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Pietsie Feenstra

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# FILMIC VOICES IN PILAR PALOMERO'S SCHOOLGIRLS: BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE GENERATION OF 1992

PIETSIE FEENSTRA

This issue of *L'Atalante* explores how a new generation of Spanish female filmmakers have constructed a voice in film in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Pilar Palomero's first feature film, *Schoolgirls* (Las niñas, 2020) offers a good example of how to create a voice for a generation of girls who came of age in the 1990s. The film won four Goya Awards (Best Film, Best New Director, Best Original Screenplay, and Best Cinematography), and was nominated for five others, including Best Original Song.<sup>1</sup> The studio Inicia Films depicts the story of *Schoolgirls* as a journey: "Celia, an 11-year-old girl, is studying at a school run by nuns in Zaragoza and lives with her mother. Brisa, a new student who recently arrived from Barcelona, propels her into a new stage of her life: adolescence. On this journey, in the Spain of the 1992 Olympics, Celia discovers that life is made up of a lot of truths, and a number of lies." The film offers a young person's perspective on the transition from childhood to adolescence, representing it as a journey of discovery. The stag-

ing of the voice is highly significant right from the beginning of the film, as the director effectively creates a voice for Celia's generation. So how does Palomero create a gaze on silence while telling the story of what happens behind the scenes at a school in 1992?

## **CONSTRUCTING A VOICE THROUGH FILM**

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Cinema can create original voices through its way of combining them with the image. In the 1980s, in his book *The Voice in Cinema*, Michel Chion explained that analysing the voice was a new and important question, stressing that this does not mean studying the words spoken, but exploring how the presence of the voice is filmed in relation to the story told in the filmic image. Chion notes that in the 1970s, feminist publishers were the first to produce women's stories on audiobook cassettes, resulting in the first archives of the voice of women's oral history (Chion, 1982: 13). It

is important to recognise that the voice can sometimes offer more freedom than writing: the voice is personal, because of its timbre, and it is often easier to speak than to write. Chion also mentions the work of Marguerite Duras as a creator who has marked literature and film through her way of imposing her voice in her work from an artistic point of view (Chion, 1982: 14). In a subsequent essay titled “*Les nouveaux masques de la voix*” (1998), Chion points out that the way of filming the voice has evolved since he published his book. Once, it was essential to combine a natural voice with a face, but in the 1980s and 1990s filmmakers began creating new filmic forms, as the realistic image could be adapted with national or regional accents or intonations.<sup>2</sup>

The 1990s also saw an increased presence of female filmmakers in Spanish cinema. Voice is a key element of their work, as suggested in the title of the collection I co-edited with Esther Gimeno Ugalde and Kathrin Saringen, titled *Directoras de cine en España y América Latina: nuevas voces y miradas* [Female Film Directors in Spain and Latin America: New Voices and Gazes] (2014).<sup>3</sup> The collection includes several articles that make reference to the innovative use of the voice by these filmmakers, such as *Take My Eyes* (Te doy mis ojos, Iciar Bollain, 2003) or *The Secret Life of Words* (Isabel Coixet, 2005), and is informed by two trends that particularly struck our attention: the directors studied film the voice explicitly, creating new filmic forms; and those who explore social realities, historical memory or other contemporary political issues give special attention to the voice. The work of female directors has created new voices, new presences, as explored in my chapter, titled “¿Cómo leer los nuevos enfoques sobre mujeres directoras? Archivar, visibilizar, escenificar” [How to Read New Approaches to Female Directors: Archiving, Visibilising, Staging] (Feenstra, 2014). In the chapter I propose three terms to describe the research on the work of female directors in film history: “archiving”, “giving

visibility” and “staging”. *Archiving* is a term used by the researcher Esther Gimeno Ugalde, who has constructed an important archive with her chapter titled “*Presencias (in)visibles: directoras en el cine español y latinoamericano*” [(In)visible Presences: Female Directors in Spanish and Latin American Cinema] (2014), bringing together important information on the presence of female filmmakers from the birth of cinema right up to 2012.<sup>4</sup> The term *staging* proposed in this article refers to a way of giving a presence to the work of women directors, or how they can create points of view in their films through the staging of the voice within certain locations.<sup>5</sup>

