

# Female journalists' representation in Rodrigo Sorogoyen's *The Realm*

## *Representación de las mujeres periodistas en El reino, de Rodrigo Sorogoyen*



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### Abstract:

Cinema has incorporated the journalism profession into its narratives because of its inherent potential for creating narratives with a high degree of interest. In the collective imagination, journalists are positioned as the fourth estate and bear a social responsibility. In the early days of cinema until around the 1990s, women occupied secondary roles compared to their male counterparts, through stereotypical characters portrayed as cold, unyielding, ambitious professionals ready to do whatever it took to get the news at the expense of their personal lives. They are depicted as masculinised

### Resumen:

*El cine ha incorporado en sus historias el oficio del periodismo ya que, por la naturaleza de la profesión, permite introducir narraciones con un alto grado de interés. En el imaginario colectivo los periodistas se posicionan como el cuarto poder y tienen una responsabilidad social. En los comienzos del cine y hasta los años 90, aproximadamente, las mujeres –frente a sus compañeros masculinos– ocupaban un rol secundario, en papeles estereotipados que las mostraban como profesionales frías, implacables, dispuestas a todo para conseguir la noticia en detrimento de su vida personal. Aparecen masculinizadas y sexua-*

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and sexualised. Using a methodological triangulation that applies descriptive analysis techniques, film analysis and in-depth interviews, the feature film *The Realm*, by Rodrigo Sorogoyen is studied to determine how the figure of the female journalist is represented in it. After studying the results, it can be concluded that present-day female journalists do not find an accurate representation of their profession in *The Realm* or cinema in general. This discrepancy stems from the persistent perpetuation of certain stereotypes that influence how women journalists' role is portrayed on the big screen.

**Keywords:**

Women; stereotypes; *The Realm*; Rodrigo Sorogoyen, journalists.

*lizadas. Empleando una triangulación metodológica que aplica las técnicas del análisis descriptivo, el análisis fílmico y la entrevista en profundidad se estudia el largometraje El reino, de Rodrigo Sorogoyen, para determinar cómo se representa la figura de la periodista en él. Tras el estudio de los resultados se observa que las periodistas en activo, en la actualidad, no se ven representadas por la visión de su profesión que ofrece El reino ni el cine en general. Esto se debe a que se siguen perpetuando ciertos estereotipos con los que se muestra en la gran pantalla el rol de la mujer periodista.*

**Palabras clave:**

Mujeres; estereotipos; *El reino*; Rodrigo Sorogoyen; periodistas.

## 1. Introduction

When contemplating the journalistic profession, the public tends to imagine it as the fourth estate, a watchdog, and even the safeguard of democracy. This perception has led to the mythification of this profession, attributing ethical values to its practice when, at times, there may be a gap between this myth and reality (Rey, 2020, p. 90). In the collective imagination, journalists are seen as defenders of citizens' rights and the proper functioning of society. Consequently, they are often depicted on the big screen on the side of the virtuous and the brave (San José de la Rosa *et al.*, 2020, p. 317). However, in this regard, Ramonet (1999), as cited by Bezunartea *et al.* (2011), highlights that, given the significant power that the media have acquired, they have transitioned from being an instrument in service to society, functioning as a means of control, to becoming a controlling instrument in the hands of an elite. This transition has transformed democracy into "mediocracy" (p.3). Nevertheless, certain feature films depict internal divisions among reporters, portraying both good and bad journalists. While some journalists seek to inform and uncover the truth, others serve the interests of power, helping to conceal what is happening from the population. In addition, cinema has incorporated the character of the journalist into its narratives (Tosantos, 2004) almost since its inception, as their stories appeal to scriptwriters. According to this author, part of the allure of including journalists in narratives stems from the unique experiences they can have due to the nature of their profession, experiences to which the rest of society does not have access. Journalists can be present at significant events, interview relevant figures, and later inform the rest of society. For these reasons, they can act as a counterpower, as their privileged position allows them to monitor and confront powerful individuals (2008, pp. 507-509). McNair (2011) asserts that feature films depicting journalists not only acknowledge the significance of their role in democratic societies but also serve as a source of information about how the public perceives them and how society expects them to be (p. 367). According to Bezunartea *et al.* (2011), the most common profile in feature films is the sensationalist and unethical journalist, appearing in 41.5% of the analysed films, followed by the journalist committed to their profession, exercising control and defending the interests of citizens, constituting 28.2%. To a lesser extent, in 13.2% of cases, films depict reporters who merely act as witnesses to the events unfolding around them.

Although journalists have been depicted in feature films almost since cinema's inception, women's representation in this profession has been unequal, initially playing secondary roles until gaining greater visibility in the 90s (Osorio, 2009, pp. 10-

11). Specifically, according to Tello Díaz's (2012) study, out of the 600 analysed films in Spanish cinema, only 46% feature female journalists. Furthermore, when examining the percentage of female characters who, as journalists, play a significant role in the plot, the percentage drops to 20% of the analysed films. Similar data is highlighted by Enache (2020, p. 276), citing an article in *Le Monde* from 2021, which gathered results from *el centro Marc-Bloch* from Berlin; out of a corpus of 3770 films spanning from 1985 to 2019, only 34% corresponded to female roles. This figure shows a trend towards equality when considering films between 2014 and 2019, with female representation increasing to 45%. Nevertheless, even in this latter case, a minority representation of female characters in cinema persists. Pachecho (2021), after analysing Spanish films, notes that non-image-dependent journalists appear in 35% of the studied sample; in contrast, for journalists whose profession is tied to their image, this percentage rises to 57% of the analysed feature-length films.

