



Portrayal of the journalist in Spanish cinema from 1990 to 2010

Representación del periodista en el cine español desde 1990 hasta 2010



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Abstract:

The journalist is a regular character in Spanish films, and analysing this role is fundamental in learning more about the profession. The aim of this research is to identify the profile of the journalist in cinema from 1990 to 2010, two decades of drastic changes in the modes of communication in our country. In its empirical phase, one of the fundamental contributions can be found in the recovery of *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), by Russian Folklorist-Scholar Vladimir Propp, which can be used to establish the characteristics of the reporter from a structuralist point of view. In this book, the conclusion reached is that the heroes are those in charge of serious journalism, whereas the villains, mainly women, are the stars of the television 'boom' with a predominance of morbidity and deceit on the small screen.

Keywords:

Vladimir Propp, Spanish cinema, cinema of the 90s, role of the journalist, structuralism.

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Resumen:

*El periodista es un personaje habitual en las películas españolas y su análisis resulta fundamental para conocer la profesión. Esta investigación se marca como objetivo identificar el perfil del periodista en el cine desde 1990 hasta 2010, dos décadas de drásticos cambios en las formas de comunicación en nuestro país. En su fase empírica, una de las aportaciones fundamentales se encuentra en la recuperación de *Morfología del cuento* (1928) del ruso Vladimir Propp para establecer desde el estructuralismo las características del informador. Concluye que los héroes se encargan del periodismo serio y los villanos, sobre todo mujeres, protagonizan el 'boom' de la televisión con predominio de morbo y mentiras en la pequeña pantalla.*

Palabras clave:

Vladimir Propp, cine español, cine de los 90, rol del periodista, estructuralismo.

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1. Introduction

Journalists are often featured in cinematic plots that take place in press offices, radio and television studios. The unscrupulous reporters in the journalism business in the 1990's and the first 10 years of the 21st century are portrayed in films with unlikely stories and characters that are attractive to filmmakers. Now they have become research material using a novel methodology of the literary narrative that has been applied to the audiovisual medium: specifically, we refer to the structuralism of Russian Vladimir Propp in his *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928). We have chosen to recover this classic work of text analysis, as most consider it capable of allowing for the establishment of precise functions, and therefore accurate conclusions.

Films are responsible for shaping "human communities" and bringing them closer to the general public through the screen, in this case the information professionals at the end of the last century and the first years of the current century. "How would we have come to know the problems of Brazilian peasants or the crisis of conscience of Eastern European youth in those countries if it hadn't been for the films of such origins?" This is the question asked by Caparrós (2007: 30). The Brazilian *Cinema Novo* of the 1960s and films of the Khrushchev Thaw from the former socialist republics give us the key to this great cinema epoch.

Films became the successors of painting in the art world. For centuries, painting "had tried to overcome time with its eternal form", and in the same way, photography and cinema "would later explain in the simplest way using those psychological perspectives the great spiritual and technical crisis of modern painting that began around the middle of the last century" (Bazin, 2001: 24).

Therefore, image has become a perfect tool for reflecting reality, transmitting ideas, and creating direct contact with society, and this has been echoed in those heroes and villains of journalism who share the work on Spanish cinema screens. From the 1970s to the present day, American and English literature has raised the dichotomy of heroes and villains in films involving journalists, and this can be seen in authors such as Brian McNair (2010), Matthew C. Ehrlich (2006), Howard Good (1989 and 2008), and the pioneer of journalist classification in cinema, Alex Barris (1976).

In Spain, important investigations have already been carried out, and the present analysis of villains in Spanish cinema in the 1990s can be added to the list. The doctoral thesis entitled, *La imagen y la ética del periodista en el cine español (1896-2010)*, defended by Professor Lucía Tello Díaz at Complutense University of Madrid in 2011, is connected to the content of this research. Professor Tello published *La Enseñanza de la Ética Periodística a través del cine* in 2012, and two other books in 2016: *Diccionario del periodista en el cine español (1896-2010)*, a manual in which she analyses titles representative of journalists and establishes some characteristics regarding these professionals, and *Hablemos de cine. 20 cineastas conversan sobre el cuarto poder*.

In the first part of her thesis, Professor Tello studies the indicative traits, characteristics, vices, images and stereotypes of the journalist in Spanish cinema and stresses the differences in the way in which men and women are portrayed in Spanish films involving reporters. The second part includes interviews with directors such as José Luis Garci, Carlos Saura, Álex de la Iglesia, Jesús Franco, Basilio Martín Patino, Gonzalo Suárez, Jordi Mollà and David Trueba, who explain why they use the media in their films. Thus, Professor Tello's vision is far removed from our structuralist methodology and the conclusions that this present work is able to achieve regarding heroes and villains in the press, with special attention paid in these pages to the latter.

La imagen de la periodista profesional en el cine de ficción de 1990 a 1999, is another doctoral thesis presented in October of 2009 at the University of La Coruña by Olga Osorio Iglesias. Like the present research, her work is based on a very comparable sample. Osorio gathers a sampling of 112 films, but the protagonists she analyses are only women, and exclusively from North American cinema.

Researchers from the University of the Basque Country, including Ofa Bezunartea, María José Cantalapiedra, César Coca, Aingeru Genaut, Simón Peña and Jesús Pérez have been some of the most productive in recent years in the field of film journalism. Studies published in specialized journals such as *Periodistas de cine y ética*, or *Si hay sangre, hay noticias. Recetas cinematográficas para el éxito periodístico*, both from 2007, as well as *Divismo y narcisismo de los periodistas en el cine* or *¿Y qué? Es periodista y además es guapa*, both from 2008 as well, analyse models of behavior and the cinematic portrayal of journalists. In 2010, the article entitled *El perfil de los periodistas en el cine: tópicos agigantados* was published. Another research paper that generated interest was *Periodistas de cine y ética*, which presented in one of its epigraphs the dichotomy of heroes and villains that supports our work. With good and bad characters, they try to reflect the concept of right and wrong. "Films tend to create stereotypes, special archetypes for special situations, and thus heroes and villains appear; moral individuals along with people who are deceitful and corrupt, instead of average professionals" (2007: 376). As in the case of Professor Osorio, the Basque group deals with North American cinema, so our work gives a very different reading of cinema involving journalists, based exclusively on Spanish productions.

