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## Haptic Visuality and Film Narration. Mapping New Women's Cinema in Spain

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### Abstract

There is a trend in female film production in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the context of Spain towards a type of cinema that we could classify as haptic. It is a mode of representation concerned with multisensory expression in film images. In this article, we shall study this haptic visuality in the works of four filmmakers: Isabel Coixet, Paula Ortiz, Mar Coll and Carla Simón, whose films in this century exemplify the trend. The method chosen is textual analysis, which will provide us with the necessary tools to study matters concerning representation (framing), narration (nuclei and catalysis) and communication (spectatorial subject). These three analytical categories together will enable us to set out the representational parameters of haptic cinema in filmic texts. The results obtained reveal that the elements related to framing (handheld camera usage, grainy images, and the recurrent presence of close-ups) help to express the characters' subjective, sensory world. As for the narrative model, a prevalence of catalysis and descriptive function can be seen, which helps the characters' affections and emotions to be widely expressed.

Likewise, inferences and ellipsis help weave filmic discourses that

involve the audience cognitively, constructing a communicative model that fosters interpretational openness and a kind of interpellation that seeks affective and intellectual communion with the spectatorial subject.

### Keywords

**Spanish cinema, women's cinema, haptic visuality, filmic narration, textual analysis.**

### 1. Introduction

This article aims to analyse new women's cinema in the context of Spain based on the notion of "haptic cinema," a concept put forward by Marks (2000) that refers to cinematographic practices concentrating on sensory expression in filmic image. To do so, we shall analyse the presence of haptic visuality in the film work by four Spanish filmmakers: Isabel Coixet, Paula Ortiz, Mar Coll and Carla Simón, whose recent films show a trend towards sensoriality of the image in new women's cinema.

Since we intend to study new women's cinema, our starting point is to be found within the context of feminist and film semiotics. The interrelation between the two approaches has a long academic and scientific history that has been widely described in various studies (Casetti, 2000; De Lauretis, 1992; Hollinger, 2012; Zurian & Herrero, 2014). Within this theoretical context, our aim is to address the specifics of the debate that concerns us: a review

of the discussion about the concept of women's cinema, a notion that is becoming a matter of interest in the current panorama of critical studies on cinema and women.

In this vein, we shall address the problems regarding the notion of female authorship and the importance given to filmic texts as a basis upon which to construct an anti-essentialist discourse. Furthermore, we shall demonstrate this significance of haptic visuality in film narration and the implications it has in terms of spectatorial construction. To do so, we shall apply a method of textual analysis that involves studying the representation, the narrative and communication (Casetti & Di Chio, 2007). The combination of these three analytical categories will allow us to detect how the presence of haptic visuality is accompanied by a kind of narrative in which a catalytic function predominates.

Lastly, we will present the results of the analyses, confirming that the presence of haptics in some film productions by the four directors is used as a discourse different from the hegemonic ocularcentrism in cinematographic representation. The films analysed show an interest in deconstructing the hegemonic spectatorial model, underlining the sensorial aspects that can be conveyed through filmic images. Thus, the different ways of involve the spectatorial subject are explored based on a mode of representation that evokes the characters' corporealised experiences, appealing to our senses and bringing us closer to the intimacy invoked by the affections and emotions we see on the screen.

## **2. Women's new cinema**

The theoretical context upon which this research is based is to be found in feminist film theory, which studies matters such as the analysis of cultural and historic significations of the representation of gender, the recuperation of feminine film production and research into aspects concerning the subjective construction of spectatorship (Colaizzi, 2007). In this context, women's cinema (Butler, 2002; De Lauretis, 1985; Johnston, 1973) alludes to the cinema practice that responds to women's desire to narrate their own stories and find a place in the culture in a way that is different from the one put forward by the hegemonic kind of cinema, whose tendency is to sensualise and objectify the female body.

It should be underlined that reflection on women's cinema has been infused with theoretical epistemological work that feminist film theory has proposed since its outset: the de-essentialisation of the notion of authorship and the search for textual expressions that may account for the criticism of hegemonic ways of representation (Colaizzi, 2007; De Lauretis, 1992; White, 2015).

