BODIES OF WATER: READINGS OF FLOODING AND OVERFLOWING IN *THE WATER* AND *CREATURA*

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INTRODUCTION

In both *The Water* (El Agua, Elena López Riera, 2022) and *Creatura* (Elena Martín Gimeno, 2023), aquatic environments are depicted as intimately connected to the bodies of the films' protagonists. *The Water* is the first film by its director, who has described it as "a naturalistic representation of the mystical" (López Riera, quoted in Losilla, 2023: 114). It follows the inner journey of Ana (Luna Pàmies), a teenage girl who over the course of the film must learn to accept the water inside her. The story is based on a local legend in Orihuela (the director's place of birth and the setting for the film), a region prone to flooding due to its geographical location south of Valencia. According to the legend, every time the river spills over its banks it is because it has fallen in love with a woman and is rising up to seek her out. The woman, sensing that she *has the water inside her*, feels drawn to the river, to which she must give herself to avert the natural disaster. This legend is the film's main theme, reinforced by documentary footage featuring different women from Orihuela recounting the legend.[1] Water thus serves to intertwine the documentary part of the film with its fictional narrative. In *Creatura*, which is also its filmmaker's directorial debut, water similarly plays a central role. This film tells the story of Mila (played by Elena Martín herself), a young woman of around thirty who moves with her boyfriend to her grandmother's old house on the Catalan coastal region of Costa Brava. Like López Riera's film, *Creatura* also explores its protagonist's inner journey, although in this case it is a journey into her memories of her childhood and adolescence, which are marked by repressed sexual experiences that affect her in the present. As we switch back and forth between Mila's life today and her recollections of the past, these memories connect the film's different narrative timelines. Water acts as a unifying element, as the various flashbacks are bookmarked by scenes of

her immersed in the sea as a child, a teenager and an adult. In addition to using water to weave together their different narratives, both films associate the bodies of their protagonists with aquatic environments. In *The Water*, Ana's body is linked to the local legend when she begins to feel that she *has the water inside her*, just as other women of the village have felt in the past. In *Creatura*, Mila's body establishes a similar intimate connection to the sea, which is depicted as a liminal space that allows her to travel between her past and present.

Both these films constitute clear examples of a trend in Spanish cinema that Shaila García-Catalán, Aarón Rodríguez-Serrano and Marta Martín-Núñez (2022) have described as "An Other New Spanish Cinema Made by Women".[2] This trend, characterised by intimate stories told from the subjective perspective of a female protagonist, is described as "Other" because it constitutes a kind of auteur filmmaking that challenges the narrative hegemony of Spanish commercial cinema, and as "New" because, although it draws on a broader genealogy dating back to the work of pioneers such as Cecilia Bartolomé, Josefina Molina and Pilar Miró, it explores new ways of constructing the contemporary identity and subjectivity of women on screen. Films such as *Summer 1993* (Estiu 1993, Carla Simón, 2017), *Watermelon Juice* (Suc de Síndria, Irene Moray, 2019), *Libertad* (Clara Roquet, 2021), *20,000 Species of Bees* (20000 especies de abejas, Estíbaliz Urresola Solaguren, 2023), *The Rye Horn* (O corno, Jaione Camborda, 2023), *The Girls Are Alright* (Las chicas están bien, Itsaso Arana, 2023), *The Enchanted* (Els encantats, Elena Trapé, 2023) and *Salve María* (Mar Coll, 2024) all belong to this movement. For various researchers of contemporary Spanish cinema, such as García-Catalán, Rodríguez-Serrano and Martín-Núñez (2022), Anna Vilaró (2021), Carlos Losilla (2023) and Raquel Fernández-Asenjo (2024), these films are also representative of another visual and narrative theme explored by this new wave of women filmmakers: the return to the countryside, reflected in the female protagonist's direct contact with elements of nature such as forests, fields, rivers, lakes or seas. In the particular cases of *The Water* and *Creatura*, it is aquatic environments that the protagonists connect with. As Belén Cornejo-Daza and Olga Fenoll-Martínez (2024) have previously explored in their analysis of *The Water*, the relationship between Ana's body and the river opens her up to new *more-than-human* ways of being as the film progresses, while Fernando Sánchez-López (2025) suggests that the connection between Mila's body and the sea in *Creatura* effectively resignifies the monstrous-feminine in fluid terms.

