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# Spanish Cinema and the Rise of the Auteur: The Case of Isabel Coixet

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy

Jennie Rothwell

Trinity College Dublin

School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies

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## SUMMARY

This thesis builds on and contributes to work in the field of film authorship and auteurism, critically considering Spanish director Isabel Coixet as a prime example of a contemporary, self-styled auteur. Heavily influenced by French film criticism, especially that of critics who wrote for *Cahiers du Cinéma* during the 1950s, the label of auteur as a singular, genius artist was first afforded to well known, critically acclaimed directors. However, this status has evolved to incorporate not only other film professionals, but also lesser-known directors who can follow an auteur strategy, irrespective of critical and commercial success. While the history of the auteur in Spain developed in a different way to its European neighbours, Coixet has consistently looked outside the peninsula for role models and for the subject matter of her films. Rather than glorify the filmmaker's 'intent' or provide biographical criticism, emphasis will be placed on the negotiation process at work in the auteur's journey from unknown to brand name. Coixet has pursued auteur status since her first film, and her projects outside the cinema promote her artistic skills across disciplines, while maintaining a coherent public persona. Although a number of studies have examined her as a director, there has not been an in-depth focus on her auteurist strategies as a contributing factor to her success and longevity in the film industry. Nor has there been a full-length study of Coixet's technical abilities, particularly in her role as camera-operator on the majority of her films, a characteristic that sets her apart from her contemporaries. As such, this thesis provides additional insights about what it means to be an auteur in 2014, and how such a strategy affects the creative practice of filmmaking.

This thesis owes a factual and interpretative debt to scholars such as Dudley Andrew ("Unauthorized"), Catherine Grant ("Auteur machines"; "Becoming") and Timothy Corrigan (*A Cinema*), whose work since the 1990s has contributed to a new conceptualisation of the auteur, and also to the many studies of Spanish cinema history that have drawn attention to the development of the auteur figure. In particular reference to Coixet, this study has benefited greatly from the articles and chapters by Susan Martin-Márquez ("Engagement"), Núria Triana-Toribio ("Auteurism"; "Anyplace"), and from Belén Vidal's treatment of melodrama and auteurism ("Love"). In these writings and others it is possible to find descriptions and analyses of Coixet as a transnational auteur which this thesis does not intend to replicate. Rather, it presents a broader perspective on auteurism, with a greater attention to how this status is reflected both on and off the screen, as Coixet embodies the role of the

textual auteur or artist and the industrial or commercial auteur simultaneously. The textual analysis framework provides close readings of her films and other projects, while the contextual information positions Coixet as an exceptional case within Spanish cinema. The majority of her films have little to do with Spain or Catalonia and the director has repeatedly articulated her indifference to national identity in the media. Many of her contemporaries have disappeared from the feature filmmaking industry, while her longevity is seemingly built on her ability to pass for an English-speaking director, a persona she has consciously pursued and shaped through interviews, personal websites and her journalistic writing.

However, this thesis concludes that Coixet's textual auteur or artist status is somewhat dependent on industrial or commercial auteur strategies, as she guides the spectator's reception of her films through interactions with the media and through non-filmic projects that cement her reputation as an all-round audiovisual creator.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Susana Bayó Belenguer for her unwavering support over these last few years. Without the encouragement from Susana and Dr Ciaran Cosgrove to pursue postgraduate study, I would not have started this thesis, never mind finished it.

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Back in Dublin, I would like to thank the library staff at Instituto Cervantes Dublín, in particular David Carrión, who was an enormous help in sourcing some of the more obscure resources I needed to access. For providing me with their respective translations of the play *Gif*, I thank Ronald Brouwer and Rina Vergano.

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Last, but definitely not least, I want to thank my parents, my sister Lynn, my friends, and particularly those who have lived with me during the last five years. If I were to name everyone individually I would need another few pages. But the biggest thanks of all are due to Kevin, who has waited patiently for me to finish this thesis, and never complained once. Thank you.

## NOTE ON CONVENTIONS

MLA style (7th Edition) has been used throughout this thesis, with the exception of spelling (British English), the justification of the text and the spacing between lines. Single quotation marks have been used to indicate a special sense of a word, while double quotation marks have been reserved for direct quotations. Ellipses have been reproduced as they appear in the original text, while added ellipses are indicated with square brackets.

Where authors have identical surnames their first names have been repeated throughout to avoid confusion.

Film production years and translated titles are listed according to their entries on IMDB.com, to maintain consistency throughout the thesis. Films discussed appear in a separate filmography at the end of the thesis.

All translations from Catalan and Spanish are my own, unless otherwise stated.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND TRANSLATED FILM TITLES

| | |
|---|---|
| *A los* | *A los que aman / For Those Who Love* |
| *Aral* | *Aral, el mar perdido / Aral, The Lost Sea* |
| *Ayer* | *Ayer no termina nunca / Yesterday Never Ends* |
| *Cartas* | *Cartas a Nora / Letters to Nora* |
| *Demasiado viejo* | *Demasiado viejo para morir joven / Too Old to Die Young* |
| *Escuchando* | *Escuchando al juez Garzón / Listening to Judge Garzón* |
| *Imitation* | *Imitation of Life* |
| *La insoportable* | *La insoportable levedad del carrito de la compra / The Unbearable Lightness of the Shopping Cart* |
| *Magnificent* | *Magnificent Obsession* |
| *Map* | *Map of the Sounds of Tokyo* |
| *Marea* | *Marea Blanca / White Tide* |
| *My Life* | *My Life Without Me* |
| *Nobody* | *Nobody Wants the Night* |
| *Robert Rylands* | *Robert Rylands's Last Journey / El último viaje* |

| | |
|---|---|
| | *de Robert Rylands* |
| *The Secret Life* | *The Secret Life of Words* |
| *Things* | *Things I Never Told You* |
| *Viaje* | *Viaje al corazón de la tortura / Journey to the Heart of Torture* |
| *Written* | *Written on the Wind* |
| *84* | *84 Charing Cross Road* |

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## INTRODUCTION

Recently completed theses and certain studies in progress reflect the growing interest in revisiting the figure of the auteur, especially in regard to women.[1] Although Spanish women filmmakers have garnered more scholarly attention in recent years, and despite the increasing number of articles, book chapters and extended interviews, a full-length academic study of Isabel Coixet has not yet been published in English. She made her debut during a boom in film production by female directors during the late 1980s and early 1990s in Spain, although many of her contemporaries have since disappeared from feature filmmaking.[2] Her survival is seemingly built on her ability to pass for an English-speaking auteur director, a strategy which she has consciously pursued and shaped through media interviews, personal websites and her journalistic writing. She is not the only survivor of the generation of 1990s women directors, but she remains an exception amongst her peers, by continually filming in English, outside of Spain and in her role as a shooter-director. While great emphasis has been placed on Coixet's gender and as a creator of transnational films, less attention has been paid to her filmmaking technique and her projects outside the cinema, aspects of her auteur persona which this analysis seeks to unpack.

Born in Barcelona in 1962, the granddaughter of a ticket-booth operator in her local cinema, Coixet grew up watching films, and began her filmmaking career aged eight, when she received a gift of a Super 8 camera for her First Communion. Aged fourteen, she wrote a letter to the Centro Sperimentale de Cinema in Rome requesting a place on one of their courses, but was politely rejected. Undeterred, she has since become one of Spain's most recognisable film directors, and has achieved moderate international success, largely owing to her pursuit of an auteurist filmmaking strategy. This thesis seeks to assess why and how Coixet pursues this auteur policy and what implications this approach has for her filmmaking

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[1] Even cursory inspection of the titles of recent theses reveals an upsurge of interest in Coixet and other overlooked female directors. For example: "La construcción de la identidad femenina en el entramado de los géneros cinematográficos que componen los Woman's Film escritos y dirigidos por Isabel Coixet"(Beatriz Herrero Jiménez, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2014), or *Out of the Shadows: Spanish Women Filmmakers in Focus: The Author Cinema of Isabel Coixet and Icíar Bollaín* (Susanne Bertenrath, published PhD thesis in German, Philipps Universität Marburg, 2012). Others address the auteur in Spain ("Reality and Fiction in the Films of Julio Medem: Meta-Narrative Practice and the Author-Function", Philip James Morris, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2007), while outside of specifically Spanish concerns, "No Job for a Lady" (Rachel Williams, University of Nottingham, 2001) seeks to explore how female directors are perceived through the emphasis on their looks and image and to chart the unsteady rise of women directors in Hollywood.

[2] María Camí-Vela notes this in her collection of interviews with Spanish women filmmakers active during the 1990s (*Mujeres detrás* 2001 ed. 16-17).

and her public persona. Since she is one of the most prolific filmmakers in Spain today regardless of gender, this 'personal' mode of filmmaking can be seen as essential to her continued success.

Although auteurism and authorship do not represent new topics for film scholars and have been revisited many times, the desire for authorship expressed by the auteur filmmaker will be examined through the construction of a public persona, irrespective of recognition afforded to a filmmaker by critics or spectators. Auteurism will thus be posited as a strategy for filmmakers to follow, rather than a model for critics to perpetuate, and it will be explored as a separate discourse to authorship; however, these two concepts are irrevocably linked. In a practical sense, auteurism represents a learned behaviour or strategy that any director, or indeed any film creative, can engage in. Owing partly to the legacy of *Cahiers du Cinéma*'s promotion of a *politique des auteurs* and partly to practical reasons,[3] legal film authorship is usually applied to the director or production company, with little regard for the input of other creative talents that ensure the film is ready for exhibition.[4] Unlike mainstream literary output where a single creative voice dominates, film authorship represents a negotiation between the director, screenwriter, technical crew, cast and audience, and this thesis will explore how Coixet navigates this relationship.

With this negotiation in mind, the methodologies explored in this thesis create certain implications for spectatorship. While Coixet's conscious media interventions attempt to create an ideal, informed audience, this thesis does not assess the effect or efficacy of these approaches after her films arrive to cinema or television screens. The pre-release strategies which will be examined here suggest that Coixet strives to create a particular type of viewing experience, and this thesis will concentrate on how she leads audiences to this experience rather than assess its consequences. While the after-effects are important to her popular appeal and how she is received by fans and critics, this analysis examines the aspects of film

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[3] Other factors also contributed to this attribution of authorship to the director. For example, Virginia Wright Wexman notes the importance of the Director's Guild of America in securing directorial control of film production ("Introduction" 10). In a newspaper article, Wright Wexman notes: "The directors' first agreement with producers, in 1939, insisted on the director's 'right to screen credits' and specified that the directorial credit be the last to appear on the screen before the film started. Appearing at the end of the list of all those who create a movie, the director's credit thus identifies the person who synthesizes and supersedes the work of everyone else" ("The Folks" n.pag). As late as the 1990s, writers, producers and directors were still arguing over the so-called possessive credit (phrased on screen as "A film by") in the courts.

[4] The phrase *politique des auteurs* was coined by director and critic François Truffaut (1932-1984) and developed and debated in the pages of French film journal *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Its significance as a catalyst within the evolution of auteurism will be discussed in Chapter 1.

authorship that can be controlled and manipulated by the director before the film reaches the cinema-goer or DVD viewer.

Previous studies of Coixet have tended to focus on female representation, the transnational context of her filmography, or her interest in generic revisionism.[5] While these readings are valid and informative within the under-researched area of peninsular women filmmakers, this thesis will focus on authorship and auteurism as a means to widening the debate around Coixet, taking into account her desire for success outside Spain and Catalonia, and for an equal footing with her male contemporaries.[6]

However famous Coixet may be today, her rise from unknown to star director has not been smooth. Her debut feature *Demasiado viejo para morir joven* (1988) was a critical and commercial failure, and she spent seven years in the cultural wilderness before trying again with *Things I Never Told You* (1995), which was shot in English in the United States. With the modest international success of this film on the festival circuit, she also staged a successful domestic comeback, albeit by extricating herself from the Spanish film industry and shooting almost exclusively in English from that point onwards.[7] Nonetheless, she has gradually been co-opted into the Spanish film industry and institutions as an 'exportable' auteur figure, despite her lack of engagement with peninsular issues and penchant for filming outside Europe. Accordingly, both her auteur strategy and her films are greatly influenced by previous traditions of self-promotion and filmmaking at home and abroad.

For instance, the auteur 'theory' put forth by Andrew Sarris ("Notes-1962") modified the *politique des auteurs* for the Anglophone context and would prove as influential as it was

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[5] Articles by María Donapetry ("Ethics"; "The Noughty"), Hererro Jiménez ("Mujer") and Martin-Márquez ("Engagement"; "La teoría") explore Coixet's representations of women on screen, while Triana-Toribio ("Auteurism", "Anyplace") and Vidal ("Love") place more emphasis on the transnational aspects of her filmography. Generic subversion comes to the fore in criticism by Anabel Martín ("Los silencios") and Vidal, amongst others. The critical views of these authors form the core of literature relevant to this thesis, and they will be referred to throughout.

[6] Projects such as the GynoCine website (http://digitalhumanities.umass.edu/gynocine/) aim to address this lack of visibility at the academic level, while the pioneering work of Camí-Vela (beginning with *Mujeres detrás* 2001 ed.) has contributed to a renewed interest in Spanish women filmmakers in the 2000s. Within the industry, organisations such as CIMA (Asociación de mujeres cineastas y de medios audiovisuales) in Spain and EWA (European Women's Audiovisual Network) promote women in the audiovisual industries and advocate on their behalf. Coixet was a founding member of CIMA and since 2012 has been President of EWA.

[7] At the time of writing, Coixet has directed the following feature films in English: *Things I Never Told You* (1995), *My Life Without Me* (2003), *The Secret Life of Words* (2005), *Elegy* (2008), *Map of the Sounds of Tokyo* (2009), *Another Me* (2013) and *Learning to Drive* (2014).

polemical throughout the 1960s.[8] The identification and analysis of personal style, technical competence and a "core of meaning" ("Notes-1962" 35) across a filmmaker's body of work has been all but abandoned by contemporary auteur criticism, but it helped to entrench director-focused criticism as a prevailing mode that endures to this day. This approach will be addressed in Chapter 1, making a claim for auteurism as a style and strategy employed by the contemporary film creative, rather than a theory of reception or of filmic analysis. Director-focused criticism and analysis sustain auteurism, but no longer hold as much importance in the creation of an auteur. Largely influenced by changing filmmaking practices and the dominance of the internet in film marketing, auteurism has moved from being a label of identification read and interpreted by cinephiles and critics to a tactic that directors can consciously employ before their film has made it to the cinema screen, while selling themselves as stars of equal importance to the cast. This self-styling, self-aggrandising (or in some cases self-deprecating), and self-mythologising practice has become essential in a more democratised context of production, where aspiring directors can use professional software and camera equipment for a fraction of the cost of previous decades. The practice of auteurism has been similarly democratised, and directors may pursue auteur status for themselves rather than relying on tastemakers such as critics, although their support undoubtedly helps.

Thus, the self-generated aspects of contemporary auteurism will be dissected in this thesis. The attribution of the term auteur to certain film professionals will not be questioned here, but this discussion investigates how a contemporary director can use this term and the filmmaking practices, critical assumptions, and spectatorial expectations it has engendered to cement their position as a unique artist in a collaborative enterprise. Additionally, auteurism can be flexible enough to incorporate collaboration, rather than view the input of other creatives as a threat to the director's author status. Coixet provides an interesting case in this respect, as her multi-tasking authorship model minimises the need for collaboration, and her associates are carefully chosen in order to enhance her 'vision' or 'personality'.[9] Not only does she write and direct the majority of her films, she also operates the camera and acts as music

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[8] Andrew Sarris (1928-2012) developed the 'auteur theory' through his writings in *Movie*, *Film Quarterly* and other journals during the 1960s. Chapter 1 will discuss Sarris's contribution to auteur criticism in greater depth.

[9] Despite Coixet's chequered career she has worked repeatedly with certain performers and technicians, and frequently cites the beneficial creative relationships she has enjoyed with stars like Cámara, Polley or Tim Robbins, or technicians such as Irene Blecua (editor), Jean Claude Larrieu (director of photography), Fabiola Ordoyo (sound) and producer Esther García.

supervisor, and has demonstrated her adaptability within the professional sphere since her time at college. Instead of attending film school in her late teens, she studied history at the University of Barcelona, and became the first member of her family to get a degree. Despite this seeming divergence from her early vocation as a filmmaker, she wrote an undergraduate thesis focused on 1970s American cinema, and kept her cinephilia alive throughout her academic career. After university, she worked extensively in the advertising industry, a period she refers to as her film training.[10] She continues to produce commercials for corporate and charity sector clients to this day, although, as a famous director, her creative input is more overtly acknowledged in recent campaigns, in recognition of her auteur status and the inherent 'selling power' it brings.

Nevertheless, her film career has developed in tandem with her work as an advertising creative, and she initially gained access to the film industry as a writer. After university she was also intermittently employed as an interviewer for Spanish film magazine *Fotogramas* and *Sal común*,[11] and published short detective fiction in the magazines *Gimlet* and *Star* during the 1980s,[12] before penning her first film script, *Morbus* (Ignasi P. Ferre, 1982).[13] This love of film and varied experience as a student, writer, filmmaker, and advertising creative provided Coixet with a wide understanding of visual storytelling and some of the practicalities of the audiovisual industry before she moved into filmmaking as her primary profession, while such an autobiography also offers a suitably cinephilic backstory for an aspiring auteur, and offers a broad knowledge base of the industry for a new filmmaker. As a director she came to the attention of the Spanish film industry in her twenties, with the modestly successful short film *Mira y verás* (1984). This *corto* led to state-sponsored funding for a feature, *Demasiado viejo*, which she wrote and directed. Owing perhaps to her understanding of how advertising and journalism operated, the young Coixet was careful and

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[10] For more biographical details see Cerrato (*Isabel* 23-25) and Heredero (*Espejo* 295).

[11] These jobs provided Coixet with an acute awareness of the importance of media interaction for film directors, despite her discomfort conducting the interviews.

[12] Coixet had a story, "The End de Thelma Todd", published in the Spanish crime fiction magazine *Gimlet*, edited by author Manuel Vázquez Montalbán. It tells of a film critic down on his luck, who receives a mysterious visit from actor George Taft, asking him to locate a long-disappeared movie star, Thelma Todd, who is allegedly living in Barcelona. The cinephilic tale tries to blur the boundaries between film, literature and life, and thus provides an apt rendering of Coixet's creative philosophy. While this story was published before she made her first film, she has also published short fiction since she became a filmmaker, in the collections *Cuentos sin cámara* (1999) and *Cambio de agujas* (2009).

[13] *Morbus* has been largely ignored and rarely warrants a mention as part of Coixet's filmography by the director herself, nor by many studies of her work. However, this project led to writing and directing her own short film, *Mira y verás*, which was well-received and proved crucial in Coixet accessing funding for her debut feature.

calculated in early interviews, arguably aware of the auteurist persona she was creating from her first full-length release. Yet, Coixet does not provide much autobiographical information outside of her sanctioned, cinephilic auteur biography. Although she writes opinion pieces for newspapers and candidly discusses her likes and dislikes across her media platforms, her fans know little about her private life, nor do critics project this private life onto reviews of her work, as often occurs with female directors. Only Coixet's self-generated autobiographical details are revisited in the media, and news stories about her are limited to the professional.

Crucially, the need to consider Coixet as an auteur and to analyse her 'personalised' vision springs from her explicit desire to be received as such by audiences and by critics. Her varied output and willingness to experiment with genre, adaptation and documentary mark her out as different from her Spanish contemporaries. The auteur label allows for this experimentation, and presents the film director as an autonomous genius whose corpus is worthy of recognition, despite minor failures or major flops: an auteur is a figure whose career is to be followed, for better or worse. By placing her work in a continuum of noted auteurs and independent directors through intertextual referencing and near-constant affirmation of her cinephilic credentials in the media, Coixet lays claim to this label with a determination she reserves only for negating other labels applied to her and her work, such as 'Spanish director', 'Catalan director' or 'woman director'. In consistently producing films in English, it seems that Coixet aims to place her work amongst directors of non-Hispanic author cinema. This thesis considers the complex history of auteur filmmaking in Spain, which was especially reviled amongst audiences in the mid-1980s and early 1990s when Coixet and many other female directors made their debut.[14] However, combined with the financial independence she maintains through revenue from her advertising career, the space for experimentation that auteurism creates has allowed her to survive in the film industry, when many of her contemporaries have not. Nonetheless, this thesis seeks to go beyond biographical criticism and the intentions of the director in order to assess the purpose and effectiveness of authorial strategies, especially in regard to this double bind of how she is perceived and how she tries to engineer these perceptions of her persona and her work.

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[14] Peter Besas notes that, during the late 1980s and early 1990s "[n]ot only did production plummet to about fifty features a year, but, far worse, local audiences were turned off by the majority of Spanish films" ("Financial" 248).

As such, she represents a contemporary, self-styled auteur who encourages the audience to receive her films as the products of an artist.[15] In the years since *Cahiers* promoted the film director as a singular genius, the evolution of auteurism means that Coixet can consciously pursue an auteur strategy, and model herself on previous incarnations of this figure while moving into a space of a performed identity. Directors have learned to 'act' as auteurs, selling a constructed personality in order to claim the status of autonomous genius or artist within the collaborative creative enterprise of film production. Accordingly, in a theoretical sense, this strategic auteur status is no longer bestowed upon a director by critical acclaim alone, but rather the filmmaker can court this categorisation through interaction with the media. Although many directors have been carefully carving out niche markets and 'selling' themselves since the film industry began, new technologies such as DVD and the internet provide greater opportunity for aspiring auteurs to construct a recognisable identity and brand.

As Claire Perkins notes, advances in auteurism often have more to do with the "practical evolution of auteurs themselves" rather than theoretical evolution ("Authorship" 20). Accordingly, this thesis will consider what it means to be an auteur in 2014, providing perhaps a more cynical definition of the term than the artistry-focused criteria of Sarris, but a more inclusive and positive spin than Pauline Kael's accusations of elitism, sexism and inauthenticity ("Circles").[16] Directors can command as much star power and recognition as actors and the film industry promotes the auteur filmmaker in a similar manner to performers, with media interviews, public question-and-answer sessions, and the sales of an auteur's back catalogue of films on DVD. While these products generate questions around reception and consumption, they will be referred to as examples of a director's auteur strategy. Simultaneously, in an increasingly commercialised market, the idea of 'branding' has become more important to the public persona of a director rather than the auteur label or, pejoratively, the designation "metteur-en-scène" or journeyman director, which Sarris and his disciples saw as inferior. The following chapters will try to bridge the gap between these two conceptions of the auteur, as a commercial entity and as an artist. Coixet desires the *Cahiers*-Sarris model of a textual auteur who can be identified through the presence of on-screen

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[15] Other critics have commented on this self-styled status, notably Núria Triana-Toribio ("Auteurism") and Belén Vidal ("Love").

[16] As a fellow contributor to *Movie*, Kael (1919-2001) spearheaded the rejection of Sarris's arguments, questioning the validity of 'auteur theory' as a juvenile, male-centric pursuit ("Circles").

artistry, yet she follows an industrial or commercial auteur strategy in order to achieve and reinforce this desired status.

In this sense, the writings of Timothy Corrigan are particularly relevant to this analysis. Although Coixet satisfies Corrigan's criteria for the "commercial auteur" in that her agency "produces and promotes texts that invariably exceed the movie itself, both before and after its release" (*A Cinema* 107), this discussion aims to explore the negotiation of "commercial auteur" and "auteur of commerce" that she enters into. She tries to escape her "commercial auteur" status as a Spanish woman film director to ensure her place as an "auteur of commerce", who

> attempts to monitor or rework the institutional manipulations of the auteurist position within the commerce of the contemporary movie industry. If normally the auteurist text promotes and recuperates a movie, these filmmakers now run the commerce of the auteurist and autonomous self up against its textual expression in a way that shatters the coherence of both authorial expression and stardom. (*A Cinema* 107)

While Corrigan does not make these categories mutually exclusive, he claims that different types of auteurs can

> strategically embrace the more promising possibilities of the auteur as a commercial presence, since the commercial status of that presence now necessarily becomes part of an agency that culturally and socially monitors identification and critical reception. Auteurs such as these can be appropriated only across the gap between their agency and their subjectivity. (*A Cinema* 105)

Accordingly, this discussion focuses on the gap that he mentions, and uses the concepts of the textual and industrial auteur in order to conceptualise the agency/subjectivity relationship within one figure. This analysis aims to contribute to a redefinition of the contemporary auteur in Spain by focusing on the extra-textual practices undertaken by the director and his or her public discourse.

Nonetheless, the contemporary shift towards a marriage of the traditional, encyclopaedic approach to auteurism and a more materialist slant is summed up by Catherine Grant:

> Contemporary auteurism comprises a complex series of interrelated film production, marketing, and reception practices and discourses which are all underpinned by a shared belief in the specific capability of an individual agent – the director– to marshal and synthesize the multiple, and usually collective, elements of filmmaking for the purposes of individual expression, or to convey in some way a personal or, at least, 'personalized' vision. ("Auteur Machines" 101)

This idea of a unifying authorial figure emerging from the collective to express a 'personal' vision has been re-embraced since the 1990s, the same period when Coixet came to prominence in Spain and enjoyed moderate success abroad. The twenty-first century auteur

aims to engage with film history, whether replicating traditional codes of representation and narrative styles, or deconstructing familiar modes and generic conventions. Chapter 1 will discuss new iterations of auteur criticism by writers like Dudley Andrew, Timothy Corrigan, Catherine Grant, Rosanna Maule or Cecilia Sayad, which take the strategic, commercial concerns of authorship into account, as well as the artistic credence given to such films. The auteur still represents a unifying force or voice within a film or films, but the evolution of auteur study has come to incorporate the creation of a self-generated cult of personality outside of each film.

Reflecting on the film industry in 2014, film critic Richard Brody, an acolyte of Sarris, cynically comments,

> [u]nder the circumstances, the auteur's name seems more like a marketing strategy, the selling of a brand, than the reflection of an artistic practice—and a director's claim to autonomy comes off as vanity and arrogance. (Brody "An Auteur" n.pag)

However, this thesis proposes that auteurism can simultaneously offer filmmakers an artistic and a commercial strategy that acknowledges the collective, collaborative work essential to film production, but preserves the 'personal' or 'individual' vision at the centre of the film. Rather than define all auteurs as inherently better than non-auteurs, just as there are 'good' and 'bad' films, there are also 'good' and 'bad' auteurs.[17] With this in mind, it is necessary to chart not only the evolution of auteur criticism, but the development of the auteur figure and how he or she negotiates this status and promotes their authorship.

Yet, on a textual level, film authorship is about creative control rather than recognition, while acknowledgment of this authorship is sought through the director's public persona. Rather than shape the reception of her films or public image through marketing alone, Coixet strives to guarantee her auteur status by authoring as much of the film as possible. While Peter Wollen posits the auteur as an "unconscious catalyst" (*Signs* 144-5), the conscious processes involved in creating a film during the shoot itself will be examined here, with emphasis on the cognisant interaction with an auteur industry that has developed in order to promote filmmakers as stars. Therefore, the term auteur will be used throughout this study not only to refer to the idea of a singular, identifiable creative voice, but also to

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[17] David Bordwell makes a similar point: "My argument assumes that the term 'auteur' picks out something neutral. For some people, though, it's not a description but a compliment; there can be no bad auteurs. But I think we can have both weak auteurs—filmmakers distinguished only by technique or tone or narrative strategy—and downright bad ones as well" ("Moonrise" n.pag).

comment on changing perceptions of the film director as the dominant artist of a collaborative enterprise. Catherine Grant continues:

> Auteurism, like many other features of cinema, is a matter of supply and demand. It is a way of both making and experiencing films, and increasingly of selling them, in which the largest part of the control of the intellectual and creative work involved in the filmmaking process, or of the responsibility and credit for this, is actively taken up by or ascribed to the film's director. ("Auteur Machines" 101)

Similarly, the purpose of this thesis is not to merely identify Coixet as an auteur director, but rather to assess how her work interacts with new iterations of the auteur that have emerged since the 1990s. Although she is not a 'corporate' auteur in the sense of huge budgets or franchise films, she successfully downplays her commercial expertise and strategies to emerge as the dominant artist-author of all her projects, but remains aware that this is because of, rather than in spite of, the involvement of other creative minds.

While her multi-tasking authorship model minimises the opportunities for collaboration, Coixet's other creative roles of screenwriter and camera operator are also marginalised by film criticism's tendency to privilege the director, a trend that has dominated since the advent of Sarris's auteur-driven criticism during the 1960s. Despite the divergence between the auteur figure, the auteur 'theory', auteur films and the response of the spectator to these films, viewing auteurism as a strategy can reveal certain ideological issues around authorship and artistry. As part of her auteur strategy, it can be argued that Coixet revisits the same protagonists over and over, and deals with similar themes, storylines and settings, despite the variety suggested by a superficial examination of her filmography. Beginning with *Demasiado viejo* (1988), her career has spanned four decades, despite her initial failure. She began experimenting with English in *Things* (1995), which was shot in the United States on a miniscule budget. After the minor success of the film on the festival circuit, Coixet returned to Spain with the Stendhal-influenced heritage drama *A los que aman* in 1998. She then reverted to North America and an Anglophone context for *My Life Without Me* (2003), garnering critical attention for her story of a young mother with terminal cancer. The success of the project marked her international breakthrough and a confirmation of her auteur status at home in Spain. Lead actress of *My Life*, Sarah Polley, would star in Coixet's next project *The Secret Life of Words* (2005), which won four Goya awards in 2006,[18] and has become a subject

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[18] *The Secret Life* won Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, Best Film and Best Production Supervision. Although Coixet had been nominated for Goyas for *Demasiado viejo* (Best New Director), *A los* (Best Original Screenplay) and *My Life* (Best Director), 2006 marked her first win for an English-language film, with Alejandro Amenábar's smash hit *The Others* having paved the way when it secured Best Film in 2001.

of study for film scholars, trauma theorists and conflict scholars, despite its limited release in international markets.[19] Buoyed by her growing international profile, Coixet was headhunted to direct *Elegy* (2008), an adaptation of Philip Roth's *The Dying Animal* (2001), which marked her first time working with another writer's script for a film.[20] Moving into her later career, *Map of the Sounds of Tokyo* premiered at Cannes Film Festival in 2009, with the majority of the action filmed in Japan. Although these projects appear markedly different at first glance, each remains focused on themes of love, death, and illness and feature characters that are emotionally or sensorially repressed in some way.

After a gap of four years where she concentrated on documentary, *Ayer no termina nunca* (2013) marked Coixet's return to fiction filmmaking, and notably to Spanish-language features, with an adaptation of a Dutch play into an intimate two-hander for popular stars Candela Peña and Javier Cámara. Despite the appeal of these actors for Spanish viewers, the film's experimental cinematography and narrative structure does not cater to a mainstream audience, rather it represents an auteurist text for Coixet fans who recognise her 'personal style' and 'inner meaning'. She has increasingly moved towards an adaptive auteur mode with adaptations such as *Another Me,* based on a young adult novel about a doppelganger and which screened at the Rome Film Festival in 2013, while *Learning to Drive* (2014) was adapted from a *New Yorker* article by Katha Pollitt. However, she has not lost her taste for original screenplays and at the time of writing, post-production is ongoing for *Nobody Wants the Night* (due 2015), filmed in Norway and Tenerife with Juliette Binoche, Gabriel Byrne and Rinko Kikuchi. Rather than emerging fully-formed with her first film,[21] Coixet provides an excellent example of a director who has displayed an overt auteur desire since her beginnings

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[19] For example, key responses focus on the therapeutic aspects of the film: Katrina Cook emphasizes the effect of trauma on the counsellor, who is played by Julie Christie in the film ("The Movie"); while Leire Ituarte-Pérez's notes how the patient, Hanna (Sarah Polley), rejects the face-to-face contact of therapy sessions and maintains silence ("Melodrama"). Rebeca Maseda reflects on the representation of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in the film (*The Secret Lives*), while Victoria Rivera-Cordero ("Rebuilding the Wounded Self") and Encarnación Juárez-Almendros ("Disability") compare the representation of disability caused by trauma in *The Secret Life* and *Los abrazos rotos* (*Broken Embraces*, Pedro Almodóvar, 2009). Although the film is not used as an example, María Carmen Rodríguez Fernández notes its importance to her argument about the depiction of women in European conflicts ("Under the Skin" 72).

[20] The screenplay for *Elegy* was written by Nicholas Meyer, although Coixet made substantial changes which will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 9. Since *Elegy*, Coixet has taken on more adaptations but has returned to writing her own screenplays, whether original or adapted.

[21] For similar views see Catherine Grant ("Becoming" 3), who describes the process of becoming an auteur.

in the film industry, and continues to evolve as her films move towards formal adaptations in both 'international' and 'national' settings.

In this spatial sense, Coixet represents a transnational filmmaker whose films often feature international locations and characters of different national identities. The cross-border geography of her films has been successfully analysed by critics such as Triana-Toribio ("Anyplace") and Vidal ("Love"). However, while her address is filtered through this transnational framework and practice, this thesis argues that the majority of her films remain textually postnational in their reluctance to deal with an in-between state. Rather than utilise cultural difference as a mark of otherness, the writer-director creates characters that are othered by their personality traits and habits. This strategy helps to dismantle archetypes and stereotypes of culture in favour of primary and secondary characters that are memorable for their quirks and idiosyncrasies, but it simultaneously gildes over the multicultural world that Coixet portrays on screen, which is somewhat homogenised by globalisation and sameness rather than difference. This transnational surface is taken for granted rather than probed by the director, and while many critics have successfully categorised and analysed Coixet as transnational, this study will look to the director's complex relationship with the national in order to address how this affects her auteur identity.

Despite her efforts to transcend nationality- and gender-based labels, Coixet is received as a 'Spanish woman director' in the media; her success never usurps her place of birth or her status as female. Notwithstanding the patriarchal, elitist origins of auteur criticism, critics such as Claire Johnston ("Women's Cinema") have reclaimed the auteur paradigm for women filmmakers and Coixet represents a director who has successfully negotiated a persona of her own construction, rather than being pigeonholed or marginalised. Additionally, recent conferences such as Gynocine (UMass Amherst, October 2011) and Women Then and Now in Spanish Theatre, Cinema and Television (Trinity College Dublin, June 2013) reflect the double bind in celebrating female creativity separately from male; the necessary and overdue foregrounding of overlooked women filmmakers highlights and further entrenches the division of male and female. E. Ann Kaplan encourages critics to "think about ways of transcending a polarity that has only brought us all pain" in regard to sex difference (*Women* 206), and similarly, this thesis avoids defining a female or male gaze and focuses on the levelling gaze that Coixet, as camera operator and director, exerts over her films. However, until the gender gap in cinema is remedied, uncovering, analysing and celebrating *la contribución femenina* rather than *la mirada femenina* will be the objective for

many studies (including this one). Much like the posthumous or post-retirement awarding of the auteur label to many directors by the *Cahiers* critics, women's contribution to cinema history has been re-evaluated in various studies,[22] while ground-breaking research such as the edited collection *La mitad del cielo: Directoras españolas de los años 90* (Ed. Carlos F. Heredero. 1998), Susan Martin-Márquez's *Feminist Discourse and Spanish Cinema: Sight Unseen* (1999), Camí-Vela's *Mujeres detrás de la cámara* (2001; 2005), Barbara Zecchi's *Gynocine* (2013) and *Desenfocadas* (2014) aim to remedy the lack of critical attention paid to women filmmakers in contemporary Spain. A special supplement to the English-language journal *Cineaste* which focused on Spanish cinema included brief profiles of various women directors in 2003,[23] but to date there has been little extended critical analysis of any Spanish female filmmakers published in English. This thesis provides a panoramic critique of Coixet's entire filmography to date, in order to assess how she has sustained her long career, and address this gap in scholarship of Spanish cinema.

However, issues around female authorship and questions of what constitutes national cinema will be sidestepped in order to focus on the layers of visibility and invisibility that Coixet necessarily shrouds herself in. Since she concerns herself with issues of female representation, but is not overtly influenced by feminist critique, her work will be examined through textual analysis rather than using a feminist framework. The style and content of the films themselves form the backbone of the arguments provided in order to engage with other critical studies of Coixet, and to offer new interpretations of her films. Yet, in creating diverse characters of both genders she engages with feminist filmmaking practices, despite her hesitancy to engage with the theoretical implications of this practice at the beginning of her career. Other studies have pointed to the fractured development of feminism in Spain, particularly during the 1970s, when Coixet was growing up.[24] This offers a possible explanation for the reluctance to be labelled a feminist, but does not impede her interaction with feminism. While feminist critique does not form the basis of this analysis, it will be incorporated at various points throughout the thesis to explore this complex relation to

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[22] For example, Lizzie Francke's *Script Girls: Women Screenwriters in Hollywood* (London: British Film Institute, 1994) or the Columbia University research project Women Film Pioneers. For more on the Women Film Pioneers Project, see <https://wfpp.cdrs.columbia.edu/> [Last accessed 12 May 2014].

[23] For the article see Juan Antonio Pérez Millán ("Women"). It briefly profiles Icíar Bollaín, Patricia Ferreira Pilar Miró, Josefina Molina, and Coixet.

[24] For more analysis of the history and development of feminism in Spain, see Anny Brooksbank-Jones (*Women in Contemporary Spain*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997) and Mercedes Carbayo-Abengózar ("Feminism in Spain: A History of Love and Hate" in *Women in Contemporary Culture: Roles and Identities in France and Spain*. Ed. Lesley Twomey. Bristol: Intellect, 2000.111-125).

gender in relation to Coixet's auteur persona, and to illustrate how her public discourse around gender has evolved during her career.

Thesis structure

In order to debate these issues, this thesis has been broken into two parts: the first deals with questions of film authorship and aims to contextualise the idea of the auteur as it relates to Coixet, to Spanish national cinema, and to Spanish women filmmakers, while the second engages more directly with her filmmaking as a self-styled auteur. While the first part sketches Coixet as an 'industrial auteur' who engages in an off-screen strategy to foreground and guarantee her authorship, the second part examines her 'textual auteur' status, as her films demand to be viewed as the products of an auteur-artist in order to provide original analyses of films that have become touchstone works within the scholarship of cinema by Spanish women. The materialist slant of the arguments in this second part will complement the close readings provided.

Chapter 1 will focus on auteurist debates that are relevant to this thesis, charting the progression of the film director from 'studio hireling' to artistic genius to star.[25] This part of the discussion will define critical terms used throughout and argue for the validity of auteur study in a contemporary context. Since the 1950s, the way in which we study the auteur has evolved greatly, in line with the evolution of auteurism itself, yet Coixet pursues an auteur status of a previous generation, albeit using contemporary technology and methods to help her achieve this. While her films reference a wide range of directors and while she 'namechecks' a number of contemporary auteurs within her public discourse, the *Cahiers* group remain central to Coixet's auteur image. Their focus on film as art was not new, but their emphasis on the director as an artist within a commercial enterprise, and their intellectual address to the reader of their reviews created a model that Coixet has diligently followed.

Although she mainly films in English and shoots outside Spain, the context of national cinema remains important to an understanding of Coixet's work. Through an examination of the exportable auteur figure in Spain, Chapter 2 will provide the groundwork for an examination of Coixet's complex relationship to Spanish national cinema in subsequent

[25] For further discussion of the director's transition from studio employee to 'superstar' see Gelmis (*Film Director*).

sections. A brief overview of the Spanish film industry will be provided, in order to place her within a context of national auteurism that has developed since the 1950s.

Chapter 3 will explore how she has promoted herself as an auteur since her first film, rather than waiting for this label to be applied to her work in retrospect. Her public persona and how she manages her 'brand' as a contemporary auteur will be examined by focusing on the marketing of her films and personality through media interviews, DVD packages and trailers. This section will consider Coixet's public discourse and extra-filmic writings and projects to assess why and how she has emerged as the most prolific female director in Spain since Pilar Miró.[26]

Moving beyond the domestic, Coixet's desire for international success means she maintains a tentative position within Spanish national cinema to this day, as the definition of this cultural label becomes increasingly transparent in a market of multilingual co-productions, remakes and reworkings. As the title of this analysis suggests, Coixet participates in an auteurism that is specific but not exclusive to Spain, or to Spanish women directors. Nonetheless, Chapter 4 will place Coixet within a generation of female filmmakers in Spain that emerged in the 1990s, concentrating on those who directed films in English and who demonstrate a similar desire for recognition outside the peninsula, in order to question her position within this wider grouping.

With this contextual analysis in mind, Part 2 of this thesis provides a closer critique of Coixet's films, and also emphasizes how they conform to a comprehensible style and display traits common to other noted auteurs such as intertextual referencing, self-reflexive commentaries, characteristic iconography and coherent themes.[27] Chapter 5 will focus on Coixet in her role as a camera operator, an aspect of her work that has been overlooked by the majority of studies, in order to understand her approach to filmmaking, and some of her

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[26] Miró (1940-1997) released nine feature films in her lifetime, a figure recently surpassed by Coixet's tenth feature *Another Me* (2013). In 1982, PSOE Prime Minister Felipe González appointed Miró as as Director General of Cinematography within the Ministry of Culture. Already well-known for her films and extensive experience in TVE, Miró set out to reform the industry from a professional perspective, drawing on her familiarity with the industrial context and her desire to address the problems faced by filmmakers in Spain.

[27] Bertenrath documents the productions by first-time filmmakers in Spain from 1990 to 2009, and identifies the films directed by women that were most successful at the domestic box office (*Aus* xii-xxix). This data reveals just how successful Coixet has been at home with three of the four feature films she released in the 2000s, with *The Secret Life* and *Map* topping the female list in 2005 and 2009 respectively, and *My Life* coming a close second to Icíar Bollaín's *Te doy mis ojos* in 2003. All three films sit within the top 13 grossing films overall regardless of gender (*Aus* xxix). Coixet's name has become synonymous with success in Spain, despite the fact that her films rarely deal directly with domestic issues.

ideological aims. Her technical abilities as a camera operator have not been studied at length, and her characteristic use of the camera will be analysed, alongside stylistic flourishes that imprint her signature on the film.[28] The formal aspects of the director's oeuvre form the basis of the analysis in order to further explore the role of a personfied 'camera-eye' throughout her work, tracing the development of her directorial vision, and how this contributes to her status as an auteur. Her relationships to director Agnès Varda[29] and novelist John Berger[30] will be assessed as a means of interrogating her visual politics and filmmaking style.

Little has been written about her non-fiction work although critics like Triana-Toribio agree that it represents more than just an aside to her feature filmography.[31] As part of her 'personal' cinema, documentaries like *Viaje al corazón de la tortura* (2003), *Aral, el mar perdido* (2010) and *Escuchando al juez Garzón* (2011) represent a more overtly political part of her filmography. These works display a coherence of style with her fiction filmography and, therefore, this thesis will treat all parts of her creative output as equal, focusing on certain films and writings as exemplary of her auteur ambition.

Concurrent to the development of her personal aesthetic whether in fiction or non-fiction film, Coixet's work has become increasingly skilled at manipulating the affective powers of cinema, and she punctuates her multi-layered texts with the sensual, addressing the viewer on a primal level through visual and auditory triggers that invoke psychological responses. This affective address, mediated through camerawork, acts as the unifying element of all her films, in both documentary and fiction. Chapter 6 will concentrate on the affective aspects of her films and advertising portfolio. Together with Chapter 5, these two sections will explore the embodied aspects of Coixet's authorship and expression, with the

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[28] Although Martin-Márquez ("Engagement") deals with Coixet's camerawork in relation to the haptic, while Cerrato (*Isabel Coixet*) briefly discusses the evolution of her mobile camera and Patricia Hart ("Sea breezes") reveals the layers of meaning in her sound design, few others have discussed her technical virtuosity in great detail or across her filmography.

[29] Varda (1928- ) was born in Belgium and is the only woman director associated with the French New Wave, although she is often grouped with so-called Left Bank filmmakers. Initially trained as photographer, she moved into filmmaking with *La Pointe Courte* (1955), which scholars like Ginnette Vincendeau recognise as a precursor to the films Truffaut, Godard and other New Wave directors began to make in the 1960s ("How" n.pag).

[30] Berger (1926- ) began his career as a painter during the 1940s and moved into writing art criticism for *The New Statesman* during the 1950s. Since the publication of his first novel, *A Painter of Our Time*, in 1958, he has written numerous novels and essay collections, while also experimenting with screenplays. His novel *G* (1972) won the Booker Prize, and his book (1972) and television series *Ways of Seeing* (BBC, 1975) remain touchstone works in visual criticism.

[31] The author wishes to thank Triana-Toribio for her comments about Coixet's 'brand' after a panel at the GynoCine conference at UMass Amherst in October 2011.

first focusing on her mode of address, while the second concentrates on her use of a personal, embodied camera to guide the reaction and reception of the spectator. While this represents another area of intersection with reception studies, the concept of the haptic has been employed by this thesis to interrogate the construction of authorship, and thus focuses on the 'personal', embodied approach of the author, rather than the personal reaction of the spectator. In focusing on affective camerawork rather than affective mise-en-scéne, this thesis seeks to theorise the figure of the shooter-director, whose bodily connection to the camera allows for a haptic reading of the resulting footage.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 consider Coixet's evolving relationship to intertextuality and adaptation, as she inserts herself into a genealogy of auteurs by referencing their work, whether literary, artistic, musical or cinematic. In this way, she encourages her audience to make associations with other auteurs, while she also makes these links explicit in her public discourse. Yet, rather than just provide an empty copy or replica of her sources, she participates in an active intertextual relationship and creates a dialogue that oscillates between reverential and critical. Chapter 7 considers her revisionist investigation of melodrama as part of her auteur strategy, through referencing work by others and interrogating generic conventions from within. Although she references many directors and films in her productions, this section will concentrate on her melodramatic output as a case study, and make comparisons to the films of Douglas Sirk as an example of a European director working within the framework of classical Hollywood melodrama. As one of the directors championed as an auteur by *Cahiers*, Sirk also represents the kind of auteur Coixet seeks to emulate; a commercially successful director who is nonetheless acclaimed for his artistry and progressiveness at a time of great political and social repression. Whereas Sirk's films were celebrated as auteur artefacts years after their release, Coixet strives to place her work into the auteur category at the time of its production.

While the analysis of melodrama generates questions around the popular auteur and popular genres, Coixet maintains her auteur-artist persona through her postmodern reinterpretation of common tropes. While there are many successful mainstream auteurs, this analysis sidesteps the popular auteur in favour of the auteur-artist inflection that has been pursued by Coixet and other contemporary directors working outside mainstream financial structures, albeit creating films that fit into popular genres.

Chapter 8 will unpack Coixet's intertextual reimagining of prestige and non-prestige cultural products, and explore how intertextuality relates to the performed role of the auteur

filmmaker. As a complement to this discussion, Chapter 9 focuses on her more traditional or formal page-to-screen and stage-to-screen adaptations. As her career has progressed she has become more amenable to working with pre-existing scripts or adapting existing material, and the final chapter will explore her development as an auteur adapter as she moves closer to Hollywood. Finally, the conclusion will suggest how Coixet fits into the evolution of auteurism after more than twenty years as a film director, and assess the success of her auteur strategy. The concluding comments will also outline areas of further study that are beyond the scope of this work.

Although auteurism has been challenged, it has assimilated other critical modes and still informs how films are made, marketed and received. However, this is largely owing to the participation of the director in the auteurism industry, whether he or she is making a no-budget film or taking on an established franchise. With these issues in mind, this thesis aims to explore the synthesis between auteurism, authorship and artistry that Coixet represents and how she achieves this through a carefully constructed persona.

# PART ONE

# THEORIES OF AUTHORSHIP AND AUTEURISM: BECOMING AN AUTEUR

## Chapter 1: Authorship, Auteurism and the Role of the Film Director

In 1948, filmmaker Alexandre Astruc formulated the metaphor of the *camera stylo* or camera pen, writing:

> Direction is no longer a means of illustrating or presenting a scene, but a true act of writing. The film-maker/author writes with his camera as a writer writes with his pen.[32] ("Birth" 35)

Astruc composes one of the earliest, or at least, best-known metaphors that argue for the artistry of the director. This notion of the director as a writer provided the seeds for the *politique des auteurs*, which filmmaker and critic François Truffaut would develop in "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" (1954), and which André Bazin would criticise in "De la politique des auteurs" (1957). This policy and mode of film criticism, focused on the genius or talent of the director, became established in the pages of *Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Arts* in the 1950s before spreading to the US and UK during the 1960s.[33] Although approaches to the auteur have developed since this period, this shift in film criticism remains essential to an understanding of Coixet and her auteur strategy as a director who seeks artist status based on a coherent and traceable genius or persona similar to what Truffaut and his colleagues were advocating in the pages of *Cahiers*. Accordingly, the development and evolution of auteurism will be traced to the present day, with a special focus on the reimagining of the auteur in the 1990s, in order to position Coixet within a changing conception of film authorship and film directing in subsequent chapters and assess why she chooses to pursue this label. This section does not aim to give a full history of auteur criticism,[34] but rather highlight the main arguments and their relevance to this thesis, and chart the progression of the director from skilled worker to star, taking into account changing contexts of production, distribution and promotion, and revealing strategies of authorship employed by such star-directors. The notion of the auteur will not be called into question, rather, the flexibility of this label and its appeal for directors will be assessed.

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[32] Lucy Fischer notes that director Maya Deren had made a similar point a few years earlier in her essay "Cinema as an Art Form" (1946), but Astruc gets the credit for this shift in thinking around the role of the director (*Body* 16). However, this chapter does not seek to unravel the founding myths of auteurism, but rather to outline a brief history of theoretical standpoints important to this discussion.

[33] For analysis of *Cahiers* issues that discussed the *politique des auteurs* see Edward Buscombe ("Ideas of Authorship"). For a detailed critical history of the journal, see Antoine de Baecque (*Cahiers du Cinéma: histoire d'un revue Tome I* and *Tome II*), and for English translations of the articles published in the journal see Jim Hillier (*Cahiers du Cinéma. Vol.1, The 1950s* and *Cahiers du Cinéma. Vol.2, 1960-1968*).

[34] For further outlines of the history of auteurism see Caughie ("Authors"), Fischer (*Body*) and Wright Wexman ("Introduction").

Although single creative voices, such as the screenwriter or camera operator, had been celebrated in an auteurist manner since the beginning of the film industry, the so-called *politique des auteurs* provides a useful starting point for a discussion of director-driven auteurism, chiefly because of the role of the journal *Cahiers du Cinéma* as an intersection between filmmaking practice and criticism.[35] As a movement that would impact film directing and notions of film authorship for subsequent generations of filmmakers and critics, prominent French New Wave directors wrote for the journal, debating the merits and function of the auteur within reviews and essays during the 1950s and 1960s. Since the 1950s, auteur criticism has assimilated movements in cultural theory, and the basic tenet of the singular genius with a corpus worthy of study prevails in the film industry and contemporary film criticism. While big-name stars and powerful producers can dictate the production process, the director commonly receives the authorial credit. While *auteur* simply translates into English as 'author', maintaining the French spelling has marked this particular type of film authorship as superior or exceptional, creating a particular profile of filmmaker and a set of critical and reception practices that continue to evolve to the present day.

**Early Auteurist Critique and *Cahiers du Cinéma***

As Susan Hayward notes, *Cahiers* was not the first place where an auteurist slant dominated critical discourse, nor has the director always been the focus of auteurist criticism. The German term *Autorenfilm* was in use as early as 1913, and many screenwriters campaigned to be acknowledged as the authors of these films, rather than the directors.[36] Debates around popular film and art cinema in France during the 1920s also threw authorship into question; critics distinguished the autonomous artistry of the auteur film from the 'scenario' film, which was often based on an idea dreamt up by a studio executive rather than a writer or director. Although a writer-director model was commonplace at that time, authorship was ascribed to the film 'maker' or director, rather than the writer. Moving to a US context, in early silent cinema, film authorship was attributed to camera operators, until D.W.

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[35] Other important analyses such as Rudolph Arnheim's 1957 publication *Film as Art* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2006) and Béla Balázs's 1945 book (*Theory of the Film: Character and Growth of a New Art*. 1945. Trans. Bone, Edith: D. Dobson, 1952) have been omitted from this discussion, but represent important contributions to the theorisation of film as art and the director as an artist. Additionally, *Cahiers* is often positioned in opposition to another French journal *Positif*, which was closely associated with Surrealism. However, the polemic between these two journals helped to further the debate on film as art.

[36] For more analysis see Hayward (*Key Concepts* 19-20). Richard Koszarski also comments on pre-*Cahiers* criticism of the director ("Auteurism Revisited" 356).

Griffith emerged as the dominant creative force of his productions, making himself a household name.[37] In early twentieth-century Hollywood, the screenwriter or producer dominated the credits of a film and producers, in particular, were seen as the principal creator or auteur of a production. Directors, even those who were well-known names, were 'hired guns' contracted to complete the page to screen transformation.

In Europe, however, the film director evolved in a different way. Rather than follow the model provided by the *Autorenfilm* or the *film d'art*, the writings of Astruc and Truffaut shifted the focus to the figure of the auteur director as sole author. In its 1950s Gallic guise, auteurist criticism functioned as an editorial riposte to the dominant cinema in France at the time, known as the *tradition de la qualité*, a series of literary and theatrical adaptations that dominated French cinema screens at that time.[38] The arguments put forth in *Cahiers* represented a shift in ascribing authorship to the director, rather than the screenwriter. Truffaut, in particular, wanted to concentrate less on the context of production and trace authorship and artistry through an examination of style and mise-en-scène rather than scrutinising the context of the production or the ideology at work, and the older conceptualisations were left behind in favour of textual analysis and a focus on the singular genius whose identity or personality was inscribed across a body of work.[39] Therefore, the film shoot, rather than the script or its literary origins, became the locus of creativity and the person in charge of this locus, the director, became the creator of meaning in the finished film, with little or no regard paid to the writer, producer, actors or spectators.

Although he was not proposing a fully-formed thesis, Truffaut's article "A Certain Tendency" was revolutionary in its identification of a new kind of film and film director within his criticism of the *tradition de la qualité*. He employed the term *la politique des auteurs*, or auteur policy, in order to explain what he saw as a necessary shift in filmmaking practice and film reception, calling for authorship and creative control to be ascribed to the director. Buscombe neatly summarises the thrust of Truffaut's article:

> Instead of merely transferring someone else's work faithfully and self-effacingly, the *auteur* transforms the material into an expression of his [sic] own personality. ("Ideas" 76)

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[37] For more on Griffith as auteur, see Gunning ("D.W. Griffith"). Indeed, the idea of the camera operator as author is particularly relevant to shooter-directors like Coixet.

[38] In 1950s France, young filmmakers like Truffaut and his colleagues at *Cahiers* objected to the hypothesis that these types of film were more deserving of the label of quality than works produced by up-and-coming directors or from non-literary sources. For more analysis see Angela Martin ("Refocusing" 30).

[39] For similar analysis, see Hayward (*Key Concepts* 22).

Truffaut's piece deplores the 'scenarist' approach to filmmaking, where the 'finished' film is a written script for someone to add the pictures to ("A Certain" 15) and Buscombe underlines the importance of the 'personality' of the director in bringing the script to life on the screen. Truffaut's arguments point to a fundamental change in the way films were being made, positing the director as the creative nucleus of the production, with authorial control over the finished product, rather than a journeyman craftsperson who turned words into pictures or merely filmed theatrical dialogue. Although many of the Hollywood directors championed by early *Cahiers* reviews were under strict studio contracts and did not have final cut, the French critics writing for the magazine, many of them directors and aspiring auteurs, made a claim for the artistry and authorial control that could be gleaned from close readings of their chosen films, despite the industrial context of their production.[40] This decipherment or decoding of film as art within its most commercial context, Hollywood, was key to this new reading. Notably, the *Cahiers* critics were revisiting many Hollywood films that had been unavailable in France during the war years, and the glut of material on offer provided an experience not unlike today's DVD back catalogues or box-sets, and allowed for a certain type of reflective analysis amenable to the uncovering of patterns and continuity across a body of work, regardless of the context of production or the context of when the film was released.

Yet, most importantly, Truffaut's article began a critical shift towards the director as the ultimate creator of meaning in a film, and as a figure of equal cultural status to novelists and artists. Outside of the *Autorenfilm* and early conceptualisation of the *film d'art* in France, in the early twentieth century, film, and Hollywood film in particular, was seen as popular entertainment produced on a factory line and the idea that a personal vision or perspective could be ascribed to a filmmaker initially shocked many critics who believed that literature and fine art topped the creative hierarchy.[41] However, this shift was not without consequences. Like Hayward, John Hess analyses the *politique des auteurs* or auteur/author policy as a separation of art from socio-political context; an ideological shift at a particular moment in history, focused on what it meant to be a director:

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[40] Namely Jean-Luc Godard (1930- ), Jacques Rivette (1928- ), Eric Rohmer (1920-2010) and François Truffaut (1932-1984). Bordwell notes: "Of course many of the auteurs discovered by the *Cahiers* critics were unknown to the public at large, and they didn't make profitable pictures. In 1940s Hollywood, the successful Lang was Walter, not Fritz. But as the film industry developed, and as auteur criticism became prominent, directorial distinctiveness became a marketing angle. By the 1970s, the movie brats, along with older hands like Altman, were presenting themselves as having 'personal visions' carried by their films" ("Moonrise" n.pag).

[41] Victor Perkins discusses earlier conceptions of film as art in *Film as Film* ("The Sins" 1972).

> *La politique des auteurs* was, in fact, a justification, couched in aesthetic terms, of a culturally conservative, politically reactionary attempt to remove film from the realm of social and political concern, in which the progressive forces of the Resistance had placed all the arts in the years immediately after the war. ("La politique-Part One" 19) [42]

Despite Hess's reservations regarding Truffaut's motivation, and the particular historical context, discussing film in this way would prove essential to evolving conceptions of film authorship and would lay greater emphasis on textual analysis and mise-en-scène as the products of a director's creative vision. Hess notes that Truffaut's article functions as a manifesto for the New Wave filmmakers rather than the theory of reception that would develop in the US and UK during the 1960s ("La politique: Part Two" n.pag). However, this early claim for film to be viewed as a work of art created by a single artist rather than a collaborative industrial product has shaped how films are received to the present day, as audiences 'know' the directors whose films they choose to watch. The implications of the *Cahiers* writings have also affected filmmaking practices, with greater power and authorial agency given to directors to the exclusion of the screenwriter, producer or cinematographer, plus the praise or blame accorded to the director as the chief creative force on the film's release.

Despite this call to arms for filmmakers, the *politique des auteurs* remained largely dependent on the critical realm in order to impact viewing practices. Within *Cahiers*, adherence varied: Bazin, as the founder of the journal, pointed out its limitations, calling attention to the custom that the most enthusiastic person would often write about a certain film,[43] stressing his objections to this style of criticism, yet simultaneously expressing his belief "to a certain extent" in the idea of the auteur ("La politique" 130-131). Bazin saw the

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[42] Hess continues: "The individual, not the universe or even the individual in society, became the auteur critics' central concern. Bazin, they thought, was too concerned with things and not enough with people. Thus, while Bazin was more interested in the mutual interdependence of all things and the revelation of the divine order in the world, the auteur critics were concerned with the transcendence and salvation of the individual. This shift (really only a slight change in emphasis) follows logically from two causes. First, the auteur critics wanted primarily to make films and express their own personal vision of the world. They were, therefore, much more interested in the art of direction (an individual art) than was Bazin. They wanted to study the works of the directors they considered the best in order to learn how to make their own films. Also, as aspiring film makers, they could not accept Bazin's technical and stylistic proscriptions; they wanted to be free to use whatever technique and style suited victythe films they would make" ("La politique-Part One" n.pag). Hayward provides similar analysis, and notes that some of the *Cahiers* group went on to become filmmakers themselves, reinforcing the idea of the *politique* as a manifesto (*Cinema* 20-21).

[43] de Baecque notes the *politique des interviews* that went hand in hand with the *politique des auteurs* championed by *Cahiers*, whereby critics often used their questions concerning the directors and their methods to confirm the analysis put forth by their reviews (*Cahiers:Tome I* 128).

auteur/artist as a useful concept and drew distinctions between *cinéaste* auteurs and the inferior *metteurs-en-scène* or manufacturers, yet wanted to avoid biographical criticism, and flagged issues of anonymity in art and literature to suggest that the identity of the author can overshadow the work, especially when critics begin "by reading the signature at the bottom" ("La politique" 135-137). This cynicism would foreshadow the backlash against the Americanised version of 'auteur theory' during the 1960s.

Additionally, Bazin's article makes a case for the singularity of film as a "popular and industrial" art ("La politique" 135) that had advanced rapidly, rather than drawing comparisons with art forms that developed over centuries. He echoes Truffaut's desire to move film away from literary models of evaluation, but highlights the dangers of comparing film to arts like painting, where we are more certain of the artist's handiwork. Consequently, Bazin claims that the film director's genius can burn out just as quickly due to this heady pace of progression ("La politique" 139-140). This idea of a brief career, or a one-hit wonder, raises the possibility of being considered an auteur from a first film, or indeed, with just one 'good' film, rather than promoting auteurism as a status to be conveyed upon a director by critics.[44] Yet, aside from these valid discussions around the limitations of the *politique des auteurs*, this early conception of the director as artist has shaped film production and Film Studies since auteur criticism emerged, whether or not the *politique des auteurs* was accepted as a critical concept. The idea of a policy to be followed, whereby a director acted as the chief creator of meaning in a film and coherently pursued similar thematic concerns across a body of work, represented a French take on the Hollywood movie machine at a time before lightweight affordable cameras and 'independent' cinema. Nonetheless, it was important to classify cinema as an art, and wrest control from literary models of criticism while making a claim for the authorship of the director, especially within the industrial context of Hollywood.

**Sarris and Kael: More Than a Polemic**

Moving into an English-speaking realm of criticism, Sarris, writing in 1962, noted that the auteur 'theory' had not been developed since Truffaut's earlier writings, and transposed the *politique des auteurs* to a set of criteria that were applicable to auteur directors in a Hollywood context ("Notes-1962"), and employed "A Certain Tendency" as a manifesto, albeit

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[44] This thesis argues that it is now possible for directors to claim their own auteurship by following the strategies set out by auteur critics within their films and adhering to the auteurist marketing and promotional practices that have evolved since the 1960s.

for critics rather than filmmakers.[45] While Bazin had argued against colleagues who bestowed a certain infalliblilty on directors they admired, he also asserted that genius and talent should be recognised, but that mediocre directors can also produce exceptional work ("La politique" 137-138). Nevertheless, Sarris's translation adjusted the standard to his advantage and declaimed bad auteur films to be infinitely more interesting than non-auteur films, further entrenching the hierarchical leanings of this mode of criticism. This distinction between who was an auteur and who was not angered many critics, most notably Kael, who objected to this elitist approach, despite championing many directors as artists during her career.[46]

Following Truffaut, Sarris's criteria focused on the artistry of the director, but offered a more complex rendering of various talents he considered essential or desirable, metaphorically sketched in a hierarchical, yet overlapping structure of concentric circles. Accordingly, the auteur must display "technical competence as a criterion of value", "the ability to put a film together with some clarity and coherence" and personal style or the "distinguishable personality of the director as a criterion of value" ("Notes-1962" 562-563), conditions which Sarris placed inside the first two circles. He clarified that these qualities could be applied differently if the director had not written the script, considering that commissioned cinema involves personal expression through visual treatment rather than literary content. "Interior meaning" could then be "extrapolated from the tension between a director's personality and his material" ("Notes-1962" 562), and featured in the innermost circle. However, in making claims for a theory and in attempting to create a canon of auteur directors, Sarris (and his followers) alienated other critics who aimed for a less individualistic approach as film theory and criticism developed.[47] For this reason, the term 'auteur criticism' will be employed rather than 'auteur theory', to promote the idea of the director as artist and author while accepting that other creative voices contribute to film authorship.

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[45] Caughie notes that Sarris's article was first published by the journal *Film Culture*, which was founded by filmmaker Jonas Mekas (1922- ), an 'underground' auteur ("Authors" 11).

[46] For more of Kael's reviews, see her 1965 collection *I Lost It At the Movies: Film Writings 1954-1965* (New York; London: Boyars, 1994) and her 1984 collection *5001 Nights at the Movies*: *Shorter Reviews From the Silents to the '90s.* (New York; London: Boyars, 1993).

[47] Sarris's writings for the journals *Movie, Film Culture* and *Film Quarterly* influenced many critics and writers, and his followers were nicknamed 'Sarristes', while Kael's acolytes were known as the 'Paulettes'. Sarris responded to Kael's article with a riposte entitled "The Auteur Theory and the Perils of Pauline" published in *Film Quarterly*. The 'auteur theory' became so polemical that prominent critic Dwight MacDonald resigned from the same publication in 1962, citing his objections to auteurist criticism in the pages of the publication (Barry Keith Grant "Introduction" 2). Regarding other print media, Sam Roggen ("No Quarterly" 2013) makes a case for *Sequence* as an overlooked journal within the history of film theory.

Reflecting on the impact of the *politique des auteurs*, Buscombe notes that it was only loosely based on theoretical approaches and "was never to be made fully explicit", and whereas Sarris aimed to avoid confusion in christening his version the "auteur theory", his actions had the opposite effect ("Ideas" 75). Additionally, he argues that in simultaneously proposing a "method of classification" (which was useful) and a "means of measuring value" (which was extremely subjective), early auteur criticism was grounded in the nebulous category of "personality" and that Sarris's own application of the theory was inconsistent, and overlooked certain filmmakers for whom personal expression was tantamount ("Ideas" 79-80).[48]

Seeing the auteur theory as an elitist, comparatist standpoint that was not easily transposed onto the American movie-making context, Kael argues that the original conception of the *politique des auteurs* came from filmmakers that operated in an environment more akin to a dramatist or composer, who saw something in American cinema that their own film tradition lacked ("Circles" 23). Also reflecting on this Franco-American relationship, Ian Cameron comments that the idea of an authored cinema was acceptable everywhere except for the United States because of the industrial context of Hollywood film production, and dissects the more fluid connection between foreign/non-US films and 'Art' ("Films" 2). Cameron claims that the ability of the critic to look past bad subtitles raises the bar for dialogue in American movies, since even one badly written line would put an English-speaking reviewer "on their guard" ("Films" 2). However, Sarris would later write about the *Cahiers* critics' reliance on subtitles or dubbing for English-language films, claiming they could find "redeeming qualities" in films with poor dialogue and remain focused on the visual in a way that an American reviewer could not ("Auteurism is Alive" 62). These comments highlight the difficulties in creating a coherent auteurist perspective, since so much depends on where, when and how a film is viewed, reminding us that the 'personal' is just as important in relation to the critic as it is to the filmmaker.

In divergence from writer-focused critiques, as the editor of *Movie*, Cameron echoes Bazin in his criticism of the "rigidity" of auteur criticism, in that its followers saw no middle ground where alternative authorial voices such as screenwriters, producers or stars could flourish ("Films" 3). Kael went further, condemning the application of set scientific criteria and

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[48] However, despite his objections to other articulations of auteur criticism, Victor Perkins claims that "Sarris's auteurism was preferable to that of his successors because it acknowledged and tried to incorporate the issue of quality" ("Film Authorship" 58).

dissecting Sarris's concentric circles, instead foregrounding the importance of "perceiving what is original and important in *new* work and helping others to see" ("Circles" 14). Indeed, Kael's emphasis on the 'new' questions how the identification of ideological or thematic concerns and stylistic flourishes at the reception level constitute a theory of authorship, and, accordingly, this thesis suggests that inexperienced directors can also follow an auteur policy without having a body of work. Kael proposes that auteur critics are the victims of manipulation by directors, and respond exactly as the filmmaker intended ("Circles" 15), further entrenching the idea of a policy consciously followed during the creative process rather than a theory to be applied after the film's release.

Later in the 1960s, under the auspices of auteur structuralism, Peter Wollen's analysis of the auteur aimed to recognise the importance of the director and simultaneously create a more democratic space in order to uncover unconscious meanings in the films ("The Auteur" 1969; *Signs* 1969). These writings helped to create a strand of auteurist analysis that was more outward-looking than previous incarnations, and thus went some way to replace the political dimension that was lost in the *politique des auteurs*. However, the ideas proposed operated within the reception-focused paradigm that underscored the auteur criticism of the 1960s and Barthes's theories of readership. Writing in 1969, Wollen made a claim for the "indispensable" nature of auteur criticism and its ability to reveal authors "where none had been seen before" ("The Auteur" 56), while literary theory was simultaneously proclaiming the "death of the author" as a reaction to interpretative, biographical criticism.[49]

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[49] Literary theories of authorship provided early models for film during the early twentieth century, and by the end of the 1960s, the arguments of critics such as Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault would prove influential for problematisations of the author figure in film. As the focus shifted from the author as the sole creator of meaning within a text to the reader as an active agent of meaning-making, Barthes's "The Death of the Author" (1968) marked a new phase in literary theory, while the subsequent critical discussion filtered into film criticism. However, Susan Sontag's "Against Interpretation" (1964) predates Barthes by four years, and Caughie notes that the essay discussed many similar issues ("Authors" 21), and called for an erotics of art rather than hermeneutics, shifting focus away from authorial intent. Mirroring Barthes' concerns, yet grounded in issues of copyright, Foucault's "What is an Author?" (1969) also made an impact on film, as he describes how the legal and literary systems need an author to apportion blame or praise, although the identification of an author is not always an easy task, nor an important one when dealing with certain categories of writing. While Foucault's concept of the "author-function" (whereby the famous author's name provides a definition of the work) would have a bearing on later iterations of auteurism, this thesis wishes to focus on the conscious shaping of an auteur persona by a director as an active, strategic force.

Paraphrasing director Jean Renoir,[50] Wollen suggests that a director spends his/her whole life trying to make one film and it is the critic's task to construct this film. In an interview with Joseph Gelmis, Italian filmmaker Bernardo Bertolucci[51] makes a similar statement, consciously or unconsciously paraphrasing Renoir:

> Godard started with *Breathless* and continued with the same film that proceeds along his whole life. It's one film, even if it has many titles or chapters. It's the same film and it walks along with him. To make film is a way of life. If we take out the title of the film and 'the end' and put the films all together we will have the figure of one man, of an auteur, the life of an auteur, transferred into many different characters naturally. But the film is one film. (in Gelmis *Film Director* 117)

This kind of discourse underlines the importance of the 'personal' to the auteur; rather than being a hired hand the director is trying to convey something personal and a 'world view' through an 'ideal' film. Yet, rather than reflecting the autobiographical, by revisiting the same film over and over, an auteur can expound his or her 'personality' as a coherent artistic viewpoint, or as an identifiable brand. In this way, auteur filmmaking becomes a reflective process that produces self-reflexive films. Nonetheless, this need to look back at a body of films *a posteriori* leads Wollen to see criticism as a revelatory process which unlocks meaning, giving agency to the critic or spectator as an active participant, while earlier advocates focused their energies on the director's intended meaning(s) across a body of work.

In *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (1969), Wollen notes the importance of the corpus for the "moment of synthesis" by a critic examining an individual film (*Signs* 71).[52] However, by focusing on auteurism as an industrial and artistic strategy, this discussion aims to question the corpus as a necessary criterion for the presence of the auteur. Although a coherent body of work helps in the identification of themes, motifs and "inner meaning" in Sarris's terms, more contemporary iterations of auteurism have moved beyond textual analysis and take the production and industrial contexts into account, including the director's construction of self within the media, some of which will be discussed below. Yet, this focus

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[50] Son of Impressionist painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Jean Renoir (1894-1979) is often noted as one of the 'great' directors, and he made over forty films in France and Hollywood during his lifetime. He began his career during the silent period and came to the attention of international critics during the 1930s.

[51] Bertolucci (1941- ) began his career as an assistant director to another noted auteur, Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975). He emerged as a director during the 1960s and continues to make films to this day, often dealing with his political views and controversial topics.

[52] Writing in 1990, Victor Perkins offers a robust critique of Wollen's theories, and claims that auteur structuralism was based on oppositions that were often commonplace rather than extraordinary, and that the focus on an analysis of a filmmaker's corpus was detrimental to the patterns and continuities that could be traced within single films ("Film Authorship" 59).

on film as an art form during the 1950s and 1960s marked a change in the conceptualisation of the director that would impact on future filmmaking practices, film marketing and criticism, whether or not the idea of the auteur was widely accepted. The ranking and categorisation of directors, however, served only to bolster the idea that 'auteur theory' was an elitist approach based on value judgements. Consequently, this thesis is not concerned with who is an auteur and who is not, but rather who wants to be an auteur and why.

Widening the debate, Graham Petrie made further objections to the 'auteur theory' within the pages of *Film Quarterly* in 1973 ("Alternatives"), suggesting that a more collaborative approach to authorship should be applied to film with respect to the 'personal' aspects so important to auteurism.[53] Petrie exemplifies the dominance of a performer like Bette Davis in star-driven vehicles such as *Dark Victory* (Edmund Goulding, 1939) and *Now Voyager* (Irving Rapper, 1949) that do not neatly fit within auteurist categorisations.[54] While refusing to call Davis an author or creator, Petrie allows her ownership rather than authorship of the films, in that audiences went to these films to see Davis, and not the work of the directors in question ("Alternatives" 29-30). He also comments on how films were shaped to suit stars like Davis, Greta Garbo or James Stewart,[55] noting an important interplay with the director and the discourse of power that exists within every film production, whether the director was recognised as an auteur or not ("Alternatives" 34). This consideration of star power, audience appeal and collaboration marks an important shift towards the industrial context of filmmaking and reception, building on earlier objections such as Kael's "Circles and Squares". Victor Perkins writes extensively on the role of the director as

> the only member of the production team who can see (whose job it is to see) the whole film rather than particular aspects, the interrelationship of the parts rather than the parts as

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[53] Responding to Petrie's article, Hess notes the importance of the Christian-realist aesthetic that characterised the writings of Bazin and Roger Leenhardt as film critics within *Esprit*, a group influenced by the Personalism movement and a strong religious ethic that Hess notes is lacking in most analyses of auteurism ("Auteurism and After" 29). Sarris claimed that both Hess and Petrie had misinterpreted him ("Auteurism is Alive" 60), seeing their clash in the pages of *Film Quarterly* as more polemical than his own spat with Kael. He also notes that he had named Garbo as an auteur in her own right in a previous essay.

[54] Davis (1908-1989) was essential in bringing *Dark Victory* to cinema screens and her star persona was crucial to the film's success at the box-office after the popularity of *Jezebel* (William Wyler, 1938). She also campaigned for the lead role in *Now Voyager*.

[55] Initially a silent-film star, Garbo (1905-1990) remained popular with the advent of sound, despite her reluctance to maintain a public persona. However, studios capitalised on her elusiveness and she was often cast as a 'mysterious' figure in films. Stewart (1908-1997) was known for his roles as an 'average', plain-speaking American, especially in his early career, even when working across a range of genres.

separate tasks.[56] (*Film as Film* 83)

For better or worse, this conception of the director as a unifying, synthesising force emerges from the various versions of auteur criticism during the 1960s and 1970s, whether or not critics agreed on a director's singular genius and right to authorship.

**Academic, Political and Cultural Changes: Independent Cinema and Art Cinema**

Film Studies began to make an impression in the 1970s, as universities started to offer courses and the number of scholarly publications grew; and Caughie notes that the notion of the auteur helped the burgeoning discipline to become respected within the academy ("Authors" 14).[57] Indeed, film scholarship has been essential to the survival of auteurism, providing a familiar pedagogical structure comparable to literature courses. While the impact of cultural studies and psychoanalysis would have an effect on film theory during the 1970s, filmmaking was also undergoing a period of great change. As the studio era drew to a close, post-1968 cinema and counterculture shook up the film industry, with independent filmmaking taking off as technological advances made cameras cheaper and more portable. Filmmaking was no longer confined to a studio setting and the French New Wave in particular had inspired many young and aspiring practitioners. *Cahiers du Cinéma* was moving in new directions, reflecting the tensions between Hollywood commercialism and the political and intellectual readings of auteurist films.[58] Writing in 1971, Gelmis notes that although there were already various established "superstar directors", the first "authentic film generation" was emerging from film schools and from other media as the 1960s drew to a close (*Film Director* x), including prospective directors who were not the studio "hirelings" of the past, nor had they apprenticed on B-movie sets, instead they represented a new type of "personal" director who came from outside the studio system (*Film Director* xi-xii). As the number of film school graduates began to increase, Gelmis anticipated a change in industrial practices to accommodate this new generation (*Film Director* xv).

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[56] Taking these industrial concerns into account, in 1972, Perkins analyses the role of the director in depth in *Film as Film*, discussing issues of authorship, ownership, control and collaboration.

[57] Marvin D'Lugo and Paul J. Smith note that auteurism initially provided a favourable approach for scholars who had "migrated" to film from other academic departments, before Film Studies became an academic discipline in its own right ("Auteurism" 115-116).

[58] For brief descriptions of this period in *Cahiers* history see Wright Wexman ("Introduction") and Hayward (*Key* 23-26) or for a more detailed account, see de Baecque (*Cahiers:Tome I*).

While these changes made it easier for young filmmakers to get started in the industry, women were still largely excluded from filmmaking, film criticism and film history. Those who did direct films were often outside the mainstream, creating experimental films and shorts. While female stars were a huge box-office draw, many Hollywood films cast them in stereotypical, objectifying roles. However, feminist perspectives impacted greatly upon film theory during the 1970s. Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) opened a door for feminist criticism of female representation, focusing on the power of the scopophilic 'look' as a source of pleasure for the male film director or male spectator. Her Lacanian-influenced analysis of this voyeuristic male gaze and the objectification of the female body would inspire film scholars of every standpoint, but few critics focused on the minority of women making films before and during the decade. Other psychoanalytic theories would also greatly impact upon Film Studies during this period, but Mulvey's interpretation and its implications for feminist perspectives represent a watershed moment.

However, writing two years earlier, Johnston makes a claim for "an analysis of the workings of myth and the possibilities of subverting it in the Hollywood system", noting how it "could prove of use in determining a strategy for the subversion of ideology in general" ("Women's Cinema" 126). Many women aspire to work within the male-dominated cinema industry that Johnston asserts as an equally valid sphere for female filmmakers ("Women's Cinema" 126), rather than existing on the fringes with experimental films, while the progressive films that Johnston proposes make way for more varied and balanced female representation on screen, whether or not there is a woman in the director's chair.[59] Despite the growing influence of feminist perspectives within academia at this time, women filmmakers remained marginal figures and the auteur category would not be extended to include them for many years. Johnston's 'counter-cinema' became an oppositional movement, with feminist filmmakers creating experimental works and short films as a deliberate break from the mainstream, but also as the one of the few outlets for female creativity in a patriarchal industry.

