

LIBERATING AND RECLAIMING THE BODY IN FILMS OF THE SPANISH TRANSITION: AMPARO SOLER LEAL'S NUDE REBELLIONS, 1975 TO 1979*

VÁLERI CODESIDO-LINARES

DAVID FUENTEFRÍA RODRÍGUEZ

FRANCISCO GARCÍA GARCÍA

I. NUDES AGAINST THE WALL AND THE FIRST WINDS OF CHANGE

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Spanish cinema gave shape to an exaggerated femininity in the construction of the image of the legendary Sara Montiel. Bettetini's assertion that "it sometimes seems that the mere presence of the same star in different films can almost establish those films as a genre" (1984: 53) is clearly exemplified in the filmography of the Spanish icon who combined sensuality and tight-fitting dresses, although her characters always maintained moral standards in line with those of the Franco regime (Pérez-Méndez, 2021: 45). By the late 1960s, women's magazines had begun featuring nude or semi-nude bodies for commercial purposes, with depictions that conformed to different codes: hygienic, glamorous or hypersexualised (Payling & Loughram, 2022: 1356). Meanwhile, the number of women at Spanish universities experienced an increase on a

par with the growth of the new urban class in the service sector during the country's developmentalist period.

Spain's transition to democracy was marked by the simultaneous promotion of a progressive political culture and an emerging erotic industry, particularly in the first years after Franco's death, from 1975 to 1978 (Labrador, 2020). With its newly acquired freedoms, the film production of the transition was markedly different from that of the final years of the dictatorship, as it focused precisely on questions that Franco's censors had previously repressed. In this context, the nude could be used as either a symbol of liberation or a merely ornamental element, given that a body considered beautiful can be interpreted as strictly decorative (López Betanzos, 2023). And because of the novelty of nudity on Spanish film screens, it was also highly profitable in the years of the so-called *cine del destape* (literally, "uncovered cinema"), which gave rise to a series of films

that “sometimes seemed to be the product of psychotropic effects” and that were characterised by “a focus on the individual that challenged all established norms” (Aguilar, 2012: 12). Directors known for Spanish genres such as *fantaterror* (Jorge Grau, Amando de Ossorio) began embracing the new wave of eroticism, introducing their own *destape* touches into their films, while Jesús Franco came to be associated with the exclusively Spanish “S” rating for adult films. The nude scene, as a vindication of social change, also expressed a special capacity to reconfigure socio-political conceptions by presenting vulnerability as a basis for exchange and staging intimate sites of disruption and de-identification (Eileraas, 2014: 42). In this respect, although one of the motivations behind the *destape* was to embrace social change, the term itself popularly refers to a widespread phenomenon that invaded the press, media, theatre, and especially films, which provided an excuse to show women’s naked bodies, as reflected in Seguin Vergara’s assertion that “the *destape* was, more than anything else, the unveiling of a part of the body of certain actresses” (2015: 72). This general definition has been endorsed both by scholars who have studied the phenomenon and by the actresses themselves (Ardanaz, 2018: 152). It would therefore be impossible to separate the exposure of the woman’s naked body from the sociocultural status of women, given that “we are constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies; we are constituted as fields of desire and physical vulnerability, at once publicly assertive and vulnerable” (Butler, 2004: 18).

In this way, a large number of established actresses navigated the wave of eroticism and the virtual imperative of nudity during the years of the *destape*. It is worth noting that “S”-rated film stars operated quite diligently as ambassadors of the female cinematic nude in the mass media beyond the big screen. Moments such as Eva Lyberty’s interview on the program *Su turno*

(RTVE, 1982) or Susana Estrada baring her breasts when accepting the *Pueblo* newspaper prize from Enrique Tierno Galván in 1978 (Sanz, 2013), offer spontaneous examples of the changing times. However, during the *destape* era, a considerable number of consolidated actresses, as well as many of the new generation, also used nudity as an aesthetic-narrative element to reconfigure part of the cinematic discourse around Spain’s transition to democracy. This article thus offers an analysis of the cinematic representation of women’s bodies during the transition, to which actresses working at the time gave a voice, face and form in the years of the so-called “wave of eroticism”. To this end, this study uses a model focusing on a *consolidated actress*, i.e. Amparo Soler Leal (25 August 1933-25 October 2013), employing textual analysis to consider the nudity of the body as a narrative-discursive element.