Focusing on this relationship between body and water, this article offers a comparative, narrative and visual analysis of *The Water* and *Creatura* with the aim of determining how each film portrays water as a liminal space in which the body of its protagonist can be transformed. Although this analysis, like the study of *The Water* by Cornejo-Daza and Fenoll-Martínez (2024), draws on the theories of the feminist new materialisms spearheaded by authors such as Donna Haraway (1991), Rosi Braidotti (1994) and Karen Barad (2007), the specific aim here is to reflect on the notion of the boundaries of the body and the transgression of those boundaries when they come into contact with water. For this reason, the theoretical framework for the analysis of the images in these films is founded on Elizabeth Grosz's notion of the volatility of the body (1994) and Astrida Neimanis's concept of bodies of water (2012; 2013; 2017). These authors, who also situate their work in the context of the feminist new materialisms, reinterpret Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection (1982) and Luce Irigaray's ontology of fluids ([1977] 2009) to propose that women's bodies extend through and beyond their material limits, articulating an interconnectivity with fluidity. All these authors thus identify water as a way of transgressing the notions of a contained, solid female body (traditionally understood as delimited, stable and separate

from its surroundings) to think of it instead as an open, volatile, fluid body with its own capacity to pick apart the monolithic conceptions of gender and sexuality.

CONTAINMENT AND BOUNDARIES OF THE BODY: WATER AS A LIMINAL SPACE

The liminal space represented by water for Ana's and Mila's bodies in these films recalls Kristeva's concept of abjection (1982), which describes the fracture that occurs between the inside and the outside of the body when something is expelled from it. According to Kristeva, the substances that come out of our bodies challenge our perception of bodily unity. She thus defines abjection as a breakdown in the meaning of the body, a phenomenon that "disturbs identity, system, order", that "does not respect borders, positions, rules" (Kristeva, 1982: 4). Abjection is therefore manifested in the body's orifices, dissolving the border between inside and outside by positioning itself precisely in the "in-between", the boundary of the corporeal. Throughout *The Water* and *Creatura*, although bodily fluids are never explicitly shown, water acts as a liminal space that challenges the perception of bodily unity for the protagonists.

This connection even appears in the promotional posters for both films. The two posters for *The Water* featuring Ana explicitly identify her with the aquatic environment.[3] The poster used to promote the film in Spain (Image 1) shows her face as she looks intently at the viewer (a gaze that will take on great importance at the end of the film) while the rest of her body is bathed in a blue colour suggestive of water. On the other hand, the poster for the French market (Image 2) shows Ana with her eyes closed and her body immersed in water, with only her face above the surface. It is an image that alludes to the iconography of Ophelia, the archetypal woman who gives herself to the water.[4] A similar composition is used in one of the two promotional posters for *Creatura* (Image 3), which shows Mila resting her head on a rock as seawater flows around her naked torso. The other promotional poster for the film (Image 4) also evokes the aquatic theme, as it shows Mila in the three different stages of her life—as a child, as a teenager and as an adult—all looking down at the camera, which seems to be underwater. The watery, liquid texture of the image distorts their faces, underscoring their aquatic connection.

These representations contrast with the opening sequences of both films, where the protago-









Images 1, 2, 3 and 4. Water is associated with the bodies of the female protagonists in the posters for *The Water* (*El Agua*, Elena López Riera, 2021) and Creatura (Elena Martín Gimeno, 2022)

nists' bodies are portrayed as restrained and tense. In *The Water*, Ana repeatedly expresses her desire to leave Orihuela, as she feels trapped in a town that spurns her all-woman family, a place that she believes offers no hope for the future. In *Creatura*, Mila feels confined inside her own body as she struggles with her repressed sexual desires. Kristeva's theory of abjection draws on the anthropological studies of Mary Douglas ([1966] 1991), who understood the body's limits as forces that are not just material but also constructed by the social reality. In other words, the boundaries of the body constitute what Judith Butler ([1990] 2018) calls "the limits of the socially hegemonic" (Butler, 2018: 258). This is why Kristeva identifies the corpse as the site where these limits break down. As a decomposing, lifeless body reduced to refuse, the corpse is the ultimate representation of the abject, symbolising a threat to all living bodies because that which once had life has now been stripped of it. As Kristeva explains: "My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such wastes drop so that I may live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—*cadere*, cadaver" (Kristeva, 1982: 3).

