Coasting: tourism and landscape

Spain has functioned as a tourist location for outsiders for at least the past two centuries. In the nineteenth century Frenchmen found Spain convivial as the primitive other next door, conveniently just the other side of the Pyrenees but allowing an escape, for a time, from the constraints of polite French society. This included a form of sex tourism, or at the very least an appreciation of maidens duskier than those to be found in France. Joseba Gabilondo observes that in the nineteenth century ‘Southern Europe, in continuation with the lower classes of most Northern European countries and cities, becomes the field in which heterosexuality is “tried out” and learned by young bourgeois men, so as to implement it later back home with women of their same class’ (Gabilondo 2008: 21). Spanish women thus come to represent a sexualised exotic other that nonetheless includes a show of freedom or agency, as Gabilondo goes on to note, ‘The orientalized “independence” of the Spanish woman becomes the sign of her “other sexuality” that is “before” and “outside” French bourgeois heterosexuality’ (ibid.: 27).

One of the most famous outputs of this vein is of course Prosper Mérimée’s novella ‘Carmen’ of 1845, which in turn formed the basis of Bizet’s opera of 1875: from there the portrait of a free-spirited, fickle and sexually desirable young Gypsy woman became known worldwide (spawning in her turn myriad interpretations of her story: see Powrie at al. 2007). Mérimée’s original story included a framing device of the French narrator travelling and researching in Spain, who meets Carmen’s lover and nemesis don José. The latter relates Carmen’s story which then forms part of the narrator’s musings on Gypsy society. Don José is himself a Northerner, from Navarre or the Basque Country, experiencing southern Spain for the first time when he is posted there as a soldier. Thus Carmen is seen as the object of a tourist’s gaze on more than one level; or, indeed, we replace the tourist with our own gaze, adopting that of Mérimée’s original traveller. What is perhaps less well known is that Spain has taken some pains to resist this figuration. Spanish cinema has contested the easy stereotype of Carmen, by emphasising the framing devices, as in Vicente
Aranda’s film *Carmen* (2003), where Mérimée himself appears as a character, or earlier in *Carmen, la de Ronda* (*Carmen, the Girl from Ronda*; Luis César Amadori, 1959), where don José is clearly marked out as part of an invading French force, or with Carlos Saura’s *Carmen* (1983), where the apparently inauthentic music of Bizet is pitted uneasily against the authenticity of flamenco (yet even here Mérimée’s text is read out, drawing attention to it but also underscoring it as the ultimate arbiter). And yet there is often an ambivalence about this opposition. To take another film text, Florian Rey’s *Carmen, la de Triana* (*Carmen, the Girl from Triana*, 1938), the plot was twisted to ensure that don José died with his military honour intact rather than shredded by a woman – he sacrifices himself to warn his colleagues of an attack by Carmen’s bandits – and reviews gratefully hailed the film as ridding Spain of the story’s French influence (Powrie et al. 2007: 167–8). Nonetheless, a German version of the film was made, *Andalusische Nächte* (*Andalusian Nights*; Herbert Maisch, 1938), with the same plot and leading actress but now spoken and sung in German, thus allowing Spain to dabble in, and profit from, being the object of dubious foreign desires (see Davies forthcoming).

The case of Carmen demonstrates the ambiguity of Spain’s position as the purveyor of tourism. Although Michael Barke points to a high level of acceptance in Spain of tourism (as it has done much to improve the lot of people in southern Spain), he also acknowledges that ‘the apparent lack of conflict does not necessarily signify a total and uncritical acceptance by Spanish hosts of the tourism phenomenon’ (Barke 2002: 260). This unease can be found in other films, particularly during the Franco era, which coincided with the boom in package tourism to Spain’s coastal resorts. Many of these films were comedies, such as *40 grados a la sombra* (*40 Degrees in the Shade*; Mariano Ozores, 1967) and *El turismo es un gran invento* (*Tourism is a Great Invention*; Pedro Lazaga, 1968): the unease of the position of the Spanish in the face of tourism dissipated through humour. A notable example is Luis García Berlanga’s *El verdugo* (*The Executioner*, 1963), where the main character is forced to become an executioner in order to gain access to an apartment (which goes with the job) for his wife and family. He travels to Palma de Mallorca to carry out his first execution: while they wait for the sentence to be confirmed he and his family enjoy the tourist sites surrounded primarily by foreigners: tourists cannot be Spanish. Most of these comedies handled sexuality with a light touch, if at all:¹ the only notable sexual references would come with films of the 1960s and 70s where the male Spanish characters ogled fair foreign women in bikinis. These women, usually from Sweden but also from France and Great Britain, neatly reversed the dark Spanish woman as sexual other, so that the Spanish could find their own exotic other on Spanish beaches. Spanish women, on the other hand, were usually portrayed in such films as possibly desirable but always more conventional,
respectable and moral – or more uptight, depending on your point of view. This reversal, however, did not necessarily dislodge the original idea of Spain as exotic sexual other. As Eugenia Afinoguénova and Jaume Martí-Olivella observe, ‘there are still many ways in which Spain is still different from those ... European neighbours, and one of them is the persistence of its (self)-positioning as an (orientalized) sexual paradise’ (Afinoguénova and Martí-Olivella 2008: xxvi). Tourists do not necessarily look for the same sort of nineteenth-century induction into heterosexuality that Gabilondo sketched, as referred to above, but sex and sexuality are still integral parts of the mixture brewed to attract present-day tourists. Nonetheless, what is intriguing for me about the Franco-era comedies that drew on tourism as a subject is their viewing of tourism from the inside. Tourism in these texts invites the Spanish to negotiate their own status as both subjects and as perceived exotic others.