*Schoolgirls* offers a good example of establishing a new point of view through the construction of the voice. Pilar Palomero’s film proposes a staging of memory in 2020, giving visibility to the voice of a new generation.<sup>6</sup> The director sets her story in Zaragoza in 1992, the year that Spain was chosen as the European Capital of Culture and the Olympic Games were held in Barcelona, as well as being the year of the Seville Expo and the opening of Museo Reina Sofia.<sup>7</sup> 1992 was also an important year for the European Community, as it marked the opening of borders resulting from the Schengen Agreement, signed in 1985 and confirmed by the 1992 Maastricht Treaty establishing the European Union. Spain had become an EC member in 1986 and the Socialist government (1982-1996), led by Felipe González, was preparing for European integration. The organisation of such important events in Seville and Barcelona, two cities steeped in legend, drew a lot of attention from other European nations and served as an appealing way to showcase Spanish culture. This is the cultural context that frames this story about a group of girls at a school in Zaragoza.

## 1992: NARRATIVES OF MEMORY

In contrast with the film’s original Spanish title, *Las niñas* [The Girls], the English title, *Schoolgirls*,

refers explicitly to the place of transmission of education to a generation. The girls share this experience, which could be described as a “collective” memory. It was the French philosopher Maurice Halbwachs who defined collective memory as the lived experience of a group over a particular period of time. Halbwachs defined various social frameworks for the transmission of collective memory: the family, religion, and school (Halbwachs, 1925; 1950). These frameworks are reflected in Pilar Palomero’s film, but the characters also react against these institutions. Cinema offers the possibility of questioning the transmission of a collective memory, a concept that itself is worth questioning.

The theorists Jan and Aleida Assmann propose other definitions for the transmission of memory, while recognising the importance of Halbwachs’s concept of frameworks. These scholars suggest a redefinition of the conception of collective memory that makes a distinction between “cultural memory” and “communicative memory” (Assmann, 2008). Cultural memory is institutionalised memory, while communicative memory is individual, personal memory passed on from one generation to the next. Cinema can transmit this type of memory through an oral history. New generations can offer their own visions of history, and cinema constitutes an ideal art form for the construction of these new voices. Aleida Assmann suggests that each new generation can offer its version of history, which she defines as “social memory”, and that this version is normally consolidated after a period of around thirty years. After this period, a new generation emerges and takes over the public responsibility for memory construction. The new generation will create its own vision of history, which is essential for revitalising cultural creativity (Assmann, 2010). *Schoolgirls* presents the transmission of a narrative of memory about 1992 in 2021: nearly thirty years later.

## TITLE SEQUENCE

It is important to analyse the mise-en-scène in order to understand how new voices are constructed in cinema. Two scenes in *Schoolgirls* stand out from the outset: the title sequence and the mise-en-scène of a rehearsal for a show. The title sequence shows a choir rehearsing. The first voice we hear is that of the nun who is conducting the choir, and the first images shown are close-ups of some of the choirgirls. The nun is telling them to mouth the words but not sing: they must express themselves by pretending to sing, but without projecting their voices. The girls imitate the gestures, moving their mouths without making any sound. The shots cut quickly from one close-up to another, while we hear the nun forbidding certain girls from singing aloud. In this group is Celia, the protagonist. She must show her face and mouth the words of the song, but her voice must not be heard. The shot immediately before the credits is a group shot of the girls, who breathe in before we cut suddenly to a black screen with the title of the film (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The girls breathe before we cut to the main title shot in the prologue to *Schoolgirls* (Pilar Palomero, 2020)

Breathing is very important for the voice, as David Le Breton observes: “If we lose our breath, we lose the ability to speak. The voice is the product of exhaling and not of inhaling”<sup>8</sup> (Le Breton, 2011: 13). According to Le Breton, we have no voice when we breathe in. The film opens with this act, showing the orchestration of a silence for certain girls who are told not to sing aloud; an act that I define as a *performative act*. From a linguistic perspective, performativity refers to John Austin’s famous speech act theory (1962), which subsequently inspired John Searle to develop certain key ideas in his book *Speech Acts*, published in 1969. Austin developed a theory on how words can be used to perform certain social rites, the best-known examples being marriage and baptism. In reality, this operation occurs through the utterance of a speech, where the words also contain a legal or other type of value. Speech acts can also evoke silences or recover a voice. The film begins significantly with this performative act of the silence of a group of girls.

