

RESEARCH

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THE DECADENT IMAGE OF THE JOURNALIST IN PEDRO ALMODÓVAR CINEMA

La imagen decadente del periodista en el cine de Pedro Almodóvar

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ABSTRACT

Journalism and journalists play key roles in the cinema of Pedro Almodóvar. The director uses the character communicator with superficial presenters in most cases and occasionally precise serious informants. This study analyzes the presence of means of communication or journalists in his last 17 films and affects the prevalence of frivolity and satire before the camera as it is shown four emblematic titles to Ticos: *Distant Heels* (1991), *Kika* (1993) *Talk to her* (2002) and *Return* (2006). The data is extracted from the doctoral thesis *The journalists in the Spanish cinema (1942-2012)*, in which the professional and personal profile of the informers which appear as protagonists or secondary in Spanish films is analyzed during the seventy years².

KEY WORDS: journalism - cinema - Almodóvar - gender - villains.

RESUMEN

Periodismo y periodistas juegan papeles clave en el cine de Pedro Almodóvar. El director emplea el personaje del comunicador con superficiales presentadoras en la mayoría de los casos y alguna vez puntual serios informadores. Este estudio analiza la presencia de medios de comunicación o periodistas en sus últimas 17 películas e incide

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² The thesis in process *Reporters in Spanish cinema (1942-2012)* is a work in which the professional and personal profile of the reporters that appear as protagonists or secondary characters in the films produced in Spain during the last seventy years. Directed by Dr. Mercedes Miguel Borrás and Pablo Pérez López, includes cinematographic references from 1924 to 2013 with 220 films located. The database selected for the study focuses on 135 films seen from *The man who wanted to kill* (Rafael Gil, 1942) to *The spark of life* (Alex de la Iglesia, 2012).

en el predominio de la frivolidad y la sátira ante la cámara, como así lo demuestran cuatro títulos emblemáticos: *Tacones lejanos* (1991), *Kika* (1993), *Hable con ella* (2002) y *Volver* (2006). Los datos se extraen de la tesis doctoral *Los periodistas en el cine español (1942-2012)*, en la que se analiza el perfil profesional y personal de los informadores que aparecen como protagonistas o secundarios en las películas españolas durante los setenta años.

PALABRAS CLAVE: periodismo - cine - Almodóvar - género - villanos.

A IMAGEM DECADENTE DOS JORNALISTAS NO CINEMA DE PEDRO ALMODÓVAR

RESUME

Jornalismo e jornalistas jogam papeis chave no cinema de Pedro Almodóvar. O diretor emprega o personagem do comunicador com superficiais apresentadoras na maioria dos casos e alguma vez sérios informadores. Este estudo analisa a presença de meios de comunicação ou jornalistas em seus últimos 17 filmes e incide no predomínio da frivolidade e a sátira diante da câmara, como assim demonstra 4 títulos emblemáticos: *Tacones Lejanos* (1991), *Kika* (1993), *Hable com Ella* (2002) e *Volver* (2006). Os dados são extraídos da tese doutoral *Los periodistas en el cine español (1942-2012)*, na qual se analisa o perfil profissional e pessoal dos informadores que aparecem como protagonistas ou secundários nos filmes espanhóis durante os anos 70.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: jornalismo - cinema - Almodóvar - gênero - vilões.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Almodóvar cinema and its transcendence

Pedro Almodóvar Caballero (Calzada de Calatrava, Ciudad Real, 1949) is the film director, screenwriter and producer most acclaimed abroad with two Oscars, two Golden Globes five BAFTA awards, two awards at the Cannes Film Festival, six Goya

awards and four César awards³. In 1990 he won the National Prize of Cinematography, in 1998 the Gold Medal for Merits in Fine Arts, in 2006 the Prince of Asturias Award and in 2011 a star on the Walk of Fame in Madrid. The list of mentions and awards is innumerable, the last one of them the Lumière Prize for his career that he collected in Lyon in October 2014⁴.

His family emigrated to Extremadura when he was 8 years old and at 16 he went to Madrid to begin his cinematic studies and film, but he could not enroll in the Official Film School because Franco had just closed it. He bought his first camera Super 8 and got his first stable employment in the National Telephone Company, where he worked for 12 years as an administrative assistant. In the late 70s he began writing comics screenplays and collaborated in *underground* magazines such as *Star*, *El Víbora* or *Vibraciones* with stories and reflections. In 1972 he shot his first shorts and moved them through Madrid and Barcelona, tapes without sound and dubbed by himself during projections. Wrote or then a short novel called *Fire in the entrails* and a pornographic photonovel, *All yours*. He also collaborated with *El País* and *Diario 16* and for the magazine *La Luna* with the character Patty Diphusa. In the 80 he formed part of the theater group The Goliardos, a company with which he interpreted small roles and where he met his first film muse, Carmen Maura, protagonist of *Pepi, Luci, Bom and other ordinary girls* (1980), a film which resulted in a cinema hitherto unknown in Spain⁵.

Bursted in the cinematographic language with new proposals that manifested his unquestionable talent (Benet, 2012). After some work as an actor or writer, the film starring Carmen Maura and Alaska marked the beginning of the legend of the director from La Mancha "The unabashed combination of elements of *punk* culture or the most ancient melodrama, the ease with which scandalous affairs were stated and the tone of precariousness and improvisation that gave an undeniable freshness to the film, managed to reveal, still crude, the enormous expressive potential of his talent" (Benet, 2012, 358). All this in a brave and breakup speech pretended to demolish the taboos of the bourgeoisie, especially in sexual matters (Pérez and Hernández, 2000).

Soon he gave way to the most commercial cinema with *Labyrinth of Passion* (1982), a representation of the Madrid scene that marked the debut of Antonio Banderas, from Malaga, or *Among Darkness* (1983), in which he dealt with the theme of the religion, titles that confirmed his obsessions and creative style. "What interests me most from reality is, in addition to living it, is to develop all its suggestions. And that is what I do

³ En www.imdb.com. Retrieved on 15 de noviembre de 2014.

http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000264/awards?ref_=nm_ql_2

⁴ En www.todopedroalmodovar.blogspot.com Retrieved on 15 de noviembre of 2014.

