

Abstract

While much has been written about Spanish cinema in academic circles over the last twenty years, comparatively little attention has been directed at films by and about women. There has been even less research on women's cinematic representation of history and socio-political issues in Spain. Although individual films dealing with this issue have been analysed, mainly in journal articles or as part of a collection of essays, as far as I am aware, there have been no substantial studies providing an in-depth analysis of films on this subject by exclusively Spanish female directors in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Due to the fact that only a small percentage of all Spanish feature films directors are female, this study claims that women's experiences of the Spanish Civil War, Franco's dictatorship and the Transition period have been under-represented in front of and, especially, behind the camera. However, a cohort of women directing in the 2000s explore these episodes of Spanish history in their films. Intersecting with three different fields –history, cinema and gender studies– this thesis examines the diverse representations of these women filmmakers in order to gauge the contributions of their films in recovering Spain's historical memory and shaping a collective national identity.

Chapter One provides a historical overview of women directors' role and evolution in the Spanish film industry, concluding with an assessment of their challenges and achievements in the twenty-first century. Chapter Two constitutes the historical and theoretical framework that contextualises the films' subject of study through a revision of Spain's politics of memory and its influence on the construction of a national identity.

Over four more chapters, the textual analysis of eight films, including fiction films and documentaries, places a special emphasis on the role that memory, identity

and female subjectivity play in the selected films by contrasting an eclectic array of female fictional characters as well as eye-witnesses. Chapter Three analyses the only two women-authored films set in the Spanish Civil War: *La buena nueva* (Taberna, 2008) and *Iris* (Vergés, 2004). The different generational approaches to remembrance of the Civil War and the intergenerational transmission of such memory are addressed in the melodrama *Para que no me olvides* (Ferreira, 2005) and the documentary *Nadar* (Subirana, 2008). Chapter Five examines the personal style in Koska's documentaries *Mujeres en pie de guerra* (2004) and *Vindicación* (2009), which portray women's overlooked involvement in war conflicts and politics. Chapter Six analyses the use of documentary interviews within the films *Señora de* (Ferreira, 2009) and *El tren de la memoria* (Arribas and Pérez, 2004) to empower and pay homage to silenced generations of women whose female identities were shaped by Francoist society.

The completed thesis provides the reader with a deep insight into the feminine perception and portrayal on screen of women's participation in twentieth century Spain's major historical events through fictional characters, female eyewitness testimonies and the directors' own enquiries about their past. By documenting women's artistic contribution to the recuperation of a marginalised version of Spain's collective memory, this thesis aims to assist in the consolidation of female models of reference for future generations of filmmakers as well as male and female spectators.