And the film ends with the girls performing in front of an audience. Celia is in the choir and she will recover her voice. She looks to either side, and slowly begins to sing aloud: we can hear her. Once again, the close-up is highly significant, because we see other girls in their white shirts in the background, but rendered anonymous, as their faces are not visible. The shot of Celia shows that she is part of the group: singing in a choir is a collective act, and Celia is presented at the end of the film as supported by the other girls. The presence of the group is very important for singing, as David Le Breton explains, because singing is a collective act that creates an echo, offering support for the individual to continue on her path in life (Le Breton, 2011: 197; Leiris, 1992: 106). Le Breton also discusses the importance of the voice in religious discourse referring to the creation of the world (Le Breton, 2011: 23). The voice has the power to vest a thing, an event, or an attitude with a presence. We are in a school full of young people, and

they have voices. Celia will create her voice; she has expressed her point of view on her family life and she will sing the song with her own voice.

Nominated for a Goya Award, the song “*Lunas de papel*” (“Paper Moons”) is very important to the story. As its Zaragoza composer, Carlos Naya, explains (Aragón Cultura, 2021), the universe of the song represents a particular context:

Well, “*Lunas de papel*” is a song that appears at a moment in the film with a lot of emotional weight. I don’t want to give the story away, but I can say that the song is sung at a moment when the character of Celia, who is performed brilliantly by Andrea Fandos, comes to the end of the film’s emotional journey. We knew that it was an important moment and we wanted to create a musical context that would somehow accompany this complex inner world of the character. The intention was to evoke the emotional depth of the character of Celia through the simplicity of a school choir song. I think the hardest part was working out how to reflect so much with so few musical elements.

The song has no explicitly religious meaning, despite being performed by a choir in a Catholic school, as the composer explains. It is interesting to note his description of the instructions given directly by Pilar Palomero about the universe of the song:

Afterwards we got together in my studio and Pilar explained to me what she didn’t want the song to be. She told me she didn’t want a “naive” Sunday school song. She said that although the context is a choir in a school run by nuns, she didn’t want the song to have religious connotations. It also couldn’t suggest any kind of spirituality outside the Christian context. In the scene we were going to see a piano and a choir of around twenty girls. These were the elements I was given to write the song (Aragón Cultura, 2021).

The atmosphere the song creates is highly significant, but so is the title, as it alludes to the film *Paper Moon* (Peter Bogdanovich, 1973), also adapt-

ed into a television series with the same name (ABC, 1974-1975). In the series, Jodie Foster plays a rebellious young girl who travels around with a Bible-selling con man, and who makes sure she gets her part of the earnings (or sometimes sabotages his deals in highly original ways). The song's title thus hints at the strength of the girls in the film, their rebellion against their religious environment, proposing new reinterpretations.

## FILMIC PROLOGUES

Beginning a film with this title sequence is highly significant: it serves as a kind of "filmic prologue" (Tylski, 2008: 43-44) that makes an important contribution to the tone of the narrative.<sup>9</sup> I define this type of sequence as a *snapshot of a moment* for the way it begins to tell the story (Feenstra, 2021)<sup>10</sup> and introduces the film's central theme. Orchestrating the silence of certain girls' voices is the central theme throughout the film, which begins and ends with the choir. The title sequence is thus directly related to the end of the film.