<http://todopedroalmodovar.blogspot.com.es/>

⁵ En www.almodovarlandia.com. Retrieved on 15 de noviembre of 2014.

<http://www.almodovarlandia.com/espanyol/biography.htm>

both in the cinema and in my own life. I don't feel committed by success, but that I want to feel freer than ever" (Caparrós, 2007, 191).

What have I done to deserve this? (1984) supposed the opening to the European market. The *New York Times* newspaper rated this film a masterpiece and it was this film, starring his fetish actress Carmen Maura, which marked the popular recognition of the director. From this film starts this investigation that focuses on the last 17 titles of Pedro Almodóvar.

Some authors point to writer Truman Capote or artist Andy Warhol as referents of his work. "There is some chromium in its designs, with that very rich and very varied use red and blue with the fetishist decoration, but always popular with his vocation by the *freak*, the marginal, the urban and tribal. And always combined with the rural, the small town, with the ancestral culture of the 'grandmothers'. Between the two sides runs the biography of Almodóvar" (Orellana, 2004, 139-147). Others question his own expressive universe, such as the critic and historian José Enrique Monterde. "Almodovar has highlighted by his seemingly obsessive stylistic will, for having achieved even selling his films under the label of "a film by Pedro Almodóvar", a very rare aspect in our cinematography, for which he has not hesitated to design a character extended beyond the screen. But let's not fall in error: the position of director refers unambiguously to the characteristics of *kitsch*, that is, a stylistic forgery, to the constitution of a very cumbersome 'style', but that does not correspond to an expressive universe of its own" (Monterde, 1993, 146).

1.2. Heroes and villains, classic in the films with journalist

The close relationship between journalists and cinema has a long history in the American cinematography and also the Spanish case presents clear examples of communicators. Based on novels with committed journalists like *The Truth About Salvolta case* (Antonio Drove, 1978) or *Comanche Territory* (Gerardo Herrero, 1997), attempts to recover episodes in the recent history of Spain such as *Yoyes* (Helena Taberna, 2000), *GAL* (Miguel Courtois, 2006) or *23-F* (Chema de la Peña, 2011) or frivolous informants such as those collected by the cinema of Pedro Almodóvar or Alex de la Iglesia allow to accomplish this approach to the profile of the journalist.

Until the appearance of Internet, the cinema was the most influential means of mass communication together with the television. As the teacher, historian and cinematographic critic José María Caparrós Lera in his *Guidelines for the moviegoer*, the films communicate ideas and create a direct contact with society (Caparrós, 2007), which establishes a complete circle: filmmaker (emitter), film (connoted message), viewer (receiver) and society (context). Filmmakers, who are part of society, feed on their stories to extract themes for their new films and with their work they influence the

public, while they themselves are influenced by the context. Through the powerful means of communication which is the cinema, the audience “take intellectual contact with other human communities” (Caparrós, 2007: 30)⁶. The work presented, the group of journalists is the one that has a place in the Spanish cinema and creates an image that the society perceives.

Since the seventies, American and English literature raises the heroes and villains dichotomy in the films with journalists with authors such as Brian McNair, Alex Barris, Matthew C. Ehrlich and Howard Good.

In 2010, *Journalists in film. Heroes and Villains*, by Professor Brian McNair, raises the distinction of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ in the information. Among the heroes there are the “guard dogs”, first line witnesses of events, heroines and artists. Among the villains he distinguishes rascals, swindlers and 'king' makers. Moreover, McNair performs a count of films with journalists on the screens, about 2,166 in the United States from silent films to the year 1996 with small roles or as protagonists of the movie. For the author, the figure reflects the absolute presence of journalism in society and therefore also in the movies that reflect the daily life of societies.

The prevalence of journalism in these contexts Reflects the extent to which our contemporary societies are, in so many respects, 'mediated'. News media are the ever-present backdrop to both private and public life, part of the cultural furniture and ambient noise of our society. Cinema reflects this (McNair, 2010, 23).

The dichotomy heroes or villains also arises in more than one occasion in the book about journalism and cinema *Stop the presses! The newspaperman in American Films*, a work of Alex Barris published in 1976. It dedicates a wide space to the villains. He recalls that in the early decades of cinema the journalists appeared as “intelligent, brave, Quixotes” while with the passing of time they came to occupy less idealized roles.

In more recent years, as will be discussed later, the newsman has been subjected to sharper, less idealized, examination, and the verdict has not always been favorable (Barris, 1976, 180).

⁶ The cinema historian and critic José María Caparrós (1943) explains how the cinema is responsible for creating “human communities” and bring them to the great public through the screen. “How we would come to know the problems of the Brazilian peasants or the crisis of conscience of the youth of the countries of Eastern Europe if it had not been by the films of such cinematographies?”, The author asks himself. “There would have been no news of these facets of our world but for the 'selected' testimony of the film movements belonging to the so-called 'revolution of the new waves' of the sixties, namely the Brazilian Cinema Novo or the Cinema of the Thawing of the yesterday socialist world”. Caparrós is the author of half a hundred books on cinema and in 2007 received the commission to write this informative guideline about the viewer

Heroes captivate the public but also the villains get the support of the audience on the screen and the screenwriters do not waste this opportunity with classic titles for the American cinema. Barris analyzes from titles of the thirties such as *Scandal Sheet* (1931) to classics of the fifties such as *Ace in the Hole* (1951) with Kirk Douglas and Jan Sterling or *Sweet Smell of Success* (1957) and the odious columnist played by Burt Lancaster.

Also the professor at the University of Illinois (Chicago) Matthew C. Ehrlich presents the division of heroes and villains in the journalism portrayed in the cinema in 2006 in *Journalism in the movies*. He believes that the work of the press in American society must be to "uncover lies and serve democracy" and it is thus reflected in the film, although this task is degraded when the journalist chooses the wrong path and becomes a villain. It analyzes a number of films within a genre that has created characters and myths that are part of American culture.

