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FILM CANON IN LIGHT OF SYSTEMS THEORIES: A METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL

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Abstract || In Film Theory, the debate about the canon is stuck in the creation of lists by professionals or critics. In contrast to this, the Polysystem Theory proposes tools for developing alternative methodologies that lead us to a clear understanding of the canonization process. The analysis of the *factors* of the cultural system makes possible a precise and true approach to this phenomenon, where the mentioned lists are only additional elements present in this context, and the intersystemic interference becomes the most sophisticated sign of canonization.

Keywords || Canon | Film Theory | Polysystem Theory

0. Introduction

Even without an attempt at a complete and coherent theorization, in our opinion the film canon requires a multidimensional approach which takes into consideration a number of variables going beyond the opinion of certain critics or specialised publications when compiling the canon¹. Market behaviour and public opinion as expressed in 3.0 society are elements which must not be ignored when trying to place an author in a canon – *one of many*, as we propose to consider the notion of multiple canons in contrast to a single and universal canon – at a certain moment in history – we also hold the concept of a diachronic canon as opposed to the traditional static one. In this sense, Polysystem Theory proves to be of great use in sharing these notions, especially at its last stage in which ideas about the literary phenomenon extended into culture, and were thus applicable to film.

In systems theory (Tötösy de Zepetnek 1992), cinema as a system is understood as a communicative phenomenon whose definition is determined by its functional nature, that is, it is defined as a result of different relationships established between the interdependent factors which make up the system. Its internal structure, according to Itamar Even-Zohar, father of the theory, would be composed of a central substratum and another, or others, positioned on the periphery (1990). Such position, however, must be considered diachronically – as opposed to the synchronic and static notion of the system suggested by the French structuralists – as positioning will vary depending on a multitude of conditions. Thus, peripheral elements can move and occupy the centre, moving the substructure previously in the centre to the periphery, although sometimes they may coexist in the central zone. This phenomenon, which Formalists called *displacement of the dominant*, was called *transference* by Even-Zohar (1990). One of the recurring areas of research in Polysystem Theory would be to find out how and why this process occurs, analysing and describing the integration process of cultural products in societies. Translating this to the canon, and from a polysystemic perspective, the interest would lay on figuring out the canonization process of a given cultural practice, rather than in the study of the canon resulting from the process.

1. The processes of canonization from a systems perspective

The debate around the canon in the literary world – and by extension, the field of the arts² – reached an unforeseen popularity when Harold Bloom published *The Western Canon: the Books and Schools of the Ages* (1994), in which he defended a personal canon based on an

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1 | Here we follow Enric Sullá's definition of the film canon, the result of a consensus amongst different simultaneous and divergent visions: "número reducido de películas, seleccionadas del catálogo o corpus (también conservado) por el valor que se les atribuye según criterios que pueden diferir (representatividad histórica, temática, estilística, narrativa, de personajes, etc.), resultado de un proceso de selección que, en el caso del cine, por su corta historia, se conserva mejor que en la literatura" (2010: 15).

2 | In the first section of this article, we tackle the literary field. Despite the limitations which there may seem in the transfer of these concepts from one context to another, it continues to provide key tools that would help us understand the canonization process of films.

aesthetic value over any ideological understanding of literary history. The issue provoked mixed reactions, becoming the centre of heated discussions, especially in the US academia.

The most notable outcome was that the canon occupied, once again, an important position in literary studies. Contributing to the controversy was the reaction of some of those pertaining to what Bloom called «the school of resentment» (deconstructionism, feminism, Marxism...), who either felt attacked or who accused Bloom of establishing a Western, European, white male canon (Knox, 1993) oblivious of minorities. In other words, they accused him of perpetuating a traditional and conservative canon which represented the dominant power. In reaction, many academics were in opposition to the canons proposed by the American researcher, which undoubtedly helped to fuel debate in literary criticism.

