

Feminism and film in transition in Spain: *Margarita y el lobo* (1969) and *Vámonos, Bárbara* (1978), by the director Cecilia Bartolomé

Feminismo y cine en transición en España:
Margarita y el lobo (1969) y *Vámonos, Bárbara* (1978)
de la directora Cecilia Bartolomé

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Abstract

Cecilia Bartolomé's *Margarita y el lobo* (1969) and *Vámonos, Bárbara* (1978) are key pieces of work that help us understand the resistance practices that were ongoing in the sixties and seventies against the Franco regime. Both pieces point out the complexity of gender relations and detail class relations and the power that some institutions, such as the Church, had on Spanish society as a whole and, particularly, on the lives of women. *Margarita y el lobo* and *Vámonos, Bárbara* were the starting points of a new brave filmography that influenced important aspects of the emancipation of women and they remain key references in order

Resumen

Margarita y el lobo (1969) y *Vámonos, Bárbara* (1978) de la directora Cecilia Bartolomé son piezas clave que nos ayudan a entender las prácticas de resistencia que se estaban poniendo en marcha durante los sesenta y los setenta en contra del régimen de Franco. En ambas obras se destaca la complejidad de las relaciones de género pero también las relaciones de clase y el poder que ciertas instituciones, como la iglesia, tenían en la sociedad española en general y, en particular, en la vida de las mujeres. *Margarita y el lobo* y *Vámonos, Bárbara* son dos obras pioneras de lo que constituyó una nueva corriente cinematográfica y que además contribuyeron a

to understand the difficulties that female movements found during the Spanish dictatorship and during the early years of the Transition period. The aim of the article is to show how Cecilia Bartolomé fought for the emancipation of women and the democratization of the Spanish society in the last years of the Spanish Dictatorship and the first years of the Democracy through her films. In these years, the end of the sixties and beginning of the seventies, women's associations were timidly being formed, most of them in secret, and they were advocating for legislative and labor reforms in favor of women's rights. We can venture the hypothesis that Cecilia Bartolomé was not oblivious to the profound changes taking place in Spanish society at the time and, therefore, her works were influenced by the feminist assumptions that were in vogue at the time.

Keywords

Cecilia Bartolomé, spanish cinema, spanish transition, gender.

la emancipación de las mujeres, obras que siguen siendo referencia para comprender las dificultades que encontraron los movimientos de mujeres durante la dictadura española y los primeros años del periodo de transición. El objetivo del artículo es mostrar cómo Cecilia Bartolomé luchó por la emancipación de las mujeres y por la democratización de la sociedad española en los últimos años de la dictadura española y primeros años de la democracia a través de sus películas. En unos años (finales de los sesenta y comienzos de los setenta), en los que tímidamente se estaban conformando asociaciones y grupos de mujeres —la mayoría en la clandestinidad— que abogaban por reformas legislativas y laborales a favor de los derechos de las mujeres. Podemos aventurar la hipótesis de que la directora no estaba al margen de los profundos cambios que se estaban produciendo en la sociedad española del momento y, por tanto, sus trabajos se vieron influenciados por los presupuestos feministas en boga durante esta época.

Palabras clave

Cecilia Bartolomé, cine español, transición española, género.

Introduction

Childhood and Education, Girls with Girls and Boys with Boys

Cecilia Bartolomé was born at the beginning of the 1940s in Spain, an impoverished country after years of civil war. It was a time when the rigid norms and laws imposed by the Franco regime impeded one from straying from the norm and undertaking new paths far from the reig-

ning orthodoxy. Schools created prior to July 18th, 1936 were closed and teachers who supported the Republic were dismissed, and purged, giving way to a kind of education focused on Christian morality that revolved around family, decorum and decency. All over the country, information was monopolized by the regime: it was *the dark hand* that kept watch over the media and the postal service. Dramatic or cinematic works and news were subjected to censorship, whose purpose was to embellish, correct or eliminate all news or images that were undesirable for the regime.¹