A second narrative effect of this opening is related to the way it establishes *Schoolgirls* as a story about what happens "backstage". The film concludes with the public performance of the show being rehearsed at the beginning. The whole story explores life in the hallways of a school, in the homes, or in the encounters between the girls as a journey of discovery that reveals new truths about the protagonist's family. This is the world behind the scenes. Looking back in film history, the original conception of the musical in the 1930s was the creation of a spectacle (Altman, 1987).<sup>11</sup> In his study of the American film musical, Rick Altman explains that the backstage was perceived as referring to the real world. Being able to successfully perform the show is an important narrative element, like a triumph after overcoming the obstacles that life poses. In *Schoolgirls*, the behind-the-scenes world is very important: the school is always present, as are the family homes,

the church, and Zaragoza or the wider community. These are sites of everyday life that suggest a realist reading of this fictional universe. Performing the show at the end, with Celia's voice, is a triumph. Her voice represents the breaking of the silence surrounding her family's taboo topic: the fact that she never knew her father and that her mother is unmarried. She is thus able to create her own original voice.

## A VOICE FOR HER MOTHER

Celia's gaze and the way her face is filmed are reminiscent of other films in the history of Spanish cinema. Numerous critics have compared her to Ana Torrent in *The Spirit of the Beehive* (*El espíritu de la colmena*, Víctor Erice, 1973) because her gaze recalls Torrent's quiet observation of the world through awestruck eyes. Moreover, Celia's relationship with her mother could be compared to the mother-daughter relationship in another film starring Torrent, *Cría cuervos* (Carlos Saura, 1975). This film includes a scene where Ana (Torrent), in a complex arrangement of voices and faces, as will be discussed below, talks about the fate of her mother (Geraldine Chaplin) while she is looking around the basement for the poison she used to try to kill different characters. The diegesis suggests that we are hearing Ana's voice in the future, although the voice actually belongs to Geraldine Chaplin. The mother is thus made present with her body and voice, as if she were Ana twenty years later, in 1995 (Figure 2). By projecting herself into the future, with this interchange of voice and body, she is able to express her mother's desires in 1975. Ana explains that her mother had abandoned her career as a pianist in order to devote her life to her daughters. *Cría cuervos* depicts a mother who suffers and dies. Ana speaks for her mother, and also represents her body, giving her desires a voice and hoping for a different future.



Figure 2. In *Cría cuervos* (Carlos Saura, 1976), a tracking shot traces a continuous line between Ana the child and Ana the adult. In the latter, the voice and face of the mother (Gerardine Chaplin) are used to allow the daughter to speak from the future, so that she can express her mother's silenced desires

A mother's silence is also a key theme in *School-girls*. Various scenes reveal that Celia's mother is not accepted by her family because she had a child out of wedlock. The other girls also treat Celia as if she were an orphan, with no family, fatherless. Celia tries to work out who her father is and wants to know where he lives. This is why she will create a voice for her mother, to be able to pass on the memory of her father. It is worth taking a theoretical approach to analyse exactly how this memory is passed on. Returning to Halbwachs's conceptualisation of the transmission of collective memory, the family, school and religion are all crucial: at school, the nun dictates the rules for sex and marriage and the girls write them down in their notebooks. When Celia goes to confession, she asks the priest why people say it is a sin for an unmarried woman to have children. The religious institutions communicate the institutionalised norm, but social repression takes place in other contexts, such as the family or in party games. Since Brisa comes from Barcelona and her parents had her out of wedlock, the other girls treat both Celia and Brisa as orphans. The girls get together to play a game of imagined realities called "Never have I ever...", which leads them to make serious statements about what they would never want. Overstepping the bounds of politeness also seems to form part of the game. Games like this have some challenging rules that make Celia especially uncomfortable, as she has a lot of questions about her father, questions that her mother never answers because she doesn't like to discuss the subject. Celia tries to create a voice for this taboo topic, for what people are whispering in the hallways, in children's games, and also for what is left unsaid. Her mother tells her that her father died of a heart attack before she was born and that he was an orphan, making it impossible to contact his family. They also have no contact with her mother's family because her relations with them are strained. For Celia, it will be extremely difficult to find any evidence of her father's existence.