The focus of my attention in this chapter is precisely the idea of looking at tourism from the inside, but through films that for once allow the Spanish woman in particular some greater measure of subjectivity, given that she has been the primary embodiment of touristic otherness. If nineteenth-century French texts insisted on the Spanish woman as whore, the Spanish films of the Franco era presented her as the long-suffering wife or girlfriend to whom the straying Spanish man would return after indulging in sexually exotic scopophilia. More recently, however, some films have offered women new subject positions that complicate their status as sexual objects, further nuanced by a facet that does not appear in the Francoist tourist films so much – the fact that tourism positions women as workers, and tourists as potential sources of jobs and money. This chapter, therefore, places women in a complex relation with tourism in terms of sex and work (and the overlap between the two). If Carmen and her ilk possessed a certain measure of independence, as Gabilondo suggested, then this independence reappears to some degree in contemporary films about tourism. The female characters of this chapter are not tourists but – in the three films I am going to look at – nonetheless dependent on tourism, or the relationship between Spaniard and foreigner, in order to make a living. In a link back to the question of Carmen as object of the tourist gaze, the central characters of these films are women, who are now subject rather than object of the gaze – thus, in a sense, women reflecting back the foreigners’ gaze. The three films in question are: Costa Brava (Marta Balletbò-Coll, 1995), Hola, ¿estás sola? (Hello, Are You Alone?; Icíar Bollaín, 1995) and Torremolinos 73 (Pablo Berger, 2003). And there is a spatial dimension to this – the beach and its hinterland – as we shall see in due course.

In his proposition 168 of The Society of the Spectacle, Guy Debord argues that
to go and see what has been made trite. The economic management of travel to different places suffices in itself to ensure those places’ interchangeability. (Debord 1994: 120)

But is this the same from the locals’ point of view, particularly those who service this industry? Can the local identity – that is, a reassertion of place as a space of belonging – re-envision the tourist image? Or, again, are these images always already compromised, because it is precisely those spaces that attract foreigners to Spain? Debord’s comment about tourist locales – that they become sites of spectacle that are ultimately indistinguishable – is akin to Marc Augé’s idea of a non-place. Augé says that ‘soils and territory still exist, not just in the reality of facts on the ground but even more in that of individual and collective awareness and imagination’, but this contrasts with the increases of non-places, which are opposed implicitly to ‘a culture localized in time and space’ (Augé 1995: 34). Yet John Urry remarks on the ‘crucial “spatial fixity” about tourist services’ in that such services cannot take place just anywhere, and their cultural meanings have to be appropriate (Urry 2002: 38). We may recall the now notorious tourist slogan used in Franco’s time: ‘Spain is different’. This slogan encapsulates the dilemma between place and non-place that tourist sites in fact offer. The slogan proclaims Spain as a specific territory unlike others and thus localised in time and space: but the slogan itself implies a desire to distinguish precisely because Spain was and is competing with other tourist sites that have similar charms and delights to sell. Thus Spain is hard to distinguish in precisely the terms Debord suggested. Nonetheless, these spaces are home to the Spanish who work in them: from this we can see how the definitions of place and non-place can coexist and blur within the same space.

Films such as the ones discussed below remind us that tourism has a local dimension that renders Spain’s tourist sites as localised in time and space, yet the blurring of the distinction between place and non-place is readily evident in these particular films. In Costa Brava the apparently neat division between Anna’s (Marta Balletbò-Coll) life as a tourist guide, conducting people around the very distinctive sites of Barcelona, and her home life – the non-place of tourism and the territory that is home to a lesbian awareness and imagination through the Costa Brava itself and Anna’s flat – in fact becomes indistinct through the rehearsals of Anna’s monologue, with the quintessential tourist site of the cathedral of the Sagrada Familia in the background. Yet, while cathedrals are very much part of a blurred site of spectacle that renders specific place unidentifiable in Debord’s terms, arguably the very distinctive modernist architecture of the Sagrada Familia – to say nothing of the fact that the cathedral is still under construction, as is clear from the film – goes against the notion of non-place both for tourists and Spaniards. In Hola, ¿estás sola? the confusion between place and non-place comes through the indeterminate status of
Niña (Silke) and Trini (Candela Peña) as sometimes workers serving tourists but at other times acting as tourists themselves, wandering over the surface of Spain, starting out from Valladolid to Málaga, and then wandering to and from Madrid. (It is notable that one of the tourists they serve at Mariló’s seaside bar is the director herself, Icíar Bollaín, playing the part of a tourist singing karaoke, a further lack of distinction between tourist leisure and local work.) The tourist beaches are not, in the eyes of Niña and Trini, and later of Niña’s mother Mariló (Elena Irureta) and their associate Pepe (Alex Ángulo), indeterminate tourist sites but opportunities to make money and get rich, one of the avowed aims of the girls from the beginning. Place and non-place are blurred through their fluctuating status as workers serving foreign tourists and as indiscriminate wanderers across a terrain than nonetheless remains their own native country. In Torremolinos 73 the site of Torremolinos is – ironically, given Debord’s ideas – the one identifiable place in the film: and yet it is strangely unrecognisable because its beaches are empty, Alfredo’s (Javier Cámara) film being made out of season. It remains, as before, a workplace for Spaniards: it also remains a tourist beach like any other but rendered strange through the absence of tourists (see Vidal 2010: 214). Torremolinos is thus both identifiable and non-recognisable, place and non-place. In these films, then, Spain becomes once more a trace that is invoked, and yet precisely because of this oscillation between place and non-place it can only be a dream of presence, never fully brought into complete existence. Spain is invoked both as ‘home’, the specific space for Spaniards, but also as tourist locale designed for non-Spaniards, aiming to serve the needs and desires of foreigners.