Soler Leal has been chosen for this study for a number of important reasons. The most obvious is age-related, as Soler Leal was a pioneer of the on-screen nude at a relatively mature age, during an advanced stage in her film career. She therefore used nudity as a discursive tool to explore questions of liberation and social criticism from the perspective of a committed activist. In fact, she made the first full frontal nude appearance in Spanish cinema, at the age of 42, in the film *La adúltera* [The Adulterer] (Roberto Bodegas, 1975), released just one month before the acclaimed *Blood and Passion* (La trastienda, Jorge Grau,

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1976), the film whose famous nude scene featuring María José Cantudo is often erroneously associated with this milestone. Moreover, Soler Leal also acted in many of the very few films directed by women at this time, including *Let's Go, Barbara* (¡Vámonos, Bárbara!, Cecilia Bartolomé, 1978) and the Pilar Miró films *The Cuenca Crime* (El crimen de Cuenca, 1979) and *Hablamos esta noche* [Let's Talk Tonight] (1982), portraying wives and mothers who clearly subvert some of the repressed roles she had played in the years of the dictatorship. In addition to all these achievements, and in particular to her own groundbreaking nude appearances, are the nude scenes of actresses who were perhaps less well-known during the transition but whose introduction to the big screen was also accompanied in some way by Soler Leal, in the form of daring appearances or prominent roles, in films such as *My Daughter Hildegart* (Mi hija Hildegart, Fernando Fernán-Gómez, 1977) and *Jugando a papás* [Playing Parents] (Joaquín Coll Espona, 1978).

The timeframe from 1975 to 1979 has been chosen due to the change in the cinematic discourse during this time, reflected by a marked increase in explicit sexual and/or violent content (Codesido-Linares, 2022) that reached its peak in these years. In a certain sense, the exposure of the body transcended eroticism to become a form of vindication of cultural transformation after so many years under a sexually repressive dictatorship. As Foucault argues, if sex is repressed (i.e., condemned to prohibition), symbolising it constitutes a deliberate transgression that anticipates the attainment of freedom (1978: 6), and thus the discursive exercise of sexual explicitness was to some extent an inherent feature of the transition. And although interpretations such as Colaizzi's suggest that "the magic of cinema is based on the manipulation of visual pleasure, on the coding of the erotic in the language of the patriarchal order" (2003: 340), the period analysed here may be better explained by Butler's argument that in re-

ality "bodies never quite comply with the norms" that constrain their representation, and "it is the instabilities, the possibilities for rematerialization opened up by this process that mark one domain in which the force of the regulatory law can be turned against itself" (2011: 2). In this sense, as a consolidated actress during the transition, Soler Leal's progressive stance represents an illustrative, repeated and effective call-to-arms in the context of societal change.

The next section considers a potentially comprehensive model to classify the various categories of actresses who, according to the research cited above (Codesido-Linares, 2022), populated the cinematic landscape of the period, as a guide for understanding and effectively framing Soler Leal as a consolidated film star at this time.

2. TOWARDS A TAXONOMY OF THE FLESH: TYPES OF ACTRESSES DURING THE DESTAPE PERIOD

The approach adopted for this study considers all those actresses who provided the Spanish film scene with its bodies, faces and attitudes during the years of the *destape*, ranging from purely erotic characterisations to representations that vindicated social changes. Based on this approach, the actresses can be categorised as follows:

1. Consolidated actresses, with established careers including roles in films of significance for their quality, recognition and/or popularity.
2. Emerging actresses, including:
 - a) Actresses of the new generation: the young faces populating the key films of the period.
 - b) "S"-rated film stars: actresses specialising in exploitation films with sexual and/or violent content.
 - c) Actresses/*vedettes*: actresses who alternated their film roles with revue theatre performances.