In line with this idea, one of the first scenes in *The Water* shows Ana and her friends watching a dead goat floating downstream in the river while they discuss their desire to escape the village (Images 5 and 6). Seeing the goat, one of them remarks: "That's why the river smells of death." Another responds: "Because of the goat." A third adds: "This river is cursed; that's why it's full of shit." At this moment, one of Ana's friends recalls the legend of the woman who *had the water inside her*. This is how the legend that underpins the whole film is first introduced. It is a legend that evokes a truth buried deep in Ana's psyche: like the goat and all of the women drawn into the river, she is fated to die in that town, with no hope of escape. At the same time, the sight of this corpse floating in the river reveals to Ana the breakdown of the body's limits: both her own and those of the





Images 5 and 6. A dead goat floats downstream while Ana and her friends talk about the legend of the women taken by the river because they have water inside them in *The Water*

women who, like the goat, dissolved when they gave themselves up to the river. In this way, while the dead goat is understood by Ana as something that contaminates the water, its association with the lineage of women who have been taken every time the river floods also turns it into a symbol of the repression and confinement of her body within the town's limits. As Lidia Mateo-Leivas (2024) points out, thanks to this initial scene

> we already know that the protagonist of *The Water* is going to be taken by the river, a river that smells of death, that is putrid [...]. And it doesn't matter whether the liquid flows along the riverbed or through her veins. What runs through [the women called by the river], what shapes them in their fluids, whether putrid water or bad blood, is what dooms them. (Mateo-Leivas, 2024: 58)

In *Creatura*, the protagonist's confinement is also expressed in Kristeva's concept of the cadaver: a decomposing, diseased and contagious

body. This idea is represented in Mila's own body through the hives that begin at her vulva and spread all over her body (Images 7 and 8). In the film's first scene Mila and her boyfriend, Marcel, are trying to have sex when she begins to feel discomfort. She starts screaming, crying and scratching her vulva compulsively. On the inner journey she takes through her memories, we discover that her hives are a physical reaction to a traumatic encounter she had with her father as a child. In one of the film's many flashbacks, a six-year-old Mila is playing on top of her father, who is lying





Images 7 and 8. Mila's hives break out again on her body when she tries to engage in sexual relations with her boyfriend, Marcel, in the opening sequence of *Creatura*

in bed next to her mother. The little girl begins to rub her body over her father's belly and crotch. In response, after warning her several times to stop, he yanks her forcefully off the bed and begins to shout at her that what she was doing is wrong. Little Mila then begins to cry inconsolably, unable to understand what she did that was so terrible. After this experience, the little girl suffers her first bout of hives on her vulva, in a visual echo of the opening scene depicting her frustrated sexual encounter with Marcel.[5] In this sense, as Anna Casas-Aguilar (2024) points out, Mila's hives become an aspect of her body that connects the film's three different timelines, just as water does. The message that her father conveyed to her when she was a child leads her to experience her body and sexuality in a way suggested by the film's title: as a *creature* whose drives and desires are socially codified as abject, and which must therefore be restrained. This question is precisely what leads Sánchez-López (2025) to identify a connection between Mila's hives and the concepts of body horror and female monstrosity.