A separate mention is warranted for the stereotypes commonly attributed to female journalists in films. Ghiglione (1990) highlights that this representation has evolved through five phases: initially, women were compelled to take up journalism because they had no alternatives. In the second phase, they served as cheerleaders for male journalists, their sole objective being to marry the man they loved. In the third phase, the feature-length films during the 1920s and 1930s depicted them as less capable but as tough as their male counterparts. In the fourth phase, they were portrayed as achieving success at the expense of sacrificing their personal lives and feeling incomplete. Finally, in the fifth phase, women journalists are depicted as professionally and personally independent, so their relationships with men are not a measure of their success. However, they are still portrayed as lacking the toughness required to be a real journalist (pp. 454-457).

Good (1998) highlights that many representations of journalists reinforce gender roles traditionally perpetuated in society, depicting female journalists as women first and professionals in second place (p. 51). Meanwhile, Saltzman (2003) highlights that female journalists must incorporate masculine traits in journalism, such as aggressiveness, toughness, self-sufficiency, and antipathy needed to succeed while still exhibiting attributes expected of women, such as being affectionate, compassionate, or maternal. Herman (2004) even suggests the masculinisation among female journalists in their professional conduct, behaving like men when they attain positions of power to uphold the patriarchal tradition (p.34). This author also highlights that, in general, female journalists receive more straightforward assignments and cover lighter stories compared to their male counterparts. To succeed, a female reporter must, to some extent, compromise her femininity, ethics, and personal life, and, even then, may still encounter discrimination and disrespectful treatment from colleagues (p. 37).

According to Osorio (2009), the cold and ruthless female journalist, the frivolous journalist, the homemaker journalist, the heroine journalist in action films, and even an updated version of a journalist who runs a sentimental advice column are among the most common stereotypes of female journalists (pp. 418-421). In more commercial or blockbuster films, these stereotypes may be exaggerated, as noted by Figuero in the study of journalists in *Batman* (Time Burton, 1989), where the photojournalist Vicki Vale, played by Kim Basinger, "is a functional character, appearing on-screen to be attacked and dominated by the Joker and defended and rescued by Batman" (2012, p. 43). As the author points out, this character deviates significantly from the role of a photojournalist accustomed to capturing human tragedies.

Recently, Waddell (2021) has introduced other stereotypes affecting how the audience perceives the reality of the profession and the professional performance of women. These stereotypes encompass the sexualisation of female journalists, who are

consistently represented as attractive and may leverage sex to obtain information from their sources, a perspective shared by Cvetkovic and Oostman (2018), who also delve into the victimisation of women who are manipulated due to perceived physical and mental weakness. Waddell (2021) also highlights other stereotypes, such as unethical professionals with misogynistic characteristics, portrayed as weak and ineffective, engaging in malpractice in their professional roles. In contrast, positive representations of female journalists convey their commendable work ethic in comparison with their male counterparts. Rincón and Mosquera (2021) even suggest that audiovisual narratives depict journalism as a profession that is “unethical and an instrument of the executive and legislative power, with female journalists being easily manipulable, self-centred, ascending the press hierarchy based on their physical appearance, rather than their preparation and intelligence” (p. 31). In this regard, the conclusion of Bezunartea *et al.* (2008) emphasises that female reporters are usually represented as more disciplined than males. However, in 40% of cases, this discipline is directed towards personal promotion, illustrating that, apart from being attractive, they are also competent journalists; if they were not attractive, they would never have pursued careers as reporters (p. 240).

Bezunartea *et al.* (2008) also highlight the underrepresentation of female journalists in cinematic works. According to their study, they make up only 20% of reporters depicted on the big screen, meaning that only one out of every five journalists portrayed in films is a woman (p. 223), a finding corroborated by Waddell (2021). Moreover, the power they wield on screen is limited, as female journalists are frequently portrayed alongside a mentor figure who guides and instils confidence in their potential (Bezunartea *et al.*, 2008, p. 240).

Other stereotypes that are also present, according to Bezunartea *et al.*'s (2010) study, are connected with age, the type of media they work in, and the section they are associated with. According to their research, in 44% of the analysed films, the average age of journalists ranges from 30 to 50, with 30.6% in the training phase and only 17.3% holding positions of responsibility. Regarding the type of media they work in, 67% are journalists working in the press as writers, reporters, or correspondents, while 30.5% work in television. Finally, 16.5% of the journalists featured on the big screen belong to the local section, 13.1% to the crime section, 11.6% to the international section and 11% to investigative journalism. Table 1 provides a summary of all the detected stereotypes.

**Table 1. Stereotypes in the representation of women journalists in cinema according to theme**

Theme	Stereotype	Author
Fourth Estate	Mythification of the profession	Rey, 2020.
Fourth Estate	Defense of citizens' rights	San José de la Rosa <i>et al.</i> , 2020.
Fourth Estate	Existence of factions among reporters: good and bad journalists.	San José de la Rosa <i>et al.</i> , 2020.
Fourth Estate	Three main profiles: sensationalist and unethical, committed to their profession, and witness to what happens around them.	Bezunartea <i>et al.</i> , 2011.
Fourth Estate	Instrument of control in the hands of an elite (mediocracy).	Bezunartea <i>et al.</i> , 2011.
Fourth Estate	Exercise of the profession as a counter-power: monitoring and confronting the powerful.	Mera, 2008.

