Interior Castles: Spaces of Women’s Enclosure in Spanish Cinema and Television since the Transition to Democracy

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

2017

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Abstract

This thesis will shed light on the mechanics of women’s enclosure in Spanish cinema and television since the transition to democracy, particularly convent and prison spaces. The study aims to make an original contribution to the field of Spanish cultural studies by highlighting the tension between these spaces as sites of control and sites of community, a tension which both problematizes and enriches the negotiation of the abject, the excessive, and the inassimilable within Spain.

Following some contextual scene-setting laid out in the Introduction, the first two chapters explore how the convent was recuperated in the popular imagination after the end of the dictatorship. The first chapter will examine convent space in three post-transition biopics of the sixteenth century Spanish mystic, Teresa de Jesús: Josefina Molina’s 1984 TVE television series, Teresa de Jesús, Ray Loriga’s 2007 film Teresa, el cuerpo de Cristo, and Jorge Dorado’s recent TV movie, Teresa (2015). This analysis will unravel the concrete and historical forces which have shaped representations of the saint’s space, particularly how Teresa’s mysticism has imbued the convent with authority as a political tool in defining national identity and gender roles. Equally, it will examine how the ineffable experience of the mystic ultimately makes the space unassimilable to any overarching power structure. The impossibility of assimilating convent space will then be the focus of the second chapter which explores the use of different aesthetic registers to render the convent socially intelligible in two mid-eighties convent films, Entre tinieblas (Almodóvar 1983) and Extramuros (Picazo 1985).

The next two chapters focus on the construction and management of Otherness in representations of female homosocial enclosure during the mid-nineties. The third chapter looks at two adaptions of the stage play, Canción de cuna – José María Elorrieta’s 1961 version and José Luís Garci’s 1994 remake – to examine how the radical Otherness of convent enclosure has been mitigated on screen in order to ease anxieties around unmarried, childless women, and to reclaim the space as part of the national landscape. Chapter 4’s analysis of Libertarias (Aranda 1995) and Entre rojas (Rodriguez 1996) will contrast this with a study of how the Otherness inherent to homosocial enclosure has also been exploited as a path towards new imaginings of community and intimacy.

The final section will examine gender, memory, and martyrdom in women’s prison films since 2000: Las trece rosas (Martínez-Lázaro 2007), La voz dormida (Zambrano 2011), and Estrellas que alcanzar (Rueda 2010). This chapter will consider how enclosed environments have been used to frame martyrdom narratives, problematically situating them at the intersection of traditional Catholic iconography and more contemporary depictions of imprisoned and confined women.

While the study focuses primarily on cultural production since the transition to democracy, emphasis is placed throughout on tracing the roots of these representations to earlier hagiography, missionary films, and the cine religioso of the 1950s. These connections not only demonstrate the endurance of the convent and prison as significant sites in the Spanish popular imagination but also their versatility as a signifying force and the need for more nuanced readings of them in cultural studies.
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Acknowledgements

My greatest thanks go to my supervisors Prof. Christopher Perriam and Dr Esther Gómez-Sierra. Their generous guidance and support has made postgraduate research a wonderfully rewarding, exciting, and academically rigorous experience. For their constant kindness, encouragement, and enthusiasm for my work I will always be grateful.

Thanks must go to the University of Manchester for making this project financially possible and to all the staff of the SALC Graduate School for making it such a wonderful place to work, especially Amanda Matthews, Andy Fairhurst, and Julie Fiwka.

Thank you also to Dr Christine Buckley for kindly providing me with a copy of “Silence, Dance, and Disease as Spaces of Agency in the Spanish Film Entre rojas”. I am also grateful for the kind assistance of Trinidad del Río in procuring materials form the Filmoteca Española in Madrid.

Warmest thanks of course to all my fellow postgraduates in the Ellen Wilkinson building for all the fun times and laughs when I needed it most. Special thanks as well to Gwynne for his invaluable help with the filmography, and also for snacks.

Finally, I must thank my wonderful family for all their patience, love, and support: my parents, Margaret, and, most importantly, obviously, Honey.
Introduction

Wishing to provide for the dangerous and abominable situation of certain nuns, who, casting off the reins of respectability and impudently abandoning nunnish modesty and the natural bashfulness of their sex, sometimes rove about outside of their monasteries to the homes of secular persons and frequently admit suspect persons into these same monasteries [...] we do firmly decree by this present constitution which shall forever remain in force, that nuns collectively and individually, both at present and in future, of whatsoever community or order, in whatever part of the world they may be, ought henceforth to remain perpetually cloistered in their monasteries [...] so that [the nuns] be able to serve God more freely, wholly separated from the public and worldly gaze and, occasions for lasciviousness having been removed, may most diligently safeguard their hearts and bodies in complete chastity.¹

Papal Decretal Periculoso, 1298

Seven hundred years have passed since 1298’s papal decretal Periculoso and, in Spain as in most of the western world, the enclosure of women is no longer a common occurrence, let alone a socially imposed condition. It remains however, a privileged space in the national imaginary and a key cultural trope which has persisted across the centuries. Focusing on film and television drama of the period 1983 to 2015, the research underpinning this thesis illuminates the semantic dynamism of women's enclosed space and highlights in particular the convent and the women's prison as valuable sites in the negotiation of histories, identities, and communities in the Spanish imagination since the transition to democracy.

The roots of the space's dynamism in visual culture lies in its long, turbulent history and the complicated relationship between those enclosed and those enclosing. While the earliest calls for the enclosure of religious women were often couched in the language of protection against external forces such as war or disease, 1298’s papal decretal Periculoso made it clear that the primary danger facing cloistered women was their own innate propensity for sin. In Spain, a later series of reforms initiated under Juan

¹ Translation from Latin taken from Elizabeth M. Makowsk’s Canon Law and Cloistered Women: Periculoso and Its Commentators, 1298-1545 (1997, 135).
I (1358 – 1390) and intensified under the Reyes Católicos, Isabella and Ferdinand, continued in this vein, fostering an enduring societal conception of women as uncontrollably promiscuous and positing the enclosure of women under male supervision as fundamental to social order (Lehfeldt 2002). By the end of the 15th century, enforced enclosure was not restricted to nuns but extended to all women who were by law required to be to some extent enclosed - if not in the home then in the prison, legal brothel, Magdalen house, or convent (Perry 1992).

The space of female homosocial enclosure became the primary site for the forging of a uniquely Spanish conception of womanhood and of the Spanish nation as a whole. As Elizabeth Lehfeldt explains, the ubiquity of this enclosure and its highly gendered nature was enabled by the enormous cultural value placed on female chastity throughout Europe and cemented by the centrality of virginity to Isabella and Ferdinand’s project of national renewal. During their reign the monarchs adopted the role of paternal figures in the household state with nuns in particular playing the part of unruly daughters threatening patriarchal authority, their enclosure the ultimate expression of state power and social control (Lehfeldt 2003, 136). This inextricable link between patriarchal power and the enclosure of women in Spain is summed up in the proverb ‘ni espada rota, ni mujer que trota’ (Perry 1992, 129; Perry 1993), establishing a semantic equivalence between the unenclosed woman and the collapse of phallic authority while also implying a privileged position for the enclosed woman in the symbolic order. Crucially however, in its use of the negative the proverb stops short of enshrining this enclosed woman as equal to the phallus in signifying power.

Not only does the figure of the enclosed woman recur consistently throughout Spanish cultural production but women’s roles - socially, historically, and narratively - are frequently constructed around the foundational binary of interior/exterior and around
the key enclosures of the turret, the court, the harem, the kitchen, the convent, and the prison. Women are defined by their relationship to these spaces with each specific form of enclosure structuring a taxonomy of women, spatial limits separating the good women from the bad, the virginal from the sexually available, the privileged from the humble, the practically minded from the spiritual, and so on. These various manifestations of women’s homosocial enclosure not only inform and define each other, but all the spaces women inhabit. This study will demonstrate how the attitudes, anxieties, and ambitions which originally structured women’s enclosure as a cultural force not only continue to inform and inspire representations of female homosocial communities in Spanish television and film since the transition to democracy, but that they impel the obsessional repetition of these representations and their evolution over time, an evolution which has been particularly intense since the end of the Francoist regime in the mid-seventies.

Already in the rhetoric of Periculoso, and in the multiple enclosures of Spain’s Golden Age, we can see the drives which originally forged, and continue to inform, women’s enclosure as an endurably meaningful and culturally significant part of the Spanish landscape – both physical and imaginary. The first of these drives is towards the rejection of deviant women and their figuring as abject – a threat to the distinction between subject and object, self and other, which profoundly disturbs the prevailing system of meaning and identity (Kristeva 1982). The abject is neither subject nor object but that which needs to be discarded in order for the boundaries between the two to be maintained. In this formulation, the abject woman is rendered as excess, surplus, and threat to the social order. This impetus towards abjection works to different degrees across different forms of enclosure. For example, the abject nature of the female body is particularly marked within the enclosure of the brothel which was seen in the sixteenth century ‘as a “necessary evil” that was believed to function as a cesspool in a castle’
(Perry 1992, 125), keeping deviant activities and bodies incongruous with Spain’s conception of itself off the stage on which that self-identity is performed. The prison and the Magdalen House play a similar role, containing and managing deviant women deemed unassimilable into society. Although ostensibly not intended as a site of abjection, this dynamic is also at play in the convent – the condition of the unenclosed nun is ‘dangerous and abominable’ and she must be contained.

Abjection is coupled discursively with another, nearly contradictory drive: the will to appropriate the enclosed woman and her enclosure, to incorporate them both into the nation space and put them to work in the machinery of the nation. Appropriation in this context is not the recuperation or assimilation of the abject but in many ways a symptom of its more total abjection as it is achieved through the expulsion of real women from the social framework and their replacement with sanitized, idealized, and fetishized images, inflated and promoted so as to obscure all traces of the problematic women behind them. This drive to incorporate the abject female body and fix it in certain socially constructive roles has been perhaps most explicit in the enclosed space of the royal court. María Cristina Quintero’s recent study of the performance of Queenship in Habsburg Spain describes how the repetitive and ritualistic spectacle of the court turned flesh and blood women, valued for their reproductive potential and particularly vulnerable to the dangers of childbirth, into interchangeable symbols of state power, ‘the natural body of any queen [] readily replaceable even as the body politic of the Queen needed to be perceived as stable’ (Quintero 2017, 132). Although this space no longer exists as a physical enclosure, it is comparable to the contemporary treatment of royal women in the media, specifically the exhaustive cataloguing of their lives in the pages of ¡Hola!, as Ewa Widlak and Jaume Guillamet Lloveras document in their study of the magazine’s construction of Queen Sofia as the embodiment of traditional Spanish womanhood (Widlak and Lloveras 2015).
Moreover, the power of ritual and its repetition to shape the lived experience of enclosed women and make them intelligible to those outside continues to play an important role in depictions of women’s enclosure on screen, as will be discussed in more detail in chapter one.

More broadly, the drive to incorporate abject women into ideological projects can also be seen in their ubiquitous use in advertising where images of female bodies are routinely appropriated as consumer objects and recruited into a neoliberal agenda. The objectification of women in advertising has of course been a preoccupation of Anglo-American feminist cultural studies for decades and has recently been highlighted in Spain through the work of photographer Yolanda Domínguez. In her audio-visual project, *Poses* (2011), Domínguez decontextualizes the weak, sick, wounded, and deathlike poses of fashion models by having them re-enacted on the streets of Madrid. While the project’s primary goal is to highlight the artificiality of these images, it also succeeds in illuminating this style of representation as a contemporary form of enclosure. The incongruity of these twisted bodies in public space underlines their alienation from the sphere of social agency. Belonging to a world where the sword of the patriarchy remains unbroken, they are definitively not ‘mujeres que trotan’. Instead, their enclosure in the realm of the image buttresses patriarchal power as the nun in the convent and the queen in the court have done in the past. This example suggests that the containment of women, as well as being generally reduced, has evolved away from an architectural to a visual mechanics (a move parallel to the broader shift away from corporal discipline and towards technologies of the gaze as social control described by Foucault).

Nevertheless, the architecture of enclosure remains a powerful visual hook. In the films under discussion in this study, images of walls, grilles, bars, and curtains allow for a satisfyingly exaggerated distinction between self and Other which works across cultures.
In her discussion of the constitution of the gendered body through abjection, Judith Butler explores how this foundational self/other dichotomy is often mapped onto spatialised understandings of the inside/outside binary. Butler emphasises how the boundaries of the body are produced and maintained, but also continually threatened by abjection, outlining the centrality attributed to interior and exterior spaces in conceptions of the self and the acts of exclusion which structure, and are impelled by, the boundary between inside and outside.

‘Inner’ and ‘outer’ make sense only with reference to a mediating boundary that strives for stability. And this stability, this coherence, is determined in large part by cultural orders that sanction the subject and compel its differentiation from the abject. Hence, ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ constitute a binary distinction that stabilizes and consolidates the coherent subject. (Butler 1999, 170–71)

While Butler is referring to the interior and exterior of the body, her formulation both echoes the foundational principle of stability which drives women’s enclosure and points to the broader connotative potential of walls as image. She offers a productive model with which to think around enclosed space, its limits, and the cultural orders which sanction both the enclosed and enclosing communities, even as we move away from an analysis of the gendered body. As an examination of women’s enclosure in Spanish film and television, this study’s analysis of how these spaces work is centrally concerned with gender categories. However, the goal of this analysis is not to deconstruct the gender categories which define such spaces. Rather, we will see how sites of women’s homosocial enclosure mark out an internal locale, not of gender identity alone, but of a constellation of intersecting and interdependent identities as they evolve in their constitution and performance over time. This study will pick apart the shapes and textures of women’s enclosed space in order to illuminate its strategic position in public discourse.
and the reasons for which the trope of enclosure has endured and become such a potent signifier in Spanish film and television since the transition to democracy.

While it is useful to consider the parallels between the importance of bodily boundaries in constituting the subject and the function of walls in defining enclosed and enclosing communities, these are not entirely geometrical. Butler’s subject finds its fixity of self in its own imaginary sanctuary of the interior, expelling the abject out to the infinite and unknown exterior. In contrast, the boundaries constructed through women’s enclosure in Spain, and magnified through their representation in narrative and media, position the Other safely contained in an enclosed, ‘interior’ space while the subject it constitutes can align itself with a limitless exterior. This reversal attributes a totalizing universal value to the ‘outer’ world while reducing the enclosed Other, and its unsettling abjectness, to the condition of a contained peculiarity. The implication of the exceptionality attributed to the enclosed space in this reversal is a pronounced value in terms of the role it plays in the broader socio-cultural signifying system but a mitigation of the value of homosocial enclosure as a lived experience. Consolidating this arrangement, the walls of enclosure double up as mediating boundary and reflective surface. Although the same stability which facilitates this universal subject’s differentiation from the abject frustrates the scopic drive, it also offers a conveniently blank canvas which can reflect back to the subject it constitutes whatever version of themselves they would like to see, and onto which they can project their own values and aspirations, or where they can screen at a distance a version of the enclosed Other more obedient to the needs of fantasy. It is these reflections, apparitions, and projections, rather than the real experiences of enclosed women, which have come to define women’s enclosure in Spanish film and television since the transition to democracy.
Mysticism, spectrality, and the allure of enclosed space

Butler’s analysis of the significance of the inner and outer to the constitution of the subject also makes clear that, as compelling as these spatial categories may be as metaphors, the interior and exterior ‘remain linguistic terms that facilitate and articulate a set of fantasies, feared and desired’ (Butler 1999, 170). For Butler, it is this displacement of the subject from a spatially manifested internal, originary site which signals a broader disturbance of categories: ‘If the “inner world” no longer designates a topos, then the internal fixity of the self and, indeed, the internal locale of gender identity, become similarly suspect’ (Butler 1999, 171). This restriction of interiority to the realm of metaphor is something this study hopes to think beyond, through the more culturally nuanced category of enclosure which implies inner space but ties this topos to a concrete social and historical reality. The extensive use of walls as mise-en-scène allows for the dislocation of interiority to be managed by its transposition from the centre onto the surface. While the inner space may be ethereal, walls are tangible, a universal signifier receptive to the inscriptions and particularities of local culture.

This is particularly true of the walls of women’s enclosure in Spain, which have their basis in very real, historical circumstances and which have played such an important social role. This does not mean they can be figured as merely a literal manifestation of the ‘inner space’ which informs the construction of the subject. Rather it is both; women’s enclosure as a socio-cultural reality is so often reiterated across planes of geography, representation, and imagination that it flickers between them, in every manifestation bearing traces of the other planes. However implausible the hauntings, demonic rituals, and lesbian orgies that characterise convent space on page and screen, they remain linked to an irrefutable historical reality. However banal the contemporary Spanish women’s
prison may be, it retains a narrative potential as a site of intrigue, iniquity, and redemption. The more firmly these spaces of women’s enclosure retain their prestige as historically grounded topoi, the greater the storyteller’s license to augment that history and blur the lines between reflections of reality and the projections of a fragile subject.

This adaptability is heightened in the Spanish context where understandings of inner space are enriched by a long tradition of thought around interiority as metaphor, cultural category, and physical space. As is well known, sixteenth-century Spanish saint, mystic, and doctor of the Church, Teresa de Jesús, has provided through her extensive writing a framework for exploring the depths of the soul which she named ‘las moradas del castillo interior’. Through her spatial imagery she creates for her readers ‘a space for the reconciliation of public and private demands, for a continuum between material and spiritual needs’ (Hughes 1997, 377). Moreover, as will be discussed in chapter one, Teresa translated this imaginary space into physical terms in the convents she founded all over Spain in a journey that has been brought to the screen multiple times. Teresa’s convent spaces usurp the structures of women’s confinement created in the service of abjection and appropriation described above, supplementing them with a mystical potential that gears them towards the facilitation of a greater spiritual liberty for the enclosed.

Writing in the 1950s, Spanish philosopher María Zambrano has offered another new way to think interior space, defining the human being as ‘el ser que alberga dentro de sí un vacío’ (Zambrano 2004, 82), an interiority that is always open, that ‘traverses the

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2 This is evident in the scheduling of the first season of Antena 3’s prison thriller series, Vis a Vis (2015) alongside a documentary series about Spain’s women’s prisons, Reclusas (2015), which aired immediately after it. The drama series exploited for narrative and aesthetic effect many of the myths which the documentary series explicitly dispelled. While, as Reclusas makes clear, no women’s prison in Spain requires inmates to wear regulation clothing, the luminous yellow uniforms worn in Vis a Vis are key to the series’ sanitized but jarringly chiaroscuro aesthetic. Equally, real prison cells in Spain prioritise privacy and prisoners are allowed to decorate them. However, Vis a Vis’s stark four bed cells with bars in place of a fourth wall are far more narratively engaging, emphasising the suffering of the characters and serving as a frame for unlikely female friendships.
outside and the inside; an outside emancipated from intrusive non-human presences, and an inside shaped and sheltered by the laws of nature and of the polis’ (Gajic 2015, 402). Again, like Teresa’s interior castle, Zambrano’s interior ‘vacio’ adapts to different contexts operating on individual, interpersonal, and broader social levels. While placing a huge importance on this interior void in the development of the individual and of human history, she problematizes the inauguration of fixed limits for such interior space, identifying the moments when movement from outside to inside is closed off as moments of crisis, as occurs in totalitarianism or early cultures that are built around ‘un tipo de orden cerrado’ where

El límite es inflexible y sin apertura alguna, sin escape alguno. Culturas como círculos cerrados, rodeados de altas, invulnerables, mágicas murallas. La primera forma de cultura está representada por el círculo mágico; el pasar y aun el pisar la raya es delito sagrado que no puede ser perdonado. (Zambrano 2004, 82)

While the context Zambrano is referring to here is not specifically defined, this description resonates with the impenetrable enclosures marked out by Periculoso. Zambrano’s understanding of the power of interiority and her apprehension of ‘círculos cerrados’ and ‘mágicos murallas’, coupled with Teresa’s mystical potential to reclaim enclosed space for enclosed women, enhance the signifying potential of women’s enclosed space in Spain. While on one level it remains a site geared towards abjection and appropriation, its capacity for containment and control is always undermined by its mystical potential to facilitate new configurations of community, new ways of exploring the self and the world. This undercurrent of mystical activity is key to the exceptionality of Spanish women’s enclosure and its impact on the narrative and semantic potential of enclosure will inform the focus of this study.
This focus will primarily be on conventual enclosure, the natural home of mysticism. The convent space demands social legitimacy and in doing so creates a tension between the mystic drive towards spiritual fulfilment, the attainment of social and political agency for the enclosed, and the perceived need for nuns to be enclosed. This tension is further complicated by the undeniable fascination which the convent holds for outsiders, articulated by Federico García Lorca in *Diario de Burgos*, after his visit to a nearby convent in 1917. At first he attributes his fascination to the natural and universal effect of walls on those the walls exclude: ‘siempre sienten una gran inquietud y una gran ansia de ver lo que hay dentro; estas emociones, bien extrañas por cierto, nos ocurren cuando contemplamos una pared, detrás de la cual ocurre algo interesante’ (Gibson 1969, 188). However, he goes on to explore the allure specific to the convent as a homosocial, religious enclosure:

Nadie diga nada del convento, porque es quizá una única verdad. El convento no admite ni afirmación ni negación; es una torre de poesía que se levanta por encima de todas las ideas. El convento es como un enorme corazón frío que guardará en su seno a las almas que huyeron de los pecados capitales. El convento es la noche y el día. El convento es la muerta pasión y la blanca virtud. (Gibson 1969, 189)

However, as the convent as a social reality has progressively lost much of its cultural currency, it runs the risk of being reduced from ‘una torre de poesía’ back to simply ‘una pared, detrás de la cual ocurre algo interesante’. With the convent’s ability to signify polysemically compromised, many of the attributes of the convent have been ascribed to other more relevant sites of women’s enclosure – most notably the prison, and this will be a secondary focus of the thesis. Like the domestic space, the convent and prison have remained culturally relevant long after the harem, the turret, and the royal court became purely metaphorical. However, in contrast to the domestic space, the prison
and convent are free floating signifiers made narratively useful by their generic nature. While domestic space in itself is shaped and defined by those who live in it, the convent and prison are not inflected as much by the individuals who inhabit them as by the values and perceptions of the society that built them. The distinction between house and home is marked by the distinctive ways in which it is practised - the ways individual members of the family curate their space with furniture, pictures, mementoes, and so on. The institutional nature of the family home has become invisible, masked by the tokens of individuality it necessarily accumulates in its production. However, there is no such distinction between the cultural idea of the convent or the prison and their individual manifestations. Any attempt by the dwellers to leave their mark on the institutional blankness of the convent and the prison walls, is in conflict with the inherent nature of the space.

In addition, the prison space has accumulated its own cultural significance through the central role it has played in 20th-century Spanish history, during the civil war, its brutal aftermath, and the years of oppression (and for Zambrano, among others, exile) that followed. This history has stocked the prison with an array of spectral martyr, victim, and heroine figures, which speak to the contemporary debate over memory politics even as they reanimate the tropes of the Catholic popular imagination. Doubly constructed as abject and idealized, this enclosed woman is figured as Other and assigned a social and cultural significance as a constitutive element in the self-conception of the wider community and nation. In Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic, Elizabeth Bronfen examines a similar phenomenon surrounding the female corpse over whose dead body ‘cultural norms are reconfirmed or secured, whether because the sacrifice of the virtuous, innocent woman serves a social critique and transformation or because a sacrifice of the dangerous woman re-establishes an order that was momentarily
suspended due to her presence’ (Bronfen 1992, 181). In both instances the masculine anxiety caused by the semantic excess of this dead female body can be assuaged by its containment in the stability of its visual representation (as in the images parodied in Domínguez Poses).

Alison Sinclair has built on this conceptualization of masculine anxiety and the drive to contain feminine excess in a Spanish context. Focussing on lust and luxury as two connected manifestations of feminine excess, Sinclair describes how ‘the way in which excess figures in late nineteenth-century texts in Spain indicates that excess is something that is threatening, that goes over the borders, and that threatens to disrupt the organizational lines of a wobbly and evolving social structure’ (Sinclair 2011, 212). In the nineteenth century texts she examines, anxiety surrounding this excess leads to the policing of women’s fashion and the translation of fashion into a key marker of social boundaries as ‘the excess of lujo (lust) gets moved sideways into the moral economy, and is made to change places with the more easily identifiable and understandable lujuria (luxury)’ (Sinclair 2011, 212). For Bronfen and Sinclair respectively, the image of the feminine corpse and women’s fashion become key sites in the negotiation of society’s relationship to the abject, the excessive, the inassimilable.

This study will argue for the space of women’s enclosure as another such site, one specific to Spanish culture. This space often incorporates elements of Sinclair’s lujuria or other aesthetics of (feminine) excess as they evolve over time into the baroque, lo cursi, kitsch, or camp, as will be discussed in chapter two. The relevance of Bronfen’s corpses to women’s enclosure in Spanish culture is less clear but can quickly be established. Although based on ostensibly universal psychoanalytic suppositions, her interpretation of images of feminine death in art and literature draws from an analysis of entirely Anglophone texts, many of which are inflected by a brand of Puritan paranoia foreign to a
Catholic Spain characterised by a very different set of attitudes to death and the dead. However, if we remember that for Bronfen the ‘construction of the Woman-as-Other serves rhetorically to dynamise a social order, while her death marks the end of this period of change’ (Bronfen 1992, 181), we are provided with a model with which to further account for the enduring cultural dynamism of women’s enclosure in Spain. Focussing specifically on the relationship between enclosed space and the woman it encloses as co-extensive parts of the mechanism, we can see how the enclosed space is doubly dynamic in containing a Schrödinger’s woman. Recalling Lorca's description of the convent, women's enclosure 'no admite afirmación ni negación'. The space limits what can be known about the enclosed woman and her real condition cannot be confirmed without dismantling it. For all epistemological purposes the enclosed woman is both alive and dead. Not just suspended liminally between the two states but actually both alive and dead at the same time, the enclosed woman serves simultaneously to dynamise and stabilize social order. It is not the reality of the enclosed woman which gives the space its semantic potency but her flickering image, vacillating between life and death, that becomes central to the identity of the wider community.

The concurrent life and death states of the enclosed woman not only maps onto the contradictions inherent to her containment but refines them and even galvanises their cultural influence. This is particularly marked in visual representations of women’s enclosure where the abject is idealised, and the invisible woman must be seen to perform her invisibility through repeated and often exaggerated acts of veiling and exposure. The spectrality of this unknowable, invisible enclosed woman provides a canvas onto which societal values can be projected at will. However, this spectrality also introduces to the heart of Spain’s national identity a volatility which is difficult to control. The semantic
dynamism of the enclosed woman and her space has nevertheless played an important role in Spanish cinema as a narrative engine and an aesthetic hook.

**History:**

Women’s enclosure on the Spanish screen

With a few exceptions, this thesis is structured chronologically in order to most clearly illustrate the evolution of specific patterns and concerns in the representation of convents, mainly, and women’s prisons, secondarily, in Spanish film and television since the transition to democracy. Each chapter provides a discussion of two or three films grouped according to shared subject matter (chapters one and three) or time of release (chapters two, four, and five), highlighting the similarities and differences between treatments of enclosed space. In order to tease out the range of influences which inform these films aesthetically and narratively, the introduction of each chapter will draw attention to earlier films, contemporaneous cultural and political events, and other visual artefacts. While the study focuses primarily on cultural production since the transition to democracy, emphasis is placed throughout on tracing the roots of these representations to earlier hagiography, religious art, media, and cinema. These connections not only demonstrate the endurance of the convent and prison as significant sites in the Spanish popular imagination but also their versatility as a signifying force and the need for more nuanced readings of them in cultural studies. The analysis of these artefacts and events will also illuminate the position of these films in relation to broader cultural trends and inform the close readings of the films later in each chapter. This broader contextualization is essential to the understanding of convent and prison narratives which, in their marked repetition of tropes and their recycling of imagery and dialogue, tend to reflect and be inflected by changes in culture more broadly.
Representations of women’s enclosed space have abounded in Spanish cinema since its nascence and flourished particularly under the Francoist dictatorship. The nun films of the 1950s and 60s signpost themes and motifs which will inform, and recur in, later films set in both convents and prisons. These include the trope of the cabaret singer finding peace and redemption in convent life, the martyred nun, often killed after leaving the strict enclosure of the convent to pursue missionary work, the singing nun, and the dissatisfied nun leaving the convent to pursue a heteronormative family life. Each of these figures is constructed through their engagement with spaces of enclosure that represent their moral choices, often set out in ultimatums which cement the dichotomy of family home and conventual enclosure as the only valid options open to women. The jolly but heroic nuns in the films Sor Intrépida (Gil 1952) and La hermana Alegría (Lucia 1955) happily submit to this binary. Both these nuns have had successful stage careers but the narrative arc makes clear that ultimately their life choice is between marriage and the convent, their potential to have independent careers is not considered. The only possible escape binary choice is is made clear when Sor Intrépida (Dominique Blanchard) leaves the convent and is martyred.

Nevertheless, this dichotomy gives way to more nuanced models of enclosed women and their space in the late 1960s and early 1970s as Spanish society gradually opens up and women attain a greater degree of independence. In dramas such as Encrucijada para una monja (Buchs 1967) and La orilla (Lucia 1971) the simplistic binary between homosocial community and heteronormative domesticity is broken down. In the latter, Hermana Leticia (Dyanik Zurakowska) choses her doomed love for a Republican soldier over home or convent, and while her choice echoes that of Sor Intrépida in that it leads immediately to her death it is more actively made as a decision and takes into account the nun’s political agency. In the former, Sor María (Rosianna
Schiaffino) becomes pregnant after being raped while working as a missionary in the Belgian Congo and is explicitly given the choice of giving up her child and staying in the convent or keeping them and marrying the handsome doctor, Pierre (John Richardson). Faced with this choice, she decides instead to live alone with her baby and carve out a new life for herself, serving God while taking care of her child. This movement demonstrates the trend toward using the convent walls as a surface on which to project the anxieties and aspirations of the general public, and also points to the convent as a site around which women can negotiate their roles in society.

It is also during the 1950s and 60s that the convent and prison emerge as complementary sites in Spanish cinema, marking them out as a coherent genre that will be the focus of this thesis. If the spectrum of good and evil women could be represented spatially, it might have the enclosures of the convent, the home, and the royal court on one end, and the prison and brothel on the other. However, the home, court, and brothel are tied to a specific set of identities, the activities undertaken in each one aimed at fixing the enclosed woman in the role appropriate to her space: housekeeping defines the housewife, court protocol defines the Queen, sexual activity defines the prostitute. In contrast, through acts of penitence, and spiritual and personal development, the convent and prison gear their dwellers towards roles uncircumscribed by space. They facilitate not a fixed identity, but a process of endless becoming. This orientation to worlds and identities beyond the walls drives the specific focus of this thesis on convent and prison spaces over other sites of women’s enclosure. The theme recurs throughout the study’s analysis of these spaces on screen, from the spiritual ambitions manifested in the convents of Teresa de Jesús in chapter one, to the political awakenings undergone by the imprisoned women in chapters four and five.
The connection between the convent and prison on a spiritual level by their socially endorsed redemptive potential also gives both spaces a privileged role in the development of plot and characterization. These sites are conducive to the grand narratives and national myths which structure and reinforce social and national identities. The narrative efficiency of the convent and prison, as well as their mutual resonance, is particularly clear in two films of the 1960s, *Pecado de amor* (Amadori 1962) and *Esa mujer* (Camus 1969), both starring Sara Montiel. Montiel's characters in these films follow tragic and redemptive trajectories, alternately bookended by the prison and the convent. *Pecado de amor* opens with an establishing scene where Montiel, a nun working in a women’s prison, recounts via flashback her own journey from sin to redemption in an attempt to inspire and encourage a particularly troublesome inmate, the aptly named Esperanza (Alessandra Panaro). In a reversal of this narrative order, *Esa mujer* opens with Montiel as a nun living happily in a secluded convent, then follows her as she abandons the convent, is beset by tragedy after tragedy, and culminates with her trial for murder.

These films narrate a trajectory between sin and redemption, mapped onto the geography of the prison and the convent, a narrative arc that sets these sites in open opposition to the family home and the reproductive futurity it represents. In the closing scenes of both films Montiel’s character attempts to re-establish contact with her estranged child. In *Esa mujer* the child herself is now a woman and their reunion constitutes a new form of homosocial community rather than a return to conventional family life. More poignantly, in *Pecado de amor* her visit to the family home of her former lover ends her hopes of reconnecting with the child she had allowed to be raised by his wife. Her meeting with this wife and estranged daughter emphasises her alienation from the domestic environment and the bond that has developed between her biological daughter and the adoptive mother. This estrangement is reinforced in the final scene of
the girl's wedding, the entire family gathered together in the church as Montiel’s Sor Belén, in full habit, watches from above in the organ loft. The scene also marks another striking instance of Sor Belén’s alienation from family being reiterated through her costumes. Her black nun’s habit is juxtaposed to the white of the girl’s wedding dress whereas at other points in the narrative her failure to assimilate to heteronormative order is marked by her prison uniform and provocative showgirl costumes. These guises are markedly different between themselves but similar in that they mark out a path alternative to that of married life and reproductive futurity. Moreover, while Sor Belén is excluded from a relationship with her biological daughter, she forges a different bond with Esperanza in the prison, inspiring and educating the young delinquent. Again, the convent appears as a site around which to renegotiate women’s roles and consider new forms of home, community and being-together.

The final years of the dictatorship saw a loosening of censorship and much Spanish horror of this period was also based around spaces of women’s enclosure which, although not convents, were often very convent like. In La campana del infierno (Guerín and Bardem 1973) a young man returns from a psychiatric institution to live with his aunt and her daughters in their old mansion, while Narciso Ibáñez Serrador’s La residencia (1970) takes place in a girls’ finishing school. Antonio Lázaro Reboll has specifically drawn attention to the latter’s use of women-in-prison iconography (Lázaro Reboll 2012, 114) but Eugenio Martín’s Una vela para el diablo (1973) is of most interest here as it prefigures and foregrounds the anxieties around female enclosed space which will become more prominent later. The plot revolves around two sisters, Marta (Aurora Bautista) and Verónica (Esperanza Roy), who are running a pension in a former convent. Scandalized by the behaviour of the young female tourists staying with them, the sisters resort to murdering them and hiding their bodies in vats of wine in the cellar. The film not
only exploits the suspicions aroused by female enclosure but also frames the scopic drive
to invade such space as a social duty, functions which would come to define later
representations of women’s enclosure.

These horror films prefigure the cinema of the destape in which the spaces of the
convent and the prison would play a central role. It is no coincidence that Dunia Ayaso
and Félix Sabroso’s homage to the soft-core porn films of the transition, Los años
desnudos (2008), charts the friendship between three actresses who meet on the set of a
nunsploitation film and go on to make a women-in-prison film together. These films
continue to play with moves of abjection and appropriation around convent and prison
spaces, but mark an era of greater freedom by playing with the idea of the possible
dissolution of different sites of women’s enclosure. As Tamao Nakahara observes in her
study of Italian nunsploitation of the same period:

It is precisely the confusion and instability of institutionalised
containment of expression that allows the ‘images of a convent’ to
be read as simultaneously horrifying and exciting. When the
brothel can no longer be the Foucauldian space that is ‘quietly
authorised’ and safely tucked away from public view, and when
the convent can no longer be the guaranteed and architectural
protector of virginity, the world of exploitation fantasy must
contend with the scenario in which each institution starts to spill
into the other. (Nakahara 2004, 133)

It is these films which also cement the enduring promise of women’s enclosure on screen:
‘that they will provide the viewer with the ‘truth’ about convent life and, once the camera
has entered the forbidden space, that the revealed truths will be shocking and titillating’
(Nakahara 2004, 129). Moreover, the scandalous nature of the women’s activities in
enclosure means that ‘once allowed inside, we are to play the role of shocked viewer’
(Nakahara 2004, 129).
Generally, these films do not take advantage of the exceptionality of Spanish women’s enclosure, joining instead an international trend whereby local peculiarities are elided. In fact, the trend in European nunsploitation was to displace narratives of conventual enclosure from the national context in which they were made. For example, although there is relatively little Spanish nunsploitation and almost none actually set in Spain, a great deal of the Italian films made in that genre are set in Spain or in Spanish occupied Sicily, and put a particular emphasis on the Spanishness of the depravity, as in *Le scomunicate di San Valentino* (Grieco 1974) and *La monaca di Monza* (Odorisio 1987). Meanwhile, the two best known Spanish nunsploitation films are set in Portugal: Jesús Franco’s *Cartas de amor a una monja portuguesa* (1977) and Jorge Grau’s *Cartas de amor de una monja* (1978). The Spanish director Jesús Franco was of course one of the most prolific directors of this period internationally, and a particular devotee of enclosed women, making numerous popular women-in-prison films including *99 mujeres* (1968), *Women Behind Bars* (1975), and *Barbed Wire Dolls* (1975).

**Methodology and Theoretical Framing**

The close readings in this study are guided by the richly contextualised studies of other scholars in the field, particularly Justin Crumbaugh, Helen Graham, Antonio Sánchez, and Sarah Wright whose analyses of cultural texts are embedded in the socio-historical frameworks that produced them. As a result, the contextualisation offered in the following chapters is in terms not just of the history of Spanish film and TV drama briefly outlined above, but also cultural history more broadly, specifically gender politics as it has developed historically. Much of this contextual information is drawn from important studies by Mary Nash, Paul Julian Smith, and Jo Labanyi, among others.
This study aims, through these contextualised and close readings of films, to open up spaces of women's enclosure to a nuanced, culturally specific, reading as continually fluctuating sites where ideas about societal roles and community structures can be thought through and renegotiated. The aforementioned thinkers, Kristeva, Butler, Zambrano, and Bronfen have provided valuable models for understanding the structuring drives behind women’s enclosure and these form the starting point for this study. Kristeva’s understanding of the abject as that which needs to be discarded in order for the boundaries between Self and Other to be maintained, illuminates the complexity of the relationship between the enclosed and the society that encloses. This understanding compliments Butler and Zambrano’s thinking on interiority which in turn provides an enriching range of perspectives on the value of enclosed space for the purposes of this study. While Butler sees the imaginary sanctuary of the interior as the throne of the fixed self, with the abject necessarily expelled to the infinite and unknown exterior, Zambrano’s interior ‘vacío’ necessarily remains open to elements on the outside. While not dealing explicitly in spatial terms, Bronfen’s examination of the mystique surrounding the female corpse and how it allows for the confirmation of cultural norms again points to the huge significance of the devices through which cultures manage and assimilate the abject. While this work forms a foundation for the understanding of enclosure in this study, the analysis of the films here will focus more on how these films attempt to manage on screen the complexities of enclosure that these thinkers identify. For this reason the analysis of the films will use key terms and ideas from three different thinkers: Gilles Deleuze, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Michel de Certeau.

The analysis in the first two chapters, which deals exclusively with convent films, draws extensively from the work of Gilles Deleuze, particularly his definition of ‘becoming’. ‘Becoming’ for Deleuze is the movement of one element in an assemblage (a
gathering of things in a context) into the territory of another element to make something new. ‘Becoming’ is not fully a state or a process and is not located at either the start or end point of this movement but rather signifies the very dynamism of change itself. This dynamic resonates with the mystical drive to spiritual self-actualization that imbues the Spanish convent with its intense signifying power. Moreover, becoming’s lack of orientation towards a goal puts it, like the homosocial space of the convent, at odds with the teleological impulses which fuel identity-driven projects of nation building, making it a very useful concept with which to approach narratives of women’s enclosure on screen, defining the unconventional forms of self-actualization available in convent space. Similarly, Deleuzian ‘lines of flight’ offer a way of identifying and thinking about actions that cut through established frames of meaning and identity to open up other possible ways of being. Deleuze’s work is particularly useful to this study as it so often frames these dynamics in visual terms. In his work on cinema he differentiates between the movement-image’s organised chains of action and reaction and the time-image’s eschewing of chronology, a contrast that will be useful in the analysis of attempts to portray ineffable and ahistorical mystical experiences on screen. In addition, other concepts such as the Body without Organs, the deeper reality in the relationship between the whole and its functioning parts, are open to interpretation in visual terms, as will be discussed in the analysis of the representation of the relationship between the nuns and their space at the end of chapter two.

As the study’s attention turns from convent to prison spaces, emphasis will move from Deleuze’s quasi-mystical approaches to the non-foundational philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy and his recent work which has provided new frameworks to explore both relationships with the Other and between members of communities. Specifically, his theory of ‘Being With’ allows for new readings of all-female communities founded
outside of explicitly religious contexts but that are still inflected by mystical traces, as women’s communities in Spain so often are. For Nancy, ‘[b]eing in common means that singular beings are, present themselves, and appear only to the extent that they comppear (comparaissent), to the extent that they are exposed, presented, or offered to one another’ (Nancy 1990, 58). As such, community demands a specific configuration of the visual apparatus, and it is this configuration that will come under analysis in chapter four. Furthermore, Nancy’s work on the deconstruction of Christianity in the West facilitates a coherent reading of secular texts in which mystical elements appear to be out of place. For Nancy, the totalizing narrative of Christianity enables us to look at each other and recognise our communion in each other. However, the recognition and communion facilitated through Christianity as a foundational narrative is grounded in an impossible immanence which forecloses on the possibility of ‘Being With’. Nancy offers the possibility of an interruption of myth as a way of thinking past this failure in community, an idea which will be of use in the analysis of the post-Christian martyr narratives discussed in chapter five.

Spain’s mystical heritage is the common denominator in each of this study’s analyses of convent and prison spaces and in order to provide a solid and historically grounded understanding of mysticism as a practice and cultural phenomenon, this thesis will return throughout to Michel de Certeau’s work on both space and mysticism. De Certeau’s phenomenological and historiographical approaches to theorizing space allows for connections to be drawn between vastly different contexts. In order to reconnect to the multiple possibilities and meanings of mystic space, de Certeau prescribes a practice of looking that refers to ‘another spatiality’ which he outlines as ‘an “anthropological”, poetic and mythic experience of space’ (de Certeau 1984, 93). This study hopes to identify moments when such ‘another spatiality’ is facilitated on screen. Moreover, de
Certeau’s description of mystical practices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in his study *The Mystic Fable* offers a framework with which to identify similar practices depicted in recent Spanish cinema and to trace representations of these practices back to longer and broader cultural movements, as we will see in chapter four.

**Structure**

The first two chapters will explore how the convent was recuperated in the popular imagination after the end of the dictatorship. The first chapter will examine convent space in three post-transition biopics of the sixteenth century Spanish mystic, Teresa de Jesús: Josefina Molina’s 1984 TVE television series, *Teresa de Jesús*, Ray Loriga’s 2007 film *Teresa, el cuerpo de Cristo*, and Jorge Dorado’s recent TV movie, *Teresa* (2015). This analysis aims to unravel the concrete and historical forces which have shaped representations of the saint’s space, particularly how Teresa’s mysticism has imbued the convent with authority as a political tool in defining national identity and gender roles. Equally, it will examine how the ineffable experience of the mystic ultimately makes the space unassimilable to any overarching power structure and opens a conceptual crack for contemporary Spaniards to engage with their national past and space. The impossibility of assimilating convent space will then be the focus of the second chapter which explores the use of different aesthetic registers to render the convent socially intelligible in two mid-1980s films, *Entre tinieblas* (Almodóvar 1983) and *Extramuros* (Picazo 1985).

The next two chapters focus on the construction and management of Otherness in representations of female homosocial enclosure during the mid-nineties. The third chapter looks at two adaptions of the stage play, *Canción de cuna* – José María Elorrieta’s 1961 version and José Luis Garci’s 1994 remake – to examine how the radical Otherness of
convent enclosure has been mitigated on screen in order to ease anxieties around unmarried, childless women, and to reclaim the space as part of the national landscape. The study will also attempt to account for the endurance of convent narratives in popular culture long after they ceased to be a social reality. Chapter four marks a move away from convent space but continues the discussion of women’s enclosure as a site of radical Otherness. This chapter’s analysis of Libertarias (Aranda 1995) and Entre rojas (Rodriguez 1996) will examine how the Otherness inherent to homosocial enclosure has also been exploited as a path towards new imaginings of community and intimacy.

The final chapter will examine gender, memory, and martyrdom in women’s prison films since 2000: Las trece rosas (Martínez-Lázaro 2007), La voz dormida (Zambrano 2011), and Estrellas que alcanzar (Rueda 2010). This chapter will consider how enclosed environments have been used to frame martyrdom narratives, problematically situating them at the intersection of traditional Catholic iconography and more contemporary depictions of imprisoned and confined women.

Overall, this analysis will provide a starting point from which to approach convent space as a culturally and politically significant force in Spain up to the present day, unravelling the concrete and historical forces which have shaped these representations and the imaginative, mystical ones which have made it exceptional.
Chapter 1
At Home with Saints:
Defining Spanish Women’s Enclosure with Teresa de Jesús

¡Gloria a ti, Serafín del Carmelo!
¡Tú de España el más puro blasón!
En tu pecho hizo Dios otro cielo
y de un pueblo encerró el corazón.
¡Gloria, gloria Teresa que brilla
como el sol de la raza en su altar!
Sol de España encendido en Castilla,
tú la luz de su templo y su hogar.

La Raza, Aniceto de Castro Albarrán 1921

Catholic priest and author of *Este es el cortejo... Héroes y mártires de la Cruzada Española* (1938), Aniceto de Castro Albarrán wrote the above hymn to celebrate the third centenary of Teresa de Jesús’ canonization in 1921. In the hymn, de Castro Albarrán exploits the saint’s own strategic use of spatial metaphors but instead of using familiar spaces as orientational markers around which to navigate fantastical spiritual interiors, he uses concrete yet symbolically loaded geo-political terms to ensnare her in a web of nationalistic discourse. The vibrancy of ‘el sol de la raza’ cannot override the hymn’s pervading sense of inertia as the indefatigable monja andariega is confined to the supercilious torpor of the altar and the heart of the diverse Spanish pueblo is shackled to a homogenising standard of Spanishness rooted in Castille.³ Both the ‘templo’ and ‘hogar’ of the last line are equally illuminated in the panoptic glare of ecclesiastic and state authority, a constricting force governing every cranny of a homeland and homeplace where few can truly be at home. In many ways the hymn exemplifies how understandings of the Spanish nation space have often been inflected by the cultural memory and

³ In its original versión this verse ended with the lines ‘Peregrinos, venid a Castilla/Su sepulcro y su cuna a besar’ (*El Pensamiento Español*, Anon 1921). A later verse of the hymn also makes clear that the pueblo includes the populations of Spain’s, by then largely former, overseas colonies: ‘De una Raza y de un alma pedazos/ separaba dos mundos el mar/ ¡hoy se encuentran los dos en tus brazos!/ ¡Tú los fundes al pie de tu altar!’
signifying force of this peculiarly spatial saint. This chapter will focus on the nature of these inflections in biographies of Teresa in Spanish film and television since the transition to democracy and explore how conceptions of the home and homeland have been renegotiated around the sites most closely identified with Teresa de Jesús – her reformed convents and her castillo interior.

Drawing on this dynamic, De Castro Albarrán’s hymn aims to lend prestige and authority to its nationalist mission by harnessing Teresa’s potency as a cultural figure, a national saint with enduring mass appeal. In some senses, Teresa is exploited here as one of a group categorised by Henri Bergson as ‘heroes’, as a ‘privileged personality’ acting on the popular consciousness through a specific ‘appeal’, ‘attraction’, or ‘call’ (Linstead and Mullarkey 2003, 10). However, this use is incongruous with the jingoistic intention of the lyrics. The value of Bergson’s heroes, incidentally also called mystics, does not lie in traditionalist intransience. On the contrary, these mystics are characterised by their transcendence of historical and cultural contexts. Linstead and Mullarkey have interpreted them as ‘creators, transgressing the boundaries of life, mind and society in their inspirational morality. They are now the personal bearers of what also underpins all movement and change in thought, life, and society – the very stuff of time’ (Linstead and Mullarkey 2003, 10). However, the hymn’s emphasis on the immobile and impenetrable refuses this progressive function. Instead, it reinforces the precedence of what Bergson described as ‘static’, conventional, and institutionalized religion, over the saint’s ‘dynamic’, mobile, and diffuse spirituality by binding the latter’s unpredictable vitality to a politically articulated and enclosed place. The unruly mystical energy which makes up the saint’s appeal as a signifier in the first place is suppressed in order to communicate a more socially unifying message to congregations in the chaos of early 1920s Spain. This contradiction already points to a tension between the enduring signifying value of the
saint across time and the specificity of the historical environments into which she has been reincarnated and put to work as a buttress of national identity, a conflict which continues to inflect representations of the saint in popular culture up to the present day.