In this sense, the debate about women's cinema cannot be identified solely by the presence of women behind the cameras. Rather, it is a more complex reflection that cannot be boiled down to a mere identification between the film text and the gender of the one who makes the film. As pointed out by Colaizzi (2007), it is a critical undertaking that alludes to the cinematographic practice of questioning the hegemonic representations of gender and also to the academic research work in the face of women's invisibility in the history of cinema.

In this panorama, reflection about the notion of authorship has entered the discussion about studies on feminine film production practically since they began. The work of critics in this area has been seen since 1970s in their questioning of all essentialism regarding female directors. This has been reflected in the articulation of critical and analytical formulations that may account for subjective effects of the image, in terms of social and discursive construction. In this context, the signification and codification of images takes on special relevance in articulating an alternative way of representation through cinematographic work, as well as in outlining the approach of feminist film theory. As indicated by Teresa de Lauretis (1985), the challenge for women's cinema lies in addressing the potential of filmic image in constructing and formulating other objects and subjects of vision.

The renewal of the concept of women's cinema in theoretical and critical reflection in feminist studies is linked to women filmmakers' growing yet still scarce participation in making films. Indeed, the tentative visibilisation of female directors' work in the media and film festivals only emphasises the fact that gender discrimination persists in the film industry, as indicated by different studies on the international panorama (White, 2015) and on the Spanish one (Arranz, 2010; Bernardez-Rodal & Padilla-Castillo, 2018). We should also add that the proliferation of studies analysing the work by female Spanish directors demonstrates this growing interest (Cascajosa, 2015; Guillamón, 2015; Zecchi, 2014; Zurian, 2017).

The appearance of different research papers in this regard only in the last decade paints a complex panorama with new aspects emerging in the debate about women's cinema that ponder the new ways of representation provided in films by women filmmakers. These aspects concern the phenomena of interculturality (White, 2015), intersectionality (Ellerson, 2012), haptic visuality (Marks, 2000) and the revision of narratological notions such as space-time and consideration of them via films by female directors (Thornham 2019).

### 3. Haptic visuality in cinema

As we have pointed out, women's cinema understood as a multiple, varied discourse, questions the hegemonic models for representing gender. In doing so, it attempts to redefine and newly explore the significant possibilities of film discourse. These new representations have fundamental implications for women in terms of spectatorial interpellation, subjective construction, and cinematographic projection. We are no longer faced with a universally defined spectatorial subject but are witnessing new explorations of the construction of one's gaze that redefine our relationship with the image. In this sense, the exploration of haptic visuality implies breaking away from the spectatorial subject of classic cinema based on a system of conventions (narrative modulations, leaps in space and time, and stylistic assemblies in montages) that creates the perceptive illusion of narrative continuity. This is what Burch (1999) calls habitable space: a space constructed by a filmic discourse focussing on guiding the spectator and fostering an immobile journey. Compared to this model typical in the institutional mode of representation (Burch, 1999), haptic cinema intends to offer an alternative spectatorial subject.

Marks in *The Skin of the Film* (2000) defines haptic visuality as one that seeks through form to represent other senses that go beyond the gaze. This type of representation implies escaping from traditional cinematographic conventions and codes by contemplating a kind of visuality aimed at the diversity of human senses (not only sight and hearing, but also touch, taste and smell). Haptic visuality refers to the cinematographic work that looks into new ways of appealing to the audience through multisensory images that make for a more complex spectatorial experience, which has traditionally been restricted to the omnipotence of the spectator's gaze and voyeuristic forms that hegemonic cinema has used exhaustively throughout its history. As we have mentioned above, the concept of haptic cinema has had a remarkable repercussion on reflections about women's cinema, whose critique has focused on the central nature of the gaze in cinema and on the subjective repercussions that this representation has on the spectatorial subject, such as distancing and objectifying the other: "The critique of ocularcentrism has a considerable legacy among feminist theorists, who link vision to the distancing from the body and to the objectification and control of self and others" (Marks, 2000, p. 133).