In the post-war years, Alicante, the city where Cecilia Bartolomé spent the first years of her life, was marked by unemployment, a scarcity of water and an attempt to promote the hemp industry, an enterprise which never got off the ground. To describe the climate that prevailed at the time in Alicante, one must not forget that it was the last city held by the Republican government.² Many people committed suicide before Franco's nationalist troops entered the city, and many of those who did not were rounded up into concentration camps and executed. Also, because Alicante was a coastal town, a special control was established on the beaches. In June of 1939, the civil governor "expressed a willingness to terminate the immoral spectacle of the beach in Alicante because of the attitude of some people without scruples" (Sanz, 1999: 271). The naked body, especially a woman's, had to be protected from outside gazes: its public exhibition clashed with the reigning morality, and the clearly paternalist Franco regime regulated and controlled what it considered to be most fragile and craved. The waves of foreign tourists which arrived at the Levante coast as of the 1950s and Spanish immigration which from countries like Germany, France or Belgium showed another way to mix, to dress, to have fun and even consume, would gradually change certain habits and customs of Spanish society.

¹ The Law of 28 June 1946 established the High Council for Cinematography. Article 4 of this law specifies that the vote of the representative of the church would be especially honoured on moral points.

² The Second Spanish Republic (Segunda República Española) was the form of government that existed in Spain from 1931 till 1939. The Republic was proclaimed on April 1931 and it lost the Spanish Civil War on 1 April 1939.

On July 17th, 1945, two years after Cecilia Bartolomé was born, Article 11 of the Law on Primary Education established that “feminine primary education will prepare students especially for home life, craftwork and domestic chores” (Boletín Oficial de España, 1945: 388).³ This context of segregation by sexes perhaps would have gone unnoticed by Cecilia Bartolomé if she had not lived in the middle of two realities: Franco-era Spain and Guinea, where she lived for most of her childhood and adolescence. Guinea, a Spanish colony from the middle of the 19th century up until 1969, was one of the richest countries in Africa; it exported wood and cocoa beans and possessed large reserves of oil and gas. It was a tropical country which had fewer than a million inhabitants and was populated with numerous ethnic groups like the Fangs and the Bubis, as well as by Spaniards and Europeans. It was a multicultural environment where, because of its remoteness and idiosyncrasy, the effects of the Franco ideology arrived diluted and produced more comical effects, as Cecilia Bartolomé showed in her feature-length film *Lejos de África* (1996). Although in the Spanish colony there was an attempt to implement rituals that were typical of the mother country, like Holy Week or the solemn military parades which had a certain grotesque character, the cultural mix and the remoteness made them appear ridiculous. Trips that the director made to Spain during her childhood helped her put this contrast into focus: “When I came to Spain, I saw a repressive country, so being in an environment with religions of different origins, learning to respect [...] was for me very important” (Val, interview with the filmmaker, June, 2013).

The weight of religion, the division of sexes in the classroom—which did not permit contact between boys and girls—and different institutionalized learning for each sex (at an early age, girls began childcare, cooking or embroidery classes) seemed grotesque to her:

They brought me here to do the validation exam for 6th grade at a boarding school in Alicante and the first confrontation I had with the school chaplain was a big scolding because he told me that

³ Article 11 of the Law on Primary Education is on line: <https://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE/1945/199/A00385-00416.pdf> (Retrieved 24th June 2019).

talking to boys was a sin [...] I came from a mixed high school: with *whites*, *blacks*, boys and girls; the *whites* were Portuguese, German and Norwegian and the *blacks* were from different ethnic groups. Suddenly, they tell you that, the least you are going to feel is ridiculous” (Moreno, television interview, 2009).⁴

The freedom to grow up in a large family in a country less repressive than the country of origin, with parents who were conservative but nonetheless very concerned about their children’s education, would be decisive in the primary socialization of Cecilia Bartolomé. And bearing in mind that the most progressive and innovative feminine role models had been erased from the map during the Franco era, her mother played an important role in this first stage: “My mother had five small children and was nine months’ pregnant when she went to Africa, and to work as a school teacher was no small thing” (Val, interview with the filmmaker, June, 2013).⁵