Indeed, challenging the limitations of her historical environment was the lifework of the Carmelite nun and reformer, Teresa de Jesús. Born in 1515 as Teresa Sánchez de Cepeda y Ahumada, she devoted her life to overcoming the limits of spatial confinement through her intersecting projects of writing and founding convents according to the primitive rule of the Carmelite order. The overlap between these projects marks the singularity of the saint’s mystic enclosure, a uniquely robust spiritual architecture with foundations not only in the physical world, but equally in an interior utopia. Described by Maríán Álvarez, who played the saint in the most recent TV biopic, as ‘una mujer con un pie en la tierra y otra en la espiritualidad’ (Belinchón 2015), Teresa worked to translate her interior paradise into a concrete reality in the seventeen Discalced Carmelite convents she founded throughout Spain. Unlike the rigid imbrication of real and metaphorical spaces in de Castro Albarrán’s hymn, which ultimately subsumes all space into the domain of the nation-state, Teresa’s spatial blend is always in motion, shifting between ontological categories. The result is a new form of mystical enclosure, a blend of metaphorical and real space exhibiting many of the most powerful properties of Gilles Deleuze’s Fold, an entity which:

separates or moves between matter and soul, the façade and the closed room, the outside and inside. Because it is a virtuality that never stops dividing itself, the line of inflection is actualized in the soul but realized in matter, each one on its own side. (Deleuze 2006, 39)

Deleuze uses Bernini’s sculpture, The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa, as an example of the Fold, the dramatic waves of her habit making out of marble ‘infinity folds that cannot
be explained by the body but by a spiritual adventure that can set the body ablaze’ (Deleuze 2006, 139–40). Bernini’s representation of a mystical kinesis conveyed through the rigidity of stone is ‘not an art of structures but of textures’ (Deleuze 2006, 140), an expression of Teresa’s spatialized spirituality, and an example of how Bergson’s two forms of religion could so productively exist side by side in Spain for centuries, mutually profiting from the productive tension between them. Indeed, Bergson makes clear that neither static nor dynamic religion can exist independently, but that they depend on each other to function coherently, ‘two complementary manifestations of life’ (Bergson 1954, 96).

As the specifically Spanish manifestation of Bergson’s dynamic religion, the mystic spirituality of Teresa does not reject the trappings of static religion but works instead to construct a home from its raw materials, depending on the infrastructure provided by the mainstream Church in order to articulate and disseminate what is arguably a highly subversive message. Equally, religious authorities from the time of her death benefitted from Teresa’s role within the church as her spiritual authority provided credibility not only for the church but the state. Teresa, as often associated with the historic battlements of Avila as with the more humble walls of her own convents, plays a civic as well as a spiritual role in Spanish culture and both of these are expressed through the uses of space associated with her. However, the more entangled these structures become with the machinations of ecclesiastic politics and state power, the more progressively they ossify, depriving the saint’s mystical dynamism of a communicative outlet. No longer able to flow through the elastic conduits of religious expression, Spain’s mystic energy becomes trapped in petrified forms of static religion.

This process of reification intensified with Franco’s rise to power and his regime’s appropriation of the traditional vehicles of mystic spirituality - including the figurative
and literal body of Teresa de Jesús. The dictator had a particular devotion to the saint, keeping the relic of her hand in his home until his death (Pérez-Romero 1996, 68). The tour of Teresa’s incorruptible arm around Spain in 1962, the year of the Second Vatican Council and the fourth centenary of her first foundation, exemplifies this trend and the close relationship forged during this period between the saint and the national space. After visiting all 17 of the convents founded by the saint in a morbid parody of her original journey, the arm was welcomed to Madrid where it was received ‘en la Plaza Mayor con honores militares de capitán general con mando de plaza’ (Martínez 2006, 14). The episode came to exemplify the kind of inmovilismo that, ‘a pesar de las nuevas exigencias y de los impulsos contrastantes madurados en el seno del mundo católico’, continued to inform the ritual, liturgical, and theological sphere in Spain for many years after (di Febo 1988, 117).

It was in this atmosphere that the first large-scale film of the saint’s life was released. Juan de Orduña’s 1962 film, Teresa de Jesús, is indicative of the drive to narratively engineer Teresa’s relationship with space to better speak to, and for, the audience of that moment, and to confirm the values of the reigning political class, a drive which continues to inflect screen depictions of the saint up to the present day. The film destabilizes the centrality of Teresa’s interior journey to her story and places greater focus instead on her physical journey around Spain. Her spiritual drive to reform the convents of the Carmelite order is recast as a public crusade, reinforcing the Francoist equation of Teresa’s spiritual quest to a military campaign. De Orduña’s Teresa (Aurora Bautista) initially decides to embark on her journey of foundation upon receiving news that her brother has died in the New World. Two priests who had been with him, deliver the news and present her with his sword which she clutches to her chest, the hilt and crossguard forming a cross. The transformation of the weapon into a religious symbol at this key
moment in the narrative positions Teresa’s mission as coextensive with that of her brother in the New World and with Spanish ventures of acquisition in general while also visually reinforcing the synthesis of political and ecclesiastic power under Franco. The image captured the film’s message so aptly it was chosen for the poster - Bautista as Teresa looming over an imposing image of the historic walls of Avila (Fig. 1).

Eclipsing the interior, mystical experiences and even the intimate convent enclosures which define her as a saint and Doctor of the Church, representations of Teresa de Jesús during the Francoist regime promoted the saint’s space as public, imperial, and intricately connected to state authority. The rigidity of such associations disconnects Spain’s ideologically constructed landscape from both its mystical past and future possibilities, giving rise to a dislocation and reification of spiritual experience and the reduction of the mystical adventure to reflexive spatial practices. The dream of radically intimate convent spaces and imaginative interior castles which Teresa fought to share with her sisters becomes institutionalised, robbed of its subversive potential and idiosyncratic exceptionality in order to be assimilated into a serviceable national metanarrative. While remaining a striking feature of the national landscape and consciousness, these spaces lose their polysemic value in the popular imagination and their potential to aid the navigation of the unique, intensely interior and personal journey.
which could make a home of an alien home space.

These recreations of the saint’s life commemorate gestures of spiritual innovation but disengage from the transformative processes of ‘becoming’ which originally defined them and marked them out as both culturally meaningful and politically useful. This potential ‘becoming’ in a Deleuzian sense is the movement of one element in an assemblage (a gathering of things in a context) into the territory of another element to make something new, it is not located at either the start or end point of this movement but is rather ‘the very dynamism of change, situated between heterogeneous terms and tending towards no particular goal or end-state’ (Stagoll 2010, 26). This dynamic is not only resonant with the inspirational heroism of Bergson’s mystics, continually driving change, but puts the mystic’s narrative of ‘becoming’ fundamentally at odds with the teleological impulses which fuel identity-driven projects of nation building like that of de Orduña’s Teresa de Jesús, ‘for if the primacy of identity is what defines a world of re-presentation (presenting the same world once again), then becoming (by which Deleuze means ‘becoming different’) defines a world of presentation anew’ (Stagoll 2010, 26). The limitless possibilities of this ‘becoming’ mark the exceptionality of the mystic space and feed into the drive to repeatedly rediscover it on screen. However, the volatile unknowability of this potential means that the ‘becoming’ of the mystic is also not containable in representational regimes which aim to signify monophonically or to privilege homogenizing standards of identity. Such regimes must instead block off the ‘lines of flight’ which cut through established frames of meaning and identity and open the possibility of subversion - of other, supplementary, dimensions where other ways of being, thinking, and knowing are made possible.

This chapter will examine three explorations of the life of Teresa de Jesús since the transition to democracy: Josefina Molina’s 1984 TV series Teresa de Jesús, Ray
Loriga’s 2007 film *Teresa, el cuerpo de Cristo*, and more briefly, Jorge Dorado’s 2015 TV movie *Teresa*. This analysis will focus on how these films mark out their difference from earlier narratives, if not by fully reopening lines of light, at least by recuperating the story’s more subversive aspects: the saint’s absolute commitment to the exploration and actualization of the self and the foundation of communities unconstrained by the established order. More specifically, the chapter will centre on how these aspects are spatially inscribed, exploring how convent space facilitates the process of ‘becoming’ outlined above, and the Deleuzian Fold. These concepts aptly illustrate the tension between the uncontainable mystical energy which inspires its own narrativization and the socio-cultural limitations of the tools available to narrate Teresa’s mystical experience in any moment - limitations which are diminished but not dissolved in filmic approaches to the saint’s life and work after the transition to democracy.

In order to foreground the spatial and phenomenological aspects of this recuperation, the chapter will also draw on the work of Michel de Certeau, particularly his account of public space in ‘Walking in the City’ (1984). Here, he describes how ‘functionalist totalitarianism (including its programming of games and celebrations) … seeks precisely to eliminate [the forces that] compromise the univocity of the system’ (Certeau 1984, 106), a process which resonates with the commemorations of Teresa under the Francoist regime. This elimination of heterogenous legend from landscape leaves a space with ‘nothing “special”: nothing that is marked, opened up by a memory or a story, signed by something or someone else’ (de Certeau 1984, 106); nothing that might allow a line of flight. Alienated from the multiple possibilities of their own national space, the inhabitants of this landscape develop a chronic frustration of the ‘scopic and gnostic drive’ (Certeau 1984, 92), a need to defy the enigma of the place, to see it, to know it, to see through it. For de Certeau, this frustration turns to exaltation upon looking down on
Manhattan from the heights of the World Trade Centre. However, for the contemporary Spanish audience, the privileged viewpoint from which to gain optical knowledge of Spain is not from a height but across the horizon, seeing through walls to decipher the complexity of the forgotten histories sealed off in enclosure. While seeing from this viewpoint can satisfy a need to make a space one’s own, this is a drive to capture everything in a field of visibility also always threatens to again reduce space to ‘the “geometrical” or “geographical” space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions’ (de Certeau 1984, 93), the surface dimension of space most readily available to the camera. In order to reconnect to the multiple possibilities and meanings of mystic space, the gaze must adopt a practice which refers to ‘another spatiality’ which de Certeau outlines as ‘an “anthropological”, poetic and mythic experience of space’ (de Certeau 1984, 93) – one far more difficult to reproduce on screen.

For de Certeau, in the face of the technocratic exorcism of mystery, polysemy, and the unknown from shared space, ‘only the cave of the home remains believable, still open for a certain time to legends, still full of shadows’ (de Certeau 1984, 106). This chapter will use this idea of home as the last stronghold of spatially inscribed otherness to explore new ways in which the space of women’s religious enclosure can be culturally meaningful in a time where it may no longer be socially useful. As discussed in the introduction, traditional domestic space is fundamentally different to the enclosures of the convent and the prison. However, the home here is not commensurate to any institutionalised site of family or identity. In this chapter, ‘home’ is de Certeau’s space of shadows, a signifier for both the intersection between the historical space of the saint’s convents and the imaginary space of her interior castle, as well as the potential capacity for shared habitation created through the telling and retelling of her story.

The idea of really inhabiting, or ‘dwelling’ in Heidegger’s terminology as we will
explore later, is key to the potential of the convent to provide not only a home space for those living within it but a space through which to think alternative ways of being at home. Local legends, as Teresa’s mystic spirituality has the capacity to be, offer the opportunity to ‘store up rich silences and wordless stories, or rather through their capacity to create cellars and garrets everywhere… permit exits, ways of going out and coming back in, and thus habitable spaces’ (de Certeau 1984, 106). The centrality of this affective dimension to the construction of home as an inhabited and inhabitable space is also foregrounded in the definition provided by Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling in their comprehensive study, *Home*, where they characterised home as ‘both material and imaginative, a site and a set of meanings/emotions’ (Blunt and Dowling 2012, 22). The book also draws from Edmunds Bunkše’s understanding of Gaston Bachelard’s house as not just ‘a physical entity but an orientation to the fundamental values – a gathering together into “one fundamental value” the myriad “intimate values of inside space”’ – with which a home, as an intimate space in the universe is linked to human nature’ (Bunkše 2004, 102). This link between particular experience and universal values, problematic as it may be, not only secures the inclusion of the convent in the category of home space but privileges it within that category. Unshackled from the need to represent individual and familial identities, the intimate values of convent space are more disposed to being supplemented by universal values, an orientation towards which can also be transformed into an orientation towards the values of the wider community and the nation. This potential is amplified in the teresian narrative of finding ways to inhabit the convent space which has clear parallels with finding ways to inhabit the nation space, particularly after the transition to democracy.

The link between home, nation, and the experience of mystical enclosure in contemporary Spain is enacted explicitly in two of the three screen productions under
discussion here; 1984’s *Teresa de Jesús* and 2015’s *Teresa* were commissioned by the national broadcaster *Televisión Española* and projected directly into homes all over Spain. The former explicitly embraced TVE’s didactic mission of the 1980s, approaching a shared national history as a way of reclaiming the past and using it to navigate the present. Preparing to film *Teresa de Jesús* in 1982, director Josefina Molina told *El País* that, although she approaches the project as an agnostic, the life, work, and environment of the saint ‘es muy importante… aunque sólo sea porque es necesario conocer nuestra historia, desentrañarla e interpretarla con el fin de ejercer un aprendizaje útil para nuestro tiempo. ¿Quién, sino la televisión, puede abordar esta misión en estos momentos?’ (Pérez Ornia 1982). In this production, television incorporates an official version of a grand historical narrative into the practices of everyday life, blurring the boundaries between private and public negotiations of home space.

However, Molina goes on to imply a communicative goal far more ambitious than a mere history lesson, remarking that Teresa de Jesús is a subject ‘cuya necesidad obsesiva de trascenderse, de colocarse en otra dimensión te obliga a observar, incluso a aprender, el fenómeno de vivir sin vivir aquí’ (Pérez Ornia 1982). This attention to the trans-dimensional possibilities inherent to the saint’s story signals a post-transition shift away from the chronological, action focussed biographies of the Francoist period to more tractable explorations of the mystical experience and its significance across time. This shift resonates with Deleuze’s paradigm of the move from the movement-image’s organised chains of action and reaction to the time-image, where ‘the sheets of past coexist in a non-chronological order’ (Deleuze 1989, xii). Michael Goddard has argued for the potential of the time-image (or ‘the crystalline regime’) to communicate a form of mysticism to a wider audience and reveal the mystic experience as ‘an opening to the processes of life itself, to a spiritual dimension wholly immanent to life’ (Goddard 2001,
If static religions always operate strategically by means of recollection-images, whereas mysticism attempts to relay spiritual movement through the direct perception of the spiritual, virtual dimensions of life, then the cinema of the time-image is uniquely placed to tactically disperse the relatively contained time crystals of mysticism, across the extended circuits of contemporary, secular mass media communications. (Goddard 2001, 62)

Although the films under discussion here rarely conform exactly to Deleuze’s definition of the time-image, the concept will be useful in examining how each of these productions draw on diverse forms of engagement with space, time, and movement to communicate the narrative of a mystic saint.

Numerous recent studies of Teresa’s on screen incarnations have explored how representations of the saint have changed over time to reflect a changing Spanish society. Celia Martín-Pérez’s study, ‘A Woman for All Seasons: Teresa of Avila on Spanish Screens’, maps out the ‘constellation of identities’ thrust upon Teresa in de Orduña’s, Molina’s, and Loriga’s productions, as well as in Rafael Gordon’s lesser known reimagining of the saint, *Teresa Teresa* (2003), marking ‘shifts in gender attitudes across five decades of Spanish cultural history’ (Martín-Pérez 2011, 29). The most recent, and most comprehensive, study of the saint on screen, *El cine de la Santa* (de Mingo Lorente and Hernández Carriba 2015), has a similar focus on changes in the figure of the saint, highlighting particularly controversies in casting and changes in the framing of historical details. However, in his comparative study of Molina’s series and Loriga’s film, Paul Julian Smith (2011) moves away from an examination of the social changes enacted around the figure of saint herself to foreground the significance of her relationship to space. He identifies the historical Teresa as a distinctive subject ‘for the screen as she constitutes a test case for the interpenetration of the factual and the fantastic, if not
fictional’, and locates this exceptionality in the contrast between ‘the concrete mise-en-scène (including the use, wherever possible, of authentic locations) that is so vital to the heritage genre’ and ‘the inaccessible sphere of the mystical vision’ (Smith 2011, 94). He also points to the sidelining of conventional familial and domestic structures in Molina’s production as establishing environment as the key factor in the formation of the saint as subject, and pointing to a rejection of the idea of genealogy as destiny. This allows for a reading of the convent as a privileged site, unshackled from the certainties and circumscriptions of the family home.

Smith in particular characterizes the marked differences between Molina and Loriga’s films as a move from historiography to historiophoty, ‘the representation of history and our thought about it in visual images and filmic discourse’ (White 1988, 1193). Indeed, the trend towards representations of national history heavily and unashamedly inflected by contemporary attitudes to it has become even more pronounced since the release of Teresa, el cuerpo de Cristo with the rise of popular series such as Isabel, Carlos, Rey Emperador, and El ministerio del tiempo. Javier Olivares, showrunner of all the aforementioned series, has captured the spirit of this recently intensified drive to televise the past:

> Cuando uno habla del pasado estás hablando del presente, como ocurre a la inversa en las novelas de ciencia ficción. Siempre estás hablando del presente, tú estás escribiendo la serie en el presente y el público que te va a ver o no te va a ver está en el presente. (Mendíbil 2013)

2015’s Teresa is very much a part of this trend, Jorge Dorado having also directed five episodes of El Ministerio del Tiempo, the series which most explicitly foregrounds the relationship of contemporary Spaniards to their national past. The lead character, lonely paramedic Julián Martínez (Rodolfo Sancho), is struggling to cope with the death of his
wife when he is recruited to work for the Ministerio del Tiempo, a mysterious government agency dedicated to protecting Spanish history. Alienated in his own time, Julián finds connection with an eclectic group of agents from radically different backgrounds and time periods, united by their shared Spanishness.

Interestingly, Dorado directed the second season episode, El monasterio del tiempo, which sees the team travel to a 1808 convent in order to protect an ancestor of Adolfo Suárez who is at risk of being killed in the Napoleonic wars, thus jeopardising the transition to democracy nearly two centuries later. Much of the humour in this light-hearted episode is derived from the disorientation 20th-century Spaniards experience in the space of the convent. Undercover as a priest, agent Pacino (Hugo Silva) is called upon to give mass, where he not only fails to give it in Latin but begins with: ‘La gracia de nuestro Señor Jesucristo, el amor del Padre y la confusión... la... la comunión del Espíritu Santo estén con ustedes’. While religious aspects of convent space are sidelined, the episode foregrounds the convent’s potential to facilitate the self-actualization of marginalised characters. The only employee of the ministry who can pass for an ageing prioress, the self-effacing secretary, Angustias (Francesca Piñón), is given the chance to lead the mission and despite her age, anxiety, and self doubt succeeds in convincing Napoleon himself to free Suárez. Also, while still slightly homophobic, the subplot in which one of Napoleon’s head officers develops a crush on Pacino displaces the clichéd images of naughty lesbian nuns propagated in the cinema of the destape from female characters onto male, from marginalised figures onto authoritative ones. The episode hints at the potential value of the convent space for contemporary audiences who have become alienated from it and opens the door for a return to the space that attempts to free it from both religious orthodoxy and the salacious projections of more recent representations.
The orientation of past narratives towards the present also defines Dorado’s *Teresa* where, according to lead actress Álvarez, the intention was to ‘poner en valor la mujer que se enfrenta a su tiempo, con los problemas propios de una mujer que no distan tanto de los que aún hoy tenemos … Nos podemos sentir identificadas con mucho de lo que ella promulgaba’ (Sanz Esquerro 2015). Moreover, the parallels between past and present are represented spatially, foregrounding particularly the perennial struggle to make a habitable space for oneself in the world and the value of the convent as a site through which to experiment with different ways to occupy space, a value that is explored and represented in different ways in each of the films under discussion here.

**La monja andariega: From alienation to new ways of habitation**

A profound affinity with states of exile and homelessness underlies the mystic experience and provides both a context and vocabulary which hugely enriches Teresa de Jesús’ articulation of the human condition as a state of exile from the divine in her literary work. Throughout her writing, Teresa articulates her feelings of alienation and isolation on the internal, spiritual plane by repeatedly referring to life on earth as ‘este destierro’. Both her literary corpus and the convents she built are ultimately a response to this overwhelming sense of dislocation as she devoted her life to defining and defending a new form of home space, ‘[un] lugar para eso que podríamos estar a solas gozando de [Dios]’ (Teresa de Jesús 1977, 58). However, the metaphor can be applied more broadly to describe the situation of the mystic on a concrete, socio-political level. De Certeau elaborates on the nature of this exilic consciousness in his description of the mystical topography as a fragmented terrain, constantly falling away from its origins and leaving its inhabitants with only the possibility of exile (de Certeau 1995, 24). While the mystical
experience is exceptional, in this sense it not only speaks to the ordinary, collective experience of adapting to changing environments but dignifies that experience and validates the anxiety attached to it by framing it as universal and divine. Building on this, Josefina Molina’s *Teresa de Jesús*, Ray Loriga’s *Teresa, el cuerpo de Cristo*, and Jorge Dorado’s *Teresa* attempt to work across contexts, resituating Teresa’s utopian vision of enclosure at the intersection of the axes of individual/mystical and collective/historical trajectories, revealing how often finding ways of being at home in one dimension means expulsion from the other.

The themes of exile, homelessness, and wandering pervade Molina’s *Teresa de Jesús* where images suggestive of this rootlessness are repeatedly foregrounded. The opening credits of the series feature a group of travellers leaving the grim and imposing walls of Avila. Foreshadowing Teresa’s later journeys through Spain as a foundress of convents, these images of ambling convoys dominate the first episode and become a recurring motif throughout the series, often accompanied by a subtitle indicating the date and location. These temporal markers simultaneously root the narrative in a historical moment and also endow it with a sense of timelessness, adding to its relevance for contemporary audiences by juxtaposing specific dates in the distant past with the unchanging Spanish landscape and still familiar landmarks such as the walls of Avila and the spires of Toledo and Seville. Dorado’s *Teresa* also uses space to draw connections between past and present, but makes the overlap even more explicit. Here, the narrative is structured around the symmetry between the struggles of Teresa in her sixteenth century convent and those of a twenty-first century teenager in a high school. The parallels are immediately established in the opening sequence which cuts from the saint Teresa writing with a quill by candlelight to a contemporary Teresa (Carla Díaz) rushing to school past Avila’s famous walls against a pop-rock soundtrack. The school is set up as both a
microcosm of contemporary Spain and a mirror emphasising its parallels with the society in which Teresa de Jesús lived, all of these elements tied together by the establishing shot of the walls of Avila. The theme of alienation is clearly established in the contemporary strand of the narrative as Teresa is locked in the school basement overnight by bullies in retaliation for having defended a Muslim student, Fatima (Andrea Hermoso), against their xenophobic threats. The modern Teresa’s forced enclosure in the basement offers a fresh angle from which the audience can consider women’s enclosure in Spain. As the modern Teresa spends the night in the basement reading her namesake’s *Libro de la vida*, the two worlds become more deeply intertwined, the teenager eventually finding new ways to inhabit the contemporary world through her engagement with the past in general and the saint’s experiences in particular.

Ray Loriga’s *Teresa, el cuerpo de Cristo* also sets up his version of the saint’s life as a narrative of a fundamentally alienated subject, but emphasises the otherness of the historical setting to foreground the overlap between Teresa’s (Paz Vega) values and those of the audience, positing these shared values as universal. Throughout, he achieves a pervading sense of rootlessness which emphasises Teresa’s cosmic and temporal disjunction over her geographical displacement by juxtaposing highly historicised and geographically specific images with more abstract sequences. The opening sequence presents us with striking images of inquisition torture chambers accompanied by a voiceover locating the scenes in late 16th-century Castille and giving a sensationalised description of social conditions at the time. The sequence capitalises on popular conceptions of the period to establish the radical otherness of the setting: the gruesome brutality of the torture chambers, the obscene riches pouring in from the New World, the orgiastic rituals of religious sects. Slowly, the crackling of heretic flesh on bonfires gives way to peaceful music as these images cut to starkly contrasting scenes of the saint, in
extravagant period costume, floating through a richly decorated imagining of her interior castle, entirely disconnected from any geographical or historical reality. The voiceover dramatically introduces Teresa with the words ‘todos los corazones están gobernados por el miedo… todos, menos uno’, cementing the saint’s alienation from her social environment. By foregrounding this alienation Loriga aligns the contemporary audience’s horror at the cruelty and hypocrisy of the inquisition with the more nuanced dissatisfaction which led the historical Teresa to first enter the convent and later to found her own monastic order, the Discalced Carmelites. This alignment flattens the historical specificity of Teresa’s struggle to construct a space for religious women in 16th-century Spain into a universal search for a place in the world.

Figure 2 The Carmelite map (Williams 1975, 115)

These time-space formulations offer the audience a stake in the narrative, framing the protagonist’s journey towards new ways of inhabiting convent space as a blueprint for inhabiting contemporary Spain. However, in foregrounding these dwelling practices as an abstract universal, they can equally problematize the agency of disenfranchised groups in constructing new formulations of space in which dwellers can operate across contexts. Alienation from the historically specific field of socio-political action undermines the dweller’s capacity to both root themselves in a recognisable and relevant geographical
space and also to extend into ‘a purely psychical or conceptual space’, a dual positioning essential ‘in order for concerted action and psychical reactions to be possible’ (Grosz 1995, 87). The ability to recognize one’s position in both planes is so essential to convent space that the contemporary Discalced Carmelite still navigates her spiritual journey using two maps, ‘one which locates her in ordinary geographical space-time and another consisting of an interior “territory” of a spiritual and psychological nature in which she is located at the same time’ (Williams 1977, 114, see Fig. 2). The ultimate objective of this map is to facilitate the convent dweller’s ascension into the timeless, psychic space of the interior castle, a movement which necessitates a mental liberation from the natural cycles of birth, age, and death, and a careful negotiation of secular tendencies towards repackaging these cycles into progressive teleologies and linear, and cumulative processes which characterize the horizontal axis of historical time. The close relationship between the convent and the official institutions of church and state in the past allowed for such a negotiation without a total breaking away, another example of static institutions facilitating dynamic processes. Even as the convent recedes as a key site in Spanish society, these productions resuscitate a specifically Teresian interpretation of enclosure as a model of a radical renegotiation of space. However, by oversimplifying the relationship between individual, spiritual experience and the socio-political contexts in which they are lived, the power of these narratives to inspire alternative engagements with space is diminished. This can threaten to perpetuate the exclusion of women from the grand narrative of male driven history by confining them absolutely to the realm of the ‘timeless’ and the ‘supernatural’.

The exclusion of women from the making of history is addressed most explicitly in the 1984 series where the paradigms of masculine heroism and family honour that characterise the ‘progress’ of the horizontal axis are fundamental to Molina’s narrative.
However, unlike de Orduña’s film where the saint is subsumed and put to work within the ideological machine of the moment, the framework of the Spanish Empire provides Molina’s Teresa (Concha Velasco) with a semantic scaffolding which she will later appropriate and use to frame her own narrative. The opening sequence of the series introduces the male members of the Cepeda family reminiscing about their involvement in the campaigns of Navarra and planning their ventures to the New World. Pointedly excluding any woman from the conversation, the scene reiterates the exclusion of women from the grand narrative of male driven history. Teresa in particular is absent from the conversation, convalescing in another room and entirely oblivious to such political machinations.

In these early episodes of Molina’s series, Teresa’s temporal dislocation is formulated as a profound nostalgia, a yearning for a mythologised past which she does not recognise as fiction. This is clearly voiced in her disappointment that the religious life is not ‘más grande, sabe… más heroico’. In this line from later in the first episode, her longing for the heroic appears ridiculous, the self-indulgent fantasy of a spoilt and sheltered child. It also serves to illustrate the futility of any attempt to ascend towards the divine without first establishing a foothold in reality. However, over the course of the series, Teresa does become adept at managing practical, particularly economic matters, and confronts the physical, legal, ecclesiastic, and political obstacles of her day as well as the spiritual ones. Although her brothers do not appear again after the first episode, their ventures in America are parallel and complementary to Teresa’s journeys, as their new found wealth finances her convents in Seville and her fame augments the family’s honour. The dependence of Teresa’s spiritual project on institutional support is made specifically clear in the penultimate episode when the king steps in to affirm the value of Teresa and her convents to her detractors. Unlike de Orduña’s film where Teresa’s foundations and
the project of Spanish imperialism are represented as co-extensive of each other, Molina’s series clearly differentiates between the two while also using that contrast to invest the saint’s activities with a prestige and accumulative value similar to those of her conquistador brothers, attaining recognition and coherence within the dominant historical framework.

In contrast, Loriga’s film depicts a saint whose trajectory diverges entirely from the processes of linear, historical time, her narrative working in direct opposition to the undertakings of patriarchal authorities. The opening sequence features shots of menacing and anonymous cavalry galloping through the countryside, disturbing the tranquil timelessness of the landscape which will later be associated with the serenity of Loriga’s saint. The military bookend the film, appearing again in the final sequence as they assemble outside her foundation at San José to lay siege to the convent. The characterisation of the military as a faceless, alien force creates an unnaturally clear cut opposition between the army and the community of nuns, articulated in terms of violent force and serene immutability respectively. In so explicitly estranging Teresa from linear, accumulative, and patriarchal history Loriga opens the narrative to explore alternative experiences of space and time, in the spirit of Deleuze’s time-image. The flashbacks used to narrate Teresa’s decision to enter the convent at the beginning of the film are so subtle that the two temporal fields seem to coexist simultaneously and later blend seamlessly into the timeless space in which her encounters with the divine take place. In these moments the film’s temporal structure goes ‘beyond the purely empirical succession of time - past-present-future’ (Deleuze 2013, xii) but in doing so flattens out that experience of time. These flashbacks prioritize a version of the saint intelligible to a contemporary audience at the expense of historical specificity.

Both of these temporal strategies risk diminishing the subversive potential of the
saint as a locus through which to explore different ways of occupying the nation space. While Loriga’s Teresa abdicates her privileged position in patriarchal history, a move which threatens to negate her true potency as a historical agent, the saint’s relationship to institutional power in Teresa de Jesús traces a fine line between being an innovative appropriation of, and meek submission to, the historical and geo-political mechanisms which characterize the horizontal axis of secular time in the Carmelite cosmic map. The challenges of negotiating this axis are further complicated as it also expresses physical change and the natural cycles of birth and death which drive the relentless forward thrust of event generated understandings of history. Homosocial enclosure supposedly releases its dwellers from this reproductively defined temporal logic, allowing dwellers to resist the temptation to outwit natural processes without succumbing to the fatalistic attitudes they infer. This forms the hallmark of convent time: the calm submission of all aspects of daily life to cycles of birth and death without attempting to aggrandise them through notions of lineage and teleology.

This is the trap into which 2015’s Teresa falls. Dorado’s film sidelines the institutional power of Church and state, framing even Teresa’s epic battle with the machine of the Inquisition as a personal attack on her by the jealous priest, Rodrigo Salazar (David Luque), who also has literary ambitions. However, while it moves away from patriarchal structure as a narrative foil, the film establishes the historical significance of the narrative by embracing history as futurity, effectively ensnaring the free space of the convent back in the nets of family ties. The film culminates with a highly fictionalised encounter between Teresa and Salazar, the dynamics of which reflect more the high school bullying of the film’s opening sequence than the pomp and circumstance of an Inquisitorial tribunal. As Salazar attempts to browbeat Teresa into a confession of heresy, dredging up her hidden Jewish ancestry as evidence of the
unorthodoxy of her spiritual practices, the saint breaks down. Her reduction to a childlike state is emphasised through a poignant high angle shot, which further accentuates Salazar’s dominance, until the teenage Teresa (also a victim of bullying) appears in the courtroom as a vision, revealing with a glance to Teresa the impact she can have on future generations of women by standing up for herself at that moment. In the ensuing exchange Teresa ridicules the significance placed on family lineage, opening the door to new configurations of community and family and positioning these new values in opposition to what is for the contemporary audience an anachronistic hierarchical order.

Teresa: Aunque yo fuera judía, árabe o conversa, ¿qué más daría? ¿No era acaso hebreo Nuestro Señor Jesucristo?
Salazar: Sólo hay que escucharla para darse cuenta de su ambición desmedida y del desprecio que esta mujer tiene por toda jerarquía eclesiástica.

However, the narrative immediately realigns this order, rejecting the possibility of a useful space outside the constraints of reproductive futurity. The final sequence returns to the twenty-first century as Teresa is released from the basement and the audience recognises that Teresa has cast the narrative using important people in her life: the Priora is the school principal (Terele Pávez); the saint’s supporters and fellow nuns are the teachers in her school; and the school bully, like the priest who interrogates Teresa, is named Salazar. Most poignantly, the last shot reveals the saint Teresa as the teenage Teresa’s recently deceased mother. This device offers a touching twist to the narrative’s dénouement and cements both the school and the town as places the modern Teresa can truly feel at home after her experience. However, it not only seals the historical Teresa into a maternal role she rejected, but disavows the exceptionality of the convent as a formative site, allowing it to be superseded by the school, a site inherently more amenable to reproductive futurity and less threatening to mainstream values.
Transverberations:
Ritual, repetition, and the any-space-whatever

Although the disavowal of this key aspect of convent space-time is in many ways inevitable, other elements of convent space-time are inescapable. The rigorous routine of convent life gives each day a clearly structured and seemingly monotonous pattern which fractures the continuity of its dwellers’ lives into repetitive, but richly signifying, cycles. Each repetitive action is performed ‘at the level of external conduct [but] echoes, for its own part, a more secret vibration which animates it, a more profound, internal repetition within the singular… repetition interiorizes and thereby reverses itself’ (Deleuze 2014, 1). In this way, the grand events which define and circumscribe the lives of outsiders are broken-down and reintegrated into convent life through the repetitive rituals, routines, and habits which commemorate the triumphs and challenges of the human soul. Birth and death retain their potent symbolic value but this power is mastered and channelled into the construction of individual narratives of the soul. The form of the films themselves reflects these configurations, blending together both the drama of the time-marking event and the repetitive rhythm of costumbre. This is particularly evident in Teresa de Jesús which, as a conventional TV series, ends each episode with the end of one chapter in Teresa’s life and begins with another, every week the saint is reincarnated in another place, in another role, a continuous cycle of small births and deaths. Indeed, there are so many versions of the saint’s life on screen, and they are repeated with such frequency, three explicitly marking centenaries, that these productions mark a cycle in themselves.

The shared challenge of convent time, and of retelling a narrative like Teresa’s, is to perpetually resuscitate the real significance of these regulated customs which are always at risk of becoming somnambulistic refrains. Attention is often drawn to this challenge in Molina’s series, demonstrating an awareness of the failures of earlier
retellings, particularly under Franco. In the final episode of *Teresa de Jesús* Teresa’s last advice to her sisters at Valladolid is ‘no hagan cosas solo por costumbre, sino haciendo actos heroicos’. This is primarily an exhortation to take advantage of the convent’s reconfiguration of the horizontal axis as a springboard to higher planes, or as Deleuze describes, to

Take an uncovered or bare repetition (repetition of the Same) such as an obsessional ceremony or a schizophrenic stereotype: the mechanical element in the repetition, the element of action apparently repeated, serves as a cover for a more profound repetition, which is played in another dimension, a secret verticality in which the roles and masks are furnished by the death instinct. (Deleuze 2014, 17–18)

However, Teresa says this with an awareness that her epic journey is coming to an end and will soon be a subject of commemoration itself, a commemoration constituted by the very retelling of her story in which these words are uttered.

These retellings of the story of Teresa are aware of their own role in commemorating her myth and of their position in a long history of different versions of her story (Molina’s and Dorado’s productions were explicitly intended to mark the 400th anniversary of her death and 500th anniversary of her birth respectively). This is especially true in the representation of the Transverberation, an event which marked the saint’s life profoundly and has echoed through time and across cultures in art, sculpture, literature, opera, and film. There is a particularly stark contrast between the more recent interpretations and de Orduña’s Transverberation, a passionless affair which illustrates aptly how the ‘mechanical element in the repetition’ can become detached from the dynamism driving the original event, robbed of the momentum with creates a Fold in experience. The scene of the Transverberation in the 1962 film takes pains to avoid any of the subversive implications and sexual connotations of Teresa’s original description. The
references to penetration used to describe the experience in *Vida* are replaced with a plea to be allowed to enter the Kingdom followed by the final lines of Teresa’s poem *Vuestra Soy*, a move which reduces the semantic excess of the experience to one monolithic declaration of the saint’s orthodox divinity. De Orduña compounds this effect by locating the event, medium long shot, in the highly institutionalised environment of the Cathedral.

In contrast, Molina and Loriga work to restore dynamism to the event, depicting it as one removed from time and place but simultaneously layering the scene with cultural connotations. Even Molina’s stripped down mise-en-scène and stark chiaroscuro vibrates with cultural and historical significance. The use of Teresa’s own words to recount the experience seems like a direct response to de Orduña’s version, a recuperation of previously obfuscated sensations. Loriga’s use of arrows penetrating the saint’s ribs doubly reinforces the idea of penetration and invites comparison between Teresa’s interior mystical experience and the more visually recognisable martyrdom of St Sebastian. This intertextuality forecloses on an ahistorical reading of the event by casting the moment into a continuum of accelerated cultural evolution, in a way re-institutionalizing it by making it most clearly intelligible to viewers familiar with this theological and cultural framework. Dorado’s Transverberation undoes this to some extent by stripping the scene down, omitting any explanatory voiceover or computer-generated special effects. Teresa experiences the Transverberation alone in her cell, while the Priora is outside the door complaining about her refusal to eat – a situation reminiscent of a teenager locking themselves in a room. This juxtaposition neatly ties together the mystical and material on one plane of universal experience, displacing the carnal sensuality of Bernini’s Transverberation with the day-to-day banality of hunger that speaks to a much wider audience.
While all three recent versions detach the Transverberation from its historical context to some extent, Loriga and Molina do so by staging the event against an empty backdrop of reflective gold and plain black respectively. These blank canvases are in contrast to, but also reflected in, the immutable Spanish landscape against which the epic narratives of the Golden Age, the invisible epiphanies of the mystic, and the contemporary viewers’ experience all take place. The opening shot of Fundaciones (the fifth episode of Molina’s series) depicts Spain as a tabula rasa just as Teresa sets out from Avila to found new convents, an act of construction which will effectively inscribe her mystic experience on the landscape. There are some similar shots of barren desert in the foundation scenes of Teresa, el cuerpo de Cristo. However, the emptiness of the tabula rasa does not speak to this particularly mystical brand of exile which embraces and gives new life to the relics of the past. As de Certeau reminds us: ‘[t]he mystics do not reject
the ruins that surround them. They remain there. They go there’ (de Certeau 1995, 25).

The contrast between these images raises the question of how these films engage with the Spanish landscape as an ‘any-space-whatever’ which Deleuze defines as

Not an abstract universal, in all times, in all places. It is a perfectly singular space, which has merely lost its homogeneity, that is, the principle of its metric relations or the connection of its own parts, so that the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways. It is a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible. (Deleuze 2004, 109)

The disarticulation of place into any-space-whatever dismantles the stability, the habitability, of home into an incoherent sequence of fragmented, undefined space but this is a property of space particularly relevant to the mystical experience. Mircea Eliade describes religious man’s experience of space as

Not homogenous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it; some parts of space are qualitatively different from others. … For religious man this spatial non-homogeneity finds expression in the experience of an opposition between space that is sacred – the only real and real-ly existing space – and all other space, the formless expanse surrounding it. (Eliade 1959, 20)

It is this space detached from the authority of origins which allows for the continual challenge to and thereby constitution of identity, propelling its inhabitants into a perpetual process of ‘becoming’. Loriga’s interiors constantly lose their integrity in this way, Teresa’s family home presented as a series of spaces, overlapping, and yet disconnected. As Teresa moves through these spaces the process of her becoming is accelerated: in the garden she is the naïve and complacent object of sexual desire, in the study a philosopher, and in front of the fire, she becomes a resolute nun. Similarly, the walls of her cell at La Encarnación, so realistically represented at first, become disarticulated, falling away to
reveal unearthly tableau as Christ appears lying in his tomb, and as Mary Magdalen and the virgin Mary come to tend to him. The real and unreal fold into each other.

Molina’s *Teresa de Jesús* has a more difficult relationship with the any-space-whatever. Insisting on lingering, gratuitous postcard shots of the ornate beauty of Toledo and Seville, the series remains reluctant to pass from:

one place to the other, from physical space to spiritual space which restores a physics (or a metaphysics) to us. The first space is cell-like and closed, but the second is not different, it is the same in so far as it has merely discovered the spiritual opening which overcomes all its formal obligations and material constraints by a theoretical or practical evasion… (Deleuze 2004, 117)

The audience’s experience of these spaces remains one dimensional, in contrast to the mystical experience which opens up the extremities of place to allow for the free flow of communication between matter and soul. Even the exceptions to this exaggerated ‘placedness’ depict the mystical journey as one undertaken by the saint but off limits to the audience. Molina’s Transverberation described above, evokes the any-space-whatever through its empty, black background. However, the stunned Guiomar de Ulloa (Magüí Mira), the central witness to the scene, who holds the saint throughout, anchors the viewing experience in the ‘real’ world. The only scene in which the series takes us to another dimension is in Teresa’s vision of hell, a dark claustrophobic tunnel where she must crawl through filth and sludge. This unreal hellscape is not folded into the landscape of the real but clearly assigned to a separate space, the passage to and from that space restricted to the saint. Throughout, the spatial focus of Molina’s series remains on the historical space of Teresa’s convents and the potential for negotiation of the homespace that it offers her contemporary viewers.
Trece pobrecitas, cualquier rincón les basta: Redefining homespace with Teresa de Jesús

In her guide to the contemplative life, *Camino de perfección*, Teresa encourages her sisters to emulate Christ ‘que no tuvo casa, sino en el portal de Belén adonde nació, y la cruz adonde murió’ (Teresa de Jesús 2015, 15). In doing so, she empties ‘home’ of its associations with origins, identity, and feminine vocation, calling for the development of new modes of habitation founded in the rejection of traditional understandings of home and domesticity, particularly insofar as they are coded as female. The saint’s story is fundamentally rooted in this departure from the confines of domestic space, a shift which challenges the home as a universal constant of human experience and positions Teresa’s interior castle as a new placeless space ‘where exiled subjects can move constructively without collapsing their memories and selves inside the cell of static identity’ (Carrión 2009, 153), this space by necessity being ‘literally foreign to the place they once knew as home’ (Carrión 2009, 153). Teresa does not construct a home as a place to live out a fantasy of wholeness and certitude, instead she erects physical enclosures to act as an anchor rooting these journeys of exploration into such terrains, the fixed point on the axis of history which facilitates the ascension into the axis of the divine.

This sense of disconnection is intensified by the texts’ depiction of 16th-century Spain as a highly regulated world, strictly divided into male and female spaces. In the opening episode of *Teresa de Jesús* the men sit around the kitchen dining table, while the women crouch about the open fire. The contrast between the limited space on offer for women and the vast terrains available to men is intensified as Teresa’s brothers share their plans to travel to the new world. Loriga’s focuses more narrowly on the ecclesiastic world where male space coincides more precisely with spaces of power, particularly the courtroom and the Inquisition torture chambers. This impression of a world divided along
lines of gender and power is established in the opening sequence where the torturers, soldiers, judges, and agents of the Inquisition are all men in contrast to the highly feminised depiction of their victims, the helpless, long-haired martyrs. Dorados’ *Teresa* similarly sets up a parallel between the bullying behaviour of the boys at Teresa’s school and that of the Inquisitor’s in Teresa’s Avila four hundred years earlier. However, Alison Weber reminds us that

> although political and ecclesiastical polities in early modern Spain were indeed constructed in the masculine spaces of the court, episcopal palace and Inquisitorial chamber… we should explore other metaphors to account for how power and agency sometimes elide spatial categorization and migrate between spaces and subjectivities. (Weber 2007, 51)

Both Loriga and Molina are alert to the possibilities of such metaphors, showcasing in particular the agency allowed to religious women. Molina also accentuates the liberating potential of female controlled space by establishing early on a striking comparison between Juana, the nun (María Massip) and Teresa’s married sister, María, (Lina Canalejas) which she uses to illustrate the differences between domestic and conventual life. While visiting Teresa’s uncle, Juana is confined to the space of the hearth but her actions go largely unnoticed and she gains some measure of freedom from the invisibility her nun’s habit affords her. The married woman however, is constantly subjected to menacing glares from her husband and submits unquestioningly to his arbitrary will. The subordination of women to their husbands is reiterated again at the family home in Castellanos de la Cañada. When María insists that Teresa stay in her house until Spring, Teresa diligently reminds her that ‘la casa es de tu marido, María’. Nevertheless, the departure of the men from the house serves as the cue for a renegotiation of domestic space and Teresa is allowed to stay. This distinction remains evident in *Teresa, el cuerpo de Cristo* where Loriga frames Teresa’s decision to enter the
convent as an escape from domestic space where she exists as an object of sexual desire and as a badge of the family’s honour, one which only has value in so far as it remains untarnished. This is in sharp contrast to the role of the prioress at La Encarnación (Geraldine Chaplin), a formidable force willing to go head to head with Jesuits and the Inquisition itself - but only from the sanctuary of her convent.

The idea of homosocial space as sanctuary can be seen to be developed in both Molina and Loriga’s productions. Both identify the cloister of the widow Guiomar de Ulloa’s (Magüi Mira/Leonor Watling) mansion as a precursor to the homosocial utopia which Teresa hopes to realise in her convents. Loriga depicts Guiomar’s utopian, husband-free courtyard, as a true home where like minds can share radical ideas and be heard regardless of status or gender. However, he also makes clear that such freedom is limited and dependent on great wealth. In Molina’s TV series Teresa’s visits to this courtyard bookend the series, appearing in the second and penultimate episodes, marking the beginning and end of her spiritual journey. Molina uses the scene of Teresa’s final return to Guiomar’s house to address the role memory and place in the construction of identity. The spectral repetition of Teresa’s joyful memories of the house are replayed, echoing in voiceover over the images of the now empty corridors and courtyards. Teresa admits she had not visited her old friend sooner out of cowardice: ‘sabía que nada como los muros de esta casa tan querida para mí podía traer a mi alma tal dolor, la imagen de mi derrota’. The house which originally suggested the utopian potential of Teresa’s convent projects, is now a painful reminder of what she has failed to achieve. It also marks the point of departure for Teresa’s last tour of Spain, as she returns to many of the convents she has founded only to find them ravaged by internal disputes and political controversies.