## POLYPHONY OF FACES

Filming silence is important to tell this story, as is made abundantly clear in the faces, including Celia's. In frontal close-ups of her face, her expression becomes a portrait of her soul. Jacques Aumont begins his book *Du visage au cinéma* with a prologue in which he raises the question of whether the soul has a face: the mystics, he explains, claim that it does, and they describe it as the "inner man" who lives on after death (Aumont, 1998: 14). Aumont thus introduces his foundational book with questions about the soul, the emotions and ways of filming the face, the seat of the gaze (1998: 18).

The face, the gaze, the eyes, the voice: the expression renders visible a series of emotions. When Celia is looking, we watch her, but she also looks at her mother, who we see from behind. This focus on the face plays an important role in giving a voice to her mother. Aumont describes the photogeneity of children in terms of the face (1998: 93), which is evident in the way Celia is filmed. Two dark eyes, long hair... an 11-year-old girl approaching puberty, but still a child. There are contradictions, questions, unsolved mysteries: her gaze bears witness to the many emotions she is experiencing (Figure 3). As the theorist Bela Balász describes it in his foundational text on the spirit of cinema (Aumont, 1998: 86), the close-up can be interpreted as a polyphony. Celia's relationship with her mother exhibits this polyphony of a "social silence" between the two characters.

## JOURNEYS OF DISCOVERY BEHIND THE SCENES

From the perspective of 2020, *Schoolgirls* takes us behind the scenes of Spain's showcase year of 1992. In a religious school preparing girls for a very specific kind of future, the topic of sexuality is addressed by nuns who dictate rules on the importance of marriage that the girls are required



Figure 3. Celia's gaze bears witness to contradictions, silences and desires

to copy. Although many scenes are set in Celia's home, the school, or the church, there are a few scenes involving travelling that draw out different *truths* revealing other realities. The scene at the bus stop (Figure 4), for example, depicts the generation gap. Modern buildings loom in the background, while the girls giggle over an erotic article in a teen magazine. When Mother Consuelo arrives, the girls hide the magazine. They greet her politely. Silence. The nun looks disapprovingly at a poster on the bus shelter containing a famous AIDS awareness campaign that is still well-remembered in Spain today: "*Pónselo, Póntelo.*" "She was looking more at the poster than at us," says one of the girls.

The first time Celia rides on a motorbike with a boy she is seen by Mother Consuelo, who scolds her: it is a sin to go out at night with a boy on a motorcycle. Because her mother had been very young and unmarried when she had her, there is a danger that Celia may choose to explore new horizons and discover different kinds of lives. Her mother, who is incapable of talking to her, is very worried but furious as she waits for her at home while vacuuming the floor: she doesn't want her daughter to be an outcast like she was for having a child without a husband and at such a young age. The noise of the vacuum cleaner is the sound of her own impotent rage.



Figure 4. “She was looking more at the poster than at us,” says one of the girls

In another sequence involving travelling, when Celia and her mother are on their way to school, her mother tries to talk to her, but their conversation stalls. Inside the car, filmed from behind, mother and daughter are physically close and yet very far apart. Celia insists that she wants to go out to the country with her mother to see their family. At first her mother refuses, but the next day she comes to pick her up early in the morning and takes her in the car. Rugged landscapes loom in the distance on their journey until they reach a deserted town, where her mother introduces her to her family for the first time. On the way home, we see a wide shot of a distant horizon over an empty landscape (Figure 5). Celia is with her mother in the car, in a shot depicting the solitude and vast distance between their lives and the town where her family lives, although the image of the horizon could also suggest hope, openness, and new beginnings (Flécheux, 2014: 20-21).<sup>12</sup> It is a sublime long shot of a remote horizon that also represents the distance between her mother and their family.

### ZARAGOZA: REBEL SONGS FOR REBEL VOICES

Behind the scenes we discover other voices too. Although official institutions communicate some repressive rules, there are rebel voices that ex-

press very different messages of freedom. Some of the songs featured in the film allude to this freedom, with the use of rock music to create a particular atmosphere. How should these voices, these songs, be read?