While feminist perspectives were often tied to psychoanalytic theory, a similar interdisciplinary methodology was advocated by Robin Wood. His article "Ideology, Genre, Auteur" (1977) suggested using multiple approaches for a more complete understanding of a

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[59] Caughie notes the complex relationship between auteurism and the avant-garde, a category where the artistry of the director was readily recognised ("Authors" 8-9); however, while the female avant-garde auteur represents a figure worthy of further exploration, this chapter will remain focused on the more mainstream, commercial iterations of the auteur.

film. Rather than subvert an exploration of ideology or generic conventions, Wood suggests that

> [i]t can perhaps be argued that works are of especial interest when the defined particularities of an auteur interact with specific ideological tensions and when the film is fed from more than one generic source. ("Ideology" 672)

This combined, yet selective method provides a more nuanced model for auteur studies. Rather than ignore ideology in the name of artistry as the *Cahiers* critics had, or reject the concept of the singular genius, Wood's article paved the way for a synthesis of theoretical viewpoints and a less polarised approach to the auteur. Indeed, feminist criticism need not exclude the male-dominated category of the auteur, while psychoanalysis did not have to focus solely on Oedipal drama or the return of the repressed.

Writing from a similarly reflective standpoint in 1981, Steve Neale commented on the turbulent critical landscape of the 1960s and 1970s, claiming that the arguments were more complex than the polemics suggest, but that debates were over-reliant on literary terminologies and that the focus on defining film artists led to a lack of definition around art cinema itself, as a systematic concept ("Art" 12-13).[60] Neale comments on the importance of authorship, or "marks of enunciation" seen in art films, a mode of filmmaking often closely tied to the figure of the auteur:

> Even where the marks of enunciation themselves are heterogeneous, they tend to be unified and stabilised within the space of an institution which reads and locates them in a homogeneous way (each mark serving equally as the sign of the author) and which mobilises that meaning in accordance with commodity-based practices of production, distribution and exhibition (the mark of the author is used as a kind of brand name, to mark and to sell the filmic product). ("Art" 15)

The focus on the author as a sign or signature that emerged from the semiotic approach of Wollen (and others) and Raymond Bellour's idea of "enunciative presence" are preserved by Neale's argument, but with a greater emphasis on industrial conditions and how these conditions influence authorship practices.[61] Art cinema and auteur cinema have become somewhat interchangeable terms, often varying only in the way they are marketed.

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[60] Neale clarified the characteristics he felt were inherent to the category, writing: "Art films tend to be marked by a stress on visual style (an engagement of the look in terms of a marked individual point of view rather than in terms of institutionalised spectacle), by a suppression of action in the Hollywood sense, by a consequent stress on character rather than plot and by an interiorisation of dramatic conflict" ("Art" 13).

[61] Stam and Burgoyne describe Bellour's idea of "enunciative presence" in relation to Hitchcock as marking his "presence as creator/narrator explicitly, revealing these films to be a mode of *discours*" ("Film Narratology" 108). This idea of the signs of film authorship entering into a discourse or conversation will be discussed in Chapter 8 regarding Coixet's use of intertextuality.

Consequently, Janet Harbord notes that "[t]he effect was to cleave a distance between the 'old' art-based movement and the 'new' radical technology of film, whilst also positioning this particular type of film culture as heir to the avant-garde tradition" (*Film Cultures* 28).[62]

Aside from new definitions of 'art' cinema, changing conceptions of the auteur, informed by the study of mass culture and entertainment would prove influential during the 1980s and 1990s.[63] Since this period, middle- to high-budget independent film has become a microcosm of Hollywood, with its own defined distribution and exhibition channels, as well as an established festival circuit culminating in Sundance. As a mode of filmmaking promoted, produced and consumed in a similar fashion to art cinema, independent cinema has also been theorised as an 'authored' cinema, with a maverick director/artist at the helm. However, E Ann Kaplan comments on the "utopian myth" of "totally independent cinematic practice" due to the contradictions at work within the social institutions where film is embedded, such as filmmakers needing funding from institutions they oppose, the lack of channels for distribution and exhibition of films with challenging or "anti-illusionist" cinematic strategies, and the reality that such directors are, in a sense, preaching to the converted, attracting familiar audiences with similar values (*Women* 196). So-called independent directors can employ auteurist strategies, promoting themselves as the creative force behind the film, a strategy made all the more authentic by their financial struggles or fiscal autonomy. Rather than debate what constitutes art cinema or independent cinema, this thesis will take both terms as synonymous with auteur films in relation to their positioning of the director as artist and as an oppositional figure to the hired hands at work on wholly commercial projects.[64] Recently, as the financial resources of conglomerates have diminished, more studios are now looking for an underground hit to distribute,[65] while financial investment by television

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[62] Previous to the publication of Neale's article, David Bordwell's "Art Cinema" (1979) makes the case for art cinema as its own genre with particular conventions and this thesis argues that auteur cinema operates in a similar fashion.

[63] Dana Polan ("Brief Encounters" 1986), Barbara Klinger ("Digressions" 1989; *Beyond the Multiplex* 2006) and Douglas Kellner ("Culture Industries") comment on the effect of mass culture on filmmaking and film reception practices, influenced by Frankfurt School theorists like Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) and Max Horkheimer (1895-1973).

[64] For an early discussion of independent cinema authorship see Sue Clayton and Jonathan Curling ("On Authorship", 1979). For an overview of contemporary issues focused on American independent cinema see Geoff King (*American Independent Cinema*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2005).

[65] Maule writes: "The commercialization of the filmmaker-author is now a prominent issue outside of Europe as well and is prompting new debates on the actual autonomy of North American 'indie' cinema. Hollywood distributors, the majors, and international distribution companies based in the US (Miramax above all) have lately appropriated the independent cinema movement by monitoring the circuit of film festivals and art houses in North America for films to buy and distribute within the

networks in production budgets also provides a guaranteed exhibition channel for the work, opening up opportunities for auteur cinema.

Within the Hollywood model, Bordwell, Thompson and Staiger provide analysis of classical Hollywood, whereby a classical artist negotiates the 'rules' of their medium to successfully express their originality, but remains within a defined system:

> The Hollywood auteur film offers a particular pleasure and knowledge: the spectator comes to recognize norm and deviation oscillating, perhaps wrestling, within the same art work, that work being actively contained by the pressures of tradition.[66] (*The Classical* 82)

This containment within a system is important, as it allows the auteur to be defined against the system and isolated as a singular genius within a collaborative enterprise. The compromise between the individual and collaborative modes remains crucial to the success of an auteur, and this thesis seeks to address this negotiation as it has developed since the late twentieth century.

**Auteurism After 1990: Auteur Strategies**

Moving into the 1990s, with the benefit of hindsight, Wood reflects on decades of scholarship on film authorship and concludes that the *Cahiers* notion of authorial inscription or visibility is almost "usable", and is preferential to auteur criticism founded upon structuralism, semiotics or deconstruction, where the "demolition of the author" is a necessary action ("Authorship" 51-55). Instead, Wood offers the term "intervention" as a more appropriate way to describe "an active and dynamic involvement that may or may not operate partly on the level of intention" by a director ("Authorship" 54). This reformulation seems an apt term for the more material approach to auteurism that would develop during the decade, where the *Cahiers* figure of the auteur and their personality came to the fore once more, but as part of a more nuanced interaction with the different strands of auteur

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national and international theatrical exhibition circuit" (*Beyond* 54). For example, the Weinstein Company distributed "silent movie" *The Artist* (Michel Hazanavicius, 2011), which was a crossover hit at the box office and during awards season, and proved that investment in independent productions pays off.

[66] Bordwell, in particular, argued against the use of 'Grand Theory' within film analysis, and writes: "Contrary to what many believe, a study of United Artists' business practices or the standardization of continuity editing or the activities of women in early film audiences need carry no determining philosophical assumptions about subjectivity and culture, no univocal metaphysical or epistemological or political presumption – in short, no commitment to a Grand Theory" ("Contemporary", 29). Although he has been criticised for such 'anti-theory' approaches, Bordwell's encouragement to view film as film and focus on more materialist and empirical aspects of film analysis represents an important development within Film Studies.

criticism that had developed in previous years.

Similarly, Victor Perkins identifies the 'errors' of auteurism owing to the "exaggerated concern with the continuities and coherence across a director's work" ("Film Authorship" 57). However, continuity and coherence also impact upon the persona of the auteur, outside of their films, an aspect which would be dissected by Timothy Corrigan, one of the most important scholars in the field of contemporary film authorship and auteurism. He observes that we already know what an auteur film is about before we go to see it, because of auteurist marketing strategies ("Commerce" 45), which contribute to the cult of personality around the director/author as artist, and distinguishes between the "commercial auteur" and the "auteur of commerce". According to his writings in 1992, the first category of directors is defined by recognition, "either foisted upon them or chosen by them" and where "their agency produces and promotes texts that invariably exceed the movie itself, both before and after its release" (*A Cinema* 107).

In this examination of auteur marketing, Corrigan exemplifies the director interview as a text that exceeds the film and the walls of the cinema, as a

> documentable, extratextual space where the auteur, in addressing cults of fans and critical viewers, can engage and disperse his or her own organizing agency as auteur. (*A Cinema* 108)

Unlike the early *Cahiers* critics, Sarris does not regard the interview as an "indispensable weapon" in what he calls his "critical arsenal" and claims he was uninterested in the "clinical personalities" of directors when writing in 1962 ("Revisited" 23).[67] Corrigan, however, shows how directors themselves have taken an interest in conveying this clinical personality through interviews, regardless of the interests of the critic or spectator. The idea that directors can 'choose' recognition is important for this thesis, as Coixet oscillates between being an unknown director abroad and a stalwart of the industry in Spain, and 'authors' the promotion of her films according to each market.

Corrigan's second category of "auteur of commerce" appears where

> a filmmaker attempts to monitor or rework the institutional manipulations of the auteurist position within the commerce of the contemporary movie industry. If normally the auteurist text promotes and recuperates a movie, these filmmakers now run the commerce of the auteurist and autonomous self up against its textual expression in a way that shatters the coherence of both authorial expression and stardom. (*A Cinema* 107)

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[67] Sarris continues: "I am, if anything, anti-interview in that I believe that a director's formal utterances (his films) tell us more about his artistic personality than do his informal utterances (his conversations)", noting that he was far more influenced by the writings in pre-1960s *Cahiers* ("Revisited" 24).

This commentary problematises the early auteurist focus on textual analysis, as promotional practices have come to place greater emphasis on the 'personality' of the director as a familiar brand to be monetised, rather than as a mark of quality. Corrigan's "auteur of commerce", then, tries to preserve the quality and artistry supposed by auteur status, yet understands the promotion-of-self needed within the contemporary film industry. Discussing Alexander Kluge,[68] Corrigan writes that the German director uses the practice of auteurism as "an extension of his early attempts to dismantle the aura of auteurism as expression", instead using it "as a textual material in its own right, a textual material through which he can act out and disperse the specific problematic of an authoritative agency" ("Commerce" 44). Framing auteurist practices as textual material adds weight to the idea that auteurism is a policy for filmmakers to follow, and ultimately one that they can control. For example, through dismantling the 'aura' of auteurism, filmmakers can attempt to direct the reception of their films by presenting themselves in a paradigm of stardom, promoting the 'personality' that was so important to early auteurist critics as an extratextual factor, rather than as a motif to be 'read' in the film text by the critic or spectator.[69] Directors may not control marketing concerns directly, but their careers and authorship practices are nonetheless influenced by it. Within the realms of auteur cinema, or art cinema or independent cinema, directors tend to exert more influence over this process than their blockbuster counterparts, often due to budgeting constraints, but selling the film as a product and its author as a commodity remain central concerns for even the most avowedly non-commercial contemporary director.

Writing in 1993, Dudley Andrew observes that the auteur has returned to academic respectability because of new studies and perspectives like those mentioned above, stating that "[c]inema is part of the media economy that has reduced the auteur to a sign, indeed precisely to a signature" ("Unauthorized" 82). Rather than 'reduce' the auteur's power, the greater visibility of the director has increased their currency in the media economy that Andrew refers to. Directors have enjoyed or endured star status since the early days of film, but since DVD packages and the internet have facilitated easier access to production materials such as interviews or 'behind the scenes' footage that promote the visibility of the

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[68] German director and author Kluge (1932- ) is associated with the New German Cinema movement that emerged during the 1960s. Like Bertloucci, he began his film career under a noted auteur, working as an assistant to Fritz Lang. Corrigan exemplifies Kluge as an anti-commercial director, yet argues that auteurist practices are equally relevant to Kluge as they are to more mainstream filmmakers.

[69] Pat Brereton notes the growing importance of the press pack for "framing responses" to a film (*Smart Cinema* 4-5).

filmmaker alongside the stars, the opportunities for directors to debate and declare their authorship have increased greatly. The popularity of film festivals has also contributed to the advances in author interaction with the public, especially in relation to art cinema, with director question-and-answer sessions a common feature of most festival programmes. The ongoing debate around the authorship of films and the subsequent auteurist marketing of cinematic by-products such as DVDs indicates that auteur film has become a genre or sub-genre like any other, with stylistic conventions and representational norms in place, albeit personal to each director and their corpus. This idea that auteur films constitute a coherent genre plays into the increased focus on branding and marketing, where the author represents a commodity to be packaged and sold as a signature, a mark of quality or a mark of familiarity.[70]

Equally, Mayne comments on the critical tendency to categorise films by director in the same way that films are classified by genre ("Female" 267). Moreover, auteur films are unified by the director's desire for visibility and artistic dominance within the text, expressed through stylistic idiosyncrasy and, subsequently, spectators choose to watch films by name directors just as they would a western, a comedy or a drama, because they enjoy and expect certain conventions from each, whether stylistic, thematic or semantic. Similarly, Hamid Nacify argues for a new genre of the transnational independent auteur film into which he places works by filmmakers who interrogate foreign genre cinema ("Phobic" 121). However, this framework could be extended to include all auteur films if we choose to look from what Catherine Grant calls the "resistant demand-side appeal of auteurism" ("www.auteur.com" 106), and focus on the pleasures offered by this familiarity with a director's work through knowing his or her corpus.

Moving later into the 1990s and to a more international perspective, Maule suggests that "in postmodern culture film authorship indicates a type of filmmaking where agency is positioned *from within* the norms and styles of dominant institutional cinema" ("De-authorizing" 114), noting that this is particularly relevant to Western European cinema where "film authorship has traditionally claimed its expressive distinction from commercial production, although operating in the same predicament" ("De-authorizing" 114-115). This broadening of the auteur paradigm incorporates the context of the film's production in favour

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[70] Similarly, Sarris notes how he constantly revised his definition of auteurism in his later writings, stressing in a 1998 interview that he would emphasise auteur films as a genre with recognisable conventions of technical competence, distinguishable personality and interior meaning (in Wolberg Weiss "A Film By" 30-31).

of the *Cahiers* era focus on mise-en-scène, yet still excluded women, who were often marginalised into a separate category of 'female filmmakers' or denied access to the auteur label.[71] By the 1990s, Mayne notes that feminist film theory had engaged in a discussion of female filmmakers but avoids the topic of female authorship, and claims that critics are reluctant to use female examples unless "such theorizing affirms the difficulty of women's relationship to the cinematic apparatus" ("Female" 264).[72] Similar arguments apply to the marginal status of European directors.

Neale notes that a filmmaking movement like the French New Wave grew out of a critical writing practice and that it "related itself to the re-construction of a national film-making tradition" ("Art" 19), but the 1980s saw more attention paid to the specifics of these national cinema industries and the writing practices that constituted them.[73] Also, the idea of national cinemas as an opposition to Hollywood production grew, with Wright Wexman reflecting in 2003:

> Hollywood has put its own spin on entertainment that can provide audiences with an experience of uncomplicated pleasure, implicitly characterizing the art cinema from abroad as a difficult and demanding form produced by artists rather than crowd-pleasing entertainers. Tellingly, such discourses have the effect of marginalizing foreign films in the marketplace. ("Introduction" 10)

The dichotomy created between art and entertainment encompasses the idea of the auteur as artist and the 'hired gun' director, who is subservient to the desires of the audience. Auteur films are often placed outside the realm of entertainment, especially those that require subtitles, adding to the notion of the auteur director as an oppositional figure, or of foreign films as culturally prestigious. However, the same divisions exist within the national cinemas exporting these filmmakers, with a cohort of 'respected' directors becoming household names in their home territories while simultaneously exported abroad as examples of national cinema.

Maule contends that the concept of film authorship was established in postwar Europe as a marketing strategy to counter Hollywood ("De-authorizing" 113), and notes how the film industries in Spain, Italy and France, for example, have been monitoring authorship as 'marketing appeal' since the 1950s ("De-authorizing" 114). This historical context supports her

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[71] Rachel Williams's 2001 PhD thesis charts the unsteady rise of female directors like Bigelow, Penny Marshall and Jodie Foster in Hollywood, noting that many women filmmakers "graduated" from television production, which Williams documents as a more accessible career path for women ("No job" 66).

[72] Writing in 1988, Kaja Silverman discusses similar issues in her chapter on "The Female Authorial Voice" (reprinted in Wright Wexman *Film* 50-75).

[73] For more on this topic in relation to Spanish national cinema see D'Lugo ("Authorship").

contention that auteur marketing is not a new phenomenon; however, it has emerged as an increasingly central concern in contemporary auteur studies since Corrigan's *A Cinema Without Walls* (1992), especially in regard to art cinema, independent cinema and national cinema. Despite expanded conceptions of the director as an artist and the inclusion of industrial considerations throughout the 1990s, auteur study remained focused on practices of film reception. However, since the 2000s, critics have begun to explore the effects of auteurism on the filmmaking process and further incorporate star studies into auteur criticism.

**Stardom and Hyphenated Authorship**

Following *Cahiers* and Sarris's supposition that authorship is the creation of meaning, it can be considered that stars can contribute as much signification as the screenwriter or director. As the most outwardly commercial facet of film marketing, star-driven works assign a degree of authorship to on-screen performers, relying on their image to generate financial investment in the pre-production stage and to guarantee box-office capital on the film's release.[74] In criticism and other writing, stars will often be referred to by their real names rather than that of their character, reminding the reader of their pre-formed persona, and how it eclipses their on-screen characters. Richard Dyer provides one of the earliest arguments for the auteur theory to be rewritten in terms of star authorship:

> When the performer becomes so important to a production that he or she changes lines, adlibs, shifts meaning, influences the narrative and style of a film and altogether signifies something clear-cut to audiences despite the intent of writers and directors, then the acting of that person assumes the force, style and integrity of an auteur.[75] (*Stars* 153)

However, regardless of acting skills and authority over the script, this positioning of the performer as a creator of meaning independent of onscreen character extends to the extratextual power of the star to influence both the reception of the film and the pre-production process, with the financing of many films dependent on who is 'attached' to the project.

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[74] For similar views see Shingler (*Star Studies* 8).

[75] In this quotation, Dyer is commenting on Patrick McGilligan's *Cagney: The Actor as Auteur* (South Brunswick: A.S Barnes, 1975).

Additionally, the figure of the actor-producer is on the rise in Hollywood,[76] with high-earning stars often investing in, starring in, and making executive decisions about projects.[77] While the numbers of actor-producers are growing, as mentioned above, 'name' producers have dominated the film industry since its early years, especially in Hollywood. Nonetheless, a creative producer can be seen as a collaborator, rather than a threat to the director's autonomy. Polan summarises:

> Where director auteurism often saw the producer as the impediment to artistry, he is now imagined to be a source of creative achievement. [...] there has even been an anthropomorphization of the studio system itself as if the anonymous rules of that system themselves constitute a creative force and vision. Auteurs are now everywhere, not just in the stratum of directors. ("Auteur desire" n.pag)

Similarly, a star or producer often has the power to attract other coveted performers to a project, or can build on a network of connections from previous productions to attain the desired casting. Filmmakers and film financiers, then, recognise the power of the performer-star or creative producer and capitalise on this brand as a mark of recognition, or perceived quality.

Correspondingly, a director can endorse his or her own authorship as a star director. Although they may not appear onscreen, this type of authorship is promoted through interviews, DVD extras, public appearances and other 'authored' projects where the filmmaker's name appears. Directors (or other film professionals) can promote themselves in similar ways to stars, whether as celebrity or artist, rather than disappearing into the background behind the camera. Foregrounding authorship or ownership in this way encourages auteurist marketing methods as well as auteurist criticism, with the participation

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[76] A pertinent example in the Spanish context is *Vanilla Sky* (Cameron Crowe, 2001), produced by and starring Tom Cruise. While Crowe is recognised as a 'personal' director, and is credited as writer-director, the involvement of Cruise (and Penélope Cruz) overshadowed the 'aura' of the filmmaker, especially in Spain, where audiences were more interested in the film as a remake of auteur-in-the-making Amenábar's *Abre los ojos* (1997). Crowe wrote in *The Guardian:* "I'd always written my own original screenplays, but *Open Your Eyes*, with its open-ended and impressionistic themes, felt like a great song for our 'band' to cover [...]Cruise had been a big fan of *Open Your Eyes*, and agreed that we could honour the original and add some new chords of our own. Our journey began" ("So lonely" n.pag). While much media attention was showered on Cruise and Cruz, who became a couple shortly after filming, US and UK critics would pay more attention to Crowe who had recently enjoyed acclaim for *Almost Famous* (2000). Amenábar remained relatively unknown outside Spanish-speaking countries until later that year when he released *The Others* (2001), also produced by Cruise's production company.

[77] In Coixet's case, actress Cruz was instrumental in ensuring *Elegy* (2008) was filmed, and in securing Coixet as the director. As a contrast, Sandra Bullock was 'attached' to an early incarnation of *Million Dollar Baby* (Clint Eastwood, 2004) that was offered to Coixet as a director-for-hire, which the director refused, citing Bullock's involvement as a turn-off (Cerrato *Isabel* 162), and demonstrating the power relations between auteur and star.

or 'intervention' of the film professional in this process. However, auteurist strategies such as this are not limited to well-known directors or even to acclaimed auteurs; the student or aspiring filmmaker can utilise the same practices. Since the democratisation of filming practices began with the advent of affordable, lightweight cameras in the 1960s, amateur filmmakers make short films in order to get noticed by the industry with low or non-existent budgets that necessitate crew members carrying out multiple roles on set. This tradition continues into independently produced feature filmmaking, creating a hyphenated authorship as a means of extending or guaranteeing authorship, or what Adrian Martin analyses as a desire for "possessory credit" ("Possessory" 94). The term writer-director has existed since the early days of film, but this thesis argues that since the introduction of digital film, hyphenated authorship has escalated to new heights, where technological advances allow first-time filmmakers to compete with established directors on a stylistic level.[78]

Additionally, director-star (as opposed to star director) is a less common permutation than writer-director or director-producer, yet Sayad chooses to highlight this category as the ultimate expression of "performing authorship".[79] Building on Neale's idea of "marks of enunciation" ("Art" 14), Sayad emphasises "authorial self-construction" and privileges the author's corporeality rather than critical construction or the author's abstraction, and seeks to render these abstractions superfluous, focusing on "the author's physical presence as much as a 'spiritual' one" (*Performing* 6-7). The author is neither absent nor authoritative, but functions as a protagonist within the work (*Performing* 15).[80] Yet, this idea of direction itself as a performance further pushes the director into the realm of the star that plays a role onscreen while maintaining the aura or personality that audiences recognise. Whether this

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[78] For example, Shane Carruth premiered his home-made debut *Primer* (2004) at Sundance as writer-director-star-composer-producer-editor-production designer and released the film through his own production company. Although Carruth represents an extreme example, he performed almost the same roles on his follow-up, *Upstream Color* (2013), and refused funding for the project in order to retain his independence. This would suggest that control of the film and filming remains tantamount to Carruth, who did not see his first film as a springboard to a studio-driven career. For Coixet, a similar desire to wrest control from the financiers has been evident since her first film, *Demasiado viejo*, when the young writer-director had to wait three years for her film to be released, due to difficulties in finding a producer (Cerrato *Isabel* 49-50; Gallardo n.pag). She now retains her independence through self-financing many of her projects and running her own production company, Miss Wasabi.

[79] Sayad discusses the concept of performing authorship in *Performing Authorship* (2013), and uses directors who appear on the screen in their films such as Woody Allen, Godard, Orson Welles and Varda as examples of performing authors. This discussion argues that Coixet participates in performing authorship practices but, by remaining out of shot, she does not fit Sayad's model.

[80] Coixet, however, better fits Corrigan's category of star director, since her body does not appear on-screen; rather her corporeal presence is mediated by the camera that she operates.

performance manifests itself through idiosyncratic stylistic flourishes, a cameo, or a starring role, the director's authorship moves onto the screen and mingles with that of the actors. This balancing act between the individual and the collective is integrated into the idea of authorship as a performance.[81]

Off the screen, Corrigan discusses the issue of performance or construction of self in director interviews, noting that since the 1970s, the "commercial conditioning" of the auteur has "evacuated" much of the "expressive power and textual coherence" that the figure of the auteur once held (*A Cinema* 135). However, the idea of branding (in both a commercial and artistic sense) has somewhat replaced this textual coherence, although the expressive power may be seen to be inferior. Writing in 1992, Corrigan believes that auteurs forfeit their authority, become demystified, and are subsumed into the "commerce" of auteurism (*A Cinema* 136), nevertheless, the director has become increasingly visible as a star figure, although at times subservient to the aura or power of the actor-star. Although promotional tactics vary, the practice of selling the director as commodity remains central to auteur marketing strategies, whether establishing the director as star, as star-author or as both. With regard to changing distribution and exhibition practices, Catherine Grant notes how the DVD format has influenced the workings of auteurism and how it is consumed, and how DVD extras such as commentary by directors tends to emphasise their desired readings and interpretations ("Auteur machines" 105). Corrigan's more recent writing notes how the promotional activities around a theatrical release are now used to generate a buzz for DVD sales ("Introduction" 9), and takes these changing distribution practices and revenue streams into consideration. Snippets of director interviews in print and online media are often used by reviewers, while the increasing number of video-based review shows on TV and online give greater opportunities for the director to appear on screen and discuss his or her work in public. At commercial press junkets, director interviews are often set up the same way as performer interviews, in front of a poster or promotional image of the film in question. Nonetheless, films classified as independent, arthouse or auteur cinema can be sold in a different way to more mainstream productions; although marketing practices vary according to budget and smaller films are often reliant on film festival publicity, the same basic concept of allowing the director an equal billing, or in some cases, a more dominant presence than the

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[81] Additionally, Fischer has recently explored the role of the director's performative self, often personified on screen as a writer character (*Body Double*).

actors applies across the board, in order to sell the auteur persona as an extension of the film.

Similarly, the relationship between director and spectator has transformed in relation to auteurism, but the roles of the spectator and the critic remain its lifeblood. In 1981, Caughie noted that any "attempt to move beyond auteurism has to recognise also the fascination of the figure of the auteur, and the way that he uses the cinephile's pleasure" (*Theories* 67). As film marketing practices vacillate between film as art and film as product, spectators move between the overlapping categories of cinephiles and consumers. Writing in 2001, Polan focuses on the cinephilia of the auteur critic as a key influence on the mode of criticism:

> The concern in auteur studies to pinpoint the primary obsessions and thematic preoccupations of this or that creator is thus an attempt to outline the director's desire. On the other hand, there is also desire *for* the director–the obsession of the cinephile or the film scholar to understand films as having an originary instance in the person who signs them. Here, it is important to look less at what the director wants than what the analyzing auteurist wants–namely, to classify and give distinction to films according to their directors and to master their corpuses. ("Auteur desire" n.pag)

Polan's comments are equally relevant to the cinephile spectator, who chooses to watch a director's entire back catalogue, or indeed, purchase it in DVD format, in the mode of a collector, seeking to interact with the author.[82] Similarly focused on the critic/spectator, Adrian Martin recalls that auteurism "has always been about an intimate, often secret, complicity–we in the audience feel ourselves privileged if we hear or receive the silent 'voice' of the auteur, as if we have received a special gift" ("Possessory" 99). This desire for the auteur's 'voice' or personality or aura remains something special, a privilege of the cinephile that enjoys the cataloguing and categorising modes of early auteurist critique. As spectators, we gain pleasure from the familiarity of auteurism, the comfort of knowing a director's name and visual style, and knowing that our choice of film has been endorsed by a critic somewhere along the line. Indeed, Adrian Martin suggests that auteurist marketing has created a "hypervisible cultural form" that we need to detach ourselves from ("Possessory" 99). However, this type of marketing reveals many new iterations of authorship, especially regarding the director, who can follow a distilled version of the *politique des auteurs* and claw back authorship from stars, producers, screenwriters and studios through a strategic position

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[82] For more on changing practices of distribution, exhibition and revenue generation within the film industry see Harbord (*Film Cultures*, 2002), Bennett and Brown (*Film and Television*, 2008), Brereton (*Smart Cinema,* 2012) and Corrigan (*American Cinema*, 2012). Additionally, Catherine Grant ("www.auteur.com") discusses their particular relevance to auteurs.

as the creator-genius at the centre of the production and through interacting with the public on this level.[83]

In the age of the internet, declining cinema attendance figures and expanding digital technology mean that more and more self-styled auteurs are emerging within independent film, as the flexibility and immediacy of online platforms allow them to control much of their own publicity and influence the reception of their work.[84] This engagement with online media demonstrates how auteurism now extends beyond textual analysis, as filmmakers enter into public discourse online and can now disseminate information about their work in a few clicks. Filmmakers can bypass the flurry of publicity that a new release entails, and keep their fans informed year-round through websites, social media and viral marketing, whether they control these outlets personally, or leave them in the hands of a marketing team. The internet has become central to the auteurism of independent filmmakers of Coixet's generation that emerged in the 1990s, like Wes Anderson or Sofia Coppola.[85] Polan comments:

> with the art-film market, the director's name is useful for its investment in high-art aesthetic ideologies of personal vision. And this marketing is not only imposed on the director by external forces in the business but can come from his own savvy self-promotional tactics ("Auteur Desire" n.pag)

Auteur directors often exceed the marketing opportunities offered by mainstream distributors, using websites to announce new projects and release teasers of upcoming releases, often in 'behind the scenes' or 'making of' format. While many films have their own websites, often set up by the marketers hired to promote the film, some directors, like Coixet, go beyond the remit of a promotional website, offering other writing such as opinion pieces, personal information and anecdotes, a list of awards received, and an extensive

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[83] Other notable rejections of single-authored films include Paisley Livingstone ("Cinematic Authorship) and C. Paul Sellors (*Film Authorship*). Both critics focus on the collective nature of film in order to reject what Sellors calls the "auteur myth".

[84] Triana-Toribio ("Auteurism") analyses the new online context for *directores mediáticos,* or 'media-friendly directors' like Coixet and Álex de la Iglesia, who take advantage of the internet to communicate with fans and media alike, retaining some of their autonomy through a self-controlled publicity outlet.

[85] Sofia Coppola (1971- ) and Anderson (1969- ) made their feature debuts during the 1990s, and like Coixet, they are received as 'quirky' and 'independent' auteurs. Pam Cook discusses Sofia Coppola as a "contemporary commodity auteur" who had already established a coherent authorial persona by the time her second feature film was released ("History"). Similarly, Devin Orgeron analyses how Anderson promotes his self-conscious and self-constructed authorial image in his films and through other outlets ("La Camera").

filmography.[86] This places the director in the realm of the star, a figure for whom we are accustomed to receiving such information through the mass media.

However, this issue of recognition also extends to collaborators. Writing in 2014, film critic Brody notes that

> [t]he notion of the auteur, of the director as creator, isn't the universal state of the art; it's an exceptional achievement. The vast fund of information and analysis that invigorates the study of movies, and the increasingly rich critical discussion that's fostered online and carries over into public events, propels directors to the fore but also obscures their individual visions. In the process, it risks undermining the conditions for their appreciation. ("An Auteur" n.pag)

Similarly, this thesis argues for the individual vision of the auteur director, while also mindful of the input of what Brody terms "the throng of collaborators, on set and off, who make a movie's recognition possible" ("An Auteur" n.pag). Auteur directors are often famous for their partnerships with others,[87] and rather than dilute the director's input as Brody claims, these collaborators are often carefully chosen to boost or enrich the "personal imprint" of a filmmaker. Therefore, the selection of other professionals becomes part of an auteur strategy whereby a director (or producer) assembles their favoured team, often employing the same technicians and actors in various productions. Although the contributions of many film professionals have been overlooked within film history, in approaching auteurism as a strategy for filmmaking, as opposed to an elitist, exclusive critical practice, collaboration can be viewed as an enhancement rather than a threat to individual authorship.

Writing in 2007, Caughie reflects that the auteur debate is no longer a central concern within Film Studies, but the repercussions of the debate have altered the critical landscape:

> Sometime around the point at which Film Studies began to be embarrassed by its affiliation to the author, the film industry and its subsidiaries began to discover with renewed enthusiasm the value of authorial branding for both marketing and reputation. It was already apparent by the late 1960s that auteurism was capacious and could accommodate even those who had first poured scorn on the *politique des auteurs* as Gallic intellectual hooliganism. Now, it has become the air we breathe: *auteurism* has become ideology. ("Authors" 3-4)

With the benefit of hindsight and rigorous scholarship, auteurism can once again provide insights that are not only to do with mise-en-scène or film style, but also tackle the nature of authorship. As Caughie concludes, auteurism has become an ideology in itself, a strategy tied to a particular way of 'looking' at films, rather than an elitist 'theory' dedicated to the

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[86] Similarly, fan-led websites and blogs also contribute greatly to the cult of personality around a director or stars, however, this discussion remains focused on the self-generated aspects of a director's public persona.

[87] For example, Martin Scorsese and editor Thelma Schoonmaker, Woody Allen and producers Charles Joffe and Jack Rollins, or Alfred Hitchcock and composer Bernard Hermann, to name but a few famous 'teams'.

identification and analysis of genius. However, the concept of genius remains paramount to contemporary auteurism, although this category has become more inclusive; directors, producers, screenwriters, stars and other film professionals of all genders and ethnicities can adopt an auteur strategy within the mainstream system or outside of it.

**Conclusion**

By concentrating on the function of the director and what that job entails, this thesis will remain grounded in the individualistic focus of early auteurist critique. However, with critics considering the industrial side of auteurist approaches, their impact on filmmaking and film reception, and returning to the political implications of an auteur policy rather than a theory since the 1990s, the evolution of auteur film criticism has come to incorporate many filmmakers that Sarris would never have included in his pantheon[88] and has extended the category to incorporate figures other than the director.[89] Indeed, since 2000, many of the pioneering auteurist scholars have revisited their own ideas with industrial concerns in mind.[90] As far back as 1977, Sarris admits: "[a]uteurism has less to do with the way movies are made than with the way they are elucidated and evaluated. It is more a critical instrument than a creative inspiration" ("Revisited" 28), and concedes that the theory he expounded was "more a tendency than a theory, more a mystique than a methodology, more an editorial policy than an aesthetic procedure" (29).

These critical re-evaluations bolster the argument for auteurism to be viewed as a strategy employed by directors as a reflection on a mode of film criticism that champions the director as artist and author. Similar to filmmaking practices, auteur criticism has undergone a

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[88] For more details see Sarris's book *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929-1968* (New York: Dutton, 1968) in which he categorised directors into three tiers. He modified some of his categorisations in later publications, but his 'pantheon' of fourteen of the 'greatest' directors remained largely unchanged.

[89] For similar views see McGilligan (*Cagney*) on the actor as auteur, Gillian Kelly ("A Gene Kelly: The Performing Auteur – Manifestations of the Kelly Persona." *eSharp* (2010): 136-156) on actor Gene Kelly as auteur, and Thomas Schatz (*The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era*. London: Simon and Schuster, 1989) on creative relationships within the Hollywood studio system.

[90] Namely Wollen's *Paris, Hollywood: Writings on Film* (London: Verso, 2002) and his essay on Michael Curtiz in Gerstner and Staiger's *Authorship and Film*. Both incorporate textual analysis, theoretical perspectives and empirical research. Wood's seminal work on Hitchcock has been revised in various editions since 1965, with the 1989 edition striving to include Marxist and feminist perspectives, as well as the developments in structuralism and semiotics, while his arguments were further modified in the 2002 edition (*Hitchcock's Films Revisited*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). Mulvey also revised her initial thesis in "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' inspired by *Duel in the Sun*" (1981) to address the gaze of the heterosexual female spectator (in *Visual Pleasure*).

democratisation and such labels are no longer limited to the acclaimed few. As a filmmaking strategy, it remains grounded in the concept of artistry rather than descending completely into a cynical marketing ploy. Accordingly, Coixet models herself on the *Cahiers* model proposed by Truffaut of the auteur as autonomous artist with a traceable style. Consequently, through her awareness of the central tenets of the *politique des auteurs* she increases her cultural kudos and credibility through auteurist marketing tactics and through her use of alternative outlets of authorship such as newspaper columns, public talks, personal websites and book publications. She represents an excellent example of a director who pursues auteurism as an industrial and artistic strategy, especially considering the history of the auteur figure in Spain, which the next chapter will outline.

## Chapter 2: Spanish National Cinema and Exportable Auteurs: The Relationship Between Auteur and Nation

While the figure of the auteur had developed greatly by the time Coixet made her feature film debut in 1988 with *Demasiado viejo*, similarly, the world of Spanish cinema that she was to inhabit as an aspiring auteur was already well established at home and abroad. Therefore, in order to understand the influences and guiding principles of her formative years, it is crucial that the evolution of this pre-existing order is comprehensively examined in all its complexity. Much that falls within this area may be thought outside the scope of our theme but, when taken all together, will introduce a milieu that is not merely the setting for auteurship but the very foundation of our auteur. While auteurism exists in a transnational or post-national paradigm in that it industrially exceeds or textually investigates national borders, Spanish cinema since the 1960s asserts its national identity through 'exportable' auteur figures.[91] Accordingly, the origins of 'exportable' auteurism during the late Franco period will be briefly examined before moving into a discussion of the film policies of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) governments and the Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales (ICAA) during the 1980s and 1990s. The impact of these policies on directors during the Transition and post-Transition period will be assessed, rather than the reception of the films produced, or whether the filmmakers studied actively pursue an auteurist strategy. A division will be maintained between older and younger generations of filmmakers as representative of the pre- and post-democracy years, and in order to explore the relationship between auteur and nation as a key element in the filmmaker's success. This chapter therefore seeks to examine Spanish auteur cinema from the 'outside', and assess the importance of international success for a filmmaker's continued domestic popularity and access to state support.[92]

For directors, auteurism represents a way to interact with the transnational industrial context while retaining a connection to the national as a popular domestic filmmaker through

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[91] For a discussion of Spanish auteurism in a transnational context see D'Lugo and Smith ("Auteurism" 113). Jordan also asserts the importance of the auteur figure to Spanish cinema history ("How Spanish").

[92] Additionally, while a range of directors from various autonomous communities are dealt with here, and with an international audience in mind, this section will consider Spanishness as a coherent identity for foreign viewers to decode, rather than diverge into differentiating Spanish, Catalan, Basque or even Andalusian cinema. Although Coixet can claim both Catalan and Spanish identity, these do not have to be mutually exclusive terms, therefore the fluidity between the two will be preserved, since this chapter focuses on centralised government policies rather than those of autonomous communities.

the promotion of their persona. For viewers, auteurism provides a coherent artist figure through which an image of the nation can be decoded, whether positive or negative. However, D'Lugo and Paul J. Smith comment on the movement of auteurism between the national and transnational, stating that

> [a]uteurism did not so much ignore the logic of the state as an ordering principle of aesthetic quality as affirm a borderless community of spectators taking shape around the universality of the medium and the shared assumptions of a seemingly timeless canon of values, a sustained aesthetic vision, and a praxis through which to embody that aesthetic. ("Auteurism" 115)

This "borderless community" would not necessarily recognise or demand an accurate representation of national or regional identity, but rather something that could be defined against their own nationality, a coherent other within a film that transcends national ties and relevance through the figure of the exportable auteur. Writing in 1999, Peter Evans notes that the most successful Spanish films of the previous twenty years are largely associated with auteurs rather than popular directors (*Spanish* 2), and these auteur productions form the basis of Spanish cinema's image away from home. The prologue to Evans's book, written by director José Luis Borau,[93] represents just one example of how the author is not separated from national cinema.[94] Indeed, in Europe, this connection can be vital for new filmmakers beginning their careers, as they seek state support to propel them onto the national, and subsequently, the international stage. Whether creating films aimed at a domestic market or at a notional 'international' viewer, the exportability of the auteur figure and their films has become increasingly important to Spanish cinema from an administrative perspective, but also to directors, and this stems from the interaction between auteur and nation during the late Franco period.

## Pre-Democratic Spain: Filmmaking, Education, Auteurism

During the dictatorship, most of Spain's well-known directors were graduates or students of the Instituto de Investigaciones y Experiencias Cinematográficas (IIEC 1947-1962),

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[93] Borau (1929-2012) was a graduate of the state film school and a member of the *Nuevo cine español* group, and later becoming a scriptwriting teacher at the school. As well as directing his own films, he collaborated with many of the other *Nuevo cine* filmmakers on their productions and acted as a mentor to many younger directors.

[94] This leads Maule to contend that: "what Borau does not acknowledge (and what contemporary specialists in Spanish cinema instead emphasize) is the connection between Spain's policies on film and authorial film practices. From the Francoist period until the mid-1990s, Spanish author cinema mainly relied on government subsidies and film modes committed to promoting and exporting the country's culture abroad. This system disregarded the lack of interest on the part of domestic film audiences in this type of cinema" (Maule *Beyond* 136).

a state-run film school modelled on Rome's Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.[95] Despite this relationship to the regime, some of the most significant and subtly anti-Francoist films were made by graduates and staff of the school such as *Bienvenido Mr Marshall* (Luis García Berlanga, 1953)[96] and *Muerte de un ciclista* (Juan Antonio Bardem, 1955).[97] Both films displaced the anxiety of the repressed political state onto their narratives, using humour (*Bienvenido*) and tension within a closed society (*Muerte*). Although Berlanga's film was popular at Cannes and Bardem won the FIPRESCI critic's prize at the same festival in 1955 for *Muerte,* both filmmakers were targeted by the authorities and punished by the censor for their films, but they remained in Spain for the duration of their careers rather than emigrate, and were not forced into exile. As graduates of the state film school, and, more importantly, as well-known filmmakers in the 1950s, these directors were already becoming recognisable names outside their home country, and paved the way for the students of the IIEC ascending the ranks to become the first generation of 'exportable' auteurs.[98] Towards the end of Franco's lifetime, the government became more outward-looking than before, encouraging increased tourism and international trade within a wider *apertura* or 'opening' to improve international opinion of the autarchy. Consequently, promoting (or being seen to support) the work of artists such as filmmakers became an important part of Spain's international image as a nation open to dissenting views. Auteurs could be presented as individual, autonomous voices, but also as official or unofficial representatives of the state with their inclusion in film festivals, which D'Lugo and Smith note have long been important in aligning auteur and nation ("Auteurism" 118). Although filmmakers like Bardem and Berlanga had achieved

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[95] The Centro Sperimentale was founded in 1935 by Benito Mussolini's administration, and was the first film school in Europe. Noted auteurs such as Roberto Rossellini and Michaelangelo Antonioni trained there, while Visconti, Vittorio de Sica and other important filmmakers conducted seminars. The IIEC created a similar link between auteur and nation that it seems Franco's government was equally keen to exploit.

[96] Berlanga (1921-2010) attended the IIEC and went on to have one of the most illustrious careers in Spanish cinema, recognised at home and abroad as a master of bleak humour. Although not as militant in politics as his lifelong friend and collaborator Bardem, Berlanga's films were viewed as equally subversive by the regime and he faced many challenges from the censor throughout the dictatorship.

[97] Bardem (1922-2002) was a graduate of the IIEC and became one of Spain's most respected filmmakers at home and abroad, winning prizes at Cannes and Valencia. As a long-time member of the Partido Comunista de España (PCE), he was repeatedly targeted by the censor during the dictatorship, but was one of the best-known Spanish filmmakers abroad during that time.

[98] Although, at the time, Luis Buñuel (1900-1983) was Spain's best-known filmmaker internationally, and is commonly grouped together with Bardem and Berlanga as the 'Tres B's' or 'Three B's', he has been excluded from this analysis because he was not working in Spain during this period. *Nuevo cine* director Antxon Eceiza comments: "for us, Buñuel was simply a myth; no film of his was shown in the country until 1961", when he returned to Spain to shoot *Viridiana* (in Faulkner "New" 208).

moderate success abroad, the cultural and political *apertura* or 'opening' of the late Franco period, however superficial, meant that the equation of auteur and nation would gain in importance, as politicians sought to put a new spin on the regime for international eyes.[99]

Borau notes that after the release of *Bienvenido*, the auteurs themselves took responsibility for "guiding and redefining the industry to which they belonged",[100] but the advent of the *politique des auteurs* in Europe and the effect of the Conversaciones Cinematográficas de Salamanca in 1955 meant that the decade was pivotal in the evolution of cinema as art in Spain, and in the conception of the Spanish film artist/auteur. By encouraging discussion about Spanish cinema, the Salamanca Conversations proved crucial to the history of auteurism in Spain. Organised by filmmaker Basilio Martín Patino (1930- ), a future IIEC student, the Conversations took place in May and brought together students, filmmakers and officials. Filmmakers at the event demanded to know more about the vague yet strict censorship rules applied to their films and called for a cinema that would reflect the realities of contemporary life in Spain at that time, rather than the "politically useless, socially false, intellectually low, aesthetically negligible, and industrially ailing" output condemned by Bardem (in Mira *Historical* 270). Additionally, the usefulness of the *interés nacional* category for films deemed important by the administration was debated at length. While the Conversations spurred the regime into affording greater protection to aspiring auteurs, the event also helped to create an elitist hierarchy with preference given to 'quality' films.[101] Subsequent administrations would not hold popular cinema in the same stead as this artistic cinema, denigrating what had been one of the strengths of the Spanish film industry up to that point. Although this aesthetic and political reinvigoration of the industry was welcomed by most critics, many have also criticised the role the event had in feeding Spanish cinema's

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[99] For more details on the implications of the *apertura* for the cinema, especially in regard to Spain-Hollywood relations, see Rosendorf (*Franco*). For further details of *desarollismo* during the *apertura* see Longhurst ("Culture").

[100] "In Spain it was precisely the auteurs who, above all after the first screening of *Bienvenido Mr Marshall* in the spring of 1953, accepted responsibility for guiding and redefining the film industry to which they belonged, trying to endow it gradually–perhaps without too much collective consciousness, but through personal effort and inspiration–with themes, forms, and styles that replaced old practices and created–with greater difficulty–for home audiences, or at least those sections that were most critical and demanding" (Borau in Evans *Spanish* xviii).

[101] D'Lugo and Smith note that the move towards auteurism spearheaded by the Salamanca conversations was "posed as an effort to revitalise the artistic qualities of Spanish cinema and not as head-on social critique" ("Auteurism" 116), a comment which compares to Hess's view that the early version of the *politique des auteurs* represented a world view couched in aesthetic language ("La politique-Part Two").

dependence on state funding.[102] The *politique des auteurs* also provided a model for aspiring Spanish auteurs, but the constraints of dictatorship meant that cinema by film 'artists' developed in a different way in Spain compared to France. Filmmaking style was greatly impacted by the French New Wave and Italian Neo-Realism, yet Maule contends that Hollywood is an especially important influence on film authors in France and Spain,[103] while D'Lugo and Smith note the "uneven intellectual and cultural development" in Spain as a result of the authoritarian regime, which made it impossible to ignore the "logic of the state" as an organising aesthetic principle ("Auteurism" 115).

The 1960s IIEC cohort came to be known as the *Nuevo cine español*, a category invented by Minister for Information and Tourism (1962-1969), Manuel Fraga Iribarne,[104] in order to endorse the state involvement in filmmaking under Franco (D'Lugo and Smith "Auteurism" 117). This name deliberately created a division between the *Nuevo cine* and the *Viejo cine* or *cine de barrio* of popular genre films, signalling a new departure within national cinema, however artificial its origins.[105] Influenced by the French New Wave, many of the left-leaning filmmakers who formed this group had more access to state funding thanks to the General Director of Cinematography (1962-1967), José María García Escudero,[106] who believed that the young graduates were the future of the artistic, ambitious cinema that had been discussed and debated at length at Salamanca. His appointment opened the door for the generation of *Nuevo cine* directors who were studying at the IIEC, which he successfully rebranded as the Escuela Oficial de Cine (EOC, 1962-1976).[107] However, as demonstrated by

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[102] For a discussion of this dependence, see Pozo Arenas (*La industria* 140) and Maule (*Beyond* 38).

[103] Maule writes: "Beginning in the 1950s, Spanish film authors used [Hollywood] films as a fundamental source of inspiration that could also ease their efforts to cope with the regime's censorship policies" (*Beyond* 45). For more on the history of auteurism in France, Spain and Italy, see Maule (*Beyond* 31-59).

[104] Fraga (1922-2012) was a key Minister of Franco's regime and was involved in some of the censorship reforms. During the Transition he founded Alianza Popular (AP), the conservative party that would later become the Partido Popular (PP) and was involved in the writing of the constitution. He remained active in politics in various roles until 2011.

[105] Bernard P.E. Bentley notes that the term *cine de barrio* is used more commonly in Spain to describe what came before the *Nuevo cine* (*A Companion* 159), but this chapter aims to put this divide between old and new into sharper focus, in order to emphasise how the auteur figure was foregrounded.

[106] García Escudero had served as Director of Cinematography from 1951 to 1952 but resigned over issues with censorship. However, in 1962 he was re-appointed by Fraga, after the Minister read his book *Cine Español* (Madrid: Rialp, 1962) which outlined problems in the industry and suggested improvements.

[107] Faulkner dates the *Nuevo cine* from 1962 to 1967, specifying the productions funded by García Escudero's legislation, but notes that other critics would also include Saura's first film *Los golfos* (1959) in this grouping ("A Cinema" 651). This chapter does not seek to redefine or relocate the *Nuevo cine*, rather it aims to explore the effect of an auteur-driven movement on the directors involved and in their

Bardem, Berlanga and others, auteurism and oppositional cinema existed in Spain before Salamanca and the *Nuevo cine*, and while the young filmmakers studying at or associated with the EOC as teachers were not the first directors to be received as auteurs, they represent the first generation to be promoted and exported as a movement within Spanish cinema.[108]

D'Lugo and Smith comment that auteurism in Spain would "implicitly be synonymous with anti-Francoism" ("Auteurism" 115), and Faulkner describes the relationship of oppositional directors as an "equivocal experience of artistic freedom yet ideological restraint".[109] While the bond between filmmakers and the autocratic regime remained complex, the legislation and funding put in place to protect and promote their work aligned them with the nation, despite differences in politics. The contentious issues discussed at Salamanca were dealt with directly by García Escudero's policy changes and helped to shift 'good' Spanish cinema towards an auteur-driven model. Censorship guidelines were finally published in 1963, and the *interés nacional* label was replaced by *interés especial*,[110] a term intended to be synonymous with 'quality' cinema. Films which were awarded this classification could claim up to fifty per cent of box-office receipts, a huge potential increase from the existing fifteen per cent. Subsidies would be based on script analysis by the censor, which meant that a screenplay which seemed inoffensive on paper could pass.[111] Additionally, special exhibition spaces or *Salas de Arte y Ensayo* were established for subtitled foreign imports and *interés especial* films.[112] Filmmaker Antxon Eceiza comments on the paradoxical effect of this category when films were sent to festivals outside Spain:

> We were anti-Franco, but when we went to press conferences at foreign festivals, critics saw that our films were classified as 'Special Interest' by Francoism. So directors were treated with suspicion both inside and outside Spain. (in Faulkner "New" 210).

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relationship to national cinema, in order to contrast this relationship with the experience of later generations.

[108] Additionally, D'Lugo and Smith note that Benito Perojo and Florián Rey could be considered proto-auteurs of the early sound period ("Auteurism" 116).

[109] Faulkner is referring to Miguel Picazo (1927- ), a *Nuevo cine* director not analysed here, but her comment neatly describes the movement as a whole ("A Cinema" 651).

[110] Pavlović's volume notes that the 'special quality' category was invented to support the EOC graduates and their transition from student filmmakers to industry professionals, by respecting the ambition of their work rather than its commercial success (*100 Years* 106-107).

[111] Producer Elías Querejeta (1934-2013) recounts the many creative methods he used to get past the censor, for example submitting an innocuous script that could be varied in tone on the shoot, or could run counter to the images on screen. The measures taken to evade censorship policies during the 1960s and 1970s are discussed by various filmmakers in the documentary *El Productor* (Fernando Méndez-Leite, 2007). For further analysis see Molina-Foix (*New Cinema* 20) and Triana-Toribio (*Spanish* 81).

[112] For further details see Faulkner ("A Cinema" 653).

Nevertheless, the funding provided by this category was essential for the *Nuevo cine* directors to become established.[113] However elitist the resultant policy changes were, and however artificial and politically-motivated the post-Salamanca move towards auteurism was, Triana-Toribio credits García Escudero with aiming to supply auteurs "modelled on the European pattern, who would in turn provide Spanish cinema with 'exportable' art cinema" ("Transitions" 85). This 'provision' of artist figures as products to be sold abroad proved influential for subsequent administrations, which consistently promote the author figure alongside the films in question as part of protectionist strategies around the idea of Spanish national cinema, including legislation, subsidies, import quotas, exhibition quotas and mentoring for filmmakers. Writing about Europe more generally, Maule notes the wide-reaching implications of such initiatives, commenting that:

> they are closely intertwined with public debates about these countries' film systems and traditions that involve not only film critics and theorists, but also politicians and major players in the film industry. (*Beyond* 16)

Accordingly, alongside satisfying domestic appetites for representations of the national, these strategies also aimed to promote Spanishness abroad as a coherent identity, as part of a wider cultural nationalist project, or in Elsaesser's terms "a cultural mode of production" where directors represent the nation despite their individual politics and personalities (*The New* 40-44).

Spearheaded by the success of Carlos Saura (1932- ),[114] a graduate of the IIEC and a teacher at the EOC, the *Nuevo cine* formed part of a wider *cine de oposición* which criticised the Franco regime through metaphorical, authored films along with oppositional works by members of the Barcelona School. Similarly influenced by the French New Wave, the Barcelona School ultimately pursued a more avant-garde cinema than their *Nuevo cine* counterparts during the 1960s.[115] Following in the footsteps of the older generation of

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[113] Director Julio Diamante comments that the awarding of pre-production funding for *Nuevo cine* filmmakers was subjective, he claims to have only received his automatic box-office percentages because he was considered to be a leftist filmmaker (in Faulkner "New" 214).

[114] Born in Huesca and interested in photography from a young age, Saura initially studied engineering but later enrolled in the IIEC. As a graduate he would teach filmmakers Martín Patino and Victor Erice. Since his feature debut with *Los golfos* (1960), Saura has been prolific within the Spanish film industry and has enjoyed international acclaim for his work during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

[115] Significant directors of this group included Vicente Aranda (1927- ), a self-taught EOC reject, and Pere Portabella (1929- ), who began his career as the producer of Buñuel's *Viridiana* (1961), while figures such as critic, historian and screenwriter Román Gubern (1934- ) were also part of a wider *gauche divine* movement in Barcelona during the 1960s. However, since they were not aligned with the

Bardem, Berlanga and Fernando Fernán-Gómez,[116] elliptical, metaphorical narratives were necessary in order to evade censorship, while an experimental visual style also became characteristic of the *Nuevo cine* as a movement by this period.[117] Other important figures included director Victor Erice (1940- )[118] and producer Elías Querejeta, owing mainly to his long-standing partnership with Saura throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Josefina Molina (1936- ) became the first female graduate of the EOC in 1969, but her career has been largely overlooked by general film histories of the period, despite her consistent relationship to high art and auteurist filmmaking. Nonetheless, her long career in television has overshadowed her contribution to the film industry.[119] More recent work has sought to rectify this oversight, but her contemporaries at the EOC such as Borau, Erice and Saura are generally recognised as the successes of the pre-democratic period.[120]

Triana-Toribio confirms that the products of the *Nuevo cine* soon became equated with national cinema (*Spanish* 83), a result which reveals this interplay between the individual

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state like the *Nuevo cine*, this group falls outside the parameters of this discussion, despite their significant impact on the cultural scene of the 1960s.

[116] Actor, director and writer Fernán-Gómez (1921-2007) also directed films during the 1950s, but his long career as an actor and his acclaimed performances provide a link between the films of the 1950s and 1960s and those made by the burgeoning *Nuevo cine*.

[117] Significant films of the *Nuevo cine* include *Del rosa al amarillo* (Manuel Summers, 1963), *El buen amor* (Francisco Regueiro, 1963), *La tía Tula* (Miguel Picazo, 1964), *Young Sánchez* (Mario Camus, 1964), *La caza* (Saura, 1965), *Nueve cartas a Berta* (Martín Patino, 1965), *El espíritu de la colmena* (Erice, 1973), *Furtivos* (Borau, 1975) and *Cría cuervos* (Saura, 1976), *Juguetes rotos* (Summers, 1966), *La busca* (Angelino Fons, 1967), and *De cuerpo presente* (Eceiza, 1967).

[118] Erice was born in Vizcaya and initially worked as a film critic and screenwriter before moving into production, where he has co-directed more than ten films, but he has only been at the helm of three feature films as a solo director. Erice's most famous film internationally, *El espíritu de la colmena* (1973) featured child actress Ana Torrent, dealing with real and imaginary demons as an allegory of the repressed political state and trauma of the Civil War. However, Paul J. Smith ("Auteurism" 139) notes that Erice was omitted from recent histories of Spanish cinema (such as Triana-Toribio *Spanish* and Pavlović *100 Years*), while Triana-Toribio makes the point that critics never comment on his long career in advertising, promoting him as an artist above all else ("Transitions" 87). Coixet, on the other hand, has directed nine feature films yet cannot escape references to her advertising career, as she notes in an interview with Donapetry ("Miss Wasabi" n.pag).

[119] From her involvement in theatre during the 1960s, Molina began her audiovisual career with documentary *Aquí, España* (1968), before graduating from the EOC in 1969. She made her feature debut with *Vera, un cuento cruel* (1973) and has enjoyed a long career in film, theatre and television directing since. Arguably, Coixet has followed in Molina's footsteps, owing to her experimentation with theatre and her expanding documentary filmography. However, her renown as a feature filmmaker, propensity for adaptation, and recognisable public image bring her closer to Miró.

[120] Triana-Toribio notes that Molina's *Función de noche* (1981) represented a "key text of the Transition" ("Transitions" 85), and as an adaptation of the novel *Cinco horas con Mario* (Miguel Delibes, 1966) the film could be seen as a proto-Miró film for its engagement with prestigious literature of the Franco period. Despite directing this significant film, Molina remains at the fringes of film history in Spain.

expression of auteurism and the collective identity of the national.[121] Additionally, Jordan makes the important distinction between a national cinema and a national film industry ("How Spanish" 69). Whereas the more prestigious national cinema deals with projecting the national for a domestic or international audience, the 'industry' provides employment for film professionals and a production infrastructure. Although there was an overlap between the 'old' and 'new' during the 1960s in Spain, the auteurs came to be seen as the legitimate creators of national cinema, while the *Viejo* cine provided entertainment and employment.[122] Whether they were state-sanctioned or not, through their exportation and circulation at international film festivals, the films by *Nuevo cine* directors came to represent Spanish cinema from the late 1950s through to the 1970s and cemented the ties between auteur and nation that continue to the present day.

Despite the elitist origins of the *Nuevo cine*, the films utilised similar personnel for cast and crew as the *Viejo cine*, with Triana-Toribio noting that both the old and new "shared an obsession with Spain's image outside of Spain" (*Spanish* 92), and thus, both types of film produced images of Spanishness that could be decoded by domestic and international viewers. On a superficial level, the *Viejo cine* perpetuated the stereotypical *españolada* iconography of *flamenco*, *coplas*, bullfighting and familiar stars, within strong patriarchal narratives. Generally speaking, the *Nuevo cine* strived to present a more social-realist projection of Spanishness as an identity in crisis, often through ineffectual father figures, masculinity in crisis, and a society at odds with the past. While the 'old cinema' concentrated mainly on the pleasures of patriarchal narratives and established genres as representations of the national, the 'new cinema' sought to deconstruct these representations from within.

Although they were regarded as exportable auteurs, and García Escudero had published the censorship guidelines, many *Nuevo cine* directors suffered at the hands of the censor, and often relied on international success at festivals before their films could be screened uncut in Spain. Nonetheless, without the endorsement of the regime, however self-serving or tacit this support may have been, it is likely that these filmmakers would have

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[121] Paul J. Smith sees Triana-Toribio's reading of auteurism as functionalist, stressing "external factors" over individual expression ("Victor Erice" 136); however, these materialist arguments fit with a core aim of this thesis, namely to explore auteurism as a strategy that has been learned by filmmakers and assess how this strategy fits with other markers of personal expression and identity such as gender and nationality.

[122] Bentley notes that the *Viejo cine* also provided social commentary and dealt with serious topics, but the majority of cinema associated with this label fit the genre parameters of comedy or the musical (*A Companion* 169-170).

ended up in exile or prison. While, as a movement, the *Nuevo cine* would last only as long as García Escudero's stint in office, for the filmmakers, their association with this label would mark their careers for years to come. Mira notes that apart from a few major successes, most of the films were flops, and few won awards at festivals (*A-Z* lviii). However, the associations with the *Nuevo cine* placed the filmmakers in the auteur category by default, irrespective of their success. In an international academic context, since the 1980s there has been more attention paid to the early post-Franco years by English-speaking scholars with texts such as Besas (*Behind* 1985), Hopewell (*Out* 1986) and Kinder (*Blood* 1993). Later work has provided further contextualisation of the auteur figure, especially in regard to the changes that would come during the 1980s and 1990s.[123] Yet the *Nuevo cine* remains crucial to an understanding of state-supported auteurism and the directors of this period provided models for future filmmakers to reject or to emulate. The future generations of auteurs would not find themselves in such a precarious political situation, but their relationship to the national would prove to be as complex.

## Film Policy and Film Education in Spain After Franco

After the death of Franco, the governments of the Transition (1975-1979) and post-Transition years (1979-1992) gradually modernised existing audiovisual legislation, with the successive PSOE governments (1982-1996) hoping to create a more dynamic film industry.[124] 1977 saw new censorship legislation enacted, creating a ratings system of 'general release',

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[123] Evans's edited collection *Spanish Cinema: The Auteurist Tradition* (1999) provides critical analysis of canonical texts by noted Spanish auteurs from the 1950s to the 1990s. More recent English-language histories of Spanish cinema include Rob Stone's *Spanish Cinema* (2001) and Triana-Toribio's *Spanish National Cinema* (2003), which provide a revised history with regard to popular film and genres. Resina's edited collection *Burning Darkness* (2008) deals with key films and filmmakers such as Berlanga, Erice, Saura and Miró, while Bentley's *A Companion to Spanish Cinema* (2008) provides a critical overview from the earliest silent films and photography to 1996. Faulkner's *A History of Spanish Film* (2013) focuses on class mobility within Spanish cinema, especially relevant in middlebrow releases of the Miró years. Labanyi and Pavlović's recent edited volume, *A Companion to Spanish Cinema* (2013) offers a wide range of analyses of this period, notably in the section by D'Lugo and Smith on auteurism in Spain ("Auteurism") and the "Censorship, Film Studios and Production Companies" chapter. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it demonstrates the continuing interest in the history of Spanish cinema for English-speaking readers and scholars, re-examining earlier histories in terms of popular cinema and industrial concerns.

[124] Since the 1978 Constitución española, a key project of the Transition, came into effect just days before the new year began, 1979 provides a natural starting point for the post-Transition.[124] As this chapter focuses partly on the socialist government's legislative impact on the film industry, it seems appropriate to periodise with regard to the constitution as a foundational document for democratic Spain. Although symbolically the Transition would last much longer, the differences between these 'generations' of filmmakers are significant.

'restricted' and 'S' for explicit sex and violence. The *Nuevo cine* no longer had to bury their criticism of the regime in allegory or ellipsis, but could, in theory, openly deal with social and political subject matter that had previously been taboo. However, with only the leader departed, and many of his former cabinet and ministers still in government, political changes were not as dramatic or wide-reaching as many Spaniards had hoped. Nonetheless, the Transition had major implications for the film industry.

In short, distributors could now import whatever films they wanted from abroad, so they were no longer obliged to invest in home-grown productions. Exhibitors could screen older Spanish films to comply with new screen quotas (one day of Spanish film was exhibited for every two days of dubbed imports, at any time of the year). The existing screening quota was found to be unconstitutional in 1979, but in order to save the domestic film industry from complete collapse, new legislation was drafted in 1980, reducing the quota to one day of Spanish film per three days of dubbed imports in any four month period. This meant that Spanish films would have to be shown year-round, although the best release dates still went to imported films. Box-office monitoring was introduced in 1978, in order to gain a more accurate picture of the Spanish film industry. The loosening of censorship regulations and revised screen quotas contributed to a change in spectatorship patterns in Transition-era Spain, feeding growing appetites for Hollywood and international productions that had only been clandestinely available during the days of the dictatorship.[125] Cinematic offerings from outside Spain had been limited for over forty years, especially those by auteurs, and the sense of delay that many cinephile spectators and filmmakers felt could now be remedied.[126]

The more relaxed ratings system led to a rise of genre films containing sex and nudity. Primarily, the Transition genres consisted of popular comedy (divided into various subgenres such as the *comedia madrileña* or the *comedia sexy*), *destape* (soft-core erotic films also known as *cine S* because of the rating system), *quinqui* (so-called 'bad taste' films, often set in the new suburbs) and *terror* (representing a new genre for Spain and somewhat replacing the

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[125] Faulkner provides an overview of this period and the post-Transition (*A History*). Additionally, Alejandro Melero comments on the trips to France made by Spanish cinephiles in order to see pictures that were banned in Spain, especially those that depicted sex ("New" 93), and briefly analyses how the political and cultural *apertura* became diverted into the *destape* or 'uncovering' of bodies on cinema screens during the Transition to democracy in the late 1970s ("New" 94).

[126] Vidal notes this sense of delay and exemplifies *Torremolinos 73* (Pablo Berger, 2003) as a film that deals with the attempt to recreate a cinephilic, auteur past for Spanish cinema, and relates this to the troubled history of cinephilia in Spain (*Cinema* 211-231).

popular spaghetti westerns and child star musicals of previous decades).[127] Although a superficial auteurist thread ran through this period, in that certain directors became associated with certain types of films, it was not until the post-Transition years and Miró's administration that *new* auteurs would be marketed and aligned with the state as the *Nuevo cine* directors had been.[128] The films of the Transition filled a void for contemporary, grittier representations of the national, but these were not necessarily representations to be exported; rather they engaged with the wider sense of an identity crisis for a newly democratic country.[129] Triana-Toribio notes that even these genre films fitted into the belief that

> films of quality should be concerned with Spain's need to find itself, to articulate a new or recovered national identity through historical cinema and other genres suitable for nation-building and identity questioning: how Spanish men and women were socialised under Franco. ("Transitions" 88)

Additionally, national broadcaster Televisión Española (TVE) began investing in film in 1979, providing a huge boost to the industry although, according to Miró "productions that raised any kind of moral problem in too harsh a manner" were excluded ("Ten Years" 44). Writing in 1990, she details the problems faced by the Transition-era film industry where distributors paid lip service to quotas by investing in substandard domestic productions and co-productions which were devised in order to gain lucrative dubbing licences for foreign films ("Ten years" 41). This practice contributed to domestic disengagement with Spanish-made cinema, whether directed by auteurs or not. Although pre-acquisition funds from television networks helped revitalise the flailing arthouse industry, Maule accounts for the negative impact of such schemes, noting how "they established a sort of 'welfare' system, often blamed for its bureaucratic slowness and aesthetic indiscrimination and did not help film

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[127] These categories and descriptions are taken from the Grupo de Investigación TECMERIN page on the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid website, where research into the cinema of the Transition and post-Transition is still ongoing. For more details see VV.AA. ("Géneros").

[128] Many other directors working during the *Nuevo cine* period and Transition that were overlooked by the administration have been recuperated such as Jesús (Jess) Franco (1930-2013), who attended the Salamanca Conversations and had been directing B-movies since 1961 before emigrating to France during the 1970s. Almodóvar remains the prime example of a Transition auteur, but others such as Fernando Colomo (1946- ) and and Bigas Luna were also co-opted into Spanish national cinema later in their careers. Colomo began his feature film career with *Tigres de papel* in 1977, making a name for himself as creator of *tercera vía* comedies and he continues to direct to this day.

[129] Rodríguez Ortega contends: "Cinema turned into a tool of cultural and political expression, chronicling the upsurge of the youth as an active agent of social change; or, alternatively, as the locus of disillusionment with the first steps of the newborn democracy" ("Representations" n.pag). Although previous films had dealt with cultural and political tensions, filmmakers now had the freedom to express dissatisfaction with the new administration in ways that were not possible before.

authors regain popularity with the audience" (*Beyond* 39). While these measures resulted in a higher output of films, many new filmmakers were in a similar position to the post-Salamanca generation; dependent on the state for a start in the industry. However, Miró notes that many small production companies were set up as corporations or semi-corporations during the Transition, making films on miniscule budgets, and were responsible for launching the careers of Francesc Bellmunt, Fernando Colomo and Fernando Trueba,[130] as well as for producing Berlanga's new comedies and Saura's *Bodas de sangre* in 1981 ("Ten Years" 42). This productive period and the successful model provided by these semi-corporations would have a great impact on Miró's policy changes during her time in government office, as she sought to harness the creativity of individual filmmakers and create an overtly authored cinema that could promote and export its directors alongside their films, perpetuating the obsession with Spain's image outside of Spain discussed by Triana-Toribio (*Spanish* 92).

As young adults during the 1980s, post-Transition filmmakers benefitted from the proliferation of cultural material openly available for the first time after the death of Franco, and in many cases, took advantage of educational opportunities at home and abroad to further their desired careers as directors. These directors formed part of a university-educated generation of filmmakers with degrees or diplomas as well as practical expertise. Yet while many of the EOC directors had studied at university before enrolling as film students, the newer filmmakers no longer had this option. As film began to be taken seriously as an academic discipline in Europe and the US during the 1970s, and was added to Spanish university curricula in 1971, the government saw the EOC as a redundant institution and closed it down in 1976, despite protests from students and industry professionals (Mira *A-Z* 173). The lack of an official film school would have wide-reaching implications for young aspiring filmmakers, but also for the type of films that were made during this period.[131]

Notwithstanding the attempt to create progressive, inclusive policies and practices during the Transition, up to the late 1980s, Spain had few female filmmakers amongst its

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[130] Francesc Bellmunt (1947- ) has been active in the film industry since releasing music documentaries *Canet Rock* and *La Nova Canço* in 1975 and has enjoyed a long career in Catalan-language film and television as a director and producer. Fernando Trueba (1955- ) made his debut with *Opera Prima* in 1980 which had over 1.2 million spectators. It was the third most viewed film of 1980 and it remained in cinemas for a year (Rodríguez Ortega "Representations" n.pag). In addition to this domestic success, Trueba won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 1994 with *Belle Epoque*. His forays into English-language cinema will be discussed in Chapter 4.

[131] Chapter 4 will discuss this in greater detail.

ranks, with only eight women releasing films as directors before 1988.[132] A contemporary of Molina at TVE, Miró made her feature film debut with the costume drama *La petición* (1976), which she lists amongst films that faced delays in their releases or had to change their titles owing to Franco-era censorship ("Ten Years" 38). Miró's second film, *El crimen de Cuenca* (1980), dealt with torture carried out by the Guardia Civil and all copies were confiscated, despite a screening at the 1980 Berlinale. The director's subsequent military trial cemented her reputation as an anti-Franco figure, keen to reform the Cinematography department with her practical experience and the case highlighted the restrictions still in place despite the liberalization of censorship laws. It seems that certain topics were off-limits, or could only be depicted in a sanitized, sanctioned version during the Transition and the post-Transition.[133] *El crimen de Cuenca* succeeded at the box-office on its release eighteen months after schedule, despite the S rating it was given (Miró "Ten years" 42), becoming the highest grossing film at the Spanish box-office in 1981, surpassing American blockbusters such as *Superman II* (Richard Lester) and Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark* ("El crimen" n.pag). Miró has not suffered the same critical neglect as other female directors who were active during the Transition,[134] but the impact of her role in the PSOE administration and her notoriety within Spanish society has not always brought positive criticism, and she was made a scapegoat for the difficult years within the film industry in the 1980s and 1990s.

**Miró Films: Success and Failure**

As mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, on her appointment to the Directorate-General of Cinematography (which would later become the ICAA) under Minister for Culture (1982-1988) Javier Solana, Miró spearheaded the 1983 Ley de Cine, also known as the Ley Miró, liberalising the 1977 censorship laws and allowing first-time filmmakers to apply for financing of up to fifty percent of their budget during pre-production. The legislation

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[132] Camí-Vela lists Margarita Aleixandre, Cecilia Bartolomé, Helena Cortesina, Ana Mariscal, Pilar Miró, Josefina Molina, Isabel Mulá, Virginia Nuñes, Rosario Pi and Pilar Távora (*Mujeres detrás* 2001 ed. 13-16).

[133] Other films faced unofficial censorship or what Rebecca Naughten terms "officious obstruction" for their hard-hitting subject matter and approaches, especially documentaries such as *El proceso de Burgos* (Imanol Uribe, 1979) and *Después de...* (Cecilia Bartolomé and Juan José Bartolomé, 1981) ("Speaking Truths" n.pag).

[134] Additionally, other female filmmakers directed films during the late Franco period and the Transition years, such as Molina and Cecilia Bartolomé (1943- ), another graduate of the EOC. For more details on women filmmakers during this period see Isolina Ballesteros ("La mirada"), Martin-Márquez (*Feminist* 141-180) and Zecchi (*Desenfocadas* 73-112).

entitled Spanish-produced films to a grant equal to fifteen percent of box-office receipts plus a further twenty-five percent if deemed 'special quality', a return to a nebulous category originally designed to protect the work of EOC graduates.[135] Miró summarises her policy changes:

> The *good* films were promoted and all co-productions closely observed; the creation of special X-rated movie theaters for films with excessive sex and violence made the S rating of films unnecessary. In addition, the distribution of Spanish films was promoted by *increased publicity at international film festivals*. [....], a new law was issued which [...] did not allow more than four dubbing licences for each Spanish film and required higher box-office results for obtaining such licences. ("Ten Years" 44-45; my emphases)

The emphasis on 'good' films would cause the most difficulty for Miró's administration, as this extremely subjective qualification would not match the desires of the audience. According to Triana-Toribio, 'good' films were to be exportable "calling-cards" (*Spanish* 113), promoting democratic Spain and building on the nation's established reputation for high standards of literary and theatrical traditions.[136] This meant that many films that fit into populist genres or that were adapted from popular literature rather than the middle to highbrow works favoured by the administration had to seek funding outside the governmental system.

Frequently held up as a model of success during Miró's tenure, *Los santos inocentes* (Mario Camus, 1984) fulfilled the 'good' film category by way of its literary origins (adapted from canonical author Miguel Delibes's 1982 novel), its auteurist credentials (Camus was a *Nuevo cine* director) and its engagement with social critique (displaying the general contempt for the lower classes in rural areas). However, it also encapsulates the interplay of auteurs at the heart of Miró's policies, with distinguished director and prestigious writer coming together on screen to create a work that could export the very best of Spanish culture to the outside world. Triana-Toribio notes the "legitimizing power of high art" at work in the adaptation (*Spanish* 123), a factor that pleased audiences and juries at festivals including Cannes, while the film's performance at the box-office surpassed expectations for an arthouse film.[137]

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[135] The *interés especial* label was withdrawn during the Transition (Pavlović *100 Years* 106-107) in favour of *especial calidad* or 'special quality'. Besas uses the term "nebulous" to describe the award ("Financial"), while John Hooper gives a brief account of how the system worked (*The New* 337).

[136] D'Lugo and Smith note that the Miró films marked a return to the literary-inspired *tradition de la qualité* that the early adherents of the *politique des auteurs* had railed against ("Auteurism" 118).

[137] *Los santos inocentes* was nominated for the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 1984, and the Best Actor prize was shared by stars Francisco Rabal and Alfredo Landa. Triana-Toribio provides a discussion of *Los santos inocentes* as a successful Miró film which will not be reproduced here (*Spanish* 123-126). Rather, the film's success serves as a comparison to the failure of Coixet's first film *Demasiado viejo*.

Despite the box-office and critical success of films like *Los santos inocentes* and the attempts to support new talent through subsidies, overlooking the popularity of genre cinema, especially the *destape* films, did not endear Miró's policies to audiences. Filmmakers producing *tercera vía* comedies like Colomo who did not have this connection to literature or auteurist filmmaking practices were left out in the cold during the 1980s. Stone accounts for the popularity of the socially-conscious comedies of this genre, as an alternative to

> the complex metaphors of Saura and his like, or the relaxing mindlessness of farces. [...] the innovation of the *tercera vía* inspired a genre of contemporary social comedies in which the keys to a film's success were audience identification and the frisson with which such previously forbidden themes as adultery, abortion and impotence were featured. ("Over Franco" 120)

Similarly, creators of subversive melodrama like Pedro Almodóvar, and youth-oriented films like Bigas Luna,[138] existed on the fringes during Miró's tenure in the ICAA. This divide between what audiences identified with and what the policymakers and auteurists wanted would pose a problem for Miró when the films her policies funded arrived in cinemas. Despite their perceived prestige and exportability, many failed to recoup their budgets at the domestic box-office, making the subsidy levels unsustainable and export inadvisable.