While some parts at least of the Spanish culture offered up to tourists are a masquerade of Spanishness behind which a real Spain may be hard or impossible to identity, that does not mean such a masquerade is devoid of any link to a ‘real’ Spain whatsoever. Eugenia Afínoguénova and Jaume Martí-Olivella argue that ‘rather than reflect on or transmit Spanish identity, tourism has helped to construct and circulate as economically viable certain “visions of Spain”’ (Afinoguénova and Martí-Olivella 2008: xvi). The Spanish themselves are actively involved in this construction of tourist identities, and to some extent connive in and create a ‘true’ identity. They become that identity, even if reluctantly, in order to survive economically, thus blurring the line between authenticity and performance. Patricia Hart suggests there may even be pleasure to be got from the masquerade: she observes that the Spanish may enjoy dressing up, or watching performances of kitsch flamenco (as in, for example, ¡Bienvenido Mr Marshall! (Welcome Mr Marshall; Luis García Berlanga, 1952)): it is not simply about attracting the foreign dollar (Hart 2008: 193). But there may also be alienation. Robert Shepherd (2002: 187) observes of tourist labour, ‘Producers (workers) are alienated from their produced objects and thus own labor, a
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The direct result of commodity exchange. In other words, after their own labor is objectified through the rhetoric of the market, workers are estranged from the objects produced with this labor. In consequence, the most authentic cultural practices and objects appear to be those that not only faithfully imitate an inherited set of practices and objects, but also are reproduced in a specific locale, by a specific type of people, and for a specific purpose, one unconnected to the market process. This last point is crucial: in order to be genuinely authentic, this reproduction must take place outside of the exchange process – that is, outside the supposed calculative rationality of the market and safely within the realm of Marx’s natural use-value. (Shepherd 2002: 192)

Shepherd’s comments suggest a divide between a real and a fake: touristic ‘Spanishness’ and the tourist worker can take pleasure only in the former rather than the latter. But the divide is not always so neat. Much of what goes on in these films suggests both sexual pleasure or fulfilment and alienation through labour, and it can be hard to distinguish between the two. Anna in Costa Brava dislikes her job as a tour guide, but it is this role, and not her desired work as a performance artist, that ensures she encounters her future partner Montserrat (Desi del Valle). Carmen (Candela Peña) in Torremolinos 73 performs sex as an act of labour, an imitation of the exotic Spanish other in porn films, for the pleasure of Scandinavian audiences: her face as she comes to climax in the culminating moment of the sex film she makes in Torremolinos is a mixture of ecstasy and despair. The result is nonetheless the much desired child that her own husband cannot give her, the fulfilment of all her hopes. The young women of Hola, ¿estás sola? do not enjoy their work serving tourists, but it gives them the wherewithal to go on their own wanderings and enjoy the fleeting friendships and sexual encounters they experience along the way.

Spaces and places of work and home

Tourism as work can also be linked to landscape. Don Mitchell has suggested that landscape is much like a commodity: it actively hides (or fetishises) the labour that goes into its making ... those who study landscape representations are repeatedly struck by how effectively they erase or neutralise images of work. More particularly, landscape representations are exceptionally effective in erasing the social struggle that defines relations of work ... the things that landscape tries to hide, in its insistent fetishisation, are the relationships that go into its making. (Mitchell, quoted in Wylie 2007: 107)

These films, however, use spaces to make plainer the efforts, the alienation and also the rewards that such work brings specifically for the Spanish. Hart (2008: 189), in discussing the rise of tourism in Spain, contrasts moving about the land
for pleasure and leisure with how most Spaniards travelled about the terrain in terms of work. ‘Ordinary Spaniards a hundred years ago may have moved the flock from summer to winter pasture as part of the *trashumancia*, passed a sunny Sunday afternoon near the Jarama, or been obliged to see the world while on military service, but they did not usually have the luxury of traveling just to relax and look’. In the contemporary era little has changed on one level, as in *Hola, ¿estás sola?* Niña and Trini travel around Spain in search of work, much of this work involving the tourist industry. While tourists go to the beach to relax and enjoy themselves, the two girls labour to ensure that these tourists make the most of their leisure (by organising holiday activities or serving drinks in a bar). Anna in *Costa Brava* also labours in order to ensure the leisure and pleasure of the tourists on her tour bus (to the extent of timetabling their activities): her own trajectory around Barcelona, however, involves a frenetic scuttling to and from the tour bus as she attempts to combine paid work with her ambition to secure funding to perform the monologue she has written. Alfredo and Carmen travel to leisure spots in *Torremolinos*, including the eponymous seaside resort, but they go to these places in order to work, to learn and later to carry out the making of sex films for Scandinavians. Yet, as we shall see, travel, movement and occupation of space can in fact blur work and pleasure.

Tourist landscapes – and in particular the beach – are offered to the tourist as landscapes of leisure, so that the image of work is indeed neutralised: any work that goes on in these spaces is virtually invisible, serving only to facilitate the notion of leisure for the tourist.

Rob Shields talks of the beach as one of the ‘places on the margins’ that is the focus of his study, and argues,

*Mention ‘beach’ and people immediately tend to think not just of an empirical datum – a sandy area between water and land caused by deposition, longshore drift, and so on – but also of a particular kind of place, peopled by individuals acting in a specific manner and engaging in predictable routines.* (Shields: 1991: 60)

The meaning of the beach is not of course confined to this idea (as we shall see in the following chapter dedicated to the matter of immigration), but Shields reminds us that one of the primary cultural means of the beach is leisure and entertainment. The individuals Shields discusses and the activities and routines they engage in (Shields is writing about Brighton beach) are tourists and day-trippers in search of relaxation and recreation. The Spanish beach as sunny playground for foreigners neglects the earlier tradition for seaside holidays for Spanish nationals that started in the northern coastlines in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Walton and Smith: 1994), and which to some extent still persists today (some of the tourists at Mariló’s bar are clearly Spanish). Whoever the clientele, however, these actions and routines
include a layer of people often in the background but essential for the whole enterprise: the people who work to ensure that leisure can take place (waiters, cleaners, lifeguards, deckchair attendants, ice cream sellers and so on). These are in the main local people, or at the very least they usually have to live locally in order to have access to their jobs. Very often these people are invisible: the point about the films I discuss here is that they draw attention to the fact that the local meaning of the beach is not only leisure but labour.