The work of teachers, like the work of nurses, telephone operators or social workers, was very much in line with the kind of work that a woman could do during the Franco era: they were women’s professions. For more than thirty years, labour laws prior to the Republic were maintained, and the *Fuero del Trabajo*, passed on March 9th, 1938, was designed to protect the family.⁶ In this legislation, women could not get jobs which previously they could get, like public defendant, judge, attorney, magistrate, broker, prison doctor, diplomat, registrar or notary. With no chance of holding these positions of authority, it was difficult for them

⁴ The Ministerial Order of May 1st, 1939 prohibited the pedagogical system of coeducation in primary schools. In places where there was only one high school, girls would go to class in the morning and boys in the afternoon, or vice versa, although the Law on Primary Education from June 1945 allowed mixed-sex schools in towns where there were no more than 30 pupils.

⁵ The mother of another Spanish director from the same generation played also a positive role model: “My family didn’t go hungry thanks to the brave disposition of my mother, who had character and was willing to protect us from malnutrition by any means necessary” (Molina, 2007:17).

⁶ The Law of Fundamentals, from 18 July the same year, established family subsidies: a subsidy of 30 pesetas per month for families with at least two children, with 15 pesetas extra for every additional child up to a maximum of 12.

to change their situation and fight for less discriminatory laws.⁷ The role that the regime most valued for women was the wife-mother-procreator and any kind of contraceptive was prohibited by the law from January 14th, 1941, which punished the public dissemination of means or procedures to prevent procreation, as well as all kinds of contraceptive propaganda.

Professional Training: The Official Madrid Film School

In the final years of the Franco regime, the Madrid Film School played a key role in bringing together a group of young people who via their work expressed their opposition to the regime and, in Cecilia Bartolomé's case, the patriarchal system as well. Madrid in the late 1960s and early 1970s continued the process of modernization and urbanization begun in the 1920s with the creation and development of new peripheral neighbourhoods like San Blas, Alcalá de Henares and Getafe. All of them bedroom communities, which received the immigrant population that had arrived in the capital in search of better job opportunities. In 1962, Spain formally requested permission to join the European Economic Community, a request that was rejected because the main European leaders felt that Spain was still not democratic. This rejection made the regime consider offering the international community a new model of an open and tolerant country with the implementation of certain changes in the political and social fabric. However, these changes were more symbolic than real.

In 1962, Manuel Fraga Iribarne replaced Gabriel Arias Salgado as Minister of Information and Tourism and his first action was to name José María García Escudero director of Cinematography and Theater in June of that year. In this decade, Jordi Grau made *Noche de Verano* (1963), Francisco Regueiro *El buen amor* (1963), Martín Patino *Nueve Cartas a Berta* (1965), Manuel Summers *Juguetes Rotos* (1966) and Carlos Saura *La Caza* (1966). *New Spanish Cinema*, as the trend born in those years was called, found new avenues of expression and its works would have little to do with local customs and traditional subjects, leading to higher

⁷ Until August 20th, 1970, there was no law passed which permitted women to pursue legal careers. The first female judge was Conchita del Carmen Venero in 1971 as a member of the Tutelary Court for Minors.

quality cinema thanks to the close link between the interests of the regime and those of certain film sectors (Zunzunegui, 2005). However, the film that triumphed the most on the big screen was *La ciudad no es para mí*, by Pedro Lazaga (1965). Paco Martínez Soria was the undisputed star of the film, playing the part of an old man who goes to the big city to see his son, who is a doctor.