In relation to the consolidated actresses in the period studied, it can be generally asserted that "al-

though there was not yet any institutional structure for preparing women for acting careers, it was most common for actresses to begin their training in theatre companies" (Sánchez Rodríguez, 2018: 26); this was true of Aurora Bautista, for example, and of Soler Leal herself, who were among a group of actresses who had established their careers in the 1960s and then found themselves riding the new "wave of eroticism" and the practically normative presence of nude women on screen in the first years of the transition. These actresses appeared in films that included nude scenes, and often bed scenes, at the peak of the *destape* from 1975 to 1978, but subsequently avoided roles with explicitly erotic tones, turning instead to films without such content or even retiring from film acting altogether. On the other hand, very specific instances of nude images would mark important milestones of the *destape* phenomenon: "The case of [Spanish singer and film star] Marisol, who appeared nude in *Interviú* in September 1976, made the whole of Spain (the magazine sold a million copies) aware that a change really was happening" (Bassa & Freixas, 1996: 115). The films of the period would reinforce new directions, from Concha Velasco in *Yo soy Fulana de Tal* [I Am So-and-So] (Pedro Lazaga, 1975) and *Libertad provisional* [Parole] (Roberto Bodegas, 1976), to Rocío Dúrcal's participation in *Me siento extraña* [I Feel Weird] (Enrique Martí Maqueda, 1977), among others that would contribute to consolidating the movement.

The second category covers emerging actresses, who are in turn divided into three main subcategories: the new generation, "S"-rated film stars, and *vedette*-actresses working in both film and revue theatre. Actresses of the new generation first appeared during the period of the transition to democracy and appeared nude on screen in many, or even most, of the roles they played in films that were political, dissident, or at least associated with the so-called *tercera vía* (third way) of films that engaged more subtly with the social changes occurring in the country. These

artists gave a new face to a more open national film tradition whose storylines would evolve into the cinema of democratic Spain, in which the female body would to some extent be represented "as an allegory of the body of the nation" (Morcillo Gómez, 2015: 153): desired, discovered and gradually reclaimed. Obvious examples include Ángela Molina in *Black Litter* (*Camada negra*, Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón, 1978) and *That Obscure Object of Desire* (*Ese oscuro objeto del deseo*, Luis Buñuel, 1978), Inma de Santis in *Forbidden Love Game* (*Juego de amor prohibido*, Eloy de la Iglesia, 1975), Ana Belén in *The Request* (*La petición*, Pilar Miró, 1976) and *The Creature* (*La criatura*, Eloy de la Iglesia, 1977), Fiorella Faltoyano in *Unfinished Business* (*Asunto pendiente*, José Luis Garci, 1977), and Emma Coen in *Alone in the Dark* (*Solos en la madrugada*, José Luis Garci, 1978). Beyond the novelty of exposed flesh, the roles they play differ markedly from the characters in films made during the Franco regime's developmentalist period, as they represent the rebellion of the youth of the time and reflect the sociocultural changes taking place, among other aspects.

However, among these emerging actresses, there were a number who began their careers during the transition starring exclusively or mostly in films assigned the Spanish film industry's "S" rating (for adults only). The discourse of this erotic cinema, which tended to revel in female sexuality, served essentially as entertainment, although it is often recognised as having a kind of political patina. For example, Vázquez Montalbán suggests these films explore "the feminisation of the transition process, the metaphorical equation of censorship with a corset which, when torn off, exposes both the physical bodies and the realities of political life" (Marí, 2007: 129). This suggestion has been challenged with various arguments, including debates over whether

the democratising power of obscene discourse should be understood essentially—in a consumer society—as the possibility of "everyone" (meaning

adult males, or any male with his female partner) having access to sexual commodities and “perversions” formerly reserved for a male elite who enjoyed them in secret. (Peña Ardid, 2015: 110)

In any case, this debate can benefit from the analysis of specific contexts, such as the ones explored here.

The third subcategory of emerging actresses proposed here is comprised of performers who also worked in revue theatre during the years of the transition. These *vedettes* would play film roles that required more physicality than acting skills, given the importance of the body and face to the *destape* phenomenon. Examples include Bárbara Rey, Esperanza Roy and María José Cantudo. This subcategory could also include other charismatic and physically attractive performers who combined acting with a strong public presence in other fields of the arts and/or the media, such as the film star and TV presenter Ágata Lys or the actress and model Teresa Gimpera.