The return to this particular house highlights the underlying narrative structure of
Molina’s series: the hopeful imagining of Teresa’s new convents in the early episodes, the epic journey undertaken to construct them which dominates most of the series and then, in the final two episodes, the painful realization that the fight to preserve the integrity of her convent space will never be conclusively won. The agonizing gap between the dream of a self-sufficient homosocial utopia and the reality of physical buildings and fragile communities which require constant upkeep, management, and renegotiation points to the crisis at the centre of all attempts to construct places in which to be at home, a crisis often elided in narratives of foundation. The importance of such acts of construction is underlined in Heidegger’s essay *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*, where he demonstrates how the three terms of the title are interlinked in a single indissoluble entity, the process of building a home and dwelling in it forming the cornerstone of subjectivity and the foundation of all productive agency. However, he excludes the work of preservation from this equation, relegating preservers to a supporting role in the lives of those empowered to construct. The family home and the women who, through their domestic labour, underpin its human value as a dwelling become the foundation for male ventures, the fixed centre of safety and identity around which they can build a grounded subjectivity. The women themselves are consigned to a single cell of identity based on domestic service to men, children and the sick rather than through any place or project of their own. The structure of the traditional family home does not allow women to benefit from its mooring properties. Their confinement within the home serves only to edify the homespace itself, not the reverse. As Elizabeth Grosz has pointed out:

> The containment of women within a dwelling that they did not build, nor was even built for them, can only amount to a homelessness within the very home itself: it becomes a space of duty of endless and infinitely repeatable chores that have no social value or recognition, the space of affirmation and replenishment of others at the expense and erasure of the self. (Grosz 1995, 122)
The work of preservation becomes a fundamental brick in the wall of the terminal enclosure experienced by women working in the home, one which definitively blocks access to higher teleologies. This confinement to immanence is a central concern of second wave feminism, as Simone de Beauvoir clarifies with a spatial metaphor reminiscent of the Carmellite spiritual map:

The clean becomes soiled, the soiled is made clean, over and over, day after day. The housewife wears herself out marking time: she makes nothing simply perpetuates the present… [T]he years no longer rise up toward heaven, they lie spread out ahead, gray and identical. (Beauvoir 1997, 470)

Even while acknowledging that the maintenance of built environments, the domestic labour traditionally performed by women, is itself a form of construction, Heidegger takes pains to reiterate that ‘building in the sense of preserving and nurturing is not making anything’ (Heidegger 2011, 147) and hence not a subjectivity generating activity. In doing so, he substantiates the polarizing identification of domestic work with immanence and of building with transcendence, while also excluding those engaged in the work of maintenance and preservation from subjectivity. It is this exclusion which haunts Teresa’s convent spaces and threatens to undermine the goals of female homosocial space.

Molina’s Teresa is keenly aware of the futile circles of domestic labour in which lay women are trapped but Carmen Martín Gaite’s script, very much a product of second wave feminism, identifies the root of the problem not as the work itself but its gendered nature. In the fourth episode, Teresa frames her choice to become a nun and her struggle to define a new convent space for religious women as an escape from these inevitable cycles of repetition:

La vida de la mujer casada solo es sometimiento al varón, al
ambiente, a la costumbre. Los embarazos se suceden hasta morir de parto o agotamiento. Ese fue el destino de mi madre, y será el destino de mi hermana María, el de Juanita, y el de tantas… Dios me hizo la merced de escogerme para sí y me libró de estar sujeta a un hombre que me hubiera acabado la vida y quizá también el alma.

This is clearly not the voice of the saint, but that of a new generation of Spanish women considering the challenges of home, domestic space, work, and autonomy through the prism of convent space. The saint as a reclaimed cultural figure can be reinscribed within an alternative framework of interior/exterior drawn from Deleuze’s definition of an outside which is not the exterior but rather the liminal space between inside and outside, a space that can be regarded as a frontier. This is the space Teresa must occupy in order to access ‘the dynamism that lies in-between two terms without belonging to either of them, endowed with the double power to both shake off whatever root it may have and, no less important, release itself from any teleology whatsoever’ (Symons 2006, IV.1) – the dynamism which facilitates becoming. Considered within this framework rather than the traditional confinement of women to domestic work, Teresa’s oft quoted affirmation that ‘entre los pucheros anda el Señor, ayudándoos en lo interior y exterior’ (Teresa de Jesús 1977, 53) can be read not as a conservative approval of women’s domestic work but a radical incitement to renegotiate the possibilities of enclosed life.

However, even in homosocial space, this work must be done and where it is not assigned according to gender, it will be assigned according to class. Molina’s Teresa is positing ‘spaces of freedom, which . . . inevitably mask someone else's servitude’ (Robbins 1993, 10). The challenge is to avoid perpetually shifting the work of maintenance onto others and find new approaches towards domestic labour. This challenge is taken on in *Teresa, el cuerpo de Cristo* where Loriga’s depiction of domesticity builds on and challenges this notion of home as a space inevitably rooted in
the necessary exploitation of others, revealing an interesting shift in political priorities which uncovers new fissures in the homosocial utopia of the convent. As a lady from a respectable family, Teresa’s attempts to help with domestic chores are rejected by the lower class sisters.

Teresa: *Aquí somos todas iguales.*  
Juana: *Aquí no, eso es allá arriba... La cocina no es lugar para una doña.*

Juana does not make explicit whether the ‘allá arriba’ she is referring to is the communal cloister upstairs or God’s kingdom itself, but does make clear that both spaces are equally out of bounds to her. However, this worthy message is somewhat undermined by Teresa’s suspiciously clean hands and the sheer impossibility of her making any real contribution to the work while wearing white satin. Again, attitudes towards the work of preservation in the film are voiced from a contemporary and slightly naïve perspective. In conversation with Paz Vega and Cayetana Guillén Cuervo on TVE’s *Versión Española*, Ray Loriga describes Teresa’s first convent at La Encarnación as ‘una reproducción idéntica de todos los males de la sociedad … existe la corrupción, la opresión, el abuso, la vanidad, el estatus, las clases’ and contrasts it with the saint’s vision of religious enclosure, which he sees as ‘*casi maoísta*, de los conventos que pasa por el propio uniforme por la igualarla en la vestimenta toda esa, la comida, unir todas en la misma fila, todos soldados de Dios…’ (Piñuela Martín 2011). Loriga’s militaristic understanding of Teresa’s convents foregrounds the revolutionary aspect of her work but sidelines the subtlety with which she balanced the spiritual and material.

Despite paying lip service to the dignity of domestic work and the importance of its fair division, ultimately these productions privilege acts of construction over preservation. No sooner has the show established the basics of domestic life at San José
than Molina’s series switches its attention to the foundations. The next episode, *Fundaciones*, draws attention to the practicalities of convent construction at which Teresa was adept. Given the gargantuan task of founding a convent in Medina del Campo against the wishes of the local Augustinians she and her sisters must work through the night to mark out the space as a convent before the suspicions of the Augustinians are aroused at dawn. While the nuns climb ladders and break through walls, the men stand around looking useless. This scene is the first to highlight the nuns’ role as constructors of their own space and the importance of this role to their spiritual life and self-actualization.

What these films do successfully draw attention to is the need to formulate new modes of construction to mark out the space of enclosure as qualitatively different to the space around it. In these radical projects of construction ‘home does not preexist: it [is] necessary to draw a circle around that uncertain and fragile centre, to organize a limited space. Many, very diverse, components have a part in this, landmarks and marks of all kinds’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2014, 311). Deleuze is clear that ‘sonorous or vocal components’ are vital in this construction, a deterritorialized home space requires ‘a wall of sound, or at least a wall with some sonic bricks in it’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2014, 311). Deleuze makes this clear using the example of a child humming as they study and ‘a housewife sing[ing] to herself, or listen[ing] to the radio, as she marshals the antichaos forces of her work’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2014, 311). This is a form of building available to all groups in society, and can be used to rearticulate domestic space.

The importance of these ‘sonic bricks’ in the construction of religious enclosure is foregrounded in the films under discussion and even in de Orduña’s 1961 film. However, in his *Teresa de Jesús*, the wall of sound does not mark out a space for enclosed women to live and grow but rather marks their enclosure as part of a fixed national place. In the final sequence, a humble muleteer who has become a devotee of Teresa, is distraught at
her death and forces his way into the room where she is dying despite the objections of
the nuns, one of whom shouts ‘¡Salid de aquí, que es clausura!’ The priest overrules this
objection, and thereby the sovereignty of female homosocial space, allowing the man to
enter. Convinced of Teresa’s sanctity, the muleteer leaves the room and goes to ring the
convent bells. The image of the ringing bells is superimposed over images of her other
foundation sites around Spain, reinforcing the muleteers declaration of Teresa as ‘santa de
Avila, ¡Santa de España!’, extending the space of the convent outwards over the entire
nation, but also assimilating the convent into the nation.

The importance of bell-ringing in the construction of milieu is also striking in the
final sequence of Teresa, el cuerpo de Cristo as the nuns enter their new home. Like in de
Orduña’s film, the bell resounds not only throughout the convent but beyond, invading
the churches, courts, and high offices of the city. However, instead of assimilating the
space to that of the nation, the bells here provide the new order with a real coherence and
collective force that distinguishes the convent from the space of the state, a distinction
compounded in the penultimate image of the nuns closing the convent doors to the
soldiers gathered outside. The ringing of bells as a central part of home building is still
more explicit in Molina’s Teresa de Jesús where the new order is often forced to establish
their convents overnight to avoid resistance from the locals. At dawn, when the surprised
townspeople around one foundation ask ‘¿han puesto una iglesia aquí?’; the confused
notary can only respond with resignation: ‘¿No han oído la campana?’ This dynamic is
more subtly reflected in the diegetic chanting and hymn singing often used by Molina as
the first indicator of a convent setting and also as a signal that Teresa has momentarily
warded off evil forces. The nuns’ chanting reflects collective unity and harmony among
the community. Perhaps the most striking example appears in the scene of Teresa’s return
to La Encarnación where she is to be forcefully appointed as prioress by the Church. The
unreformed Carmelite nuns immediately rebel against the decision leading to a riot in the chapel. Order is only restored when Teresa’s old friend Juana begins singing loudly and refuses to stop until everyone has joined in.

As we have seen, Teresa’s acts of construction involve more than physical building. Her production of space enlists sonorous as well as spatial devices to lay claim to territories and compose specific milieu within which the mystic subject can be at home. Teresa appropriates the structures of static religion, the bells, the chants, the altars, and inscribes upon them her dynamic mysticism, a vital, mobile and nomadic force which ‘occupies territory only because it depends on the raw aesthetic and territorializing factor as its necessary condition’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2014, 321), as the infrastructure essential for its survival and dissemination. It is this ‘raw aesthetic and territorializing factor’, buttressed by the place-making apparatuses of tradition, habit, and routine, which becomes the point of contact between the mystical and the institutional. These institutional structures organize ‘the functions of the milieu into occupations and bind the forces of chaos in rites and religions, which are forces of the earth’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2014, 322). However, the tension between static form and dynamic energy causes ‘territorializing marks [to] simultaneously develop into motifs and counterpoints, and reorganize functions and regroup forces’. (Deleuze and Guattari 2014, 322 italics in original). The space becomes alive, defying any restriction to the binaries of construction/preservation, inside/outside, splintering into multiple realities and deploying to new planes of experience. As Deleuze reminds us, through these subtle readjustments in function and force, ‘the territory already unleashes something that will surpass it’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2014, 322).

This ‘something’ could be the element which, for Bergson, makes the mystic territory ‘qualitatively different from those associated with fabulation’ (Bogue 2006, 208),
i.e., from closed societies organized according to the myth-making function of static religion. It is this surplus energy which propels the fabric of enclosure as it deploys onto the plane of the virtual, ‘a vector map of zones of ongoing constructive, generative activity, each zone serving at most as a pilot in an open-ended movement beyond any pre-constructed map’ (Bogue 2006, 25). In its virtual manifestation, enclosure performs its real work, becoming a mobile, fractured architecture which evades the demands of any signifying, subjectifying or representational regime which would ‘bind thought to unity or the One’ (Grosz 2001, 63). This last section will address how both intra- and extratextual attempts to enforce such regimes upon the convent walls are ultimately defeated by the complex and versatile material texture of the virtual. Teresa’s mystically inscribed convent walls reject the attempts of outsiders within and without the texts to project their agendas or reflect their privileged subjectivities onto the contours of enclosure.

The virtual here is not a platonic garden containing an idealized version of enclosure which can only be poorly imitated in the actual, rather it is the site of innovative and constructive thinking where multiple new possibilities for enclosure are generated. The shift between the actual and the virtual is not a swift flight but a jarring, stuttering jolt marked by profound discomfort and entailing the abandonment of any conventional notion of home. This generation of new formulations of space necessitates a violent ‘wrenching of concepts away from their usual configurations, outside the systems in which they have a home, and outside the structures of recognition that constrain thought to the already known’ (Grosz 2001, 60).

The irreducible complexity of this escape to the ‘outside’ is emphasised by the fact that Teresa’s homelessness takes place mostly within the home. From the beginning of Molina’s Teresa de Jesús it is clear that her body does not fit in either the domestic or convent house. Struggling with stairs, clinging to windows and doors, lying diagonally,
fully dressed across the bed neither fully asleep nor awake, she does not fit into either version of home but exists in the liminal space between, profoundly disturbing any dichotomy between a homely and welcoming interior and a threatening, alien exterior. This liminality is also foregrounded in Loriga’s film. In the convent of La Encarnación Teresa lingers on stairways, unwelcome downstairs, uncomfortable upstairs, and hovers in doorframes watching the other nuns. More subtly, her role as an insidious disruptor of civic space is hinted at in the longshot of her walking along the walls of Avila. Following its curves, but definitively outside, her walking generates a new map without regard for municipal ordnances. The radical possibilities of such a new map are illustrated in Doña Guiomar’s courtyard which she is travelling to, another enclosed space which reflects and challenges the enclosure of the city and of the convent. This disregard for the limits of metropolitan space is reiterated on her return to the town as she creeps stealthily through the back alleys of Avila to collect banned books, smuggled past the walls in bags of grain.

Teresa’s spatial tactics in these scenes create tension through the manipulation of the limits of an outside which is not the exterior but rather the liminal space between inside and outside, a space that can be regarded as a frontier.

The outside is not a fixed limit but moving matter animated by peristaltic movements, folds and foldings that altogether make up an inside: they are not something other than the outside, but precisely the inside of an outside. (Deleuze 1988, 96–97)

This is the space Teresa must occupy in order to access the dynamism which defies the highly regulated stasis of institutionalised religion in order to facilitate becoming. These films hint at the extent to which ‘the effects of depth, of interiority, of domesticity and privacy [can] be generated by the billowing convolutions and contortions of an outside, a skin[]’ (Grosz 2001, 65). Doña Guiomar’s utopian courtyard beyond the walls, and Teresa’s subversive activities within them, both push against the city limits, causing the
convolutions and contortions which in turn inflect the modes of interiority, domesticity, and privacy which characterize these enclosures. In these films the essence of enclosed space is not located at its centre but at its peripheries and hence, finding a home in enclosed space also entails reimagining the very notion of ‘being at home’. Both Molina and Loriga build on this liminal positioning, structuring their depictions of Teresa around a series of conventional binary juxtapositions with the saint as the representative of a third, unknown trajectory, tangentially pushing into the unknown. In this sense, characterization in these films works as a hall of mirrors. This technique plays with the subjectifying tools used by the Church to construct the members of its congregation as saints and sinners.

In a space emptied of mirrors and reflective surfaces, the convent dwellers are programmed to seek out images of themselves in the confession box or to make of themselves a reflection of saints. Instead of revealing the saint directly to the audience, we catch glimpses of her as she is reflected in those around her. Molina uses the juxtaposition of Juana, the nun and María, the wife to address the limited paths open to women, positioning Teresa as an alternative to both. Juana and María’s dialogue concerning the saint’s unsuitability to either the religious or domestic life is framed in a sharply contrasting, mirror-like diptych, the married woman, busy in some mundane task and the nun wistfully gazing into the fire with empty hands. Juana’s concerns that Teresa is not suited to convent life are met with María’s assurance that domesticity would not fulfil her either: ‘ella vuela más alta, es distinta’. This difference is not made explicit, all that is clear is that she is not reflected as a subject in either of these women. The saint becomes a subject without substance, an illusion, a trick of the light. However, the saint as an outside force, inflecting and subverting the order of the interior is reflected in María’s increasing awareness of her own subjection and later in Juana’s endurance and fortitude in the face of the chaos of the reformation. Loriga uses a similar effect in his
film where Doña Guiomar and Juana represent opposite ends of the social spectrum, the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’, highlighting Teresa’s extreme asceticism, an ideology of having nothing but God, as an escape from the patriarchal system of inequalities. Similarly to Molina’s Teresa, this potential is not apparent in the saint herself but in her effect on Doña Guiomar and Juana as they move closer to becoming equals.

Dorado’s film uses the trope of the mirror more explicitly to highlight contrasts and mark out similarities between characters. He offers another powerful triptych as a way of conveying the exceptionality of the saint. The agent of the Inquisition, Salazar, achieves his first successful conviction when he figures out how the alumbrada under investigation could have appeared to glow and levitate. He demonstrates the trick for his superiors, positioning two mirrors to catch the sun’s rays and standing on a stool which is invisible in the reflection. In the next scene the hoax is contrasted with Teresa’s authentic experience of the Transverberation, which we see from all angles (the camera circles the saint as if verifying for us that there is no trickery at play here) and then, last of all, reflected in a mirror. Closing off

Figure 4 Three reflections in Jorge Dorado's Teresa (2015)
the triptych, the sequence flashes forward to 2015 where the contemporary Teresa looks up from reading about the Transverberation to catch her own reflection in a mirror. Her reflection is far away and makes her uncomfortable. The sequence reasserts the exeptionality of the saint and the possibilities of her space. The contemporary Teresa emphatically cannot see herself reflected in the saint but despite her discomfort, the overlapping of times and places restores to the contemporary Spanish space, in which both she and the audience live, some of the legends and shadows that define ‘the cave of the home’ (de Certeau 1984, 106).

Conclusion

As Teresa comes into sight through these different reflections we are reminded of the experience she describes in Vida:

Estando una vez en las Horas con todas, de presto se recogió mi alma, y parecióme ser como un espejo claro toda, sin haber espaldas ni lados ni alto ni bajo que no estuviese toda clara, y en el centro de ella se me representó Cristo nuestro Señor, como le suelo ver. (Teresa de Jesús 2007, 365)

Although this scene is not depicted in either the films or the TV series, the experience highlights a key aspect of identity construction within mystic enclosure. The very concept of subjectivity rests upon the scaffolding of social and biological identities which can only be perceived, and hence actualized, through the kind of social relations which convent space denies. This is also a condition immanent in the virtual, which Deleuze describes as ‘an impersonal and pre-individual field’ (Deleuze 2009, 283), and one essential to becoming.
Becoming is beyond subjectivity: beyond any self/other relational. There is through the processuality of ‘becoming’ and specifically becoming-woman, an autonomous, autopoietic level of existence through which life is lived and experienced at a molecular level, outside the exigencies of self to other relations, a purely viral and genetic evolution of life, in a truly biological or germinal sense: mind and body becoming with the world, in true autopoiesis. (Kennedy 2002, 149)

In Teresa’s vision all these identities disappear, and Christ alone in reflected in the glistening mirror of her soul, stretched out and unfolded. The spiritual self-annihilation of the Carmelites is only an annihilation of socially constructed identities which allows for the revelation of the true haecceity of the spirit.

The singularity of this reflection is in stark contrast to the multiple shadows, glimmers and refractions scattered across the screen in *Teresa de Jesús, Teresa, el cuerpo de Cristo*, and *Teresa* as they attempt to forge enclosed subjects that will speak to their contemporary audiences. The pure interiority of enclosure which these films operate around constitutes a ‘problematic deduction [which] puts the unthought into thought, because it takes away all its interiority to excavate an outside in it, an irreducible reverse-side, which consumes its substance’ (Deleuze 1989, 175). These productions ultimately lose some of their meaning to this void in their attempts to force representation on an unknown element. Molina’s series subordinates the spiritual and mystical aspects of the saint’s story to the concrete parallels between her time and that of the audience. Her Teresa alternates between speaking her own words from her writing and a ventriloquism of the concerns of early 1980s Spain. Loriga’s exploitation of the saint’s ‘star quality’, reinforced with the casting of Paz Vega, opens up another void within the space of the convent, which in *Teresa, el cuerpo de Cristo* runs the risk of becoming a very well decorated stage on which sainthood is performed. Dorado takes an earthier approach to sainthood but in doing so reduces a potent cultural figure to another mere link in the chain
of reproductive futurity that allows for the convent to be taken over by these forces.

While the identities attained through convent space are not politically useful, the privileging of Teresa as a social and historical subject is cinematically useful. As a privileged subject she draws attention to the role of the speaker, but as the fabric of the virtual convent is stretched, folded and pulled apart, her voice becomes redirected. Her call to the nuns to occupy a space of their own reverberates through the convent walls to be projected into the audience, becoming an essential effect of these films. As Goddard reminds us, cinematic mysticism:

would remain just another mythic story if it did not lead back out of the cinema into a re-spiritualization of life itself, through the transmission of this experience via the crystalline regime of signs to the spectator, who can then be directly affected by the spiritual experience that this new technology of the virtual facilitates. (Goddard 2002, 62)

This chapter has attempted to define the nature of this affect. While these films cannot be said to fully achieve ‘a re-spiritualization of life itself”, they all allow for a renewed access to convent space as a site through which to think about alternative ways of occupying space and finding a home within it, an access that was cut off during the Francoist regime. These engagements with the figure of Teresa de Jesús restore the convent as a culturally valued space, reaffirming its potential to facilitate connections between the present and past, the material and mystical, the immanent and the transcendent.

However, while these recuperations of convent space are useful for ordinary Spaniards, they achieve legitimacy through Teresa’s authority as a saint and Doctor of the Church. Paradoxically, while the ineffable experience of the mystic makes convent space unassimilable to any overarching power structure, it is Teresa’s brand of mysticism that imbues the convent with authority in rethinking the value of women’s enclosed space.
This paradox problematizes the position of enclosed women who do not fit into accepted understandings of saintliness. These problematic, often gendered, understandings of saintliness and their relationship to space will be addressed in the next chapter.
Chapter 2
Quiero ser santa:
The Gendered Aesthetics of Sacred Space in Secular Spain

It was never, could never be, any surprise to me that saints should be found in the misery and sorrow and suffering of Harlem, in the leper-colonies like Father Damian's Molokai, in the slums of John Bosco's Turin, on the roads of Umbria in the time of St. Francis, or in the hidden Cistercian abbeys of the twelfth century, or in the Grande Chartreuse, or the Thebaid, Jerome's cave (with the lion keeping guard over his library) or Simon's pillar. All this was obvious. These things were strong and mighty reactions in ages and situations that called for spectacular heroism. What astonished me altogether was the appearance of a saint in the midst of all the stuffy, overplush, overdecorated, comfortable ugliness and mediocrity of the bourgeoisie. (Merton 1999, 407)

In his 1948 autobiography, Thomas Merton, the twentieth century mystic and visionary poster boy for the new and reassuringly conciliatory brand of Second Vatican Council Catholicism, pictured a global map of saints as a rough terrain of open space - a public, urban, masculinized, and timeless world. Anointed by their exposure to the wilderness, these saints are warriors and nomads inscribing their ‘spectacular heroism’ onto a bare and receptive landscape to remain there, a narrative repeated time immemorial. Among these, he is surprised to find one saint enclosed within the walls of kitschy bourgeois domesticity, carving out a brand of sainthood embedded in a particular, fleeting historical moment and hemmed in by culturally specific class and gender expectations. Instead of framing the cultural trappings of her middle class upbringing as a stumbling block on her path to God, Merton goes so far as to argue that Saint Thérèse of Lisieux (1873 – 1897) became the twentieth century’s most popular saint precisely by clinging to them, ‘in so far as one could cling to such a thing and be a good Carmelite’ (Merton 1999, 408). Her ‘utterly oversweet art, and [] little candy angels and pastel saints playing with lambs so soft and fuzzy that they literally give people like me the creeps’ (Merton 1999, 408) set the tone for a comfortable spiritual experience with mass appeal, an everyday domestic approach to divinity which is at once in stark contrast, but also foundational to, the mystical, masculine wilderness.
Both the aesthetics of pastel domesticity and of the rugged exterior are used to characterise sainthood in Spain’s cine religioso of the 1950s and 60s, but it is ultimately the wilderness which dominates the Spanish religious imagination of this period and beyond. The very sites which Merton identifies as the ages and situations of spectacular heroism formed the backdrop to Luis Lucía’s _Molokai, la Isla Maldita_ (1959), Luis Buñuel’s _Simón del desierto_ (1965), and Sagitario Films’ abandoned project, _Don Bosco_ (1951). Similarly, José Díaz Morales’ swashbuckling biography of Ignatius Loyola, _El capitán de Loyola_ (1949), moves from the battlefields of the soldier saint’s youth to the isolated cave where he wrote his _Spiritual Exercises_, and finally summarises his achievements with a montage of the Jesuit schools, universities, hospitals, and even martyrs that are his legacy in exotic locations around the world. Luis César Amadori’s _El señoir de la Salle_ (1964) also capitalized on the contrast between the extravagant homes of the French aristocracy and the slums of Reims where the saint founded his schools. Although much less well received both critically and commercially, hagiographic epics continued to be made long after the decline of cine religioso. Miguel Picazo’s gory 1978 hagiography of Juan de Dios, _El hombre que supo amar_, offers the audience a relentless hellscape of rowdy taverns, lunatic asylums, brothels, and massacres which throws the sanctity of its subject into stark relief. Even as recently as 2011, Roland Joffé’s _There be Dragons_ narrates Josemaría Escrivá’s foundation of the Opus Dei against the dramatic backdrop of Madrid in ruins during the Civil War.

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4 Fernando Sanz Ferreruela’s 2008 article, ‘Cuatro hagiografías cinematográficas frustradas en la España nacionalcatólica’, examines three more abandoned projects with a similar theme: an earlier version of Father Damien’s _Molokai_ story (1948-1951), a biopic of San Francisco Javier which was to be titled either _El cruzado de Oriente_ or _Huella en Oriente_ (1951-1952), and _El Padre José_ (1949), a biography of San José de Calasanz. (Ferreruela 2008).

5 At the time of his death in 1984, Luis Lucía, whose ‘películas de curas fueron de los más importantes del género, … aún conservaba … la ilusión de rodar otra más, sobre san Juan de Dios, que pensaba titular _Dar_ (“simplemente _Dar_”), que evidenciera la deserción de quienes, como él, habían desarrollado el género religioso en los años cincuenta, pero se adaptaron luego al cine erótico de consumo’ (Galán 1984).
These films not only demonstrate the dramatic appeal that the combination of masculine saint and spectacular setting holds, but confirm its cinematic versatility, inspiring productions aimed at a broad range of audiences, from popular (Molokai, la Isla Maldita), to highbrow (Simón del desierto), to niche (There be Dragons). The markers which code the main characters as both masculine and saintly (each term reinforcing the other) signify powerfully and consistently across contexts. Analogous constructions of saintly subjects are examined in Kathy Bacon’s study of saintliness, gender, and national identity in the Spanish novel. Emphasising the capacity of discourses around sainthood to reflect and shape broader societal issues of ‘identity, values, and behaviour within a given culture’ (Bacon 2007, 1), Bacon breaks down into its constituent parts the notion of ‘saintly capital’, the accumulation of distinctions through which characters are rendered socially and culturally recognizable as saints (Bacon 2007, 7). In order to facilitate a study that foregrounds cultural understandings of sainthood over theological, she takes as a starting point ‘the dynamics of the saintly situation’ – ‘that situation where a person is labelled a saint and his or her behaviour interpreted within the parameters of saintly performance’ (Kleinberg 1992, 7). Accordingly, this chapter takes as a starting point the ‘ages and situations that called for spectacular heroism’ which for Merton and the filmmakers of the cine religioso were definitive markers of ‘saintly capital’. Building on this, the chapter will examine post-transition attempts to move away from these formulations, to define new ‘saintly situations’ where alternative understandings of saintliness can be performed and read. Specifically, the study will focus on those attempts which take the space of the convent as a locus around which to negotiate gendered appropriations of ‘saintly capital’. In doing so, the study will reveal changes in attitudes to, and manifestations of, female agency.
Although Bacon’s study explores saintliness in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the frameworks she outlines in terms of the capital required to establish recognition as a saint and the broader socio-cultural implications of that capital provide a background to this chapter’s engagements with notions of saintliness in the 1980s. With these frameworks in mind, this chapter will untangle the spatial and aesthetic aspects of the ‘saintly situation’ in the second half of the twentieth century and explore how the problematic gendering of saintliness in visual culture in the decades leading up to the transition to democracy produced a nuanced set of responses in the 1980s. Both the diversity and the shared underlying drives of these responses are manifest in the unusual configurations of convent space in Pedro Almodóvar’s *Entre tinieblas* (1983) and Miguel Picazo’s *Extramuros* (1985) which will be examined later. First, these films and their forerunners in Spanish cinema will be situated in the context of the global trends and attitudes towards gendered spaces of spirituality represented in the writing of Thomas Merton, as well as the discourse around Catholic art in the early 1960s, marking out the conflicts and resonances between Spanish and international visual cultures.

This chapter will identify the different aesthetic influences which define 1980s convent spaces (kitsch, cursilería, the baroque, and camp) and demonstrate the nuanced signifying power they hold in the context of Spanish cinema where the emphasis on masculinity and patriarchal frameworks in representations of sainthood had previously dominated even the narratives of female saints. We have already seen in chapter one how Juan de Orduña’s 1961 film framed the accomplishments of Teresa de Jesús in the context of Spanish imperialism. More strikingly, Rafael Gil’s *Reina santa* (1947), gives the title character, twelfth century queen and saint, Isabel of Aragon (Maruchi Fresno), markedly little screen time, the film focusing instead on the power struggle between her husband and son for the Portuguese throne. Similarly, in José María Elorrieta’s film, *Rosa
de Lima (1961b), the Peruvian saint’s rather low key and uneventful journey to sainthood runs parallel to the arrogant conquistador Don Gil de Cepeda’s (Frank Latimore) journey to the New World and to redemption. Unlike the activities of the male saints discussed above, the projects undertaken by men in these films are strikingly profane. Nevertheless, they gain spiritual validation, guidance, and redemption through the female saint, who inspires them to follow God not through any concerted action of her own, but her sheer saintliness. In these films, the sanctity of both Rosa de Lima and Isabel of Aragon is articulated in terms of traditional femininity and the style of ‘utterly oversweet art’ which gives Merton the creeps: both are beautiful, unfailingly gentle, obedient to their respective husbands and fathers, and associated with roses.

In the semiotic minefield of the twentieth century’s spiritual geography the intense polarization of saints into masculine heroes conquering the wild, and feminine, often infantilised, beauties securely enclosed in idealised sites of containment gave rise to a system of signification which reduced religious women from narrative agents to semantic functions. This trend is exemplified in the figure of Thérèse de Lisieux which lends itself so easily to being folded up into the compact and undemanding role of the ‘Little Flower’, acting as a compass for devotees such as Merton and Jack Kerouac (Maher 2004, 23) to slip in their pocket as a guide for their own spiritual journeys across physical space. She gives these adventurers a sense of direction, not only of origin in a bright, warm and reassuringly familiar home space but of destination and movement towards a divine goal, although domestic origin and divine destination become oddly conflated in the dreamy, pastel kitsch associated with Thérèse. This marked and gendered distinction between introverted, domestic spirituality and wild, mystical adventure also imposes on the enclosed space of feminine sanctity, and by extension, the homosocial utopia of the convent, some of the most restricting structures of heteronormative society, in particular
the confinement of woman in a domestically coded space to act as an anchor for male adventures, a haven of security and guarantor of the journey’s transcendental meaning.

The function of this confined woman resonates with the configurations of space mapped out in Martin Heidegger’s essay, *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* as discussed in Chapter One. For Heidegger, the cornerstone of subjectivity, the foundation of productive agency, and of thought itself is produced through the acts of building a home space and dwelling within it. Such acts of building are celebrated in the *cine religioso* discussed above: de la Salle’s schools, Ignacio Loyola’s foundation of the Jesuits, and the churches, orphanages, and clinics Father Damien builds on Molokai. However, Iris Marion Young has drawn attention to the condition under which men fix and keep hold of their identity in this way: man must not only construct a house and dwell in it but put things in it, and confine there a woman to reflect his identity to him (Young 2001, 258). In her critique of Heidegger’s treatment of preserving activities in *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*, Young (2001) recuperates the elided role of woman in the construction of dwelling places and illuminates her significance as the foundation and safeguard of the stability and identity supposedly inherent in the building itself. Domestic space and the women in it underpin the dwelling as the foundation for male ventures, too often foreclosing on the possibility of these women’s own adventures. However, the importance of their role is amplified in non-secular environments where the enclosed woman represents not just the identity of the adventurer but the certainty of a transcendental truth. In Merton’s mystic world map, the nun in her convent takes the place of the woman in the family home as this fixed centre out of which new pathways open for male adventurers to ascend to privileged subject positions. However, the realignment of the iconography of saintliness in 1980s Spain opens the door to new articulations of the enclosed religious woman, built from the aesthetics of the past.
Aesthetics and the Gendering of Sacred Space: 
*L'art Saint-Sulpice, lo cursì and the baroque*

The domestication, infantilization, and commodification required of religious women to fulfil the role of spiritual safeguard is reflected in the ubiquitous pastel kitsch aesthetic which originated in the area of Paris surrounding the church of Saint-Sulpice in the 1840s and went on to dominate globally as ‘the international style of Catholic church art’ (McDannell 1995, 170). The area’s workshops mass produced a vast array of religious goods but were most famous for cheap plaster statues of religious figures, at first all-white but later hand painted in blue, pink, and yellow (McDannell 1995, 168). By the mid twentieth century *l’art Saint-Sulpice* had come to adorn not only altars and public shrines but family homes across the world. In her essay ‘Christian Kitsch and the Rhetoric of Bad Taste’, Colleen McDannell examines *l’art Saint-Sulpice* and Christian kitsch more generally, demonstrating how the distinction between ‘art’ and ‘kitsch’ was mapped onto the dichotomy between masculinity and femininity, allowing for an aesthetic discourse within the Church which identified this ‘feminine’ religious art as a threat to the masculine values of the faith, critically devaluing its role in spiritual practice. The aesthetic came to prevail particularly in depictions of religious women and attracted...
intense criticism for feminising its male subjects, particularly Jesus, attributing to them a mildness and frivolity at odds with their authoritative role within the Church (McDannell 1995, 178–180). Such criticisms appeared as early as 1863 when a Belgian Catholic congress condemned ‘sensual and spineless representations’ which ‘emasculate piety’ (quoted in McDannell 1995, 167–68), but intensified in the 1950s and 60s with calls for such kitsch art to be replaced with ‘well-made genuine things: things that are simple, manly, solid, chaste, honest, unsentimental, noble, hieratic’ (McDannell 1995, 174).

This criticism was all the more intense because ‘what was at stake was not merely art or kitsch, the mass or devotions to the saints, but whether the church was to be masculine or feminine, a place for men or for women’ (McDannell 1995, 174). In its decorative function, artefacts in the style of l’art Saint-Sulpice tend to accumulate to produce a collective impact, which some felt redefined religious space as ‘a domesticated, feminine space, redolent of either cheaply dressed hussies or powerless old women’ (McDannell 1995, 174). This preconception is reflected in Merton’s description of his jarring encounter with Saint Thérèse ‘in the midst of all the stuffy, overplush, overdecorated, comfortable ugliness and mediocrity of the bourgeoisie’, a description which very much participates in the dismissive discourse around popular religious art and gendered understandings of it, but also reveals an underlying anxiety.

A convert to Catholicism in adulthood, Merton inherits the idea of the saintly little nun confined in a sacred space which has become no less socially constructed and domesticated than any secular space. In keeping with the general dismissal of art in this style, Merton reads these artificially fabricated artefacts as culturally transparent, empty signifiers, pointing only towards the tastelessness of their collectors. As a result, Merton’s map of saints is one which erases from the sacred all traces of the popular, dismissing as mediocre and ugly some of the key orientational markers for devotional practitioners.
without his cultural capital. The educated, upper-middle-class, transcultural Merton cannot recognise popular religious art, and particularly ‘Catholic kitsch’, as a gateway to transcendence for people mired in the immanence of the everyday.

While l’art Saint-Sulpice is highly idealised it is also commonplace and lifelike. Its pink and fleshy saints look like any pretty girl on the street and so leave open a conceptual crack for women (or at least white women) to see reflections of themselves in the dimension of the divine. Catholic critics argued that these ‘realistic details could not create a bond with the divine world because they rooted the viewer too much in the mundane world’ which ‘slipped too easily into a debased human world’ (McDannell 1995, 177). However, it is this proximity to the ordinary which allows marginalised subjects to claim some form of representation on a socially intelligible platform of spiritual aspiration. Of course, while they do hold potential to blur the distinction between immanence and transcendence, the sanitised, mass produced forms of representation on offer through kitsch religious art also threaten to radically reduce and even deform the identities squinting to see themselves reflected in it. In the unexamined attribution of the kitsch aesthetic to spaces of women’s enclosure the complex and volatile signifying potential of these forms is overlooked, eliding its positive potential and sealing up those seeking representation through them in an echo chamber of dead end signifiers which distorts self-image while further aggrandizing the ‘tabula rasa’ of masculine epics.

Both the potential of the aesthetic to allow for the representation of marginalised subjects and the dangers of over identification with it are evidenced in the construction of Thérèse of Lisieux’s saintly persona. The saint was complicit in this construction, signing off letters as ‘toute petite, Thérèse’, composing saccharine poetry in the voice of a child, and participating in convent plays dressed as an angelic Joan of Arc in shining armour. By her own admission, the French saint’s spiritual journey is emphatically not a great
mystic adventure punctuated by heroic deeds, acts which she felt were impossible within the confines of the cloister. She advocated instead the ‘petite voie de l'enfance spirituelle’, a path to God based on love alone rather than action. Owing to this, her cult was initially promoted as a reaction to the situation in Spain during the 1930s by Pope Pius XI who saw the petite voie ‘as a possible ‘third way’ between the rival claims of Marxists and Fascists’ (Burton 2004, 56), an escape from tough politics into Thérèse’s pastoral dream. While this did not have any significant impact on the course of events (other than to exemplify the Church’s political impotence at that moment), the episode poignantly illustrates the attraction of kitsch as a potential universal signifier but also its limited capacity to signify with any kind of authority across cultures.

Although its mass-produced uniformity fed the perception of popular religious art as anodyne, ‘free from local heresy’ (McDannell 1995), and conducive to the transcultural communication of supposedly universal values, its function, significance, and reception inevitably changes across contexts. The influence of the Saint-Sulpice aesthetic in early French cinema has been highlighted by María Magdalena Brotons Capó (2014, 138–39), Richard Abel (1998, 95), and Joseph Marty (1985). Marty has situated the trend in the context of French history (specifically the revolution, the Third Republic, and the separation of Church and State), seeing the aesthetic as being dramatically at odds with this socio-cultural context.

While echoing Merton’s dismissal of the style as mere signs and images distracting from an ill-defined but crucially important ‘real’, Marty marks a clear distinction between *l’art de Saint Sulpice* and the French social reality and popular imagination, positioning it as an alien and reifying force in society.

In Spain however, this distinction is not so clear. The bland aesthetic of *l’art de Saint Sulpice* coincides strikingly with that of the peculiarly Spanish socio-cultural phenomenon, *cursilería*, a thwarted middle class aspiration towards social ascension which originated in the nineteenth century but reverberates in Spanish culture to this day (Valis 2002). The *cursi* aesthetic is similar to kitsch and often the lines between the two (and also camp) are blurred. Nevertheless, Leopoldo Alas Mínguez has attempted to distinguish between them, describing *lo cursi* as ‘blando y empalagoso’, and kitsch as ‘hiriente y deslumbrante’ (Alas Mínguez 1995, 15). Although *l’art de Saint Sulpice* shares some elements with pure kitsch (ie., being mass produced while *lo cursi* is usually homemade schmaltz), Alas Mínguez’ definitions position *l’art de Saint Sulpice* in a clear and close relation to *lo cursi*. Noel Valis’ study *The Culture of Cursilería: Bad Taste, Kitsch, and Class in Modern Spain* (2002) claims for *lo cursi* a rich and enduring social significance, reflecting feelings of cultural inadequacy and class insecurity as well as the tension between nostalgia for a romanticised past and Spain’s long, halting progress into modernity. If *l’art de San Sulpice* ‘négation du corps, du réel, du travail’ positioned it outside patterns of social development in France, its connection with *cursilería* gives it a central role in the making of modern Spain.

Although Valis focuses nearly exclusively on secular *cursilería*, Kathy Bacon has built on this work, exploring the links between *lo cursi* and cultural expressions of spirituality, arguing that Spanish conceptions of saintliness have a structure analogous to *cursilería* (Bacon 2007, 2). The latter a pretension to refinement and the former a
pretension to divinity, both converge around their anxieties concerning appearance, distinction, and authenticity (Bacon 2007, 23). More significantly, the labelling of something as cursi, and thereby the drawing of attention towards those anxieties, recalls Merton’s initial reaction to Therese of Lisieux’s bourgeois kitsch and reproduces the dynamic of the enclosed woman as a buttress for masculine identities.

The accusation of cursilería [] constitutes a strategic assertion of prestige over its object. It denounces an inauthenticity in the other which implicitly constructs the speaker, by contrast, as authentic. … The ‘recognition’ of lo cursi in others is often driven by the need defensively to assert one’s own distinction’ (Bacon 2007, 23–24).

Another unique factor in the reception of the Saint Sulpice style in Spain was that in the Spanish public sphere from the 1930s on, any idea of a peaceful, interior petite voie, was subordinate to the Francoist rhetoric of the crusade and its appropriation of individual spiritual journeys into its militaristic national narrative. This attitude was most explicit in the cine de cruzada of the 1940s, but traces of this genre persist in the later cine religioso and beyond, as elements of the soldier come to define the saint and, as we have seen, backdrops of bellicose chaos often defined the ‘saintly situation’. Even while cursi saintliness finds clear expression in Spanish cinema in the reina santa’s simplistic promotion of peace and Rosa de Lima’s repeated emphasis on love alone, the worth of these values is not presented as self-evident but part of a grander programme of values, united and made worthy under the banner of hispanidad. Johannes Großmann’s definition of hispanidad seems to describe a phenomenon in stark contrast to the small-scale sweetness of cursi saintliness. For Großmann, hispanidad is

a historical, cultural and political style of thought with a clearly defined rhetorical and metaphorical repertoire, based upon the
imagery of ‘Baroque Spain’ and referring to the sense of cultural superiority and religious mission as well as to the close relations between the Spanish nation and the peoples of its former transatlantic empire’ (Großmann 2014, 770)

This baroque style, which was widely emulated in Spanish art, architecture, and cinema emulated during the 1940s and 50s, aimed to recall the glory of Spain’s Golden Age when its imperial and spiritual prowess was at its zenith. However, as Román Gubern points out ‘incluso cuando se intente huir del abigarramiento dulzón o blandengue en nombre de la austeridad castrense, como en la fórmula de Giménez Caballero del español entendido como mitad monje y mitad soldado, no se escapará del efectismo kitsch’ (Gubern 1989, 87). This collapse of the masculine soldier/saint epic into kitsch is clear in films like ¡Harka! (Arévalo 1941), Raza (Sáenz de Heredia 1942), and Balarrasa (Nieves Conde 1951), ostensibly war films but which slide inevitably into sentimentality. Gubern’s example of the Valle de los Caídos highlights the failure of this attempt to appropriate the baroque and the common drives it shares with lo cursi – ultimately both aesthetics are rooted in feelings of insecurity, cultural inadequacy, and pretension. However, this baroque imitation was attached to a political reality and achieved a recognizable prestige by foregrounding its Spanishness and characterising Spanishness as difference. Meanwhile, cursilería was more associated with the shoddy imitation of other national cultures, particularly England and France (Valis 2002, 9). The construction of a baroque saintliness within the larger project of hispanidad claims for itself a greater level of socially intelligible prestige by cementing the distinction between extroverted, masculine forms of spiritual aggression and feminine, domestic spirituality and working to cast the former as authentically Spanish while eliding the positive effects of the latter. During the Francoist regime ‘saintly capital’ came to be accrued around sites of war, suffering, death, and nation building while spaces of women’s enclosure, held together by
the invisible processes of preservation and conservation, are dismissed as kitsch or *cursi*,
drained of their signifying power.

Even the sympathetic Merton is initially disconcerted by Thérèse’s saccharine
kitsch packaging but is relieved and edified to find that it can be stripped away to reveal a
meaning consistent with his world view, which is for him, morally absolute and universal.
However, this stripping down constitutes a (possibly traumatic) break with the past which
does violence to those who seek representation through the semiotic system kitsch
provides. It also forecloses on the possibility of making visible the culturally and socially
specific narratives and identities communicated in the hieroglyphs of kitsch and ensures a
blindly monophonic reading of baroque appropriations. Adventurers in convent space
find themselves plotting a journey in a battle against both the petrified and immovable
layer of *cursilería*, what Merton describes as ‘the thick resilient hide of bourgeois
smugness’ (Merton 1999, 408), in which Spain’s convent spaces became encased in the
popular imagination and also against the naïve idea that social and cultural realities can be
escaped by simply breaking through this layer to a timeless, universal, ‘immortal soul
beneath that surface’ (Merton 1999, 408).

**A Clash of Styles: Redefining Religious Women in 1980s Spain**

While the kitsch, cursi, and baroque styles which characterised the sacred spaces of the
Spanish popular imagination fluctuated in power and popularity over time, all of them
were resuscitated in one way or another in the attempts to renegotiate the space and
spectre of the religious woman in the post-Transition period. Almodóvar’s *Entre tinieblas*
is a striking example of how religious women came to be situated at the intersection of
the diverse styles and genres which had defined the ‘saintly situation’ up to that point.
Paul Julian Smith has described the film as ‘reworking traditional Spanish cinematic genres’, situating it as a response to ‘the three kinds of films sponsored by the victorious Nationalist government after the Civil War … militaristic “cinema of the crusade”, an escapist musical “cinema of folklore”, and a pious and sentimental “cinema of priests”’ (Smith 1994, 39). Alejandro Yarza sees the film as a parody of ‘todo un tipo de cine religioso que tuvo un enorme éxito popular en la España de la posguerra, desde Balarrasa (Nieves Conde 1950) y La hermana San Sulpicio (Lucia 1952) hasta Marcelino, pan y vino’ (Yarza 1999, 37). The contrasting examples of the war epic Balarrasa and the nun musical La hermana San Sulpicio, position Entre tinieblas precisely between the savage landscapes of masculine saintliness and the delightful domesticity in which the religious woman was enclosed – while also identifying the film as part of a particularly Spanish tradition, suggesting a possible resonance with the españolada genre, which will be discussed further in chapter three. Almodóvar himself has cited an eclectic range of influences: the melodramas of Douglas Sirk, the paintings of Zurbarán, and the numerous musicals and light comedies featuring Rocío Dúrcal and Sara Montiel as nuns (Bouza Vidal 1989, 74). The striking diversity of these influences is typical of engagements with this theme in 1980s Spain as popular culture was driven to reanimate and radically re-evaluate the cultural significance of feminine spirituality.

This reappraisal of women’s traditional spirituality reverberates across the cultural production of the 1980s, both in the mainstream and in the countercultural movements of la movida. In 1982 children’s pop group Parchís released Las Rockeras de Santa Teresita, featuring wholesome rock’n’roll nuns in the vein of Rocio Dúrcal. However, the fact that three of the dancing nuns are little boys, along with their bizarre dance moves (repeatedly lifting their habits up to show their legs like the can-can), renders the song deeply disconcerting despite their presumably innocent intentions. More purposefully subversive
was the hit song ‘Quiero ser santa’, jointly written by Alaska y los Pegamoides and Parálisis Permanente, which was first released as a gothic post-punk track in 1982 with an acid house re-release in 1989. The song’s lyrics resuscitate a corporeal and feminised spiritual iconography, rooted in baroque idealisations of the wounded body which contrasts strikingly with the spotlessness of kitsch. The contrast recalls McDannell’s observation that ‘[u]nlike the realistic statues of the baroque period, l’art Saint Sulpice avoided the bloody and pained images of Christ and the martyrs’ (McDannell 1995, 169). Whereas there was ‘almost no decay or decomposition in l’art Saint Sulpice’ (McDannell 1995, 169), the song’s lyrics foreground images of corporal harm; ‘llagas’, ‘estigmas en las manos / en los pies y en el costado’ (Benavente, Canut, Curra, and Gara, 1982). Even the idea of incorruptibility is rendered unnatural and horrifying in the singer’s desire that ‘cuando me muera / Mi cuerpo quede incorrupto / Y que todos los que me vean / Queden muertos del susto’ (Benavente, Canut, Curra, and Gara, 1982).

