarism intact but oppositely-orientated.

CONCLUSION

As I have argued in chapter 2, discourses are powerful because they are the stage where people's subjectivities are shaped. Although not all discourses have the same social reach, every discourse is liable either to empower or to disempower a specific group. When 'identity groups' (e.g. women, immigrants) access a discursive context hitherto closed to them, they acquire the power to articulate, to reinforce and / or to dislocate arguments about the way that they have commonly been constructed. For this reason, feminist film scholars have been especially interested in cinema directed by women, departing from the assumption that women filmmakers will reflect upon the conditions of subjection that women have suffered from throughout history, as reinforced by filmic representations.

To recap what has been stated in the introduction; the main aim of this research is to study how femininity is represented and whether or not it has been problematised in the works of Spanish women filmmakers from 1990 to 2005. Considering the recent incorporation of women directors into the Spanish film industry, I have also analysed what position these filmmakers occupy within this industry. My objectives have been to assess:

a) what position these directors occupy within the industry and how that position affects the type of cinema that they produce;

- b) how their films interrogate and contest cinematic convention regarding cultural representations of femininity and engage with socio-cultural changes in the situation of women;
- c) what types of female models and subjectivities are offered in these films and how new feminine subjectivities are inscribed cinematographically;
- d) to what extent we could define the perspectives adopted in these films as feminine and / or feminist.

I have aimed to answer these questions through the use of a CDA approach. I have offered detailed analyses of a few significant films, taking into account their discursive contexts and focusing on three issues, in relation to gender, that are fundamental to CDA: the relations of power that a text serves, the interpretations of reality that it offers, and the subject positions that it privileges. I have come to hold the position that the most fruitful field for research has been the multiple narratives that portray the processes of women who are going through a process of questioning and re-assessing their gender identities. Due to the large quantity of films and the multiformed shape of cultural constructions of femininity, I have focused on three thematic clusters that have been closely related to the construction of feminine identity through history and are significant in the context of contemporary Spanish cinema: representations of motherhood and family, of sex and love, and of the 'Other' (analysed in chapter 5, 6, and 7).

A summary can now be given of my findings regarding what have emerged as the recurrent characteristics of their films, presented under the heading of the aforementioned questions.

The position of women within the industry

As described in chapter 4, the position of women within the industry often, if not generally, follows a pattern that will, by now, be familiar. In short, the position of women has advanced greatly since the early 1990s: there are more women filmmakers than ever before (e.g. Camí-Vela, 2005: 17-18; Heredero, 1998: 9) and new ones keep on joining the industry. Nevertheless, on at least four fronts, it has yet to achieve parity with the position of men. Firstly, their number is comparatively low and the rate of women's incorporation has decreased in the first half of this decade (Arranz, 2008). Secondly, their budgets tend to be below average (Monterde, 1998: 22). Thirdly, they advance slowly within the industry, which leads them to make their directorial debuts only after establishing a solid career in other areas of the film industry, and when they are much older than the average male debutant (ibid: 16-19). Fourthly, if debuting is a difficult task, the biggest challenge is to keep on making films, and, of the fifty-three directors I have listed, only fourteen had premiered three or more films by 2005 (for further details see page 140 and note 7 of chapter 4).

This raises the question of whether there still exist discriminatory practices in the industry that make difficult women filmmakers' careers.

Against this, and taking into account the audience ratings of their films available in the ICAA database, it could be argued that this is because their films tend not to fulfil the commercial demands of an increasingly competitive market (now less protected by the governmental support to which Spanish filmmakers had become accustomed, as studied in section 3.2.1.). Insofar as they can be categorised, and as analysed in section 4.2., the MJCE films often are intimate character studies and / or

explorations of social issues (such as domestic violence, immigration, the exploitation of workers, and so on); they do not have big stars; and they avoid explicit violence and sex; which is to say that they tend not to be particularly spectacular or sensationally entertaining. All this can make financiers hesitant.

Broader industrial developments are not irrelevant here. The increasing dependency of cinema upon television has helped to improve the social image of the JCE filmmakers but it has also brought its own restrictions, such as quicker and more redundant narrative rhythms (e.g. Cerdán and Pena, 2005: 269; Benet, 2005: 74-75). Furthermore, the disappearance of second-run cinemas and the increasing replacement of small-scale art houses by giant multiplex entertainment centres (typically at shopping malls) has profoundly altered the kind of films that can be easily marketed (e.g. Palacios, 2005: 411-412). Basically, there seems to be ever less room in the market for 'intimist', character-based films, which tend not to sit comfortably within the emergent consumerist-escapist paradigm of cinema-going (as filmmakers such as Isabel Coixet and Manana Rodríguez have declared, respectively, in Camí-Vela, 2005: 78, and Heredero, 1998: 76). The industry seems more inclined to only cater for a quite narrowly conceived type of cinema, putting filmmakers under pressure to achieve 'originality' whilst conforming to narrow paradigms of what is commercial (a tendency that Kaplan argues is affecting Western cinema in general, 2003: 27). Within this paradigm, there is an unspoken but pervasive assumption that blockbuster budgets equal 'must-see' cinema, to the detriment of other cultural and aesthetic paradigms.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that some male counterparts with 'intimist'/no-spectacular films and poor audience ratings, such as Marc Recha, has had been able to enjoy a consistent career.

Therefore, it could be also argued that there are still discriminatory factors. Firstly, many women filmmakers still feel that they have to work within a predominantly male culture and that there are subtly-discriminatory practices that still prevail in the industry (as clearly transpires in many of their statements from Camí-Vela, 2005 and is explained in section 4.1.). This is, at least, the broad position taken by CIMA, which, adopting a liberal feminism approach to media (as describe by Van Zoonen, 1996) aims to affect a more balanced representation of women executives in all areas related to the industry (e.g. at festivals) and believes that this would effect a change in the types of media representations of women (as stated in their objectives, found on their webpage).

Secondly, as a few of these filmmakers have also denounced, women's projects are often granted lower budgets (e.g. Gutiérrez in Silió, 2007) and thus depart from an inferior position. Not only the quality 'look' of the production and the necessary provision of stars suffer but, moreover, a decent budget is essential for the promotional campaign that is needed to support a film from the production stages in order to increase its commercial potential (e.g. Ansola, 2003: Casado, Merodio and Jiménez, 2007). These shortcomings can make it difficult for their films to secure distribution contracts.

To sum up, one could argue that there are several discriminatory practices that hinder women filmmakers' incorporation within the industry. Nevertheless, what emerges most strikingly is the way that contemporary industrial demands structurally 'discriminate' against the kind of cinema that many women (and men) seem to make. The standard consumer-model response to this charge – i.e. that not enough people are correspondingly keen to see films like this – falls apart when it is

considered that there is nothing like an equal playing field regarding the promotion and distribution of films.

Interrogation of socio-cultural and cinematic conventions and engagement with socio-cultural changes

MJCE films are characterised by a focus on characters, which is often used as a mechanism for questioning identity, notably gender identity.

Overall, the MJCE films clearly offer an alternative to many popular Spanish films in at least two ways (following the studies about gender representations in contemporary Spanish cinema by Arranz, 2008 and by Aguilar, 1998; and as analysed in section 3.3.3.). This alternative is characterised by a focus on themes related to women, such as solidarity between women, and women in history. It is also characterised by a refreshing prioritisation of female characters; who, furthermore, tend to be presented as autonomous, rather than defined in relation to men. Whereas in many popular films, the construction of female (and male) characters still follows well-ingrained filmic conventions (e.g. the whore-virgin dualism), these women filmmakers aim not only to avoid them but also, on occasion, to subvert them.

MJCE films are therefore characterised by an awareness of representational practices. This, of course, is common to many JCE and postmodern films, which typically engage and play with genre conventions and intertextual references (e.g. Quintana, 2001: 71; Heredero, 1999: 24). However, in MJCE films, this knowingness tends to be placed at the service of less frivolous, more substantial agendas, at least in the treatment of gender issues. Political consciousness of this is prominent, as

translated into a purposeful engagement with the conventions of representing femininity and gender relations – issues that, even if secondarily, most films touch upon.

It is worth recapping some of the ways that this awareness is formally manifested in MJCE films. *Mise-en-abîme*, which is perhaps *the* classic mechanism for reflexively exploring representation in cinema (as in other media), is frequently employed. This is explicitly and extensively used in some films, such as the inset to-camera monologues in *Costa Brava*, and the discussions of paintings in *Te doy mis ojos*. Both allow the characters in the films to reflect upon the very stories that they are part of, and allow the filmmakers to offer a commentary upon the stories that they are telling (as analysed in 6.3. and 7.2.). In other films, the device is used more subtly, such as through Eva's experiences in the production of light entertainment programmes in the television industry in *Insomnio*.

The second way that this self-awareness is manifested is in a persistent and more-or-less explicit engagement with the ideological mythology of femininity as it is applied to real, socially and historically located women. The contradictions that emerge from this application come in for particular attention. Thus, for example, the impossibility of 'performing' heterosexual femininity is explored in *A mi madre le gustan las mujeres* (obvious, for example, in its first sexual scene), as are the 'traditional' – more particularly Catholic – pitfalls of the virgin-whore binarism in *Sexo por compasión*. It would be difficult for the viewers of either film to walk away with an unproblematised faith in the naturalness of femininity as it has been, and still is, constructed and represented. Of course, it is precisely this mythology of femininity that *Te doy mis ojos* and other films also interrogate using the device of *mise-en-abîme*.

A third interrogative technique, more specific to the forms and traditions of cinema, is the dislocation and, thereby, subversion of genre conventions. Thus, for example, the assumptions underlying the conventions of the romantic comedy genre are contested, by pairing a straight woman with a gay man in *Amor de hombre*, and by pairing two straight women in *Puede ser divertido*. Effectively, both films question the still apparently-natural prioritisation of the romantic discourse for women, and tentatively propose an alternative discourse of friendship. This dislocating subversion of genre conventions is also applied to other genres that normally marginalise or entirely exclude women. Thus we have the 'heist' movie in which the bank-robbers are housewives (*El palo*), and the political thrillers with female protagonists in the films of Patricia Ferreira.

Similarly, many MJCE films contest basic cinematic strategies for allocating and interpellating identificatory subject positions. Thus, in some films, we have men, rather than women, presented as vacant or incomprehensible objects of mystery for female agents (in *Hola, ¿estás sola?* and *Para que no me olvides*), while men's bodies are presented as objects of erotic contemplation (notably in *Retrato de mujer con hombre al fondo*).

It should again be emphasised that these dislocations and inversions of representational conventions do not constitute simple postmodern 'play' for its own sake. Again and again, MJCE films target representational practices that have been, and still are, especially associated with the oppression, limitation or marginalisation of women in society. As we have seen, the dangerous costs of the romantic discourse are interrogated in *Te doy mis ojos*. But representational practices are contested on at least four other thematic fronts. Firstly, the ostensibly natural 'destiny' of

motherhood and subjugation to the family is contested in *Nosotras* (which proposes, simply but radically, that motherhood is not always heavenly) and *Me llamo Sara* (which challenges the unwritten rule of self-renunciation). Initially, the scarcity of films that address this issue is surprising, but we should not forget that motherhood and mother-daughters relationships are rarely addressed beyond easy stereotypes (e.g. of generational conflict) in cinema, as Golombiski (2001) remarks upon in relation to Hollywood. Secondly, the common practice of presenting women as more-or-less automatic competitors (as analysed by Tasker, 1998 in relation to Hollywood cinema and noted by Arranz, 2008, in relation to contemporary Spanish cinema) is displaced in favour of an alternative paradigm of female solidarity and friendship. Thirdly, standard ways of representing female sexuality, e.g. by fragmenting the female body as a spectacular interlude from the rest of the film (e.g. Ballesteros, 2001: 179 and ff., in relation to contemporary Spanish cinema), are contested and redrawn, as outlined in chapter 6. The fourth contestation includes but is not limited to women: namely, it is the contestation, described in chapter 7, of the massive and complex networks of identity and exclusion (of 'self' and 'other', of 'normality' and 'abnormality') that permeate culture in an unspoken and common-sensical manner that is, all-too-often, presented as natural, rather than culturally and historically specific.

Relations between men and women are often, if not usually, portrayed in MJCE films in oppositional terms. This becomes clear in, for example, the well-established strategy of gender reversal in comedies, which emphasise the mutually-exclusive 'nature' of the genders. This is common in many 1990s Spanish films (e.g. *Salsa rosa*) (e.g. Aguilar, 1998: ch. 7 and 8) and many MJCE films are no exception. Not coincidentally, many of the films from this period that have marketed a female audience (films by women,

for women, and about women) have adopted this stance towards gender relations (e.g. *Puede ser divertido, Cómo ser mujer y no morir en el intento, Muere, mi vida, Me llamo Sara, Retrato de mujer con hombre al fondo*).

However, and more interestingly, this tendency has changed in the MJCE films from the late 1990s and the first half of the 2000s. Many films break with this hackneyed convention, and instead present gender relations as spaces for negotiation, in which fluid communication between men and women is presented as less of an impossibility (e.g. *La suerte dormida, Semen, una historia de amor, Alma gitana, Flores de otro mundo, Hector*).

MJCE films generally work within the remit of the conventional cultural association of women with the private sphere, if rarely exclusively. When it is registered, the home and its related responsibilities (e.g. childcare) is sometimes presented in positive though not uncomplicated terms (e.g. *Mi vida sin mi, Poniente*), and other times as a limit on women's freedom (e.g. *Retrato de mujer con hombre al fondo*). On several occasions, emblematically in *Cómo ser mujer y no morir en el intento*, the films also register dissatisfactions within this sphere, notably regarding men (who, typically, leave the women in the lurch regarding housework and childcare).

This is clearly an issue that relates to the socio-cultural problems that affect women. Other socio-cultural problems that are registered include i) patriarchal practices in institutional settings, ii) the difficulties women can have to be recognised and respected at work, iii) the sexual objectification of women, iv) problems faced by socially marginalised women, and v) problems with the work–life balance, especially for single mothers. To give

corresponding examples: i) *Te doy mis ojos* and *Me llamo Sara*; ii) *Yoyes*, *A mi madre le gustan las mujeres* and *Insomnio*; iii) *Cuando vuelvas a mi lado*, *Boom, Boom*; iv) *Extranjeras*, *Flores de otro mundo*; and v) *Insomnio*, *Poniente*.

Types of femininities and subjectivities privileged

Here I will offer a summary about how the films engage with traditional and postfeminist models of femininity. There are conspicuously few representations of 'traditional' women in central roles in MJCE films; which is, after all, a marked tendency of contemporary Spanish cinema in general (as transpires from many studies such as Gámez Fuentes, 2001). This tendency can in turn be explained, at least partially, by their general preference for young characters (Heredero, 1999: 18-19).

When traditional women do appear as such, it is almost always in secondary roles. Generally portrayed as older women, they are either silenced and constructed as anachronistic (e.g. the mother in *Te doy mis ojos*), or else they are compelled to change and become more modern (e.g. Sofía, played by Laura Cepeda, in *Nosotras*). Female characters that conform to more modern models of femininity, assigned protagonist roles, are presented as more contradictory; contrastingly, more traditional types are often constructed simplistically. Some of their films, such as the above examples, include characters that respond, if not always directly, to values associated with femininity that were strongly reinforced during Francoism (e.g. abnegation and A servile attitude towards men). As Gámez Fuentes (2004) thoroughly analyses in her study of the mother figure in Spanish literature and cinema, this has been a common tendency in Spanish cinema since the Transition, with traditional women – often in their role of mothers – who have often come to symbolically represent Francoism.

There are, however, many portraits of women who have a 'subjectivity in between', torn between traditional values (e.g. the centrality of marriage and children to women's identity) and more modern values (e.g. the centrality of work to women's identity). This may relate to the always somewhat awkward cohabitation of traditional and modern values that is one of the main discursive trends of Spanish media and social texts (e.g. Ortega, 1996 and Castells and Subirats, 2007). Unlike in many media representations, traditional choices, such as marrying and staying at home, do not go unnoticed and are questioned within the narrative; as, for example, in *Una estación de paso* (Gracia Querejeta, 1992, Spain), *Héctor* and *Pon un hombre en tu vida*.

By contrast, 'modern' women are shown as cosmopolitan, professional, urban and young. Work and economic independence are shown, if mostly implicitly, as central to their lives; but family also features prominently, even if in a narratively accessorial manner. They typically demonstrate scepticism towards issues that are traditionally associated with women, such as the romantic discourse. As with most JCE films (Hereadero, 1999: 20), an urban and middle-class life is usually assumed and presented as the norm. Some of these characters (e.g. in *Puede ser divertido*, *Muere, mi vida*) are, if only partially, constructed using characteristics associated with postfeminist gender sensitivities: femininity as a bodily property, self-construction as a sexual object, sex as a source of power, an emphasis on self-surveillance, consumerism as the key to the construction of a DIY 'individual' identity, etc. (characteristics most comprehensively compiled by Gill, 2007 and analysed in section 2.3.2.). But this type of characters is still rare in their cinema; in Spanish media, this is a model that is gaining force, but which is modified in accordance with the importance of community and the family in Spain (as argued in section 2.3.3.). For example, individualism was still experienced as a new, imported idea in

Spanish culture during the 1990s (e.g. Albardi, Escario and Matas, 2000: 13; and Plaza, 2007: 99 and ff.), although as Castells and Subirat (2007: 200 and ff.) argue it is gaining force with the dissolution of communal pillars – i.e. the family, the church and the school – that no longer retain their authority.

Looking at these characteristics, what is the typical target audience of MJCE films? Some, with successful stars, more 'careful' visual styles and within a genre frame, are clearly aimed at a mainstream audience (notably María Ripoll's films). Nevertheless, many of these films have a more niche audience: some are marketed as women's films for women (e.g. *Me llamo Sara* and *Puede ser divertido*) and many are constructed for a more intellectual audience on the art house circuit (e.g. Isabel Coixet's films). Maybe for this reason, some MJCE directors (e.g. Coixet and Balletbò-Coll), like many of their male colleagues, are increasingly constructing their films for an international audience.

There is a marked difference in the representation of femininity between the MJCE films of the early 1990s and those that have follow them. Notably, the early films tend to portray women in relation to men, with an emphasis on the differences between the sexes. The later films have instead tended to focus on the experience of specific, non-generalised women, whereby factors other than just sexual difference are also emphasised. For example, the socio-historical situations in *El Calentito* ask what it means for a young woman from a traditional background to encounter the freedom of 'la movida'; while, in *Extranjeras*, the situation of women immigrants is interrogated.

This could be related, if not necessarily consciously, to the change in feminist theory. Beforehand, I would like to clarify that, with this, I do not

intend to imply that MJCE filmmakers have directly been influenced by feminist theories – only some have – but rather that feminist theories have articulated (and sometimes, advanced) ideas that have become visible in culture, especially in certain circles. If, in the 1970s, feminist theories were more focused on sexual difference, later, in the late 1980s, it displayed more of an interest in the always-particular confluence of feminist concerns with other, inseparable, social and political concerns (e.g. see Thornham, 2001). This calls for a 'politics of location' in cinema, as defined in Alison Butler's book:

In women's cinema, a feminist politics of location is articulated by those films which situate female identity in dynamic historical situations, to reveal the imbrication of technologies of gender with those of local, national and international power (Butler, 2002: 91)

As mentioned in chapter 4, the way of representing womanhood in many MJCE films seem to comply with the 'ideal' of women's cinema that Teresa De Lauretis call for in her 1988 essay "Aesthetic and Feminist Theory: Rethinking Women's cinema" (1997). Here she argued that the task of women's cinema is not to deconstruct but to reconstruct narrative and visual pleasure in order to produce the conditions of visibility for a different social subject, (the varied and multi-faceted women). Women's cinema should enact the contradiction between *women* as socio-historical subjects and *Woman* as a sign constructed through and within Western culture.

4. Feminist and feminine perspectives

As emphasised throughout this thesis, media reports have, when speaking about the MJCE directors and their films, generally capitalised on their sexual difference by speaking about a 'feminine perspective'. This is,

however, a term recurrently used without any qualification, other than that the film is about women and portraits female characters. This has, thereby, generally reinforced the naturalisation of an androcentric perspective and the ghettoization of these filmmakers. This, at least, is how they have understood the media emphasis on their difference, and, consequently, they have tended to reject any suggestion of a different, feminine perspective (as they recurrently expressed in Camí-Vela, 2005).

Leaving aside media reception and instead following literary theorisations of a 'feminine perspective', one could argue that many MJCE directors display a different way of approaching gender issues and the construction of femininity. Many of the characteristics associated with feminine perspectives in literature clearly appear in their work: a focus on domestic situations, female characters and issues related to women, the confrontation of traditional and modern models of femininity which results in a privileging of modern models, an interest in women's role in history, and so on (Freixas, 2002: 162 and ff.; analysed in section 4.3.2.).

Definitions of a feminine perspective and a feminist perspective are somehow surprisingly similar in some academic texts. For example, Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas (1998: 133-6) list characteristics associated with a feminine perspective – such as the use of autobiographical narratives, portrayals of processes of re-evaluation of identity, and characterisation through the portrayal of everyday details – as does Ballesteros (2001: 49 and ff.) regarding feminist cinema, although she adds others that the first do not mention.

Through the process of elaborating this thesis, I have somehow become more aware of how ambiguous and overloaded the term 'feminist cinema'.