Cecilia Bartolomé entered film school in the midst of all these changes and was one of the first women, along with Pilar Miró and Josefina Molina, to pass the entrance exam. The Film School opened in 1947 under the name *Instituto de Investigaciones y Experiencias Cinematográficas* (IIEC), which in 1962 changed to *Escuela Oficial de Cinematografía* (EOC) with the arrival of José María Escudero.⁸ The EOC lasted until 1976 and became a historical reference for many other educational institutions established in those years (Rodríguez, 2007: 14). The replacement of José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, one of its first directors, with the Falangist L. Ponce de León took place during the school's heyday, when students made films that were very personal and critical of the regime. The change of director was the final blow for the School, which still endured two very conflictive academic years from 1968 to 1970. The university conflict reached its high point in January of 1969 when students from the Universidad de Barcelona stormed the rector's office, and in Madrid, the death of Enrique Ruano, leader of the Popular Liberation Front, increased the wave of anxiety among the students.⁹

Cecilia Bartolomé entered film school at a time when there were practically no women studying film, and when a woman who devoted herself to art was considered pernicious and immoral:

to my father, for example, it didn't seem unusual for me to come to Spain to study. I hid from him the fact that I had enrolled in film school and I told him that I was going to enrol in industrial engineering, where there weren't any women, either. This didn't seem bad to him, nothing anomalous. What he didn't like was that I should

⁸ In 1976, its functions were delegated to the Faculties of Information Science.

⁹ Another event that increased social tension in those years was the Burgos case, a trial of 16 members of ETA in December 1970, with the death penalty requested for nine of them.

be a film buff, he didn't think that was right (Val, interview with the filmmaker, June 2013).

That film was viewed as a profession that was inappropriate for a woman was not something peculiar to Cecilia's family. The Spanish film director Josefina Molina recounts how her parents received the news: "When I finished high school, I proposed to my parents that I would go to the IIEC in Madrid. I can't describe the astonishment and skepticism I saw in their faces" (Molina 2007: 27). As Josefina Molina relates: "Film seemed to them to be a world of ruin" (Molina, 2007: 27).

That is why Cecilia Bartolomé, following the path of other women who entered film school, broke several taboos: studying to work in cinema, primarily a masculine sector, and managing to contribute a unique, bold and critical vision through her work.

Barbara Zecchi also shows that this generation of women directors, among whom were Pilar Miró, Josefina Molina and Cecilia Bartolomé lacked female models on which to establish their own creation (Zecchi, 2014).

Following Zecchi I will employ the term *gynocine*. *Gynocine* is a term coined in response to the limitations surrounding terms such as *cine femenino* and *cine de mujeres* within the Spanish film industry. *Gynocine* places an emphasis on the ability of the viewer to read existing gender dynamics in a film regardless of its intended ideological meaning. And it does not necessarily have to be directed by a woman, it is not *cine de mujeres*. For Zecchi not all films directed or produced by women may be feminist, even if it is clear women that works in the Spanish film industry were –and are– not exempt from the discriminatory practices that characterize the Spanish film industry (Zecchi, 2013)¹⁰. From this perspective Cecilia Bartolomé was making feminist cinema in *Margarita y el lobo* and also *Vámonos, Bárbara* by the topics she was approaching, the way she was filming and the actor and actresses she had chosen, as I will explain later.

¹⁰ The term *Gynocine* draws on American literary critic Elaine Showalter's concept of "gynocriticism" (*Towards a Feminist Poetics*, 1979), a critical posture aimed at constructing and independent space for female writers in the literary sphere.

Margarita y el lobo: Women's Associations and Feminism

The Order of August 11th, 1944, one year after Cecilia Bartolomé was born, made the homemaking exam mandatory for those women who wanted to obtain a university degree, a driver's license or a passport, and authorized the *Sección Femenina* as the only institution that could certify teachers. It would not be until the early 1960s that the regime tried to promote work for women via the Law on Women's Political, Professional and Labor Rights, from July 15th, 1961, out of the need to increase the female population that worked. Plans were established to create children's gardens and senior citizens' residences. However, the requirement of marital authorization for the exercising of labor rights was kept up to the passing of the Law on Labor Relations in 1976, so until the 1980s, marital authorization was necessary for any woman to perform legal or financial transactions.