Fourth Estate	Average age of journalists: 30-50 years old.	Bezunartea <i>et al.</i> , 2010.
Fourth Estate	67% of the represented journalists work in print, and 30.5% on television.	Bezunartea <i>et al.</i> , 2010.
Fourth Estate	The most commonly represented sections are local, events, international, and investigative journalism.	Bezunartea <i>et al.</i> , 2010.
Fourth Estate	Unethical profession. Instrument of executive and legislative power.	Rincón y Mosquera, 2021.
Gender	Female journalist: easily manipulable, self-centred, ascends in the press hierarchy based on her physical appearance and not her education or intelligence.	Rincón y Mosquera, 2021.
Gender	Representation in 5 phases: obligation to accept work, cheerleader for the male journalist in order to marry him, less qualified but equally tough, sacrifices her personal life, independent in professional and personal matters, but lacks the toughness of a real journalist.	Ghiglione, 1990.
Gender	Woman first, then professional.	Good, 1998.
Gender	Need to incorporate masculine traits (aggressiveness, toughness, self-sufficiency, anitpathy) to succeed, while still being affectionate, compassionate, or maternal.	Saltzman, 2003.
Gender	Masculinisation of the journalist to maintain power. Continuation of patriarchal tradition.	Herman, 2004.
Gender	Assigned simpler assignments and tell easier stories than men.	Herman, 2004.
Gender	Must sacrifice femininity, ethics and personal life to succeed and will continue to face discrimination and disrespect from men.	Herman, 2004.
Gender	Most frequent stereotypes: cold and relentless journalist, frivolous, housewife, action movie heroine, and sentimental advice columnist.	Osorio, 2009.
Gender	Secondary role compared to male journalists.	Osorio, 2009. Tello Díaz, 2012. Enache, 2020.
Gender	Most women journalists depend on their image to practice the profession.	Pacheco, 2021.
Gender	Sexualisation of the female journalist always represented attractively, even using sex to obtain information.	Waddell, 2021. Cvetkovic y Oostman, 2018.
Gender	Victimisation of women, manipulated for being physically and mentally weak.	Cvetkovic y Oostman, 2018.
Gender	Unethical professionals with misogynistic, weak and ineffective characteristics, engaging in malpractice in their professional work.	Waddell, 2021.
Gender	Representation as more disciplined than men, focused on personal promotion.	Bezunartea <i>et al.</i> , 2008.
Gender	If they were not attractive, they would not have been reporters.	Bezunartea <i>et al.</i> , 2008.
Gender	Numerical underrepresentation of female gender journalists.	Bezunartea <i>et al.</i> , 2008. Wadell, 2021.
Gender	Accompanied by a mentor figure who teaches them and gives them confidence in their potential.	Bezunartea <i>et al.</i> , 2008.

Source: created by the authors. 2023

To analyse the portrayal of the press as the fourth estate and the stereotypes associated with female journalists, the film *The Realm* (Sorogoyen, 2018) was chosen for examination. This feature film, based on true stories, revolves around a female journalist who must take a stance regarding her role as the fourth estate by the end of the film. Another reason for selecting this film lies in the numerous awards it received, including seven Goyas from the *Academia de Cine*, as well as accolades from various festivals (*Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales* [I.C.A.A.], 2023) and its considerable box office success with 365,256 viewers (I.C.A.A., 2023). This implies that any stereotypes depicted on screen would have reached a wide audience, perpetuating them in the collective imagination. The insights from this case study can aid in analysing the current stereotypes surrounding the representation of female reporters in Spanish cinema and the dynamics between political power and the press.

In *The Realm*, Rodrigo Sorogoyen portrays corruption from the perspective of a politician, Manuel López Vidal, to try to understand him. The politician is confronted by a journalist, Amaia Marín, at the film's conclusion. As Sorogoyen explained to Pastor (2019), this character embodies the role of the press and serves as an agent denouncing the corrupt ecosystem. The journalist appears in four specific moments in the plot, representing the fourth estate, which implies a responsibility for the journalist. This responsibility is beneficial to society when exercised for the common good. However, it can also be dangerous when driven by the informant's interests or influenced by individuals or entities. The final message of the film underscores the complexity of the system.

Moreover, the character of Amaia Marín was created by Sorogoyen after consulting with expert journalists, including Ana Pastor. Morales (2018) reported that the journalist's final confrontation with the corrupt politician was filmed on the set of *El objetivo*, a programme then hosted by Ana Pastor and produced by Atresmedia, which also coproduced the feature film *The Realm*. To prepare for the role, actress Bárbara Lennie met with Ana Pastor to study how the journalist conducted herself. Pastor acknowledges being consulted for creating the character, but Morales (2018) says, "I don't think she is inspired by me as much as by what we journalists do".

For all these reasons, this research aims to analyse the role of the female journalist in the feature film *The Realm*, addressing the following objectives:

- Analyse the differences between the roles of male and female journalist characters in the film.
- Examine the portrayal of the female journalist in *The Realm*, mainly through film analysis.
- Determine the role and stereotypes embodied by the character Amaia Marín in her capacity as a journalist.
- Verify whether the character of the female journalist, according to several professional women in the sector, aligns with reality or presents a distorted view.
- Describe the function of the female journalist character portrayed in the film concerning her role as the fourth estate and guardian of democracy.

These objectives aim to verify the following hypotheses.

H1. Stereotypes surrounding the role of female journalists are currently perpetuated on the big screen, portraying them as cold and ruthless professionals, emphasising their gender over their profession, masculinising them, sexualising them, and compelling them to sacrifice their femininity, ethics and personal lives.

H2. In feature films, the portrayal of female journalists involves assuming the role of controlling political power, while male journalists are more likely to side with the corrupt; female journalists are represented as professionals safeguarding society's interests.

H3. The portrayal of female journalists in feature films does not align with the perception of female journalists regarding the nature and practice of the journalistic profession.

## 2. Methodology

Methodological triangulation will be employed using descriptive analysis, film analysis, and in-depth interviews. The study will focus on camera framing, shot size, angle, movement, and editing rhythm given to each narrative unit through editing. Relevant details of the soundtrack and music will be highlighted when applicable, relating all these expressive aspects with the representation of the female journalist and the main stereotypes that are revealed in the analysis of the scenes.