The categorisation proposed above considers the diversity of the actresses working during the period and the significance of those at the forefront of the *destape*, such as “S”-rated film actresses, although it is important to consider milestones of relevance to consolidated actresses and how they supported the new spirit introduced by the emerging actresses of the new generation. While this “map” offers opportunities for a wide and diverse range of lines of research, this analysis focuses on a selection of key discourses in the filmography of the consolidated actress Amparo Soler Leal, specifically in the films *La adúltera*, *Let's Go*, *Barbara*, and *The Cuenca Crime*.

3. RECLAIMING THE BODY, THE “HAPPY NUDE”, LIBERTARIAN AGITATION

The film medium articulates reality through “the selection and combination of real profilmic objects or events in reality (faces, landscapes, gestures, etc.) in each shot” (De Lauretis, 1984: 41-42). Ac-

cording to Mulvey, however, the self-satisfaction and egotism that have characterised the high point of film history until recent times need to be challenged, making way for a total negation of the ease and plenitude (in this case) of eroticism in cinema. The alternative is “the thrill that comes with leaving the past behind without rejecting it, transcending outworn or oppressive forms or daring to break with normal pleasurable expectations in order to conceive a new language of desire” (2006: 344). In this sense, Soler Leal constitutes a perfectly representative example of the Spanish actresses whose popularity in the 1960s led to their being “chosen to travel the world as ambassadors of the ideals of a nation through their image, their attitude, or their professional experience” (Sánchez Rodríguez, 2018: 26), especially after the end of a dictatorship for whose values she had once served as a standard bearer, which unquestionably placed her in an ideal position to encapsulate the evolution of both processes.

Indeed, in 1962 Soler Leal had played Mercedes, the selfless mother of an oversized family in Fernando Palacio's propaganda film *La gran familia* [The Great Family]. In this film, she is depicted “as the absolute queen of the home, where she has authority over all the emotional tasks, while her husband is in charge of the economic affairs” (Sánchez Rodríguez, 2013: 83) in “a succession of little stories about married life” (González Manrique, 2008: 7) that never offer the slightest hint of any realistic problems. Some scholars even argue that “the concept of the traditional woman as a wife and mother, as dictated by the women's branch of the Falange, is illustrated to perfection in the film” (Sánchez Rodríguez, 2013: 83). There are certainly very few references to Mercedes's feelings, except when her youngest child goes missing for a few hours.

During Spain's transition to democracy, however, Soler Leal began a new stage in her career, specialising in strong-willed, obstinate female characters who bore little resemblance to the

depictions of women imposed by the regime. In this new phase, the questioning of the traditional family, the emergence of a sexuality previously silenced by the dictatorship, and an intense dispute over the limits of home and motherhood would result in a 180-degree turn in the construction, development and perception of Soler Leal's filmography. The significance of this new direction—marked, it must be remembered, by the added factor of her maturity—is evident above all in the innovative nature of her characters in intra-personal terms, and particularly in their relationships with loved ones in the story (almost always husbands and children). For example, while during the Franco regime she had served to personify its rigid values in *La gran familia*, years later she would give the same personification a recalcitrant twist, as an expression of liberation when those same values are torn down.

Having acted in several comedies in the 1960s and 1970s, Soler Leal would begin appearing in more progressive films associated with the aforementioned *tercera vía*, such as *El amor del Captain Brando* [The Love of Captain Brando] (1974) or *¡Jo, papá!* (1975), both directed by Jaime de Armiñán. In each of these two films, “the only character who seems to have evolved is Amparo Soler Leal's, since she begins, in the second film, to change her behaviour in an effort to understand the opportunities offered by the new era” (Asión Suñer, 2019). However, it is worth focusing on the films where this fully liberated discursive “happy nude” motif

that characterises her work in this period is more richly expressed. The first of these is *La adúltera*, a Spanish-French co-production directed by the *tercera vía* filmmaker Roberto Bodegas, which was released in the year of Francisco Franco's death. In this case, it is important to note that this was a period when films by women filmmakers were rare, although “the analysis of these films shows that male directors at this time of the transition, although not as forcefully and perhaps more incidentally, also constructed female characters who were liberated and progressive images of Spanish women” (Guarinos, 2015: 13).

Split into short segments introduced by titles to give the impression of a gradual progression, the film follows Magdalena (Soler Leal), a traditional woman of a well-to-do background, who marries an emotionally repressed language teacher, Lucien (Rufus Narcy), whom she meets after an absurdly scatological and allegorically significant episode involving his mother, Simone (Tsil-la Chelton). Initially introduced as the romantic hero, Lucien turns out in fact to be a former Nazi collaborator.