A simple definition is offered by Smelik (2001: 1): a feminist approach entails a recognition and a questioning of the unequal power dynamics that affect women and in which women participate. Thus, many MJCE films engage one way or another with feminism; nevertheless, only a few foreground this involvement (e.g. *Me llamo Sara*).

Some play with simple popularised media ideas of feminism, ideas that have become common sense, while ignoring or not considering others of equal or greater importance. This sometimes has happened through what Gill (2007) has called a postfeminist sensitivity, this being the articulation of a common-sensical, accomplished feminism and neoliberalism, with an emphasis on individualism and consumerism as the source of happiness. This is the case with *Puede ser divertido*.

Other films engage, though not theoretically, with the inequalities and issues that have long been feminist concerns: domestic violence, (subtle) forms of discrimination implicit in language and social norms, the work-life balance, women in disadvantaged positions (e.g. immigrants), etc. (e.g. *Extranjeras, La vida perra de Juanita Narboni*).

Therefore, one could argue that there are at least three different ways of assessing the feminist content of a film, by asking: firstly, whether or not the characters are 'daughters' (and 'sons') of feminism; secondly, whether or not the preferred readings and subject positions constructed in the film invest in ideological messages advanced by feminist theories; and finally, and following the intense theorisation of feminist cinema, whether the films conform to the characteristics associated with the feminist 'genre' (for want of a better word).

To the first question, most characters in MJCE films are in one way or another daughters of feminism, living in a society in which, in relation to a no-so-distant past, women enjoy, at least legally, equal rights. This is not something unusual for contemporary filmic characters; the professional, autonomous, empowered and urban woman is a recurrent image on the screen and on television. Nevertheless, this new female empowerment is often translated as a power to consume, and as sexual freedom. This is also the case with a few MJCE films, though it is not the norm.

To the second question, most MJCE films do not offer a preferred feminist reading because they do not engage with issues that would require a feminist subject position. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, there are many films that contain some sequence where a 'feminist sensibility' is offered as a means of assuming the preferred subject position (e.g. *Entre rojas*). A few films construct a preferred reading that, in my opinion, can only be called feminist. This is the case with *Me llamo Sara* and *Te doy mis ojos*. Nevertheless, their preferred 'feminist' readings differ fundamentally, since *Me llamo Sara* defends and aims to give visibilisation to the natural specificity of female experience (which departs from the body) and to the importance of sisterhood. Its feminism is therefore more universalising. *Te doy mis ojos* instead offers a reading that is located in the here and now, in the concrete and particular; it engages with a socio-cultural problem that is affecting many women in Spain, domestic violence, and it engages with the conventional representational practices regarding this issue.

Chapter 4 tried to reply to the fourth question. The intense theorisation around the subject of women' and feminist cinema has discursively constructed a 'feminist genre' that, in my opinion, only some films partially engage with, such as the aforementioned *Me llamo Sara* and also, through

lesbian feminism, *Costa Brava*. Many characteristics associated with this genre are found, if dispersed and infrequent, in many MJCE films, but others, such as reflections upon the female body beyond beauty, are still rare.

Before closing this summary, it should be clarified that, as in any account that aims to provide an overview of a large number of films, some MJCE films fit uncomfortably within this account. Atypical films directed by Spanish women fall into various categories. For example, it has emerged from this research that most women filmmakers aim to avoid formal experimentations; nevertheless, films such as *Yo, puta* (Luna, 2004, Spain) – with its combination of documentary and mainstream fiction – and *Sexo por compasión* – which is inspired by 'magic realism' – are clear exceptions. Similarly, it has been argued that MJCE films tend not to be easily classified within a genre; but, notwithstanding this, many others do, especially within the comedy genre (e.g. the screwball comedy *Hasta aquí hemos llegado*, with its mistaken identities and stereotypically extreme characters). The MJCE films are clearly part of a larger group, which had been referred as the JCE cinema, that presents many similarities regarding themes and visual styles and that are conditioned by the same industrial demands (e.g. a more televisual style).

Finally, it should not be understood that what I have encountered has been in any way a homogenous or monolithic sample of films. In this study, I have focused on the ways that these MJCE films construct femininity, and it is in this regard we can find more similarities. Granted that certain themes, tendencies and concerns have emerged as broadly 'characteristic' of this field, I have concentrated in this study on those films that articulate these characteristics most eloquently.

NOTES

Introduction

1 In the following potted summary, I offer a condensed summary of recurrent issues identified by other scholars.

For a detailed analysis of the discursive trends of political and tourist campaigns during the 1980s and 1990s, see Kelly (2000). For a condensed revision of the socio-political situation of the period 1975-1996, see Juliá (1999).

For a detailed analysis of the situation of women, see Brooksbank Jones (1997).

For a detailed analysis of national definitions of Spanish cinema and / or the industrial changes in the 1980s and 1990s, see Jordan (2000a and 2000b), Triana-Toribio (2003), Vallés Copeiro (2000) and Zunzunegui (2005).

2 For further details, see appendix 1.

3 I have not counted Ana Díez and Isabel Coixet among these fifty women, since they debuted at the end of the 1980s. But, as I said before, I have considered the films that they directed in the 1990s.

4 In many studies (e.g. Heredero and Santamaría, 2002; Camí-Vela, 2005), directors who have debuted in the first years of the current decade, such as Helena Taberna and Patricia Ferreira, have been jointly considered with those who debuted in the 1990s.

Chapter 1

1 For example, within cultural studies, Barker and Galasinski (2001: 8).

2 Understanding De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* as the trigger of its theoretical development.

3 Although her theories and her methodology are appealing, framed between Foucauldian discourse analysis and psychoanalysis, they are more applicable to those cultural products that aim to dissolve this binaristic understanding of gender identity. A contestation of these correlations is hardly visible in contemporary Spanish cinema directed by women and, therefore, her theories are not directly applicable. Her theories would be more applicable for analyzing films that focus on groups, such as transsexuals, that upset clear-cut gender distinctions such as *La mala educación* (Pedro Almodóvar, 2004, Spain) and *20 centímetros* (Ramón Salazar, 2005, Spain and France).

4 The expectations imposed on (Western white) women in the name of 'femininity' increased considerably during the XIXth century, especially among upper and middle-classes (e.g. Walters, 2005; Smith, 1990).

5 In her article, Grimshaw offers a linguistic discourse analysis of three classical feminist texts: Daly *Gyn/Ecology* (1979); M. Frye *The politics of reality*, (1983); and K. Millet *Sexual Politics* (1977). In this article, she does not mention that these theorists speak about ideology, but her comments about their way of conceptualising femininity correspond to the tenets of ideology, popular in intellectual circles at that time.

6 For Barthes, the study of myths was understood as a theoretical approach that combines ideological theories and semiotics, with its focus on the study of 'ideas-in-form' (112).

7 Barthes further elaborates that: "We know that myth is a type of speech defined

by its intention (I am a grammatical example) much more than by its literal sense (My name is Lion); and that in spite of this, its intention is somehow frozen, purified, eternalized, made absent by this literal sense (The French Empire? It's just a fact: look at this good Negro who salutes like one of our boys)" (124).

8 Following De Lauretis' distinction (1997).

9 Bartky borrows this definition from one of Judith Butler's papers entitled 'Embodied identity in De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*'.

10 As Bartky points out: "(T)he production of 'docile bodies' requires that an uninterrupted coercion be directed to the very processes of bodily activity, not just their result; this 'micro-physics of power' fragments and partitions the body's time, its space and its movement" (1990: 63).

11 Angela McRobbie offered a similar perspective, though updated to the contemporary postfeminist context, in her paper 'Illegible rage: young women's postfeminist disorders' presented in the LSE in January 2007.

12 The two last volumes of his *History of Sexuality – The Care of the Self* and *The Use of Pleasure* – and the series of seminars published collectively under the title *Technologies of the Self*. In these works, he develops the possibilities of exerting agency within the limits of discourse.

13 We should remember that, unlike with ideology, it is not related to a 'self-realisation' of the innate potential of the individual.

14 In this context, language is understood in a very open way, as any system of meaning creation; for example, Foucault spoke about the architectural organisation of the panopticon (in *Discipline and Punishment*) as discursive.

15 This 'reality' never has a fixed meaning: "Foucault's point is that it is as material beings in the world that we interrogate our relation between the world and our existence in it, and this interrogation can only be undertaken from wherever we find ourself (sic.) located at a specific historical and cultural juncture. The danger is that we come to believe that the knowledge that emerges from this interrogation can provide a ground, or a secure foundation on which to make universal or True claims about this knowledge and the relation that we are able to interrogate" (Barker, 1998: 77).

16 She analyses media discourses of femininity during Victorian times as a way of illustrating how to adopt a Critical discourse analysis in the study of media texts.

17 She argues that: "Gender can be thought as a particular discourse, i.e. a set of overlapping and often contradictory cultural descriptions and prescriptions referring to sexual difference which arises from and regulates particular economic, social, political, technological and other non-discursive contexts. Gender is inscribed in the subject along with other discourses, such as those of ethnicity, class and sexuality, in a variety of cultural practices" (quoted in De Gregorio Godeo, 2003: 499).

18 This is the approach adopted by Smith (1990) and explained in section 1 of this chapter.

19 Fairclough describes the 'orders of discourse' of a domain as: "the totality of its discursive practices, and the relationships (of complementarity, inclusion/exclusion, opposition) between them – for instance in schools, the discursive practices of the classroom, of assessed written work, of the playground, and of the staff room. The order of discourse of a society is the set of these more 'local' orders of discourse and the relationships between them (Fairclough, 1995a: 132)" (quoted in Barker and Galasinski, 2001: 69).

Similarly, Fuery defines this as 'unities of discourse' defined as: "those aspects imposed on a collection of materials/textualities/phenomena that makes them seem somehow united [...] Part of their operation is to link, sort, exclude, and define groupings of knowledge. One of the effects of this is that these unities gain, over time, a sense of truth and knowledge itself. They pass from the status of artificial constructions and subjective positions to becoming ways of thinking about things, and the ways in which cultures produce systems of knowledge" (2000: 62).

20 Kelly (2000) discusses how, through official discourses and since the Transition, there has been a reinforcement of a discourse that emphasises the transformation of Spain, embodied in the notion of Europe as a desirable goal and political imperative. As an example, she refers to the electoral political campaign of the PSOE where 'Europe' became a byword for modernisation. 'Catching up' with Europe (the feeling of erasing the differences and become an 'equal') was a national obsession.

21 This definition has, however, sometimes been simplistically understood as a type of specialised language. For example, Tonkiss (1999) defines discourse as a: "system of language which draws on a particular terminology and encodes specific forms of knowledge" (using the example of 'medical language'); it necessarily has 'three important effects': it establishes a "distinct domain of expertise"; it serves as a type of "backstage knowledge" that allows a fluid communication among those that participate in the discourse; and it "authorizes certain speakers and statements" (248).

22 For him, discourses are not informed by the object of knowledge that they study but are rather systematised discursive practices that constitute the object studied (Talbot, 2007: 12).

23 He also addressed this subject in his last two (published) volumes of his *History of Sexuality*.

24 These being the others, the technologies of production, the technologies of signs systems, and the technologies of power or of domination.

25 As Barker and Galasinski point out, "Performative does not refer to a performance by an intentional actor, but to the impelled performance of regulatory discourses of power" (2001: 87). Butler gives the example of marriage, constituted – and subjectively interiorised – when the judge's elocution 'I pronounce you man and wife' is uttered (ibid.).

26 Following Butler, Barker and Galasinski (2001: 36-7) explain that this identification is always destined to fail because it trips over the materiality of the body.

27 For a brief overview see, Jaworski and Coupland's introduction (1999).

28 As Rose states: "If you are writing a discourse analysis, then, the arguments about discourse, power and truth/knowledge are just as pertinent to your work as to the materials you are analysing. Doing a discourse analysis demands some sort of critical reflection on your own research practice" (2001: 160).

29 This has become a common feature of this type of analyses, as Schrøder highlights: "The main limitation of critical discourse analysis is that no empirical attention is given to the middle range of the discourse practices [of production and consumption]. Fairclough has deliberately excluded this aspect from his own analyses, stating that 'my emphasis will be upon linguistic analysis of texts ... I am not concerned ... with direct analysis of production or consumption of texts' (Fairclough 1995: 62). Certainly, so far, few researchers overall have undertaken holistic, empirical studies of media and their circulation of discourses between senders and recipients" (2002: 108).

30 An interesting development from this, for the study of media, is that with this understanding, text is constructed as "qualitatively continuous with the experience of everyday life" (Meinhof and Smith, 1995 quoted in Talbot, 2007: 63). Therefore, socially constructed discourses (e.g. sociological studies) are seen as constituting the textual references of other texts. 'Reality' becomes then a discursively and contradictorily complex construct (this does not deny the 'existence' of reality but a transference from a 'ontological' reality to a 'epistemological' human reality).

31 Following and quoting Hall's theories of the encoding and decoding processes, Van Zoonen explains: "The concept of polysemic media texts should be embraced with caution, however. In spite of its essential ambiguity, the range of meanings and subject positions a text offers is not infinite. 'Encoding will have the effect of constructing some of the limits and parameters within which decodings will operate' (Hall, 1980: 135)'. So most texts do have a 'preferred reading' which, given the economic and ideological location of most media, will tend to reconstruct dominant values of a society" (1996: 45).

32 Rose explains that to study the rethorical organisation of the text is fundamental: "[to] explore how those specific views or accounts are constructed as real or truthful or natural through particular regimes of truth. As Gill (1996: 143) says, 'all discourse is organised to make itself persuasive', and discourse analyses focus on those strategies of persuasion" (2001: 140-141).

33 Suture is a specific way of cinematic address. Kuhn defines it as "the process whereby the gap produced by that absence [the absence of the source of cinematic enunciation] is filled by the spectator, who thus becomes the 'stand-in', the subject-in-the-text" (Kuhn, 1994: 52) Therefore the spectator is always 'sewn-in' the enunciation. A device for this is the 'shot/reverse shot' structure.

34 Further analysed in chapter 6.

35 These are probably the kind of silences Foucault had in mind when he said: "Silence itself –the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers – is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses" (1998: 27).

36 This becomes more remarkable when considering that the pre-production research was extensively based on direct contact with several women, sheltered within support organisations, who had suffered 'domestic' violence. This resulted in the realisation of Bollaín's short *Amores que matan* (2000, Spain).

37 In this article, she only offers a superficial approximation, but describes clearly a methodological plan. Santaolalla has also written a complete book about the subject, published in 2005 (*Los Otros: Etnicidad y 'raza' en el cine español contemporáneo*).

38 My translation from:

"1. ¿Qué tipos de imágenes de la inmigración aparecen en –y son ignoradas por – el cine español contemporáneo? ¿Cómo se relacionan éstas con: a) la historia de la representación de la inmigración y lo étnico en el cine español; b) otras formas de representación cultural de la alteridad en España (por ejemplo, publicidad, prensa, televisión); c) el tratamiento de estos aspectos en otras industrias cinematográficas; d) otros factores constituyentes de 'diferencia' –género, sexualidad, clase social – con los que interaccionan dentro de la ficción?

2. ¿Cuáles son los discursos culturales e ideológicos de los que emergen y dentro de los cuales circulan esas imágenes? ¿De qué forma puede ayudar la identificación de estos discursos a la interpretación de las imágenes [...]? ¿Qué tipo de necesidades y/o deseos satisfacen?

3. ¿Cómo contribuyen tales imágenes y sus contextos socioculturales e ideológicos a los debates y a las prácticas asociadas con la identidad individual y comunitaria en la España contemporánea –sobre todo teniendo en cuenta las patentes tensiones que existen en el país entre las fidelidades locales y globales (incluyendo aquí la dinámica post-colonial)?".

Chapter 2

1 For an interesting analysis of how Spain has been represented in governmental official discourses, especially in tourist advertising campaigns, see Kelly's article (2000).

2 There are many studies of the discourses of femininity as reflected in the

legislation and in the speeches and publications of the 'Sección Femenina' (see Glossary).

3 Martín-Gaite explains how they tried to sell the traditional model of femininity as a new model, opposed to the lost of values of Republicanism (1994: 27).

4 Fragments of these discourses are included in Morcillo (2000) and Martín-Gaite (1994).

5 "1938 Fuero del trabajo had declared the family '[la] célula primaria natural y fundamento de la sociedad y al mismo tiempo [una] institución moral, dotada de derecho inalienable y superior a toda ley positiva" (Brooksbank Jones, 1997: 75). Although things have changed considerably in Spanish society, Brooksbank Jones argues that in the mid-1990s it was still extremely difficult for unmarried couples to deal with the state (ibid.: 90).

6 For example, adultery was a criminal offence more severely punished in the case of women than men (Brooksbank Jones, 1997: 76).

7 Pilar Primo de Rivera, founder of the Sección Femenina, clearly stated in her speeches that 'the sole mission of women towards the Patria is Homemaking" (my translation from: "la única misión que tienen asignadas las mujeres en la tarea de la Patria es el Hogar") (quoted in Muñoz Ruiz, 2004: 114).

8 The contents of media products were regulated by a (often ambiguous) system of regulations which became a bit clearer and better defined in the early 1950s, as Muñoz Ruiz points out (2004: 116).

9 The life of illustrious women and Renaissance treatises were often used in women's education to help to convey these values. The two main female historical figures were Saint Teresa de Ávila and Isabel I of Spain. While encouraging women to keep to the private sphere and not to overstep other privileges, this choice of role models may seem odd. But as Inbal Ofer points out, their heroism, which was necessarily attached to masculine values, did not modify their feminine attributes and it was motivated, contingently, by the right reasons: "the attainment of a religious and national goal" (2005: 668). On top of that, these were considered *exceptional* women, who did not do anything to raise the status of femininity per se.

The preferred treatises were two classic Spanish Renaissance treatises about the correct behaviour of women that exerted a considerable influence until well into the 1960s, *The Instruction of the Christian Woman* (Luis Vives, 1523) and *The Perfect Married Lady* (Fray Luis de León, 1583). For a nuance analysis, see Morcillo (2000: 40 and ff.).

10 Women who enrolled at university were forced to serve a mandatory social service where domestic values were inculcated, as if trying to counter-balance the harm this could cause (Morcillo, 1999).

11 This segregation was less effective on the lower levels of the class system (Martín Gaite, 1994: 66). Men were at the centre of women's life projects; for men, women were a superficial part of their life, pleasant though incomprehensible (156).

12 Relationships were regulated by an unwritten code with expected proceedings at different stages of the relationship (e.g. girls with a 'formal' boyfriend were not allowed to even dance with other men; the standards for boys were altogether different). The unwritten rules that regulated gender relations during the post-war period are the object of Martín Gaite's (1994) study. In particular, chapter VIII discusses the rules governing courtship.

13 Their social function encompassed the organisation of travelling classrooms (aimed at combating the high levels of illiteracy among women in rural and far-connected areas) and the organisation of courses to improve the levels of living and health of many women and infants. They also organised multiple courses "on agriculture for rural women, childcare, cooking, sewing, etc. in the attempt to raise women's 'cultural' awareness" (Carbayo-Abengózar, 2000: 115). Victoria Lorée Enders (1999) and Inbal Ofer (2005) re-assessed in their articles the important social role that this organisation developed, and discussed how their task improved standards of living for many women. They defend their role for the improvement of the situation and of rights for women. For

example, Enders mentions the important role that Pilar Primo de Rivera had in the elaboration and approval of the *Law of political, professional and labour rights of women* (sanctioned in 1961), which considerably improved the situation of women.

Although she recognises that they fought for an improvement in women's situations, whilst always clarifying that their aspirations were not feminist (accepting women's natural inferiority), Martín Gaité (1994: ch. III) regards them as Franco's servants. Pilar Primo de Rivera's tamed character enabled an easy adaptation to the changes of the time and, probably, the survival of the Sección Femenina's status long after the end of the influence of the Falange. What is more interesting is that, despite the social changes that had obviously affected the situation of women, she put forward a proposal in 1968 advocating for a regular payment to the housewife; this, which could be considered as a 'feminist' idea, actually had an anti-feminist will behind it, namely, to keep women in their 'natural' domain, home (Romero Marín, 2000).

14 Childless widows or single women aged 17 to 35 had to fulfil their Servicio Social, as did many other women under multiple circumstances (with a public job or academic career but also to obtain a passport, a driving licence and to join any kind of association) (Martín Gaité, 1994: 60). This implied a compromise of 6 hours per day for 6 months, which was often extended if they did not meet the basic requirements (64).

15 Muñoz Ruiz (2004) emphasises this in the ideological discourse of women's *tebeos* (children's comics), while Martín Gaité (1994) analyses it in relation to woman's press of all types.

16 By, for example, not sharing all their activities with female friends or family when in the public sphere (e.g. when going to the toilet, or sending a letter without showing it around).

17 As Martín Gaité observes, this was in itself a contradiction, because the male population was, proportionally, considerably lower due to the casualties of the war, and many women, especially single women, were *forced* into labour (1994: 46-48)

18 Women could not work at night. Married women were a priori discouraged from working, and it was only allowed when their husband's salary was insufficient. Single women could only work with the written permission of her tutor (her father, generally). Women were not allowed to access many public jobs. A thorough analysis of the conditions under which women were allowed to work can be found in chapters two and three of Aurora Morcillo (2000) and in chapter 3 of Anne Brooksbank Jones (1997).