Having explained the aforementioned research works, we now present published informative books that also cover this subject, along with selections of random titles dealing with these types of films, but without scientific criteria. The review of Spanish books featuring journalists begins with *Los chicos de la prensa*, published by Juan Carlos Laviana. As its author explains, “it was written with a fundamentally capricious criterion” (1996: XIII). In 2006, around the time of the 51st edition of the Valladolid International Film Festival, also known as Seminci, another book was published entitled, *Cine entre líneas. Periodistas en la pantalla* (Rodríguez, 2006). The author dedicates one of its chapters to Spanish film production with more than 30 films. We have added to our research 12 film titles included in the book, *Periodistas de cine. El cuarto poder en el séptimo arte*, published by journalist Luis Mínguez Santos. Once again, North American films play a large part in this book in which the author acknowledges the scarcity of Spanish titles. He points out that there was hardly any production during Franco’s dictatorship, and now in the period of democracy “the few titles listed come from relatively successful fictional works or films based on real events with a strong documentary component” (2012: 197). Josep María Bunyol’s *Historias de portada, 50 películas esenciales sobre periodismo* (Cover stories. 50 Essential Films about Journalism) (2017), explores the dichotomy between heroes and villains, and among the 50 titles there are five Spanish films in our database.

Our research supplements all of the work mentioned above with a methodology designed by the authors of this article, which has no precedent in the study of cinema. As already explained, this present work makes a fundamental contribution through the application of Vladimir Propp’s structuralism. Another novelty is the distinction made between realistic and unrealistic films in order to achieve more reliable results. Situations considered to be ‘realistic’ are those with credible characters who could be found in any pressroom, radio or television studio. Films considered ‘unrealistic’ are those with an excess of satire or fiction and unlikely situations, and therefore are not contexts of real life.

This research has the following objectives:

- 1) To identify the profile of the journalist featured in Spanish films through the creation of a morphology related to the functions of reporters as primary and secondary characters.
- 2) To describe the portrait of the journalist within their professional field in realistic and unrealistic films. The characteristics of the job allow for the description of the journalist’s profession in credible and unlikely situations, leading to possible heroes and villains.
- 3) To define the characteristics of villains portrayed by unrealistic Spanish films in the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century.

The objectives are intended to test the following hypotheses:

H1. The unrealistic Spanish films of the 1990s and the first ten years of the 21st century with the presence of media and journalists are composed of villains with a lack of journalistic ethics, and characters in unlikely situations that arouse laughter or tenderness in the viewer, rather than anger.

H2. The morbidity and lies in television programs have shaped the work of villainous journalists in the unrealistic Spanish films of the 1990s and the first ten years of the 21st century.

2. Methodology

One of the original contributions of this research has been the retrieval of the book *Morphology of the Folktale*, a well-known work by Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp (1895-1975)¹, published in 1928, as a basis for developing a morphology of the journalist. His study of 100 marvellous tales of his country's folklore establishes the original matrix from which the remaining universal stories emerge, with a set of irreducible narrative elements that he calls "functions of the characters", 31 in total. In our work, after analysing the 135 Spanish films with journalists, we have obtained a morphology of the reporter with 21 functions (San José, 2017).

Propp's theories were later revised and broadened by authors such as Roland Barthes, who established three levels. In addition to functions, he proposed actions and narration. Other ideas emerged from Algirdas-Julien Greimas, who paid more attention to syntax.

In the first phase of the study, quantitative methods have been used by defining and narrowing down the sample to achieve a general filmography of 220 titles, and one that is specific with 135. The work is based on an extensive compilation of feature films produced in Spain. An intense search from the beginning of Spanish films up to the present day served to find and consolidate the 'general' filmography with the aforementioned 220 titles. Afterward, a 'specific' filmography was developed through the selection of titles with main or secondary roles until the figure was set at 135.

From the first films viewed, the information was collected on analysis sheets in two databases using Filemaker software:

Database 1: Film analysis sheets: general database with information about the films. The fields and formulary used reproduce those proposed by the database of the Spanish Film Library.

Database 2: Journalist analysis sheets: Journalism-specific database with key data for the investigation. The fields and formulary contain information related to the journalist's role as well as information from Database 1.

The decision was made to stop at 135 as it became apparent that the functions to produce the morphology were repeated, at which time it was considered that enough "irreducible functions" had already been collected from the characters, as happened to Propp with the stories of the Russian tradition.

The 21 functions are divided into three areas.

First area: refers to the section in which journalists carry out their profession.

Second area: refers to the journalists' personalities.

Third area: refers to whether they are considered heroes or villains.

Presentation of the data has been performed using the following guidelines:

- Definition of the action has been as precise as possible for the 21 functions.
- A conventional sign with a capital letter indicates the function.
- A number has been assigned for each media: press (1), radio (2) and television (3).

¹ This work was unknown in the Western world until its translation into English in 1958. The first edition in Spanish appeared in 1971, followed by the translation of a French version published in 1970 that was based on the second Russian edition (Leningrad, 1968), revised and enhanced by the author from the first edition of 1928. This was reflected by a translator's note in 1971. The 1971 and 2011 editions have been used for this research.

— The indications Pr and Sec have been used for primary and secondary characters, respectively.

The films were sorted chronologically according to the periods established in this research: Post-War POS (from 1942 to 1959), Developmentalism DEV (from 1960 to 1974), Transition and the 1980s TRA (from 1975 to 1989), Modernity MOD (from 1990 to 1999), Recent years (RY) (from 2000 to 2012). In this way, and according to the objectives, the evolution of the morphology of the reporter will be verified.

The following is a general outline of the functions of the journalist's morphology in Spanish films. The information gathered in the third area (heroes and villains) will be used for the objectives, results and discussion parts of this research.