A song can sometimes represent an important moment in the narrative, like the song “*Lunas de papel*”, which bookends the story like a “crystal-song”, as this concept is defined by the British scholar Phil Powrie (2016: 67-77), as a song that connects important moments in the story, linking past, present and future. Powrie draws on Gilles Deleuze’s theory of the “crystal-image”, an image that represents several timeframes simultaneously. In this sense, we can see how the end of the



Figure 5. Filming the horizon in *Schoolgirls*: solitude, distance and openness



Figure 6. Music in *Cría cuervos* and in *Schoolgirls*.

film alludes to different points in time: Celia has recovered the voice she needs to speak about her past, and at the same time to project into the future. The act of singing the song is a *performative* act involving past, present and future. The song has this dialectical value between multiple moments of Celia's life and creates a resonance with the past in places where she could not express herself freely, such as school. Singing the song is an example of communicative memory, lived memory, defined by Assmann (2008) as a reaction against institutionalised memories. Music in films makes it possible to tell this story of a memory: a communicative, lived memory.<sup>13</sup>

However, there are other songs that reveal other issues. The allusion to *Cría cuervos*, for example, serves as a kind of resonance with the

past of Spanish film history. In Saura's film, the song "¿Por qué te vas?" ("Why Are You Leaving?") is heard in closed spaces, inside the house; only at the end of the film do we hear the song outside the house (Feenstra, 2018: 328). Similarly, we see Celia inside her home listening to her tapes (Figure 6), in what represents a moment of refuge with the music she has discovered thanks to her friend Brisa, who recorded some mixtapes for her.

Celia sings along to the tune, just as Ana has her song in *Cría cuervos*. The allusion to Saura's film is dialectical: Ana refers to the future, and the film ends with the song "¿Por qué te vas?" while Ana and her sisters walk to school through the streets of Madrid (Figure 7).

In *Schoolgirls*, we return to the 1990s with Celia, who takes us behind the scenes at a school. Celia is reminiscent of Ana, but she is living on the cusp of adolescence with rock music and new experiences that take her outside her home.



Figure 7. The song "¿Por qué te vas?" plays at the end of *Cría cuervos*

There are several important artists featured on the soundtrack. A famous song from 1993 by the Spanish Gothic rock band Niños del Brasil seems like a slogan for the lives of these young girls: “Lunes, no, martes no, viernes, sí...” (“Monday, no, Tuesday, no, Friday, yes...”). The girls don’t want to go to school; they want to have fun, go to parties, smoke cigarettes, discover new experiences, and dance gleefully to songs like this. In the disco they dance to Patti Smith and Bruce Springsteen’s “Because the Night”, “Héroe de leyenda” (“Hero of Legend”) by the Spanish band Héroes del Silencio (1978) and “Sed de venganza” (“Thirst for Vengeance”) by Niños del Brasil (1991). After showing Celia recover her voice by singing “Lunas de papel”, the film ends with Manolo Kabezabolo’s “El aborto de Gallina”, a rebel song, over the final credits. The credits at the end of the film also include all the lyrics and groups featured on the soundtrack.

The film thus depicts a journey of discovery through songs, locations and new horizons. Celia has recovered her voice (Figure 8) as she sings “Lunas de papel”, a “crystal-song” about several different stages of her life, interweaving past, present and future. She has heard her *echo* song inside the closed spaces she wants to free herself from, and she has danced and sung songs by Zaragozaan rock groups and songs in English from the 1970s, while making journeys of discovery on a motorcycle, in the discotheque, and with her friends.

### CONCLUSION: NARRATIVES OF MEMORY, BREAKING THE SILENCE

This issue of *L’Atalante* explores the construction of female voices in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and *Schoolgirls* offers a narrative of memory that places the focus on the lives of girls: singing, making noise, breaking the rules out of curiosity, etc. These girls get together and sing, drink alcohol, express themselves freely, put on lipstick and smoke cigarettes, get dressed up before going out together: all activities typical of adolescence. The choice to set the story



Figure 8. Celia recovers her voice. Singing “Lunas de papel” at the end of *Schoolgirls*

in 1992 is revealing. The *mise-en-scène* uncovers a behind-the-scenes story when we see a choir of girls and a nun gesticulating at a rehearsal for a show. As Rick Altman suggests in his discussion of show musicals and musical comedy in the 1930s, the audience feels involved, as if they were observing a possible reality in these backstage spaces (Altman, 1987: 207-208). As viewers, we have also discovered the mother’s silence and her daughter’s desire to understand the taboo subject.