Professor of journalism at New York University, Howard Good is the most prolific author in the relationship cinema and journalist and gives titles such as *Outcasts: The image of journalists in contemporary film* in 1989 and *Journalism Ethics goes to the movies* in 2008.

The first book is a review of the films with journalists and reminds that the writer Tom Wolfe, when he got his first job in a newspaper in 1957, thought about journalism as he had seen it portrayed on the screen. Heroes and villains intermingle in this analysis of the evolution of journalism. In *Journalism Ethics goes to the movies* he assures that the credibility of journalists was losing and in 1977 it was verified that the number of courses about journalist ethics tripled in universities and colleges in the US.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to analyze the presence of journalists in the cinema of Pedro Almodóvar. Once detected the characters, the description of their role or in both professional and private scope is made. The analysis of the character in his work allows us to detect whether it is a hero or a villain of journalism and the study of his behavior in his privacy gets to determine how his personality is and his habitual state of mind.

According to the background and theoretical description reflected in the former paragraphs, the investigation starts from the following hypothesis:

H1.- Pedro Almodóvar's films presents a decadent image of the journalist, with a clear stereotype of a villainous television presenter with certain personal and professional characteristics. Through the films studied, it can be established a double analysis in which on one hand it affects the portrait of the profession with

cold women and moved by the success of audience and on the other hand the portrait of the personality with melancholic and unstable women.

H2.- The villain journalists presented in the cinema of Almodóvar are framed in films with implausible stories with tales nearer to fiction and satire.

H3.- The journalist presented in the cinema of Almodóvar does not hold positions of responsibility and the issues to which he is dedicated are related to entertainment and events.

H4.- The decisive presence of women in the Spanish screens as journalists starting from the decade of the 90s comes accompanied by the increase of cases of frivolity, so the prejudice that the films make to the image of the reporter can be detected. In the case of the cinema of Almodóvar, this general rule for the Spanish cinema is also present.

Para alcanzar los objetivos propuestos y comprobar las hipótesis expuestas, junto con una actualizada bibliografía, se contó como fuente fundamental con la producción cinematográfica de Pedro Almodóvar.

3. METHODOLOGY

The last 17 films as a director were located; from *What have I done to deserve this?* (1984), a film that marked the international launch of the creator, to his latest work, *The transient lovers* (2013). In viewing the 17 feature films it was detected that in all of them means of communication or an informer appears. A selection was carried out with those titles where the reporter is shown with a strong role, either as protagonist or secondary in the cast but with weight in the plot.

List of movies:

1. *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* (1984)
2. *Matador* (1986)
3. *Law of Desire* (1987)
4. *Women on the Edge of a Nervous Breakdown* (1988)
5. *Tie Me!* (1990)
6. *Faraway Heels* (1991)
7. *Kika* (1993)
8. *The Flower of My Secret* (1995)
9. *Trembling Flesh* (1997)
10. *All About My Mother* (1999)
11. *Talk to Her* (2002)
12. *Bad Education* (2004)
13. *Back* (2006)
14. *Broken Embraces* (2009)
15. *The Skin I Live in* (2011)

16. *Passenger Lovers* (2013)

17. *Juliet* (2015)

In the first phase of the study quantitative methods are used with the definition or demarcation of the sample to reach a general filmography with 17 titles and a specific filmography with 5 titles analyzed by finding journalists that were protagonists or secondaries.

And in a second phase, once it achieved an adequate number of films on which to work the proper model of an analysis of content starts to check the hypothesis. Already detected the leading and supporting protagonists with five films and six journalists, it is proceeded to establish a new filter starting from the dichotomic category of heroes or villains, with which the sample is reduced to 4 reporters, presented by chronological order. The other two journalists do not conform to the categories of heroes or villains since they do not show characteristics to frame them in one of the two.

In a third phase the five films are collected again and the six journalists, also in chronological order, to delimit the psychological portrait of the character. The filter leaves out two people who not appear defined enough to establish the characteristics of his personality.

The five films that pass to phases two and three require a thorough study with several viewings, from 2 to 5.

4. RESULTADOS

4.1. Presence of media or reporters in the 17 analyzed movies

Its film story integrates "as a pastiche, the constants of late Franco's counterculture such as the comic, the anti-establishment rock, the pop, drugs, Super-8 and the punk, in addition to elements openly kitsch like zarzuela, photoromance and advertising" (Pérez and Hernández, 2000, 220). The media also ask for their place in that 'pastiche' and soon begin to be a basic element in newspapers, on the radio and television.

In *Pepi, Luci and Bom and Other Run-of-the-mill Girls* (1980), the movie starring Carmen Maura and Alaska already had a media. The TV accompanies the action for a few seconds with the voice of a presenter and two commentators who talk about summer activities, allowing us to locate the action in this season of the year (00:37:10).

The man from La Mancha discovers the appeal that journalists can arouse through the screen and media resources are frequent in their movies. In addition to the defined characters of communicators that can be found in the five movies *Faraway Heels* (1991),

Kika (1993), *The Flower of My Secret* (1995) *Talk to Her* (2002) and *Back* (2006), snippets can be found in their origins.

In the other 11 cases, the presence of media is repeated at any precise moment of the plot to provide data on the story, to briefly present what has happened or will happen and sometimes only as backing to provide ambient sound. The information is often related to events and communicators do not escape satire and morbid fascination, so the decadent image of the press is maintained also in the fleeting appearances in the press.