OUTLINE OF SAMPLE PRESENTATION

First area: section in which the journalist works in their media

- Function I. Definition: entertainment. Designated with A
- Function II. Definition: events. Designated with B
- Function III. Definition: research, policy. Designated with C
- Function: IV. Definition: commitment. Designated with D
- Function V. Definition: war. Designated with E
- Function VI. Definition: biography. Designated with F
- Function VII. Definition: paranormal phenomena. Designated with G
- Function VIII. Definition: director, boss. Appointed with H
- Function IX. Definition: scholarship holder. Designated with I

Second area: personality

- Function X. Definition: male emotional imbalance, drama, thriller, terror. With J
- Function XI. Definition: female emotional imbalance, drama, thriller, terror. With K
- Function XII. Definition: male emotional imbalance, comedy. Designated with L
- Function XIII. Definition: female emotional imbalance, comedy. Designated with M
- Function XIV. Definition: work-related stress. Designated with N
- Function XV. Definition: love. Designated with O
- Function XVI. Definition: lack of love. Designated with P

Third area: heroes and villains

- Function XVII. Definition: hero, righteousness, virtue. Designated with Q
- Function XVIII. Definition: hero, truth, danger. Designated with R
- Function XIX. Definition: hero, unlikeliness. Designated with S

Function XX. Definition: villain, unethical, sensationalism, wickedness, evil. Designated with T

Function XXI. Default: villain, unlikeliness, satire. Designated with U

Media:

Press (1)

Radio (2)

Television (3)

Characters:

Primary characters: Pr

Secondary characters: Sec

3. Results

3.1. Villainous journalists in Spanish films

Of the 135 films in the sample, 98 have characters that can be included in the category of hero or villain in both realistic and unrealistic films, if we consider that the latter are those that present fiction or an excess of satire. If we look at the stories from the 1990s and the first ten years of the 21st century, we discover that there were twenty films with villains.

In the 1990's, humour among villains was reinforced with lies and stories of a sentimental nature, using television as a backdrop. In the first years of the new century, the fusion of television, women, and wickedness gained strength. Next, the 20 films of this study are shown with the phases, characters, media, and functions according to our methodology:

Figure 1. Films with journalistic villains from 1990 to 2010

TITLE	PERIODS	CHARACTERS	MEDIA	FUNCTIONS
Disparate Nacional (Mariano Ozores, 1990)	MOD43	Pr1/Pr2/Sec	1	A, U / A, U / H
Tacones lejanos (Pedro Almodóvar, 1991)	MOD45	Pr	3	B, K, P, U
Rosa Rosae (Fernando Colomo, 1992)	MOD48	Pr	3	A, U
Acción mutante (Alex de la Iglesia, 1993)	MOD49	Sec	3	B, U
Kika (Pedro Almodóvar, 1993)	MOD50	Pr	3	B, K, N, P, U
Una chica entre un millón (Á.S. de Heredia, 1994)	MOD54	Pr	3	H, J, P, U
El hundimiento del Titanic (A. Chavarrías, 1994)	MOD56	Pr	2	A, L, N, P, U
El día de la bestia (Álex de la Iglesia, 1995)	MOD58	Sec	3	G, U
Dame algo (Héctor Carré, 1996)	MOD63	Pr/Sec	3	B, M, N, U / H
Siempre hay un camino a la derecha (J.L. García, 1997)	MOD70	Pr	3	B, U
El grito en el cielo (D. Ayaso y F. Sabroso, 1998)	MOD72	Pr/Sec1/Sec2	3	A, M, N, P, U / H / I

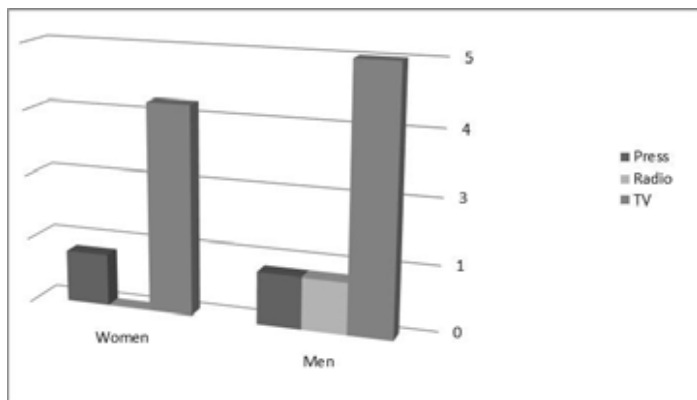
Atilano, presidente (La Cuadrilla, 1998)	MOD73	Pr	1	C, U
Año Mariano (E. G. Cuervo y K. Elejalde, 2000)	RY80	Pr	2	A, U
Hable con ella (Pedro Almodóvar, 2002)	RY84	Sec1/Sec2	1 / 3	A, J / A, U
No somos nadie (Jordi Mollà, 2002)	RY89	Pr	3	A, U
Teresa, Teresa (Rafael Gordón, 2003)	RY94	Pr	3	A, K, U
Franky Banderas (J.L. García Sánchez, 2004)	RY103	Sec1/Sec2	2 / 3	A, U / A, U
Cuba-libre (Rai García, 2006)	RY113	Pr	3	B, M, N, P, U
Volver (Pedro Almodóvar, 2006)	RY115	Sec	3	A, U
Prime time (Luis Calvo Ramos, 2008)	RY127	Pr/Sec	3	A, U / H, U

Source: created by the authors

3.2. Morbidity and the dominance of television in the 1990s

The television media has dominated the section of unrealistic, villainous characters. Of the 12 titles from the 1990s, 9 belong to professionals in the audio-visual media. Comedy prevailed in this period in which the gender balance was nearly equal with villains numbering 4 female and 5 male.

Figure 2: Presence of women, men, and the media (1990-1999)



Source: created by the authors

Next, we move to the analysis in chronological order. Manolo Molero (Antonio Ozores) and Emilio Lezcano (Óscar Ladoire) are celebrity journalism photographers in *Disparate Nacional*, and are able to take all kinds of compromising photos with their cameras.

— “We’re press photographers. We always live in a state of excitement in order to see what’s going on out there. With complaints, threats, lawsuits and other nonsense... we don’t have a life” (TC: 00:55:20).

They are not proud of their work, and on one occasion Manolo’s daughter, who is studying to become a journalist, says that her mother does not want her to pursue that career because “one penniless person in the family is enough”. Manolo and Emilio work under the management of their boss, Renedo (Antonio Resines), who is quick-tempered, hostile toward computer technology, nostalgic for the typewriter, hypochondriacal, and above all a person whose selfish has no limits, which often leads him to consent to beating Emilio and Manolo, or to a photograph being taken of a minister who is in hospital with his entire face and body bandaged. The three villains are convinced that unethical behaviour and lies are the best road to take. However, at the very moment when they agree to carry out a crafty farce, they express their guilt:

— “If we don’t publish things like this, we don’t sell copies, and if we don’t sell copies, we end up in the goddamn street!” (TC: 00:22:00).