The emphasis on the corruption of the female body is reinforced in the cover image of the Parálisis Permanente EP, a crucified female body. The group’s internationally recognizable gothic aesthetic and the inclusion of an image of Boy George dressed as a moribund nun on the reverse side of the EP, indicates an attempt to situate the sentiment of wanting to be ‘azotada’, ‘flagelada’, ‘enclaustrada’, and ‘martirizada’ in a global context, mitigating the specific association of Spain to such violent and intense forms of spiritual practice. Despite this claim to universality, Quiero ser santa remains idiosyncratically Spanish and part of a drive to reappropriate feminine saintliness which cannot be reduced to a gothic fetishization. In the context of la movida specifically, and post-Transition Spain more broadly, Bronfen’s assertion that ‘both femininity and death inspire the fear of an ultimate loss of control, of a disruption of boundaries between self

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6The line ‘Quiero estar martirizada / Y vivir enclaustrada’ is included only in Alaska’s version of the song (Benavente, Canut, Curra, and Gara, 1989).
and Other, of a dissolution of an ordered and hierarchical world’ (Bronfen 1992, 182) is a desirable, rather than a feared, possibility.

The nuance of the desire to be ‘acongojada, alucinada, y extaciada’ is clear in Jordi Socias’ 1983 portrait of Alaska, originally published alongside an interview with the singer in Madrid me mata, entitled ‘Ya era hora: La primera comunión de Alaska’ (Alpuente 1985). Replicating the composition and style of the early twentieth century communion photograph, the singer poses clutching a prayer book and rosary beads in a full white dress and veil. A link is achieved between the decidedly cursi elements (the outfit, lace, flowers, white tablecloth, Alaska’s infantilization), and the power of Alaska’s influential public persona, the ominous shadow of the cross looming over her redeeming the cursilería of the artefacts in the foreground. Both this portrait and the crucified female body on the original CD cover for Quiero ser santa restore images of feminine spirituality to a protagonistic role. Their black and white colour confers to them a dignity and a history very different from the technicolour hypermodernity which characterised la
movida, but which simultaneously earns them a place in that discourse – a place the masculine baroque epic no longer has.

The failure of paradigms of masculine saintliness to dynamise the social order in this way, or even to contribute to discourse in post-transition Spain, is exemplified in Picazo’s earlier film El hombre que supo amar (1978). Here, the director wholeheartedly embraced the dramatic baroque aesthetics of ‘misery and sorrow and suffering’ to ruthlessly recreate ‘el abigarrado y barroco entorno de una España naciente’ (Hermes 1978), in a revival of the aesthetics of earlier cine religioso, albeit with added gore. The film throws the steadfast saintliness of Juan de Dios (Timothy Dalton) into sharp relief against a shifting backdrop of ‘ruidosos burdeles, putas desdentados, locos, leprosos, tullidos, moriscos quemados, violaciones, torturas, autopsias...’ (Trueba 1978). Despite being one of the most expensive Spanish films ever made, the production was a flop, released two years late, and panned by critics. Even ABC, the publication least likely to critique hagiographical efforts, identified the film’s greatest weakness as ‘el deseo de acumular tantas cosas, de no dejarse nada en el tintero’ (Hermes 1978). Despite the exuberance and excess of signifiers crowded onto the screen, the film fails to signify, to produce a ‘saintly situation’ which can resonate with audiences or to articulate for its subject an intelligible brand of ‘saintly capital’.7

This failure of the conventional tropes of saintliness to signify in the newly democratic Spain not only facilitates the reanimation of previously marginalised modes of representation (kitsch and cursí) but opens up the outmoded markers of ‘saintly capital’ (in this case the baroque aesthetic) to use in new contexts. This is conducive to the production of camp which, for Andrew Ross,

7 The failure of these tropes to signify effectively outside of niche groups was cemented in Joffé’s There Be Dragons (in this case the Opus Dei). The New York Times review of the film was particularly scathing: ‘Clunk, clunk, squish. That is the sound of the dead language in Roland Joffé’s screenplay for There Be Dragons as it tramples his would-be epic of the Spanish Civil War into an indigestible pulp’ (Holden 2011).
is created not simply by a change in the mode of cultural production, but rather when the products … of a much earlier mode of production, which lost its power to dominate cultural meanings, become available, in the present, for redefinition according to contemporary codes of taste. (Ross 1988, 139)

*Entre tinieblas* and *Extramuros* are very much products of this renegotiation of style. Both films move visually and narratively between different aesthetic registers, refusing to stick to the rules of any one. They cinematically construct what Deleuze would call a ‘minor literature’, a writing that deterritorializes the ordinary use of language, dessicating the central language’s syntax and vocabulary to follow the lines of flight inevitably lurking in all language systems. The films achieve this very differently, but the contrasts between them map onto those between the two types of minor literatures described by Deleuze and Guatarri and exemplified in the writing styles of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett. Like Joyce, *Entre tinieblas* ‘works with exuberance and overdetermination; … to achieve global reterritorializations’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 19). Like Beckett, *Extramuros* also constructs a minor language but instead ‘works drily, soberly, in deliberate poverty, and pushes deterritorialization to the point where nothing but intensities remain’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 19).

Despite the marked aesthetic differences between the two films, they have striking narrative similarities: small, struggling convent communities whose members try to establish identities for themselves beyond enclosure, a process which is accelerated and complicated by the arrival of an outsider to the community. In both cases, this outsider inhabits the only luxuriously overdecorated room in an otherwise bare and ruinous convent. The room and the character combine to become a locus around which the convent space is renegotiated as a ‘saintly situation’ where new ways of being recognised
as saintly can be formulated, and marginalised subjects can find representation in the transcendent.

**Building a world:**

**Kitsch, camp, and chaos as building blocks of a saintly situation**

His [Merton’s father’s] vision of the world was sane, full of balance, full of veneration for structure, for the relations of masses and for all the circumstances that impress an individual identity on each created thing. His vision was religious and clean, and therefore his paintings were without decoration or superfluous comment, since a religious man respects the power of God's creation to bear witness for itself. (Merton 1999, 407)

Merton’s insistence on an art which portrays a world that is exactly what it appears to be reiterates his belief that meaning is immanent and stable in all things, only obscured by the ‘superfluous comment’ placed upon it by the contingencies of social, cultural, and ethnic identity. This attitude echoes the Vatican’s position on visual art in the run up to the Second Vatican Council which condemned the extravagant sentimentality of mid-century religious imagery as the ‘deformations and debasements of sane art’ (Pizzardo 1952, 475), implying that these elements could easily be stripped away at any moment to reveal the true essence of the spirit lying behind it. This absolute faith in the symbolic order to communicate a universal truth goes beyond the typical representations of subjectivities as ordered relations between interiority and exteriority to an insistence on the total conflation of appearance and essence and the levelling out of surface and depth into a flat terrain governed by the forces of visibility, order, and predictability. Such an aesthetic imagines a landscape where the infinite folds of the baroque have been cast off as superfluous impediments to authentic experience.

Both *Entre tinieblas* and *Extramuros* employ the excesses and superfluous comment discarded by the Catholic Church and exhausted by the filmmakers of the *cine religioso* to construct a world without sanity, balance, or structure. Both films are feats of
imagination, re-evaluating and experimenting with different registers and modes of representation, mixing and matching elements to produce a patchwork of different ‘saintly situations’ at times overlaid, at times crudely sutured. Their convents not only bridge the gaps between gendered routes to spiritual becoming but, by incorporating elements of both the wilderness and the domestic, create complex collages of human and mystical subjectivities. They play with the aesthetic categories of *cursi* and kitsch, releasing devalued signifiers back into the play of signification through camp and the baroque. Through this play they redefine the potential of women’s enclosure as a ‘saintly situation’ which can signify outside of orthodox or religious understandings of saintliness. This new model of saintliness no longer exemplifies traditional societal ideas about virtue, value, and distinction, but interrogates them.

The process of mixing different elements in new contexts to challenge preconceptions is key to the camp aesthetic which defines *Entre tinieblas* and of which traces and inversions can be found in *Extramuros*. In his discussion of camp and the recycling of history, Alejandro Yarza builds on Andrew Ross’ work on Anglo-American camp, reconsidering camp’s ‘reciclaje del deshecho histórico’ (Yarza 1999, 17) in the context of 1980s Spain where

> el camp va al Rastro, por así decirlo, para reciclar la ropa usada de la historia. … Las películas de Almodóvar … tomaron la vanguardia en el proceso de reapropiación paródica de elementos centrales a la iconografía española tradicional, y dotaron de un significado nuevo ese legado icónico usado extensamente por el discurso ideológico franquista. (Yarza 1999, 17)

*Entre tinieblas* literally goes ‘al Rastro’, drawing attention to the commodification of saintliness and its changing value in post transition Spain as the unconventual community of the *Redentoras Humilladas* attempt to advertise their ‘tartas milagrosas hechas con el
cuerpo y la sangre de Cristo’ to an unimpressed public. Despite their efforts to sell their eclectic but mundane assortment of cakes, flowers, and peppers, they lose out to the more attention grabbing spectacle of the flame-throwing magician, a tension playfully highlighted when one of the nuns, Sor Estiércol (Marisa Paredes) performs her own magic trick unnoticed, pushing a skewer through her cheek. The scene establishes the nuns’ alienation from the system of market values but also suggests the measure of freedom implicit in this estrangement and their potential to derail it. Their products and practices may no longer have a commercial value but their persistence in producing them unleashes these symbols and rituals back into a more free play of signification.

Extramuros also literally goes ‘al Rastro’: the central character Sor Angela’s (Mercedes Samprietro) success in accumulating ‘saintly capital’ in the eyes of the wider community is confirmed when it is translated into financial capital in the marketplace where vendors sell the ‘blessed’ items that she has touched. This brief market scene demonstrates the success of the nuns’ plot to attract fame and fortune to the convent through their fraud. However, the audience, knowing that Sor Angela has faked her stigmata and her saintliness is a performance, is keenly aware of the worthlessness of the relics. Moreover, by insisting on a place and price within this system, the nuns make themselves subject to its rules and instead of being released into the free play of camp, the saintly capital they accumulate only serves to mire them in baroque cycles of sin, retribution, and repentance. While the Redentoras Humilladas threaten marketplace values from the outside, the nuns of Extramuros attempt to infiltrate this system, ultimately turning that system against them.

The rastro eclecticism of camp also comes into play in the festival of incongruity which characterises these films and is exemplified in Entre tinieblas by the tiger living in the cloister of the Comunidad de Redentoras Humilladas which, for Almodóvar,
‘representa lo irracional en la película’ (Almodóvar and Strauss 2001, 48). Unlike the lion guarding St Jerome’s library, the tiger in the cloister is not a guaranteed marker of a ‘saintly situation’ apt to facilitating performances of saintliness. In the cloister, the lion’s incongruity only serves to emphasise the mundanity of the convent’s contemporary setting, offsetting the Redentoras Humilladas disappointment that they emphatically do not live in an age or situation calling for spectacular heroism. Their frustrated impulse towards asceticism manifests itself only in the perverse fetishization of poverty and misery. The Madre Superiora’s (Julieta Serrano) dream of filling her convent with ‘asesinas, drogadictas y prostitutas – como en otra época’ parodies the nostalgia for sites of destitution found in writers like Merton and indulged in the dramatic locale of the cine religioso.

The dislocation of the ‘saintly situation’ from the impulse towards saintly distinction highlights the contingency of ‘saintly capital’. Thus, by foreclosing on the conventional spaces of spectacular heroism and reducing the ‘parameters of the saintly performance’ to the enclosure of the convent, the film opens up a space to reconsider the constitution of virtue and distinction outside traditional frameworks, those of the Church, the state, or even conventional morality. Even in failure, the imaginative power of the nuns in their attempts to create new stages on which to perform saintliness positions them as agents in the construction of the convent as a point of convergence of other times and places. Through these imaginative constructions they find an alternative route into Heidegger’s subjectifying process of building.

Similarly, Extramuros is driven by the dramatic tension between the rich imaginary world that the central characters, Sor Angela and Sor Ana (Carmen Maura) have assembled out of the codes of conventional ‘saintly capital’ and the harsh realities of their environment. The nuns’ tragic attempt to restore their convent to its former glory by
faking the miracle of stigmata unfolds against a background of ‘misery and sorrow and suffering’, an arid landscape simultaneously afflicted by both drought and plague – a challenging terrain which the desert fathers, Simon and Jerome, would be at home in. However, their complicity in scheming to simulate and produce physical evidence of a divine intervention in the life of the community only emphasises their abandonment by divine forces. In contrast to the lush interiors he designed for Teresa, el cuerpo de Cristo, Rafael Palmero’s set compounds this sense of desolation, presenting us with a dilapidated convent interior stripped of decoration and superfluous comment.

However, the dilapidation is not so exaggerated as to become a comment in itself. The role of the built environment in shaping the narrative is suppressed at the moments of greatest tension, where chiaroscuro lighting causes the set to recede and the characters to take centre stage. This is clear in the sequence following the the death of several nuns to the plague, as Sor Angela leads Sor Ana to the cellar to ask for her help in the fraud. The peeling walls, creaking doors, creeping mould are foregrounded as they move from Sor Ana’s cell to another darkened room. The bleak emptiness of the environment painfully conjures up the absence of the dead nuns and the God who has abandoned them, demanding a comforting veil to be thrown over the void. As she explains her plan to save the convent by imitating the saint from her book, Sor Angela’s face is illuminated and the crumbling walls become concealed in the shadows. This baroque tenebrism is repeated in later scenes as the nuns’ fiction gains momentum. Although the bareness of the walls recedes in these moments, the audience is still aware of them and the undefined absence they evoke is made more jarring through contrast with the increasingly baroque narrative invented by Sor Angela. This imaginative construction is more blatantly problematic than those of the Redentoras Humilladas, but still demonstrates an exertion of power over place that could be called building.
The ruinous Madrid convent of *Entre tinieblas* and the desolate landscape of *Extramuros* also serve to foreground acts of preservation in ways which challenge both Heidegger’s assertion that this is not a subjectivity generating activity and also Merton’s rendering of the spiritual home as a purely conceptual space. In doing so, they engage with the tension between idealism and realism in much religious art. While *l’art Saint Sulpice* developed in contrast to the gore of the baroque it shares its appetite for detailed fleshy realism, albeit rosy cheeks instead of bleeding wounds. For some, this idealised realism was thought to root ‘Catholics in a sensual, finite, feminine world’ (McDannell 1995). For these critics of the aesthetic, ‘women were in the realm of the body, the flesh, and the literal’ while the role of ‘the church was to lift people out of the banalities of everyday life, not to reinforce them’ (McDannell 1995, 178). A clear example of this are the prints of Ade Bethune, arguably the most representative of Vatican II artists, which draw attention to manual work, but remain abstract enough to distance the viewer from the harsh realities of this labour, counterproductively attempting to dignify the work of preservation by obfuscating it further.

Almodóvar’s film mocks such attempts to sanitize and sanctify domestic work. *Entre tinieblas* parodies both the baroque celebration of contorted, wounded bodies and the more recent exaltation of banal labour by juxtaposing them. Much of the humour in the film is derived from the conflict between practical Sor Perdida’s (Carmen Maura) compulsion to clean and the obsessive ascetic Sor Estiércol’s proclivity towards performances of bodily mortification. Sor Estiércol routinely smashes glass on the kitchen floor in order to walk across it in socks while Sor Perdida is compelled to immediately clean up with the kind of sweet good nature you would expect from the singing nuns in convent films of the 1960s. Here, the transcendent suffering of the baroque is made camp
through its reconnection to immanence, while repetitive domestic work is made visible in all its banality.

This juxtaposition underlines what Stephanie Knauss hails in Almodóvar’s cinema as the camp ‘embrace of the superficial and material, in theological terms, as an incarnational aesthetics that offers redemption through the affirmation of the material, not its disruption or negation’ (Knauss 2014, 31). It also marks the site at which the now problematic and unwieldly cultural relics of Catholicism can take a line of flight and move back into a process of becoming through camp. As Mark Jordan observes

Vivid Christian artefacts or rituals pass so easily into ‘secular’ camp because they are already camp – because they permit themselves excess in the extremity of devotion; because they outrageously combine the divine and the human; because they announce their failure ever to represent what they ceaselessly copy. (Jordan 2010, 188)

What they positively achieve in this passing into camp is a reconciliation of the grand Christian meta-narrative of sin and redemption and the everyday experience of Jesus’ gentle and unchanging love, a reunion which had been problematized by the polarization of these themes into categories of baroque grandeur and low-brow kitsch. A similar conflict can be seen in Extramuros between Sor Angela, whose attempts to fake stigmata endanger her life, and the doctor trying to save her (Antonio Ferrandis). However, this tension does not pass into camp reconciliation, instead vacillating on the edge of camp and returning to the dramatic tragedy of the baroque, as Sor Angela ignores his advice and is forced to have her palms cauterised in a particularly grizzly scene.

Both films foreground not only the mundane routines of preservation but heroic acts of conservation as the nuns compromise themselves in attempts to keep their crumbling convents standing and avoid invasion from outside forces. Unlike Simon’s pillar or José María Escrivá’s war-torn Madrid where ruins are mere products of an
unexamined immanence, backdrops against which to perform sainthood, ruination in these convents is very much a process rather than a condition of a ‘saintly situation’. With plaster crumbling from the ceilings and mould spreading across the cracked walls, these ruins do not promise to stand forever in testament to their former inhabitants but rather threaten to bury them, erasing them completely. As such, it demands rectification, shaping the actions and decisions of the convents dwellers. In this, the films invert Jordan’s third explanation for the easy passage of Christian artefacts into secular camp: that ‘they announce their failure ever to represent what they ceaselessly copy’ (Jordan 2010, 188). While to copy is a creative act, ruination is destructive. In aiming to reproduce a ‘saintly situation’ while entangled in a battle against ruination, the nuns find themselves vacillating between the two forces. Sor Perdida’s attempts to clean, the Madre Superiora’s machinations to keep the convent financially afloat, Sor Angela’s elaborate fraud to win fame for the fading community, are framed both as a hopeless imitation of an ideal and a battle against the inevitable falling away of the space from an ideal.

Efforts to conserve the convent in Entre tinieblas announce their failure openly, in a gleeful embrace of camp and a move away from cursilería, an aesthetic register which cannot tolerate the exposure of its shortcomings. As the community is broken up and the building falls ever further into disrepair, the nuns escape into a world of other possibilities – to marry, to write novels, to travel. It is not only the blatantly parodic elements which mark Entre tinieblas out as distinctly camp, but this elision of consequences. Even as it is built on a patchwork of diverse artefacts and recollections from history and culture, the narrative arc of Entre tinieblas disrupts the logic of cause, course, consequence in an attitude of playful knowingness, creating a new narrative ‘to dethrone the serious’, and develop ‘a new, more complex relation to “the serious”’ (Sontag 2009, 288), a function in line with Susan Sontag’s definition of camp as playful, ‘anti-serious’ (Sontag 2009, 288).
It is this playfulness which Almodóvar feels it is necessary to remobilize in the convent film. Reflecting on the long history of nuns in Spanish cinema, he notes that:

La monja es un género cinematográfico que nunca ha funcionado cuando se toma en serio. La idea de las monjas me motivaba mucho, tenía en la cabeza un montón de estrellas que han hecho de monjas y han sufrido muchísimo. Lo tenía en la cabeza pero traté de olvidarme de ello en el momento de hacer la película. (Vidal 1990, 74)

Almodóvar’s linking of seriousness and suffering belies camp’s more complex relation to the serious and also calls into question the position of the very serious Extramuros, where failure of the nuns’ efforts is tied up in a grander system of retribution from which there can be no escape. Consequences cannot be separated from causes and, with their fraud shamefully exposed as artifice, their failure to save the convent leaves them abandoned in a failed baroque - imprisonment and the desolation of their beloved convent. However, Sontag reminds us that camp does not ‘sneer at someone who succeeds in being seriously dramatic’, instead it works ‘to find the success in certain passionate failures’ (Sontag 2009, 291).

Whether they escape retribution or fall prey to it, these convent dwellers universally fail to accumulate the ‘saintly capital’ needed to ascend to dominant subject positions through their relationship with place in the way Merton’s mystics do. The nuns in both Extramuros and Entre tinieblas struggle to distinguish themselves from the sick and poor surrounding them - their space engulfs them. Nevertheless, in both films the very failure of these nuns to perform saintliness in ways which are intelligible to those around them constitutes the cinematic performance which the audience recognises as a critique of conventional saintly capital, and an invitation to renegotiate its formula of virtue and distinction.
Having attended a Salesian school, Almodóvar’s own perception of what constitutes saintly capital is strongly influenced by the figure, life, and work of John Bosco, and it is to this saint he returns to model the shift from orthodox understandings of saintliness and the ‘saintly situation’ to a more pliable, understanding which can be put to work in the new, plural, and democratic Spain. In interviews Almodóvar has often connected the character of the Madre Superiora to John Bosco, via Jean Genet. He stretches the definition of saint by reminding us that Sartre canonised Genet in his biography of the writer, *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr* (1964), and mirrors this in *Entre tinieblas*, connecting the three figures through the space they share with juvenile delinquents.

San Juan Bosco empieza a crear albergues, y casas donde reunirlos y entretenérselos jugando y enseñándoles una profesión, y Genet se convierte en uno de ellos … los acompaña en su viaje al fondo del infierno, como Julieta [Serrano] y las ‘Redentoras Humilladas’. Toda la obra literaria y la vida de Genet tiene ese tipo de misticismo. … Julieta es también una mística, sólo que es la carne, palpitante y prohibida, la que proove su adoración. Es religiosa, pero Dios tiene poco que ver. (Almodóvar, quoted in Bouza Vidal 1989, 72–73)

This paradigm is echoed in the Madre Superiora’s complaint that from spending so much time with the convents ‘redimidas’ she has become just like them, and it is key to the film’s renegotiation of what can constitute ‘saintly capital’ outside of strictly Catholic or even religious contexts. Almodóvar’s matrix recalls a ‘saintly capital’ accrued around some of the conventional markers of virtue and distinction: proximity to God, mystical practice, hellsapes, and a congregation in dire need. However, he positions the Madre Superiora in a chaotic reconfiguration of this situation, a site replete with the trappings of

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8 Almodóvar has reiterated this connection in his discussion of the film on *Versión Española* (Piñuela Martín 2013)
devotion but without God, a shelter abandoned by those seeking refuge, where mystical experiences are mired in immanence.

Father Damien exemplifies the typical relationship of saint to situation, rising as a hero above the nameless lepers of the Molokai colony, the simplistic white saviour narrative allowing his figure to outshine the native Hawaiians who are historically known to have worked to improve conditions on the island long before his arrival and after his death. In contrast, when plague comes to the region in Extramuros the nuns are the worst hit, unable to save even themselves. As everyone else evacuates, they are stranded in the convent. Indeed, it is this refusal to abandon the convent which really defines the protagonists of Extramuros. However, unlike Father Damien, their remaining represents not a sacrifice for the benefit of others but a commitment to a friendship, a community of nuns, and a built environment which have no wider social value. Their attachment to place is a socially unintelligible performance of martyrdom which cannot be translated into ‘saintly capital’ because its motivations cannot be justified in that value system. Their story cannot be mapped onto the templates for saintliness outlined in the hagiographical books Sor Ana reads to the ailing Sor Angela, and therefore can neither be truly spoken or heard beyond the convent walls.

Sor Angela and Sor Ana’s stoic refusal to leave is in stark contrast to Entre tinieblas where the nuns scramble to escape the collapsing convent, abandoning their community in the hopes of inhabiting a more culturally privileged subject position. The Redentoras Humilladas frequently make reference to the order’s missionary work in Africa and to their fellow nun, Virginia, who died there. Virginia’s absence from the convent confers to her a pious dignity reflected in the anachronistic sepia tones with which she is remembered in her portrait, contrasting starkly to the cursi pastels and kitsch technicolour of the rest of the convent. While the photograph recalls the earnestness of
missionary endeavours in the *cine religioso*, the suppressed cursilería of the missionary’s
divine aspirations erupts in the pink lipstick kiss her mother, the Marquesa (Mary Carrillo), plants on the glass and which the Madre Superiorsa immediately wipes off with her sleeve, her anxiety to reinstate the sober piety of the portrait revealing her own aspirations. The ease with which the baroque grandeur of martyrdom can slip down the hierarchy of aesthetic registers is reinforced in the casual tone in which the other nuns recount how Virginia was eaten by cannibals, a running joke throughout the film. The comedic effect is augmented when we learn that Virginia also gave birth to a son, who is now Tarzan, and her story becomes a parody of the narratives of missionary heroes like Father Damien. The outlandishness of the nuns’ extramural journeys are reiterated in the closing scene as the Madre Superiorsa decides to travel to Thailand, but does so as a drug mule working for her dealer friend, Lola.

![Figure 8 Virginia's mother kisses her photograph in Entre tinieblas](image)

In refusing to justify the decision of *Extramuros*’ nuns of to cling to the convent in any framework other than their doomed love for each other, and in parodying the nun’s flight from the *Comunidad de Redentoras Humilladas*, both filmmakers hint at a hidden
value in enclosed homosocial life. However, in order to articulate this value in socio-culturally intelligible terms both films rely of the gendered binary of specularization/despecularization.

Stargazing:
Convent Space as Stage and the Spectacle of the Saint

The discovery of a new saint is a tremendous experience: and all the more so because it is completely unlike the film-fan's discovery of a new star. What can such a one do with his new idol? Stare at her picture until it makes him dizzy. That is all. But the saints are not mere inanimate objects of contemplation. (Merton 1999, 407)

Merton’s outline of a scopic system which opposes the secular gaze to a spiritual one is built on the assumption that the film star in question is female, immediately aligning the observer with the male gaze and foreclosing on the possibility of a secular gaze serving any other than an objectifying function. Furthermore, for Merton, the act of looking at the film star is disorientating in contrast to the focussed contemplation of the saint which is enriched by the saint’s reciprocity - their intercession in the life of the devotee. The dichotomies present in this formulation are undermined by the manipulation of the dominant scopic systems in Extramuros and Entre tinieblas, worlds where it is impossible to distinguish between the icons of the saint and the film star and where both refuse to be ‘inanimate objects of contemplation’. This section will discuss how these films play games with the audiences’ scopic drive, alternately gratifying and frustrating it as the gaze is jolted out of complacency to become itself an object of contemplation. These convents, in providing space for practices of adoration and contemplation, become stages on which saints, idols, and beloved bodies jostle for the spotlight in a scopic
regime further complicated by the absence of mirrors in which specularised subjects might see themselves.

The scopic drives of both the audience and the characters are frustrated in Extramuros. Unlike Picazo’s earlier film, El hombre que supo amar, where the chaotic environment of 16th century urban Granada continually offers up opportunities for Juan de Dios to perform sainthood in dramatic and clearly intelligible ways, these nuns are offered instead performances of saintliness which are beyond their power to emulate. In scopic terms, the aspiring objects of the gaze are reduced to frustrated onlookers. Sor Ana reads to the ailing Sor Angela the story of a mystic saint, similar to Teresa de Jesús. Soon after, the community of nuns find themselves bearing witness to a procession of flagellants who pass by the convent walls, barely dressed, whipping their own raw skin and screaming for God’s mercy. The sheer emptiness and desolation of this landscape compounds the frustration of the nuns and produces a twist on the audience’s scopic drive. Countering the usual drive in cinema to penetrate the convent walls and look inside, this scene shows the nuns in a watching experience so intense the wooden grills on the convent windows creak and are eventually broken through as the nuns jostle to look through the tiny frames, for a glimpse of the spectacle outside. It is these receptive experiences which inform Sor Angela’s own disastrous attempt to perform sainthood.

The comparison between the saint and the film star is a valid one nonetheless, and the conflation of the two is particularly prominent in Spanish cinema. Alejandro Varderi has examined the kitschification of the religious woman in Rafael Gils’ 1952 film Sor Intrépida. The title character (Dominique Blanchar) is a former singer who has abandoned the stage to enter the convent (a premise which recurs through convent films in Spain and internationally from Sister Act (Ardolino 1992), to Sor Yé Yé (Fernández 1968), to Entre tinieblas). After a struggle to fit in in the convent community and to prove
herself as a nun, Sor Intrépida becomes a missionary in India, following the conventional narrative template of the *cine religioso* which insists on the abandonment of comfortable confinement and the embrace of dangerous, foreign territory. When the leper colony she works at comes under attack she insists on staying by the side of a sinner until he repents. Varderi argues that ‘esa inquebrantable resolución de sor Intrépida’ arises from:

> la kitschificación del imaginario sagrado con el cual establece una relación de dependencia y obediencia. Dicho proceso tiene lugar cuando se borra la distancia entre la imagen de un santo y lo que esa imagen representa, a través de la estrategia de hacerlo hablar: repetidamente la cámara presentará un primer plano del santo y una voz en *off* diciéndole a sor Intrépida lo que debe hacer en todo momento. (Varderi 1996, 121)

Her martyrdom at the hands of an undefined group of natives is not shown on screen, the kitsch camera elides a possible moment of baroque suffering and focuses instead on Sor Intrépida’s angelic, illuminated face as she resolves to accept her fate. The key scene rounds off Sor Intrépida’s journey, beginning as an icon of the stage and passing through the convent to be re-specularised as a martyr on the other side.

Roles gendered as male and female in dominant cinema practice generally correspond to the opposition between despecularized and hyperspecularized entities on screen (Smith 1994, 42). Convents, particularly those portrayed in these films, cheat the gaze by toying with this opposition through the radical despecularization of their female inhabitants. Homosocial space inherently eliminates one half of the gender binary and works to suppress visual markers of gender, effacing or concealing the physical traces of femininity from those enclosed. In doing so, they raise the question of whether homosocial spaces must inevitably produce the character of lesbian camp ‘in which gender referents are suppressed, or slip into one another, fictional lovers are constructed, metaphors substitute for literal description, and the characters and narratives of popular
culture replace personal ones’ (Case 1988, 60). These symptoms certainly come into play in *Entre tinieblas* and *Extramuros*. However, translating the space to the screen inevitably requires bringing these referents back into play, postulating a gendered audience which requires the codes of femininity and masculinity to satisfy its scopic drive and even to make sense of the narrative.

Playing with the convention of the female star, conspicuously oriented towards the male gaze, Almodóvar elides the distinction between orthodox saint and secular idol. The forms of specularization produced in *Entre tinieblas* combine the framing mechanisms of traditional Catholic iconography as well as those of Hollywood stardom. When the cabaret singer, Yolanda (Cristina Sánchez Pascual) abandons the stage to seek sanctuary in the convent in fear that she will be arrested for her involvement in her boyfriend’s death, she arrives at the chapel, still in costume, surrounded by light in a halo effect. This usurpation of the central position assigned to divine beings within convent space is cemented in the next scene when she positions herself directly in front of Virginia’s painting of the Infant of Prague, her trendy hairstyle eclipsing Jesus’ elaborate headpiece. The shift is reinforced when, in an effort to please her, the mother superior offers to replace the painting with a poster of Mick Jagger. The ‘star’ literally takes the place of the religious icon only to abdicate it, just as the audience adjusts to this shift. Shedding her makeup, tying back her hair and changing from her red sparkling evening dress into the second-hand clothes offered to her, Yolanda despecularizes herself. This movement is disorienting to the viewer as it leads to a dramatic shift in the central focus of the film - ‘as Yolanda is despecularized, reduced to a modest blouse and slacks, the Mother Superior is quite literally illuminated, spotlit in the darkened chapel as she battles her pharmaceutical and amorous addictions’ (Smith 1994, 42). Idols may be inanimate but the mobility of the gaze, freshly liberated from the constraints of traditional iconography,
allows for a line of flight, an escape from socially regulated ways of seeing. This works to blur the boundaries of ‘desire and identification. The spectator, like Yolanda, is thus ‘led in’ to the convent and sutured into identification with her point of view through a newly sinuous and mobile camera’ (Smith 1994, 39).

Such mobility is also at play in the scopic system of Extramuros where Barbara Morris has drawn attention to Picazo’s creation of ‘a different way of visualizing women than is determined by more traditional iconography’ (Morris 1991, 87). As Sor Angela commits to her performance of sainthood grinding pieces of broken glass into the palms of her hands, the performance melts into an authentic display of love and affection between her and Sor Ana. As Sor Angela crumbles into the adoring Sor Ana’s lap, their pose reflects the iconic Pietá image but shifts focus from the virtue of maternal sacrifice, already enshrined in Spanish culture, to celebrate a more inclusive interpretation of love and friendship between women. The warmth and humanity of the image contrasts starkly.

**Figure 9 Extramuros’ Pietá image**

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with Sor Angela’s eerie appearance to the townspeople at the chapel grill, fully veiled but with her scarred palms presented to the desperate crowd - a performance of sainthood worthy of Alaska. The contrast between the love of the subverted Pietá and the cold, eerie, but more immediately recognisable, saint who appears in the chapel underlines the urgency of renegotiating ‘saintly capital’.

In contrast to Entre tinieblas, Picazo forgoes spotlights, halos, and saintly posturing to construct instead a visual emphasis on female community, highlighting the patterns of monastic uniformity over the idiosyncrasies of the idolized individual. The monochrome palette and the rigid symmetry of its mise-en-scène impede the viewer’s instinctive response of either desire or identification, confounding the scopic drive and thwarting the male gaze by refusing to give the viewer a stable focal point around which to orient itself. After Sor Angela’s faked stigmata attracts the attention and admiration of a local aristocrat, his daughter (Asumpta Serna) decides to enter the newly famous convent. Despite her extravagant dress and noble lineage, the new novice, known only as la Huéspeda, at first appears to be similarly engulfed by convent space. Confronted with the bareness of her cell, she shrinks into the background, falling into sync with the geometric uniformity of shadows and light created by the window grills against the cell walls. While the emptiness and silence of the cell is unsettling, more jarring still is the apprehension of La Huéspeda as she looks around the cell and

Figure 10 La Huéspeda arrives at the convent
realises she has no mirror with which to confirm her own identity to herself, either literally, as in a reflective surface, or figuratively, in an audience for whom she could perform and receive confirmation of her identity.

Such an anxiety surrounding spectacle and the gaze is closely related to kitsch discourse, Milan Kundera famously describing the attraction of kitsch as ‘the need to gaze into the mirror of the beautifying lie and to be moved to tears of gratification at one’s own reflection’ (Kundera 1988, 135). We have already seen this in l’art Saint-Sulpice’s capacity to offer a conceptual crack for women to see reflections of themselves in the dimension of the divine. Almodóvar plays with this idea quite literally in Entre tinieblas, but turns these reflections against the reflected subject. The opening scenes are marked by the omnipresence of mirrors and other reflective surfaces which always reflect unwelcome realities. Yolanda groans to see her own image in the tryptich bathroom mirrors in her boyfriend’s apartment. Both the death of her boyfriend and her own cowardly reaction to it are not shown directly, but rather reflected in the metallic bedframe. She later sees the the police arriving at the nightclub to interrogate her in her dressing room mirror.

The sudden switch to the non-reflective space of the convent is jarring, but the contrast is immediately repeated again within it. The first scene in the convent juxtaposes the radically despecularised Madre Superiora and the vain Marquesa, who ostentatiously reapplies her lipstick in a magnifying mirror. This image, like the reflections outside the convent, is ugly but here the ugliness is magnified, underlining the convent’s potential to distort and challenge power. This transposition of mirror from the secular world into convent space and its subsequent distortion into a totem of vacuity not only establishes the convent as a space apart but cements the reflection itself as empty of signifying power. Mirrors in Entre tinieblas mark out the slips in the signifying system, the reflected and the
reflection never fully matching up. This is reinforced through scenes where dialogue is filmed in shot-reverse-shot close-ups with the actors looking straight into the camera. This produces for the audience the awkward sensation of looking into a mirror and seeing something unexpected.

![Figure 11 The Marquesa fixes her makeup in a mirror](image)

However, convent dwellers compensate for the lack of mirrors by constructing reflections of themselves through the collection and assembly of objects in space which articulate alternative portraits of unseen, unrepresentable, or unachievable visions of the self. Most strikingly, Almodóvar’s Madre Superiora has curated a wall of her favourite sinners, Brigitte Bardot, Ava Gardner, Gina Lollobrigida among others. However, we are never entirely sure whether the image she sees reflected in them is of herself as a redeemer of sinners or as an actual sinner herself. This collection of stars is another example of characters constructing a minor language through the vocabulary of kitsch and this altar of pop culture icons provides an unexpected answer to Merton’s question, ‘What can such a one do with his new idol?’ While Merton intended for this to be a rhetorical question, implying that the contemplation of secular idols is unproductive, for the Madre Superiora her altar allows for active reflection and impels her to work:
En las criaturas imperfectas es donde Dios encuentra toda su grandeza. Jesús no murió en la cruz para salvar a los santos sino redimir a los pecadores. Cuando miro a alguna de estas mujeres siento hacia ellas un enorme gratitud pues gracias a ellas, Dios sigue muriendo y resucitando cada día.

The slippage between reflection and reflected, along with the Madre Superiora’s ambiguous relationship to the icons of her altar, allows the Redentoras Humilladas a more flexible relationship to the scopic regime. Through these devices they attain some control over their own spectacle, a control they demonstrate in the film’s climax by turning the convent into a stage where Yolanda performs for the Madre Superiora. While Yolanda takes centre stage, in a metallic gold dress that matches the reflective tinfoil and gold sprayed decorations, the nuns’ joyful participation on the peripheries of the stage as musicians and back-up singers releases them from the intensities of the despecularised/hyperspecularised binary to move between these poles.

Notably however, the Madre Superiora remains in thrall to her icon Yolanda, trapped in the binary of seer/seen. The relationship between these two main characters fails to be redeemed by the space. Positioning the convent in the ‘interim phase which lies between the change in emphasis from a transcendent to a materialist ideology in the wider society’, Ryan Prout reads this quasi-sexual relationship between the Madre Superiora and Yolanda, ‘as symptomatic of the deficit of other models by which non-exploitative and non-fiscal or matrimonial relationships can be understood or conveyed within a materialist consumer paradigm’ (Prout 1999, 61). In terms of the argument put forward here, they are confined by the lack of images in which they can perceive a nuanced reflection of themselves and fall into an imitation of the closest roles available. The limitations placed on roleplaying are still more extreme in Extramuros. While Sor Ana and Sor Angela do operate a slip of signification in their appropriation of the Pietá image
described above, the absence of reflective devices in their convent abandons the nuns in a futile attempt to imitate the unattainable sainthood described in their book. Moreover, for this community, there is no middle way between being engulfed by the space and occupying the spotlight. This dichotomy is intensified with the arrival of La Huéspeda and her construction of a room within the convent that works directly against the principles of that space.

“The comfortable ugliness and mediocrity of the bourgeoisie”: Islands of kitsch and the curation of the self in convent space

When something is revoltingly ugly, it is ugly, and that is that. I did not find myself calling the externals of that weird culture beautiful. But I did have to admit that as far as sanctity was concerned, all this external ugliness was, per se, completely indifferent. (Merton 1999, 407)

Ultimately, like Merton’s spiritual journey, both these narratives centre around one theatrically overdecorated room in an otherwise bare convent. It is not an ‘indifferent’ space but one packed with loaded socio-cultural signifiers which both define and undermine the convent’s capacity to function as a ‘saintly situation’. It is a space left over from Francoist kitsch cinema where

The presence of woman remained fixed at the center of events that always unfolded outside of her control. She was therefore the ambiguous patriarchal symbol, deprived of power to negotiate ‘a room of her own’ within the male's perspective regarding the construction of the nation. Being merely a tool she could easily be switched from virgin to mother to whore, in order to signify the heroic pages of the victorious Nationalists. (Varderi 2005, 65)

Varderi is discussing Raza here but it could just as easily be describing the tower to which Isabella is exiled by her husband in Reina santa or the garden hut in which Rosa de Lima’s father allows her to play at saintliness when he refuses to allow her to enter the
convent. Yet, even these spaces of confinement, in the suffering and deprivation they imply, bear the trace of the traditional ‘saintly situation’, and mark out a potential stage on which to perform spectacular heroism. The same cannot be said for the luxuriously decorated rooms which not only confine women in these films but seal them in the role of spiritual anchor for other people’s adventures.

In Entre tinieblas the former cell of Virginia, the missionary eaten by cannibals, is ‘una lujosa suite recargada y cursi’ (Pradera 2004). Virginia entered the convent as an act of rebellion after being forbidden from marrying her lover by her father, a story which emphasises the suspension of time within convent space - even her mother the marquesa remarking that ‘en estos tiempos, esas cosas no suelen suceder’. Her father decorated her convent cell to replicate exactly her room at home in the hopes that he could continue to control her, which he did until she escaped to the missions. Although clearly a passionate, troubled, and sexual woman, Virginia is confined out of sight between anodine cherubs, floral wallpaper, fresh bouquets, and a plaster bust of Jesus straight from the rue Saint Sulpice. In her attempt to become a builder, to construct a space and a subjectivity for herself, a saintly situation, the Madre Superiora is compelled to fix and keep hold of her identity by preserving the room as Virginia left it, and confining her redimidas (including Yolanda) there to reflect her identity to her. Almodóvar has clarified his intention that the room act as a link between Yolanda and Virginia, cementing the sense that the room confines its inhabitant not only to a space, but to a role as another interchangeable woman like that described by Varderi:

A mí me gustaba la idea de que se produjera una especie de posesión a través de la habitación de Virginia, y eso no quedo claro en la película. Yolanda debía seguir los pasos de Virginia y llegar a relacionarse como una hija con la marquesa. También con Chus tenía que establecer las mismas relaciones. … Es como si esta habitación estuviera esperándola, estuviera decorada para ella.
Like Virginia, La Huéspeda, enters the convent after a failed love affair. She brings with her lavish furniture, an extravagant wardrobe, and a devoted maid. Her presence there not only reflects the new-found success of the convent but, as Virginia’s confinement once did, also allows outsiders to project aggrandised images of themselves, to make visible the intangible virtues they wish to claim as their own. La Huéspeda’s father, the duke, through increasing the *encomienda* to the convent and keeping his daughter there, creates an image of himself as a devout Christian and a powerful, wealthy aristocrat. (The Marquesa has a similar arrangement with the *Redentoras Humilladas*, which she reneges on early in the film – donating money to convents no longer endows the donor with the status it once did.) However, such a space cannot contain or reflect the presence of actual woman, only the spectre of the Heideggerian subject critiqued by Young.

![Figure 12 La Huéspeda (right) and Yolanda (left) in their rooms](image)

As discussed in the previous section, the absence of mirrors is conspicuous in both convents. This absence is all the more marked by the exception of those on the dressing tables in these special rooms, constructing the inhabitants as uniquely specularised, ‘special’ subjects in the uniform space of the convent. La Huéspeda, who is complicit in her own construction as an anchor for her father’s identity, participates in this through the accumulation of objects within her cell that she uses to combat the forces of convent
space. While she initially appears to be engulfed by the space, La Huéspeda later reasserts her identity, filling the room with textured and reflective surfaces, bedding, curtains, mirrors, bottles of perfume, which neutralize the uniformity of the convent. Ultimately however, this activity only offers access to unstable forms of subjectivity. While she achieves popularity and status among some nuns through her assembling of material objects, the spectacle of her space and her person draws her into conflict with the convent’s other spectacle – Sor Angela’s imitation of a saint. The tension between juxtaposed images of the veiled, wounded saint and the glamorous, decorated noblewoman increases until they annihilate each other when La Huéspeda attempts a power grab by reporting Sor Angela and Sor Ana to the Inquisition. This of course leads to the dismantling of the convent by Church officials that in turn entails La Huéspeda’s abdication of her room.

Outside this dichotomy, a more innovative form of spatial curation does offer convent dwellers access to a higher spiritual path and to a form of ‘saintly capital’, albeit a radically deconstructed one. Deleuze’s Body without Organs (BwO) is not necessarily a physical body but can be any material, organic, cultural, or sociological assemblage. Convent enclosure itself constitutes a BwO because it is an assemblage upon which disparate and disconnected elements of the body politic come together and create fragile new worlds on a plane of consistency. The bodies of the nuns are central elements in this assemblage but share equal ontological status with the convent’s grilles, confessionals, pews, and crucifixes. This dissection of the cloistered body is communicated visually in these films through lines cut across the body, dismantling the coherent entity of the body into disparate parts which become free and mobile to form new connections with other parts across ontological hierarchies. The skin of the woman, the folds of the habit, and the
bricks and mortar of the convent walls are all equal and fluid elements of the same entity. By submitting to the uniformity of convent space, these nuns can attain another power.

Self-flagellation draws lines across the flesh of the nuns, cilices cut them in half, the habit marks lines across their wrists and foreheads, bodies are traversed and broken down. The geometry of convent space further emphasises these contours, the grilles placed in windows and locutorios further fragmenting bodies and faces, detaching voices from speakers. The convent of Entre tinieblas does not have grills in the locutorio, but a geometric shadow is cast across the Madre Superiora’s face anyway, marking her out as an enclosed subject as she speaks with the Marquesa. This image is echoed towards the end of the film as Sor Víbora enters the confession box to confess her love to the priest (Manuel Zarzo). In Extramuros Sor Ana eavesdrops on the priora’s confidential conversation with the doctor, her body just another vertical line in the railings, the white band of her veil repeating the pattern of light on the steps next to her. The scene calls to mind the expression ‘the walls have ears/las paredes oyen’, the realization of Deleuze’s vision of a BwO which allows for the total reconfiguration of sense, function and organ:

Animal elegance, the camouflage fish, the clandestine: this fish is crisscrossed by abstract lines that resemble nothing, that do not even follow its organic divisions; but thus disorganized, disarticulated, it worlds with the lines of a rock, sand, and plants, becoming imperceptible. … It is by conjugating, by continuing with other lines, other pieces, that one makes a world that can overlay the first one, like a transparency. (Deleuze and Guattari 2014, 280)
However, the power of this ruthless fragmentation and repurposing of organs to integrate the cloistered body and its surroundings is somewhat undermined by the convent’s monolithic exterior wall which seems to offer itself to lay audiences as a blank canvas onto which they can project their fantasies of enclosure. One of the few scenes of *Entre tinieblas* shot from outside the convent features a nervous postman, horrified when Sor Estiércol informs him that Merche, the drug addicted prostitute has become a nun overnight. Although this is not true, the scene reveals both the absurdity of these presumptions and the possibilities for convent dwellers to use them to their advantage. In *Extramuros*, the walls of the convent amplify Sor Angela’s reputed saintliness allowing outsiders to develop an idealised and magical image of her in their minds even though all that is really visible to them is the convent walls.
Ultimately, the inscrutability of the convent walls makes of itself a fetishized object, threatening to draw upon itself and its dwellers the constraining web of desire generated by frustrated outsiders. It produces a cancerous BwO that instead of creating new worlds becomes caught in the reproduction of identical patterns, ‘endlessly repeating the selection of homogenized individuals in a process of conformity’ (Protevi 2010, 103). This phenomenon of ‘social cloning and assembly-line personalities’ (Protevi 2010, 103) is initially animated by the nuns’ erasure of their own identifying marks. While the cutting of hair, the donning of the habit, the lowering of the eyes hold a potential for the turning of the nuns’ bodies into a BwO, more often they make of these bodies a blank canvas onto which outsiders can project extraneous meanings. The convent dwellers in both Entre tinieblas and Extramuros collude in the production of these corporal fantasies. Sor Angela reproduces on her own body the marks of martyrs and saints, fabricating the saintly body of the public imagination. In Entre tinieblas the Madre Superiora tries to turn her convent into a processing system, taking in the raw material of stereotyped whores, murderesses, and drug addicts and monotonously churning out redeemed sinners who inevitably return to sin and go through the process again. This alternative form of mass production produces a counter discourse to traditional kitsch – these reproductions are edifying for the Madre Superiora in the same way surrounding oneself with l’art Saint Sulpice statues might create for the consumer an aura of saintliness but are in reality grotesque echoes of a failed baroque.