19 This subjugated position had many implications. For example, women were unable to live alone while their father or husband was alive, they were dispossessed of all their possessions when they married, and were forced to ask their husbands permission regarding a multitude of situations (e.g. starting a job, getting a passport). Even worse was the situation of women who were separating from their husbands, since they hardly had any rights regarding their home (even if they had brought this possession into marriage), and they had a lot of limitations regarding access to their children. This changed thanks to the perseverance of Mercedes Formica, a member of the Falange and of the Sección Femenina, and a prominent lawyer, who fought for the re-writing of these laws, with occasional success (Carbayo-Abengózar, 2000: 115-116).

It is important to stress the legal construction of women as infants under male supervision, relieved of all 'individual' rights (being constructed as an extensions of men, the heads of the family). It is as if the state did not engage with individuals but only with families (which were always directed by men).

20 Brooksbank Jones points out that the mid-1960s saw the beginning of an organised woman's movement, with groups such as the *Movimiento democrático de la mujer* within the Communist Party, and the initially timid flow of classical feminist texts such as Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1997: 6-7).

21 For a thorough analysis of these changes, see Morcillo (1999 and 2000) and Brooksbank Jones (1997).

22 As Martín Gaité pointed out, this was the discourse that prevailed during the

postwar period in Spain (1994: 23-24).

23 Carbayo-Abengózar argues that these changes were partially due to the impact of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1967) on the Spanish clergy, which became more politicised towards the Left. Many Catholic women's organisations started campaigns to improve women's rights (2000: 117).

24 My translation from: "empezaba a proliferar el espécimen de la muchacha que iba a bailar a las boîtes, llegaba tarde a cenar, fumaba, hacía gala de un lenguaje crudo y desdolido, había dejado de usar faja, no estaba dispuesta a tener más de dos hijos y consideraba no sólo una antigualla sino una falta de cordura llegar virgen al matrimonio".

25 The oppressive character and ridiculous aspect of many of those normative parameters were rendered visible in the pages of *La Codorniz*. Some newly rich girls enjoyed a certain liberty regarding bending the rules – though without breaking the cardinal rule of remaining virgins – and adopted a frivolous attitude (drinking, smoking, and being as loud as men) (Martín Gaité, 79-89). Also, in many urban working-class areas, the 'good' customs and Francoist values that regulated gender relations were often disregarded and men and women socialised together without as many restrictions. This contributed to the official if ambiguous labelling of these areas as 'impassable areas to healthy ideals' / 'zonas infranqueables a los ideales sanos' (ibid.: 95).

26 This recent book adopts a popular style, though based on rigorous sociological data. Although written conjointly, the first section of the book offers an assessment about the situation of women in Spain by Castells and an assessment about the situation of men by Subirats. My translation from: "De entrada, es una sociedad muy tradicional, pero es una sociedad dicotómica entre la gente de menos de 40 años y de más de 50 años, con una franja entre los 40-50 que están entre los dos mundos [...] Todavía es mayoritario, todavía en la práctica se ve, pero estamos diciendo que este modelo entra en crisis y entra en crisis de forma mayoritaria en las nuevas generaciones".

27 This statistic show a slightly more optimistic panorama than the data offered by other reports, such as that elaborated by the Instituto de la Mujer, which pointed out that only 40.77% of women were working in 2005 (Instituto de la Mujer, 2007?: 29).

28 The unemployment rates for women who are actively seeking work are much higher than they are for men or for women in other E.U. countries, mounting up to 15% (against 8.1% of men), which represents 5.7% over the European Union average. For example, in the U.K, only 4.2% of women are unemployed, against 5% of men (Instituto de la mujer, 2007?: 31-32).

29 See Glossary.

30 The impact of the Internet has been less important in Spain than in other European countries, although it is becoming more popular. Following the summaries of the reports by AIMC (a group of commercial consultants that elaborate audience reports to be used by media companies), only 12.6% of the population used the Internet on a monthly basis in 2000; but this percentage had raised to 26.2% of people using the internet on a daily basis in 2007.

31 This relates partially to the source of finance of many of them, the *Instituto de la Mujer*, which mainly finances studies that adopt a 'quantitative' methodology. Adopting the discursive conventions of governmental sociological reports, these tend to either quantify the amount of texts that fit the analytical categories chosen or, when analysing the text, to isolate the parts (of the ad, television programme, etc) that illustrate their analytical categories without assessing them within a continuum of either that specific text or the representational conventions of its specific medium. Furthermore, although concerned with evaluating levels of equality in the media, they tend to use analytical categories that are in themselves socio-historically contingent but treated as 'universal' (e.g. sexism). For example, Royo-Vela et al. (2007) apply the "Consciousness Scale for Sexism" developed by Butler – Paisley and Paisley-Butler (1974) for analyzing their sample of advertisements (640).

32 Nevertheless, Royo Vela et al. (2002) clarify that there are significant differences

regarding the different types of press. For example, the type of femininity represented in advertisements from women's magazines tends to be less traditional (183). Also, there are differences regarding the types of product. For example, in their analysed sample, 100% of cleaning products presented women characters taking a housewife role (181).

33 They measured up the results of their content analysis study against the results of other similar studies done in Western countries, and found important similarities between them. For example, male voice-overs (an authoritative enunciative mode) are much more common in all of the countries studied than are female voice-overs; there are more young female characters than male young characters; and women are overwhelmingly used to advertise body products.

34 During the 1990s, Spanish serials became extremely popular, taking the primetime slots and displacing American serials. For a nuanced analysis, see Álvarez Mozoncillo and López Villanueva (2000).

35 During this and the last decade, many serials have often comically staged family dynamics, for example *Médico de Familia* (Estudios Picasso and Globomedia / Telecinco; 1995 – 1999; Spain) and *Ana y los siete* (Star Line Productions / Television Española; 2002 – 2005; Spain) and the interactions of a small community, for example, a flat tower community *Aquí no hay quien viva* (Antena 3 and Miramon Mendi / Antena 3; 2003 – 2006; Spain). Towards the end of the 1990s, and with the success of *Periodistas* (Estudios Picasso, Globomedia and Écija / Telecinco; 1998 – 2002; Spain), 'professional serials' have proliferated, and this has coincided with –and probably has been a contributing factor towards – the rise of a 'realist' tendency in television serials (Galán Fajardo, 2007: 229-30).

36 All the information provided about the series has been mainly extracted from the Internet Movie Data Base and the websites of the television channels. This applies to all the series mentioned in the thesis. When the series are Spanish, I have indicated in which Spanish channel they were broadcasted. The format has followed this pattern: the production companies / the channel that broadcasted the series; its run; its nationality. See appendix 4.

37 She focuses her analysis on two popular serials: *El Comisario* (Bocaboca Producciones, Estudios Picasso and Telecinco / Telecinco; 1999 – 2009; Spain) and *Hospital central*.

38 This is a low percentage. Furthermore, the situation has not improved a great deal, taking into account that in Fagoaga's 1993 study the equivalent percentage was 10% (quoted in Fagoaga, 1996; 356).

39 My translation from: "las características asociadas a los personajes masculinos son la valentía, la inteligencia y el liderazgo, mientras que las que se les atribuye a las protagonistas son la sensibilidad, la bondad y la preocupación por la imagen; los personajes que ejercen autoridad de algún tipo tienen nombre de varón, mientras que los que se representan como más sumisos responden a un nombre de mujer".

40 For a nuanced analysis of this, see Wheleman (2000: 27-36) and Brunsdon (1997).

41 Other feminist theorist scholars from different Anglophone countries (e.g. McRobbie, 2006; Taylor, 2003; Whelehan, 2000; Levy, 2006) have also signalled towards this situation.

42 The group of women she interviewed, who were anxious to preserve a 'feminine' appearance whilst distancing themselves from 'traditional' femininities, suffered a similar dissatisfaction with their bodies and understood that the constitution of alternative 'femininities' is articulated through appearances and are constituted through a time and money consuming disciplinary regime. This leads to a commodification of differences. The resulting appearance may be different, but the process of construction of femininity is left untouched.

43 Levy explains how there has been a visible tendency in American culture of women who enjoy constructing themselves as sexual objects (e.g. willingly exposing their

breasts and genitalia for a popular television programme, *Girls Gone Wild*) and with heterosexual women who enjoy consuming 'images of women as sexual objects' (through pornography, visits to lap-dancing clubs, etc.)

44 Its celebration erases the psychological side-effects it can produce (e.g. fears of 'losing' the power that lies in their bodily allure); dressed as a source of women's pleasure, this shift hinders the possibility of social critique and reinforces neo-liberal individualist ideas; and, finally, it represents a move "from an *external male judging gaze* to a *self-policing narcissistic gaze*" (Gill, 2003: 5; her emphasis).

45 For Gill (2007: 261), the pressures involved in achieving a winning femininity have increased: self-surveillance has become more intensified and all-pervasive in the regulation of the body (e.g. 'upper arm definition', 'smells'); the discipline has come to regulate detailed areas previously relegated to the private (e.g. how to send the right text to a 'lad love'); and it has also extended to our 'psychology', and we are now constantly invited to reflect upon the type of person –e.g. woman, wife, friend – we are. Through the textual, a 'right form' of femininity is instantiated: "(It) provides a standpoint for the subject from which her own conduct or the conduct of others can be examined" (Smith, 1995: 168).

46 Her study analyses in detail one issue of an Australian woman's magazine about the emergence of 'New Femininities'. Despite the obvious limitations that this narrow sample brings with it, many of her conclusions echo other theorists' observations and are transferable to the analysis of Baumgardner and Richards' article (2004).

47 Quoted in the market research report elaborated by Kantar Research, which, acknowledging the strong consumerist potential of women, explored the different lifestyles of women in a multitude of European countries (although misreading the meaning of many cultural Spanish manifestations).

48 My translation from: "una consideración nueva del propio destino".

49 After analysing the television programming of the week from the 5th to the 11th of May 2008, I have not found any programme that focus on transforming women's appearances. I have also looked into the programmes section of the websites of the main national Spanish channels and read the summaries about the aim of their programmes (the public channel *TVE 1* and *La 2*, and the private channels *Antena 3*, *Cuatro*, *Tele 5* and *La Sexta*) and I have not found any instances of this kind of programme.

50 For example, in his study from the first half of the 1990s, Martín Serrano comments that for every two women that appear as 'actors' or guests in television programmes and advertising, references are made regarding the body of one of them, whereas, in the case of men, only one in four are subjected to such comments (1995: 77).

51 For example, being at the centre of a very popular cinematographic sub-genre, 'la comedia sexy hispana' (still popular in the early 1980s). This conservative and patriarchal cinematic trend was ambiguous regarding the combination of modernity and femininity. Foreign modern female characters, portrayed as tempting attractive devils, were often opposed and defeated by the virtue of the true Spanish model of femininity, proclaiming the superiority of traditional values.

52 I have not found any study of the representation of women in the 'variety' programmes that were often at the centre of Friday and Saturday evening programming during the 1990s and which seem to have lost space in the last years. In this kind of programmes, the appearance of semi-naked stewardesses that were conspicuously constructed as sexual objects was a central element.

53 My translation from: "Por el contrario, a lo que asistimos en las escenas de los anuncios es a la incorporación de la mujer publicitaria a los patrones masculinos de comportamiento, de simbolización y de consumo, y en consecuencia a una aceptación de los valores y de los estilos de vida asociados al orden simbólico masculino".

54 Plaza (2005) disagrees in his analysis of the construction, indicating a clear feminisation, of male celebrities in girl's magazines. But this is a very specific medium

and what he suggests is that the 'new' men may be more easily found among the mediums directed at women (what could be considered a man constructed for a feminine gaze).

55 The Spanish edition of *Cosmopolitan* was first launched in 1976 but failed completely, since this new, more sexual, bold and daring type of femininity did not fit easily with Spanish constructions of femininity (Gallego, 1990: 66-67; Ganzabal Learreta, 2005). At that time, other women's magazines addressed to the new woman had to reconcile both traditional and modern values in their discourse, reassuring their readers that entering the public sphere did not result in a loss of femininity (Gallego, 1990: 66-67).

Cosmopolitan was successfully re-launched in 1990, following a massive entrance of international groups in the field of Spanish women's magazines (Ganzabal Learreta, 2005). Since then, *Cosmopolitan* has become increasingly popular and, in the last years, has become the most read publication of its type (i.e. glossy monthly women's magazines), mainly targeting young women (as indicated in the 2000 and 2007 reports produced by AIMC).

But, in order to succeed in the Spanish market, *Cosmopolitan* has adapted its discourse and its contents. At the time of its launch (1990), *Cosmopolitan's* main novelty and appeal was its bold treatment of sexual matters, then still rare in Spain, but which is nowadays commonly found in other Spanish magazines (Ganzabal Learreta, 2005). In the Spanish edition, the playful and frivolous tone characteristic of its Anglophone editions is played down in favour of a more serious and formal style (Machin and Van Leeuwen, 2005, 592, 595). This seriousness also applies to the contents. Unlike the UK and the US editions, the Spanish *Cosmopolitan* marks clear differences between the more informative and more entertaining contents, and often includes articles about women's rights and professional opportunities (ibid.: 592). This last aspect is, Feliú et al. observed (1999), a common feature of Spanish women's magazines, maybe because women's involvement in the public sphere seem less consolidated than in other Western countries.

56 Following sociological studies, they sustain that Spain and Germany are the two European countries where gender equality takes central stage more in society.

57 The role of fashion and advertising in the increase of illnesses associated with body image was recognised by the Ministerio de Salud in 1999, and propelled a media campaign that resulted in several important fashion festivals – e.g. Cibeles, Madrid – rejecting for the catwalk those models seen as embodying an anorexic ideal (Torres, 2003: 433). This is still the case nowadays, creating a media debate whenever these fashion festivals are celebrated.

On top of this, following the conclusions of the first European anthropomorphic study about the bodies of women, the Ministerio de Salud is planning to change the clothing system of sizes to accommodate 'realistic' type of women (an initiative well publicised in the Spanish media during January and February 2008).

Chapter 3

1 This is further explained in chapter 4. For a list of women filmmakers before the late 1980s, see note 1 of chapter 4.

2 Jordan's study focuses on constructions of 'masculinity' but it also refers to those of femininity.

3 My translation from: "El cine 'sexy celtibérico' es reflejo, en clave cómica, de la situación en que se encuentra la sociedad pretransicional: de la tensión entre el desahogo y la represión, entre la relajación y la contención, entre el moralismo católico y el erotismo convertido en objeto de consumo".

4 The family, as an essential pillar of Francoism, was symbolically overloaded in its

cinematic representations. During the Transition, many films focus on the family, especially in the figure of the mother. Gámez Fuentes's study (1999) offers a thorough analysis of this subject.

5 For a nuanced analysis see Brooksbank Jones (1997: chapter 1).

6 I am not offering thorough analyses of these films. Josefina Molina and Pilar Miró's early works have been analysed in several studies (e.g. Martín-Márquez, 1999; Donapetry, 1998; Ballesteros, 2001). Vernon (2002) offers an overview of the work of the three women directors working during the Transition (including Cecilia Bartolomé). There is also a study completely dedicated to Cecilia Bartolomé's work, edited by Cerdán and Díaz López (2001).

7 My translation from: "una generación de mujeres en las coordenadas culturales, sociales y políticas de la España de la transición".

8 In the case of Miró, Martín-Márquez offers a detailed analysis in her book (1999: 14-15 and 163 and ff.); Ballesteros also analyses their rejection (2001: 47-9). I will refer to these women filmmakers' refusal to be labelled as feminist filmmakers in the next chapter, when analysing the reasons that contemporary women filmmakers have for doing the same.

9 Indeed Díez Puertas suggests that the reason why the funding system was kept at the end of the dictatorship was to use it as a measure for controlling the type of films produced in that delicate political period (2003: 72).

10 This section has been primarily based on the information provided by the laws (listed in the bibliography) and in Hopewell (1991), Riambau (2003), Merchán (2000?), Jordan (2000b), Vallés Copeiro (2000), Díez Puertas (2003) and Cerdán and Pena (2005). Since many of the data and the arguments repeat, I have only referenced the source when I am quoting directly, or when the author argues a particular issue that others have not considered.

11 This is a type of cinema that Benet has called a cinema of consensus (2001: 46) since it constructed a cruel image of the past as a front against which it rebelled whilst constructing a bright future as a contraposition. It is also often labelled as 'cine polivalente', since it aimed to be exportable at the same time as reflecting upon the idiosyncrasy of Spanish culture(s) (Riambau, 1995: p.421-429).

12 Many have studied this situation e.g. Riambau, 1995; Jordan, 2000b; and Merchán, 2000.

13 The then minister of Culture.

14 There were many such abuses. For example, subjective and suspicious criteria were used, and funding was often destined to projects created by friends of the people in charge of deciding about the funding; and the inflated budgets of the projects that aimed at such subventions resulting in many of them getting a considerable margin of benefits even before they were premiered (for a nuanced analysis see Díez Puertas, 2003: 227 and ff.).

15 New filmmakers are defined in the 2007 law (art. 4) and in the 1983 decree (art. 6) as directors who have not yet directed or co-directed their third feature-film.

16 My translation from: "en los doce años que van de la *Ley Miró* a la llegada del PP al poder se ponen en marcha principalmente dos modelos proteccionistas: el primero centrado en la figura del director como artista y creador (impulsado por Miró y Méndez Leite y con Javier Solana como Ministro de Cultura socialista); el segundo que destaca al productor como industrial (desde que Semprún ocupó dicho Ministerio)".

17 Acronym for 'General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades'. In 1995, it became part of the World Trade Organisation functioning. For many experts, this is probably the key factor for explaining the reorganisation of the industry during the 1990s (more than any governmental change) (e.g. Vallés Copeiro, 2000: 231; Cerdán and Pena, 2005: 255).

18 This is clearly stated in the preambles of the law 17/1994.

19 The study *Green book of the audiovisual production* (produced within the MEDIA II scheme) clearly showed the weight of American cinema at that time, detailing that

70% of films exhibited in Spain were American movies (a proportion that had tripled since 1984) (Cerdán and Pena, 2005: 231-233).

20 In Real Decreto 1039/1997: art. 11.

21 In Ley 55/2007, art. 25.

22 The share in 1983 (art. 18, R.D. 3304/1983) was of one day of Spanish movies for three 'foreign' movies. In the 1994 law, they introduced a significant change, establishing a differentiation between big population centres (with a ratio of 1 EU film for 2 foreign films) and smaller population centres (that kept the ratio of 1 to 3). The benchmark regarding the population was 125.000 inhabitants. This measure was taken in order to preserve the few one-screen cinemas in rural areas and the cinemas '*de re-estreno*' / clearance theatres (showing a double bill of films that had been premiered long before). Historically, these had been venues for Spanish films and were closing down progressively. What they failed to realise was that many of the multi-screen cinemas that started to spread along Spain during the 1990s were located in shopping centres in the outskirts of the city, in smaller satellite towns. In practice, these were the most favoured by this measure.

After 1997, this percentage was reduced to 1 EU film for 3 or 4 American movies, a ratio that is similar to the present one (25% following the law 55/2007).

23 Following article 39 from the Ley 55/2007, it is considered a minor offense not to fulfill the screening quota in a percentage of up to 30%; this could lead to a fine of 4000 euros or a legal warning. As the percentage increases, so does the fine. The looseness of this law contrasts sharply with the strictness of earlier regulations, such as those contemplated in the Ley 17/1994. In article 9 of this law, it is considered a minor offense not to comply with the screening quota in a percentage of up to 10%, this being punishable with a fine of 500.000 pesetas (over 3000 euros); not to comply with the screening quota in a percentage of over 20% is considered a very serious offense and it is punished with a fine that goes from 5 to 10 million pesetas (c. 30.000-60.000 euros).

24 Vallés Copeiro points to the important agreements signed in Caracas in 1989 and 1991, called "Convenio de Integración Cinematográfica IBEROAMERICANA", and also lists several of the agreements with other European countries (2000: 241 and ff.). These agreements are not exclusively centred on production. For example, the MEDIA I and II programmes also included issues related to dubbing and exhibition issues.

25 *The Ninth Gate*, a satanic thriller directed by Polanski, with Johnny Depp as the protagonist, was listed as the 3rd biggest box office earner of Spanish films (ICAA, 2004?: 13). Although this is not exclusive to this decade, this has become more acute in the 1990s. Internationally well-known Spanish films such as *Los otros* and *Mi vida sin mí* have been distributed internationally without recourse to the 'Spanish Cinema' label.

26 For an interesting discussion about this subject within the global context, see Benet (2001).

27 The Institute of Cinema and Audiovisuals Arts (Instituto de la Cinematografía y de la Artes Audiovisuales) is the main governmental body that mediates with the industry. As Vallés Copeiro points out, there are two main institutional bodies that regulate the cinema industry in Spain: the Ministerio de Cultura [or Ministerio de Educación y Cultura since 1996] (politically) and the ICAA (administratively) (2000:235).

28 Radio Televisión Española is the nationalised radio and television company. Until 1990, *TVE* –with its two channels – was the only national television company, but that year the government approved three new private channels to broadcast in all of the national territory: *Canal +*, *Antena 3* and *Tele Cinco*. Since then, others such as *La Cuatro* have arisen.