What remains clear is that Bloom's vision was a valid option to which other different points of view should be added, a simple task given that it would only need to include writers and works from the minorities (Sullà, 1998). Next to the canon as defined by Bloom, aside from the social character of literature, new ones would need to be proposed. From this moment on, then, literary theory would be about a history of canons, rather than of the canon, which could even lead us to an appropriate definition of the concept of literature: «Se configuraría así una teoría de los cánones, en plural, que han actuado en diferentes etapas de la formación del concepto mismo de literatura y de su propia evolución» (Pozuelo Yvancos, 2000: 82). It also emerges at that time the study of the ideological mechanisms in the construction of the canon, moving literary research away from the resulting canons. The target was to find the ultimate agenda behind the canon, that is, to expose the power exerted by dominant classes in establishing a given canon. It therefore became a controversial and recurrent object of study under suspicion, leading to the reductive thinking that its creation ought to be exclusively for economic and professional reasons (Talens, 1995: 16).

This debate went beyond the North-American sphere and reached Europe, a transfer not without controversy given that it was considered something alien to the traditions of the continent. Its arrival in Europe was seen, in the best of cases, as pure artifice (Pozuelo Yvancos, 2006). Despite the initial reluctance, it is quite symptomatic to find in books such as *Introducción a la Literatura Comparada* (Gnisci, 2002) chapters dedicated to the canon from a feminist (Gajeri, 2002) or multiculturalist perspective (Neri, 2002). Beyond Italy, in Spain important texts analysing the problem were also published in Spain, like *El canon en la teoría literaria contemporánea* (Pozuelo Yvancos, 1995) and *El canon literario* (Sullà, comp., 1998).

It is precisely in Pozuelo Yvancos' work that provides a lucid and effective solution to the sealed atmosphere of discussion in the USA. The solution proposed by the Spanish researcher, and detailed in his other studies, consists of applying system theories to the analysis of the «procesos de constitución de la canonicidad literaria, que son polisistémicos e históricos» (2000: 9). In order to resolve the problem, Pozuelo Yvancos places the studies within the framework of Polysystem Theory and its notable methodological coherence. To Polysystem Theory he adds Lotman's Semiotics of Culture, which for him has not been properly attended, despite being the most complex vision and its agreement with some principles of Even-Zohar's theory³.

One of the main novelties of Polysystem Theory as regards the literary canon is its retaking of the link between Literature and History. In this way it relates to the theory proposed by Tynianov (1970), a pioneer in talking about the *literary fact* in contrast with Literature, emphasising the changeable nature of categories, dependent on the conditions of each period. It is also important to remember that, from this theoretical framework, the text is no longer at the centre of the system, and the text-centred nature of other theories give place to a more complex view of the artistic phenomenon. Translating this idea to the study of the canon, it will cause to focus interest on the formation of canonicity in a given culture instead of the study of the resulting canons. In this way, it is possible to obtain an accurate knowledge of the functioning of an artistic system in relation to culture, which is what inevitably determines its creation.

Another of Even-Zohar's contributions to the theory of the canon is his conception of the system as a set of hierarchical elements which exert tension on each other – implying a *functional* interpretation –⁴. If the study of the canon only attends the central layer, following the traditional concept of the canon, we ignore all the peripheral literature, leaving the analysis incomplete, since it is not possible to understand this phenomenon without taking into account the relationships of resistance established between canonized and non-canonized elements. Translating this to films helps to understand the emergence of labels such as underground and *Nouvelle Vague* cinema: without the consideration of a dominant category such as «classical cinema» or «modo de representación institucional» (Burch, 1999) it would not be possible to oppose these other classifications which are defined by the tension created around the Hollywood model. It rejects the omission of non-canonized or marginalised elements, since it would prevent the knowledge of the canonization process in all its complexity, as inevitably «some films are moved to the centre of attention; others, to the margins» (Steiger, 1985: 8).

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3 | We advocate for the first vision: we are interested in how mechanisms of canonization are address from a historical and relational conception.