Both Ana and Mila thus experience their own bodies as a problem for them, as excessive corporealities that must be restrained. Throughout each film, each woman's body poses a constant threat: of flooding in Ana's case, and of overflowing in Mila's. For Grosz (1994), by returning to the fluidity of the body (that is, to contact with its inherent watery materiality), it is possible to dissolve the boundaries of the body and transgress its relationship with its surroundings. Thus, in opposition to a Cartesian understanding of the body that conceives of it merely as a vessel of the mind, Grosz proposes fluidity as a way of reclaiming agency over our bodily materiality. Irigaray (2009) argues that sexual difference has been constructed on the basis of an ontological hierarchy of solids over liquids. Solid bodies—which for Irigaray represent male logic—prioritise restraint and stability, while liquid bodies—which are associated with the female—are characterised by a lack of control, flooding and overflowing, as they are constantly affected by phenomena such as menstruation, childbirth and lactation. In her ma-

BOTH ANA AND MILA EXPERIENCE THEIR OWN BODIES AS A PROBLEM FOR THEM, AS EXCESSIVE CORPOREALITIES THAT MUST BE RESTRAINED

terialist reinterpretation, Grosz (1994) questions this binary logic by exploring the potential of the fluid body. Because it is experienced as an intense, viscous, leaking amorphous mass, the fluid body stands in total opposition to the rational, stable model of the solid body. With this in mind, Grosz raises the question:

> Can it be that in the West, in our time, the female body has been constructed not only as a lack or absence but with more complexity, as a leaking, uncontrollable, seeping liquid; as formless flow, as viscosity, entrapping, secreting; as lacking not so much the phallus but self-containment; not a cracked or porous vessel, like a leaking ship, but a formlessness that engulfs all form, a disorder that threatens all order? I am not suggesting that this is how women are, that this is their ontological status. Instead, my hypothesis is that women's corporeality is inscribed as a mode of seepage (Grosz, 1994: 203).

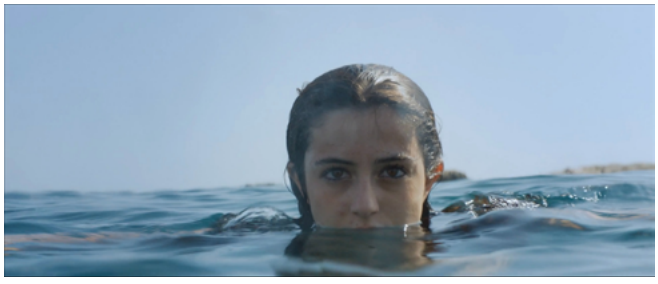
As the narrative progresses in *The Water*, Ana's body gradually begins to surrender to its own fluidity. One of the first signs of this is the beginning of her relationship with José, which for her represents a possible way of escaping the village. José appears to be the only young man in Orihuela who has ever left the town and lived outside Spain, although this is later revealed to be untrue. It is significant that their first encounters take place on the banks of the river, in scenes that show them either immersed in the water or lying down beside it. In this way, Ana stops thinking of the river as a threat and begins gradually to understand it as an increasingly attractive object of desire. "Grandma, is it true what they say about having water inside you?" Anna asks her grandmother. The old woman strokes her face and replies: "Everything is going to turn out fine." Ana's transformation culminates with her giving herself to the river for the first time. In this scene, she visits the village church with José. Once inside, she takes him to look at a statue of Saint Rita. Ana studies the details of the saint's body: her crown of thorns, the blood running down her face, the contours of her skin. A moment later, Ana's expression changes completely when she makes a decisive move away from José when attempts to kiss her. Surprised, he tries to put his arms around her, but she pulls out of his embrace. Annoyed, José storms out of the church, leaving Ana behind, still gazing quietly at the saint. Then, when she kneels in a pew to pray, we see other women around the church—the same women who take part in the documentary part of the film. This is the first time that the two diegetic worlds appear together in the same place. Ana then notices a woman looking at her from a distance. Without a word, the woman walks out of the church, and Ana follows her to the banks of the river. There, the stranger tells Ana that she knows "everything". This is when Ana begins to accept her aqueous condition and gives herself for the first time to the river. "Here you've got me!" she calls out to the water as she steps into the shallows (Image 9). But her offer appears not to work, as the town ends up being struck by another flood.