Rebecca (Victoria Abril), the leading actress of *Tacones Lejanos*, presents her work as a journalist on rare occasions because the film deals mainly with the personal relationships of the characters. The first time she appears on television is with a sign language translator. Thinking that her mother would be watching the news, a ludicrous situation arises because she suffers a laugh attack when talking about very serious matters. Her life is a contradiction. She is capable of making up a story for the judge so as not to be blamed for her husband’s murder, but then she recounts in front of the TV cameras in great detail how she killed him:

— Rebecca (in tears): I don’t know what I did with the gun. I must have thrown it somewhere. I don’t remember very well what happened next. I just remember going back home, and once I got there, everything came over me. I couldn’t call anyone to get it off my chest. I didn’t know what to do. I only knew that I would never see Manuel again, and that caused me tremendous pain (...)

— Police: Miss, would you mind coming with us?

— Rebecca: Wait a minute, please, I’m not finished yet. That’s all for now. We remind you that at half past eight in the afternoon in the second edition of ‘The News’, you will see this and other news that will be coming into our editorial office. Until then, as always... thank you for watching.

(TC: 00:47:23)

The relationship with her mother characterises Rebecca’s every performance in this bizarre tale of lies that places Rebecca on the side of the villains.

In *Rosa Rosae*, Theo Delgado (Juanjo Puigcorbé) is going to speak on his program called Literature and Women. He challenges Rosa Cordón, who is his lover, and Violeta Muñoz, with sarcasm:

— Theo: Who do we start with? By seniority, with Rosa. I meant literary seniority (moment in which the canned laughter and applause sound, essential in the program to reinforce the continuous humour of the anchor), Rosa, rose, rosae. That’s Latin, isn’t it? (TC: 00:02:35)

It is all about strategies to gain audience share. He goes to Rosa's house and tries to justify his actions in the face of her anger. She calls him "bastard, son of a bitch, and disgusting". He tries to stop the aggression and assures her that he treated Violeta better because she is the Comet Award winner.

- Theo: You're nervous, honey. You know perfectly well that my on-camera flirtations are just that. It's my style. My style is to mess with everybody, babe. If I hadn't, it would have been very noticeable.
- Rosa: I don't want to have sex. You've already fucked me in front of two million people.
- Theo: That's four million people. It's the star show. (TC: 00:06:00)

He treats his lover with complete coldness and contempt. After making love, he dresses hurriedly: "Don't forget. I'm seeing my in-laws today". However, the great betrayal is stealing the idea of her novel. He goes to the *Retiro* to meet Rosa's friend, Rose, and enter her life and that of her boyfriend for the sole purpose of befriending the two of them to find out the details of their cult, a story that Rosa uses for her novel, and that Theo wants to use for his TV show.

The height of his lack of scruples occurs when he asks his lover to help him choose a tie for the program, and soon after he betrays her on that same program. He announces on live TV that he is going to travel to Tibet with Rose and her partner's cult, and he is going to write a book about this group's cannibalism, and he assures the audience it will be very macabre. The broadcast begins at the airport when he gets on the plane, but not before getting a slap in the face from Rosa in front of the cameras. The crazy situations run all the way to the end because the plane in which they are travelling crashes, and as Theo is the only victim, he serves as food for the rest of the passengers who belong to the cult, an end that attempts to 'serve justice' to this villain.

In *Acción mutante*, J. Blanch (Jaime Blanch) is the host of a television program in charge of introducing the film. The news selected announces the film's surreal content:

Tonight, at five o'clock in the morning, Matías Pons, president of the National Federation of Culture, was murdered under strange circumstances. Apparently, it could have been a kidnapping attempt. The police attribute responsibility for the crime to the terrorist group *Acción Mutante* (while he is reporting, behind him on a large screen appear images of police at the scene of the victim). The *Acción Mutante* band started ten years ago, and since then many attacks have been perpetrated by this group of disabled people. Their specific targets so far have been prominent personalities due to their beauty, public health institutions, and sperm banks."

Jaime is a caricature with a greedy personality who is only concerned about attracting an audience. He announces the kidnapping of a young woman and a request for 100 million 'ecus' in ransom. Anything goes when he tries to increase audience share and he has no scruples in resorting to nudity, like the time when a half-naked stewardess brings him an envelope using the excuse of delivering the latest news. The final act of the TV host takes place in a bar where the money from the kidnapping will be delivered. He breaks in, and without a word to anyone says, "film it". The journalist, followed by the camera and two sound technicians, broadcasts live the act of handing over the money that ends with his own shooting death. "Don't shoot. I'm from the TV Show". His concern for audience share, and mostly his show, which he values more than his own life, make this reporter a villain.

In *Kika*, Andrea Caracortada (Victoria Abril) is an extravagant broadcaster. She is an unreal, bizarre character who is being used to satirise tabloid journalism so excessive it borders on madness. She has an unusual look with her equipment when she is on the street, and with her eye-catching gothic dresses on the TV studio set as well. If the way she looks is striking, no less provocative are her appearances in front of the TV camera. Her first appearance takes place in a television studio when the tone of her message is revealed. “A woman is burned to the bone in the office of a director of the BVB bank after being denied a loan of 800,000 *pesetas*. After these words, some images appear in which Andrea approaches a woman who is going to visit a tomb:

- Andrea: Excuse me, what were your daughter’s reasons for committing suicide?
- Woman: Please, leave me alone.
- Andrea: Was the girl happy? What was the family environment like?
- Woman: What do you expect it to be like? It was a living hell because of my husband. A year ago, he abused the girl. (TC: 00:18:03)

In another report, we are plunged into Kika’s house. She has just been raped by Paul Bazzo. In the presence of two officers who personify police incompetence, the victim is addressed, at which point the persuasion to achieve their objectives is again verified. “The fact that you’ve been raped doesn’t give you the right to be nasty” he reproaches her when the victim wants to close the door. An obsession to grab headlines is repeated in the final scene of the film when she dies trying to get a few words out of the murderer, Nicholas, who also takes her life at the end. This race for morbidity and audience share places Andrea and her strange behavior among the most villainous females.