29 Vallés Copeiro (2000: 248) remarks on the impact of the law 25/1994 that declared that 50% of broadcasting on Spanish television had to be reserved for E.U. works, with half of these being in any of the Spanish national languages and excluding advertising and news, sports and game programmes, i.e. leaving mainly fiction programmes and films. Furthermore, under new EU directives, the different television

channels committed to invest 5% of their annual profit for funding Spanish cinema and television films (Allison and Jordan, 2005: 29; Cerdán and Pena, 2005: 268-9).

30 For example, most of the MJCE films produced after 1995 received the collaboration of a television channel. See Appendix 1.

31 Vallés Copeiro points out that, following the regulations of 2000, cinema and television films were given the same category and could be distributed in the same spaces (2000: 235) but I am not sure if this was ever applied. This has not been kept in the current law (LEY 55/2007), although it does still aim to reinforce the link between cinema and the audiovisual, as stated in its preambles:

"The Law introduces the concept of the integration of cinema in the audiovisual, considering the latter as a whole – formed of specific parts – in order to benefit cinema and television and conceiving film and audiovisual productions as basic contents of the television and the former as an important element for broadcasting, promoting and financing cinema"

(My translation from: "La Ley introduce el concepto de integración de la cinematografía en el conjunto audiovisual, considerando éste como un todo, con sus especificidades, para beneficio del cine y la televisión, concibiendo la producción cinematográfico y audiovisual como contenido básico de la televisión y a ésta como elemento importante de difusión, promoción y financiación de la cinematografía").

The relationship that is overtly established in this law has been progressively forged since the beginning of the 1990s.

32 My translation from: "Las servidumbres que la televisión ha implantado en el audiovisual van desde el tipo de narraciones que aceptan en sus cadenas generalistas; hasta el número de escenarios posible para un producto; pasando por las limitaciones impuestas, por ejemplo, a los directores de fotografía, que estrechan considerablemente la gama de opciones que tendrían en un trabajo pensado para la gran pantalla".

33 My translation from: "la más importante transformación que ha sufrido el cine español de los últimos años tiene que ver, principalmente, con su imagen social (...), y ésta se crea tanto a través de las campañas publicitarias específicas, como mediante los discursos institucionales puestos en pie. Y esto nos lleva de vuelta al universo televisivo: por una parte, la televisión es el medio audiovisual en el que se han formado las más recientes generaciones de espectadores cinematográficos, es en sus pantallas donde se ha creado su cultura audiovisual, con su propio *starsystem*, su variantes genéricas, sus opciones de puesta en forma, etc.; por otro, la televisión se convierte en perfecto trampolín publicitario para los productos cinematográficos de estreno y para la puesta en marcha de discursos institucionales" (2005: 271).

The increasing popularity of Spanish television series, that have taken the primetime slots and displaced American series since the beginning of the 1990s (for a nuanced analysis see, Álvarez Mozoncillo and López Villanueva, 2000), have supplied Spanish cinema with well-known actors and actresses, who enjoy the favour of the public (e.g. Paz Vega, Javier Cámara).

34 My translation from: "falta de un mercado audiovisual plural, diverso y competitivo".

35 My translation from: "un medio para difundir, no la cultura española, sino las ideas, los valores y las creencias del partido gobernante".

36 My translation from: "la figura del creador en el cine español contemporáneo no está representada por un director, un guionista o un productor. No, aquel que impone sus gustos creativos, el que adopta muchas de las decisiones estéticas y narrativas – lo veremos: sobre todo éstas – es ahora un analista de guiones que trabaja para el departamento de compras de una televisión".

37 Following Fernández Blanco: "Between 1968 and 1995, Spanish cinema lost more than 90% of its spectators, three quarters of its benefits and the number of exhibited films fell by 80% [...] our cinema was on the verge of collapsing. Meanwhile foreign cinema was also seeing how their numbers decreased, but at a lower level: two thirds of

their spectators disappeared, a third of their benefits and almost half of their films" (1998: 50).

(My translation from: "Entre 1968 y 1995 el cine español perdió más del 90% de sus espectadores, tres cuartas partes de sus ingresos y el número de películas exhibidas cayó un 80% [...] nuestro cine se colocó al borde del colapso. Mientras, el cine extranjero también veía menguar sus números, pero en una escala sensiblemente inferior: desaparecieron dos terceras partes de sus espectadores, un tercio de sus ingresos y algo menos de la mitad de sus películas").

This was a type of crisis that encompassed many levels: with the decrease on the number of spectators that went to cinema theatres (hitherto one of the main economically accessible entertainment practices), many theatres started to close down, which led to the downfall of the exhibition sector. Box-office revenues were consequently affected and the distribution and production sectors also suffered. It is important to clarify that, if the number of spectators (of Spanish cinema and of cinema of other nationalities) started to decrease in Spain during the mid 1960s, this did not affect certain genres. It is strange to notice that the peak in the popularity of Spanish cinema (1966-1975) coincides with the proliferation of the sub-genres (e.g. horror movies and the Hispanic comedy) that Miró's legislation aimed to eliminate. But although these types of cinema were extremely popular, other types were largely ignored. For a nuanced analysis of this contradiction, see Palacios (2005:393-399).

The reasons adduced to explain the crisis are multiple. The popularisation of television and, later on, video, combined with the increasing price of the ticket and the disappearance of the small town cinemas, finished with the role of cinema as family entertainment (Fernández Blanco, 1998: 17-18; Díez Puertas, 2003: 39 and ff.). On top of that, the variety of free time activities enhanced. Among them, Palacios highlights the role nightclubs played in the crisis, since these came, since the mid 1960s, to substitute cinemas as a space of freedom and sexual socialisation among young people (the main cinema audience group) (2005: 410). Martín-Márquez (2005) offers a nuanced analysis of the social use of cinema (theatres) as a space for sexual activities during the first decades of the Dictatorship.

38 Experts (e.g. Cerdán and Pena, 2005: 270 and ff.; Riambau: 2003) coincide generally when pointing out the factors at play for this recovery, but disagree regarding the importance given to those factors.

39 Fernández Blanco (1998: 67-77) and Palacios (2005: 388) coincide in this description, adding up that cinema is more popular among people with a medium education and that, by a slight margin, men go to the cinema more often than women.

40 The data from the period 1996-2003 was noted in the ICAA's report (2004?), and the data about the year 1994 in Cerdán and Pena (2005: 270).

41 In Spain, the multi-screen cinemas started late, with the first cinema opening in 1983 in Madrid, and with a proliferation along the 1990s. Palacios (2005: 411-2) puts forward an interesting argument about how this new way of 'consuming' cinema has conditioned the type of 'target' audience and type of cinema produced. It has stopped being working class family entertainment (with the whole family heading for the local cinemas –*cines de barrio* – found in many quarters). They do not find their place in these multi-screen cinemas that are frequented by middle-class (especially young) people. Regarding the type of cinema exhibited, these multi-screen cinemas, participating in the shopping centre experience, are not likely spaces for the exhibition of certain films (e.g. art cinema).

42 Even in the past, this distinction blurred in certain genres and films. For example, in the last years of the dictatorship, the cinema of "la tercera vía" (or 'third way') consciously tried to combine the (commercial) attractions of the popular cinema of the time (with the spicy sexual content), with the more auteurist, slightly politically committed, cinema.

43 See Glossary.

44 Films such as the *Last Resort* (Pawel Pawlikowski, 2000, UK), *Lylja 4Ever* (Lukas Moodysson, 2002, Sweden and Denmark) and *Nil By Mouth* (Gary Oldman, 1997, UK and France) show that – if we want to still use this label – we have to think about social realism in a different way.

45 Borrowing Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas (1998) definition, the 'comedia del esperpento' "[...]is the filmic exploitation of a long-standing aesthetic of Spanish black humour, vulgarity and bad taste. Over the last century or so, the latter has been developed chiefly in art, literature and drama (particularly Valle-Inclán) and has promoted a view of Spain as a laughable distortion, a crude deformation of European civilizations" (75).

46 But, as she also points out, this is not exceptional in the Spanish critical establishment, which also overlooks these aspects in well-reputed films such as *Abre los ojos*.

47 They have become blockbusters, a phenomenon rarely seen in the Spanish context. *Airbag* attracted 2.105.521 spectators, gaining 6.925.492 euros; *Torrente: el brazo tonto de la ley*, 2.840.925 spectators, with over 10 million euros of box office receipts; its sequel, *Torrente 2: Misión en Marbella* (Santiago Segura, 2001, Spain), went over 22 million of box office revenue and over 5 million spectators. And the other films mentioned are located on the top ten most 'successful' Spanish films of the year when they were premiered (ICAA, 2004?: 13-14).

48 *Concursante* is exceptional within this trend because of its programmatic and socio-politically compromised approach. It aims to convey the emotional reality of those trapped and crushed by the capitalist system.

49 An emblematic example is *Historias de la radio* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1955, Spain) which could also be understood as a pre-puzzle film about the influence of the Radio in the Spanish 1950s. Its sketchy structure relates it to the puzzle film, but it does not have that programmatic flavour to it.

50 He argues that this type of film – which is typically Hollywood – creates the *mise-en-scène* of a multicultural world where different identity groups cohabit, mixed but not integrated with each other. Two ideological formulae are often used: one that remarks upon the cultural incompatibility of the different groups while legitimising every point of view (transcending the Good and Evil dichotomy) and another that appeals to the 'common' principles of human nature and calls for collective action in order to save someone or something (Zumalde, 2008: 231-232).

51 After the forced interlude that the application of the Miró's decree introduced, the 'delinquency subgenre', which portrays apathetic young people's involvement in crime and drug abuse, became popular again in the 1990s. Daniel Calpasoro and Mariano Barroso's films are emblematic examples of this type of cinema, but also some works of directors from the old guard such as *Historias del Kronen* (Montxo Armendáriz, 1995, Spain, France and Germany) and *Días contados* (Imanol Uribe, 1994, Spain). As Ballesteros notes, despite the clear continuities, these characters offer a contrast with their predecessors due to the accentuation of their nihilism (Ballesteros, 2001: 236 and ff.)

52 Not many MJCE directors have adopted this genre. Patricia Ferreira's films are clear exceptions; other examples are María Ripoll with *Utopía* and Laura Mañá with *Palabras encadenadas* and Ana Díez with *Todo está oscuro*.

53 My translation from: "está marcado por el eclecticismo posmoderno y su compromiso por dar voz a los núcleos marginales, por deshacer las fronteras entre el centro y el margen, el arte de élite y el arte popular, en una sociedad que ya desde el tardo-franquismo ha ingresado, casi sin notarlo, en el mercado transnacional del consumismo tardo-capitalista y cuyas representaciones culturales están inevitablemente asociadas a la omnipresencia globalizadora de la imagen y a la saturación de los medios de comunicación".

54 We should remember that young people are the main cinema audience. That Spanish cinema – filmed by directors of previous generations (with clear exceptions such

as Almodóvar and Trueba) – had lost touch with the Spanish public has been a popular argument for years. This focus on young people may or may not have been a conscious effort of the new directors but it seems related to the higher regard that Spanish cinema enjoys today.

55 Benet expresses how those 'empty' characters tend to prop their identity on intertextual references from images of 'cult' popular culture (e.g. comics, music, and horror movies): "In fact, the protagonists fill in their characterisation (their narrative identity) through references from popular culture, mainly from rock groups and the cinema" (My translation from: "De hecho, los protagonistas rellenan su caracterización (su identidad narrativa) a través de referencias provenientes de la cultura popular, fundamentalmente los grupos de *rock* y el cine") (2001: 48-9).

56 The 'self-reflexive' type is also often found in many films from the 1980s; these types of characters are very distant from the protagonists of many films from the 1960s, who were overwhelmed by material limitations (e.g. lack of jobs or money). Mondelo's thesis (1996: 268-271) compares the representation of youth in a group of films of 1960 and 1961 with a group of films of 1990 and 1991 and refers to this development.

57 For these reasons, Quintana labels their cinema as 'cine ensimismado' (2001:17).

58 This dissolving of the boundary that separates low and high culture is not exclusive to the filmic context and, as Freixas (2000: 49) remarks, has also affected literature. Whereas this process started before in other countries (the rise of Cultural Studies in the Anglophone context back in the 1960s was a symptom of that change), this has taken a longer time in Spain, maybe due to the dictatorship heritage.

59 Both are content analysis studies. Arranz's study has not yet been published in full and therefore the criteria used for analysing the films are still unknown to me. I have only been able to consult a Power-Point resume of the study that only develops one of the dimensions of the study, its qualitative analysis. I was also at two talks in which two members of the team, Fátima Arranz and Pilar Aguilar, presented the results of the study (I International Encounter of CIMA, Madrid, 3-5 December 2008).

60 Arranz (2008) point out that, in their sample, the percentage is of 35.7% of films with female protagonists and of 2.4% with leading male and female characters.

Heredero (1999: 20) points out that, among the 1997 and 1998 production of these JCE directors, the main characters were 38% female and 62% male (without considering those films with co-protagonists).

From Aguilar's sample of 55 films (only six directed by women) produced between 1990 and 1995, 17 have a leading female character and 10 have a man and a woman as protagonists (1998: chapter 3), which supposes, approximately, 31% and 18% respectively.

61 This data could only serve to give us some point of comparison, since the criteria applied are different. Furthermore, I have only consulted the article about the report and not the report itself. In that report, done by the magazine *USA Today*, they analyze the representation of women in popular American films from 2001 (films that were exhibited in 600 or more screens in the States). In the article, they point out that 'in the movies, men dominate 65% to 35% in all roles surveyed and 75% to 25% in starring roles'. When exploring why this 'disproportion' is still found, they gathered the opinions of several experts:

"Terry Press, DreamWorks' marketing chief, insists one reason is that men shun movies that prominently feature women. Clothed women, that is. 'Guess why a guy wants to see *Monster's Ball*?' she says. 'I could have spent an hour telling him about the great performances. But he wants to see Halle Berry naked'.

Of course, her co-star, Billy Bob Thornton, also drops his drawers. But that's barely mentioned in the film's press coverage. Casting men in lead roles carries little risk because, experts say, men and women prefer it that way. 'It's a question of hierarchies', says Shirley Glass, a Baltimore clinical psychologist and avid moviegoer. 'Those in a position of less power are more inclined to be interested in a person with greater

power". (Wloszczyna and DeBarros, 2002: n.p.)

62 The exact proportion is 79.3% of the films directed by men and 69.2% of the films directed by women. In any study, the criteria applied in order to choose the films to be analyzed affects the results beforehand. In the case of Arranz's study, they sought to represent the work of women filmmakers, and for this reason they applied a different criteria for selecting men's films (those that reach at least one million spectators) and women's films (those that reach at least 100.000 spectators, since, in the period analysed, only one film by a woman, *Te doy mis ojos*, reached one million spectators). They focused on a sample of 42 films, including as well the three animation films with higher number of spectators.

63 In *El Lobo*, the main character (Eduardo Noriega) finds himself between two women. His wife is a sensible mother who is cautious and weary of her husband's involvement with ETA (and the police), and is characterised as pretty but decent. The other woman is an ETA sympathiser who 'lures' him into her bed but later, when she finds someone else higher up in the organisation, abandons him. This latter relationship opens up a space for the introduction of steamy sexual scenes.

64 In her intervention in CIMA, the scriptwriter and director Ángeles González Síndé clearly articulated this concern. She declared that when she co-wrote *La buena estrella* (1997, Spain, France and Italy) with the director Ricardo Franco, the latter was unsure about her depiction of the main male character (played in the film by Antonio Resines) whom, for his kindness and soft manners, Franco and his advisers (among them Pilar Miró) considered 'unbelievable'. A summary of her intervention (although without the name of the film) can be found in a document summarising the speakers' interventions in the Encounter CIMA.

Chapter 4

1 Due to the low number of studies concerned with the role of women in Spanish cinema, this list should be considered an approximation. Camí-Vela lists these ten directors, until 1988 (2005: 17), adding the name of Helena Cortesina (the first Spanish woman director that we know, first studied by Martín-Márquez, 1999) to the list offered by Heredero (1998:9). However, this list is not as exhaustive as it might at first appear. Other writers have added the work of Lina Romay and Emma Cohen (Núñez Domínguez and Loscertales Abril, 2005). In a search of the Ministerio de Cultura films database (link in bibliography), Emma Cohen appears only as a shorts director and Lina Romay is not registered as film-director. Nevertheless, in other sources (the IMDb), Romay is credited as the co-director of several films, alongside Jess Franco, such as *Confesiones íntimas de una exhibicionista* (1983, Spain).

Whether or not Emma Cohen and Lina Romay directed a feature film remains uncertain, since I have only followed these leads superficially; nevertheless, considering the type of films Jess Franco directed (exploitative sub-genres), if Lina Romay was really his co-director, she is a name that many would rather erase.

These lists do not include non-commercial filmmakers and short filmmakers (and neither does mine). In the field of experimental cinema – a tendency that was not very strong in Spanish cinema though it had some momentum in the seventies – there may have been some women directors. In the field of political documentaries, the role of Helena Lumbreras, a socialist documentary filmmaker with an interesting career (mainly but not exclusively developed in Italy), is generally forgotten. Several women film festivals, such as the one organised by the University of Zaragoza, have paid homage to Helena Lumbreras' work in their 2006 editions.

2 My results indicate that, proportionally, there has been an increase in the number of female directors between 2000 and 2005 (24) in comparison to the previous

10 years (29 directors). Nevertheless, I have not measure these results against the general incorporation of new directors to the industry and I have taken into account female directors who work collaboratively with male directors or with other female directors (counting them individually and not as a team). Therefore the criteria used, in relation to Arranz's study, are different.

3 The new law of cinema (LEY 55/2007) and the gender equality law (Ley para la Igualdad Efectiva de Mujeres y Hombres, 2006) aim to enforce measure of positive discrimination such as the equal representation of men and women in decision making bodies (e.g. the committee that chooses the film projects that are to receive governmental funding).

4 Isabel Coixet declares that Spanish 'soft sexism' 'has undermined women's self-esteem until recently' (Camí-Vela, 2005: 67). This is similar to the declaration of Dolores Payás in the same collection of interviews (ibid.: 138-139) and to that of Inés París who declared that: "There is something we all [women directors] have in common: it is really difficult for us to be the authors of this narrative. It is difficult for us to construct our own identity and even more to make it public, translate it into images, narrate it to the others". (My translation: "Y hay algo que todas tenemos en común: nos cuesta muchísimo ser las autoras de este relato. Nos cuesta construir nuestra identidad propia y nos cuesta aún más hacerla pública, ponerla en imágenes, contársela a los demás").

This declaration, entitled *Mi Mirada* (my 'way of looking') was published in *Punto de Vista*, one of the two blogs linked to CIMA on the 21st of July 2008 (<http://puntodevistablogcima.blogspot.com/search/label/REFLEXIONES>; last accessed on August 2008).

5 In this regard, Zecchi (2004, 319-320) argues that Pilar Miró is a central figure to explain this incorporation of women to the film industry as directors. For her, Miró's legislative changes had a twofold impact of some importance; firstly, they aided the incorporation of new directors (among them, towards the end of the 1980s, four women Isabel Coixet, Ana Díez, Pilar Távora and Cristina Andreu); and secondly, they facilitated the demise of exploitation sub-genres of the 1970s that offered denigrating portraits of women.

6 Although many of them have pursued university education, few of them had a formal education in the audiovisual. Among those exceptions, Marta Balletbò, Ana Díez and Isabel Coixet went abroad to complete their education. We should remember that the national film school, closed in 1971, only re-opened in 1995.

7 Between 1990 and 2005, the following filmmakers have directed three or more films: Dunia Ayaso (co-directing with Félix Sabroso), Marta Balletbò-Coll (self financing her own films), Iciar Bollain, Isabel Coixet, Ana Díez, Patricia Ferreira, Yolanda García-Serrano (co-directing with Juan Luis Iborra), Chus Gutiérrez, Laura Mañá, Gracia Querejeta and María Ripoll. At least, two other directors have premiered their third film after 2005: Inés París (who worked with Daniela Fejerman in her first two films) and Helena Taberna.

8 Here we should remember that subsidies offered by the Ministry of Culture have been destined to support projects of 'debutant' filmmakers during the 1990s.

9 Brunsdon's essay (2000a: 167) concerning the situation of women in the British media and film industries refers to several reports that highlight the difficulty that women encountered in keeping a balance between work and family life (often renouncing the latter). I have not encountered any equivalent study applied to Spain. Nevertheless, the difficulty of maintaining this balance has also been a common concern expressed by several filmmakers in interviews e.g. Azucena Rodríguez and Silvia Munt (Camí-Vela, 2005: 164 and 353).

10 My translation from: "Tardamos dos veces más en conseguir financiación y encima es una cuarta parte de la de ellos. Hay una sutil desconfianza del productor".

11 The encounter, entitled 'Primer Encuentro Internacional de CIMA: Las mujeres del audiovisual ante el futuro' was celebrated in the Centro Nacional de Arte Reina Sofía

(Madrid), 3-5 December 2008. A summary of the talks, the programme and the conclusions are available in the webpage of CIMA. Organised as round tables, the talks of the guests were brief and the more fruitful discussions that followed are minimally recorded in these notes. Present at these talks, I recorded most of the information that I am utilising here.