Fiona Handyside, in her article about the beach in the films of Eric Rohmer, has usefully distinguished between the beach as a leisure site and as the object of and creation of labour (Handyside 2009: 155), although the work she specifies in Rohmer’s films – ethnography – is hardly the labour I have in mind here. I am particularly intrigued by her description of Rohmer’s ethnographers as ‘the metteurs-en-scène of desire rather than those who live it’ (ibid.: 157). While the labour of tourism does not fit with the designation of ethnography, nonetheless we readily perceive the Spanish characters as performing precisely this function: of creating and maintaining tourist sites precisely as places of leisure and of interest, of being in fact metteurs-en-scène. This differentiation between work and leisure applies well beyond the beach, but we can see the tension operating in the films’ beach scenes as well: Niña and Trini co-ordinating activities such as exercise and bingo for tourists, the actors and film crew of Torremolinos 73 working hard to reproduce the notion of Spain as a site for recreational sex.

Handyside notes that for Rohmer’s holidaymakers ‘the beach is marked as a site of leisure and relaxation where one “should” be happy’ (Handyside 2009: 154); thus any unhappiness experienced is more extreme. This anachronism for those who work there is readily apparent, since the labour on offer provides

Figure 14 Niña comforts Trini in Hola, ¿estás sola?
no satisfaction. In the three films discussed here, tourist labour is carried out in order to satisfy other people but not oneself, and it can prove an ironic backdrop for personal misery (Trini weeping on an empty beach, for instance) and dissatisfaction (Fig. 14). Yet the beach can also be the route to fulfilment of personal desire (the baby conceived, the lesbian relationship consummated, the money to wander around Spain free of ties and find fulfilment in fleeting relationships). And this personal desire can include sex, thus bringing us back to the notion of the Spanish woman as sexualised and independent. Handyside notes the beach’s ‘modern reality as a place of provisional and contingent relations’ (ibid.: 155), and the possibilities for sex have long formed part of the attraction of Spanish beaches. Tourist spaces for the Spanish female subject are primarily places of work but they also offer routes to personal and often sexual fulfilment, even though this path to subjectivity includes the possibility of positioning themselves as exotic objects. In this complex imbrication of subjectivity and objectivity, Spain traces itself once more in this ambivalence, which, on the one hand, attempts to overturn the stereotype of the Spanish beach as the place of sun, sand and sex, and yet, on the other hand, sees the Spanish consenting to participate in their own othering, and at times finding sexual and other satisfaction in so doing. It is this play on the stereotype that sees Spain in the process of always becoming but never being fully formed.

The beach is not, however, the only space utilised in these films: for the Spaniards the beach is one specific locale among others that also impinge on their life. The beach is not separate from a hinterland through which the Spanish characters also move: its attachment to real territories and its function as one space imbricated with other spaces, across which locals live their lives, becomes pronounced in these films. In Costa Brava the eponymous beach extends to the port of Barcelona itself (and at times the film refers to Barcelona’s own status as a place of two different cultures and languages, Spanish and Catalan), but also Anna’s flat and the back streets of Barcelona through which she moves in search of funding. In Hola, ¿estás sola? the beach is a way station and also the end point of the girls’ journey, but they also spend time in the city: there is a fort-da sense of flitting between city and beach. In Torremolinos 73 the trajectory to Torremolinos savagely parodies that of the tourist as the couple travel there to enact the fantasy of exotic sex with foreigners in their badly made porn films: the misery suffered by Carmen in Torremolinos will nonetheless give way to the joy she will experience back at home in Madrid with her child. The beach’s hinterland may be restricted in scope, as in the Barcelona of Costa Brava, or it may encompass much of Spain, as in the shuttling back and forth between the beach and the capital Madrid in Hola, ¿estás sola? (including some panoramic landscapes of Spain as the girls travel around it in trains). Nonetheless, the beach is noticeably attached to somewhere else. The movement of the
women back and forth between the spaces of home and tourism complicates the division between the binary of an alienated tourist culture and an authentic local culture. While the places of tourism may be places of unpleasant labour for all the women involved, the desires of the women also get caught up in these spaces, and their personal lives become bound up with their experience of tourist spaces. The beach may be the space of tourist labour for Spaniards, but in each case the women use it for their own ends. Shields argues that ‘Beaches had always been a “free zone” of sorts by virtue of their status as uncertain land, the surface contours of which might change with every tide’ (Shields 1991: 89). This uncertainty and malleability also applies to the uses the women make of the beach, and the desires they trail across it. The rest of this chapter will be dedicated to looking at the way the beach is connected to its hinterland through the manner in which these spaces are used in the films for the negotiation of different forms of both labour and sexual desire.