For her part, Barker (2009) refers to haptic visuality's ability to involve us emotionally and bring us nearer to the characters' subjectivity. Haptic cinema constructs a closer, empathetic spectatorial subject that enters the film in a different way to the one used by the spectatorial model based exclusively on the gaze. This sensoriality is achieved via an emphasis on the materiality of the filmic form, but also by bringing the camera closer to the characters

and including shots with images that visualize touch, stroking or embraces. All of these strategies seek the spectator's affective closeness with the film.

Using a phenomenological approach, Sobchack (1992, 2004) also analyses the spectatorial subject's relationship with the film text as a corporealised experience, underlining how theories on cinema have normally focused on visible qualities but not so much on the sensorial impact they cause. Contrary to the classical assumption of the central nature of one's gaze in conceptualising the spectatorial subject, the author defends the film text's ability to involve us through other senses, to evoke sensorial and corporeal perceptions that foster a more holistic spectatorial experience: "The theorist, abstracted from his own embodied experience in the movie theatre, describes cinematic vision as the essential entailment of a *viewing subject* and a *viewed object* in what is thought of, rather than lived through, as a single and *disembodied* act of vision and signification" (Sobchack, 1992, p. 24).

#### 4. Hypothesis and method

The hypothesis we are using as a basis is that feminine film production in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is tending towards a type of cinema that we could classify as haptic, revealing a new form of visuality that questions the hegemonic ways of filmic representation based on spectacularisation, voyeurism, scopophilia or the sexualisation of the female image. It is not only about introducing female characters and script plots that question gender stereotypes, but also about including formal elements in the film discourse that are aimed at substantially modifying the spectatorial gaze.

The method used is textual analysis which, deriving from semiotic theory, has been widely used in feminist and gender research in cinema. We set out by considering filmic texts as semiotic constructions, significant practices whose discourses are built upon verbo-visual codes that distinguish them clearly from other kinds of discursive practices (Heath, 1981). As a textual construct, the film is organised into different categories that can be analysed: representation, narration, and communication (Casetti & Di Chio, 2007). Firstly, we shall study representation, which will enable us to analyse the framing (the types of shots and the layout of the characters and objects in the scene). Secondly, we will analyse the narration, which concentrates on aspects referring to the hierarchy of the nuclei or the function of narrative ellipsis and catalysis, the latter being identified with the use of the descriptive mode of filmic narration (Barthes, 1977). Lastly, we shall analyse the communication: what kind of spectatorial subject makes up filmic texts. These three analytical categories will enable us to identify the representational parameters of haptic cinema.

The corpus chosen uses films by four female Spanish directors who exemplify the trend towards haptic visuality: Isabel Coixet, Mar Coll, Paula Ortiz and Carla Simón. Starting from a description of their cinematic works, we shall focus on the texts in which a clear presence of haptics is detected, in order to identify the common elements that their works have in representing sensorial visuality.

#### 5. Results: analysis of case studies

##### 5.1. Isabel Coixet's synesthetic cinema

With fifteen feature length films under her belt, the last of which, *Elisa & Marcela*, premiered on Netflix in 2019, Isabel Coixet has established herself as one of the most prolific and cosmopolitan filmmakers in Spanish cinema. All but four of her films –*Demasiado viejo para morir joven* (*Too Old to Die Young*, 1989); *A los que aman* (*To Those Who Love*, 1998); *Ayer no termina nunca* (*Yesterday Never Ends*, 2013); and *Elisa y Marcela* (*Elisa & Marcela*, 2019)– have been shot outside Spain, as pointed out by Barbara Zecchi (2014). Unlike the other female directors whose work we are analysing in this article, Coixet began her career at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with two films with which she carved out a space in the international panorama: *Things I Never Told You* (1996), and *A los que aman*. However, it was in the 21<sup>st</sup>

century when a point of inflection appeared in her work, where one can see a gradual assumption of the formal elements characteristic of haptic cinema: hand-held camera, blurred images and close-ups that bring us nearer to the characters. Although these elements are stylistic hallmarks to be found in all of her cinematographic work in the new century, as an example we shall study three films in which haptic visuality appears most significantly: *My Life Without Me*, 2002; *The Secret Life of Words*, 2005; and *Nobody Wants The Night*, 2015.