Accordingly, expenditure on promoting Spanish cinema abroad ('fomento del cine español en el extranjero') increased, with costs rising sharply from 4,861,462 pesetas in 1982 to 27,280,766 pesetas in 1983, the first year that the new legislation was applied and this expenditure did not drop below 15,000,000 pesetas for the rest of the decade.[139] Despite these efforts, international distribution deals remained elusive for many peninsular filmmakers during the 1980s. In Maule's opinion, "foreign distribution of authorial films was not adequately organized and wagered upon the random fortune of individual films at international film festivals" (*Beyond* 52), much like the policies during the peak of the *Nuevo cine*. Miró's policies struggled to commodify art cinema or protect author films against Hollywood domination and, as Maule points out, the legislation (like that of other European countries in the 1980s) paradoxically contributed to the marginalisation of home-grown film product (*Beyond* 52). However, Caparrós Lera also notes the protective function of the policy

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[138] Outside of Spain Almódovar (1949- ) is currently the nation's best-known filmmaker as the director of nineteen feature films since 1980. A product of the counter-culture of the *movida madrileña*, his early films engaged with stereotypes of Spanishness promoted by the dictatorship but his propensity for camp comedy and melodrama placed him on the fringes of the industry during his early career. Bigas Luna (1946-2013) began his career in video-art before making his first feature *Tatuaje* (1976) and experimenting with English-language cinema with *Reborn* (1981) and *Anguish* (1986). Like Coixet, Bigas Luna created an installation for the Spanish Pavilion at the Shanghai World Expo in 2010.

[139] The author wishes to thank the Biblioteca de la Filmoteca de España for this unpaginated data (*Cinematografía* n.pag).

and reports that the legislation was welcomed initially as a long-overdue recognition of the 'quality' of Spanish cinema, although it benefitted producers rather than distributors or exhibitors (*El cine de la democracia* 57-65).[140] Additionally, Stone notes that the pre-production subsidies were much higher than those offered by other European governments ("By Way of" 10), although Miró claims that funds were awarded the same way as other European nations ("Ten Years" 45). Although these changes were initially beneficial to the filmmakers in receipt of these funds, the policies created a bubble of films that Spaniards 'should' watch, rather than responding to what audiences would watch. Overlooking popular genre cinema and the types of film established during the Transition would lead to audiences abandoning Spanish-made cinema during the 1980s, which was unsurprising considering the range of choices they could now enjoy on their screens, in the cinema and at home on television.

Consequently, while the policies of the PSOE government aimed to distance the socialist administration from the dictatorship, the subjective nature of awarding funds under the Ley Miró created an 'official' culture promoted by the Ministerio de Cultura, and was seen to foster nepotism and favouritism similar to previous governments (Besas "Financial" 246). Faulkner suggests that the Film Protection Fund established by the Ley Miró could be seen as another form of censorship, in regard to its selectivity and promotion of certain types of middlebrow films ("Miró Films" 161).[141] It seems that Miró's attempts to create a cohort of filmmakers more successful at home and abroad than the *Nuevo cine* backfired, with popular 'outsiders' like Almodóvar dominating the Spanish box-office and garnering praise abroad in later years. Mira notes that Almodóvar's rise was initially "resented" by the establishment, since he focused on the present day and made films that were not serious nor concerned with "the traumas of Francoism" (*Historical* lx) and this modus operandi was adopted by the 1990s generation.[142] Yet, in spite of overlooking popular filmmakers like Almódovar, Colomo and

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[140] Caparrós Lera documents the positive reactions to the new legislation amongst industry figures, including directors Bardem and Martín Patino (*El cine de la democracia* 59-60).

[141] Similarly, Triana-Toribio comments that the Ley Miró mirrored film policies of the post-Civil War period, with the same need to mythologise national identity (*Spanish* 115).

[142] Writing in 2003, Triana-Toribio notes that Almodóvar remains "a source of embarrassment" for certain Spanish critics, marking how he has been co-opted into Spanish national cinema through his dominance of the domestic box-office and international success rather than through critical respect for his treatment of Spanish socio-political concerns (*Spanish* 158). However, his self-generated auteur status brought the recognition he deserved from the establishment, providing a model to follow for younger or newer directors. Yet, rather than mimic Almodóvar's template of popular auteurism, Coixet chooses to follow the *Cahiers* model.

Bigas Luna, the Miró administration allowed more new directors to break into the industry, a trend that continued into the 2000s, with over two hundred *operas primas* made between 1990 and 2001 (Heredero "New Creators" 32). However, the Ley Miró also helped create a legion of debut filmmakers, many of them women, who never succeeded in directing a second feature film.[143] Despite aiming to foster a relationship between director and nation, the lack of success of these films at the box-office meant that author films fell further out of favour with audiences, and since these films had been marketed as national cinema, this did not help in the perception of Spanish cinema as a quality product equal in cultural and commercial value to foreign imports.

After Miró's acrimonious departure from the ICAA in 1985, legislation was tightened by a judicial 'correction' of the law in 1987, which nullified the system of pre-production funding without any consultation of industry professionals (Caparrós-Lera *El cine de la democracia* 76), although Miró's successor as head of the ICAA, producer and critic Fernando Méndez-Leite (in office 1986-1988), maintained that institutional policy remained in line with what the Ley Miró had set out in 1983.[144] Faulkner notes that film policies did not change much after Miró's departure from the ICAA ("Miró Films" 161); however, the stopgap measures introduced by Méndez-Leite and the 'correction' of the legislation had consequences for filmmakers working at the time, namely reducing the number of new filmmakers who could access funds. The creation of the Academia de las Artes y las Ciencias Cinematográficas in 1986 aimed to promote Spanish cinema at home (Consejería *El cine* 6), while the inauguration of the Premios Goya in 1987 helped to draw international attention to domestic films as an official stamp of approval from the home market. After 1988, as Miró-funded films trickled out, new Minister for Culture (1988-1991) and former screenwriter Jorge Semprún drafted updated legislation that would award post-release funding to films that succeeded at the box-office.[145] The 1989 Ley Semprún placed greater responsibility on

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[143] Using Camí-Vela's extensive list as a basis, the following directors have not succeeded in making a second feature film to date: Cristina Andreu (now teaching at a university), Ana Belén (actress), Cristina Esteban, Eugenia Kléber, Maria Miró, Isabel Mulá, Virginia Nunes, Mirentxu Purroy, and Pilar Sueiro, who has moved into production (*Mujeres detrás* 2001 ed).

[144] Méndez-Leite was quick to clarify: "[e]n cualquier caso, la sentencia no entra para nada en el fondo ni en la filosofía de la política cinematográfica actual, que está regida básicamente a partir del decreto de 1983" ["in any case, the judgment does not in any way affect the substance or the philosophy of the current film policy, which is mainly governed by the 1983 decree"] (in Jarque n.pag).

[145] Dubbing licences were limited to two per exhibitor per domestic production, in line with EU standards and obtaining them became the ultimate goal of many exhibitors and distributors, meaning they cared little about the success of their domestic investments, exhibiting films just to fulfil quotas

producers, and obliged them to shoulder the financial risks involved in the film, although pre-production subsidies based on the producer's available funds also ensured their independence and solvency.[146] Semprún accused his predecessor of cronyism in regard to awarding of funds and Méndez-Leite responded by objecting to the new decree, claiming

> el nuevo decreto se parece al anterior, con una concepción a la baja de las subvenciones, y mantendrá la paralización de la producción de los últimos meses.[147] (in "Méndez Leite" n.pag)

These controversies perhaps account for the shift in national identity politics in the English-language films produced during the 1990s, as filmmakers depicted transnational or post-national stories as they sought to escape official 'Spanish cinema' and the inherent partiality and insularity it represented at that time.

As a director working predominantly through English, but also as a filmmaker whose utmost desire is to be received as an artist, Coixet's complex relationship to national cinema has not been resolved easily, and this fraught association stems from her longing for international success, rather than domestic acclaim. As a comparison to the success of *Los santos inocentes*, her debut film was a Miró failure: rather than acting as a gateway into the exportable auteur stable, *Demasiado viejo* flopped at festivals and at the box-office. With 73 million pesetas awarded before Miró left office, *Demasiado viejo* was shot in 1986, but not released until 1988 (Cerrato *Isabel* 49), with Gallardo noting it took three years to find a producer, since most were reluctant to make a 'Spanish' film by an unknown, inexperienced director and without recognisable stars ("La vocación" n.pag). Timing also played a role: while still looking to make exportable cinema and hoping to shore up ailing finances, the focus of the ICAA had shifted since Miró's departure. Rather than support emerging directors, the economic situation facing the film industry had to be addressed, so Coixet's film needed to appeal to a wide audience beyond the arthouse circuit. Additionally, the delayed release may not have helped with its reception, since Miró-funded films had largely trickled out by 1989. It first released appeared in theatres in Madrid in January 1989, rather than premiering in Coixet's hometown of Barcelona ("Isabel Coixet estrena" n.pag), where she had received considerable press attention during shooting,[148] a factor which did not improve the film's

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(Besas "Financial" 249-250). Besas also notes that most of the producers would have already recouped their initial investments before the film was released ("Financial" 250).

[146] For further details see Stone (*Spanish* 10-11).

[147] ["the new decree is similar to the previous one, with a perception of lower subsidies, and it will maintain the paralysis of production of recent months"].

[148] The Catalonia-based press had already generated a buzz around the film preceding its release, touting Coixet as the first Catalan woman to direct a feature since Rosario Pí's *El gato montés* in 1936.

chances after it was "aggressively trashed" by critics at San Sebastian in September 1988 (Mira *Historical* 88), where it screened in the Zabaltegui section. However, most critics focused on the conditions of production, the director's background in advertising and her status as a woman director rather than the quality of the film itself.

Although set in Barcelona and filmed in Spanish, *Demasiado viejo* bears the hallmarks of an 'American' film, not least through its engagement with US film history. Disillusioned protagonists Equis (Gerardo Arenas), Evax (Emma Suárez) and Taxi (Emilio Lain) inhabit a grimy, pre-Olympic Barcelona, members of a lost generation that Coixet wanted to portray:

> Jóvenes que alguna vez habían tenido ilusiones por algo, que un día eran punkies y al día siguiente se hacían mensajeros para no estudiar informática.[149] (in Heredero *Espejo* 309-310)

Equis and Evax work as motorcycle couriers, while Taxi has inherited his father's cab, and while each character has the freedom to travel around or beyond the city, they remain outsiders, playing at urban cowboys on mopeds, comfortable only in their dingy saloon or on the open road. The ICAA-appointed producers wanted to see Coixet's wordy protagonists engaged in more action, a 'suggestion' that prompted the inexperienced director to modify her script and insert violent scenes that did not appear in the original version of *Demasiado viejo* (Cerrato *Isabel* 50). While the Spanish Academy rewarded Coixet with a Goya nomination for Best New Director in a bumper year for women in the category,[150] the golden girl of Catalan cinema (M. Rodríguez n.pag) was left to the creative and cultural wilderness and had to pursue her career without institutional support. The changes to ICAA funding policies during the late 1980s meant that Coixet would have needed the backing of a powerful producer in the pre-production stage to secure financial aid from a government body for a second feature. However, *Demasiado viejo*'s disappointing box-office run meant that such preproduction support was not forthcoming, and the young director would not receive any further institutional funding from the Spanish or Catalan government until later in her career.

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For more details, see press articles by Butragueño and Unzueta ("Isabel Coixet estrena a Madrid abans de tenir sala a Barcelona"); Caballero ("Isabel Coixet roda el seu primer film a Barcelona"); Ricart, (Isabel Coixet: una publicitaria que debuta como directora de cine") and Mariano Rodríguez ("Isabel Coixet, una joven de 27 años, será la primera mujer catalana que dirigirá un largometraje"). The titles alone denote the local familiarity with Coixet, and note her profession in the advertising industry, her gender, her (incorrect) age, and her Catalan roots, which underlines the early pigeon-holing of her work.

[149] ["Young people who had once dreamed of something, one day they were punks and the next they became bike messengers, so that they wouldn't have to study IT"].

[150] Andreu was also nominated for *Brumal* (1988), but the Goya was awarded to Diéz for *Ander Eta Yul* (1988).

Perhaps if Coixet had made her first film in English it would have met with a different fate, although this hypothetical situation seems unlikely, due to the funding regulations she was subject to and the supremacy of dubbing in Spanish cinemas.[151] Nevertheless, *Demasiado viejo* remains consistent with the rest of Coixet's oeuvre, displaying her preoccupation with American cinema and the idea of the individual rather than the national, and her desire to be received as an auteur from the beginning of her career. The director notes:

> Mi primera película la hice en Barcelona, pero como si la estuviera haciendo en Nueva York. Creo que por eso es una obra fallida, porque hay cosas como que no corresponden como si estuviera mal elegido el lugar para pasar ese trama.[152] (in Huete Machado "La mirada" n.pag)

As a recipient of Miró funding, Coixet's first film fell victim to the critical and commercial disdain for films seen as pandering to the bourgeois middle classes who held strong opinions on Francoism (Mira *Historical* lx). This failure meant that, rather than enter the pantheon of state-supported auteurs, she had to gain recognition abroad before being recuperated as a Spanish director. Therefore, her complex relationship to national cinema seemingly runs in tandem with her desire for auteur status and lack of dependence on (rather than independence from) the national. Yet, her nationality and authorship are intertwined, no matter how she presents or sells herself. As an aspiring auteur, she would find her approach to filmmaking and authorial control greatly influenced by this early experience. Aware of the high dropout rate for emerging directors, Coixet points out that forty-two *operas primas* were made in 1988 and only eight of these directors managed to make another film (in Donapetry "Miss Wasabi" n.pag). Unfortuntely for Coixet, she made her debut during a difficult period in Spanish cinema history, and the changes to the infrastructure of the industry made it difficult for her to progress with her career, especially as a female director.

## Post-Transition Spain: Filmmaking, Education, Auteurism

The lack of an official film school meant that post-Transition filmmakers were not part of a state-funded programme geared toward finding employment in the film industry as their

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[151] Dubbing prevails in Spain largely as a relic of Franco-era censorship, when officials were keen to purge any subversive content in films imported from more democratic nations, mainly the US. Even domestic productions were dubbed for many years, with a limited coterie of voice actors creating a defined, homogenous vocal style that stifled performances and Spanish sound design well into the 1990s. For more details on dubbing in relation to Coixet, see Hart ("Sea Breezes"), and for commentary on other Spanish cinema see Vernon ("Listening") and Whittaker ("Locating").

[152] ["I made my first film in Barcelona, but as if I was making it in New York. I think that is why it failed, because there are things that don't match up, as if the location was a bad choice for that story"].

predecessors had been during the 1960s.[153] Degrees in Comunicación Audiovisual became popular at Spanish universities in the interim, and until the Escola Superior de Cinema i Audiovisuals de Catalunya (ESCAC) and the Escuela de la Cinematografía y del Audiovisual de la Comunidad de Madrid (ECAM) opened their doors in 1994, filmmakers had to go abroad to study the practical and technical side of filmmaking in depth at university level.[154] This would mark a change in the techniques and styles seen on Spanish cinema screens as more self-taught practitioners began to make films. Rather than the glossy Miró films with high production values, films that were stylistically grittier such as *Alas de mariposa* (Juanma Bajo Ulloa, 1991) and *Vacas* (Julio Medem, 1992) began to make an impact in the early 1990s, and followed on from Almodóvar's underground success.[155] The tension between national cinema and auteur cinema relevant to the *Cahiers* critics mirrors the experience of Coixet and her contemporaries in the late 1980s. Although, in the 1980s the socialist administration policies gave preference to a Spanish version of the *tradition de la qualité* that Truffaut and his colleagues railed against in the 1950s, Spanish cinema asserted this 'quality' through the auteur figure, rather than maintain the division between the auteur and the scenario film. Popular auteurs such as Almodóvar were on the rise, so Semprún's administration and that of his PSOE successors Jordi Solé Tura (Minister for Culture 1991-1993) and Carmen Alborch (Minister for Culture 1993-1996) sought to recuperate the ailing industry through their success.

Certain filmmakers that debuted during the post-Transition such as Juanma Bajo Ulloa (1967- ), Manuel Gómez Pereira (1958- ) and Medem (1958- ) have been dubbed the *Joven cine español*, marking a break with previous generations but also a continuation of the auteur-

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[153] Camí-Vela lists the courses and schools attended by other women filmmakers during this interim period; some completed their studies at municipal film schools and a few studied Ciencias de la Imagen (*Mujeres detrás* 2001 ed. 16). Monterde also provides a brief overview of the academic careers and vocational filmmaking courses taken by women directors during the 1990s and notes that many moved into production roles such as assistant director, script supervisor, or into the world of advertising ("Miradas" 17-20).

[154] Elsaesser defines education as an essential criterion for his definition of "world cinema" directors, remarking that filmmakers in this category are often self-taught or have travelled abroad to study film ("World Cinema" 3-4). Although the contested concept of world cinema generally relates to non-European directors, as underdogs, these filmmakers fit much of Elsaesser's transnational criteria from an industrial point of view. They chose to prioritise international, non-European success, but the lack of support from their home country also made acclaim abroad a necessity for domestic acceptance.

[155] With regard to this period, the views of critics such as Besas, Hopewell, Pavlović, and Paul J. Smith are concisely summarised by Faulkner as an overriding condemnation of the Ley Miró era "for its cronyism, for its imposition of a uniform, politicized view of Spanish culture and for its corollary effects of shrinking the variety of output and stifling in particular its popular and commercial trends" (*A History* 161).

driven *Nuevo cine* model. However, the focus on youth signalled a discontinuation from the *Nuevo cine* directors who were still active, as they became the old guard of auteurs. This grouping also marked a rupture with Miró-era cinema, with directors and critics keen to distance themselves from the ill-fated legislation and policies. As Triana-Toribio notes, "the most prominent filmmakers of the early 1990s advocated an aesthetic and thematic break with the politically responsible cinema" (*Spanish* 141) and this idea of "looking north but heading west" (*Spanish* 143-163), allowed for a cinema decidedly arthouse in its aesthetic, while undoubtedly moving away from the traditional social realism common to European national cinemas and embracing the multitude of popular American genre cinema such as melodrama or action and a focus on the individual rather than the collective. Additionally, the failure of Miró's policies allowed for the appropriation and adaptation of texts outside the middle- to highbrow canon, which film audiences responded to in great numbers.[156]

Moreover, Christina A. Buckley comments on the generation of Spanish directors that emerged in the 1990s, and notes that the films produced

> have not entirely eschewed the Spanish past, but rather [it] plays an integral and inextricable role in their conceptualisation in that each incorporates a repressed historical memory. ("Commercial" 205)

Whether repressing the past or subverting Spanish cinema history, this new cohort of filmmakers was not burdened by Franco-era censorship, or a totalitarian regime to rail against. Nonetheless, their films had to be accepted and approved by a national body in order to access state funding, propping up the 'welfare system' proposed by Maule (*Beyond* 39), where the film industry became reliant on government and network television subsidies, a situation that had become untenable by the end of Miró's years in office. Without the need to manipulate scripts to pass the censor, or to cut entire scenes or segments, the younger generation could move on from the elliptical and often ambiguous narrative style of the *Nuevo cine* directors. As funding, distribution and exhibition practices began to change during the 1980s and 1990s, Buckley contends that globalisation "purports to foment international innovation, sensitivity, understanding and acceptance, but tends to exert pressure toward stylistic and cultural conformity and exclusivity", calling for the recognition and study of "the innovative strategies created to resist such pressure" ("Commercial" 205). By pursuing an authored, yet commercially-minded cinema, these filmmakers moved away from the concerns

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[156] However, the parameters of the *Joven cine* largely excluded female directors, who represented a growing demographic within the Spanish film industry of the 1990s. This will be discussed in Chapter 4.

of previous generations and attempted to compete in a globalised marketplace while retaining creative control of their work.

Recouping ground lost during Miró's tenure at the ICAA and re-embracing the popular, successful directors on the fringes like Almodóvar, Bigas Luna and Colomo became the priority for successive PSOE administrations in an industry where "streamlining production into a more coherent cinema would help audiences to identify a particular kind of film as Spanish *and* European" (Triana-Toribio *Spanish* 114). Accordingly, 1989 saw the establishment of the Council of Europe's Eurimages fund, encouraging co-production, supporting distribution and exhibition, and investing in the upgrading of cinemas to digital technology.[157] 1991 heralded the introduction of the MEDIA programme by the EU, with measures "to support the European film and television programme industry, make it more competitive and foster the circulation and production of European audiovisual products".[158] This increased emphasis on co-production and 'European' films further complicated film's relationship to the national, as more transnational concerns began to shape the film industry. Furthermore, an automatic subsidy scheme based on box-office receipts was enacted in 1994 and introduced in 1995, providing for refunds of one third of a producer's investment up to 100 million pesetas, if the film grossed 30 million pesetas. In addition, ICAA funding to new directors and experimental film rose by 700 million pesetas per year.[159]

Distribution and exhibition practices also affected up-and-coming filmmakers: writing in 1996, Besas noted the importance of release dates, and revealed that the average Spanish-produced film during the 1990s brought in about forty percent less at the box-office than an American film, and thereby the best dates tended to go to "Yank blockbusters" ("Financial" 250), a practice that continues to this day, with the exception of Almodóvar or industrially 'Spanish' films such as Woody Allen's *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008) or *Midnight in Paris* (2011). This deference to Hollywood fare causes further disadvantage for smaller films across Europe, but in 1995, the new automatic subsidy policy meant that box-office figures mattered

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[157] Kinder notes the vogue for European co-productions in Spain in the late 1980s and early 1990s, whether by established filmmakers such as Saura (who directed *El Dorado* in 1987 and *¡Ay Carmela!* in 1988) or Fernando Trueba (*The Mad Monkey*, 1988) or productions like *Boom Boom* (1988) by newcomer Rosa Vergés (*Blood* 412-420).

[158] For more details on the MEDIA programme and the relevant EU legislation see the official website. Available at: <http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/audiovisual_and_media/l24104a_en.htm> [Accessed 26 October 2014].

[159] For further details see Besas ("Financial" 257), Maule (*Beyond* 54), and "New subsidies" (n.pag).

even more than before, with producers relying on audience numbers to recoup their initial investment.

However, in a textual sense, many filmmakers of the post-Transition moved away from typically 'Spanish' topics and contexts, and some experimented with genre and English-language filmmaking to further entrench themselves as major players in the domestic industry, while also improving their recognition abroad. The rise in English-language cinema during the 1980s and 1990s provided an alternative route for new and established filmmakers to assert themselves internationally, creating a new figure of the Spanish director who did not necessarily produce Spanish national cinema, but could nonetheless be used as an exportable auteur just as their *Nuevo cine* predecessors had been during the 1960s. Despite these divergences, the *Joven cine* became the next grouping to be given a coherent, exportable identity at the time they were working, rather than in hindsight, and much like the *Nuevo cine*, this label was ascribed only to men, despite the growing numbers of new female directors like Coixet who were creating youth-oriented cinema that looked beyond Spain. Auteurist strategies would become increasingly important to these new filmmakers, whether male or female, as they sought artistic and commercial success in post-Transition Spain.

## Conclusion

The relationship between auteur and nation remains in flux, especially as budget cuts continue to affect the film industry. However, the evolving opportunities to criticise, promote and produce film in an auteurist context have helped Spanish cinema to survive on the international stage. Like their European counterparts, Spanish auteurs have endured a complex relationship to the national, but the auteurist policies pursued since the late Franco period reveal a reliance on artist figures to create Spanish national cinema that appeals to domestic *and* international audiences. Nevertheless, this relationship remains reciprocal in that filmmakers also need national or institutional recognition in order to advance.

This chapter has traced the history of auteurism in Spain via the exportability of the auteur figure, rather than the success of films produced under this label. The filmmakers exemplified here are important figures within the history of auteurism in Spain: as prominent auteurs during the dictatorship and the Transition, these directors provided the post-Transition filmmakers with career trajectories to emulate or oppose. While many of the filmmakers mentioned in this chapter would have achieved auteur status regardless of any financial or promotional state support they received, this chapter has explored how the

director's relationship to the national cinema context can shape their success as auteurs. However, it has not treated how or if the filmmakers themselves cultivate an auteur persona, a strategy which has become increasingly important for contemporary directors like Coixet, who distinguish themselves from their compatriots through the use of English, but also seek to capitalise on the reputation for quality Spanish cinema artists that the successes of the *Nuevo cine* helped to create. This persona will be the subject of the next chapter, as we return to a closer examination of Coixet in order to locate her within the post-Transition context.

## Chapter 3: The Construction of an Auteur Persona and its Implications for Coixet's Authorship

Before approaching an analysis of Coixet's films and placing her within the context of the Spanish film industry, her public persona will be explored, as her interaction with the media augments her claims to authorship of her films and places her in a similar paradigm to the film star. As Chapter 1 outlined, the twenty-first century film auteur must promote a coherent brand and use personal star power as part of this promotion, and as Chapter 2 concludes, new filmmakers are often reliant on state support in order to become exportable auteurs. In order to assess the auteur persona she has cultivated, Coixet's extra-filmic writings, advertising portfolio and websites, alongside DVD extras and other interview material will be analysed. However, rather than seek to pursue biographical criticism, aspects of her creative output that lie outside her feature filmography will be discussed in order to better understand her status as a self-styled auteur. She constantly aims to shape how the public perceive her personality and her work through regularly updated websites and inter-disciplinary projects, and strives to be received as a *Cahiers* auteur; a film artist whose personality is essential to the production, both textually and industrially.[160]

While the *Cahiers* conception of the auteur director seems somewhat outdated considering the theoretical and industrial developments since the 1950s, Coixet constantly forges links to Truffaut and other filmmakers that were part of this group. Additionally, her foregrounding of her 'self' as an author through diverse outlets augments her claim to auteurship, and place her 'personal' vision at the heart of every project she undertakes. Nevertheless, regarding auteur status, Jennifer Slobodian contends:

> The obstacles involved in studying the *auteur* are more heightened in the film genre due to the nature of production. When multiple people are involved in the construction of a single frame, scene, and the film as a whole, separating out the *auteur*, or the veritable 'producer' of the cultural product, becomes a futile task for the critic and one that would poorly represent the outcome of the artistic visions at work were it to be achieved. ("Analyzing" 160)

However, this cynical conception of the auteur as a denigrating force within film is challenged by Coixet's sustained commitment to multi-tasking authorship, which provides ample evidence of her textual auteur or artist status. She engages critically with the work of others through adaptation and intertextuality, while she updates and refreshes hackneyed

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[160] This chapter owes a factual and interpretive debt to Triana-Toribio ("Auteurism"; "Anyplace") and Vidal ("Love") owing to their articulation and analysis of Coixet's self-conscious media persona and self-styled auteurist traits. The three articles will be referred to extensively throughout.

representations of women, men and emotions, aspects of her filmography which Part Two of this thesis seeks to unpack. However, in order to understand her pursuit of auteur status in a post-*Cahiers* industry, this chapter will examine her public discourse and relationship to the media as an outlet for auteurism.

## Coixet's Media Persona and Auteur (Auto-)Biography

Mimicking the career trajectory of some *Cahiers* critics-turned-filmmakers, Coixet draws on her personal spectatorial experience for the cinema she wishes to create, and discusses her nostalgia for a golden age of cinema-going, pre-internet and pre-social media. She notes that, as a child who took full advantage of her grandmother's job in the local cinema, she felt more comfortable in the dark of the movie theatre than outside, and saw the cinema as a refuge from the rest of the world.[161] Similar biographical snippets are repeated on her websites (which will be discussed later in this chapter) and in various short career summaries online, which help to sell Coixet as someone fascinated by cinema from a young age, and are evidently intended to augment her auteurist credentials.[162] Much like famous artists mythologised through stories of their youthful brilliance, many filmmakers talk about their early obsessions with making or watching cinema, especially since the 'movie brat' generation of Steven Spielberg and Francis Ford Coppola emerged in the 1970s.[163] The *Cahiers* critics who became part of the French New Wave would not have had access to film equipment until adulthood, but the advent of Super 8 and other portable, inexpensive cameras in the later twentieth century means that film directing experience can start

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[161] "El hecho de que mi abuela fuera taquillera hizo que mis padres y yo fuerámos muchísimo al cine. Recuerdo haber visto películas de programa doble (probablemente inapropriadas por mi edad) que apenas entendía, pero, de alguna manera, el acto de ir al cine me producía una fascinación brutal: me parecía que se era mucho más feliz (aunque no entendiera las cosas o se me escaparan muchas) en la sala oscura que afuera; esa sensación de refugio, de mundo fuera del mundo me gustaba mucho" ["The fact that my grandmother was a ticket-booth operator meant that my parents and I went to the cinema often. I remember seeing double features (which were probably inappropriate for my age) that I barely understood, but in a certain way, I was fascinated by the very act of going to the cinema: to me it seemed that the darkened theatre was a happier place than outside (although I didn't understand things or they went over my head); I really liked that sense of refuge, of a world outside the world"] (Coixet in Cerrato *Isabel* 25).

[162] These anecdotes are frequently cited in Coixet's artist biographies, as well as on both her official websites ("Miss"; "Vida").

[163] Like Coixet, Spielberg's (1946- ) interest in film stemmed from childhood, when he made a short film to earn a Boy Scout merit badge. Similarly, the young Francis Ford Coppola (1939- ) edited together home-movie footage on Super 8 to create his own features. While other factors were more important in kickstarting the careers of these two 'New Hollywood' directors in the 1970s, they promote a cinephilic autobiography with roots in their early years.

younger. Notably, Coixet does not describe the early movies she made on her Super 8 camera, and prefers to discuss the films and filmmakers that influenced her, but she makes a point of including this fact in autobiographical texts as a way of promoting a cinephilic backstory.[164] Just like Truffaut, Godard and others proudly claimed to be 'children of the Cinémathèque' Française, she uses her own personal history to assert her cinematic credentials as a part of her auteur autobiography.

Similarly, Coixet's nostalgia for the auteurs of the past, and a desire to live among them also places her in the bracket of self-styled auteur. She idolises auteurs like Truffaut and Varda, and possesses a cinephilic knowledge of film history. As a fan, the director intertextually allies herself with the *politique des auteurs*, and her refusal to dilute authorship to a collective marks her determination to be received as an auteur in Sarris's terms: the classical director-artist whose 'personal' films become a recognisable sub-genre in themselves (i.e. "Woody Allen" films, a "Scorsese" film, etc.), or alternatively, whose films communicate a coherent brand of aesthetics. Cinephilia thus becomes Coixet's native language (Triana-Toribio "Anyplace" 59), and like a language she treats it as something to be practised and used regularly. Vidal tackles this aspect of her persona directly, as the director inserts herself into a "preferred lineage" of filmmakers belonging to or descending from the New Hollywood generation or French New Wave ("Love" 220). However, Coixet's desired family tree does not limit itself to cinema, nor does she want to pigeonhole herself as a high-brow cultural critic. This cinematic ancestry is carefully interleaved into her real autobiography on her websites and in her publications.

Notably, this cinephilic genealogy stretches beyond Spain and allows Coixet to create a sense of fluidity with regard to national identity. While the next chapter will deal with her relationship to Spanish cinema in more detail, it is necessary to note her approach to media questions regarding her national origins. In general, she refuses to be drawn on issues of Spanish or Catalan nationality in public, preferring to focus on individuality or 'personhood'. Elsaesser claims that so-called world cinema directors often have "an ambiguous relationship to their indigenous film culture and national film industry" ("World Cinema" 5); however, Coixet remains mindful that nationality plays a role in the formation of point of view and can be part of a cinephilic backstory. On her website she writes:

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[164] For further biographical details see Coixet's interview with Cerrato (*Isabel* 24-30). The Super 8 anecdote is included in many of her biographies whether in print or online. For examples of where the story is mentioned alongside writing by the director herself, see Coixet (*From I to J* 89; "Lake" n.pag; "Vida"; "Miss").

> El punto de vista de un autor está empapado de su género, de su origen, de su educación, de sus viajes, de sus encuentros, de sus amores, de sus fobias, de sus manías, de sus lecturas, en fin, de todo lo que hace que cada uno sea cada uno y tenga sus cadaunadas, como decía mi abuela. Resulta que en mis cadaunadas pesan más unas cosas que otras.[165] ("Eso de la patria" n.pag)

This awareness that her roots and her lifestyle are integral to her creative work does not hinder her from pursuing a gender-neutral, post-national authorship strategy.[166] Using a term borrowed from politics, post-national cinema encompasses films that are less concerned with a specific national identity, instead focusing on a collective global experience.

This slant is reinforced by Coixet's preferred use of English. Although she has directed documentaries in Spanish throughout her career and released *Ayer* in Castilian in 2013, expressing herself through English has formed a major part of her auteur strategy, both on and off the screen. Since English is the lingua franca of Hollywood and the film industry in general, the polyglot Coixet chooses it in order to achieve maximum visibility and to dodge the labels of nationality she wants to avoid, as well as to engage with the cinephilic world of Anglophone film history. Her mastery of the language allows her to masquerade as a Hollywood director, and she was described as such in *The Guardian* film listings by a reviewer.[167] Yet, rather than use English as a marketing ploy, Coixet also writes her screenplays and speaks in English (or French) during interviews when requested, an ability which allows her to further downplay her national origins.[168] While her linguistic skills allow her easier access to other markets, this gliding between cultures is not without risk, as it sets

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[165] ["The point of view of an author is steeped in his or her gender, origins, education, travels, encounters, loves, phobias, manias, what he or she has read, well, everything that adds to who he or she is and to his or her peculiarities, as my grandmother says. Some of my peculiarities weigh more than others"]

[166] According to Saskia Sassen, the rise of the individual and his or her 'personhood' has contributed to the dominance of supranational bodies and the resulting effect on the national. She writes: "It is becoming evident today that far from being unitary, the institution of citizenship has multiple dimensions, only some of which might be inextricably linked to the national state" ("Towards" 277). This idea of citizenship not as a rigid definition, but something mutable and transferable that engages with a lived culture rather than a place of birth or residence fits post-national cinema's concern with the individual and 'personhood'. Regarding cinema, the articulation of similarity dominates, in contrast to the focus on difference that national cinemas have promoted in the past. The author wishes to thank Stephanie Dennison for comments she made during a seminar at the University of Leeds in 2012 which encouraged the author to think about Coixet's films in this way.

[167] Triana-Toribio discusses this misattribution as indicative of Coixet's successful attempt to 'pass' as an Anglophone director ("Anyplace" 57). This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

[168] For similar views and further discussion of Coixet's tactical and cinephilic use of English see García de Lucas and Weinrichter ("Cosas" 14) and Vidal ("Love" 220). In addition, in 2014 it was reported she was learning Italian for a potential adaptation of a Roberto Saviano novel until financing fell through (Belinchón "Isabel Coixet" n.pag).

her apart from other filmmakers in the domestic sphere and makes her, in a way, less 'Spanish', a denomination which can be important with regard to institutional funding and recognition. Yet, through the use of English she can promote herself as an auteur filmmaker above all else, rather than being received as a Spanish or Catalan filmmaker making a crossover movie.[169] Rather than make a film in another language to announce her virtuosity, or to access new audiences, Coixet aims to infiltrate the English-language market from the inside, masquerading or performing as an Anglophone filmmaker. While her films do not always address the culture clash or 'in-between' of transnational cinema, as a filmmaker who travels extensively and glides across cultures and languages, she operates within a transnational industry.[170] Yet, by making herself visible as the creator and promoting her personality as a facet of her authorship, it can be argued that auteur directors like Coixet open themselves up to this kind of discourse. The necessary self-mythologisation of auteurism and the focus on personality as the source of genius seems to counter the director's attempts to avoid pigeonholing, although it is possible to argue that the label Coixet tries hardest to escape is that of 'Spanish cinema'.[171]

However, her beginnings as a director were firmly located within the industrial context of Spanish national cinema. At the time of her debut, she fitted the profile that the Ley Miró was targeting and was awarded funds to make her self-penned *Demasiado viejo*. While the context of the release has been discussed as a Miró failure in the previous chapter, the resulting circumstances would have a huge effect on Coixet's public persona. As a young debut director with funding from the ICAA, she felt obliged to lie about her age, claiming to have been born in 1960, instead of 1962 (Cerrato *Isabel* 24). Adding to this insecurity, she suffered from over-exposure in the media during the lead up to the release of the film. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the Catalan press paid considerable attention to Coixet before her film had been released. *La Vanguardia* published an article by Mariano Rodríguez titled

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[169] For example Alejandro Amenábar's *The Others* (2001), Álex de la Iglesia's *Perdita Durango* (1997) or *The Oxford Murders* (2008).

[170] With regard to the categories of national and transnational cinema, Deborah Shaw questions their real significance, commenting that: "[t]he concept of the transnational has seemed a straightforward solution for dealing with the problems inherent in the 'national cinema' label; however, what does the term actually mean? Which films can be categorised as transnational and which cannot? Does the term refer to production, distribution and exhibition, themes explored, aesthetics, nationalities of cast and crew, audience reception, or a range of these?" ("Deconstructing" 47). While other critics have labelled Coixet as transnational, this thesis suggests she has become a transnational filmmaker by association, rather than by design.

[171] For similar views see Triana-Toribio ("Auteurism") and Paul J. Smith ("Transnational").

"Isabel Coixet, una joven de 27 años, será la primera mujer catalana que dirigirá un largometraje" pointing out her (incorrect) age, gender and nationality in the headline, alongside a photo of the director. This proved typical of the press coverage of her debut film, with others foregrounding her advertising background. In the article, however, the young director refused to be intimidated by the label of "first Catalan woman to direct a film since 1936", and resisted an alliance with women directors, stating:

> Sólo siento responsabilidad como ser humano, personalmente. No me creo portavoz de las mujeres ni de un sector de ellas. Tampoco soy feminista ni creo que la mayoría de directoras lo sean.[172] (in M. Rodríguez "Isabel" n.pag)

Just as she shirked questions of national identity, at the start of her career she also denied a feminist motivation, and declared herself unwilling to speak for women, yet critics have consistently focused on Coixet's status as a woman director, with journalist Casimiro (Miro) Torreiro identifying her "sabia mirada de mujer" or 'wise womanly gaze' back in 1996, when she had only released two feature films ("Sabia" n.pag).[173] From an academic perspective, Camporesi and Martin-Márquez comment on her feminine gaze, judging it essential to an understanding of her work,[174] although Coixet problematises the practice of assessing films in relation to the gender of the director. For example, in an early interview, the director questions the existence of the female gaze, remarking:

> No estoy nada segura de que exista esto que se llama la mirada femenina. No sé si a un extraterrestre, al que pasáramos *El Piano* y las películas de George Cukor, sabría distinguir cuál pertenece a una mano masculina o femenina. De la misma forma, creo que la sensibilidad de Jane Austen está también en otros novelistas masculinos de su generación, y me da igual si *Reflejos en un ojo dorado* está escrita por un hombre o por una mujer, porque estoy segura de que se trata, en cualquier caso, de un gran novelista. Mi propia película... ¿la podría haber hecho también un hombre?, pues no sé, creo que sí.[175] (in Heredero *Espejo* 304)

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[172] ["Personally, I only feel responsibility as a human being. I don't think I am a spokesperson for women or for a group of them. I am not a feminist, nor do I believe that many female directors are either"]

[173] While this thesis proposes that it remains impossible to tell the gender of a director or screenwriter simply from watching a film or reading a script, nor should it matter, this concept of a gendered gaze cannot be overlooked. Since this study is concerned with Coixet's 'personality' and creative process, Chapter 5 will deal with her investigation of the gaze in more detail, notwithstanding the director's resistance to the idea early in her career.

[174] Martin-Márquez sketches the director's critical engagement with gaze theory, with regard to her first short film, *Mira y verás* ("Engagement" 547-551) and exemplifies *My Life* for its use of haptic techniques and subversion of the male-centric gaze that dominates film ("Engagement" 556-559). Like Torreiro, Camporesi identifies the director's "sabia mirada de mujer" and its importance to Coixet's films ("A ambos" 64).

[175] ["I am not sure that this thing called the female gaze exists. I doubt that if we were to give an extraterrestrial *The Piano* and the films of George Cukor, it would know which were made by male or female hands. In the same way, I think that the sensibility of Jane Austen is also present in other male novelists of her generation, and it is all the same to me if *Reflections in a Golden Eye* was written by a

She focuses on the absurdity of identifying a director's gender identity through textual analysis and reflects that supposedly 'feminine' or 'masculine' traits can belong to anyone regardless of their gender. In a more recent interview, she comments on the treatment of women directors in the media, reflecting on the male rhetoric used to describe *The Hurt Locker* (Kathryn Bigelow, 2008) and its female director:

> Si sabes que la dirige una mujer la recibes de una manera. Y si sabes que la dirige un hombre la recibes de otra manera. Para mí un ejemplo es como se está recibiendo la película de Kathryn Bigelow *The Hurt Locker* que es nominada al Óscar, fue me parece una muy buena película pero la sensación que yo tengo es que en todas las críticas se habla de que la ha dirigido como un hombre. Que es una película de testosterona. O sea, para magnificar [Bigelow] se la atribuyen virtudes masculinas que es completamente absurdo. No hables de quien la ha hecho. Habla de la película. No saques conclusiones a partir del género de quien la hace.[176] (in Bertenrath xxxiv-xxxv)

However, she calls for critics to pay greater attention to the content of the films rather than drawing conclusions based on the gender of the director. In this sense, the *Cahiers* approach to the auteur represents an attractive model; Coixet seems to desire a somewhat depoliticised textual analysis, in order to bypass categorisations she sees as unhelpful. On the one hand, as an auteur, she wants people to know who she is and she recognises the importance of participating in media interviews as a marketing tool; yet, on the other hand, this visibility leads to further commentary and criticism on the basis of gender. She does not enjoy answering questions about being a woman in the film industry, and like many other female directors she astutely remarks that her male contemporaries are not quizzed about their gender in interviews,[177] nor do the terms 'male director' or 'men's cinema' exist in

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woman or a man because I am certain that it was, in any case, written by a great novelist. Could my film have been made by a man? I don't know, but I think it could have".]

[176] ["If you know that a woman directed it you receive it in a certain way. And if you know that a man directed it, you receive it another way. In my opinion, an example of this is Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker* which has been nominated for the Oscar. I thought it was a very good film but I got the feeling that all the critics were talking about how she directed it like a man. That it is a testosterone film. Or rather, in order to acclaim [Bigelow] she is given masculine virtues, which is completely absurd. Don't talk about who made it. Talk about the film. Don't jump to conclusions because of the gender of the person who made it."]

[177] At the 2013 Berlinale Coixet remarked on the different treatment of male and female directors, stating: "tenemos que estar justificando... Por ejemplo, si Kathryn Bigelow hace una película de guerra se le plantea que por qué no hace una película de mujeres, y si la haces con temas femeninos, te dicen: "¿Y por qué haces una película así?"... Esas preguntas no se les hacen a los hombres, y una no tiene que perder tanto tiempo en contestar ese tipo de cosas" ["we have to justify it... For example, if Kathryn Bigelow makes a war film she is asked why she doesn't make a woman's film, and if you make a film with female themes you are asked 'why do you make a film like this?'... Men are not asked these questions, and one doesn't have to waste so much time responding to this sort of thing"] ("Isabel Coixet en una retrospectiva" n.pag).

popular discourse. Consequently, she makes no attempt to create or appropriate a female look, instead creating a humanist, gender-neutral perspective that seeks to remedy the objectification processes of the cinematic gaze that were identified by Mulvey (1975). Accordingly, she aims to draw us out of our passivity as spectators by investigating our perceptions of looking. While this in itself represents a feminist practice, during her early career Coixet argued for a gender-neutral reception and reading of her films through a negation of *cine de mujer*. However, while she vindicates traditional portrayals of women in the cinema and has tentatively become more outspoken in her comments about female directors, she does not attempt to make any overt feminist statements in her films; nonetheless, she stealthily undermines the stereotypes and objectification of women in many mainstream films.[178] Similarly, Martin-Márquez demonstrates her playfulness in deconstructing the patriarchal viewpoint from within, using an affective mode of address rather than making experimental films ("Engagement" 545).[179]

In 2012 Coixet became the President of the European Women's Audiovisual Network (EWA), and has taken a more active role in discussing the particular difficulties faced by women in the film industry, writing:

> I always use a very graphic example: the film industry is like a rocky mountain; boys climb the mountain with boots and sticks, girls must climb naked except for a pair of really high heels and a suitcase full of stones. For a man, directing a movie is a fierce challenge, for a woman it is like winning the lottery. There's also something very upsetting, something we must fight every single day: the cultural dismissal of women is so ingrained that the public, including some women, don't seem to perceive a problem. [180] ("EWA's President" n.pag)

This about turn in Coixet's public politics has been shaped by a twenty-six year career in the film industry, making films in different countries and languages, and in varied genres and formats. It seems she has now come to embrace her position as a woman director, and sees it as a defining characteristic of her industrial position as a veteran filmmaker, but she nonetheless still questions the idea of a female gaze or *mirada femenina*, requesting that her projects not be received as the product of a woman director, but as works created in a context where females are in the minority, and at a distinct disadvantage. Concurrently, she

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[178] For similar views, see "Modernising Melodrama" (274) by the author.

[179] Coixet's interest in the haptic will be discussed in later chapters, as it works to strengthen the gender-neutral gaze she tries to adopt. In creating a cinema of sensations punctuated with stillness and silence, Coixet can approach what Wheeler identifies as a new kind of "human(e) gaze" ("Acting" 281), personal to her as the camera operator, screenwriter and director.

[180] Coixet repeats this remark in other interviews, promoting her new manifesto on women in the film industry as President of EWA. During an interview for the Málaga Film Festival in 2013 Coixet recited this quotation almost verbatim, repeating and reinforcing this message (73tv "Fundido").

believes her gender has affected getting her films funded (Holdsworth n.pag), and often repeats a metaphor of getting dressed for work, highlighting the performativity of gender,[181] stating:

> Intento en cada momento de mi vida recordar que al final lo importante es hacer películas, y sobre todo no dejarse el punto de vista femenino en el vestidor. Tampoco imponerlo. Uno cuando dirige una película no se deja el género en el vestuario, uno es quien es y hay que sentirse orgulloso de ello, y sobre todo no quejarse, no avergonzarse y reivindicar con normalidad, con sentido del humor, y a veces trabajando en silencio también.[182] (in "Isabel Coixet en una retrospectiva" n.pag)

These comments seem to contradict her earlier statements about not being influenced by a director's gender when viewing a film, but also highlight the difficulty in escaping gender identity as a criterion of assessment. Linguistically at least, Coixet's discussion of gender has evolved from an outright refusal to discuss the problems facing women directors to a more proactive foregrounding of issues specific to female filmmakers. Yet, rather than subvert her gender identity, she masquerades as an Anglophone auteur filmmaker, performing the role of the cinephile director and cultural critic.

**Coixet's Writing, Websites and Self-Promotion**

While her linguistic abilities allow Coixet to promote her 'self' with some ease, her writing skills also aid in the construction of an auteur persona. She markets herself as an author in the traditional sense, albeit writing short texts to be read on various platforms, both digital and analogue; she writes regularly for a readership, whether on her website or in a newspaper column with *El Periódico de Catalunya*, as well as releasing book-length collections of her short articles and musings. Writing for publications forms part of her desire to be received as an all-round auteur intellectual, active in cultural life in Spain, even if the majority

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[181] This chapter invokes terminology used by Judith Butler in her seminal work *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1990); however, it is beyond the scope of this research to provide an in-depth analysis of Butler and the myriad of responses her work has inspired. For a more detailed theoretical discussion of gender in relation to Coixet see Herrero Jiménez ("Mujer"), Ituarte-Pérez ("Melodrama") and López Hernández ("La mujer").

[182] ["In every moment of my life I try to remember that the important thing is to make films, and above all, not to leave the female point of view in the dressing room. Nor impose it. When you direct a film you don't leave your gender in the dressing room, you are who you are and you must be proud of that, and above all, don't complain, don't be ashamed and defend yourself by being normal, with a sense of humour, and also, by working in silence sometimes"]. As part of her stock answers to interview questions, Coixet repeats the dressing-room metaphor on her ClubCultura webpage in relation to national identity and gender (Triana-Toribio "Auteurism" 274), consolidating the idea of her online presence as a one-stop shop for Coixet's views.

of her fiction films do not directly deal with a Spanish or Catalan context. She has published four books to date that are not film scripts: *La vida es un guión*, (2004), *La vida secreta de Isabel Coixet* (2010) and *Alguien debería prohibir los domingos por la tarde* (2011), which are formed of short, journalistic pieces of writing and diary-style entries,[183] while *From I to J* (2009) accompanies the exhibition-homage to writer and artist John Berger that Coixet curated for the cultural centre Arts Santa Mònica in Barcelona. Notably, these writing credits are through Spanish, since her writing is more likely to generate interest and revenue in Hispanic markets, but also form part of a tradition of filmmaker books by auteurs.[184] Aside from personal writings, books of interviews are also a popular format for directors. Coixet follows in the footsteps of Truffaut's published conversations with Alfred Hitchcock in *Hitchcock/Truffaut* (1967) in two such publications, one in conversation with the filmmaker Cesc Gay (*Diàlegs a Barcelona*, 2009), and one focused solely on her work (*Con C de Coixet*, 2013).

Although this section has underlined her longing for international recognition, a desire to remain in good standing at home has become more evident in recent years, and Coixet's publications and published interviews intersect with this increased visibility in peninsular public life. Her column for *El Periódico*, published in Spanish and Catalan, focuses mainly on cinema, with the director expounding her expert knowledge and opinions about many classic and contemporary films, relating them to current issues in the media. In this way, she exerts her authority over the topic, extending her claims to film authorship as a director that knows her film history and as someone who is not afraid to share this knowledge with her readers. Its title "Mi hermosa lavandería"/"La meva preciosa bugaderia" recalls *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Stephen Frears, 1985) and her own obsession with laundrettes, which she uses as a location in almost every film she makes.[185] This linking is typical of Coixet's

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[183] *Alguien tendría* is a collection of her newspaper columns for *El Periódico*, while *La vida secreta* and *La vida es un guión* contain more personal texts, many of which she has shared on her websites. Rather than publish original material, she exploits existing texts in order to shape them for a new market, whether consumers of books by filmmakers, or her fans.

[184] Examples of books by filmmakers are countless, but many follow the template of collections of film reviews (Peter Bogdanovich, Truffaut), filmic memoirs (Truffaut), or treatises of filmmaking and directing (Varda, Chris Marker, David Mamet), while others focus on topics as diverse as the film industry itself (Hal Hartley) or self-help (David Lynch).

[185] Laundrettes begin to appear in Coixet's films from *Things* onwards: in *A los*, we see a nineteenth-century laundry area that doubles as a bathhouse; in *My Life* Ann meets Lee in a laundrette; in *The Secret Life* Hanna visits the oil rig laundry room; and in *Map*, one of Ryu's contract kills takes place in a Tokyo laundrette. Additionally, Coixet's short *No me hables de la vida cuando estoy muriendo* (2008), created for the False Trailers Festival, Teaserland, begins in a laundrette. This parody trailer for a

synthesis of her public persona and filmography, being at once cinephilic and self-conscious. Naming the column after a successful film invites associations to the critically-acclaimed English-language cinemas she seeks to emulate, but also reinforces her public image in Spain, where she believes her auteurist traits are well-known. At various points during the "Director's Commentary" feature of the *Map* DVD Coixet talks about her obsessions. Some of these are explained anecdotally, such as her childhood fixation with the lighting effect caused by beaded curtains (which she portrays on the screen during *My Life* and *Map*), while others are casually dismissed as information the spectator already knows, such her love of laundrettes. Additionally, a 2013 television interview with Coixet takes place in a laundrette, as the presenter selects personal items from inside the drum of a washing machine for the director to explain their significance (Bestiari "Els diumenges"). Although DVD commentary and interviews are generally aimed at fans, such deliberate associations suggest that Coixet expects a certain familiarity with her idiosyncrasies which have become conscious markers of her auteur identity on the screen, whether in her films or in the media. Moreover, it seems that such self-consciousness is aimed at a certain type of audience that she is keen to connect with, whether through film or print.

Aside from the newspaper column, she actively promotes all facets of her career online, with fiction films, documentary, installation art, theatre direction and book publications all featured on her personal websites, as well as advance information about upcoming releases ("¡Acción!" n.pag), keeping her brand within the public sphere, even when she does not have a film in the cinema. As an advertising professional, she recognises that websites and viral marketing techniques can reach more people than traditional film publications, and that these media can be more easily controlled and managed than traditional interviews and journalistic reviews. Within this attempt to connect with global cinema-goers, Triana-Toribio contextualises Coixet within the Spanish film industry and analyses her particular brand of visuality through the self-reflexive writings on her website hosted by FNAC's ClubCultura portal ("Auteurism"). Although the site provides certain texts in English, as part of FNAC's network of filmmaker and author pages, it is aimed primarily at a Spanish-speaking market who might be customers of the retail giant.

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'Coixet comedy' suggests that she expects audiences to recognise her obsession with laundry and accept it as one of her auteurist traits. This self-reflexive aspect of Coixet's auteur persona will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

Apart from providing a commercial outlet, Coixet uses her web platforms as part of Dyer's transmedia 'star text' (*Stars*) in order to cultivate an all-round intellectual status, whilst claiming to have her feet firmly on the ground: for example, the *Pistas* section of the website depicts her eating fried onions from supermarket Mercadona while reading Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2003), listening to musc by Antony and the Johnsons on her iPod, conveying a persona that is simultaneously unpretentious and intelligently engaged.[186] Accordingly, Triana-Toribio notes that Coixet actively promotes a self-conscious mixture of high art and pop culture on her webpages ("Auteurism") with the trailer logo used on the FNAC ClubCultura page marking her out as a cultural nomad. This trailer stands as a metaphor for Coixet's globalised outlook, as well as her relative success in the film industry; she is now a star with her own Winnebago. The site design allows us to view what comes out of the trailer by clicking on the door, windows or sunroof, but we cannot enter the realm of the artist. This seems an apt representation of her relationship to the public sphere: she maintains her authorial status through media interactions of her own choosing and design. Similarly, Triana-Toribio contends that the director reveals a lot through her website in pre-empting questions journalists might or "should" ask her; she can exploit the potential of the FNAC site as a *directora mediática* or 'media-friendly director' ("Auteurism" 274-275) who uses her commercial expertise to promote herself as an auteur and artist.

While Coixet did not design her website, from ClubCultura's insistence that the artists themselves are responsible for the content (Triana-Toribio "Auteurism" 268), it can be assumed she had input into the icons used, and while the layout provides an understated backdrop for the writings on her website, it nonetheless promotes a coherent persona that can be discerned across her filmography with the guidance of the website. Although García de Lucas and Weinrichter propose that the modest budgets of her films have kept her accustomed to going without the perks of stardom ("Cosas" 17), the trailer symbolises Coixet's desired persona of a nomadic auteur-star, always ready to travel and perform, transporting her world with her.[187] She does not choose a suitcase or another travel motif, but the on-set home of film stars or star directors, a private space usually decorated to their taste,

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[186] For similar views see Triana-Toribio ("Auteurism") and Vidal ("Love").

[187] Vidal references Corrigan in regard to Coixet's status as an "auteur of commerce" and discusses her website as a place where "cultural criticism freely mingles with brand endorsement" ("Love" 221-222). However, although both Vidal and Triana-Toribio briefly analyse Coixet's choice of a Winnebago or star trailer as her website iconography, neither has the space in their respective chapters to explore its possible significance in more detail.

which represents the microcosmic world of her films. This symbolism simultaneously announces her star status and her versatility as she executes various creative roles within each production. This mobile home symbol suggests that the director sees herself as a world citizen, and subsequently gleans from many different national traditions for the narratives and mises-en-scène of her work. Yet, this mobility also involves engaging with the world's media and transmitting a coherent authorial persona around the globe. The iconography is also familiar to fans as the home of Ann in *My Life*, who lives in a trailer with her family. As a textual association with her breakthrough film, the trailer blurs the boundaries between the self and fiction, placing Coixet's 'personality' front and centre and allowing the viewer to forge these connections.

Additionally, Triana-Toribio comments that the colour scheme used on the site is a non-committal, adaptable aesthetic, yet Coixet's media awareness and "product-placement" savvy allows her to further extend her auteurism to the internet, providing a cool, neutral design akin to the desaturated mise-en-scène presented in her films ("Auteurism" 268-269), offering a coherent brand across platforms, giving both her films and her website a distinctive, identifiable visual style. However, this also extends into her less visible internet outlets as a way of synthesising her 'brand' or 'personality' across her projects. Accordingly, Coixet's different web pages maintain diverse foci; her hosted page at retailer FNAC's ClubCultura site zones in on her 'products' such as DVDs and books, while other pages concentrate on different aspects of her work and persona. Her advertising work appears on the online video hosting platform Vimeo, as Imelda Films,[188] while she also authors a Tumblr food blog (which seems to be defunct since 2012) and a more recent WordPress blog where she reviews restaurants called "The Best and The Beast". The food blogs remain more hidden, but still in plain sight with links provided on the Miss Wasabi webpage, as well as on the company Twitter and Facebook.[189] As another method of cultivating her auteur status, she personally contributes to all five online platforms, with new posts added to coincide with film or book releases, and to promote her journalistic work. For example, gastrophile Coixet uploads pictures of meals she has recently eaten in restaurants to "The Best and The Beast", tying in with her interest in depicting eating on screen and her love of food, such as her contribution to a project on viscosity by the Catalan restaurant Les Cols d'Olot ("Les Cols"), and her Estella

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[188] For the Imelda Films home page see <http://vimeo.com/channels/imeldafilms> [Last accessed 21 July 2014].

[189] "Glorious Food" [online weblog] Available at: <http://misswasabi.tumblr.com/archive> [Accessed 19 December 2013]

Damm advertisement based around the now-closed restaurant El Bulli.[190] "The Best and The Beast" also suggests songs or playlists to listen to, and much of the music chosen has featured in her fiction films. This overlap between media adds to the coherence of Coixet's authorial voice, as the songs she selects become attached to her work through these repeated associations. Like the laundrette and trailer, the self-conscious repetition of music enhances the synthesis of industrial and textual auteurism, as her films are deliberately linked to her online presence. However, it is important to note that she does not invite an online dialogue with her audience. Her personal websites are not interactive, and she does not have a strong presence on social media. Rather her various internet presences represent promotional tools and informational platforms for those interested in discovering more about her.

Her Miss Wasabi homepage represents her production company and her credibility as a writer-director-producer and offers a full version in English. It also provides a more complete résumé with equal status given to every part of her creative output. The director lists all her work on the navigation menu under the headings "Films," "Words," "Advertising" and "Things," with each category given parity as part of this online CV. The home page icon is a cartoon Coixet replete with glasses and a fringed hairstyle who takes on the form of a lump of wasabi. Superficially, this could possibly indicate that the filmmaker is being consumed by her love for Japanese culture, or that she has the power to morph into another being. Alternatively, we could read it as her representation of her alter ego as a pungent, vibrant flavour that people either love or hate. However frivolous these interpretations may be, the presence and use of online media places Coixet within the "deterritorialization" of auteurism that Catherine Grant discusses, where vast swathes of films that vary in format, genre, language and budget compete in similar spheres, yet the figure of the auteur remains undiminished ("www.auteur.com" 105-106). Since Corrigan's *A Cinema Without Walls*, auteurism is something that no longer requires the textual analysis of Sarris and his contemporaries as a compulsory requisite; the discourse of auteurism now extends to all parts of the film's journey from initial idea to DVD release, and to all the creative figures involved in the process. As a skilled advertising professional and as a *directora mediática*, Coixet is aware of how to participate in this new discourse to support her commercial interests and promote her artistic talent.

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[190] Coixet's advertisement for El Bulli ("Mediterraneamente") will be discussed in Chapter 6 in more detail.

**Deterritorialized Auteurism: DVDs and Trailers**

DVD releases now contain material like director's commentaries or interviews as an added extra to coax spectators into buying something they could probably illegally download or stream via the internet. The film's by-products have become as important as the opening weekend box-office figures, and directors are now aware of the medium's potential for self-promotion and self-mythologisation.[191] Moreover, retailers and DVD rental outlets categorise films by director, in addition to grouping by genre. Accordingly, Coixet marks herself as an auteur by aiming to create a body of idiosyncratic authored work, and aspires to have her films displayed for sale or rental under her name rather than under the headings of any national cinema or within traditional genre categories. Her more recent DVD releases contain extras such as interviews with cast members, B-roll camera footage, 'making of' segments and production diaries, tapping into the cinephilic desire to know what happens behind the scenes.

Since Coixet relies on the festival circuit for exhibition opportunities outside Spain, DVD sales remain crucial to her standing as well as her income, and must be marketed to attract international home audiences. Her DVD extras often include director interviews, which complement the now ubiquitous 'behind the scenes' footage, but it seems that she uses her DVD add-ons in order to advance her reputation as an 'actor's director', with a deliberate discussion of what it was like to work with her, where performers comment positively on their experience. Her casting of performers known for TV and film roles also appeals to the home viewing market, as the boundaries between the two media become more blurred. Yet, considering the potential of DVD to export subtitled films and Coixet's desire for recognition outside Hispanic markets, the DVD version of *A los* has no English subtitles, and despite her fame in Spain and the enduring popularity of heritage productions, as far as this research concludes there has been no attempt to export *A los* or *Demasiado viejo* to non-Spanish speaking audiences. However, these have probably been overlooked because Coixet established herself on the festival circuit with her English-language films, and has since evolved into a wider post-nationalism.

Yet, Coixet also uses the concept of 'bonus material' in her work outside film, notably with an Estrella Damm publicity campaign in 2011. As an auteur-advertiser with a brand of her own to promote, a 'making of' video accompanies the advertisement she directed for the

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[191] For similar views see Catherine Grant ("www.auteur.com"; "Auteur machines"), Harbord (*Film Cultures*), Klinger (*Multiplex*), and Orgeron ("La Camera-Crayola").

'beer of Barcelona'.[192] The music from the original commercial ("Mediterraneamente") plays over a collection of 'behind the scenes' footage, as the creators become the stars. The names of Coixet, chef Ferran Adrià and advertising executive Oriol Villar appear on screen alongside their faces, like acting credits. Like a film, the advert has an author, and this kind of material demonstrates how Coixet synthesises her auteur brand and maintains her artist persona across platforms.

However, as a director who is finely attuned to changing viewing practices and the importance of the internet, Coixet has also written about the decline of cinema-going, with many people watching films on computer screens at home, while multi-tasking, or while using social media:

> la noche artificial en la que te sumerge una película vista en una sala no tiene ya el carácter sacro que tenía para muchas generaciones de espectadores.[193] ("Si estás muerto" n.pag)

She objected to pre-release media saturation for *Ayer*, refusing to surrender any information about the plot and making the cast and crew sign confidentiality agreements. The lead actors (Javier Cámara and Candela Peña) and setting (Spain, 2017) were confirmed in the press before the film's release, but Coixet claims to be tired of knowing too much before seeing a movie, writing:

> Últimamente, el espectador llega a las películas, sabiendo demasiadas cosas de ellas. A veces, viendo el tráiler ya te haces una idea del film. Y cuanto más sabes de éste, menos ganas tienes de verlo. Hay una saturación enfermiza de información. Ya sé que será casi imposible, pero me gustaría que los espectadores llegaran a *Ayer no termina nunca* sabiendo muy poco de la historia.[194] ("¡Acción!" n.pag)

This move seems to undermine the structures of auteur cinema, as Coixet plays with Corrigan's idea that auteurist marketing guarantees "a relationship between audience and movie whereby an intentional and authorial agency governs, as a kind of brand-name vision that precedes and succeeds the film, the way a movie is seen and received" ("Commerce"

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[192] For the online video featured on Coixet's Imelda Films website, see Imelda Films ("Making of"). This advert will be described in more detail in the next chapter; however, the 'making of' is relevant to Coixet's promotion of self as an artist, despite the corporate nature of the video.

[193] "The artificial night that you are submerged in by watching a film in the cinema no longer has the same sacred character for generations of spectators" (Coixet "Si estás muerto" n.pag)

[194] ["Lately, the spectator arrives at films knowing too much about them. Sometimes watching the trailer gives you an idea of the film. And the more you know the less desire you have to see it. There is a sickly saturation of information. I know that it is almost impossible now, but I would like spectators to come to see *Ayer no termina nunca* knowing very little about the story"] (Coixet "¡Acción!" n.pag). However, the secrecy surrounding the release also helped to draw attention away from the film's status as an adaptation of a Dutch stage play, *Gif* (*Poison*) by Lot Vekemans (2009), a deviation which consequently ensured that the plot twist in the original was not revealed. Issues of adaptation will be discussed further in Chapter 9.

102). Nevertheless, in today's internet culture, this secrecy around the film becomes another Hitchcock-style marketing gimmick,[195] despite Coixet's wholesome intentions for a less media-dependent film industry. This nostalgia helps to connect her to the non-commercial director-as-artist tradition, elevating her films to art status and thus helping to reinforce the auteur label.

While her auteurist interventions are aimed mainly at the Spanish market Vidal notes that her "double passport" ("Love" 220-221) allows her to be a genre filmmaker abroad and an auteur at home, and comments on how her films represent a negotiation between the global and the local ("Love" 220). However, as an extension of this transnational ability she also successfully negotiates the public and the personal in her pursuit of auteur status, with her publications, websites, documentaries and other projects compounding her desired image as an accessible, yet intellectual public figure in Catalonia and the rest of Spain, despite filming most of her fiction films in English, with non-Spanish performers.

**Coixet's Auteur Skills: Star-Gazing and Collaboration**

Another part of the auteur brand is repeated collaborations with stars, and Coixet has honed her skills as an astute star-gazer within the constellations of Europe and Hollywood. She frequently casts peninsular stars known for their cross-border appeal such as Sergi López, Javier Cámara, Leonor Watling and Penélope Cruz. Similarly, Italian actress Monica Bellucci was cast in *A los* just before she became famous on a global scale, and Coixet seems to be aware of the impact of the European 'transborder' stars she collaborates with, exploiting their transnational potential for maximum international attention. Duncan Wheeler makes the interesting point that as a "reigning transnational transborder European star" Cruz comes second only to Juliette Binoche in regard to international recognition ("Stardom" 282). Notably, Binoche will star in Coixet's upcoming production, *Nobody Wants the Night* (due 2015) alongside another rising transnational star, Rinko Kikuchi, who found international acclaim in Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Babel* (2006).[196] The Japanese actress will be working with Coixet for the second time, having played the main protagonist of *Map* in 2009. Yet, Coixet remains aware of the importance of national stardom. Casting the established actor

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[195] For example, Hitchcock famously produced an informational pamphlet to advertise *Psycho* (1960), warning the audience not to arrive late to the screening, and not to reveal the twist to other potential spectators after seeing the film.

[196] For further production details see Gandiaga (n.pag) and "Exclusiva" (n.pag).

and dancer Min Tanaka as the sound engineer in *Map* also illustrates Coixet's local understanding in selecting a familiar face for Japanese audiences. Similarly, *Another Me* (2013) sees Coixet working with stars familiar to British and Irish audiences like Jonathan Rhys Myers and Rhys Ifans alongside new TV stars like Sophie Turner from *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011- ). Meanwhile, the director's North American casting choices lean towards critical favourites like Sarah Polley and Tim Robbins, but she has also picked up on nascent indie stardom in casting Leslie Mann (Laurie in *Things*), who came to fame in Ben Stiller's *The Cable Guy* (1995), released the same year as *Things*, while Brat-pack favourite Andrew McCarthy assumed an adult role as Don. Similarly, securing the participation of Cassavetes stalwart Seymour Cassel was a major coup for Coixet's first American production. She has also benefitted from the cachet of other established American icons like Blondie star Deborah Harry (*My Life*, *Elegy*) who had notably appeared in *Videodrome* (David Cronenberg, 1983) and other quirky productions. Rock icon Harry plays against type as Ann's mother in *My Life* and as the put-upon wife of a famous poet in *Elegy*. We are more accustomed to seeing her as the fearless frontwoman of post-punk band Blondie, but in the films she embodies dejected, somewhat defeated characters. This list of performers may seem arbitrary, but commentators such as Tello Díaz note the careful selection process involved, with Coixet's cast often known for their ethical credentials and activism, alongside their indie appeal.[197]

Whether a confirmed star or up-and-coming ingénue, the iconic significance of a performer, or his or her "structured polysemy" (to use Dyer's *Stars* terminology), can also impact upon directors. Coixet turned down the opportunity to direct an early incarnation of *Million Dollar Baby* (Clint Eastwood, 2004), allegedly because Sandra Bullock, an actor she dislikes, was attached to the project at the time (Cerrato *Isabel* 162). Perhaps unwilling to compete with Bullock's star image and the meaning her persona would engender on the screen, Coixet passed on the project, which would scoop four Oscars in 2005, with actor-director Eastwood at the helm. In some way, this behaviour reinforces the idea of the actor as auteur, as it seems she was unconvinced she could direct Bullock and exert her authorship over the actor's performance. Tello Díaz suggests that the rejection of *Million Dollar Baby* and,

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[197] Tello Díaz comments that actors Sarah Polley, Tim Robbins and Mark Ruffalo are noted for their social responsibility and activism, claiming that ethics plays a major part in the director's casting criteria (*Con C* 29 n6). However, Coixet responded to questions on the topic by saying her only criteria was that she could imagine an actress cleaning the bathroom in her house (in *Con C* 29). Nonetheless, she has gone on to work with other politically-motivated performers in her fiction films (Cruz) and in her non-fiction projects (noted activist Javier Bardem produced *Invisibles*).

later, *Memoirs of a Geisha* (Rob Marshall, 2005) were based on ethical considerations, but Coixet does not seem to agree:

> No sé si puede considerarse decisiones estrictamente éticas. Son proyectos que cuando te los ofrecen, ves el tinglado en que te vas a meter y no sabes si podrás soportar la presión (en el caso de *Memorias de una geisha*) de una producción de 100 millones de dólares.[198] (in *Con C* 24)

Such a response would indicate a more auteurist intention; Coixet is more comfortable with smaller, more modest projects that fit with her existing filmography and guarantee her authorial control, rather than moving into big-budget productions dominated by studios and executives. On the other hand, for *Learning to Drive* (2014), Coixet worked with Ben Kingsley and Patricia Clarkson, who played leading roles in *Elegy*. The interplay of authorship between the trio worked well on the 2008 film, so in casting these actors again, the director hopes to replicate the on-set success of their previous encounter.

However, to delve deeper into Coixet's own star persona, Camporesi thoughtfully notes the connection between the often-eccentric secondary characters and the presence of the director herself, as they address issues of alienation, confused identity and the power of memory.[199] Rather than a Hitchcock-style cameo, the director inserts herself, or markers of her public persona (the thick glasses of the unsympathetic nurse in *My Life* or the confused

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[198] ["I don't know if you could call those decisions strictly ethical. When you are offered those projects you can see the mess you are getting yourself into and you don't know if you can handle the pressure of a 100 million dollar production (in the case of *Memoirs of a Geisha*)]. However, in the case of *Million Dollar Baby*, another possible reason Coixet rejected the project could be the conservative ending, where the main protagonist is punished for transgressing the social code. Although the basic plot is similar to *My Life* (which was the basis for Eastwood's offer), in that a working-class white woman experiences a more fulfilling life before dying, Coixet's film portays impending death as a catalyst for new experiences, while Eastwood's Maggie achieves professional success and wealth before being 'punished' by a tragic accident and 'saved' by euthanasia at the hands of her male trainer who has been her mentor throughout the film. While both are strong characters who are emphatically brought to life in nuanced performances by Polley and Hilary Swank respectively, Coixet's Ann experiences greater autonomy than Maggie.

[199] Camporesi writes: "Estos personajes secundarios que parecen cameos disfrazados de la misma directora evocan [...] la espontánea fuerza con la que ella dibuja, o acepta, fronteras, para poderlas franquear. Ese pequeño interacción entre autora y personajes, donde de repente el detrás y el delante de la cámara se contaminan sin confundirse es uno de los caminos que llevan de un lado al otro de un limen, en este caso el representado por el texto cinematográfico y las reglas de la puesta en escena" ["These secondary characters that seem like cameos by the director herself in disguise evoke the spontaneous force with which she draws or accepts borders, in order to cross them. That small interaction between author and protagonists, where suddenly the space in front of and behind the camera cross-contaminate without blending into one another is one of the paths which leads from one side of the threshold to the other, in this case what is represented by the cinematic text and the rules of mise-en-scène] ("A ambos" 62).

national identity of the Catalan hairdresser in *Things*) into these light-hearted moments.[200] Nevertheless, her on-screen presence remains largely metaphysical, through her role as camera operator. The director describes the camera as her "heartbeat",[201] commenting that it is the only way she can tell the story she wants to tell without losing anything from the frame.[202] Linguistically fusing the camera to her body in this way reveals just how important the 'personal' camerawork is to each film, as we see the results of her performance in the finished films. Simultaneously, operating the camera herself allows her greater authority over the narrative she wants to relate, as her camera-eye or camera-heart dominates the film's address.

**Coixet's Social Conscience and Documentary Film: Documenting the Auteur**

Concurrently, Camporesi makes the valid point that Coixet's productions, although relatively small, remain far from the fringes of the industry, particularly in Spain, allowing her to live "comfortably and coherently" between film and advertising.[203] However, there is some overlap between the two modes of filmmaking, derived from the director's social conscience which inspires her to express socio-political concerns through fictional and non-fictional outlets. Coixet often focuses her narratives on individual figures that have been forgotten or isolated within the community, and according to Camporesi, she aims to make the audience respond to the failures experienced by her resigned protagonists through a portrayal of emotions rather than events.[204] This interest in emotions filters through to her advertising while her commitment to social justice and a change of the social order is expressed overtly

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[200] A nurse with thick glasses and a fringe also appears in *Demasiado viejo*.

[201] Producer Andre Lamal of Lakeshore Productions speaks about working with Coixet as part of the DVD extras of *Elegy*, in the "Selected Soundbites" section, and remarks on her insistence on operating the camera, describing it as her "heartbeat".

[202] "Le dije [a Tim Robbins] que era la única manera que había encontrado de contar lo que quería contar sin perder nada de lo que quería ver en el encuadre" ["I told him [Tim Robbins] that it was the only way to tell it the way I wanted without losing what I wanted to see in the frame"] (in Navarro "Biografía" 89).

[203] Coixet puede "vivir entre dos industrias comóda y coherentemente" (Camporesi "A ambos" 57).

[204] "Muy claramente, lo que interesa [a Coixet] es contar emociones, más que hechos, y, sobre todo, emociones que nacen de la imposibilidad de alcanzar los deseos, de gozar de pequeñas o grandes cosas. Sus personajes se entregan entre casi resignados a la fuerza de sus sentidos, más allá de las posibles frustraciones del fracaso, sin dejarse apenas condicionar por la falta de correspondencia entre lo que quieren y lo que pueden conseguir" ["What clearly interests [Coixet] is relating emotions rather than facts, and, above all, emotions that are borne of the impossbility of one's desires, to enjoy small or big things. Her protagonists are almost resigned to the strength of their feelings, beyond the possible frustrations of failure, not allowing themselves to even be conditioned by the mismatch between what they want and what they can have"] (Camporesi "A ambos" 59).

through her documentary work on projects that deal with overlooked or forgotten stories. Similarly, Wheeler comments on the "melodramatic human(e) aesthetic" employed in Coixet's cinema as a stylistic trait ("Stardom" 281), which, in turn, feeds into her desire for representational equality.[205] While her longer documentaries give case studies for us to ponder, the short texts represent a call to arms, as Coixet attempts to rouse the viewers into action with these empathetic videos. In 2008 she directed an advert for the UN Day in Support of Victims of Torture (IRCT "You can") which encouraged people to get involved in the cause, as something preventable that can be stopped. Similarly, her commercial for the charity Plan Internacional en España ("Por ser niña", 2010) focuses on children; reminding us that females are more vulnerable to poverty, forced marriages and violence. While her documentaries focus on the mistakes of the past, her advertising concentrates on the possibilities for the future. The children playing 'I spy' in Coixet's video for Fundación ONCE ("Veo, veo", 2006) do not label the people with disabilities that they 'spy'; rather they say what they see, which is a teacher, a shop assistant or a mother. The ability of children to see past stereotypes is put forward as model for the rest of us to follow. Consequently, this socially-engaged advertising represents another opportunity to connect with a diverse audience, beaming her advertisements into the homes of masses of television viewers and internet surfers, as another way of extending her brand to a potential audience for her feature films. Although advertising creatives are largely unknown to the public, Coixet promotes her Plan Internacional advertisement on her Miss Wasabi site under the heading "Otros" and the charity's YouTube page includes her name in the title of the video, which forms part of a larger campaign that features contributions from other famous faces in Spain.[206]

Following on from her involvement in collective protest film *Hay motivo* during the run up to the 2004 general elections, where she directed a short about old-age pensions, Coixet became a part of the Partido Socialista y Obrero de España (PSOE) election campaign of 2008 and directed four commercials to be aired on public television as part of voter participation initiative *Vota con todas tus fuerzas* or *Vote With All Your Might*. These short pieces are glossily photographed and expertly edited, and subtly include persuasive images of

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[205] Wheeler uses this term to describe Coixet's filmography: "[w]hilst retaining the melodramatic human(e) aesthetic of her earlier films, [*The Secret Life*] is framed in political as well as personal terms through the study of a young woman psychically and physically scarred by the Balkan conflict" ("Acting" 281).

[206] The Plan Internacional en España Por Ser Niña playlist is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLSSOdN40Fx-Z3yvxFR9FqcpJBSkr431Ad> [Last accessed 4 September 2014].

Prime Ministerial candidate José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero on screen, whether on an old man's TV set or on a billboard that a young girl sees on the street. Each advertisement encourages voter participation, no matter what the person's political leanings. The high production values and avoidance of hackneyed political slogans marks a fresh kind of political propaganda, one that reminds viewers that they have a part to play in our society's future. This desire to affect the spectator and spur them into action weighs heavily on her non-fiction projects, whereas her politics remain more subtle, yet no less visible in her fiction films. While representational issues and visual politics will be discussed later, the non-fiction projects such as the PSOE campaign point to a concern for ethics that is perpetuated across her filmography. As an auteur, this marks the most readily identifiable part of her personal ideology, and it has not gone unnoticed by critics.[207] However, her most explicit political actions are found in her non-fiction films, and Chapter 5 will attempt to relate some of these non-fiction projects to her commercial releases and examine them as part of her desire to be received as a multi-faceted, multimedia artist. Nonetheless, this active citizenship and political participation plays a role in her public persona. These works are important to her reputation in Spain as a left-leaning intellectual and socially-conscious director, and cement her position within Spanish cultural life, while her ad-hoc journalistic work allows her to speak with some authority on the topics she chooses to dissect.