However, some signs of change began to appear in Spanish society in the 1950s and multiplied in the 1960s. In 1953, the liberal-leaning Spanish Association of University Women was created. In 1960, the Seminar for Women's Sociological Studies was established. Four years later, in 1964, in secret and within the Spanish Communist Party, there arose the Women's Democratic Movement (initialled MDM in Spanish), which was formed as a unitary and plural movement where communist, socialist and Christian women worked together (Tejeda, 2011). In 1965, the first Catalan and Spanish translations of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and Simone Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* were published. Although they were banned by the regime, they were read in secret. It is surprising to see how women of the transition read these works before the works of Spanish authors who had already taken an interest in feminism at the end of the 19th century and especially during the Second Republic.

Women's groups established at the beginning of the 20th century revolved around the *Residencia de Señoritas* and the *Lyceum Club Femenino*, but their activities ground to a halt at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. From that moment, some of these groups, individually or collectively, took action against the regime. They encountered many difficulties along the way and in many cases were not aware of the legacy they had

left behind. Artists, writers, athletes and also filmmakers tried to break molds through their paintings, their novels or their films, but as Isabel Tejada notes, “Spanish female artists from the 1970s suffered a double isolation: the one shared with their peers because of the dictatorship, and the other resulting from their condition as women” (Tejada, 2011:78).

They were creative women who were considered feminists and understood that change in the country had to come also through change in gender relationships. The artist Esther Ferrer noted that, in the 1960s, there were “spectators who thought that what we did was incomprehensible, but what they did know was that, in doing this, we were not going along with the Franco aesthetic and they thought, ‘that isn’t pro-regime, either,’ and that united us” (Ferrer, television interview, 2012). They were women who lacked feminine role models or had more problems finding them, as in the case of those who decided to work in film:

The paradox exists in that in this business, the points of reference a woman filmmaker has have always been established by men. For example, for me, the cinema of Jean Renoir, François Truffant, the masters of Hollywood, Visconti, Fellini, Murnau ... There is no woman’s name on that list (Molina, 2003: 76).¹¹

In this context, *Margarita y el lobo*, Cecilia Bartolomé’s end-of-term project, was a hidden message that was inevitably going to make her confront the regime and censorship. It was an act of protest in which she was the singing voice but was accompanied by brave actresses, actors and a technical team composed fundamentally of friends. The screenplay for *Margarita y el lobo* was an adaptation of the book *Les stances à Sophie*, written by the French feminist writer Christiane Rochefort in 1963. Bartolomé used Rochefort’s work to narrate the story of a young couple: they meet during a student demonstration, are attracted to one another and get married, but Margarita, the main character, begins to

¹¹ She continued to note the lack of references that she had when she entered the Film School in 1963: “What tradition did a woman directing film in Spain have at the end of the 1960s? The films of those women (the pioneers) have evaporated over time. They are not analyzed, nor seen, nor mentioned. They are like leaves scattered in the wind of an uncontrolled will” (Molina, 2003: 78).

find it difficult to feel free during the relationship. Thus she decides to leave her husband at a time when divorce in Spain was unthinkable.

The forty-three-minute film used irony, humour and music as a thread to ridicule the conventions of prudish, chauvinist Spain. The main character was played by the actress Julia Peña, who frequently collaborated with many New Spanish Cinema directors like Erice, Egea, Saura, Picazo, Raúl Peña, Fons and Patino, and with Vittorio de Sica in *Los girasoles*. Julia Peña joined the Communist Party in 1970 and was arrested on several occasions because of her very critical stance against the regime.¹²

Over five acts, Margarita reads a text in front of the camera, questioning the audience. Using this technique, the director emphasizes the importance of education for women, the error of giving in to love and specifically to intimate relationships, the answer to her personal realization, the lack of sexual freedom and the way that her self-esteem had been undermined by the uniform and repetitive speech that revolved around the woman as a mother and lover of the home. It was a speech extolled ad nauseum by the *Sección Femenina* and which hid the doors to other alternatives and ways of life. Margarita decides to end her marriage because *I am drowning*, as she replies to her husband. Margarita is criticized for broadening her mind, for painting, for giving talks, for not making up, fixing her hair and dressing according to certain supposedly established canons. And she is reproached by her husband Lorenzo, for whom a woman's happiness is found in marriage. Margarita is foul-mouthed, sexually *liberated*, independent, and is not willing to miss the chance to live her life, regardless of losing the material privileges she enjoyed thanks to her marriage. What is more, those privileges inhibit her own independence because they make her exercise a social role in line with a certain class in which the most traditional bourgeois reserve and conformism predominate. Margarita is criticized by her mother-in-law, a woman who embodies the stuffy, classist Spain and reproaches the