Although he formulated it in the 1930s and 1940s, Maurice Halbwachs’s theory on the transmission of cultural memory is still relevant today, as Jan and Aleida Assmann have shown. The institutions of society—religion, school, and the family—are the frames of reference for the transmission of collective memory, but cinema can create

other voices, other narratives of memory. Pilar Palomero's film about 1992 reveals the contrasts between the weight of tradition and the showcasing of the major events of the modern world, contrasts that are still present today. The filmmaker delves inside the institutions of religious education and families that uphold these traditional norms. Celia gives a voice to a new generation. Palomero has directed a moving film about attitudes, convictions, repressive games, girls' faces and a voice for its protagonist. Cinema can create this voice, which I define here as a *filmic voice*, to break the silence for this generation, by capturing its "photogenic" faces (Aumont, 1998: 94), while creating a direct resonance with Spanish film history. ■

## NOTES

- 1 The five 2021 Goya nominations that *Schoolgirls* did not win were: Best Original Song, Best Editing, Best Supporting Actress, Best Art Direction, and Best Costume Design.
- 2 In this essay, which was published in English in 1998 as a preface to the translation of *The Voice of Cinema*, Chion discusses reactions to his book, originally published in the 1980s, and points to the new filmic forms being created and how the interaction between the character's body and voice has changed since his book was first published.
- 3 This book was the result of a conference organised in Germany in 2011 about the work of female Spanish and Latin American filmmakers. The theme of the female voice has also been explored in the Spanish context: in 2018, Filmoteca de Gerona organised a conference about the representation of women in silent film, and in 2019, María Luisa Ortega and Minerva Campus organised a conference with the title *Modos de hacer. Directoras de America Latina* ["Ways of Doing: Female Directors of Latin America].
- 4 Esther Gimeno Ugalde's chapter also offers a general bibliography on this research topic. This archive helps give visibility to the work of female directors in Spain and Latin America.
- 5 In my chapter, I propose the term "staging" as an important act. I draw on Homi Bhabha's theory of the "third space" or "interstice" (Bhabha, 1994: 2) as new sites in the filmic space where female directors reveal new voices. Bhabha cites concepts such as Bakhtin's "polyphony" and "dialogism" to discuss the interaction with culture that embraces new identities: for female filmmakers polyphony is also evident in the integration of new voices into filmic storytelling (Bhabha, 1994: 44).
- 6 A children's choir is also depicted in a French context in the film *The Chorus* (*Les choristes*, Christophe Barratier, 2004). This film tells a story set in 1948 in a school as a kind of "behind-the-scenes" look at French history. The film was a box office hit in France.
- 7 This museum exhibits Picasso's 1937 painting *Guernica*, which was brought to Spain in 1981 and kept at the Prado's Casón del Buen Retiro before being moved to Museo Reina Sofía in 1992.
- 8 In the original: "*En perdant sa respiration, l'individu perd sa parole. La voix se donne sur l'expiration et non sur l'inspiration.*"
- 9 In his book, Tylski offers an overview of the use of credits, proposing terms such as preface, prelude and opening to explain how credits function in a film.
- 10 In my chapter "*La foto-memoria de los títulos de crédito en la obra de Carlos Saura: El séptimo día (2003), un ejemplo paradigmático*", I offer an analysis of the title sequence as a snapshot of an important moment both in film history and in Spanish history. It is like a snapshot of a moment, a "memory-photo". In *Schoolgirls*, the staging of an orchestrated silence at the beginning of the film constitutes an important focus for the story.
- 11 Rick Altman defines three categories of film musical: the fairy tale musical, the show musical, and the folk musical. These three categories establish certain characteristics to facilitate the analysis of the story.
- 12 Céline Flécheux suggests that the horizon can depict openness but also the limitation of our gaze in a specific and symbolic way.
- 13 Citing Jan Assmann's definition, communicative memory can create reactions against institutionalised memories.