The descriptive analysis aims to identify the scenes in *The Realm* where a female journalist is portrayed to determine the number of scenes dedicated to this depiction, their durations, and their placement within the narrative. The significance of the journalistic plot becomes evident in the first viewing of the film; as mentioned above, the story's closure takes place in a television studio during an intense face-to-face encounter. This scene, which we analyse later, is lengthy and uniquely engages the audience; as Sánchez López asserts, "Amaia's direct appeal to the camera establishes a three-way discourse involving her, Manuel and the audience, compelling the latter to conclude the viewing without a resolution to the conflict" (2022, p. 351). Perhaps the film leaves this solution to the viewer, presenting them, through this ending, with an opportunity for personal reflection and introspection in the context of systematic and widespread corruption evidenced in various moments in the film.

The representation of the female journalist in the story is also studied through various categories that will be used to determine the visual development of the female journalist within different scenes. In addition to the aspects mentioned above, the duration, weight, and disposition of the scenes in the main plot are analysed, as well as the symbolic value attributed to objects and characters within the narrative. To this end, various qualities are considered to comprehend the model of the journalist as depicted in the film, as established by Sánchez-Escalonilla (2014), Seger (2000) and McKee (2003) in their studies on audiovisual narrative from the perspective of film scriptwriting. Due to the study's inherent limitations, the analysis focuses explicitly on the categorisation of the character of the female journalist based on social status, temperament, style, dialogues, notable physical and psychological traits, and real-life inspiration. The objective is to uncover what Seger calls "the essence of the character" and the paradoxes contributing to the complexity of the character, including distinct emotions, values and attitudes (2000, p.34). Film analysis is also used to examine narrative characteristics in various scenes featuring the female journalist, considering aspects such as size, angle, duration, and movement, among others.

The study samples are scenes from *The Realm* (Sorogoyen, 2018), where the journalist plays the leading role. Specifically, the discursive representation of four scenes will be examined, including the conflict at play, the context within the whole story, characters related to the female journalist, the generic inflexion of the scene, who plays the leading role, and who instigates events.

Due to the previously mentioned study limitations, the film analysis will focus on two of the most relevant aspects of cinematic representation: framing, which will be analysed and described in conjunction with the content, and editing, with a specific emphasis on how images are put together. This includes whether external editing is used, creating a particular rhythm and overtly guiding the narrative, or if internal editing is used, capturing events without cuts or with minimal cuts, thereby allowing greater freedom in recording continuous events. Movement- both of actors and the camera- emerges as a significant narrative element.

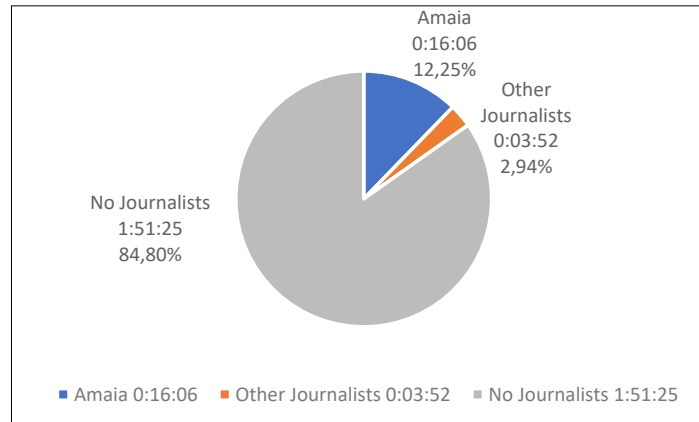
Moreover, the methodological triangulation will be juxtaposed with an additional procedure: in-depth interviews. Three female journalists served as primary sources to compare the representations of professional women journalists in Sorogoyen's films, specifically in the film *The Realm*, the subject of this research. The selection of female journalists encompassed professionals of different ages working in various media- print, television, and radio journalism- to provide diverse perspectives for comparison.

### 3. Analysis of the scenes

In *The Realm*, the presence of journalists as a backdrop to the story can be quantified in 20 out of the 131 minutes of the film. The character of Amaia makes appearances on screen for just over 16 minutes. These interventions are distributed throughout the entire film in brief segments, except for Amaia's final appearance, which also concludes the film. Figure 1 shows the percentage of the total durations that these appearances represent.



**Figure 1. Journalist screen time in *The Realm***



Source: created by the authors. 2023

The journalist’s and Amaia’s interventions have been gathered in Table 2. As can be seen, the represented media are print and television. There is no representation of radio journalism in this feature film. The scenes that feature Amaia were analysed in-depth.

**Table 2. Scenes featuring journalists and Amaia in *The Realm***

Characters	Initial time	Final time	Total Time	Description
Amaia	0:10:07	0:12:34	0:02:27	Waiting to go on air
Amaia	0:13:39	0:13:54	0:00:15	News about a politician being brought to court
Other journa- lists	0:14:51	0:16:14	0:01:23	Background television with journalists delivering the news
Other journa- lists	0:24:39	0:25:30	0:00:51	Tip-off: journalist leaks news
Other journa- lists	0:27:07	0:27:52	0:00:45	Manuel visits the newspaper to prevent publication
Amaia	0:30:05	0:31:08	0:01:03	Amaia reports news about Manuel’s recording
Other journa- lists	0:42:33	0:42:44	0:00:11	Background TV

Other journalists	0:46:40	0:47:14	0:00:34	Yacht video leak
Amaia	1:04:38	1:07:30	0:02:52	Meeting at the hotel between Amaia and Manuel
Other journalists	1:12:25	1:12:33	0:00:08	Journalists covering the court exit
Amaia	1:59:00	2:08:29	0:09:29	Interview on late-night programme
No journalists	N/A	N/A	1:51:25	
Total			2:11:23	11

Source: created by the authors. 2023

### 3.1. Classroom scene

The journalist Amaia Marín is played by the actress Bárbara Lennie in the film. Rodrigo Sorogoyen opts for a young woman yet mature enough to inspire confidence in her experience; the actress was 34 years old when the film was produced in 2018. Lennie is a widely acclaimed actress in numerous reviews. She is the director's choice to play a prestigious journalist who does not allow herself to be overwhelmed and uses her talent, skills and competence to bravely confront the prevailing corruption in society, particularly within the political class.