4 | For their evident linkage with the approach of polysystem, we should note the contributions of Pierre Bourdieu and his conceptualization of the intellectual field as a system of force lines “esto es, los agentes o sistemas de agentes que forman parte de él pueden describirse como fuerzas que, al surgir, se oponen y se agregan, confiriéndole su estructura específica en un momento dado de tiempo” (Bourdieu, 2002: 9). This dynamic structure, the result of tensions at the core of the cultural system, responds to a similar vision than that of Itamar Even-Zohar.

José Lambert, from the University of Leuven, has been another principal promoter of Polysystem Theory, with valuable contributions to the concept of the canon. One of the most interesting ideas to come out of his work is to provide empirical contributions, instead of metaphysical notions of the canon: in contrast to aesthetic universals, historical particulars (Lambert, 1997). He thus breaks away from the idea of studying a static canon, heir from a period and its conditions, as well as only taking into account the personal preferences of one social group, usually the academic elite. Bloom's notion of the canon in the classic sense, where the author becomes its validating authority, is thus totally overcome. It would demand to consider a more complex idea. The very term polysystem comes to define this idea of a heterogeneity in the object of study, far from the atomicity that some theoreticians wanted to apply to the artistic object. The widespread acceptance of this theory for the descriptions of multilingual cultural systems and multicultural countries like Israel, where Even-Zohar was born, is proof of its emphasis in heterogeneity.

The canon, as previously mentioned, cannot contain only texts, but rather it would be necessary to take into account the models or rules that govern their positioning within a culture⁵. And culture is not only formed by the texts, but also by the relationships established in a historic continuum between texts and codes. The distinction made between two types of canonicity is very relevant, as they serve to explain effectively the relationship between the textual level and the repertoire. These concepts are *static canonicity*, when a work becomes part of the canon together with other texts which have been held in the highest esteem by the validating community, and *dynamic canonicity*, when in addition of becoming part of the canon a work acts as a model in the creation of new works (Even-Zohar, 1990: 19)⁶. This last idea is similar to Rakefet Sela-Sheffy's distinction between *guideline for cultural production*, when an element of the cultural repertoire acts as a guide for other creators/producers, and *high status*, when a work simply holds a central position, although it does not generate new works that follow its technical and artistic premises (Sela-Sheffy, 2002:147).

2. Factors of the system and its role in canonization

When analysing the canonization process of films, we must consider different variables, which Itamar Even-Zohar called *system factors* (1999). In order to define them, Even-Zohar starts from Roman Jakobson's studies on communication (1983: 32) and analyses all the possible combinations between the elements of his famous model. According to the Israeli's theoretical approach, the constituent factors in any socio-semiotic or cultural manifestation are:

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5 | Even-Zohar will call this aspect *repertoire*, which will be discussed later.

6 | This could be the case of films like *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982), the artistic direction of which continues to be a model for all science-fiction films.

• *Producer*. It refers to the individual who performed in the repertoire, either creating a product or reproducing it. Such producers not only create products, but also models that are in turn incorporated into the repertoire. An individual producer does not therefore have a significant impact in culture, given that it would be difficult for a lone producer to bring about a change in the cultural system. However, in spite of what Even-Zohar has stated, the small shifts in the system that occur due to personal achievements must not be disregarded. For example, it would be remiss to ignore the genius of celebrities like James Cameron who with his film *Avatar* (2009) caused a revolution in commercial cinema as we understand it nowadays, turning this film of stereoscopic science-fiction into the best example of *event cinema*, with all the socio-economic implications that it entails.

• *Consumer*. Here we would consider the reader or, since we are talking about cinema, the viewer, who acts passively in the repertoire. It is interesting to note that this figure is undergoing a certain mutation. At the height of the 21st century, consumers belong to the digital age 3.0, that is, they are not merely a passive user as defined by Even-Zohar, but they also record their opinions in blogs and specialised web sites, preferences which in turn influence a community. This traditionally inactive consumer, thus acts like a canonizing institution, although due to its collective nature and anonymity, it is a wide-spread entity both in its composition as well as its trends.