Costa Brava

If the beach can serve quite crudely as metaphor for sex, in Costa Brava it also serves as an expression of true (lesbian) identity and the nurturing of a relationship that is both international and Catalan in scope. Anna as the central character is a tour guide around Barcelona, who does the job only in order to survive while nurturing her dream of getting funding to perform her monologue about a lesbian neighbour. Her relationship to Barcelona itself – the hinterland to the Costa Brava beach and the place where her labour is located – is complex: as a harassed guide, she drags her charges at high speed in English and French around the city, which in fact we do not see. Nor does Anna dwell in any detail on the sites the tourists have come to see: her work consists more of parcelling out time so that they have so many minutes to take pictures, so many minutes to take lunch, and so on (suggesting tourism as labour simply to be got through, as quickly as possible). The towers of the Sagrada Familia – the iconic image of Barcelona – are only viewed through a screen of washing as Anna rehearses her monologue, still in her tour guide uniform. This is Barcelona from the point of view of a local rather than a tourist. Tourist sites are intertwined with the marks of everyday living. Catalan modernist architecture such as the Sagrada Familia is, however, of paramount importance to Barcelona as a tourist site, and is the very thing that both keeps Anna going and interferes with her desire for expression through her drama. During one conversation Anna tells Montserrat, after the latter has mused about her relationships with men and women, that if she does not get involved with either she will be doing a lot of museums: contrary to the familiar stereotypes, tourism is a barrier to any form of sexuality. Yet beyond the Sagrada Familia, refigured through the lines
of washing in the foreground that detract from its status as iconic of Barcelona, the spaces of the heritage industry have been eradicated from the screen.

The beach, like the Sagrada Familia, is refigured not as a touristic space, but one in which the tourist becomes intimately involved with the local and thus the space in which local as well as tourist desires are acted upon. Anna meets Montserrat, the woman who will soon become her lover, as part of her work as a tour guide. Montserrat soon separates herself out from the group and retires to the beach to read (as it happens) Anna’s monologue which is inside the bag Anna lends her. The reading of the monologue and the references to lesbianism that it contains will mark out the beach as a place of lesbian desire (Fig. 15). For when Anna and Montserrat return to the beach – the Costa Brava itself of the title, suspiciously empty of tourists – their budding relationship is consummated, although only by implication. After a conversation on the beach, Anna and Montserrat disappear from the scene. Balletbó-Coll then offers the audience tranquil shots of the empty beach in which Anna’s car occasionally appears to one side, the implication being that sex takes place inside the car.

Yeon Soo Kim remarks on the link between the Costa Brava and lesbian and gay identity (through the town of Sitges, a known gay resort) (Kim 2005: 139–40), and comments:

The family that Anna and Montserrat form together is located in the interstices – a borderless space with no beginning and no end. They do not confine themselves to one national territory or any single identity. The lesbian couple are migrant subjects who feel at home anywhere on earth and, at the same time, who belong to nowhere in particular. (Kim 2005: 140–1)
Her comment that the beach is devoid of the Barcelona landmarks which offer Anna employment as a guide (ibid.: 138) reinforces this notion of a lack of unidentifiable territory. The sense of the beach as borderless spaces links to the idea of interstices as observed by Susan Martin-Márquez, particularly in terms of Montserrat, whose sexual orientation is in flux and whose engineering speciality of bridges is significant. Martin-Márquez notes the initial importance of the beach in introducing the idea of interstitiality: ‘This “in-betweenness” initially surfaces in a scene set on a Costa Brava beach’ (Martin-Márquez 1999: 289). Nonetheless Martin-Márquez does ascribe a measure of Catalan identity to lesbianism through the association with the Sagrada Familia, while when Montserrat spends time with a male colleague (hinting at the possibility of heterosexual relationships), the architecture they wander around is international (ibid.: 290). Montserrat’s flirtation (literally) with heterosexuality in fact serves to problematise her specific link to the Catalannness of lesbian identity; and her iconic Catalan name suggests that Catalan identity is itself ‘in-between’ in a sexual sense. While Costa Brava hints strongly at Barcelona as a specifically Catalan city – and Anna includes in her tourist itinerary a discussion of the Catalan character – and Anna includes in her tourist itinerary a discussion of the Catalan character – it simultaneously suggests that the place of lesbianism in Catalan identity is problematic: although Anna’s former lover might perform in Catalan, Anna herself gives her monologue in English, and Montserrat, for all the Catalannness of her name, cannot understand the Catalan language. Neither woman finds permanent roots in Barcelona because Montserrat loses her job while Anna can only break out of the monotony of tourism by performing her monologue in the USA.

The film’s title refers to the division and to the blurring between labour and love – labour, because Anna works for a company called Costa Brava tours, suggesting the Costa Brava as a place for tourists. Yet, for selected tourists, specifically Montserrat (and we are reminded of her status as a tourist or passer-through at various intervals throughout the film – on the tour bus and while looking around the Jewish quarter in Girona), Anna also acts as guide to another, lesbian, environment that is also the Costa Brava, the coast and beach of that name. This Costa Brava, then, is not a tourist space but reserved for a desire for which eventually Barcelona itself will not have a space, a place of private desire denuded of tourists but which is not necessarily reclaimed for the homeland, remaining an interstice, the free zone, which Rob Shields referred to above. There is, however, a disjuncture between desire and belonging which is also conveyed through mismatch between voice and image. The first real discussion between the couple-to-be takes place on the beach, with a great deal of emphasis on static shots of landscape shots of cliffs, a dead tree, the sand, while for the most part this key conversation goes on only in voice-over, with very few shots of the speakers themselves. At times when they do come into shot they are clearly not
speaking, and are some distance apart. This conversation is reflected elsewhere when we see the couple have conversations we cannot hear against neutral park landscapes (as opposed to the iconic Parc Güell as part of Anna’s tour bus itinerary, which is glimpsed in grainy tourism sequences reminiscent of a video camera). The distance between the visual image of the women speaking and the aural reception of their dialogue reinforces the point to the audience that their desires are not in synch with the landscape. The disjuncture of the landscape and the couple on it, reinforced by the shots of coastline while the women make love, an activity that can only be viewed obliquely, suggest the difficulties as well as the possibilities in blurring landscape, labour and desire, contradicting Kim’s comment cited above that the women feel at home anywhere. Dialogue is always synched, however, in Anna’s flat that forms part of the hinterland but which is a confined space: when Anna and Montserrat occupy it together there is no sense of an exterior context. While the characters occasionally look out of the flat window wistfully, we do not ourselves see outside, or what they are looking at. This space appears cut off from Barcelona more generally, and when we do see a link between interior and exterior, as Anna performs her monologues in front of a view of the Sagrada Familia, the only route out seems to lead back to the overly familiar tourist spaces once more.