The first time we see the journalist, she is working alone in a room where several journalists await an interview with a well-known figure. Amaia is seated, writing with a pen, focused on her work, while two other journalists are working independently, one with a mobile phone and the other with a laptop. Amaia is represented as an analogical woman, in contrast to her counterparts. Manuel López Vidal is sitting at a distance from her, and a dialogue indicates that Amaia does not have a favourable opinion of him.

From the audiovisual narrative, the scene comprises ten shots, all featuring camera movement, in most cases with a slight and gradual approach to the characters. This movement reflects their mutual feelings, her disdain for him, and his respect, admiration and eagerness to approach her.

Both characters appear in the frame only at the beginning of the scene and later, when Manuel gestures for Amaia to proceed with the interview so she will not miss a train back to Madrid. In all the cases, the shots are very wide, emphasising the considerable distance between them and portraying them through extensive frames. However, as the scene progresses, they are shown separately in distinct shots, especially in closer frames. The only close-up featuring both characters is in continuity: first, focusing on Amaia, followed by a pan, after which the camera remains on Manuel. In other words, in close-up shots, they appear separately- a device that symbolises the gap between them through panning.

Amaia Marín is depicted as an independent, efficient, hardworking, solitary, incorruptible woman, and somewhat unfriendly in the face of corruption personified by the politician Manuel López Vidal, who portrays himself as amiable. The female

journalist shows no interest in the politician, whom she can barely stand and from whom she wants no favours. Despite this, the politician seems to wield greater power and control over the situation in this initial encounter, as he manages to approach her, appear friendly, engage in a tense conversation, and do the journalist a favour by letting her interview first so she does not miss her train.

### *3.2 Two scenes in the news programme*

As it becomes clear at the beginning of the story, Amaia works as a journalist on a morning television programme. In the film, we can see the journalist on this programme in two specific moments. In both instances, she is framed within the television screen as part of the programme being watched by the family.

At first, her appearance is very brief. On this occasion, Amaia appears after the news video to explain how the party's vice president has been brought before the court.

This intervention is presented with six shots edited through cuts. Narratively, it can be interpreted as a clash of perspectives between the family and the information provided by Amaia on the programme. The shots show the family watching the television and Amaia delivering the news as part of the programme, creating a shot reverse-shot dynamic. Although these are static shots, the camera maintains a slight movement, reminiscent of a handheld camera, conveying the internal tension of the situation and character dynamics. While the director shifts focus to the family's reactions to the information provided by Amaia via the television, the viewer remains aware of Amaia's presence through her voice, providing details regarding the arrest off-screen.

In the initial intervention, Amaia is centred in a medium shot alongside two other journalists: a woman on the left and a man on the right. Throughout her interventions, the language adopts the audiovisual code used in television, portraying Amaia as a self-assured professional familiar with the codes of journalism.

Her second appearance follows the same pattern as the first but with a longer duration: one minute and three seconds. In this segment, she presents news about Manuel López Vidal and the incriminating recording revealing the politician's corruption. This appearance comprises eight shots edited through cuts. The scene depicts Manuel López Vidal, his wife and daughter watching television in the morning. They are aware that controversial recordings have been leaked, in which the politician is implicated in illegal practices abusing power.

Amaia initially appears as an off-camera voice before being seen in the picture. This voice-over is sustained until the end of the scene, over the shot of the family watching television until they decide to turn it off. Similar to the previous intervention, Amaia first appears in a medium-wide shot, centred, and, in this case, flanked by two male reporters. The language used by the director to narrate the scene is distinct. Although most of the shots are static, incorporating slight movements of the handheld camera to convey the tension at the time, there are three slow zoom-ins on this occasion. Two of these movements are made towards the television in which Amaia appears framed, first with the other journalists and later alone in a medium shot looking at the camera. The third zoom movement is produced in the reverse shot in which Manuel is listening to the news. These slow zoom-ins denote the gravity of the matter and focus on the two critical sides, again confronting each other on-screen, the journalist delivering the news and Manuel reacting, heightening the tension.

Concerning the stereotypes, these scenes depict the journalist as a cold and relentless professional, in line with what Osorio (2009) pointed out. She is also portrayed as attractive, aligned with Waddell's (2021) assessment and dependent on her image (Pacheco, 2021).

In her role as the fourth estate, Amaia serves as a source of information for the audience (McNair, 2011). She embodies a journalist committed to her profession, exercising control over political power, highlighting their shortcomings, and defending citizens (McNair, 2011).

### 3.3. *Hotel scene*

This short scene, lasting only three minutes, narrates a brief encounter between the journalist and the politician in a hotel room. *The Realm* shifts between several genres, incorporating various audiovisual resources typical of thrillers or intrigue. In these genres, the psychology and motivations of the characters play a crucial role (Sánchez Noriega, 2002, p. 158), as is evident in this particular scene.

The haunting music and the alternating montage between the journalist walking down the hotel hallway towards the room and the politician savouring a drink in front of the mirror in his room create an atmosphere suggesting an intimate encounter between the characters and, in a way, it is. The 23 handheld shots in this scene convey the tension and instability between the two characters.

As the journalist enters the room, the music stops. Silent glances are exchanged as she enters, somewhat bewildered, into the room. Once in the room, the large bed takes centre stage during an extensive wide and overhead shot while he pours the drinks. Her perplexed glances and the surroundings initially hint at a potential sexual encounter until the dialogue- but not the shot- significantly alters the narrative code, indicating a different purpose for their meeting.

The politician has something to offer her that she wants to hear. The storytelling takes a turn, transitioning from medium shots to reverse shots during the preliminaries of the proposal. The dialogue reintroduces personal tension but delves into the heart of the matter when the director employs close and overhead shots in the scene's climax.