¹² Julia Peña was arrested for belonging to the Spanish Communist Party. One of the arrests occurred in the María Guerrero Theater during the performance of *Play Strindberg* by Friedrich Dürrenmatt in November 1970, when she protested from the stands about the Burgos Council.

way her daughter-in-law dresses, eats and behaves, for having no class, in short, for being vulgar. It is a confrontation between two generations of women, one educated by the precepts of the Franco dictatorship and the other, although she was born during that time, who had the good fortune to study, go to university and demand another lifestyle despite all the social obstacles. Cecilia Bartolomé would reflect this confrontation in all of her work, because if she emphasized feminine solidarity—solid friendship between women and between women and men—she would also expose the weight of the hierarchy and the prejudices among women themselves.

The songs of *Margarita y el lobo* are the backbone of the story and allow their author to talk about subjects that do not directly correspond to the plot, such as when the main character and her lover sing about the things they believe in and don't believe in: "freedom of expression, the new Spanish cinema, organic democracy [...] left-wing magazines [...] equal opportunities [...], university reform [...] freedom to congregate" (Bartolomé, song's lyrics: *Margarita y el lobo*, 1969). Bartolomé uses archive footage of Holy Week, the Pope and fashion shows to provide a counterpoint to the story. For her music and songs are an important part of the plot and serve as a vehicle that transports the feelings of the protagonists and one of the main recipients of her feminist discourse (Garcia, 2016: 9).

Bartolomé also included versions of popular songs endowed with a double reading, for example a waltz *Iban amarraditos los dos*, where three people in black are dancing and singing at the same time. Margarita and another woman are using a mantilla, a female garment very popular in Spain in these days, related with the Catholic tradition and representing modesty and submission.

In the final scene, Margarita arrives at her new apartment, with a drawing as the only decoration and a mattress which she lies down on after breaking up with her lover, and says, "Goodbye, Lorenzo! I have a long road in front of me. I am alone, alone in the end!" (Bartolomé, *Margarita y el lobo*, 1969). This is a metaphor of the solitude necessary after more than three decades of a paternalistic, reactionary regime. The

reality was that the story was censored, and several of her future projects cancelled, as the author comments: “Relating things always brought me problems, constantly. When I finished my end-of-degree project at film school, we were still in the Franco era. It awoke a tremendous rage” (Val, interview with the filmmaker, June 2013).

Margarita y el lobo is not only a feminist work, which addresses issues related to sexuality, relationships, divorce, or female emancipation. It is also a critique of social class differences within a society that is experiencing a dictatorship. We know little about Margarita’s social background, although her interest in writing, painting and knowledge, allow us to see that Margarita has a progressive outlook. Lorenzo, her husband, represents the economic power and more traditional values, which she shares with her catholic mother, who in turn despises Margarita. As Cecilia Bartolome explained in an interview: It was a project full of humour, irony and satire which disturbed the stuffy censorship of the time: “I employ a tone of comedy in my work. Humour for me is fundamental. But conservatives have never understood humour” (Val, interview with the filmmaker, June 2013).

Because of her direct criticism of a stagnant Spanish society that continues to keep women in a situation of subordination, the piece was censored and the director had many difficulties to film again. Ten years had to pass to make the feature film *Vámonos, Bárbara*. In this film she returns to the topic of divorce, adultery and personal freedom.