The final shot of the film includes a broad city space, as the women run gleefully towards the horizon, happy in their anticipation of a future together in the USA, a space outside the Barcelona into which they do not fit. This shot encapsulates the ambiguity of space, dwelling on the Barcelona cityscape as the space which has no room for lesbians and yet also the space through which they run, happy in the knowledge that their life together can continue. Barcelona is abandoned to tourists, while the beach has been refigured as the interstitial space, prefiguring the USA beyond the film as the ultimate interstitial space where the women can find satisfaction in both love and work. The nation thus traces itself on to the text precisely through its absence: what the landscapes help us to see is the antithetical nature of desire and belonging. Barcelona is the space from which lesbianism is excluded even as it allows the opportunity for the coming together of Anna and Montserrat. The absence of these spaces suggests furthermore the alienation of Anna’s work in the tourist industry: she does not dwell in these spaces and they become not localised place but merely time passing before Anna can escape to her ‘real’ labour. The Costa Brava, alternatively, must be emptied of tourists in order to become a site of leisure and pleasure for local desire: its hinterland is not the city of Barcelona so much as Anna’s flat, a space in which Anna and Montserrat’s relationship can develop, and the streets that form the backdrop of their conversations. In this most negative call to care, the landscape expresses a need for space in which to find satisfaction in both love and work, but the nature of the work and the nature of
desire mean it can find no space within the nation. And yet the nation invites the
desire by allowing the relationship between Anna and Montserrat to happen.
This is expressed in spatial terms by the disjuncture between the different
spaces as well as the actions and voices of the characters who move within them.

Of all the texts mentioned in this book, Costa Brava seems to be the one
with the greatest disjuncture between the term ‘Spain’ and other labels for
the nation that traces itself across the spaces. The film emphasises Catalonia
as opposed to Spain, specifically in Anna’s musings to her tourists as to what it
means to be Catalan: in addition, there is a certain irony in that the majority of
funders she approaches for money to put on her monologue are Catalan rather
than Spanish (before, finally, she turns to the USA and gets the funding she is
looking for). How, then, can Spain be evoked? We can again turn to the notion
of Spain as an uncanny identity suggested by Gabilondo that I discussed in
Chapter 4, even though Catalan resistance to Spanishness has not been quite as
violent as the antagonistic relationship which nonetheless seems to hold Spain
and the Basque Country locked together. The insistence within Costa Brava of
national identity being, if anything, Catalan, nonetheless conjures up at one
remove the spectre of Spain against which Catalanness must be asserted. In a
film where lesbian identity can only find clear, synched expression within the
interior confines of Anna’s flat, the wider spaces of the nation, Spain as well
as Catalonia, are found unaccommodating. Such a link may seem tenuous, but
it is worth considering Gabilondo’s comments again when he argues that ‘In
Spain, most new subject positions and identities, as soon as they are othered,
become national noises and fractures that, nevertheless, are constitutive of the
state order and its desire’ (Gabilondo 2002: 276), and he immediately goes on
to mention ‘queers, immigrants and women’ as examples of the contradictory
position to which this gives rise, categories to which one or both of the women
can be considered to belong. The desire to associate offered by a dream of
presence means that Anna and Montserrat contribute to this national noise in
which different identities seek to find room: they do this within Catalonia, but
as such contribute to Catalonia’s own ‘noise’ as it seeks to find accommodation
with(in) Spain. It also, however, reveals that the desire to belong suggested by
the dream of presence does not of itself guarantee the fullness of belonging. The
wider spaces of Barcelona and the Costa Brava, in which labour and desire come
together, ultimately do not offer such labour and desire a home.

Hola, ¿estás sola?

The ambivalence of Hola, ¿estás sola? in terms of the Spanish use of tourist space
is apparent even before watching the film, from its DVD cover, wherein the
central characters Niña and Trini are captured in what seems a relaxed tourist
pose beneath palm trees, a blue sky in the background, Niña with casual yellow knapsack and unbuttoned jeans, Trini carrying a boombox. While it suggests girls having fun – part of the ambience of the film – it also suggests them as tourists. They are indeed tourists in one sense, as they travel around Spain, moving from their home town of Valladolid to the coast to Madrid, then back to the coast and finally back to Madrid again. In some sequences the camera dwells on the Spanish landscape that provides a backdrop to the conversations of the girls as they discuss their lives and their futures. But they are also at times servants of the tourist industry. Money, or the lack of it, is one of the overriding difficulties the girls face; and the occasions when they make money are those when they are by the beach, working in the tourist industry. Thus the DVD cover belies the nature of their beach existence: they are there as workers. Their first stopping-off point is Málaga: on the Málaga beach with sunbathers in the background, they are perusing the local paper in search of a job. The job they find, as coordinators of activities for the middle-aged visitors, is on one level humorous as Trini mutters bingo numbers monotonously in Spanish: she does not have the requisite English skills to allow the tourists to participate. The humour cannot, however, disguise the fact that this is a dead-end job for them both, and soon they move on to Madrid in search of Niña’s mother Mariló. But Mariló herself becomes inspired by the chance to improve her finances, and takes the girls plus new friend Pepe to the beach in order to set up a bar.