• *Product*. The production of a set of signs and/or materials and a certain behaviour. The product of a system may be a text, a visual artwork or, in our case, a film. However, what is most important from the perspective of Polysystem Theory is not the detailed analysis of the textual aspects, but rather how the work influences society, creating new models (for example, we can refer again to the film *Avatar*, which was a new cinematographic model because of its exploitation strategy and promotion, causing a real dislike for 3D films, although it is by now already in decline).

• *Market*. Defined as the sum of elements involved both in the production as well as the sale of the cultural repertoire. In this way it will be positioned between the producer and the consumer. The larger the market, the larger the possibilities that the repertoire will develop with different variables, some of which will contribute in turn to the development of the culture. We must highlight that its relationship with the *institution* factor is problematic, given that there is often confusion between them. Distributors will play a part here in this analysis, favouring

the commercial success of certain films to the detriment of others, and thus affecting its canonization.

- *Institution*. It consists of the set of elements that control the culture, regulating the systems' rules by accepting some and rejecting others. Like the market, it mediates between the producer and the end consumer, but unlike the former its decisions take longer, sanctioning those rules that will be used by future generations. The best known case is the official group of critics, researchers, educational media, the media (newspapers, magazines), etc...However, as previously mentioned, the role of 3.0 consumers must not be ignored, since in the digital age their opinions can be even more influential than those from the academic sphere. The result is the tendency towards an epistemological change, which Jenaro Talens envisages referring to the functioning of the literary institution: «what was once defined in terms of 'serious literature' nowadays has a minor influence in comparison to the electronic discourses that have replaced it as a more attractive and respected source of information» (1995: 5).

- *Repertoire*. This is without doubt the key concept in Polysystem Theory. It is defined as the set of rules and materials which regulate both the construction as well as the use of a product, that is, its production and consumption. With cinema we refer to the set of rules and materials which regulate the production and the interpretation of a film text⁷.

In order to study the canonization process of a filmography – and by extension of its author, from the point of view of *politique des auteurs* – the different factors involved must be analysed in order to apply them to all its films. The selection and observation of different variables must be made bearing in mind quantitative and qualitative elements, always ensuring it is sufficient to analyse the behaviour of that filmography in a given cultural system. For its part, the use of the statistical method, though it is not usual practice in the Humanities⁸, could add accuracy to vague and repetitive expressions like «it was successful», «it received acclamation from critics» or «it was repeatedly awarded», expressions that tend to fill not only news articles, but also part of academic literature. Our proposal tries to develop a more objective system, not to create a canon, but to identify if a producer or cultural model has been canonized or not.

For an analysis of the *market* factor the final box office figures of the released film are very useful. In the case of foreign films, given the limited number of them that tend to be released in countries like the USA – due to the limited number of cinemas showing original film

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7 | Culture cannot be understood at the level of texts, or as the sum of a series of texts or products, not even at the level of the repertoire. Culture is the result of all factors previously described and their interrelationships.

8 | An exception within the systems theories is the Empirical Theory of Literature, put forward by S.J. Schmidt, which relies to a great extent in surveys and statistics.

versions –, the financial success of each is very revealing (which will give us a more adjusted view of the interest it attracted) and the end of year position in the ranking of biggest box-office foreign films hits. It would always be useful to relate this variable to age rating, which can mark the commercial career of a film, just as with the film distributors, since depending on their importance and the publicity campaigns they can have an impact on the success or failure of a film.

The reaction of the *consumer* will also be a key element in the canonization, since we are faced with 3.0 viewers who not only consume, but who also participate actively making recommendations on specialised websites or social networks. It is useful to gather the information and opinions produced online, given that they can influence a group. This phenomenon is showing a progressive increase⁹.

Likewise, examination of the repertoire provides essential information when checking if an element has been canonized or not. This would involve analysing if a film had produced a movement in the film system studied, that is, if it had become a new *model* in the field of cinema. In order to carry this out it is very effective to look for signs pointing to this, such as neologisms like *Hitchcocknian*, *Almodovarian* or *Fellinian*, examples of a clear variant in the film code. We start from the hypothesis that if such neologisms are present in a language it is because the film is considered something peculiar and unique, capable of forming a new *model*. In this interpretive line, the identification of other cultural products which have been created following these patterns would reinforce this idea of innovation in the repertoire.