12 As Casado, Merodio and Jiménez (2007: 394) remark with the "acceleration of the cycles of exploitation of the films", marketing and promotional campaigns have become more important during the 1990s. With the almost complete disappearance of *clearance theatres* and with the overwhelming pressure of American films that dominate the market, the tendency of Spanish distributors has been to launch the film simultaneously in many venues while supporting it with a costly promotional campaign (with the additional expense of the multiple production of copies) since Spanish films are not usually exhibited for longer than a week (except, of course, those that achieve high levels of popularity).

13 This benchmark –although unexplained – is also used in the power point presentation of Arranz (2008). We should not forget that this benchmark is not applicable to all the films such as those that work on the margins of commercial circles such as *Costa Brava* and *Sexo oral* (self-financed and in the first case, distributed by the directors).

14 See Appendix 1.

15 In this respect, Icíar Bollaín made an interesting comment in the aforementioned CIMA encounter. This director has previously declared that she has not experienced any form of discrimination in her career. Nevertheless, after Maroto's speech, she spoke about her recent experience. After directing critically and commercially successful films, she is now embarked in her fifth film, a co-production with a considerable higher budget than previously. On this occasion, she has felt pressurised to accept a team of well-reputed technical professionals by the producers who have remarked that this is a 'risky' project.

16 Maroto was not talking about the 'quality' of their films but about their commercial potential. When one of the members of the audience – Chus Gutiérrez – replied that there is a sort of 'economic censorship' and that a great many subjects are banned from the screens, Maroto replied, following a market logic, that they simply do not sell. Giving the example of a recent film distributed by her company, *Un novio para Yasmína* (Irene Cardona, 2008, Spain and Morocco), Maroto lamented that despite being a 'necessary film', the decision to distribute it was propelled more by personal interest than for commercial considerations, as 'a treat that we allow ourselves occasionally' (paraphrasing). This film, that addresses prejudice against immigrants (specifically that they aspire to marry Spaniards in order to gain nationality), addresses questions of immigration from the point of view of the immigrant (something uncommon in Spanish cinema).

But as Maroto said, despite the fact that immigration is one of the hot issues in contemporary Spain, this is a subject that generally does not attract audiences. Another member of the table, Mariela Besuievsky – an important producer in the Spanish industry – supported Maroto's idea although she also clarified that, guided by prejudices about the commerciality of themes and types of films, she herself had rejected what became two (unexpected) successful films, *Te doy mis ojos* and *Solas*.

17 In the interview of Isabel Coixet conducted by Camí-Vela (2005), she emphasized the reluctance of producers to support projects that cannot be easily classified as pertaining to a genre and the horror they feel when presented with an 'intimist' project (78).

In the short piece written for Heredero's book (1998), Manana Rodríguez explained the difficulties she had in finding a producer and a distributor for her project, *Retrato de mujer...*, since "our script did not fit with the conventional canons of production: it did not have a strong plot, no spectacular situations, no good nor evil characters and it could

not be easily defined as a specific genre type" (76) (my translation from: "nuestro guión no se ajustaba a los cánones habituales de producción: no tenía trama fuerte, ni situaciones espectaculares, ni buenos, ni males y no se ascribía fácilmente a un género").

18 It is probably coincidental that in the Encounter CIMA, one of the panels explored new forms of distribution and production. Almudena Carracero's talk about her application of a hybrid system of distribution for her documentary, in which she retained and directly managed DVD sales, attracted great interest among the audience. Carracero is working in the USA where the industrial situation is different.

Among the MJCE directors, Marta Balletbò-Coll has employed alternative ways of financing and distributing her films. But her case is exceptional.

The limited number of venues for non-mainstream films is an international situation. An example of a film that has found alternative ways of financing and exhibiting is *The Age of Stupid* (Franny Armstrong, 2009, UK).

19 See note 16.

20 My translation from: "Esta nueva materialización del costumbrismo pone el énfasis en lo cotidiano y no es casualidad que tres de las películas que más claramente adoptan esta nueva tendencia hayan sido realizadas por mujeres: *Hola, ¿estás sola?* (Iciar Bollain, 1995), *Tengo una casa* (Mónica Laguna, 1996) y *Retrato de mujer con hombre al fondo* (Manana Rodríguez, 1997). Las tres son películas que optan por una historia mínima en la que el juego de actores y la psicología de los personajes, mostradas a través de las coordenadas de la normalidad, de los hábitos de comportamiento, son lo fundamental".

21 Gámez Fuentes applies this argument to Martín-Gaité's novel *Nubosidad Variable* and extends it to several films and novels with female protagonists from the democratic period. My translation from: "interactúa[n] con las visiones y decisiones de las protagonistas, creando entre todas un paisaje subjetivo e histórico que reconoce y revaloriza la relevancia de las disidencias singulares, ahora bien, sin instrumentalizarlas, dentro del proyecto narrativo femenino que las aglutina".

22 Their cinema is generally rooted in contemporary issues. Nevertheless, when looking back, they often focus on the period of the Transition, a period that is increasingly being revisited, for example, in *El Lobo* and *Los años desnudos* (Dunia Ayaso and Félix Sabroso, 2008).

Sometimes, the films are set in the present but are permeated by a memory that threatens or 'echoes' the present of the characters (e.g. *Sé quién eres*, *Ségné*, *Poniente*).

23 This omission is not uncommon when speaking about this film, though it is a mistake that is somehow understandable. Indeed, the film opens with the credit title, 'a film by Joaquín Jordá' and it is only after an introductory sequence that this is followed by another credit title 'directed and written by Joaquín Jordá and Nuria Villazán'. The persona of Joaquín Jordá, a veteran and well-regarded filmmaker from the 'Escuela de Barcelona', and the fact that the documentary (about psychosurgery) is loosely related to his own experiences, obscures the role of his co-director.

A similar situation occurs with the review that Seguí (2007) offers of *Aro Tolbukhin, en la mente del asesino* (2002, Spain), co-scripted and co-directed by Lydia Zimmermann, Isaak Pierre Racine and Agustín Villalonga. Despite recognising that the film was Zimmermann's idea and that she is the main narrator, Seguí considers it a film by Villalonga.

24 Furthermore, when the *Boletín de la Academia* – a publication that González Sindé, as director of the Academia, indirectly supervised – published a review about that event, they repeated the same recurrent topics about women directors, only quoting those allusions that fitted with that discourse of gender segregation. The article was published in the *Boletín de la Academia: noticias del cine español*, n.151: p. 19 (dec. 2008).

25 For concrete examples, refer to Gutiérrez (2004: 15), Manana Rodríguez (in

Hereadero ed., 1998: 75), Dolores Payás and Ana Díaz (in Camí-Vela, 2005: 125 and 82)

26 The more extended quote reads: "También puede que piensen que a van a ver las cosas desde otra perspectiva y eso les asusta, ahora que estaba todo tan organizado y tan bien explicado, cada estereotipo en su sitio" (pp. 51-2).

27 Other films that clearly target a female audience are *Muere, mi vida; Cómo ser mujer y no morir en el intento* and *Retrato de mujer con hombre al fondo*.

28 I have focused on the critical reception of those films analysed in the core chapters. To reach more firm conclusions, a thorough analysis of the critical reception of these films needs to be undertaken.

29 My translation from: "Promover una imagen no sesgada y más real de la mujer en los medios, que ayude a dignificar la imagen pública de la mujer y a crear modelos de referencia para las nuevas generaciones de mujeres".

30 A documentary that brings together Isabel Coixet, Inés París, Icíar Bollaín, Gracia Querejeta, Josefina Molina, Cecilia Bartolomé, Helena Taberna, Eva Lesmes, Azucena Rodríguez, María Ripoll, Silvia Munt, Patricia Ferreira and Cristina Andreu. It seems to respond to the same motivations that inspired the documentary *Filming desire, a journey through women's cinema* (Mary Mandy, 2000, France and Belgium). Information about this documentary, which, at the time of writing, had not yet been premiered, can be found in the CIMA weblog *Agenda* (section Noticias CIMA).

31 My translation from: "Mientras que lo propio de la masculinidad es la mirada, lo conceptual, la metáfora, el deseo de nombrar y poseer...lo femenino es lo gestual, lo táctil, lo metonímico, lo asociativo, el deseo no de propiedad sino de proximidad".

32 This has been frequently commented on both inside and outside academia. In relation to this subject, Christine Scharff's conference paper (2007) offers an interesting summary regarding the possible reasons for the dis-identification that many young women feel concerning feminism in the UK and Germany. Her conclusions highlighted that we should always consider "the important role of sexuality and normative femininity in negations of feminism, where the women's movement is rejected as anti-men and 'unfeminine'" (16). Feminism is also associated "with spinsterhood and lesbianism" (14), categories once again excluded from the realm of the 'feminine'. None the less, she warns of the dangers of disregarding how notions of the nature of normative femininity, of its value and the way in which it interacts with feminism(s) are contingent: "gender and –in the context of feminist identification amongst young women – femininity should be seen as classed and racialised performances" (17). As an example, she explains how Skeggs' research shows that working-class women in the UK reject feminism because is associated to middle-classness and because, understood as excluding femininity, they found femininity as a useful aid to ascend the social ladder.

33 Furthermore, their 'feminist' status also springs from the way that a few of their films (e.g. especially *Te doy mis ojos*, but also *Extranjeras*, *Entre rojas* and *Poniente*) have been used to raise gender consciousness in educational settings. In recent years, a high number of didactical guides about gender representations, to be used in schools and cine-forums, have been published, including detailed analysis of these and other films (e.g. Menéndez Menéndez and Fernández Morales, 2004; Núñez Domínguez and Loscertales Abril, 2005).

34 My translation from: "La directora y su película asumen o esperan la complicidad de una audiencia que se interesa o se identifica con la experiencia femenina y los aspectos relacionados con su esencia biológica, su situación en la sociedad, su estética, los espacios donde habita, el ritmo que rige su vida, etcétera".

Chapter 5

1 To put this data into context, we should remember that, in this reading, Castells

takes into account the statistics available about the number of households with single people, single mothers or fathers, married couples without children, and older people living alone. He further clarifies that we should not think that 'new' forms of family life and people living alone are the most common. For example, there are still many households of parents that live with children older than 24, since many Spanish young people between 24 and 34 years of age still live in their parents' house. This is partially motivated by the high housing prices that are making it difficult for young single people to move out. What he illustrates with this estimate is that the 'ideal' (i.e. hegemonic in people's consciousness) traditional family is a cultural construct that hardly exists in its 'pure' form (in Castells and Subirats, 2007: 41-2).

2 My translation from: "Es la añoranza de la familia de la que vienen, pero que no casa (nunca mejor dicho) con la realidad del hogar en el que viven".

3 Coincidentally, this is the title that both Ballesteros (2001) and Castells (2007) used to entitle their respective sections dedicated to the family.

4 Until then, Elvira Mínguez had only worked in a famous film, as a secondary actress (*Días contados*).

5 This company also produces television films, including one directed by Silvia Munt, *Los hijos de Mohamed* (immediately before the production of *Gala*, studied in this chapter).

The film was also backed by the Catalan and Spanish television and governmental film departments. Partially promoted as a Catalan film (e.g. presented in the Sitges Film Festival in the Catalan section), the film is actually shot in Spanish, almost entirely in interior spaces, and lacks any culturally specific references to Catalonia. The film may have benefited from the changes of Catalan filmic policies, which, in 1996, considered as Catalan (and therefore eligible for governmental support) any film produced in its territory, regardless of its language and cultural referents (Jordan and Morgan Tamosunas, 1998: 181-2).

6 It collected a few awards in a few minor festivals: Best Secondary Actress (Elena Castells-Gina), Best Direction and Best Film at the Alexandria Film Festival; Best Leading Actress (Elvira Mínguez) at the Miami Film Festival; Best feature film awarded at the Turin International Film Festival.

7 Following the data from the *Base de datos de películas calificadas del Ministerio de Cultura*.

8 Information provided on the production company website, available at: www.invitrofilms.com.

9 Sara's fear of ageing is clearly conveyed in two dream-scenes.

10 In the opening sequence, where all the characters are introduced, Susana (one of Sara's friends) is presented as a 'sexual object of desire'. The initial shot is a M.S. of her body, dancing. The camera tracks back and enhances the shot to a M.L.S., and shows Susana with several men dancing very closely to her and looking at her with (comically) lustful eyes. A cut follows and the camera tracks towards Sara and her friend who, observing Susana, comments how she would like to be better looking and thinner. But, later in the same sequence, and in other points of the film, Susana complains about her sexual frustration since she finds it difficult to reach orgasm. The deconstructive use of the camera is emphasised in this scene mainly because it is the only shot that fragments the female body and constructs it in a mythical way. Susana comes to stand as 'sexual object of desire', attracting the male and the female gaze. Following Mulvey, in this shot the 'enunciative' agency (the camera, and the actors and actresses) focuses on her body, which is 'observed and controlled'. But this is used here exactly to criticise this 'spectacularisation' of the female body and to evidence that it does not necessarily agree with the desire of the 'object of desire'.

11 My translation from: "Me *llamo Sara* reivindica a nivel personal y colectivo la ruptura con la relación de la mujer para el hombre estructurada por un sistema de patriarcado, a la vez que propone un movimiento personal y político de asociación de una

mujer hacia otra; asociación que Janice Raymond describe con el término *Gyn/affection* y que consiste en 'the state of influencing, acting upon, moving and impressing; and of being influenced, acted upon, moved, and impressed by other women'" (2005a: 77).

12 My translation from: "A lo largo de la historia occidental siempre se le ha supuesto a esa figura maternal la capacidad de conocer la respuesta a cualquier demanda, insuficiencia y/o deseo filial. De hecho, es esta estructura subjetiva la que, como analizaremos más adelante, las narrativas hegemónicas (occidentales, dictatoriales e incluso democráticas) continúan perpetuando. En ellas se coloca a la madre en posición de sujeto que conoce la Respuesta pero sin posibilidad de verbalizar sus propios conflictos y demandas. Es la posición que ha sido catalogada como de 'interlocutora silenciosa' (Gallop, 1982: 115), puesto que sitúa a la madre en un *locus* sin posibilidad de modular su propio deseo".

13 I consulted a copy of this article before its publication, provided by Carlota Larrea, and so I do not have the page number. My translation from: "la habilidad supuestamente 'natural' o intuitiva de una madre para navegar en el mar de las emociones y relaciones; el desinterés propio y el consecuente sacrificio de la madre por aquellos que la rodean; y, la supresión total de una sexualidad activa".

14 For an extended discussion about these changes in the attitudes towards the family in Spain, see Castells and Subirats (2007: 257-258).

15 My translation from: "Al ir haciéndome mayor, fui cristalizando la idea de decir alguna cosa sobre nosotras. Porque todo lo que veía acerca de nosotras me parecía distorsionado, banal, frívolo y poco interesante" (D.Payás in Camí-Vela, 2005: 131).

16 My translation from: "El control sobre la voz y la imagen, el tono autoanalítico, confesional y testimonial del discurso y la voluntad de entregarlo a la audience como ejemplo y resultado de una coyuntura tanto personal como histórica, no es sino una forma de hacer ideología, de hacer que lo personal sea político".

17 The film contains somewhat inarticulate references to 'high' culture (e.g. Nabokov's biography, Ingres' paintings of the Turkish baths, plus direct references to Virginia Wolf and Jane Austen). The meaning of some of these intertextual references remains ambiguous. For example, in several panning shots of Sara's living room, a photograph of Carson McCullers figures prominently. One possible interpretation is that this writer, in novels such as *The member of the wedding*, made the formation and re-drafting of identity one of her recurrent topics.

18 This is conveyed in different ways throughout the film (e.g. their similar hair-styles, and shared habit of playing with their curls). An obvious strategy is the repeated use of a painting by Marisa - which she gives to Cristina in an early sequence - that depicts a young woman who, with her back to the spectator, stands by a window and a blank canvas. This composition is echoed in a later shot where Marisa is framed in a *mise-en-scène* similar to the woman in the painting; but defeated, sitting and drinking. Finally, it reappears at the end of the film when, after Marisa's suicide, Cristina stares at her reflection in the glass frame of the painting (in a sustained medium shot). In the following sequence, we discover that she has decided not to enter into a relationship with Diego and has opted instead for continuing her uncompromised style of life.

19 This is not limited to the birth of a child. Other films have recourse to other symbols. For example, *Flores de otro mundo* closes the narrative of one of its protagonists, Patricia (Lissete Mejía), with her black daughter's first communion, which changes the shape of a traditional rural Spanish community.

20 As she succinctly expressed in another article, contemporary Spanish cinema engages with "motherhood as a position from which to question the history of Spain, rather than as a mere symbolisation" (2001:69; my translation).

21 The first type, the *abjected* mother, is rarely found in contemporary cinema, although it reappeared in several narratives of the pre-Transitional and Transitional years. Constructed as a symbol of Francoism, it works as a menace that threatens to engorge its children and clearly conveys the uneasiness produced by the still too

proximate and not yet completely closed Francoist past (e.g. *Furtivos*, José Luis Borau, 1975, Spain).

22 Acknowledged in the credits.

23 For example, she was said to love money and to be extremely mean with it. Doing an anagram of Salvador Dalí's name, Breton called her 'Ávida Dollars', as stated in a declaration by the historian Estrella de Diego, who, in 2003 (the same year that this film was produced) published a biography about Gala (Mora, 2003). To contrast this opinion, the film interviews people that offer very different and contradictory opinions about this subject.

24 The film explains that when Gala met Éluard he had not even started to write, and that Gala nurtured his artistic potential. In the same way, the narrative explores how Gala abandoned Éluard – by then a well-reputed and 'established' poet – for the almost unknown (though promising) Dalí, and how she supported his artistic education, guiding his readings, and finding the first buyers for his art works, acting as his agent.

Chapter 6

1 Melero observes that: "Within a very short time, sex alone would prove insufficient, and more morbid and extreme representations were produced. From 1976, just a few months after Franco had died, a vast number of films would deal with issues such as incestuous relationships (Borau's *Furtivos*, 1975), the sexual life of priests (De la Iglesia's *El Sacerdote*, 1977), and nuns (Grau's *Cartas de amor a una monja*, 1978), paedophilia (Giménez-Rico's *Retrato de familia*, 1976 [...]), or bestiality (De la Iglesia's *La criatura* in 1977 [...]). Such representations tended to be very explicit and it certainly blurred the limits between eroticism and pornography" (2004: 94).

2 Ballesteros' analysis is grounded in Linda Williams' seminal study on Hard Core pornography.

3 Camí-Vela and Aguilar refer directly to Mulvey's famous theory to explain this cinema. For Mulvey, the dominant perspective of cinema is phallogocentric, constructing men as the agents of action and women as passive receivers; the display of the female body, converted into a fetish, 'stops' the narrative action and the gaze (of the camera, the character and the preferred spectator position) is constructed as male.

4 In my opinion, the use of sex as an attraction is less common in the production of these new directors. Some are offering very interesting and complex reflections upon sexuality (e.g. Medem or Tristán and David Ulloa in *Pudor*). But only a detailed study could determine if these tendencies are changing.

5 I understand sexuality as defined by Krzywinska, 'a term that encompasses the host of feelings, desires, longings and fantasies of a sexual nature that inform our relationships with others, that constitute our sexual identity, and which are related to – but not the same as – the act of sex' (2006: 232).

6 Brunsdon analyses a few films directed by British women that are about women. She only incidentally speaks about this aspect. Johnson focuses on a group of films that associate sex with bad feelings. And Williams present us with detailed analyses of a group of films labelled *Hard-Core Art Films* – e.g. *9 songs* (Michael Winterbottom, 2004, UK) and *Intimacy* (Patrice Chéreau, 2001, France, UK, Germany and Spain) – that offer explicit representations of non-simulated sex while showing ambivalent emotions and philosophical reflections.

7 She inserts this reflection in her analysis of Tusquets' novel *Ese mismo mar de todos los veranos* (1978). The original reads: "Al fin y al cabo todos los cuentos repiten una misma historia, la de la conformación de la joven a su posición de objeto dentro de la economía heterosexual".

8 In their article, they analyse the revival and mutation of the romantic novel (now

'chick lit'). They refer to the studies of Ulrich and Elisabeth Beck among others to sustain this argument.

9 The original reads: "Asimismo, un 56% de las mujeres y un 46% de los hombres creen que 'existe alguien que de alguna forma está predestinado para cada uno de nosotros (lo hayamos encontrado o no)'. No deja de ser extraordinario que tras milenios de dominación, conflicto y violencia entre hombres y mujeres y en un entorno tecnológico en el que sería factible reproducir nuestra especie en laboratorio, persista con fuerza, en particular entre las mujeres, la idea del amor romántico, de la persona única a la que una vez que se encuentre es natural serle fiel toda la vida. Porque un 77% de mujeres y un 74% de los hombres piensan que 'el amor verdadero lo puede todo'. Ese sentimiento del paraíso perdido pero todavía alcanzable es tal vez lo que explica la continuidad de la búsqueda del otro, la persistencia de la familia a pesar de todos los pesares, el intento de reconstrucción de nuevas familias cuando se rompe una y la amargura y la violencia cuando llega la crisis".

10 My translation from: "No es la violencia lo que es un indicador de la ruptura del modelo, sino que la ruptura del modelo da un nuevo sentido a la violencia".