Image 9. Ana gives herself to the river for the first time in *The Water*

In *Creatura*, on the other hand, from the outset Mila's body experiences water as a means of expressing her sexual desire freely. A paradigmatic example of this is a scene showing the teenage Mila, her eyes peeking above the surface of the water, watching a group of teenagers from the village as they fool around half-naked on a pon-

toon platform floating in the sea, trying to keep themselves from falling into the water (Images 10 and 11). This image subtly marks the moment in the film of Mila's sexual awakening, constructed through a conscious gaze that situates her desire in her active observation of the boys' wet torsos while she hides in the water, like a mermaid stalking her prey. Unlike Ana, Mila is not afraid of the water, as it is depicted as the only place where she can experience a certain agency over her body and her sexuality. This image of Mila as a teenager connects directly to the last scene of Mila as a child, when the water of the sea is first presented as a source of healing for her. After the first time that hives break out on her vulva, following the fight with her father, her mother pours seawater on the rash and explains that it has great healing power (Image 12). Moreover, this scene resonates with one in *The Water* of Ana bathing her grandmother, while the old woman tells her of the violence she suffered over the years at the hands of her late husband, Ana's grandfather (Image 13). Both these images convey an intimate relationship with water in the protagonists' past and present experiences of their bodies.





Images 10 and 11. The teenage Mila exhibits agency over her own desire in the water of the sea in *Creatura*





Images 12 and 13. Personal care related to water. Mila's mother teaches her about the power the sea has to heal her hives in *Creatura*, while Ana washes her grandmother in *The Water*

FLOODING AND OVERFLOWING: WATER AS TRANS-CORPOREALITY

In the final scenes of *The Water* (Images 14 and 15) and *Creatura* (Images 16 and 17), Ana and Mila both experience a unification with water that ultimately frees their bodies from their constraints. At the end of each film, we see the protagonist immerse herself in the aquatic environment that has been present throughout the story (the river in Ana's case and the sea in Mila's) for a final catharsis that allows her body to embrace a fluid corporeality that transforms it into a body of water. As Neimanis points out, "we should recall that water is not only fluid; it works according to a logic of differentiation. There is no such thing as water in the abstract; all water is embodied" (2013: 35). Thinking of ourselves as aqueous enables us to "open to alterity—to other bodies, other ways of being and acting in the world—in the simultaneous recognition that this alterity also flows through us" (Neimanis, 2012: 96). Although Kris-





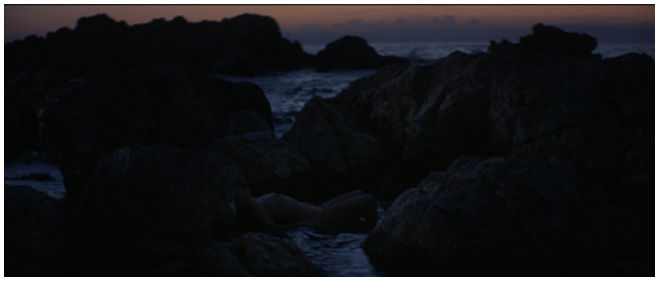
Images 14 and 15. Ana's body is flooded by the river, becoming a body of water in the final scene of *The Water*

teva (1982) defines catharsis as part of a process of bodily purification and cleansing based on the expulsion of the abject, water in these final scenes becomes the element that facilitates the protagonists' acceptance of their abjection. In other words, it is identified as the medium that triggers their agency and the liberation of their fluid bodies. These cathartic experiences operate in these scenes in two apparently opposed yet complementary ways: through flooding in Ana's case, when she gives herself to the river, and through overflowing in Mila's, when she enters the sea.

At the end of *The Water*, Ana is afraid to give herself to the river completely and disappear as the legend requires, as did so many other women of the village in previous floods. However, she gradually comes to recognise a possibility of liberation in this act of surrender. When the village is hit by another torrential downpour, the young villagers go out drinking and Ana seizes the opportunity to give herself to the water. She says goodbye to her