The beach sequences, intercut with those that are set in Madrid or depict travel to and from the capital, suggest a division between tourism and travel in which the latter appears to be for Spaniards alone. As Patricia Hart commented above, this is travel not for leisure purposes but travel for work purposes, or – given the girls’ hopes for a brighter future through their travel – a chance to seek their fortune. This film emphasises the hinterland just as much if not more than the beach; and the hinterland raises questions about belonging and home. Martin-Márquez (2002: 259) notes the details of *mise-en-scène* in *Hola, ¿estás sola?* that suggest travel around Spain: the bag with a map of Spain on it, the painting of a winding road over the sofa, the images of Andalusia that inspire them to go south. She argues that what Trini and Niña are looking for is ‘a secure and comfortable place for themselves in the world’ (ibid.), but in that case they do not find it, as the film ends with them back on the train to Madrid. Martin-Márquez concludes that ‘Travel, then, has moved beyond a confirmation of sameness through opposition to an-other; now, it works to reproduce that sameness. One travels to find oneself at home’ (ibid.: 258); however, money and work are most likely to be found at the beach, hence the need to oscillate there and back. The hinterland, however, is no longer a space tucked away from the foreign gaze, as the girls’ acquaintance with Olaf (Arcadi Levin) in Madrid suggests. As Martin-Márquez remark, ‘Olaf both literally and metaphorically
builds and maintains homes in the film, and indeed, in *Hola, ¿estás sola?* it would seem that, ironically, immigrants are more successful at creating and sustaining a Spanish household than are Spaniards’ (ibid.: 262). If, as she suggests, Olaf is a conscientious construction worker off whom Niña lives, then we have a neat parallel in that, at the beach, the Spanish labour to serve the foreigners while in Madrid the reverse is the case. However, whether we consider Olaf, or the girls, the division between tourism and travel remains clear: travel around Spain involves work. This involves travel to and from the beach as well: the beach remains a place of leisure for tourists only. The Spanish hinterland is, however, also the place where desire can be fulfilled: Madrid is the place where the girls have fun (in direct contrast to the image of the DVD cover), where they eat for pleasure, make friends and indulge in sexual relations with an exotic other (Olaf). Bollaín emphasises Madrid as the place of leisure and pleasure rather than work for the girls, even if work was what they were travelling in search of, while as they travel the girls recount to each other their own dreams and desires, suggesting that the relationship between work and leisure is experienced in diametrically opposed ways for Spaniards and for tourists.

The beach may be a site of demeaning drudgery for the girls, but it does nevertheless offer a chance to fulfil desires of a better and freer life, thus it still ironically implies the idea of escape. Annabel Martín comments of tourism under Franco:

> Si los veraneantes extranjeros disfrutan del subdesarrollo, de sus carencias sociales y de sus soles naturales, como mercancía explotable, los excursionistas españoles, conscientes de su papel subalterno en este juego, transforman la industria turística en su propia escapatoria a las restricciones imperantes en el franquismo. (Martín 2005: 149)

If foreign holidaymakers exploited the underdevelopment, the social deprivation and the natural sunlight as a commercial good, Spanish tourists, aware of their subaltern role in this affair, turned the tourist industry into their own escape route from the prevailing restrictions of Francoism.

This is also true, I think, many years later of the girls’ beach experiences: the drudgery of the labour they have to carry out is clear, but they undertake it precisely in order to live a life free from restrictions (in Niña’s case, the conservative morality of her father who catches her in bed with her boyfriend in Valladolid). The invocation of Spain through landscape and *mise-en-scène* is clear from this film: Niña and Trini through their travels draw their own personal map of Spain. The emphasis on their subjectivity as they pursue their own personal question for success, happiness and enjoyment is, however, the very thing that prevents Spain from being fully present: rather, it expresses the always already becoming of Rose’s theorisation as a permanent process. Their travels also underscore the link between Spain’s position as tourist other that
attracts tourists to use the labour of Spaniards, but they also demonstrate the possibility for the Spanish woman to connive in such objectification in order to assert her own subjectivity. The oscillation across different Spanish terrains allows us to see this parallel oscillation between object and subject.

**Torremolinos 73**

As in *Costa Brava*, so in *Torremolinos 73*: the beach is the site of sexual expression, but, as in *Hola, ¿estás sola?*, it is also the site of labour; for the making of soft porn films on the beach of Torremolinos is a form of work and, for Carmen, hardly a source of pleasure. Here again, we have the woman as apparently independent sexual other – and by a strange irony she is called Carmen, once again a siren for otherness for Northern men (in this case, Scandinavians). Carmen becomes involved in soft porn films after her husband Alfredo’s employers, disappointed at the lack of profits from selling encyclopedias door to door, decide to sell erotic films instead, and insist on their employees’ involvement. In changing the nature of their business, Alfredo’s employers are being less radical than they might think: Spanish women have appeared to be sexually accessible to foreigners much earlier than the 1970s. There is a reversal here, however, of the previous holiday comedies of the Franco era: instead of Scandinavian women being seen as the object of rather puerile sexual pursuit by Spanish men, now Carmen is the one forced to run around a department store in the attempt to escape a Danish admirer. But the film also reminds us of one of the purposes of this labour: the acquisition of the wherewithal to participate in a consumer economy. As a result of making and acting in their films, Alfredo and Carmen have access to consumer goods that were previously beyond their reach when the former worked as an encyclopedia salesman. Alfredo and Carmen are able to buy into a life of consumer affluence: a car, a washing machine, furniture, a fur coat. The beach at Torremolinos is the setting for Carmen’s acquisition of the ultimate (consumer?) good, the baby that she, though not her husband, has deeply longed for and which together they acquire directly through their work in porn films.