Lastly, *institution* will continue to have an important influence. On the one hand, it is essential to note the criticisms of the various films given by both specialised and general media. To this effect, the presence of meta-search engines of criticism is extremely useful, in directly facilitating the hyperlinks to an article. On the other hand, looking at the different awards a film has received, chronologically, as well as its relationship with all the possible variables, provides essential information on the trajectory of a film towards its canonization. It is very interesting not to distinguish between the number of awards in each venue, or if it is in fact an award or only a nomination: what is important to highlight is the presence of a given film in annual film awards, whether they have been nominated professional bodies or by critics associations. And lastly, among other observable variables, it is necessary to consult the different lists of the best in world cinema compiled by the critics and professionals, in order to see if a film has made it onto that list. As we have already stated, although these lists should not receive total responsibility in the canonization process

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9 | Such phenomenon might be questioned by box office sales, as they also are a result of viewers' preferences. I have not consigned them because I believe that the consumer's influence on the functioning of the system is still quite well defined, with a clear difference between the functions of the market and those of institutions. However, should take into consideration the contributions of online social networks and websites, like the wikis of *Breaking Bad* and *Lost*. The fan phenomenon has amplified the success of these new American shows, contributing to a greater dissemination among broad sectors of the population and directing its consumption in an irretrievable way.

– we have mentioned its partiality earlier –, its impact is decisive, especially when connected with other aspects previously stated here.

3. A review of film canons: the case of the USA

Even though we have defended an idea of the canon removed from that which we will discuss in what follows, we should not ignore the value of the lists compiled by various professional bodies, since they determine a canonization amongst certain specialist sectors in the film industry. They continue to constitute a key agent for the persistence of certain elements of the repertoire in the cultural system of a given country, as expressed by Frank Kermode (1998) when talking about institutions and the associated interpretations. We will note several initiatives undertaken in the USA, which we have chosen as cultural system for being the centre of world cinema production and for its interest in the creation of these types of lists.

It must be remembered that lists of the best films had their peak around 1996 with the commemoration of the first centenary of the invention of the cinematograph, when «se exacerbó esa querencia de los cinéfilos (...y de las revistas de cine) por las listas» (Weinrichter, 2002: 33). It seemed that, after one century, it was the time to create the first canons of films, and also it coincided with the publication of the famous book by Harold Bloom, whose model in some cases it would follow.

The American Film Institute (AFI) started this trend with the project «AFI's 100 Years...100 Movies». With the aim of celebrating the first century of the history of cinema, they asked 1500 relevant figures in the film sector to select the best films of all time. Due to the nature of the organisation, only American films or those that had an important financial involvement with the USA were eligible for selection. They chose four hundred films, all made between 1912 and 1996. On the list published in June 1998, *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941) occupied first place, followed by *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942) and *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972).

Ten years later, in 2008, the AFI decided to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the list by publishing «AFI's 100 Years...100 Movies (10th Anniversary Edition)». Twenty three films were removed and nineteen added (which were already amongst the four hundred nominated in the first project). In addition, four films made between 1996 and 2007 entered the list: *The Lord of the Rings. The Fellowship of the Ring* (Peter Jackson, 2001), *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1998), *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997) and *The Sixth Sense* (M. Night Shyamalan, 1999). *Citizen Kane* kept the top position of the list, while *The Godfather* fell to second place to the

detriment of *Casablanca*, which would settle for the bronze medal in this classification.

Given the success of this initiative, in 2008 the AFI published «America's 10 Greatest Films in 10 Classic Genres». The most interesting thing about this new project was the selection of genres and the definition of each of them: animation, romantic comedy, western, sports films, mystery, fantasy, science fiction, gangster, legal dramas and epic cinema. In spite of its moderate impact in the academic sphere, the authority of the institution that conducted the survey makes it an important attempt at establishing a canon of film genres.