In a cold and controlled marriage almost completely bereft of intimacy, Magdalena feels trapped and neglected, thwarted not only in her desire to become a mother (which Lucien regulates according to a strict calendar) but also in her open need for pleasure. With a fashionable nod to the “art and essay film”, the marital scuffles and humiliations take place in a bedroom that is completely red, perhaps a Spanish parody of the setting in *Cries and Whispers* (Ingmar Bergman, 1972), which was still a highly influential work at that time. In any case, the film serves to document how, in the era depicted, “housewives, in particular, have a degree of room to move and do not assume their role uncritically; rather, they mould their ideals and their material reality to their daily needs, their dreams and their real lives” (Navarro Martín, 2024: 172). Magdalena soon starts looking for affection and freedom outside the home, while the film deploys

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Image 1. Still-frame from *La adúltera*

(with varying degrees of effectiveness) a whole range of symbolic allusions to the “happy nude” of the liberated woman. A *pasodoble* plays when the baker (Francisco Cecilio) appears on screen, and a phallic correlation is established (similar to the vulgar prologues typical of “S”-rated films) every time the couple delivers or handles baguettes. On the other hand, in the case of the pharmacist, Belluga (José Luis Coll), Magdalena submits to a torrid aborted romance that includes everything from clumsy expressions of affection evoking the poet Juan Ramón Jiménez to direct tributes to the woman’s desired body, before the suitor ends up dying at the decisive moment from a sudden heart attack, dressed only in leopard-skin underwear. Even before his death, with her sexual desire at its peak, Magdalena eats one of the baguettes from the attractive baker with some delicious beluga caviar given to her by the pharmacist as a kind of oral compensation, combined with fantasies, her sex drive still unsatisfied (Image 1)

In the end, what began as a fleeting alleviation of her attraction to the bread delivery man ends with Magdalena taking him as a lover, after he helps her dispose of Belluga’s corpse, finally challenging the norms imposed by her husband and mother-in-law. The final scene, which depicts the intimate encounter between Magdalena and the bread delivery man, shows him slowly removing her clothes in the bedroom until she is completely naked, for the first and only time—as a final liberation, as noted above—in the film (Image 2).

The character’s maturity offers a different kind of eroticism, not as wild as most contemporaneous examples, yet with considerable power. Her rebellion fulfils the objective of “resignifying female sexuality, because in the context of improper behaviour, women are able to unveil their subjectivity. The woman represented in attitudes contrary to those expected by society tears down the imaginary of the fragile woman” (López Betanzos, 2022: 9). The protagonist’s nudity at the end of the film offers an image of vulnerability as well as desirability. As noted above, it is also the first full frontal nude shot in Spanish cinema, which in turn suggests that in the chronology of the *destape* it is not so much the bold explicitness that has gone down in history, but a certain feminine aesthetic that involves a character and body type commonly represented by young women, often with a lack of autonomous power.

4. THE BODY OF THE “NEW REGIME”, MOTHERHOOD AS TERRITORY OF REBELLION

The second iconic film featuring the liberated Soler Leal, which shows “her character always ready, restless and willing to take on all kinds of challenges” (Arias González, 2013: 306), in addition to being significant for the way it reclaims the female body to trigger a break with tradition, is *Let’s Go, Barbara*. In fact, this film begins with Ana (Soler Leal) making love with a co-worker for whom

Image 2. Still-frame from *La adúltera*



she has no feelings at all. Immediately after this, she decides to break up with her husband on the phone, in a scene broken up by recurring inserted shots of photographs depicting her past life: standard snapshots of marriage and child-rearing very deliberately in black and white. Ana and her pre-teen daughter, Bárbara (Cristina Álvarez), then embark on a trip that turns the film into a kind of road movie, which will serve Bartolomé to articulate its discourse through the various stops on their journey. In this way, the director offers both a positive picture of the future—Bárbara displays a precocious maturity, and Ana speaks and acts with her in a way that openly expresses a “new” approach to motherhood—and a respect for traditional female family ties, embodied, for example, in the character of Aunt Remedios (Josefina Tapias). Despite this solid foundation, however, the filmmaker’s desire to push boundaries leads her to include nude scenes not only of the mature woman, but also of teenagers and pre-teens, with segments suggesting rites of passage such as the scene featuring Bárbara herself naked from the waist up while skinning a rabbit. Nevertheless, the main break with convention related to the unclothed body—and the main manifestation of the “happy nude” motif discussed here—is openly declared at one specific moment: when Ana, dancing with only a pair of Spanish shawls covering her, suffers a shock when she accidentally exposes herself to a group of foreign visitors