*My Life without Me* shows us the life of Ann, a young woman who lives with her daughters and husband in a caravan and who has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. The film portrays the last months of Ann's life, in which she decides to hide her illness from her family and to make a list of ten things she wishes to do before dying, which include recording tapes for her daughters' future birthdays and falling in love with a man other than her husband. The film familiarises us with the lead role's subjective experience by using Coixet's specific kind of filming here. It pays special attention to corporeality in dealing with its topic of imminent death and the transient nature of one's body. Ann enjoys the little everyday pleasures in life, almost all of which are tactile. The film thus emphasises aspects that normally only appear sketchily or are simply overlooked in commercial films. As Zecchi points out, the protagonist wants to satisfy basic physical needs: "to feel the rain on her skin, moist soil underneath her feet, to stroke her father's hairy skin, embrace a lover; curl up with her children in bed" (2014, p. 153-154).

At the same time, the organisation of the shots, longer or shorter focal length and the use of hand-held camera are essential elements in the filmmaker's discourse. By using filmic materiality, *My Life Without Me* provides us with a great many sensorial images that evoke a corporealisation of visuals. Likewise, the film uses the following techniques, all of which fall within the context of what we understand to be haptic cinema: the use of hand-held camera or a suspended system giving a certain fluidity to the filmed image (attempting to evoke certain bodily expressions such as breathing and movement), the notable presence of close-ups, blurred images and glinting on the camera lens which, together with the graininess of the images, all help express sensoriality.

In *The Secret Life of Words* (2005), Coixet presents us with a broader range of haptics, no longer focusing solely on tactile sensoriality, but on a more complex synesthetic experience. In this film, Coixet places emphasis on other senses in addition to sight: taste, smell, hearing and touch. This film addresses the senses "not through sensorial richness, but rather through scarcity, lacking and precariousness" (Paszkievicz, 2015, p. 424). The main character in the story, Hanna, is a survivor of the Balkans War who, due to a trauma caused by torture, represses all forms of sensorial pleasure. Hanna, who works as a nurse taking care of Joseph (a man who has lost his sight because of an accident at work), does not allow herself to enjoy the senses of taste, hearing or touch: she always eats the same insipid food, she disconnects her hearing aid so as not to hear, and she cleans her hands compulsively for hygiene after touching another. As the film progresses, the relationship between these two helps to awaken Hanna's corporeality and emotions as she simultaneously overcomes the psychological trauma she has suffered. Coixet shows us this awakening by using framing in a significant sequence in which the camera movements highlight her emotions and pleasure as she enjoys her first tasty meal for a long time. Hapticity is also achieved with images that show Joseph tracing Hanna's scarred skin by touch, and her hands healing his body's burn wounds.

*Nobody Wants the Night*, set at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, narrates Josephine Peary's expedition to the North Pole in search of her husband, the explorer Robert Peary. Despite the imminent arrival of the cold winter and the dangers it brings, Josephine decides to stay in the cabin where her husband lives in order to wait for him, with the sole company of an Eskimo woman, Allaka.

In this case, Coixet's film clearly connects with the typical plot line of expeditions, which in the context of the adventure genre (Sánchez-Escalonilla, 2009) has clearly epic connotations: the traveller is conceived as a hero who, while carrying out a cartographic job, blazes new trails and contemplates unknown lands, exploring far-away spaces and uncharted territories. Unlike this genre of film, however, Coixet's movie proposes an expedition plot line that focuses not on discovering unknown spaces but on affective contact with another; in this case, a racialised other represented by an Eskimo woman.

At the same time, the film's discourse questions the traditional dichotomy between civilisation and barbarity (very common in the expedition genre), delving into an affective relationship that gradually builds between the two women. In this sense, as the relationship progresses in the film, its representation takes on a more haptic nature. Mixing with Allaka's world fosters physical and affective contact between the two women: they must sleep together, keep their bodies warm to face the polar cold, and they must eat the same raw meat. They also take care of Allaka's baby when he is born (the result of a relationship between the young woman and Josephine's husband) and sleep together in an embrace with him to keep him warm.