In *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* (1984), the TV set plays in the background in the living room with a report on the growth of the population and the need to take measures of birth control, information in which the voices of a journalist and the testimonies of women on the street about the use of contraceptives interleave (00:09:30). Also a newspaper page with the headline 'Ingrid M has committed suicide' is what makes it possible to communicate this news to the spectators (01:19:15). Although not doing any informative work, in the aforementioned movie appears a journalist, Lucas (Gonzalo Suárez): "I'm a writer, a journalist ... I do a little bit of everything" (00:08:00)

Matador (1986) shows a presenter in a newscast with the event of a rape and four murders, news that serves to introduce Ángel Jiménez and his lawyer María Cardenal, the protagonists of the movie (00: 29:30). Besides, there is a journalist (Verónica Forqué) on the backstage at a fashion show to interview the designer. She bursts with a cassette recorder while a model is being made up and the designer (Pedro Almodóvar) is monitoring preparations. She chews gum vulgarly and repeats "how interesting" or "how pretty" after the answers of the interviewee, what makes us think about her shortage of words. "Are you Francisco Montesinos? It's just that I want to interview you". He ignores her and follows on his own while the young woman pursues him. "I won't distract you at all, it's just a minute", she insists, making her way between models, makeup artists and hairdressers. In the middle of this interview on the move among the people, the designer addresses some models who are injecting some substance, "How many times do I have to tell you not to shoot up in the dressing room?" Faced with this juicy scene, the journalist brings the recorder closer to the designer while shouting the question and she right away brings it closer to the models, waiting for a succulent statement (00:43:00).

In *Law of Desire* (1987), there is an anonymous press release with three journalists, two women and one man, the latter with a camera, who address the director, Pablo, and the actress, Tina, after the successful premiere of a movie. The harmless initial questions about the content of the work and their next projects end with a controversy as the lesbianism of the actress is questioned (00:06:40). It also includes a hostess of a television program (Rosy de Palma) that interviews the protagonist of the movie, a theater

director who just released a play, a meeting marked by the ridiculous infatuation of the reporter who, spellbound, addresses the interviewee (00:40:00).

Women on the Edge of a Nervous Breakdown (1988) contains a report that opens the 20.30 news in which it is announced that an armed Shiite group has been captured, an event that determines part of the plot since one of the members of the terrorist group has lived together with one of the women in the film. Again as a satire, the news hostess is an older woman who reads the news to the camera and, in the middle of her speech, she stops to drink water (00:24:40).

Tie Me! (1990) has a journalist with a cassette recorder in hand who sneaks into the shooting of a movie to interview the director. The questions and answers of the lead actress of that movie within the movie allow us to know fundamental data. Between seemingly innocent questions by a journalist without malice, there is an impertinent question that angers the director: "How come you chose a porn actress with a reputation as a junkie?" (00:10:30).

Trembling Flesh (1997) begins with a voice on the radio in the rooming house in which the protagonist's mother is about to give birth. The announcer talks about governmental measures "to defend peace and progress in Spain", allowing us to place the action in 1970 and next giving a 22-year-elapsing jump in the film story. Before, the NODE also announces the subsequent birth of Víctor on an urban bus and his mother already in the hospital with Madrid authorities (00:09:00). Again the television plays a key role with sports news showing one of the protagonists as champion at the Paralympics in Barcelona 1992, at which point it is revealed that policeman David de Paz is on a wheelchair and, in addition, he is married to the former girlfriend of Víctor (00:27:15).

In *All About My Mother* (1999), there is only one reference to a media when actress Huma justifies her absence because she has been on television, supposedly in an interview (00:49: 00). In *Bad Education* or *n* (2004), Ignacio's brother threatens the priest to pass the story of pederasty in a biographical short story written by his brother in which the priest appears to a journalist from *Diario 16*. "I have a friend, a pig, which is interested in publishing this story, but first I want you to give me your opinion because, in addition to being the literature teacher of Ignacio, you are one of the protagonists" (00:25:20). The movie starts with Ignacio's friend, a film director, cutting events from newspapers that serve him as inspiration for new scripts, in this case, the story of a motorcyclist who died frozen and, nevertheless, travelled 90 kilometers on his motorcycle though he was already dead (00:01:20).

In *Broken Embraces* (2009) the press has its relevance as well since twice the clippings from the newspaper *El País* serve to provide information: 'Ernesto Martel passes away',

those about a friend of the blind film director (00:02:40), and 'the premiere of *Girls and Suitcases* convenes the world of the cinema and politics, the director and the actress read while staying on Lanzarote Beach (01:18:40). *The Skin I Live in* (2011), a newscast presents one of the characters when he recounts the story of a heist to Bulgari jewelry in Madrid perpetrated by this individual. In *Passenger Lovers* (2013), again is a clipping, in this case from *La Vanguardia*, which includes a story that is behind part of the plot. 'Guardian Bank: n or imminent intervention'. It appears on one occasion at the beginning of the movie, when the president of the bank himself is the one who reads the news on the plane or n (TC: 00:02:00), and at another time it is one of the pilots who retakes the headline of the press (TC: 00:55:00). In *Juliet* (2016), the media gradually and timely report on several moments of the plot with the disappearance or n Antía, who he has not seen or known about for years. Bea tells him she saw Antía.

4.2. Villainesses on television and serious reporters in the press

In addition to s brushstrokes of media and journalists in their filmography of the twelve previous movies, there are four women that show their lack of ethic to the camera in *Faraway Heels* (1991) *Kika* (1993), *Talk to Her* (2002) and *Back* (2006) and two press reporters in *The Flower of My Secret* (1995) and again *Talk to Her* (2002). Rebecca (Victoria Abril) is the protagonist of *Faraway Heels* that shows a newscast on a television, a space that allows her to confess to all the viewers that she has murdered her husband. Andrea Caracortada (again Victoria Abril) is in *Kika* the presenter of a sensationalist program of rugged events with a high audience. In *Talk to Her* appears a morbid presenter (Loles León) to interview the bullfighter Lydia live on television and stage a show. *Back* includes the television program *Wherever You Are* with a persuasive presenter (Yolanda Ramos) in which a woman expounds the day to day of the mysterious disappearance of her mother.

a) Rebecca in *Faraway Heels* (1991)

The main role for a journalist in the movies by the man from La Mancha comes with *Rebeca* (Victoria Abril), the protagonist of *Faraway Heels* (1991)⁷. Being in charge of conducting a newscast live on television, the sophisticated woman tells the television viewers that she has killed her husband.