In *Una chica entre un millón*, Miguel Robles (Juanjo Puigcorbé) listens to the TV in his luxurious car with a program on the screen in which the speakers assure viewers that a marriage of convenience has been arranged in order for his TV station to be joined to that of his future father-in-law. Miguel lives for his work, and he knows how to deceive anyone in order to achieve his goals, including his girlfriend, with whom he appears docile and submissive, although he really has no illusions about the wedding. His girlfriend accuses him of being selfish, and he defends himself:

- This is a world of sharks, and my instinct is to cut someone in half with my teeth (TC: 00:17:06).

He’s a calculating, intelligent man who doesn’t trust even his girlfriend’s father. “By marrying my daughter, you will be the greatest man on television. You could end up on National Television”, his future father-in-law reminds him. There is even a moment when he is about to lose an advertiser worth 10 billion *pesetas*, and he suddenly thinks his father-in-law is responsible. “I’m not married yet. For 10 billion he is able to sell his own soul”. Another villain, just like himself.

El hundimiento del Titanic stars Albert Planes (Sergi Mateu), who proposes giving a boost to the radio station by merging with another network, and to announce the proposal he organises a party in the facilities of the same station, precisely in the old room where radio programmes with live audiences were broadcast 20 years ago). After the merger, he is the one who hosts the party for the presentation of the new radio station in which he commits to radio that is “truthful and serious”. However, he fails in his private life because he lies, cheats on his wife with his program partner, flirts with other women, and is an unscrupulous infidel, because the person with whom he betrays his wife is his best friend’s girlfriend. Though to a lesser extent, the rest of the workers are defined as a group of immature people who only think about smoking drugs in

the newsroom. There are also journalists in charge of covering the news related to the business merger of the radio stations, and one of the photographers takes a photo of the two executives drunk and drugged on the floor. The photo appears in the newspaper the next day with the headline, 'Chaotic presentation of the new radio station'. A whole range of reporters are on the side of the villains.

In *El día de la Bestia*, astrologer Cavan (Armando De Razza) is an influential TV presenter, eccentric and phony, who has no qualms about deceiving the public. He is highly arrogant, as he believes that his program is essential. In his programme entitled '*La zona oscura*', he is presented with a voice-over:

- Voice: I now present to all of you the investigator of the occult, the magician of mystery, the master of the supernatural, the man who knows the present, the past and the future, the internationally renowned, Professor Cavan.
- Professor Cavan: Today's program is very special. We're not going to talk about UFOs or miraculous cures, and we're not going to answer your calls either. Tonight, we have with us a very special guest, someone we have all heard of, but only a few of us really know. I am talking about the devil. (TC: 00:22:50)

Everything is rigged, and 11-year-old Juan Carlos is introduced. He is asked how he is, now that everything has finished, and the boy replies, "I'm very well thanks to you and 'The dark zone' team. The audience sees images of the boy's home where he is in bed, possessed, and Professor Cavan is performing a kind of exorcism. Father Angel sees the broadcast from a bar and decides that this is the man he needs. He goes to the TV station with the boarding house owner's son and they chase the presenter to his home. The eccentricities continue in the home of the deceitful professor when the priest requests his assistance in contacting the devil to find out where the birth of the Antichrist will take place. Feeling pressured and having taken a beating from the priest, the magician invents a way of invoking the devil while he remains bound and bloody. "All of this is absurd! Don't you realize that this is just a charade for jerks and shitheads to watch my program and buy my book?" A complete, nonsensical adventure of a television satire full of lies and villains.

Dame algo tells the story of Marisol Fernández (Natalie Seseña), who is forced to take a dose of cocaine and speak in front of the camera while a message at the bottom of the frame reads, "there have been deaths, and there will be more, so do not take your eyes off the screen". The first image of the journalist is seen on the screen of a television set in an electrical appliance store at the time when a 'homeless' person, Benigno, is on the street, so he stops in front of the shop window. He goes to the TV station to talk to Natalia, but the arrogant journalist doesn't pay any attention to him. Shortly after, he sees her on the street with the camera operator. She is desperate because there is no news that day, which is the moment when the woman's bad character becomes apparent in the way she talks to her colleague:

- Marisol: Nothing interesting today, and no balls either. We have nothing.
- Benigno: Don't you want to film the star of the day? (Benigno leads them to the door of the hostel where he kills a nun. Later, it appears to be a farce by the protagonist without any real deaths).
- Marisol: Do you have it? (she asks quickly and nervously to the camera operator).
- Benigno: Don't you want the star of the day? Or do you want me to go to another TV station? We can kidnap the nuns and the suckers, and if they don't get it live on TV, we'll kill them all. (TC: 00:12:30)

In addition to Marisol, other unscrupulous reporters join the plot, such as the director of the TV station who is unstable, alcoholic and insecure. “Today is the last day. Tomorrow I’ll leave it” he says, while he pulls a bottle of alcohol out of a drawer after the alleged killer’s call to the TV station to sell him the images. There is an undefined group of villainous journalists at the door of the hostel waiting to take some macabre photos and video. In the final scene, a comment from the main character to everyone present makes perfectly clear the vision of this cinematographic satire toward sensationalist journalists: “Go to hell, vultures”.

Siempre hay un camino a la derecha, is the title of the film and the name of the program headed by Lanza Gorta (Javier Gurrutxaga), a TV host who is highly theatrical, money hungry, and dishonest, but always has a big smile. His arrival on the scene is remarkable when he storms into a house with his camera operator where two men are about to commit suicide: “There is always a way out”. Shortly afterward, on the studio set, the phony host starts the performance. “Juan and Pepe, two souls who were about to take their own lives. A heartfelt applause”.

On the magnificent TV screen with hostesses, orchestra, and the public watching, the theatrical anchor-man with a suit and bow tie gives way to the two men dressed in an unusual bullfighting costume. The programme continues with a social worker, Luchi, and the two wives dressed in sevillana costumes on the set, followed by another video that the presenter announces: “Watch for the docudrama - our heroes start a new life”.