Although these initiatives enjoyed some popularity, there were many who saw it as a superficial exercise driven by personal and economic interests. A few days after publication of the first list by the AFI, the famous critic Jonathan Rosenbaum (1998) wrote an article in the *Chicago Reader* condemning the American institution as being egocentric for restricting the results exclusively to the USA. Angry at the disregard for world film production, Rosenbaum proposed his own canon, comparing it to the one compiled by the AFI. His preoccupation for this subject continued with the publication of *Essential Cinema: On the Necessity of Film Canon* (2004), in which he listed a thousand films that must be vindicated against the pressure of publicity from the big Hollywood studios, responsible of concealing films from other regions.

In addition to these lists, we must also mention the lists of the best in world cinema published by the American press and specialized journals¹⁰. *Time* magazine became the main promoter of these lists when in May 2005 the critics Richard Schickel and Richard Corliss published «9 Great Movies from 9 Decades» (2005). In this article, they identify the best films of each decade beginning in 1923, when the magazine was first published. *Hable con ella*, for example, was chosen as the best film in the inaugural decade of the 21st century. Undoubtedly, this nomination meant more commercial and critical support for this film, which had earned the Oscar for the best original script two years before, continuing its status as a contemporary classic.

In 2011, these same critics chose the best films of all time in the article «All-Time 100 Movies» (Corliss and Schickel, 2011). We must highlight that in the article the authors accepted and defended the creation of lists as a sign of the times. Returning here to the Spanish director, we find his film *Hable con ella. Todo sobre mi madre* also appeared in the two individual preliminary lists compiled by each critic, but as they had to reduce the number short-listed to only one hundred, and given that they had already included the other Spanish

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10 | Important European film publications, like *Cahiers du Cinéma* (2008) and *Sight and Sound* (2012) joined in this trend of creating canons, which the later had been conducting for decades. More recently, the BBC conducted a survey in 2015 to find the one hundred best American films of all time with a survey to sixty-two international critics.

author, they decided to remove him from the list.

On the other hand, the film magazine *Empire* conducted a survey in 2008 with the aim of selecting the fifteen best films of all time. The number of participants in the survey reached one thousand, including directors and critics. It was an attempt to achieve a more objective view of the best in world cinema, both in the number of reviewers as well as the large body of films, in which, in addition, there was no limitation on dates or geographical origin. Thus, Spanish cinema was represented by *El espíritu de la colmena* (Víctor Erice, 1973) in 93rd place, *Los olvidados* (Luis Buñuel, 1950) at 121st, and *El laberinto del fauno* (Guillermo del Toro, 2006) in 132nd position.

Websites also joined in this trend, an example of which is the website *Mr. Showbiz*, created in 1995 and that some years later, in 2001, published «The 100 Best Movies of All Time», referring exclusively to the American market. On a much more popular website, *Yahoo Movies*, we also find a list which claims to include the best film productions made between 1990 and 2008: «100 Movies to See Before You Die: The Modern Classics». *Todo sobre mi madre* appears again, in an inventory that lacks any type of classification, and whose only order is chronological.

Except for the case of Rosenbaum, who acted in reaction to the AFI, the rest of the examples are characterised by not providing any theoretical reflections on the mechanisms used in selecting the films. However, there is no shortage of American authors who, looking towards Harold Bloom and his theory on the canon, use this author as the point of departure when creating their own lists, applying his ideas on cinema. Perhaps one of the most interesting attempts – as well as that of Rosenbaum’s – is a 2006 article by Paul Schrader entitled «Canon Fodder». In the article, after reflecting on the first century of film, Schrader establishes some basis for the creation of a film canon which would serve to educate future generations. Schrader’s criteria are:

- *Beauty*, to give priority to aesthetic value.
- *Strangeness*, in Harold Bloom’s sense, a personal vision must bestow originality to the work of art.
- *Unity of form and subject matter*, given that in a great film, form must provide that strangeness to the film.
- *Tradition*, again in Bloom’s sense, according to which films are simultaneous rather than sequential in relation to their predecessors.
- *Repeatability*, given that timelessness is the key to canonicity, as the work can be viewed by different generations time and again throughout history.
- *Viewer engagement*, since a great film pull viewers from a

passive state, making them participate creatively during the viewing.