It becomes evident that the discussion revolves around business. The politician, like a mentor (Bezunartea *et al.*, 2008), asserts, "You love your job. Too much. But it's okay because you are very good. Really good, intelligent, hardworking, with a touch of sass. But you still lack something for them to take you seriously". "A penis?" she asks. The closed and overhead framing, as mentioned above, highly contrasted lighting- more pronounced on him than on her- and the more noticeable movement due to the size of the shot, with him elevated and looking down at her. Her looking up shows a moment of intimacy between the journalist and the politician, which, although ambiguous, does not seem to relate to anything sexual but instead explores the characters' deep psychology and true motivations, characteristic of the genre.

Ultimately, the politician offers the journalist a promising story, but she has to wait. Claiming to be terrible at waiting, a moment of silence ensues. And then, raising his glass, he proposes a toast "to patience", which she accepts through cheers— followed by a sip from both of them, silently looking at each other, which seals the deal.

Undoubtedly, the scene plays with the sexualisation of the woman journalist (glances, smiles, bed), overt masculinisation (“You lack something for them to take you seriously” “A penis?”), power dynamics (the politician imposes the terms of the agreement), and journalistic ethics (making a pact with the enemy in exchange for a good story, a personal and clandestine nocturnal encounter in a hotel room).

### 3.4. TV set scene

Amaia’s final appearance in the film spans over 9 minutes. In this scene, Manuel attends the late-night show hosted by Amaia with notebooks containing information that compromises his party.

This scene has two distinct parts: the first depicts the encounter between Manuel and Amaia in the make-up room before entering the set. The characters seem close to each other and almost conspirational. Amaia is kind and friendly to the politician, asking him if he is well and saying goodbye to him, assuring him that everything will go well. Long-duration shots and a pan from the notebooks to a close-up of Manuel’s face reflected in the mirror, and then a close-up profile shot of Amaia’s face are employed. Although the conversation between the politician and Amaia is friendly, the director’s choices underscore the gravity of the situation. Furthermore, the camera adopts a more stable stance on a tripod, abandoning its subtle movements and incorporating panning. When Manuel finishes makeup and walks down the television station’s corridors towards the set, Amaia’s voiceover accompanies him as a prelude to the politician’s impending presence on the programme.

The second part of this scene shows Manuel’s participation in Amaia’s late-night programme. It commences with a wide general shot of them seated face-to-face across a large table, featuring a video wall in the background. The director’s approach employs television-like techniques such as zooms and shot-reverse-shot techniques. From this wide general shot, there is a slow zoom with crane movement to a medium shot of both and then to a shot-reverse-shot production of the two, first framed in a medium shot and later in a close-up. Despite being centred in the frame, neither Amaia nor Manuel look directly at the camera but instead at each other.

In contrast to the make-up room encounter, Amaia seems distant, cold, abrupt, and almost aggressive towards Manuel. He notices her seriousness and that the interview is not going as he would like: he wants the contents of the notebooks to be revealed, but Amaia does not show them and opts for a commercial break. During this interval, Sorogoyen breaks the axis to provide the viewer with a glimpse into the television programme. Amaia and Manuel are still facing each other, separated by a large table, but in the contrary position they had previously occupied. The video wall is no longer the backdrop; instead, the cameras and the set staff, stage manager, and camera operators are. Manuel attempts to approach Amaia, but she is awaiting instructions given by a male voice, presumably the director, through the intercom. To a certain extent, the programme’s director assumes a mentoring role, offering guidance and boosting Amaia’s confidence, emphasising what she is doing well, aligning with observations made by Bezunartea *et al.* (2008).

Following the commercial break, Sorogoyen maintains a television-like production, employing shot-reverse-shot editing, starting with wider shots and transitioning to close-ups. The verbal confrontation takes precedence, with few listening shots. The same shot values are repeated for questions and answers, incorporating fairly agile and quick editing. In this verbal confrontation, Manuel tells Amaia that it is true that “power protects power”, to which Amaia, encouraged to stop him over the

intercom, responds "Do you want us to give you an award?". The confrontation between them continues to escalate until, at one point, Amaia is instructed to go on a commercial break. Manuel replies that he will take his notebooks and leave if they go on a commercial break. The control room leaves the decision in Amaia's hands, who chooses not to interrupt the broadcast. Manuel lashes out at her, discussing journalists' attitudes, ignorance, or hypocrisy. Manuel also delves into the connections between power and the so-called fourth estate or journalism, mentioning the interests and ties between the media and politicians.

As Amaia halts Manuel again, inquiring if he regrets his actions, she is congratulated again by the control room via intercom. Undeterred, Amaia decides to remove the intercom and proceeds to criticise Manuel, explaining that she is not looking for repentance but analysis and reflection to prevent further instances of corruption, emphasising that there are many corrupt politicians.

Amaia poses her final question to Manuel in a close-up shot. But unlike previous frames, she directs her gaze not at him but straight at the camera. She asks him if he has stopped to think about what he is doing. After this shot, the focus shifts to Manuel, in a close-up, as a shot-reverse-shot of Amaia, who also looks directly at the camera. Manuel remains silent. In the final shot of this scene and the entire film, Sorogoyen returns to the close-up of Amaia, who also looks at the camera in silence. This intentional framing puts the ball in the viewer's court, making them a participant in the problem but also, in a sense, part of the solution to the questions raised throughout the film and articulated by Amaia in her interview with Manuel.

In the concluding scene, the journalist begins as a woman before being a female journalist (Good, 1998), portraying attributes commonly associated with the female gender, such as warmth, compassion, and even a maternalistic nature, subsequently adopting masculine attributes (Saltzman, 2003) during the verbal confrontation on set. Amaia is masculinised in the exercise of her profession (Herman, 2004) while visually appearing attractive and sexualised (Cvetkovic and Oostman, 2018; Pacheco, 2018 and Waddell, 2021) wearing a tight red dress and make-up accentuating her feminine features.