One of the women finds a job in a club, and when images of this story appear, the anchor-man justifies this type of news: “No matter how hard life becomes, there is always a way out”. When this same woman reappears on the screen with a penis in her hand from a mutilated client, the host again defends himself: “The penis is not a trick to get more audience share, but is a plea against vice”. Gorta becomes another television villain with this atrocious story about the world of reality shows.

El grito en el cielo takes place on and near the set of *‘El cielo de Miranda Vega’*, an entertainment programme with Miranda (María Conchita Alonso). Much of the film is set during its broadcast, with the alternating fortune of the different contestants fighting to win the prize, which is none other than the opportunity to co-present the programme with Miranda. The film begins with the words of the person in charge of the TV station (Tito Valverde) in a luxurious office with taxidermic animal heads and horns. He tells the female presenter that she is “a big star, but it’s not working”. Although he says he used to like her choreographies and songs from twelve years ago, he scolds her for not bearing in mind that it’s been a long time since then. He suggests that she ought to be more in touch with the audience to attain the status of “trash TV” and “do things worse”, which she can’t refuse because she has a contract and her career is in full decline. They talk about the new direction the program will take, and the head of the station insists on letting the participants in the game show “make fools of themselves”. “It’s good. Laughing is good. It’s good reality”. She whines and protests because she doesn’t like the new format proposed by the boss, and even ironically tells him that they are already spying on celebrities. His enthusiasm is not swayed, and he assures her they will do it:

— “It’s the other side of reality: lovers, secret children, swindles, vices, perversion, criticism, crime... it’s all good, and a hidden camera is good” (TC: 00:15:26).

Miranda is responsible in her work, though insecure due to the pressure she is under from the TV station’s director. She has been a diva from the moment she first appeared on the show, wearing a long skirt and a tribal looking, feathered headdress

with a suggestive proposal to viewers: “Enjoy entertainment until you overdose. Forget your miseries, your boring lives, your mediocrities”. Anything goes in a world of screen villains.

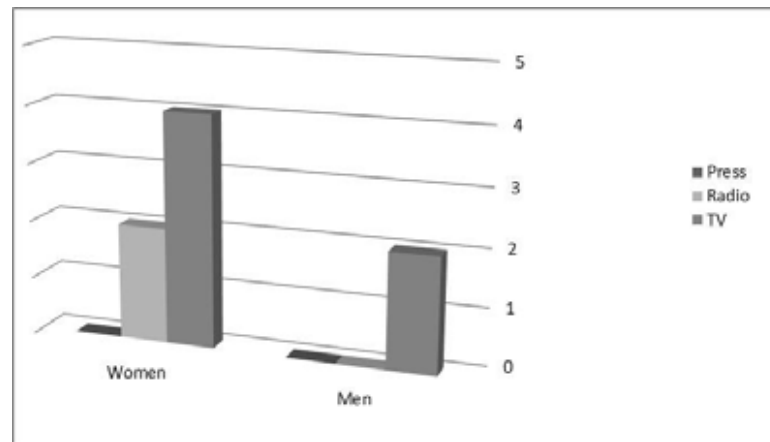
In *Atilano, Presidente*, Sol (Laura Conejero) succeeds in grooming a good candidate to be presidency of the government, loved by the people and the press. At the last minute, the leaders at the highest level decide they don't want Atilano to be president, so the person they end up with is Sol, the true creator of the character. Faced with continuous bumbblings at the press conferences, she finally decides to invent a story for the journalists by saying that Atilano has lost his voice, and she herself responds for him.

The head of the press therefore becomes the villain as she pulls the candidate's strings to achieve a clear objective: to deceive public opinion through the media and create a fake politician.

3.3. Lies to entertain in recent years on television

The predominance of TV channels with rotten villains, with 6 out of the 8 titles that make up this section, have persisted in the last few years of this research. For the first time, comedy has found a balance with drama, with 4 films in which humour takes the spotlight, and another 4 in which television satire masks a feeling of sadness. The role of the villainous woman dominates with 6 females on the screen.

Figure 3: Presence of women, men, and the media (from 2000 to 2010)



Source: created by the authors

In *Año Mariano*, the program hosted by *María* (Sílvia Bel) follows the motto, “Alone with *María*, because life is not only what we see and what we touch”. With no motivation at work, she doesn't let her bosses know about her apathy and shows herself to be a responsible worker. In a nonsensical story, Mariano Romero hears the Virgin's voice in the utterances of the

journalist, and the confusion leads them to gain a multitude of Christian followers and an audience of 7 million viewers. She is a broadcast villain who is protected by her boss and his offers:

- “It’s a good program for an ambitious professional like you. We have great ideas, and I have no doubt you’ll be up to the task (...) We have some news about a man who has witnessed the appearance of Our Lady, and she weeps blood. The Vatican is interested in the news. I knew you would like it, María. It’s raw meat.” (TC: 00:40:35)

In *Hable con ella*, an Argentine journalist who maintains a relationship with a bullfighter called Lydia is the main character, but there is also a case of a macabre reporter (Loles León), who interviews the female bullfighter live and tries to make a scene

The journalist and the female bullfighter have an argument on the set. The interviewee blames her, saying the commitment agreed upon when the deal on her television appearance closed had not been fulfilled. In the deal, she was only expected to be locked up in a bullring with six bulls:

- Lydia: I warned you in the dressing room that I wasn’t going to talk to you about this matter.
- Journalist: But talking is the best thing to do, my dear. And talking about problems is the first step to overcoming them (while she fondles the interviewee’s arm)... because the Valencian Kid...
- Lydia: There you go again...
- Journalist: Lydia, darling, don’t be rude... let me finish the question...
- Lydia: I warned you in the dressing room that I didn’t want to talk about this.
- Journalist: You didn’t warn me in the dressing room about anything. And I don’t like you saying those things because people might think we set up the interviews. And I don’t bargain at all. I only do live interviews. I’m one of the few who dare to go live (while he grabs Lydia’s arm tightly and makes her sit up again after she tries to get up and leave), just like you should dare to admit that you’ve been pimped, because the Valencian Kid has been pimping you. A man who has shared not only fame and the bullring with you, but also the bed. He left you in the lurch when it suited him. (TC: 00:07:40)

This is classic Almodóvar: an unscrupulous female presenter capable of causing the most tense situations on the air, as in the case of the host of this television programme in which Lydia participates.