IN THE FINAL SCENES OF *THE WATER* AND *CREATURA*, ANA AND MILA BOTH EXPERIENCE A UNIFICATION WITH WATER THAT ULTIMATELY FREES THEIR BODIES FROM THEIR CONSTRAINTS

mother and grandmother with a conspiratorial look and goes off to her last party before surrendering to her fate. It is here that it becomes clear that Ana is as drawn to the river as it is to her, because when she leaves the party without saying a word, she takes one last look back at José and her friends, impervious to the rain that is drenching her body. The two bodies—Ana's and the body of water—are seeking each other out. After some real documentary footage showing the devastation caused by the flash floods of 2019 in Orihuela and its surrounding area (a weather event that occurred while the film was being made, resulting in another moment when reality and fiction come together in the story), Ana is shown submerged in the river in an overhead shot (Image 14). At last,





Images 16 and 17. Mila's body overflows in the water of the sea, becoming a body of water in the final scene of *Creatura*

she has allowed herself to be flooded by the water. She then steps out of the river looking directly at the camera (Image 15) while we hear her speaking in a voice-over:

> I am my mother. I am my grandmother. I am that woman from 1670. From 1850. From 1987. I also have water inside, although now I only see water outside. All full of water. All full of shit. The water full of shit. I am my mother. I am my grandmother. I am that woman. She is always the same woman who returns. I am that woman, but there was no need to count on me to have a fear, because now I am the one who is going to tell my story.

With these words and that final gaze into the camera, Ana claims her place as a member of that lineage of women who, like her, *have the water inside them*. The culmination of the legend represents her acceptance of her corporeal excesses; the flooding of a body in which the only thing separating the water outside and the water inside is her own skin. In this sense, both her words and the fact that she rises out of the water and looks at the camera suggest a relationship between equals: a flood between two bodies that become one. This moment of mutual flooding is for Ana a cathartic experience of *trans-corporeality* when she accepts her fluid nature. Stacy Alaimo (2010) describes trans-corporeality as an interconnection of the human with the more-than-human. According to Astrida Neimainis, who draws on Alaimo's theoretical framework, "[t]his does not mean the self disappears, but rather that she is dispersed through waterways of mutual imbrications" (2013: 35).

In the case of *Creatura*, the catharsis operates through the overflowing of Mila's body in relation to her hives. Throughout the film, Mila's hives represent her repressed sexual desires, giving rise to the somatisation of what she needs to let go of but is unable to. This situation represents an "abjection of self", a demonstration that "all abjection is in fact recognition of the want on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded" (Kristeva, 1982: 5). This need to free herself from the limits of her own body is met in the film's final scene, when the action of giving herself to the seawater is for her a catharsis that brings an end to her trauma. The scene begins in her bed, a place that throughout the film has served to represent her sexually blocked condition. Unable to stop scratching the itch caused by her hives, she leaves the house and heads for the beach. When she reaches the shore, she strips naked and stretches out beside the rocks (Image 16). Lying in the shallows, she begins pouring seawater over the hives with one hand while caressing her belly, thighs and vulva (Image 17). This action, which she repeats several times, allows her to achieve a state of bodily pleasure that finally results in an orgasm. This final scene depicting her body overflowing also represents a cathartic moment of *trans-corporeality* for Mila as she accepts her fluid condition. In these images we also see her free herself in the water, dissolving the boundaries of her body so that the two elements—her body and the water—become one.

At the same time, Mila's bodily overflow suggests a return to the womb and the amniotic fluid, representing a reconnection with her body and with female sexuality. For Irigaray (2009), amniotic fluid leaves a mark on the bodies of mother and child. This is an idea that is also present to some extent in the scene of Ana's flooding experience in the river, as she connects with her mother and grandmother, and with all the other women of her village, while in the final scene to *Creatura* it is expressed in Mila's sense of touch. As Irigaray explains, this scene evokes the intrauterine experience of the infant, "[e]specially without memory of that first event where he is enveloped-touched by a tangible invisible out of which even his eyes are formed but which he will never see: without seeing, neither visible nor visibility in this place" (Irigaray, quoted in Grosz, 1994: 104). When Mila strokes her vulva while pouring seawater over herself, this fluid tactility is expressed in the