Numerous sequences show us this attachment taking shape as the film progresses: Allaka warms Josephine's cold feet with her hands, and when Josephine falls ill and can hardly open her mouth, the young woman chews the raw meat before putting it in Josephine's mouth so that she does not die of starvation. This world of senses represented by the Eskimo woman is also clearly expressed when Josephine discovers that Allaka is pregnant and asks her why she had not told her, to which she replies that she thought Josephine was able to smell and see.

As we have seen, through visual resources such as the hand-held camera, hazy images, close-ups and the use of scenes with physical contact, Coixet's films materialise the representation of haptics, involving the senses of a spectatorial subject that distances himself from the classic model.

## 5.2. *The expression of sensoriality by Paula Ortiz*

Paula Ortiz is a Spanish director from the new generation of women filmmakers whose career has taken off in the first two decades of this new millennium. So far, she has directed seven shorts and two feature films –*De tu ventana a la mía* (*Chrysalis*, 2011) and *La novia* (*The Bride*, 2015)– the latter bringing her twelve nominations at the Goya awards in 2016.

Haptics can be felt in the film *De tu ventana a la mía* from the start. The first images we see involve that tactile nature: close-ups of poppy petals flood the screen, simulating a tapestry. They thus provide us with a metaphor that appeals to the image's material nature, to the characterisation of the film text as fabric. This emphasis on the material nature of visuals is symbolised in the first sequence, in which a red thread passes from windows through which the three characters look outside as they sew. This thread passes through space and time, connecting these three women's story: Violeta (1923, spring, Canfranc), Inés (1941, summer, Cinco Villas) and Luisa (1975, autumn, Zaragoza), leading each of the narratives to coincide with a historic moment: the Bourbon Restoration, the post-war period and the end of the Francoist dictatorship. It is no coincidence that Ortiz chose these three historic moments –except for the brief period of the Republic, which is significantly left out– to show how Spanish women's lives have been linked to the private sphere and to the traditional female role of the angel of the home. Ortiz's film gives a close-up view of the main characters' subjectivity. Most of the time, they are bound to the sphere of the home, a vital universe marked by the repetition of little, apparently insignificant activities.

The thread that metaphorically binds these three stories symbolically also alludes to the director's cinematic work itself, to the manufacture of the film that, insofar as it is a discursive construct, is the result of selecting and cutting initially separate fragments that are brought together in the post-production phase. In this vein, using the activity of sewing as something

significant that is staged and highlighted as an integral part of the main characters' subjectivity, *De tu ventana a la mía* also provides us with a metacinematographic reflection on the work of filmic writing. Just as the red thread connects the three characters in the film, the sensorial images in Ortiz's work seek to create bonds with the viewer, fostering the effects of emotional and affective suture. This appeal to the senses is achieved by introducing grainy images, using scenes with physical contact and close-ups to bring us nearer to the characters.

Haptic visuality also appears in the reflection on female work. Numerous close-ups of the characters' hands express the tactile materiality of their work: it is not just household work (with shots of women's hands sewing or weaving in the home), but also work outside the sphere of the home, shown by the hands of agricultural workers (like Inés) who work reaping cereal and shearing sheep.

The use of haptics is also found in *La novia*, but this time the effect is fundamentally achieved by bringing the camera up close to the characters. The film, based on Lorca's theatre play *Bodas de sangre* (*Blood Wedding*), narrates the tragic story of a love triangle: Leonardo, the bride and bridegroom have known each other since childhood. Leonardo and the bride have always been in love but never got married. On her wedding night, the bride elopes with Leonardo, but her escape ends when the bridegroom finds them at dawn and the men die in a fight.

The film begins with a sequence in which the bride appears lying on muddy ground. Her clothes are torn and stained with blood and earth as she tries to pick herself up with great difficulty. Different close-ups show the difficulty with which she gets rid of the mud covering her body. Later, in different sequences we follow the character's movements, thus involving us in her subjective experience: walking barefoot over grass and tree bark and the frenetic dance at her wedding with the result of her fainting (which symbolises the emotional impact the young woman is undergoing). The close-ups in which we hear the deep breathing of the horse ridden by Leonardo also stand out with their sensorial intensity, as do its trotting hooves on the ground and the shots representing corporeal sensations such as contact with water (when the bride bathes), the dazzling sun that blinds the character and the audience's gaze, and the wind scattering dry earth whose particles fill the screen and appear to reach us.