#### 4. Interviews

Upon completing the analysis, in-depth interviews were conducted with currently practising journalists to gain insights into their perspectives on the character of Amaia Marín. In addition, we sought to discern the roles and stereotypes they observed in the cinematic representation of the female journalist. Table 3 provides the essential information from the female journalists that were interviewed.

**Table 3. Interviewed journalists' information**

Name	Age	Current Work Medium	Position	Other Media Experience
Cristina López Schlichting	58	Radio	Director of “ <i>El fin de semana</i> ” at COPE	TV, Print Media
Pepa Blanes	38	Radio	Head of Culture at <i>CadenaSER</i> , Director of “ <i>El Cine en SER</i> ”	Print Media
Maite Sáez	60	Digital Press	Chief Editor at <i>Anuncios</i>	Print Media

Source: created by the authors. 2023

All the interviewees universally praised *The Realm*. Sáez highlights that she detects a portrayal of journalists in films characterised by a ruthless and cold professional in pursuit of news. She also observes a specific intermediary role between power and society, often too close to power, whether political or economic. Sáez also notes the presence of naivety as a stereotype in films featuring women as journalists and that these characters often play a secondary role, as exemplified by Amaia in *The Realm*. Blanes expresses a similar sentiment, underscoring the tendency to pigeonhole journalists into clichéd roles of the “glamorous, alcoholic, workaholic and overly epic” journalist. When it comes to representing women journalists, Blanes points out that these female characters “are like men, predatory, highly ambitious, and do not have a family because they are too busy working”. At the same time, on other occasions, “they are the students, interns, or newcomers being mentored by a star journalist, often with a considerable amount of paternalism and sexualisation”.

All the interviewees agree that there has been an evolution in the representation of women journalists. Blanes attributes this shift to the Me Too movement, impacting representations of male and female journalists. López notes that the role of women in journalism is changing. Therefore, as journalism and women change, the social role of women changes. Sáez highlights that female reporters have transitioned from mere anecdotes in newsrooms to integral members of editorial teams. In her opinion, female journalists rarely have leadership roles when they appear on screen. When they do, they are often portrayed as harsh. On the other hand, Blane qualifies that cinema represents the division in newsrooms, reflecting, rather than transforming reality since “there are many women, but not in positions of responsibility”, indicating lower visibility in the workplace.

Regarding the final scene in *The Realm*, Amaia’s interview with Manuel, Sáez highlights that it is quite disconcerting yet enlightening in a society where corruption runs rampant and permeates everything. This scene makes viewers confront themselves, first, with disbelief that the journalist will continue protecting the “others” and placing all the blame on the interviewee. Later, when she discovers that she is involved in the plot, it leaves the viewer quite vulnerable. Furthermore, in her opinion, it represents the corruption that also pervades journalism, which is prevalent in certain professions and media, although it does not represent the entire profession. Blanes clarifies that Amaia’s character aligns with the style of the journalist on whom the role is based, but “not all female journalists work the same way”; therefore, it does not represent all of them.

The three interviewees express a positive view of films addressing the role of women journalists in cinema because, according to López, it contributes to social evolution realistically portrayed, first helping to comprehend the situation and then educating

our children about it. Sáez, on the other hand, notes that it is necessary to reflect the current reality of women journalists, with many women covering all types of roles, from political analysis to the coverage of conflicts worldwide. Blanes points out that more films with different portrayals of women journalists are needed to address issues such as “work-life balance, precariousness, the sexism in newsrooms, the lack of credibility, and issues many female journalists face regarding their image”, which are currently not represented on screen.

When asked about the values that should be conveyed on the big screen regarding the work of women journalists, López underscores the importance of discussing the glass ceiling, sexism, and how women in influential positions or executive roles tend to adopt more masculine traits to occupy those positions, as well as motherhood, career, and their compatibility. Sáez highlights the pursuit of truth, humanity in conflict coverage and dealing with those who suffer them, integrity, the contribution of new narratives, camaraderie, and the desolation in the aftermath of atrocities as values to emphasise. Blanes adds that it is also essential for feature films to provide a “reflection on work and responsibility”.

Furthermore, Sáez emphasises that there are usually more women journalists than men in newsrooms, but this numerical representation is not reflected in feature films. Therefore, she does not feel represented by the cinema's portrayal of women journalists, which neither she nor López usually discusses with colleagues. As López clarifies in the interview, “I have never worried about how cinema reflects [on] our profession. What worries me is the space power leaves for me”. In contrast, Blanes, who also disagrees with cinema's portrayal of women journalists and does not feel represented by it, has discussed the representation of her profession in cinema with other journalists specialising in the seventh art. In these conversations, they often criticise the image “of the total winner in a neoliberal world who has given up everything as a woman to reach that position, and still may not even achieve this. Also, the sexism with which we are represented”. Pepa points out that, curiously, these conversations also highlight “the purchasing power given to female journalists, who have big houses that are impossible to afford on a reporter's salary”.

## 5. Discussion

As indicated by the findings, the character of Amaia is portrayed as an opposing force to the corrupt politician Manuel in the film. This can be observed from a filmmaking perspective, in which numerous shots and counter-shots underscore the contrasting dynamics and her relationship with him throughout the film. The journalist not only acts as a government watchdog, exposing criminal actions of those in power but also aligns herself with the side of the virtuous, defending societal rights, in line with what San José de la Rosa *et al.* (2020) highlighted. Amaia goes beyond mere exposure: she proposes a solution to prevent further societal corruption cases, which involves analysis and deliberation, leaving the audience to take action and achieve tangible results. As shown in the film, the role of the journalistic profession as a government watchdog is not always clear or possible due to the intricate web of relationships and interests, often economic or otherwise, between journalists and politicians.