Feminist Waves of the 1970s and *Vámonos, Bárbara* (1978)

Women’s groups exploded in Spain in the 1970s. The Association of Women Jurists 1971 was primarily responsible for the Family Rights Reform, and the Spanish Association of Separated Women 1973-1974 fought against corruption in the ecclesiastic courts regarding separations and marriage annulments at a time when divorce in Spain was still not legal (Pardo, 2007: 203). In 1975, among others, the Feminist Self-Consciousness Seminar, the Madrid Feminist Group and the Legal Feminist Group were created. In 1976, there came the Women’s Liberation Front. The Union for Women’s Liberation, the Association

of Single Mothers for Legal and Social Equality for their Children and the Castilian Association for Family Planning appeared in 1977, and the Feminist Vindication Club followed in 1979.

Most of these women's groups were university-based, but many were also affiliated with trade unions, then clandestine. The proliferation of these movements that sprouted in the 1960s and gained strength in the 1970s reflects how they had acquired a consciousness of resistance in the wake of the political events of the time. In 1977, the UCD government created the General Department of the Feminine Condition, and a year later, the approval of the Spanish Constitution repealed Article 416 of the Civil Code, which condemned feminine adultery and the use of birth control pills. In 1979, the Feminist Party was founded, the first Seminar for Women's Studies (initialled SEM in Spanish) was held at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, and the Second State Conference of Granada took place. These airs of change were reflected in film; during the period of transition to democracy 1975-1982, the appearance of new politically-themed cinema ran parallel to the development of different social movements in Spain (Berzosa, 2012: 133).

In the years that *Vámonos, Bárbara* 1978 was filmed, Pilar Miró had just completed *La Petición* 1976, based on the work by Zola. It starred Ana Belén as a late-19th century, young, aristocrat class lady who begins a sexual relationship with the son of a servant. From the same year is *Emilia, parada y fonda*, by Angelino Fons, and writer by Carmen Martín Gaité. It tells the story of the insipid life of Emilia, married at an early age to an older man whom she decides to leave one day. The most novel subjects that were depicted on the big screen, however, were those relating to abortion: *Abortar en Londres* 1977 by Gil Carretero, who narrates the vicissitudes of several women who cannot abort in Spain, and *Aborto Criminal* 1974 by Ferres Iquino, who raises the dilemma of unwanted pregnancies. Television was also a reflection of these changes, and as Manuel Palacio remarks, "one of the most surprising aspects during the 1976-1977 TV season promoted by Rafael Anson is the proliferation of series that had women play the main character" (Palacio, 2011: 168). Among them, there were *La señora García se confiesa*, *Las Viudas* and

Mujeres Insólitas, which was about the lives of famous women like Ana Bolena, Teresa Cabarrús and Cleopatra.

In this context, Valeria Camporesi declared that “we can read *Vámonos, Bárbara* as an audiovisual document, as a film of the Spanish Transition” (Camporesi, 2001: 54) and it was described by the historian and film critic Roman Gubern as the first feminist movie in Spanish film history, and). Since her end-of-degree project, Cecilia Bartolomé had sided with the weakest: “Yes, I am a feminist, a staunch feminist. Feminism consists of believing that being a woman does not change my rights or my obligations...” (Val, interview with the filmmaker, June 2013). *Vámonos, Bárbara* tells the story of a middle age women, Ana coming from a bourgeois family who works in a studio in advertising. She is living with her husband and daughter. One day she decides to leave her husband, tired of her monotonous life and takes vacation with her daughter Barbara, twelve years old, in order to start a new life. During the trip around Tarragona they go to visit different people, like her old aunt Remedios who urges her to go back with her husband, her bohemian friend Paula and her new lover Iván.