Although the real emptiness of these rooms is hinted at throughout both films it is not until the final moments that the audience is brought face to face with the spiritual vacuum behind ‘the thick resilient hide of bourgeois smugness’. When the Madre Superiora goes to tell Yolanda she is leaving for Thailand she finds the room empty. In shock to find that the woman she had hoped to leave in that room as an anchor for her
globetrotting adventures has gone, she responds to the absence with a gut wrenching scream, described in the script as ‘a cry of impotence, [a] terrible lament [which] pierces the convent walls’ (Smith 1995, 37), its echoes only further emphasising the emptiness. Similarly, Sor Angela and Sor Ana also return to their beloved, now abandoned convent in the final scenes of *Extramuros*. In all the emptiness of the convent it is in the ridiculously overdecorated cell that Sor Ana finds Sor Angela’s body, dressed in La Huéspeda’s luxurious gown, sitting motionless in front of her dressing table mirror. The artifice of these rooms is jarring in contrast to the real pain in the Madre Superiora’s scream and Sor Ana’s lament when they realise they have been abandoned. The heartfelt and universal agony of losing a loved one cuts through attempts to replicate ‘saintly situations’ or to accrue ‘saintly capital’ through culturally intelligible markers of distinction.

**Conclusion**

The analysis of *Entre tinieblas* and *Extramuros* in this chapter has provided an insight into how constructions of female saintliness were renegotiated in 1980s Spain and how this was reflected spatially. Despite the historical exclusion of women from the open landscapes of the ‘saintly situation’ where saintliness was usually performed on Spanish screens, these films dismiss attempts to occupy that space, and instead recuperate the maligned aesthetics traditionally associated with feminine saintliness, mixing kitsch, *cursilería*, and camp, with elements of the masculine, dignified, baroque to create new visions of women’s enclosed space in which convent dwellers can map out their own version of saintliness. While the more orthodox representations of female sainthood discussed in the previous chapter demonstrated the potential of convent space to offer
alternative ways of occupying space, these films take that potential to the extreme. Where Molina’s series and Loriga and Dorado’s films take note of the tensions between constructing and preserving in female homosocial space, these films more explicitly problematize the dynamics through which enclosed women have provided anchors and safeguards for other people’s spiritual ambitions. In exploding this structure they play not only with the aesthetic registers of women’s enclosed space but the scopic regimes that govern it. The films hint at several different possible approaches to representation, spectacle, and spectatorship; the hyperspecularization or despecularization of the subject, the construction of alternative mirrors of the self, and the submission to the geometry of space as a BwO. While these devices often fail or are usurped by other forces, when they do function they illuminate the power of women’s enclosed space to frame diverse narratives and experiences.

However, if these films allow for radical renegotiations of what a ‘saintly situation’ can look like, it often looks like a convent in ruins. Like the church bells in the narratives of Teresa de Jesús, the laments of Sor Ana and the Madre Superiora construct a sonic milieu but it is a milieu of destruction, not construction. Both laments, echoing as they do through empty and abandonned spaces, seem to herald the end of convent space as a key signifier in popular culture. Although this seems like an appropriate conclusion to come to in mid-1980s, democratic Spain, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter such a requiem was premature.
Chapter 3
Saber mirar: Seeing Spain through Two Adaptations of Canción de cuna

¡Al fin monjas! El odio a la maternidad

¿Habrá algún ciudadano, por insensible que sea, que al cruzar frente a uno de esos edificios en que a caridad burguesa recoge a los abandonados del regazo materno no haya sentido el escalofrío de la tragedia que tras los muros del triste y lóbrego edificio se está desarrollando constantemente? No creemos haya nadie que al pasar frente a una Inclusa, edificio muchas veces mandado demoler por las malas condiciones de seguridad, no haya pensado en que todos los ciudadanos, cada una por una circunstancia especial, somos responsables de que exista un régimen tan criminal que oblige a una madre abandonar al hijo de sus entrañas que tal vez fuese concebido en una noche de amor y para el que acaso ella soñara la realización de las más difíciles y brillantes empresas, como suele ocurrir a toda madre, puesto que cada una cree ver en el fruto de su vientre a un futuro caudillo, a un héroe, a un sabio o a un redentor.

*El Socialista* September 10, 1918

*El Socialista’s* 1918 report on the conditions in Spanish children’s homes run by nuns incorporates and corroborates many of the ideas about religious women’s enclosure that had proliferated during the 19th century. The dramatic portrait of the Inclusa as a ‘triste y lóbrego edificio’ (Born 1918), sending shivers down the spines of passers-by, colludes in the gothic construction of the convent as a site veiled in mystery, cut off from the civilising light of modernity. It echoes Victor Hugo’s description of the Spanish cloister in *Les Misérables* as a particularly funereal and grotesque form, rising ‘dans l'obscurité, sous des voûtes pleines de brume, sous des dômes vagues à force d'ombre’ (Hugo 1990, 44–45). The reporter goes on to describe the distress of young mothers denied contact with their children, internalising and translating into journalistic transparency a gothic imaginary which had often been projected onto backward, Catholic Spain by writers in the rational, progressive north⁹. However, the article cannot simply

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⁹The enduring trope of the grim and carceral convent was popularised in world literature with Denis Diderot’s *The Nun* and Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk*, both published in 1796, and became a staple of Gothic literature with Charles Maturin’s *Melmouth, the Wanderer* (1820). Lewis and Maturin’s novels specifically framed the Spanish convent as a locus of depravity, although *Melmouth*’s convent was actually a male
parrot the anti-Catholic attitudes of some gothic literature, where the author/readers’ comfortable outrage is predicated on the foreignness of the subject matter from its source. However fantastic it may seem to an audience at a remove from the ecclesiastic world, convent walls in Spain remain closer to the realm of fact than fiction and the resolution of the anxieties surrounding them requires a more nuanced process of thought and imagination. It is this cocktail of anxieties and imaginaries brought on by the spectre of the nun as ‘Other within’ and how they have changed over time which will be explored in this chapter.

Ultimately what is at play in the *El Socialista* report is a new and more aggressive manifestation of the old suspicions around nuns and their space which can be traced back to 1298’s *Periculoso*, the papal decree requiring strict convent enclosure for all nuns with the aim of protecting religious women from both the perils of the outside world and, more importantly, from the nuns’ own propensity for sinful behavior. The particular anxiety regarding potentially wicked religious women adopting caring roles would become increasingly pronounced as the twentieth century progressed. Indeed, it would be partly justified nearly a century later in the revelation of the *niños robados* scandal, the theft and illegal adoption of thousands of babies by nuns, priests, and doctors, beginning under Franco and continuing until the mid-90s. Like *El Socialista*’s report, the often problematic media coverage of the *niños robados* story capitalized on the enduringly potent imagery of the severe convent facade, desolate maternal figure, and tragic child. In particular, Telecinco’s special reports on *El debate* and the series *Niños robados, ¿dónde

religious community. Sensationalised, supposedly factual, accounts of young girls kept captive in convents were also popular in the US (Rebecca Reed’s *Six Months in a Convent* (1835)) and Canada (Maria Monk’s *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk, or, The Hidden Secrets of a Nun’s Life in a Convent Exposed* (1836)).

10 Prompted by Telecinco’s *El debate* special on May 5th 2012, fifteen associations of victims affected by the scandal condemned the coverage on certain TV stations for sensationalising their stories and inciting ill-informed debates (*REPUBLICA.COM* 2012). Begoña Marugán Pintos (2013) has also noted the tendency to make of the case ‘una trama para disfrute televisivo’ in her examination of the reporting on *niños robados* cases in Spanish media.
mixed sensationalised accounts of events (often foregrounding the role of devious nuns) with emotional family reunions and public appeals to help find missing people. The images of the centres run by the nuns in question, which were shown in the investigative sections of *Niños robados, ¿dónde están?*, resuscitated the popular conception of such institutions as ‘triste y lóbrego’ (Fig.15) giving the report a peculiarly gothic key that jarred with the exaggeratedly disinterested tone of the voiceover introducing them. Nevertheless, the emotive combination of gothic and sentimental motifs mobilises and indulges a set of near primal fears and desires focussed around women and which the aura of journalistic credibility frames as righteous indignation. The implicit positioning of the audience in the roles of mother, child, or protector figure, like the repeated interpellation of the *El Socialista* reader as ‘ciudadano’, engender a collective social conscience in opposition to the nefarious activities undertaken by religious women in the secrecy of enclosed space. This emotionally charged opposition abjacts the convent from the society that shaped it - once an integral part of that society, the convent becomes unassimilable to it.

Figure 15: Images of the mother and baby homes shown in the investigative sections of *Niños robados, ¿dónde están?*

This evolution of attitudes towards religious women’s enclosure is intricately related to the changing position of the mother in Spanish society. This is already clear in the *El Socialista* report where the coldness and darkness of the *Inclusa* is underscored by its contrast to the warmth of motherly love and the bright future represented by the figure of the child, a potential thwarted by women who, ‘por una aberración religiosa, reniegan
al placer y al dolor de ser madres’ (Born 1918). The sentiment echoes Federico García Lorca’s description of his visit to a convent in *Diario de Burgos* a year earlier in 1917 where he describes the nuns as ‘esencias rotas de amor y maternidad’ (Gibson 1969, 189).

It finds its way again into his evocative portrait of ‘La monja gitana’ in *Romancero Gitano* (1928), confined as she is in her ‘silencio de cal y mirto’, beset by sensual and perhaps also maternal desires. Fixed in this oppositional relationship to the good, loving, maternal woman, the celibate nun becomes a contentious figure and her space the object of intense scrutiny, the two presumably conspiring to undermine the social and emotional bedrock that is the mother/child dyad.

In her study of gender ideals in early 20th century Spain, Nerea Aresti draws attention to the nun/mother binary as it is framed in the *El Socialista* article, ‘Odio de las monjas a la maternidad’. She explains the dichotomy as a natural consequence of left-wing anticlericalism but one also grounded in a social reality, ‘la política severa y deshumanizada de las instituciones benéficas regentadas por religiosas, en las cuales las madres solteras eran tratadas como pecadoras y almas perdidas’ (Aresti 2001, 185). While this may be historically accurate, it is important to note in the journalist’s hyperbole an underlying need to reduce the complexity of the celibate religious woman to a containable position in a dichotomy, thus eradicating any traces of ambivalence around the sanctity of the mother. It is not the nuns’ abdication from the maternal role, or their supposed hatred of it, which raises suspicion but rather the ambivalence they generate around that role by marking out alternatives to motherhood and other ways of mothering, undermining the social scaffolding of the traditional nuclear family.

Aresti goes on to position the author’s extreme viewpoint as part of a broader shift early in the last century towards the inauguration of motherhood as the sole feminine activity worth undertaking, adding that even the Church ‘participó de este cambio
tendente a hacer de la maternidad la fuente exclusiva de dignificación de las mujeres, frente a los hombres y frente a dios’ (Aresti 2001, 185–86). Mary Nash has similarly noted this turn in Spanish society but positions it even earlier, asserting that ‘by the turn of the century conventual life no longer constituted a valid model of femininity’ and that ‘by then, the biological function of reproduction had already become the key component in structuring women’s cultural identity’ (Nash 1999, 27). While it might not be possible to pinpoint an exact moment when this shift in values occurred, it is clear that the ideology of feminine domesticity quickly became hegemonic while any socio-cultural currency religious women might have had depreciated significantly during the early decades of the twentieth century.

While the figure of the nun has receded nearly entirely in the cultural production of many, but not all, European countries over recent years and women have access to roles beyond motherhood both in narrative and in real life, the anxieties which initially drove the privileging of the mother at the expense of the nun continue to inform the construction of religious women and convent space in the Spanish popular imagination. An examination of how this construction developed over time and also of its more recent manifestations can illuminate the enduring traces of the anxieties around childless women and the treatment of the radically Other in popular culture more generally, particularly in the negotiation of what is understood as ‘Other’ and as ‘Spanish’. The present chapter aims to examine representations of religious women in maternal roles from before and after the transition to democracy, focussing specifically on the convent space as a marker of nunly Otherness, the imposition of maternity as destiny, and the relationship between

11 A notable exception is a number of documentaries, novels, and films about Ireland’s Magdalen laundries, also run by nuns. Elizabeth Butler Cullingford has analysed these texts in ‘Our Nuns are not a Nation’: Politicizing the Convent in Irish Literature and Film’ (2007).
enclosed space and the forward thrust of time associated with social and economic ‘progress’.

Reproduction and Repetition: 
The compulsive assimilation of the religious woman on page, stage, and screen

The prestige of the mother over other women was reflected across the mainstream cultural production of the early and mid-twentieth century, the potent conjunction of the convent wall, maternal figure, and the child featuring strongly. However, rather than vilify religious women as unnatural anti-mothers in the gothic vein, these narratives are largely melodramas or comedies where the dramatic tension is resolved through the assimilation of nuns into the heteronormative structures of marriage and motherhood. The popular novels La hermana San Sulpicio (Palacio Valdés 1889) and El niño de las monjas (López Núñez 1922) positioned religious women as romantic object and mother figures respectively. Similarly, Francisco Gargallo’s hit 1934 film Sor Angélica centred around a tragic nun redeemed by marriage (Triana-Toribio 2003, 26). The popular stageplay Madre Alegría opened the same year to commercial success and critical acclaim, its by now familiar plot placing the title character in the role of mother to a group of orphans (Caparrós Lera 1981, 128–32).

The aforementioned novels were not only warmly received on publication but were also the subject of multiple cinematic adaptations for decades after. El niño de las monjas, the story of a bull fighter abandoned at a convent as a baby, was adapted to the stage in 1923 and later to the screen on four separate occasions (directed by José Calvache Walken (Spain 1925), José Buchs (Spain 1935a), Mario del Río (Mexico 1944), and Ignacio Farrés Iquino (Mexico/Spain 1959)). La hermana San Sulpicio proved still more versatile. This 1889 tale of a good-natured young novice who falls in love with a dashing doctor/poet, spawned six adaptations over eighty years: a silent version in 1927
starring Imperio Argentina and directed by Florián Rey, a sound version with the same cast and director in 1934, a popular Argentine TV series in 1960, and a modernized Spanish/Mexican co-production titled Sor ye-yé in 1968. Luis Lucía also directed two very different versions, a conventional española with Carmen Sevilla in 1953 and a fully updated reworking entitled La novicia rebelde in 1972 which shifted the action to the full-colour, motorized, and mobilized Spain of the 1970s. Madre Alegría also spawned two film adaptations, the first directed by José Buchs in 1935 and a later Argentine version by Ricardo Núñez Lissarrague (1950).

While it is perhaps most explicit in the Hermana San Sulpicio films, where the nun’s repressed desire to get married and have children is central to the plot, the imposition of romantic and maternal roles on female religious characters marks a foreclosure on the possibility of a life or an identity for women outside heteronormative and reproductive marriage. This compulsory heteronormativity is emphasized to different degrees across the films and in some cases became intensified over time. For example, the original El niño de las monjas novel ends with the torero’s death and his grief-stricken love interest, Soledad, entering the same convent he was raised in. Even though this ending is framed as deeply tragic and more a representation of her consuming romantic love for the bullfighter than a commitment to God or her own spiritual life, the choice to become a nun is nevertheless endorsed as a legitimate and dignified one. However, by 1958 the convent no longer represents a worthy expression of Spanish womanhood. Ignacio Farrés Iquino’s adaptation of the story ends with the title character marrying the wealthy heiress, Gloria, and Soledad (relegated to a sisterly role in the plot) pairing up with the torero’s sidekick, Perico. While this change is largely to harmonize with the lighter tone of the film, in the final shots, as the young couples walk away from the nuns
towards their bright futures, the viewer is left with the sensation that what they are leaving behind is the quaint but unproductive world the nuns represent.

Unlike the gothic rhetoric of El Socialista or the niños robados TV specials, which frame women’s enclosure as a fundamentally abject site set apart from the wholesome world of family, ‘progress’, and the homogenous community of the nation, these films work to neutralize the nun and the convent as a socio-cultural force and assimilate them into an idealized vision of Spain. Within this totalizing vision even the possibility of occupying the sinister anti-mother role is denied by a rigorous system of representation which cannot tolerate any shadow of dissonance. Consequently, while none of these narratives figure the convent a site of spiritual liberation, even of the most orthodox nature, neither is it a gloomy, gothic cave. Rather, anxieties about what women might get up to alone together are assuaged by brightly illuminated convent spaces, reigned over by a meticulous regime of visibility.

This visibility is achieved in part through the incorporation of the nun and her convent into the arsenal of españolidad signifiers. Indeed, the narrative of the nun-turned-wife/mother was popular with some of the directors most closely identified with the españolada genre: Florian Rey, José Buchs, and Luis Lucía. Perhaps most strikingly, El niño de las monjas in all its incarnations brings together the hyper-Spanish spectacle of bullfighting and the intimacy of convent space onto one single plane of representation, neutralizing the power of the nun to signify anything other than Spain’s charmingly bendito atraso. Reviewers at the time summed up José Buchs’ 1935 version as

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12 Román Gubern has described the españolada genre as characterised by ‘una sublimación idealista del tipismo diferencial de las zonas económicamente deprimidas y de coloración feudal, y definida por lo tanto por la exaltación del agrarismo (con tono caciquil y latifundista), por su nacionalismo xenófobo, por su machismo antifeminista y por su concepción religiosa ultraconservadora’ (Gubern 1977, 126–27).
Similarly, from its conception as a costumbrista novel La hermana San Sulpicio was an emphatically Spanish narrative, showcasing the unique blend of secular and religious customs native to its Andalusian setting and playing with regional stereotypes in the romantic match between the Galician doctor and the Sevillian nun. Both Florián Rey and Luis Lucía capitalized on this in their respective adaptations where españolada stars Imperio Argentina and Carmen Sevilla portray flamenco singing, guitar playing nuns heavily supplemented with characteristics of the Andalusian gypsy. The equivalences forged between the nun, the convent, and the national spectacle reduce the experience of the religious woman to its visual and symbolic components, putting them to work in the construction of a romanticized image of Spain as a premodern idyll, fundamentally different to the rest of world.

This image of Spain permeated cultural production in the 1940s and 50s and became doctrine in the 1960s with the inauguration of the long-lived tourist slogan ‘Spain is different’. In this formulation the reduction of the nun to a (minor) building block in the nation’s self-constructed Otherness further problematizes her position as an ambiguous ‘Other within’: the nun is both an integral part of the state aligned institution of the Church and an unknowable element set apart from mainstream society in the mysterious space of the convent. This disquieting ambiguity is somewhat mitigated through her positioning as a marker for Spanish backwardness, neatly embodying its problematic undercurrent of impotence and containing it in the category of the feminine. This is underlined in cinematic representations of the nun and also the gypsy, that other unsettling female figure, as haunting to Spain’s self-construction as she is essential to the españolada. Both figures are simultaneously Other to, and representative of, the nation.
However, highly specularized and more readily translatable into tourist revenue, the gypsy became increasingly ideologically manageable while the mysterious nun could still only very awkwardly be fit in to Spain’s postcard-perfect image, the very act of making her visible already negating the foundational principle of her enclosed condition.

Nevertheless, a brief look at the parallels and points of divergence in representations of the gypsy and the nun may be useful in illuminating the complex position of the religious woman as Other in the Spanish popular imagination. Jo Labanyi’s work on racial and ethnic Others in the mid-century Spanish folkloric musical has highlighted ‘the Spanish fascist (and Catholic) emphasis on incorporating the Other’ (Labanyi 1997, 222). Borrowing from Homi Bhabha in her analysis of the stereotype as a tool to manage alterity, Labanyi also establishes the exoticised image of the gypsy as a tool used to contain difference and impose a homogenous vision of society (Labanyi 2003). As tentatively suggested above, there is in such discussions of the figure of the gypsy some light to be thrown on the representation of the nun in the films under discussion here, specifically in the cultural use of romantic and marriage plots to limit the roles available to women on screen and in the popular imagination. Labanyi has paid particular attention to the romance format of films featuring gypsies as protagonists, culminating in the vast majority of cases with the betrothal of the gypsy heroine to a landowner, the ‘nomadic’ and marginal elements of the population thus being ‘settled’ and incorporated into a traditional property-owning system, naturalized by being based on the land. (Labanyi 2000b, 57)

Although the nun cannot be described as a racial Other, this pattern of gypsies abandoning the nomadic life for marriage has clear parallels with the trope of the nun forsaking homosocial enclosure for heteronormative marriage. Like the gypsy, the figure
of the nun could be seen to contain diversity, to fold into one model many different possible ways of being woman beyond reproductive and economically productive lines – models which need to be curtailed in order for the status quo of the early years of the dictatorship to be maintained.

Of course, the role of gendered anxieties in constructing and representing religious women was marked long before the era of the Francoist folkloric musical addressed by Labanyi. Bernard P. E. Bentley has described Buch’s Madre Alegría and El niño de las monjas, both made in 1935, as revealing ‘antifeminist fears brought about by the current emancipation of women’ (Bentley 2008, 59), presumably referring to the progress made towards gender equality under the Second Republic. Equally, as this chapter will explore, anxiety around the nun endured long after the end of the dictatorship. The persistence of nun-turned-wife/mother narratives tells us that the nun of the popular imagination is shaped not simply by reactionary ‘antifeminist fears’ of an emancipated woman, the objectionable ‘mujer que trota’ of the early modern imagination, but by more nuanced and universal concerns about the unknowability of the Other, particularly the feminine Other who evades integration to hegemonic cycles of production and reproduction. While the jolly singing nuns of fiction and the grim monsters of the media appear to be diametrically opposed they merely represent different responses to the disquiet around this Other. The appending to the nun of extraneous values (chronic infirmity, caricatured malevolence, one dimensional joviality, incongruous theatricality etc.,) work to either foreclose on these models as valid ways of being or to draw the nun back into the structures of heteronormativity.

The extent of the overlap between varying attitudes, anxieties, and images surrounding nuns, and also their endurance, is perhaps best illustrated in Madre Alegría.
Set in a Madrid inclusa\textsuperscript{13}, the play culminates in a familiar scene: a once destitute mother returns to the inclusa to be reunited with her daughter after eighteen years, having now made a name for herself as a flamenco singer. However, the director of the inclusa, Madre Alegría, turns her away: ‘Sólo dejó un pedazo de carne con vida… Y ahora es y piensa como yo. Al reclamarme lo que fue suyo, quiere quitarne lo que es mío’ (Caparrós Lera 1981, 131). This moment in the play is represented as the consummation of Madre Alegría’s sincere love for the girl and her dedication to the children of the home. This is in stark contrast to a similar situation described in the El Socialista report, as desperate mothers return to visit their children at the inclusa only to be told that ‘los niños esos no pertenecen ya a sus madres, sino a la inclusa’ (Born 1918). The journalist frames this appropriation of children by nuns very differently, commenting that ‘sin darse cuenta, esa monjita reflejó en sus palabras, frías y crueles, el espíritu atávico de todas las Comunidades religiosas’ (Born 1918).

While the article condemns the same institution the play celebrates, both accounts take women on the fringes of and outside heteronormative reproduction and tidy them into categories that make sense within the grand narrative of female biological destiny. Both the character of Madre Alegría and El Socialista’s bereft mothers are idealized as angelic, suffering maternal figures. In contrast, El Socialista’s pitiless nuns are figured as hard-hearted monsters unable to comprehend the sanctity of motherhood and the returning mother in Madre Alegría is righteously punished for being a bad mother by having motherhood denied to her. While accounting for the outliers attempting to escape their maternal destiny, every class in this taxonomy compounds the conflation of true

\textsuperscript{13} In the original script the setting is given as the Institución Provincial de Puercicultura de Madrid (Labrador Ben 2005, 168) which was located at 50 Calle O’Donnell. 48 Calle O’Donnell is now Hospital Maternidad O’Donnell and directly across the street is Hospital Santa Cristina, both centres where Sor María Gómez Valbuena is known to have used to facilitate illegal adoptions and locations repeatedly highlighted in Niños robados, ¿dónde están?. This overlap of fiction and reality highlights the extent to which these narratives are embedded in Spanish culture and society.
Spanish womanhood and sanctified motherhood. More difficult to square into a coherent narrative is the journalist’s dismissal of the spirit of religious communities as atavistic in 1918 and the continued reprisals of this narrative in media nearly a century later.

*Canción de cuna:*
One hundred years and counting

In accounting for the compulsive repetition of the nun-turned-mother trope, the rest of this chapter will focus on a text that originated in the early twentieth century and has since been repeatedly adapted across media. Originally written as a stage play by María de la O Lejárraga in 1911 (but for many years attributed to her husband Gregorio Martínez Sierra), *Canción de cuna* centres around the adoption of an abandoned baby girl named Teresa by an enclosed community of religious women, recasting the celibate, childless nuns as self-sacrificing mothers. Over more than a century it has become one of the most enduring narratives of Spanish convent life. In addition to the numerous theatre and radio productions over the years, the play has been taken to the screen six times since its conception. Four of these films originated in America: a US version directed by Mitchell Leisen in 1933, an Argentinian production directed by Gregorio Martínez Sierra himself in 1941, Paulino Masip’s Mexican adaptation in 1953 (directed by Fernando de Fuentes), and a Hallmark made-for-TV movie in 1960, again from the US. The chapter will examine the two most recent, Spanish productions: José María Elorrieta’s saccharine 1961 *Canción de cuna* and José Luis Garci’s more sober 1994 reworking.

Despite these numerous remakes and adaptations at intervals spanning over eighty years, the story is perennially anachronistic. On the release of Elorrieta’s 1961 adaptation *ABC*’s reviewer described the film as ‘una auténtica joya del arte escénico casi ignorada por la actual generación, cuyos valores humanos son dignos del mayor encomio y de que
Thirty years later however, the description of Elorrieta’s production in the ABC weekly television guide described it as a film ‘[que] no posee otro interés que el arqueológico’ (ABC 1990). Unsurprisingly then, Antonio Colón, reviewing Garci’s 1994 Canción de cuna in the same publication, is puzzled by the impulse to tell the story once again.

¿Vuelven los llamados buenos sentimientos, las historias sentimentales? ¿Se cotizan de nuevo valores que parecían definitivamente olvidados o arrumbados por caducos? ¿Estamos ante el eterno retorno o se trata simplemente del vaivén de las modas, de la ley de la oferta y demanda? (Colón 1994)

This tone of perplexity has been sustained in subsequent discussions of the film, Barry Jordan and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas later describing it as ‘a wistful, sentimental, saccharine-coated, light melodrama, ... arguably a thematic and stylistic anachronism, seriously out of step with trends in Spanish film in the 1990s’ (Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas 1998, 70).

This bemusement is all the more justified considering that both Spanish versions were produced at moments of dramatic modernization in Spain. Elorrieta’s 1961 film came at a key moment in Spain’s economic development, just as the stabilization plans put into place in the late 1950s were beginning to take effect and the country entered the rapid economic growth of the 1960s. Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi have drawn attention to the inauguration of the National Programme for Regulating Investment in 1959 as a specific turning point, Franco himself describing it as marking ‘a new era’ in his New Year message of that year (Carr and Fusi 1981, 54). In this new approach to economics ‘rationalization was to take place over tradition – though they must be reconciled if possible’ (Carr and Fusi 1981, 54), an attitude very much evident in 1961’s Canción de cuna, as this chapter will demonstrate. The mid-90s also mark a high point
for Spain as a modern, democratic nation taking its place in the global community. This new identity was showcased to the world in a series of internationally significant events taking place in 1992: the Barcelona Olympics, the European Capital of Culture in Madrid, and the World Expo in Seville, which also included the unveiling of the rapid train service, Alta Velocidad Española (AVE). Underlining this atmosphere of rapid and intense progress was a familiar desire to reconcile the new and the old. Antonio Sánchez cites the inclusion of Semana Santa drummers in the 1992 Olympic opening ceremony as an example of the ‘flexibility of premodern practices adapting to a completely new cultural context, as well as illustrating the vitality within Spain of certain pre-modern cultural practices’ (Sánchez 2007, 186).

The figure of the nun is not so flexible and her reality proves more difficult to contain in contemporary discourse. When Jordi González, whose controversial coverage of the niños robados scandal on Telecinco’s El debate had already drawn criticism from victims’ groups, broached the topic again in a series of talk-show style specials, he framed the scandal as an anachronism. Introducing a specific case from 1995, he adds:


Himself contributing to the revival of a rhetorical anachronism, González places a particular emphasis on the role of devious nuns in the scandal, falling back on the same gothic motifs found in El Socialista a century earlier. In a segment on the investigation into Sor María Gómez Valbuena, González dramatically introduces the nun as a ‘figura siniestra, siniestra’ and goes on to describe how ‘la oscura y siniestra sombra de esa mujer sigue proyectándose sobre las víctimas’, conjuring up images of the nun as a
Nosferatu-like, baby stealing demon. Of course, the attempt to fit the nun into a coherent narrative by positioning her as an absolute Other was ill-conceived and contributed to the sensationalist tone of the series, but it illustrates well both popular conceptions of religious women and the persisting difficulties in their representation. Moreover, González’ dramatic juxtaposition of a crime so seemingly archaic and its contemporary backdrop highlights the specific moment of Canción de cuna’s renewed critical and commercial success as one in which convent narratives had no place. It is the management of this incongruity of the narrative in its moment of narration which this chapter will now examine in more detail, exploring both Elorrieta’s and García’s films in order to more clearly map changes in the representation of women’s enclosed space over time.

**Trespass and the Integrity of the Convent Walls**

Habéis venido aquí para escuchar un cuento,  
Y os han hecho saltar las tapias de un convento.  
¡Atrevimiento insigne! ¡Casi Profanación!  
Mas ¿qué no hará un poeta por buscar la emoción?

The above lines, taken from the original script for Canción de cuna, were reproduced in the March 1st 1966 issue of El ruedo: Semanario gráfico de los toros. The article in which they were quoted, ‘Contrasentidos de la bravura’, decried the tendency of contemporary bullfighters to move too close to the bulls in the ring in order to trigger a more dramatic and entertaining response from the animal. The author criticised these ‘buscadores de oro y buscadores también de emociones a cualquier precio’ (Fernández Salcedo 1965) for their artlessness, comparing them to the audacious poet described above. He also goes on to cite as a contributing factor the poor quality of the bulls, who allowed, and even provoked, this encroachment through their docility and their refusal to cooperate in the spectacle of the corrido without such crude aggravation. This unusual choice of quotation
not only speaks to the continued currency of the play into the 1960s – the quotation is introduced with the words ‘como recordarán ustedes, en Canción de cuna…’ – but provides an insight into how its themes reflected the broader interplay of interdiction, spectacle, and national symbolism at work in this era. The opening up of the nation space to technocratic modernity demanded a radical re-evaluation of boundaries while simultaneously, the construction of Spain as a cultural product for international consumption also insisted on a reassertion of these sacred spaces as receptacles of national identity. The bullfighter must infringe on the space of the bull and jeopardise the legitimacy of his craft in order to produce a more visible, if less authentic, expression of Spanishness, one more clearly in line with the vision of Spain as ‘different’.

The treatment of Spanish convent space in Canción de cuna, not only in its 1961 incarnation but from its conception to Garci’s version over eighty years later, illustrates a similar drive to render culturally visible and economically profitable a particularly esoteric and enigmatic facet of Spanish life, despite such visibility inherently compromising its characteristic intimacy. The satisfaction of this drive is particularly contentious in Canción de cuna, where the plot and staging is so much at odds with the solitude and eventlessness of monasticism. Canción de cuna is a text that ostensibly celebrates the idiosyncrasies of convent life while simultaneously demanding a radical reconfiguration of its basic precepts. The translation of the cloister setting to the stage entails the breach of the supposedly impenetrable convent walls. In the original play, Lejárraga capitalises on the novelty of this intrusion for dramatic effect, breaking the two acts with a lengthy rhyming chorus addressed directly to the audience, a device which not only breaks through the traditional fourth wall of the stage (which in this case coincides with the fourth wall of the consecrated cloister), but also playfully neutralizes the taboo of trespassing on sacred ground. The playwright, audience, and narrator are all gleefully
Complicit in this voyeuristic thrill while any real threat to their sense of security posed by the alterity of the convent is mitigated through the play’s repositioning of the enclosed, unknowable nuns in the glare of the footlights and the socially intelligible framework of family and domesticity.

Although neither Elorrieta nor Garci’s adaptations of Canción de cuna incorporate these or any other lines from the chorus, both films are keenly aware of their own ‘atrevimiento insigne’. Elorrieta’s 1961 film in particular operates at the intersection of the desire to breach the consecrated limits of traditional Spain and the need to maintain an attitude of reverence towards those boundaries - the thrill of the former cannot be achieved in the absence of the latter. In a movement parallel to the reduction of Teresa de Jesús’ mysticism to a set of institutionalised images and practices (a change intensified with her centenary the same year, see chapter one, p.35), the film reduces the spiritually, historically, and culturally complex phenomenon of the convent to the field of the spectacle. The convent walls and their related protocol are displayed as empty artefacts and performative formulae which simultaneously reinforce Otherness while declaring their own inconsequence. Its ‘difference’ now purely superficial, the convent’s power to signify is amputated just at the point where it can be incorporated into the monotonous landscape of ‘sol y naranjas, tablaos flamencos y playas paradisíacas’ (Grandes 2011) conjured up in the opening sequence. Compounding this, the mudejar arches, palm trees, and white walls of these title cards suggest a shift of the action from the original play’s Castille to Andalusia - the more easily identifiable Spain of the españolada. What Elorrieta offers is a landscape of Spain in the abstract, a space of sutured icons with limited signifying power and heightened commercial appeal.

By 1994, Garci must work even harder to re-establish the integrity of convent space and recreate the thrill of profane incursion on sacred ground. Like Elorrieta, he
achieves this in part by emphasising the convent as a site of nostalgia and an axiomatic trope of national identity, subordinating the peculiarities of women’s enclosed lives to the grand narrative of social change in Spain and attributing significance to the convent as a relic of a national, collective past. Reviews of the film confirm its success in annexing the cloister to the abstract space of the nation, Julián Marías describing it as ‘absolutamente española, más aún, saturada de ambientes, escenarios, personajes y asunto rigurosamente españoles. … que lleve dentro la modalidad española, la actitud española ante la vida’ (Marías 1994). In this, Marías not only defines nuns and the convent as ‘rigurosamente españoles’ but proclaims as ‘rigurosamente español’ the style in which Garci presents them, ‘sobria, ceñida, rigrosa, que no se permite ningún exceso’(Marías 1994). These adjectives not only accurately describe the very elements of the film which set it apart from the earlier version but mark a return to a definition of Spanishness built around Castillian austerity rather than Andalucian spectacle. The overcast, autumnal landscape advances the theme of nostalgia while rejecting the vision of Spain constructed under the dictatorship.

Moreover, by situating their convents in idealised landscapes, both films reject the gothic construction of the Spanish convent as a gloomy den of sin and decay, reclaiming an important part of the Spanish cultural landscape for the Spanish viewing public. However, this recuperation of the convent does not constitute the nuanced process of thought and imagination truly necessary to work towards resolving the anxieties around women’s enclosure. Instead, this anxiety is disavowed and elided in the giddy nervousness of ‘atrevimiento insigne’, where enclosure is an affective force experienced more intensely by outsiders than the nuns themselves. Visitors and the audience engage with the rituals and built environment of enclosure, independently of the enclosed. In Elorrieta’s film, when Teresa (Soledad Miranda) first encounters her self-assured suitor
Antonio (Jaime Avellán) in the orchard, he is shocked and chastened to find he has inadvertently intruded on a convent. Later, this uncharacteristic apprehension is reinforced explicitly in the dialogue when he admits to having walked around the walls but to have been afraid to enter, hoping instead to ‘encontrarla fuera de aquel santo lugar’. Antonio’s hammed up reverence for sacred space is centred around the physical and institutional aspects of the convent; he barely takes into consideration its inhabitants. In contrast, Garci’s film produces a direct relationship between audience and architecture but does this counterintuitively, providing no exterior shots of the convent walls. Instead, the film is bookended with an interior shot of a grilled, circular window. This shot coincides with Teresa’s entrance and exit from the convent but does not reproduce this movement. Instead, the eye of the viewer is mapped onto the *oeil de boeuf* window, cementing an identification between the audience and the peculiarities of the convent’s built environment to the exclusion of the women it encloses. In both cases the nuns, the mysterious element that would shift the register of the ‘atrevimiento insigne’ from playful to threatening, is elided.

This appropriation of convent space by outsiders is actually bolstered by the nuns who themselves seriously undermine the integrity of the walls. Garci’s Madre Tornera (María Luisa Ponte, the nun in charge of doors and keys) serves as comic relief, the comedy directly derived from her exaggerated commitment to her task. Despite thirty years of mockery from the convent’s doctor, Don José (Alfredo Landa), she still insists on the ritual of walking before him with a bell to alert the community to the presence of a man. Her good-natured doggedness echoes the tenacity of the narrative itself, and perhaps even offers a flattering reflection of the filmmaker and the audience in their own nostalgic undertaking. Elorrieta’s Hermana Tornera (María Jesús Groy) is a more purely comic
character, the humour here stemming from her incompetence, at one point locking the pantry door to keep the cat out only to realize later that she has locked him in.

Significantly, Elorrieta’s Hermana Tornera first appears when she rushes through the cloister to give the Priora her saint’s day present only to realize she forgot to announce herself with the routine ‘Ave María Purísima’. This ritualistic refrain, and the response ‘Sin pecado concebida’, loses currency with each repetition until it is abandoned in the climactic scene when Antonio, finally enters the convent to meet the nuns and take Teresa away with him. At first, they address him formally with the traditional ‘Ave María Purísima’ but the progressive, secular technocrat is unfamiliar with the refrain. The nuns accommodate the intruder to the detriment of their own boundaries and it is they who revert to the secular ‘muy buenas tardes, caballero’, with a giggle and a knowing smile between themselves to let the audience know they are complicit in this - to return to the term again - ‘atrevimiento insigne’. Their concession of the upper hand to the engineer, whose plans to extend railway lines into the area will inevitably transform the space of the convent, supplements the sentimental scene with an air of the contractual, which is confirmed when Antonio promises that his house will always be a God fearing one. The union of religious tradition and technological progress, represented by the nuns and Antonio respectively and consolidated in Antonio and Teresa’s marriage, reflects the dual priorities of the conservative, Catholic, and technocratic ministers who entered government in the late 1950s. Tatjana Pavlović has described this group as:

Technocrats and the professional cadres who had faith in statistics and rates of productivity rather than Spain’s divine mission. ‘Scientific’ governance with its host of technocrats required a new vocabulary, a switch from a militaristic and providential lexicon to one of stock charts and percentages. (Pavlovic 2011, 11)
It was these ministers, many of whom were members of the Opus Dei, who pushed through reforms such as the Stabilization Plan of 1959, and laid the groundwork for the rapid economic growth of the 1960s (Townson 2007, 3). The scene’s translation of spiritual discourse into contractual terms both posits such changes as natural, while conflating the visibility of nuns and their acquiescence to the new social order. The act of translation assimilates the nuns to that order, rendering them socially intelligible in a way that buttresses the authority of the technocrats with divine power.

By 1994 however, such an alliance between church and state is no longer desirable and Garci instead presents the systematic casting aside of the language of enclosure as poignant but inevitable. In the 1994 encounter between the nuns and Teresa’s suitor, Pablo (Carmelo Gómez), Don José acts as interpreter for Pablo, whose disorientation speaks to contemporary Spaniards living lives increasingly governed by global events, academic and financial calendars rather than religious ones.

**Pablo:** Hacía mucho tiempo que deseaba ver a ustedes. Pero la primera vez que vine al pueblo era…
**Don José:** Adviento.
**Pablo:** Adviento. La segunda era…
**Don José:** Cuaresma.
**Pablo:** Cuaresma.

The stuttering exchange establishes Pablo as an outsider to the convent while his sincere but strained attempts to remember religious festivals that he might not have celebrated in a while aligns his worldview with that of the audience. More importantly, it emphasizes his respectfulness in approaching enclosure and the warmth of his reception there. While Pablo admits he is afraid of the nuns it is not because he has taken on cultural anxieties around the dark, gothic nun of popular fiction. He assures the nun that his fear comes ‘a fuerza de respeto y de cariño’. It is this atmosphere of harmonious convergence between
past and present which allows Garci to reconcile in the film’s climax what reviewer Antonio Colón thought irreconcilable: ‘valores que parecían definitivamente olvidados’ and ‘la ley de la oferta y demanda’ (Colón 1994). While Pablo’s reverence frames his request to see the nuns’ faces before leaving the convent as a mark of respect for a fading tradition, their compliance also satisfies the voyeuristic impulse to expose the obscured - the very same impulse which drives less wholesome representations of the convent in the gothic and in nunsploitation. The recurring aphorism ‘saber mirar es saber amar’, coined by the priora and later repeated by Don José, reframes Pablo’s scopic drive as a universal impulse to knowledge and love of the Other.

Figure 16 Teresa’s fiancé encounters the nuns in Canción de cuna 1994 (left) and 1961 (right)

The pulling back of the locutorio curtains to reveal the nuns’ faces is not just the narrative climax of Canción de cuna but encapsulates the drive behind it: to unmask the mysterious monsters lurking in the darkness of enclosure and reveal them as harmless, ‘just like us’. In this, the text contrasts starkly to another comparable film that more comfortably plays with the taboo of the unseen, Ladislao Vajda’s 1955 Marcelino, pan y vino. This film, centred around an abandoned baby boy raised by a community of monks, is not only similar in terms of plot and setting but also in that its dramatic arc is driven by

14 Like Canción de cuna, Marcelino, pan y vino has also been remade on numerous occasions: a 1979 Philippine version, a 2000 Spanish/Japanese animation series, a 1991 Italian film, and a 2010 Mexican adaptation set during the Mexican Revolution. In contrast to Canción de cuna however ‘all these reiterations extract the film from its national and temporal origins, and thus obscure its ideological project paradoxically by universalizing the story just as the original film intended’ (Crumbaugh 2014, 343).
an Otherness at the centre of enclosed space. The orphan Marcelino discovers a mysterious figure in the monastery attic and although initially frightened, he eventually befriends the man: a miraculously animated plaster statue of Christ. However, this figure is not visible to the audience and, when the film culminates with the miracle of Marcelino’s reunion with his mother and Jesus in heaven, this spectacle also remains off-screen, only visible to the viewer through the amazed expressions of the monks as they watch through chinks in the door and then, through the poignant image of Marcelino’s lifeless body next to the now inanimate crucifix. Sarah Wright has noted how, in this dynamic, the film’s aesthetic coincides with Sobchack’s definition of the horror genre as working through ‘the occlusion and then revelation of something horrible’ (Wright 2013, 49). While Marcelino appears to be a straightforward sentimental hagiography, the devices of horror operating underneath the surface allow for more imaginative engagement with divine Otherness on the part of the audience.

No such freedom is allowed the viewer or subject of Canción de cuna. In contrast to the evocative shadows of Marcelino’s attic every inch of Elorrieta’s convent is illuminated by blinding white light, intensified against the white walls and novices’ white habits. Even before the climatic unveiling of the nuns faces for Antonio, everything in the cloister is visible, creating what Henri Lefebvre has termed an ‘illusion of transparency’ that goes hand in hand with a view of space as innocent, as free of traps or secret places. Anything hidden or dissimulated — and hence dangerous — is antagonistic to transparency, under whose reign everything can be taken in by a single glance from that mental eye which illuminates whatever it contemplates. (Lefebvre 1991, 28)
This transparency purges the Spanish convent of its gothic traces, instating the external gaze as a regulating force over it. This force, also at play in Juan de Orduña’s bare, highly institutionalised mise-en-scène in *Teresa de Jesús* (see chapter one), reduces Otherness to mere idiosyncrasy and, in liberating the space from the anxiety of the unknown, eliminates its mystical potential. Even released from the panoptic impulse of the dictatorship, Garci’s film works towards a similar transparency. However, by avoiding the dazzling glare of Elorrieta’s film he manages to maintain an atmosphere of intimacy even as he dismantles the convent’s potential for deceptive traps or secret places. He illuminates the convent instead with a fresh autumnal light which washes the screen in sepia tones, the palette of nostalgia. While Elorrieta is primarily concerned with illuminating space, Garci’s film also operates on a temporal dimension, extending the reign of transparency not only across the spatial boundary of the convent wall but into the receding past, claiming the site of religious women’s enclosure as part of a universal, but also peculiarly Spanish experience.

Agapito Maestre has also recognised this transparency in Garci’s aesthetic, describing *Canción de cuna* as ‘una mirada limpia a la vida’, adding that it challenges ‘quienes huyan del teresiano pensamiento hispánico: “Dios está entre los pucheros”’ (Maestre 2012, 82). This description resonates with both Lefebvre’s definition of transparency and the opening sequence of the film, the camera slowly moving through the convent as the night shadows dissipate and dawn floods the cloister, the cells, the garden, the sewing room, and, of course, the kitchen. This vision of spiritual practice extended into all, even the most mundane, areas of life speaks to both conventional understandings of the phrase ‘Dios está entre los pucheros’ and the audience’s potential dissatisfaction with the spiritual vacuum and relentless novelty of postmodernism, which was by 1994 running its course. However, Garci’s meticulous cataloguing of the community’s daily
life forecloses on the ineffable and volatile potentials of women’s enclosed space. The omnipresence of God in the ‘teresiano pensamiento hispánico’ is translated into the omnipresence of the camera, and the panoptic drive to observe and regulate which was supposedly rejected with the dictatorship becomes mixed in with a moral urge to recognise and know the Other. This is confirmed in Maestre’s description of the film as ‘una forma de saber sobre el alma de quien vive con serenidad’ that connects the audience with ‘una naturaleza divinizada [que] nos da un ‘conocimiento’ también absoluto de sentimientos tan comunes a todos nosotros como la alegría y la tristeza’ (Maestre 2012, 84).

The idea of ‘una naturaleza divinizada’ is significant in the context of Canción de cuna as it marks the underlying principle of Don José, the character most key to the crossing of the convent wall, in whom spiritual tradition and rational progress are brought together, if not reconciled, and through whom the audience’s ‘atrevimiento insigne’ is achieved and justified. Don José enters the convent as a man of science with the goal of examining and diagnosing the nuns for their own benefit; the audience enters with him, their scopic drive disguised as the doctor’s scopic obligation. In both versions the doctor is characterised by an irreverent but humourous mix of spiritual and medical advice. Both Don Josés (Antonio Garisa and Alfredo Landa) prescribe ‘una cataplasma y cinco padre nuestros – ni uno menos’ to a nun with a splinter. Similarly, Alfredo Landa’s doctor chastises the Priora for her fasting, insisting that she eat properly ‘como manda la santa biología’.

In the original play, this rhetoric reflects the beginning of the shift from spiritual to biological discourses as societal frameworks, but the tone shifts in the two adaptations under discussion to reflect their contemporary attitudes. Garisa’s affable Don José reinforces the union of tradition and progress in which 1960s Spain was grounded. Landa
offers a likeable, but more mature character, his jokes about ‘la santa biología’ betraying a resigned frustration with the nuns’ disregard for physical realities that later gives way to his own nostalgia for more spiritual approaches to maladies as he responds to an enquiry about his health with ‘nada que no cure un salmo quam dilecta’. Both adaptations retain the doctor’s unsettling inscription of the nun’s bodies into heteronormative frameworks, which perhaps the atrevimiento más insigne of the narrative. Inspecting the splintered finger, Garisa’s Don José describes it as ‘mono’. In both versions, another ill nun is described as ‘palidita pero torneada’. Most tellingly, both Don Josés prescribe for a sickly 18-year-old novice ‘o ducha o matrimonio’, a line preserved from the 1911 original which eerily foreshadowed the role doctors would have in 1920s in ‘the dissemination of a modernized gender discourse based on a reconceptualization of motherhood as a woman’s social duty’ (Nash 1999, 33), a discourse which would continue to resonate throughout the 20th century.