Rebecca's work as a journalist is rarely shown since the movie focuses primarily on the personal relationships of the characters. Her life is marked by her mother, an artist who is also called Rebeca, whose stage name is Becky del Páramo, who leaves her in Spain to succeed in Mexico when the protagonist is just a little girl. The story is located

⁷ Script: Pedro Almodóvar. Producer: El Deseo SA and Ciby 2000. Release date: October 23, 1991. Spectators: 2.072.921. Box office receipts: 45,234,098 euros. Actual rating: age older than 18. Duration: 113 minutes. Gender: melodrama, comedy. (Source: www.mcu.es Database of qualified movies)

in the days mother and daughter spend in Madrid when the artist returns from Mexico and, once in Spain, she dies shortly afterwards since she suffers from angina pectoris, an ailment she had not told about to her daughter so as not to emotionally blackmail her. Once in Madrid, she discovers that her daughter is married to the man who was her lover when she moved to America about twenty years before and whom she had not seen for fifteen years.

Rebeca is a serious, sad, almost always distressed and emotionally unbalanced woman, she spends half the movie crying. She has a big dependence on her mother, although she has not spent much of her childhood with her. The importance she gives to her mother and the fact of having shared the same man leads her to be jealous of her and to confront her on several occasions. Very reserved, she does not admit that the popularity of the mother affects her.

The first time that Rebeca appears on television is on the screen next to the deaf language translator. A grotesque situation occurs because she has a fit of laughter despite being talking about very serious matters, all because she got nervous at the thought that her mother was watching the news (00:16:40).

Her life is a contradiction, she is capable of inventing a story before the judge in order not to be blamed for the murder of her husband but, afterwards, she tells to the camera with great detail how she killed him. It is precisely in her second appearance to the camera when he confesses the murder of her husband to the audience (00:47:23).

Rebeca: (crying) I don't know what I did with the gun. I must have dropped it somewhere. I don't remember what happened after. I only remember that I went back home and, once there, everything came over me. I couldn't call anybody to relieve myself, I didn't know what to do. I just knew I wouldn't see Manuel again and I that hurt me very much. I don't know how I suddenly decided to fight against that anguish: I picked up a camera and started to photograph the memories of our life in common. I photographed the table in his study, with papers as he had arranged them the last time, his gym bag, the bed, her robe, the closet with his costumes (she lists them while showing the photos to the camera), the rocking chair where he used to see me while watching television. I even photographed a couple of precious sheets I had bought some days before and we would no longer share. It was then that I realized I was alone and, by killing Manuel, I had not killed my love for him.

Policeman: Miss, Do you mind accompanying us?

Rebecca: Wait a moment, please, I have not finished yet. That's it for now. We remind you that at 8.30 pm, in the second edition of 'News', you can see this and other news that will gradually come to our newsroom. Until that moment and as always ... thanks for your company...

The relationship with her mother marks each action of Rebeca. After emotional talks with each other, it seems that the journalist attains peace when she addresses her mother once she leaves jail, through a letter that her mother reads before going on stage: "Mom, I'm already out. Forgive me for the scene yesterday. Tonight I have things to do but tomorrow, if you do not mind, I'd like to see you and hug you and say I love you and we still have time. I adore you, your little Rebeca" (1:27:50). Shortly after, Becky suffers a heart attack on stage and, already in her deathbed; mother and daughter contrive to make it look like it was Becky who killed Manuel, a bizarre story of lies that puts Rebeca on the side of the villainesses.

b) Andrea in *Kika* (1993)

Andrea Caracortada (Victoria Abril) is in *Kika* (1993)⁸ the hostess of a sensationalistic program with high audience called *The Worst of the Day*. In her rare appearances without being characterized for her program, she looks like a normal woman, but when appearing as a journalist, she is an unreal, grotesque character who is used in this movie to satirize yellow journalism. She verges on madness and, in the last interview she tries to make, she dies for getting some words from the murderer Nicholas, who eventually kills himself.

She is introduced into the plot of the movie because she is the ex-wife of Ramón, the current husband of Kika, and she still lives constantly attentive to him. She also has a relationship with the father of Ramón, Nicholas, a famous writer whom she proposes to write some scripts for her program.

The same hostess records the reports with a camera embedded in a kind of helmet that she wears and light bulbs on her breasts to illuminate what she takes photos of. With costumes designed by Gautier, Andrea Caracortada has an unusual look with her equipment when she is on the street and also with her gothic flashy dresses in the set of the program.

Her caricatured character makes Andrea a cold, robotic woman in front of and behind the camera, unfeeling when facing the interviewees sometimes deranged because she cannot get over her breaking up with Ramón. She is intelligent, as her quickness to improvise questions or react to the monitor shows and she dominates the television, with an ability to stand on the top of the ratings.

If her physique is striking, her interventions are no less provocative. She first appears in the television set, at which time the tone of her information is already detected. «A

⁸ Script: Pedro Almodóvar. Producer: El Deseo SA and Ciby 2000. Release date: October 25, 1993. Spectators: 1.037.808. Box office receipts: 3,038,616 euros. Rating: age older than 18. Duration: 114 minutes. Gender: comedy. (Source: www.mcu.es Database of qualified movies).

woman is burned Bonze-like in the office of a manager of the BVB bank after they denied her a loan of 800,000 pesetas. Prosecuted for indecent assault, a member of the Court of Seville Archbishopric. Juana T. denounced she had been subjected to degrading propositions, between quotation marks, when she went to request her marriage annulment. A.R.A-Artillery commander kills his wife and then commits suicide». After her words, she gives way to some images in which Andrea Caracortada approaches a woman who goes to visit a grave (00:18:03).

Andrea: Excuse me, ¿what were the reasons of your daughter for committing suicide?

Woman: Leave me alone, please.

Andrea: Was the child happy? How was the family atmosphere?

Woman: How do you want it to be? A hell because of my husband. A year ago he abused her.

Andrea: And didn't you denounce him?

Woman: We wanted him to leave, to leave us alone, to stop making our life hell. We are going through the formalities of separation. What are you doing here? (She shouts at her husband who is in front of her and he, without saying a word, fires three shots and kills his wife before Andrea's camera and flees).