(Image 3). The scene, presented in a brief but daring medium-long shot, is a clear subversion of the folkloric archetypes embodied by the divas of the dictatorship and a transgressive epitome of the regime’s hegemonic “spicy” comedies aimed at promoting tourism. It is also in this embarrassing moment that Ana meets Iván (Iván Tubau), who in the scenes that follow will lead her to confront a whole series of new decisions about how to clothe, display or surrender her body, before she leaves him behind to avoid returning to the old ways that once oppressed her.

In keeping both with the film’s opening sequence and with much contemporary feminist cinema, the masculinity portrayed in *Let’s Go, Barbara* has no place in the context that is reconfigured, liberated and claimed by Ana’s body. For the spectator of the era, the actress’s reclaimed body offers a discourse of discovery that is both original and intelligible. For the spectator today, the film retains its satire of the vulnerable femininity of the Franco era and its call for a singular authenticity in a world full of prejudices and expectations.

It is worth noting one final form of rebellion, also related to motherhood, as expressed in the third of the films analysed here, *The Cuenca Crime*, in which Soler Leal plays a desperate rural working-class mother forced to carry all the responsibility for her family when her husband, León (José Manuel Cervino), is arrested and imprisoned. In the scene of the prison visit, León,

Image 3. Still-frame from *Let’s Go, Barbara*



Image 4. Still-frame from *The Cuenca Crime*



who has been tortured and deprived of food and water, lunges at her violently and tries to suck some kind of nourishment from her breasts (Image 4), completely dismantling, both figuratively and ideologically, the traditional image of the smiling, carefree mother that she once embodied, in accordance with the old norms of the Franco regime that defined *La gran familia*.

This is the product of Miró's presentation of a vulnerable and violated motherhood and a mother at the head of an impoverished family persecuted by power. Although Chevalier and Gheerbrant identify a return to the primordial condition as one of the various symbolic meanings of female nudity (2007: 412), Soler Leal's body in this film is highlighted for its ability to provide mother's milk, for which her character is assaulted. The encounter with her tortured spouse thus turns into a demand for emotional and physical nourishment, at an extreme moment for a devastated couple no longer able to provide mutual support.

As Gorfinkel suggests, the political economics of cinema may have had an especially powerful influence on its aesthetic aims (2012: 82) in a decade in which mainstream cinema and the exploitation film became intertwined. As a result, explicit sexual and violent content experienced an increase in films made toward the end of the 1970s both in Spain and internationally. In this context, Miró's film would become a milestone in the construction of a raw, rebellious discourse with extraordinary rhetorical force.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The open categorisation proposed here for actresses active during the *destape* era of Spanish cinema serves to organise and classify the general configurations of the phenomenon in relation to the work of the film stars who brought it to life. It should be noted, in any case, that nudity is only truly nudity when it is visible, and its meaning would be defined by its voluntary nature or

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vulnerability. In this sense, Spain's transition to democracy was an especially sensitive and productive period for the configuration of nudity, especially in the case of women.

In the films of this key period in Spanish cinema, although nudity may be variously classified as functional, spectacular, erotic (inscribed in desire), unwitting self-exposure or victimisation, in *La adúltera* and *Let's Go, Barbara* the body is presented as an essential site to be reclaimed and affirmed. In *The Cuenca Crime*, on the other hand, nudity is associated with need and violation, marking an extremely unique case of the representation of the body while at the same time exposing the context of abuse and humiliation involved in practices of torture.