As she did in all her previous films, the director finds support in feminine solidarity against those who make life difficult for Ana, the film’s main character. This solidarity serves as a reference for doing things another way. Mother and teenage daughter are the ones who make the final decision to continue down the path alone. And it is Ana’s friendship with an old friend, also divorced, who shows her another way to view life at a time when adultery was still considered a punishable offense. The Penal Code made a big distinction between feminine adultery, which was severely punished with sentences of up to six years in prison, according to Article 449, while living together—only for men—was a minor offense according to Article 452 (Augustín, 2003: 283).¹³

In *Vámonos, Bárbara* the road takes an important place and it is a response to and as an expression of the sociopolitical and cultural changes

⁰⁰ The Penal Code of the Republic did not consider adultery a crime, neither for men nor for women and the divorce law from that time considered infidelity just cause for annulling a marriage.

in Spain at the turn of the century, and not merely as a result of the importation of American cultural codes (Pérez, 2011: 25). The film differs from *Margarita y el lobo* in that it respects classical narrative order, but both works share a common element: they are odes to freedom and to the responsibility to make certain decisions. In *Vámonos, Bárbara*, as a backdrop, we also see the arrival of tourism with the resulting destruction of the rural landscape, as well as the massive construction of enormous towers prepared to take in the waves of sun and beach tourists. Both works also share irony and humor: Margarita and Ana laugh at themselves —at the way they drive, their nudity and the absurdity of some of their relationships.

Conclusions

For the generations born in the 1970s, in the midst of intense legislative changes that would and still do affect the lives of many women, it is important to know and value the work of female filmmakers, artists, writers and journalists, Cecilia Bartolomé among them, to understand where we come from (Varela, Parra, Val: 2017).

As this article has tried to make manifest, education is vital for shaping critical and free mentalities so that independent men and women have the courage to confront discrimination from authorities. During the Franco era, “the Catholic church impeded the intellectual development of women. Illiteracy rates rose, which gave rise to greater exclusion from job opportunities and greater dependence on one’s husband” (Toboso, 2009: 82). It influenced not only intellectual education but also daily life, especially through religious ceremonies, and in particular through confession and spiritual guidance. And that burden today is still difficult to bear.

Women’s organizations in the 1960s and ‘70s played a key role in winning social improvements for everyone because a more just society is a common good that does not belong to only half the population. Cecilia Bartolomé’s work, like the work of many of those now-forgotten women who fought for democracy, was discordant and made sense of different ways to live, love and even work. Bartolomé broke the mold of what was expected of a bourgeois woman, thanks in large part to the support she received from her family and the education she received in

Guinea, far from Franco's repression. And she was fortunate to be part of an institution such as the Madrid Film School, where new winds of change were blowing.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the director made a documentary about the Spanish Transition with her brother José C. Bartolomé. With the establishment of democracy, and thanks to the mobilizations of women's groups within and outside the spheres of power, adultery and contraceptives were decriminalized and Article 14 of the Constitution prohibited sexual discrimination. Around that time, the first family planning centres opened (Pardo, 2007). However, divorce was not legalized until 1981. More changes came but the feeling of the population, or at least a large part of it, was one of discouragement and impotence.

The first part of the documentary *Después de... No se os puede dejar solos* (1981) depicts the public battle undertaken by certain women's groups to defend subjects like the sexual and reproductive rights of women and the decriminalization of abortion. The Bilbao trial took place because of the arrest of 11 women accused of having had or performed abortions. Thousands of activists took to the streets in protest under banners that read, *I had an abortion, too* and *Sexuality is not maternity*. The images of the demonstration show how sexual freedom was at the foundation of their public agenda. The documentary is very valuable also because it gives a voice to citizens and not only to the political, financial or cultural elite. The voices of important figures within the Spanish feminist movement like Cristina Alberdi (2000) and Francisca Sauquillo, who founded the Feminist Seminar Group in 1975, note how, after Franco's death, *the key posts had not changed and the same people were still in power*. They stressed that the change in mentality would take many years to transpire and they explained it with an example: "in a trial with a couple, the judge, thinking he was going to do something wonderful and wanting to give the husband a good scolding, told him, 'It's very bad to hit your wife. One can kill a woman, but not hit her!'" (*Después de...* (primera parte, 1981). This documentary, as had happened with her end-of-degree project, was denounced before the Public Prosecutor the same year it was filmed, received no state subsidy and could not premiere until 1983.

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Recepción: 27/06/19
Aprobación: 28/10/19



Aquí y ahora, 2017 | de Sofía Hernández