The morbid fascination of each story surpasses the previous one. She next appears at the mansion of Nicholas and Ramón because she wants this location to shoot planes. She explains to her former father-in-law that she is no longer a psychologist, that she has a television program where "she is surrounded by madmen... and delighted". "What interests me is the lot. The story I want to shoot is based on a married couple that killed ten people and buried them discreetly in their garden without anyone seeing" (TC: 00:24:20).

On another occasion, she appears again on the set with another thorny issue. "This week our popular section or n '*Bloody Ceremonies*' has had the pleasure of travelling to Villaverde de los Ojos, where, as every year, the procession of 'The picaos'" is held, she shows images of penitents whipping themselves and sticking picks in their backs until they bleed. "Among the secret group of masked penitents was Pablo Méndez, better known by his stage name, Paul Bazzo. Do you remember Tailtherapy and *Make Love and Not War?*", she says looking at a non-existing public. "That's Paul Bazzo. The famous porn actor was serving a sentence in prison for various crimes against public health. The prison authorities had granted him permission for one day so that he could fulfill a promise to the Virgin of his town. So, once masked, Paul took advantage or the procession to escape. Given the limited intelligence quotient of the famous porn actor, an ex-boxer and ex-legionnaire, it is assumed that his freedom will last little" (TC: 00:25:11).

In her fourth report, she plunges into Kika's house, who has been raped by Paul Bazzo. In the presence of the two agents, who embody police worthlessness, she

approaches Kika, when you can see again the persuasion of Andrea to achieve her objectives, her obsession to capture a statement and an image that is repeated in the final scene of the movie when she dies. A race to achieve sleaze and audience that places Andrea among the most villainous women on television.

c) The gossip hostess in *Talk to Her* (2002)

In *Talk to Her* (2002)⁹, the Argentine journalist who has a relationship with the bullfighter Lydia has a more leading role in this work, but there is also a case of a morbid presenter (Loles León), who interviews the bullfighter live to put up a show.

The journalist and the bullfighter engage in an argument in the set. The interviewee reproaches the journalist that he has not fulfilled the commitment agreed at the time of closing his appearance on television, in which it is assumed that what was going to be dealt with would be the fact that the bullfighter was going to stand in a bullring with six bulls (00:07:40).

Lydia: I warned you in the dressing room that I was not going to discuss this issue.

Journalist: But talking is good, woman. And talking about problems is the first step to overcome them (while caressing the arm of the interviewee) ... because the Child of Valencia...

Lydia: Wow...

Reporter: Lydia, darling, don't be ordinary ... let me finish the question...

Lydia: I warned you in the dressing room that I don't want to discuss this issue.

Journalist: In the dressing room you didn't warn me anything. And I don't like you to say those things because people may think that we agreed terms for covenanted interviews. And I don't agree terms for anything. I only interview live. I'm of the few people who dare to interview live (as he forcibly grab Lydia's arm and forces her to sit again after an attempt to get up to leave), as well as you should dare to recognize you've been pimped because the Child of Valencia has been pimping you. A man who has shared with you not only fame and bullring but also the bed. He's got rid of you when it's been good for him.

A classic by Almodóvar that is repeated: presenters without any scruples and able to cause the most strained situations on TV, as in the case of the hostess of this television show in which Lydia participates.

⁹ Script: Pedro Almodóvar. Producer: El Deseo SA Release date: March 15, 2002. Spectators: 1,367,450. Box office receipts: 6,208,691 euros. Rating: age older than 13. Duration: 109 minutes. Gender: drama. (Source: www.mcu.es Database of qualified movies).

d) The morbid journalist in *Back* (2006)

Back (2006)¹⁰ includes a television program in which a woman talks about the day-to-day disappearance of her mother in a village in Castilla La Mancha. Her relatives say that this woman has earned so much money by appearing from TV set to set that she has been able to make a down payment on an apartment in Madrid. The program shows when the other daughter of the missing mother goes on stage and timidly sits on the couch to this program of testimony. Behind her, the r or title *Wherever you are*, the title of the TV program. She is suffering from a terminal cancer and has been offered treatment in Houston if confides the disappearance or n of his mother. The interview starts with presenter standing in front of her with an arrogant and cold voice, without showing a hint of emotion about the subject (1:26:58).

Presenter: I referred to you explaining to me what you told our editor. You've told her something very important about this lady and her husband that relate her to the disappearance of your mother. Is it true or not, Agustina?

Agustina: I'd rather not talk about it, they were assumptions of mine.

Presenter: Yeah, but the fact is that you've come to talk about that lady and your mother, eh?

Agustina: Yeah, but I've thought better.

Presenter: What's the matter? I don't see you comfortable, you're a little nervous (she sits beside Agustina on the couch). I'd like to say Agustina has come here also to explain to us that she's been diagnosed with a fatal disease, isn't it?

Agustina: Yes (very shyly)

Presenter: You have cancer, Agustina, but you shouldn't be nervous, you are among friends. Come on, a loud applause for Agustina (applause). Agustina has a wish; it is to go to a clinic in Houston. But, in order to go to Houston, you have to speak clearly. I remind you that you have committed yourself with this chain (Agustina leaves) Agustina Agustina!

The ethic-lacking presenter that Almodóvar presented in other movies is repeated in *Back* with this woman who clearly becomes a villainess on television.

e) Serious journalists in *The Flower of My Secret* (1995) and *Talk to Her* (2002)

Opposing these four villainesses are two men who practice serious journalism in the traditional press. Ángel (Juan Echanove) is responsible for the section of Culture in *El*

¹⁰ Script: Pedro Almodóvar. Producer: El Deseo SA Release date: March 16, 2006. Spectators: 1,931,060. Box office receipts: 10,243,082 euros. Rating: age older than 13. Duration: 125 minutes. Gender: dramatic comedy. (Source: www.mcu.es Database of qualified movies)

País in the movie *The Flower of My Secret* (1995)¹¹. The writer Leo, the protagonist of the movie, asks him for a job and soon the journalist admires and is infatuated with her, as he falls for the interesting personality of the writer.