Specifically, Coixet uses advertising and documentary to engage with issues relevant to a Spanish, or at least Hispanic, demographic by making non-fiction work in Castilian, and as such, engages with an audience who may not have seen her films, but who know who she is because of her auteur persona and interventions in the media. Despite the interest in her ethical considerations by critics, these productions have been somewhat overlooked and few scholars deal specifically with Coixet's advertising portfolio, documentary work, or artistic side projects, which are as important to her persona as her feature films, especially since they engage more directly with nationally-specific topics like politics, poverty, domestic violence and immigration within Spain, and display a coherence of style with her fiction filmography.

As part of a textual auteur strategy, she revisits certain themes repeatedly, such as

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[207] Of the few critics who tackle Coixet's non-fiction output, Tello Díaz provides a resoundingly personal portrait of the director through an extended interview on various ethical topics (*Con C*), while Zecchi details her documentary work and relates it to Coixet's political conscience ("Desenfocadas" 147-148). Donapetry ("Ethics") and Anabel Martín ("Los silencios") examine ethical considerations within Coixet's fiction films, however, this thesis seeks to explore both modes of filmmaking and Chapter 5 aims to provide more detailed analysis of her non-fiction work than has been published to date.

death and illness, but always with ethical concerns in mind. Recurring structures also aid in documenting her auteurist credentials within each film. An inability to communicate is often at the heart of her narratives, yet Coixet is overtly concerned with the expression of emotions in a way that is neither excessive nor indulgent, and opportunities to discuss feelings are often set up as an intimate conversation between two people in a private space. Judging by interviews she has participated in, these dialogues often provide a mouthpiece for the director's own views, adding to the personal dimension of her films. Additionally, she places similar emphasis on presenting protagonists that relate to her world views and politics. When asked in a 2006 interview why her male characters were all such nice people, she responded:

> ¿Sí? No me había dado cuenta, Dios mío. Es que a mí no me gustaría hacer una peli sobre un hijoputa. No. Yo quiero ver en mis obras a la gente que me gustaría conocer. Los malos no me interesan.[208] (in Huete Machado "La mirada" n.pag)

However, since that interview, Coixet filmed *Elegy*, which focused on the less than sympathetic David Kepesh, and has expressed an interest in creating a bad female character.[209] Yet, her documentaries remain focused on 'good', ethical people, whom she depicts in an ethical manner, influenced by Berger's theories of looking and seeing, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Stylistically and structurally, Coixet displays many other auteurist traits, some more easily recognisable than others. As mentioned above, laundrettes appear in most of her productions, and protagonists often have identical or similar names from film to film, and the secondary characters often fit the 'quirky' mould.[210] She has employed voice-over in various films and often utilises a handheld camera, exploiting the unstable nature of the framing rather than using a tripod. Going beyond the surface, this camerawork is crucial in the creation of silent, respiratory pauses in many of her films, moments of reflection that pulse to the rhythm of her unsteady camera. Rather than discuss these traits in detail here, they are listed in order to outline the persona she projects of an auteur with a recognisable style and substance.

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[208] [Really? I hadn't realised. My God. It's because I wouldn't like to make a film about a bastard. No. In my films I want to see people that I would like to meet. Bad people don't interest me"].

[209] In a 2010 interview, Coixet remarked: "I'd really like to make a film about a really nasty female character that no one likes and with no redeemable quality" (in Spencer "Q+A" n.pag). This quotation will be referred to in more detail in Chapter 7 in relation to her portrayal of female characters.

[210] James McDowell discusses the implications of 'quirky' cinema as both a sensibility and a critical buzzword ("Notes"). Coixet's films fit McDowell's argument, but it is her characters in particular that engage with the quirky or 'kooky' sensibility.

Additionally, her films feature heavy intertextual referencing, but Coixet's literary allusions are not limited to the cinema screen; she discusses novels, literary criticism and poetry on her websites, in her publications and in interviews, and presents herself as a connoisseur of the written word. Wary of theory and theoreticians while being extremely literary in her approach, she has remarked that if she were asked to give classes at a film school, the only book she would recommend is Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet* from 1929 ("Si estás muerto" n.pag), and accordingly, letters and literature feature heavily in Coixet's mise-en-scène. Letters, in particular, serve to underline the theme of communication, or a lack of communication within the films. The epistolary form of address complements Coixet's preferred narrative structure of set-piece dialogues between two people, and provides another stylish way to represent inner monologues, or the things that characters cannot say during these conversations, rather than using a voice-over. However, it is usually not the content of the letters that matters to the characters or the plot, but rather the fact of receiving or not receiving a letter. This obsession with letters and messages creates a textual link throughout her filmography and provides just one example of Coixet's auteurist intent. In *Demasiado viejo*, many of the characters are *mensajeros*, or bike couriers, who are tasked with delivering messages and parcels around Barcelona. The messages are the catalyst for Equis's (Gerardo Arenas) relationships in the film, whether a tryst with a young secretary, or a late-night chat with a depressed woman (Carme Elías) who orders tequila. The films does not feature any significant letters or messages that propel the narrative, but Equis's profession remains central to the plot and justifies his chance encounters with different characters and his freedom of movement around the city. As Coixet's first film, *Demasiado viejo* begins a chain of letters and messages that continue to her most recent releases and overlaps into her non-fiction output.

This aspect of Coixet's cinema has been developed in her later films, where the messages, meant for one person in particular, serve to expand the set-piece dialogues that form the basis of her narrative structures. It seems she is comfortable to continue using this form of address in her fiction and non-fiction work. The letter or missed message often drives the plot forward or reveals another layer of discourse around communication, or the inability to voice one's feelings. Coixet successfully exploits the letter-writing motif as a narrative device, but also as an auteurist flourish or signature, highlighted by the handwritten subtitles

that appear in certain films.[211] Although there are many more examples of Coixet's auteurist flourishes and stylistic traits, this section has briefly outlined a few key patterns in order to relate them to the auteur persona she actively cultivates, notwithstanding how her films are received by critics and the public. In becoming an auteur, directors like Coixet act as

> historical agents, or subjects, who have direct, intentional and reflexive, if obviously not completely all determining, relationships to the cultural products they help to produce, as well as to their reception. (Catherine Grant "Becoming" 2)

In this way, Coixet performs the role of the auteur director while participating in a process of creating meanings that are important to her films and other projects, and aims to influence the reception of her films as the products of an auteur or film artist, albeit one who is intellectually and culturally engaged with other aspects of society.

## Conclusion

Within the public sphere, Coixet's carefully constructed media personality has become so defined as to be parodied on the comedy show *Muchachada Nui* in 2008.[212] The sketch, aired on TVE2, consists of comedian Joaquín Reyes impersonating Coixet on the set of *The Secret Life*, as the director takes eye drops that allow her to see what is on the 'inside' of people. Interestingly, the video describes the camera as her "third eye", perhaps unintentionally parodying the corporeal language she uses to describe her relationship to the camera. However crude this impersonation, it serves to underline her success in strategic self-promotion, proving that the public know who she is and can approximate what kind of films she makes through this appropriation of her 'personality'. Coixet's tics become part of 'deterritorialized auteurism', proving that she has successfully sold her constructed 'personality' as a brand, within her films and within the media.[213] This adheres to Corrigan's contention that auteurism can be perpetuated without seeing a single film because of the marketing techniques used ("Commerce"). While she is amongst a minority of Spanish

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[211] Handwritten subtitles appear in *My Life* as Ann composes a list of things to do before she dies. Other auteurist flourishes like this will be discussed in detail in later chapters, but they are mentioned here in order to sketch a fuller picture of Coixet's auteur persona and how she manages her brand both on and off the screen.

[212] For online videos of the programme see Muchachada Nui ("Muchachada Nui") and for another parody, also by Reyes, see ed1115 ("Celebrities Isabel Coixet"). Similarly, Bordwell notes that "one sign of a distinctive authorial approach is that it can be parodied" ("Moonrise" n.pag), exemplifying skits about Wes Anderson on sketch show *Saturday Night Live* (NBC).

[213] For more on Coixet's relationship to the 'afterlife' of film see Triana-Toribio ("Auteurism" 264), who draws on the work of Janet Harbord (*Film Cultures*).

filmmakers who have directed English-language cinema, her carefully-crafted persona has made her the most famous example of this type of filmmaking and, arguably, one of Spanish cinema's most valuable exports. Recently, Lázaro-Reboll et al. have suggested that Coixet participates in the gender-neutral strategic auteurism preferred by female filmmakers in Spain ("Strategic" 183-184); however, she is placed in a different category to other female directors of her generation by her desire to succeed abroad and by her English-language filmmaking experience. With this clearly-defined public persona in mind, the next chapter will contextualise her among her peers and argue that her conscious pursuit of auteur status has aided her longevity within the film industry at home and abroad.

## Chapter 4: Coixet and Contemporary Women Film Directors in Spain from 1988 to 1998

In order to understand how Coixet has emerged as one of the most successful directors in Spain and to place her auteur strategy in context it is necessary to map the landscape of the Spanish film industry during the early part of her career. This chapter will outline the circumstances of her first English-language film, *Things I Never Told You*, and place her within a small group of Spanish filmmakers, both male and female, who chose to shoot in English and, in many cases, outside the peninsula during the 1990s. Alongside the films by male directors briefly discussed in Chapter 2, Miró's *Beltenebros* (*Prince of Shadows*, 1991) paved the way for the younger generation of Post-Transition filmmakers, irrespective of gender, to attempt to enter the international market through the back door, by filming in English.

Accordingly, this section will provide a comparative overview of the only four women who directed English-language films up to 1998 apart from Coixet and Miró: Chus Gutiérrez (*Sublet*, 1991), Marta Balletbò-Coll (*Costa Brava (Family Album)*, 1995), Gracia Querejeta (*Robert Rylands' Last Journey*, 1996) and María Ripoll (*If Only / The Man with Rain in his Shoes*, 1998). It will also offer a brief discussion of *Beltenebros*.[214] Longevity has proved more difficult than box-office success for many women in the film industry, and the impact of English-language filmmaking on their sustained careers will be documented in order to position Coixet as an exception among her peers. This chapter will serve to illustrate how her career, so similar in many ways, and founded on much the same basis, has markedly diverged from theirs as a result not only of her desire for auteur recognition, but also because of her continuing commitment to filming in English.

Rather than relate Coixet to more straightforward examples of 'Spanish national cinema', she will be located within this niche of Spanish women directors filming in English during the 1990s. Although this grouping creates a somewhat artificial bubble, it is a relevant paradigm for a discussion of authorial control and auteur strategy. 1988 has been selected as a starting point for 'new' filmmakers since it coincides with Coixet's first theatrical release, *Demasiado viejo*. 1998 marks the production of her third feature, *A los que aman*, which began her slow-burning affiliation to 'official' Spanish cinema, although she would choose to

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[214] These four filmmakers are of a similar age to Coixet: Balletbò-Coll (Barcelona, 1960), Gutiérrez (Granada, 1962), Querejeta (Madrid, 1962) and Ripoll (Barcelona, 1964) were all in their twenties when making their first feature films. As discussed earlier, Miró belonged to an older 'Transition' generation, and had directed five features before *Beltenebros* was released.

shoot her fiction films almost exclusively in English from that point onwards.[215] Within these ten years, the women directors studied here started out as Spanish directors in nationality only, but many have become creators of more easily identifiable 'Spanish national cinema', while Coixet retains her international focus. Instead of directing 'crossover' films in Spanish as a springboard for international recognition, at the beginning of their careers, the female directors discussed in this chapter were consciously and purposefully looking beyond the domestic sphere. Camí-Vela provides excellent analysis of selected peninsular women directors filming in English ("Cineastas-multicultural"), but this section will delve further into the industrial and economic factors that influenced the decision to direct these particular films, and will briefly assess each director's desire for auteur status, in order to draw comparisons to Coixet.

As we have seen, Coixet came of age during the post-Transition years (1979-1992) in Spain, a period spanning King Juan Carlos's political reforms, the attempted coup d'état of 23-F (1981), Spain's incorporation into NATO (1982) and the EU (1986). This period culminated in 1992 with the Barcelona Olympics, the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, and the Seville Expo, events that confirmed Spain's place on the world stage and cemented its reputation as a liberal democracy after four decades of dictatorship. Additionally, as Chapter 2 points out, despite the precedents set by Molina and Miró as pioneering female filmmakers, women were generally excluded from the 1990s grouping of *Joven cine español*. Critics focused on Juanma Bajo Ulloa, Manuel Gómez Pereira, Julio Medem, Fernando Trueba and other internationally-acclaimed directors working at the end of the decade, perpetuating the importance of the exportable auteur to national cinema discourse. Balletbò-Coll, Coixet, Gutiérrez and Querejeta had made two or three well-received films apiece by the end of the 1990s and displayed a similar interest in making popular cinema concerned with the present day but were not granted admission to this category. Caparrós Lera notes the contribution of Coixet and Rosa Vergés[216] during a separate "auge de las mujeres cineastas", which was taking place simultaneously to the *Joven cine* (*La pantalla* 52), while Mira's *Historical Dictionary* does

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[215] This time period has also been chosen because of María Camí-Vela's important research into the area, with her book's introduction making the distinction between women directors that debuted before and after 1988 in Spain (*Mujeres detrás* 2001 ed. 13).

[216] Vergés (1955- ) began her feature film career with *Boom Boom* (1990), which was set in Barcelona with an international cast and aimed at an international audience. Kinder details the film's reinscription of Catalan identity (*Blood* 422-423), while Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas locate Vergés within the group of female directors creating mainstream films with an international focus during the 1990s (*Contemporary* 123). Her career as a director has continued although she has not helmed a full-length feature film since *Iris* (2004).

not include women in this grouping either (lx), but notes the popularity and success of Coixet's *The Secret Life* and *Te doy mis ojos* (Bollaín, 2003). It seems that successful films by women were noticed, but these women were not promoted or celebrated as auteurs in the same way their male counterparts were, despite having similar filmmaking experience and expertise.[217] Research by Camí-Vela, Martin-Márquez, Triana-Toribio and others has sought to re-evaluate the contribution of female directors to this period, but they have not been granted access to the *Joven cine* label and were thus excluded from the national auteur paradigm.[218] By educating themselves abroad or living outside of Spain for extended periods, these five women not only mastered the English language, but successfully negotiated a non-Spanish film landscape and retained the creative control and authorship of their productions. Despite their relative inexperience and lack of funding (in most cases), these directors succeeded in creating films that broaden the notion of what a 'Spanish director' should make, and stand in contrast to the idea of Spanish national cinema in circulation during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

**English-Language Cinema in Spain and Hispanic Hollywood: The 1980s and 1990s**

Although film production declined in Spain after the introduction of the Ley Miró, there was an upsurge in English-language productions by peninsular directors, as audiences turned their backs on home-grown films. Besas notes that "[n]ot only did production plummet to about fifty features a year, but, far worse, local audiences were turned off by the majority of Spanish films" ("Financial" 248). This move away from national themes and into a more international sphere extended across Europe in the 1990s and included male and female filmmakers of different nationalities,[219] with *Things* appearing during its peak in the mid-

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[217] As a contrast, Jordan makes no division between men and women in his discussion of the filmmaking generation of the 1990s ("How Spanish" 75), whereas other critics identify separate, gendered generations, or exclude women altogether. Examples of the latter include Caparrós Lera and Antonio Santamarina ("Desde otro"). Rather than define a generation, Marta Selva Masoliver discusses the common features of films by Spanish women released in the late 1980s and 1990s ("Del sueño").

[218] Important publications include Camí-Vela (*Mujeres detrás* "Cineastas españolas"; "Cineastas-multiculturales"), Martin-Márquez (*Feminist Discourse*), Triana-Toribio ("Transitions). More recent edited volumes that deal with women directors in Spain in detail include Labanyi and Pavlović (*A Companion*), Nair and Gutiérrez-Albilla (*Hispanic*), Núñez Domínguez, Balanza et al (*Directoras*) and Zecchi (*Desenfocadas*).

[219] This period saw many male European filmmakers directing movies in English, ranging from low budget films like *Lisbon Story* (Wim Wenders, 1994) to Hollywood-funded, high-concept thrillers and action movies such as *Total Recall* (Paul Verhoeven, 1990), *Shattered* (Wolfgang Petersen, 1991), *In the Line of Fire* (Wolfgang Petersen, 1993), *Leon* (Luc Besson 1994), *Outbreak* (Paul Verhoeven, 1995), *The*

nineties. However, older, lauded male peninsular directors had already experimented with English-language filmmaking before 1988, and represent the predecessors of the "accented" cinema Coixet and her contemporaries would direct in the 1990s,[220] for example Borau's *Downstream* (*On the Line/Río abajo*, 1984), or Bigas Luna's *Reborn* (1981) and *Anguish* (1986).[221] An alternative, but more difficult way to gain international attention was for a Spanish-language film to be championed by critics abroad, as was the case with Almodóvar's *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (1988), which put popular Spanish cinema back into the international limelight just as Coixet's career was beginning.[222] Jordan notes that Almodóvar has been promoted as a "foundational" national film author for the post-Franco period, yet he too had plans to direct a feature in English during the 1990s ("How Spanish" 72-76) despite his assimilation into Spanish national cinema by that point.[223] Accordingly, Cristina Sánchez-Conejero documents this desire to interact with English-language cinema as part of a "Spaniwood" trend, characterised by the "Hollywoodisation" of Spanish cinema during the 1990s ("Spaniwood" 336). Consequently, the filmmakers studied here would take full advantage of this inclination as they looked beyond Spain and Europe.

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*Fifth Element* (Luc Besson, 1997), *Alien: Resurrection* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 1997) and *Air Force One* (Paul Verhoeven, 1997). With the exception of Wenders and Jeunet, these directors have continued to direct films exclusively in English. However, female Polish director Agnieska Holland became the most prolific during the decade, with *The Secret Garden* (1993), *Total Eclipse* (1995), *Washington Square* (1997) and *The Third Miracle* (1999). Claire Denis began to experiment with English dialogue in her short *Keep it For* Yourself (1991) and in her feature-length *I Can't Sleep* (1994), while other European women also made inroads into English-language filmmaking with productions such as *A Couch in New York* (Chantal Akerman, 1996).

[220] Vidal makes reference to Nacify's idea of "accented cinema" (*An Accented Cinema*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), whereby exile, diaspora and migration are mediated through multi-accented, or multi-lingual films that highlight difference rather than homogeneity, and relates this to Coixet ("Love" 220). Since all the films discussed in this chapter feature characters speaking "accented" English yet not all deal directly with the issues outlined by Nacify, this chapter will not analyse the films in this respect, despite the usefulness of this concept.

[221] While Buñuel had been at the helm of *The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1954) and *The Young One* (1960) in previous decades, as Chapter 2 notes he had, at that point, completely extricated himself from the Spanish film industry.

[222] Zecchi forges some interesting connections between Almodóvar's breakout success with *Mujeres* and Coixet's failure with *Demasiado viejo*: both were released in the same year and starred Fernando Guillén as a Don Juan character, Coixet's Barcelona is portrayed in an equally fresh manner to Almodóvar's Madrid, while both films share artificial dialogues and draw attention to minute details in the mise-en-scène (*Desenfocadas* 150).

[223] Almodóvar's planned adaptation of novel *The Paperboy* (Peter Dexter, 1995) never progressed, but a recent adaptation of the novel appeared at Cannes in 2012, starring Nicole Kidman, Zac Efron and Matthew McConnaughey, directed by Lee Daniels. Press articles noted the links to the Spanish director, with Daniels benefitting from this interplay of auteurs.

Simultaneously, Spanish stars were making inroads in Hollywood,[224] and a superficial "Hispaniwood" began to take hold (Sánchez-Conejero "Spaniwood" 351). Latin lover characters became popular in mainstream English-language films, while the astounding success of Mexican super-production *Como agua para chocolate* (*Like Water for Chocolate*, Alfonso Arau, 1992) had opened the floodgates for Hispanic and Lusophone cinema on US screens and tapped into the market for Spanish-speaking audiences in North America.[225] Peninsular directors were soon enticed to Hollywood to capitalise on this vogue for Latin characters on screen, represented by the growing popularity of Spanish stars like Antonio Banderas and Penélope Cruz, who became the go-to actors for any character with Hispanic, Lusophone or Mediterranean national identity.[226] Jordan notes that film directors are commonly sold as the stars of arthouse 'foreign language' cinema ("How Spanish" 72).[227] However, by directing an English-language film, it seems the filmmakers took second place to the 'foreign language' stars like Banderas and Cruz, and relied on their transnational star power for distribution and box-office success. Yet, simultaneously, these English-language productions worked to raise the auteur profile of the directors at home in Spain, belatedly fitting into Miró's desire for exportability as directors explored new markets.

Filmmakers of generations as varied as Trueba and Gonzalo Suárez (1934- ) waited until they had firmly established themselves in the domestic sphere before making their first forays into English in 1988 with *The Mad Monkey* (Trueba) and *Rowing with the Wind* (Suárez), employing stars such as Jeff Goldblum and a young Hugh Grant in one of his first film

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[224] For example, Banderas successfully transitioned from Almodóvar favourite to Hollywood star playing a variety of nationalities along the way. He made his English-language debut as a Cuban musician in *The Mambo Kings* (Arne Glincher, 1992) and subsequently scored a small part in *Philadelphia* (Jonathan Demme, 1993), then progressed to more prominent roles in *Interview with the Vampire* (Neil Jordan, 1994) and *Desperado* (Robert Rodríguez, 1995) to become one of the most recognisable actors in Hollywood during the 1990s. His *¡Átame!* (Almodóvar, 1990) co-star Victoria Abril featured in Borau's *Downstream* in 1984 and returned to English-language film with *Jimmy Hollywood* (Barry Levinson, 1994), although she has not pursued roles in the US since, choosing to further her career in Spain and France instead.

[225] The US/Mexican borderlands found a transnational approach in Robert Rodríguez (1968- ), who burst onto the scene the same year with Spanish-language *El Mariachi* (1992).

[226] Cruz began her busy English-language career in Hollywood with a part in *The Hi-Lo Country* (Stephen Frears, 1998), released the same year as Ripoll's *If Only*. In 2000 she played a Brazilian chef in *Woman on Top* by Venezuelan director Fina Torres, a Mexican landowner's daughter in *All the Pretty Horses* (Billy Bob Thornton) and a Greek islander in *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (John Madden). In 2001 Cruz reprised her role as Sofia in *Vanilla Sky* (Cameron Crowe, 2001), the U.S. remake of Amenábar's *Abre los ojos* (1997), and later that year starred alongside Johnny Depp in *Blow* (Ted Demme) as his Colombian wife.

[227] Jordan is referencing Vincendeau ("Issues" 440-448), whose article discusses European cinema in more general terms.

roles.[228] In fact, as the first English-language film by a Spanish director to represent Spain at an international festival (Venice in 1990), *The Mad Monkey* (also known as *Twisted Obsession*) failed to impress at the international box-office.[229] However, this did not deter Trueba from trying again with *Two Much* (1995); with Banderas playing the non-specific Latino lead, the film attempted to cash in on the Hispaniwood trend.[230] Antonio Gonzalo (1951- ) mixed languages, using English and Spanish for *Scent of Vengeance* (*El aroma del Copal*, 1997), while Juan Calvo made his short film debut with *Hotel Oasis* (1994), shot and set in Los Angeles, where he was studying.[231] Basque director Álex de la Iglesia had found similar success through Castilian before experimenting with *películas de encargo* in another language. *Perdita Durango* (1997) featured well-known Spanish actor Javier Bardem alongside rising US stars Rosie Pérez and James Gandolfini, and it was one of the most successful films at the Spanish box-office in 1998.[232] As popular auteurs, these directors could capitalise on their previous success and renown as a springboard into the English-language realm. Therefore, these male filmmakers had the opportunity to film in English, rather than using it as a strategic escape from the parameters of Spanish national cinema and the expectations of domestic audiences and critics. None of these productions engaged specifically with a peninsular context, instead presenting themselves as 'international' genre films, although the presence of peninsular cast,

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[228] Although the film was not a huge success, Grant met actress Elizabeth Hurley on the set of *Rowing with the Wind* and the couple would become the target of huge media attention throughout the 1990s, arguably increasing Grant's star profile. Despite the lack of box-office success at the time of its release, Suárez won the Best Director prizes at the 1988 Goyas and at San Sebastián the same year. At the time of writing, *Rowing With the Wind* is currently being promoted as part of retailer FNAC's 2014 promotion "La Filmoteca Fnacional" as part of a series of "grandes obras de nuestro cine" alongside other traditionally more 'Spanish' productions such as Erice's *El sur* (1983) or Saura's *Cría cuervos* (1976). For more details see <http://www.clubcultura.com/filmoteca-fnac-nacional> [Accessed 5 June 2014].

[229] For a discussion of the production and reception of *The Mad Monkey*, see Kinder (*Blood* 417-419; 502-503).

[230] Like *Rowing with the Wind*, the set of *Two Much* also provided star romance, introducing Banderas to future wife Melanie Griffith. While the celebrity power couple does not warrant further investigation here, it represents another facet of the star system that can impact on a film's success at the box-office. Sadly for Trueba, the burgeoning romance did little for his box-office receipts outside of Spain.

[231] *Hotel Oasis* is mentioned here because it was screened and won prizes at numerous Spanish film festivals. Calvo has since moved into Spanish-language television directing.

[232] Although he did not venture into English-language filmmaking until after 1998, Amenábar (1972- ) made a huge impact with the 2001 release of *The Others*, a Henry James-inspired ghost story starring Nicole Kidman. This smash-hit film marked the beginning of another spate of English-language releases by Spanish male directors the following year: *Food of Love* (Ventura Pons, 2002) and *Darkness* (Jaume Balaguero, 2002), as well as the Spain-USA co-production *The Dancer Upstairs* (John Malkovich, 2002). Like de la Iglesia, Amenábar enjoyed a modicum of international notoriety and was invited to Hollywood by producers that had been impressed with his debut in order to put his own stamp on an English-language project as an auteur-for-hire.

crew and (in most cases) funding made them industrially Spanish to some extent. Evans notes the popularity of films like *Perdita Durango*, but, more importantly, he makes the point that the top-grossing films of 1998 were by noted arthouse directors (*Spanish* 3), nonetheless, the success of these films, or at least, the attention paid to them, marked a shift in what could be considered Spanish national cinema.

It is also notable that none of these male directors were working with original scripts during the late 1980s and early 1990s, and they all created adaptations of some form, even if they are credited as writer-directors.[233] Adapting works written in English aligned their films with the preferred model of Miró films, and fed into the desire for successful transpositions from page to screen. However, rather than selecting contemporary prestige products such as *Los santos inocentes*, the male filmmakers chose to direct versions of popular novels less connected to high art. During the same period, the female peninsular directors who elected to make films in English enjoyed varied success, but most chose to use original screenplays. As filmmakers without wide experience and auteur credentials, however, they were at a distinct disadvantage at the time of their experiments in English. While most male directors tended to exploit the potential of these unusual productions to augment their pre-existing auteur credentials and increase their credibility in Spain, it seems the women generally chose not to film in Spanish in order to escape from notions of national cinema and *cine de mujer* to which they found themselves subject.

Although she was not lacking in industry experience, Miró was also at a disadvantage when shooting *Beltenebros* (*Prince of Shadows*, 1991) in English with the actors Geraldine James, Patsy Kensit and Terence Stamp, and using translator Owen Thompson and writer John Hopewell as her go-betweens. Notwithstanding the changes to funding policies after her departure from government, as an established director, she could access domestic funding and support for an adventurous project in English and would enjoy (at best) a respectable box-office return and (at worst) media attention for the resulting film. In a continuation of her preferences for adaptation whilst head of the ICAA, Miró chose the eponymous book by Antonio Muñoz Molina (1989) as source material, and received funding from the Ministerio de Cultura of 85 million pesetas to film in England, Poland and Madrid.[234] The director recalls

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[233] *The Mad Monkey* was an adaptation of a Christopher Frank novel *The Dream of the Mad Monkey* (1976), *Perdita Durango* was based on the novel *59° and Raining: The Story of Perdita Durango* (1992) by Barry Gifford, while *Two Much* was adapted from a Donald Westlake novel of the same name (1975).

[234] For further production details see Muñoz ("Pilar" n.pag) and Thompson (*Beltenebros*).

> [l]a elección de los actores ha sido muy compleja, pero tanto el productor como yo decidimos que *en lugar de hacer una película española* con actores extranjeros, y esto de los extranjeros es porque lo exigen los personajes de la novela, pues, *era mejor hacer una película más internacional* y rodada en el idioma original de los actores.[235] (in Muñoz "Pilar" n.pag; my emphases)

She intended to deviate from the conception of national cinema that she had helped to create and make a more "international" film in English and Spanish, although remaining within the paradigm of literary adaptation. However, rather than claim that her film was not Spanish, she points out that it goes beyond the institutional definition of the national.[236] *Beltenebros* won the Silver Bear for Outstanding Artistic Contribution at the 1992 Berlinale, vindicating its director, who had long desired recognition abroad. As one of the most important filmmakers and cultural figures of the Transition and post-Transition, her trailblazing career in film, television and politics provided a model for many of the generation of female directors that emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s.

However, Miró remained the exception to the rule during the late Franco period and during the Transition. While other critics have documented the 'generation' of female directors from which Coixet emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s,[237] Camí-Vela notes that many of these filmmakers have not sustained careers in the film industry.[238] Despite Coixet's initial flop, she has become the most prolific of this group, helming more theatrically-released productions than any other woman in Spain, and surpassing Miró's previous record

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[235] ["Choosing the actors was complicated, but I, as much as the producer, decided that rather than make *a Spanish film with foreign actors*, who are foreign according to the characters of the novel, *it was better to make a more international film* in the native language of the actors"] (my emphases).

[236] Wendy Rolph contends that *Beltenebros* "[a]lthough set in two very specific historical moments of Spain's mid-twentieth-century Francoist past, it is inscribed intellectually and affectively –and, in the case of the film, linguistically– in the postnational present of a globalized, communitized Europe. The film *Beltenebros*, especially in its multi accented English-language *versión original*, may well suffer an awkward deracination, but to the increasingly decentred postmodern viewer this may not necessarily diminish its effect" (Rolph "Beltenebros" 118).

[237] For further documentation of this generation, see Camí-Vela (*Mujeres detrás* 2001 ed.; 2005 ed.), Bertenrath (*Aus dem Schatten*, 2012) and Zecchi (*Desenfocadas*, 2014) and articles in the edited publications by Zecchi (*Gynocine* 2013) and Francisco A. Zurian (*Construyendo*; forthcoming).

[238] Aside from the directors dealt with in this chapter, Camí-Vela lists the following twenty-nine directors that debuted after 1988: Cristina Andreu, Dúnia Ayaso, Ana Belén, Icíar Bollaín, Judith Colell, Ana Díez, Cristina Esteban, Patricia Ferreira, Yolanda García-Serrano, Isabel Gardela, Eugenia Kléber, Mónica Laguna, Arantxa Lazcano, Eva Lesmes, Laura Mañá, Maria Miró, Núria Olivé-Bellés, Dolores Payás, Teresa de Pelegrí, Mirentxu Purroy, Azucena Rodríguez, Manane Rodríguez, Mireia Ros, Maite Ruiz de Austri, Ana Simón Cerezo, Pilar Sueiro, Helena Taberna, Mar Targarona, and Rosa Vergés (*Mujeres detrás* 2001 ed.). Camí-Vela makes the important point that only ten women had directed films in Spain before 1988: Rosario Pí, Helena Cortesina, Ana Mariscal, Margarita Aleixandre, Josefina Molina, Pilar Miró, Cecilia Bartolomé, Isabel Mulá, Virginia Nunes and Pilar Távora (*Mujeres detrás* 2001 ed. 13).

of nine fiction films with the 2013 release of *Another Me*. Similarly, Camporesi remarks that Coixet fits the mould of Transition-era directors like Miró, but notes that she is too young for this generation, while not being completely aligned with the post-Franco generation of filmmakers that debuted during the 1990s.[239] Coixet can therefore be tentatively placed within the latter group, considering the similar issues faced by these filmmakers at the beginning of their careers, despite the divergent path she has since taken.

**English-Language Cinema by Female Directors in Spain: 1988-1998**

As discussed in Chapter 2, educational opportunities for filmmakers changed after the Transition. Accordingly, three of the five directors in question in this chapter trained in America, with Gutiérrez supplementing her previous acting experience with film courses in New York's City College from 1983 to 1987, while Balletbò-Coll combined performance and direction during her MFA in Film Directing at Columbia University. Already a chemistry graduate, she arrived in New York in the early 1990s on a scholarship from La Caixa and a Fulbright Award. Similarly, Ripoll studied at the American Film Institute from 1992 to 1993, and completed courses in Directing Actors (with Judy Weston during 1994) and Screenplay (UCLA). As outlined previously, Coixet did not formally train in film and studied history at the Universitat de Barcelona, learning her technical skills as she ascended the ranks within the advertising world. Likewise, Querejeta studied history in Madrid, augmenting her childhood spent on film sets with work on documentaries for her father's company. However, Balletbò-Coll, Gutiérrez and Ripoll ensured they had professional, accredited training in filmmaking from recognised institutions, rather than following the self-taught or on-the-job route taken by Coixet and Querejeta or study Comunicación Audiovisual at a Spanish university. Male directors of this generation also benefitted from a university education, with most of the

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[239] Camporesi writes: "Si hubiera colocar en una época histórica codificada la presencia de Coixet, habría que ponerla en estado de precario equilibrio entre los directores de la Transición, cuando ella era demasiado joven para hacer cine, y los que pertenecen a la que Vázquez Montalbán llamó 'la primera producción biológica de españoles rigurosamente postfranquistas', con los que tampoco se puede identificar completamente" ("A ambos" 63-64). ["If Coixet's presence could be positioned within a codified historical era, she would have to be balanced precariously between the directors of the Transition, when she was too young to be making films, and those who belong to what Vázquez Montalbán called 'the first biological production of Spaniards that are staunchly post-Francoist', who she doesn't completely identify with either"]. Vidal and Triana-Toribio ("Anyplace") firmly place Coixet in a post-Transition generation that includes both male and female directors, with Vidal identifying other Spanish filmmakers who have released films in English, like de la Iglesia, Balletbò-Coll and Amenábar (Vidal "Love" 220).

filmmakers mentioned here holding a Bachelor's degree, but similar to their female counterparts, they did not choose to study Comunicación Audiovisual, with only Trueba graduating from a Ciencias de la Información department.[240]

Each filmmaker studied here followed a different path into filmmaking, but each has shown a dedication to education and training as a film professional, whether in Spain or abroad. The female directors profiled have experienced complex relationships to Spanish national cinema as both a textual and industrial concept, yet those who remain active within the industry have largely been incorporated as producers of national cinema. However, at the time of their debut they wanted to create films that lay outside the parameters of Spanish national cinema, looking to succeed internationally. Rather than adapting their projects to fit the domestic system of funding and dealing with typically Spanish issues, Balletbò-Coll, Gutiérrez and Ripoll decided to make their feature debuts in English, filming on shoestring budgets with international actors and crew. In contrast, Querejeta had the luxury of modest ICAA funding for her English-language adaptation project after the success of her debut feature *Una estación de paso* (1992).

Similar to other Spanish female directors,[241] Gutiérrez trained as an actress before she decided to move into filmmaking and shot some short films during her studies in New York. In her first feature *Sublet* (1991) coincidences form the basis of the plot, with Gutiérrez casting Bollaín (another actress turned filmmaker) as Laura,[242] an observer of life's absurdities for the majority of the film, until she becomes compelled to fight back. As a recent arrival to New York from Spain, she tries to settle in to city life after a break-up. Her struggles to secure a job, find a permanent place to live and learn English are interspersed with bizarre moments of culture clash based on Gutiérrez's own experiences.[243] The film entrenches itself in the

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[240] Amenábar dropped out of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid's degree programme in Ciencias de la Información (specialising in Imagen) after one year (1990), citing the lack of practical experience offered by the course ("Biografía" n.pag). However, he met his main collaborator, screenwriter and director Mateo Gil at the Complutense. Trueba graduated from the same faculty, with a degree in Ciencias de la Imagen (Instituto Cervantes "Fernando Trueba" n.pag).

[241] Namely Ana Belén, Icíar Bollaín, Balletbò-Coll, Laura Mañá, Silvia Munt, Mireia Ros and Mar Taragona (Camí-Vela *Mujeres detrás* 2001 ed. 16).

[242] Alongside Coixet, Bollaín (Madrid, 1967) is one of the most prolific female directors in Spain. Beginning her career as an actress, the young Bollaín starred in *El sur* (Victor Erice, 1983) and is a well-known face for Spanish cinemagoers. She has gone on to direct six feature films, including *También la lluvia* (2010), Spain's official entry to the Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film in 2011. Her directing work is marked by strong social concerns, modelled on the approach taken by British director Ken Loach.

[243] In an interview with CIMA, Gutiérrez recounts her affinity with emigrants: "Hay un tema con el que me identifico siempre, el ser diferente, la emigración. Mi primera experiencia de emigrante es a los

transnational, switching from English to Spanish to 'Spanglish', and embracing the cultural differences at the core of its narrative. The US setting proved essential for her examination of urban and cultural alienation, a topic that Coixet would later develop in *Things*.[244] However, with New York in mind from the origins of the project, operating outside Spanish institutions and seeking alternative funding was the only way she could get her film made. Additionally, filming in the US made Gutiérrez stand out from other first-time directors, although the overseas location and non-Spanish crewmembers prevented her from applying for institutional funding. Like Coixet in 1989, Gutiérrez was nominated for the Best New Director award at the Premios Goya in 1993, receiving a nod from the domestic industry despite the box-office failure of her film.[245]

Even though Gutiérrez enjoyed a high level of creative autonomy, she notes how distribution and exhibition practices impacted negatively on *Sublet* when it was time to screen the film in Spain, stating:

> esa película sólo tenía sentido en su versión original y por problemas de distribución se dobló. La película doblada no tenía demasiado sentido. No sabían qué hacer con ella. De modo que la sacaron y liquidaron.[246] (in Camí-Vela *Mujeres* 2001 ed. 78)

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ocho años cuando mi familia se viene de Granada a Madrid. La segunda fue cuando a los dieciocho me voy a Londres. Me puse a trabajar en un hotel haciendo camas y sirviendo desayunos. A los veintiuno me voy a Nueva York a estudiar pero sigo siendo una emigrante. He sentido miedo en una frontera, he trabajado ilegalmente y he tenido problemas de comunicación como cualquier emigrante" ("Entrevista por Carlos Reviriego" n.pag). ["There is a theme that I always identify with; being different, emigration. My first emigrant experience was as an eight-year-old when my family came from Granada to Madrid. The second was as an eighteen-year-old when I went to London. I started working in a hotel making beds and serving breakfast. At twenty-one, I went to New York to study but I was still an emigrant. I was scared at the border, I had worked illegally and I had problems communicating, like any emigrant".]

[244] Gutiérrez comments on this alienation in an interview, stating: "En EEUU lo que más me impresionó fue la soledad. No se vive igual allí que aquí. En *Sublet* hablaba de lo que significa cuando una persona se traslada a otra cultura y forzosamente tiene que reencontrarse a sí misma, encontrar su propia fuerza. La película habla de eso: cuando estás sola, vences o te hundes. El hecho de salir de tu cultura es una forma muy directa de encontrarte contigo misma" (in Camí-Vela *Mujeres* 2001 ed. 76) [What affected me the most in the US was the loneliness. Living there is very different to how it is here. *Sublet* talks about what it means when someone moves to another culture and is forced to find themselves, to find their own strength. The film talks about this: when you are alone, you sink or swim. Leaving your own culture is a very direct way of finding yourself"].

[245] Gutiérrez's website also lists the following prizes and nominations for *Sublet*: CEC Award for "Mejor Artista Revelación" from the Círculo de Escritores Cinematográficos, the Caracola de Oro at Muestra Cinematográfica del Atlántico Alcances in Cádiz, the Luna de Valencia, and second place in the Best Film category at the Cinema Jove Festival in Valencia. (For more details see http://www.chusgutierrez.es/en/director/details/obra/sublet/ [Accessed 11 September 2013]).

[246] ["The film only made sense in its original version and it was dubbed because of distribution problems. The dubbed film didn't make much sense. I didn't know what to do with it. So they brought it out and ruined it".]

While the film is heavy with Spanish dialogue, the use of English and 'Spanglish' are essential throughout the film. It seems that the director was more incensed about the mistranslation or homogenisation of her film than the disappointing box-office returns, with the distributors pandering to the dominance of dubbing in Spanish cinemas rather than preserving the film's linguistic diversity and the interlinked cultural crossings at its heart. The subsequent dubbing of the film somewhat erases the transnational aspects, as the difficulties in communicating in another language became irrelevant. The transnational nature of the dialogue and its importance to the film's overall meaning was discounted, and the director rightly bemoans her lack of authority to rectify this. With funding from her friend and mentor Trueba, she did not have to compromise in preproduction as much as Coixet, who felt under pressure from the producers of *Demasiado viejo*. Yet, securing a distributor in Spain should have been a major coup for Gutiérrez as an unknown director, but instead it contributed to her film's failure at the box-office because of the subsequent loss of authority in the translation of the material.

Like Gutiérrez, Balletbò-Coll also had prior experience of shooting in the US, directing a short, *Harlequin Exterminator* (1992), during her MFA at Columbia, and working on various shoots around New York to gain experience. After starring in and directing a successful short, *Intrepidíssima* (1992), in her hometown, she filmed her 1995 debut feature in and around Barcelona as a co-directed project with Ana Simón-Cerezo.[247] *Costa Brava (Family Album)* hinges on Anna's (Balletbò-Coll) monologue "Love Thy Neighbour", a performance piece that charts the evolution of a stereotypical Catalan housewife's views on lesbian relationships from "absolute homophobia to a queer stance" (Moreno-Florido 32).[248] The monologue fails to obtain funding from domestic institutional sources, a situation reflected in the real-life conditions of the film's production. While Anna struggles to get her monologue produced she earns money as a tour guide, translating the peculiarities of Catalan life and culture for the audience, who double as her tour clients. On a bus tour to the Costa Brava, she meets and falls in love with Israeli-American Montserrat (Desi del Valle).

Interestingly, Balletbò-Coll unabashedly makes Barcelona a star in all her films, making sure to be very specific about the location of her narrative, using recognisable,

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[247] Since Balletbò-Coll writes, directs and stars in the films discussed in this chapter, the creative input of Simón-Cerezo in *Costa Brava* has been excluded from this study in order to trace the development of Balletbò-Coll's career.

[248] ["reflexiones sobre la vecina lesbiana evolucionan desde una homofobia absoluta hasta una postura *queer*"] (Moreno-Florido "Turismo" 32).

exportable locations for an international audience, while retaining enough local flavour and authenticity for domestic appeal.[249] *Costa Brava* uses the Hospital de Santa Creu i San Pau as Montserrat's home address, and shoots in the Port Olimpic, Parc Güell, and Anna selects a rooftop overlooked by the Sagrada Familia, arguably the most exported icon of Barcelona, as the set for her monologue. Gaudi's conservative, staunch Catholic Barcelona is juxtaposed with a lesbian comedian's caricature of a Catalan housewife, as the sounds of a huge religious celebration drift through the air. Additionally, Balletbò-Coll highlights her Catalan nationality, tapping into cultural difference as a resource for comedy. In-jokes about Catalan people and constant references to the Tramuntana wind that blows along the Costa Brava invite complicity from residents of this "small and peculiar country". But the transcultural remains an important issue in *Costa Brava*, as our polyglot tour guide Anna babbles away in English, French and Catalan and has a relationship with the monolingual Montserrat. Like Gutiérrez, Balletbò-Coll investigates the clash of cultures and identities, playing with the idea of transnationalism.

The timing of *Costa Brava* meant the director missed out on Ley Miró subsidies for new directors, and the director was forced to self-finance through Tupperware parties and had to cajole photographic companies into donating free film stock, since she only received institutional financing after the film's release.[250] As a filmmaker confident in her creative abilities, Balletbò-Coll comments on the benefits of self-financing, noting the autonomy she enjoys during her productions, as well as the right to final cut, but admits that the distribution process is an area where she lacks expertise.[251] *Costa Brava* won various awards at gay film

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[249] In her follow-up film, *Honey, I Sent the Men to the Moon/Cariño he enviado los hombres a la luna* (1997), Balletbò-Coll goes so far as to introduce 'Barcelona, Catalonia' in a voice-over by FBI agent Parker (Laura Schrock), in keeping with its hard-boiled, detective-style opening and closing sequences. However, this film shifts towards a post-national frame of reference, where nationality only matters in the creation of cultural stereotypes like the tough-nut FBI agent, the New York mafia princess or the olive-oil-obsessed president desperate to promote Spanish produce. Balletbò-Coll's third feature *Sévigné: Júlia Berkowitz* (2004) is set specifically within the world of Catalan theatre.

[250] For further details about the circumstances leading up to production see Balletbò-Coll (in Camí-Vela *Mujeres* 2001 ed. 30) and "Costa Brava Press Kit" (19-20).

[251] When quizzed about the film's release date by Camí-Vela, Balletbò-Coll responded: "[L]a estrené en mayo y tuve la habitual recepción de un mes de mayo. Fue una decisión mía total y quien sepa lo que es la producción y exhibición ya sabe lo que significa estrenar en este mes. O sea que es una lección para tener en cuenta. Lo bueno es que cuando hago cine desde el primer hasta el último fotograma, todo el control lo tengo yo. De modo que aprendes mucho porque yo no hago caso a nadie. Después veo si he tenido razón o no. Concretamente, en la cosa creativa me veo muy segura y en la técnica también. Ha sido en distribución donde... Yo la tenía acabada en enero y tuve que esperar hasta mayo porque sabía que en mayo no estrena tanta gente" ["I released it in May and it got the usual reception for the month of May. It was entirely my decision and anyone who knows production and exhibition

festivals, but the director recalls the unfortunate Spanish release date she accepted, during the annual lull in cinema attendances during May, leaving her with an even smaller potential audience and box-office return. As producers of the film, the director and her business partner Simón-Cerezo only received 5.9 million pesetas of the 30 million Premio de Especial Calidad del Ministerio de Cultura, relative to their original investment.[252] In order to benefit from Generalitat de Catalunya funding, films must be made in or dubbed into Catalan,[253] a requisite that García de Lucas and Weinrichter suggest Coixet was aware of when shooting *Demasiado viejo*, noting how the actors hide their mouths a lot during shots of dialogue, making the dubbed version as seamless as possible (6).[254] Not having funding from the Generalitat meant that Balletbò-Coll did not need to consider the implications of dubbing for her first film, although there is a Spanish-language version on the DVD. Additionally, Balletbò-Coll wrote the subtitles for *Costa Brava* and for her second English-language feature in 1997 *Honey, I've Sent the Men to the Moon*. Since the director had not secured a distributor, this was probably due to budgetary constraints, yet this task consequently allowed her to retain authorial control over her material, avoiding what Gutiérrez saw as the destruction of *Sublet*.[255]

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knows what it means to open in that month. Or rather, it's a lesson to keep in mind. The good thing is that when I make a film, from the first frame to the last, I have complete control. So you learn a lot because I don't listen to anyone. I find out later if I was right or not. In particular, I see myself as very secure about the creative parts and in the technical aspects also. It's in distribution where... I had it finished in January and I had to wait until May because I knew that not as many people released their films in May"] (in Camí-Vela *Mujeres* 2001 ed. 31). Balletbò-Coll notes that Querejeta was clever enough to say no to a 'bad' release date (in Camí Vela *Mujeres* 2001 ed. 31), but without the network and insider knowledge that Querejeta had at her disposal, filmmakers like Balletbò-Coll, Coixet and Gutiérrez had to clutch at whatever opportunities they were afforded, even if these were less attractive options.

[252] Balletbò-Coll notes that the Premio de Especial Calidad del Ministerio de Cultura which she won for *Costa Brava* is considered as a source of funding by the Ministry, despite being awarded after the film's release (in Camí-Vela *Mujeres detrás* 2001 ed. 30).

[253] In accordance with the 1994 Ley de Cine, the subsidy threshold "for films of new directors making their first two features" was 20 million pesetas (Besas "Financial" 257) and if made in a regional language this dropped to 10 million pesetas.

[254] Hart documents a similar awareness and desire to control the finished transnational product in Coixet's later career, with great care taken to use minimal ADR (automated dialogue replacement) and preserve the carefully crafted soundscape of *The Secret Life* in the Catalan and Spanish dubbed versions ("Sea breezes" 52). This attention to detail is another savvy move that has aided Coixet's longevity and artistic credibility as she provides an equally arresting aural experience for non-English speaking audiences.

[255] Balletbò-Coll subsequently took part in the dubbing of her third feature *Sévigné: Júlia Berkowitz* (2004) to Catalan. This DIY approach benefits the transnational aspects of the story, avoiding a similar disaster to Gutiérrez's experience with *Sublet*. For example, the American accent of Marina's ex-lover Joana (played by Leslie Charles, an experienced voice actor) is preserved in the dubbed version. Despite

Balletbò-Coll managed to release three feature films in ten years, and has had a relatively successful career, yet she remains relatively unknown in Spain. Her focus on lesbian relationships seems to have further compounded her marginalisation within the industry. However, as a writer-director, she posits herself as the star of her productions, not least though her on-screen performances as an actor, but also as the central focus and executor of her marketing campaigns. As a contrast to Coixet's digital persona of Miss Wasabi, Balletbò-Coll created a physical personality for the promotion of her second feature film, and visited cinemas and answered questions from the public dressed as a particularly outspoken nun called Sor Milagros de l'Alegría Perpetua. Rather than use this persona to extend her artistic reputation, she chose it as a marketing gimmick to drum up interest in an underfunded film without institutional support, making her a perfect example of Corrigan's commercial auteur whose personality is central to each production (*A Cinema* 107). However, she also fits the role of Sayad's performing author, and, as the star of her films, her accented English does not allow her to masquerade as an Anglophone actor, but rather highlights her national identity as she explains and thus exports the national for an international audience. Rather than downplay the national origins of her films on screen, Balletbò-Coll embraces and explores identity and stereotype, using an array of national identities which communicate through English in order to make her productions attractive to the outside world.

Unlike the filmmakers discussed above, Querejeta followed a more traditional route, and made her feature debut in Spanish before her first English-language production. She co-wrote and directed *Robert Rylands' Last Journey* as a follow-up to the generally well-received *Una estación de paso*.[256] However, Besas notes that the budget for her debut was US$2.36 million (€1.9 million in today's terms), including a government subsidy of US$650,000 (€513,000) and a box-office return of US$40,000 (€31,000), and uses the film as one of his examples of "insular, self-indulgent, uninspiredly experimental, pretentious, and, on occasions, hopelessly amateurish" cinema made in the 1990s ("Financial" 242). Nonetheless, as she is the daughter of producer Elías Querejeta, her father's reputation, financial clout and

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the attention paid to the translation of dialogue by Coixet documented by García de Lucas and Weinrichter, Hart notes that accents are not preserved in dubbed versions of Coixet's later film *The Secret Life* ("Sea breezes" 52).

[256] Critic Ángel Fernández-Santos provides an auteur-inflected review of *Una estación de paso*, focusing on Querejeta's "voice" and "hallmark": "El cine español cuenta con una nueva, luminosa y poderosa voz, que no sabe explicarse más que con la mirada: el sello del verdadero cineasta" ["Spanish cinema has a new, luminous and powerful voice, which cannot be explained with just the gaze: the hallmark of a true cineaste"] ("La debutante" n.pag).

scriptwriting expertise undoubtedly gave Querejeta the younger easier access to the boys' club of film production and distribution during the 1990s, with some critics leaning heavily on this supposed nepotism regarding her first film ("Gracia" n.pag). *Robert Rylands* opened to general acclaim in Spain, no mean feat for a free adaptation of a bestselling novel by a well-known contemporary writer, *Todas las almas* by Javier Marías (*All Souls*, 1989) (Fernández-Santos "El lado").[257] Internationally, it received mixed reviews: *Time Out London* describes the film as "'[f]reely' adapted from Javier Marias' acclaimed novel, this mystery-cum-psychological drama [...] is so stilted, clumsy and dramatically tedious as to be virtually unwatchable. Celluloid Oxbridge at its very worst" (G.A. "Robert Rylands n.pag); however, *Variety* critic Derek Elley is more complimentary, conceding that the film is "a rewarding ride for connoisseurs of quality drama" ("Robert Rylands'" n.pag). In this sense, *Robert Rylands* belatedly fits the Miró film criteria, combining international appeal with guaranteed box-office success in Spain as an adaptation of a popular novel.

Regarding this international appeal, Querejeta's film appeared during a slew of British heritage films that continued throughout the 1990s, mainly adaptations of popular 'classic' literature such as the Merchant-Ivory adaptation of *Howard's End* (James Ivory, 1992), or the television series of *Pride and Prejudice* (BBC, 1995). Yet, the decade also offered alternative interpretations of British literary traditions such as the adaptation of Kazuo Ishiguro's 1989 novel *The Remains of the Day* (James Ivory, 1993), or Taiwanese director Ang Lee's film version of *Sense and Sensibility* (1995).[258] Although Querejeta loosely adapted a novel by a Spaniard set in contemporary Oxford, the film connects to a sense of literary Britishness that was popular in cinemas at the time of its release in 1996. However, with regard to Spanishness, Querejeta's adaptation posed a safer bet for Spanish state funding than the work of the other filmmakers studied here. Although she had only directed one film, her links

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[257] Working alongside her father, an experienced producer of literary adaptations, Querejeta aimed to create a free adaptation of Marías' work from the outset of the project, which Dona Kercher claims "rescue[s] an overwhelmingly male chauvinistic text for a feminine voice" ("Children" 104), despite the writer's protestations that she had completely changed his novel. The Querejetas maintained the basic plot and location of the quasi-autobiographical novel inspired by the author's time in Oxford as an academic, but interpreted a key relationship in the novel as homosexual. The resulting *Robert Ryland's* incensed Marías to the point of exchanging heated letters with Querejeta and her father, as producer and co-scriptwriter, in the back pages of *El País* and taking the pair to court. According to her father, Querejeta the younger stayed true to the "texture" of the original novel (Kercher "Children" 101), and Kercher documents the positive critical response to the film ("Children" 101); however, the film did not secure a Europe-wide release despite Elías Querejeta's pedigree.

[258] Interestingly, Ripoll's 2001 film *Tortilla Soup* was essentially a remake of Lee's *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994), with the story transposed to a Mexican-American family living in Los Angeles.

to auteurism and the prestige of the *Nuevo cine español* were likely factors in her successful bid for pre-production subsidies.[259]

Like Querejeta, Ripoll made a 'British' film, although set in London rather than Oxford, and as a debut film rather than a second outing. After working as an assistant director to Bigas Luna on *Anguish,* the Catalan director began her career on a collective project, *El domini dels sentits* (1996) which she undertook with four other female directors, Judith Colell, Isabel Gardela, Núria Olivé-Belles and Teresa de Pelegrí. Ripoll wrote and directed "L'oida", a twenty-minute segment of the portmanteau film, while *If Only* (1998) represents her first full-length feature film as sole director. Cashing in on the financially successful Brit-flick phenomenon of the 1990s, *If Only* appeared during a spate of films depicting contemporary British life such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994), *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996), *The Full Monty* (Peter Cattaneo, 1997), and the latterly released *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999) which was shot in the same part of London. Similar to a box-office hit from the same year, *Sliding Doors* (Peter Howitt, 1998), Ripoll's film poses a what-if question, allowing us to go back in time and see the two possible trajectories of our hero Victor (Douglas Henshall) as he navigates a breakup with his girlfriend (Lena Headey).[260]

Unlike Balletbò-Coll, Ripoll shifted the narrative of her first English-language feature from a Spanish or Catalan context and elected to shoot in London, even though the original story by Rafa Russo was set in Spain. Since she was relatively new to directing features, Ripoll employed an experienced cast and crew in the UK, to complement the novice team of herself, screenwriter and composer Russo and producer Juan Gordon.[261] Yet, despite her inexperience, she managed to 'pass' for an Anglophone director and had a larger budget at her disposal than the other directors studied here. *If Only* screened at the Montreal World Film Festival in 1998 (as *The Man With Rain in his Shoes*) in the UK section, an inclusion the director claimed to be an error (Romero "Buena" n.pag), but this misattribution demonstrates

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[259] Monterde notes that the total budget for *Robert Rylands* was 300 million pesetas ("Miradas" 24 n.11) which was double the average of other new female directors during the 1990s.

[260] Writer Rafa Russo comments on the similarities between *If Only* and *Sliding Doors*, remarking that "es un argumento similar al de [*Sliding Doors*], de Gwyneth Paltrow, pero nosotros la hicimos primero, aunque ésa se estrenó antes. También hemos coincidido en muchas localizaciones de Londres. Hemos rodado escenas en los mismos sitios" ["it is a similar plot to Sliding Doors with Gwyneth Paltrow, but we made our [film] first, although it came out earlier. We also bumped into them in many places around London. We filmed scenes in the same places"] (Russo in Nieto n.pag).

[261] "[Los técnicos] fueron elegidos a propósito. Quisimos rodearnos de gente que sabía más que nosotros" ["They [the crew] were chosen on purpose. We wanted to surround ourselves with people who knew more than we did"] (Ripoll in Nieto n.pag).

how successfully the film passed for a British production.[262] The English-language films examined here consistently depict Hispanic characters either as main protagonists or as fringe figures and *If Only* is no exception. The film incorporates a Latin lover character in the guise of Louise (Cruz) and two shadowy figures that quote Cervantes and bear a passing resemblance to Don Quijote and Sancho Panza, but the film veers away from stereotypes, preferring to reflect the multicultural reality of a neighbourhood like Notting Hill.[263] In fact, Louise's Spanishness seems incidental; rather her foreign-ness represents the important part of her character, as she introduces Victor to an alternative life within a cast of characters of varied UK accents. Although Querejeta and Ripoll's narratives portrayed foreigners in England, both films aimed to pass as British, with a strong focus on the dialogue and accents of the performers.[264]

**Coixet's Complex Relationship to the National: Institutional Exclusion and Rehabilitation**

In contrast to the other four directors studied here, Coixet has taken a different route in the film industry. Unlike Querejeta, Coixet did not have a successful first film to use as a springboard for further projects. She did not make her feature debut with an English-language film like Balletbò-Coll, Gutiérrez or Ripoll, yet, the failure of *Demasiado viejo* put her in a similar category to these brand-new filmmakers when she decided to proceed with shooting *Things* in the US in 1994. She was not trying to fit in with domestic trends by filming in English, but owing to financial necessity and a desire for artistic autonomy, she sought to access funding outside of the peninsula. She notes that it was less complicated to film in America than in Spain since "the actors showed up to work for a pittance because they liked the script".[265] Reflecting on the situation in 2009, Coixet recounts that she was working in the

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[262] *If Only* was produced with financial investment from Spain, France, Germany, UK and USA. Monterde lists the budget of *If Only* as 460 million pesetas, which beat the previous record amount of Querejeta's 300 million for *Robert Rylands* ("Miradas" 24 n.11).

[263] One critic notes that Ripoll does a better job of depicting this area than Michell's *Notting Hill* (Stack n.pag).

[264] Like Balletbò-Coll, Ripoll notes that she participated in the dubbing of the film in order to preserve the differentiation of regional accents as far as possible, but recommends the English original: "Aunque he supervisado el doblaje para que las voces se acoplaran lo mejor posible, hay cosas que se pierden, como el maravilloso acento escocés de Douglas, el protagonista" (Ripoll in Nieto n.pag).

[265] "Los actores se apuntaron a trabajar por cuatro duros sólo porque les gustaba el guión" (Coixet in de España "Isabel Coixet busca" n.pag). Even with a small budget, Coixet managed to engage the services of actors she This allowed her to cast Seymour Cassel, the star of choice for her hero John Cassavetes. Cassel, a veteran indie star, allegedly claimed he would work on any film he thought was a worthy project in exchange for a plane ticket.

United States during the 1990s and it seemed perfectly natural to write a script in English, remarking:

> Cuando volví a España, intentando buscar financiación, pues todo el mundo le parecía esto una cosa marciana totalmente. España es un país donde la gente no se mueve de sitio, viaja poco. Claro, cuanto más marciano les parecía, más ganas tenía yo de hacerla allí. Y, bueno, acabé haciéndola de manera precaria, pero seguí, que es lo importante. Para mí el mundo es ancho y abierto.[266] (in Donapetry "Miss Wasabi" n.pag)

This defiant determination not to compromise her authorial vision and transplant the story to a Hispanic context meant that Coixet's financial independence was not entirely a choice, but a necessity.

With a budget of 150 million pesetas,[267] *Things* follows similar disaffected, solitary protagonists to *Demasiado viejo*, but they speak in English and live in a nameless yet identifiably American town, rather than Barcelona. When Ann (Lilli Taylor) gets dumped over the phone by her long term boyfriend her life falls apart. She talks to Don (Andrew McCarthy) on a phone helpline, and since they live in a small place, she ends up meeting him by chance. The film charts their unusual relationship as these two lonely people try to figure out what they want from their lives alongside a quirky cast of secondary characters. Since it was filmed in English, *Things* fit the 'exportable' category and shifted the misplaced or misunderstood American-ness of *Demasiado viejo* to a more appropriate location, although it precluded Coixet from Spanish and European funding opportunities.[268] Despite the introduction of the Eurimages scheme and the MEDIA programme within the EU, without the support of a producer or the ICAA, or a significant portion of the film financing raised already, Coixet could not access these funds. Rather than wait any longer, she decided to raise the cash needed through her advertising career and retain her creative autonomy through this financial

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[266] ["When I returned to Spain, looking for financing, it seemed like an alien concept to everyone. Spain is a country where people don't move around, they don't travel much. The more alien it seemed, the more I wanted to do [the film] there [in the US]. So I ended up making it in an unstable way, but I pursued it, which is the important thing. For me, the world is wide open"].

[267] José Enrique Monterde provides this figure ("Miradas" 24 n.10) and discusses the difficulties experienced by female directors when trying to access funding during the 1990s (22).

[268] According to García de Lucas and Weinrichter, Coixet's film also incurs a temporal misplacement, pre-empting movies like *Slacker* (Richard Linklater, 1991), *Clerks* (Kevin Smith, 1994), or Ben Stiller's *Reality Bites* from 1994, with 'Generation X' protagonists, a term that novelist Douglas Coupland would not coin until 1991 ("Cosas" 15). In this way, Coixet proved to be ahead of her US counterparts in portraying the kind of disaffected youthful protagonists that would populate later indie films.

independence, a tactic she still employs to this day.[269] In fact, it seems that Coixet's enforced independence from institutional funding has played a key role in her subsequent success, as she was no longer subject to the whims of funders and producers who had strongly encouraged changes to her debut film.

Although Coixet had to fight for the ICAA to recognise *Things* as a Spanish film, its success marked her reinvention within the industry. According to Torreiro's 1996 write-up:

> Tampoco tiene muy claro Coixet por qué se ha pasado tres años reescribiendo el guión, montando la producción junto con otro publicista, el ex crítico Lluís Miñarro, y peleando con trabas administrativas varias, la negación de subvenciones (les pilló cambio de titularidad en el Ministerio de Cultura), el reconocimiento de la nacionalidad española de la película, que finalmente ha obtenido.[270] ("Isabel Coixet ultima" n.pag)

Additionally, the director herself has discussed the difficulty in ascribing nationality to the film:

> Lo que pasa es que los distribuidores parecen tener algunos problemas para situarla en cualquier parámetro. Los americanos –la gente de Fox o Miramax, por ejemplo– dicen que es demasiado europea. Los de aquí, que es demasiado americana, y todos se han puesto de acuerdo para decirme que ya hablaremos después de Berlín.[271] (in de España "Isabel Coixet busca" n.pag)

Despite these problems and the uncertainty around the film's Spanishness, the warm reception it received at the Berlinale in 1995 helped to put her back on the radar of Spanish producers and ICAA officials, and she secured subsidies from television network Canal+, the Ministerio de Cultura, SOGEPAC and SOGETEL for her Spanish language heritage drama *A los* (1998) made three years later. Inspired by the Stendhal novel *Armance* (1827), the film centred on unrequited love between a young doctor, el Maestro (Patxi Freytez), and his neighbour Matilde (Olalla Moreno), kept apart by scheming younger sister Armancia (Amanda García) 'somewhere between the eighteenth and nineteenth century'. Yet, despite the Galician location, Castilian dialogue and peninsular cast and crew involved, the film does not deal with Spanish issues or identity in any way, but rather it engages with a European trend

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[269] Coixet financed the film through Eddie Saeta, an advertising agency and production company she established with Miñarro in 1989. In more recent times, revenue from her production company Miss Wasabi provides some of the initial investment for her feature film projects.

[270] ["Coixet was not sure why she spent three years rewriting the script, editing the production together with another advertiser, the ex-critic Lluís Miñarro, and fighting various administrative obstacles; subsidies were not awarded (they were caught out by a changeover in the Ministry for Culture), the Spanish nationality of the film was not acknowledged, but in the end she got it".]

[271] ["What is happening is that the distributors seem to have problems in locating it anywhere at all. The Americans –the people from Fox or Miramax, for example– say it's too European. The people from here [Spain] say it's too American and everyone has agreed we will talk about it after Berlin".]

for heritage films during the 1990s.[272] Yet, the film was industrially Spanish enough for Coixet to qualify for funding and begin her recuperation into the national cinema paradigm.[273]

However, this complicated relationship to national cinema resulted in her exclusion from some of the ICAA's institutional marketing of Spanish film during her early career despite her having directing three feature films between 1988 and 1998 when other directors (notably male filmmakers) received plaudits and publicity, despite making fewer films. Coixet's first two films had been included in the Ministerio's *Cine español* annuals of the relevant years, as an indication of what constituted government-sanctioned and government-funded national cinema, whether this funding came during pre- or post-production. These catalogues of new Spanish films exhibited in Spain each year provide production details, a summary of the plot in Spanish, English and French, and they list the subventions awarded, where relevant. Although Coixet's films gained some alliance to official national culture with their inclusion in these purely factual official publications, as a filmmaker she was not included as a new director or continuing director in the Consejería de Educación en Reino Unido e Irlanda's *El cine español actual: 1992-2002*, while first-timers such as Benito Zambrano received short tributes in the "Nuevos Directores" section (Gisbert da Cruz *El cine* 19).[274] Although this publication is but one limited example, as a text promoting Spanish cinema abroad in markets relevant to this study, this exclusion could be analysed as institutional inconsistency regarding the treatment of new male and female directors, or at worst, institutional sexism. Similarly, *Sublet* was omitted from Gutiérrez's entry in the Consejería publication, again demonstrating the institutional inconsistency in marketing female directors, especially when her other films to that date were included (*El cine* 18), while complete filmographies were included for the male directors. The publication mentions only *Sexo oral* (1994) and *Alma gitana* (1996), even though *Sublet* was included in *Cine español*

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[272] Significant writings within the heritage film debate include Dyer ("Heritage Cinema in Europe" in Vincendeau [ed.] *Encyclopedia of European Cinema*, London: BFI, 1995), Andrew Higson, (*English Heritage, English Cinema: Costume Drama Since 1980*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), Claire Monk and Amy Sargeant (eds) (*British Historical Cinema: The History, Heritage and Costume Film*, London: Routledge, 2002) and Vidal (*Heritage Film: Nation, Genre and Representation*, New York: Wallflower, 2012).

[273] Vidal notes that the film "resist[s] national as well as overtly feminist frameworks of interpretation by erasing the conventional markers of heritage realism and opting for a formalist engagement with ambiguous romance stories that deprive their feminine characters of agency" (*Figuring* 19). While *A los* is referenced briefly here in in relation to national cinema, the textual implications of the film will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.

[274] Zambrano (1965- ) trained in filmmaking in Cuba and made a huge impact with his third feature *Solas* (1999), winning five Goya awards.

*1992* annual (91) and shown at the Semana de Cine español in Murcia the same year, where Bollaín won the Premio Francisco Rabal for Best Actress (184-185).[275] It seems that the category of national cinema, or cinema worthy of promotion by a national cultural institution could ignore certain works by directors, while using those same directors to sell Spanish cinema at home and abroad.

However, the publication does make a concession to *Things*, and lists it in the Drama section of "Películas más representadas de la década 1992-2002, agrupadas por género cinematográficos" (Gisbert da Cruz *El cine* 8-10).[276] In excluding Coixet as a filmmaker, the Embassy and the Ministerio failed to recognise her potential at the time of publication. While *Things* was screened at Cannes in 1998 as part of "Directoras españolas de los años 90" ["Spanish women directors of the 1990s"], the title of the section made plain the emphasis on the directors, rather than promoting 'Spanish films directed by women' or similar. This inconsistent appropriation would suggest that Coixet was considered sufficiently successful to be included in the marginal category of *directora española* by certain institutions, but not important enough to make the cut when male *directores* were in the running.

As a government text used to promote Spanish cinema abroad in an 'official' educational context, the Consejería publication goes into greater detail about the films and filmmakers listed, and provides some box-office information for later years. The publication does cite the contribution of other female directors, with Bollaín and Gutiérrez featuring in the "new directors" (*El cine* 17-18) section, while Miró warrants a mention in "continuing directors" (*El cine* 20). Coixet, it seems, still had to prove herself worthy of the title 'Spanish director' in the eyes of the institution, despite having three films to her credit. However, since the 2000s, Coixet has been rehabilitated into the Spanish cinema category, as the industry has embraced her international success and esteem. In 2004 *A los* was deemed sufficiently

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[275] Very little is written about *Sublet* and copies of both the original and dubbed versions are difficult to find. The author wishes to thank David Carrión at the Biblioteca del Instituto Cervantes de Dublín for help in locating a VHS copy. It seems that the early work of many female directors is equally difficult to access, hinting at institutional sexism. The work of women is not kept for posterity as part of the canon, nor preserved as the oeuvre of auteurs, whereas early work by their male counterparts is easier to find, regardless of its quality or success. Although more research is required to support this conjecture, the role of the cinematic archive cannot be underestimated: Bordwell has recently commented on how influential archival practices can be in regard to film history ("A Celestial"), and while it is beyond the limitations of this study to explore further, it would seem that the lack of attention paid to emerging female directors in Spain, especially in the pre-DVD era, has led to a lack of an auteurist back catalogue for many of these women. It seems that, not only in Spain, women directors, especially new directors, are measured on a different scale and held to different standards than their male counterparts.

[276] ["films most representative of the decade 1992-2002, grouped by genre"].

national enough to be sold through the "Un País de Cine 2" offer in *El País* (Galán "A los que" n.pag).[277] This selection of films is listed on a subsidiary page of the *El País* website as "the best cinema made *here*: 45 titles of the best *Spanish* cinema on DVD" (my emphases).[278] This belated welcome into 'the best Spanish cinema' by a national newspaper seems based on Coixet's success with *My Life*, considering that *A los* has no specific Spanish relevance other than the language, although it fits the industrial definition of Spanish cinema by way of its Galician location and peninsular cast and crew.[279] While *My Life* was a box-office hit at home, it seems Coixet's 'exportability' and modest international acclaim provided the the foundation for her overdue recognition as a Spanish director.[280] Like *Demasiado viejo*, the commercial DVD version of *A los* has not been subtitled or dubbed into English, and is distributed through the retailer FNAC, who also host Coixet's website. Combined with the *El País* promotion, this lack of translation would suggest there has been no attempt to promote the film abroad and that it has been incorporated into a Spanish national cinema to be consumed domestically.[281] Rather than sell the film internationally as the work of an auteur, it has been appropriated as a product of the national, belatedly fulfilling the function of gateway into national auteur status that *Demasiado viejo* had not.

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[277] *A los* lost out to Ripoll's *If Only* in the Gran Angular section at the Sitges Festival Internacional de Cine de Catalunya in 1998. Seymour Cassel, who had starred in Coixet's *Things* sat on the jury. The following year Coixet herself would serve on the jury at Sitges, with Ripoll on duty in 2003 (Sitges "Dossier" 66-67; 81), which signalled industry recognition of them as significant domestic filmmakers, despite their relative inexperience at that point of their careers.

[278] The tagline in Spanish reads: "el mejor cine hecho aquí: 45 títulos del mejor cine español en DVD". The first series of DVDs sold in 2003 focused more on the status of the 'most relevant directors' of Spanish cinema, described as: "Una colección de 45 películas en DVD con los directores más relevantes del cine español". *El País* also sell non-Spanish films through newspaper kiosks in Spain, usually grouped by more open themes such as 'novela negra contemporánea' or 'cine inteligente', cashing in on recent critical successes at the Spanish box-office or 'classic' films deemed collectible. For more details on the series, see the listings for each series ("Un país 1"; "Un país 2"). While the series are compiled for profit, and not as an act of canon-building, the inclusion of Coixet as part of Spanish cinema is nonetheless significant.

[279] According to Monterde, *A los* had a budget of 230 million pesetas ("Miradas" 24 n.11), almost 100 million more than *Things*.

[280] Camí-Vela notes the box-office success of *My Life* with 501,454 spectators in 2003 and total Spanish box-office revenue of €2,411,425 during its 37 weeks on domestic screens ("Cineastas que filman" 190 n.2).

[281] *Demasiado viejo* was dubbed into Catalan, but there are no foreign-language subtitles on the DVD release from Cameo Media.

**Exportability: Exhibition and Distribution**

This idea of exportability remains key to the textual and industrial success of the English-language films studied here, regardless of any auteurist agenda. Since Balletbò-Coll, Coixet and Gutiérrez had no institutional funding or pre-production backing of a distributor, using English meant that their films would have a greater chance of appealing to an international audience. If their films faced disadvantage at home, at least (in theory) they could be easily exported abroad, or have a greater chance of screening at film festivals.[282] Since *Things*, Coixet has premiered many of her films at Berlin or Cannes, and has scooped coveted spots at Sundance, Telluride and Toronto. Similarly, Balletbò-Coll and Gutiérrez experienced this growing reliance on film festivals as a platform for low-budget cinema, and as a temperature gauge used by distributors for the predicted success of a film in various markets. *Costa Brava* opened in May 1995 in Barcelona, and two years later in Madrid, as well as securing distribution in the US, and it won the audience award at the San Francisco Festival.[283] As mentioned above, Ripoll's film was shown at the Montreal World Film Festival, a major coup for a first-time director,[284] while *Sublet* was screened at the Cinema Jove festival in Valencia.

Therefore, these productions achieved moderate success on the festival circuit before their wider release in Spain, a strange mirroring of the Franco-era treatment of directors like Erice and Saura who, despite being supported by the EOC, often faced bans or major cuts to their films, and used their international success as a bargaining tool with the authorities (*El Productor*). Although the newer films did not face such stringent censorship, the fact that they had to prove themselves internationally before being approved as 'Spanish' represents the continued struggle to define national cinemas, and how far it is demarcated by the participation of governments and institutions. The practice of awarding funds after

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[282] Elsaesser notes the importance of film festivals to emerging directors, recalling that filmmakers who fall into the category of "world cinema," are "integral to the transnational film festival circuit, focused notably on Cannes and Berlin, but now also on Toronto and Pusan" ("World Cinema" 3). Coixet's participation in *Venice 70: Future Reloaded* cements her relationship to the festival circuit and to 'world cinema'. As part of a a portmanteau film used to promote the seventieth anniversary of the Venice Film Festival, seventy 'world cinema' directors created short films to be projected as one continuous feature at the Biennale di Venezia. It is significant that Coixet uses her own voice-over in the film, as she places herself at the centre of the short piece in order to legitimately claim her place in this pantheon of important directors.

[283] Balletbò-Coll discusses these successes in Camí-Vela (*Mujeres detrás* 2001 ed. 30-31).

[284] Ripoll's most recent release *Traces of Sandalwood* (*Rastro de sándalo*, 2013), a story set in Barcelona and Mumbai won the audience award at Montreal in 2014, continuing her successful relationship with this festival. It will screen out of competition at SEMINCI 2014.

production and often after exhibition at festivals further entrenches the idea of film directors being co-opted into national cinema as an afterthought, after the films have proved themselves financially worthy of government subsidy.

Of these five post-Transition filmmakers, only Coixet and Ripoll have continued to make films in English into the 2000s, and both have begun to experiment with Spanish-language productions, especially in documentary format.[285] Miró never made another film in English before her death in 1997, and followed *Beltenebros* with *El pájaro de la felicidad* in 1993. Neither Gutiérrez nor Querejeta have returned to English-language filmmaking since the 1990s; their traumatic first experiences seem to have taken their toll. Gutiérrez in particular has made her name with socially-relevant dramas focusing on immigration within Spanish borders. She has been slowly assimilated into the category of Spanish national cinema, with films that examine marginalised communities and immigration, but from a Spanish perspective. As a possible companion piece to *Sublet*, Gutiérrez's film *Retorno a Hansala* (2008) revolves around Leila (Farah Hamed), a Moroccan immigrant to Andalucía, and her assimilation into Spanish society, facing many mundane struggles and language barriers similar to *Sublet*'s Laura. However, the later film takes a more sombre turn when Leila's brother drowns on a doomed *patera*. Cultural hegemony is inverted when she meets undertaker Martín (José Luis García Pérez), and forces him to adapt to Moroccan customs when they repatriate her brother's body to the rural village where she grew up. The consistent theme of immigration and exploration of 'outsider' figures marks Gutiérrez's textual auteur ambition, although she does not pursue industrial auteur status in the same way as Coixet. As a contrast to Coixet's online public image, Gutiérrez's website successfully sells her brand, but rather than providing a site for auteurist, artistic reflection, it functions as an elaborate online CV, and promotes her production company rather than Gutiérrez as an artist. A biography of the director is punctuated by her work,[286] rather than the quirky anecdotes or lists of 'likes' and 'dislikes' that Coixet includes on her website ("Me gustan").

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[285] Ripoll directed the documentaries *Witness* for Canal+ in 2002 and *Cromosoma cinco* in 2005. Like Coixet, she took part in the fiftieth anniversary of TVE with a segment about fame, titled *50 años de...Fama, todo por un sueño* (TVE, 2009).

[286] For a biography of Gutiérrez on her website, see <http://www.chusgutierrez.es/es/biografia> [Last accessed 1 July 2014]. At the time of writing, she is promoting her most recent feature film *Ciudad de Delirio* (2014), filmed in Colombia about a romance between a Spanish doctor and a Colombian dance teacher. Gutiérrez has continued to direct shorts, documentaries and theatre work on a variety of topics not limited to Spain, but she has not returned to filming in English.