In *No somos nadie*, the host of the show, (Daniel Giménez Cacho), is stressed by the drop in audience share, and he discovers a way of raising the program’s numbers by using Salva. He doesn’t hesitate to use all kinds of tricks to obtain unprecedented notoriety in order to turn this young street kid into a massive idol: the new Messiah. “A man who has enlightened our hearts and dispelled our darkness”, says the person responsible for the programme, deeply touched by the audience’s applause at the solemn broadcasts.

Tried for homicide, he becomes a contestant on *‘Mano dura’*, and manages to save himself, thus starting on a new road to success. Appearing on a huge studio set with terraced side stands and spectators gathered in the central area, dark, with light provided only by the candles of hundreds of people who welcome him into the place, Salva makes a stellar appearance with an image reminiscent of Jesus Christ. Through his manner and long hair, he passes through the crowd with peoples’ outstretched arms in failed attempts to touch the new Messiah, who is nothing more than a media gimmick. At the top of

the staircase in front of him is the exalted host, who shouts, “Listen to him, look at him, feel him. Be imbued with his enlightened presence”. Exclamations of astonishment by the public are steady until they reach a peak, then suddenly, Salva is shot live on camera. If Jesus died on a cross, then Salva dies on a studio set in this film, which is used to satirise the programmes of psychics and televangelists,

In *Teresa, Teresa*, the successful hostess in charge of the program called *‘Laberintos’* (role played by actress Assumpta Serna), is used in this film to recover the thoughts of Saint Teresa. The sensual diva of the TV program has the mission of giving the answer to the writer, who in this fictional account returns from the past to carry out the interview and respond to spectators who write letters or call live. The hour and a half film takes place on the television set with the two women engaged in a dialogue, which is only occasionally disrupted by the hostess taking a rest. Before the start of the program’s opening song and the words of the female presenter, a voice-over clarifies that the statements have been taken from the biography and testimonies of the Saint. At the end of the film, Saint Teresa can be seen in T-shirt and trousers, not her usual appearance, so it becomes apparent that this is nothing more than a TV show.

Despite the strong emotional imbalance caused by the death of her three-year-old son, who drowned in her pool, she stoically endures, and becomes a TV star, cultured and sophisticated.

— “Dear audience, do not be alarmed, this program will not become a catechism class. The rules of our program prevent it. Whether you are a believer or a neo-pagan, this program does not endorse the statements of our guests. The night brings us labyrinths...” (TC: 00:11:50).

This is followed by details of the life and work of the Saint, as well as everything she suffered as her body was “cut up” and distributed all over the world. It ends with the requests of Internet users. They ask her to levitate herself, to recite *“Muero porque no muero”*, and to eat a sardine. She does the latter, and the theatrical, surrealistic film finishes in which the diva-like aspect of the hostess makes the story lean toward the side of the villains.

Radio becomes the channel for a lie on the programme entitled *Franky Banderas*. He witnesses all of this live with a hostess who does not fail to take advantage of the disparate story to add sentimental content to her program:

— Hostess: Ladies and gentlemen... Once again, truth is stranger than fiction. And how many months are you into your pregnancy? Who is the the child’s father?

— Mother: He’s a bullfighter. I was a poor village girl, and I didn’t know anything about life. Then I was elected queen of the strawberry festival. So I had to preside over the bullfight. One of the bullfighters dedicated the bull to me, and suddenly it was love at first sight. But unfortunately, the bull killed him before we could get married and have a child (fake cries).

— Hostess: And what was the bullfighter’s name?

— Mother: Manzanillo.

— Hostess: Go ahead, cry... Cry and let it go...(TC: 00:49:20)

Radio news is the first step. Afterward, the story appears on magazine covers. Lastly, television becomes interested in covering the story in a way that is no less morbid. On the television program, the aggressive hostess (Paula Soldevila) begins her interview with a direct question. “You don’t engage in prostitution, do you? I mean, in a professional way.

In short, these are villains who vent their rage with scandal and lies to gain audience share. In this case, they use a child who does not yet have a will, and between his relatives and the journalists the kid is falsely transformed into a helpless character. In *Cuba libre*, Cristina Melero (Kira Miró) is involved in nonsensical stories that she fully takes advantage of to capture an audience. She and her camera were the only means of communication that sneaked into the Cuban embassy while dozens of reporters waited at the door among many police officers. Guided from her boss's mobile unit, she broadcasts everything that happens, and her boss does not hesitate to manipulate some recordings to make everything seem more "overwhelming":

— Right at this moment, there is a brutal police response to the violent reaction of the squatters (she says to the camera while tripping one of the squatters who runs out, falls to the ground, and is attacked by a policeman in the confusion). Record, record, record (she tells the camera operator), then stops a young woman without permission who is also running away from the conflict zone. With us, we have one of the survivors of the eviction. How does it feel to be a victim of police brutality? (TC: 00:14:45).

The journalist and the camera operator go to the Cuban embassy to get an exclusive interview with the Cuban ambassador. "You are the most qualified", says her boss. "I'm the only one available, get real", she quickly replies as she slaps some makeup on her face in a frivolous odyssey of manipulated information.

In *Volver*, the aggressive hostess (Yolanda Ramos) begins the interview with a woman sitting on a sofa. She is standing in front of her with a cold, arrogant voice:

Host: I was wondering if you could explain what you have just told our editor. You told her something very important about this lady and her husband that relates her to the disappearance of your mother. Is that true or not, Agustina?

— Agustina: I would rather not talk about it. They were my assumptions.

— Hostess: Yes, but you've come to talk about that lady and your mother, right?

— Agustina: Yes, but I've thought it over.

— Presenter: What's the matter? You don't look comfortable. You look a bit nervous (she sits next to her on the sofa). I'd like to tell you that Agustina has also come here to explain to us that she has been diagnosed with a terminal illness. Isn't that right, Agustina?

— Augustine: Yes (she answers curtly)

— Hostess: You have cancer, Agustina, but you shouldn't be nervous. You're with friends. Come on. Give it up for Agustina (applause). Agustina has a wish to go to a clinic in Houston. But to go to Houston, you will have to speak well. I remind you that you have made a commitment to this channel (Agustina is leaving)... Agustina, Agustina! (TC: 01:26:58)

The unethical female reporter that Almodóvar shows in other films is seen again in *Volver* with the woman who becomes a television villain with no sign of emotion, worried only about reaching an audience.