It is suggested, therefore, that there are journalists who denounce, like Amaia, and who align themselves with political power and corruption, consistent with San José de la Rosa *et al.*'s (2020) assertions. Thus, while Amaia emerges as a defender of truth,



in the first quarter of the film, a male journalist aligns himself with the corrupt, warning Manuel about an impending news story exposing him as a corrupt politician.

Despite Amaia's significant role in the film as Manuel's adversary, her role remains secondary, given the number of minutes she appears on screen, just over 16 minutes, representing 12.25% of the film's total duration. This figure corroborates the conclusions drawn from the studies by Osorio (2009), Tello Díaz (2012), Enache (2020) and Waddell (2021), highlighting that female journalists on screen continue to be relegated to secondary roles and are numerically under-represented.

Amaia's character in the film also conforms to the stereotypes that Osorio (2009) mentioned since, after the analysis, she is characterised as a cold and relentless professional. In this sense, if, as Bezunartea *et al.* assert regarding films about journalists, the seventh art, like literature, exaggerates character traits to add greater "interest to the narrative" (2010, p. 149), the dramatic weight in the film's opening scene presenting the female journalist lies in the tension and antipathy she displays towards the corrupt politician. This portrayal also aligns with typical stereotypes of female journalists, as Bezunartea *et al.* (2010) pointed out. Amaia, who is around 38 years old, works in television, focusing on local crime reporting, and eventually hosts her investigative journalism late-night programme.

Amaia serves as a source of information for the public (McNair, 2011), positioning herself as a dedicated professional exercising control over political power and advocating for citizens (Bezunartea *et al.*, 2011). Initially, she seems to have limited power (Bezunartea *et al.*, 2008) on her programme, subject to directives from a director via intercom. She could be perceived as a weak (Cvetkovic and Oostman, 2018), manipulable journalist, a mere instrument of political power (Rincón and Mosquera, 2021) reluctant to confront the corrupt character to protect the upper echelons of the network. However, Amaia ultimately asserts her journalistic independence (Ghiglione, 1990) by removing the intercom and refusing to comply with the director's orders. While she does not propose a definitive solution, she does prompt viewers to reflect on preventing future corruption cases.

Despite the masculinisation of Amaia's professional role (Herman, 2004), she continues to behave with attributes associated with the female gender, being understanding (Saltzman, 2003) with the politician before the interview. She is occasionally sexualised, as she is portrayed attractively on television (Waddell, 2021).

These stereotypes identified in the film analysis were substantiated during in-depth interviews with active professionals. It was highlighted that women working as journalists tend to be portrayed with a somewhat ruthless and cold professional profile in their pursuit of news, characterised by work addition and ambition.

None of the three interviewed professionals feel represented by the portrayal of women in the professional context of journalism in films. Among the reasons for this is the discrepancy in the numerical representation of active professionals, as well as the depiction of women journalists, which some interviewees describe as sexist, portraying the professionals as total winners who sacrifice everything as women. Another aspect underscored as a contributing factor to not feeling represented is the purchasing power depicted in feature films, which does not correspond to the actual level of remuneration received by professionals in reality.

## 6. Conclusions

This research puts forward three hypotheses concerning prevailing stereotypes in the audiovisual representation of women journalists. Following a theoretical study on these clichés, the analysis focused on the portrayal of stereotyped journalistic professionals, specifically female reporters, in cinematic representations. To this end, an examination was conducted on a recent and relevant film, *The Realm* by Rodrigo Sorogoyen, focusing on the character of journalist Amaia Marín. Several recurring patterns have been identified, affirming the continued perpetuation of prevalent stereotypes regarding the role of women journalists on the big screen. In particular, they are portrayed as cold, relentless, and frivolous. Their gender often overshadows their professional endeavours, sometimes subjecting the character to sexualisation and underscoring their need to appear attractive on television. Within their profession, they must adopt masculine traits, displaying more aggressiveness, toughness, self-sufficiency and antipathy as prerequisites for achieving success.

Furthermore, it is concluded that the character of Amaia Marín wields influence over political power in the story. Nevertheless, the interviewed professionals within the field do not feel represented by her or her portrayal of their profession in cinema, particularly in the film *The Realm*. This sentiment is partly attributed to the perpetuation of specific stereotypes in depicting women journalists on the big screen, characterising them as cold, ambitious and relentless.

In order for women journalists to feel represented in films today, two conditions must be met. Firstly, the proportion of women and men in newsrooms must be shown more accurately. Secondly, and perhaps more fundamentally, feature films would need to diverge from prevailing stereotypes that currently shape the depiction of female journalists and instead address underexplored issues. These issues include sexism, the existence of glass ceilings, motherhood, achieving work-life balance, job insecurity, or the masculinisation of women within the workplace.

Another conclusion drawn from this research is the contrasting portrayal of the fourth estate in the feature film *The Realm*. Male journalists are predominately associated with antagonists and corrupt politicians. Conversely, the female reporter is depicted as a corruption reporting agent, aligning herself on the side of the righteous, safeguarding societal well-being and proposing a solution.

In future lines of research, it is recommended that the same methodology be applied to a more extensive corpus to gain a comprehensive view of the portrayal of women journalists in contemporary Spanish cinema. Furthermore, another potential research direction involves extending the analysis to encompass other professions, determining whether, for instance, female football players are accurately represented on the big screen.

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## 8. Specific contributions of each author

	Name and Surname
Conception and design of the work	Felicidad González Sanz
Methodology	Javier Figuero Espadas
Data collection and analysis	Felicidad González Sanz and Javier Figuero Espadas
Discussion and conclusions	Felicidad González Sanz
Drafting, formatting, version review and approval	Felicidad González Sanz and Javier Figuero Espadas

## 9. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest contained in this article.

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