As we can see, Ortiz's two films immerse us in a kind of haptic visuality that involve us with the characters' subjectivity. Both cases manage to delve into the characters' emotions while making the case for a catalytic kind of narrative concentrating more on elaborate sequences and descriptive passages in which the narrative tempo pauses, rather than on a concatenation of a great many actions.

### 5.3. Mar Coll's discourse and film materiality

Mar Coll's film work includes two shorts and two feature length films: *Tres dies amb la família* (*Three Days with the Family*, 2009), winner of the Goya for Best New Director, and *Tots volem el millor per a ella* (*We All Want the Best For Her*, 2013). This director's first short film, which we will concentrate on for our analysis because of its openly haptic nature, is called *L'última polaroid* (*The Last Polaroid*, 2004). This film text stands out not only because it was an end-of-course project and won the award for Best New Director at the Sitges Film Festival in 2005, but also because, as pointed out by Colaizzi (2017, p.109), it is "a veritable declaration of principles that refers us to the enucleation of the director's own poetry: it contains structural, stylistic and thematic elements that emerge in different modalities and modulations in her later works." Indeed, in this work we can find aspects that appear in her two feature length films: the female main character, the central nature of the affective plot line that is also in conflict with the family environment, and the attention to form, to the filmic materiality and to the possible narratives of the filmic discourse.

*L'última polaroid* narrates the last night Mariana and Eli spend together. They are two teenagers who have to come to terms with their imminent separation brought about by Mariana's family moving from Barcelona to Málaga. The youths' emotional state, the sadness for their separation and the difficulty of assuming the loss all materializes in poetic visuals sustained in a profusely haptic way. The short film begins with a slightly out of focus close-up of Mariana's face, upon which a gentle rain is falling that appears to caress her skin. Unlike the growing trend in today's visual culture towards sharp, high definition images, here grainy images flood the film from beginning to end, establishing an alternative aesthetic, and immersing us in the emotional state being experienced by the characters. It is a state that is perceived as confusing and blurred, also expressed in Eli's doubts about the future of their relationship and in the symbolism of the photos of them both taken with the Polaroid camera, upon which the camera casts a nostalgic gaze at a recent past that is now perceived as such. In addition to this, there is the amount of close-ups that bring us near to the girls' faces and the use of hand-held camera, which gives the images a partial, unstable quality completely in sync with the subjective expression of the traumatic time the characters are going through.

Mar Coll's two feature length films have a less haptic visuality, which is why we have decided not to analyse them. However, as regards the spectatorial construction put forward, it should be pointed out that in both cases the filmic narration opts for a form in which ellipsis and catalysis take centre stage as the stylistic markers with which the spectatorial subject is encouraged to rebuild these gaps, silences and indications that point to the characters' subjectivity and life transitions.

#### 5.4. *Carla Simón's catalysis, hapticity and affections*

Carla Simón's work is composed of two experimental videos, three short films and a feature length film, *Estiu 1993* (*Summer 1993*, 2017), with which she won the Best First Feature at the Berlin Film Festival and was nominated for the Oscars. Simón's film narrates a summer in the life of Frida, a six-year-old girl who has just lost her mother to AIDS, and who must begin a new life with her adoptive family in a rural village. It has a heavily catalytic structure in which the flow of time and the description of an everyday world where nothing apparently happens take on a crucial relevance. The film pauses to look at little day-to-day events, representing such down times in which Frida's life takes place. The story thus expansively shows Frida's games with her new sister and the contemplation of the new space where she is to live, a rural space that is experienced as separate and strange. In this way, the everyday conversations between the characters take centre stage, as well as the village fiestas and family visits. These are apparently unimportant events that trace out the flow of daily life in which the characters find themselves.

Together with this catalytic and descriptive representation, the function of ellipsis appears as a fundamental element that brings us closer to Frida's subjectivity. In fact, the reason for her mother's death, one of the main enigmas for the main character, is not revealed until near the end of the film, when the girl asks her adoptive mother about it.