The melancholic Marco Zuloaga (Darío Grandinetti in *Talk to Her* (2002) is an Argentine journalist who devotes himself to writing tourist guides and collaborates with the supplement *El Dominical* in *El País*. He meets the bullfighter Lydia González because he intends to make a report for the weekend supplement because she is one of the few women dedicated to bullfighting and eventually falls in love with her. Shortly afterwards, the woman is seriously injured and falls into a coma, which causes a great commotion on the journalist.

Although, in both cases, the profession occupies the background, the two persons are plausible, with some serious work in prominent newspapers.

4.3. General characteristic: melancholic

Out of the six journalists analyzed in the five movies, four of them make clear, via the screen, their melancholy.

Rebecca (Victoria Abril) in *Faraway Heels* (1991) is a sensitive woman who has a great dependence on her mother, although she has not spent much of her childhood with her. The fact of having shared the same man leads her to be jealous of her mother and to face her on several occasions. One of the most emotive encounters and in which the strong bond is detected occurs when, after some time without seeing each other, the judge gets Rebecca out of jail a few hours to talk to her progenitor (01:15:16):

Becky: Why did you do it?

Rebecca: I didn't kill him, mom.

Becky: But to you herself confessed, nobody forced you.

Rebecca: Killing him would have been legitimate but, as you didn't even allow me that, my only revenge has been to admit it, even if it was a lie.

Becky: Why are you tormenting me, Rebecca? Is it for having slept with him? Is that why?

Rebecca: Don't talk nonsense. You were not the only one (almost shouting).

Becky: Then? (While feeling downcast)

Rebecca: Have you seen *Autumn Sonata*? It's the story of a famous pianist who has a very mediocre daughter. A story like ours. One day, the mother goes to visit

¹¹ Script: Pedro Almodóvar. Producer: El Deseo SA Release date: September 20, 1995. Spectators: 981,750. Box office receipts: 3,196,999 euros. Rating: age older than 13. Duration: 103 minutes. Gender: drama. (Source: www.mcu.es Database of qualified movies)

her daughter, already married, who is also fond of playing the piano. After eating, the mother asks her daughter to play something for her. The daughter finds herself in a predicament... But at the insistence of her mother, she agrees. And very nervously she plays a prelude by Chopin. When it's over, her mother tells her she has done very well, but she can't not help sitting at the piano herself and giving her some advice. And there is nothing more humiliating for the child than hearing those tips!

Always anxious and in a continuous contradiction, she is capable of inventing before the judge a story in order not to blame herself for the murder of her husband but, afterwards, she tells to the television camera, with all kinds of details, how she did away with his life.

The presenter Andrea Caracortada (Victoria Abril) in *Kika* (Pedro Almodóvar, 1993) is introduced into the plot of the movie because she is the ex-wife of Ramón, the current husband of Kika, and she still devotes her constant attention to him. She also has a relationship with Ramón's father who kills him later, Nicholas, a famous writer to whom she proposes to write a few scripts for her program. Her bond with this family is what destabilizes the peculiar journalist. Her meeting with her ex-husband Ramón occurs when she goes to their house to film some shots (00:25:57):

Ramón: Andrea, what are you doing here?

Andrea: I've come to see the house; I'd like to rent it.

Ramón: It's for sale, not for rent.

Andrea: I thought that, while you were waiting for a buyer, you wouldn't mind earning some money.

Ramón: Well, you thought badly. Bye, Andrea.

Andrea: Ramón, would you come with me just a moment to the gate? I'd like to talk to you.

Ramón: No, you know the way.

Andrea: Goodbye, Nicholas, I was glad to see you.

Nicholas: Goodbye (while she leaves).

Ramón: When the hell will she leave me alone.

Nicholas: You shouldn't mistreat her. Some women like it.

Ramón: I never mistreated her. I just ran away from her.

Nicholas: And the scar? Andrea says that you made it.

Ramón: I? She did it herself. She started to cut her face to keep me from leaving her.

Nicholas: Interesting girl.

Sadness permeates, therefore, the character of robotic Andrea, unfeeling when dealing with interviewees and sometimes deranged because she cannot get over her breaking up with Ramón.

Ángel (Juan Echanove) in *The Flower of My Secret* (1995) suffers the harsh conquest of writer Leo, a difficult way making the tender and nice journalist unhappy at times because he is aware that his love is not returned (00:45:20).

Ángel: Tomorrow there is a shouting contest in Colmenar de Oreja. You have to come. You're going to have a lot of fun.

Leo: No, I can't.

Ángel: Maybe you prefer a demonstration? There is one of medical students that is very fun. You could write an article about it.

Leo: Tomorrow I have a lot to do, my husband comes back from a trip.

Ángel: Ah, there is a husband. I knew that there was something between us, a gulf between the two, as Amanda Gris would put it.

Leo: This reminds me of 'The Apartment', by Billy Wilder (she says so while watching the wording).

Ángel: Me too. Since, in that movie, Shirley Maclaine falls in love with a person with whom she thought she was in love, not with whom she was truly in love, but someone else.

Leo: Look, Ángel, unfortunately I'm in love with the person I believe I'm in love with.

The following conversation between them occurs in the apartment of Ángel after meeting Leo in a Health demonstration and taking her home totally beside herself due to her heavily drinking. When she wakes up, he has prepared a full breakfast with a red rose. The woman is in a full personal crisis because she has been abandoned by her husband and does not take an interest in the journalist at all. She decides to retire to her town for a while to calm her nerves and is called by Ángel that confesses he has written novels with the penname Amanda Gris to fulfill the contract and prevent a demand from the publisher. When they return, they agree to go to a flamenco show. Love leads him to do silly things such as kicking the garbage on the city streets or dancing and singing at night, a joy resulting from drinking and from his emotion for being with the person he loves, a happiness that is not clear at all because he knows that Leo is not in love (1:27:15).

Ángel: Is something wrong?

Leo: No, nothing.

Ángel: No, not nothing. In the dressing room you were besotted and now you're about to start crying. Is my company so unpleasant?