scene's dim lighting, which establishes a visual atmosphere of dark tones that allude to the moment described by Irigaray, a moment when we see nothing but feel ourselves submerged in and touched by water. For Neimanis (2017), immersing ourselves in water dissolves the boundaries of our bodies, as these are integrated into a watery nature that dilutes the skin. In this regard, in her materialist reinterpretation of Irigaray's (2009) description of the amniotic fluid, she argues that "this gestationality need not take the form of a reprosexual human womb [...], [since] [w]e learn gestationality from water; we repeat its potential *in* and *as* watery bodies" (Neimanis, 2017: 69). *Creatura* culminates with all three versions of Mila—the child and teenager of the past and the adult in the present—swimming in the sea, filmed from such an extreme proximity to their skin that it is impossible to distinguish clearly where their bodies end and the water begins.

CONCLUSIONS

For Sara Ahmed, although the skin

> appears to be the matter which separates the body, it rather allows us to think of how the materialisation of bodies involves, not containment, but an affective opening out of bodies to other bodies, in the sense that the skin registers how bodies are touched by others. (Ahmed, 2000: 45)

In *The Water* and *Creatura*, aquatic environments are revealed to be bodies that *touch* and transform the films' protagonists by triggering their desire and flooding and overflowing what had until then been contained. At the same time, the watery materiality that constitutes Ana's and Mila's bodies establishes a *hydrological* corporeality that transcends the individual qualities of these two films and connects them to each other. As Neimanis explains, water "does not ask us to confirm *either* the irreducibility of alterity *or* material connection" but instead "flows between, as both" (2012: 90). By flowing through their bodies, water is embodied in them, both materially and metaphorically, inscribing them into the natural environment that surrounds them, and into other ways of understanding the female corporeality inherited from previous generations. In the women in the documentary part of *The Water*, in the ones who gave themselves to the river before Ana, and in the evocation of a sexuality unleashed when Mila's mother teaches her how to calm her hives with seawater, these films transgress the notions of a delimited, confined, solid female body and conceive of it instead as a body of water, open and fluid. In this way, through their tactile connection to water, Ana and Mila interconnect *trans-corporeally* with other watery bodies, transcending their own identity, gender and sexuality.

THE WATERY MATERIALITY THAT CONSTITUTES ANA'S AND MILA'S BODIES ESTABLISHES A *HYDROLOGICAL* CORPOREALITY THAT TRANSCENDS THE INDIVIDUAL QUALITIES OF THESE TWO FILMS AND CONNECTS THEM TO EACH OTHER

For García-Catalán, Rodríguez-Serrano and Martín-Nuñez, the films made by the recent wave of Spanish women filmmakers have introduced new "filmic forms related to the body" (2022: 9). In this sense, *The Water* and *Creatura* invite us to think about the body beyond its material boundaries, understanding aquatic environments as sites of subjectivity and embodied resistance where these new corporeal forms emerge in contemporary Spanish cinema. However, it is worth highlighting that these two films in particular can be included in a broader movement of films, including a number of recent titles of the "Other New Spanish Cinema Made by Women". These include the aforementioned films *Summer 1993* (Estiu 1993, Carla Simón, 2017), *Watermelon Juice* (Suc de

sìndria, Irene Moray, 2019), *Libertad* (Clara Roquet, 2021), *20,000 Species of Bees* (20.000 especies de abejas, Estíbaliz Urresola Solaguren, 2023), *The Rye Horn* (O corno, Jaione Camborda, 2023), *The Girls Are Alright* (Las chicas están bien, Itsaso Arana, 2023), *The Enchanted* (Els encantats, Elena Trapé, 2023) and *Salve María* (Mar Coll, 2024). It is a genealogy that can be traced back to much earlier Spanish films such as *Let's Go, Barbara* (Vámonos, Bárbara, Cecilia Bartolomé, 1978) and *Costa Brava* (Marta Balletbò Coll, 1995). All these works participate in what Neimanis (2017) calls a *hydrocommons*: a material and symbolic space where water can become a site for connection and bodily transformation. In these films, water passes through each of the protagonists' bodies in various ways (either as an active element that comes into direct contact with their bodies, or as part of the *mise-en-scène*), creating similar aquatic experiences that extend beyond each individual film.[6] In this ocean of films, *The Water* and *Creatura* are two paradigmatic examples that serve as a foundation to begin exploring the narrative, aesthetic and political potential of bodies of water in contemporary Spanish cinema. ■

NOTES

1 This legend is told gradually over the course of the film in scenes showing different women from the village looking directly at the camera as they recount it. In this way, the filmmaker constructs a documentary component that unfolds in parallel with the fictional narrative. These women include the director's own mother, as well as some of her neighbours (López-Riera, 2022).