11 Between 1999 and 2007, 534 women were murdered, often brutally, in this way. Castells (2007: 43) specifies that the highest incidence was in women aged 30-40, followed by women aged 20-30; they are 'the women belonging to a generation that already dares to say no and thereby, pays the consequences'. (My translation from: "las mujeres de la generación que ya se atreve a decir no y que por tanto sufre las consecuencias"). Formal complaints of domestic violence have also boomed in the last decade, but curiously, the largest age group is of women aged between 45 and 64 (ibid.: 44).

12 Gender equality has been one of the main political selling-points for this government, which prides itself on being the first European government to embrace a total representational parity in their cabinet. "Por una parte, se aprobó en el Congreso la Ley Orgánica Integral de Medidas contra la Violencia de Género. Ésta es una ley que había creado una gran expectación en la sociedad española, en la medida en que había sido un compromiso adquirido con las mujeres en la campaña electoral por el candidato a presidente del Gobierno, Sr. Rodríguez Zapatero y venía formando parte de la agenda política, y por tanto mediática, de forma regular. Una Ley de estas características tuvo gran eco en todos los medios informativos". (López Díez, P. (dir.), c. 2005: 37). At the moment of writing (February 2009), the government is drafting a new law about voluntary abortion that aims to facilitate the procedures for abortion (coming closer to the situation in the UK), and this is raising a lot of conflict, especially from groups linked to the Church.

13 My translation from: "No queríamos reconocerlo, pero teníamos que aceptar que estábamos contando una historia de amor. Violencia doméstica, de género, terrorismo doméstico...Así es como lo llaman, nos recordábamos, nos avisábamos, la una a la otra".

14 This short contains many of the elements (e.g. the therapy groups, and the basic psychological profile of Luis Tosar's character) that would be developed later in the film (especially regarding Antonio's characterisation). They described how a famous sociologist with whom they had an interview was outraged with this decision: "that is because, in the way the media address the subject, making him the main character was not very politically correct" [My translation from: "Y es que, tal como se habla del tema en los medios de comunicación, hacerle a él protagonista no era lo más políticamente correcto"] (Gutiérrez Carbajo, 2006: 63). Not many films have foregrounded this subject and, when they have, the focus has been on the point of view of the female victim such as *Sólo mía* and *Celos* (Vicente Aranda, 1999, Spain).

15 Cruz states:

"Another problematic element, related not with the film per se but with its promotion, lays in Bollaín's defense that the film tells 'a love story', as Elvira Lindo confirms: 'Astonishingly, there is love between the characters. Wrong, murky love, corrupted by

complexes, by the anger, by the submission' (62). But, can a relationship like this – in which, leaving aside brief glimpses of complicity [...] the threat and the fear, the submission and the domination prevail – be qualified as 'love'? When the psychologist asks Antonio what he misses most about Pilar, he is only able to say 'the little noise' she makes when she walks around the house, that is, her supportive, silent, hardworking, submissive presence; not her as a person (nor even as a sexual object). Rather than love, what we see is mutual dependency and, overall, the desire for love" (2005: n.p.).

(My translation from: "Otro elemento problemático, relacionado, no con la película misma, sino con su promoción, reside en el hecho de que Bollaín sostenga que la película cuenta una 'historia de amor', como lo confirma Elvira Lindo: 'Asombrosamente, hay amor en los personajes. Amor equivocado, turbio, contaminado por los complejos, por la ira, por la sumisión' (62). ¿Pero puede caracterizarse como 'amor' una relación en la que, aun habiendo pequeños atisbos de complicidad [...], predominan la amenaza y el miedo, el dominio y la sumisión? Cuando el psicólogo le pregunta a Antonio qué es lo que extraña de Pilar, sólo es capaz de decir que 'el poco ruido' que hacía al andar trajinando por la casa, es decir, su mera presencia de apoyo, silenciosa, hacendosa, sumisa; no a ella como persona (ni siquiera como objeto sexual). Más que amor, lo que vemos es dependencia mutua y, sobre todo, deseos de amor").

16 Press dossier of *Te doy mis ojos*. The original reads: "¿Por qué una mujer aguanta una media de 10 años junto a un hombre que la machaca? ¿Por qué no se va? ¿Por qué no sólo no se va sino que incluso algunas aseguran seguir enamoradas? Las razones de dependencia económica no explican el hecho de que una de cada 4 mujeres en Europa y Estados Unidos aseguren haber vivido una relación de violencia en su vida. Según fuimos documentándonos descubrimos que una de las razones primordiales era que siguen en la esperanza de que el hombre cambie. Así, nuestro personaje es una mujer que sigue esperando cada día que entre por la puerta el hombre del que se enamoró... ¿Pero, quién es ese hombre? ¿Por qué no existe apenas un perfil del maltratador? ¿Y por qué estos hombres maltratan durante años a quien dicen querer con toda su alma?".

17 They assisted at group therapy sessions for victims, read books, spoke with sociologists, and so on, as Bollaín described in her essay about the film (in Gutiérrez Carbajo, 2006: 64-5).

18 This sequence is fundamental regarding the exploration of Antonio's character, but it has often been misread when analysed in isolation (e.g. Martínez-Carazo, 2007). Through Pilar's explanation of one of Kandinsky's paintings (the only 'abstract' painting featured in the film), Antonio's subjectivity is described as Pilar comes to understand the source of his anger. This sequence is located towards the end of the third section. The morning after Antonio sees Pilar explaining Danae in the museum, Pilar discovers Antonio's notebook laying on the floor; opening it, she starts reading the red pages (the ones reserved for recording bad experiences, as Antonio explained to her previously). Accompanied by a melodic music, the image of the written pages dissolves into a redish coloured surface on a wall; the camera pans through the projected slide of this painting. Pilar explains how Kandinsky used the colours to create symphonies of feelings, creating parallels and repetitions between them. Finally, she and the image focus on the violet circle that, in the top of the painting, dominates the rest, and which represents, she says, fear. A dissolve melts this image with a close-up of the water that opens the following sequence, their second meeting by the river. In this sequence, Pilar's understanding of Antonio's feelings is visually expressed: violence (red) arises from fear (violet). In the following sequence, she will express this understanding verbally.

19 She replies that she enjoys and is good at it, and he belittles her: "Sure. You have always been good at useless things". (My translation from: "Seguro. Tú para las cosas inútiles siempre has sido buena").

20 Beyond 'chit-chat' with customers and family members, he also has a brief menacing conversation with Juan, soon after Pilar has left him at the beginning of the

film; this is the only sequence when they are together alone.

21 For example, the third section of the narrative often repeats a situation 'sketched' in one of the initial sequences of this section. In it, two members of the therapy group enact a role-play about the kind of conversation they have with their wives when they go back home after work; showing their difficulties to communicate and the functional nature of their relationship, they act clumsily when pretending to take an interest in their wives' day and feel uncomfortable showing such feelings. This role-play will serve as a 'magnifying mirror' of Pilar and Antonio's everyday life, with many of the sequences opening with Antonio's return to home and showing a similar attitude.

22 My translation from: "yo no quiero llegar a los sesenta y verme como los tíos ésos de la terapia, jodidos y amargados, y amargando la vida a su familia".

23 The choice of Luis Tosar for this role seems perfect. His physical resemblance (the way of acting and his physiognomy) to the kind of man representing the 'macho iberico' from 1970s Spanish comedies (e.g. Alfredo Landa) reinforces Antonio's characterisation as an old-fashioned man who finds it difficult to adapt to changes. Furthermore, Luis Tosar had stood out in two roles from two films that were close in time to *Te doy mis ojos*: in Bollaín's second feature film *Flores de otro mundo*, in which he played the role of a traditional rural man, Damián and as one of the frustrated unemployed men from *Los lunes al sol*, where he is represented as someone who mistreats his wife.

24 There was an alternative ending (available in the extras of the Spanish DVD but not in the copy sold in England) in which a new scene was added to the previous one. The point of view extreme long shot of Pilar walking away in the streets from Antonio's perspective (standing on his house balcony, in what is the last shot of the final edition) dissolves into a shot of Madrid. In a museum, Pilar explains Durero's paintings of *Adam* and *Eve* to a group of children. This ending suggested a major resolution, with Pilar having a secure situation working as a tour guide in Madrid. It also foregrounds the thematic interests of the film: the differences between men and women, as constructed culturally. As the children observed, prompted by Pilar's questions, the 'first man and woman' also have belly buttons. If this sequence had been inscribed, the film would have had a major degree of resolution, by continuing the story into the bright future of Pilar. By eliminating it, the film stresses the end of the relationship as the end of the narrated story; what Pilar's future will be is not at stake.

25 The parallelism between sequences is consciously exploited in this film; some repetitions stand out, such as the two sequences by the river. There are also subtler repetitions, such as that explained in note 21 and in the two meetings in the graveyard (further explained in note 32). The use of varied repetition extends beyond the parallelism in these sequences and is also used in the construction of the dialogue. For example, the constant references (from the title) to the act of looking; or the constant appeals to 'normality' from Antonio, Aurora and the men from the therapy group.

26 In the narrative and character analysis, I have already sketched some ideas about masculinity that imbue the story (e.g. Antonio's relationship with the men of the therapy group and his therapist). The character of Antonio is also defined in relation to Ana's husband, John, who, being only superficially sketched, comes to stand as another model of masculinity. Unlike Antonio, John lives in a stage of confusion when confronted with Aurora's claims about 'normality'. He is also constructed as Antonio's opposite, especially in the way John relates to Juan. Despite his limited screen time, he appears in several sequences in which he is very close to the kid. The fact that he is a foreigner is clearly symbolic. An unintentional truth effect that some may extract from the film is that the character of John (representative of the new man) is, in its simplification, constructed as a passive man, which contrasts with the active attitude (more attractive for many) of the traditional Antonio. See also notes 18 and 21.

27 Something that Candela Peña, the actress who plays this role, and Iciar Bollaín expressed in the interviews collected in the extras of the Spanish DVD and in other

media.

28 This sequence is constructed with an alternation of medium long shots of Rosa explaining the job to Pilar, and of Pilar sitting in a chair, with Ana standing closely behind her and replying to Rosa's questions before Pilar can.

29 She is associated with traditional feminine spaces: her husband's tomb, her daughter's house, her daughter's wedding. Again, the casting choice of Rosa María Sardá is very appropriate, since it echoes other roles she has performed in other recent films (e.g. *Todo sobre mi madre*).

30 This creates the few comic moments in the film. In the first sequence, the whole family (except Antonio) visits her husband's grave; Aurora asks John if they are going to marry "Por la iglesia o de cualquier manera" ("by the church or in any odd way") to which John, turning for an explanation to Pilar (who explains that 'de cualquier manera' is 'civil ceremony'), replies "De cualquier manera". Later, Aurora insists on clarifying where John intends to be buried since he does not belong to the family tomb, creating another comic moment based on misunderstanding.

31 In Francoist legislation, men who killed their wives for 'questions of honour' were kindly judged. As Castells and Subirat (2007) affirm, many women and men now in their 60s or older have naturalised wife-beating as a normal element of gender relationships; like the title of a book they mention, the idea that 'my husband beats me as much as normal' persists in some sections of society.

32 The parallelism between the two sequences in the graveyard shows Pilar's change of attitude. In the first, in the first part of the film, Pilar is holding a bucket of dead flowers when her sister tells her that she has found out about the abuse Pilar has been suffering and urges her to leave him permanently. Pilar expresses her reasons: her lack of economic resources and work experience and, especially, her worries about what Antonio would do without her.

In the second, after the second sequence by the river, Pilar recriminates her mother (who, perhaps coincidentally, is the one who holds the bucket of dead flowers this time) for sustaining an abusive relationship with her father for years. Her mother replies: "Yo no supe hacerlo mejor, hija. Inténtalo tú" ("I did not know how to do it better, daughter. Try it yourself"). The sequence ends with a sustained reaction shot of Pilar, and her brusque departure.

33 Ana shows her irritation with her mother's attitude of turning a blind eye: "The one who doesn't know what is going on is you, or you don't want to know!... Why don't you tell her, Pilar? Why don't you tell us? What are all those falling accidents from the A&E reports? How many times have you fallen down, Pilar? What's up? Don't you look in front of you or what the fuck is going on?" ("¿Ila que no lo sabes eres tú o no te quieres enterar!... ¿Por qué no se lo cuentas Pilar? ¿Por qué no nos lo cuentas? ¿Qué son todas esas caídas de los partes de urgencias? ¿Cuántas veces te has caído por las escaleras, Pilar? ¿Qué pasa? ¿Qué no miras por dónde vas o qué coño pasa?").

34 The original, more extended quote, reads: "Departing from the cross-over of these two visual texts, the cinematographic and the pictorial, I intend to explore the paradoxically liberating effect of these art works which reflect the ring of oppression that history and culture have drawn around the female figure". ("Partiendo del cruce de estos dos textos visuales, el cinematográfico y el pictórico, pretendo explorar el paradójico efecto liberador de una serie de obras de arte que reflejan el círculo de opresión que la historia y la cultura han trazado alrededor de la figura femenina").

For a more extended discussion of the use of the paintings in the film, see Martínez-Carazo (2007). I agree with the basics of her analysis, except from her interpretation of Kandinsky's painting, which she understands as a metaphor for Pilar's family life (401).

35 Danae was the daughter of the king of Argos, Acrisius. When an oracle predicted that he was going to be killed by his grandson, Argos imprisoned Danae in order to keep her away from all men. But Zeus/Jupiter, who was in love with Danae, transmuted himself into a torrent of golden dust and sneaked through the ceiling of the sealed

chamber, impregnating her. This painting captures that exact moment.

36 The correct English translation would be 'in heart and soul' but this distorts the meaning as related to the sexual scene.

37 My translation from: "algunos de sus dueños quisieron a Danae así, como Júpiter, bien cerquita. Pero hubo otros que hicieron como su padre, encerrarla bajo llave para que nadie la viera. Hubo un rey que incluso quiso quemar el cuadro...".

When Pilar tells the history of the kings who kept 'Danae' (the painting but also, by the use of the pronoun, the woman) away from the public eye, her voice off resonates over a relatively long medium shot of Antonio. The end of the sequence, when she says "but he did not achieve his purpose, and here she/it is, in public display" ("pero mira no lo consiguió y aquí está a la vista de todos"), is shot with a L.M.S of Pilar against the projection, illuminated by it and 'melting into' it.

38 This conversation takes place after an angry outburst by Antonio who, after being unable to get in contact with Pilar, verbally abuses her. Antonio is surprised when, raising his hand, she collapses, terrified and trembling, against the wall. Later, with the therapist, he shows his surprise about the terrified reaction of Pilar. When asked about the origin of his anger, he explains himself in terms of the romantic discourse of 'unity' as much as of a 'sexist' discourse of 'possession' (which could only result in the cancelation of the other). He explains his train of thought thus: first, that she does not want him to know where she is, which is why she turns off the phone; second, because she is cheating on him; third, that she does not think about him, and that she will meet some other man and run off with him any day. The therapist breaks this chain of reasoning, arguing that Antonio also meets women in the shop and does not go off with them. To this, Antonio replies: "That is not the same, fuck. I am not interested in the women who come to the shop...I do not want any grief, I just want a normal relationship". The therapist interrupts, asking, "And what is a normal relationship?". Antonio replies hesitantly: "Dunno... normal in a marriage...dunno... that both know where they are and what they are up to, what they think...". The therapist replies, "Then, you should ask her...But, anyway, it should not be a question of control, you should trust her.... Furthermore, how are you going to know what the other is up to in every moment? And what does she think? And what does she dream?!".

39 My translation from: "El amor es, pues, un conflicto entre las libertades individuales de los dos amantes; el proyecto de uno entra en conflicto con el del otro: el amante desea, de esta manera, convertirse en el 'límite objetivo' de la libertad del otro (*ibid.*, p. 376). El sujeto enamorado no desea simplemente 'poseer' a la persona deseada, es decir, poseer su cuerpo, sino 'cautivar su conciencia'" (Segarra, 2007?: 7).

In the other way, as a way to achieve 'transcendence': "otra concepción muy extendida del deseo (y que para él sería la causa de la pulsión sexual), que hace de éste un medio para superar los límites de nuestro yo individual y para conseguir así, mediante la fusión con el otro, una trascendencia de la que los individuos como tales están privados" (*ibid.*: 8).

40 After the sexual scene in Ana's bedroom, Pilar hurries him to get dressed because she does not want her sister to find them there, together. Before telling Ana, she reasons that they should wait until things 'settle down' again. Once more, Antonio disqualifies Pilar's judgement, as if her reticence to go back with him is unfounded or frivolous: "What's up? Do you want to start having new boyfriends now? Do you want an English boyfriend like your sister? An international boyfriend that speaks like a clown?... or maybe now that you live in the centre of Toledo having a husband who sells fridges is not good enough?". Pilar replies, with a soothing tone: "I did not mean anything like that, Antonio. Sorry". He continues: "Shit, this is not a normal way of being together, Pilar. It is not normal!". (My translation from: "¡qué cojones! ¿Qué pasa? ¿Quieres andar ahora echándote novios? ¿Qué quieres un novio inglés como tu hermana? ¿Un novio internacional que hable con acento de payaso?...O a lo mejor ahora que vives en el centro de Toledo te parece poco que tu marido trabaje vendiendo neveras...". Pilar: "No

quería decir eso, Antonio. Perdona". Antonio: "Coño, ésta no es manera normal de estar, Pilar ¡No es manera de estar!").

Over the image of Pilar making the bed, a voice off declares "the spouses are obliged to live together"; the sentence belongs to the official vows of marriage that a judge is reading in Ana and John's wedding. Through this sound bridge, the 'official' discourse melts with Antonio's.

41 For similar reasons, Goss (2008: 35) rejects the conclusions from a critique which I have not consulted: "some critics misread the film and the issue that it dramatises. Roger Ebert's otherwise positive account posits that domestic abuse may reduce to a woman 'addicted to the excitement' of being 'the star of his disease'" (2006: 1).

42 A simple internet search of 'guías didácticas' for *Te doy mis ojos* registered several results. The *Informe 2004 sobre violencia de género* (Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales) also lists the different contexts in which this film has been used for this purpose.

43 My translation from: "Y es que, ¿quién no confunde a veces querer, con controlar? ¿quién está libre de establecer relaciones de poder con su pareja? [...] ¿quién no teme en algún momento perder a su pareja? ¿Y qué hacemos para paliar ese miedo?".

Chapter 7

1 My translations from the film dialogue: "yo no tengo nada contra esa gente... yo sólo digo, que cada oveja con su pareja y cada cual en su casa"/ "quien lejos va a casar, o va engañado, o va a engañar".

2 This is a narrative device consciously used by the scriptwriters Julio Llamazares and Iciar Bollain, as they explain in their book (2000: 43).

3 Her view represents a common type of xenophobia, qualified as 'differentialist racism', which "propagates the notion that cultures exist as isolated capsules whose well-being depends on the maintenance of distances and limits with other, 'foreign' cultures, so that if you want to avoid racism, you have to respect the 'tolerance thresholds', maintain 'cultural distances'" (Flesler, 2004: 105; citing Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991).

4 Cavielles-Llamas remarks that, whereas in 1992 most Spanish provinces had less than 1% of immigrant population (with four counties with a proportion over 2%), by 2006, the presence of immigrants had considerably increased in most provinces and accounted for more than a 10% of the total Spanish population (2009: 7-8). This data obviously does not consider the unaccounted presence of illegal immigrants.

5 Citing Bill Richardson ('Hispanic v. European Identity: Where Is Spain?', 2001), Martínez-Carazo remarks that "If it is true that Spaniards are willing to reinvent themselves, through their recently found regional plurality and their pertenance to Europe [...] it cannot be doubted that, in this reinvention, the multiracial factor is still not finding a space". (My translation from: "Si bien es verdad que el español está dispuesto a reinventarse a sí mismo a partir de su recién estrenada pluralidad regional y de su pertenencia a Europa, [...], resulta innegable que en esta reinención no cabe aún una dimensión multiracial") (2005: 266).

6 As many have noticed, (e.g. Martínez-Carazo, 2005; Cavielles-Llamas, 2009), there are not films directed by immigrant filmmakers, which is hardly surprising due to the recent character of this situation.

7 Feature films such as *Flores de otro mundo*, *Tomándote*, *Poniente* and the recent films, *Un novio para Yasmína* and *Retorno to Hansala* (Chus Gutiérrez, 2009, Spain); also the three documentaries *Extranjeras*, *Cuatro puntos cardinales* (Manuel Martín, José Manuel Campos, Pilar G^a Elegido and Natalia Díaz, 2002, Spain) and *El tren*

de la memoria. Secondly, other films have also addressed this issue: *Time's up* (Cecilia Barriga, 2000, Spain, USA and Chile), *A mi madre le gustan las mujeres* and *Hola, ¿estás sola?*.

8 Her first film, *Sublet* follows the story of Laura (Icía Bollaín), a young Spanish woman who is living in the Hell Kitchen quarter of New York. It explores the feelings of alienation that Laura experiences with her little knowledge of the language, with her middle-class background, and her ignorance of the social customs and unwritten rules. But it also dwells on the (precious and scarce) moments of connection, portraying the experience as simultaneously enriching and terrifying. Her second film, *Sexo oral* is a documentary exploring the sexual experiences of people from different sexual orientations, generations and backgrounds. Her third film, *Alma gitana* offers a rare portrayal of (non-folkloric) gypsy life, following the relationship between Lucía (Amara Carmona), a girl who comes from a traditional gypsy family, and Antonio (Pedro Alonso), a 'Don Juan' and flamenco dancer who has grown up with the memory of his deceased flamenco parents. Although in another vein, her third film, *Insomnio* includes one protagonist, Eva (Cristina Marcos), who, after giving birth to her daughter, experiences how her whole personal and public identity as revised; overwhelmed by her new role as 'mother', she also sees how her colleagues and bosses modify their conduct towards her, foregrounding her new 'persona'.