Leo: You have reminded me of Paco. We went to Athens three years ago. It is not like Madrid, there are almost no bars. We were walking down the street alone and Paco found some cardboard boxes and began to play soccer like you are doing now. He looked like a child ñ o. It's the only happy memory I have of that trip.

Ángel: It's categorically forbidden to play soccer. From now on, only ballet. If the spinning tops dance, I can also dance (he starts dancing and stamping his heels until he falls down and she helps him up).

(...)

Leo: Come, Ángel, I'll take you home, you're drunk.

Ángel: Stay with me.

Leo: No, I have to go home.

Ángel: Alone?

Leo: Yes.

Ángel: How strong you've become. I liked you more when you were frail.

In the end, it is she who goes to Ángel's home and they sit, one on each rocking chair, in front of the fireplace. Although she has given up alcohol, that night she accepted a glass to toast with Ángel and they kiss for the first time, at which ends the movie finishes with the bittersweet taste of unrequited love.

No less melancholic is the condition of Marco Zuloaga (Darío Grandinetti) in *Talk to Her* (2002). When he talks to the nurse Benigno about the possibility of Lydia listening to the people around her in the hospital bed while she remains in a coma, he is skeptical and sorry (00:54:40).

Marco: I'm not even able to touch her, I don't recognize her body. I'm unable even to help nurses to turn her around in bed. And I feel very mean.

Benigno: Talk to her, tell her.

Marco: Yes, I'd like to, but she can't hear me.

Benigno: How are you so sure that she doesn't hear us?

Marco: Because her brain is off, Benigno.

(He returns later)

Benigno: Have you talked to her?

Marco: No, and don't insist...

Benigno: Bye Lydia, you have to be very patient with him (he tells Lydia).

Sensitive, crying several times along the movie. The first sighting of the journalist takes place in a theater while he sees a contemporary dance and cries due to the emotion the show conveys to him. He also weeps when he kills a snake in Lydia's house because it reminded him of his ex-wife, who suffered from a phobia about reptiles and whom he has not forgotten yet. His sensitivity and kindness lead him to be stuck to Lydia's bed for two months, suffering for her, until he learns that, one month before falling into a coma, she had made up with her boyfriend. He also sympathizes and goes to comfort the nurse Benigno in jail, charged with raping and impregnating Alicia while in coma.

5. DISCUSSION

The studied movies allow us to establish a theoretical discussion based on the hypotheses formulated at the beginning of this text. The first of the assumptions put forward is verified since the films by Pedro Almodóvar show a negative and decadent picture of the journalist, with a clear stereotype of a villainess television presenter, with personal and professional characteristics. The four journalists analyzed in *Faraway Heels* (1991), *Kika* (1993) *Talk to Her* (2002) and *Back* (2006) are cold women without any scruples. While, in the first of the mentioned movies, emotional imbalance seems to be what leads the journalist to lie and become a villainess, in the other three films the reporter move to get audience. The analysis of the latest 17 movies by Almodóvar lets us go further on and it is observed that, already in the origins of his films, the first signs of villainess journalists with a morbid tendency appear in *Bullfighter* (1986) and *Tie Me!* (1990).

Having established the predominance of the villain in the profession, the second part of the first hypothesis stops in the privacy of reporters and melancholy is perceived to be a common rule. While the in-process thesis *Reporters in the Spanish Cinema* (1942-2012), from which this piece of research starts, concludes that more than half of reporters portrayed by the cinema are sad and collects the reasons, in the case of Almodóvar this trend is seen as well with Rebeca in *Faraway Heels* (1991), this woman being unhinged by the relationship with her mother, Andrea in *Kika* (1993) for the failure of her relationship as a couple, and Ángel in *The Flower of My Secret* (1995) and Marco in *Talk to Her* (2002) also cornered by their complicated relationships.

Also the second of the hypotheses is reflected emphatically. The villainous journalists shown in the movies by Almodóvar are framed within movies with unlikely stories and excessive satire, with characters that are impossible to find in real life. It is not credible that a news presenter confesses a murder before the camera as in the case of Rebeca in *Faraway Heels* (1991) or that a journalist goes to record the most truculent events with a camera embedded in a kind of helmet and dressed in gaudy Gautier costumes as in the case of Andrea Caracortada in *Kika* (1993). Also exaggerated in their physical appearance and in their misconduct are the two presenters of *Talk to Her* (2002) and *Back* (2006), reporters seeking to ridicule sensational journalism and improbable to be found in current television programs.

As for hypothesis three, the journalists actually shown in the cinema by Almodóvar do not hold an important position and the issues they deal with are related to entertainment and events. This is so in these four cases. Rebecca in *Faraway Heels* (1991) is responsible for presenting a newscast of a general content but, in this case, the news she relates is an event. Andrea in *Kika* (1993) focuses on the most thorny events. The presenter in *Talk to Her* (2002) deals with rose issues and the one in *Back* (2006) engages

in events again. The other two male journalists we analyzed dedicate themselves to entertainment as well, with Ángel in *The Flower of My Secret* (1995) as head of the section of Culture in *El País* and Marco in *Talk to Her* (2002) that writes for tourist guides and reports for *El Dominical* in *El País*. In addition, it is checked that the other 11 analyzed movies show reporters or news always related to entertainment, especially cultural issues and events.

The fourth hypothesis is contrasted as well. The decisive presence of women as journalists in the Spanish screen since the 1990s does not benefit female reporters, with a tendency to roles in which they are frivolous and morbid. In the case of the movies by Almodóvar, this general rule for the Spanish cinema is also present. According to data from the in-process thesis *The Journalist in the Spanish cinema (1942-2012)* that sustain this study, while from the 1940s to the 1980s male journalists accounted for 70% the analyzed movies, in the 1990s a turn towards equality began to take place and, in the latest 22 years we studied, corresponding to 93 movies, 40% of movies show men while 47% include women. The rest, 10 movies, show both sexes sharing space. In addition, since the 1990s, 50% of women are shown in frivolous television programs, about 30% in serious publications and the rest on serious television or radio. As to men, 51% work in respected publications and 22% in frivolous television programs and, as in the case of women, the rest on serious television or radio.

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