Although as viewers we can deduce what has happened long before the end (that Frida's mother died of AIDS and the child is probably infected), the truth is that until then all of these sequences have been indicative (like the allusion to Frida's blood tests or the scene in which Frida is wounded while playing in the park and the mothers are gripped by panic) or directly elliptic, as in the conversation in which the adults begin to talk about the matter and Frida hides under the table, taking us with her and thus making it hard to hear what is being said. In the latter case, primary internal auricularisation is used (Gaudreault & Jost, 1995), with a distorted soundtrack representing the subjectivity of Frida listening. As Jones and Perriam have indicated in this regard (2019, p. 87), "the camera is the eye and the sound equipment the ear of Frida."



Simultaneously with the narrative of daily life given to us by the film, in which catalysis is prominent, the subjectivity of the main character is expressed by using a kind of framing in which the camera identifies with Frida's corporealised presence in numerous scenes. In this way, a kind of haptic visuality is staged that allows for greater closeness to the girl's subjectivity: hand-held camera work is used to follow her movements not only when she walks in the woods, runs with her sister and swims in the river, but also when she climbs trees to play.

There are also other expressive aspects that foster the hapticity of the visual image, such as the habitual use of grainy images, the close-ups of characters and scenes with physical contact. These latter clearly help create the world of affections in which Frida lives, which materialise in different sequences in which she is seen embracing her grandmother or her aunt in bed, curled up and sleeping next to her new mother or jumping on the bed, tickling or playing with her father and her sister.

Touch is suggested in the film as a type of affective communication that it is not possible to exchange via verbal language. In this sense, Frida cannot begin to overcome her trauma with words but with embraces and the warmth of her new family. As opposed to speech therapy, which is more typical in the adult world in which a rationalist, conscious attitude seems to rule (at least in appearance), it is the universe of attachment and affections that makes up Frida's subjective world. In this way, the pain Frida is suffering is not expressed in the scene in which the reasons for her mother's death are verbalised, but later at the end of the film, paradoxically making the girl's weeping (her corporeal reaction to the loss) converge with a moment of fulfilment and joy. In the last scene, within a context of fun and enjoyment with her new family, a rush of repressed pain and mourning bursts out: the trauma of loss and the assumption of the new situation cause the girl to weep, but she cannot verbalise it because she does not know what is happening to her. In this ending, it is not language but the haptic world that takes centre stage: Frida finds solace only through corporeal language, through the therapeutic effect of an embrace and through the affection of her adoptive family.

## **6. Conclusions**

As we have now seen, the use of haptic visuality reveals itself as a significant trend in new women's cinema in the Spanish context in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Judging from the above, we can establish the main characteristics that make up the presence of haptic visuality in the works studied.

Firstly, the use of hand-held cameras to follow the characters appears to be a fundamental formal aspect to evoke corporeal movements and expressions they convey. Moreover, in the case of Isabel Coixet this use of hand-held camera goes beyond the examples described, since it appears throughout her films.

Secondly, and especially in the case of Isabel Coixet and Mar Coll, visual sensoriality is achieved through grainy images that evoke the material nature of celluloid film as opposed to the hegemonic tendency towards sharpness and high definition in the images typical of today's visuals. This same sensorial effect is created by shots out of focus or scenes slightly out of shot, due to the hand-held camera. Both elements recur in all the other cases analysed and leave evidence of the place the film was produced, whether in the recording device itself (which is clearly seen with the movement of the lens blurring the image) or in the subject located behind the camera, who leaves traces of their bodily movement in the unstable shot.

On the other hand, we can see a great presence of close-ups, which helps bring the characters' subjectivity and corporeity nearer. This effect of placing ourselves near the characters is also emphasised by the use of a long focal length, which outlines faces and leaves the surrounding environment out of focus.

Lastly, as regards the narrative mode of the films analysed, a prevalence of catalysis can be seen over narrative moments that move the action forward. The filler function these have spreads out in the text in such a way that the description of the characters' affections and emotions is expressed in all its complexity and detail. Moreover, the use of ellipsis and inferences contributes to the fabric of filmic discourses that get the audience intellectually involved, who have to fill those gaps with their apprehension, encouraging an interpretive openness that shuns the closed-off, ideologically marked nature seen in other more conventional models of representation.

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