The programme called *Prime time* features the unemployed journalist Jaime (Alberto Amarilla) as an accomplice of the macabre programme '*Juez y parte*'. In the first case, the audience has to decide who must die; either a neo-Nazi soldier, Miguel Ángel, or a pimp, Khaled, and the latter is the one who is shot in the head in the presence of the rest of his compan-

ions, thus a state of panic begins to spread on the television show with the 7 contestants being kidnapped for their alleged crimes. Although Jaime is the one who gains more prominence in the film and becomes the clear villain, there are other evil journalists in this plot as well: the general director of the channel, Ricardo (Alberto González), the programme director, Alicia (Rocío Muñoz), and the host (Domingo Cruz), who in a cold-blooded way, and only interested in creating a spectacle, are in charge of conducting a sinister game show. On the fourth day, after the apparent first death, there are 4.3 million subscribers and Ricardo analyses the figures:

- Ricardo: Come on, fill me in.
- Analyst: Within 3 minutes of the execution, 59% of the registered users had paid the fee. In the next two hours, 90,000 new subscriptions were added.
- Ricardo: How was the impact?
- Analyst: A few days ago, we jumped from internet forums to mass public opinion. We are present in all of the conventional media and there is no talk show that isn't talking about us. They tear us to pieces, but they all follow us. (TC: 00:47:47)

The tension and harshness of the images continue in this show about human suffering, which is very profitable in terms of audience share, and it transforms those responsible for the TV channel and the young journalist into evil creators of a morbid spectacle that ends in drama. Although the live deaths were false and nobody was supposed to die, at the end of the story one of the contestants who suffered from a mental disorder ends Jaime's life and then commits suicide.

4. Discussion

The analysis of the 20 Spanish films with our original structuralist approach, inspired by Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), shows the rich potential for the audio-visual field of the Russian author's text analysis theories, almost a century after the release of his book. The narrowing down of only 'unrealistic' films brings rigour to the sample as well; those that are implausible due to an excess of satire or fiction, and therefore are not found in real life.

With the results obtained, it can be seen that H1 is confirmed. The unrealistic Spanish films of the 1990s and the first ten years of the 21st century with the presence of media and journalists include villains with a lack of journalistic ethics and characters in unreal situations that awaken more laughter or tenderness in the viewer than anger. H2 has also been verified. The morbidity and lies on television programs are characteristic of the work of the villainous journalists in the unrealistic Spanish films of the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century.

In addition to verifying the two hypotheses, the results reveal novel contributions to the role of television in relation to radio and the written press, dominance of the comedy genre, and damage to the image of the woman with more villains on the screen.

When we summarise, the data it can be seen that of the 12 titles from the 1990s, 9 belong to audio-visual professionals. *Tacones lejanos* features the host Rebeca who confesses on live TV that she killed her husband. Rosa Rosae stars Theo, the host capable of stealing a novel. The star of *Kika* is Andrea Caracortada, who discovers the worst events of the day in her

program. In *Acción mutante*, J. Blanch fights for audience share until he dies. *Una chica entre un millón* introduces the TV mogul and gangster Miguel. In *El día de la bestia*, Professor Cavan hosts a show with charades of UFOs, possessed people and extraterrestrials. In *Dame algo* Marisol Fernández looks for blood when searching for the news of the day. *Siempre hay un camino a la derecha* (There is always a way out) is also the name of the program directed by Lanza Gorta, who takes advantage of the misfortune of others for his television show. In *El grito en el cielo*, Miranda lives her particular madness under the pressure of audience ratings.

Disparate Nacional can be found in a press office during this decade, and this is a show involving Manolo and Emilio, both of whom make a living telling lies and creating deceptive shams. On radio, there are villains in *El hundimiento del Titanic*, with Albert and his skirt-chasing escapades. There is also deception in *Atilano, Presidente*, with Sol heading the press with her bag of tricks.

As the hypothesis states, laughter prevails over anger, and this is clearly evidenced by the film genres chosen. Comedy dominates throughout this period with its total presence in 8 of the titles; in 2 of them, it shares the screen with drama; and in 2 others, there is only drama. In the 9 television titles, the gender balance regarding villains is nearly equal, with 4 female and 5 male. The cases of press and radio are men, and there is one woman as head of the press

The predominance of television for impossible villains continued in the last 10 years of the research, with 6 titles out of 8 occupying this section. In *Hable con ella*, there is a host who takes advantage of the live show to intimidate the interviewee. In *No somos nadie*, the host of a morbid television program is the one who decides if people condemned to death should be saved or not. In *Teresa, Teresa*, a television diva performs a surreal interview with Saint Teresa. *Volver* features a television program in which morbid statements are gathered in exchange for medical treatment for the woman who confesses. *Cuba libre* shows Cristina Melero and her 'anything goes' attitude for becoming the network's main host. *Prime time* features a macabre reality show that makes a business out of suffering.

There are two radio titles: *Año Mariano* shows María in the strange role as the 'Virgin Mary' on the radio, and in *Franky Banderas*, lies on the air, even with minors, keeps the tension going.

For the first time, comedy is reconciled with drama, with 4 films in which humour prevails and another 4 in which television satire disguises sorrow. There is a predominance of television with 6 cases, while radio is the chosen media between the other two. The villainous woman is dominant with 6 females on the screen.

The study of 20 films during the two decades of the sample has allowed for this contribution to be made to the worlds of cinematography and journalism, thanks to the recovery of Vladimir Propp's famous work entitled *Morphology of the Folktale*. This period of Spanish cinema around the 1990's was a crucial moment in national film production in which a wave of young creative talent appeared with their ground-breaking projects. The success of Spanish cinema with its impressive box office numbers, and even awards in Hollywood, can be seen in this research with examples among our list of films, such as *El día de la bestia* by Álex de la Iglesia, *Hable con ella*, and *Volver*, by Pedro Almodóvar. These two decades were also very important for Spanish journalism with the arrival of private TV channels and an overload of television programmes. In summary, this work complements the body of research on the same topic with a new methodology by which we have chosen to continue with the study of the media and the portrayal of journalists in films.

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