Maternal Destiny and the Irresistible Child

Madre si eres amante, madre si eres hermana,
Madre por pura esencia y madre a todas horas,
Si con toda mujer, porque Dios lo ha querido,
¡Dentro del corazón lleva a un hijo dormido!

Again demonstrating Canción de cuna’s cultural endurance and versatility, the above verse from the chorus was reproduced in La Nación in 1965 as part of a full page spread to celebrate mothers’ day. The poem’s insistence on women’s inherent maternal destiny as a biological fact, ‘por pura esencia’, and also divine will, ‘porque Dios lo ha querido’, reflects the broader significance of Don José’s rhetoric. It also speaks to the pro-natalism that characterised the early Francoist period, even though it had ceased to be promoted as a social reality at least a decade before La Nación’s mothers’ day spread (Nash 1994,
Sarah Wright has explored the influence of early Francoist pro-natalism on Spanish cinema in her book, *The Child in Spanish Cinema*. Here, she highlights specifically how ‘Francoist religious cinema appears to respond to [the] failure [of pro-natalism] with a corresponding build-up of the figure of the child’ (Wright 2014, 31), particularly the orphan child ‘programmed to love unconditionally an absent mother’ (Wright 2013, 17).

Examining the construction of this irresistible child though networks of auratic encounters with objects and figures, both divine and terrestrial, Wright’s study focuses primarily on *Marcelino, pan y vino* but also explores the films *Un traje blanco* (Gil 1958), *El maestro* (Fabrizi 1957), and *Cerca de la ciudad* (Lucia 1952), providing a comprehensive study of the trope of the orphan boy as it developed throughout the 1950s. Her work draws particular attention to the power of the cinematic child as a disciplinary apparatus, a gravitational force imposing social order on the viewer. The adorable faces of child stars like Pablito Calvo and Miguelito Gil elicit the maternal gaze of the female audience, the child’s unquestioned innocence and vulnerability addressing the viewer as parent and fixing them in that role. This interpellation of the audience into a social constellation based on traditional familial structures, and working in orbit around the idolized figure of the child star, advances pro-natalist objectives while facilitating and reproducing the regime’s shift in values over the period in which these films were produced. Over this period, Marcelino’s devotion to the figure of the crucified Christ gives way to the protagonist of *El traje blanco*’s obsession with a white communion suit, foreshadowing the wave of consumerism set to sweep Spain in the 1960s. Wright also notes the conspicuous absence of women, and especially girls, in this all-male world, explaining that the ‘exaltation of the male child has to do with reproductions of the Madonna and child paradigm as an aesthetic hook’ (Wright 2013, 35). With this in mind
it is clear that, despite centring around an orphan girl rather than boy and a plethora of mothers rather than an absence, 1961’s *Canción de cuna* is very much a part of this pervasive cult of motherhood as a call to social uniformity, a call from which religious women were no longer exempt.

The fetishization of motherhood in Garci’s film could easily be dismissed as nostalgia but actually also connects with social trends of the 1990s. Although Spain fell from its position as most fertile nation in 1970 to having the lowest birth rate in the world by 2000 (Zecchi 2005, 147), the discourses of pro-natalism had not disappeared, but simply become less aggressive. Barbara Zecchi (2005) and María José Gámez Fuentes (2004) have both addressed the return to traditional feminine values in Spanish cinema of the 1990s, highlighting specifically how this move was reflected in the proliferation of narratives glorifying motherhood and often presenting liberated working women finding themselves craving a baby, a husband, and a home. While 1994’s *Canción de cuna* may seem anachronistic alongside the work of Almodóvar or Álex de la Iglesia, it does have a certain resonance with other films of the 1990s (Zecchi specifically cites *Solas* (Zambrano 1999) and *Puede ser divertido* (Rodríguez 1996)) where motherhood is positioned as ‘the way for women’s’ fulfilment, and as the solution to women’s problems’ (Zecchi 2005, 148). In fact, *Canción de cuna*’s anachronistic convent setting is the ideal vehicle for such a narrative as the limitations of motherhood are set off against the futile and obsolete practice of being a nun, offering a refreshing break away from the dichotomy between mother and ‘career woman’.

Both films use the space of the convent to perpetuate the conflation of woman and mother by playing with the construction of the enclosed female space as one of lack. In this space, both child and woman is ensnared in a rigid binary of absence and presence, dissatisfaction and fulfilment – a binary in which both subjects are
unnecessarily dependent on each other. As mentioned above, Garci’s opening sequence fetishes the convent as a locus of nostalgia, but he simultaneously figures the cloister as a void. It is a space of hollow depths, a womb like space demanding penetration, its emptiness reiterated throughout in the soundtrack of dull echoes and birdsong. In contrast, Elorrieta’s convent is a space so shallow it is nearly convex, bursting with faces and voices. Elorrieta avoids shots of the length of the cloister, focussing on its interior corners in a framing which nearly inverts them. His bright, busy mise-en-scène is an aesthetics of disavowal which betrays a terror of interiority, a denial of the nuns’ interior spiritual journey and of the dark, frightening places to which that journey may take them.

Figure 17 The cloister at the beginning, middle, and end of 
*Canción de cuna* (1994)

This visual lack and its maternal connotations, although quite explicit in itself, is reiterated in the script in a scene from the original play which survives intact in both adaptations. The young nun Sor Juana confesses that her hunger for a child is so great that

siempre que comulgo, recibo al Señor en figura de niño, y así lo aprieto contra el corazón y me parece que como es tan pequeño y tan desvalido, no me puede negar cosa que le pida. Y luego se me antoja que llora, y le pido a la Virgen que me ayude a callarlo. 
(Martínez Sierra 1921, 19)
The imagery here not only reasserts the power of the ‘Madonna and child paradigm as an aesthetic hook’ (Wright 2013, 35), bringing that hook into play in the narrative, but brings the interior world of the nuns into view, positioning it as very much aligned with mainstream, heteronormative society in striking contrast to the mystical imagery women’s religious enclosure. As Patricia Walker O’Conner (1962, 80) points out, Sor Juana’s experience of the real presence of Christ in communion is very much in the tradition of Spanish mysticism but here there is a reversal of roles and a disavowal of the complexity of human relationships and women’s spiritual experiences. While San Juan de la Cruz and Teresa de Jesús feel themselves enveloped and protected in the arms of their Lord (in a markedly erotic spiritual encounter), Sor Juana imagines that she is comforting the baby Jesus, taking on the more socially useful role of self-sacrificing and asexual mother.

![Figure 18 Sor Juana and Teresa reflected in the Madonna and child](1961)

Even as the Madonna and child paradigm powerfully comes into play in *Canción de cuna*, its function is coercive rather than enticing. While the boys of the *cine religioso* condition the female gaze to gaze at children, the dynamic of the gaze in *Canción de cuna* is not directed at the child but through the child to the mother, a controlling image that constitutes a restrictive model of femininity. Significantly, the interdiction against mirrors within the convent, which is mentioned briefly in the original script but
foregrounded in both films, leaves the image of the virgin mother as the only reflection available to the nuns, becoming a model they have no choice but to conform to. The Madonna as limiting reflection is foregrounded in Elorrieta’s film during Teresa’s christening where the audience is caught between the image of the Madonna and child above the altar and Sor Juana holding Teresa, as she looks up at the painting, the parallel images forming an unbreakable cycle of representation which will not allow for anything outside it. The possibility of something else coming in has been foreclosed on early in the film with the confiscation of Sor Marcela’s hand mirror which she used whenever she felt a desire to ‘subirse a los árboles, y de trepar por las paredes, y de saltar las tapias de la huerta… Servidora coge un rayo de sol en el espejo y le pasea por entre las ramas y por el techo de la celda y por las paredes de enfrente’. Garci represents her renunciation of the mirror, and of the fantasy she had created of herself, as a coming to maturity, and shows her also confiscating a mirror years later when she herself becomes priora. Elorrieta simply uses it to portray the nun’s silliness.

In a further contrast to the films in Wright’s study, it is not the child that provides the aesthetic hook in Canción de cuna but the mother as she is constituted through the child. Teresa’s childhood is elided in the jump between acts; there is a brief montage of her as a very clean and well behaved child in the 1961 version while Garci skips over the entire 18 years. Also elided in both films is one of the most striking features of the stageplay: the radical childishness of the Lejárraga’s unruly, giggling, energetic nuns. Elorrieta’s version exploits Sor Marcela’s transgressions in the opening scenes for comic effect but when she is reprimanded she is immediately chastened. Garci portrays her as wistful rather than wayward – all his nuns are dignified and mature ladies of impeccable comportment. This is a significant contrast to the treatment of boys in the cine religioso, particularly Marcelino, a child very much in tune with the forces of chaos, who draws a
great deal of his charm from this affinity. Both Elorrieta’s and Garci’s Canción de cuna work to suppress the girl child’s ability ‘to relentlessly enact the heterogeneous, spontaneous and indefinable’ (Baraitser 2009, 21), a suppression all the more significant because it is an ability children share with mystics.

**Time and the Snares of Progress**

La vida va tejiéndose con ritmo tan igual,  
Corre tan clara el agua, es tan limpio el cristal,  
Que el tiempo se ha dormido en la quietud fragante;  
¡Quién sabe si pasó un siglo o un instante!

Both the breakdown of the convent walls and the assimilation of nuns into the model of the heteronormative family, produce and inflect a third challenge to the integrity of female monastic space within Canción de cuna that is magnified in both the versions under discussion here: the distortion of time. In the original play, Lejárraga fetishizes what she describes as ‘el tiempo sin tiempo’ of the convent, figuring it as a space unshackled from the relentless forward thrust of history and progress. However, the narrative as a whole works against this alternative chronology; the introduction of the child Teresa into the convent, her coming of age, and subsequent marriage brings this spiritual community under the jurisdiction of a rigid chronology governed by the practicalities of child rearing, political change, technological development, and reproductive futurity. The tension between the community’s identification with a space outside time and their practical commitment to the child’s future is latent in the original script. It generates a temporal acrobatics which becomes more pronounced with every retelling as the gap between the moment of the narrative’s conception recedes into a more distant past, obscured by a century’s worth of radical change.

The ease with which the turn-of-the-century narrative of La hermana San Sulpicio is translated to the 1970s in Sor Yé-yé and La novicia rebelde contrasts starkly with the
halting vacillation of *Canción de cuna* as it is resuscitated once and again, a living anachronism repeatedly awakening in strange new worlds. The greater versatility of *La Hermana San Sulpicio* is partly facilitated by its focus on one individual nun living outside convent enclosure. Working in the highly regulated and uncompromisingly modern setting of a hospital, Hermana San Sulpicio has neither the time nor space for the intense contemplation and introspection that facilitates the unmarked, flat time of the convent. As such, she can easily be recuperated and assimilated into the modern world. All versions of the narrative end with her leaving the religious community to marry a doctor, tracing a linear progression out of the pre-modern spirituality of convent life into the world of rapid technological evolution. This linearity is reinforced through minor changes in the narrative. For example, the pseudo-scientific spa of Valdés original is upgraded to a modern, technologically equipped hospital in *La novicia rebelde*. Similarly, the doctor/poet of the novel is rendered much less a poet and much more a man of science, his cool-headed pragmatism providing a foil for the dreamy *novicia rebelde*. As in *Canción de cuna*, the relationship between the man of science and the nun, flattering mirrors that between government technocrats and the church in the 1960s, reconciling progress and tradition but giving progress the upper hand.

In contrast, *Canción de cuna* is a narrative very much rooted in the immutable space of the convent, the story of a community rather than an individual. Both Elorrieta and Garci’s films must work with the abiding frustration of the scopic drive produced by the inscrutability of the convent walls and the compulsion towards rendering veiled and enclosed subjects, living according to an ancient rule, socially intelligible to a changing audience. In different ways, both directors overcome these challenges by exploiting the timelessness of the convent, establishing the cloister as a space alien to progress, evolution, and development. The convent is positioned as a blank canvas produced from
religious structures so ubiquitous to Spanish life that, even though it has been moulded by the forces of history and culture, it can be perceived as a tabula rasa.

Both productions can be said to take up what Justin Crumbaugh has defined as central to *Marcelino, pan y vino*, ‘the rhetoric of the “España eterna,”’ the timeless Spain of unchanging values and a distinct national essence’ (Crumbaugh 2014, 340). Elorrieta simply refuses to incorporate change into the space of the convent and preposterously, while Teresa grows from infant to young woman, neither the nuns nor Don José age in any way. The film is set in a ‘synthetic’ past in which Spain’s history is celebrated but the values specific to 1961 are portrayed as timeless and universal: the glory of Spain’s empire flourishes, the values of consumerism reign, and women wear theatrical dresses that seem to be inspired more by 1950s Hollywood rather than any historical reality. Garci is more subtle, organically structuring the convent as a site of endless repetition. The two ‘acts’ of the film self-consciously reflect each other, novices replace senior nuns and repeat the advice they were given to the novices who in turn replaced them. Motifs and seasons recur cyclically, the routine of work and prayer is unbroken. To return again to Colón’s perplexed review of the film, its cultivated cyclicity speaks to the inevitability of ‘el eterno retorno’ that the film’s sheer existence in 1994 exemplifies.

However, there is also latent in the figure of the nun, in her space, and particularly in this film, an echo chamber in which to sound ‘el vaivén de las modas’ (Colón 1994). As a site freed from teleological impulses, convent space is used in *Canción de cuna* as a palimpsest on which the anxieties of Spanish society are staged and its values inscribed and reaffirmed. These films conflate the voyeuristic thrill of looking through the walls to gaze at the radically ‘other’, with the narcissistic buzz of seeing the self-reflected and validated through association with the eternal allowing new culturally and historically relative ideas to be construed as natural. Elorrieta’s film was released in a key moment at
the dawn of *desarrollismo*, Spain’s great leap from stagnant autarky to consumerist technocracy, and on the eve of the 1962 Second Vatican Council that would radically redefine the role of the church in society. These two transformative moments would inform the treatment of religious women in popular culture later in the decade, and an analysis of these new images can illuminate the motivations behind Elorrieta’s and Garci’s films. The prime example of this is *Sor Citroen* (1967), Pedro Lazaga’s film following the misadventures of the delightfully inept, Sor Tomasa (Gracita Morales), described by Jorge Pérez in his study of the film as

> an unconventional nun who is aware that spiritual values have to stay attuned to market demands and progress, […] a non-threatening clerical image who has assimilated the changes following the II Vatican Council, […] the perfect embodiment of a sterilized version of *desarrollismo*. (Pérez 2007, 16)

‘Non-threatening’ is an apt term to describe the smiling Sor Tomasa as she dashes about Madrid in her Citroen 2CV rescuing orphans, but ironic in that she is a terrible driver and very much a threat to the people of Madrid. Indeed, much of the comedy of the film is derived from the stereotype of the ‘bad woman driver’ repeatedly coming within a hair’s breadth of mowing down innocent bystanders. This modern stereotype overlays older, premodern ideas about the inherently dangerous and uncontrollable nun, producing a new subject which still speaks to the rhetoric of danger and security which has characterised the discourse of convent enclosure since *Periculoso*. Sor Citroen reveals the shift in approaches towards the containment of dangerous women from uncompromising enforced enclosure to the individualization of the subject and their placement in a field of constant visibility. Sor Citroen may be a menace on the roads but her integration into the newly mobile Spanish nation through her ownership of the car allows for her to be monitored. Her commitment to the goals of *desarrollismo* and her endorsement of its
values is reassuring, even more so because her attempts to live up to them are so inept and unthreatening.

This potent union of the nun, as a vestige of pre-modern Spain, and the car, a symbol of its consumerist future, was also used to successfully promote the music of *Las monjitas del Jeep* (who had two hit albums in the late 1960s) and would also feature prominently in the final scenes of *La novicia rebelde*. The role of the car in this film betrays the conservative values motivating the trope of the driving nun. *La novicia rebelde*’s final sequence begins with the self-sufficient novice, Gloria, changing the oil in her car. Mobile in terms of car ownership but inert in affairs of the heart, she struggles to confess her love for the doctor and it is only on the road that she finally realizes religious life is not for her - just as she drives by the doctor whose own car has broken down. Casting aside her habit for a remarkably trendy floral dress, Gloria stops to help and finds romantic love on the side of the motorway. Her car has brought her out of the convent and into the future but her tomorrow is not a mysterious sunset of endless possibilities, it is one prescribed and curtailed by the authority of technocrats and furnished by consumerism. The car simply moves her from one form of enclosure to another.

With these later films in mind we can better understand the shift away from convent space which Elorrieta attempts to manoeuvre in his 1961 *Canción de cuna*. Radically adapting the original plot, the film no longer focuses solely on the nuns as they find a place for Teresa within their community. Instead, Elorrieta tells a more conventional love story between the orphan Teresa and her love interest Antonio which develops entirely outside the convent but very much within the frameworks of consumerism, the defining theme of *desarrollismo*. In a key scene, Antonio spots Teresa through a shop window as she arranges a display of needlework produced in the convent. His penetrating gaze of desire as he watches her through the window, powerfully
conflates consumerism with romantic love. The positioning of Teresa in the shop window alongside the rest of the merchandise contrasts starkly with the veiling of the nuns behind the thick metal grill of the convent *locutorio*, underscoring their alienation from the contemporary world.

With this same parallel, Elorrieta operates a key shift that will make way for the high visibility of post Second Vatican Council nuns. In his film, the ignorance of the nuns now takes precedence over their own unknowability and the unnerving sensation of being seen by the unseen is mitigated by the nuns’ own blindness. Similarly, their inability to observe and process modernity contrasts with Antonio whose comprehensive maps and charts of the area imply a rigorous panopticism. Their inability to move contrasts with the heightened mobility presaged by the railway project. Their attachment to tradition is strikingly juxtaposed to Antonio’s sidekick, the financier of the railway project, who continually spouts the refrain ‘hay que ir con el espíritu progresivo de la época’. Antonio completes the shift from religious to technocratic authority in the final sequence, with his request that the nuns draw back the curtain of the *locutorio* so that he can clearly see the faces of his ‘suegras’. Fulfilling his request, the nuns allow for the territorialisation of sacred space by the consuming gaze of technocracy and their assimilation into a network of visibility structured around the technological progress and the reproductive futurity.

Garci’s nuns cannot escape this network of visibility either. The technocratic dream born in the 1960s was finally realised with the opening of *Alta Velocidad Española* during the Seville World Fair in the golden year of 1992. The events of that year, according to Helen Graham and Antonio Sánchez, ‘were explicitly intended to celebrate Spain’s coming of age as a modern, democratic European nation-state’, and ‘seemed to be part of an official attempt to represent Spain’s new, ‘modern’, democratic national identity as if it were built on a tabula rasa’ (Graham and Sánchez 1995, 406). Garci’s film
both situates itself within the global network constructed through the events of 1992 and reacts against it, reproducing the ‘temporal dislocation and sense of anachronism that characterises contemporary Spain, where accelerated development – particularly since 1975 – has produced a sense of living in different time frames at once’ (Graham and Sánchez 1995, 409). While very faithful to Lejárraga’s original elsewhere, García’s adaptation introduces a number of references to the international community. The nuns gossip about the English engineers who work with Sor Juana’s brother-in-law; the titular ‘canción de cuna’ is the very unSpanish Toora Loora Loora, the melody of which Sor Juana learnt from an Irish woman in her village; and the dress pattern for Teresa’s wedding dress has come straight from Paris. However, this enthusiasm for cross-border co-operation in industry and culture is tempered by a subtle nostalgia for Spain’s bendito atraso. As the nuns busily prepare Teresa’s wedding dress from the Paris pattern, the camera lingers on Hermana Vicaria covering the images of scandalous French women in corsets with pictures of the Holy Family. When the convent doctor, Don José, brings the nuns a newspaper they wonder at the beauty and blondeness of the English Princess Victoria Eugenie, and are enthralled by the details of her ill-fated wedding to Alfonso XIII of Spain. Again however, this global engagement is tempered by Don José’s comment that Victoria Eugenie ‘no sabe en que país se ha metido’, conjuring an image of the foreigner in Spain as a fish out of water, a dulled echo of the refrain España es diferente.

Me-myself-at-a-distance

In the final sequence of 1994’s Canción de cuna, Pablo approaches with apprehension a veiled group of unknown women – his Others in many senses of the word.
In the moment of greatest dramatic tension, he requests that the nuns reveal their faces to him. As the windows are opened daylight dispels the room’s shadowy gloom and with it, Pablo’s fears. The faces revealed are far from Lorca’s image of ‘esencias rotas de amor y maternidad’. The camera pans slowly across each nun’s illuminated countenance as if to reassure the audience that none of them is the baby-stealing, ‘figura siniestra’ created by the media. In the light, the ‘aberración religiosa’ that El Socialista described as leading these women away from the path of motherhood, becomes a quaint idiosyncrasy easily assimilable to Pablo’s worldview. He addresses them as ‘suegras’ and they become exactly that: mothers as much engaged in the heteronormative project of futurity as he is. In the moment of unveiling, both Pablo and the audience achieve the voyeuristic thrill of ‘knowing’ the Other. They do not experience this as thrill, voyeurism, or intrusion, but as the ethical satisfaction of having traversed a distance to approach the Other on their terms, and with respect - this distance being an analogy for the gap between genders, classes, faiths, races, etc. It is a gap condensed and materialized in these films as the walls, bars, grills, and curtains of enclosure. This ethical act of traversing distance to approach the other is culturally valued work, particularly when that distance is figured as the physical borders of religious women’s enclosure.

The moral worth of crossing the convent threshold is explicitly evident in the nun films of the 50s and 60s that feature nuns travelling outside of Europe as missionaries. Their traversal of geographical distance to encounter the Other is framed as an act of supreme charity and courage. However, the nun’s primary journey out of Spain and into an alien nation of savages is often mirrored in a second, smaller movement at the centre of the narrative. The nuns’ commitment to their encounter with the Other is reiterated and magnified at the precise moment they traverse the threshold of their enclosure. Sor María (Rosanna Schiaffino) in Encrucijada para una monja (1967) breaks the Mother
Superior’s rules and leaves the precinct of the mission to help the victim of a snakebite. In the final moments of *Sor Intrépida* (1952), Sor María de la Asunción (Dominique Blanchar) steps out onto the porch of the church to confront the indigenous people coming to attack the community directly. This submission of the self to the encounter with the Other is presented as an admirable act of self-annihilation - Sor María is brutally raped and Sor María de la Asunción is martyred (although we do not see this, her martyrdom is implied in her departure from enclosure).

Pablo’s encounter with the Other is of a very different nature. While his purely scopic encounter with the nuns creates the illusion of a distance traversed, he stops short at the threshold to merely look across it - as into a mirror. Such a narcissistic gaze figures differences between people as the relation between the self and an external locus of that same self’s identity. The encounter across the threshold institutes distance as the condition of recognising and justifying the self, eliding the difference inherent to the Other in order to reconcile their figure to a coherent and totalizing world vision. Aptly, Alain Badiou has explained how such a “mimetic” conception that locates original access to the other in my own redoubled image also sheds light on that element of self-forgetting that characterizes the grasping of this other’ (Badiou 2002, 21). He goes on to formulate this self-forgetting in spatial terms: ‘what I cherish is that me-myself-at-a-distance which, precisely because it is ‘objectified’ for my consciousness, founds me as a stable construction, as an interiority accessible *in its exteriority*’ (Badiou 2002, 21).

Pablo’s scopic penetration of the veiled, mysterious Other not only dispels the monstrous images which occupy her place in the darkness, but positions that Other as a mere reflection and extension of himself. He sees in the generically maternal faces of the nuns the validation of his own projects and goals while the enclosed women become reduced to, and enclosed in, the regime of sameness that restricts them to reproductive roles.
The narcissism of this gaze is nothing new but bearing in mind Badiou’s formulation of the encounter in terms of interiority and exteriority, its positioning in the context of female enclosure is both interesting and problematic. The stable construction of Pablo’s fragile ‘I’ can only prevail because it is buttressed by the unyielding structure of the convent wall, guaranteeing the necessary distance which both enables this self-affirming encounter and confirms it as an ethical act. This model is more explicitly at play in gothic convent literature, in nunsploitation films, in the closely related genre of the ‘women-in-prison’ film, and arguably even in Jordi González sensational investigations into the nuns involved in the niños robados scandal. However, in these cases, the ethical work of traversing distance to approach the Other is elided and the exploitation of enclosed space as an exteriorised canvas on which to project interior desires, fears, and anxieties takes precedence. Like Pablo, the voyeur of nunsploitation approaches the limits of confinement to encounter the other as a ‘me-myself-at-a-distance’ but the enclosed woman of exploitation film functions not as a reflection to be greeted with an acknowledgment of sameness, but as an icon of abjection.

In both cases, the prominence of the walls in the narrative, as well as the audience’s identification with the characters outside or entering enclosure rather than those within, results in a reinscription of ‘the opposition between the diegetic and the extradiegetic within the fiction itself’ (Silverman 1988, 54). While these tropes do not coincide entirely geometrically with the mechanisms through which Kaja Silverman claims this reinscription is achieved in classic Hollywood cinema, the treatment of women’s enclosed space in Canción de cuna particularly, and in Spanish cinema more broadly, often leads to what Silverman has described as a redefinition of:

interiority and exteriority […] as areas within the narrative rather than as indicators of the great divide separating the diegesis from
the enunciation. ‘Inside’ comes to designate a recessed space within the story, while ‘outside’ refers to those elements of the story which seem in one way or another to frame that recessed space. (Silverman 1988, 54)

Silverman goes on to assert the coding of the recessed space within the diegesis as female and the narrative framing as male, ‘female characters are incorporated within an exaggeratedly diegetic locus, and male characters assigned a seemingly extradiegetic position’ (Silverman 1988, 54). *Canción de cuna* in all its incarnations models a particularly Spanish way of making convent interiors visible so that they fit into the frame of the nation’s picture of itself and reflect to the viewer a reassuring vision both of themselves and the unknown around them. However, since the release of Garci’s film there has been a turn back to representations of women’s enclosure as acts of disclosure, as evidenced in Jordi González documentaries, which focus specifically on the role of television in unravelling the mysteries of what nuns get up to unseen. Similarly, Telecinco’s 2013 miniseries *Niños robados* takes up the same mission of disclosure and extends González use of gothic motifs to the extent that they mark a return to the 19th century (pathetic fallacy, evil nuns, beautiful and innocent young mothers etc.,). This layering of tropes has made it difficult for the convent space to signify polysemically as we have seen it do in previous chapters. The next chapter will examine other configurations of mysticism and women’s enclosure beyond convent space.
Figure 19 Archival photographs of the ‘miracle of Garabandal’

On June 18th 1965 a No-Do camera crew, a group of representatives from the Italian media, and thousands of other spectators gathered in the small town of Garabandal, Santander to witness the sixteen year old visionary Conchita González receive a second message from the Virgin Mary. This vision was the latest in Spain’s long history of divine apparitions, but the first to be so meticulously documented. Ever since Conchita’s first vision four years earlier, the mystical interactions she experienced alongside her three friends, Jacinta, Mari Cruz, and Loli, had been photographed, recorded, scrutinised, and debated widely both in the media and the Catholic Church. The obsessive drive to capture visual and aural evidence of these visitations was all the more perplexing because the supernatural elements under investigation could be neither seen nor heard. Instead,
images of the incident echo the visionary paintings of the Golden Age where ‘the Beyond’, the ostensible subject of the image, is only ‘rhetorically present in the form of an immense ellipse … the sacred is “captured” by the painting and relayed back to the spectator solely through the ‘mirror of the soul’ effect’ (Stoichită 1995, 171) assumed in the faces of the seers. In the same way, the sound recordings of the event do not capture the voice of the Virgin, her presence is experienced aurally through the girls’ unearthly singing.

The plethora of images and sound recordings produced in Garabandal are recognizable as representations of divine phenomena because they repeat, and in many cases magnify, the codes and language of the visionary experience formulated in earlier cultural artefacts, codes which are inscribed onto, and reverberate out from, the body of the seer, functioning without reference to the vision itself. Many of the photographs (Fig.19) showcase the familiar gestural codes of the visionary that produce this ‘mirror of the soul’ effect - the upturned gaze, the limp but erect body, the whites of the eyes clearly visible. However, unlike earlier visionary painting where the seer is often a solitary figure illuminated in a darkened vacuum, the girls are sometimes positioned at the centre of an intensely crowded composition. In the photograph of Conchita receiving the second message from the Virgin Mary (Fig. 20), the frame of the camera encloses a multitude of

Figure 20 Conchita receives a second message from the Virgin Mary
faces, each gazing intently at the visionary who in turn gazes heavenwards, in thrall to a mystical scene only she can see – a scene which is the subject of the image but always outside it – just like the viewer of the photograph. As the spectacle of the visionary gathers around itself a community of witnesses, the ‘mirror of the soul’ effect proliferates into a multidimensional labyrinth of looks, producing a refracted gaze which dramatically disturbs the prevailing scopic regime.

This disturbance is magnified through the visionaries’ corporal and vocal performance which problematizes acts of seeing, looking, hearing, and listening to impose its own order on the surrounding space. The dramatic twists of the girls’ bodies as they orient themselves away from the terrestrial to the divine mark the epicentre of an intense collective experience. In its ecstatic state, Conchita’s body avoids objectification by the gaze by becoming a diffuse element, dispersed between its multiple reflections both in the eyes of the spectators and in the invisible vision above their heads. While the seeing body marks the centre of a spectacular event it also does away with the possibility of a ‘looking at’, leaving only a looking through, across, into, or towards the unseen. The transformation of the body into a transmissive material is reinforced in the mystic’s manipulation of the voice. At Garabandal, the Virgin Mary’s words are spoken in Conchita’s voice but word and voice only converge through the intercession of the Archangel Michael. This convoluted ventriloquism gains traction and hermeneutic value as the message echoes through the gathered community, amplified by the media’s microphones and subsequent repetition in village gossip, the media, theological debates, and exegesis. In this way, the disjointed voice of the visionary disrupts auditory regimes and defies the typical subordination of the vocal/aural to the corporeal. Through the visionary experience both body and voice together transform themselves into a mesmeric force, drawing and holding together a new community of witnesses.
The function of the mystical experience as an organising force in community is evident in much earlier depictions of spiritual ecstasy in Spain. In Juan Ribalta’s *The Vision of Saint Bruno* (1621-2) the visionary founder of the Carthusian monastic community appears flanked by four bishops, representatives of orthodox Church authority, while in the foreground two Carthusian monks model practices of spectatorship and adoration, one with arms outstretched in amazement, the other prostrate (Stoichită 1995, 17). Above their heads St Bruno’s vision of the holy trinity is rendered visible to the saint and the viewer of the painting, but not to the other figures in the painting, who only bear witness to the vision through its reflection in the body of the visionary. The totalizing fusion of divinity, vision, authority, and spectatorship is reinforced in the bishops’ staffs which connect the upper and lower halves of the painting, articulating the internal coherence of the group and the continuity between the seen and unseen, terrestrial and divine elements of the community.

While the prevailing sense of order in Ribalta’s painting contrasts starkly with the crowded, chaotic composition of the Garabandal photographs, the key structural elements remain intact in the intricate network of looks bringing together the divine vision itself, the privileged seers (the girls, St Bruno), authority figures (the priests (Fig 19), the Guardia Civil (Fig 20), the bishops), and other witnesses both inside and outside the frame. The tension between chaos and control generated in the encounter between the representatives of earthly power and the visionary, an often marginalized figure who gains authority through the vision, is often particularly striking in representations of women’s visionary experiences. The Guardia Civil surrounding Conchita (Fig 20) not only demonstrate the association of political and divine power cultivated under Franco, they also mark an attempt to regulate and contain the unknowable excess of feminine spirituality unleashed through the vision, an unruly force with a long and problematic
history in Spain. The feminine experience of the ineffable Other requires witnesses not only to testify to the reality of the visionary event, but to guard against the supposedly deceptive nature of women and the often unruly eroticism of their mystical encounters. However, the provocative gaze of the female visionary does not easily submit to arbitration. As we will see later, in the same move as it summons these witnesses and judges, the spectacle of the female visionary can transform linear networks of glances like those in Ribalta’s painting into disorienting labyrinths of looks.

Efforts to suppress the complex mechanics of the gaze at work in performances of female spirituality can be seen in convent films of the 1960s. To return briefly to the discussion of 1961’s *Teresa de Jesús* in chapter one (see p. 57), de Orduña suppresses the subversive implications and sexual connotations of the saint’s mystical Transverberation on multiple levels, snuffing out any possibility of an alternative interpretation. He achieves this by framing the experience in both the highly institutionalised setting of the cathedral and in a medium long shot that captures both the saint and the divine phenomenon in an uncompromising field of visibility. Within the diegesis, the visionary gaze is given a fixed subject (the saint) and object (the crucifix), the two tied together in a totalizing binary. The ‘mirror of the soul’ effect is cast aside and the divine, ineffable element is materialised in form rather than in elusive reflections, its mystery reduced to a supernatural ray of light linking the saint and the crucifix. The use of voice-over and a rising musical score compounds this reduction of the mystical to the institutional. The saint narrates what was originally an ineffable and erotic experience in concrete terms of her servitude to God and a plea to be allowed to enter his kingdom, mitigating the visionary’s privileged position as someone who has already attained something of the beyond. However, the potential of the voice-over to occupy a space slightly outside the diegesis and to ‘preserve[] its integrity, … invert[] the usual sound/image hierarchy’
(Silverman 1988, 48) is undermined by the extradiegetic music at the scene’s close. As the score reaches its triumphant climax it is by far the most dramatic element in the scene, taking precedence over the female voice-over and the visual spectacle of the vision, forcing them both back into a more recessed space in the diegesis. The dominant musical soundtrack positions itself both outside the diegesis and as the focal point of the scene, appropriating for the audience the triumphant sensation of the visionary experience from which the visionary herself is nearly excluded.

To take forward the arguments introduced at the end of chapter three, Kaja Silverman’s articulation of the paranoia that leads to the entrenchment of the female body and voice within a recessed space of the diegesis in classic Hollywood cinema, also aptly describes the motivations behind the co-dependency of image and voice in de Orduña’s Transverberation and other representations of enclosed women:

To permit a female character to be seen without being heard would be to activate the hermeneutic and cultural codes which define woman as ‘enigma’, inaccessible to definitive male interpretation. To allow her to be heard without being seen would be even more dangerous, since it would disrupt the specular regime upon which dominant cinema relies; it would put her beyond the reach of the male gaze (which stands in here for the cultural ‘camera’) and release her voice from the signifying obligations which that gaze enforces. (Silverman 1988, 164)

While not a mystical or visionary experience, the final sequence of 1961’s Canción de cuna draws attention to this paranoia, briefly activating the hermeneutic codes of the ‘enigmatic’ woman only to reassuringly dismiss them in the next moment. Antonio is initially confused and disconcerted when he hears Teresa and the nuns speaking behind the locutorio grille and curtain but cannot see them. This paranoia is quickly resolved however and the nuns are made accessible to the gaze and to a ‘definitive male interpretation’ both diegetically, in acquiescing to Antonio’s request to see their faces,
and extradiegetically, as the camera strikingly takes on Antonio’s point of view, meticulously entrapping the nuns within the limits of the frame, making them accessible also to the audience. Just moments before the locutorio was a site of labyrinthine potential full of traps and frustrations for the gaze, audience identification quivering between the frustrated Antonio trying to catch a glimpse of the nuns between the bars and the bemused women watching him. However, after the curtains are opened, the striking shot of the nuns looking straight towards the camera as if posing for a photograph consolidates their submission to the conflated gaze of the audience, the camera, and Antonio. The labyrinth of looks is reduced to a self-Other dualism that confines the nuns to a sanitised and prescribed ‘Otherness’ that nevertheless buttresses the viewer’s self-satisfaction in their ethical act of approaching and embracing that ‘Other’.

These two scenes highlight what Silverman has identified as the confinement of women to a recessed space within the diegesis and the parallel association of man with the narrative frame. They also demonstrate the heightened susceptibility of spaces of women’s enclosure to gendered organisations of diegesis that can too easily be mapped onto the intense and gendered opposition between inside and outside fostered in women’s enclosure, compounding the audience’s identification with this male-coded voyeur. While in classic cinema it may only be ‘through an endless series of trompes l'oeil that [the] male viewing subject sustains what is a fundamentally impossible identification with authoritative vision, speech, and hearing’ (Silverman 1988, 54), the architecture of the Spanish convent film much more readily facilitates that identification, in scenes like the final sequence of Canción de cuna even reifying it into a binary.

Even when there is no such reification, the understanding of female enclosure as a space structured around its boundaries diminishes the role of the magnetic pull at its centre, and of the elusive spiritual and emotional bonds which tie members of enclosed
homosocial communities together from within. Consequently, enclosure is portrayed as a structure based purely on a principle of preventing escape/penetration at its margins rather than on a more complex mechanism of attraction and repulsion working at its very centre. In contrast to the self-Other duality of the voyeuristic and narcissistic gazes usually associated with women’s enclosure, the refracted gaze of the mystic vision negates the secure boundaries between self and Other, viewer and viewed. It disturbs the conflation of the diegetic boundary and the convent walls which allowed the audience to comfortably identify with characters outside the walls while watching from a safe distance the narratives unfolding within. The visionary experience positions Otherness as a centrifugal force shaping female homosocial space and binding the enclosed community from within. The radical disruption of prevailing visual and auditory regimes has the capacity to unsettle even the most fundamental diegetic boundary of the screen, hailing the spectator as witness to a divine phenomenon and insisting on their complicity in confirming or denying its veracity.

**Being Side by Side:**
**A new orientation of ‘Otherness’**

This chapter will focus on two moments of feminine mystical ecstasy in Spanish cinema from the mid-1990s, exploring how the affective forces produced through these experiences can be used to positively structure women’s enclosed space and define homosocial communities. The two films under discussion, Vicente Aranda’s *Libertarias* (1996) and Azucena Rodríguez’s *Entre rojas* (1995), both narrate the attempts of diverse groups of women to form coherent, politically effective communities within restricted spaces. Unlike the convent films in the previous chapters, these films deal with more problematic and at times ambiguous spaces of enclosure. Rodríguez’s film explores the
connections forged between political prisoners in the convent-like space of a 1974 women’s prison, while Libertarias follows six women as they make their way through a series of convent, brothel, trench, and prison spaces in the first months of the Spanish Civil War. In both films the audience sees these communities of women from the inside, through the eyes of their newest and most unlikely members. Entre rojas is told from the point of view of Lucía (Penélope Cruz), an upper class madrileña who is caught helping her communist boyfriend in his activism and finds herself in Madrid’s Yeserías prison, surrounded by working class women. Libertarias is dominated by the perspective of a similar fish out of water, the novice María (Ariadna Gil). Forced to leave her convent at the start of the Civil War, she first takes refuge in a brothel only for it to be taken over by a group of anarchists from the Mujeres Libres, led by Pilar (Ana Belén). Along with the prostitute Charo (Loles León), María joins the women and accompanies them on their journey across the trenches, battlegrounds, and bars of wartime Catalonia.

Despite the repressive settings these women find themselves in, the communities formed in these narratives are ultimately not united by externally imposed confinement, but by an internal cohesive force generated between women. Although this force is ostensibly their shared political beliefs (which are a major factor) both these films foreground the differences in class, education, and faith between group members, highlighting conflicts at the same time as they romanticise their camaraderie. The refusal to superficially resolve these conflicts by erasing or even mitigating the differences between members of the community points towards a more fluid structure of homosocial enclosure, bringing subjects together in relation to each other rather than in opposition to an external force. This chapter will illuminate the more complex mechanics of community at work in these spaces by reading the films through their brief but significant moments of mystical experience, illustrating how the vocal and gestural codes of the
visionary encounter can be brought into play to radically reconfigure cinematic approaches to women’s enclosed space and female solidarity.

While previous studies have drawn attention to the striking configurations of female homosocial communities in *Libertarias* and *Entre rojas*, many have overlooked the mystical experiences these groups share. Magí Crusells (1996) and Mª Asunción Gómez (1999) have each elaborated on the historical context which made *Libertarias*’ diverse band of female anarchists possible, although still rather implausible, examining the film’s representation of the *Mujeres Libres* anarchist group. Similarly, Helena López (2005) has offered a historically rooted analysis, arguing that despite the film’s positive images of women’s solidarity, Aranda’s emphasis on violence and spectacle reproduces the gender stereotypes he was trying to avoid. María Van Liew (2008) and Julia Barnes (2016) have further developed this discussion of the styles of spectatorship encouraged by the film, Van Liew providing an interesting analysis of how the ‘accountability of a diegetic witness [María] and the contemporary spectator is established through the shared coordinates of witnessing a wartime shift in women’s social status, most notably among the Popular Front armies’ (Liew 2008, 230). Barnes takes López’s argument even further, arguing that in the final scene, when the group of women are brutally raped by Moroccan troops, the camera takes on the misogynistic gaze of popular horror films, a point we will return to later in this chapter.

While highlighting the significance of spiritism and spirituality to the development of the film’s central themes, even Jean-Paul Aubert’s perceptive study of anarchism and neo-Christianity in *Libertarias* only mentions the characters’ mystical experience very briefly, describing the spiritist Floren’s (Victoria Abril) possession by the spirit of Mateo Morral as ‘une séquence empreinte de loufoquerie’ (Aubert 2003, 196). Although less work has been done on *Entre rojas*, Christina Buckley’s (1998) insightful
analysis of the film does draw attention to parallels between the performances of the main character, Lucia, who is a dancer, and that of the ‘visionary’ Berta (Myriam de Maeztu), whose visceral and allegedly telepathic description of a massacre beyond the prison walls will be examined here. Although Buckley reads both performances as instances of hysteria, her description of the hysteric as ‘crafty, wise, and tenacious’, with ‘a deceptive talent’ (1998, 476), as well as her discussion of hysteria as spectacle and its power to attract audiences of male judges (doctors, psychiatrists etc..), sets a valuable precedent for this study’s reading of Berta’s ‘vision’ as an eruption of mystical energy in the prison.

This chapter will both examine the mechanisms through which the cultural codes of the visionary experience are activated in these narratives of enclosure, and demonstrate their power to initiate a spatial, centripetal force structuring these communities malleably from their core rather than at their borders. Such a restructuring of enclosed space has the potential to disable the voyeuristic and narcissistic gazes that thrive around the boundaries of the enclosure’s traditional architecture. A centripetal community organisation also overrides the binary structure of interior/exterior that could allow viewing subjects to experience their engagement with enclosed subjects as a distance traversed towards an ethical encounter with the Other. While the benefits of a move away from voyeuristic and narcissistic approaches to enclosed subjects are self-evident, the dismantling of the walls as an ‘ethical’ device for managing and assimilating difference poses new challenges for both filmmaker and audience. This is particularly true for these films which come at the very beginning of Spain’s ‘boom de la memoria’, a moment in which a more direct, and even simplistic approach to the abject Others of the Francoist regime might have been more palatable.

As these boundaries can no longer function to facilitate the self-Other encounter of the viewing public, enclosure is used in these films to illuminate different patterns of
relation within communities. The shift in focus from frontier to centre enables a move from the rigidity of the self-Other dualism of Levinasian ethics to a more versatile structure, which I will argue is very similar to that described by Jean-Luc Nancy as ‘being-as-relation’. Within this structure ‘[t]he ethical relation is not “passed over”, […] it is simply thought of differently as a relation of being side-by-side rather than an “otherwise than being” of transcendence in the face-to-face’ (James 2005, 343). The relegation of the exterior walls of enclosure from indispensable narrative framing device to incidental prop not only makes it possible for enclosed women to remain on the primary plane of the diegesis, their voices and narratives unmediated by outsiders, but fundamentally restructures the spatiality of Otherness on screen. Here, Nancy’s non-dualist, non-foundational thinking offers us new tools to understand enclosed community in these films, beyond the traditional metaphysical frameworks imposed by the foregrounding of walls in narrative and mise en scène. However, even after the polarizing walls have been sidelined, the thinking of enclosed communities beyond metaphysics made possible in Libertarias and Entre rojas is undermined because the mechanism used to produce community is the mystical experience – an inherently metaphysical phenomenon.

This paradox means that while the introduction of mystical elements is fundamental to this shift of focus from margins to centre achieved in these films, it also problematizes it. By disrupting the face-to-face binary of seer/seen, visions, apparitions, and possessions can rupture and reconstruct the space in which they take place by offering infinite configurations of being-as-relation. However, they achieve this by invoking precisely the two metaphysical forces which Nancy so vehemently rejects. The first of these is the Altogether-Other, the condition upon which the Levinasian model of Same-Other relations is founded, a model particularly relevant here for its ethical
implications. Badiou points out that the existence of an Other is contingent on the existence of the Altogether-Other, ‘quite obviously the ethical name for God’ (Badiou 2002b, 22). For Badiou, the problematic contingency is clear, and by the same logic that the Same-Other model is problematized for Nancy.

There can be no Other if he is not the immediate phenomenon of the Altogether-Other. There can be no finite devotion to the non-identical if it is not sustained by the infinite devotion of the principle to that which subsists outside it. There can be no ethics without God the ineffable’ (Badiou 2002b, 22).

While a move away from the Same-Other model of relations is made possible in these films, the mystical activity through which this is partly achieved invokes a Christian metaphysics whose dependence on the Altogether-Other restores it.

Secondly, in appealing to unknown, authoritative, and originary outside forces, the mystic moments in these films could be said to institute a ‘common, essential substance in which beings would partake or share and which would exist in a totality superior to them’ (Luszczynska 2011, 58), instigating an arrangement of communion whose exclusivity, according to Nancy, is detrimental to a truly open and fluid community. This common substance would mark out the inside and the outside of the community with the same rigidity as the walls. However, while these women invoke the metaphysical Altogether-Other and the lost originary community in order to structure their space, through that invocation they detonate the end of that system. However paradoxical, this contradiction is actually consistent with Nancy's thinking where ‘it is from within metaphysics itself that the movement of a destabilization of a system of beings in their totality can take shape’ (Nancy 2008, 7).

In this sense, the use of the codes of Christianity in these scenes marks not the common, essential substance which ties the women together in an exclusive relationship
to each other based on a static, shared identity. Instead, they mark the void left by the Altogether-Other, a deconstruction of Christianity, or, more precisely, its disenclosure, an opening up of the cracks in the totalizing, closed narrative of Christianity. A reading of these moments of mystical experience as performances of the Christian tradition in its death throes can illuminate their significance in the moment of their production in the mid-nineties, in a democratic Spain on the brink of post-Christianty casting its eyes back to key moments in this deconstruction. These historical moments are highlighted very explicitly in Libertarias, a film bookended first with the literal deconstruction of churches and religious icons as they are sacked and burned in the early days of the Civil War and then with their reinstatement in the final sequence as the victorious Nationalists reopen churches and restore crosses to town squares. However, the restoration of religious iconography to public space coincides with the collapse of protagonist María’s belief system. Interestingly, Van Liew has framed this collapse in relation to Spain’s mystical tradition, pointing out that ‘the mutilation and death of her protector [Pilar] prompts María to defy the notion of spiritual superiority over the material world, a sentiment summed up by Santa Teresa de Avila by her famous verse: “muero porque no muero”’ (Van Liew 2008, 239). In the final scene, María’s desperate pleas that the gravely wounded Pilar not die disregard the Christian promise of everlasting life. The juxtaposition between the restoration of this promise’s iconography and María’s lack of faith in it, marks both the disenclosure of the Christian framework while highlighting its ubiquity in Spanish culture.