9 115.269 spectators, following the data available in the MCU films database.

10 As with *Te doy mis ojos*, there are many available on the net. For example, www.gobiernodecanarias.org/educacion/3/Usrn/cep_laguna/recursos/cineforum/Poniente/Unidad.doc (Last accessed 6/2/2009).

11 *Un Franco, 14 pesetas* (Carlos Iglesias, 2006, Spain) and *El tren de la memoria* also present a similar reflection, through their exploration of the conditions of Spanish emigrants in other European countries during the 1960s. Although, diegetically, none of the films include direct parallels with the situation of actual immigrants in Spain, the directors have emphasised this parallelism in promotional interviews and materials. For an interesting analysis of *El techo del mundo* and *Un Franco, 14 pesetas*, see Cavielles-Llamas (2009).

12 As Goytisolo and Nair affirm in their book *El peaje de la vida: Integración y rechazo de la inmigración en España*, this is an obvious but often forgotten mechanism for fighting 'otherness', next to the remembrance of the hybrid character of Spanish identity. In her article, Ballesteros (2005) summarises their argument: "the urgent need to create a collective memory of traumatic historic episodes in order to transcend the chronic amnesia that has historically characterised Spanishness and, by doing so, reshape the national identity" (2005: 11).

13 Quoting the words Curro uses to describe Adbembi's social status, he is one of the dispossessed 'moros de mierda'.

14 This way of shooting the characters surrounded by other characters stands out from the rest of the film, where the characters are shot either in isolated shots or with one other character (e.g. Curro with Miguel, with Adbembi or with Lucía; Lucía with Perla, with Paquito or with María).

15 The universal message of the film was reinforced in a text, by Chus Gutiérrez, included in the extras of the Spanish edition of the DVD. As Holland (2002: 35) points out, the 'marketability' of this product depended on how the story was understood: it "looks destined for a healthy fest life and a comfortable berth in arthouses. Offshore chances will depend on whether its social critique is perceived as local or universal".

16 Taking the data from a book written by Jordi Petit about the social movements of gays and lesbians, Castells (2007: 34) argues that in 1975 "a survey about Spaniards attitudes towards homosexuality revealed that a 83% advocated 'its disappearance' and a 80% supported the hypothesis of a law against homosexuality. Twenty years later, in 1997, another survey by CIS showed that 75% of the population accepted registered homosexual couples". (My translation from: "una encuesta sobre las actitudes de los

españoles ante la homosexualidad reveló que un 83% propugnaban 'hacerla desaparecer' y un 80% apoyaban la hipótesis de una ley contra la homosexualidad. Veinte años después, en 1997, una encuesta del CIS mostró que el 75% de la población aceptaba parejas homosexuales de hecho").

17 Moreover, Collins emphasises that this lesbian character was neither soon erased nor condemned to a constant string of unhappy events, as has been common in other international representations of lesbians (ibid.).

18 Collins (2007) highlights how the film represents the lesbian relationship as asexual, since the contrary would have reduced its commercial potentiality. She offers an analysis of this film, within the context of recent European films that address the, still rare, topic of lesbian motherhood.

19 Although his book is primordially concerned with films directed by homosexual men and women from within gay movements, he dedicates a section to films that are produced outside the movement but which address this subject. Speaking about films directed by women, he remarks: "It is striking how many of these films, though speaking from a heterosexual (or unclear) position, provide very affirmative images of lesbianism, often seen as an enviable alternative to relations between the sexes or else as part of an exploration of women bonding together, dissolving distinctions between comrades, friends and lovers" (Dyer, 1990: 272).

With 1980s and 1990s mainstream Hollywood movies portraying lesbian relationships as asexual, the association between lesbianism and female solidarity has become so predominant that, in American cinema, "[t]here is a sense then in which *all* female friendships occupies an ambiguous, eroticised territory" (Tasker, 1998: 154).

20 Following De Lauretis's arguments, Gámez Fuentes is specifically analysing the treatment of lesbianism in *El pájaro de la felicidad*.

21 The assimilation of lesbianism into this feminist utopia was defended and labelled by Adrienne Rich as the 'lesbian continuum', as Gámez Fuentes also points out. Despite erasing lesbian specificity and presupposing an essence of womanhood, this and other central ideas of cultural feminism influenced many North-American lesbian filmmakers during the 1970s (Dyer, 1990s: 175).

22 Some short-filmmakers have also shown an interest in the experiences of lesbian women. Mariel Marciá, a Chilean filmmaker working in Spain, has created two multi-awarded shorts about lesbian desire, *Flores en el parque* (2006) and *A domicilio* (2008). Another Chilean based in Spain, Cecilia Barriga, became internationally recognised with a short that, using footage of Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich's films, stages a love story between these filmic stars, *Meeting of Two Queens* (1988). Since then, Barriga has directed other shorts and two films – *Time's up* and the medium-length documentary *Ni locas ni terroristas* (2005, Spain) – but she has not focused on this subject again.

23 Triana-Toribio highlights that "Balletbó-Coll is aware that being identified with this [gay] boom can be as much a curse as a blessing for a director's career" (2003: 146). Similarly, in the interview with Camí-Vela, the director rejected any labelling of her films as part of a lesbian, woman's or Catalan cinema, remarking that this type of 'labelling' generally hinders the commercial potential of her films (2005: 43-45). Contrastingly, when promoting *Costa Brava*, her statements in the Catalan newspaper *La Vanguardia*, show a different perspective regarding her stance towards Catalan nationalism: "I hope that, if we all pull together, we can get through, not only with the cinema, but also with the Catalan identity and with our promotion abroad" (my translation from: "A ver si entre todos tiramos adelante no sólo del cine, sino de la identidad catalana y de nuestra promoción en el exterior") (García Nieto, 1995). Furthermore, the film is full of references to Catalan identity.

24 Balletbó-Coll stated that she shot in English because that would enhance the possibility of finding international distribution (Camí-Vela, 2005: 41-2). Smith (1997: 43) adduces a further possible reason: "While Balletbó-Coll has said that the use of English

was purely pragmatic (she knew that the doors of foreign distributors would otherwise be closed to her), English also serves as a lingua franca which side-steps the tricky question for local film-makers of whether to use the native Catalan or the alien widely spoken Castilian (Spanish)".

25 As is acknowledge in the end credits of *Costa Brava* and several journalist remark about *Sévigé* (e.g. Rodríguez Marchante, 2005; Cendrós, 2003), the films were made with left-over film stock donated by several production companies. Furthermore, these same journalists remark how the actors and actresses of *Sévigé* worked for free (entering a co-operative with the director) and that the director self-financed most of the film. She also self-financed and distributed her first and second films (for more details, see Camí-Vela, 2005: 40-43).

Costa Brava, at least, was also directly promoted by the director, who presented the soundtrack to the media in the tape-player of her car (Agencia Efe, 1995) and regularly went to the cinema Verdi (Barcelona) where the film was being projected, giving posters away and speaking with the spectators (García Nieto, 1995).

26 Stated by the director in a news brief (Agencia Efe, 1995).

27 For further details see Camí-Vela (2005), Smith (1997) and Augusto M.Torres (1997). Although initially the director expected that she was going to premiere first in America and only then find distribution in Spain, this order was inverted (Camí-Vela, 2005: 42).

28 Kim (2002) focuses on the role of the tourist in this film. She explains that through this figure (initially identified with the uncritical spectator that transiently 'consumes' culture), Balletbò-Coll "addresses the challenges that a minority art film faces in a global market" (545).

29 Smith highlights that "Balletbò-Coll resisted the demands of her US distributors, who requested more sex and violence" (Smith, 1997: 44).

30 Cultural feminism had a great impact in the lesbian underground cinema of the 1970s and it may still have some offspring in other periods; this argued for a complete segregation from men (held responsible for women's oppression) and defended that "women who recognise that women are oppressed by men should be lesbians [in a political, if not necessarily in a sexual, way], should be among those whose way of living challenges male power" (Dyer, 1990: 177).

31 Quite accidentally, and without knowing much about the film, I watched *Go-Fish* in the mid-1990s and felt quite puzzled about many of its jokes. In her detailed analysis of the film, Henderson (1999) highlights how this film includes many references directed to a lesbian audience.

32 She declared, maybe making reference to the character of her film and surely referring to the 'common woman', that: "The housewife is still not coming to watch the film. It is needed that people say that the film is subtle, tender and funny. When they know that it is like *Fried Green Tomatoes*, then they [the housewives] will come" (My translation from: "El ama de casa todavía no está viniendo a verla. Falta que se diga que esta cinta es fina, es tierna, es divertida. Cuando sepan que es como *Tomates verdes fritos*, entonces sé que vendrán").

33 For an example, compare Augusto M.Torres's critiques of *Costa Brava* and of *Puedo ser divertido* (1997 and 1995, respectively).

34 Although with a very different perspective and conclusions, Barbara Zecchi (2007) has also studied how Spanish women filmmakers (including the work of veterans such as Josefina Molina) represent men. She also considers that, in their work, the role of male characters is instrumental, functioning as counterparts for tackling women's issues. She mainly identifies four ways of approaching men (or, using her words, the male body): as an instrument to unveil how female desire is not 'phallo-dependant'; to sanction the desirability of mature female characters that contrast with the construction of the aged male body as dysfunctional; as perpetrators of violence against women, punished through symbolic narrative castration; and, finally, as a way of transcending the

divide between the genders, constructing the male body as similar to the female body.

35 This is constantly remarked upon in all Rodríguez's declarations, in which she simultaneously tries to play down the confrontational tone set by the opening caption. See Salvador Llopart's article (1995) and Rocía García's article (1995).

36 My translation from: 'Yo me encontraba con un guión que no me gustaba y que mi ideología no me permitía [...] Intenté rescatar un discurso decente para las mujeres. Ya que nos están vendiendo como película femenina, pues no hagamos el ridículo' (Camí-Vela, 2005: 174).

In this interview, Rodríguez remarks that the script constructed a very negative image of men, adopting a confrontational stance. Rodríguez's dislike for the script was also shared by Lola Salvador Maldonado (the co-scriptwriter with Marga Mareo).

37 This is clear, for example, in an early crosscutting sequence of Carmen and Alicia's activities in their flats. The sequence opens by panning over a shelf full of photographs of Carmen's family (starting with their wedding photo and the photo of their baby boy) with sound-off of Gregorian music and a taped message left by Carlos (Ramón Langa), Carmen's recent ex-husband, who sweetly asks her to write an article about whales for him, to bring it to the newspaper and to pick up his cheque, while dropping that he misses her, 'my sweet ex-wife'. Carmen, who had already foreseen his request, types disappointed sentences about the amorous behaviour of the cetaceans, that argue for the incompatibility of the male and female members of the species. While dragging herself around her classically decorated and tidy flat, she also sets the washing machine and cooks a meal. Alicia's characterisation is contrastingly different. With loud pop music, Alicia rushes wearing a facial mask to open the door of the flat; when confronted with her ex-husband Juancho (Jorge de Juan), she tells him off for dropping by early and catching her in that (uncared) state. As she goes to get the mask off, Juancho inspects the messy and upbeat flat, finding a fridge full of champagne bottles and silk tights. In a dialogue punctuated by Alicia's puns and jokes, Juancho states that for his New Year wish, he has asked for a handsome, loving and rich man for her, and subsequently, reviews with Alicia her expensive phone bills (that he pays). As Alicia tidies up her nails, Alicia frivolously admits that she calls erotic lines as recourse to her insomnia but that she mainly calls to job lines (her own New Year wish, instead of the handsome man that he wishes for her). When their son Juan appears dressed as a super-hero, Juancho appeals to Alicia to intervene and convince Juan, but she remarks that he should deal with it.

**Feminine identity as the site of struggle: the
confrontation of different models of femininity in
contemporary Spanish cinema directed by
women (1990-2005)**

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APPENDIX 1: LIST OF MJCE FILMS

To elaborate this list, I have used the existing bibliography, the institutional reports published by the I.C.A.A. (detailing the Spanish films produced every year) and the information provided in the Film Data Base of the Ministerio de Cultura. Many of the films listed in the aforementioned institutional reports are co-productions with other countries in which most of the team are foreign or in which Spanish investment has not reached 50%, such as in *La niña santa* (Lucrecia Martel, 2004). These films have not been included in this list, and neither have animation films (such as those directed by Maite Ruíz de Austri). Films that have never – or not yet – been premiered, are included in footnotes.

I have provided the English title given by the Internet Movie Database (IMDB). Some of these films, neither having been premiered nor distributed in Anglophone countries, do not have an English title. In these cases, indicated with an asterisk, I have either provided my own translation or relied on the translation provided by the 'Anuarios del Cine Español'.

Those films that I have not been able to access – mainly documentary films – are given in the shadowed boxes in the first column of the table below. Films scripted by the director have shadowed boxes in the second column. Following the information provided in the aforementioned ICAA Data Base and in the credits of the consulted films, the third column indicates if any television channel has collaborated in the production of a film and / or if that film is a co-production. Those films that have attracted more than 100.000 spectators – according to aforementioned Films Data Base – have a shadowed box in the fourth column.

Title (English Title)	Director/ Scriptwriters	Participation in TV and/or Co- productions	Spectator s (shadowed when over 100.000)
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1990

<i>Boom, Boom</i>	Rosa Vergés / scripted with Jordi Beltrán	No Co-production with Belgium (25%)	188.659
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1991

<i>Cómo ser mujer y no morir en el intento</i> (<i>How to Be a Woman and Not Die in the Attempt</i>)	Ana Belén / Carmen Rico Gody	No	689.779
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1992

<i>Sublet</i>	Chus Gutiérrez	No	60.043
<i>Una estación de paso</i> (<i>A Passing Station</i>)	Gracia Querejeta / scripted with Elias Querejeta	No	26.874

1993

<i>Urte Ilunak /Los años oscuros</i> (<i>Dark Years*</i>)	Arantxa Lazcano	No	9.811
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1994

<i>Ojalá, Val de Omar</i> (<i>I Hope So, Val de Omar*</i>)	Cristina Esteban / Javier Quintanilla	No	368
<i>Sexo oral</i> (<i>Oral Sex*</i>)	Chus Gutiérrez	No	34.464
<i>Souvenir</i>	Rosa Vergés / scripted with Jordi Beltrán	No	115.550

1995

<i>Los baúles del retorno</i> (<i>Trunks for the Return*</i>)	María Miró / scripted with Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón	TVE and Canal +	10.020
<i>Entre rojas</i> (<i>Among Red Women*</i>)	Azucena Rodríguez / Scripted with Mercedes de Blas and Miriam de Maeztu	Antena 3	49.358
<i>Hola, ¿estás sola?</i> (<i>Hi, Are You Alone?</i>)	Icíar Bollaín	TVE and Canal +	300.596
<i>Puede ser divertido</i> (<i>It Can Be Fun*</i>)	Azucena Rodríguez / Salvador Maldonado and	No	57.947

	Marga Madeo		
<i>Costa Brava (Family Album)</i>	Marta Balletbò-Coll / scripted with Ana Simón Cerezo	No	19.502
<i>Alma gitana (Gypsy Soul*)</i>	Chus Gutiérrez / Scripted with Antonio Conesa, Juan Vicente Córdoba and Joaquín Jordá	TVE and Canal +	231.710

1996

<i>Cosas que nunca te dije (Things I Never Told You)</i>	Isabel Coixet	Co-Production with USA (60%)	237.345
<i>El dominio de los sentidos / El Domini dels sentits (Domain of the Senses)</i>	Episodic film. <i>La vista</i> by Judith Colell, scripted with Jordi Cadena; <i>El olfato</i> by Isabel Gardela; <i>El tacto</i> by Nuria Olivé; <i>El gusto</i> , Teresa de Pelegrí, scripted with Dominic Harari; <i>El oído</i> , María Ripoll, scripted with Nico Baixas and Rosa Serra	TVE	20.829
<i>Perdona, bonita, pero Lucas me quería a mi (Excuse me, Darling, but Lucas Loved Me)</i>	Dunia Ayaso and Félix Sabroso	Sogepaq and Canal +	283.436
<i>Pon un hombre en tu vida (Put a Man in Your Life*)</i>	Eva Lesmes / Scripted with Luis Marías and Joaquín Oristrell	Antena 3, Canal +	121.504
<i>Tengo una casa (I Have a Home*)</i>	Mónica Laguna	TVE and Canal +	71.210
<i>El último viaje de Robert Ryland (Robert Ryland's Last Journey)</i>	Gracia Querejeta / Scripted with Elías Querejeta	TVE and Canal + 40% UK	140.687
<i>La Moños</i>	Mireia Ros	TVE, TV3, and Canal +	31.641
<i>Muere, mi vida / Mor, vida meva (Die, My Darling)</i>	Mar Targarona / Scripted with Montse Abad	TVE and Canal +	30.394

1997

<i>Retrato de mujer con hombre al fondo</i>	Manana Rodríguez / Scripted with Xavier	No	27.031
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<i>(Portrait of a Woman with a Man in the Background*)</i>	Bermúdez		
<i>Tic, Tac</i>	Rosa Vergés/ Scripted with Edmond Roch	No	28.801
<i>Todo está oscuro (Everything is Dark*)</i>	Ana Díez/ Scripted with Carlos Pérez Merinero, Angel Amigo and Bernardo Belzunegui	TVE, Euskal Telebista, Canal+. Co-production with Portugal (20%)	16.487
<i>Amor de hombre (Love of a Man)</i>	Yolanda García Serrano and Juan Luis Iborra	Sogepaq	38.652
<i>Insomnio (Sleepless in Madrid)</i>	Chus Gutiérrez/ Scripted with Juan Flahn and Fernando León	Canal +	105.014

1998

<i>Torturados por las rosas (Tortured by the Roses*)</i>	Eugenia Kléber/ scripted with Héctor Fáver	No	43
<i>Me llamo Sara / Em dic Sara (My Name is Sara)</i>	Dolores Payás	TVE and TV3	18.761
<i>A los que aman (Those Who Love)</i>	Isabel Coixet/ scripted with Joan Potau	Canal + Co-production with France (20%)	109.983
<i>Cuando el mundo se acabe, te seguiré amando (When the World Finishes, I Will Still Love You*)</i>	Pilar Sueiro	Canal +	30.104
<i>El grito en el cielo (Shout Out)</i>	Dunia Ayaso and Félix Sabroso	Canal +	51.527
<i>Cariño, he enviado a los hombres a la luna / Honey, I've Sent the Men to the Moon</i>	Ana Simón Cerezo and Marta Balletbò- Coll	No	2.454
<i>LLuvia en los zapatos (The Man with Rain in Their Shoes)</i>	María Ripoll/ Scripted by Rafa Russo	Canal +, TVE Co-production with France (20%)	201.478
<i>Yerma (Barren*)</i>	Pilar Távora	Canal Sur and TVE	79.175

1999¹

<i>Cuando vuelvas a mi lado</i>	Gracia Querejeta /	TVE, Canal +,	397.469
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¹ *My Gun* (Luna) was also produced this year but it has not been premiered

<i>(By My Side Again)</i>	Scripted with Elías Querejeta	Telecinco and Televisión Galicia	
<i>Flores de otro mundo (Flowers from Another World)</i>	Icía Bollaín / Scripted with Julio Llamazares	TVE	372.765
<i>Monas como la Becky / Mones com la Becky (Monkeys like Becky)</i>	Nuria Villazán and Joaquín Jordá	Canal +, TV3	10.298

2000

<i>Km. 0 (Kilometer 0)</i>	Juan Luis Iborra and Yolanda García Serrano	TVE and Vía Digital	194.883
<i>Mafia en la Habana (Mafia in Havana*)</i>	Ana Díez	Co-production with Cuba (30%)	256
<i>Nosotras (Women)</i>	Judith Colell/ Jordi Cadena	TV3, Canal +	27.300
<i>Sé quién eres (I Know Who You Are)</i>	Patricia Ferreira / Inés París and Daniela Fejerman	TVE, TVG y Vía digital Co-production with Argentina (20%)	105.705
<i>Sexo por compasión (Compassionate Sex)</i>	Laura Mañá	Vía Digital Co-production with Mexico (20%)	60.256
<i>Tomándote (Tea for two)</i>	Isabel Gardela	?	4.470
<i>Yoyes</i>	Helena Taberna/ scripted with A. Martorell	TVE, Vía Digital and Euskal Telebista. Co-production with France and Italy (30%)	202.363
<i>Ya es la hora / Time's up</i>	Cecilia Barriga	? Co-production with USA and Chile (30%)	28.578

2001²

<i>Algunas chicas doblan las piernas cuando hablan (Some Girls Cross Their Legs When They Talk*)</i>	Ana Díez/ Scripted by Daniel Castro	?	44.902
<i>Juego de Luna (Luna's Game)</i>	Mónica Laguna/ scripted with	?	49.457

² Contrarily to Camí-Vela (2005), I have not included the film *Tortilla Soup* (María Miró) in this list since the film is produced in North America.