The most recent post on Balletbò-Coll's webpage claims she is in pre-production for the adaptation of the novel *Hotel Kempinsky* (Barcelona: Els Medols, 2002), which she wrote with Simón-Cerezo under the pseudonym Marta L. Puig. However, very little information about this project is available.[287] Although Balletbò-Coll's career seems to have come to a stop, her significant contribution to the positive representation of women on screen cannot be discounted, especially regarding lesbian relationships and female friendship. Balletbò-Coll, doubly marginalised by her sexuality, has had little published on her work,[288] and her lack of commercial success as a director seems to stem from this peripheral status. Like Coixet, she pursues auteur status by highlighting her multiple production roles and engaging in intertextual referencing that privileges the work of other auteurs. However, she strives for commercial auteur status, as indicated by her interview comments and her unsubtle approaches to marketing: she does not desire the artist reputation that her fellow Catalan now enjoys. Although her short filmography provides a consistent discourse on female authorship and performance through on-screen appearances playing a writer, her industrial auteur strategies come to the fore.[289] Like Coixet, Balletbò-Coll set up her own production company and worked in advertising. She was also employed as a television scriptwriter on various TVE and TV3 series during the 1990s; as such she has proved herself to be a versatile audiovisual professional, yet remains on the fringes of the Spanish film industry.

Balletbò-Coll's most recent, and most critically acclaimed film *Sévigné (Júlia Berkowitz)* (2004) deals with the world of Catalan theatre.[290] In contrast to her other productions, the director did receive some institutional funding in the pre-production stage of *Sévigné*, which could have contributed to her decision not to make the film entirely in English, yet it is more likely that the linguistic preferences of her first choice actors to play theatre director Júlia (Ana Azcona) and her critic husband Gerardo (Josep María Pou) dominated when writing her script focusing on the Catalan theatre scene. However, the director manages to showcase her fluency in English through conversations with her American ex-girlfriend,

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[287] <https://sites.google.com/site/selfactualisationkindofthingng/> [Accessed 14 December 2013]

[288] Kercher does not mention *Costa Brava* or *Honey, I Sent the Men to the Moon*, underlining how overlooked Balletbò-Coll's work has been, although Martin-Márquez devotes part of her afterword to *Costa Brava* (*Feminist* 298-291).

[289] For an overview of Balletbò-Coll's career, see Rothwell ("La manual de seducción" in Zurian [ed.], *Construyendo*; forthcoming).

[290] *Sévigné* was filmed in Catalan, Spanish and English and enjoyed a warm critical response, with *Variety* writer Jonathan Holland noting the "clutch of superior performances" and the major improvement since *Honey, I've Sent the Men to the Moon* failed to impress at the box office ("Sévigné" 37).

Joana (Leslie Charles), reminding the audience of her linguistic proficiency and ability to switch between languages and cultures.[291]

In contrast, Querejeta has remained firmly within a peninsular context, while her pedigree and relative box-office success has seen her thrive during the 1990s and 2000s. Her most recent feature release at the time of writing, *15 años y un día* (2013), represented Spain in the Best Foreign Language Film category at the 2014 Academy Awards, a nomination that represents the ultimate national endorsement. Furthering her domestic credentials, Querejeta has also directed numerous television broadcasts, working on high-profile series such as *Cuéntame como pasó* (TVE, 1995- ), non-fiction series *El partido del siglo* (Canal+, 1999) and Spanish football documentary *La roja: de Brasil a Brasil* (TVE, 2014). She does not seem to have a personal website, although she regularly updates her Twitter account with photos from her shoots and links to media articles about herself.[292] Although her family name seems to grant her auteur status by default, her films display a stylistic coherence and thematic consistency. Like Gutiérrez, she does not actively pursue an auteur status in the media, but her longevity has made her films recognisable as a coherent oeuvre, as they reinvestigate familial relationships, often through the eyes of a mother with a young son.

Gliding between cultures, Ripoll markets herself as a director-for-hire abroad, and projects such as *If Only* and *Tortilla Soup* (2001) display her talent for quirky genre films.[293] Meanwhile, she raises her profile in Spain with domestic adaptations such as *Tu vida en 65"* (2006) for which she adapted the script from Catalan dramatist Albert Espinosa's play of the same name.[294] The film superficially fits the category of Spanish cinema, taking place in Barcelona (but aims for a wider distribution with characters speaking Spanish rather than

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[291] *Sévigné* was screened on TV3 in April 2009, preceded by the programme *Sala 33*, which focuses on films produced in Catalonia. Presenter Álex Gorina interviewed actors Ana Azcona and Josep María Pou, commenting that the director herself declined to appear on the show. Azcona claims she was "rather upset with everyone in the Catalan film industry" at that time, but the interview goes no further in dissecting the reasons why.

[292] For Querejeta's Twitter feed see <https://twitter.com/sietemesas> [Last accessed 1 July 2014].

[293] Aside from her use of Hispanic characters, Ripoll has continued to participate in the Hispaniwood trend with her later work. Her 2001 release, *Tortilla Soup*, recounts the love lives of a Mexican-American family in California and engages with a secondary trope of Hispaniwood; the Latin food film. During the 1990s many films depicting Hispanic or Lusophone cultures revolved around food and the pleasures of eating, for example, *Como agua para chocolate* (Alfonso Arau, 1992), *Luminarias* (José Luis Valenzuela, 2000) or *Woman on Top* (Fina Torres, 2001).

[294] As a director who does not usually write her own scripts, Ripoll remarks: "Es muy satisfactorio para mí trabajar con buen material escrito por otros, sobre todo, si, como en este caso [*If Only*], el texto rezuma sensibilidad, veracidad y sinceridad" ["For me it is quite fulfilling to work with good material written by other people, especially when, like in this particular case [*If Only*], the text exudes sensibility, veracity and sincerity"] (in Cendros n.pag).

Catalan), yet it does not interact with a particularly peninsular context. Rather, it represents a 'coming of age' narrative in which the young protagonists try to move on with their lives after a death. She is also slated to adapt the novel *La marca del meridiano* (Lorenzo Silva 2012) for the screen,[295] while her Barcelona/Mumbai-set project, *Rastro de sándalo* (2013), appears to fit with the transnational agenda and production model of *If Only* and *Tortilla Soup*.[296] Ripoll does not pursue an auteur identity in the media, and since she is not a traditional writer-director, her filmography seems more fragmented than the other directors studied here, despite her interventions in the writing process. Like Coixet, she cultivates a different image at home and abroad, making more 'authored' films for the Spanish market and disappearing into the director-for-hire's chair for her English-language productions. However, unlike Coixet, Ripoll places greater emphasis on her director-for-hire status as a competent filmmaker with wide-ranging experience. Her website features her fiction films, documentaries and advertising work side by side, promotes her production company Cahuenga Films, and represents an online CV for a skilled director, in contrast to Coixet's online artist's hub which the previous chapter analysed in detail.[297] Ripoll also works in advertising and gleans influences from literature, art and theatre, adapting and referencing other works for the screen. Yet, although Coixet imbues her advertising with her auteur personality, she primarily makes commercials in order to fund her film projects and maintain her autonomy. In contrast, it seems that Ripoll directs advertisements to further her craft and her portfolio, as a director-for-hire. Although it seems her career is gaining momentum in recent years, her lack of a consistent auteur image puts her at a disadvantage when it comes to recognition. Overall, of these five women, Coixet is most interested in being an artist, whereas the others are more concerned with their survival in an industry that is increasingly underfunded.

According to Heredero's 1999 analysis, twenty-five percent of films produced between 1990 and 1998 were by first-time directors (*20 nuevos* 12). No figures are provided for how many of these filmmakers have continued in the industry, but amongst the women directors, twenty-five of the thirty-five that Camí-Vela identified in 2001 have managed to direct or co-direct a second feature (*Mujeres detrás* 2001 ed. 16-17; 197-213), but only six of these twenty-nine have succeeded in helming a third film to date. Since five of these have

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[295] Silva's book is part of his Bevilacqua series, and the second novel, *El alquimista impaciente* (2000) was adapted by Patricia Ferreira in 2002.

[296] For more details on Ripoll's upcoming releases and projects see Hopewell ("Spain's" n.pag) and "Rastros" (n.pag).

[297] For Ripoll's personal website, see <http://mariaripoll.com/.> [Last accessed 27 May 2014].

directed at least one film in English, it would seem that diversifying in this way represents an intelligent strategy for longevity within the film industry. Rather than relying on the 'welfare system' of national cinema subsidies, these women directors have used the skills and notoriety they accumulated through working in English to benefit their domestic standing, in most cases leading to easier access to national funding and more promotional opportunities for their films as part of government-supported cinema.

**Conclusion**

Despite featuring Hispanic characters, the English-language films directed by Coixet and her female contemporaries eschew the expectations of the Spanish national cinema and ignore or, at least, subvert the stereotyped Latin lover storylines of many Hispaniwood films of the period. Interacting with this trend for Hispanic characters and filming in English was not only a shrewd commercial move, attracting international attention and acclaim in most cases; additionally, this practice represents an ideological break from Spain and assumed notions of Spanishness, and detracted attention from the directors' gender. Therefore, this departure was beneficial to female filmmakers who preferred to be unknown 'directors' in a saturated Anglophone market rather than *directoras españolas* at home. In this way, English represents a form of escapism, especially from a domestic industry whose agenda did not match the directors' own. Coixet has used this to her advantage, and her economic independence from the Spanish film industry has helped her to maintain her autonomy in relation to national identity, despite having easier access to funding as her reputation has grown.

As Mike Wayne notes, eighty percent of European films do not leave their country of origin ("Politics" 26), so the decision to write and film predominantly in English illustrates the desire of Coixet and her contemporaries to escape the constraints of national cinema, whose boundaries Wayne describes as "increasingly porous" within contemporary cultural theory ("Politics" viii). However, Coixet continues to crave this same porosity on a global scale, assimilating her work into other national cinemas outside European models, despite the larger scale of competition for funding, festival screening slots and international distribution. It seems that this was also the ambition of the other female directors surveyed here when they were starting out. Camí-Vela has theorised the boom in English-language production amongst Spanish women directors during the 1990s (and 2000s) as an expression of multiculturalism, or an aspiration to produce global rather than national cinema, given the

transnational tropes at work in the films,[298] and while these films were created in English because of the particular stories their writers or directors wanted to tell, their transnational or post-national narratives subsequently gave them easier access to the international market. Whether working on self-generated projects, *encargos* or adaptations, it would also seem that these filmmakers were concerned with strategically using their limited resources for maximum exposure rather than promoting a multiculturalist agenda. As debut filmmakers, Balletbò-Coll, Gutiérrez and Ripoll sought to create commercially-viable cinema without major auteur aspirations, while Coixet and Gutiérrez aimed to improve their artistic credentials with their sophomore features.

As the most outwardly auteurist of this group, Coixet has consistently pursued the art cinema label since her first film with her public persona, while the others have explored other forms of auteurism or other ways of becoming an auteur. The longer careers of Gutiérrez and Querejeta provide opportunities for auteurist criticism of their body of work, as recognisable tropes and themes are more easily identified *a posteriori*, while Ripoll continues to build her brand as a director-for-hire. Notwithstanding Balletbò-Coll's departure or hiatus from the film industry, her short filmography demonstrates her commitment to the director-star form of commercial auteurism in a more visible style of hyphenated authorship than Coixet. This chapter has argued that the female filmmakers without a pedigree like Querejeta's tried to circumvent the expectations of the Spanish film industry and reach a wider, international audience through the back door during a peak time for European directors filming in English. Despite the reluctance to engage with traditional ideas of Spanish national cinema, the resulting films connect with a transnational sense of Spanishness and ultimately represent a highly exportable cycle of works that appeal to an international audience while retaining some connection to their directors' native land. This chapter concludes that this early self-sufficiency benefitted these filmmakers, while their experience of filming in English has increased their international profile and ability to find funding from diverse sources, thus improving their chances of longevity in the industry. With regard to the discussion of

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[298] Camí-Vela notes: "Además de las razones personales o económicas que algunas mencionan, casi todas las cineastas expresan el deseo de salir del encasillamiento de lo que se denomina 'cine nacional' para hacer 'cine global'; un cine categorizado por la diversidad cultural y la cultura transfronteriza; un cine que representa un encuentro entre estrategias comerciales e implicaciones multiculturales" ["Aside from the personal or economic reasons that are mentioned, almost all the directors express the desire to escape the pigeonholing of what is called 'national cinema' in order to make 'global cinema'; a cinema categorised by cultural diversity and transborder culture; a cinema where commercial strategies and multicultural implications meet"] ("Cineastas-multicultural" 70).

hyphenated authorship in Chapter 1, the multi-tasking authorship model followed by these directors was often due to budgetary constraints, but it also represents a protective authorial strategy in a co-production/international environment where overall control of the film can prove elusive or fragmented. While the figures of the auteur and the director have undergone substantial evolution since *Cahiers*, these roles have been shaped not only by the personality of the filmmakers in question, but also by the social, historical and industrial shifts of the last century, as Part One has demonstrated. Coixet remains an exceptional figure within national cinema, yet the changes that have taken place in Spanish society and the film industry since her debut have affected her career path and her filmography greatly, and the following chapters in Part Two seek to assess how she textually negotiates this ever-changing landscape.

# PART TWO

# TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF COIXET'S FILMS AND OTHER PROJECTS: VISUAL POLITICS, CINEMATIC TECHNIQUE AND AUTEUR ADAPTATION

## Chapter 5: Experiments in Cinécriture and the Gaze: An Auteur Camera

Part Two of this thesis engages more directly with Coixet's films and offers textual analysis of her work informed by the issues of authorship and the industrial context discussed in Part One. In order to understand her auteur identity on a textual level, this chapter begins an analysis of her visual politics and her public discourse to assess how she promotes this ideology as an auteur. While camerawork will be discussed throughout Part Two, this section will move into a discussion of Coixet's visual style across fiction and documentary modes of filmmaking, through an analysis of her personality behind the lens and the discourse she employs to discuss it. In particular, her non-fiction work and projects outside the cinema provide an opportunity to examine her personal camera in detail and address an area of her output that has been overlooked by most studies. Firstly, her personal camera will be explored in order to assess how it forms part of her auteur agenda, and provides another outlet for authorship. As a shooter-director, Coixet's personal gaze or look remains tantamount to the films, but this gaze remains reflective at all times, encompassing her desired textual ancestors and her own desire to challenge established representations in order to create progressive films. Secondly, her emulation of Agnès Varda's filmmaking philosophy and methodology will be assessed, owing to their similar interest in experimenting with other media and Coixet's intertextual relationship with other auteurs she admires. Thirdly, her 'way of seeing' via John Berger will be analysed as a genesis for her treatment of the cinematic gaze, using examples from her fiction films. Rather than focus on the editing process where a film can be rewritten completely, the film shoot will be posited as a locus for the director's creativity, especially considering Coixet's role as camera operator.

### Auteur Camerawork

Coixet did not operate the camera on her earliest films, the short *Mira y verás* and *Demasiado viejo*, but rather her interaction with the camera began after her initial difficulties in the industry and after she had trained on the job as an advertising creative. The problems she faced early in her career and the creative hiatus of seven years between *Demasiado viejo* and *Things* seem to have spurred her into a greater desire for creative control, an authority which has been granted to her through operating the camera. Aside from formal acts of writing, operating the camera on her shoots gives her direct contact with the camera-stylo or camera-pen, unmediated by a monitor, placing the movement, points-of-view, and rhythm of

filming under her direct control. Although she collaborates with other film creatives on the shoot and in the edit, and demonstrates an increasing propensity towards working with pre-existing screenplays by other writers, this refusal to delegate gives her more concentrated or, at least, an unusual authorial power. In this way, she addresses any "anxiety of authorship" or desire for originality that Gilbert and Gubar identify as the desire of the male (literary) author (*The Madwoman* 57).[299] Rather than strive to be an original genius, she places herself into a lineage of auteurs through a *cinécriture* approach to filmmaking, and incorporates images used by other auteur directors in a system of conscious, considered intertextual referencing.

Moving beyond Astruc's camera-stylo metaphor as "a means of writing just as flexible and subtle as written language" ("Birth" 32), Varda, the so-called grandmother of the French New Wave, describes cinematic creation as *cinécriture*, or simultaneously thinking in words and images. She suggests that

> a well-written film is also well-filmed, the actors are well-chosen, so are the locations. The cutting, the movement, the points-of-view, the rhythm of filming and editing have been felt and considered in the way a writer chooses the depth of meaning of sentences, the type of words, number of adverbs, paragraphs, asides, chapters which advance the story or break its flow, etc. In writing it's called style. In the cinema style is *cinécriture*. (in Alison Smith *Agnès Varda* 14)

Although this metaphor describes cinematic creation in general, Coixet's multiple roles during the production of her films, particularly her job as camera operator, allow her to dominate the areas described by Varda, rather than indirectly managing and guiding the work of other film professionals. This control allows Coixet to think audiovisually, knowing she has ultimate authority over the production, not only as director, but as a multi-tasking auteur. Her films seem to derive naturally from this kind of instinctual, audiovisual thought process, as she exerts powerful control over many other aspects of production including scriptwriting, casting and music supervision. Correspondingly, Angela Martin describes *cinécriture* as one possible way for women filmmakers to assert their presence, especially in relation to filmic writing, claiming:

> It would allow us to avoid having to go through and be marginalised by the arguments about

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[299] Gilbert and Gubar (*The Madwoman* 1979) provide a feminist critique of Harold Bloom's idea of the "anxiety of influence" suffered by writers (*The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 1973). Whereas Bloom's male writer strives to find an original, distinctive authorial voice, Gilbert and Gubar's female writer is concerned with the state of merely being or becoming an author. Although more contemporary theories of female authorship are relevant to this point, this discussion selects Gilbert and Gubar's analysis as a product of the same era as Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972) and Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), touchstone theories within Coixet's ideology, which will be discussed in this chapter.

> the auteur theory, or having to find the filmmaker or her female voice in the text in order to give it authorial credence. ("Refocusing" 35-36)

Yet, identifying the female voice remains secondary for Coixet; instead she strives to be recognised as an auteur or artist rather than a female filmmaker, as the previous chapters have demonstrated. However, the camerawork she employs and her particular interaction with theories of the gaze address representations of women in cinema as part of a revisionist agenda.

Although most directors are closely involved in the camera set-ups on a shoot, and many directors of photography and camera operators can be considered auteurs or artists in their own right, shooter-directors like Coixet are rarely found outside low- and no-budget filmmaking. She joins contemporary A-list directors such as Robert Rodríguez and Steven Soderbergh amongst the minority of filmmakers that operate the camera on shoots, while others (like Michael Mann and Varda) have operated the camera intermittently.[300] This chapter argues that the shooter-director represents a film author who exerts a creative vision over the film in a particular way: by looking through and moving the camera during shooting, rather than watching through a monitor or standing beside the machinery, a shooter-director interacts with the filmed image in a way that most directors do not. Direct contact with the camera-eye facilitates auteurism, as the filmmaker finds another way to author the film through a heightened personal view or vision. Although it is difficult, and perhaps facile to compare idiosyncratic creative processes, Coixet's filmmaking method remains one of her unique qualities and accentuates her auteur agenda. Director Dziga Vertov's theory of the camera-eye relates particularly to the shooter-director,[301] and his words are reproduced in Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972), a seminal text in Coixet's visual education. Vertov writes:

> I'm an eye. A mechanical eye. I, the machine, show you a world the way only I can see it. I free myself for today and forever from human immobility. I'm in constant movement. I approach and pull away from objects. I creep under them. I move alongside a running horse's mouth. I

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[300] Robert Rodríguez is known as the 'one-man crew', shooting, directing and editing his productions, and he continues to carry out these roles since moving from no-budget *El Mariachi* (1992) to larger, studio-funded films like *Sin City* (2006). Soderbergh (1963- ) has operated the camera or acted as cinematographer on all his directorial productions since *Traffic* (2000) and often edits. Like Coixet, Soderbergh moves freely from one genre to another and engages in a similar model of multi-tasking authorship. Mann (1943- ) has operated the camera intermittently on films such as *Heat* (1995). Chapter 1 mentioned up-and-coming filmmaker Shane Carruth as another example of multi-tasking authorship, with camera operation as one of his many production roles.

[301] Dziga Vertov (1896-1954) was a Soviet director and film theorist known for his influential writings on the kino-glaz or 'camera-eye'. Coixet notes that she went to see a Vertov film with the intention of using certain images in *Map* (in Coixet and Gay *Diàlegs* 75); an anecdote which forges another connection to the Russian director and his approach to cinematic creation.

> fall and rise with the falling and rising bodies. This is I, the machine, manoeuvring in the chaotic movements, recording one movement after another in the most complex combinations. (in Berger *Ways* 17)

Vertov's wish to unite body and machine comes to the fore in his film *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) which showcases his desire to create a cinematic language, free from interference from theatre or story.[302] Shooter-directors invoke this camera-eye by interacting directly with the 'I'; the personified camera. The handheld style employed across many of Coixet's films augments this idea of a personal view, as the unsteady camera mimics human vision and furthers this embodied connection to the audience member.[303]

Admittedly, for camerawork to contribute to authorial recognition, it must be generally known that a particular director operates the camera, and Coixet can advertise this facet of her creativity through her auteur persona. Rather than stemming from particular thematic concerns, what Sarris would identify as "inner meaning" or "core of meaning" emanates from her being behind the camera, through technical aspects and "personal style" ("Notes-1962" 562-563). Rather than performing the role of Wollen's "unconscious catalyst" (*Signs* 114-5), she follows a learned strategy of auteurism to guarantee the visibility of this core of meaning(s). Actor and photographer Dennis Hopper explains how her methods are conducive to a performer's best work:

> It's wonderful, she puts the camera on a sort of rope, a string, so it bounces a little, and she moves it, and when you look at the film, you don't notice [...] it's like being alive, the cinema is alive. And she'll be a little off in her composition, half a face or something, but you really don't notice it because it'll move, but it's just right and it feels like it is breathing. (*Charlie Rose*)

Hopper's commentary reveals Coixet's creative process, as she tries to create a sense of respiration and life through the handheld camerawork. Her camera-eye not only influences the intimate performances she elicits from her actors but also the subsequent reading of the film as a progressive text. The wavering handheld camera aids the director's revisionist portrayals of generic stereotypes,[304] providing a slightly unsteady point of view and helping her to question the entrenched representations of cinema, as they appear unstable on the screen. In an interview Coixet remarks

> every director has their own path, and I know most people say, "No, if you're behind the camera, how do you really capture the performances?" and for me, it's the way to REALLY capture what they are doing. I know, since I'm used to doing it, when they have to move. I can

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[302] *Man with a Movie Camera* sought to move beyond what Vertov saw as filmic clichés and create a wholly cinematic language.

[303] Ideas of embodiment and affective camerawork will be explored further in Chapter 6.

[304] Representations and stereotyping will be dealt with more specifically in Chapter 7.

> follow them very subtly, and I think for them, when you're shooting very intimate scenes, it's a way to have them more relaxed and more free. (in Douglas n.pag)

In this way, she behaves like a performer, intuiting the needs of her actors, who repeatedly claim she creates a "safe space" for them.[305] Yet, her own presence becomes as important as theirs, as she works with the actors and the camera to convey that the cinema is alive. Although her presence remains metaphysical, in a certain way, her personality appears on the screen, approaching what Sayad terms "performing authorship", which proposes to "privilege the author's actions over their achievements" (*Performing* 1), and focuses on the intentions of a director. While her body does not appear on screen, she inserts herself into the frame through her camerawork, as the audience (consciously or unconsciously) assimilates her camera movements as bodily gestures.[306]

Moving from physical gesture to verbal language, Coixet explains her camerawork in a particular way, and reflects a conscious engagement with the discourse used by artists, performers and other auteur filmmakers. Rather than identify with the camera-pen or metaphors of cinematic writing, she describes the camera as a part of her anatomy, while the language she uses to publicly discuss her camerawork supplements this fusion of body and machine. Producer of *Elegy*, Andre Lamal, recounts how Coixet was adamant about using a handheld camera for the bulk of the film, calling it her "heartbeat".[307] This underlines her affinity with performers, where the camera becomes another part of the body, moving from Astruc's camera-pen to camera-heart, via Vertov's camera-eye, with this bodily connection augmenting the personal dimension. The camera becomes an on-screen extension of her personality, fused to her body like musician and instrument. To further this performative connotation, she does not enjoy watching the results of her performance in post-production. She claims to suffer during the edit because she can see all the defects (Camper "Camper"), preferring the shoot itself.[308] Actress Sophie Turner recently claimed that Coixet "edits in her

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[305] In an interview, Kingsley draws attention to the fact that Coixet operates the camera, and mentions how she cried during takes, which he described as a "gift" to the actors (in Storrs "Entrevista" 9).

[306] Rather than delve into this idea of the performing director, this chapter will focus on the "actions" undertaken by Coixet, while the following chapter will address her "achievement" by examining the effect she aims to provide for the spectator.

[307] Producer Lamal speaks about working with Coixet as part of the DVD extras of *Elegy*, in the "Soundbites" section.

[308] In contrast, director Bollaín spoke about her love for the editing process at a public talk during 2014. Fiona Noble paraphrases the director's comments: "She [Bollaín] noted that she loves editing, finding it the most creative part of filmmaking (other than the writing of the script). In a lovely metaphor, she compared it to going to the market to get the ingredients you need, but it is when you start editing that

head" on set, an anecdotal comment that nonetheless points to the filming process as the main outlet for Coixet's authorship.[309]

Although Coixet is not the sole camera operator on her sets, and in many cases it is impossible to tell which material was shot by other camera operators, this desire to directly author and craft the frame itself strengthens her connection to *cinécriture*. However, her fluency in operating and discussing the camera is the result of a process, with her embodied camerawork becoming more distinctive and identifiable as her filmography develops. Nonetheless, her camerawork remains influenced by other factors, such as an aspiration to rewrite or re-author gender stereotypes and to force the viewer to question their relationship to the image projected on the screen.

## Films From the Soul: Coixet, Varda and *Cinécriture*

Another of these contributing factors is found in Coixet's filmmaking philosophy or ideology, which is strongly related to her esteem for noted auteur filmmakers. She overtly acknowledges her admiration for Varda,[310] and many articles comment on the connection between the two directors, from their shared interest in small, everyday details to the similarity of their hairstyles. Coixet describes the Belgian-born director as "the prototype of honesty in a filmmaker, I have taken on her phrase: 'I never thought about having a career,

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you start cooking. She also commented that she always changes the endings of her films during the editing process" ("Spanish cinema symposium" n.pag). As a comparable Spanish auteur, Bollaín takes a different approach to Coixet, with the 'rewrite' she describes happening in post-production. However, her use of metaphorical language to describe the creative process aligns her with Coixet and other directors.

[309] "Isabel es la directora más maravillosa. Es muy inteligente y sabe exactamente lo que quiere. Lo mejor de ella es que es muy rápida. En *Juego de Tronos* se tarda uno o dos días en rodar una escena, en *Mi otro yo* se podían hacer diecisiete al día. Isabel edita toda en su cabeza mientras va rodando, así que lo tiene muy claro. Es extraordinaria, una directora brillante" ["Isabel is the most wonderful director. She's very intelligent and knows exactly what she wants. The best thing about her is that she's very quick. On *Game of Thrones*, it takes a day or two to film a single scene, in *Another Me* we could shoot seventeen per day. Isabel edits everything in her head while filming, so she's got it quite clear. She's extraordinary, a brilliant director"] (in Díaz de Río "Entrevista" n.pag).

[310] In the biography section of Navarro's edited book, Coixet describes Varda and her late husband Jacques Demy as her "Sartre and de Beauvoir" (*De los* 87). This comparison to noted philosophers underlines the importance of these two figures, but particularly Varda, within Coixet's filmmaking philosophy. Coixet interviewed Varda for *Fotogramas* in 2003, and the finished piece was presented as a 'conversation' between the two directors. While the author has not been able to access the *Fotogramas* edition, a version of the article has been posted online (see Coixet "Conversación"). Additionally, the two women sat on the jury for the Camera d'Or prize at Cannes in 2013, which enhances their 'real-life' connection.

only about making the films that came from my soul'".[311] However, the cinephilia and commercial leanings that are evident since Coixet's first film suggest that she did hope to have a career in filmmaking, although, like Varda, she strives to maintain the 'personal' within her films, even when working as a director-for-hire. Not only does she appropriate Varda's filmmaking philosophy and her *cinécriture* methodology, she also imitates scenes from her films. Following in the footsteps of the 'grandmother of the New Wave', Coixet has also published her screenplays, and written other treatises on cinematic creation, and is involved in installation art, in order to market herself as a true artist and accomplished creator.[312]

Like Coixet, Varda follows a multi-tasking authorship model by writing, directing and producing (and sometimes editing and starring in) her films, and often works through a similar theme of mortality. Varda creates subversive representations of women on the screen, whether investigating illness and death in *Cléo de 5 à 7* (*Cléo from 5 to 7*, 1962), questioning motherhood in *La Bonheur* (*Happiness,* 1965) or challenging the fetishization of female bodies in *Sans toi ni loit* (*Vagabond*, 1985). Similar to Coixet, Varda has filmed all over the world, and has made films in countries less familiar to the European film viewer such as Cuba and Iran. In emulating Varda's nomadic, varied career and prodigious output, Coixet seems to desire a similar artist status with her projects outside the cinema, but her connections to the advertising industry and closer relationship to Hollywood mean she is received as a much more commercial auteur than Varda, who presents herself primarily as an artist who is capable of combining different formats such as film and photography.[313]

Unlike Coixet, Varda had not seen hundreds of movies before attempting to make a feature, but rather she came to filmmaking through photography so her knowledge of the camera and visual storytelling were her greatest strengths as a new filmmaker, while she was somewhat unburdened by film history. Aside from her creative pursuits, Varda is a teacher, and she is quoted as follows on her biography page for the European Graduate School in Switzerland:

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[311] The original article reads: "el prototipo de la honestidad como cineasta, hago mía su frase: 'Nunca he pensado en hacer una carrera, sólo en rodar las películas que me salían del alma'" (in Soto "Vivir" n.pag).

[312] Varda has published various titles throughout her career: *Les Plages d'Agnes: Texte Illustre* (Paris: Editions de l'Oeil, 2010), *Agnès Varda, l'île et elle* (Paris; Arles: Actes Sud, 2006), *Sans toit ni loi: un film d'Agnès Varda* (Paris: L'Avant-Scene du cinema, 2003), *La marginalité à l'écran* (Paris: Cinémaction, 1999), *Varda par Agnès* (Cahiers du Cinéma, Paris, 1994) and *La Côte d'Azur, d'azur, d'azur, d'azur* (Collection Lieu Dit. Vol. 4. Paris: Les éditions du Temps, 1961). In a recent interview, she discusses her increasing propensity towards installation art (Getty Research Institute "Art").

[313] For similar views on Varda, see Sayad (*Performing* 50-55).

> I just didn't see films when I was young. I was stupid and naïve. Maybe I wouldn't have made films if I had seen lots of others; maybe it would have stopped me. I started totally free and crazy and innocent. Now I've seen many films, and many beautiful films. And I try to keep a certain level of quality of my films. I don't do commercials, I don't do films pre-prepared by other people, I don't do star system. So I do my own little thing.[314]

As part of the school's public website, this quotation serves to market Varda as a bona fide auteur and artist with decades of experience in an ever-changing industry. Dissimilar to Coixet, she does not experiment with more commercial forms of audiovisual creativity such as those she lists above. However, she has become somewhat of a star herself, and appears on the screen in her increasingly self-reflexive projects such as documentary *The Gleaners and I* (2000) and *The Beaches of Agnès* (2008), and documents the filming process and the ageing process as much as her subject matter. Sayad writes that Varda represents a "confiding author", who is personal in her address, but not confessional, especially in *The Beaches* (*Performing* 48), where the filmmaker reflects on her life and career. Coixet takes a similar tone in her documentaries but resists appearing on the screen, or making herself the subject matter or bodily protagonist, although she uses her own voice-over in certain films.[315] To illustrate this personal address, Sayad discusses a review of *The Beaches* by A.O. Scott which reads:

> One of the dividends of *The Beaches of Agnès* is that Ms. Varda allows herself, and the audience, to peek behind the scenes, to learn something about her techniques and the sources of her inspiration. Some of these have been personal and geographical: Sète, so vivid in *La Pointe Courte*, was where her family took refuge during World War II after fleeing Belgium. Others are literary, artistic and political: the Surrealists, Picasso, the revolutions in China and Cuba and, above all, the rise of feminism in the West. ("Living" n.pag)

Coixet does not allow the audience to "peek behind the scenes" in her finished films, but provides production footage on her DVD releases, as befits the commercial auteur. She also makes her own presence more overt in her documentary work, but declines from placing the main emphasis on herself within the investigation (as Varda does in *The Gleaners*), or on her own life (as Varda explores in *The Beaches*). While Varda, like Godard, "performs herself at work" within her films (Sayad *Performing* 49), like most other auteur directors, Coixet redirects this kind of self-portraiture into the more commercial format of 'making of' segments and interviews.

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[314] For the full biography see <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/agnes-varda/biography/> [Last accessed 7 August 2014].

[315] As a point of comparison, Coixet provides the voice-over for *Viaje*, which will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

**Acts of Looking and 'Ways of Seeing': Coixet, Berger and the Gaze**

Further to the process of *cinécriture*, another important influence on Coixet's visual politics was her discovery of *Ways of Seeing* during her twenties whilst living in London. She writes:

> in twenty pages and twelve tube stops, the act of seeing had acquired a brilliance and given me a sense that I was closer to solving a mystery that had always eluded me: seeing is finding. (*From I to J* 12)

Since then, Coixet has referenced Berger throughout her quest to uncover new ways of seeing, both implicitly and explicitly using his ideas about seeing, art and our perception of images to create an aesthetic all her own. A relationship of mutual admiration and respect began when Berger e-mailed to tell her she was a "true artist", after seeing her first English-language film, *Things*. Moreover, the personal connection they maintain is fundamental to Coixet's conscious construction of an auteur image. The British novelist, artist and critic enjoys a consistent association with high-culture, despite his polemical associations with Marxism, especially early in his career. Similarly, Coixet's experimentation with writing, publishing and installation art make plain her desire to be received as an all-round creative figure like Berger or Varda, rather than just a filmmaker.

Berger also participates in a synthesis of self, similar to Coixet. Preceding *Ways of Seeing*, his first novel *A Painter of Our Time* (1958) documents the working process of an exiled Hungarian artist living in London, who disappears after the opening of his first solo exhibition. The story is told by the painter himself, Janos Lavin and his friend, an art critic named John. As a companion piece to Berger's art criticism, *A Painter of Our Time* examines the before and after of artistic creation through the eyes of fictional characters. Coixet does not explore the life or the role of the artist on the screen, but rather she depicts 'ordinary' people with extraordinary sensitivities and shows us that the mundane can be beautiful, or, at least, worthy of critical attention. Nonetheless, Berger's ideas around creativity and the visual remain tantamount to an understanding of her work, and she has provided direct responses in the form of an exhibition and a short film dedicated to him, while also including a book by the author in almost every fiction film she makes.[316]

The title of the 2009 tribute exhibition, *From I to J*, foregrounded the personal

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[316] *To the Wedding* (1995) is incorporated into *My Life*, while *Ways of Seeing* appears in more than one film: in *The Secret Life* the book sits on a character's desk while in *Elegy*, a copy appears in a scene on the beach. In *Ayer*, a copy of *Pages of the Wound* (1996) lies on the back seat of a car. These citations of Berger's work and their significance to the plots and characters of the films will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.

connection between Coixet (I) and Berger (J) and the origin of their relationship as correspondents, with the accompanying publication and DVD (2009) revealing much about their relationship in epistolary and interview form for those who missed the exhibit which opened in Barcelona at Arts Santa Mònica. Upon entering the exhibit, visitors were met by a video interview between Berger and Coixet, which made clear the interplay of auteurs from the first moment with both artists appearing on the screen together.[317] Then, in groups of no more than twenty, visitors moved into a darkened space guided by lighting and voices reading letters written by Berger's character A'ida (A). A prison bed represented each letter, and was surrounded by mesh wire in order to simulate the enclosure and isolation of the receiver, Xavier (X), for whom these letters represented his only contact with the outside world. Coixet drafted in famous actresses to read passages from the epistolary novel, and recruited her friend, star architect Benedetta Tagliabue, to design the interior space and housing for the audiovisual equipment.[318] The faces of the actresses that read the letters were not visible, but Coixet incorporated photo portraits she took of each woman at the end of the route, while the DVD provides the footage of each performer reading the text, which included her collaborators Cruz, Clarkson and Polley. Berger envisaged "glimpses" of the actresses, but Coixet was more interested in the sound of the human voice and "how it can take you to some place" (in Lucas "From I to J"). Accordingly, she moves away from her association with the filmed image in order to communicate through Berger's words, bringing them to life as an embodied, affective book reading. The exhibition placed the visitor in various incarnations of Xavier's prison cell where each letter was made audible, creating an audiovisual experience of Berger's book for the visitor, albeit without the medium of film to accompany the prose. This project perhaps best documents Coixet's *cinécriture* process, as she controls the 'style' of Berger's words, adding the human dimension in order to bring them to life from the printed page.

Following on from this tribute exhibition, in 2010 Coixet directed and shot a *corto* on

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[317] This description of the exhibition is based on the book publication and accompanying DVD (Coixet and Berger *From I to J*), press reviews (Rivas "Coixet y Berger"), design briefs from Tagliabue's studio EMBT (Tagliabue "World"; EMBT "Scenography") and information from La casa encendida, Madrid ("Isabel Coixet pays tribute"), where the exhibition subsequently travelled in 2010.

[318] Although this information reads somewhat anecdotally, it is important that Coixet chooses trusted collaborators in order to further her personal vision, while these collaborators are also held in high esteem in their respective fields. During 2006, Coixet invited Tagliabue to participate in telvision show *Carta Blanca*, where she discussed the films the director had encouraged her to watch ("Carta Blanca"). The architect also appears in Coixet's short film *La huella de tu voz*, discussing her family history of cancer.

Harinezumi film for the Jameson NoTodoFilmFest, which was later screened at Arts Santa Mònica as part of the travelling exhibition "Imperfect as They Are".[319] Again reflecting on the epistolary relationship she enjoys with Berger, Coixet's short, *Dear John*, is described in the press pack:

> A visual poem in the form of a letter addressed to her friend John Berger, whom she has not seen for a long time. Instead of explaining in words everything that has gone on in her life during this interval, Coixet chooses to do so with images recorded in Spain and England, accompanied by [a] short text. ("Isabel Coixet premieres" n.pag)

The pseudo-vintage format, recalling her first ever Super 8 camera, connects to nostalgia bound up in images of trains and letter-writing, both staples of romantic and melodramatic genres, which Coixet combines with the cut-and-paste sensibility of video-art. Fragments of handwriting appear on the screen, putting a signature on the piece and on this personal letter as a product of *cinécriture*. The director avoids voice-over and uses the handwritten subtitles familiar from *My Life* and her 2007 short film *Cartas a Nora*. It seems that this is Coixet's own handwriting, or another way to represent her authorial signature across her body of work, while also augmenting the personal, intimate address of the letter for the spectator. Yet, these overt homages aside, with Berger as a mentor, she can be part of an 'art' world, and with *Ways of Seeing* as a visual manifesto, she can put his ideas into practice across her filmography.

While Berger's ideas grew out of a renewed interest in the gaze and subjectivity during the 1970s, other critics have developed these concepts in greater detail. Yet *Ways of Seeing* as both printed book and television broadcast provides an accessible and engaging introduction to theories that have been debated for many years and continue to evolve to this day. Gaze theory migrated to Film Studies via Art History, but the moving image presented a new challenge for those accustomed to still images. Early theories of the gaze in film by Bellour,[320] Mulvey, and later, Christian Metz,[321] to name but a few, were grounded in

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[319] The exhibition included work by directors Agnès B., So Yong Kim, Bruce La Bruce, Park Chan Wook, Patrice Leconte, Jonas Mekas, Christopher Doyle, Harmony Korine, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Miranda July, Albert Maysles, Mark Recha and others.

[320] Writing in 1969, Bellour focused on the oedipal male-centric narrative of Hitchcock's films, but argued that a female gaze was present and possible within narrative film, notably in *Marnie* (*The Analysis*). Mulvey's subsequent analysis was more focused on the fetishistic quality of the male gaze within such films, rather than the narrative structures of film ("Visual Pleasure").

[321] Primarily concerned with the viewer's identification with the camera, Metz argued that the audience confuses what is on screen ("the imaginary signifier") with what it represents, and this illusion allows the spectator to disavow the knowledge that what they are looking at is merely an image (*The Imaginary* 1982).

Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis and are also relevant to Coixet's work, but since she places such heavy importance on Berger, he remains key to her conscious construction of an auteur persona. Other scholars have focused on her engagement with the cinematic gaze, an aspect of her visual politics which is informed by her cinephilia as much as any feminist philosophy or film theory, although she remains loyal to the central ideas of important figures of the 1970s, such as Varda, Berger and Mulvey.

Accordingly, *Ways of Seeing* impacted greatly on Coixet's aesthetics and her desire to reorient the gaze through camerawork. In the book, one essay discusses socially-conditioned and highly-coded representations of women in art and society, as the constantly "surveyed" figure that "appears" as a "sight". This vocabulary implies the passivity of the female depicted; whereas men can look and "survey", expressing their power through these actions, a woman's reactions, rather than actions, indicate how she would like to be treated (Berger *Ways* 45-47). Coixet's *50 años de...La mujer, cosa de hombres* (TVE, 2009) presents a video-essay version of Berger's arguments, through its focus on the more sinister topic of domestic violence. Compiled for the fiftieth anniversary of TVE in 2009, *La mujer* remains an exercise in editing, and presents a curated collage of archive footage of advertising featuring women from the 1960s up to the new millennium. These clips are expertly interwoven with news reports on deaths of women in Spain in order to question the connection between the advertisements and domestic violence and to ask us to reconsider our relationship to these kinds of images. The considered pace of the twenty-five minute video gradually includes more and more contemporary images, reminding us that our taste in advertising and promotional imagery has not evolved much, despite how old and distant the laughably sexist commercials from the 1960s and 1970s seem. Close to the end, a credit roll of names honouring the dead women appears on screen, making them cast members in this documentary rather than forgotten victims. This cathartic naming reinforces the authenticity of the material as the rolling text reiterates just how many women have died so tragically from domestic violence in recent years. Rather than use camerawork, Coixet edits existing material to create a contemporary version of Berger's essay and to finally engage with a topic she had been researching since the early 2000s. In addition to the explicit connections to Berger, this carefully curated piece represents a reimagining of a documentary she never finished called

*Más me duele a mí*,[322] which Coixet abandoned for ethical reasons, fearing the potential repercussions for victims who gave their testimonies to her.

However, the influence of Berger extends further than exhibitions and documentary. The mentor/mentee relationship moves into the public eye with Berger's introduction to the published screenplay of *The Secret Life*, in which he compares images from the film with various paintings (in Coixet *La vida: el guión* 7-10). Furthermore, just as *Ways of Seeing* distinguishes between being naked and being nude as binary opposites, Coixet portrays vulnerable bodies with a desire to reveal something about their inner selves through nakedness, while also portraying Berger's idea of the nude in photographic or cinematic form. He writes that nakedness is a "process rather than a state in lived sexuality" and notes that at the time of writing, the 'ideal' spectator was still seen as masculine (*Ways* 60).[323] In *Mira y verás* Coixet engages with Berger's take on the traditionally male surveyor and female surveyed, creating a film where the semi-nude male becomes objectified and scrutinised by the scopophilic female, reversing the traditional 'look' of mainstream cinema, and interrogating long-held notions around theories of subjectivity and objectivity. In the short film, the male body relates to Berger's nude; on display, as something to be consumed and possessed by the viewer, rather than as a subject in its own right, yet Coixet takes care to allow space for questioning in her portrayal of the naked body as *Mira y verás* wrestles with the idea of the male/female gaze. Martin-Márquez contends that since her first short film, Coixet has actively investigated gaze theory, using filmic references and Berger's ideas around practices of looking to update and subvert traditional screen representations.[324] However, these arguments also apply to Coixet's other films and non-cinematic projects, as the director remains true to the central tenets of 1970s debates around the gaze espoused by Berger and Mulvey, but presents them in a subtle manner.

Moving into feature film, in *The Secret Life*, Balkan war survivor Hanna (Sarah Polley)

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[322] Coixet discusses her motivation for making *Más me duele a mí* in her 2003 book, *La vida es un guión* (63-67). The film was listed in various biographies as an upcoming project as late as 2006 ("Premios" n.pag), but most of the filming was complete as early as 2000, and Coixet had over 500 hours of testimonies from women in Madrid, Barcelona and Logroño (Teresa Rubio "La directora" n.pag). Addtionally, the project was rejected for funding by the Generalitat de Catalunya ("Isabel Coixet" n.pag).

[323] Berger writes: "In lived sexual experience nakedness is a process rather than a state. If one moment of that process is isolated, its image will seem banal and its imaginative states will be chilling. This is one reason why expressive photographs of the naked are even rarer than paintings" (*Ways* 60). In a certain way, Coixet attempts to create this 'expressive naked' in her films.

[324] For more detailed analysis of *Mira y verás* see Martin-Márquez ("Engagement" 547-551). All descriptions of *Mira y verás* in this thesis are based on this article.

reveals her breasts to Josef (Tim Robbins), mimicking the pose of Tintoretto's painting "Lady Baring her Breast" (c.1570), a link which is pointed out by Berger in his introduction to the published screenplay (in Coixet *La vida: el guión* 7-10). Hanna has been a victim of horrific torture during the Balkan conflict, and her body is marked by scars rather than adorned with pearls. Yet, the tableau represents her attempt to reveal a part of her past and her personality, rather than merely exposing her flesh. Hanna offers her body to Josef, who is temporarily blind and can only touch her scars, reading them like Braille (Donapetry "Ethics" 92), thus rendering his 'male gaze' ineffectual. Consequently, the desire to see passes over to the viewer, although her tortured body represents an abject scopophilia rather than connecting to the psychosexual origins of gaze theories. The sequence becomes an instance of Berger's theorisation of nakedness as being oneself, as Hanna strives to share a part of her inner self by offering her outer self. The camera remains steady at the beginning of her emotive testimony, becoming closer and more mobile as the scene progresses, drawing the spectator into her shocking past. Coixet provides nudity and a kiss, common denominators of a sex scene, yet the scars on her naked torso provide evidence of her ordeal for Josef, who cannot see them, rather than arousal. Similarly, the kiss between the two characters functions as part of Hanna's catharsis. Rather than exchanging looks, or more carnal touches, Josef and Hanna's bodies touch as the spectator is forced to question his/her desire to see. Earlier in the film, Hanna finds a copy of *Ways of Seeing* in Josef's bedroom, a detail which provides an insight into his propensity towards an alternative mode of viewing the world, and Hanna's subsequent sensual awakening. Each character will in turn show each other a new way of seeing, with Hanna guiding the touch of the blind Josef along her scarred body, while she herself is awakened to the pleasures of life by Josef's sensual descriptions of food and literature. Appearances are not what they seem in the film, and Coixet does her utmost to dispel myths and codes around representations of the female as passive and objectified using Berger's ideas as a stepping stone.[325]

However, moving forward to 2008, *Elegy* perhaps best characterises Coixet's revisionist representations of women through camerawork and implicates the spectator in a similar voyeuristic, scopophilic gaze, as a companion piece to *Mira y verás*.[326] The film depicts

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[325] The representation of women will be discussed further in Chapter 7, particularly in relation to melodrama.

[326] The following discussion of *Elegy* was developed from a conference paper titled "Breathing New Life into *The Dying Animal*: *Elegy* by Isabel Coixet" which was presented at *Cine Lit VII* held in Portland, Oregon in February 2011.

Caroline (Clarkson) dancing provocatively as she takes off her clothes for her lover, serial-womaniser and college professor David Kepesh (Kingsley), the protagonist of Philip Roth's *The Dying Animal* (2001), from which the film was adapted.[327] The unsteady camera transmits his point of view, as if he is in bed, waiting for her and watching. Her fragmented body gently writhes and titillates as the camera pans up and down, taking her in as she strikes the clichéd poses of a striptease. However, Caroline looks knowingly toward Kepesh, over her shoulder, meeting his gaze; her tongue-in-cheek expressions during the sequence allow her to participate, actively becoming the object of the gaze. Subsequently, Kepesh's authority and power dissolve during the course of the narrative; his gaze loses its force and those who were formerly objects of it become subjects once more.

Contemporaneous to *Ways of Seeing*, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* argues that the male gaze represents an inherently scopophilic look, and analyses the power relations at work in classic Hollywood films of the 1950s. Mulvey's article similarly underlines the passivity of the female subject in her "to be looked-at-ness" ("Visual").[328] Additionally, Slobodian remarks that Coixet has managed to construct "counter-hegemonic discourse" that serves to "de-binarize" issues of gender, sexuality and national identity in her films.[329] Consequently, at the end of *Elegy*, Consuela shows up at Kepesh's apartment and reveals she is suffering from breast cancer, and she is soon to have surgery. Since he was obsessed with

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[327] *Elegy* will form part of the arguments in Chapter 9, where the film's status as an adaptation will be examined in greater detail, while this chapter seeks to use it as an example of Coixet's visual politics.

[328] Mulvey writes: "Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as a bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning" ("Visual" 15). Although her ideas have been much debated and contested, with Mulvey herself revising certain parts of her central thesis, "Visual Pleaure and Narrative Cinema" remains a watershed for the study of female representation in cinema and a new generation of feminist critics. Challenges to Mulvey's thesis came from E Ann Kaplan (*Women and Film*), Kaja Silverman ("Masochism") and Jackie Stacey ("Desperately"), who argued that the gaze could also be female. Teresa de Lauretis (*Alice Doesn't: Femenism, Semiotics, Cinema*, 1984) pointed out a process of "double-identification" at work in active and passive spectatorship), while Steve Neale ("Masculinity as Spectacle") and Richard Dyer (*Don't Look Now*) analysed the gay spectator in relation to the gaze.

[329] Comparing Coixet and Argentinian director Lucrecia Martel, Slobodian writes: My purpose then, of discussing the "female/feminist gazes" of these two directors is not to conflate their works (with each other's, with other female directors', not even with other films within their own *oeuvre*) but to uncover the ways in which these two *autoras*, as minorities in their fields, have managed to construct counter-hegemonic discourses in the two films analyzed here that, to a greater or lesser extent, work to de-binarize gender and sexuality and national/international divisions" ("Analyzing" 165). Slobodian connects the two directors as products of similar national film industries that developed after a transition to democracy, with similar industrial approaches to the auteur figure. The article also points out that both women collaborated with Almodóvar's El Deseo production company. Similarly, Paul J. Smith also compares Coixet and Martel as transnational female film auteurs ("Transnational" n.pag).

her body and, particularly, her breasts during their relationship, this news is almost as devastating to him as it is to her. She asks him to take photos of her breasts before the doctors "destroy" them, posing topless on his sofa for these *mementos mori*. Much as the kiss in *The Secret Life* represents a desire to connect rather than seduce, Coixet has described Consuela's pose as "the least erotic nude in all history".[330] Accordingly, she claims to have sent her director of photography a note saying "Lucian Freud" before starting the *Elegy* shoot, since she wanted to portray a carnality and tactility in her depiction of the body similar to the work of the painter (Andreu *Una mujer* 89). She places Consuela prostrate on a couch, naked, mimicking the pose of many of Freud's nudes. Her "to-be-looked-at-ness" is highlighted by the camera's pan along her body, although in the reciprocal gaze the viewer becomes aware of their own scopophilia. However, simultaneous to its imitation of Lucian Freud's art, this *tableau vivant* forges a connection to the painter's grandfather, psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, and his famous couch, as Coixet indulges in the psychoanalysis of her personages, transforming the gaze into an empowering or at least levelling force, as Donapetry illustrates ("Ethics" 94). The director offers the viewer a chance to analyse Consuela as she lies on the couch, and dissect the semiotic possibilities of her nudity and their own implication or entrapment in the gaze.[331] Wheeler points out that a professor of literature, or "distinguished aesthete, however misogynist he may be" represents an appropriate figure for Coixet to tackle in relation to the gaze ("Sex" 293), as he provides a cipher for the self-analysis required by Roth's book, while also embodying the self-serving objectification of the male gaze. Visually, the lurking, hidden camera shots that pepper the film draw the viewer into a controlling, obsessive gaze, just like Kepesh. His anxiety over losing Consuela to a younger man coheres with Mulvey's Freudian analysis of the power relations in classic Hollywood films. We become Kepesh's substitute, taking over the gaze when he is not there; however,

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[330] Coixet states: "Yo lo veía totalmente como el desnudo menos erótico de la historia porque, cuando estás viendo las tetas de Penélope, de Consuela, en ese momento tú estás pensando en que se las van a cortar" ["I saw it as the least erotic nude in history because when you are looking at Penélope's breasts, Consuela's breasts, at this moment you are also thinking that they are going to be cut off"] (in Donapetry "Miss Wasabi"). For further discussion on Coixet's treatment of the nude, see Donapetry ("The Noughty").

[331] As her first foray into Hollywood and her first adaptation *Elegy* will be discussed in Chapter 9 in greater detail. However, Wheeler studies the gaze in *Elegy* and notes a similar psychoanalytic connection between Mulvey and Roth ("Sex" 297), while Donapetry elucidates a connection to Berger's nude/naked dichotomy in *Elegy* ("Ethics"; "Noughty"), whereas this chapter focuses on *The Secret Life* owing to Berger's participation in the publication of the screenplay and his comments on the film.

these shots further weaken our protagonist, as he becomes the hunted prey of our look, fragmented and incessantly pursued by the mobile camera.

Similarly, in the sequences where the camera follows the back of Kepesh's head, stalker style, or invades his bathroom while he showers, Coixet reminds the audience that they are as much in pursuit as the character on screen. This voyeuristic cinematography pervades the narrative, with the camera lurking low outside a café window at one point, while George (Dennis Hopper) and Kepesh enjoy one of their many chats about women, and how they relate to the opposite sex. George pontificates on how beautiful women are "invisible". His character claims that men are "so dazzled by the outside that we never make it inside. We never see the actual person". This dialogue, which comes from the screenplay and not from Roth,[332] interacts with the cinematic gaze and Berger's definition of naked and nude, rather than the literary origins of the book. Coixet chose to keep this scene in her finished film, providing a multi-layered discourse around the objectification of women in cinema with the anxious, repressed male protagonist revealed as weak and powerless to a greater extent than his classical counterparts. Kepesh's view of Consuela as a "work of art" that he can possess positions him within Berger's art and ownership debate, while subtly commenting on discourses of beauty and objectification. After years of debate, these seminal works by Berger and Mulvey on the gaze loom large in Coixet's approach to operating the camera, always conscious of the power relations at play. Yet, despite her rejections of feminist theory early in her career, her films provide evidence of a feminist practice. The director tips the visual balance slightly, in order to equate rather than privilege the feminine, creating a gender-neutral gaze through her camera. This more fluid approach to gender relations and gender stereotyping comes to the fore in analyses of her camerawork. However, Berger's early work remains crucial to Coixet's 'way of seeing' and informs her visual politics to this day. Although she may consciously or unconsciously interact with other theories of the gaze, she chooses to publicise her affinity with Berger's ideas rather than any other ideologies and inflect her camerawork with this awareness.[333]

Camporesi investigates what she deems the inherent "criticality" of Coixet's fiction film work which searches for an artistic or expressive space. Despite the director's desire to create films that are "socially useful" ("A ambos" 67), and her high regard for history in

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[332] The screenplay was not written by Coixet, which is unusual within her filmography, but this will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 9.

[333] Coixet also employs moments of stillness to emphasise the reflective nature of her camerawork and her interaction with the active spectator, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

general, she does not attempt to place herself or her films within a social realist or historical tradition; rather she uses documentary to navigate this expressive space. Although they may share a similar humanist and compassionate viewpoint, this is where Coixet differs from other successful Spanish female directors like Bollaín, who strives to create socially-engaged fiction films. Coixet, on the other hand, channels her social and ethical engagement more directly into her non-fiction output, and creates a social cinema of documentary, shorts, advertising and other projects.

**From Fiction to Fact: Cinécriture and the Gaze in Documentary and Social Cinema**

While her fiction films and other projects convey Coixet's dialogue with the gaze through *cinécriture*, the documentary mode allows her to foreground her authorship to a greater extent, although she uses similar techniques and camerawork across the board. This section provides a close reading of the camerawork and the construction of a 'personal voice' within a selection of her documentaries.[334] Much as her cinematographic embellishments mark her presence in her feature films, this alternative mode allows her to participate more visibly in the films themselves. Beginning with *Viaje* (2003), Coixet has directed eight non-fiction films at the time of writing, although this part of her career has been somewhat overlooked by critical studies. She has also directed *Cartas* (part of the film *Invisibles* from 2007), *La insportable levedad del carrito de la compra* (from the collective film *Hay motivo* made in the run up to the 2004 Spanish general elections), TVE production *La mujer* (2009), *Aral* (2010), *Escuchando* (2011), *La huella de tu voz* (2011) and *Marea Blanca* (2012). Although only *Escuchando* was released (for a very limited run) in cinemas in Spain, the TV broadcasts of these non-fiction works and the internet platforms they appear on mean that her work is exposed to audiences that may not necessarily have seen her fiction films, or know who she is. Yet, in entering the documentary mode and making socially-motivated advertising for charitable organisations like Plan Nacional ("Por ser niñas") and Fundación ONCE ("Veo, veo"), Coixet brings her *cinécriture* to a sphere outside the walls of the cinema, fulfilling a civic duty to uncover lost or forgotten stories and giving a voice to the marginalised. Additionally, as more explicitly 'personal' productions, her desire to re-orient the gaze extends to these non-fiction outlets.

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[334] The following discussion of Coixet's non-fiction work was developed from a paper titled "Isabel Coixet and Social Cinema", which was presented at the conference *Gynocine* at UMASS Amherst in October 2011.

Firstly, as the genesis for her future documentaries and her fiction film *The Secret Life*, Coixet's debut documentary, *Viaje*, investigated the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), based in Denmark. The film focused on victims of the Balkan war and was broadcast on TVE1, but has received little critical attention, nor has it been subtitled into English or released on DVD. While travelling around Copenhagen and Sarajevo with employees of IRCT and meeting ordinary people who had faced unbelievable cruelty during the Balkan conflict, she realised that torture is closer to home than most Europeans think. The filmed text is fairly experimental in its cinematography, and small details are important to the narrative. Coixet operates a fluid, mobile camera throughout, utilising handheld tracking shots and tilting to catch the facial features of the people she interviews. The shaky frames give a sensation of a living point of view within the film, as the camera functions as our stand-in and explores this unseen territory for us. As a demonstration of 'personality' or style, she utilises a variety of technical flourishes throughout: she racks focus, a zoom is used, and she masks off parts of the camera lens, reframing the people we see on screen. Overall, these forays into non-mainstream cinematography do not detract from the narrative, but as her work in the medium has progressed, Coixet has distilled these techniques into a more coherent semiotic system.

In *Viaje* Coixet is the narrator; this is her personal *viaje*, a journey to uncover the sad truth about torture in Europe. The film ends with a shot of her hand, holding a stone that represents the stories of the brave people she met through the IRCT, as her voice-over tells us. The image also recalls Varda's *The Gleaners and I*, where the Belgian director's hands recur throughout the film, holding funny-shaped potatoes she finds, or forming part of her musings on ageing, as she makes herself a protagonist in the film.[335] Yet, unlike *The Gleaners and I,* we do not see Coixet's face on screen, so her voice and her camera become our proxy as these horrific true stories unfold. Voice-over is used didactically in almost all her early documentaries, yet the spoken word often takes second place to the filmed image, as the camera portrays what the audio does not express, like hand gestures or the surroundings of the people interviewed.[336] In *Viaje*, an IRCT worker describes one of the brutal torture methods used, her hands mimicking the action of an agricultural machine as it crushes the legs of the victim. The camera tilts down to frame this hand movement, intensifying the

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[335] Saavedra also notes a possible homage to Varda in the scene where Coixet films the stone in her hand ("La vida secreta" 72).

[336] Tello Díaz also notes the focus on gestures in Coixet's films (*Con C* 28), especially *Escuchando*, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

horror of what is being described. At some points Coixet inserts still pictures of some of the torture methods, but, for all its subtlety, this acting-out seems more visceral and disturbing than the photos.

Later that year *La insoportable levedad* depicted a young Barcelona resident observing the increasing poverty of the older people in his area as part of *Hay motivo*, a collective film protesting against the Partido Popular (PP) government of 2003. Coixet recalls the previous PP era in Spain as: "esa mezcla de hipocresía, desfachatez, prepotencia y hombreras" (*La vida es* 31).[337] Channelling this anger into film, she provides an ironic intertextual title recalling Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984), a novel which considers the philosophical burden of life, while the short film remains focused on how cuts to government spending have unfortunately 'lightened' the burden of pensioners' shopping carts. The young male protagonist, a concerned local resident, speaks directly to the camera, as if being interviewed, but this is an actor playing out the director's words; however, the film maintains a documentary tone throughout, and mixes facts and figures with subjective observations. The focus shifts back to the director's personal viewpoint at the end of the film, as the factual titles roll and suddenly amongst the statistics, we see a more casual observation; "No hay datos sobre el aumento de mujeres mayores que han dejado de teñirse, pero *yo* cada vez *veo* a más mujeres con pelo blanco" (my emphases).[338] Although much of the short film comments on rising food prices, the director includes this small detail about lifestyle cutbacks made by older people. Consequently, this anecdotal comment carries more emotional significance than a percentage about pension rates or income tax, and makes the plight of pensioners visible to the eye in everyday life, a concept underlined by an extreme close-up of an elderly lady's white hair used throughout the short film. Frequent close-ups such as these make the director's presence explicit; through camerawork, rather than editing or dialogue, Coixet guides the spectator to the 'meaning' or 'message' of her social cinema.

Raising awareness and questioning visibility comes to the fore in this socially-engaged mode of filmmaking. Ethical concerns dominate a very short film Coixet made in 2006 called *10,000 árboles*, documenting the damage from three storms in Vancouver that decimated a forest of trees, to the dismay of local residents. The director narrates a voice-over description of what happened, while gentle music tinkers in the background. The video was part of an

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[337] ["that mix of hypocrisy, brazenness, arrogance and shoulder pads"].

[338] [There is no data on the increasing numbers of older women who have stopped dyeing their hair, but *I* see more and more women with white hair"] (my emphasis).

internet publicity campaign for Nature Movies and the Nokia N95 phone, which the film was shot with. Her technical dexterity, even with an inferior camera, and her capacity for creating an emotive text is displayed in this simple video, which documents the devastation caused by the storms. Using her own voice marks a coherence of style with *Viaje*, while the environmental subject matter marked the beginning of a cycle of ecologically-aware documentaries.

Although Coixet moved closer to home with *Cartas* (2007), her international outlook is not diminished by setting a film in Spain. During her short segment of the collective film *Invisibles*, an audio track of letters from home creates a parallel narrative around the daily life of Nora, a Bolivian immigrant to Barcelona who has lost a child to the as-yet incurable disease Chagas. She works day and night as a carer of the elderly and as a childminder in order to send money home to her family, and the camera follows her on her daily commute and films her squalid living arrangements. Like *La insoportable levedad*, Coixet reconstructs a real-life situation to make the audience notice a problem that they might not have significant contact with in their daily lives, despite sharing a bus or a train with migrant workers like Nora, or employing people from other countries to take care of their children.[339] In fact, Coixet based the story on a Bolivian immigrant she met on the metro in Barcelona; while having a conversation about chagas with a doctor from the nearby Hospital Clínic, she was interrupted by a young woman who said that a friend had personal experience of the disease and made the introductions.[340] Coixet's obsession with letters finds an outlet outside her feature films in *Cartas*, which is formulated as an epistolary address, where a voice-over reads the letters written to Nora by her sister in Bolivia. The intimacy of the letters draws the spectator into her world back home, while Nora struggles to make ends meet in Barcelona and sends money to her relatives. Although we do not see the letters on the screen, and only hear the text in voice-over, their content is of utmost importance. In a practical sense the voice-over condenses the information for the short film, but also provides a counterpoint to the images, as our protagonist commutes to her various jobs around Barcelona, in a city where Chagas does not exist, while her sister's life in Bolivia is dominated by the effects of this cruel disease.

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[339] Taking the whole project into account, Antonio Gómez-López Quiñones writes: "En todos estos casos subyace una lógica [...] que lanza una doble condena moral y política sobre el desconocimiento, a la vez que privilegia la visión como principal remedio" ["all these cases have an underlying logic [...] that initiates a double moral and political condemnation against ignorance, while at the same time privileging vision as its main remedy"] ("Visbilidad" 243).

[340] For further details on the background to the film see Tesón ("Hacer visible") and for analysis of the other segments see (Gómez-López Quiñones "Visibilidad").

The personal is once again highlighted through the use of handwriting scrawled across the screen during the titles, another formal indicator of the epistolary address, and the director's 'signature'. Although *Cartas* forms part of a collective film, it bears the hallmarks of Coixet's authorship through letters, voice-over, handheld camerawork and poignant music.

These stylistic features are also present in 2010's *Aral* and 2012's *Marea* and mark a return to the ecological theme. Both *Aral* and *Marea* assess the human impact of environmental disasters such as the disappearance of the Aral Sea and the Prestige oil tanker spillage, using handheld camerawork and voice-over narration. Coixet focuses on the human side of these ecological disasters, and documents their effect on the local population as much as the landscape itself. Interviews form the basis of each film, although we do not hear the director's voice on screen. Like *Viaje*, each documentary is broken into segments or chapters by intertitles. This structural coherence is important for Coixet's auteur persona as a documentary filmmaker, and synthesises with her early fiction films. For example a similar device is used *Things* whereby intertitles of character names divide the film into distinct parts and introduce each protagonist. These intertitles have a similar pacing function within her documentaries, but serve to impart information rather than to introduce new characters.

Another link to fiction and to Coixet's stable of preferred actors is found in voice-over. *Aral* presents the authoritative voice of *Elegy* star Kingsley as our trusted narrator: his participation represents the famous speaking for the forgotten. Nevertheless, we realise that the 'I' and the 'we' Kingsley uses refers to Coixet and her production team rather than himself, as they travel through the arid landscape of Uzbekistan to document the effects of the disappearance of the Aral Sea, one of the greatest, yet lesser-known environmental disasters of the twentieth century.[341] Those who remember the Sea tell their stories to the camera, intercut with pans around the nooks and crannies, which capture small details such as a lone cotton plant, a rusty old anchor or still photographs in the local museum. These items acquire a semiotic significance through condensation of meaning: the cotton represents the crop of choice of the Soviet authorities who gave the go ahead to divert the nearby river, causing the disaster; the anchor serves as a symbol of the fishing and tourism that once dominated the area; the photographs in the museum remind us of the people whose lives have been irrevocably affected by this environmental tragedy. The mobile camera pertains to another layer of symbolism; its movement contrasts with the static, decaying boats, the rusty

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[341] For further details of the ecological and human impact of the Aral Sea disaster, and recent attempts to improve the situation, see Peter Micklin ("The Aral").

anchor on the old shoreline and the now abandoned fish factory, once full of bustle and activity.

Neither *Aral* nor *Marea* has been released theatrically and, like *10,000 árboles*, both were made in conjunction with commercial partners. As an advertising creative, Coixet maintains a good relationship with the corporate world, but seeks to promote herself as a dissenting voice from within through collaborating with their charitable divisions, such as We Are Water (*Aral*), Nature Movies (*10,000 árboles*) or Corona Save the Beach (*Marea*), or indeed, technology giant Samsung, who commissioned Coixet to document breast cancer survivor stories for *La huella* (2011). The short film is a collection of interviews with women who share their experiences, while the appearance of famous men such as actors Paco León and José Coronado punctuates the 'talking heads' setup with buzzwords such as "hope" or "mammograms" that guide the narrative and introduce the topic of conversation. Each woman's name appears on screen in an intertitle, while the handheld camera remains unsteady throughout the film. Once again, Coixet's identifiable style augments her claim to auteur status, even within a 'corporate' video such as *La huella*. While the cause remains at the heart of the film, the director still puts her recognisable stamp on the visuals, and focuses on human stories and their storytellers.

While these particular documentaries give a voice and platform to overlooked or forgotten stories through a mobile, probing camera and punctuational close-ups, *Escuchando* stands in sharp visual contrast to the director's earlier non-fiction output. In the 2011 production, camerawork replaces Coixet's corporeal voice, and her participation takes a back seat so she too can listen, just as the title implies. In the film, author Manuel Rivas interviews former Judge Garzón, who was the centre of a trial alleging abuses of power by the judiciary, while the director and her camera remain unobtrusively in the background. The director states that she approached the judge "con el propósito–aún inconcreto, sin delimitar–de filmar *un documento* en el que él hablara de la situación por la que estaba atravesando" (my emphasis).[342] This emphasis on the documentation or testimony of Garzón's case led to a pared-down approach that marks a shift within her documentary-making, simultaneous to Coixet's non-fiction work moving from the TV screen into the cinema. The camera work remains mobile and engaged, moving in to Rivas's and Garzón's faces and gestures as they speak, but leaving out minute, subtle details that often added layers of meaning in her

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[342] ["with the purpose –which was still vague and undefined- of filming *a document* where he would speak about the situation he was experiencing"] (in Garzón *La fuerza* 11; my emphasis).

previous work. Yet it seems to be this sense of giving evidence that Coixet was eager to preserve on screen, with Garzón removed from judicial responsibilities and speaking as a witness.

For all its simplistic appearance, *Escuchando* employs a few tricks to cement its status as a testimony. The film was shot in black and white, giving a sense of unembellished, clean cinema. Yet, in addition, this increases the legitimacy of the documentary, as black and white images are often associated with the concepts of 'history' or 'truth' owing to old newsreels or found historical footage. The camera changes angle as Garzón speaks, often getting a little closer to him, as it tries to convey a sense of him as a human being and not a headline. Moreover, the simultaneous publication of his book adds another layer of authority and sense of testimony to this filmed text, with the DVD on sale as a companion piece, a condensed version of the long transcribed interview, a filmed *document* of the book. This desire for objectivity and accuracy seems to have increased in each film, with Coixet striving to maintain a balance between giving an opinion and presenting cold hard facts. The recent Goya success of *Escuchando*, its appearance on cinema screens (albeit for a very limited run) and the comprehensive press coverage of the film's release will perhaps revive interest in the director's non-fiction work that has not been released theatrically. However, Coixet's engagement with the social flows into the non-filmic projects she undertakes, and her auteur persona remains identifiable in settings outside the cinema.

As discussed above, 2009 saw Coixet venture into installation art, with her tribute exhibition to Berger, *From I to J* marking a first step into the gallery space. In 2010, she formed part of the Spanish Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo, along with filmmakers Basilio Martín Patino and Bigas Luna. While the other directors presented standard film projects, albeit in an unusual exhibition setting, Coixet created Miguelín, a giant robot infant, who 'dreamed' of cities of the twenty-first century and the public could watch as the six metre animatronic baby smiled, blinked and appeared to breathe, while telling them what Spaniards wanted their urban areas to be like in the years to come through short cartoon films projected onto his giant baby torso. The animations directed by Coixet propose a tolerant environment for future generations to grow up in, promoting multiculturalism and respect for our planet. The cartoons fit with her desire to make films that are socially useful, while Miguelín himself seems to represent her filmmaking, as something that is alive and breathing,

and can invoke a human response.[343] Just as Coixet's position on gender has evolved, so too has her relationship with national identity. Of the ten short clips, only four contain any specifically Spanish resonance, the rest could take place anywhere, reinforcing her post-national remit even though she was representing Spain.

The film version of *Aral* accompanied an exhibition in Barcelona during 2010, which brought the desertified region to life for the visitor. The small space (in a Roca Bathroom centre) contained still photographs, video, sound and text that told the story of the gradual disappearance of the sea. A patchwork of close-up images of barren ground, rust, and rotting boats ran from floor to ceiling creating an exhibition space the shape of a boat in one half of the room, with glass bubbles or portholes protecting video screens showing maps, text and footage of the area. In this way, the tiny details that interest Coixet are magnified in close-up; a trait that carries over from her filmmaking into the gallery space. The exhibitions she has curated or participated in further expose her moral compass as she tries to engage the viewer or visitor in forgotten causes, or involve them in the future of their cities while she simultaneously increases her public profile through these personal projects.[344]

## Conclusion

Coixet combines Varda's notion of *cinécriture* with Berger's relentless visual inquisitiveness to create a more egalitarian gaze and to promote awareness of the practice of looking within the spectator. While her fiction films redress the gender balance through camerawork, and go some way to represent Coixet's personality behind the camera, her documentaries stand as the most explicitly personal contributions to her filmography to date. As a shooter-director, she chooses to undertake one of the more traditionally anonymous roles in film production. Yet, rather than diminish or dilute her authorship, operating the camera cements her status as an auteur as she exerts her personal vision over the camera-eye, connecting it to her body as a personal, camera-heart as part of a coherent visual manifesto while the non-fiction works she has created thus far represent a mature, inquisitive exploration of the varied topics she tackles. Through her interaction with the non-fiction mode she creates films and other projects that allow us to 'see for ourselves'. The title of her

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[343] The official page of the Spanish pavilion at the Shanghai Expo 2010 is available at <http://en.expo2010.cn/c/en_gj_tpl_74.htm>. [Accessed 20 December 2012].

[344] In 2011, Coixet also created an exhibition of her photographs of Japan in order to raise funds for victims of the earthquake and disaster at Fukushima.

breast cancer survival documentary, *La huella*, neatly defines the purpose of her socially-inflected cinema, and conveys her 'interior meaning': through non-fiction filmmaking Coixet uncovers and communicates a trace of the voices that these people have been denied or which have not been heard. Just as her fiction films convey coherent underlying themes, exploring isolated people who struggle to express their true emotions, her social cinema concerns people who have no outlet to communicate their stories, or have been overlooked in film or media representations of their plight. As a mentee of Berger, Coixet asks the viewer to question his or her relationship to words, sound and image, in an attempt to reveal truth and emotion, whether in fiction or documentary format, or within the gallery space, while simultaneously validating her auteur persona and personal stamp. With this analysis in mind, the next chapter moves towards an examination of her embodied camerawork as an extension of this filmmaking philosophy and as further confirmation of her auteur persona.

**Chapter 6: Touching the Five Senses with the Camera: An Auteur Affect**

While all Coixet's fiction and documentary films express a visual concern with the senses and the sensual, this section will analyse her camerawork as she approaches an affective mode of expression in order to demonstrate that her interest in the sensory has been established as part of her auteur identity. With regard to her treatment of emotions and the emotive, many critics point towards the sensual aspects of her filmmaking, and note her interest in invoking an affective dimension in order to connect more deeply with the spectator.[345] Recent studies by Martin-Márquez have placed Coixet's work within the realm of haptic theory, where the eye becomes a hand as the filmed image 'touches' the spectator.[346] The spectator thus enjoys a film experience that goes beyond the optical or aural, reacting bodily through physical or emotional sensations. To achieve this the director uses a variety of techniques that allow our eyes to act as hands and kinaesthetically experience what we see on screen, rather than just viewing it from a distance; however, Coixet's handheld camerawork stands out as the main conveyor of this haptic address.

For the purposes of this chapter, a cross-section of her work will be analysed in order to chart a progression of the sensual in work that Coixet has devised, written, directed and shot, rather than adapted.[347] While other films will be referenced throughout, and while adaptations such as *Elegy* also address the spectator through a corporeal camera, two early films (*Things* and *A los*), and two later examples (*The Secret Life* and *Map*) demonstrate how this interest in the affective has developed and become part of her auteur identity. This selection of films marks a 'before and after' in relation to her international success and recognition with *My Life* in 2003. In these particular works, she channels her treatment of the senses through psychologically fragile protagonists who re-establish a meaningful connection

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[345] For further discussion of the sensual aspects of Coixet's films see Donapetry ("Ethics"; "Noughty"), Martín ("Los silencios"), Vidal ("Love") and Wheeler ("Sex").

[346] The author would like to thank Martin-Márquez for her extremely insightful plenary dealing with *My Life* at the first GynoCine conference (27 October 2011), which informed some of the ideas explored in this chapter. This analysis engages with similar concepts to those suggested in Martin-Márquez's work, but focuses on Coixet's reawakening of her deadened protagonists and her careful layering of affective techniques in order to create a crescendo of affect. Martin-Márquez has subsequently published her research ("La teoría"; "Engagement"), and this chapter will refer to these articles extensively.

[347] Issues of adaptation will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8 and Chapter 9.

to the sensual world during the course of the film through embodied camerawork.[348] Just as Triana-Toribio suggests that cinephilia represents a language that Coixet and other contemporary filmmakers speak fluently ("Anyplace" 59), the sensual techniques carefully applied to the narratives also create a vernacular. This visual language allows Coixet to inhabit a space outside national or generic parameters, and make her "personal style", to use Sarris's term ("Notes-1962" 562-563), identifiable and coherent.

**The Affective Dimension: Coixet's Early Commitment to the Sensual**

Regarding the sensual in cinema, Linda Williams discusses melodrama, horror and pornography as body genres since they provoke a corporeal reaction in the spectator, through an excessive mode of expression that differentiates them from "dominant modes of realistic goal-oriented narrative" ("Film Bodies" 3). In comparing these three categories, Williams's article attempts to "get beyond the mere fact of sensation to explore its system and structure as well as its effects on the bodies of spectators" ("Film Bodies" 3).[349] Consequently, this "system and structure" has shaped an affective turn in Film Studies. Scholars had previously referred to the haptic as the connection to the senses, mainly in art theory,[350] yet since the 2000s, analyses of the haptic in film have become more widespread, complementing and elaborating on French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's influential investigation of cinema and building on theories of phenomenology, particularly those of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.[351] Rather than explore the philosophical implications of the methodology behind haptic theory, the techniques used to create a haptic mode of address

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[348] This chapter has been developed from a publication by the author ("The Everyday Affect"). The published version was developed from a conference paper presented at *(S)Movies: Contemporary Spanish Cinema* in New York in December 2011.

[349] Williams's ideas around body genres will be dissected in greater detail in Chapter 7 in relation to melodrama.

[350] Giuliana Bruno discusses the earliest notions of the haptic in art and film as part of a theoretical dialogue between curator Aloïs Riegl (1858-1905) and Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), and documents the use of the term in film theory to discuss the depth of cinematic space (*Atlas* 249-250).