In order to most effectively tease out the mechanisms through which mystical uses of space are used to redefine Spanish women’s enclosure on screen and also to illustrate why such uses are particularly useful in the context of 1990s Spain, this chapter will use a layered theoretical framework. Firstly, Jean-Luc Nancy’s work in The Inoperable
Community and Dis-enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity will provide a framework to imagine new ways of thinking women’s community beyond religious enclosure. In these texts Nancy discusses community and Christianity separately but this analysis will use the two together to illuminate how the enclosed homosocial community recalibrates itself in the face of Christianity’s self-destruction. In addition, Michel de Certeau’s work on the cultural history of mysticism will be used to illuminate how both films move beyond conventional organizations of women’s community counterintuitively by activating the gestures and codes of the mystic or visionary experience. Nancy’s work is also useful here in highlighting possible readings of these moments as examples of secular ecstasy, a Nancean ‘being-outside-oneself’ which facilitates between beings an exposure to each other’s ‘finitude’, ‘the infinite lack of infinite identity’ (Nancy 1990, xxxviii) that allows for an inoperable community based on something other than sameness. Nevertheless, de Certeau’s historical and phenomenological studies of mysticism provide a more concrete socio-historical analysis of the mechanics of these codes which will be important here. Moreover, when de Certeau asserts the political nature of mystic utterances or, at least, an essential connection between the mystical and the political, he does so not only in spatial, but nearly cinematic terms. This is evident in his description of how mystics erected ‘places in which relation could occur’:

By elaborating the preliminaries and rules of the operations corresponding to a particular dialogical or conversational use of language, by including in this language its bodily (gestural, sensuous) aspects, or its circumstantial ones (time, place, lighting, sound, position and situation of verbal exchange or prayer), and not just in its verbal element, they engaged in a politics of the speech act. (de Certeau 1995, 165)

In this stage setting, de Certeau’s mystics set forth a speech which works, conditioned by a voïlo, an absolute performative which creates an interdependency
between the performer and the willingness and agency of the spectator in actively choosing to approach and engage in the spectacle. This echoes Stoichită’s sixth thesis on the representation of the visionary experience: ‘The spectator viewing the visionary painting is requested to take on a role: he is “the one who sees the seeing”’ (Stoichită 1995, 198). Van Liew has described a similar dynamic at work in Libertarias where the force of the film, ‘despite its abusiveness of the witness [María], carries the spectator by association to a point of social and political accountability’ (Van Liew 2008, 233). Through their identification with María, ‘the outsider turned insider, the spectator is tricked into assuming the same responsibility that [she] accrues through the powerful lure of violent imagery and the desire to survive’ (Van Liew 2008, 233). Van Liew’s focus on the community of witnesses assembled around the spectacle of violence, offers an interesting counterpoint to the other community of witnesses which assembles around the spectacle of the vision. While the latter provides a more flexible structure of community it is still limited by the interdependence of performer and audience. The work of performing the visionary experience and actively attracting an audience forecloses on the production of Nancean community here as ‘in fact it is the work that the community does not do and that it is not that forms community. In the work the properly “common” character of community disappears, giving way to a unicity and a substantiality’ (Nancy 1990, xxxix).

Whether or not these mystically gathered communities fall prey to forced unicity and substantiality will be addressed using classic feminist film theory. While Nancy's work provides a set of signposts with which to think of women's enclosure and homosocial community beyond architecture, and de Certeau's offers an insight into how this has been achieved historically, Silverman’s work allows us to consider how this is technically achieved on screen. Ana Corbalán has argued that Entre rojas constitutes a text book example of feminist cinema, following Teresa de Lauretis’ definition of such
cinema as ‘un cine caracterizado por una división genérica que se aleja del discurso oficial y que construye otros espacios sociales con los que imaginar nuevas subjetividades’ (Corbalán Vélez 2013, 244). Again emphasising the fortuitous overlap between mysticism and feminist cinema, de Lauretis herself has identified the defining themes of this cinema in terms which, as we will see, very much resonate with the visionary experience: ‘the gender-specific division of women in language, the distance from official culture, the urge to imagine new forms of community as well as to create new images (“creating something else to be”), and the consciousness of a subjective factor at the core of all kinds of work’ (de Lauretis 1989, 145). She also explicitly highlights how ‘[t]hese themes, encapsulated in the phrase “the personal is political,” have been formally explored in women’s cinema in several ways: through the disjunction of image and voice, the reworking of a narrative space, the elaboration of strategies of address that alter the forms and balances of traditional representation’ (de Lauretis 1989, 145). These tropes are markedly similar to the strategies highlighted by de Certeau, those at play in the Garabandal visions, and also those in the films under discussion. Conchita’s communication with a figure only visible to her challenges conventional ideas about the connection between image and voice. Surrounded by Guardia Civil and journalists with microphones, illuminated by the relentless flash of cameras, her body marks the epicentre of a dynamic and diverse community space. The strategies of address at play in this encounter with the Altogether-Other fundamentally unsettles the forms and balances of traditional representation. The mechanisms highlighted here will provide the framework for the analysis of these mystic scenes in Entre rojas and Libertarias, where I will argue the same formulations of vision, voice and body are present.
**Geographies of the Gaze:**
*Passivity, agency, and the space of compearance*

Sobre sus ojos abiertos sin pestañear hacia lo alto, concentraron durante veinte minutos los focos de la Televisión italiana, el No-Do español y los equipos particulares de cine; miles de voltios capaces de cegar a cualquiera. (Sánchez Ventura 1968)

Journalist Francisco Sánchez Ventura's account of the ‘miracle at Garabandal’ juxtaposes the visionary’s gaze with the media’s. His description of Conchita's open, staring eyes posits an exaggerated passivity and emphasises her absolute receptivity to the sensory experience of the vision. In this, the account echoes Silverman’s description of the depiction of the female subject's gaze in classic cinema as ‘partial, flawed, unreliable, and self-entrapping’ (Silverman 1988, 31). It is a gaze shot through with the attributes of the hysteric: this female subject ‘sees things that aren't there, bumps into walls, or loses control at the sight of the colour red’ (Silverman 1988, 31). Even more strikingly, like Conchita, this woman ‘is always on display before the male gaze … she manifests so little resistance to that gaze that she often seems no more than an extension of it’ (Silverman 1988, 31). However, the visionary experience disrupts this dynamic, as the act of seeing things that aren’t there becomes a mark of scopic privilege, and thereby power. In the context of Spain under Franco, where the masculine autocratic power governing the country is based on the invisible power of God, ‘bumping into walls’ can be read as a demand for a new articulation of space. As Buckley’s analysis of female performance in *Entre rojas* makes clear, a hysterical ‘loss control at the sight of the colour red’ has the potential to give rise to a spectacle demanding spectators, reconfiguring the lack of resistance to the male gaze as an entrapment of that gaze. The uncertainty and unreliability surrounding this gaze collects other gazes around it, galvanising its power.

Of course, this visionary experience changes in Spain’s post-Christian context, where the masculine autocratic power governing the country is no longer based on the
invisible power of God. However, Nancy provides us with a possible framework for understanding the power of the visionary experience in a secular context. Secular ecstasy can facilitate the being outside oneself that, for Nancy, is essential to compearance. For Nancy, ‘[b]eing in common means that singular beings are, present themselves, and appear only to the extent that they compear (comparaissent), to the extent that they are exposed, presented, or offered to one another’ (Nancy 1990, 58). As such, community demands a specific configuration of the visual apparatus which is at odds with that at play in traditional cinema but can be enacted on screen. For example, the intense passivity of the visionary before her witnesses has the potential to constitute compearance. A similar passivity is reflected in the visionary moments in Libertarias and Entre rojas where characters adopt, then reposition and privilege the ‘partial, flawed, unreliable, and self-entrapping’ gaze of the female subject. However, while the spectacle of mysticism in these films has the potential to facilitate Nancean compearance, this is jeopardised by the ambivalent shifting between gestures of exposure and of veiling at other points in the films, and also by the temptation to put the vision to work in consolidating the community it assembles, to make the inoperative community operative through the vision.

The performances of mystical ecstasy in Libertarias and Entre rojas draw on other cultural phenomena in order to shape safe spaces of enclosure for women and consolidate communities within them. Both these scenes not only incorporate visual codes of early modern Christian mysticism, but also invoke the aesthetics of 19th century Catalan Spiritism. Indeed, spiritism is a central theme in Libertarias where one of the main characters, Floren, describes herself as ‘anarchista, espiritista, y coja’, going on to explain that she is ‘anarchista porque creo que el individuo es todo y el estado nada’ and ‘espiritista porque creo que, después de muerto, el individuo es todo y Dios es nada’. The character highlights the philosophy of the movement and its close ties to Bakunian
anarchism, explicitly linking this form of spirituality to the political beliefs which unite this group of women, and later even to Christianity, declaring to María that ‘Jesús fue el primer anarchista de la historia’. This overlap of opposing ideologies was an important theme for Aranda, who himself explained that

Libertarias puede ser catalogada como anticlerical, es evidente, pero al mismo tiempo es neocristiana, porque creo que la doctrina anarquista es neocristiana, en cierto modo establece – sin decirlo tan directamente como lo hago yo ahora – que las obras de Kropotkin y Bakunin no dejan de ser libros de la Biblia. (Aranda, interviewed in Freixas and Bassa 2000)

These clumsy attempts to fit together different sets of ideas and beliefs into one totalizing narrative undermines the disenclosure at play in other moments of the film, and actually marks out the kind of work Nancy problematizes, that drive to produce shared values that turns free, spontaneous community into forced communion. In contrast, Berta, the ‘visionary’ figure in Entre rojas, does not openly identify with any specific belief system other than orthodox Communism. Spirituality and politics are juxtaposed through this character rather than blended. While her visionary performance is dramatically at odds with her political affiliation, Berta more ambiguously blends elements of different mystical traditions in her ecstasy: if her arched back and nonsensical screams position her experience in the Christian mystical tradition, the darkened room, tarot cards, and candles on the table next to her imply a séance has taken place.

In both cases, the framing of these mystical moments within these spiritual traditions, specifically insofar as they produce politically useful spaces and spectacles, raises questions over whether they constitute instances of genuine compearance, or merely reproduce totalitarian, exclusionary politics. Both these traditions contain an inherently gendered and political dimension. Both mystics and mediums, like the
characters in these films, have historically used the spectacle of the vision to escape the suspicion that a woman with political opinions might have provoked. For these women, it also constituted an act of rebellion ‘against their own status as “invisible ghosts” in traditional society’ (Cerezo Paredes 2013, 4) but often in ways which only reaffirmed their passive relation to political agency. As Julian Holloway notes in her study of the space of the séance in nineteenth century Britain:

The spiritualist movement argued that women made the best and most effective mediums because they were innately better placed to comment on moral and spiritual matters than men and their passivity permitted the spirits to speak through or even possess them. (Holloway 2006, 183)

Interestingly, the key point Holloway makes here is a spatial one, that ‘the most respectable site for the séance was the home’, and he goes on to link space and gender, reiterating Alex Owen’s argument that ‘spiritualism served to sustain a geography of femininity whereby women’s freedom to speak via mediumship was still far outweighed by the reproduction of a marginalizing and subordinating ideology’ (Holloway 2006, 183).

However, such a geography of femininity is problematized in Spanish culture where the geography of gender is dominated by the dynamism of convent space which always simultaneously reproduces and explodes subordinating ideologies, freeing the mystic visionary from the domestic space and lending her a greater degree of authority.

The moments of mystic experience in Libertarias and Entre rojas mark turning points in the narrative and provide a focal point for the communities depicted therein. Equally, they demand an audience, drawing subjects away from the fringes to the centre of the enclosed space. This movement in itself is driven by a will to see and to believe, de Certeau’s volo which constitutes the basis for a collective identity. However, this community of spectators is very different to the voyeurs who gather at the convent walls
and prison bars for the scopic thrill of an encounter with the Other. This spectacle breaks down the binaries of self/other, spectator/performer, seen/unseen. This is evident in the shift away from the boundary spaces of enclosure, into the sheltered spaces of the deep interior. As Corbalán points out, prison bars are omnipresent throughout *Entre rojas*. She emphasises particularly their visibility in the frequent scenes of celebration, ‘lo cual simboliza la limitación física de la libertad de sus protagonistas y le recuerda constantemente a su audiencia dónde se encuentran encerrados estos personajes y cómo, paradójicamente, utilizan su alegría a modo de rebelión contra la opresión y silenciamiento que supone la represión penitenciaria’ (Corbalán Vélez 2013, 246). The scene of the inmate Berta’s psychic vision is a marked exception. Embedded in one of these celebration scenes, the vision takes place away from any kind of bars or grills. Emphasising this, the only entrance is then blocked off by the crowd of other prisoners who come to witness this scene. Similarly, in *Libertarias* when the spiritist, Floren, becomes possessed by the spirit of Mateo Morral, the spectacle draws the rest of the group away from the trench barricades to join her in an underground shelter. The intimacy of this setting is reflected in the bodies of the characters, who form a séance-like circle around her. In both instances the spectacle summons the characters and viewing subjects to a recess, but we do not have the sense of a woman confined to a secondary space in the diegesis. Rather, the spatial dynamic asserted by the mystical experience makes of that radically interior space the primary plane of diegesis. The audience is interpellated as witnesses and the act of seeing the mystical activity of the interior becomes an act of interrogation that is constitutive of that mystical experience and the community it manifests, suppressing the rigidity of the boundary between the diegetic and extradiegetic.
This move of narrative focus to the interior also marks a shift away from a geography of femininity which consigned women to the home space and towards one that reproduces feminine spaces in masculine places – in their warmth, intimacy, and darkness these women have carved out womb-like spaces in a prison and a trench. The visionary spectacle thrives on this contrast, and conventional modes of authoritative speaking are displaced by the attention grabbing aesthetics of juxtaposition. In both scenes the visionary is not only highly visible in terms of camera focus and mise-en-scène, but this visibility is amplified by her heightened femininity, ruthlessly elided elsewhere in the films. Floren’s possession is the only scene in Libertarias where a woman wears her hair down, her light blonde, curly hair standing out in the darkness. The context of this scene also highlights the women’s participation in conventionally feminine activities which are out of place in the trench setting: the spirit takes hold of Floren while Concha (Laura Mañá) is brushing her hair in front of the mirror. The first shot of the possessed Floren in front of the mirror recalls the brothel dressing room earlier in the film in a marked regression in the narrative trajectory of the film which sees the women embark on a journey out of ostensibly ‘repressive’ female spaces (the convent, the brothel) into the ‘freedom’ of male space.

Berta also stands out visually during the vision scene. The long red nightgown she wears is one of the brightest items of clothing in Entre rojas, and also uncharacteristically feminine for Berta. It is a nearly flamboyant choice for this character who in nearly every other scene wears a particularly masculine, loose fitting flannel shirt and trousers, or a plain white nightdress. Berta’s androgynous attire throughout the rest of the film, is more in keeping with the austerity of her character and the rigor of her political beliefs. Her asexuality is put in direct contrast to the sensuousness of Manuela (Blanca Portillo) who is introduced early in the film as she prepares for a conjugal visit. She later salaciously
recounts the encounter to a captive audience, wearing a red dress very similar to Berta’s, reinforcing the parallels between Manuela’s story and Berta’s visionary narrative, both restoring the sensuality of women’s lived experience, even in enclosure. All of these examples engage in de Certeau’s politics of the speech act by recruiting the ‘bodily (gestural, sensuous) aspects’ of language as well as ‘its circumstantial ones (time, place, lighting, sound, position and situation of verbal exchange or prayer)’ (de Certeau 1995, 165).

The striking specularization of the female body in these scenes inflects the audience’s reading of the films as a whole. Both Floren and Berta are secondary characters but their visionary performances relate back to and inform the protagonists’ problematic relationship with the scopic regime. While Entre roja’s Lucía is a professional performer whose body is perpetually oriented towards, and regulated by, an audience, Libertarias’s María is a novice in an enclosed convent, having chosen a life of invisibility. The opening sequences follow María’s attempts to hide from anarchist troops after she is driven out of her convent. In her frantic effort to regain invisibility she hides behind walls, screens, and finally in a brothel bed with a fugitive bishop. The trauma that initiates her journey over the course of the film is that of having her veils stripped away from her, of being forcefully wrenched out of one scopic regime and into another.

In contrast, Entre rojas opens with Lucía’s dance rehearsal, as the camera cuts between shots of her dancing and her boyfriend’s desperate attempts to warn her of her impending arrest. Entirely oblivious to this, when the police arrive at her door she makes no attempt to hide, simply standing in the centre of the wide corridor, as if just waiting for them to force the door open. This jarring moment betrays Rodríguez’s ambivalent attitude towards female invisibility, an attitude that inflects the film as a whole, which is punctuated by scenes of Lucía’s dancing. Indeed, these scenes mark the central device
through which her character development is demonstrated. In the opening sequence, the lightness of Lucía’s feet as she floats across the studio floor contrasts starkly with her boyfriend’s feet pounding the pavement, signalling her alienation from the public, political world. Later in the film, after learning that she has been sentenced to ten years in jail, Lucía dances alone in the prison gym, her classical performance breaking down into jerks and thrashing. While both scenes foreground her enclosure, first in the narrow world of upper middle class Madrid, then in the prison, the second also highlights her new found powers of expression which open up new worlds to her. Buckley notes that ‘as Lucía’s dance strays further and further from classical ballet, she draws closer to her companions in terms of corporeal expression’ (Buckley 1998, 475).

What the dance expresses however, is Lucía’s grief at her forced withdrawal from the scopic regime, a loss of visibility the audience is invited to mourn with her and which marks her out as different from the other prisoners. Both Buckley and Martín-Márquez have drawn attention to this key scene as underscoring ‘the class difference that separates Lucía from her fellow inmates – that is, she has lost a professional opportunity that would never have been available to the other women in the prison’ (Buckley 1998, 475). The tragedy of Lucía’s invisibility is further emphasised with the casting of Penélope Cruz, whose beautiful, unusual face demands to be seen. However, rather than allowing the audience to struggle with this, Rodríguez includes an unlikely love interest, Pablo (Carmelo Gómez) to reassure Lucía and the audience that she is seen, admired, and therefore exists. This romantic subplot is not related to the central political themes of the film and does not serve any purpose other than to assure the audience and Lucía of her visibility within a heteronormative framework.

Aranda is more sympathetic towards María’s inclination to invisibility, allowing her to slip into the background and become the gaze interior to the diegesis with which
the audience can identify. While Van Liew has pointed to this as a potentially problematic male coded identification with a female voyeur, she has also highlighted how the traditionally gendered roles played by the active, aggressive Pilar and the passive, submissive María, as well as ‘the “men’s” uniforms they wear, create a space of spectatorial flexibility that defies the objectifying vantage point of the male viewer’ (Van Liew 2008, 234). However, as Barnes has discussed, this spectatorial regime changes radically in the final scenes. When the men in the group decide to kill a lamb to eat, María abdicates her role as witness and attempts to return to enclosure in a barn so she will not have to see the slaughter. Her return to enclosure offers her both blindness and invisibility but only momentarily, as Morrocan soldiers immediately descend on the group outside, brutally raping and killing the women before entering the barn and finding María. The camera moves slowly over her body as María herself is violently raped, dismantling the conflation her own and the audience’s gaze. This sudden dismantling is made all the more jarring when the camera suddenly turns to reveal a Morrocan soldier, grotesquely grinning as he intently watches the scene. While Barnes has criticised the camerawork in this scene for adopting such a voyeuristic point of view, the brief overlap between the between the point of view of the audience and the leering soldier is unsettling enough to redeem it. However, any discomfort the viewer might feel in catching themselves watching this scene is immediately displaced as the soldier himself is caught watching by his superior, the Spanish officer suddenly entering behind him.

This moment of discovery momentarily invokes the space of women’s enclosure as the forbidden space of exploitation cinema that promises titillating revelations and where the reigning anxiety is that of being caught watching. Such a dynamic is marks a reversal of the traditional mystic and spiritist fear of being ‘found-out’, or caught in the act of manufacturing a performance. In order to manage the constant threat of unveiling,
mediums and mystics play with the boundaries between the seen, the unseen, and the corporeal to produce the effect of a collective encounter with the supernatural and thereby remove themselves from the binary of veiling and revelation by occupying the space between them. As Steven Connor suggests in his discussion of spiritualism and technology:

> Where the optical body is an anatomy unfolded to the eye, which allows it to be clearly differentiated from its outside and from other bodies, the phantasmal body of the spiritualists is a transmissive or connective medium; it is experienced in terms not of the relationship between interiority and exteriority but in terms of passage between them. (Connor 1999, 210–11)

Neither Floren’s nor Berta’s bodies can be precisely described as phantasmal but they artificially achieve an impression of movement between dimensions. Floren moves through pools of light and darkness allowing the shadows to play across her face. She looks in the mirror, creating a double of herself, her use of light, shadow, and reflection, conjuring a refracted spectrality. Berta also achieves a sense of transmissivity. The semantic connection between the red of her nightdress and her screams of ‘¡Sangre!’ blur the lines between her interior vision and the performance on display to the audience.

Moreover, both visions produce transmissive bodies in the form of the communities gathered and dispersed around them. The recruitment of witnesses not only further refracts the performance through the ‘mirror of the soul’ effect discussed in the opening of this chapter, but through the narrative impact of the vision on other characters beyond the original site of the vision. This impact is further emphasised as the fear of being ‘caught in the act’ of performing mystical experience is diminished in both films. In Libertarias, Pilar immediately dismisses Floren’s possession as nonsense. Her face during the performance is not a passive reflection of the mystical energy at play but an eye-rolling, pursed-lipped rejection of it. Despite this, Pilar returns to the trenches to reflect
on Floren’s/Matteo Morral’s words, specifically the instructions on how to make a bomb take will destroy the Nationalist camp on the other side of the river. It is the putting into action of this mystical plan that will temporarily give the anarchist group the upper hand. While the narrative impact of Berta’s vision in *Entre rojas* is not so explicit it is also removed from the framework of exposure in a way that strengthens the community. Shortly after the vision, Lucía finds Berta in the toilets with a transistor radio and realizes that news of the massacre was technologically, and not mystically, communicated to her. This scene invokes the grandiose rhetoric of exposure employed by sceptics of Spiritism, and even the Inquisition in their quest to demystify the tricks of the *alumbradas* (see chapter one, p.73), a rhetoric Teresa de Jesús lived in conflict with. However, it also emphatically diminishes the theatricality of such acts of exposures as the curious Lucía looks over the cubicle wall to see Berta sitting on the toilet listening to the radio in a moment of exaggerated banality. Without any attempt to justify the trick on Berta’s part, or to denounce it on Lucía’s the moment also marks a striking instance of compearance between the two very different women in which they are exposed to each other.

The elision of the visionary’s fear of being caught out realigns the scopic regime of women’s enclosure. The foundational promise of nunsplorationa cinema, that ‘once the camera has entered the forbidden space, that the revealed truths will be shocking and titillating’ (Nakahara 2004, 129) is turned on its head in this enclosure by the women’s nonchalant attitude regarding the legitimacy of their activities. Their attitudes mean that the audience is no longer allowed ‘to play the role of shocked viewer’ (Nakahara 2004, 129). In the case of *Libertarias* in particular, any anxiety around seeing and being seen is displaced onto the audience in the horrifying moment when they see themselves watching Maria’s rape in the leering Morrocan soldier, freeing the visionary performance from the constraining fear of exposure.
Mystical Ventriloquism:
The vocal miracle of the visionary experience

Las niñas, de once años una de ellas, y de doce las restantes, que apenas sabían leer y escribir, transmitieron unos mensajes que, según el propio Obispado reconoció, se ajustaban perfectamente, en su teología, a la doctrina de la Iglesia. (Sánchez Ventura 1968)

In Christian mysticism, the authority of the mystic’s message is often shaken by its communication in visual terms or by convoluted ventriloquism such as that at play at Garabandal where the words of the Virgin Mary, communicated by the Archangel Michael via three little girls to the media, miraculously coincide with official Church doctrine. However, the echoes and vibrations of the voice, particularly the extralinguistic elements, Connor has described a similar dynamic that ‘[f]or all of the startling visual apparitions of the séance, its tendency is to replace a visual body with the fundamentally auditory/acoustic phenomenology of the sonorous body’ (Connor 1999, 204). Indeed, much of the theatricality of the spiritist performance is grounded in the throwing of the voice. In both cases the visual and auditory are at odds, and it is the sonorous body which wins out in terms of prestige.

There is a radical and gendered dislocation between the visionary body and the voice spoken through it. Again, Silverman’s analysis of classic cinema can help us understand representations of mysticism where the woman's words are similarly ‘shown to be even less her own than are her “looks”’ (Silverman 1988, 31):

They are scripted for her, extracted from her by an external agency, or uttered by her in a trancelike state. Her voice also reveals a remarkable facility for self-disparagement and self-incrimination—for putting the blame on Mame. Even when she speaks without apparent coercion, she is always spoken from the place of the sexual other. (Silverman 1988, 31)
However, it is precisely through exaggerated performances of coercion that the visionaries of Libertarias and Entre rojas come to occupy a place of rhetorical authority, and capitalize on the unreliability of their own speech. The instability of the mystic’s speaking position enlists the listener in a process of interpretation, confirmation, and action which informs the structure of the community.

Much of the power of Floren’s performance comes from the startlingly masculine sounds coming from her highly feminized body. Indeed, it is this unexpected voice which initially attracts the attention of the rest of the group – Charo’s concerned cry that ‘Floren habla como un tío’. Aranda further unsettles the limits of verisimilitude by using dubbing to produce this effect, rather than having Victoria Abril speak in a deep voice. Berta’s voice during her trance also jars with her gentle but firm manner of speaking throughout the rest of the film. Her value and success as a political activist has clearly been in part derived from her eloquence. When Lucía arrives at the prison and asks who she is, Cata (María Pujalte) responds impatiently that she shouldn’t need to ask: Berta’s reputation is such that she does not need to introduce herself. Her leadership role and skill in communication is reaffirmed in the scene prior to her vision as she welcomes the new inmates using the familiar discourse of the Communist Party, reminding the prisoners going to trial the next day that ‘las compañeras que quedamos aquí siguen estando con vosotras, pase lo que pase’. The measured language and considered pauses contrasts starkly with the erratic, high pitched wailing in which she communicates her vision as her rhetorical balance and structure is broken down into repetitive fragments. Berta’s androgynous body subverts this relationship between voice and body still further. Her emotionless use of communist discourse denies her female body, or indeed any kind of corporeality. Her welcome speech might as well come from the transistor radio it is so uncorporeal. The detached, disembodied messages of her welcome speech and of the
radio contrast with her visceral screams of ‘¡Sangre!, ¡Sangre!’, that are brought out with the full force of her body. The words not only communicate a description of the bleeding body of the murdered boy, but bring back into focus her own female body. Communicating in this way, Berta uses the women’s exclusion from hegemonic discourse to their advantage, deliberately translating information out of this discourse and into that of mysticism to amplify its emotional power.

The contrast between official political discourse and mystical utterances plays out very differently in Libertarias. The scene immediately prior to Floren’s possession sees the group take turns to read anarchist propaganda to the Nationalists on the trenches opposite over a loudspeaker. María breaks her accustomed silence and takes the megaphone to recite quotations from Bakunin, which one of the male anarchists is particularly impressed that she has learnt by heart. However, the Nationalists respond by abusing her verbally and dismissing her message: ‘¡Hija de puta! ¡Sácate la polla de la boca para hablar!’. There are clear parallels between María and Floren’s attempts to communicate, both taking on a convoluted ventriloquism as living women, Maria and Floren, speak the words of dead men, Bakunin and Mateo Morral. However, the Nationalist’s aggressive and gendered rejection of Maria’s formal attempt to address them in the face-to-face contrasts starkly with the violent impact Floren’s supernaturally communicated message will shortly have on them, as the group follow the mystic’s instructions and violently take over the Nationalist camp.

Key to their communicative power is Floren and Berta’s use of elements of glossolalia without fully embracing the ‘abjection of meaning’ (de Certeau 1996, 30) that is a precondition of submission to de Certeau’s vocal utopia beyond structured language. In the context of feminine mystical ecstasy the discontinuity between speech and meaning can become a tool for more powerful communication rather than another marker of
woman’s passive relation to authority. In classic cinema, as Silverman asserts, this passivity is entrenched in the female body which produces speech and in ‘the identification of the female voice with an intractable materiality, and its consequent alienation from meaning’ (Silverman 1988, 61). Silverman continues:

the corporealization of the female voice magnifies the effects of synchronization. It emphatically situates the female subject within the diegetic scene, on the side of what can be overseen and overheard, and in so doing draws the curtain on the male subject’s discursive insufficiency. By isolating the female subject from the production of meaning, in other words, it permits the male subject to pose as the voice that constrains and orchestrates the feminine “performance” or “striptease,” as enunciator rather than as himself an element of the énoncé. (Silverman 1988, 62)

Both mystic speakers use fragmented sentence structures punctuated with inarticulate sounds. Despite this, both have clear communicative goals: Floren wants to communicate her plan for an attack while Berta wants to tell the other inmates about the street violence taking place outside the prison (but in a way which will consolidate her own authority within the group). However, what is at stake is not the simple communication of a message, these speech acts are both calls to action but they also function phatically. To really make impact these messages must work with the visual components of the performance to assemble and galvanise the community. Floren’s low growling introduces an element of fear to the collected group, focussing them on the message: the broken narration of Berta’s vision does not communicate much linguistically - it is brief, repetitive, and non-grammatical. While Berta has the full details of the event at her disposal she leaves them out to obfuscate the messages own meaning:

Berta: [Screaming and short breaths] ¡Sangre! ¡Sangre! Sangre y muertos… y los fachas corren… los han matado – un - un chico
en el suelo [three sharp inhalations] ¡Asesinos! ¡Asesinos!
¡Asesinos! ¡Asesinos!

This works not only to incorporate the familiar codes and rhetoric of the visionary experience but also enlists the audience in the active interpretation of the message. In a later scene, Manuela, again providing a counterpoint to Berta’s performance, returns from a meeting with her lawyer who has provided her with the official account of the attack. She immediately does the work of connection and interpretation, recounting the story coherently, repeating what the lawyer has told her:

Ayer por la tarde, en una manifestación por amnistía, apareció un grupo de fachas y se liaron a tiros. Han matado a tres. Uno de ellos era un chaval de 18 años. Ha habido muchos heridos. Mucha sangre. La policía tardó media hora en llegar.

Manuela’s response to the coinciding of Berta’s vision and authoritative discourse is emotional. She is not only horrified by the violence but in awe of Berta’s power. Moreover, Manuela has now been released from prison and the experience ensures she will leave prison but continue as a member of the community formed there, further emphasising a construction of female community governed by connecting rather than enclosing forces.

Berta’s message and Manuela’s translation of it is a perfect example of how de Certeau’s mystic utterance can abdicate meaning while inspiring ‘the hermeneutic work [which] mobilizes its scientific apparatus’, even if in so doing, it unveils the belief that animates it’ (de Certeau 1996, 34). Manuela can only interpret the words because she is predisposed to belief. Through the volo of the assembled women (not only Manuela’s desire to believe but also Lucía’s refusal to interrogate) the ‘vocal miracle’ of the visionary experience ‘narrativizes itself’:
It seems that the threshold between muteness and speaking can be extended and organized, can be reconstituted like a "no man's land," a space of vocal manipulations and jubilations, already free from silence but not yet subject to a particular language. (de Certeau 1996, 38)

Again, the visionary experience challenges the institution of boundaries. However, instead of merely moving focus to the centre of enclosure, these vocal acrobatics constitute and territorialize new spaces, the aptly named ‘no man’s land’ of utopia between speech and silence where a collective female voice can function politically.

**Conclusion**

While *Libertarias* and *Entre rojas* displace feminine mystical activity from its home in the convent, they demonstrate its power to consolidate communities and redefine them spatially. In this chapter, we have seen the mobilization of the codes and gestures of the mystical experience into new contexts, defining new geographies of the gaze which undermine those set out in earlier cinema of women’s enclosure, particularly those of nunsploitation. Equally, these films recuperate the communicative power of marginalised voices and modes of speaking over those of mainstream authoritative discourse. However, the recuperation of mystical discourse leaves it open to appropriation, a risky dynamic which will be explored further in the next chapter.
Chapter 5
A Work of Death:
The Space and Spectacle of Martyrdom in Post-Christian Spain

Vemos a los mártires como modelos de fe y, por tanto, de amor y de perdón. ... Los mártires murieron perdonando. Por eso, son mártires de Cristo, que en la Cruz perdonó a sus perseguidores. ... No hay mayor libertad espiritual que la de quien perdon a los que le quitan la vida.

Mensaje con motivo de la Beatificación del Año de la fe en Tarragona, el 13 de Octubre de 2013

Beginning nearly contemporaneously with the passing of the Ley de memoria histórica in 2007, the past decade has seen the beatification of over one thousand victims of the Spanish Civil War as martyrs of the Catholic Church - all of these dying on the Nationalist side of the conflict. The mass beatifications which took place in 2007 and 2013 incited anger among many sections of the Spanish public. The hyperbolically reconciliatory tone of the proceedings reflected in the quotation above, was more in tune with the propitiative rhetoric of the Pacto de silencio than with the new, progressive Spain committed to the recuperation of memories that had for so many years been repressed. Indeed, the beatification of clergy who had in many cases openly supported the Nationalist uprising in 1936, and in others rejected any kind of compromise with Republican forces, was contrary to the core goals of the Ley de memoria histórica. However, while the repercussions of the new law were concrete and far-reaching, after the immediate media backlash any direct impact the beatifications had on increasingly secular Spanish culture was barely perceptible. Nevertheless, the seemingly uncritical incorporation of these figures into an extensive and deep rooted tradition of martyr worship has provided a haunting counterpoint for the work of historical memory undertaken since 2007.
The *Ley de memoria histórica* aimed to inscribe the government’s formal condemnation of the Francoist regime onto the public landscape and officially recognize victims of political, religious, and ideological violence on both sides of the Civil War and dictatorship. Although the law is incomplete and was met with less than enthusiasm on the left and with outrage on the right, it did legally enshrine state recognition of victims. The most concrete and visible actions taken as a result of the law have been the removal of Francoist symbols from public spaces and the exhumation and identification of victims of Francoist repression whose bodies were buried in mass graves. As challenging as this project is in legal and practical terms, the collective cultural and emotional work of processing such upheaval was also a complex and demanding undertaking. Indeed, while the removal of Francoist statues and plaques was slow and state aid for the exhumation of bodies was limited, and then stopped completely in 2014, the public debate regarding appropriate ways to remember the victims of the war and dictatorship dominated the public sphere for years. Jo Labanyi cites as an example of this the 2006 ‘obituary war’ which took place across the pages of national newspapers, ‘a flurry of *esquelas* commemorating victims “vilmente asesinados por las hordas rojas” countered by further *esquelas* on the Left, until the hostilities petered out in 2007’ (Labanyi 2008, 123). Although the *Pacto de silencio* had been slowly but surely unravelling for a long time beforehand, the debate and passing of the new law accelerated the process and actively engaged a new generation, many with no first hand memory of the dictatorship, in the process of recovering and correcting the wrongs of the past.

The public debate around the implementation of the law brought into everyday usage a rhetoric of recuperation, disclosure, and exposure, which intensified and galvanised hitherto ethereal and disjointed memory practices into a set of concrete and collective actions. However, in both its rhetoric and practice the law produced an
intangible excess of meaning and memory irreducible to the dispassionate acts of exhumation and erasure it entailed. While the removal of symbols, statues, and plagues satisfied an initial drive towards political purification, the empty spaces left behind remained with perhaps an even more haunting presence than the monuments themselves. Equally, the disinterment of bodies dredged up more history, memory, and emotion than could be administered to by legal and official means alone. Indeed, the conflict between the supposedly objective, material evidence produced during the exhumations, and more subjective, affective memory practices has become a central and often overlooked dichotomy underscoring Spain’s memory boom. In *Exhuming Loss: Memory, Materiality and Mass Graves of the Spanish Civil War* (2011), Layla Renshaw outlines how ‘the systematic investigation of the traumatic past can serve to allay anxieties around memory and forgetting’ (Renshaw 2011, 11) and, in the case of mass graves, reassert ‘the sanctity or worth of an individual life and the victory of individual identity over anonymity’ (Renshaw 2011, 11). However, she problematizes the perceived political neutrality of exhumed remains, reconfiguring contemporary Spanish encounters with recovered ‘bodies, objects, and images as a series of transformations that progress through different material indices of the dead and of the traumatic past, or as a series of shifts in the register through which the dead are being materialised’ (Renshaw 2011). Despite the emotionless, scientific processes to which the bodies are subjected in exhumation, identification, and reburial, the remains inevitably re-accumulate their own social and political agency and enter into complex relationships with the living, replete with their own set of anxieties regarding memory, justice, and individual and collective identity.

Interestingly, Renshaw’s ethnographical study also touches on how ‘[t]he act of materialising the dead through exhumation, and the perceived neutrality or objectivity associated with the act of materialisation, help to circumvent or counter th[e] negative
perception [of [the] explicitly political representation of the dead, and of an ideological bond between the living and the dead]’ (Renshaw 2011, 30). This dynamic has also found expression in Spain’s cultural production, the dead appearing materialised in much of the literature and film dealing with Spanish memory politics, manifesting themselves collectively in the form of ghosts and monsters which can more easily be addressed and given closure. Attention has been drawn to this trope by Jo Labanyi and others (Labanyi 2000a; 2002; 2007; Colmeiro 2011; Hardcastle 2005) who have traced its trajectory from El espíritu de la colmena (Erice 1977) to El espína de del diablo (del Toro 2001) and more recent Spanish horror, engaging particularly with Derridean ‘hauntology’ as a way of understanding spectrality in historical terms. For Derrida, history is spectral in that it is always irretrievably lost, yet persistently makes itself present. ‘Traces’ of traumatic pasts and suppressed narratives resurface in different, often slippery forms. However, where Renshaw’s archaeological materializations allow for at least an appearance of detached objectivity in our relationship with the past, imaginative and emotional ones much more readily facilitate the accumulation of shifting and elusive meanings around these figures.

Nevertheless it is the fantastical materializations of the past as ghost or monster which have taken precedence in recent years. In Alison Ribeiro de Menezes’ study of memory discourse in the new millennium, Embodying Memory in Contemporary Spain, the author observes that ‘memory is today approached through imaginative and emotional investments in the past rather than cognitive rationalizations’ (Ribeiro de Menezes 2014, 2). She also draws particular attention to the shift ‘from ruined architecture to ruined bodies’ (Ribeiro de Menezes 2014, 2) and memories which are ‘embodied rather than emplaced’ (Ribeiro de Menezes 2014, 2). The embodiment of traumatic memory in ghostly figures embedded in supernaturally saturated plots has been proven effective not only in securing home and international audiences, but in bringing marginal experiences
to centre-stage and illuminating new ways of thinking the future through the past. José F. Colmeiro clarifies this:

Ghosts as embodiment of the past in the present, destabilize the accepted notions of history, reality and self, and the clear demarcations that define them. Their here-but-not-here borderline existence, between the dead and the living, blurs the binary divide that constructs our perception of reality. Ghosts remind us that we need to confront our past if we want to move ahead and construct a better future. (Colmeiro 2011, 31)

However, Ribeiro de Menezes does not deal exclusively with spectral embodiments, considering instead the full breadth of embodiments from the purely metaphorical to the physical. Here, I hope to follow Ribeiro de Menezes and use a broader understanding of what it means to embody memory, focusing particularly on the embodied performance of martyrdom and its relationship to the space of enclosure. The figure of the martyr, like the ghost, is one defined by, and always oriented towards, their own death. Death defines the martyr, yet in their cultural afterlives they return to us alive to perpetually re-enact their dying, each time in a new context and with a new set of social, cultural, and political prerogatives acting upon them. Their spectrality is systematically downplayed. Where the ghost blurs boundaries between past, present, and future, the martyr bridges them, returning to life again and again, not in spite of, but because of their own death.

While memory discourse in the public sphere threatened to become a web of contradictions, the Church’s beatification process effortlessly sublated the complexities of history, imagination, and memory into the comforting, coherent, and totalizing narrative of martyrdom, responding to all questions and challenges with self-referential gestures to the foundational myths of Christian martyrdom. For example, when one of the martyrs beatified in 2007, Gabino Olaso Zabala, was found to have tortured another friar while working in the Philippines his inclusion in the list was justified as a typical example of a
sinner redeemed through Christ and Christian sacrifice - ‘aunque hayan sido grandes pecadores, son redimidos tras haber derramado su sangre por la fe, al menos según la visión de la Iglesia’ (20minutos 2007). While the case remained problematic to outsiders, the myth of the Spanish martyrs maintained its internal coherence independent of any conflicting, external logic. In addition, the gestures towards forgiveness and reconciliation embedded in the rhetoric of the process also threatened to ensnare those problematizing the beatifications in the web of its internal logic. If there is no greater ‘libertad espiritual que la de quien perdona a los que le quitan la vida’ (OICEE 2013), it is then those who seek redress for the crimes committed during the war and dictatorship who are imprisoning and harming themselves. This manoeuvre did not go unexamined.

Fernando del Rey Reguillo has criticised the bias of the beatifications, drawing particular attention to the rhetorical snares set during the 2001 beatifications of 226 Valencian martyrs of the Church:

El arzobispo sostuvo que cuando la Iglesia se implicó en esta obra: ‘ha hecho memoria verdadera, justa y agradecida de inmensos perdonadores’. Al poco, sin embargo, el mismo individuo se descolgó criticando la política de recuperación de la memoria histórica que estaba poniendo en marcha el Gobierno socialista y distintas iniciativas ciudadanas: ‘todos – dijo – hemos de evitar reavivar sentimientos de odio y de destrucción’. (del Rey Reguillo 2012, 65)

The beatification processes have in many cases incited and spurred on opposing memory practices, making many Spaniards ask themselves the same question Samuel Amago and Carlos Jerez-Farrán pose in their introduction to Unearthing Franco's Legacy (2010):

is it ‘possible for ‘bygones [to] be bygones for Spaniards when the Vatican beatifies 480 victims of the atrocities committed by the militias loyal to the Republican government but continues to
ignore the death and suffering of thousands of victims of Franco’s brutality?’ (Amago and Jerez-Farrán 2010, 25).

A consideration of this discordant combination of circumstances and cultural attitudes can shed light on some of the tropes of Spain’s cinematic production since 2007. By this time the number of films exploring the Civil War had been on the increase since the nineties and this trend included several critically and commercially successful films such as La lengua de las mariposas (Cuerda 1999), Soldados de Salamina (D. Trueba 2004), and El laberinto del fauno (del Toro 2007). However, coinciding with the passing of the Ley de memoria histórica and the first mass beatification in 2007 a second trend emerged, focusing on the post-war period and foregrounding the experiences of women, specifically imprisoned and victimized women. This chapter will explore Emilio Martínez-Lázaro’s 2007 film Las 13 rosas, Mikel Rueda’s Basque language TV movie Estrellas que alcanzar (2010), and Benito Zambrano’s adaptation of Dulce Chacón’s novel, La voz dormida (2011).

The first of these, Las 13 rosas, reconstructed one of the most well-known and enduring martyrdom narratives of the post-war period, the true story of a group of thirteen young women who were executed in August 1939. Although the story of the trece rosas goes back much further, as Tabea Linhard has illustrated in her study of the evolution of their myth (Linhard 2005), director Martínez Lázaro was aware of its renewed relevance in the moment of his film’s release, just two weeks before the passing of the Ley de memoria histórica. In a promotional interview in EL PAÍS Semanal he positioned the film as part of a direct response to the beatification processes, and a step towards the recuperation of a nearly forgotten moment in history:

Tenemos que hablar de esto, sacarnos los demonios. Además no es lícito, no vale el revisionismo sólo para un bando, no es justo que algunos arzobispos consigan sus mártires y los eleven a los
However, when _Las 13 rosas_ opened to mixed reviews (_El País_’ Carlos Boyero labelling it ‘tan cierto como endeble’ (Boyero 2007)) and less than impressive box office takings (Brunet 2008), Martínez Lázaro attributed the film’s lukewarm reception to its release in ‘un momento político tan crispado como el que vivimos con ocasión de la aprobación de la Ley de la Memoria Histórica’ (Estrada 2007). He went on to ask, ‘[a]l fin y al cabo, nadie tendría que enfadarse por unos hechos que ocurrieron nada más y nada menos que hace 70 años y cuyos responsables están muertos o son centenarios. ¿Quién se va a enfadar entonces?’ (Estrada 2007). These words, spoken in ‘un momento político tan crispado’, seem disingenuous to the point of facetiousness, especially as Martínez Lázaro’s film labours the melodrama inherent in the sudden and wrongful death of the young to elicit a raw emotional response, relentlessly layering rousing musical scores, on angelic heroines, on orphaned children to ruthlessly provoke both the viewers’ tears and indignation.

Nevertheless, this approach did attract a substantial audience and the film was commercially successful, as Martínez Lázaro’s films usually are. His romantic comedies, _El otro lado de la cama_ (2002), _Los 2 lados de la cama_ (2005), and, more recently, _Ocho apellidos vascos_ (2014) and _Ocho apellidos catalanes_ (2015) were hugely successful although largely based on a narrative formula which depends on an unsophisticated understanding of gender roles and, in the case of the latter two, Spanish regional identity. However, what is at stake in the retelling of the _trece rosas_ narrative is more than the reintroduction into the public consciousness of a tragic, and for many years forgotten, story (itself a challenging undertaking from a historical perspective). In the political moment defined by the _Ley de memoria histórica_, the responsibility for remembering has
become a collective one, no longer the lonely work of the dead and the centenarian. The retelling of forgotten stories, the creation of a new national myth, involves the re-ordering of social space, the strategic filing away of the inevitable but unmanageable excess of affect, and the fundamental restructuring of the community around a new set of values. A careful renegotiation of gender roles, or at least a careful re-examination of the treatment of female bodies in martyr narratives, is central to the success of such a project.

While in his other films Martínez Lázaro managed to neatly package and market complex identities, in the case of Las 13 rosas the chemically unstable combination of femininity and death complicates matters. As Elizabeth Bronfen points out in Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic (1992), the work of recovery always entails the production of an uncontainable excess inimical to stability and order. Disturbance is inevitable as:

… the ‘re’ of return, repetition or recuperation suggests that the end point is not the same as the point of departure, although it harbours the illusion that something lost has been perfectly regained. Instead, the regained order encompasses a shift; that is to say it is never again/no longer devoid of traces of difference. The recuperation is imperfect, the regained stability not safe, the urge for order inhabited by a fascination with disruption and split, and certainty emerging over and out of uncertainty. (Bronfen 1992, xii)

As Bronfen is addressing the order lost to the twin threats of femininity and death and its recuperation through their representation, her analysis is doubly useful here as it not only problematizes the processes of ‘return, repetition or recuperation’ (the kind at play in the cultural response to the Ley de memoria histórica) but specifically relates these activities to the figure of the dead woman.

The films we will be examining in this chapter relate to more concrete and specific contexts – the original traumatic rupture is brought about not simply by the
psychical shadows of femininity and death (although they are a component), but by the concrete and inescapable realities of war, repression, and injustice. While the objective materiality of the exhumations tells us that the vast majority of the war dead are male, at the moment of recuperation these original traumas nevertheless appear inscribed in the popular imagination on the figure of the dead woman, specifically the martyred woman. Recovered and narrativized, the spectacle of this martyred body re-emerges, ‘staging absence as a form of re-presence’ (Bronfen 1992, xii), providing a vessel in and through which the excess produced in the broader processes of recuperation can be managed and contained. In its organising function, the martyred female body works parallel to that of the ghost in recent Spanish cinema. Unlike the ghost however, the perceived historical basis of the martyr narrative allows for what feels like a more direct and objective confrontation with the past.