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## FILMIC VOICES IN PILAR PALOMERO'S SCHOOLGIRLS: BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE GENERATION OF 1992

### Abstract

Pilar Palomero's first feature film, *Schoolgirls* (*Las niñas*, 2020), offers a good example of how to create a voice for a generation of girls who came of age in the 1990s. The film offers a young person's perspective on the transition from childhood to adolescence, representing it as a journey of discovery. This article explores the staging of the voice, which is highly significant right from the beginning of the film, and the way that the director effectively creates a voice for Celia's generation. So how does Palomero create a gaze on silence while telling the story of what happens behind the scenes at a school in 1992?

### Key words

Filmic voice; Memory; *Schoolgirls*; Pilar Palomero.

### Author

Pietsie Feenstra is a Professor of Film and Audiovisual Studies at Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3. She is a member of the RIRRA 21 research laboratory at Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3 and a research fellow with IRCAV at Université Paris 3, Sorbonne. Her research interests include the relationship between visual culture and the writing of history in political contexts that reveal a cultural rupture. Her latest published books are *La photo-mémoire des paysages-témoins en Europe (Pays-Bas, Espagne, ExYougoslavie)*, 2020; *Ciudades performativas. Prácticas artísticas y políticas de (des)memoria en Buenos Aires, Berlín y Madrid*, 2021 (co-edited with Lorena Verzero), *Le Nouveau du Cinéma Argentin*, 2015 (co-edited with Maria Luisa Ortega), *Le cinéma espagnol. Histoire et culture*, 2014 (co-edited with Vicente Sánchez-Biosca), and *Female Film Directors in Spain and Latin America. Nuevas voces y miradas*, 2014 (co-edited with Esther Gimeno Ugalde and Kathrin Sartingen). Contact: pietsie.feenstra@univ-montp3.fr

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## VOCES FÍLMICAS DE LAS NIÑAS DE PILAR PALOMERO: LAS BAMBALINAS DE LA GENERACIÓN DE 1992

### Resumen

La ópera prima de Pilar Palomero *Las niñas* (2020) es un buen ejemplo de la creación de una voz para una generación de niñas de los años noventa. La película propone un ambiente juvenil sobre el tránsito de la niñez hacia la adolescencia, como un viaje iniciático. Este artículo explora la puesta en escena de la voz, muy significativa desde el principio de la película y el modo en que la directora ha creado una voz para la generación de la protagonista. ¿Cómo se crea una mirada sobre el silencio narrando lo que sucede entre las bambalinas de un colegio en 1992?

### Palabras clave

Voz fílmica; Memoria; *Las niñas*; Pilar Palomero.

### Autora

Pietsie Feenstra es Catedrática en la Universidad Paul-Valéry Montpellier III en Estudios Cinematográficos y Audiovisuales. Es miembro del laboratorio de investigación RIRRA 21 de la Universidad Paul Valéry Montpellier III y miembro investigador del IRCAV de la Universidad Paris 3, Sorbona. Investiga sobre la relación entre la cultura visual y la escritura de la historia en contextos políticos que muestran una ruptura cultural. Sus últimos libros publicados son *La photo-mémoire des paysages-témoins en Europe (Pays-Bas, Espagne, ExYougoslavie)*, 2020; *Ciudades performativas. Prácticas artísticas y políticas de (des)memoria en Buenos Aires, Berlín y Madrid*, 2021 (editora junto a Lorena Verzero), *Le Nouveau du Cinéma Argentin*, 2015, (editora junto a Maria Luisa Ortega), *Le cinéma espagnol. Histoire et culture*, 2014, (editora junto a Vicente Sánchez-Biosca), *Directoras de Cine en España y América Latina. Nuevas voces y miradas*, 2014, (editora junto a Esther Gimeno Ugalde y Kathrin Sartingen). Contacto: pietsie.feenstra@univ-montp3.fr

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