[351] Philosopher Deleuze (1925-1995) used cinema to illustrate his metaphysical theories. His books *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (first published in French in 1983) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (first published in French in 1985) theorised what cinema reveals about space and time that other arts cannot and remain influential within the study of the affective in film. The work of philosopher Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) concerning perception remains at the forefront of phenomenology, which concerns the study of human existence with regard to bodily experience, and philosophically decoding the meaning of this experience. However, this chapter will not focus on the origins of haptic theory, which are sketched by Martin-Márquez ("Engagement" 554-556) but will investigate the techniques employed by Coixet to create an embodied audiovisual experience.

will be explored here, as they engage the senses of the viewer and invite an embodied response. Vivian Sobchack defines embodiment as

> a radically material condition of human being that necessarily entails both the body and consciousness, objectivity and subjectivity, in an irreducible ensemble. Thus we matter and we mean through processes and logics of sense-making that owe as much to our carnal existence as they do to our conscious thought. (*Carnal Thoughts* 4)

This conflation of objectivity and subjectivity comes to the fore in Coixet's films, where the spectator simultaneously objectifies protagonists through the gaze and identifies with their subjectivity through the affective engagement with their emotions and experiences. Sobchack highlights the importance of embodiment to the cinematic, as she focuses on

> what it is to *live* one's body, not merely *look* at bodies– although vision, visuality, and visibility are as central to the subjective dimensions of embodied existence as they are to its objective dimensions. (*Carnal Thoughts* 2; my emphases)

Similarly, the 'lived' experience of Coixet's most affective films will be examined here, to investigate how her mobile camera and propensity for close-ups draws the spectator into a double-bind of 'looking' and 'living'. Laura U. Marks uses the term "haptic visuality" in her book *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (2000), and elucidates how a 'physical' sense can be transmitted though filmed images. Marks uses experimental works to theorise the haptic, but the techniques and effects she describes translate to more conventional forms of cinema. Accordingly, Coixet uses her camera to engage with physical or corporeal sensations in order to communicate the inner lives of her reticent, lonely protagonists, both as a stylish quirk but also as part of her 'personal' cinema.

As part of her auteur autobiography, the director's public discourse often refers to the affective experiences she has enjoyed in the cinema, helping to understand her approach to filmmaking. Similar to the metaphors she uses when discussing her camerawork, she also employs corporeal language to describe the physiological effect of cinema on spectators or of books on readers. She writes:

> Hay algo que ocurre a veces en una sala de cine o en el acto de leer, *que trasciende* a lo que pasa realmente*, a lo que el realizador o autor quiere contar* o incluso a lo que el espectador o lector entiende. Son estos momentos en los que desde la butaca *sentimos que el mundo exterior se abre camino por una especie de portal en nuestra nuca* y hace que ambos, la pantalla, el libro y lo que está fuera de ella en la vida 'real', entren en una fusión espontánea que *nos incorpora*. Uno puede encontrarse de repente con la cara llena de lágrimas o con *la sensación casi física* de que esa función de sombras o página escrita es más real que el envase vacío de palomitas, los movimientos del espectador de al lado que no encuentra la postura

> cómoda o los gemidos de los vecinos de arriba que han decidido fundar una familia.[352] ("Tras" n.pag. my emphases)

In a certain way she aims to transcend what is happening on the screen and interact with the spectators on a deeper level, asking them to 'live' the experience of the protagonists while 'looking'. While creating haptic imagery and dialogue, she also employs a discourse of embodiment in the public realm, using metaphorical language to corporeally connect film and lived experience, a skill she honed while working in advertising.

Indeed, Coixet's extensive background as an advertising creative perhaps provides a clue to her dexterity in conveying the sensory, since the hyper-condensed format of advertising necessitates a clear and affective mode of address in order to transmit its desired effect. For example, her 1999 commercial "Evax Salvaslip: ¿A qué huelen las nubes?" invites the audience to consider the smell of certain inanimate objects such as clouds, in order to promote the odour-sealing properties of sanitary towels. A similar mode is at play in the advert for the chocolate snack Huesitos ("Huesitos" 2005) suggests a biological response, inviting the consumers to wink as a signal that they would like to eat one;[353] like many food adverts it triggers the sensory in order to sell a product. Although the Huesitos commercial was produced during a peak time for Coixet's popularity, productivity and acclaim, the interest in the sensual nonetheless provides a clear example of the synthesis that the director creates between her feature films and other projects. However, she can translate techniques she uses in advertising into her cinematic output in a more complex way, given the much longer screen time at her disposal. In the advertisement, the emphasis on the eye draws the viewer into a dialogue with the mother and child winking on the screen, and as Jennifer Barker notes, "viewer and film share certain ways of being in, seeing, and grasping the world, despite their vast differences as human and machine, one blood and tissue, the other light and celluloid" (*Tactile* 8). While acutely aware of this dualistic relationship, Coixet aims to exploit these similarities with her camera-eye as she approaches an affective visual language.

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[352] ["There is something that sometimes takes place in a cinema or while reading, which transcends what is really happening, what the author wants to say or even what the spectator understands. These are the moments when, from our cinema seats, *we feel that the exterior world has made a path through an opening in the nape of our necks* that allows both book or film and 'real' life to enter in a spontaneous fusion *that we are incorporated into*. You can suddenly find yourself tearful or with the almost physical sensation that this shadow-play or this page of writing is more real than your bucket of popcorn, or the movements of the person beside you who can't get comfortable, or the moans of the neighbours overhead who have decided to start a family"] (my emphases).

[353] For an online video of the Evax commercial see luismiger ("Evax") and for the Huesitos advertisement see Emiliguirao ("Huesitos").

Her direct contact with this mechanical eye brings her physically closer to the filmed image and extends her control over the cinematography which, in turn, promotes her auteur agenda and augments her claim to authorship.

While Chapter 3 discussed Coixet's 'making of' video for "Mediterraneamente" as part of deterritorialized auteurism, the brands she promotes are similarly eager to exploit her auteur credentials. As an advertisement for confectionary giant Cadbury, the agency in charge sought to promote Coixet's involvement in the Huesitos publicity campaign to celebrate the thirty-year anniversary of a popular chocolate snack, thereby using her auteur image and established reputation in the advertising industry for their financial benefit. Other auteur directors such as Anderson, Erice, Spike Lee or Michel Gondry have created advertising campaigns for big brands and often capitulate on their auteur persona to create 'authored' advertisements,[354] in an industry where the public does not generally recognise a singular author, nor the creative agency tasked with the production. Instead, within the public realm, the finished piece is usually connected to the company or product it advertises, with certain brands famous for certain types of commercial, even if they use different agencies to create each campaign. This applies to Coixet in regard to the stylistic coherence between some of her advertising and her feature films, especially in her communication of the sensual. Discussing her advertising career, she comments:

> La publicidad es un permanente ejercicio de *síntesis*, pero tiene una cobertura tremendamente ornamental. Lo que se aprende es que cualquier historia puede contarse con *muy pocas imágenes* y de manera muy *sintética*, pero a mí esto no me parece que tenga mucho valor, porque en el cine cada historia necesita el tiempo que ella misma requiere, y no siempre una *apretada síntesis visual* puede ser coherente con lo que se quiere narrar.[355] (in Heredero *Espejo* 294; my emphases)

She claims to dislike a "synthetic" or superficial use of images, but notes the "synthesis" necessary for successful communication of ideas in advertising. However, this idea of synthesis remains important to her status as an auteur, and rather than indulging in the "ornamental" in the longer time allotted by narrative film or documentary, she still strives to

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[354] Anderson has directed adverts for large companies such as American Express, Hyundai, IKEA, AT&T and Sony, while Lee has created commercials for Nike, Levi's, Converse and Taco Bell. Similar to Coixet, Gondry enjoyed a long career in advertising before moving into feature film, with clients such as Adidas, Air France, Fiat, Coca-Cola and Heineken. While many Spanish filmmakers have dabbled in advertising, Erice remains the most prestigious 'art' cinema director in this category, with adverts for Nescafé, El Almendro and Fontecelta. For a brief summary of other famous Spanish directors who have created commercials see "10 Directores".

[355] ["Advertising is a constant exercise in syntheses, but it has a tremendously ornamental range. What you learn is that any story can be told *with very few images* and in a *very synthetic way*, but this does not hold much value for me, because in the cinema every story needs the time it needs, and a *tight visual synthesis* might not always be suitable for what you want to portray"]

tell stories with as few images as possible. Thus she employs an emotional minimalism that relies on haptic techniques to engage the spectator in the story, with her embodied camera becoming more prevalent as her filmography progresses.

As part of this development, Coixet's distinctive cinematography moves from a steadier, yet mobile camera in her first feature, *Demasiado viejo* to an almost incessantly wavering point of view in *Map*. The continual movement of her camera-eye mimics the movement of the human eye; our gaze flits around the images on screen just as the director's eye does during filming. It seems that her main aim is to mimic her own vision, encouraging an embodied spectator and providing a deeper, more instinctual and sensual identification with the protagonists onscreen as they share in her 'personal' viewpoint through her 'personal' viewfinder. Martin-Márquez has noted that this mobile camera has become characteristic of her work since *My Life* ("Engagement" 556), but *Things* also benefits from this unsteady, questioning look or point of view. The mobile or shaky camera-eye forges a connection to the personal, embodied camera-heart, and Coixet mediates our access to the images through her control of this machine.

In her early films, attempts at addressing the five senses are generally based on close camerawork and detail, in order to provide sensory snapshots, as her mobile camera moves almost imperceptibly closer. For example, *Things* presents Ann (Lili Taylor) listening to music and making a sandwich, a close-up shot shows her hands squeezing a blob of cheese onto some bread, then she gleefully licks her fingers, in a small moment of everyday pleasure recreated for the audience. Focusing on the sandwich and involving the audience in this somewhat mundane process synaptically connects us to the protagonist's fleeting somatic experience through this tight camerawork.

Other everyday activies are glorified on the screen in a similar way: in fact, Coixet spends more time documenting Ann and Don (Andrew Mc Carthy) preparing their bodies for their date than depicting a love scene between the two characters. The tight camerawork frames close-ups of skin being shaved, teeth being brushed, or talcum powder being spritzed; these ordinary undertakings are given fetishistic significance owing to the excitement of the protagonists. Although the director has since portrayed graphic sex scenes in *Map*, she remains more interested in these banal yet sensual activities than in creating titillating footage. Ann and Don do not have sex on screen, but close shots of bare body parts make plain what has occurred, with the sensual pleasure reserved for the build-up.

Nonetheless, a need for physical sensations and human contact continues through the film, with Frank (Seymour Cassel) looking for hugs, just as obsessed neighbour Paul (Alexis Arquette) presses his face against his TV screen, while covertly watching the confessional videos Ann has made for her boyfriend, in a physical expression of his desire to touch her in reality. His desperate action reveals the flatness of the screen and our inability to physically touch the representations we see on it, yet simultaneously reminds us of how deeply our sensory perception can be affected by film images inviting a shared subjectivity or intersubjectivity between protagonist and audience.[356] Equally anxious to engage the senses of the spectator, *A los* appropriates a sensory mode of address throughout. Coixet enlivens the wedding-night sequence between Matilde (Olalla Moreno) and León (Christopher Thompson) through detailed shots of the different layers of fabric that the groom peels away from his bride's body, a tactic which effectively replaces the sex scene in a similar fashion to the displacement of the sensual in *Things* from the sexual to the somatic. In *A los*, this fetishistic portrayal is transferred to fabric rather than skin. Through extreme close-up, the camera photographs the texture of each garment, from Matilde's thick petticoats to her gauzy veil. When we finally see her illuminated flesh, also tightly framed, the consummation for the viewer is complete, León's hands now caressing her bare skin. This scene represents the "tight visual synthesis" that Coixet extols in advertising, yet it works equally well in feature film form, providing a subtle, yet no less affecting, love scene through texture. In a Deleuzian sense, she "envisages" surfaces in close-up, investigating the textures and reflections they possess.[357]

This desire to ignite the senses and impart a sensation of tactility becomes more acute in later films, and peaks eleven years later in *Map*, where even the texture of the fish being prepared at the Tsukiji market is made visible through tight camerawork. While the film includes the director's most explicit sex scenes to date, her concern with the sensual remains at its most potent in regard to the tiny details, which are similarly privileged in earlier works. Equally, in the epilogue to the publication of *Map* as a book (rather than a traditional

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[356] This image connects to films with a similar theme, namely *Persona* (Ingmar Bergman, 1966) and *Videodrome* (David Cronenberg, 1983), and their intertextual use allows Coixet to 'touch' a lineage of auteur filmmakers and claim a place in the genealogy.

[357] Dissecting the two 'poles' of the face, Deleuze notes, "each time we discover these two poles in something –reflecting surface and intensive micro-movements– we can say that this thing has been treated as a face [visage]: it has been "envisaged" or rather "faceified" [visagéifiée], and in turn it stares at us [devisagé], it looks at us...even if it does not resemble a face" (*Cinema 1* 88). Deleuze's comment personifies the object of our gaze, whether animate or not. Similarly, Coixet's camera personifies the textures of the fabrics as they stand in for the flesh of the lovers.

screenplay), Coixet pinpoints the sights, sounds, smells and textures of the market, recounting "el olor de atún fresco y algas y ostras, los gritos de los subasteros, el fragor de los miles de cajas siendo arrastradas y la peculiar luz de los fluorescentes a las cuatro de la mañana".[358] This evocative scene is brought vividly to life in the film, as short bursts of close-up shots convey the hustle and bustle of the marketplace and the myriad activities taking place. The visceral effect of the dead flesh on display fits with the naked skin depicted later during the high-octane love scenes, as a similarly quivering camera does its utmost to capture every sensation that pulses from the frame and mimic slightly unsteady human vision. However, the rapid editing of this market sequence conveys a sense of photographic snapshots, even though we are looking at filmed images. Equally, the indexical power of the photograph is transferred to digital film as the quaky 'stills' document the market, inviting us to experience the sights from a tourist's-eye-view, as if looking at photographs we had taken. Eduardo Urios-Aparisi notes that Coixet generally avoids the tourist gaze employed by Sofia Coppola in her 2003 release *Lost in Translation* ("Japanese Collage" n.pag), yet this brief sequence of shots works to document and fetishize a popular tourist activity in Tokyo, and mimics the snapshots of tourist cameras.

In relation to photography, Barthes contrasts the photographer's personal intent or *studium*, with the arresting or "bruising" *punctum,*[359] yet, through the use of haptic techniques, Coixet attempts to deliver a cinematic *punctum*. For Barthes, this was always obscured by the forward drive of the film itself (*Camera* 26), but in simulating still photographs or creating tableaux vivants, the director tackles this contrast between stillness and movement; rather than being mutually exclusive, these seemingly dichotomous concepts can ebb and flow within the filmed frame. This, in turn, reactivates our awareness of looking, rather than allowing us to watch passively. The use of silence and stillness mark her 'personal style' within her films, while the philosophy behind them conveys her 'interior meaning':

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[358] ["the smell of fresh tuna, seaweed and oysters, the shouts of the auctioneers, the clamour of thousands of boxes being dragged, and that peculiar light from the fluorescent bulbs at four in the morning"] (*Mapa* 115).

[359] An annotation of Barthes's book defines these terms in relation to one another: "The *studium* speaks of the interest which we show in a photograph, the desire to study and understand what the meanings are in a photograph, to explore the relationship between the meanings and our own subjectivities. The *punctum* (a Latin word derived from the Greek word for trauma) on the other hand inspires an intensely private meaning, one that is suddenly, unexpectedly recognized and consequently remembered (it "shoots out of [the photograph] like an arrow and pierces me"); it 'escapes' language (like Lacan's real); it is not easily communicable through/with language" (Kasia Houlihan "Roland Barthes" n.pag).

silence can speak louder than words, and we must question what we see. These 'silent' moments never present a vacuum of noise; even when nurse Hanna (Sarah Polley) sits quietly in the corridor of the oil rig in *The Secret Life*, making no sound, we hear the gentle hum of the electric lights and machinery, or a shower being switched on.

While Martin-Márquez exemplifies *My Life* as a source of similar respiratory pauses, this thesis proposes that *The Secret Life* and *Map* also provide ample evidence of similar affective silences, or moments without dialogue or music. For example, in *The Secret Life,* Hanna lives in an enforced silence caused by her hearing disability, but also by her choice not to use her hearing aid all the time. While she does not experience deafness as complete silence, there is an absence of distinction between sounds, an effect which Coixet allows the audience to experience at the start of the film. The protagonist chooses to switch off her hearing aid and does not wear protective headphones like her colleagues; however, the spectator experiences the same factory soundscape as Hanna, aurally signified by tinny conversations and the distant clanking of machinery. As her working day draws to an end and her name is called over the tannoy, initially, she does not hear it and nor do the audience. As soon as we see the extreme close-up of Hanna turning on her hearing aid, we realise we had become unwitting accomplices in her rejection of sound and had been drawn into her subjectivity through a shared 'silence'.

Yet, as a complement to silence, the frequent use of stillness on the screen also produces moments of reflection and contrasts to the movement of Coixet's camera. The director creates moments of sustained stillness, quiet meditative pauses where the camera lingers on an empty space or lone object, allowing us to really look at a space or an image and experience its arresting, affective quality. For example, in *Map*, Ryu visits the narrator at his house where they drink tea and talk. After she leaves, the camera lingers on her teacup, still steaming, and pauses momentarily, in a possible reference to the films of Ozu. The narrator, obsessing over her inner thoughts, reaches over to touch the rim. However, the lone cup also provokes a similar reaction in the spectator for whom Ryu is still a mysterious and emotionally inaccessible character.

Yet, rather than mark an end point or stall the narrative, the living, carnal quality of these pauses plays a fundamental role in the flow of Coixet's films, and has become an auteurist trademark. Mulvey notes that "linearity, causality and the linking figure of metonymy, all crucial elements in story-telling, find a correspondence in the unfolding, forward-moving direction of film" (*Death* 69), underlining the motion of the physical film itself

as it runs through the sprockets of the camera, or the spool of the projector, or in the case of digital, the constant motion of the pixels on the screen. Moments of stillness punctuate many motion pictures, but Coixet's attempts to reproduce the effect of a photograph in her work allow for philosophical, contemplatory pauses. In these pauses, we can reflect on the nature of film itself, as it mimics the photograph. The mobile camera that she employs contrasts with the still images and tableaux she presents throughout her films, both as moments of respite and respiration (Martin-Márquez "Engagement" 556) and loaded, pregnant pauses (Donapetry "Ethics" 90-91). Consequntly, these pauses allow us to experience a palpable, audible moment of reflection, or something similar to John Cage's *4'33"*; a manifestation of silence as a presence rather than an absence where the audience considers their relationship to the sounds they expected to hear.[360]

She prefers to use the camera rather than an edit to create this simulation of stillness, as a living moment that ebbs and flows rather than stopping abruptly and deliberately. Rather than being immobile or empty, these moments are full of emotion and energetic potential and these affective pauses interact with her haptic imagery, providing respite after intense sequences of affect. Unlike Truffaut, Saura or other directors she admires, Coixet does not make use of the freeze frame in her work, choosing not to incorporate this technique into her editing practice. Yet, she employs other 'visible' edits such as jump cuts or slow motion, which work to remind the viewer of the medium of film, and break the illusion of the invisible editing that spectators accept as seamless. Although stillness, affective images and a mobile camera are in no way exclusive to her work, or to the indie or art film, these features, along with visible edits, have become part of her auteur trademark.

**Affective Audio**

Moving from image to audio, Coixet labours to create a soundscape conducive to her representation of the sensual, carefully building up layers of sound in postproduction to heighten her depiction of the senses. Coixet exploits voice-over as a narrative device throughout her filmography, adding to the 'personal' dimension. In her earlier films the voice-over often allowed characters to speak their true feelings, while in the later films the director

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[360] Composer Cage (1912-1992) created the piece *4'33*, which was first performed in 1952 in a traditional concert setting. The piece consists of three movements of complete silence, and forces the audience to listen to the sounds around them and rethink the concept of silence. Cage uses silence as a sound effect, rather than a lack of sound. This remains relevant to Coixet's films in relation to the dichotomies of silence/sound and stillness/movement.

uses voice-over and dialogue to intensify moments of sensuous pleasure, with smells and tastes described in detail, to be sampled later by our main protagonists in a more reflective and usually solitary manner. In *A los*, the flashback structure provides justification for the descriptive voice-over of the Maestro (Julio Núñez) as he retells the story of his youth to Armancia's son (Gary Píquer). His voice describes sensual experiences, such as lying in the grass and looking at clouds, or describes emotions such as his feelings for Matilde, yet images, often of food and natural beauty, remain central to the affective dimension of the film. For example, when a pomegranate rolls slowly down a step, or a basket of apples is dropped to the floor in a moment of surprise, the viewer's eye is drawn to the sumptuous images. Similarly in *Things*, Don's voice-over reveals his emotional state, but images, such as those described earlier provide the principal affects of the film. Voice-over also reveals the private thoughts of incidental characters, as they sit in their cars at a level-crossing. The camera moves slowly along the line of cars, while the voice-over tunes into the various inner monologues going on, which range from mundane issues to existential crises.

These asides are expanded within fantasy sequences that similarly allow the viewer to experience what is going on inside the character's mind. However, in *Things*, Don is so disconnected from his own senses that, at first, he does not fantasise about his own life; in his daydreams he invents other people's conversations and the lives they might lead in the houses he sells. But after he meets Ann, he visualises them dancing together in a laundrette. Yet, in the sequence he stands outside the window looking in, rather than being an active participant in the dream. Coixet develops this auteurist flourish in *My Life*, as Ann (Sarah Polley) imagines supermarket employees and customers dancing around her with balletic movements as she shops. As a somewhat emotionally stilted protagonist like Don, she does not take part; the dream plays out as she sleepwalks through the imagined scene.

Yet other films make use of the close relation of fantasy and obsession through an affective address that encourages identification or intersubjectivity with the protagonists as they experience more direct contact with the sensual. For example, Chapter 5 noted the imagined scenes in *Elegy*, where Kepesh's jealousy incites paranoid fantasies about Consuela with other men. Although he is conneced to the sensual through his work and his frequent sexual encounters, through his relationship to the younger woman he begins to address his feelings on a more honest level, including negative emotions such as jealousy. Nonetheless, Coixet's self-penned films document the power of the senses to engage the emotions within characters she created, rather than adapted. Fantasy not only reveals innermost thoughts, as

an auteurist device within Coixet's cinema, it also invites identification with the protagonist on the screen. For example, Martin-Márquez recently illustrated the haptic aspects of *My Life*, especially powerful in the moments when Ann appears alone in the frame ("Engagement"). This critic recounts the dream-like opening sequence of the film as it triggers the affective through voice-over, with Ann narrating in the second person ("this is you") over images of her barefoot self, standing outside while it is raining. Martin-Márquez argues that this switching of roles invoked by the voice-over invites the spectator to share in the terminally-ill protagonist's subjectivity, and henceforth her sensory experiences or, as Vidal notes, this moment "encloses the spectator in Ann's fantasy" ("Love" 224).

Although not prompted by voice-over or fantasy, but rather an absence of words and a desire for isolation, a similar intersubjectivity applies to *The Secret Life*, where the exposition sets up factory worker and Bosnian war survivor Hanna (Sarah Polley) as our cipher for this haptic visuality. We share in her rejection of the sensual at the start of the film and we are similarly involved in her sensual life as she undergoes a gradual emotional and sensorial awakening on meeting Josef (Tim Robbins), an injured man on an isolated North Sea oil rig. The childish voice-over that frames the film remains disembodied and somewhat mysterious; while the voice is connected to Hanna and always speaks about her, the spectator deduces that it is not the voice of her conscious self. This mysterious being recounts tactile desires and experiences such as being held or having her hair touched to remind us of the sensory void in Hanna's life, rather than inviting an embodied response. Slobodian comments that Coixet's emphasis on sound in *The Secret Life* represents "a highly subversive act due to its effect of undermining the dominance of sight" ("Analyzing" 169). Yet, by subverting the inherent vococentrism of this narrative style, Coixet can reclaim wordless moments of sensory contemplation and allow pauses to 'speak' for themselves. Concurrently, Patricia Hart discusses the relation of sound design to the meaning of the film, and has defined the soundscape (by Coixet's frequent collaborators Fabiola Ordoyo and Aitor Berenguer) as "sculpted".[361] This description provides an excellent analogy for the director's filmography, as she strives to create something tactile and synaesthetic, and to effect as much of the artistic

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[361] The author wishes to thank Hart for her insightful conference paper "Sculpted Sound in Isabel Coixet's *La vida secreta de las palabras*", presented at Gynocine, UMASS Amherst in October 2011. She has since published her work under a different title ("Sea breezes"), but the sculpting metaphor used in the conference paper is particularly apt in relation to the affective dimension of sound design in the film.

process as possible. Although voice-over dominates the narrative in many of her films, the carefully crafted soundscape subtly draws the viewer's attention to the sensual.

Similarly, in *Map*, the voice of an 'other' bookends the story of Ryu (Rinko Kikuchi), an assassin that works by day in the fish market, and David (Sergi López), a Catalan man who runs a wine shop in Tokyo, although in this case our narrator (Min Tanaka) is given a physical body to inhabit. The voice-over intensifies his connection to the protagonist, as his infatuation with the enigmatic Ryu increases and she becomes more distant and unreachable. Slobodian maintains that *The Secret Life*

> dramatizes the ways in which an inversion of the sight/sound binary does not function to resolve power inequalities and is not sustainable, as the film culminates in a conventional heteronormative, familial pairing. ("Analyzing" 170)

However, this analysis proposes that Coixet strives to portray greater equality within a heteronormative pairing, rather than as a conservative fallback and uses this relationship to sound as part of her questioning of representation. *Map* better fits Slobodian's hypothesis, as it resorts to the power inequalities of film noir as femme fatale Ryu is punished with a bullet for her misdeeds and murders.

As well as using voice-over to pinpoint the sensual, Coixet also imbues her dialogue with descriptions of the sensory, as part of her build-up to the more intense moments of sensorial reawakening for the main characters. This completes her three-pronged approach to the senses; providing textured, tactile imagery in her films, using her public discourse to ally her work with the sensual, and constructing dialogue that highlights the haptic within each film. Her intervention into portraying the pleasures of eating on screen reaches its apotheosis in *The Secret Life*, when the camerawork takes us gradually closer to Hanna as she sits alone in a corridor of the oil rig and experiences a moment of gastronomic epiphany.[362] We watch her tentatively try the flavoursome food that chef Simon (Javier Cámara) has lovingly described in his kitchen, the same meal that Josef has joyfully consumed in the previous sequence. By this point the viewer can readily imagine the taste and smell of the meal as the voices work to synaptically connect spectator and protagonist as Hanna eats in silence.

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[362] Ituarte-Pérez also discusses this moment in relation to the reawakening of Hanna's sexual rather than sensual desire ("Melodrama" 148-150), commenting later in the article on Hanna's "hysterical" body as an encypted manuscript ready for interpretation (150-152). This idea of encryption not only applies to the gender relations of the medical discourse film, but also to Coixet's treatment of the senses, as the haptic techniques, rather than the dialogue, 'unlock' the trauma the characters have suffered in *The Secret Life*.

Accordingly, Coixet forces us to listen to silences as intensely as we would to words. The director comments on the scene:

> Ésta es una secuencia capital: es el primer momento en el que ella despierta a un sentido (todos los personajes de la plataforma van despertándole la vida), es la primera vez que muestra algo humano, y lo hace comiendo de esa manera tan agitada; me parece que, para acompañar la forma en la que ella comía, lo más adecuado era hacer que la cámara se moviera así.[363] (in Cerrato *Isabel* 44)

She remarks that the camera movement was "appropriate" to accompany Hanna's "agitated" state, describing, but not reflecting on, how the visual and psychological effect synthesise to create this important sequence. She notes that this is Hanna's first "human" moment in the film, and thus she wants the audience to be involved in the scene, drawing the spectator into Hanna's personal experience. The absence of dialogue or voice-over in this scene makes for a more contemplative, reflective moment of hapticity. The camera takes on a persona, as it bobs in a similar manner to Hanna's head as she starts to wolf down the leftovers of her patient's dinner, the tinkering background music getting louder and more intense, parallel to the rising sound effects created by eating. Instead of a carefully planned sequence of shot/reverse shot, Coixet captures it all in one emotional take. The spectator thus transcends the scopophilic look discussed in Chapter 5, moving into a deeper, or embodied, relationship with the on-screen image through this intersubjectivity, while the auteur director promotes the embodied camera within her public discourse.

Simultaneous to her use of silence, Coixet also exploits the faculty of hearing itself, as the act of listening gains a voyeuristic importance in the films, particularly *Map*. The narrator's need for the sensual borders on the obsessive as he follows Ryu to capture her personal sound effects on tape, in order to listen to them as intensely as possible, alone and wearing earphones. He is not a hard-boiled detective by profession, although he investigates and tries to possess Ryu in noir style through his own professional means of sound recording. The audience also hears these tapes as subjective diegetic sound, yet we cannot be certain that their content is real or fantasy, since the sound man listens to conversations and noises he could not possibly have captured, such as Ryu and David laughing together on a date. The aerial shots of Tokyo complement this attempt to convey the narrator's omniscience with his voice-over prologue and epilogue framing the narrative, while the camerawork adds to a

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[363] ["This is a pivotal sequence: it is the first moment where she wakes up to a sensation (everyone on the rig awakens her to life), it is the first time she shows a human quality, and she does it by eating in this agitated way; it seemed to me that the most appropriate way to accompany this way of eating was to make the camera move the way it does"].

sense of surveillance, as a god-like vantage point looks down on the labyrinthine city. His audiophilia encourages similar behaviour in the audience, while simultaneously magnifying the sensual aspects of the film and it justifies our own desire to investigate Ryu as a neo-fatale figure through fetishized listening. As if trying to learn a foreign language through a listen and repeat technique, the sound man regurgitates Ryu's words in English, "why not?" in an attempt to decipher her actions, but remains none the wiser about her true feelings.

Listening and speaking become substitutes for touching, and Coixet herself has noted how sound becomes another character in *The Secret Life*.[364] In a parallel fashion to *Map*, Hanna also interacts with an audio recording, obsessively listening to a phone message left on Josef's phone by his lover. Similar to the sound technician, Hanna listens in isolation, in her patient's old bedroom. She also begins to mouth the words, as the message increasingly invades her consciousness and she begins to vocalize her burgeoning sensory desires. Listening becomes a substitute for speaking as both Hanna and the Japanese narrator absorb the words around them, afraid to utter their own, and only communicating with these desires to speak when they are alone. Additionally, the considerable attention given to sound design in the films asserts Coixet's enthusiasm for incorporating the spectator into the scene, with sounds strategically muffled or amplified so that we are equal to the characters on the screen. Furthermore, the audible sounds of cooking, apparent in chef Simon's kitchen in *The Secret Life* and in some of the restaurants visited in *Map*, aid in evoking a smell for the audience, the steam from the dishes conjuring up a sense of an enveloping vapour. In a similar fashion, the voyeuristically shot shower scenes from *Map* attempt to share scent with us, capturing the noise of the shower while the steam created replicates this vapour effect for the lemon halves used by the women.

In a more concrete kinaesthetic manner, Josef from *The Secret Life* tries to inhale Hanna's essence from a bar of soap he finds in the backpack she abandons. The camera frames his fingers, as he holds the soap and makes a lather, gently rubbing his hands together in an attempt to touch Hanna or a part of his memory of her through this physical sensation. Although music is playing, Josef's sniff remains perceptible, forging a deeper connection to the sense of smell for the audience. Marks writes on the importance of smell as a sensory event:

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[364] Coixet remarks: "Yo creo que en [*The Secret Life*] hay una valoración diferente del silencio; porque el sonido es un personaje más de la película" ["I think that silence is valued differently in [*The Secret Life*], because it is another protagonist in the film"] (in Donapetry n.pag).

> I propose that the proximal senses, touch, taste, and smell, are not only hedonic but may also be senses of knowledge (epistemology), vehicles of beauty (aesthetics), and even media of ethics. [...] Why smell in particular? Because smell often brings with it a freight of personal affect: it seems to be the least translatable and most personal of all the senses. Smells can be semantically coded, but less easily than other sense perceptions for this reason. If smell can be a medium of shared knowledge, then I'd argue any sense can. ("Thinking" 123)

Since our sense of smell is so directly related to emotion and nostalgia, Coixet attempts to touch the olfactory organs of her stifled protagonists and those of the audience in some way, in a dedicated effort to create a wholly affective cinema. Marks describes the ability of smell to "create a pocket of affective experience, a memory or shock that briefly opens a window to the virtual", which she thinks "might help people hang on to life when so much of our experience is deadening" (in Muller "Revealing").

Moreover, the emotionally repressed characters often undergo a period of sensory deprivation, whether accidental of self-imposed, allowing Coixet to document their re-acquaintance with their sensual through a crescendo of affect. At the beginning of *Map*, the listless, taciturn Ryu plays an Eastern cowboy; her job as an assassin sets her apart from society and prevents her forming any tactile relationships other than with her knife (for gutting and preparing the fish at the market) and her gun. Living in a sparse, utilitarian apartment in the suburbs and distanced from the urban hub, Ryu is driven further outside society as a lonely commuter, her only face-to-face human contact seen in regular meals and meetings with the narrator.

Similarly, hearing-impaired Hanna from *The Secret Life* reneges the sensual, but her deprivation remains largely self-enforced, in that she chooses when to turn on and off her hearing aid and isolate herself further from society. Additionally, we learn during the course of the film that she is not deaf from birth, thereby providing a clue to traumatic events in her recent life. This provides another clue as to why she suffers an extreme and sensory withdrawal, compounded by self-inflicted limits on her diet (chicken, white rice and apples) and on her physical contact with others. However, Hanna expresses faint signs of life, but subsequently rejects any desire that might engage her senses, only passively participating in her day-to-day routine. For example, when she makes phone calls to an unidentified woman (who we later discover is her counsellor), she does not speak, although she maintains this connection to the other woman's voice. Further to this we see Hanna doing some needlework at home and on a bus journey, a sign of a possible creative outlet, or a wish to create something textured and tactile, but when she dumps the embroidery hoop into the bin we realize its function as another technique for blocking out the world around her. Hanna does

not even admire the scenery out the bus window, preferring to focus her attention on a monotonous, robotic, seemingly unemotional task.

Yet, both Ryu and Hanna express a budding need for the sensory, the former craving strawberry *mochi* cakes and devouring them with visible pleasure, while the latter begins to listen in on conversations happening around her with increasing interest. Coixet goes to great lengths to demonstrate the paucity of sensory experience in these characters' lives, allowing her to document the gradual reawakening of their appetite for life. Like subtle shadows or flecks of colour applied by a painter, these tiny details flesh out each narrative, adding depth and texture to the image rather than heightening the verisimilitude of the film, and reveal the repressed desires of the people we see on the screen. As auteur films, Coixet's narratives deal with the struggle to communicate emotions, while the haptic techniques help the audience to understand what these emotions might be.

**Affective Letters**

Another way that Coixet addresses the written word is through letter-writing and messages. In *Things*, Ann's boyfriend, Bob, sends a break-up letter, but she does not see it. When he tells her over the phone that he wrote to her, she initially reacts with delight, enthralled by the romantic notion of letter-writing. Misdirected messages provide a *Romeo and Juliet* miscommunication in some cases, most notably in *Things*, where Ann reacts to the death of her relationship (rather than the death of her lover) by drinking the 'poison' on her coffee table, a bottle of nail varnish. Subsequently, she rejects traditional letter-writing in favour of video-diary style messages in which she describes her emotions, discusses physical sensations she had during their relationship, and later films herself having sex with Don. Instead of penning a reply to Bob, who is working in Prague, she sends these video tapes via her neighbour Paul, who, like Equis (Gerardo Arenas) in *Demasiado viejo*, works for a courier company. However, as discussed earlier, Paul watches the tapes himself and touches Ann's face on the screen, becoming more and more emotionally attached to her as he listens to the sensual language she uses, and never sends the messages to their intended destination.

While Coixet repeatedly returns to the messenger figure, as physical objects, the letters or videos remain at the heart of the narrative and their effect on the receiver, whether the intended recipient or not, is often explicitly sensual. Without the options of modern technology or speedy worldwide delivery, in *A los* the lovestruck young Maestro (Patxi Freytez) writes letters to Matilde which she never receives. Unbeknownst to the young doctor

until the end of the film, she receives empty envelopes with the bouquets of flowers he leaves for her. Instead, his words are intercepted, read, and, at one point, eaten by her younger sister, Armancia (Amanda García), and Matilde falls in love with León who, like Equis and Paul is an emissary, although he arrives on horseback rather than on a moped or in a van. Like Paul in *Things* who 'eats' the images of Ann with his eyes, unrequited lover Armancia relishes in the reading of the Maestro's letters, going as far as to ingest them, and to physiologically digest them.[365]

Similarly, in *The Secret Life*, we see a pile of letters filmed in close-up on Hanna's hall table, with a tight shot of her hand touching the unopened envelopes. In her analysis of *A los*, Vidal notes that "the letter in close-up fleshes out the haptic relations between writing, knowledge and vision, but also creates an objective correlative of the distance between sender and addressee, seeing and reading" (*Figuring* 193). Similarly, Hanna does not open these messages which we later learn are from her counsellor, but takes them with her on her enforced holiday, which signals some sort of desire to stay in touch or have them nearby, even if she does not read them. Bordwell discusses such letters as "suppressed" information, whereby the narrative "flaunts its suppressiveness" ("Moonrise" n.pag), making the viewer aware of the importance of the content without revealing it. However, content remains central to the messages in *My Life* where Ann records voice messages on tape for her loved ones which are to be distributed after her death. This modernisation of the letter fits into Coixet's subversion of traditional melodramatic tropes, but turns our attention to the act of writing or composing a message, rather than receiving one. Writing also takes precedence in another way; sitting alone at a table in a neon-lit diner Ann creates her list of things to do before she dies, with her handwriting appearing on the screen as a subtitle during the scene. The scrawled letters produce a more personal approach to subtitling, with the character's pen 'touching' the screen through this unusual stylistic flourish.

Speaking at the time of the release of *The Secret Life*, her fifth feature, Coixet recognises that letter-writing forms a characteristic part of her filmography:

> Eso aparece en las cinco [películas]. Las cartas son la promesa de algo nuevo. Los mensajes que no llegan son muy importantes para mí; hay cosas que has recibido a destiempo, que han cambiado tu manera de pensar sobre una relación; mensajes de móviles que caen en manos extrañas. Oír un mensaje ajeno te abre puertas hacia un mundo que no conoces, te permite

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[365] Vidal elaborates on this scene from the film: "A convent novice asks [Armancia] 'what does [the love letter] taste like?' This brief, subtly comical exchange between the young girl and the nun disavows the symbolic power of the rituals that organise the intricate universe of period romance" (*Figuring* 191).

> fantasear. Yo oí una vez uno de una mujer que se equivocó y, ¡ufff!, fue estremecedor.[366] (in Huete Machado "La mirada" n.pag)

As outlined in previous chapters, a struggle to communicate remains at the heart of Coixet's films, and messages often gain a fetishistic significance in the lives of emotionally-repressed characters. Yet, the format the messages arrive in is not as important as their sensory effect on the receiver, whether the message is life-changing, shocking, or allows the reader or listener to fantasise. In other films, messages that are not necessarily material objects like letters or tapes provoke bodily responses in the protagonists, for example in *Le trench rouge*, a text message from a cheating husband (Sergio Castellito) to his mistress (Leonor Watling) ending their affair causes her to collapse, while a voicemail from Consuela (Cruz) in *Elegy* forces a stunned Kepesh to sit on the floor of his apartment and listen to it repeatedly. These more contemporary forms of communication continue into *Map*, where David (Sergi López) leaves a message for the father of his dead girlfriend (Takeo Nakahara), which reduces the recipient to tears. His assistant, Ishida (Hideo Sakaki), tries to comfort him, but to no avail. However, earlier in the film, Ishida had shielded his employer from seeing the daughter's suicide note, which had been scrawled in blood on her bathroom mirror. He erases the potentially hurtful message by hurriedly washing away the blood, the primitive, bodily writing material that represents the dead woman's last words. Coixet concentrates on the effect such messages can have on the stilted protagonists, for whom the very act of sending or receiving a message can be revelatory, sometimes in spite the content of the message itself. Although the content of letters and messages is not always focused on the senses, the characters often touch the messages physically in some way, and are affected by them psychologically, and as part of the re-awakening of the protagonists, they provide a basis for Coixet's exploration of emotions.

**Affective Recordings: Awakening the Protagonists**

Correspondingly, the lovers of the female protagonists in *The Secret Life* and *Map* undergo their own sensory trauma, with Josef temporarily blinded after an accident on the oil rig, and the grieving David surrounded by memories and mementoes of his girlfriend, Midori,

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[366] [It appears in all five [films]. The letters are the promise of something new. Messages that never arrive are very important to me; there are things that you have received the wrong time, that have changed the way you think about a relationship; messages on mobile phones that fall into someone else's hands. Hearing a strange message opens doors to a world you do not know, it allows you to fantasize. I once heard one from a woman who had the wrong number and, phew, it was shocking.]

who committed suicide. This section will deal with how a relationship to recorded images triggers the awakening of the characters. Both Josef and David are given ample time to convey their enthusiasm for taste and the pleasures of food (Josef) and wine (David), confirming their sensual status and their role as the catalysts of reawakening for the female protagonists. The blind Josef makes assumptions about Hanna's appearance, but 'sees through' her attempts to lie to him. He tries to elicit personal information from this reticent nurse, building an imaginary picture of her in his mind, which is only made real when he recovers his sight and goes to visit her counsellor, Inge (Julie Christie), in Copenhagen and is offered a photograph of Hanna which he initially refuses to see. This photograph relates to Barthes' ideas around the nostalgia invoked by the photographic image, both as an embodiment of Hanna's past life and an important clue for Josef in solving the mystery of who she really is (*Camera* 92-93). For his part, Josef rejects this invitation to nostalgia, preferring to find Hanna and begin a future with her, rather than dwell on the past.

This concept resurges in *Map*, as the men in Midori's life each interact with photographs of her. Conveying grief through the memories evoked by a photographic image, they also express a yearning to possess this fragment of the dead woman, to not let go. Her father, Nagara (Takeo Nakahara) grips tightly to a still image of them together, gently stroking it with his hand, as if it were Midori herself. The photo as proxy also relates to David, who cannot bring himself to change his screensaver, seeing a frozen snapshot of their relationship every time he turns on his computer. Nagara's assistant, Ishida (Hideo Sakaki), who secretly loved Midori, cries over the torn photograph he sneaked into his pocket, again demonstrating the futility of a two-dimensional image to replace a real human presence. Ishida's version of Midori is further fragmented, as half the photo ends up in the hands of Ryu, who has destroyed, reconstructed, reproduced and enlarged her half depicting David, as she too falls foul of nostalgia. Ryu sticks her larger-than-life David on the wall above her bed, like a teenager would put up a poster of an idol or object of desire. Making a pin-up of the male protagonist forms part of Coixet's attempt to deconstruct typical noir gender roles and create a fragmented inversion of the male gaze. However, this image also feeds into the characters' desire for sensual experiences as David becomes the stimulus of Ryu's sensory reawakening. Mulvey notes that pin-ups and production stills used in posters help audiences possess the ephemeral film object in constant motion (*Death* 161), yet this phenomenon translates to 'real' life, as Ryu attempts to possess a still image of David.

Tapes of moving images become just as important as the static photographs in Coixet's world. Just as Paul in *Things* dares to touch Ann's face on his TV screen, in a twisted version of the little boy in Bergman's *Persona* (1966), Midori's father is overwhelmed watching home videos of her splashing about in a swimming pool, the moving images stirring memories of his daughter. The power of film to create a simulacrum becomes more acute in these later films by Coixet, as the filmed footage comes to represent something unknowable or untouchable, despite the protagonists' attempts to interact with what they see on the screen. Similarly, in *The Secret Life*, although Josef's motivations are clear and his desire overtly expressed, he initially refuses to see the still photo of Hanna, so Inge offers him a video of her testimony, and a chance to see and hear what she has not expressed. His hands are framed in close-up holding the symbolic tape, which represents the key that could unlock Hanna's secret. The archive room where he stands contains thousands of gruesome sensory memories, recounted on videotape by other survivors of horrific torture.[367]

However, Josef has already heard Hanna tell the beginnings of her story, rendering this two-dimensional representation void for him, as he hands back the recording, rejecting the spectacle of hatred and horror it contains. Martín notes that the film awakens viewers from their "moral lethargy" and implicates them as witnesses to the horrors of the Balkan War ("Los silencios" 281), yet in rejecting a visual representation of acts of torture, Coixet respects the collective memory of victims, letting the physical and mental scars communicate the devastation of torture and the awful shame felt by survivors.[368] In handing back the tape, Josef chooses not to pursue the mystery of Hanna's unknowable past, allowing her to deal with it on her own terms, to simply "go on living", as she suggests when Josef inquires how she lives with the dead. Accordingly, Josef's hands become an important metaphor for the tactility of cinema, as the close camerawork draws our eye to the things he touches throughout the film: Hanna's soap, her backpack, the tape of her testimony and most importantly her tortured body. He touches the marks left by her torturers and rapists, in a

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[367] The archive room in the film is located in the real-life International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT) that Coixet investigated in her documentary *Viaje* (2003).

[368] Similarly, Camí-Vela writes: "Si *La vida secreta de las palabras* no puede 'representar' el horror vivido, sí puede producir emoción y conocimiento en el espectador. Aunque Coixet no haga ninguna referencia en su film al libro *Regarding the Pain of Others* de Susan Sontag, la directora parece seguir el consejo de la escritora de que a una cierta edad, tanto en el arte, como en la vida, el espectador debe perder su inocencia" [If *The Secret Life* cannot 'show' the horrors experienced, it can produce emotions and knowledge in the spectator. Although Coixet makes no reference in the film to the book *Regarding the Pain of Others* by Susan Sontag, the director seems to follow the advice of the writer that at a certain age, in art as much as in life, the spectator must lose their innocence"]("Filmando" 28).

scene that represents a peak of achievement in Coixet's depiction of the senses. Following Barker's idea of the film itself possessing a physical body (*Tactile* 8-9), the camera engraves Hanna's scars onto the film negative, just as her captors sliced them into her skin, hence the film itself replicates the torture for the audience through its very medium.

Coixet's hero, John Berger, notes the similarity between Hanna and Tintoretto's famous painting of the woman displaying her breasts (ca. 1570), and reminds us that Hanna makes an almost identical gesture to the painted image while Josef, blinded and also visibly scarred from his own near death experience, can only listen and touch,[369] reading Hanna's scars as Braille-like hieroglyphs of her ordeal.[370] Thus the focus shifts from the visual to the tactile, as only the audience can see Hanna's scars, but the close-up shots of Josef's hands trigger our sensory imagination as we envisage the texture of these indelible marks we see on the screen. The narrative purposefully progresses towards this climax of affect, as Hanna's senses are gradually reactivated throughout the film, and her trauma finally unlocked by Josef's touch.

**Conclusion**

Over the course of her feature filmography Coixet increasingly utilizes a sensory mode of address in order to connect with her spectators in a meaningful way, creating a bridge between the audiovisual and the rest of the senses. She has insightfully developed this mode, from her early experiments in *Things* and *A los* to her more recent fiction films, with the textural and the tactile becoming ever more important within her films, as she struggles to portray human emotion without being pigeonholed by the coded meanings of traditional genre films. While trying to subvert categorization and audience expectations by engaging with well-known narrative structures and eschewing the politicized gaze of the traditional male spectator, Coixet simultaneously edifies her texts with this mindful visual sensibility and a precise soundtrack to further arouse the senses and the emotions. Consequently, she creates a lingua franca of affect that helps her films eschew the narrow categorisations she dislikes. As we have seen, Coixet directed and produced a commercial, "Mediterraneamente", for Estrella Damm beer in 2011.[371] The extended three-minute version of the commercial which documented a summer romance set around the famous restaurant, El Bulli, comes

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[369] Berger provides the introduction to Coixet's published screenplay (*La vida: el guión* 7-10).
[370] Donapetry makes the connection between Hanna's scars and Braille ("Ethics" 92).
[371] For an online video of the advertisement see TheEstrellaDamm ("Videoclip").

replete with tactile imagery: skinny-dipping at Cap de Creus; the heroine nuzzling sea-urchins with her nose. It climaxes with head chef Ferran Adrià relishing a bite of a sneaky fried egg made by one of his kitchen trainees. The tagline, "a veces lo normal puede ser extraordinario",[372] seems a fitting slogan for Coixet's own brand of visuality, whether in advertising, documentary or feature film, as she turns the banal into the sensual through her carefully crafted cinematography. This treatment of the senses allows for a biological rather than ideological identification to the lives of the on-screen protagonists, as she tries to add another dimension to the flat screen and synaesthetically transport us into the tactile world she inhabits. Through her corporeal fusion with the camera, her camera-eye or camera-heart provides us with an embodied point of view, as she reiterates her auteur agenda through metaphorical discussions of the cinematic anatomy. With this analysis in mind, the next chapter will explore how Coixet's filmmaking techniques and defined auteur persona aid in the revision of generic material, as she creates 'ordinary' settings for melodrama.

[372] ["Sometimes the ordinary can be extraordinary"].

## Chapter 7: Coixet's Interpretation of Classic Melodrama: An Auteur Genre

While producing marketable genre films, Coixet also employs revisionist techniques and intertextual referencing in order to create auteur melodramas. This chapter will explore her re-imagining of melodrama in the films *My Life*, *The Secret Life* and her contribution to *Paris, Je t'aime* (2006) entitled *Le Trench Rouge* as another facet of her auteur strategy.[373] Effectively, the techniques outlined in the previous chapter aid Coixet to rewrite melodrama and foreground her authorship. In order to appreciate this restaging of melodrama, her films will be compared to some 'classic' melodramas and to the work of Douglas Sirk (1900-1987), the German émigré cinema and theatre director who fled the Nazis in 1937 to become an eminent Hollywood filmmaker, producing beautifully shot and artfully arranged domestic dramas. Sirk's opulent texts, fraught with the tensions of 1950s American society, were previously overlooked as frivolous 'women's films' or 'tearjerkers', until reclaimed by *Cahiers du Cinéma* critics in the late 1960s and deservedly brought back into the public eye during the 1970s,[374] just as political upheavals in Spain were opening doors for alternative filmmaking practices in a new democracy.

Although other critics have discussed Coixet's relationship to melodrama at length,[375] this chapter will take some of Sirk's American films as models of 'classic Hollywood melodrama' by a noted auteur and compare them with the selection of films by Coixet. In particular, *Magnificent Obsession* (1954), *Written on the Wind* (1956) and *Imitation of Life* (1959) will be examined in order to explore Coixet's stylish subversion of the so-called classical canon. This discussion will focus on characterisation and character relationships, as well as touching on dialogue, music, camerawork and editing as expressions of auteurist intent within Coixet's investigation of melodrama, as a comparison to a noted auteur particularly associated with melodrama. Both Sirk's *Imitation* and *Magnificent* were remakes of earlier page-to-screen adaptations by John M. Stahl, which had been successful at the box-

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[373] This chapter has been adapted and extended from an article by the author published in the *Journal of Catalan Studies* ("Modernising Melodrama").

[374] *Cahiers* paid particular homage to Sirk in 1967 with a special focus on his filmography (*Cahiers du Cinéma* 189 [April 1967]: 14-29).

[375] Donapetry ("La voluntad"), Herrero Jiménez ("Mujer"), Leire Ituarte-Pérez ("Melodrama"), Anabel Martín ("Los silencios"), Ángela Morales ("La crisis") and Vidal ("Love") have also examined Coixet's work in specific relation to melodrama. As her most successful and most 'conventional' melodramatic film, *My Life* is Coixet's most frequently analysed work in relation to melodrama, owing to the narrative focus on illness and motherhood. Accordingly, this chapter places heavy emphasis on the film, but strives to reveal the melodramatic mode at work across her filmography.

office.[376] Coixet follows a similar adaptation model, and updates Sirk's revised versions of the 'original' films, as she enters into a continuum of auteur adaptations.

Links have been made between Coixet and Sirk previously, with the Filmoteca de Catalunya running a series of films in 2004 titled "El melodrama o la vida és un plor: de Douglas Sirk a Isabel Coixet". Like Coixet, Sirk successfully 'passed' as an Anglophone director during the 1950s, working amongst the many European exiles also making popular mainstream movies at that time. Although he was respected as a director of successful genre films, he remained relatively invisible during his days in Hollywood, enjoying critical acclaim in retrospect, when his career was effectively finished. Coixet, on the other hand, enjoys modest international visibility through filming in English, while she is one of the best-known filmmakers in Spain. As we have seen, her ambiguous relationship to national cinema aids in the exportation of her melodramatic films. While the majority of her films have been produced outside Hollywood and her professional exile is self-imposed, Coixet also transcends assumptions about Spanish, Catalan or European directors and poses as an English-language filmmaker, especially within the boundaries of melodrama. However, the programme accompanying the Filmoteca de Catalunya's film series reprints an article by Miguel Marías that recalls the difficulty in defining melodrama:

> Aquest perill de caure en la indefinició total del melodrama –que resultaria gairebé un *sinònim* del cinema i que es podría considerar com *la dramatúrgia pròpia* del setè art– no deixa de ser significatiu, i té causes històriques bastant clares: el naixement de la narració cinematogràfica i la indústria del cinema es produeix en un moment de gran vigència del gènere, del qual s'havien nodrit tant els cineastes com el públic; no ha d'estranyar, doncs, que el melodrama sigui un dels gèneres més arrelats en el cinema.[377] ("La melodia" n.pag)

Marías identifies melodrama as a synonym of cinema itself, noting its power as a dramaturgy or building block of expression. The "danger" of the "uncertainty" of melodrama stems from its relevance across the board, with techniques as applicable to the action film as they are to drama, such as swelling music to complement moments of tension, convenient twists of fate and the stereotypical happy or sad ending. As a narrative and dramatic tradition, the melodramatic mode allows for the utilization of certain upheld conventions (such as poignant music or *deus ex-machina* endings) to manipulate the emotions of the audience and explore

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[376] *Imitation* (Stahl, 1934) was adapted from a Fannie Hurst novel of the same name (1933), while *Magnificent* (Stahl, 1935) was based on the eponymous novel by Lloyd C. Douglas (1929).

[377] ["The danger of falling into the total uncertainty of melodrama –which is almost a synonym of cinema itself and could be considered the very dramaturgy of the seventh art– remains signficiant and has quite clear historical causes: the birth of cinematic narration and the film industry came at a moment of great force for the genre, which nourished both the filmmakers and the public; it is not surprising, therefore, that melodrama is one of the more established genres in cinema".]

the psyches of the protagonists on screen. Despite pejorative connotations associated with melodrama as the soapier, over-sentimental relation of gritty 'drama', Coixet aims to engage with the characteristic 'excess' of emotion cited by scholars, whereby 'reality' is heightened through a surplus of emotion, music or mise-en-scène.[378]

Consequently, Linda Williams's assertions that melodrama represents a mode of expression, rather than a genre ("Melodrama Revised") will be employed here. For Williams, melodrama functions as a flexible mode of expression that resonates across film history, rather than as an umbrella term for emotional movies. As outlined in the previous chapter, Coixet employs affective techniques to engender greater empathy and identification with her protagonists by manipulating emotions and responses, a tactic similarly exploited by the melodramatic mode. The battle to articulate feeling without the negative connotations of the 'weepie' or 'chick-flick' means Coixet takes a minimalistic approach to emotion, finding the balance between what Williams terms body genres ("Film Bodies") because of the embodied response they provoke in spectators (such as crying when watching melodrama) and the more rational-sounding 'drama'. Williams probes deeper into this idea, categorising melodrama as a "broad mode" rather than a genre and defining the term as

> a perpetually modernizing form that is neither opposed to the norms of the 'classical' nor to the norms of 'realism' but which adapts both. It emerges from primal sentiments of love and loss. ("Melodrama Revised" 273-4)

Coixet utilises this "perpetually modernizing form" to connect with an audience generally weary of chick flicks and suspicious of tearjerkers, creating a type of film that is harder to pin down than the 'classic' Hollywood models such as *Stella Dallas* (King Vidor, 1937) and *Mildred Pierce* (Michael Curtiz, 1945). Vidor's film narrates the rags-to-riches-to-rags tale of Stella Dallas (Barbara Stanwyck) who marries into money and class but cannot escape her more humble roots. After a series of embarrassments, self-aware (and recently divorced) Stella sabotages a loving relationship with her daughter (Ann Shirley) so that the young 'lady' better fits into the more refined social milieu of her father and his new wife. Adapted from the James M. Cain novel (1941), Curtiz's *Mildred Pierce* also centres on sacrifice within the

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[378] Seminal analyses of the conventions of classical melodrama include: Peter Brooks (*The Melodramatic Imagination*), Jackie Byers (*All That Hollywood Allows*), Pam Cook ("Melodrama and the Women's Picture"; "Imitations of Life"), Mary Ann Doane (*The Desire*), Thomas Elsaesser, who classifies melodrama as a "mode of experience" ("Tales"), Christine Gledhill ("The Melodramatic Field"), E. Ann Kaplan (*Women and Film*) and Franco Moretti ("Kindergarten"). While this chapter has been influenced by these readings, it will synthesise the direct criticism of Coixet rather than the vast analyses of melodrama.

mother-daughter relationship, as self-made woman Mildred (Joan Crawford) vies for the affection and admiration of her spoiled daughter Veda (Ann Blyth).[379] While respecting the genre's 'rules' and engaging with archetypes such as the sacrificial mother depicted in films like *Stella* and *Mildred*, Coixet consciously employs some typical tropes and narrative devices of melodrama. The director can glean what she needs from the classical conventions, in an attempt to modernise this tradition that has now been assimilated into the catch-all term 'drama'.

**Melodrama: The Woman's Film, Personhood and Place**

Traditionally, men have dominated the creative side of melodrama, both writing and directing what is known as 'the woman's film', a wide-reaching generic tradition placing the supposed concerns of female protagonists at the heart of the narrative in order to connect with a predominantly female audience.[380] Yet, just as Williams sees melodrama as a mode, Mary Ann Doane classifies the woman's film as an impure genre, influenced and subsumed by other narrative structures and styles, although dominated by women protagonists and 'female' storylines focused on relationships, motherhood and domestic life (*The Desire* 152-153). Nonetheless, while the male melodrama has been theorised, little critical attention is paid to the inverse practice of women writing male characters, of which Coixet is a skilled practitioner. Most of the literature on Coixet's melodrama analyses how she writes female protagonists and their everyday heroism, but few have commented on their male counterparts, who the filmmaker sees as a closer relation to herself. In an early interview, when asked why she identifies more with Don (Andrew McCarthy) from *Things* rather than the female protagonist Ann (Lili Taylor), she responds:

> Porque me he sentido como él, porque he fantaseado como él, porque mi aproximación a la gente es a veces como la suya, porque a veces tengo esa melancolía un poco irónica como él.[381] (in Camí-Vela *Mujeres* 2001 ed. 59)

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[379] The article by Herrero Jiménez explores female characterisation, and discusses the subversion of gender stereotypes in Coixet's films in comparison to these two 'classics' ("Mujer"). Her comparative analysis of sacrificial mother figures remains extremely useful to the focus of this thesis in relation to generic revisionism and updated cinematic representations of women, but this chapter will concentrate more on alternative narrative tropes and archetypal figures within the melodramatic tradition of cinema.

[380] Mulvey notes that melodramas are often made by men and watched by women ("Notes").

[381] ["Because I have felt like him, because I have fantasised like he does, because my approximation of people is sometimes like his, because I sometimes have that sort of ironic melancholy like him".]

Accordingly, Coixet focuses on the personal, autobiographical connection with the protagonist, rather than his or her gender. She describes her female characters as heroes, while she identifies personally with the flawed, struggling male protagonists she creates, using her autobiographical experiences to infuse their characters with a greater verisimilitude.

More recently, Coixet has remarked on the lack of obligation she feels to create strong female characters (in Spencer "Q+A" n.pag),[382] and similarly, Selva Masoliver locates this approach to masculinity outside heteronormative parameters, writing:

> Sus personajes principales, todos femeninos, ostentan la huella de haber participado del misterio de manera consciente o no, y hacen de interlocutoras, en su extrañeza, con homónimos masculinos que encarnan, dicho sea de paso, una evidente apuesta por una masculinidad distinta de la que marcan los cánones heteronormativos.[383] ("Los límites" 43)

Coixet does not strive to create female characters according to any feminist philosophy; rather she attempts to portray humanised protagonists of both sexes or as "homonymous" of each other in their experience of life. This aspect alone helps to shift her work from the paradigm of the 'woman's film' to a more contemporary, egalitarian enterprise, in an attempt to redress the balance of gender representation onscreen. Textually, this is reflected in the performance styles of the actors in Coixet's films, and the emphasis on their individuality rather than their gender. Her protagonists live in a world where a social pecking order remains active, but they can choose to pursue their personal goals outside of the hierarchical structure, prioritising their 'personhood'.[384] This focus on individuality adds an existentialist perspective or degree of universality to the protagonists, as they transcend nationality, social class and family background. As discussed in Chapter 6, the cinematography reflects this outlook, with character-dominated framing and frequent close-ups, personalising the experience and maximising the process of identification for the spectator. The following

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[382] In a 2010 interview, when asked a question about the responsibility to create strong female characters, Coixet responds: "I'd really like to make a film about a really nasty female character, that no one likes and with no redeemable quality. Other people are always trying to make you feel like you have a responsibility but I don't feel that. I'm glad a lot of young girls love my films in Spain and want to make films like mine, so as a technical film-maker yes. But I don't feel an obligation to always portray positive or strong female characters" (in Spencer "Q+A" n.pag).

[383] ["Her main protagonists, all female, bear the marks of having participated in the mystery, whether consciously or not, and in their peculiarity they act as representatives for male counterparts who, incidentally, embody a clear commitment to a masculinity that falls outside heteronormative parameters"].

[384] Consequently, Donapetry discusses the ethical implications of *The Secret Life* and *Elegy*, as each film explores and asserts the humanity of the individual protagonist, neither as archetype nor stereotype ("Ethics").

sections will briefly compare narrative tropes, the framing of characters, and the use of dialogue in Coixet's films to examples of classical Hollywood narrative and films directed by Sirk.

Although Coixet's films are not straightforward examples of realism, she employs a predominantly realist mode as a framework upon which to weave a melodramatic story, as she portrays a world where the emotional and the emotive are acceptable. Shades of kitchen-sink realism colour the exposition of *My Life*, as Ann (Sarah Polley) goes about the daily grind, working nights as a cleaner in a university she never got to attend. Ann is a twenty-three year old mother of two, who lives in a trailer in the back garden of her downtrodden mother (Deborah Harry). Although Ann is white and North American, she is part of a marginal class of underprivileged 'trailer-trash'; however, the film does not focus on her class background or economic struggles. Unlike the trailer on Coixet's website, which Chapter 3 discussed as a metaphor for the peripatetic existence of an auteur, Ann's mobile home is going nowhere until she discovers she has terminal cancer, and sets about living her life to the full before she dies. In contrast, Sirk's *Written* details the moneyed yet miserable lives of the millionaire Hadley family. Alcoholic playboy Kyle Hadley (Robert Stack) marries sensible Lucy (Lauren Bacall) in an attempt to settle down, regardless of the sparks between her and his best friend Mitch (Rock Hudson). As a child Mitch had been taken under the wing of old Mr Hadley (Robert Keith), the self-made, hardworking patriarch who despairs of his spoilt children and identifies with Mitch's salt-of-the-earth character and working-class roots. Despite the brotherly ties, Kyle's wild sister Marylee (Dorothy Malone) recklessly and relentlessly chases Mitch, and overtly flaunts her relationships with other men in order to make him jealous. Sirk uses Hudson's everyman character as a foil to these repressed rich protagonists.[385] During Sirk's tenure in Hollywood, the mere articulation of desire rather than the achievement of personal wishes provided the basis of a melodramatic narrative (Neale "Melodrama" 20). In this way, Sirk portrays a defined sketch of Eisenhower's America, when an almost Victorian outlook on social status was the norm, prioritising position in society rather than individual desires or needs. The class tensions simmer close to the surface of *Written*, whereas Coixet takes a subtler, yet no less powerful approach to class in *My Life* by pushing her commentary further into the background and focusing on Ann as an individual fulfilling her innermost desires before she passes away.

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[385] Hudson's character provides a similar foil to the bourgeois suburbanites of *Magnificent Obsession*.

In comparison to Sirk's performers, Coixet's actors in *My Life* employ a more naturalistic style of performance than their 1950s counterparts. The veracity of their mannerisms, conversations and habits allows a contemporary spectator to identify with their dramas and recognise the banal surroundings as part of daily life. Although the dreary settings Coixet depicts allow her protagonists to be 'everymen' and 'everywomen', their distinctive quirks are deliberately marked, compounding their uniqueness and individuality. For example, the film begins with Ann standing outside in the rain, her voiceover telling the spectator "this is you". Whether talking to herself or the audience, the personal pronouns attempt to create parallels between protagonist and spectator and draw the audience into an "intersubjectivity" with Ann (Martin-Márquez "Engagement"). However, as the film progresses, Ann's idiosyncrasies such as demanding sweets from her doctor when she gets bad news or learning Mandarin from audio tapes in her car, mark her out as a unique individual in a mundane, humdrum environment.

Consequently, Triana-Toribio locates Coixet's films in "anyplace North America" ("Anyplace") as part of a trend of contemporary film melodramas that utilise a non-specific location for their narrative, creating a recognisable, universalized feel.[386] This practice provides an opportunity for allegorical readings of locations similar to their counterparts from the classical period, with the fictional towns depicted coming to represent the supposedly universal or, at least, stereotypical values of suburban life. However, these anyplaces seem to augment the general sense of disconnection and isolation that Coixet's protagonists suffer in these alienating, yet visually arresting spaces.[387] As Vidal notes, the "low key aesthetic and unconventional narrative patterns" at work further integrates Coixet into this "drab yet stylised vision of urban alienation and small-town eccentricity" ("Love" 225-226), as the director finds intrigue in the mundane. Coixet seems to go out of her way to downplay locations in the majority of her films, while simultaneously placing emphasis on the mise-en-scène. *My Life* was filmed outside Vancouver, but is set in an unspecified town, whose only

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[386] The often nameless, unidentifiable towns used in Coixet's films resonate with the anyplace settings of the American independent filmmaking tradition that became part of modern film culture during the 1970s. The release of *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969) marked the dawn of the New Hollywood movement where film school graduates like Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese operated outside of the studio system, creating low budget, critically acclaimed productions. Coixet admires and identifies with filmmakers such as Cassavetes, listing *A Woman Under the Influence* (1974) amongst her favourite films of all time ("Carta Blanca"). Vidal identifies the similarities between Coixet and indie filmmakers such as Cassavetes, Hal Hartley or Jim Jarmusch ("Love" 226).

[387] Many critics have notes the influence of painting, especially the work of Edward Hopper, on Coixet's work. These critics and the paintings in question will be discussed in Chapter 8.

recognisable features are of small-town Americana: a roadside diner, a laundrette, cars, and a hick bar. We get a vague national landscape, but Coixet does little to locate the story anywhere specific. Similarly, Sirk's films are often set in an anonymous suburbia; *Magnificent* reflects a post-World War II American anyplace as families moved to the outskirts of large towns and cities. *Written* also portrays a small town, but the Hadley family's opulent gated mansion keeps them at a distance from the blue-collar workers. However, neither the satellite towns nor the fancy homes depicted in the films engage with the unexpected, nor are they populated by quirky secondary characters. Sirk leaves the intrigue to the main protagonists, with the supporting cast and locations reflecting the social norms of the time, while Coixet creates idiosyncratic minor characters in order to break with archetypal representations.

Paul Willemen argues that Sirk also employs techniques of non-specificity through his use of Brechtian distanciation in his films, underlining the hypocrisy of the social structure ("Distanciation"). Whether this device is intentional or not, the portrayal of an absurd reality with its hyper-excessive staging and polarised characters sharply contrasts Coixet's fetishisation of the mundane, as she makes the banal worthy of cinematic attention. Coixet plays with audience expectations and genre conventions by placing the melodrama in a 'real' world with dirty clothes, family meals and overlapping dialogue, rather than the distant, controlled 'reality' of Sirk and his contemporaries. The ordinary trumps the alien worlds of racing pilots, oil tycoons, and millionaire playboys who never do laundry, clean their kitchen or eat on screen. As Peter Brooks recounts, the films of Sirk have become "a touchstone of popular domestic melodrama because they consistently offer a stylish *refusal* of the dailiness of the everyday" (*Melodramatic* ix; my emphasis).

Yet, it is precisely the everyday, the run-of-the-mill that Coixet tries to make aesthetically pleasing, fetishizing laundrettes, beauty parlours and eating. The neon-lit diner where Ann orders pineapple cheesecake from a middle-aged waitress remains a million miles away from the iconic and expensive New York eatery The 21 Club, depicted in many Hollywood movies of the 1950s. While the clientele are not 'ordinary' people, their behaviour and surroundings comply with mid-century American societal norms and decorum. In *The Secret Life*, a tacky Chinese restaurant where Hanna (Sarah Polley) meets her future employer remains a million miles from China, and further again from 21. Her new boss (Eddie Marsan) slurps his noodles loudly and eats in a hurry while talking on the phone. However, we rarely see the protagonists of 1950s films eat; rather, the social cachet of a prestigious New York

club merits its inclusion in the narrative, allowing the audience a glimpse of the glamorous world of starlets and bankers drinking cocktails and occasionally consuming an olive. A close-up of the restaurant's famous tablecloths in *Written* functions as a transition from one scene to the next, but it is this foregrounding of place, setting and its significance that creates an inescapable social environment in Sirk's films.

Correspondingly, this social hierarchy infiltrates the lives of Sirk's characters in specific ways. In much of the Hollywood output of the period, protagonists who refuse to conform to social standards are punished, especially if they are female. Although in many conservative contemporary films women who transgress the social code are punished for their actions in some way,[388] this castigation was more explicit in the women's film or melodrama of earlier decades. *Imitation* recounts the rags to riches story of aspiring white actress Lora (Lana Turner) and the parallel tragedy of her loyal black maid, Annie (Juanita Moore), rejected by her light-skinned daughter Sarah-Jane (Susan Kohner). The young girl runs away, earning a living as a dancer in a shady club, rather than pursuing 'honest' domestic work like her mother or more respectable outlets for performance like Lora. Sadly, Sarah-Jane prefers to be labelled as 'white trash' than black. In keeping with the Manichaean characterisation of Sirk's world, 'bad' Sarah-Jane is punished by the loss of her mother in *Imitation*, while 'good' Annie is compensated in death with the funeral of her dreams.

Coixet strives to challenge this good versus bad aspect of melodramatic representation by embodying both qualities within the one character. For example, Ann fulfils a list of things to do before she dies, from the mundane ("do something with my hair") to the future happiness of her young family ("find a wife for Don that the girls like"). Most importantly, she embarks upon an extra-marital affair with a man she has just met (as part of "sleep with other men, just to see what it is like") knowingly breaking his heart ("make someone fall in love with me"), despite having a loving husband (Scott Speedman) waiting in the trailer they call home. At this juncture another director might have depicted such a protagonist as unsympathetic and self-destructive, but Ann's individual circumstances remain at the forefront of the spectator's mind, with her voice-over functioning as a constant reminder that she is going to die. Ann is not castigated for her affair with Lee (Mark Ruffalo)

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[388] For example, *Million Dollar Baby* (Clint Eastwood, 2004), which Coixet was offered the chance to direct. However, Coixet is not averse to 'punishing' female characters for their transgressions: in *Map*, Ryu suffers a spectular, stylised death at the end of the film, although this is relevant to her occupation as an assassin rather than her gender. However, like Ann, she gets to experience a more fulfilling, passionate life before dying.

as she would have been in a 1950s melodrama. In Coixet's humanist version Ann dies, but not without experiencing her reward of a more passionate life. Her impending death is not a punishment but rather a catalyst for change in her ordinary existence. The director refuses to persecute her female characters for their desires, nor does Coixet "spectacularise female suffering or fall back on clichéd class images" (Vidal "Love" 227).

With her bucket list, Ann tries to be like man-eating Marylee Hadley, the reckless and selfish female protagonist of Sirk's *Written*, but her heart of gold and sheer ordinariness prevent her being depicted as morally reprehensible in this desire for pleasure. In contrast, Marylee is condemned to solitude, as the men in her life disappear from her side. First her father dies, then her brother, and finally her beloved Mitch leaves with the long-suffering Lucy. Marylee is left with the family oil business, but denied the desire for men that she so blatantly displays throughout, as she flirts outrageously with Mitch and every other man on screen. The closing sequence depicts her holding a phallic miniature oil well, as she contemplates the life she must now lead. Sirk also aims to depict the duality of her character by allowing the audience to empathize with Marylee, but she has been forcefully polarized throughout the film and remains the villain of the piece. With the public grief and humiliation of Sarah-Jane or the cruel future implied for Marylee, Sirk can be cynical about society, yet in most cases the social order wins out over the individual who must be punished. In contrast, Coixet's films highlight the personal with a more balanced characterisation in order to tone down the Manichaeism of these stock protagonists and create more human and humble personages. However nuanced Sirk's treatment of his fictional characters, as a revisionist auteur, Coixet dialogues with the archetypal protagonists of previous melodramas in order to refresh notions of 'good' and 'bad'.

**Melodramatic Camerawork, Mise-en-Scène and Editing**

Camerawork also provides a point of comparison between Coixet and Sirk. Ann from *My Life* is an adulterer, but Coixet diverts our attention from this fact and implicates the spectator in Ann's point of view, providing first-hand experience of her situation. In order to intensify our identification with the character, she frames her tightly, and allows Polley's face to be the main focus; the close range provides the audience with a greater understanding of her motives and emotions. With Ann's predominant control over the point of view of the narrative of *My Life*, Coixet ensures that her cancer is not the sole source of pathos that

allows us to forgive her philandering, but we empathise with her desire to experience a different life. Paul J. Smith notes that:

> The documentary-style camera work, by Coixet herself, is surprisingly jittery and editing features frequent jump cuts. This also helps to distance the film from the women's pictures of classic Hollywood, with their smoothly seductive style. ("Transnational" n.pag)

While Sirk's more distant camera allows us to observe his protagonists within the social space, as the world they inhabit rather than their individual desire remains the dominant factor in their lives, Coixet includes many close-ups, in order to draw us into the protagonist's emotions. The camera remains at a distance for most of the funeral scene in *Imitation*, allowing the spectator to experience Sarah Jane's devastation within the grand procession, demonstrating her outsider status. Sirk's characters are often further from the camera, as if on stage in the theatre, with close-ups and push-ins reserved for pivotal moments, and with much emphasis on their composition within the space. Contrastingly, Ann's voice dominates the death scene and its aftermath in *My Life*, with a close-up of her face, eyes closed as she embraces death, knowing she has lived. Coixet claims to be uninterested in creating a rigid composition ("Habitación" 38-39),[389] although in spite of the naturalistic movements and blocking of the actors, it remains obvious that some effort is involved in setting up each shot. Director Álex de la Iglesia claims that "[f]ew people work as carefully as she does on the color and composition of every shot", attributing this attention to detail to her background in advertising (in Minder "An Unclassifiable" n.pag), an industry where there is little time for experimenting on set.

However, in the Sirk films, mise-en-scène is tantamount to the unsaid, the repressed and the occult in the narrative. The exiled German director utilised set dressing as a means to express his characters' interior crises in a time of greater self-censorship and repression of emotions, necessitating this heightened theatricality and intentional staging. As critics like

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[389] Discussing the analysis of composition in art and films, Coixet writes "tengo la sensación de que todos estos términos no son más que una cortina de humo para encubrir la ausencia de una emoción verdadera o de la capacidad de experimentar una emoción verdadera; quizás me equivoco, después de todo también hay grandes artistas que poseen, además, el vocabulario necesario para hablar de lo que hacen, aunque no sé por qué, para mí el silencio de Hopper respecto a su obra es más explícito, que, pongamos por caso, Paul Klee disertando sobre el vacío positivo y otras lindezas" (Coixet "Habitación" 39) ["I get the feeling that all these terms are little more than smokescreens to hide the absence of real emotion or the capacity to experience real emotion; maybe I'm wrong, after all there are great artists who also possess the vocabulary to talk about what they do"]. While this quotation marks Coixet's resistance to psychoanalytic analysis of her films in favour of the examination of emotion, it also reveals her awareness of how directors and artists speak, noting that some are better than others. However, she does not maintain the public "silence" of Hopper, as this thesis strives to demonstrate.

Elsaesser ("Tales") have noted, the hyper-expressive staging results in films rife for psychoanalysis, with every visual detail adding another layer to the dialogue. The lavishly decorated interiors are loaded with meaning, and characters are often united or distanced from their environment and the people that populate it through costumes of complementary colours. The spectators can choose to submerge themselves in this semiotic paradise or abstain from analysis and merely enjoy the painterly stylization offered by the films. Coixet's pared-down approach to interiors and locations is decidedly more realist, or simply put, more normal than the stylized, almost parodic world of Sirk, as he offers a subtle critique of American society in the 1950s. Coixet elects to draw specific attention to the alternative and the eccentric, allowing the camera to linger on details for just long enough, inviting the active spectator to absorb these minutiae if they so desire. Overall, the same attention to detail emanates from both directors' work but while Coixet guides our eye to various aspects of her staging, pinpointing a rich detail amongst the sparseness, Sirk provides a more static mise-en-scène, allowing spectators to zoom in where they choose.

However, while creating his lush mise-en-scène in the 1950s, Sirk did not have hand-held cameras and thus his photography remains more static and smooth than Coixet's. The camera is mobile, but usually motivated by character movement or the need to include some aspect of the decor, often a mirror, which will tell us something essential about a character or merely offer another elegant fixed shooting option. As the previous chapter revealed, Coixet exploits the possibilities of today's more portable technology, with her unsteady shots and almost incessant movement. Operating the camera on shoots allows her to have fewer crew members on set, thereby creating greater intimacy between the actors during emotional takes.[390]

Although Coixet is less involved in editing, a process where a film can be rewritten completely, certain traits have become characteristic of her films, pointing to a desire for stylistic coherence across her filmography despite working with different editors.[391] She also utilises postproduction technology in order to express the melodramatic mode and exploit the full potential of her medium. Within Sirk's world of classical editing, transitions between

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[390] Cruz discusses this as one of the advantages of working with Coixet on the *Elegy* DVD.