Analysed in these terms of rupture and recuperation, it is clear that the obfuscation of the historical personae of the trece rosas in Martínez Lázaro’s film is inevitable. The trece rosas are the empty space. They are the irretrievable absence and loss which the narrative is a response to. Their production on screen can never recuperate their own irredeemable absence; it is this absence itself which provokes the impulse to tell the story. Their death forms part of the loss that haunts Spain and their image cannot fill that gap but it can obscure it. As Justin Crumbaugh points out in his study of spectrality and the spectacle of the martyr under Franco:

In order to be seen as larger than life, spectacle relinquishes to some extent its claim to a lived reality, embracing instead the consciously artificial. And the absence or loss of that life experience, of the real people in it, behind it, or which it is about, persists in a disquieting state of invisibility, having been spectralized by the spectacle itself. (Crumbaugh 2014, 339)
The spectacle of the incontestable martyred body can seal up fissures in national myth, stabilize the disruption, and eradicate the ambivalence caused by its own original martyrdom. However, in order to do this, this body must surrender the characteristics that originally marked it out for martyrdom, obfuscate its own individuality to make of itself a canvas on which the myths of the community can be inscribed. Ultimately, the remembering of the martyr figure is not about the martyr, it is about restoring the community wounded by their absence to an illusion of plenitude and wholeness.

To achieve this, the martyr must be transposed in her entirety into a new and alien context. Like Renshaw’s cadavers travelling from the mass grave, to the laboratory, to the new burial site, shedding dirt and gathering a new political agency on the way, the martyr undergoes a series of transformations to enter into a relationship with the contemporary living. The most marked of these transformations in the films discussed here is the stripping away of political beliefs to make for a more universally acceptable victim figure. Kajsa Larson has argued that Martínez Lázaro’s ‘depoliticization of the Thirteen Roses creates a disconnect between Spain’s past and present by sheltering the twenty-first century viewer from fully understanding the ideological divides, hardship, and trauma surrounding calamities such as the Roses’ execution’ (Larson 2012, 1–2). The protagonists’ depoliticization is certainly marked – all but one of the rosas was an active member of the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas but this is barely mentioned in the film. Equally, the strategic omission of the more gruesome historical details (the filth of the prison and the epidemic of scabies amongst the women) to satisfy the demands of aesthetics and the sensibilities of the contemporary viewer, diminishes the horrors endured by the women. However, the depoliticization of historical figures does not serve only to provide a more palatable narrative to squeamish audiences. It also conforms to a broader social agenda, what Antonio Gómez López-Quiñones calls ‘ethical apoliticism’
in his important essay, ‘A Secret Agreement: The Historical Memory Debate and the Limits of Recognition’ (2012) which provides a more considered account for the apolitical representation of the Civil War dead.

There seems to be something inappropriate, off-putting, and unseasonable about these pre-postmodern political trajectories that for several decades (before, during and after the Spanish Civil War) configured their own subjectivities around (currently) outmoded and disquieting beliefs: anti-capitalist revolution, party loyalty, class solidarity, public ownership, a real political economy and the possibility of a true historical meta-narrative break. When in the present day a neo-liberalized social-democrat reformism (both apologetic and straightjacketed) is the most radical electable option, it is not too hard to understand why Franco’s political fatalities have become the object of demands and hyperbolically nostalgic gestures that, on the other hand, usually belittle or ignore the victims’ (so-perceived unsuitable and over-the-top) political culture. (López-Quiñones 2012, 101)

Gómez López-Quiñones frames this depoliticization as a response to the politics of recognition which have characterised and informed not only Spanish memory culture, but humanitarian justice more broadly. He builds his argument on Charles Taylor’s definition of recognition as the thesis

that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by misrecognition of others, and so a person or group can suffer damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. (Taylor 1994)

Positioned as an ethical response to injustice and a way to restore marginalised subjects to full modes of being, the re- of recognition joins those of return, repetition, and recuperation in the arsenal of mechanisms through which we cope with collective loss.
and absence. Recognition as a legally inscribed antidote to marginalisation has been mobilised extensively in Spain where the Ley de memoria histórica, ‘por la que se reconocen y amplían derechos y se establecen medidas en favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia durante la guerra civil y la dictadura’ (italics mine), did exactly that. In the discourse of liberal justice and humanitarianism, the politics of recognition facilitates ‘the illusion that something lost has been perfectly regained’ (Bronfen 1992, xii). Here, the spectral trace of difference produced in recuperation is manifested in the vague ‘altruistic aura’ (López-Quiñones 2012) around the martyred dead, behind which their unassimilable, anachronistic, and heterogeneous political ideals are suppressed. Gómez López-Quiñones argues that the sanitization of politically marginalised groups entailed in recognition justice gives rise to an ethics which ‘becomes a safe refuge from the domain of political action and decision; an ivory tower of incommensurable “respect for” and “indebtedness to” a socio-politically decontextualized levinasian other’ (López-Quiñones 2012, 100).

Such a dynamic conveniently centres the act of thinking about the past around a Self/Other relationship similar to those discussed in previous chapters. If enclosure in earlier convent and prison films has allowed for a controlled engagement with the Other, the imposition of a similar structure onto the relationship with the past may account for the setting of these narratives in enclosed prison environments. Indeed, many of the narrative devices used to manage the viewers’ engagement with the traumatic past are fundamentally spatial and in large part structured around spaces of enclosure, in these films primarily the women’s prison. After the release of Martínez Lázaro’s film, Estrellas que alcanzar and La voz dormida also played with and developed these mechanisms of space and the relationship between martyred bodies and enclosure. This cinematic trend towards narratives of women martyred in enclosure was anticipated in literature,
specifically by Jesús Ferrero’s *Las trece rosas* (2003), Carlos Fonseca’s *Trece rosas rojas* (2004), and Chacón’s *La voz dormida* (2002). However, the representation of these narratives on screen is notable not only in that they constitute a minor cinematic trend in themselves but that they represent uses of female enclosure moving on from those examined in previous chapters. The prison setting of these martyrdom narratives provides a framework for the work of restructuring community in the face of a traumatic past. Positioning the reanimated dead in a space so profoundly Other as an early Francoist prison distances the audience from this past. This distance is reinforced by the impenetrability of the walls which frames and isolates the narrative as an exceptional event while also validating both the audience’s spectatorship and impotence. They can only watch, but by watching they are giving witness to events intended to be hidden from view, thereby recuperating them in the eyes of history and participating in a broader humanitarian justice agenda.

**Interrupting Myth**

For Jean Luc Nancy, myths are the narratives we produce to enable us to look at each other and recognise our communion in each other. The supreme example he gives of such myths is Nazi Germany where the foundational Aryan myth produced ‘a subjectivity present to itself, as the support, the source, and the finality of representation, certitude, and will’ (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1990, 294), an individual subject so rigorously defined that Germans could become and identify themselves as such, and also recognise, and fall into communion with, other such subjects. Such a myth not only provides a foundational point of departure for national projects but an unrelenting impetus towards a final goal, the accomplishment of history. Such myths ultimately fail in their work
because the recognition and communion facilitated through them is founded on an impossible immanence which forecloses on the possibility of being—with, and can only lead to death—as it did in Nazi Germany. Myth cannot be escaped or abandoned it can only be interrupted, and this interruption must originate from the inside.

The mechanisms of embodiment, temporal disconnection, and memory recuperation at play in each of these films are complex and highly effective—not in reconnecting contemporary Spaniards to a difficult moment from their past, but primarily in constructing an internally coherent myth out of acts of meaningless violence. Even though these elements were originally brought together to facilitate the production of a foundation myth for a new post-Christian Spain confronting its past, they ultimately frustrate the production of this myth. A fundamental factor in the production of this myth is the use of enclosed space to allow the narrative to mimic the totalizing logic of traditional martyr narratives by foreclosing on the possibility of interruption by alternative narratives. The enclosed environments of these martyrs inflect and frame their narratives, problematically situating them at the intersection of traditional Catholic martyrology, humanitarian justice agendas, and more contemporary depictions of imprisoned and confined women. While still relying on the culturally charged motifs and aesthetics of traditional hagiography, these recent images and narratives of secular martyrdom have become both politically neutral and deeply gendered.

Moreover this myth is entangled in the older, more sophisticated and fully developed myth of Francoist Spain. During the Francoist period, a foundational myth of the forging of the nation during the civil war was successfully created and propagated materially throughout the country in the form of statues, monuments, and street names. The figure of the martyr played an important part of this myth, borrowing heavily from the Catholic tradition of martyrdom which was annexed and sublated into the national
myth of los caídos, and spatially inscribed onto the Spanish landscape in the Valle de los Caídos monument. This co-opting of the discourse of martyrdom problematized the production of martyrs in opposition to the regime from the start. Tabea Alexa Linhard (2005; 2002) has already drawn attention to the ruthless recycling of imagery and metaphor in early poetry about the trece rosas myth, particularly ‘the obsessive repetition of three metaphors – flowers, stars, and of course roses’ (Linhard 2005, 121). She has pointed out that in the case of the trece rosas

The execution of the minors, the choice of the name, and the poems represent a crucial moment in which literary conventions and oral traditions intersect, creating a fragmented narrative that oscillates between resistance and accommodation to tropes, myths and narratives stemming from both Republican and Nationalist contexts. (Linhard 2002, 187)

Linhard shows that such recycling is inevitable as the only way to articulate even the most unconventional martyr narratives ‘is by means of already available metaphors, symbols, and tropes’ (Linhard 2005, 120). In order to be widely recognisable and understood such a story ‘can only be told in a common discursive language that is not ready to articulate the complexities of women’s participation in revolution and war’ (Linhard 2002, 199). The recycling of hackneyed metaphors and symbolism can also be seen in Estrellas que alcanzar which makes recourse to both the conventional metaphor of stars for hopes and dreams, but also to the more nuanced motif of water which is linked to both the most peaceful and most distressing moments for the protagonist, Victoria (Bárbara Goenaga). Moreover, these metaphors are iterated spatially and mapped onto Victoria’s trajectory through enclosure. She gradually loses hope, and even the vision of something to hope for that the increasingly unreachable stars represent, and moves closer to her eventual drowning in the pool of water under the jail. These metaphors become so
central to our understanding of the film’s message and Victoria’s emotional journey that at one point the delivery man Pedro, with whom she develops a close friendship, is called upon to artlessly explains the significance of the estrellas of the title to his assistant. By foregrounding metaphors and tropes as conveyors of meaning over the historical characters and their physical experiences, the film diminishes the agency of the enclosed women. What is embodied in them is not a reanimated vision of people from the past, but mere symbols for generic values such as hope, resilience, and freedom. Linhardt makes a similar point with reference to Diana Taylor who argues in her study of women’s resistance in Argentina’s Dirty War that, ‘in their struggle to fight back, individual women, too, were forced to erase themselves as material beings as they claimed their existence and validity as icons’ (Taylor 1997, 86, qtd in Linhard 2002, 188). Constructed out of such tropes, the re-embodiment of martyrs will always obstruct and erase its own corporeality.

This device of mixing and juxtaposing tropes and motifs from conflicting discourses to produce cultural meaning features in all three films. In Las 13 rosas Republican and Nationalist myths frequently coincide and contradictory positions are articulated in exactly the same vocabulary. For example, the optimism and endurance of the trece rosas even during their incarceration is underscored in the early prison scenes when they are forced to sing the Falange hymn, ‘Cara al sol’. They do so unenthusiastically, ostentatiously disengaged until the final lines: ‘¡España una! ¡España grande! ¡España libre! ¡Arriba España!’ After unenthusiastically muttering the first two lines, the prisoners unreservedly scream ‘¡Libre!’ together, subverting the song to make it their own but inadvertently drawing attention to the concurrence of their own political ideals and those of their ‘enemies’. It is no coincidence that this undefined notion of
freedom, so broad that both sides aspire towards it, is also the political value most acceptable and engaging to 21st-century audiences.

In other moments the overlap of discourses is more ambiguous. Throughout the film the narrative capitalizes on the rousing military anthems of the period which characterise the film’s atmosphere, foreground and develop its key themes, and advance the narrative - even though the songs are actually Nationalist. Early in the film a group of Nationalist soldiers are shown entering Madrid singing ‘Yo tenía un camarada’, specifically the lines:

Él me quiso dar la mano,
miemtras yo el fusil cargué,
y uniéndola con la mía,
‘vete con Dios’ -me decía-,
‘por España moriré,
por España moriré’.

The final lines hang in the air as an eerie foreshadowing of the martyr narrative about to unfold, uniting both groups in a shared death drive. More uncanny still is the sense that the lyrics coincide more precisely with the audience’s interpretation of the trece rosas story as a patriotic sacrifice without specifically defined political motives on the part of the martyrs. This scene is one of several in the film which develop the theme of children’s desensitization to violence and their indoctrination into the ideology of Francoist regime. More of a motif than a fully developed subplot, the scenes with the boys gesture towards critical approach to historical memory that is simultaneously undermined as it folds back into itself, reduced to a simplistic denunciation of violence in general terms at exactly the moment an untangling of political motives and wills are most necessary.

The multiple myths annexed in the martyrdom narrative of Las 13 rosas overlap and collide with older supposedly contradictory myths. However, the old myths do not interrupt the new narrative or draw attention to its incoherence - they are instead
immediately sublated into the new one. This is particularly true of the moments in which the girls’ martyr narrative is explicitly articulated in the visual rhetoric of Christianity. In the first part of the film as the girls’ back stories and characters’ are established we are introduced to the character of Blanca Brisac (Pilar López de Ayala) who, ‘with a serene gaze and bright red lips, symbolizes the sweet, innocent, doe-eyed heroine’ (Larson 2012, 7). As the civil war ends we see her take her religious paintings out of the closet where she had been hiding them. Reflecting on the images of the Virgin Mary, her son, Quique (Nacho Fernández), agrees that they are beautiful and that they look like Blanca. The scene not only indelicately enlists Christian imagery in the telling of a very different story, but clumsily ensures that audience’s will not attempt any more imaginative or nuanced reading of the text, or its characters - if a character appears angelic, it is because they are angelic. More specifically, the comparison between Blanca and the Virgin Mary sets her apart from the other rosas, confirming her unimpeachable character and extreme impartiality in dealing with people from all political and social backgrounds as the standard against which their executions will be judged as obviously wrongful.

Still more striking, is how the secular martyr narrative of the trece rosas seamlessly incorporates elements of the Passion of Christ. After distributing anti-Franco flyers at the Auxilio Social – the crime twelve of the thirteen rosas are imprisoned for – they have to flee from the police. Julia (Verónica Sánchez), Carmen (Nadia de Santiago), and Adelina (Gabriella Pession) come across an open-air military mass and take cover there. Julia hides in a confession box and Carmen is given a mantilla which allows her to join the praying women without suspicion. There is an opportunity here to highlight contrasts between the two myths, to play with the ironies and inconsistencies in both but instead, they are combined in a totalising spectacle of martyrdom and sacrifice. Adelina is immediately spotted in the crowd and tries to escape behind the altar where she is trapped
and caught, not by the guards, but by two sacristans who hold her, centre stage, against the altar. The image of this martyr held down on a Catholic altar binds the two narratives together and forecloses on any possibility of alternative interpretation.

*La voz dormida* has similar moments where conflicting myths come into contact, but in this film they neither collide head on, nor are they assimilated into one another. Here, contradictions acknowledge each other without challenge, modelling a moment of compearance closer to Nancy’s vision of community where beings exist in exposure to each other. This relationship is most clearly illustrated when the protagonist, Pepita (María León), recently arrived from Andalucía to Madrid to be closer to her pregnant and imprisoned sister, the former miliciana, Hortensia (Inma Cuesta), arrives at the house of her new employer. Señor Fernando (Jesús Noguero), a former doctor with Republican sympathies who has escaped incarceration due to his family connections, warmly welcomes Pepita into his home on the condition that she remains silent about her sister, a Republican militia woman who is in Ventas prison awaiting trial for being a member of the Communist party. Immediately after agreeing to this deal however, Pepita is taken to meet Señor Fernando’s wife, Doña Amparo (Miryam Gallego), the daughter of a Francoist military captain and elder sister to two Nationalist soldiers killed in the war. The encounter between the two women provides a key moment of Nancyan ‘ecstasy’, a being’s coming to the outside of itself, in which viewers have the opportunity to step outside of the myth of historical memory and recuperation in which they are participating by watching the film. When Pepita and Fernando enter the room, Doña Amparo is sitting peacefully constructing a myth of her own – painting a portrait of her two martyred brothers giving a fascist salute in their Nationalist uniforms. The relationship between the two women is immediately problematized in the dialogue when Doña Amparo asks Pepita who shot her father, ‘¿los nuestros o los rojos?’ eliciting the jarring response, ‘Los
nuestros, señora’. Pepita betrays her failure to commit to, and identify acceptably as, one
side or the other, cutting through the Manichean characterizations of good and evil which
tend to characterize foundational narratives.

However, the discomfort of the situation is more effectively reinforced visually as
the dialogue takes place with Doña Amparo’s very kitsch posthumous portrait of her
brothers in the background. The two young men, now eternally childlike, stand side by
side, hands raised in a fascist salute, an image typical of early Francoist kitsch. The two
very different women face each other as neither friends nor enemies. The painting, a
fragment of one martyr narrative, finds itself stranded in the midst of another (the film
itself) but neither is threatened, neither gestures to assimilate or destroy the other. This
scene establishes a relationship of communion in crisis, marking ‘the indefinitely repeated
and indefinitely suspended gesture of touching the limit, of indicating it and inscribing it,
but without crossing it, without abolishing it in the fiction of a common body’ (Nancy
1990, 67). In this scene La voz dormida demonstrates a self-awareness of the incoherence
inherent in attempts to reconstruct traumatic pasts and in doing so, productively and non-
violeently interrupts both myths.

Martyred Lives and the Meaning Making Machine

As discussed in the introduction, the most common criticism against Las 13 rosas
is that it obscured the protagonists’ political beliefs and their affiliation to the Juventudes
Socialistas Unificadas but this obfuscation is essential to the manufacture of martyr
figures which will restore the community of the nation to an illusion of plenitude and
wholeness. Any strongly held beliefs will alienate the martyrs from their audience and
draw attention to the inconsistencies in myth. This depoliticization also has the added
effect of rendering their lives devoid of meaning. Without the JSU and so only their death can have meaning, foregrounding their role as martyrs.

A similar depoliticization occurs in both *La voz dormida* and *Estrellas que alcanzar*. In the former, it is made clear that Hortensia and her husband are committed communists and that that this is the reason they are sentenced to death. However, what that meant in life is not explored: their vision of Spain is not made clear other than in the most general terms of freedom and equality, and the actions they were willing to undertake to make this vision a reality are not divulged. Political affiliations are similarly obscured in *Estrellas que alcanzar*, which opens directly with the scene of the protagonist’s detention and imprisonment without giving us any window into her former life and why she is detained. In these films, the martyrs’ labour of political commitment is reduced only to the work of death. This reduction is further facilitated by the enclosed space of the prison which cuts them off from any activity other than that of dying. This work of death forecloses on any possibility of positively structuring community:

> Community no more makes a work out of death than it is itself a work. The death upon which the community is calibrated does not operate the dead being’s passage into some communal intimacy, nor does the community, for its part, operate the transfiguration of its dead into some substance or subject - be these homeland, native soil or blood, nation, a delivered or fulfilled humanity, absolute phalanstery, family, or mystical body. (Nancy 1990, 15)

The martyr narrative cannot be redeemed, not only because it is a myth and built on a false immanence, but because it is predicated on a meaningful interpretation of death, which is impossible. ‘For Nancy, the logic of a will to immanence is the logic of imbuing death with meaning or making a work out of it. In contrast, for the finite or mortal being (the being that is not an individual), death is that from which meaning cannot be derived’ (Luszczynska 2005, 176).
Again, enclosure in these films facilitates the production of this meaning which is not one. The prison designates the site of absence over which images of the absent are projected. These re-enactments of martyred deaths cannot give meaning to the original death but they can give the impression of doing so by signifying intensely. In obscuring the gaps left by trauma, the intense signifying power of the martyr death sutures the wounds of the national past but also threatens to open fresh wounds. This phenomenon is intensified when the two terms of Bronfen’s formulation, femininity and death, are brought together in the body of the martyr, and is compounded in these films by the space’s gendered nature.

On the one hand death and femininity serve as ciphers for other values, as privileged tropes. Each term grounds the way a culture stabilizes and represents itself, yet does so as a signifier with an increasingly receding, ungraspable signified which invariably always points self-reflexively to other signifiers. On the other hand, precisely because death and femininity are excessively tropic, they point to a reality beyond and indeed disruptive to all systems of language; they evoke the referent that texts may point to but not touch. (Bronfen 1992, xii)

*Las 13 rosas, Estrellas que alcanzar,* and *La voz dormida,* all place a particular focus on images of female, feminine, and specifically maternal, martyrdom. This focus aims to stabilize the martyr’s body and attempt to recuperate loss through gestures to futurity. All three films end with pleas to futurity. The final sequence of *Las 13 rosas* is dominated by Blanca Brisac’s letter to her son, written in the hours before her execution, which is heard in voiceover: a message of love and reconciliation is very much in tune with the rhetoric of the beatification of the Spanish martyrs: ‘Sólo te pido que seas muy bueno, muy bueno siempre. Que quieras a todos y que no guardes nunca rencor a los que dieron muerte a tus padres, eso nunca.’ *Estrellas que alcanzar* similarly ends with a message from the dying Victoria addressed directly to her son, outlining her hopes for his
future. In *La voz dormida* it is the voice of the child who gives meaning to the narrative, as Hortensia’s daughter describes life after her mother’s death and her attempts to have her parents exhumed and buried together – again sublating the martyr narrative to the preoccupations of the contemporary audience. In both, the figure of the child as totem of futurity drives the narrative towards a destined and totalizing finality, thereby eliding the meaninglessness of death. The foregrounding of the child also positions the contemporary audience as central to the narrative – it is they that will produce and validate the meaning of the narrative.

**The Spectacle of Victimhood**

In order to function intelligibly as a politically potent narrative device and a cultural commodity in the 21st century, the martyr figure must evolve, substituting and augmenting the familiar tropes of the Christian martyr tradition with a newer iconography. In response to shifts in values and political attitudes, the past decade has seen the traditional figure of the martyr transformed into the more universally current image of the victim, ‘an important and competitive political actor not only in Spain but also in the Western world in general’ (López-Quiñones 2012, 94). Ángel G. Loureiro has described this shift in recent cultural production as a move ‘from a messianic history laden with promises of a better future, … to a view of history as grievance; concurrently, the focus is on the victims of history, and no longer on the heroic figure of the warrior’ (Loureiro 2008, 231). Although Loureiro’s focus on the warrior as the immediate predecessor of the victim somewhat sidelines the important role of the martyr in the development of representations of war, his formulation of the changing perceptions of, and attitudes towards, history and its agents highlights parallels with the move away from
the Church rhetoric of sacrifice and martyrdom and towards human rights frameworks as
the prevailing logic by which to process the violence and trauma of war, and to recuperate
that which is lost to it.

Within this dual shift, the prison has emerged as a key site in which audiences can
rethink attitudes towards freedom, justice, community, and reconciliation - concepts key
to the Spanish transition to democracy. This space’s polyvalence as microcosm,
metaphor, and allegory has lent itself to the examination of a range of broader social
concerns across cultures, but the violence and oppression which have characterised
twentieth century Spanish history\textsuperscript{15} have allowed it to accumulate a special currency as a
vehicle for exploring relationships with the national past. Building on Jan Alber’s
assertion that prison metaphors ‘usually serve to critique certain limitations of the “free
world” and thus carry significant ideological and critical weight’ (Alber 2011, 229), Eva
Woods Peiró has provided an insightful analysis of the prison which opens the space up
to both figurative, broadly universal readings as well as insights specific to the cultural
and political context of Spain in the new century. In her article on the carceral and the
transnational in Daniel Monzón’s critically and commercially successful prison thriller,
\textit{Celda 211} (2009), she highlights the prison apparatus as ‘implicit in our comprehending
what constitutes freedom and democracy’ (2015, 64).

Prisons, prisoners and surveillance technologies reflect some of
our greatest underlying social anxieties; and they impair the
recognition of one of our deepest ideological blindspots: that
which is repressed will always return. Prisons inherently comment
on our inability to contain, to quarantine those we want to be dead
but who remain animate. Those ‘lifers’ are socially dead yet
capable of sudden rebellion, and of achieving goals and
responding to human affect. (Woods Peiró 2015, 64)

\textsuperscript{15} Eva Woods Peiró points out that ‘between 1936 and 1952, Spain was an immense open prison
comprising hundreds of internment, concentration and forced labour camps as well as newly
established or refurbished conventional prisons for the purpose of controlling opponents of
Francoism (Beevor 407; González-Ruibal 54).’ (Woods Peiró 2015, 66)
The significance of the prison as a site constructed around the containment of abject but irrepressible bodies - a dynamic echoed in the exhumation of mass graves – allows for interesting comparisons to be drawn between the ghostly and the imprisoned bodies of Spanish cinema. Most strikingly, such a comparison illuminates the prison film’s compulsive focus on the material body, and its relation to architecture.

Although Woods Peiró gleans the above conceptualization through her analysis of Celda 211, a film which features just one speaking female character, its implications for women’s prison films allow for a more nuanced reading of gendered enclosure in film, elucidating the functions of the female body in these narratives and its relationship to enclosed space. The specific communicative force of enclosed female bodies, particularly in their exaggerated victimhood, is put in relief if we compare them to their male counterparts in the men’s prison films released around the same time. These films include the biopics of Juan José Garfia, one of Spain’s most dangerous prisoners, in Horas de Luz (Matji 2004), and of executed Catalan anarchist, Salvador Puig Antich, in Salvador (Huerga 2006), as well as the aforementioned Celda 211. While imprisoned men are equally victimized by imprisonment and are also social agents constrained to enforced passivity by the state apparatus and carceral architecture, these films chart their rejection of the victim role as they take on agency in their own negotiations of the justice system, facing the indifference of society with steadfast stoicism and irrepressible rebelliousness. While Celda 211 most explicitly adopts the mode of the thriller, both Horas de luz and Salvador contain nods towards that genre which so emphatically centres the agency of its male protagonists. The key factor which differentiates imprisoned men from imprisoned women in the films under discussion here is that male subjects are responsible both for their crimes and their own search for justice.
Like the women’s prison films under discussion here, these films also touch on complex national issues of historical memory, regional identity, and social injustice. However, the men’s prison films capitalize on the tensions inherent in these themes to construct disorienting moral landscapes and map them onto the alienating architecture of the prison, the negotiation of which provides much of the audience’s thrill. The blurring of moral boundaries propels the plot of both *Horas de luz* and *Celda 211*, two films set in Spain’s notorious and controversial FIES (Ficheros de Internos de Especial Seguimiento), areas specifically designed to hold dangerous or troublesome prisoners in conditions of extreme isolation. In 2009, the year *Celda 211* was released, all of Spain’s FIES were shut down amid a contentious debate regarding the human rights of the prisoners. This setting not only foregrounds the objective guilt and violence of the imprisoned characters but problematizes the moral high ground on which the Spanish justice system, the prison guards, and even the Spanish viewing public stand in relation to them. The location of these narratives in FIES positions all parties as perpetrators, and the protagonists as both victimized and victimizing, while placing the audience in the uncomfortable role of judge, attempting to negotiate right and wrong in a radically unfamiliar setting.

While this dilemma is a challenging and ambitious one to pose in commercial cinema, no sooner is the ethical test set than it is dismissed by reintroducing to homosocial space the ethical protocol of heteronormativity. The ethnical mire is heavily gendered from the start of both *Celda 211* and *Horas de Luz* but the introduction of a female body into male enclosure provides an axis around which a simplified morality can reorganize and reassert itself. If the prison space of *Celda 211* is immense, complex, and intimidating, the hyper-masculine, socially inscribed body of Malamadre (Luis Tosar), the leader of the riot around which the film’s plot revolves, is more than a match for it. This physical match makes of the homosocial arena of the prison a level playing field
between prisoners and guards, emphasizing the ethical ambiguity of the space to the extent that guards and inmates become barely distinguishable within it. When the riot breaks out, the protagonist Juan, a prison guard undertaking his first day of training, is knocked unconscious. Waking hours later in cell 211 he realizes that in order to survive the riot he must pass himself off as a new prisoner and join the other inmates in their rebellion. As he develops homosocial bonds with the prisoners his dual position further muddies the moral waters and he becomes increasingly sympathetic to the inmates demands while continuing to eschew their violence and act in the best interests of the prison authorities. However, just as he is most conflicted regarding his allegiance to either side, the death of Juan’s pregnant wife Elena (Marta Etura) conveniently restructures the moral universe and clarifies his position within it. Seeing the riot on the news, Elena goes to the prison to find Juan, becoming trapped in the protests outside the prison gates where she is struck down by prison guard Utrillo, an injury she later (rather implausibly) dies from. After seeing her fall on a news report recorded by a mobile phone, the previously conflicted Juan himself becomes a victim by proxy of police brutality and unites with the prisoners both in their suffering and in their fight for justice. Juan’s impulsive murder of Utrillo when he comes to negotiate terms with the inmates is shocking but somehow justified as revenge.

Similarly, in Horas de luz it is the highly feminized, sexualized, and maternal body of Marimar (Emma Suárez), the kindly prison nurse who brings the logic of conventional morality to the chaotic spirit of the infamously violent murderer, Juan José Garfia (Alberto San Juan). The already troubled Garfia is further dehumanized by the conditions in FIES, becoming increasingly antisocial until Marimar arrives at the prison, in incongruous pink lipstick. As she assimilates him into heteronormative marriage and makes him a father to her three children the audience no longer needs to vacillate as to
whether Garfia is primarily a perpetrator of crime or a victim of an overly harsh penal code. Through Marimar, Garfia escapes this dichotomy and is allowed a complexity of character, the semantic excess of which can be channelled through the more one-dimensional, purely ‘good’ character of Marimar. Just as Elena’s death gave Juan the opportunity to become an arbiter of justice, Marimar’s loneliness and suffering allows Garfia to demonstrate his humanity. In both cases it is the victimized female body through which the wrongdoing is managed.

The female body suggests an innocence and vulnerability more conducive to victimhood, a vulnerability which is reinforced in the youth, sickness, and pregnancy of the martyred bodies in *Las 13 rosas*, *Estrellas que alcanzar*, and *La voz dormida*. The reiteration of this vulnerability foregrounds the prison as a liminal space between life and death, a liminality which contrasts strikingly with the narrative dichotomy established between good and evil. Reviews and scholarly literature on *Las 13 rosas*, and indeed Spanish memory politics more broadly, frequently discuss the Manichean visions of good and evil which continually threaten to dominate the debate (Boyero 2007; Smith 2014). Nevertheless, each of these films takes pains to include at least one positive representation of a character on the opposing side – strikingly these incongruously ‘good’ characters are invariably prison guards. One of *Las 13 rosas*’s main deviations from the recorded history of the executions is in its stretching to portray supporters of Franco as good people (B. P. Martínez, Fernández-Checa, and Pascual 2013; Smith 2014; Marañón 2012; Deveny 2012). Particularly controversial was the depiction of the infamously cruel director of Las Ventas prison, Carmen Castro (Goya Toledo), as a reasonable person who even sheds tears as the trece rosas are led to their execution. Similarly, the guard in *La voz dormida*, Mercedes (Ana Wagener), shows kindness to Hortensia before her execution, even interrupting the film’s most tense and
dramatic sequence to explain and justify her role in the prison and in Hortensia’s death. The role and importance of victims is reaffirmed while the position of evildoer is abdicated, becoming disembodied and dispersed between several less central characters. It is outside the prison that the girls encounter truly intransigent evil, and where the oppressive structure is accounted for, reinforcing their enclosed condition.

This new moral landscape means that the whole spectrum of good and evil shifts and twists itself according to gender. The opening sequence of *Horas de Luz* unflinchingly catalogues the brutal crimes of the protagonist Juan José Garfia; the first part of *Salvador* centres on the martyr’s own account of his political activities including a bank robbery; *Celda 211* does not go into detail about the prisoners’ crimes but neither does it attempt to expiate their guilt in any way. This is in stark contrast to the women’s prison films in which innocence is foregrounded as a prerequisite for audience sympathy. Unlike the traditional Catholic beatification process, the post-Christian martyr myth cannot contain, assimilate, or even tolerate any trace of evil.

Specifically, the entanglement of this category [of victim] with a particular emotional tone that we can detect, for instance, in many recent popular films and novels about the 1930s and 1940s, often reinstates a handicapped subject that has been reduced to a semi-passive state. The victim appears as an unnecessarily idealized and inoffensive social entity whose peaceful agency is suddenly constrained by hostile, powerful ‘evil’ forces. The victim was, of course, innocent before becoming a victim and is afterwards a diminished individual who lacks something and needs to be completed again. (López-Quíñones 2012, 104)

The prison setting in *Las 13 rosas* confirms the objective innocence of the women as the crime for which they are executed takes place while they are all already imprisoned in Las Ventas. Similarly, the imprisonment of Hortensia and Victoria precludes any direct involvement with any political group, however justified it may be. In this, the women’s
enclosure in the prison mirrors the treatment of victims’ bones in the laboratory which Ignacio Fernández de Mata has also described as making ‘malleable Victims’ through their removal from the socio-historical contexts that defined their pre-victimhood identities. He articulates how through the exhumation process ‘the innocence of the victim is “consolidated” in his or her abstraction from a complicated milieu in which good and bad things were happening, in which messy problems and tensions could potentially lead a bystander to say, “if he was killed, it must have been because of something”’ (Fernández de Mata 2008, 259).

The cinematic space of victimhood

Significantly, the space of the martyr in the moment of their death is constructed largely through camera position and camerawork. The sidelong of the markers of enclosed space in these scenes, and their framing in close-ups as visual spectacles is also consistent with the repositioning of these martyrs in a human rights framework. This is highlighted explicitly in Estrellas que alcanzar where the prisoners’ hope for justice and the return of their stolen children lies in a visit from Red Cross inspectors. Realizing that she will never see her own son again and therefore has nothing left to lose, Victoria unites the other prisoners and plans a revolt. She encourages all the prisoners to come to her typewriting classes and document their experiences, planning to deliver the letters to the inspectors in order to reveal the reality of conditions in the prison: ‘El mundo tiene que saber lo que pasa aquí dentro y lo sabrá. Si logramos entregar esas cartas a los inspectores de la Cruz Roja será el fin de La Pantera, estoy segura’. This idea in itself is in line with the expectations and ideals of a contemporary audience with faith in the justice system of
international human rights, a discourse built around the dynamics of revelation and exposure where:

activists believe that the presentation of information of violations will shame nations into complying with the UDHR. Testimony and witnessing are thus central aspects of human rights discourses and activism; … Human rights groups mobilize the language of visibility—bringing atrocities to light, the light of public scrutiny—and technologies of witnessing. (Moorti 2011, 236)

However, the sequence depicting the prisoners’ attempts to put this plan into action and deliver the message to the Red Cross jarringly shifts between modes of humanitarian and Christian justice. Firstly, the rebellion fails when it is betrayed by one of the prisoners themselves. The drama and pathos of this act of betrayal is heightened by its biblical resonances. Jesusa, on the false understanding that if she co-operates with prison authorities she will have her child returned to her, uses La Pantera’s whistle to call in the guards. This frames Victoria’s martyrdom as even more explicitly Christ-like.

However, the ensuing riot is partly shown from the perspective of a fallen victim, a perspective which evokes the found footage of human rights ‘sub-veillance’ videos which ‘espouse overtly the point of view of those whose rights have been violated’ (Moorti 2011, 237). As the camera appears to fall to the ground, presumably knocked over by the guards as they rush in to quash the riot, the unusual angle and mise-en-scène is reminiscent of activist Bradley Will’s final recording. Shot during a protest in Oaxaca, Mexico, Will’s camera continued filming as he died, the footage drawing considerably more media attention to the human rights abuses in the region than it would have had he lived. This angle binds the perspectives of the defeated dead and the consumer public to inflect and advance a human rights discourse. This is also reflected in the scene of Hortensia’s execution in La voz dormida. While we see Hortensia’s body from the
perspective of the fallen dead next to her, the emphasis is not the act of witnessing but on the spectacle of her death. These films show the significance of a female, enclosed perspective in the production of secular martyr narratives.

This kind of human rights media is also foregrounded in *Celda 211*, where Juan witnesses his wife’s death in a low quality video uploaded to a prisoner’s phone and his own death is depicted in a similar way. The audience witnesses the end of the riot through the eyes of the dying Juan – blurred and upside down. In death, he stands witness to injustice. However, *Estrellas que alcanzar* only very briefly takes up this perspective. Suddenly, the camera abandons Victoria’s perspective to position her again centre stage, as the object of the gaze rather than its subject. Having established her victimhood in a contemporary human rights framework, the narrative key switches back to the traditional rhetoric of martyrdom. Victoria survives the suppression of the riot only to be condemned by la Pantera to two weeks solitary confinement in the *pozo*. Her death is not a device for witnessing injustice, but the spectacle itself. The camera slowly zooms in on the shivering, helpless Victoria as she slips under the water, the onus of witnessing falling on the audience. This balance between occupying the perspective of the dead and observing death as a spectacle is also achieved in *La voz dormida* where Hortensia’s execution is
shot from a range of perspectives as if the camera is anxiously avoiding coinciding with any particular viewpoint. The line of the condemned is shown from above and behind the line of executioners, cautiously avoiding the uncomfortable identification between the audience and the executioners.

**Figure 22 Victoria's death in Estrellas que alcanzar**

**Conclusion**

While martyrdom and death ostensibly preclude testimony, *Estrellas que alcanzar* offers both and in a way which allows the audience to feel that they are contributing to the work of recuperation. The opening sequence offers familiar documentary-style talking head testimonial interviews from women who were imprisoned in the Saturrarán jail where the film is set. Although the interviews are real and unscripted, included for their documentary value and to assure audiences of the veracity of what follows, the testimonies include no specific factual information. The exact name and location of the prison is not mentioned and we are given no information about the witnesses that might help us contextualise their testimony - their names only appear in the final credits, after the cast. The testimonies are not included to provide the audience with historical
information with which to make sense of and judge the fictional story which follows, or to understand the prison experience. Instead, they are edited in such a way as to contextualize and justify the viewing experience. Although one witness makes clear that ‘esto no se puede imaginar nadie no pasando por ello’, the impossibility of simulating the horror through a mere TV movie is immediately undermined by a second who states that ‘no es lo que te ha pasado a ti, es lo que has visto pasar a las demás’. The inclusion of such a statement in the introduction to the films encourages an unfeasibly intense and self-indulgent identification with the narrative on the part of the audience, a dynamic at play to a greater or lesser extent in each of the three films analysed in this chapter.

Even as these films mark a turning point in representations of women’s enclosure on screen it perpetuates older tendencies towards projecting onto this space the concerns and anxieties of the contemporary audience. Moving dramatically away from the exploitation cinema that characterised the early years of the transition, the audience no longer looks to enclosed space as a way of looking at abject bodies from a safe distance but as a way of containing idealised figures from the messiness of the outside world. Moreover, this is achieved through the attempted appropriation of the totalizing narrative of Christianity that contemporary Spain claims to have discarded. While the films fail to seamlessly transpose this narrative onto their own, it is these moments of failure in which the myth interrupts itself that create some of the most powerful scenes in these films, moments in which the possibility of a new community is opened up. More problematic is the attempt to insist on a greater, universal, and future-oriented meaning in the deaths of these figures. Even efforts to instate these martyrs in anachronistic human rights frameworks is problematic in that it restores to enclosed space a dynamics of justified disclosure. This positing of the scopic drive as as moral obligation threatens to reduce the
enclosed to victimhood in the same way they were once reduced to abject bodies or sex toys, eliding the power of enclosure as an unknown constant in Spanish popular culture.
Conclusion

El convento es la noche y el día. El convento es la muerta pasión y la blanca virtud. El relicario de la fe y la tradición, y por eso aguarda temblando como un animal recién nacido al borroso porvenir. Los lagos insonables, son interrogaciones; hay que saberlos mirar. (Gibson 1969, 189)

Returning to Lorca’s description of the convent a full century after it was written (and with the representations of women’s enclosure examined here in mind), his profound understanding of the significance of the space is as clear as his intuition regarding its future. The poet highlights the convent as a space of contrasts and contradictions, a framing consistent with the vastly different portrayals of the space we have seen between films like Entre tinieblas and Teresa, el cuerpo de Cristo. He also positions the convent as a repository of tradition, something essential to the understanding of Spain’s past. Again, we have seen the convent play this role in the numerous biopics of Teresa de Jesús and remakes of Canción de cuna, both narratives whose retelling has nearly become tradition in itself. Moreover, in light of the transformation in attitudes towards and perceptions of convent space produced since Lorca’s visit to the convent in 1917, and particularly since the transition to democracy, his apprehension regarding the convent’s future now seems justified. Nevertheless, while this study has mapped a clear shift in emphasis in Spanish visual culture from the enclosure of the convent to the prison, it is evident that elements of the convent have clearly and consistently been mapped onto the prison, preserving in a different form the semantic vitality suggested in Lorca’s evocative article. In this way, the convent has proved itself more robust than Lorca ever suspected.

The endurance of the convent as a culturally significant site has been clear from the first chapter’s examination of Teresa de Jesús’ convent spaces in the numerous representations of her life in visual culture. The study demonstrated how concrete and historical forces have shaped representations of the saint’s space and offered it again and
again as a site through which to negotiate national space, identity, values, and gender roles in Spain. Key to this negotiation was the relationship between Teresa’s mysticism, the convent as both space and community, and state and ecclesiastical authorities for whom Teresa’s spiritual authority offered a potentially useful political tool. It is this ineffable experience of the mystic that both makes of the convent the powerful signifying force that is so tempting to cultural producers and state agents alike, as well as a space unassimilable to any overarching power structure. These engagements with the figure of Teresa de Jesús restore the convent as a culturally valued space, reaffirming its potential to facilitate connections between the present and past, the material and mystical, the immanent and the transcendent.

If Josefina Molina, Ray Loriga, and Jorge Dorado’s films suggest the convent’s enduring value as a ‘relicario de la fe y la tradición’, in the films examined in chapter two position the space as a trembling animal at the mercy of Lorca’s ‘borroso porvenir’. Almodóvar’s *Entre tinieblas* and Picazo’s *Extramuros* reaffirm the potential of the convent as a valuable site in renegotiating social roles and values, but challenge this potential by pushing it to extremes. This chapter provided an insight into how constructions of female saintliness and women’s space were renegotiated in 1980s Spain and how this was reflected spatially. The chapter contextualised the enclosure of religious women on screen with a brief comparative history of the treatment of saintly men and women in Spain’s *cine religioso*. This analysis demonstrated the historical exclusion of women from the rugged and often exotic landscapes where saintliness was usually performed on Spanish screens. The contrast between these spaces and the domestic environs to which saintly women have often been confined is reflected in these films, but any attempts to occupy that space is narratively dismissed either by parodying the nun’s desire to occupy such spaces, as in *Entre tinieblas*, or by emphasizing the convent’s power
to foster intimacy, as in Extramuros. Instead, these film’s recuperate the maligned aesthetics traditionally associated with feminine saintliness, mixing kitsch cursilería, and camp, with elements of the masculine, dignified, baroque to create new visions of women’s enclosed space in which convent dwellers can map out their own version of saintliness.

Where Molina’s series and Loriga and Dorado’s films take note of the tensions between constructing and preserving in female homosocial space, these films more explicitly problematize the dynamics through which enclosed women have provided anchors and safeguards for other people’s spiritual ambitions. In exploding this structure they play not only with the aesthetic registers of women’s enclosed space but the scopic regimes that govern it. The films hint at several different possible approaches to representation, spectacle, and spectatorship; the hyperspecularization or despecularization of the subject, the construction of alternative mirrors of the self, and the submission to the geometry of space as a BwO. While these devices often fail or are usurped by other forces, when they do function they illuminate the power of women’s enclosed space to frame diverse narratives and experiences. Even as the final moments of these films appear to foreclose on the convent as a valid social space in contemporary Spanish society, they also hint at the possibility of the power of convent space deploying to other configurations of women’s enclosure, a potential which is explored in more detail in the final two chapters.

At the point at which this study was at risk of portraying women’s enclosure in Spanish cinema and television as marking a linear trajectory out of the convent and into the prison, chapter three highlights the surprising potential of convent narratives to recur at the moments they are least expected. This chapter examines José María Elorrieta’s 1961 Canción de cuna and José Luis Garci’s 1994 remake, two films in which the
convent’s ‘lagos insondables’ are drained, flattened, and put to work in the national machine of a rapidly modernizing Spain. Specifically, we saw how the radical Otherness of convent enclosure has been mitigated on screen in order to ease anxieties around unmarried, childless women, and to reclaim the space as part of the national landscape.

Moving away from the convent, chapter four’s analysis of Vicente Aranda’s *Libertarias* and Azucena Rodriguez’ *Entre rojas* marked the realisation of the potential of the convent’s mystical energy to deploy and signify culturally in other spaces. The analysis of these films showed how the mobilization of codes and gestures of the mystical experience in new contexts can work to redefine women’s enclosure outside of the framework of the convent. In these films visionary performances construct new geographies of the gaze which undermine those set out in earlier cinema of women’s enclosure, particularly those of nunsplitation. Equally, these films recuperate the communicative power of marginalised voices and modes of speaking over those of mainstream authoritative discourse. However, the recuperation of mystical discourse outside the radical intimacy and secrecy of the convent leaves it open to appropriation by other forces, a risky dynamic which is explored in chapter five. This final chapter examines gender, memory, and martyrdom in three women’s prison films since 2000: *Las trece rosas, La voz dormida*, and *Estrellas que alcanzar*. These martyr narratives exploit the enclosed space of the women’s prison as a framing for ideologically simplified representations of history. They also play with the religious connotations of women’s enclosure, its resonance with the convent as a ‘relicario de la fe y la tradición’, problematically situating these narratives at the intersection of traditional Catholic iconography and more contemporary depictions of imprisoned and confined women. While this chapter has problematized this framing it has also highlighted how pervasive it has become in contemporary Spanish culture. While the narratives of martyrdom and
victimization discussed in the final chapter are problematic, they nevertheless speak to the enduring cultural value of women’s enclosed space and to the inescapability of that space’s mystical and religious connotations in Spain. In anything this has become more marked since the production of the film’s examined in chapter five as the space of women’s enclosure has risen to a new prominence in Spanish culture across abroad range of medium, in which the mystical has taken on a new significance.

In 2016, television channel Cuatro’s reality series Quiero ser monja followed five young girls who believed they had religious vocations as they entered a contemporary convent. Finally offering the Spanish viewing public the look inside convent life that they had always wanted, the series opened to high ratings and became a trending topic on twitter. However, after the first episodes, the series flopped (El País 2016). The cameras penetrated the convent walls, not to find levitating saints, orgies of lesbian nuns, or fugitive cabaret singers hiding in disguise. Rather, the series was marked by a devastating banality. While the series perhaps crushed the idea of real life convents as mysteriously exciting places, imaginary convents have recently become a staple of Madrid theatre where Juan Mairena’s Cerda (2014) and ensemble production Las Magdalenas (2015), featuring drag queen nuns, ninja nuns, drug taking nuns and more, have both met with success. Javier Calvo and Javier Ambrossi’s long running musical La llamada (2013), set at a Catholic youth camp run by nuns where a young girl receives visions of God singing Whitney Houston songs to her, is currently being made into a film starring Anna Castillo. Moreover, Spain’s answer to the global success of women’s prison drama Orange is the New Black (2013), Vis a vis is decidedly contemporary but contains marked mystical elements: the primary antagonist Zulema (Najwa Nimri) practises Islamic mystism.

Lorca closes his description of the convent with a sensitive appraisal of the enduring value of convent spaces and a hope that ‘si las generaciones venideras los
comprenden, los cercarán de murallas de plata’ (Gibson 1969, 189). However, the capacity of the value of convent space to adapt to new contexts suggests that no such “murallas de plata” will be necessary.
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