Moreover, in all of the films analysed here, Amparo Soler Leal's nude scenes constitute a reclaiming of the body based on sensuality and sexuality, as well as in functional and maternal terms. This would ultimately make it possible to expose the limitations imposed by the models of femininity, eroticism and motherhood established under the Franco dictatorship. It is also particularly interesting that in the films analysed the body is not only a product of political constructions but also an agent that generates and transforms the political dimension. Based on this analysis of Amparo Soler Leal's on-screen performances, especially taking into account her status as a consolidated actress, two inferences can be made: (1) her representations of nudity, associated with the eroticism of personal vindication, are symbolically dignified; and (2) a significant theoretical and argumentative evolution characterised the films of the period as a result.

Cinema thus serves as a pathway towards reclaiming and vindicating the body, proposing a discourse which, although mainly critical, is also constructive in the senses described above, given the predominance of an orientation towards the formation of a social concept around the reclaimed female body, which was gradually established during this period. In this context, the consistency of Soler Leal's nude scenes stand out above other more superficial cases (such as the case of María José Cando's physicality) for their significance and depth.

Along the same lines, it could be argued that films directed by women reconfigure the representation of nudity, especially in this era, moving away from its traditional erotic instrumentalisation to explore new dimensions of identity, power and vulnerability. In contrast to previous film traditions, where the female nude tended to be inscribed within the parameters of male desire or moral transgression, women directors have proposed storylines in which the body is shown from a female perspective, with a consciousness of nudity as a vindication of social changes or as a reflection of its relationship with pleasure, intimacy and oppression. Films such as *Let's Go*, *Barbara* present an affirmed and liberated body, while in *The Cuenca Crime*, nudity is associated with need and violence. In this way, women directors have expanded the categorisation of nudity, incorporating perspectives that challenge traditional perceptions while at the same time resignifying them in a narrative of self-knowledge and resistance, in line with parallel discourses like the one articulated in *La adúltera*.

The result, in short, is a liberating cinematic discourse reflecting the Spanish social reality and, in a way, foreshadowing fundamental changes to the vision and understanding of the female body and in the antiquated social and cultural approach to it during the years of the dictatorship. Indeed, as effective instruments of this liberation, cinematic discourses fed into reality and desire, words and deeds, to the point that the nude scenes them-

selves, embedded in such discourses, constituted events of considerable cultural impact.

NOTES

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LIBERATING AND RECLAIMING THE BODY IN FILMS OF THE SPANISH TRANSITION: AMPARO SOLER LEAL'S NUDE REBELLIONS, 1975 TO 1979

Abstract

Nudity in cinema during the Spanish transition to democracy became a key device for reflections on identity and the female body from diverse perspectives. This article analyses the discursive potential of Amparo Soler Leal's nude scenes in films made from 1975 to 1979, as a tool for reclaiming personal freedom and vindicating sociopolitical change. At the age of 42, Soler Leal made the first full frontal nude appearance in Spanish cinema (a milestone often erroneously attributed to María José Cantudo in *Blood and Passion*) and explored introspective representations and vindications of the body in films such as *La adúltera* and *Let's Go, Barbara* in a context where the body emerged as a vehicle for reflecting on existence and society. This article evaluates her contributions in relation to a prior categorisation of actresses active in the period, highlighting how Soler Leal, as a consolidated actress, served as a precursor and agent of transformation during a time of profound cultural and political change in Spain.

Key words

Spanish transition; Amparo Soler Leal; *Destape*; Nude body; Spanish Cinema.

Author

Váleri Codesido Linares is a Juan de la Cierva postdoctoral researcher at Universidad Rey Juan Carlos and holds an international doctorate in audiovisual communication, advertising, and public relations from Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Her research and teaching focus on audiovisual narrative, creativity, and the history of Spanish cinema. She is a member of the high-performance research group Ciberimaginario and the FlixOlé-URJC Chair of Spanish Cinema. She has published various articles in indexed journals such as *Doxa*, *Visual Review*, and *Trasvases entre la Literatura y el Cine*. Contact: valeri.codesido@urjc.es.

David Fuentefría Rodríguez is a lecturer in the Audiovisual Communication Department (Bachelor's Program in Journalism). His research focuses on audiovisual narrative, film and television theory, history and criticism, genre hybridity, audiovisual and knowledge management, and rock music in audiovisual advertising and fiction. He also directs CINEFICAA (Cinema, Fiction, and Audiovisual Art), a research group at the Universidad de La Laguna, and has published numerous articles related to his field in publications such as *Fotocinema* and *Observatorio*. He is the author of several books on film criticism and audiovisual production as a pedagogical tool. Contact: dfuentef@ull.edu.es.