[391] Chapter 5 noted that Coixet dislikes the editing process and does not work consistently with any one editor, although Irene Blecua has become her most frequent collaborator, having worked on *Viaje*, *The Secret Life* and *Map*. For example, in the films studied here Coixet works with three different editors: Ernest Blasi (*A los*), Lisa Robison (*My Life*) and Blecua, yet, the coherent style across her body of work suggests that Coixet authors the edit as much as other directors.

shots are fluid, and frequent montage sequences condense events into a shorter period of time. The opening of *Magnificent* employs rapid cuts to involve the audience in a boat crash, with the sheer speed of the boat and the short shots increasing the tension and the powerlessness felt by the spectator, as the crash becomes inevitable. Water splashes against the camera, followed by a very tight shot of playboy Bob Merrick (Rock Hudson) in the boat, everything goes white, then an extreme close-up the boat spinning and a shot of his female friend screaming on the shoreline. In contrast, in the opening sequence of *The Secret Life*, the slowness of the cinematography intensifies the powerlessness of the spectator and heightens the drama of the situation. The transitions between the shots are also slower and dreamier, with Coixet using quick fadeouts, giving the idea that this is a memory or flashback. She also uses more extreme close-ups on Josef's face as he is engulfed in the flames. The effect mimics the smoky, hazy experience of a blaze, along with the echoey, tinny voices of the crew members, adding to the veracity of the filmed experience. Although slow motion is not a new invention in cinema, its use marks a more postmodern type of editing, inserting an effect of unreality and announcing the presence of the author. However, Coixet's use of slow motion in *The Secret Life* ultimately serves to provide a life-like, affective experience for the spectator, intensifying the moment and emphasizing the melodramatic.

Similarly, both directors use transitions and montage elements to create distinct effects. For example, *Magnificent* and *Written* both employ a calendar to show the passing of time, as the dates flick forward or indeed backwards as each shot fades into the next. Although this typical use of montage is not life-like, it functions as an accepted device in cinema, retaining as much invisibility as possible in the editing of the material. Coixet employs a more staccato form of transition when Ann sits in the grim hospital waiting room, separating the shots with jump cuts, and using the clock on the wall as a visual marker of time. In this clip she also inserts an unintroduced flashback, as the bespectacled nurse remembers her childhood, without any calendar pages rolling backwards or a dreamy haze appearing on screen. Comparing both methods we see that Sirk's creates a more fluid effect to preserve the suspension of disbelief, while Coixet's approach gives a harsher, but more contemporary division of time. Using a jump cut to condense material intensifies the melodramatic aspect by pinpointing the important shots for the spectator, yet the visible editing reminds us that this is a deliberate feature created by the director. Coixet transgresses the fourth wall, bringing melodrama up to date, utilising classical representation through a postmodern system of signification where the medium of film is not 'invisible'. In this way,

Coixet announces her presence as an author, reflecting on the melodramas of the past and inserting herself into the tradition.

**Melodramatic Themes and Tropes: Death and Doctors**

Reflecting on this 'insertion', Coixet also upholds certain thematic conventions in her melodramatic films, yet dialogues with them to create a revisionist take on the classics. Following on from the theme of retribution, rather than depict death as a punishment or 'fate', Coixet engages with this well-worn trope in order to update melodramatic representations that continue to the present day. It matters little where she lives or where she is from, Ann becomes a part of the myth of the dying woman that has been glorified on screen throughout various incarnations and evolutions of the woman's film. Many illness narratives portray a woman dying, by charting the progression of her illness visually as she 'wastes away' and by depicting her death on the screen. This practice has evolved little from earlier melodramatic representations such as *Dark Victory* (Edmund Goulding, 1939), which Paul J. Smith sees as a closer relation to *My Life* than *Stella Dallas* ("Mi vida" n.pag).[392] On a textual level, Coixet engages with Varda's *Cléo de 5 a 7* (1962) for her portrayal of Ann in *My Life*.[393] Adrian Martin writes:

> It is easy to hail Varda as a pioneer of feminist cinema –a label she resists–but *Cléo from 5 to 7* was, way before its time, already a complex "postfeminist" portrait of a woman. Cléo is, after all, no idealized archetype. As a central movie character, she is an unlikely, surprising choice. Cléo loves and suffers –and it is hard not to identify with her agonized wait for the medical word that will decide her future– but she's also petulant, frivolous, vain, scatty. ("Cléo" n.pag)

Cléo is a beautiful pop star with a luxurious lifestyle, yet Coixet chooses a poor young mother whose life ambitions are reduced to learning Mandarin in her car on the way to work. Yet it seems that Coixet adopts a similar approach to characterisation, drawing on Varda's protagonist for her human rather than archetypal traits. While Cléo's imminent diagnosis gives her pause for reflection, Ann's impending death spurs her into action, in a desire to experience a more passionate life before it is too late. Both films end with their protagonist's

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[392] However, this chapter employs *Stella Dallas* as an example of a 'classic' that has received considerable critical attention, whereas *Dark Victory* exists as a more subversive and progressive portrayal of women and female friendship, despite Judith's (Bette Davis) death at the film's end.

[393] Unlike Ann, Cléo (Corinne Marchand) awaits test results from her doctor, believing she has terminal cancer, and the film ends before she receives her diagnosis. However, Cléo's refusal to conform to society's expectations places her in a similar category to Ann from *My Life*.

journey complete; Cléo has re-evaluated her life in the hope it will continue, while Ann rejects the deathbed goodbye scene for a parallel existence that fulfils some of her dreams.

Illness narratives persist as generic staples and 'dying young' narratives remained intertwined with motherhood through to *Love Story* (Arthur Hiller, 1970), as Jenny (Ali McGraw) discovers she has cancer during medical tests for infertility. The dying mother trope segues into contemporary dramas such as *Terms of Endearment* (James L. Brooks, 1983), *Beaches* (Garry Marshall, 1988) or *Stepmom* (Chris Columbus, 1998).[394] However, it seems the protagonists of the illness narrative have decreased in age as the trend progresses.[395] More recently, British-Irish co-production *Death of a Superhero* (Ian Fitzgibbon, 2011) focuses on teenage cancer patient Donald (Thomas Sangster) as he struggles to lose his virginity before dying. In a Hollywood version, *Now is Good* (Ol Parker, 2012) stars Dakota Fanning as a teenage girl in the same predicament as Donald, who makes a to-do list like Ann from *My Life*. Although these films focus on younger characters, Coixet constantly reminds us of Ann's youth in the film, giving her childish traits such as a penchant for sweets and glasses of milk.

Notwithstanding this position within the 'terminal illness movie', Coixet's portrayal of death has evolved throughout her filmography. Earlier heritage film *A los* depicts a traditionally melodramatic death as Matilde (Ollala Moreno) perishes before our eyes in the arms of her unrequited lover, el Maestro (Patxi Freytez). The literary-influenced heritage drama comes replete with all the trappings of period detail and mise-en-scène, which extend to this typical portrayal of romantic love and death. Since then, however, Coixet has taken a more subversive approach to genre expectations of both critics and audiences alike, with *My Life* as prime example.[396]

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[394] Regarding the dying mother trope, *Stepmom* depicts a mother (Susan Sarandon) and stepmother (Julia Roberts) negotiating the parenting of two young teenagers when Sarandon's character is diagnosed with terminal cancer. *Terms of Endearment* focuses on the strained yet strong mother-daughter bond between Aurora (Shirley MacLaine) and Emma (Debra Winger) who similarly suffers a terminal cancer. Friendship rather than motherhood remains the focus in *Beaches*, which recounts a lifelong, complex friendship between singer CC (Bette Midler) and lawyer Hilary (Barbara Hershey). The film leads up to Hilary's death from cancer, leaving behind her daughter to be cared for by CC.

[395] *A Walk to Remember* (Adam Shankman, 2002) stars pop singer Mandy Moore as a leukaemia patient, where the 1950s setting engages superficially with the high point of family melodrama. Similarly, *My Sister's Keeper* (Nick Cassavetes, 2008), which Coixet was offered as a director-for-hire, depicts a family court battle over organ donation when one child suffers from leukaemia.

[396] Coixet's later film *Elegy* (2008) also depicts a female protagonist suffering from cancer. However, since *Elegy* is primarily a literary adaptation and does not fit as neatly into the category of melodrama as the films discussed here, this chapter omits a discussion of the death tropes contained in the film. It does not deal directly with a doctor-patient dynamic, although the main protagonist Consuela (Penélope Cruz) comments on her relationship to hospitals and her anxieties around surgery. *Elegy* also

Coixet refuses to portray Ann dying or her funeral, with her death signalled only by a white screen. Throughout the film, voice-over keeps Ann in a liminal space between life and death for the entirety of the film, omnipresent through this voice after this invisible death. In this way, Coixet eschews the manipulative tear-filled ending, where the characters grieve on screen. As an older reference point, *Dark Victory* stars Bette Davis as Judith Traherne, a spirited socialite diagnosed with a brain tumour, who ends up marrying her doctor, Frederick Steele (George Brent) before she dies. Like Ann, Judith keeps her illness a secret at first. After revealing it, Judith does not disclose that she is close to death and dies alone in her bed, the screen fading to grey, similar to Coixet's white screen. With this cinematic ancestor in mind, Ann controls her own death. There is no death scene, no funeral; Ann watches her family from bed, separated from them by a beaded curtain not dissimilar to the diamond shaped teardrops that appear in the opening credits of Sirk's *Imitation* in what Vidal calls "a non-ironic take on the tears of melodrama motif" ("Love" 232). Chapter 3 noted her childhood obsession with "cortinas de colores" yet, simultaneously, this link to Sirk strengthens the interplay of auteurs and her connections to classic melodrama.[397]

Nonetheless, the representation of death in *My Life* diverges greatly from *Imitation*. As the scene progresses, we watch the future unfold without Ann, yet directed by her voice-over, lending a poignancy that an opulent funeral scene could not have given. In contrast, *Imitation* depicts one of the most lavish cinema funerals ever filmed, with all-white pomp for Annie, and the emotional return of Sarah-Jane, who has arrived too late to save her relationship with her mother. Neale writes:

> Time in general and the timing of the coincidence of points of view in particular are indeed crucial-not that the coincidence is always too late (though it may be, of course), but rather that it is always *delayed.* Tears can come whether the coincidence comes too late or just in time, provided there is a delay, and the possibility, therefore, that it *may* come too late. Tears in either case are still 'the product of powerlessness', though not necessarily always because 'it is clear how the present state of affairs should be changed-and that this change is impossible'.[398] ("Melodrama" 11)

Neale contends that this idea of timing, along with coincidence and the spectator knowing

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depicts a deathbed scene, where George O'Hearn (Dennis Hopper) kisses his old friend Kepesh (Ben Kingsley) before dying, in a role-reversal of the dying woman trope and an affirmation of the importance of male friendship to the narrative.

[397] Coixet discusses her "obsessions" on the *Map* DVD director's commentary.

[398] In this article, Neale discusses Franco Moretti's ideas of agnition, or the retraction and reestablishment of points of view. Moretti claims it is "a moving device when it comes too late" ("Kindergarten" 160) and that "tears are always the product of powerlessness" (162). Neale agrees with both points but feels further qualification is needed, as per the quotation above.

more than the protagonists form the most important aspects of melodrama, with tears providing the acknowledgement that it is "too late". However, Ann's final voice-over in a recorded message addressed to Lee provides a sense of completion, indicating that Ann lived a life of passion before she died. Her voice-over provides a parable, warning Lee not to leave things "too late", and to experience life before it passes him by. Although *Imitation* provides a parable, Annie's death also functions as a punishment for the errant Sarah-Jane rather than as a reminder that life is precious.

Related to the theme of death and illness within melodrama, figures of authority such as doctors (or lawyers or police) are often depicted as the rational, benevolent voices of reason within melodramatic films, yet Coixet chooses to unpick this dynamic and portray the doctor-patient relationship in a more equal, humanist manner.[399] Rather than portray the functional, expository doctor characters of many classic Hollywood films, Coixet provides fully-fledged medical protagonists or an exploration of the doctor-patient dynamic. Doane writes:

> Medicine introduces a detour in the male's relation to the female body through an eroticization of the very process of knowing the female subject. Thus, while the female body is despecularized, the doctor-patient relation is, somewhat paradoxically, eroticized. (*The Desire* 40)

Coixet, however, seeks to redress the gender balance, providing male and female doctors and counsellors who, like their patients, struggle to communicate emotion and relate on a human level. *Things* articulates a dissatisfaction with patriarchal doctor-patient relations and hospital conditions. Ann (Lili Taylor) gets angry with the lack of menu choice for her hospital meals and expresses distrust and dislike for her psychiatrist (Kathleen Edwards). Ann reacts with great disappointment to her psychiatrist's pedantic approach to her mental state. Examining the portraits of female literary figures displayed on the office walls, Ann says "I thought you really had read Nina Berberova" to the doctor in a dismissive tone.[400] However, her reliance on the doctor is highlighted when she later tries to contact her in a moment of crisis, but ends up speaking to Don (Andrew McCarthy) on the crisis helpline, gaining more from her encounter with a volunteer than from a trained professional. Although he is not officially a doctor, Don provides the social and sensual healing that Ann requires after her relationship breaks down;

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[399] Ituarte-Pérez makes specific reference to *The Secret Life* and the patient-doctor relationship within melodrama ("Melodrama" 146-154) based on Doane's 'medical discourse film' analysis. Although this section touches on similar areas, the focus is primarily comparative, discussing Coixet's treatment of the patient-doctor relationship as generic subversion within her humanist mandate.

[400] Russian-born Berberova (1901-1993) lived most of her life in exile in Paris until she moved to the US during the 1950s.

they discuss emotions on the phone and in person, and they have sex, which is not depicted on the screen. More importantly, they are filmed holding each other, bodies entwined, each remedying the loneliness felt by the other.

Similarly, doctors and patients are important to the flashback structure of *A los*, which centres on a young man (Patxi Freytez) who follows in his father's footsteps to become a doctor, owing to his childhood love for his neighbour, Matilde. In a certain manner, he engages in Doane's eroticized doctor-patient relationship; as a teenager he actively pursues romance, and leaves love letters and flowers for Matilde to find, but a combination of bad timing and her conniving younger sister prevent his obsession from becoming a reality. Yet, as Matilde's confidant and physician, he fulfils the desire to know and, in some way, possess the female subject; as a friend he is privy to her innermost thoughts, while as a doctor he is tasked with curing her body when she is ill. When she dies of a mystery sickness which is linked to hysteria through her discovery of husband León's affair with Valeria, the trainee doctor renounces medicine and destroys his textbooks. He subseuquently earns a living as a teacher to become the older Maestro (Julio Núñez) of the film's opening sequence. He only begins to deal with this trauma years later when Matilde's nephew seeks a diagnosis for his sick wife, and the Maestro returns to the site of the origins of his desire; the house next door.

The emphasis shifts back to the patient in *My Life* as the frustration with the doctor-patient hierarchy seen in *Things* continues. Yet Coixet persists in portraying the emotional struggle faced by doctors who must give 'bad news' to their patients. Ann demands humane treatment in the hospital when undergoing tests, answering back to grumpy, overworked nurses who leave her waiting for hours and are reluctant to help alleviate her worries that someone collected her children from school. Just as she demands decency and courtesy from the hospital, Ann exercises her right to a 'good death' as part of her palliative care, despite the appeals of her doctor. Casado da Rocha discusses Ann's "secret patient autonomy" in the film ("Stars" 334-336), as the shy medic (Julian Richings) gives the young mother her diagnosis in a waiting area, and allows her to make all the decisions regarding her treatment. The doctor even takes on the duties of a lawyer or probate executor after Ann's death, distributing taped birthday messages to her daughters. In this way, Coixet allows us to empathise with the doctor's dilemma when delivering terminal diagnoses, rather than portraying a character who merely reports bad news as a plot device and leaves. Martin-Márquez discusses the lateral framing of this particular scene as it places Ann on an equal footing to her doctor ("Engagement" 551-552), as the patient directs the treatment and

provides an example of how physicians should be considerate of terminally-ill people when delivering bad news. Yet, Coixet also chooses to portray the doctor alone at certain points, before administering Ann's ultrasound, or in his office sorting out her tapes after she dies. This individual framing allows him more agency, rather than becoming a mere stock character, and invites the spectator to empathise and identify with his position.

However, on a more subtle level, with *The Secret Life* Coixet interacts with what Doane calls "medical discourse" films, a subgenre of the woman's film (*The Desire* 38-69). Sirk's (and indeed Stahl's) *Magnificent* provides a complex narrative subsumed in medical rhetoric and imagery, as Helen Phillips (Jane Wyman) loses her husband Dr Phillips to a heart attack when an ambulance arrives "too late" to save him because rich playboy Bob Merrick crashed his speedboat. On learning about Dr Phillips's philanthropic life philosophy and after causing another accident which leaves Helen blind, the remorseful Bob trains as a doctor, extensively researching blindness and winning the love of Helen, much like his counterpart in *Dark Victory*. Helen's blindness keeps her from guessing his true identity until the film's end, when she refuses to marry him. Yet she subsequently falls into a coma, requiring brain surgery that only Bob can perform, waking up with her vision restored and her love returned. Coixet turns this relationship inside out with *The Secret Life*, as oil rig worker Josef (Tim Robbins) lies temporarily blinded after attempting to rescue his suicidal best friend from a fire. However, since the friend's wife (Leonor Watling) had been cheating on her husband with Josef, he is not entirely vindicated for his efforts to save his friend, who had recently discovered the truth. When nurse Hanna (Sarah Polley) arrives on the rig, the pair become each other's physician, with Hanna tending to Josef's physical wounds and emotional needs, while he helps unlock the psychological trauma she underwent during the Balkan conflict. Like Helen, he falls in love while blind, never having seen Hanna's face. However, Coixet also aligns Josef with Bob Merrick, as he feels guilt for his friend's death and responsibility for Hanna after she breaks down and tells him she was raped and tortured. Yet, the young nurse also feels remorse for the friend she could not save, who bled to death from her wounds. Josef goes about 'researching' Hanna, as Bob researches Helen's blindness, and as Frederick researches Judith's tumour, engaging Doane's "eroticization of the very process of knowing the female subject" (*The Desire* 40). Josef's search leads him to Copenhagen and Hanna's former counsellor, Inge (Julie Christie), who she visited after her horrific ordeal in Sarajevo. This interplay of doctor-counsellor-patient figures adds greater nuance to the *Magnificent* template, which ostensibly represents a fairy tale win which the man rescues the woman "in

the nick of time", to use Neale's phrasing. Sirk highlights the specific, and the extraordinary, going as far as the complex medical jargon of *Magnificent* with its Hudson Burrs and haematomas, a device that reaches a visual and aural saturation point as the doctors 'scrub in' for Helen's big operation. This unfamiliar rhetoric lends an exotic tone to his characters' speech, keeping them at a distance from the 'ordinary' spectator, whereas Coixet's doctors speak plainly.

Owing to this sensitivity to the contemporary doctor-patient dynamic, Coixet's films are now used as part of biomedical courses, with *My Life* and *The Secret Life* attracting attention for their approach to patient relations and issues of confidentiality.[401] Inge gives Josef an opportunity to see a video of Hanna's testimony, breaking all confidentiality protocol. Although this seems to be more of a test of Josef's intentions towards Hanna and he declines to watch the video, she still offers to show him a photo of her former patient and most likely gives him her address so he can find her before the film ends. The previous chapter analysed this scene as part of an affective agenda, yet it simultaneously provides a revisionist portrayal of medical professionals as part of Coixet's humanist approach to characterisation. In her analysis of *The Secret Life*, Katrina Cook remains centred on the counsellor's perspective, noting that Hanna's reticence causes confusion and impatience for viewers of the film, similar to the experience of counsellors when treating a client ("The Movie" 335).[402] Coixet's humane portrayal of doctors combats the often impersonal, archetypal authority figures common to classic Hollywood films. Further to this, Cook also notes that counsellors need to develop "self-care techniques" when dealing with patients "in order to prevent *compassion fatigue* or *vicarious trauma*" (335, my emphases). Additionally, Selva Masoliver uses similar language to comment on Josef's temptation to look at the tapes of Hanna's testimony as a symptom of "the sensorial anaesthesia that overpowers us".[403] It seems that through her use of melodramatic technique and medical discourse Coixet consciously creates "vicarious trauma" for the viewer in order to draw us out of the compassion fatigue or "sensorial anaesthesia" we are experiencing, since we are dismissive of and desensitised to emotional films. In doing

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[401] Various articles deal with Coixet's films from this perspective, namely Casado da Rocha ("Stars"; "Primacy") Belling ("Bad News"), Cook ("The Movie") and Fernández Morales ("Civil War"). These analyses highlight the humanity depicted in the on-screen relationships despite their fictional origins. Addtionally, Rivera-Cordero ("Rebuilding") discusses issues of disability and trauma in *The Secret Life*.

[402] Despite her focus on the patient-counsellor relationship, Cook makes some shrewd textual observations about *The Secret Life*, namely that water appears in almost every scene and functions almost as another character in the film ("The Movie" 332).

[403] Discussing Josef's conversation with Inge in the IRCT archive room, Selva Masoliver describes "la anestesia sensorial que nos apodera" ("Los límites" 46).

so, she asks us to empathise with patient and counsellor, portraying them both as vulnerable individuals, and exploring the duality of the doctor-patient identity and the potential for healing present that is present in each person. Revising the medical discourse film forms part of Coixet's desire to stamp her personality and creative vision onto these genre films, as she exploits the melodramatic mode and typical narrative tropes to produce a recognisable story with auteurist idiosyncrasies. As fictional characters, the psychiatrist in *Things,* the lovelorn young medic in *A los*, the timid doctor from *My Life*, and the counsellor in *The Secret Life* are allowed to bend certain rules, yet their hubris reveals their humanity and point of interest for bioethical readings of the films.

**Auteur Melodrama: Rewriting, Restaging and Re-Shaping**

Moving from Coixet's characters to her auteur characteristics, Lorenzo Torres Hortelano cites the director as a prime example of auteur melodrama in the Hispanic tradition (*Directory* 66-67). As noted in Chapter 3, she can be an auteur at home in Spain where her auteur persona is recognisable to those familiar with her work, while she remains a solid and reliable genre film director abroad (Vidal "Love" 221).[404] Auteur melodrama thus represents a highly marketable category, especially in regard to the exportability of a film, with this dual appeal or "double passport" that Vidal mentions ("Love" 221) making for a different reception (and marketing strategy) at home and abroad. For example, Coixet defies or subverts genre expectations by grounding her films in a personal microcosm, with imagery and cinematography that span her oeuvre, such as the laundrette that appears in almost every film and using jump cuts to condense time. This desire to connect her films stylistically marks an auteurist intent, as Coixet firmly places her stamp on the mise-en-scène to highlight her authorial presence. This section will focus on these distinctions as another facet of her auteur agenda.

In making modifications to the melodramatic mode, Coixet is commenting on the history of the genre and providing her auteurist take on it. After exploring the limits of

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[404] Torres Hortelano also exemplifies Almodóvar, Bigas Luna, Alejandro González Iñárittu and Julio Medem as part of his auteur melodrama category. He notes the connection between Coixet's work and Almodóvar, on textual and industrial levels, owing to their similar revisionist tactics the fact that Almodóvar's company El Deseo produced Coixet's *The Secret Life* (*Directory* 66-67). At a University of Leeds seminar in 2012 Stephanie Dennison commented that El Deseo have enjoyed particular success with transnational melodrama, a category which Coixet's *Things*, *My Life* and *The Secret Life* fulfil industrially.

melodrama in her early films, she chooses to engage in a more ironic approach to archetypal melodrama in *Le Trench Rouge*, her contribution to the collaborative film *Paris, Je t'aime* (2006). The short film flies as close to irony as she dares and functions as a semi-parody of melodrama set in Paris, a city commonly depicted as the official world headquarters of romance. The director chooses to embrace some obvious melodramatic clichés, for example the main protagonist (Sergio Castellito) dancing with his mistress (Leonor Watling) on the banks of the Seine, or her subsequent collapse on receipt of his text message ending their relationship. This moment represents a knowing nod to Truffaut's *The Woman Next Door* (1981), placing the short within a continuum of auteur films, as well as melodramatic tradition.[405] This conscious intertextuality and unashamed engagement with the tradition of romantic cinema invites a cine-literate audience to enjoy further references to Truffaut's auteur credentials as Miranda Richardson's character hums the music from *Jules et Jim* (1962); we can relish these forbidden melodramatic clichés as Coixet depicts them with a wry smile.[406]

This provocative approach also allows Ann from *My Life* to dismiss *Mildred Pierce* as a "stupid story", ignoring or perhaps rejecting the parallels with her own life and the obvious significance it holds for her mother, who cries watching the film. Her nameless mother (Deborah Harry) enjoys the narrative, distilling her version into a story for her young granddaughters, but Ann dismisses the ideology involved, of "mothers making dumb-ass sacrifices". In this way, Coixet can be a part of the melodramatic past by addressing its history and traditional narrative trajectory, but can simultaneously distance herself from it through subversion. Similarly, the somewhat macabre portrayal of Ann handpicking the new surrogate mother seems like a classic *deus ex machina* resolution for *My Life*, but in fact this device comes from the source text, "Pretending the Bed is a Raft", by Nanci Kincaid (1997). Coixet's Ann succeeds in pairing off her soon-to-be-widowed husband to another of her choice, however credible or incredible this may be, echoing King Vidor's *Stella Dallas*.

Not only does Coixet place importance on the image; the dialogue of her films also reflect a desire to engage with the melodramatic mode and uncover its potential for a more

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[405] *The Woman Next Door/La femme d'a côté* (1981) tells the story of two ex-lovers, Bernard (Gerard Depardieu) and Mathilde (Fanny Ardant) who, years later, find themselves living as next-door-neighbours in a small French village. A voice-over narrates Truffaut's tale of rekindled passions and tragedy, similar to Coixet's 'silent' images of adultery and death dubbed over with the narrator's voice in *Le Trench Rouge*.

[406] Coixet provides the voice-over for the song hummed by Richardson's character, arguably furthering her personal link to Truffaut and auteur cinema, even though she is not credited for this contribution.

contemporary treatment of emotions. Berger notes that "seeing comes before words" (*Ways* 7), yet we are restricted by prescribed language in our interpretation of the world. The title of *The Secret Life* alludes to this facet, as the film deals with the inability to express emotion and the unlocking of past trauma through talking and enacting certain melodramatic clichés. However, Coixet's dramas stand out for their lack of on-screen tears, finding other ways to inject a sense of the melodramatic mode. In *The Secret Life*, melodramatic discourse dominates certain scenes between Hanna and Josef, forming a narrative device as entrenched in our compartmentalised minds as the language we use to discuss visual culture.

Yet, this specific way of speaking works to highlight its own artificiality, and Vidal discusses the use of "oral performance", citing speeches that simultaneously embrace and disavow melodramatic excess, in which characters struggle to communicate their feelings in "elaborate musings, off-the-wall dialogues, and small stories" in which they reveal intimate secrets in indirect ways ("Love" 231). For example, Josef finds Hanna at the end of the film and they engage in a melodramatic dialogue, referencing the last scenes of *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942) and the tears so frequent to melodrama. Although *Casablanca* does not qualify as a 'woman's film', its status as a quotable classic leaves it open to reuse and revision. As Rick (Humphrey Bogart) convinces Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman) to get on a plane out of Casablanca with her freedom-fighter husband Lazlo (Paul Heinreid), he says that if she stayed with him, she would regret it "maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon and for the rest of your life", in what has become one of the most quotable lines of dialogue in a Hollywood film. Rick pushes Ilsa away, in a scene famous for its 'romance', but also at a time where the US Production Code would not allow a film to show a woman leaving her husband. Unencumbered by censorship, Coixet's scene takes place in a scrap yard with an old boat decaying in the background, a marked contrast to the night-time, wartime airport scene of Curtiz's film, or perhaps a comment on *Casablanca*'s status as a relic. In *The Secret Life*, Josef hesitantly asks Hanna to go away with him, becoming more certain as the conversation progresses:

> Josef: I thought ... you and I, maybe we could go away somewhere... together. One of these days. Today. Right now. [Pause] Come with me.
> Hanna: No. I don't think that's going to be possible.
> Josef: Why not?
> Hanna: Um, because I think that if we go away to some place together... I am afraid that, um, one day, maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow either, but one day, suddenly, I may begin to cry and cry so very much that nothing or nobody can stop me and the tears will fill the room and I won't be able to breathe, and I will pull you down with me and we will both drown.
> Josef: I'll learn how to swim, Hanna. I swear. I'll learn to swim.

The characters seem unsure of what they are saying at first, hesitantly adopting the clichéd

language of melodrama to articulate their emotions.[407] Hanna and Josef are unable to openly discuss their real feelings, so they use this melodramatic discourse to allegorise and allude to their emotions. Anabel Martín comments on the moral language used in the film, and elucidates her argument that the melodramatic discourse acts as a way for the characters to talk through their otherwise unvocalised problems ("Los silencios" 279), while Ituarte-Pérez discusses Hanna's rejection of the 'talking cure' of therapy ("Melodrama" 152), furthering the idea that Hanna does not have the words to describe her emotions and must appropriate them from other sources. This inability to fully express emotions brings the affective into play, as Coixet's embodied camera and haptic imagery allows us to get closer to the stifled, suffering protagonists.

Martín also notes that Coixet utilizes melodrama as a politicized testimony, in a search for a reparation or cure for the trauma of the Yugoslavian war of the 1990s ("Los silencios" 290). Camporesi makes a similar comment on the "criticality" and subtle layers of meaning involved in her productions ("A ambos" 56) which, according to Martín, allow the films to restore our sense of the "sacred" ("Los silencios" 291). Slobodian writes:

> Coixet is unable to sustain a nonconformist slant through to her film's conclusion, eventually reverting back to standard shots and preordained gender roles. Perhaps in her quest to appeal to all audiences, to be a citizen of nowhere, Coixet cannot conceive of an ending that does not reflect a standard love story. ("Analyzing" 174)

However, rather than "conform" to a romantic ending, Coixet provides redemption for Hanna, giving her a chance to experience a more sensual life, using melodramatic discourse as a script, or a 'talking cure' that can unlock true emotions. This language simultaneously provides links to film history, as the spectator recognises snatches of dialogue.

Like her classical counterparts, Coixet uses *melos* to skilfully tread the fine line between drama and melodrama. However, she takes a gentler approach by incorporating music to subtly enhance the emotions conveyed through dialogue or images, rather than manipulating the viewer with swelling overtures designed to bring on the tears. For example, Sirk's *Magnificent* and Marshall's *Beaches* provide a swelling motif to intensify the emotions at play. Coixet employs more subtle methods, such as the music played on a glass harp in *My Life*,[408] a device that seems to be part of Ann's intersubjectivity with the protagonist, as a type of music that denotes "altered mental and physical states", bridging a connection to the

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[407] For similar views on melodrama, and in-depth analysis of film dialogue see Sarah Kozloff (*Overhearing*).

[408] This music was composed by Alfonso Villalonga, whose collaborations with Coixet will be discussed in Chapter 8.

sensual (Martin-Márquez "Engagement" 558). Discussing the soundtrack of *Things,* the director remarks:

> para mí la música debe guardar una correspondencia total con la imagen y ambas tienen que mantener un protagonismo entrerelazado: no pueden ir cada uno por su lado.[409] (in Heredero *Espejo* 300)

Rather than manipulating their emotions completely like the melodramas of the 1950s or 1980s, Coixet's desire for a greater interrelation of music and image is realised in *My Life* through the glass harp, as a signal for the affective.[410]

Yet, closer examination of Coixet's films reveals an intense relationship to the sound design of each production, using only sound technicians that she inherently trusts to create the ambience she desires (Hart "Sea breezes"), regardless of the musical score. Rather, the contemporary music chosen represents the "auteur music" and announces the director's presence within the film,[411] while the carefully-crafted score heightens the affective mode at work. In a 1997 interview, Sirk claimed that "the word 'melodrama' has rather lost its meaning nowadays: people tend to lose the 'melos' in it, the music" (in Halliday *Sirk on Sirk* 107), yet Coixet aims to rediscover and reinforce the relationship between music and emotion through her close attention to the original score of her films.

**Conclusion**

Coixet explores the possibilities of classical melodrama, but does not exclude other modes from her narratives; her multi-layered work defies pigeonholing, and represents a new postmodern form of melodramatic expression, where classical conventions are respected and upheld but where the clichés of the past are ultimately avoided or, at least, parodied. Yet, she demonstrates her respect for the past in her contemporary traditionalist approach to genre revisionism, using techniques of intertextuality and pastiche, but refusing to fully engage in ironic practices. Whereas Sirk employs the melodramatic mode to subtly critique society, with the benefit of greater creative freedom, advances in technology and more liberal attitudes to social issues, Coixet can use it to critique cinematic representations of society. The distance she maintains from the classical canon assures the contemporary spectator that they are not

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[409] ["For me the music has to match the image perfectly and both have to maintain an interrelated significance: they cannot go their separate ways"].

[410] Martin-Márquez has discussed this in greater depth ("Engagement" 558).

[411] "Auteur music" is a term used by Claudia Gorbman ("Auteur"), and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.

watching a weepie or a chick-flick but something more in keeping with the American indie tradition. Using these subtle, tongue-in-cheek references and stylish cinematography, Coixet makes films for lovers and haters of melodrama alike, retaining just enough of the melodramatic tradition to appeal to a cine-literate audience, while preserving the love and loss we expect from the narrative. This understated rewriting process represents Coixet's auteurist reinterpretation of old material, re-presenting it in a way that fits with her contemporary, revisionist agenda. The next chapter will examine how she uses intertextuality as a tool for revision outside of melodrama.

**Chapter 8: The Interplay of Authors, Art and Literature: Auteur Referencing**

Although generic revisionism engages with an adaptive mode of filmmaking, another important part of Coixet's auteur identity is represented by her intertextual tendencies and increasing interest in adaptation. The next two chapters will explore intertextuality and adaptation as an extension of Coixet's auteurist agenda and investigate the interplay of auteurs inherent to this mode of production.[412] She sets up a dialogue with writers, artists and filmmakers she admires through intertextual and adaptive strategies and, despite the focus on work by others, she manages to augment her claims to authorship in the process. Adaptation Studies has remained closer to literary studies than Film Studies, owing to the origins of the latter within English Literature departments of universities and the multidisciplinary use of film as a teaching tool for 'reading' literature.[413] However useful this approach to students and critics, this allegiance has engendered what Robert Stam calls a "standard rhetoric" of adaptation criticism that "has often deployed an elegiac discourse of loss, lamenting what has been 'lost' in the transition from novel to film, while ignoring what has been 'gained'" (*Literature* 3). Accordingly, the 'gains' made by Coixet's intertextual filmmaking will be explored in this particular chapter, in order to propose that she appropriates the work of others in a complex system of auteurist referencing and rewriting, rather than transposing the material from page to screen.

Although this represents a common aim of many adapters, Coixet's implicit and explicit use of intertextuality as a form of writing help to challenge what Linda Hutcheon calls "the denigration of adaptation as a secondary mode" (*A Theory* xiii). Overall, these final chapters perpetuate the prevailing and pervasive trend within Adaptation Studies of close analysis of both the adapted and source material, yet, rather than make a value judgement, or point out 'losses', the playfulness of the auteur adapter will be explored, and the "process, ideology and methodology" that Julie Sanders identifies as the tenets of adaptation study

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[412] While intertextuality has been explored by scholars across disciplines, notably by Gérard Genette (*Palimpsestes*, 1982), this chapter is based primarily on the arguments of Hutcheon and Sanders, who explore the intertextual layering of films.

[413] Like Leitch (*Film Adaptation*) and Hutcheon (*A Theory*), Stam and Raengo aim to push adaptation studies away from the 'fidelity' paradigm that dominated much early criticism (*Literature*), while Cartmell and Whelehan seek to distinguish between literary and cinematic forms in their studies, privileging "literature on screen" (*Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*). Leitch criticises recent adaptation textbooks, noting that critical approaches often coagulate around the question of 'is it as good as the book', resulting in a superficial "thumbs up or thumbs down" conclusion ("Adaptation Studies" 68-69).

(*Adaptation* 20) will be examined.

Coixet's choice of source materials remains as important as her adaptation and appropriation methods, and her careful curation has played an important role in becoming an "adaptive auteur", a term Corrigan uses to describe Truffaut ("Friction"). This term describes a filmmaker who acts not as a "vehicle for various textualities and intertextualities", but as a "corporeal and expressive agent who both engages and consumes texts as part of a specific cinematic event in which loss and failure become the definitive features of the adaptation ritual" ("Friction" 319). Thus, the adaptive auteur category can apply equally to Coixet, and to others noted for their adaptation skills whereby 'losses' are seen as part of the process, rather than as disappointments. Corrigan's definition will be employed in order to evaluate how she engages with the work of others to further her personal authorship on a textual level, and to analyse how this affects her auteur identity on an industrial level. Yet, it is her desire to refashion the work of other auteurs that make her an interesting case. Rather than being a "cinematic son" of literature, she is the cinematic daughter of auteurism.[414]

Consequently, whether borrowing from other films, art or literature, Coixet's cherry-picking of influences stops her work from becoming an empty replica of any text, instead producing a dialogue between her ideas and the literary and cinematic ancestors of her choosing. However, she openly admits to 'copying' directors,[415] artists and writers she admires, and it seems her particular talents lie in synthesizing the material she appropriates with her own ideas and visual imagination. Writing in 1948, Bazin discusses adaptation as "digest", and observes how "the aesthetic fat, differently emulsified, were better tolerated by the consumer's mind" ("Adaptation" 26). Although this argument dates from early adaptation criticism and focuses on making literature more accessible, the metaphor Bazin employs remains particularly apt in relation to Coixet, who follows this "digestive" process in all her films, but selects only titbits of the works she wants to use and combines them with others, as she "emulsifies" the source material to provide a digest rather than being confined to one overarching piece of source material. Accordingly, Bazin's digest metaphor will be used to imply that this compendium of texts, distilled and deconstructed, makes something new and digestible, while the ability of the audience to identify these sources remains important. Although he was discussing more formal or traditional modes of single text adaptation, Coixet

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[414] Corrigan defines Truffaut as a "cinematic son" of Balzac ("Friction" 321).

[415] In an episode of the television show *Carta Blanca* presented by Coixet, she discusses her influences and uses the term 'copying' to describe some of her practices ("Carta Blanca").

relies on her successful mixing of influences and sources to create a palatable and 'digestible' finished product.

**The Question of Prestige**

Bazin's text epitomises the focus of most adaptation criticism, and deals with the transformation of canonical or well-known source materials, whereas Coixet selects from a range of non-prestige, less-criticised sources for her self-generated adaptation-based projects, a practice she has developed since *My Life*. Nonetheless, the issue of prestige also comes into play with regard to intertextuality. In relation to famous works, Leitch discusses the power relations between the source and the adaptation, with the balance shifting in favour of an established source or an acclaimed filmmaker (*Film Adaptation* 6-7). For example, famous auteurs get a "special dispensation" in regard to fidelity if their image overshadows the renown of the source (*Film Adaptation* 6). In the main, Coixet opts to incorporate lesser-known products and thus her auteur image is not contested. This allows her to use her "special dispensation" to rewrite the source without accusations of infidelity. Thus she can simultaneously exploit the intertextual awareness of the spectator to maintain a dialogue with high-value cultural products through intertextuality, whether literature, film, music or visual art.

Hutcheon defines intertextuality as a form of adaptation when a 'receiver' is aware of the source materials (*A Theory* 21). Following a similar thread, Catherine Grant writes about Argentine author Manuel Puig, but her commentary could easily apply to Coixet, who also

> 'adapts', in a very productive fashion, the pre-existing and relatively anonymous 'scripts' provided by songs from popular music and film culture. These recordings and performances do not just 'accompany' the film, [...] they are used as musical lyrics [...] *to tell the story*. ("Becoming" 11)

This commentary hints at intertextuality as a potential form of authorship or, at least, as a form of copying that is not unoriginal. In this way, Coixet adopts other references and 'adapts' them in order 'to tell the story', rather than as an ornamental link to films, books or art she admires; for example, her annexation of melodramatic dialogue as a form of shorthand for the emotions her characters struggle to communicate (discussed in Chapter 7). This active intertextuality becomes what Sanders terms "appropriation", rather than adaptation. For Hutcheon, adaptation is a prolonged, acknowledged intertextuality or dialogue (*A Theory* 20), which involves three modes of engagement; telling, showing and interacting (*A Theory* 25-27). Sanders, on the other hand, claims that "appropriation" represents a more complex process, which entails "the same sustained engagement as adaptation", but frequently adopts "a

posture of critique, even assault" (*Adaptation* 4).[416] Coixet's assault is delivered in the form of generic subversion, as the previous chapter outlined, and although the critics discussed here are theorising adaptation practices, their arguments can be extended to her intertextual referencing.

Notably, Sanders points to the many synonyms for adaptation that are in circulation (*Adaptation* 3), and comments on the fragmentary *bricolage* of intertextuality, whereby references are 'assembled' into a collage or, in a comparison to music, 'sampled' (*Adaptation* 4). The contemporary trend for remixing that began in hip-hop music has spilled over into other cultural forms, with directors like Quentin Tarantino utilising a wide range of intertextual, transmedia references as part of their visual style, which together make up a broader critique, rather than each individual reference challenging historic representations. While Bazin's digest best describes Coixet's adaptive and intertextual philosophy, the concept of sampling perhaps provides the closest analogy to her methodology, as she incorporates fragments of works by other artists into her films, whether they act in a similar manner to lyrics, melody, or merely a motif or hook. In this way she can write and direct her film with the raw materials provided by others, as opposed to merely imitating or copying. She remains more focused on the ideological and emotional potential of other films, art and literature, rather than just their visual style, assimilating them completely into her creative practice.

Throughout her filmography Coixet creates a rich, intertextual world that is simultaneously implicit and explicit, acknowledged and undefined. Accordingly, Sanders divides appropriation into broad categories of "embedded texts", which often name their source explicitly ("Adaptation" 27-32), and "sustained appropriations", which do not always make clear their associations with other works ("Adaptation" 32-41). Yet rather than engage in pastiche or parodic practices, Coixet enters into a dialogue with her creative ancestors and contemporaries with these 'digested' appropriations whether they arise from famous sources or lesser-known works. While she engages in assemblage techniques, in general, her appropriation practices provide homage of the filmmakers, writers or artists she admires and chooses to emulate rather than oppose, although these references are not always overt. The content of the source material remains paramount, but often the link to the creator reinforces the interplay of auteurs that Coixet is keen to negotiate. The next sections will

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[416] Later, Sanders remarks that sampled music does not employ quotation marks, yet does not suffer accusations of 'stealing' or 'copying' in the same way as literature and film, and suggests that a similar approach to adaptation would be welcome (*Adaptation* 40-41).

explore this interplay and layering as it moves from the surface of the mise-en-scène to an inherent part of each film's ideology.[417]

**Coixet's Relationship to Literature**

On a superficial level, books play a significant part in the plots and set-dressing of Coixet's films. Ann (Lili Taylor) in *Things* confides in her psychiatrist over a shared interest in literature, and feels betrayed when she thinks that the doctor has not really read stories by the female authors whose portraits hang on her office wall. The previous chapter unpacked this moment to exemplify her exploration of the doctor-patient relationship; however, it also functions to underline the trust and confidence we place in those with similar tastes in literature, and the clues books can provide in relation to personality. The films draw heavily on these hints to enrich her visual storytelling; however, rather than use referencing as a shortcut, the nods to other works, especially literature, provide another outlet for the exploration and extension of the interplay of auteurs that these intertextual practices engender. Creating links in this way aids the contextualisation of her work as a prescription of genre, but the process of self-codification that Coixet enters into remains most relevant to her auteur persona. The director discusses this conscious and deliberate referencing in interviews, as it ranges from the subtle to overt homage, to transposing influences across places and spaces.[418]

> Una de las cosas que echo en falta de la crítica cinematográfica en nuestros días es la falta de referencias interdisciplinarias. Creo que estamos en un momento en el que, si bien los pioneros del cine podían tener influencias literarias y pictóricas, los directores tenemos influencias de muchísimos campos. El video-arte influye en el cine y el cine en el video-arte. Mi cine está muy influenciado por la literatura, pero parece que, como los críticos de cine normalmente no leen, sólo ven películas y no visitan instalaciones artísticas, pues no se enteran. Los ves en los festivales, después de ver dieciocho películas, que están muertos y no les queda tiempo para otras cosas, como vivir, por ejemplo. Como iba diciendo, tengo muchas influencias.[419] (in Donapetry "Miss Wasabi" n.pag)

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[417] While layering in relation to sound design has been discussed by Hart ("Sea breezes"), this term equally applies to her intertextual tendencies as they mimic the post-production process of 'layering' sound to create an effect. Herrero Jiménez theorises this intertextuality across Coixet's films as a mise-en-abîme structure, where each narrative mirrors another in an infinite series of reflections ("Hacia"). However, it is the self-conscious aspect of this structuring device that this chapter seeks to unpack.

[418] For example, Álvarez-López notes that the ending of *Map* seems inspired by the novel *On Chesil Beach* (Ian McEwan, 2007), despite its very particular and very English setting ("Isabel Coixet" 125).

[419] [One of the things that I think is missing from film criticism today is a lack of interdisciplinary references. I think we have reached a point where the pioneers of cinema had literary and pictorial influences, while directors now have influences across many different fields. Video-art influences cinema and cinema influences video-art. My cinema is influenced by literature, but since it seems that film critics don't normally read, they just watch films and they don't go to art exhibitions, so they don't get it. You see it at festivals, after watching eighteen films they are exhausted and have no time for

The director comments on the importance of interdisciplinary referencing, and draws attention to her wide range of influences. Thus she seems to view this intertextual address as one of her strengths, and as a defining part of her creative process. Her complaint that reviewers do not recognise or identify the references she includes suggests that she invites critics to make these links, and that she wants her work to be discussed in relation to the connections she makes, whether to a famous novel or an obscure piece of video-art. Nonetheless, references to literature represent the most prevalent and accessible source material that can be gleaned from her work.

At the end of *Things*, Ann hurriedly fills one side of her suitcase with books rather than clothes, preferring to stuff her outfits into a laundry bag, which foregrounds a more meaningful, caring relationship with literature than the 'material' world of clothing. This emotional reliance on literature grows throughout Coixet's filmography, as Lee (Mark Ruffalo) from *My Life* uses books as furniture in his empty home, and the volumes provide both spiritual and physical support in times of turmoil. As an extension of her adaptation methodology, Coixet often invents protagonists that are highly literate, and almost always cuts to a shot of what they are reading, or aspire to read. At the very least, this method means that images of books and references to literature appear somewhere in each film. Yet the characters often lead parallel lives to the narratives of those books, or in some way experience a similar sensibility in their daily existence, further embedding their literary leanings into the ideology of the film. Although not a formal adaptation, *A los* draws on Stendhal's *On Love* (1822) and *Armance* (1827).[420] Rather than transpose the plot elements, Coixet and co-writer Joan Potau aimed to convey the spirit of Stendhal's essays and fiction through highly literary dialogue and a plot that revolves around unrequited love as part of this transposition. The tagline of the film is derived from a Henry van Dyke citation,[421] but often

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other things, like living, for example. As I was saying, I have a lot of influences]. For further details, see Coixet's interview with Lucas ("From I to J").

[420] *Armance* recounts the story of two characters bound by their word but driven by their desires. Olivier vows never to reveal his love to his cousin Armance, but when gravely injured after a duel, he confesses his feelings. *On Love* is a collection of essays on the topic, with anecdotes and philosophical musings that describe Stendhal's seven stages of love. It seems Coixet aimed to provide a similar effect to the essays, with Matilde's frequent discussions of the nature of love, while remaining grounded in the unrequited love plot of *Armance* and her previous films. For more details and analysis of the particular stories and extracts that influence *A los* see Vidal (*Figuring* 188).

[421] The lines quoted are from Van Dyke's poem "Katrina's Sun-Dial" in the collection *Music and Other Poems* (1904), which reads as follows: "Time is/Too Slow for those who Wait,/Too Swift for those who

attributed to Shakespeare. Notwithstanding the identity of the author, the origins of the quotation are quite clearly literary:

> Time is too slow for those who wait, too swift for those who fear, too long for those who grieve, too short for those who rejoice, but, for those who love, time is eternity.

The film is a continuous homage to literature, yet, in order to capture the 'spirit' of the age or the heritage 'feel' without explicitly adapting any one text, it uses a wide-ranging intertextuality throughout, and conjures connections to the famous authors of these works or the lives of the characters they created.

Additionally, the director transfers this example of eighteenth-century French literature to a heritage setting 'somewhere in Europe',[422] placing the timeless narrative 'somewhere between the eighteenth and nineteenth century', since that was her undergraduate area of expertise as a history student. Cerrato notes that she also uses etchings and paintings to ground the text in a particular historical era, mimicking the mise-en-scène of everyday life provided by different artists (Isabel 78).[423] However, literature remains at the forefront of the plot and in the lives of the protagonists. Accordingly, Coixet turns the main protagonist of *Armance* into Armancia (Amanda García),[424] the scheming younger sister of hopeless romantic Matilde (Olalla Moreno). Yet the most extreme example of life imitating art comes in the form or the young Jónas (Albert Pla), the brother of the Maestro, who dedicates his life to *The Divine Comedy* and continues to quote lines from Dante as he grows into an older man (Juan Manuel Chiapella). Jónas is not always certain of the source of his citations, whether they came from Dante or his own mind, as he too enters the territory of

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Fear,/Too Long for those who Grieve,/Too Short for those who Rejoice;/But for those who Love,/Time is not" (*Music and Other Poems*. 1904. Project Gutenburg 2009).
Available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3525/3525-h/3525-h.htm> [Accessed 12 October 2014].

[422] Vidal highlights the non-specific temporal and spatial location: "the story takes place against the backdrop of an imaginary eighteenth-century borderland 'somewhere in Europe', inhabited by displaced characters and mapped over with linguistic difference" (*Figuring* 184).

[423] Cerrato lists the artists André Bouys, Jean-Siméon Chardin, Jean-Baptiste Greuze and Antoine Watteau and as the primary visual influences on the film. Vidal comments: "This whimsical myriad of historical anecdotes situates the film sometime between the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, aligning the diegetic world with a set of signs that have not yet evolved into a teleological narrative of history. Set at the dawn of modernity, but suppressing the idea of a consciousness of modernity, the story unfolds in the wings of history" (*Figuring* 185).

[424] The infant Armancia was played by Coixet's daughter Zöe. This small detail adds another 'personal' layer of signification to the characters while also mimicking Francis Ford Coppola's casting of his baby daughter Sofia in *The Godfather* (1972), as the infant Michael. Although an incidental detail, it dovetails with the blurring of boundaries between art and real-life that is often part of the myth of the auteur persona. This familial involvement has continued: Coixet's daughter provided the artwork for the cover of the book *The Secret Life of Isabel Coixet* (2011).

"sustained appropriation", painfully aware of his indebtedness to literature. However, most of Coixet's protagonists remain unconscious of their literary connections, and viewers must forge the links for themselves.

For example, the basic plot of *My Life* is lifted from a short story by American writer Nanci Kincaid, "Pretending the Bed is a Raft".[425] The previous chapter dissected Coixet's plot in detail but it is important to note the changes she made to the original. In the print version, Belinda, a young mother, is diagnosed with terminal cancer. She lives with her husband, Virgil, in a trailer in her God-fearing mother's back garden, where she plans her funeral, finds a new wife for Virgil and records taped messages for her family, much like Ann (Sarah Polley) in the film. Belinda's family and friends know she is dying, yet Ann does not tell anyone her diagnosis and sets about fulfilling her modest wish list. Kincaid's characters hail from Alabama and speak in regional accents that are reflected in the written prose, yet Coixet sanitises their origins, and takes care to purge the local flavour from the original story. The highly-coded American South is replaced with an American anyplace in order to increase the universal potential of the story. Hilaria López notes that some critics saw this anyplace as a weakness or failure of the film ("A disjunctive" 158), notably Hilario Rodríguez, who writes in *Dirigido*:

> In the end, everyone becomes an automaton in the hands of Isabel Coixet, who is unable to establish a more intimate relationship with the environment and the circumstances of the story, depriving American independent cinema of its personality. Where an American filmmaker would have described her country and would have seen her charaters as inhabiting a particular world, the Catalan director has only been able to see a woman who, before dying, confirms how much her loved ones and a couple of friends will miss her when she is dead. (in López 158-159; trans. López)

For Rodríguez, Coixet fails to adapt to American independent cinema, but it can be argued that she gleans only what she wants from different traditions of filmmaking, without 'depriving' these traditions of anything essential nor slavishly imitating them. Intrigued by Kincaid's plot rather than the setting, she felt no anxiety in changing the little-known story, unburdened by the sense of prestige that comes with canonical literature or extremely successful popular texts. Like Hutcheon, Sanders comments that "[w]hile it may enrich and deepen our understanding of the new cultural product to be aware of its shaping intertext, it may not be entirely necessary to enjoy the work independently" (*Adaptation* 22), and

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[425] Coixet describes finding the book in an airport bookshop and reading the stories for the first time ("Mi vida" 95). She writes: "Nunca he creido en las adaptaciones literarias, pero había algo en el relato que me tocaba de una manera absoluta y ya nunca me iba a abandonar" ["I had never believed in literary adaptations, but there was something in the story that touched me and it would never leave me"] ("Mi vida" 96).

similarly, the audience does not need to have read Kincaid's story or have knowledge of American independent cinema to appreciate Coixet's film. Although she had been using and developing intertextual techniques since her first film, *My Life* marks a move into the territory of "sustained appropriation", while relying on "embedded texts" to add layers of meaning to the narrative. The film helped to establish Coixet's reputation at home in Spain as an auteur director, by building on her previous work and increasingly recognisable visual style, while the film's international success earned her the title of 'director to watch' on the festival circuit.

Moving deeper into an embedded mode of intertextuality, *My* Life engages with *Middlemarch* (George Eliot, 1874) to create a simultaneous adaptation and appropriation. As part of her to-do list, Ann intends to sleep with another man, "just to see what it's like", and she meets Lee, a lonely figure who finds comfort in reading. He leaves a copy of the novel in the pocket of a coat she borrows, and scrawls his phone number inside the cover. In this way, the book becomes essential to the plot, and provides the vital link between the characters. Yet, the fact that Lee wrote his number in a book is merely a whim of the director, a novel way of transmitting a message rather than the traditional melodramatic letter, which Coixet has replaced with voice-over and the taped messages Ann records for her loved ones. Eliot's long book describes the town of Middlemarch and those who inhabit it, as well as main protagonist Dorothea's act of defiance of societal norms in marrying Mr Ladislaw and losing her money in the process. Like Ann, the main protagonist of *Middlemarch* is denied a typically happy ending, and sacrifices her potential to help her new husband succeed in politics. However, both women follow their own instincts and refuse to bend to society's norms, with their personhood intact until the very end. Similarly, Eliot makes no apologies for Dorothea's pursuit of happiness, and refuses to turn her into a villain, despite the contempt of some of the villagers and her family when she marries Mr Ladislaw.

Coixet explicitly notes the influence of the last page of Eliot's novel on the closing scenes of *My Life* (Cerrato *Isabel* 103), and entrenches the book into her narrative on two levels. Eliot writes of the ordinary yet noble life of Dorothea as an unsung heroine, just as Coixet portrays Ann as an admirable dying figure, courageous and devoid of self-pity, rather than a martyr. We empathise with Ann's desire for a different life, rather than focus on her affair or her lies to her family. Dorothea is similarly cast, with Eliot writing:

> But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for *the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts*; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to *the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.* (*Middlemarch* 1492; my emphases)

Similarly, Ann does not change history, nor does she shout her suffering from the rooftops, yet her presence touches those around her, and allows them to expect more from their lives. She is an individual, yet takes part in the enduring story of dying young.

Ann unconsciously emulates Dorothea or, at least, the description of Eliot's main protagonist from the last page of the book. Rather than 'adapt' *Middlemarch*, or indeed, "Pretending", Coixet appropriates Eliot and Kincaid's chief protagonists, producing a human 'digest' of their qualities to create a character she revisits over and over, often repeating names across films to compound this effect. While *My Life* offers the richest example in Coixet's continuum of characters with similar names and similar traits, these characters recur across her filmography and work through similar sets of emotions. For example, the ill or traumatised woman appears in *A los* (Matilde), *Things* (Ann), *My Life* (Ann), *The Secret Life* (Hanna), *Elegy* (Consuela), *Map* (Ryu) and *Ayer* (C). The sleepwalking figure also appears throughout her filmography, with *Demasiado viejo* (Equis), *Things* (Don), *My Life* (Lee), *The Secret Life* (Hanna), *Elegy* (Kepesh), *Map* (Ryu) and *Ayer* (J), and waits to be awoken by an encounter with the other protagonists, as outlined in Chapter 6.

Through the ill woman character of *My Life*, Coixet also forges a link to the Berger novel *To the Wedding* (1995), which Lee reads from during the film, providing a direct quotation rather than a mere allusion, and underlining the parallels between the film and the book. Sanders distinguishes between quotation, which can be "deferential or critical, supportive or questioning" depending on the context, and citation, which implies a more deferential relationship" (*Adaptation* 4), yet Coixet's reverent approach also leaves room for innovation, using Berger's words to 'tell the story'. The novel recounts the story of a young woman with AIDS who is about to get married, told through the perspective of the various characters. Lee warns Ann how sad the story is before beginning, but she exhorts him to continue, although she proves unable to bear hearing about an experience parallel to her own and desperately flings the book away. The passage read aloud describes the gradual deterioration of the bride's body: the words on the page are so powerful and resonate so strongly with Ann that she must physically overcome them. This citation effectively replaces the death scene and the portrayal of the dying woman in the film; rather than watching Ann's final moments, the audience only sees the white screen, as discussed in the previous chapter. Yet, the lines quoted from the novel are enough for any viewer to engage with Berger's description of slow death, regardless of having read *To the Wedding* in full. Simultaneously, however, Berger readers will recognise Ann's similarity to Ninon, the book's protagonist, as a

fun-loving young woman who is able to philosophise and rationalise her experience in order to make the most of the time she has left.

Similarly, in the opening sequence of the film, Ann makes reference to "all the things they talk about in the books you haven't read", referring to the familiar archetypes and myths that exist in our literary culture, and often appropriated into new 'versions' or 'updates'. Ann makes clear her own lack of identification with the heroines of *Middlemarch* and *To the Wedding*, finding herself in a similar predicament but rejecting parallels to their stories, just as she rejects the stereotypical and melodramatic representations invoked by clips from the film *Mildred Pierce* and references to the plot of *Stella Dallas*, both of which were adapted from novels, as Chapter 7 points out. Ann's mother (Deborah Harry) confuses the plot of the two maternal melodramas, underlining the mythic quality of these stories, and the interchangeable protagonists that play the archetypal downtrodden matriarch (Martin-Márquez "La teoría" 58). The unnamed mother openly identifies with these stories, crying as she watches *Mildred Pierce*, while Ann vehemently rejects her literary counterparts, in an attempt to express her individuality rather than live out a myth or stereotype. In the same way, Coixet transcends and transforms the literary sources of her film, resulting in an (un)original work that encourages a dialogue, and becomes a digest of its ancestors. Through an engagement with adaptations, as well as 'original' works, she creates a rich intertextual world for lovers of literature, yet does not alienate spectators who might not have read *Middlemarch* or *To the Wedding*, or have an interest in classic film melodrama. Nonetheless, Coixet consciously exploits the interplay of authors inherent to adaptive filmmaking, especially with famous writers such as Berger, in order to place her own work within the category of art.

As we have seen, books by her mentor Berger often make a brief cameo appearance where appropriate. These recurrent 'citations' form part of the surface level of the films, where books provide comfort and clues to unlocking the emotionally-repressed characters, yet, like *Middlemarch*, the content of the books referenced also informs the subtext of the film. For example, in *The Secret Life*, Hanna (Sarah Polley) does not notice a copy of *Ways of Seeing* on Josef's (Tim Robbins) desk, as she snoops around his bedroom. Nonetheless, Coixet's own visual awakening upon reading the book for the first time (described in Chapter 5) connects to the shift in perception that her protagonist undergoes in the film. With Josef in the sick-bay, Hanna temporarily inhabits his space, and investigates her new surroundings accordingly. The pin-board on the wall, just as Berger suggests in the book, represents a

miniature museum or gallery, with highly personal images and texts on display.[426] Tellingly, the camera pauses on a photo of Josef with his dead friend and his wife, crystallizing a happy moment in their relationship, now relegated to memory. Not only does the director "show" Berger's text in the film, she also "interacts" with it, to use Hutcheon's terminology (*A Theory* 25-27). This technique represents another facet of her auteur ambition, since these fleeting visual quotations might only be noticed on repeated viewings by true aficionados of her work, yet their ephemeral nature remains less concerned with the reception of the film as an adaptation or appropriation; rather these are 'citations' that Coixet inserts for her own enjoyment, and to enter into a dialogue with important works.

Additionally, in *Elegy*, a copy of *Ways of Seeing* appears in shot when Consuela and Kepesh go to the beach. In *Ayer*, a copy of *Pages of the Wound* (1996) lies on the back seat of C's car in the opening sequence. However, the book appears only briefly, and it is difficult to make out the title, which furthers the idea that Coixet inserts these citations for her own enjoyment. They are quite deliberate, but not entirely obvious. While *Map* features a shot of book spines in Ryu's house, the titles are blurred out by glass bottles on the table. It is likely that one of these books is by Berger but, at the very least, Coixet implies that Ryu reads. Although the director claims the film was influenced by certain Japanese authors (*Mapa* 116), she does not directly reference Haruki Murakami or Banana Yoshimoto in the same way she cites Berger,[427] instead reserving this particular form of deference for the British author's work and highlighting his importance within her system of referencing.

**Coixet's Relationship to Visual Art**

Nonetheless, this engaged interaction is not limited to literature, as Coixet extends her intertextuality to visual art and has carefully selected and curated her influences since her first film. *Demasiado viejo* engages directly with the work of American painter Edward

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[426] Berger writes: "Adults and children sometimes have boards in their bedrooms or living-rooms on which they pin pieces of paper: letters, snapshots, reproductions of paintings, newspaper cuttings, original drawings, postcards. On each board all the images belong to the same language and all are more or less equivalent within it, because they have been chosen in a highly personal way to match and express the experience of the room's inhabitant. Logically these boards should replace museums" (*Ways* 30).

[427] However, Murakami's *Sputnik Sweetheart* (1999) is the book read aloud to the dying woman in Coixet's *Le Trench Rouge* in *Paris, Je t'aime*.

Hopper; a print of "Office at Night" (1940) covers the safe in the courier company office.[428] However, Coixet moves gradually into replicating and recreating paintings and photographs in her later films. Just as she was inspired by the eighteenth century painters referenced above for the pastoral mise-en-scène of *A los*, she appropriates Hopper's distinctly urban images for her study of the everyday. "Nighthawks" (1942) and "Automat" (1927) dominate the nocturnal mise-en-scène of *Things* and *My Life*, as the protagonists enter neon-lit diners, coffee shops and laundrettes that bear more than a passing resemblance to Hopper's work. This choice of iconography reflects a fascination with Americana and the use and recreation of specific painted images grounds this attraction in a recognisable visual culture. Yet, just as Hopper's realist canvases reveal the absurd theatricality or 'cinematic' quality of everyday scenes such as the workers in "Office at Night" or the bar customers of "Nighthawks", Coixet's reimagining of his artworks aims to recreate this surreal effect on the spectator. While her admiration of the artist is well-known and well-documented through public interventions such as the talk she gave about Hopper's painting "Hotel Room" (1931) at the Museo Thyseen-Bornemisza in Madrid,[429] she opens up a direct dialogue with his work through her recreations of his paintings as tableaux and their resultant impact on the visual landscape of her films. Other artists loom large in her system of referencing, but Hopper's influence remains the most identifiable within her early films *Things* and *My Life*, both of which were key works in the establishment of Coixet's distinctive visual aesthetic and auteur persona.

Further to her personal style and investigation of the gaze, which are outlined in Chapter 5, Coixet's use of two-dimensional images like photographs and paintings reveal the one-dimensionality of representation in familiar artistic images of women. Although the surface of the cinema or TV screen is also one-dimensional, the mobile nature of film images allows for a more dynamic representation and for the women to physically step out of prescribed poses. Just as her protagonists can accept or reject their connections to literary ancestors, they can also re-present or re-create familiar artistic images within the director's dialogue or digest of these photos and paintings. Donapetry identifies the imitation of Lucian Freud's portraits in *Elegy*, rather than the obvious referents of Goya, Velázquez and

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[428] Hopper (1882-1967) was known for his paintings of modern American life during the early twentieth century. Many have noted his influence on Coixet's films (Donapetry "Noughties"; "Ethics", García de Lucas and Weinrichter, Martin-Márquez "Engagement", Vidal "Love" and Wheeler ["Sex"]).

[429] In the talk, which has been published, Coixet comments on the critical perception of Hopper as a bad painter, but a great artist ("Habitación" 36).

Modigliani that come from the original Roth novel ("Ethics" 94).[430] In the book, Kepesh, the distinguished professor of aesthetics, compares his lover Consuela to many works of art throughout, but primarily to "Las meninas" (Velázquez ca. 1656). However, Coixet elects Goya's "La maja vestida" (1800-1807) as the main point of comparison because of the physical resemblance of actress Cruz and the Duquesa de Alba.[431] Roth writes about Consuela as the descendant of a duchess, so this change neatly incorporates this nuance and Cruz further entrenches the connection by mimicking the posture of "La maja desnuda" (1795-1800) in subsequent scenes. In a practical sense, this change forms part of Coixet's adaptation methodology, as she compensates for a potential 'loss' by engaging with a more appropriate alternative. However, with regard to ideology, screenwriter Meyer introduced an invented scene of Kepesh recording a segment of his radio show with a guest, talking about ownership of art and how buyers believe they own the piece, when really it owns them, a conversation that provides a discourse not dissimilar to Berger's *Ways of Seeing*. Coixet chose to preserve this treatise which mirrors Kepesh's futile attempt to possess Consuela as his object of desire, his own personal work of art.[432] Although she did not write the scene, it fits her ideological model.

As we progress through her filmography, Coixet's use of art evolves from the presence of a significant painting on the screen to the recreation of artworks, and finally, to the art created for the film. *Map* incorporates the work of a well-known Japanese performance artist, Azuma Makoto (1973- ), who dresses a woman as a human plant especially for the film.[433] Additionally, the film depicts a flash mob of kissing couples, which the director copied from an event in Paris. On the *Map* DVD she comments on how she was overwhelmed by the strangeness of this event and wanted to recreate it in a film. However, she also creates her own flash mob later in the film, where the couples argue. Similar to the

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[430] In *The Dying Animal*, Roth's Consuela is identified with Modigliani's "Le grand nu" (1917), and she sends Kepesh a postcard of the image, an action which cements this connection in the mind of the reader.

[431] The online catalogue of the Prado museum notes that although the model is presumed to be the Duquesa de Alba, she has also been identified as Pepita Tudó, a mistress of Manuel Godoy, who commissioned the painting ("Online Gallery" n.pag). Nevertheless, the physical resemblance to Cruz remains more important than historical accuracy in this case.

[432] *Elegy* will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9.

[433] In the *Map* DVD commentary, Coixet discusses seeing one of Makoto's interventions in an exhibition on Art and Landscape. The artist is known for his botanical sculptures similar to the one he created for the film, and has worked with fashion designer Martin Margiela, another artist Coixet references by name in the DVD commentary owing to Ryu wearing his shoe designs which feature prominently in an early dressing-room sequence. More information is available from Makoto's website: <http://azumamakoto.com/> [Last accessed 20 September 2014].

Hopper paintings, the performances reveal certain absurdities within everyday urban life; for example, someone can just walk by an art installation and not notice, just as Ryu walks past without a second glance, completely disconnected from life going on around her. Moreover, in creating art pieces specifically for the film, it seems Coixet wants us to question our relationship to art itself, rather than interrogate our relationship to particular famous works. This marks an evolution in the intertextual use of art in her films and points to an auteurist, philosophical leaning which is more evolved and nuanced than 'namedropping' references to famous artists: the director can tell the story through art, whether or not she created the work herself. Equally, she also employs music as a narrative device, and uses songs to express the emotions of her protagonists.

**Coixet's Relationship to Popular Music**

While Chapter 6 discussed Coixet's relationship to the soundscapes in her films, as music supervisor on many of her productions her control of the soundtrack engenders a style that Gorbman terms "auteur music", which creates "a platform for the idiosyncratic expression of taste" ("Auteur Music" 151), with contemporary songs used alongside the original score. A common feature across many genres, this intertextual auteur music forges connections to the musician who composed it, the era it belongs to, and any films where it may have appeared previously. However, as the Catherine Grant quotation included in this chapter's introduction indicates, songs can also be particularly useful tools for storytelling ("Becoming" 11), especially to the adaptive auteur.

Although the original music in her films represents an important expression of authorship, with a certain style repeated across her films, from *The Secret Life* onwards, contemporary music has become part of Coixet's storytelling technique and she reuses songs or returns to artists she has featured previously in her films. This repetition helps the director to express herself, through her reinterpretation of works by others, and as Chapter 2 pointed out, she often uses music included in her feature film soundtracks on the *Pistas* recommendations page of her ClubCultura website, or as a suggested accompaniment to the food reviewed on her blog "The Best and The Beast". However, her films provide the richest examples of Gorbman's term. For example, *My Life* uses Lee's musical taste to showcase auteur music: his sister sends him tapes to listen to in his car, and this music reflects or reveals the inner thoughts of the characters, helping to tell their stories. Ann and Lee listen to Blossom Dearie on their way to a restaurant, and Lee talks about the eighty-year-old singer

who still performs in a tiny club in New York. This sets in motion a sequence where both Ann and the audience are reminded of her impending death, as she realises she will never grow old, and Lee makes plans for their future together not knowing she will not be there with him. Indeed, later in the scene Ann reacts bodily to this realisation, suddenly feeling very ill, and cuts their date short. While her cancer is a likely cause of her malaise, the fact that she hears the same music inside the restaurant, perhaps inside her mind, points to the effect it has on her and the ability of songs to tell the story.

Just as Coixet relies on the existing artwork and music of others to convey her personality, she also uses the products of her collaborations to further her auteur identity and, with respect to original music, the input of composer Alfonso Villalonga is particularly important to her artistic identity.[434] He has created the original score for many of her productions, some of which she has reused in order to cement her auteur stamp across different pieces of work. For example, the glass harp music from *My Life* reappears in the documentary *Viaje*. Coixet provides the voice-over for this film as a personal document of her journey to Sarajevo, and the music would be familiar to viewers of *My Life*, which was released earlier in the same year, 2003. Chapter 5 also discussed the synthesis between factual and fictional modes of filmmaking, and this repeated use of music is important to her successful establishment of an auteur persona. Although she did not write the music, it becomes associated with her, rather than with Villalonga, through repetition.

Comparable to Coixet's bibliophilic tendencies, she writes extensively about her intimate relationship to music, which highlights the personal dimension and makes music a central part of her auteur autobiography. For example, texts on her ClubCultura website recall the shiver she felt down her spine when she first heard the voice of musician Antony Hegarty ("Antony and Me" n.pag) and the various images that come to mind when she listens to certain songs ("NO sin mi i-Pod" n.pag). In *The Secret Life*, the powerful vocal style of Hegarty, singing almost *a capella* draws yet more attention to the lyrics rather than the music of "Hope There's Someone" as part of a montage sequence where each character ponders their emotions, alone on the oil rig. She also describes how Hegarty was moved by this section of

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[434] Villalonga (1962- ) grew up in Barcelona and trained at the Berklee College of Music in the USA. He has enjoyed a long career as a songwriter and composer of film scores. For Coixet, he has composed music for *Things*, *A los*, *My Life* (which was reused in *Viaje*) and *Ayer*, as well as providing the music for her theatre production *84*. During 2013, Coixet appeared on an episode of TV3 show *Bestiari illustrat* where she performs karaoke with some of her friends and collaborators, including Villalonga (Bestiari "Els diumenges").

the film: "Me llama días después y me dice que ha llorado viendo el trozo [...] donde está su canción y que no puede esperar a ver el resto de la película" ("Antony and Me" n.pag).[435] While the inclusion of the song reflects the director's taste, and the interview she conducted with Hegarty occupies prime space on her ClubCultura website ("Antony and Me"), the music and lyrics become intertextual tools to tell the story, in tandem with the song's function as auteur music.[436] Coixet also comments on the interplay of auteurs involved in such a process, and contends that musicians are not thinking about how their songs might be used in films at the time of writing:

> Después de todo un autor de canciones no las hace pensando en una hipotética banda sonora y menos aún, un autor tan rabiosamente personal como Antony. Sólo me tranquiliza pensar que Tom Waits que acaba de ver el montaje, y cuya canción "All the world is green" tambien forma parte de mi película, me acaba de decir que nunca antes una canción suya había encajado tan bien en una película y que se sentía orgulloso de formar parte de ella (he guardado el mensaje de Tom Waits durante semanas en mi móvil hasta que todos mis amigos ya empezaban a estar hartos de oírme decir ¿no querrás escuchar el mensaje que me ha dejado...."?, pero es que para mí y para Leonor Watling, Tom Waits es Dios).[437] ("Antony and Me" n.pag)

These anecdotes suggest she approaches artists on a personal level, rather than just dealing with their record labels when it comes to music clearance and that the approval of the musicians is important to Coixet. While this endorsement remains an extratextual factor that does not impact the audience's reaction to a song, the fact that she discusses it in in interviews makes it part of her auteur persona. She does not just insert or 'use' the songs; she incorporates them fully into the narrative, as a storytelling tool, and this is sanctioned by their original creators. The repeated associations, such as Hegarty's "One Dove" as the closing song in *Map*, reinforce the connections between Coixet and her chosen musical collaborators.

The cultural status of the music itself is also important to the films. *Elegy* uses carefully selected classical pieces by Bach and Satie to convey the rarefied life of Kepesh, but also to demonstrate Consuela's appetite for high culture and her unabashed enjoyment of

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[435] [He calls me a few days later and tells me that he cried watching the part of *The Secret Life of Words* where his song was, and that he can't wait to see the rest of the film].

[436] The Muchachada Nui video also parodies Hegarty's song, which points to its importance within *The Secret Life* ("Muchachada Nui").

[437] [After all, a songwriter does not write with a hypothetical soundtrack in mind, and an author as fiercely personal as Antony, even less so. The only thing that puts me at ease is thinking that when Tom Waits, whose song "All the World is Green" was also in my film, had seen the edit, he told me that no song of his had ever fitted so well into a film and he felt proud to have been a part of it (I saved the message from Tom Waits on my phone for weeks until all my friends were sick of hearing me say 'do you want to hear the message he left for me.....'? But it's because for me and for Leonor Watling, Tom Waits is God)].

piano music throughout the film. Since she is credited as music supervisor on the production, Coixet went to greater lengths to make known her curation of the music for the film. In fact, classical music represents an interesting test case for the interplay of auteurs; since the majority of 'great composers' like those chosen by Coixet for *Elegy* were dead before recordings of their 'original' works and performances could be made, the musical scores they left behind are open to interpretation by star musicians such as concert pianists or renowned conductors. In general, however, the performer-interpreter is overlooked, or the composer receives the star billing on CD releases or in concert performances. However, this idea of reinterpretation is not limited to classical music and adds another level to her status as an adaptive auteur. Similar to her willingness to engage with film adaptations such as *Mildred Pierce* or *Stella Dallas*, *Map* utilises Japanese-language versions of famous songs such as "La vie en rose" or "Someone to Watch Over Me",[438] and the presence of these reinterpretations or translations provides another metaphor for her appropriation process. Rather than use the 'standard' version of the song, she employs a cover version that reinterprets the song, just as she reinterprets the work of other artists for the screen and creates a digest.

Nevertheless, as Saavedra notes, her soundtracks have progressed from instrumental background music to the exclusive use of popular music within the diegesis, as the subtexts of the songs she chooses helps to develop complicity with the spectator ("La vida" 74). Notably, from *The Secret Life* onwards, original scores have faded into the background, and Coixet provides more musical interludes within each film, where her characters actively listen to songs or even perform them. Although this evolution could be as much to do with increased budgets for music clearance that the director would not have had on her earlier projects, the performance of music has become more prevalent within her films. Even in *My Life*, Ann sings "God Only Knows" by The Beach Boys for Don, and records it on her taped message to him, while a later scene uses a version sung by a children's choir, in an anaphoric use of auteur music that also tells the story, with lyrics that discuss the loss of a loved one. Similarly, in *The Secret Life*, chef Simon sings along to his radio in the kitchen, and chooses music to complement the meals he serves on the oil rig. Hanna sings a few bars of an Italian disco song, "La dolce vita", that was popular the summer she was raped and tortured by soldiers in the Balkans, in a poignant performance which underlines the importance of music and

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[438] Although Coixet is not credited as music supervisor on *Map,* on the DVD commentary, she claims to have fourteen cover versions of "Someone to Watch Over Me", and talks about why she chose the Japanese-language version, a discussion which indicates her influence over the music chosen for the film.

memory, and provides a clue to her rejection of sound when she switches off her hearing aid. In *Map*, David performs karaoke at a Tokyo bar. He is preparing to return to Spain and is completing his to-do list before leaving. His chosen song, "Enjoy the Silence", is one of Coixet's own karaoke favourites, a fact she reveals in the DVD commentary. Although this is not obvious in the film, selecting a song with 'personal' relevance and having a character perform it strengthens Coixet's connection to auteur music, but also furthers her intertextual relationship to music and her appropriation methodology by having her protagonist reinterpet the song.

**Conclusion**

Thus, intertextuality, whether literary, pictorial or musical, marks another way for Coixet to create an auteur filmography, where her own previous work becomes part of the intertextual word as much as the sustained appropriations or acknowledged references. Her repeated tics become part of her intertextual language and help elevate her work to auteur status. By including her previous films as part of her referencing system, intertextuality becomes a self-reflexive practice. Rather than tell the story or reflect the director's taste, the repeated names forge links between her characters, expressing the 'everyperson' qualities she wishes to convey, and cementing the idea that she revisits the same protagonists in the majority of her films.

Her entry to the Teaserland Film Festival in 2008 plays on this self-conscious aspect. *No me hables de la vida cuando estoy muriendo* was intended as a false trailer for a comedy about a terminally-ill cancer patient considering suicide. The short piece is set in a laundrette with a voice-over in English and Russian. Although it functions as a parody of her own work and auteur image, unlike the Muchachada Nui videos discussed in Chapter 3, this is a self-reflexive caricature created by Coixet where she demonstrates her awareness of her auteur persona and the most recognisably 'personal' characteristics of her films. This synthesis between her films and her public persona helps to cement her reputation through a self-reflexive intertextuality that transcends the cinema screen.