2 It should be noted that Barbara Zecchi (2014a; 2014b) previously pointed out Spanish women filmmakers who preceded this current wave, who were especially popular in the 1990s and emerged as creators of a new cinematic language in Spain. For Zecchi, this language was characterised by a tactile understanding of the bodies of the films' female protagonists. This question has also been explored by Silvia Guillamón-Carrasco (2020) and Nuria Cancela & Miriam Sánchez-Manzano (2020) in relation to this new wave of women filmmakers emerging in the first decades of the 21st century.

3 In addition to these two, there was a third poster released in Spain showing the façade of a house and the fields that surround it all flooded with water.

4 The film's relationship with the iconography of Ophelia is explored in greater depth in Larumbe-Villarreal (2023; 2026 [forthcoming]).

5 It is worth highlighting that Elena Martín blurs the depictions of these two male characters in various scenes in the film, intensifying the ambiguity with certain shots that confuse her father's body with Marcel's. Especially noteworthy in this respect is a scene showing Mila lying in bed, when a man wearing a jersey that we have previously seen her father wearing reaches his arm out to her suddenly and holds her down forcefully. As we are not shown his face, we are initially led to believe it is her father, but a few seconds later we find out that it is actually Marcel. This ambiguity clearly evokes the Oedipus complex, a condition that the director herself identified as a theme of the film in an interview with Mireia Trías and Gonzalo de Lucas (2025).

6 This idea of the *hydrocommons* in contemporary Spanish women's cinema is explored in a book chapter titled "Bodily Materialities of Water in Contemporary Spanish Women's Cinema", included in the forthcoming collective publication *Amphibious Screens: Film and TV Between Land and Sea* (2027), edited by Joanne Garde-Hansen, Linda Kopitz and Carolyn Birdsall.

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BODIES OF WATER: READINGS OF FLOODING AND OVERFLOWING IN *THE WATER* AND *CREATURA*

Abstract
This article examines how aquatic environments are configured as spaces of bodily agency and transformation for the protagonists of *The Water* (*El Agua*, Elena López Riera, 2021) and *Creatura* (Elena Martín Gimeno, 2022). Based on a comparative analysis of both films and drawing on the theories of various feminist new materialist scholars on the potentialities of aqueous and fluid bodies, it explores how Ana and Mila—the protagonists of these films—conceive of water as a space where they can transcend their bodily limits. In this process, their experience with water gives rise to a transformation that floods and overflows the body, articulating new forms of fluid corporeality.

Key words
Body; Water; Fluid; Materiality; *The Water*, *Creatura*; Spanish cinema; Spanish women directors.

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CUERPOS DE AGUA: LECTURAS DE LA INUNDACIÓN Y EL DESBORDAMIENTO EN *EL AGUA* Y *CREATURA*

Resumen
Este artículo se propone analizar cómo el medio acuático se configura como un espacio de agenciamiento y transformación corporal para las protagonistas de *El Agua* (Elena López Riera, 2021) y *Creatura* (Elena Martín Gimeno, 2022). A partir de un análisis comparativo de ambas películas, y con el apoyo de diversas pensadoras que desde los nuevos materialismos feministas han teorizado sobre la potencialidad de un cuerpo acuoso y fluido, este texto examina cómo Ana y Mila —las protagonistas de estos films— conciben el agua como un espacio desde el que trascender sus propios límites corporales. En este proceso, la experiencia acuática da lugar a una transformación que las inunda y desborda, articulando nuevas formas de corporalidad fluida.

Palabras clave
Cuerpo; Agua; Fluido; Materialidad; *El Agua*, *Creatura*; Cine español; Mujeres directoras españolas.

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