	caechevarria		
<i>Los pasos perdidos (Lost Ways*)</i>	Manana Rodriguez / scripted with Xavier Bermúdez	TVE and Vía Digital. Co-production with Argentina (25%)	56.943
<i>El palo (The Hold-up)</i>	Eva Lesmes/Luis Marías	Tele 5 and Canal +	139.803
<i>Náufragos/ Stranded (The Shelter)</i>	Luna (María Lidón)/ Scripted by Juan Miguel Aguilera		

2002

<i>Hasta aquí hemos llegado</i>	Yolanda García/ scripted with Carlos Molinero	TV E and Vía Digital	86.047
<i>A mi madre le gustan las mujeres (My Mother Likes Women)</i>	Inés París and Daniela Fejerman	Vía Digital and Antena Tres	431.092
<i>El alquimista impaciente (The Impatient Alchemist)</i>	Patricia Ferreira/ scripted with Enrique Jiménez	TVE, Vía Digital 20% Argentinian	206.158
<i>El estado de Florida contra J.J. Martínez</i>	Mercedes Segovia /scripted with Julia Montejo	Vía digital, TVE	16
<i>Galíndez</i>	Ana Díez/ scripted with Bernardo Belzunegui, Ángel Amigo and Begoña Miñaur	Euskal Irratia Telebista, Vía Digital and TVE Co-production with Cuba (20%)	1178
<i>Poniente (West*)</i>	Chus Gutiérrez	Antena 3 y Vía Digital	115.269
<i>Sin Retorno/ Not turning back</i>	Julia Montejo and Jesús Nebot	TVE and Vía Digital Co-prod with USA (40%)	11. 235
<i>Machín: toda una vida</i>	Nuria Villazán		
<i>Aro Tolbukhin, en la mente del asesino (Aro Tolbukhin, in the Mind of a Killer)</i>	Lydia Zimmermann, Isaak Pierre Racine and Agustín Villalonga.	Canal +, TVE and Television de Catalunya.	21. 512
<i>Cuatro puntos cardinales</i>	Manuel Martín, José Manuel Campos, Pilar García Elegido and Natalia Díaz	Television de Catalunya, Television de Galicia, TV Valenciana, Canal Sur	178

2003

<i>Elena Dimitrievna Diakonova: Gala</i>	Silvia Munt	Canal +, Televisió de Catalunya, TVE	26.097
<i>Descongélate (Chill out!)</i>	Félix Sabroso and Dunia Ayaso	Antena 3 and Canal +	230.019
<i>Extranjeras (Foreign Women*)</i>	Helena Taberna	Euskal Irrati Telebista	3396
<i>Mi vida sin mí / My life without me</i>	Isabel Coixet	Antena 3 Vía Digital Co-production with Canada	562.473
<i>Palabras encadenadas (Killing Words)</i>	Laura Mañá/ Fernando de Felipe	Vía Digital	53.157
<i>Te doy mis ojos (Take my Eyes)</i>	Icía Bollaín / scripted with Alicia Luna	TVE Canal +	1.063.305
<i>Utopía (Utopia*)</i>	María Ripoll/ Curro Royo and Juan Vicente Pozuelo	Vía Digital, Antena 3, Telemadrid, Canal 9 and TF1 Co-production with France (20%)	170.607

2004

<i>Hay motivo</i>	Many directors, among them: Gracia Querejeta, Isabel Coixet, Icía Bollaín, Chus Gutiérrez, Yolanda García , Ana Díez and Mireia Lluçh	No	828
<i>En el mundo a cada rato (Every so Often in the World)</i>	5 directors and among them: Chus Gutierrez and Patricia Ferreira	TVE	6.948
<i>Iris</i>	Rosa Vergés/ scripted with Jordi Barrachina	Canal + and Televisió de Catalunya	69295
<i>Seres queridos (Only Human)</i>	Teresa Pelegrí and Dominic Harari	Canal +, Telemadrid, TVV, TVG, EITB, Televisión de Canarias. Co-production with Arg., UK and Portugal	83.166
<i>Sévigne: Júlia Berkowitz</i>	Marta Balletbò-Coll	TV3	7431

<i>Héctor</i>	Gracia Querejeta / Scripted with David Planell Serrano	Canal + and Ensueño films (associated to Antena 3)	196.316
<i>Yo, puta (Whore)</i>	Luna / Adela Ibáñez and Isabel Pisano	No	29.096
<i>Febrero / Febrer (February*)</i>	Silvia Quer / Lluisa Cunillé	Televisió de Catalunya	4.939
<i>Mujeres en pie de guerra (Women ready to fight*)</i>	Susana Sáenz Díaz (alias Susana Koska)		12.988
<i>Santa Liberade</i>	Margarita Ledó Andión		
<i>Los nombres de Alicia (Alicia's names*)</i>	Pilar Ruíz Gutiérrez	Televisió de Catalunya	9.825

2005

<i>Morir en San Hilario (To Die in San Hilario)</i>	Laura Mañá	TVE, Tv Cataluña, Canal +	52.194
<i>El Tren de la memoria (Memory Train*)</i>	Marta Arribas and Ana Pérez	TVE	1.499
<i>El Calentito</i>	Chus Gutiérrez/ scripted with Juan Carlos Rubio	Canal +	168.489
<i>Para que no me olvides (Something to remember me by*)</i>	Patricia Ferreira/ scripted with Virginia Yagüe	TVE, Canal + and TVG	81.046
<i>La suerte dormida (Sleeping Luck)</i>	Ángeles González Sindé/ scripted with Belén Copegui	TVE Vía Digital Telemadrid	50.666
<i>Ni locas ni terroristas (Neither Crazy nor Terrorists*)</i>	Cecilia Barriga	No	
<i>Semen, una historia de amor (Semen, a love sample)</i>	Daniela Fejerman y Inés París	TVE and Canal + Co-produced with the UK (20%)	429.471
<i>La vida secreta de las palabras (The Secret Life of Words)</i>	Isabel Coixet	Canal + and TV Catalunya	685.003
<i>La doble vida del Faquir (The Double Life of the Fakir*)</i>	Elisabet Cabeza and Esteban Rimbau	TVE and Televisió de Catalunya	6.280
<i>Esta no es la vida privada de Javier Krahe (This is not Javier Krahe's private life)*</i>	Ana Murugarren Fabo and Joaquín Truncado		1.636

<i>La niebla en las palmeras</i> ³ (<i>The Fog in the Palm Trees</i>)	Dolores Salvador and Carlos Molinero	Canal +	456
<i>La vida perra de Juanita Narboni</i> (<i>Juanita Narboni's Lousy Life*</i>)	Farida Benlyazid Amor/ scripted with Gerardo Bellod	Canal Sur Co-produced with Morocco	7797
<i>Aguaviva</i>	Ariadna Pujol	TVE and Canal +	2. 409

³ *La niebla en las palmeras*, *La vida perra de Juanita Narboni* and *Aguaviva* were premiered in 2006.

APPENDIX 2: OTHER SPANISH FILMS MENTIONED*

20 centímetros / 20 centimeters (Ramón Salazar, 2005, Spain and France)

Abre los ojos / Open your eyes (Alejandro Amenábar, 1997, Spain and Italy)

Agustina de Aragón / Augustina of Aragon (Juan de Orduña, 1950)

Airbag (Juanma Bajo Ulloa, 1997, Spain, Germany and Portugal)

Aires difíciles, Los / Rough Winds (Gerardo Herrero, 2006)

Aldea maldita, La / The Cursed Village (Florián Rey, 1942)

Amantes / Lovers (Vicente Aranda, 1991)

Año Mariano / The Year of Maria (Karra Elejalde and Guillermo Guillén Cuervo, 2000)

Años desnudos, Los / Rated R (Dunia Ayaso and Félix Sabroso, 2008)

Buena estrella, La / Lucky Star (Ricardo Franco, 1997, Spain, France and Italy)

Bwana (Imanol Uribe, 1996)

Calle Mayor / Main Street (Javier Bardem, 1956, Spain and France)

Carlos contra el mundo / Carlos Against the World (Chiqui Carabante, 2002)

Cartas de Alou, Las / Letters from Alou (Montxo Armendáriz, 1990)

Celos / Jealousy (Vicente Aranda, 1999)

Chevrolet (Javier Maqua, 1997)

Concursante / The Contestant (Rodrigo Cortés, 2007)

* I have provided the English title given by the Internet Movie Database. When they do not give a translation, I am responsible for the translation and I have indicated it with an asterisk. Following the data provided in the IMDB, when the film is a co-production, I have recorded which other countries have participated.

*Confesiones íntimas de una exhibicionista / Intimate Confessions of an Exhibitionist** (Jess Franco and Lina Romay, 1983)

*Después de...primera parte: No se os puede dejar solos / Afterwards...First Part: I Can't Leave You Unsupervised** (Cecilia Bartolomé and José J. Bartolomé, 1981)

*Después de...segunda parte: Atado y bien atado / Afterwards...Second Part: Tied Up and Well Tied Up** (Cecilia Bartolomé and José J. Bartolomé 1981)

Día de la bestia, El / The Day of the Beast (Álex de la Iglesia, 1995, Spain and Italy)

Días contados / Numbered Days (Imanol Uribe, 1994)

Esa pareja feliz / That Happy Couple (Javier Bardem and Luis García Berlanga, 1951)

Éxtasis / Ecstasy (Mariano Barroso, 1996)

Familia / Family (Fernando León, 1996, Spain and France)

Fausto 5.0. (La Fura dels Baus, 2001)

Función de noche / Evening Performace (Josefina Molina, 1981)

Furtivos / Poachers (José Luis Borau, 1975)

Gary Cooper, que estás en los cielos / Gary Cooper, Who Art in Heaven (Pilar Miró, 1980)

iHarka! (Carlos Arévalo, 1941)

*Heroína / Heroine** (Gerardo Herrero, 2005)

Historias de la radio / Radio Stories (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1955)

Historias del Kronen / Stories from the Kronen (Montxo Armendáriz, 1995, Spain, France and Germany)

Huevos de oro / Golden Balls (Juan José Bigas Luna, 1993, Spain, France and Italy)

Isi & Disi (José María de la Peña, 2004)

Jardín de las delicias, El / The Garden of Delights (Carlos Saura, 1970)

Lobo, El / Wolf (Miguel Courtois, 2004)

Lucía y el sexo / Sex and Lucia (Julio Medem, 2001)

Lunes al sol, Los / Mondays in the Sun (Fernando León, 2002, Spain, France and Italy)

Mala educación, La / Bad Education (Pedro Almodóvar, 2004)

Malas temporadas / Hard Times (Manuel Martín Cuenca, 2005)

Martín (Hache) / Martin (H) (Adolfo Aristarain, 1997, Spain and Argentina)

*Mirada ausente, La / The Absent Perspective** (Frank Toro, 2009)

Nadie hablará de nosotras cuando hayamos muerto / Nobody Will Speak of us When We're Dead (Agustín Díaz Yanes, 1995, Spain and France)

Novio para Yasmina, Un / A Fiancé for Yasmina (Irene Cardona, 2008, Spain and Morocco)

Nueve cartas a Berta / Nine Letters from Berta (Basilio M. Patino, 1965)

Otros, Los / The Others (Alejandro Amenábar, 2001, USA, Spain, France and Italy)

Pájaro de la felicidad, El / The Bird of Happiness (Pilar Miró, 1993)

Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón / Pepi, Luci, Bom and Other Girls Like Mom (Pedro Almodóvar, 1980)

*Petición, La / The Request** (Pilar Miró, 1976)

Pico, El / Overdose (Eloy de la Iglesia, 1983)

Pisito, El / The Little Apartment (Marco Ferreri, 1958)

¿Por qué se frotran las patitas? / Scandalous (Álvaro Begines, 2006)

*Princesas / Princesses** (Fernando León, 2005)

Proceso de Burgos, El / The Burgos Trial (Imanol Uribe, 1979)

*Pudor / Modesty** (Tristán Ulloa and David Ulloa, 2007)

*¿Qué hace una chica como tú en un sitio como éste? / What's a Girl Like You Doing Here? **(Fernando Colomo, 1978)

Raza / Race (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1942)

Retorno a Hansala / Return to Hansala (Chus Gutiérrez, 2008)

Rewind (Nicolás Muñoz, 1999)

Salsa rosa / Pink Sauce (Manuel Gómez Pereira, 1992)

*Silvia ama a Raquel / Silvia loves Raquel** (Diego Santillán, 1979)

Solas / Alone (Benito Zambrano, 1999)

Soledad, La / Solitary Fragments (Jaime Rosales, 2007)
Sólo mía / Mine Alone (Javier Balaguer, 2001)
*Surcos / Furrows** (José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1951)
Tapas (José Corbacho and Juan Cruz, 2005, Spain, Argentina and Mexico)
*Techo del mundo, El / The Ceiling of the World** (Felipe Vega, 1995, Spain and Switzerland)
*Tía Tula, La / Aunt Tula** (Miguel Picazo, 1964)
Tiempo de silencio / Time of Silence (Vicente Aranda, 1986)
Todo por la pasta / Anything for Bread (Enrique Urbizu, 1991)
Todo sobre mi madre / All About My Mother (Pedro Almodóvar, 1999, Spain and France)
*Torre de Suso, La / Suso's Tower** (Tomás Fernández, 2007)
Torrente: el brazo tonto de la ley / Torrente: the Stupid Arm of the Law (Santiago Segura, 1998)
Torrente 2: Misión en Marbella / Torrente 2: Mission in Marbella (Santiago Segura, 2001)
Traje, El / The Suit (Alberto Rodríguez, 2002)
Un Franco, 14 pesetas / Crossing Borders (Carlos Iglesias, 2006)
Vámonos, Bárbara / Let's Go, Barbara (Cecilia Bartolomé, 1978)
*Vera, un cuento cruel / Vera, a Cruel Tale** (Josefina Molina, 1974)
Vida por delante, La / Life Ahead (Fernando Fernán Gómez, 1958)
XXL (Julio Sánchez Valdés, 2004)

APPENDIX 3: FOREIGN FILMS MENTIONED

- Crash* (Paul Haggis, 2004, USA and Germany)
- Filming desire, a journey through women's cinema* (Mary Mandy, 2000, France and Belgium)
- Independence Day* (Roland Emmerich, 1996, USA)
- Giulietta degli spiriti / Juliet of the Spirits* (Federico Fellini, 1965, Italy and France)
- Go Fish* (Rose Troche, 1994, USA)
- Last Resort* (Pawel Pawlikowski, 2000, UK)
- Lylja 4-Ever* (Lukas Moodysson, 2002, Sweden and Denmark)
- Magnolia* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 1999, USA)
- Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000, USA)
- Nil by Mouth* (Gary Oldman, 1997, UK and France)
- The Age of Stupid* (Franny Armstrong, 2009, UK)
- The Sixth Sense* (M. Night Shyamalan, 1999, USA)
- Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991, USA and France)
- The Ninth Gate* (Roman Polanski, 1999, Spain, France and USA)
- 9 Songs* (Michael Winterbottom, 2004, UK)
- Intimacy* (Patrice Chéreau, 2001, France, UK, Germany and Spain)
- Gladiator* (Ridley Scott, 2000, UK and USA)
- Fried Green Tomatoes* (Jon Avnet, 1991, USA)

APPENDIX 4: TELEVISION SERIES MENTIONED*

Ana y los siete (Star Line Productions / Television Española; 2002 – 2005; Spain)

Aquí no hay quien viva (Antena 3 and Miramon Mendi / Antena 3; 2003 – 2006; Spain)

C.S.I.: Crime Scene Investigation (Alliance Atlantis Communicactions, Arc Entertainment, Jerry Bruckheimer Television and CBS; 2000 – ; Canada and USA)

Cambio radical (Boomerang TV / Antena 3; 2007; Spain)

El comisario (Bocaboca Producciones, Estudios Picasso and Telecinco / Telecinco; 1999 – 2009; Spain)

Extreme Makeover (Lighthearted Entertainment and New Screen Entertainment; 2002 – 2005; USA)

Gran hermano (Telecinco / Telecinco; 2000 – ; Spain)

Hospital Central (Estudios Picasso and Videomedia / Telecinco; 2000 – ; Spain)

House M.D. (Heel & Toe Films, NBC Universal Television, Bad Hat Harry Productions, Shore Z Productions, Moratim Producktions and UMS; 2004 – ; USA)

Los hombres de Paco (Globomedia / Antena 3; 2005 –; Spain)

Más que amigos (Globomedia / Telecinco; 1997 – 1999; Spain)

* The information provided has been mainly extracted from the Internet Movie Data Base and the websites of the television channels and production companies that made the series. When the series are Spanish, I have indicated in which Spanish channel they were broadcasted. The format has followed this pattern: the production companies / the channel that broadcasted the series; its run; its nationality.

Médico de familia (Estudios Picasso and Globomedia / Telecinco; 1995 – 1999; Spain)

El patito feo (Boomerang TV / Antena 3; 2000; Spain)

Periodistas (Estudios Picasso, Globomedia and Écija / Telecinco; 1998 – 2002; Spain)

Sex and the City (HBO, Darren Star Productions and Sex and the City Productions; 1998 – 2004; USA)

Sin tetas no hay paraíso (Grundy Producciones / Telecinco; 2008 – ; Spain)

Trinny & Susannah Undress... (ITV Productions; 2006 – 2007; UK)

Yo soy Bea (Fremantle Media International, Grundy Productions, RCN and Telecinco / Telecinco; 2006 – 2009; Spain)

APPENDIX 5: GLOSSARY

CIMA is an association of women from the audio-visual industries (cinema and television), bringing together distributors, producers, directors, scriptwriters, etc. Created in 2006, it was the initiative of a few of directors (i.e. Inés París, Icíar Bollaín and a few others) and was, paradoxically, an idea generated in one of those round tables that discussed women and cinema. The directors Dunia Ayaso, Josefina Molina, Cecilia Bartolomé, Isabel Coixet, Chus Gutiérrez, Cristina Andreu, Ana Díez, Daniela Fejerman, Patricia Ferreira, Eva Lesmes, Manana Rodriguez, María Ripoll, Laura Mañá and Helena Taberna are among the members; other members are distributor Nieves Maroto and producer Mariela Bessuievsky.

They have two main aims: to effect a change in the way women are represented in the audiovisual media and to encourage an increase in the number of women in the audio-visual industries.

Cine costumbrista / Costumbrismo could be defined as a portrayal of everyday life and customs, often linked to the depiction of working classes and, more particularly in the past, to stereotypes of 'authentic' Spanishness. In her glossary, Triana-Toribio clarifies that *costumbrismo* and *costumbrista* are terms "often used to define films which make use of elements that the audiences can easily identify as representations of indigenous behaviour and traditions" (2003: 178).

Cine intimista / Intimismo is an ambiguous term, without a clear definition. It could be qualified as a type of cinema that focuses on the

feelings, fears and frustrations of the characters, often depicting individualised habitual behaviour in such a way that they achieve a symbolic status.

Goya Awards. These awards are the equivalent to the Oscars or the BAFTAS for the Spanish film industry and are granted by the Academia de las Artes y las Ciencias Cinematográficas.

ICAA, acronym for Instituto de la Cinematografía y de la Artes Audiovisuales (Institute of Cinema and Audiovisuals Arts), is the main governmental organ that mediates with the industry. As Vallés-Copeiro points out, there are two main institutional bodies that regularise the cinema industry in Spain: the Ministerio de Cultura (politically) and the ICAA (administratively) (2000:235).

Instituto de la Mujer. The Spanish Women's Institute is not the same as the English Women's Institute. It is an autonomous body, created in 1983 through a governmental initiative, which counts among its objectives the encouragement of research in gender studies.

P.S.O.E. (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) is the Spanish labour party that was in government from 1983 to 1996 and again, from 2004 until today. During their first period in government, Pilar Miró became Director of Cinematography and enforced the Ley Miró.

P.P. (Partido Popular) is the Spanish right-wing party that, re-formed after their failure in the democratic elections of 1982 (then called Alianza Popular). It was in government between 1996 and 2004.

Sección Femenina (Women's Section), a body created in 1934 within the Falange (created a year earlier), was entrusted by the Francoist

government with the mission of indoctrinating women in the Francoist ideals of femininity. This responsibility lasted throughout most of the dictatorship, despite the declining influence of the Falange from the end of World War II, and therefore, this body exerted a considerable and constant influence in the regulations of gender relations in Francoist Spain.

Transition refers to the period of political transition from a dictatorial regime to a democratic government. When quoted in the text, it refers to the period 1975-1983. However, the dates of the Transition have been hotly disputed in Spanish historiography. Generally, it is agreed that the death of Franco in 1975, signals the beginning of the Transition. There is still no definitive agreement as to when the period ends.

An optimistic estimate is that 1978 marks the end, with the first democratic elections and the approval of the Spanish Constitution that overruled much of the Francoist regulations. However, the complaisant government of the UCD (Union de Centro Democrático), led by Adolfo Suarez, was elected in the shadow of fear cast by the dictatorship.

The majority view is that 1982 marked the end of the Transition. The failure of the Tejero's military 'coup d'état', signalled a point of no return. This year, the PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) won the elections, the first 'truly' democratic elections.

Some analysts believe the Transition lasted until as late as 1992 with the Barcelona Olympics and the International Exhibition of Sevilla (Expo 92) that, on some level, signalled the 'modernisation' of Spain and its integration as a fully fledged member of Western Culture.