This chapter has outlined Coixet's wide use of intertextuality or appropriation across her body of work. As an adaptive auteur, she can use the work of others as a form of shorthand, or digest, in order to dialogue with other artists and elevate her own work to the status of high art, even when referencing popular, rather than esteemed, works. The careful curation process applied across her films and public discourse provides another reflection of

her personality for the spectator; the director can document her own tastes through her protagonists and their surroundings, adding an autobiographical element to each character and furthering her constant re-visitation of similar relationships and emotions. She skilfully weaves the work of other writers, artists, filmmakers and musicians into her narrative tapestry. Conscious engagement with the texts, films, music, paintings and photography of others helps Coixet to stake her claim as an artist and intellectual, using these appropriated, digested references as a form of shorthand for the cultural meanings and significations she would like to interrogate. This, in turn, becomes a type of performance or reinterpretation, as the films act out her admiration for the work of others, and her use of intertextuality creates a simultaneous effect of conversation with the past and assertion of authorship. Aside from this self-reflexive dimension, the repetition of Berger citations, music, and art references become part of her creative style, despite their origins as the work of another person. The careful selection of references and their conscious repetition and reinterpretation become appropriation, as she reinterpets and (re)presents these works without compromising her authorship. Bearing this in mind, the next chapter will explore similar issues, but will shift focus to her more traditional or formal adaptation projects.

## Chapter 9: Coixet's Auteur Adaptations

While her intertextual methods remain at the heart of every film, since the mid-2000s, Coixet has directed an increasing number of formal adaptations, moving away from her writer-director status to become an adaptive auteur. This final chapter will focus on how she has used her intertextual skills and the auteur persona she has built up since *Demasiado viejo* to author projects that have originated elsewhere. Her relationship to source materials will be assessed, whether literary or theatrical. Similarly, this analysis will emphasise how she approaches their transposition to another medium via the interplay of auteurs; and how she has developed as an auteur-adapter throughout her career. Contemporary adaptation criticism will be incorporated into an examination of Coixet's only foray into theatre direction, *84 Charing Cross Road*, her first 'traditional' or 'formal' novel to film adaptation, *Elegy*,[439] and her 'free' adaptation of a Dutch stage play, *Ayer*, which remains her most recent adaptation available on DVD at the time of writing.[440]

As outlined in the previous chapter, issues of prestige remain pertinent to appropriation practices, yet a perceived hierarchy of literature and film often threatens to overshadow the reception of a page to screen adaptation.[441] However, Simone Murray notes that while journalistic criticism remains dominated by the discourse of fidelity, academic reviews have resoundingly and repeatedly rejected such hierarchical studies, and instead, she calls for a materialisation of adaptation theory in order to refocus on the processes of the adaptation industry itself ("Materializing"; *The Adaptation* 8-11).[442] This industrial emphasis

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[439] While *Elegy* has been discussed in the previous chapter as an example of a prestige product and intertextuality owing to its rich discourse around art, this section concentrates on the negotiation of authorship relevant to its screen adaptation. Both films have been mentioned in previous chapters as examples of Coixet's interrogation of the gaze (*Elegy*; Chapter 5) or her move towards a Spanish cultural context and Spanish-language filmmaking (*Ayer*; Chapter 2), but this analysis seeks to explore the process of adaptation undertaken by Coixet and interpret the auteurist inflections in these works as 'unoriginal' productions.

[440] This chapter will primarily engage with publications by Hutcheon (*A Theory* 2006; expanded 2012), Sanders (*Adaptation* 2006), Leitch (*Film Adaptation* 2007; "Adaptation Studies" 2008) and Murray (*The Adaptation* 2012).

[441] Leitch remarks: "It is as if adaptation studies, by borrowing the cultural cachet of literature, sought to claim its institutional respectability and gravitas even while ensuring adaptation's enduring aesthetic and methodological subordination to literature proper" ("Adaptation Studies" 64). Leitch echoes Stam's contention that "[t]oo often, adaptation discourse subtly reinscribes the axiomatic superiority of literature to film" (*Literature* 4).

[442] Murray contends that, as a product of the publishing industry, literature remains as collaborative a practice as film, and it similarly relies on a network of professionals for production and dissemination (*The Adaptation* 13).

comes to the fore in an analysis of Coixet's more traditional adaptations, which are purposefully selected by the director to coalesce with her auteur persona and textual obsessions or 'inner meaning'.

As we have seen, Coixet was initially reluctant to accept director-for-hire projects and famously rejected an offer from DreamWorks to direct an adaptation of the successful novel *Memoirs of a Geisha* (Arthur Golden, 1997), stating that the project did not fit with her vision of the cinema (Cerrato *Isabel* 162). Her other notable rejection, *Million Dollar Baby*, was adapted from the short stories of FX Toole in *Rope Burns: Stories From the Corner* (London: Vintage, 2001). While the previous chapter outlined the director's relationship to prestigious literature, Catherine Grant reminds us that adaptations themselves are seen as "prestige product" by both audiences and producers ("Recognizing" 71), while Hutcheon notes their critical and commercial success, with the Best Picture Oscar more often than not awarded to an adaptation (*A Theory* 4). It seems Coixet is less interested in the potential critical and commercial gains to be made from adaptation, and carefully selects her projects in order to preserve her authorship and auteur status, whether working in theatre or film.

## Becoming an Adaptive Auteur: *84 Charing Cross Road*

Following in the footsteps of Josefina Molina, Coixet turned to theatre direction with a stage version of the novel *84 Charing Cross Road* (Helene Hanff, 1970) which premiered at the Festival Temporada Alta in Girona in 2004, before moving to the Teatre Romea in Barcelona.[443] The book, which begins in 1949, reprints real-life letters between a London bookseller called Frank Doel and a New York author (Hanff) who corresponded for over twenty years, but never met in person. A friendship develops out of their shared love of literature and the care packages Hanff sends to the office staff during postwar London rationing. Reporter Teresa Cendrós notes that Coixet had previously been offered theatre projects to direct but she had never felt a connection with the narratives ("Isabel Coixet reafirma" n.pag).[444] However, she loved the autobiographical source book and after seeing

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[443] All descriptions of the play are taken from press articles and Coixet's writings. A short excerpt from the Girona production is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuvl6AZwLgU> [Last accessed 29 July 2014].

[444] Coixet gives an account of reading the book for the first time in Ferrer Gimeno (*El viaje de Helene* 13).

the film version,[445] and a staging of the theatrical adaptation in French, she decided to purchase the rights.[446] Prior to the opening in Girona, various newspaper reports of the festival programme featured a photo of Coixet, or included her name in the headline, despite the participation of other prestigious authors and performers perhaps more familiar to theatre audiences.[447] Owing to the success of *My Life* in Spain and abroad, by 2004, Coixet was a well-known figure in Spanish public life. The fact that her image was used to draw attention to the theatre festival demonstrates the high level of public interest in her work outside the cinema. Despite the pre-existing appetite for the book, play and film of *84*, her growing reputation meant that she would not be received as a novice director of a translated play, nor as a respected theatre director, but she would face criticism from those who knew her film and advertising work. She would not be judged solely on the play itself, but on her ability to adapt herself to the theatre. In this way, her auteur persona represents a double-edged sword: while her reputation helped generate interest and publicity for the stage production, the audience's familiarity with Coixet as a filmmaker –and the use of her star image to sell the play– placed her theatre inexperience at the forefront. Ever-conscious of the differences between working in film and with a stage production, she remarks:

> El cinema és una mena de monstre que ho arrasa tot, és molt potent. El teatre, no. En el teatre es produeix una mena de procés en el qual s'avança, es retrocedeix, de cop i volta avances tres passes i pos després en retrocedeixes dues. En el teatre s'arriba a tot de manera més lenta, pero potser molt més profunda que no pas en el cinema. A més, si hi ha alguna cosa que

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[445]The book had already been adapted into a successful West End stage play by James Roose-Evans in 1981 and was picked up for a Broadway production the following year. Despite a poor review in the *New York Times* and a shorter run of performances than its West End counterpart, a film version was made in 1987, starring Anne Bancroft and Anthony Hopkins, directed by David Hugh Jones. The *New York Times* theatre critic, Frank Rich, wrote: "Fans of its source material -Miss Hanff's slight and breezy epistolary memoir of 1970- will probably delight in the faithfulness with which the adapter, James Roose-Evans, has brought it to the stage. Audiences in search of a play offering genuine emotional or intellectual stimulation or even steady laughter are likely to find that this sketch fails to satisfy, and that its modest non-theatrical charms wear thin fast. [...] The vacuous lip service this play pays to the joys of England's literary heritage is no more than fancy name-dropping. '84 Charing Cross Road' is high-minded but resolutely non-intellectual -a play for those who get more pleasure out of owning handsome old books than reading them" ("84 Charing" n.pag).

[446] It was subsequently translated into Spanish by Ramón de España and into Catalan by Joan Sellent. For further production details see Andreu (*Una mujer* 47), Cendrós ("Isabel Coixet reafirma") and Chicano ("En teatre"). The production won the award for Best Theatrical Contribution at the XVA Premios Turia.

[447] For example, writer Eduardo Mendoza and French actress Julie Delpy were among the participants in the festival. Newspapers that printed a photo of Coixet to accompany reports during the August preceding the festival included *Avui* ("Isabel Coixet debuta"), *ABC* ("Isabel Coixet, Leonor Watling") *El Punt* (Castillón "Isabel Coixet debuta"), and *El País* (Morgades "Xavier Albertí").

> no funciona en l'obra, no tens la possibilitat de salvar-ho a la sala de muntatge, com en el cinema.[448] (in Chicano "En teatre")

However, she also comments on the similarities of her films and theatre:

> Pero me pareció también *mi territorio*, de hecho mis películas son *muy teatrales*, con poco reparto. ¡Cuanto menos bulto, más claridad, ése es mi lema! [...] Pero al final, sea como sea, se trata de contar.[449] (in Huete Machado "La mirada" n.pag; my emphases)

*84* marks Coixet's first project working with a script she did not write, but as the previous chapter has outlined, she was not an inexperienced adapter at this point in her career. Her incursions into intertextual appropriations of literature, art and cinema would prove helpful when working on *84*, despite the different 'process' she describes. She recognised that she could 'author' the pre-existing play owing to the epistolary format of the original book by Hanff, and the set-piece dialogues that constitute the stage version, features which have come to characterise Coixet's filmography.[450] The inability to 'edit' theatre did not deter the director, who counteracted the unknown territory of the stage by working with a familiar team.[451]

Lead actress Carme Elías, a long-time friend who had worked with Coixet previously on *Demasiado*, discusses how the director treats actors, remarking:

> Isabel, cuando elige a los actores es porque cree que le van a dar lo que ese personaje necesita y lo que ella quiere, por eso ella pone toda su confianza en ese actor, y ese actor se siente totalmente arropado por Isabel.[452] (in Basalo n.pag.)

Similarly, her directing skills are often praised by actors, and the ability to work with performers is especially relevant to adaptations, where directors must negotiate with an existing script, cast or source material rather than make these choices for themselves.

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[448] ["Film is a kind of monster that destroys everything, it is very powerful. The theatre does not. In the theatre there is a kind of process that moves you forward, then you go back, then you suddenly advance three steps and then go back by two. In the theatre you get to everything more slowly, but perhaps in a deeper way than in movies. Also, if something does not work in the play, you cannot salvage it in the editing room, like you can in a film"].

[449] ["Yet it also felt like *my territory*, in fact my films are *very theatrical*, with small casts. Less is more, that's my motto! [...] But, in the end, whatever happens, it's about the narration] (my emphases).

[450] The title of the film version was translated into Spanish as *La carta final* for the 1988 release. This focus on the epistolary format of the novel furthers the connection to Coixet and her love of letters.

[451] Frequent collaborator Vilallonga composed the music for the stage play, while Coixet's friend José Luis López Linares, who had given her a copy of Hanff's book as a gift, designed the lighting for the production. The director also knew actors Elías and Minguell and cast them specifically in the roles of Hanff and Doel.

[452] ["When Isabel chooses actors it is because she believes that they will bring what is necessary, and what she wants, to a character, so she puts total confidence in the actor and that actor feels completely cocooned by Isabel"]. In *Demasiado* Elías played the suicidal customer that orders tequila to be delivered to her apartment at night.

Frequently cited as an 'actor's director', Coixet understands her performers, and allows them plenty of freedom to intepret the material as they choose; nonetheless, she knows how to extract excellent performances and has honed this skill throughout her career. Further to her interest in and control of performance across formats, it seems the director takes a similar approach to emotions and her desire to engage the senses of the audience, regardless of the medium. She remarks:

> Y en la convención que es el teatro, la soledad que viven trasciende al público: escenificamos la soledad y estamos todos los espectadores ahí, juntos, sentados, mirando. John Berger se pregunta por qué la gente se besa en el cine, y no se besa en el teatro. Yo también me pregunto: ¿por qué los espectadores no se besan?[453] (in Andreu *Una mujer* 47)

She discusses theatre and cinema as collective experiences that should invoke a bodily, sensory reaction as an interaction with the work in question, rather than a passive reception of spectacle. Although she did not adapt the play in the traditional sense of taking it from book to stage, working in an unfamiliar medium for *84* provided a genesis for her future adaptation practice and laid the groundwork for later page-to-screen adaptations such as *Elegy* and *Ayer*. A month after her experiment in the theatre, Coixet began filming *The Secret Life* which was, in a sense, 'adapted' from the horrific stories she had heard from Balkan war survivors during the filming of *Viaje*, while the unusual setting came from a Repsol advertisement she shot on an oil rig and the fascination she felt for this isolated space.[454] She followed this with her short contributions to the collective films *Paris, Je t'aime* and *Invisibles*. As her first formal feature film adaptation, she chose to direct *Elegy*, upon invitation from Lakeshore Entertainment. However, these later projects were marked by her initial foray into adaptation with *84*.

Regarding this creative experimentation, friend and fellow director Andreu writes about Coixet's only theatrical work to date, whereas most other accounts have ignored this part of her CV. The success of the play helped cement her reputation as an "actor's director", and her close work with Elías and Josep Minguell was rewarded with a prize for Best

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[453] ["And in the theatre tradition, the loneliness experienced [by the characters] extends to the audience; we dramatize loneliness and we, the spectators, are sitting there together, watching. John Berger wonders why people kiss in the cinema and not in the theatre. I also wonder, why do the audience not kiss each other?"].

[454] For Coixet's anecdote about the origins of *The Secret Life* see Cendros ("Y Tim Robbins"). The director has also noted the similarities between the film and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, comments which are briefly discussed by Helena López ("A disjunctive" 165-166).

Theatrical Contribution at the XVA Premios Turia (Andreu *Una mujer* 47).[455] Although Coixet has not returned to theatre direction, *84* represents an interesting diversion in her career, taking a book that had been made into a successful film, despite claiming to dislike literary adaptations on *The Charlie Rose Show* in 2008 (*Charlie Rose*). Yet, as the previous chapter outlined, she regularly plunders literary sources or rewrites her own literary creations for the cinema, although this type of direct adaptation of an existing work seems contrary to her status as a writer-director. Again, this analysis returns to Catherine Grant's argument for this type of intertextual authorship, where borrowed material does not just "accompany" a film, but actively "tells the story" ("Becoming" 11). Overall, Coixet's willingness to experiment makes her activities outside film more relevant to an understanding of her oeuvre as a whole, and her attitude to filmmaking. The director writes:

> Siempre he contemplado el teatro con *el mismo respeto reverencial* con el que he considerado a la literatura. Resulta pues paradójico que la primera obra teatral en la que trabajo sea una obra que habla, entre otras cosas, del amor, de la fascinación que ejercen sobre nosotros los libros. Pero desde el momento en que leí (en su formato original) la obra de Helene Hanff, sentí (como han sentido miles de lectores en todo el mundo) que el mundo del que habla 84 Charing Cross Road estaba asombrosamente cerca de *mis obsesiones: el paisaje de los sentimientos ocultos, del amor como proyección, de las cosas que no se dicen porque no necesitan decirse, de la soledad como vocación*. Helene Hanff y Frank Doel se escribieron cartas durante veinte años y nunca se conocieron [...] Mi único deseo es, que a la salida de la representación, el espectador, parafraseando a la propia Helene Hanff, se diga: "*Yo viví aquello. Yo estuve allí. Yo me emocioné*".[456] (Coixet "84 Charing Cross Road" n.pag, my emphases)

Coixet, clearly seeing a link with her films and a running thread of her "obsessions" through her creative output, infuses every project with the desire to affect the audience and elicit an emotional response. Additionally, the advertisements, music videos and short films she has directed, as well as her appearances as a DJ for events in Barcelona, make plain her desire to be accepted as an all-round cultural figure in Spain.

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[455] Indeed, the star power and renown of Cruz and Kingsley represented another obstacle for Coixet's authorship, yet she garnered praise from the entire cast as an 'actor's director', successfully negotiating with them to elicit the performances she required and to create the "cocoon" described above by Elías, or "safe space" espoused by Cruz in the DVD extras of *Elegy*. This skill for eliciting performances is crucial for Coixet's dialogue-heavy films, and is aided by her skill as a camera operator.

[456] ["I have always regarded the theatre with *the same reverential respect* that I have for literature. It is paradoxical then, that my first theatrical work is about, amongst other things, love and the fascination books hold for us. But the first time I read the work of Helene Hanff (in its original format), I felt (as thousands of readers all over the world have felt) that the world which *84 Charing Cross Road* speaks of is surprisingly close to *my obsessions: the landscape of hidden emotions, love as a projection, things that are not said because it is not necessary to say them, loneliness as a vocation*. Helene Hanff and Frank Doel wrote each other letters for twenty years and they never met [...] My only desire is, that on leaving the play, to paraphrase Helene Hanff, the spectators say to themselves: '*I lived that. I was there. I was moved*'.]

**The Fidelity Paradox: *Elegy***

As her first and only director-for-hire project, *Elegy* demonstrates how Coixet succeeded in injecting her personal style and authorial vision into an adaptation of *The Dying Animal* (Philip Roth, 2001). The interplay of auteurs at work on this project provides an interesting counterpoint to the rest of her filmography, with Coixet's camerawork becoming increasingly important as primary authorial outlet since she did not write the script or cast all the actors. The source text by Roth is not regarded as one of the Pulitzer-Prize-winning novelist's best, yet his authorial stamp and distinctive status as a touchstone American writer remains as palpable as ever in the third instalment of his *Professor of Desire* books. Additionally, screenwriter Meyer is well-respected in Hollywood for his involvement in the *Star Trek* films, and holds some authority over the adaptation of Roth's work, having penned a screenplay for the bestselling novel from 2000, *The Human Stain* (Robert Benton, 2002).[457] Nevertheless, Coixet made a considerable number of changes to the original text that were accepted by the producers from Lakeshore, and the film premiered at the 2008 Berlinale.

The main challenges for adaptation stem from Roth's authorial style and how to represent the chief protagonist, a recognisable character from a trilogy of successful novels. *The Dying Animal* recounts the final chapter in the story of Kepesh, familiar to readers as the cultured protagonist of *The Breast* (1973) and *The Professor of Desire* (1977), an ageing professor who routinely seduces a young female student from his literature seminar each year. The young graduate student Consuela Castillo is marked out from his previous conquests by her respectful air and sophistication, and represents a "throwback to a more mannerly time" (*Dying* 11), but their year-long affair all but destroys his meticulously ordered and emotionally detached life. Nevertheless, Kepesh's obsessive jealousy and aloofness connive to end the relationship, and only when Consuela becomes ill with breast cancer are they brought together once more.

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[457] Nicholas Meyer (1945- ) is known as a screenwriter, producer, author and director. He has directed two of the *Star Trek* series and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay for his script of his self-penned Sherlock Holmes novel for *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* (1976). He has also been in contention for other accolades, including three Emmy nominations. Like Coixet, he has vast experience in different areas of the filmmaking process, and represents another auteur whose work she had to negotiate with during the making of *Elegy*.

When Coixet became involved, Cruz and Kingsley were already contracted as the lead actors, and she inherited the title and the existing script from Meyer.[458] Wheeler discusses the interplay of auteurs at work in *Elegy*, and notes that despite the battle over changes to the script,[459]

> Meyer actually renders Roth's prose style into a series of conversations between two individuals and monologues: another of Coixet's authorial stamps, central not only to her film aesthetics but also to her star persona. The ostensibly one-to-one address of her website and columns, ability to engage with interviewers at press conferences and the charm of a number of written projects emerging from exchanges with another individual, all appeal to her followers. ("Sex" 294)

It seems that the form, as much as the content, plays a part in the adaptive auteur's choice of sources. Similar to *84*, Meyer's screenplay would ultimately 'adapt' to Coixet's methodology and ideology, and she saw the project as a chance to leave her 'authorial stamp' on the work of a writer as iconic as Roth. In the *Elegy* DVD commentary, Meyer remarks that as he was dealing with a lesser-known Roth novel, he had more freedom to "fool around" with the material, yet he writes a Kepesh that is instantly identifiable to those who have read the novels, and a fully formed protagonist for those who have not. Although Coixet maintains that the existing screenplay was a "really smart adaptation", especially on a structural level, she was not happy with Meyer's portrayal of Consuela as a naïve and, above all, stereotypical Latin woman. Coixet spent ten days on the rewrites, remarking that she "had to forget who David Kepesh was in the book" (*Charlie Rose*). Yet, her film had to take the implications of the trilogy into account, in order to create a protagonist that would resonate with Roth's readership, as well as the author himself, despite the title change. Coixet notes that

> one of the things he [Roth] kept saying, and I think it's a quote from the book, is that the body has the same memory as the mind, that physicality is really important for him. (*Charlie Rose*)

Indeed, this Edna O'Brien paraphrase is quoted as the preface to the novel, and Coixet skilfully captures this bodily energy in her film, although she omits much of the source text's graphic sex scenes, considering them irrelevant to the story she was trying to tell.

These updates aside, Coixet wanted to acknowledge Roth more openly by keeping the title of the original book, but the producers refused. While the modified name gave the

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[458] Wheeler comments on the production context of *Elegy*: "[H]er list of conditions included contracting Patricia Clarkson and Peter Sarsgaard as secondary actors, shooting in Vancouver and with a large part of the crew with whom she had worked there on *My Life*" ("Stardom" 285). For further production details see Cerrato (*Isabel* 162).

[459] For further details about Coixet's struggle to change the original screenplay of *Elegy*, see Cerrato (*Isabel* 162).

director breathing space from the author, she was reluctant to accept this alteration.[460] Nonetheless, the issue of fidelity comes to the fore in journalistic reviews of the film. *Guardian* writer Peter Bradshaw concludes:

> The change of title is a clue to how the text has been softened and sweetened–elegies are composed in honour of dead people, not dying animals–but the result works perfectly well on its own terms, and it is substantially better than the last Roth adaptation to reach the screen, The Human Stain. ("Elegy" n.pag)

Bradshaw notes the success of the film "on its own terms", which is made acceptable by the change of title, but does not allow Coixet's film to be judged separately from Roth's book, or previous adaptations. Other critics bemoaned the softening of the source material, seeing it as unfaithful to the source material. *New York Times* reviewer Manohla Dargis writes:

> The film also dilutes the novel's pessimism, its smog of self-contempt and more aggressively ugly deeds and words–no one could mistake the onscreen Kepesh for a misogynist–but dilution, bowdlerization, counter-readings and heresy are legitimate strategies in the adaptation racket. Dullness isn't. ("Extracurricular" n.pag)

Dargis makes negative reference to the adaptation industry, remarking on the techniques used to transpose the narrative from page to screen and refusing to judge the film on its own merits. However, conscious of the fidelity discourse, she continues:

> The problem with *Elegy* has nothing to do with faithfulness and everything to do with interpretation. The film is an overly polite take on a spiky, claustrophobic, insistently impolite novel, but this wouldn't be such an issue if Ms. Coixet had the cinematic language that could withstand, equal, obliterate or transcend the book's blunt force, its beautiful sentences, flashes of genius and spleen. Ms. Coixet has a fine eye and she has created a visual scheme–an attractively dark palette, discreetly hovering camera movements and smooth edits–that makes everything look very nice indeed (especially the radiant if miscast Ms. Cruz). There's not a hair out of place here or an emotion. It's as if Ms. Coixet had tried to quiet the howls of a dying animal. ("Extracurricular" n.pag)

While praising Coixet's "eye" and style of filmmaking, the review concludes that the film version lacks the essence of Roth, his personal voice. The director also had to contend with preconceptions of leading man Kepesh as a figure familiar to many viewers that know the source books, yet under Coixet's direction Kingsley portrays a weaker, more vulnerable 'professor of desire', undermined by her camerawork and his own obsession. Admittedly, her treatment of *The Dying Animal* results in a more toned-down and palatable version of Roth's

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[460] Coixet openly discusses her desire to keep the original title in line with Roth's book in various press interviews, but she was overruled by the producers. For further details see "Isabel Coixet afirma", Douglas ("Exclusive"), Hernández ("Sin preguntas") and Llanos ("Penélope").

protagonist, but this was interpreted as a 'loss' by many reviews, especially from English-language journalistic sources.[461]

In contrast, academic criticism of the film has been more positive and, perhaps, more auteurist, given the focus on *Elegy* within Coixet's body of work as a subject of interest for hispanists. Actress Cruz was instrumental in getting the film made and,[462] as Wheeler suggests, she gives one of her best performances as Consuela ("Sex" 301), Roth's object of desire, who becomes less fragmented and more three-dimensional in the film. Other articles similarly comment on the 'gains' made by Coixet's authorship, and present her as a legitimate, and above all successful adaptive auteur (Donapetry "Ethics"). Even the journal *Philip Roth Studies* praises the film for its softening of Kepesh, arguing that *Elegy* is a more successful adaptation than previous attempts with Roth's more canonical works.[463] Reviewer Halio writes:

> The basic difference between the novel and the film, however, is the narrative structure. Whereas *The Dying Animal*, like *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), is written as a monologue told to an unnamed listener, screenwriter Nicholas Meyer has fashioned a script with excellent dialogue (some but not all of it taken directly from Roth) along with occasional voiceovers to keep the action on track. Isabel Coixet has deftly directed and included excellent music, mostly piano sonatas by Bach or Beethoven, to provide appropriate romantic backgrounds. All of this helps to contribute to the more sympathetic rendering of the action. While the focus is still mainly on David Kepesh, he does not emerge so self-preoccupied or narcissistic as he appears on the pages of the novel. (Halio "Elegy" 288)

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[461] While providing a generally positive review, Philip French concludes that *Elegy* "is an enjoyable, often moving and generally well-considered film, though [...] the novelist's precise tone inevitably eludes the film-maker" ("Review" n.pag). Even a reviewer who admits to not having read Roth's book enters into a fidelity discourse: "My instinct says this is a plot-heavy adaptation of a work based heavily in introspection, and thus the feeling that something's lacking in translation" (Nick Pinkerton "Age of Consent" n.pag). For a similarly negative tone in the Spanish press see Carlos Boyero ("Insuficiente adaptación").

[462] Cruz discusses her determination to get the film made, and how she spent six years tied to the project before shooting began (Brito "Cruz").

[463] Roth's more famous and successful books have been adapted for the screen, and according to Wheeler ("Sex" 293), *The Human Stain* (Robert Benton, 2002) was largely panned by critics. Roth himself was credited as a writer on a production of *The Ghost* Writer by TV network PBS in 1984. Other minor works have been made into B-movies such as *The Battle of Blood Island* (Roger Corman, 1960), based on a short story "Expect the Vandals", while also in 1960 another story "The Contest for Aaron Gold" was adapted into an episode of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. Additionally, in a recent article on the website *The Wire*, journalist Adam Chandler ("Stop") calls for an end to Roth adaptations, as a reaction piece to the casting of an upcoming adaptation of the Pulitzer Prize-wining *American Pastoral*, arguably Roth's most canonical, or, at least, famous work. Dargis also wonders about Roth adaptations: "It's a wonder that filmmakers continue to adapt Mr. Roth's work to the screen, which is largely inhospitable to tough, prickly and unappetizing ideas and characters, especially in America" ("Extracurricular" n.pag). These snippets provide excellent examples of the resistance to novel-film adaptations of 'touchstone' writers like Roth, pervasive in journalistic reviews as well as academic criticism. As a follow-up to *Elegy*, Coixet was offered *American Pastoral* by Lakeshore, but she declined (in Donapetry "Miss Wasabi").

Coixet points out that Roth liked the finished piece (in Donapetry "Miss Wasabi" n.pag), a fact which represents another important contributing factor to the interplay of auteurs, or as Murray writes: "In such a public climate, it matters more to film marketing and publicity what a Philip Roth thinks of the latest screen adaptation of his work than a Dan Brown" (*The Adaptation* 27).[464] The fact that Murray uses Roth as an example serves to prove his canonical status within the world of adaptations. Yet, her point also highlights the practice of selling films like *Elegy* as adaptations, rather than stand-alone works, despite changes to titles or plots–and the importance of the author's consent or approval, which is often marked by their presence at the premiere of the film (*The Adaptation* 27) or at events such as readings which, according to Murray, represent a "performative embodiment of the filmic text's interrelationship with its print source (119). Accordingly, Roth had some involvement in the project and Coixet visited him during pre-production. She recounts that he was almost as obsessed with Cruz as Kepesh was with Consuela, and recalls how their meetings were often dominated by Roth reading sections aloud from the book (in Donapetry "Miss Wasabi"). Despite his support for the finished project, her willingness to speak freely about the experience would indicate that she was less concerned with Roth's approval than with staying true to her vision of the book.

Aside from the structural changes she made to the script, Coixet uses the camera to author the adaptation. The film opens with a prologue of Kepesh appearing on *The Charlie Rose Show*, explaining his back-story and promoting his new book about hedonism. The subject matter of the book functions as his manifesto for living: the pursuit of pleasure in a compartmentalised life, where sex is just sex. This mock interview sets up the first-person confessional tone for the rest of the film, with Kingsley's voice-over –beginning in the next sequence– almost seamlessly justifying the frequent interjections and comments that he will make throughout. The director did not operate the camera during this expository sequence, but as the film progresses, the shakiness of Coixet's camera is particularly noticeable, and works in a twofold way, at once distancing us from the narrative, reminding us of the camera's presence, and conversely, functioning to submerge the audience deeper in the story as the camera moves like the human head, implying Kepesh's point of view, or indeed our

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[464] Dan Brown's novels *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) and *Angels and Demons* (2000) were adapted for the screen by Ron Howard in 2006 and 2009 respectively and were marketed as big-budget action thrillers with major stars.

own. In this way, Coixet's personal camera furthers her auteur agenda, as she questions the authority of the protagonist, and draws the attention of the viewer to practices of looking.

Accordingly, despite Consuela's objectification, she gains some agency in the film, as Coixet allows direct access to her, unmediated by Kepesh, a device which represents a major divergence from the novel. However, this simultaneously makes her the subject of our unfiltered gaze, trapping her fragmented body in the frame no matter what she does. For those who have read the book, this switching of point of view draws the audience's attention to their own gaze. While Roth allows his protagonist exclusivity of narrative voice, and focalises every event through his subjective narration, there remains the possibility that everything we see on screen comes from the professor's imagination and memory. Yet, it is more likely that he does not construct the moments outside of his point of view, as his voice-over clearly demarcates fantasy sequences, and we experience Consuela's look to the camera through his eyes, as if she is looking directly at him. In Kepesh's fantasy sequences, we penetrate the mind of the obsessed lover, entering into his voyeurism, transformed into another being, as Kepesh himself is in *The Breast*. We watch Consuela kiss another man, as the professor waits outside the opera for her. A few scenes later he is hallucinating once again and we are submerged into a dream of Consuela having sex with another young man, this time gazing directly into the camera as it frames her face tightly, as if looking into Kepesh's eyes. This device allows us into his inner world, viscerally experiencing his anxieties, neatly tying in with his areas of academic interest, and reminding us of the previous books. However, fantasy sequences are part of Coixet's visual language, and amplify her auteurism within the filmed text.

For example, when we see Consuela naked during one of Kepesh's piano sessions, the audience enjoys the visual image of her away from the gaze of her lover, rather than experiencing it through his language or point of view. In the book, Kepesh/Roth describes her standing there naked, in full view of him as he plays Mozart sonatas. Conversely, in the film, she lies out on a sofa behind him, out of his line of vision, almost mimicking the pose of Modigliani's "Le grand nu", which we see on the cover of the more recent Vintage Books editions of *The Dying Animal*. In this way, Coixet gives this moment to Consuela as a more active protagonist; she is actively listening and enjoying the music, rather than passively standing there being *looked at* by Kepesh. While Chapter 5 exemplified this moment as part of Coixet's interrogation of the gaze, it also marks a significant change in tone from the novel. The director takes a moment from his fantasies and brings it into real life, but into Consuela's

life rather than her teacher's. Yet, the cinematography again conspires to turn the viewer into Kepesh's surrogate, as the camera slowly pans her naked body, fragmenting it, and we gaze at her for ourselves, without the intervention of the protagonist.

The novel ends at the point where Kepesh has just received word that Consuela is in hospital. The reader is left with a cliff-hanger: wondering will he go to her, as the imaginary interlocutor (that is Kepesh's mind) reminds him of the implications a visit might have, saying "Think about it. Think. Because if you go, you're finished" (*Dying* 156). The film also chooses to portray an open ending, but with a greater sense of closure than the novel. Kepesh goes to Consuela and comforts her, suggesting a possible reunion of the couple, if she survives cancer. Roth's narrative ends in panic and anxiety, while Coixet's has more Hollywood gloss, despite the sad circumstances. The director allows Kepesh an opportunity to finally mature and take some emotional responsibility, whereas Roth keeps us in the dark about whether or not Kepesh goes to the hospital.

In the film and the book, Consuela's behaviour and appearance change as the relationship progresses, but this development stems from a different event on page and on screen. In the book, she snaps her teeth viciously at Kepesh, after he has subjected her to forceful oral sex, which he claims was intended unsettle her, to free her "from her own surveillance", and inaugurate her into the "sinister dream" (*Dying* 31).[465] This "biting back of life" (Roth *Dying* 30) brings about a transformation in her, at least in the mind of her lover. This misogynistic sequence does not appear in the film; rather the modifications in Consuela's demeanour begin during an invented scene on the beach, when she silently mouths the words "I love you". The film marks her apparent psychological change physically with her tousled hair, and a less austere wardrobe. Roth was adamant that Consuela would never wear jeans, but Coixet chose to ignore that, and dresses her in jeans and a trench coat (*Charlie Rose*). Her mannerisms are more relaxed, more vivacious than before; she is comfortable in the relationship and in her love for Kepesh. Coixet dilutes the misogyny of Kepesh in leaving out this bite scene, and portrays Consuela as a woman in love, rather than undergoing some sort of subconscious eureka moment.[466] Considering that the idea of fidelity represents an

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[465] *The Dying Animal* features a lengthy description of this scene, which Roth viewed as a key turning point in the novel. However, Coixet refused to film it, despite Roth's insistence of its importance to Consuela's character.

[466] In an interview, Coixet notes that she was not sure if Consuela was a real person in Roth's life, but she claims that all the reflections about sex are from Roth's persona life, although voiced by Kepesh:

emotional rather than a logical concept, the deviations employed by the director and screenwriter create an adaptation that gives the 'feel' of Roth, respecting his source text while diffusing the narrative voice into other characters and the camera itself. Coixet has created an onscreen world wrought with obsession, jealousy and love, with the seemingly self-controlled Kepesh as author of his own sentimental downfall, just as Roth does in the novel. However, it is the corporeality, the life that Coixet gives to the characters and the camera that sums up the success of *Elegy* as an adaptation, rather than an exact replication of the events in the book.

The international success of the film and a 2008 'movie tie-in' reprint of Roth's book with the film poster as its cover mark an interesting interplay of auteurs.[467] As is often the case with adaptations, most of the audience will see the film before reading the source text, or might never read it. Bazin comments on the commercial power of this reversed reception, noting that book sales always go up when a film version is released ("Adaptation" 22). Although the film and publishing industries have changed since Bazin's article appeared in 1948, contemporary publishers continue to exploit this potential market, reprinting novels with the film poster as cover art in an attempt to cash in on the connection between the adaptation and the source text, providing what Hutcheon calls "oscillation" between source and adaptation in regard to intertextual awareness:

> If we know the adapted work, there will be a constant oscillation between it and the new adaptation we are experiencing; if we do not, we will not experience the work *as an adaptation*. However, as noted, if we happen to read the novel after we see the film adaptation of it, we again feel that oscillation, though this time in reverse. Oscillation is not hierarchical, even if some adaptation theory is. (*A Theory* xv)

This oscillation is particularly pertinent to *Elegy* as Coixet's most 'traditional' page to screen adaptation; for the informed spectator, Roth's book looms large when watching the film, yet her reorientation of the gaze within the frame, as discussed in Chapter 5, places the misogyny of *The Dying Animal* into sharper relief on a second reading. The potential of adaptation to provide a re-vision of a canonical text is dealt with in the opening sequence of the film as Kepesh cites Barthes during one of his lectures, while Consuela clutches *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973) to her chest as she walks to class. Regardless of the subjective nature of Hutcheon's oscillation "in reverse", the use of adaptation cover art by publishing houses, or

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"Para él, el sexo es la venganza del cuerpo sobre la muerte" ["for him, sex is the body's revenge on death"] (in Luis Martínez "Isabel Coixet" 63).

[467] Vintage published an edition with images of Kingsley and Cruz on the cover, and a sticker prominently displayed stating "The inspiration for the motion picture *Elegy*".

the inverse practice of placing the source author's name on the film poster aims to provoke this oscillation in the receiver, foregrounding the process of adaptation. These practices may be purely commercial, and out of the control of the film director as publishers and producers aim for 'cross-market' appeal, but they reveal much about the interplay of auteurs inherent to film adaptation. Such practices also help to confirm Coixet's 'success' in adapting *The Dying Animal*, as her film version is allowed equal footing with Roth's book within his creative territory of the bookshop.

**Adaptive Auteurism: *Ayer no termina nunca***

Regarding the oscillation described by Hutcheon, *Ayer* is perhaps less a 'free' adaptation than Coixet claims, with a script that changes little from the original text. The source play, *Gif* (*Poison*, 2009) has the potential to become a prestige product in Holland, where the playwright Vekemans is a successful dramatist. The stage version has been translated and performed in English, French, German and Spanish (with the title *Ayer te gustaba la lluvia*),[468] but it also represents a less prestigious product internationally, where Vekemans is not well-known. While it proved almost impossible to make Roth invisible in *Elegy*, Coixet successfully repackages Vekemans' play as an auteur production, and retains her credit as writer-director. Nine years after she directed *84*, she came to the project as a more established film auteur and a more experienced adaptive auteur. Catherine Grant writes:

> Clearly, auteurs are not born *sui generis* (the constitutive characteristic of auteurism), but rather they become it. [...] such a laborious becoming necessarily involved and built upon the contribution of named collaborators, themselves *sui generis* authors, at the same time as it paradoxically required, to a certain extent at least, *the dis-appearance* of these collaborators" ("Becoming" 3; my emphases)

After this process of becoming, Coixet opts to preserve the theatrical structure of a conversation between two people created by her 'collaborator' Vekemans, which she embellishes with 'cinematic' additions of cutaways, close-ups and short flashbacks. While expansion of the short play was necessary, it represents another source amenable to her adaptation methodology, similar to Meyer's *Elegy* screenplay. Blogger Ana Rodríguez comments that Coixet had been considering an adaptation "for years", although Vekemans's play only made its theatrical debut in 2009, and was translated into Spanish and performed in

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[468] Vekemans' website provides some links and information about translations of her plays: <http://www.lotvekemans.nl/download.htm>. [Last accessed 26 July 2014]. The author wishes to thank translators Rina Vergano for access to the English translation (*Poison*), and Ronald Brouwer for the Spanish translation (*Antes*), both of which will be referred to throughout this section.

Madrid in 2012.[469] This anecdotal information serves to underline Coixet's careful selection of potential source materials, ever conscious of how they will fit into her filmography. Although it was sold as a 'free' adaptation, the dialogue used in Coixet's film remains close to Brouwer's translation for the stage, although Vekemans's unembellished lines leave space for the performer or director to interpret. Similarly, Catherine Grant comments that "[f]ree adaptation allows auteurs to *rewrite* texts and make them their own" ("Recognizing" 58), and in a certain way Coixet escapes the fidelity paradigm in claiming 'free' adaptation status, authorizing her rewrite through simultaneous deference to and transformation of an 'original'.

The play recounts a meeting at a cemetery between a man (Him) and a woman (Her), who have not seen each other in ten years. Their child died in an accident ten years ago and the man left, and now lives in France with a new wife, who is expecting a baby. The child's body is being exhumed along with the rest of the graves because of poison found in the soil. However, it transpires that the woman has concocted this story in order to engineer the meeting, and the former couple have an open and frank discussion about their breakup, the child's death and their emotions. Moving into a recognisably peninsular landscape and language, Coixet sets the film in La Igualada cemetery, a vast concrete structure on the outskirts of Barcelona, and takes advantage of the cavernous setting for a pared-down film with only two actors, referred to in the credits as J (Him) and C (Her). Coixet modifies the poisoned soil of the stage version to the impending construction of a casino on the graveyard site, in a 2017 version of Spain that is suffering the effects of years of financial austerity, bank bailouts and mass emigration. In the DVD extras of *Ayer*, and during press interviews, Coixet discusses how she wanted to combine the general story of a country with that of a couple who have suffered a great tragedy.[470] In transposing the source material to film– and to a new geographical and linguistic context with personal resonances– the "indigenized" version of the drama becomes an 'Isabel Coixet film' rather than a 'play by Lot Vekemans'.[471]

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[469] In a review of the film, Ana Rodríguez writes about the original play: "En España, primero ha sido llevada a las tablas en 2012 por el director teatral Miguel Ángel Sola y poco después acaba inspirando el título *Ayer no termina nunca*, que de la mano de Isabel Coixet, quien ya se había interesado por el texto años atrás" ["In Spain it was first brought to the stage in 2012 by theatre director Miguel Ángel Sola and shortly after it inspired the title *Ayer no termina nunca*, by Isabel Coixet, who had been interested in the text for years previously"] ("Miedo" n.pag).

[470] Coixet's version is dedicated to her friends Javier and Cristina, who lost a child, and attempts to tell the story of their emotional turmoil through the plot of Vekemans' play.

[471] Hutcheon discusses the "indigenization" of Shakespeare into German, which subsequently "generated" domestic drama (*A Theory* 28).

Further to this rebranding, the film version builds upon the long set-piece conversations between couples in her previous films, a feature which Wheeler describes as Coixet's "authorial stamp" ("Sex" 294).[472] This intense exploration of feelings such as grief, anger and guilt represents another version of Coixet's ideal protagonists, with allusions to her previous work such as the name Hanna (Cámara's new German wife), his profession as an academic (recalling Kepesh), and the stylistic coherence with her other films such as the handheld camera and brief pauses or emphatic silences. However, *Ayer* is less concerned with the senses than it is with a forthright discussion of the emotions in question. In a typical Coixet trope, the plot hinges on a letter sent from C to J about the problems in the graveyard, which he carries with him to their meeting. C notes that a written letter seemed more appropriate, since nobody writes them anymore; the formality of pen and paper is preferred to an email, text message or phone call. Nevertheless, the subject matter remains less important than the resultant meeting at the cemetery. C's letter turns out to be fictional in content, but its effect is to reunite the couple at the site of their son's grave and have an honest discussion in an unadorned setting that reflects their raw emotional state.

The camera, although mobile, does not photograph haptic imagery, but rather it concentrates on the cavernous setting. While Coixet has greater space at her disposal than a theatre director, she uses few locations, containing most of the scenes within the cemetery, in an enormous cement building.[473] The first Spanish production of the play in Teatro Fernán Gómez also utilised a sparse setting– an empty stage with only a long wooden block for seating. Coixet imitates this bareness with her choice of the sharp geometry of the concrete buildings in the Igualada cemetery, which were designed with the poetic conception of space in mind, as a link to past, present, and future.[474]

Additionally, the camera maintains its independence from the characters at certain points, replicating the point of view of a theatre audience. For example, it focuses on empty

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[472] These set pieces are found in all of Coixet's feature films at the time of writing: For example, *Demasiado* (Equis and Evax in the bar), *Things* (Ann and Don in the laundrette), *A los* (Matilde and the Maestro walking in the gardens), *My Life* (Ann and Lee at the seafront restaurant), *The Secret Life* (Hanna and Josef in the infirmary) and *Elegy* (Kepesh and Consuela on the couch) and *Map* (David and Ryu at the market). Although the protagonists of *84* never meet in person, their epistolary relationship plays out in similar dialogic fashion.

[473] The cemetery was designed by architects Enric Miralles and Carme Pinos and is a well-known landmark in the hills outside Barcelona. The late Miralles was the business partner and husband of Coixet's friend Tagliabue, who has collaborated with the film director on the *From I to J* exhibition and designed the Spanish Pavilion for the Shanghai Expo in 2010.

[474] For photos, maps and details of the design brief see Souza ("Clásicos" n.pag). For analysis of the architecture see Quiros et al ("Enric").

space after the protagonists have left, photographing their bags as they go outside for fresh air in one of Coixet's characteristic respiratory pauses. However, this moment suggests the characters have walked 'offstage', only to walk 'onstage' again in the next shot, albeit in another part of the cemetery buildings. Simultaneously, however, the camera engages in a more cinematic viewpoint as the couple argue, as it pans quickly back and forth between their faces, like a tennis match. At once cinematic because of the close range, this camerawork also imparts the theatre spectator's perspective. In adapting *Poison*, Coixet remains 'faithful' to a theatrical storytelling mode, changing little on a structural level, while she connects the source material to her auteur filmography by reusing familiar characters and camerawork. The receiver's knowledge of the source is arbitrary, especially in Coixet's "indigenized" version, yet the director goes to some lengths to preserve the theatricality of Vekemans' play.

Nevertheless, the film expands on the play by providing cutaways to black and white interior monologues for the two characters and, to an extent, makes the filmed adaptation more theatrical as these soliloquys provide further insight into the thoughts of the protagonists. These interior interludes are presented within a cave-like, seemingly natural space, as opposed to the sharp, constructed lines of the cement structure. Coixet's interest in black and white images from previous project *Escuchando* is maintained, and like the non-fiction film, *Ayer* strives to 'document' a certain truth or perspective; although, in this case grief, rather than injustice, is the object of investigation. With regard to casting, Coixet had seen the chemistry between Cámara and Peña in *Torremolinos 73* (Pablo Berger, 2003) and, in a way, expands on this previous incarnation for her film.[475] She was interested in working with Cámara again after his performances in secondary roles in *The Secret Life* and *Paris, Je t'aime*. Like Elías and Cruz, both actors praise her directing skills; their comments further bolstering Coixet's reputation as an 'actor's director'.[476]

Peña's character speaks directly to the camera in most of her angry, frustrated cutaways, while Cámara's character muses over the path his life has taken, often staring into the distance. Although the film version makes use of silence as a common characteristic of Coixet's cinema, these soliloquys become an artificial way to flesh out what are already well-defined characters, convincingly brought to life by the actors. The switch between colour and black and white, while innovative within her filmography, provides a respite from the intense

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[475] Berger's film recounts the story of an encyclopaedia salesman (Cámara) and his wife (Peña) who decide to make adult films as a source of extra income, set in 1973 Spain. For extended textual analysis of the film, see Vidal (*Cinema*).

[476] Cámara and Peña discuss their experiences with Coixet in the DVD extras of *Ayer*.

conversational setup, and breaks the tension between the characters, yet the visual effect jars somewhat. The lines spoken by the protgaonists remain quite similar to the source play, but the stylised separation of the dialogue and the invented interior monologues highlights the divide between the foundational material and the innovations of the film director. In this way, the interplay of auteurs is preserved. Writing for *Screen Daily,* Mark Adams comments that Coixet

> draws out impressive performances from Javier Cámara and Candela Peña, and while intriguing, the film is rather too inaccessible and bitter to work beyond niche art house audiences, with this tortured and tormented couple's coming together a pretty bleak assignation for all concerned. ("Yesterday" n.pag)

Adams also notes the intensity of the production, and concludes that the theatrical origins, which allow for the intense performances, make it difficult to watch as a film ("Yesterday" n.pag). In the Bazinian sense, Coixet does not successfully 'digest' the source material into a form easily assimilated by cinemagoers; however, she creates a work that represents the pinnacle of her exploration of emotions and death as part of an auteur filmography. The reviewer suggests that the film requires a niche audience, which indicates an auteurist work: this is a film for Coixet fans, rather than for the general public. Accordingly, her marketing strategy and public discourse concerning the film seem to be her most auteurist to date. By keeping the production and plot details secret and creating an enigma around her first feature film in Spanish since *A los*, she presents an autonomous work rather than an adaptation. Yet, *Ayer* remains remarkably true to its theatrical roots, despite the label of 'free' adaptation and the change of title.

**Auteur Naming**

Similarly, Sanders uses this practice of renaming adaptations to explain Cartmell's category of "analogue" adaptation, where an adapted film becomes a stand-alone piece, independent of the source material (Cartmell and Whelehan *Adaptations* 24). Coixet's renamed projects such as *My Life*, *Elegy* and *Ayer* revolve around this analogue adaptation mode, with an optional, enriching intertextual commentary. Nonetheless, the prestige hierarchy remains inescapable for many reviewers. However, in modifying the titles of her films, Coixet can distance herself from the source material and lay further claim to the adaptation as an author, rather than just a metteur-en-scène of the written word.[477] Whether

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[477] Similarly, Leitch writes about established directors whose filmography consists predominantly of adaptations and suggests that: "the auteur status of filmmakers depends at least as much on their

or not she has final say over the film's title, the renaming marks the producer's intent to position the film as a loyal adaptation or an auteurist interpretation. As director-producer, she had the authority to change the title of *Poison* to *Ayer,* indicating her desire to stray from Vekemans's play. Contrastingly, with *84* and *Elegy* she wanted to retain the connection to the source material and create a dialogue or 'digest' with her adaptation, much like the links she forges with other works through intertextual appropriations.

Since *Ayer*, her projects adhere to the more conventional adaptive practice of naming the film after the source. *Another Me* (2013) is based on an eponymous young-adult novel by Scottish writer Cathy MacPhail (2003).[478] However, in the five years it took the film to gestate, an alternative name, *Panda Eyes*, was attached to the project for quite some time, which Coixet described as a Japanese-inspired teen horror.[479] The shift back to the title of the novel by MacPhail may have been related to British financial investment in the film,[480] but the change is indicative of the film's status as an adaptation proper rather than an appropriation of plot elements or characters. Although MacPhail's book is not a prestige product, she is a popular novelist, and this alignment takes advantage of the linked cultural appeal of both literature and film, and it would not be surprising to see a 'movie tie-in' cover in bookshops upon the film's general release in the UK and Ireland.[481]

However, Coixet has also created her own adaptation texts, albeit converting her original script for *Map* into a printed publication in Spanish. *Mapa* (2009) is not a screenplay or a shooting script; rather it represents a textual manifestation of *cinécriture*, providing step outlines in paragraph form of *cintas* or strips of film, interspersed with photographs from the shoot. Sequences that contain no dialogue are described prosaically in vivid detail, recounting Coixet's vision for the scene, which she gets to control as screenwriter, camera operator and director. In using a non-traditional layout to create a book that is neither screenplay nor

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temperament and working habits, their triumphs in conflicts with other aspiring authors, and their success at turning themselves into brand names as on their artistic aspirations or any textual features of their films" (*Film Adaptation* 237).

[478] *Another Me* recounts the story of Faye, a teenager convinced she is being followed by a ghost or a doppelganger.

[479] In a 2013 interview with Spanish film magazine *Fotogramas*, Coixet refers to the film as *Panda Eyes* (Vall "Isabel Coixet" n.pag), so it seems this change in title happened at a very late stage.

[480] However, *Screen Daily* reported that Film Agency for Wales provided £20,000 towards the budget while the project was still titled *Panda Eyes* (Wendy Mitchell "Film Agency" n.pag).

[481] Another possible reason for the shift back to the title of the novel is the recent spate of young-adult literary adaptations to hit cinemas such as the *Twilight* films (2008-2012), *The Hunger Games* (Gary Ross, 2012) and *The Golden Compass* (Chris Weitz, 2007) and, correspondingly, the production companies and investors may have wished to be part of this vogue for teen fiction on screen.

novelisation of her finished film, she authors a hybrid, reverse-engineered text, whose publication coincided with the film's release, in an attempt to further her multi-disciplinary adaptive-auteur agenda. The book's cover tells readers that it arose from the script; however, in choosing to publish this version rather than a traditional screenplay the director promotes her brand of visual storytelling and strengthens her connection to *cinécriture*. This staging of the film release as a multimedia event, with 'tie-in' book publications reinforces the idea that directors do not have problems accessing filmmaking; it is access to audiences that proves difficult for arthouse or independent cinema. Although a blockbuster-style media saturation strategy will not always suit a smaller production, Coixet's knowledge of advertising and product placement allows her to see the value of promoting her film work through other outlets traditionally the preserve of adaptation.

Another project in post-production is *Learning to Drive* (2014), which Coixet adapted from a *New Yorker* column by Katha Pollitt ("Learning" 2002). Again, the title remains unchanged, despite the extensive expansion required to transform Pollitt's article into a feature-length film. The column recounts the writer's bond with her driving instructor, which begins as her long-term relationship disintegrates, providing a familiar template for one of Coixet's ideal characters, the traumatised woman or sleepwalker, who is awakened by a stranger. Additionally, she has cast *Elegy* stars Clarkson (who played Carolyn) and Kingsley, and will possibly build on their former screen incarnation as lovers, while simultaneously adding them to her 'stable' of performers as an auteur filmmaker.[482] At the time of writing, from information available online and interviews with the cast, it seems *Learning to Drive* will perpetuate Coixet's favoured model of set-piece conversations, with emotionally honest and raw performances from the actors as they revisit the director's favourite relationship.[483] Also in pre-production is an adaptation of Penelope Fitzgerald's novel *The Bookshop* (1978), which will see Coixet return to a bibliophilic milieu in order to portray the protagonist's struggle to run an independent bookshop in a small English village.[484]

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[482] Like Cruz with *Elegy*, Clarkson was instrumental in bringing Pollitt's work to the screen and spent eight years attached to the project ("Patricia Clarkson talks"). Coixet recounts that the actress gave her and Kingsley a copy of the script during the *Elegy* shoot (Robert Goldrich "Chat Room").

[483] For more production details see Carlos Aguilar ("Women to Watch"), Goldrich ("Chat Room") and Jane Schoettle ("Learning").

[484] In 2012, Coixet was rumoured to be directing a film version of the stage play *Marburg* (2010) by Catalan playwright and stage director Guillem Clúa ("Marburg").

## Conclusion

Coixet's continued engagement with the mode of adaptation suggests a new departure in her filmography, as she moves closer to Hollywood, or, at least, the Hollywood fringes, with structurally formal adaptations taking precedent over her self-penned original screenplays. This suggests that, as an auteur, she has perhaps made her identity so clear and decipherable that she can now place her stamp on the work of others, rather than relying on the hyphenated authorship model she has followed in the past for her authority and creative control. Her auteurist approach to adaptation and appropriation opens up a space where intertextuality can become adaptation and 'unoriginality' can be innovative. Similarly, her selection of source materials for formal adaptations reflects the interplay of auteurs she is keen to negotiate, although she also gleans from non-prestige sources and 'freely' adapts lesser-known texts to escape from accusations of infidelity. In this way, she amplifies her auteur agenda, and posits herself as a worthy adapter through engaged, active intertextuality and through considered, self-reflexive adaptation. Rather than become a director-for-hire, she has developed into a strategic adaptive auteur in recent years, by sourcing projects she can author competently and that allow her to further explore her favoured themes, narrative structures, and modes of filmmaking. Her adaptive auteur skills bridge the gap between the textual and industrial auteur: in this move towards an adaptive mode, Coixet has successfully negotiated a synthesis between auteurism, authorship and artistry.

## CONCLUSION

After years of debate, theoretical questions of authorship remain pertinent to the collaborative world of film. As Part 1 of this thesis has revealed auteurism has shifted, since the *Cahiers* period, from an editorial policy to an attractive strategy for filmmakers to follow, whether they are directing a big-budget franchise or a no-budget short. While it is not necessary to be an auteur in order to be received as the author of a film, this analysis has also shown that it is not necessary to be a highly successful director to be an auteur. Despite starting out in the industry as a relative unknown, Coixet has consistently packaged herself as an auteur and sells her films as the products of an artist, while interacting with commercial modes of filmmaking and film publicity. However, this commercial expertise has not dented her artistic reputation, and as this thesis has demonstrated, it helps her to further her auteur agenda across platforms and set her apart from her contemporaries.

While Coixet is not the first filmmaker to model her career in this way, nonetheless the figure of the auteur has been transformed completely since the upsurge in director-focused criticism during the 1950s and 1960s. Accordingly, this analysis concludes that contemporary auteurism denotes a learned strategy and thus a performed mode of authorship, grounded in the Romantic figure of the artist, yet sustained by the commercial drive of the industry. With the advent of the internet, filmmakers can now exert more precise control over their public image and persona than ever before. A chronological exploration of the auteur figure revealed that the evolution of the director has run in tandem with the development of auteur criticism. Thus, while the interdependence of director and critic persists, the democratisation of filmmaking and the decline of the studios means that, in many cases, directors can claim auteur status for themselves from their first film. Although the long history of the auteur has provided alternative figures to emulate, this thesis contends that Coixet's persona remains comparable to the *Cahiers* group. She intellectualises her filmmaking practice through writing and interviews, in a similar fashion to her predecessors in their roles as writers for the magazine, and as directors. While she pays homage to other filmmakers such as Ozu, Wong Kar-Wai and Cassavetes, she most closely imitates auteur-artists of the French New Wave like Truffaut and Varda and makes these connections explicit within her public discourse.

In focusing on Coixet's constructed persona and how she addresses the spectator, this analysis largely excludes critical and popular responses to her films and other products.

Yet rather than privilege Coixet's voice to the exclusion of others, this thesis seeks to explore how her authorship strategies are reflected in her films and in her interactions with the media in order to examine the process of image-making and how it relates to the process of filmmaking. With this in mind, notions of success (in terms of box-office sales and critical acclaim) and failure are sidelined in favour of emphasis on how Coixet employs an auteur strategy to control and, in some way, transcend the reception of her films as part of a long-term survival strategy. The later chapters on intertextuality and adaptation reflect on reviews in order to demonstrate that such transcendence is not always possible, but the emphasis on Coixet's constructed persona provides an opportunity to evaluate her authorship strategies over a long career.

However, this thesis also sought to differentiate between the textual auteur and the industrial auteur, as a means of distinguishing art and commerce, but also in order to exemplify how Coixet successfully negotiates the relationship between the two concepts. She chooses to cultivate an intellectual, artist persona that is acessible, rather than courting mainstream popular appeal. It can be concluded that her textual auteur or artist status is somewhat dependent on industrial or commercial auteur strategies, as she guides the spectator's reception of her films through interactions with the media and through non-filmic projects that cement her reputation as an all-round audiovisual creative. As a textual auteur, Coixet revisits the same protagonists many times over, yet rather than providing a dull repetition, each new project provides a more nuanced exploration of her favoured themes, while also cementing her artistic personality as an auteur. In constantly changing the locations, timeframes and languages of her productions, she experiments just enough to provide novelty, while her engagement with intertextuality becomes self-reflexive, as she restages and revisits her own work alongside the work of other artists and directors she admires. As an "auteur of commerce" (to use Corrigan's term), Coixet consciously constructs a public persona that can be marketed alongside her creative work as a strategy learned from auteurs of the past. She follows a tradition of self-styled auteurs, but her particular method of multi-tasking authorship sets her apart, especially in her role as camera operator. Her persistence in following this low-budget shooter-director authorship model keeps her in the realm of the "auteur of commerce"; however, this thesis has modified Corrigan's critical terms in order to further explore the simultaneous creation of film style and public image, as the two processes feed off each other on the screen and in the media.

While she has not reached the international fame levels of Spain's most exportable and exported auteur, Almodóvar, she has created a legible identity and brand that strategically elevates her films to the status of art and places her in the realm of the star. While scholars such as Catherine Grant ("Becoming") and Sayad ("Performing") have begun to explore the connection between star studies and the director in more detail, the concept of the director-star needs further theorisation and debate as part of an expansion of star studies and a critical reassessment of auteurism beyond the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, the performed star identity was deconstructed through analysis of Coixet's position as an industrial auteur, which comes to the fore in her public discourse and particularly through her websites. As critics such as Triana-Toribio have pointed out, her calculated media interventions and carefully-crafted online persona make her auteurist desires explicit through metaphorical language and repeated references to high and low culture ("Auteurism"). Although casual in tone and seemingly unrehearsed, Coixet repeats the same metaphors and phrases in interviews, and consciously or unconsciously reinforces her auteur agenda. Evidence of the success of this strategy can be seen in the similar vocabulary used by her critics and colleagues, as illustrated in Chapter 8 and 9. For example, heartbeat analogies are not limited to the filmmaker, with the director of Arts Santa Mònica writing:

> In searching for a way to hear aloud what we see in silence, Isabel Coixet intensifies the right to read and look, and the pleasure of doing so, without differentiating between the arts, or even between those who create, those who transmit, and those who receive. This reunion with the calligraphic takes place in a collective heartbeat. (Vicenç Altaió, *From I to J* 9)

Altaió's commentary neatly summarises the main facets of Coixet's identity as textual and industrial auteur; the synaesthetic portrayal of emotions and silence, an exploration of the literary or "right to read", an engaged "look", creativity that crosses disciplinary boundaries, a collaborative and adaptive mode of working, a personalised address to the 'receiver', and, not least, the use of personified, embodied language to describe her biological connection to art. In this way, her construction of a persona comes full circle. Thus, by simply reading her websites or publications, it is possible to understand Coixet's filmmaking philosophy and anticipate the kind of projects she directs, without seeing a single one of her films, advertisements or exhibitions.

Moreover, this thesis has sought to tease out the concept of the auteur as a constructed identity that marginalised directors can use to escape categorisations they see as pejorative, which in Coixet's case are the tags of 'Spanish director' or 'woman filmmaker'. However, as we have seen, in recent years she has become more accepting of these labels

and incorporates them into her auteur persona; she can use them as part of her auteur identity, and as part of her continued success, rather than fighting against these classifications. This is particularly apt in relation to Coixet's elusive approach to feminism. While other critics such as Bertenrath and Herrero Jiménez have provided textual analysis of gender issues within her films, this study has sought to incorporate gender as another facet of Coixet's strategic auteurism by highlighting the change in her public discourse rather than the treatment of gender in her films. She has gradually increased her activism as a voice for women directors, through her involvement in founding CIMA and her status as President of EWA. As part of her presidential manifesto, she writes:

> What do we need? What we really need is to change our cultural attitude towards women 180 degrees. We need Female [sic] super heroes. We need Big [sic] budgets. We need the right to be bitchy if we feel like it. We need to stop apologising for being bitchy. We need to alert the audience, if they are not watching films directed by women, they are missing the point of view of the other half of mankind (did I say 'mankind'?). ("EWA's President" n.pag)

This marks an evolution in her politics since early interviews where she evaded questions of gender. Whereas previously Coixet allied herself only to her auteur ancestors, and was involved in a group like CIMA for 'practical reasons' such as the working conditions of female audiovisual professionals, she now publicly associates herself with a similar, pan-European group and declaims her desire to revolutionize the representation of women on the screen, and to promote activism among the audience.

While this thesis underlines Coixet's connection to feminist film theorists such as Mulvey, more recent conceptualisations of women's film authorship extend to the terminology used to distinguish male and female authorship and address the lack of critical attention afforded to the latter. A recently created blog *The Auteuse Theory* (established by film academics Eylem Atakav and Melanie Williams) justifies its creation of a separate sphere for women's film criticism due to the continuing inequalities within the film industry.[485]

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[485] The home page of the Auteuse Theory blog states: "The purpose of this blog is to allow us to think about and write about a range of films made by women, from silent re-discoveries to the latest releases, from activist documentaries to mainstream Hollywood features, taking in examples from across the globe, whether famous or obscure. We have no desire to force ham-fisted links between very different films and very different filmmakers, to insist that they fit some pre-designated template of women's cinema. Quite the opposite; we want to explore the diversity of forms taken by women's filmmaking across different nations and eras. So why focus on women as a separate category at all? Why isolate their films from those of their male peers and think about them as some kind of exceptional or special case? Well, there's still the matter of persistent inequality of opportunity within certain key authorial roles in the film industries. [...] And although we are very reluctant to make simple equations between the fact of there being a woman being [sic] at the helm of a film and that film offering a more complex picture of femininity (there have always been battalions of male directors who

Similarly, the category of 'auteure' has been used in the volume edited by Jacqueline Levitin, Judith Pleiss and Valerie Raoul, *Women Filmmakers: Refocusing* (2003), as a means of distinguishing the female and male auteur. Within the same publication Angela Martin contends that the idea of auteurism "has nothing to do with women's filmmaking" ("Refocusing" 30), commenting that with the increased presence of women in all areas of the film industry, earlier critical questions of

> feminist aesthetic or a woman's voice that informed women's filmmaking [...] are now less productive and although necessary and very important at the time, they have, in some ways, become as limiting as the auteur theory. ("Refocusing" 34)

However, this thesis concludes that auteurism can represent a progressive strategy for women directors. Coixet chooses to follow an auteur strategy in order to overcome narrow categorisations and enter a space where experimentation is permitted to those who can legitimately claim artist status. Yet, this strategy can create contradictions: despite Coixet's initial reluctance to be 'marginalised' as feminist, she has engaged in feminist filmmaking practices from her first film, and has contributed to the creation of nuanced male and female characters. In deflecting questions around gender and nationality Coixet strives to create an identity based around gender-neutral, international auteurism, but further study is needed in order to assess how this is received by audiences.

Rather than compare women directors solely to one another, their work demands to be examined alongside their male counterparts without the connotations of *cine de mujer*, however positive or negative that label can be. As a gender-neutral auteurism evolves, it is necessary to reconceptualise the role of the director through an evaluation of their creative process rather than only grouping filmmakers by gender or national identity. However, this is not to suggest that a post-gender approach is appropriate; instead we must reconsider the usefulness of the categories that shape our understanding and grouping of directors, and question each director's treatment of gender rather than grounding this treatment in his or her biological sex. Yet, at the time of writing, there are fewer women directing films in Spain than there were at the start of the 2000s (Caparrós-Lera "Women"; Arranz "No, chicas"),[486]

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are very good at telling female-focussed stories), there is nonetheless plenty of anecdotal evidence to suggest that this is often true." (<http://auteusetheory.blogspot.ie/>. Accessed 14 December 2013)

[486] According to Arranz, the number of women directing feature films in Spain between 2000 and 2010 has remained almost stagnant, with 8.1% of the features released between 2000 and 2005 directed by women with a small increase to 9.8% for the years 2006-2010. Arranz alsos note that production is on

despite a greater female presence within the audiovisual industry and on educational programmes.[487] While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate why the number of female directors has declined, this analysis concludes that an auteur approach remains the most effective survival strategy within the contemporary Spanish film industry.

Additionally, this study has created certain implications for the national and postnational auteur. In prioritising the authorial strategies undertaken by Coixet and analysing how they interact with issues of national identity, this thesis has revealed the complexity and contradictions of this relationship. However, while she cannot transcend categorisations related to nationality, Spanishness can play a part in her strategic auteurism as she gravitates towards domestically-focused documentaries and has become an established Spanish director. While Vidal underlines Coixet's status as an auteur at home ("Love"), the majority of her films have little to say about Spanishness or a Spanish context, rather they create a postnational address.

Nonetheless, the task of this thesis has been to examine Coixet as a singular figure within the auteur tradition in Spain, largely owing to her preference for English-language filmmaking. Although she has become one of Spain's exportable auteurs, she remains focused on an international milieu; however, considering that she has recently represented Spain at the 2010 Shanghai World Expo, this analysis assumes her incorporation into the establishment as a Spanish director or Catalan director rather than a creator of 'Spanish national cinema'. She was also part of the homage to Spanish cinema held at Cannes in 2010, an event organised by the Ministerio de Cultura, an inclusion which suggests state-sanctioned approval of her work and 'official' consensus of her status as a Spanish director. Although governmental approval is less important than during the Franco period, it nonetheless remains central to accessing institutional funding and the promotional opportunities provided by national cinema showcases at festivals and other events.

With this transition in mind, this thesis concludes that one of the attractions of the auteur label is its flexibility: an auteur filmmaker's public persona can change during their career, rather than remaning static. Consequently, this flexibility also allows for experimentation and failure. Indeed, failure represents a neglected area of investigation

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the rise, making the difference more stark: for example the year 2000 saw 98 feature films produced, while this had risen to 222 by 2010 ("No, chicas" n.pag).

[487] According to Arranz, in 2000 59.7% of students graduating from Comunicación Audiovisual programmes in Spain were women, and this figure had risen to 62.4% for the academic year 2010-2011 ("No, chicas"). For further empricial analysis see Arranz et al ("La situación").

within Spanish cinema. While 'successes' such as Almodóvar and Saura are widely exported and lauded around the world, many interesting filmmakers have been overlooked as national cinema seeks to define itself as a worthy competitor with Hollywood. This analysis has prioritised the filmmaking process over reception in order to illustrate the importance of authorship strategies to a sustained career, regardless of box-office figures, awards or critical acclaim. Rather than concentrate on the effect of such strategies on the audience, this study has assessed their impact on the film as a product.

By locating Coixet within Spanish cinema and amongst her male and female contemporaries who shoot in English, this discussion has synthesized the recent critical interest in her work, while the subsequent close analysis in Part 2 also engaged with common critical perceptions of her films, yet sought to underline her commitment to the auteur strategy as both textual and industrial auteur. Part 2 also contended that she uses cultural products of varying prestige to her advantage as she moves closer to an auteur-adapter model. This thesis has demonstrated that her increased propensity towards an adaptive mode, although expressed throughout her filmography through intertextuality, has come to fortify her auteur identity rather than compete with it. In re-authoring the work of others, she succeeds in promoting her own creative voice while respecting the source material. It remains to be seen if she will continue with adaptation-based projects, but her careful selection of texts is closely tied to her auteur ambitions and her 'way of seeing'.

Additionally, Coixet has created a network of willing collaborators for her shoots that consists of performers and technicians, as well as professionals in distribution and exhibition. In recent years her recurring associations with actors, musicians and technicians have strengthened, rather than diluted her auteur status, as she firmly places her authorial stamp over their areas of expertise, and as they 'adapt' to the 'Coixet style'. She works 'with' these creative partners to express her personal vision, rather than competing 'against' them for artistic dominance. Similarly, other auteur directors employ a stable of actors and crewmembers, and these collaborations become part of the director's auteur identity, whether or not the other person is an auteur or star in their own right. While this thesis has not addressed Coixet's skill for collaboration in detail, nor dealt with the importance of this practice within film, it nonetheless concedes that her multi-tasking authorship does not exist in a vacuum.

Despite the collaborative nature of filmmaking, it is clear that the idea of 'personality' remains central to the identification of auteurs, whether or not authoring tactics are

consciously or unconsciously pursued by the director. In order to further understand and conceptualise the auteur, we must constantly revisit the ways an auteur persona is constructed as technology advances. This discussion has sought to investigate why auteurism is an attractive strategy for filmmakers like Coixet who feel marginalised by the recognition they receive in terms of their nationality or gender. Yet, rather than provide a model, she has been positioned as the exception rather than the rule, especially in regard to women directors in Spain. Since the scale of the auteurism debate remains extensive and evolving, there is a need for more studies of film authorship, especially in relation to women directors in Europe and particularly in Latin America.[488] Auteurs (or indeed their marketing teams) can adopt personalised, individual strategies that foreground their artist status, making it difficult to determine a concrete definition, in addition to the ever-changing opportunities for publicising films and film directors. Nonetheless, it is this individual aspect that characterises the figure of the auteur throughout film history, and as a textual and industrial auteur, Coixet injects her films and her media persona with idiosyncrasy.

Notwithstanding the re-evaluation of the auteur figure within Film Studies that runs parallel to her career trajectory, Coixet represents a director who is redefining film authorship by modelling herself on auteurs of the past while exploiting the technology of the present for on-screen and off-screen expressions of auteurism. By employing strategies that place the director in control of the film beyond the shoot itself, her work invites auteurist criticism, while her auteur persona aims to 'direct' this criticism. This shrewd approach has allowed her to weather a turbulent period in Spanish film history, and she sells herself around the globe as an auteur, not as a Spanish female filmmaker, although, as we have seen, she is becoming more accepting of this label. While auteurism in Spain has evolved greatly since the Franco period, and is not limited to the director-as-artist model put forth by *Cahiers*, Coixet adheres to this solid framework in order to present a coherent authorial persona. She remains outside any defined generation or group demarcated by nationality, gender or genre; she stands alone as one of Spain's most successful filmmakers, a position she has achieved through her unfailing pursuit of auteur status.

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[488] Tentative connections have been forged between Coixet and Argentine filmmaker Lucrecia Martel, while edited collections like those mentioned above have focused on a panorama of women filmmakers in Spain, in particular. An in-depth analysis of this connection is beyond the scope of this thesis but Paul J. Smith ("Transnational") and Slobodian ("Analyzing") view Coixet and Martel as comparable transnational female auteur directors.

## FILMOGRAPHY

**Feature Films, Short Films and TV Documentaries by Isabel Coixet**

*50 años de... La mujer, cosa de hombres* (TVE, 2009)

*A los que aman* (1998)

*Another Me* (2013)

*Aral, el mar perdido* (2010)

*Ayer no termina nunca* (2013)

*Cartas a Nora. Invisibles* (2007)

*Demasiado viejo para morir joven* (1988)

*Elegy* (2008)

*Escuchando al juez Garzón* (2011)

*La huella de tu voz* (2011)

*La insoportable levedad del carrito de la compra. Hay motivo* (2004)

*Le Trench Rouge. Paris Je t'aime* (2006)

*Learning to Drive* (2014)

*Map of the Sounds of Tokyo* (2009)

*Marea Blanca* (2012)

*Mira y verás* (1984)

*My Life Without Me* (2003)

*No me hables de la vida cuando estoy muriendo* (2008)

*Nobody Wants the Night* (2015)

*The Secret Life of Words* (2005)

*Things I Never Told You* (1995)

*Venice 70: Future Reloaded* (2013)

*Viaje al corazón de la tortura* (TVE, 2003)

**Select Advertising and Promotional Videos by Isabel Coixet**

"10,000 árboles" (Nature Movies, 2007)

"Mediterraneamente" (Estrella Damm, 2011)

"Evax Salvaslip: ¿A qué huelen las nubes?" (Evax, 1999)

"Huesitos" (Cadbury-Schweppes, 2005)

"Les Cols: A Restaurant, A Dream" (Les Cols d'Olot, 2012)

"Por ser niña" (Plan Nacional de España, 2010)

"Vota con todas tus fuerzas" (PSOE, 2008)

"Veo, veo" (Fundación ONCE, 2006)

"You can do something to stop torture" (IRCT/UN, 2008)

**Films and Television by Other Directors**

*84 Charing Cross Road* (David Hugh Jones, 1987)

*A Woman Under the Influence* (John Cassavetes, 1974)

*Abre los ojos* (Alejandro Amenábar, 1997)

*Anguish* (Bigas Luna, 1986)

*Beaches* (Garry Marshall, 1988)

*Beltenebros* (Pilar Miró 1991)

*Bienvenido Mr Marshall* (Luis García Berlanga, 1953)

*Boom Boom* (Rosa Vergés, 1988)

*Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942)

*Cléo de 5 à 7 / Cléo from 5 to 7* (Agnès Varda, 1962)

*Como agua para chocolate / Like Water for Chocolate* (Alfonso Arau, 1992)

*Costa Brava (Family Album)* (Marta Balletbò-Coll, 1995)

*Cría cuervos* (Saura, 1976)

*Dark Victory* (Edmund Goulding, 1939)

*Death of a Superhero* (Ian Fitzgibbon, 2011)

*Downstream/On the Line/Río abajo* (José Luis Borau, 1984)

*El crimen de Cuenca* (Pilar Miró, 1980)

*El espíritu de la colmena* (Erice, 1973)

*El pájaro de la felicidad* (Pilar Miró, 1993)

*El Productor* (Fernando Méndez-Leite, 2007)

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*Función de noche* (Josefina Molina, 1981)

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## ABSTRACT

Thesis title: Spanish Cinema and the Rise of the Auteur: The Case of Isabel Coixet

Author: Jennie Rothwell

This thesis provides in-depth analysis of the work of filmmaker Isabel Coixet (Barcelona, 1962) in light of developments within academic auteur study since the 1990s. Auteurism has become a strategy for filmmakers to follow, whether or not they are received as auteurs or artists by the critical establishment or by the wider public. As writer-director, camera operator (and often producer and music supervisor), Coixet follows the multi-tasking authorship model of low-budget filmmaking, and employs auteurist tactics in the marketing of her films and in the creation of her public persona. This model also helps her to escape the gender-based labels and categorisations applied to her films at home, yet, consequently, increases her visibility as author and artist. Although a number of studies have examined her role as a director, there has not been an extensive focus on her auteurist agenda as a contributing factor to her success and longevity in the film industry in Spain and abroad. As such, this thesis provides additional insights about what it means to be an auteur in 2014, and how an auteurist approach impacts on the creative practice of filmmaking.

Rather than glorify the filmmaker's 'intent' or provide biographical criticism, emphasis will be placed on the negotiation process at work in the auteur's journey from unknown to brand-name. Within the existing literature it is possible to find descriptions and analyses of Coixet as a transnational auteur which this discussion does not intend to replicate. Rather, a broader perspective on auteurism will be offered, with a greater attention to how this status is reflected both on and off the screen, as she embodies the role of the textual auteur or artist, while simultaneously fitting the mould of the industrial or commercial auteur. The textual analysis framework provides close readings of her films and other projects, while the contextual information positions her as an exceptional case within Spanish cinema. However, this thesis concludes that her artist status is somewhat dependent on industrial or commercial auteur strategies, as she guides the spectator's reception of her films through interactions with the media and through non-filmic projects that cement her reputation as an all-round audiovisual creative.