LIBERACIÓN Y REAPROPIACIÓN CORPORAL EN EL CINE DE LA TRANSICIÓN: INSURGENCIAS DESNUDAS DE AMPARO SOLER LEAL ENTRE 1975 Y 1979

Resumen

El desnudo en el cine durante la Transición española se convirtió en un medio clave para reflexionar sobre la identidad y el cuerpo femenino desde diversas perspectivas. Esta investigación analiza el potencial discursivo de los desnudos de Amparo Soler Leal, entre 1975 y 1979, como herramienta para la reapropiación de la libertad personal y el cambio sociopolítico. Protagonista, a los 42 años, del primer desnudo integral frontal en el cine español —habitualmente asociado a *La trastienda*—, Soler Leal exploró, en películas como *La adúltera* (Roberto Bodegas, 1975) y *¡Vámonos, Bárbara!* (Cecilia Bartolomé, 1978), representaciones introspectivas y reivindicativas de la corporeidad, dentro de un contexto en el que el cuerpo se inaugura como vehículo para reflexionar sobre la existencia y el entorno social. Este artículo evalúa sus aportaciones en relación con una categorización previa de las actrices del período y evidencia el modo en que Soler Leal, como actriz consagrada, actuó como agente anticipatorio y de transformación, en un momento de profundos cambios culturales y políticos para España.

Palabras clave

Transición española; Amparo Soler Leal; *Destape*; Cuerpo desnudo; Cine español.

Autor/a

Váleri Codesido Linares (La Orotava, 1980) es investigadora posdoctoral Juan de la Cierva en la Universidad Rey Juan Carlos y doctora internacional en Comunicación Audiovisual, Publicidad y Relaciones Públicas por la Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Su trabajo investigador y docente se centra en la narrativa audiovisual, la creatividad y la historia del cine español. Forma parte del Grupo de Investigación de alto rendimiento Ciberimaginario y de la cátedra de cine español FlixOlé-URJC. Ha publicado diversos artículos en revistas indexadas, como *Doxa*, *Visual Review* y *Trasvases entre la literatura y el Cine*, entre otras. Contacto: valeri.codesido@urjc.es.

David Fuentefría Rodríguez (Madrid, 1973) es profesor contratado doctor del Área de Comunicación Audiovisual (Grado en Periodismo) en la Universidad de La Laguna. Sus líneas de investigación versan sobre narrativa audiovisual, teoría, historia y crítica del cine y de las series, hibridación de géneros, audiovisual y gestión del conocimiento, y música rock en el audiovisual publicitario y de ficción. Dirige, además, CINEFICAA (Cine, Ficción y Arte Audiovisual), grupo de investigación de la Universidad de La Laguna, y ha publicado numerosos artículos relacionados con su especialidad en publicaciones como *Fotocinema* y *Observatorio*, siendo, además, autor de varios libros relacionados con la crítica de cine y el audiovisual como instrumento pedagógico. Contacto: dfuentef@ull.edu.es.

Francisco García García is an emeritus professor at Universidad Complutense de Madrid, specializing in audiovisual communication and advertising. He earned his doctorate in 1982, obtained his professorship in 1995, and retired as emeritus in 2019. He served as Head of the Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising II and as Deputy Director of the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport from 2000 to 2004. His research work includes topics such as the digital society and education, creativity and audiovisual narrative. He has directed numerous doctoral theses and organised many academic events, such as the Ciudades Creativas, INFANCINE, and Internet en la Educación international conferences. Contact: fgarciag@ucm.es.

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Francisco García García (Madrid, 1948) es catedrático emérito de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, especializado en «Comunicación Audiovisual y Publicidad». Doctorado en 1982, obtuvo la cátedra en 1995 y se retiró como emérito en 2019. Ha sido director del departamento de Comunicación Audiovisual y Publicidad II, así como subdirector General del Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte entre 2000 y 2004. Su labor investigadora abarca la sociedad digital y la educación, la creatividad y la narrativa audiovisual. Ha dirigido numerosas tesis doctorales y liderado múltiples eventos académicos, como los congresos internacionales Ciudades Creativas, INFANCINE e Internet en la Educación. Contacto: fgarciag@ucm.es.

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