- *Morality*, since all films have a moral component which must not be ignored.

As Jonathan Rosenbaum (1998, 2008), Schrader asserts that the canon should never limit itself to exclusively commercial principles, nor to a given national identity. With these criteria, he creates his own classification to select the best fifty films of all times, with *La règle du jeu* (Jean Renoir, 1939) occupying first place. This corpus is again divided into three categories: gold category for the first twenty, silver for the following twenty and bronze for the last ten, with *Hable con ella*, on this occasion in 46th place.

4. Interference as a form of canonization

Among the most interesting works undertaken within the framework of Polysystem Theory that of Rakefet Sela-Sheffy should be highlighted, especially her works on the processes of interference between systems. In our opinion, a cultural product is canonized without question the moment it becomes a model for a given culture, and even more so when the model is naturalized; it is then that *interference* occurs. Returning to the studies of Sela-Sheffy (2003) three steps are necessary for this to happen. The first corresponds with the importation of products to a given society. The second with its translation, be it interlinguistic or intersemiotic. And lastly, it must be reproduced, in other words, that new products are implemented and consumed transparently and according to a model introduced by the cultural product. It may be the original cultural product or a set of them. It is during this last step when naturalization of an external element occurs that interference really takes place. Such is, in turn, the most sophisticated form of canonization because of the transparency with which it imposes its model, staying well outside discussions regarding its legitimacy within the cultural framework where it is placed¹¹.

In order to identify these cases of interference, it is very indicative to attend the use, by the public and critics, of neologisms exploiting personal names and used to describe a cultural product. In this way, when a Spanish or South Korean thriller – a genre that the *repertoire* models according to specific guidelines – is described as Hitchcockian we are clearly upholding a clear example of *interference*. The director – producer – of this film receives certain rules introduced from the British director's film, which can be revealed to critics or viewers/consumers. This would be an example of canonization of an author through his films, in which its set features and characteristic narratives have been reproduced, and often inconspicuously. The

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11 | The controversy generated around the ideological readings of the traditional canon must begin with consideration of the critics who have created the lists, since they also are consumers and no strangers to the influences of society. The diachronic character of the canon is therefore essential, given that "values held by contemporary film scholars and critics are historically shifting" (Wright Wexman, 1986: 33).

subtlety with which this process occurs makes it harder for the researcher to discover the rules governing the creation of a film, as the adoption of these rules as natural hinders finding out the models at work throughout the film. In this way, this neologism – like Fellinian, Pasolinian or Almodovarian – becomes an indicator of certain canonized film texts in the repertoire, of undeniable impact because of their model function. Using the terminology employed at the start of this article, it would also be a case of dynamic canonicity, when a text not only forms part of a cultural repertoire but also acts as a guide in the creation of other products.

This mechanism is even more evident when these terms appear in the general media out of the context of the film industry and without explaining what they are. There is thus a clear semantization of the neologism that reveals the bias for a model which is being used in the creation of other films or cultural products. It is a test of canonization, in a given cultural system, when it creates a style and forms part not only of the cultural repertoire, but also of the vocabulary.

From a polysystemic perspective, we have presented an alternative way of compiling traditional canons. It is a proposal to determine an authentic, *epistemic* canon as opposed to those which are *vocational* (Mignolo, 1998), while being aware that such analysis must take place both in the centre of the system as in the periphery, since all the models can be directed at different social groups which, even when they are smaller, can be important in the shaping of the cultural system. The history of cinema, in spite of its youth, is a good example of this, and it becomes a testing ground yet to be exploited¹².

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12 | Take as an example American underground cinema, and one of its leaders, Andy Warhol, who has become one of the main names in universal art, influencing film directors like Pedro Almodóvar who in turn has received several Oscars and has been invested Doctor *Honoris Causa* at Harvard University. Here we see how elements are transferred from the periphery to the centre in the film system, a clear process of canonization, and an example of interference in the Spanish film system.

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