The eponymous beach appears late on in the film, first in the form of a poster specifically labelled Torremolinos 73, with a bathing beauty in front of a beach and hotel block, the quintessential image of Spain as a package tourist destination. But this poster is one of a display of semi-naked women designed to inspire men about to give sperm samples. This poster alone does the trick for Alfredo, about to provide a sample in his turn to test his fertility, and even then only when he, in a rather endearing gesture, tapes a picture of Carmen’s face over that of the model on the poster. The exoticism to some extent turns the Spaniard on, too, but there needs to be a ‘home grown’ element. But we should
notice the fact that sexual desire is artificially induced: it is in itself a labour designed to acquire a good (the baby – though, as it turns out, Alfredo is sterile) and it is devoid of pleasure. This sets out the meaning of the beach in the film even before Alfredo and his crew arrive at Torremolinos to shoot his film. The beach symbolises sex, but sex as labour rather than pleasure. Pleasure in this film is seen in terms of consumerism and middle-class aspirations, and it is associated with the hinterland where Carmen and Alfredo live.

When the couple arrive at the beach, they are greeted with a surprisingly empty Torremolinos, owing to the fact that it is out of season. The beach we are offered initially appears ideal in that it is empty: we can actually see the beach because there is no clutter of tourists to get in the way, unlike the beach in Costa Brava. But this time the ideal beach is undercut several times over. The black-and-white footage of Alfredo’s film reveals Carmen and her leading man Magnus walking romantically across the empty beach: but a cut to a colour sequence also reveals the film crew walking before them and recording their actions (Fig. 16). The idyll is no more than an act, a labour that causes distress and alienation. Alfredo himself only really comes to occupy the beach as he absorbs the fact that Carmen will perform her sex scene for real in the film, in the hope of becoming pregnant by Magnus: he sits gloomily on the beach at night alone, pensive, only his megaphone (formerly belonging to Ingmar Bergman, no less) for company. As the Danish crew attempt to persuade him to join in some nude bathing, he tries to attack Magnus, but only gets dunked in the cold sea for his pains. In the end he joins in the general laughter, since he has no other outlet for his pain and anger. This scene is surprisingly painful to watch, and of course undercuts once again the pleasurable meanings of the beach. By removing the
tourists from the beach the film underscores the alienation of the usually invisible labour that the Spanish must perform for the pleasure of foreigners.

This beach has a hinterland: the bleak landscape of the block of flats where the couple live, and the Spanish countryside where Alfredo learns to behave like the middle classes he aspires to by going on a rabbit shoot with his employer don Carlos. He is not a natural hunter, and pauses in dismay at the prospect of shooting a rabbit, but the whispered suggestion by don Carlos of a film premiere in the Gran Via gives him the power to shoot (with obvious phallic overtones). His shooting of the rabbit prefigures his shooting with the camera of the long-suffering Carmen. This scene thus ties in the beach with the hinterland, as Carmen’s victimisation is prefigured. As Alfredo films his wife having sex with Magnus at Torremolinos, her face looks alternately possessed of sexual ecstasy and infinite sadness, while Alfredo weeps – this servicing of exotic desire is infinitely painful for those at home. But the shots of the housing estate (Fig. 17) remind us of why Spaniards might undertake labour such as this: a chance for betterment and to get out of the trap of a genteel poverty, the fulfilment or expression of desires (including, ultimately, the baby, as well as Alfredo’s own ambitions to be a director like Bergman). This implies a clear-cut division between beach as place of labour and hinterland as place of self-fulfilment. But this is modified by the fact that the couple’s bedroom becomes studio and rehearsal space for the porn films, both a degradation of the desire and love Alfredo clearly feels for Carmen, and also an opportunity for self-expression and self-betterment. The bedroom becomes a border space that signifies both work and sexual pleasure.

The position of the Spanish woman as exotic other for Scandinavia also proves an ambivalent matter. Carmen is certainly very uncomfortable in her

Figure 17 The hinterland that inspires aspiration in Torremolinos 73
role as sex star, and it is significant that in order to attempt to elude her pursuer in the department store she buys an expensive pram, thus both contradicting the sexual star persona she has acquired but also indicating the reason why she has become such a star in the first place. While Alfredo and Carmen are in the first instance virtually forced to make the films in order for the former to keep his job, the new line of work awakens Alfredo’s interest in film. This turns into an obsession with Ingmar Bergman, who receives many ironic references in Alfredo’s attempts at pitching his Torremolinos film beyond mere sexploitation, including Death with his scythe at the funfair and a chess-playing sequence. Spanish stereotypes are represented at the funfair by dwarves dressed as Carmen and bullfighters. These references – along with the moody sex scenes themselves – may explain why Alfredo’s film succeeds in Scandinavia, as we are told at the end, while it was a flop in Spain. It suggests a lack of authenticity of a culture made with an eye to the foreigner. The ultimate irony, though, is the child that results from the onscreen union of Carmen and Magnus, the very blond Marisol, a name that resonates above all with Spanish audiences as that of the earlier blond child star of 1960s Spanish cinema. The blondness reminds us of the idealisation of the blond child, the foreign-looking child, for Spanish audiences who idolised the original Marisol. But it also harks back to the earlier notion of the Spanish woman as other reproducing a notion of Spanishness for foreign audiences. Belén Vidal, drawing on Thomas Elsaesser, notes that Torremolinos ‘tacitly accepts that ideas of nation can only exist in a transnational space … the presentation of Self (one’s own national culture) through the look of the Other’ (Vidal 2010: 222).

Vidal also notes that as a result of the failed attempt to give a Bergmanesque feel to the film ‘the tacky holiday landscapes of the popular comedies of desarrollismo are defamiliarized, disclosing a different, downbeat side to the discourses of economic prosperity. The views of Torremolinos in the cold winter light bring to the fore the melancholic undertones of the comedy’ (ibid.: 224). But when she goes on to add that the use and misuse of cinema tropes allow for an alternative imaged Spanish identity in dialogue with Europe (ibid.), this neglects the gendered aspects of the framework of Spain in the tourist gaze. Carmen is performing the same function for the foreigner as her earlier namesake: a duality of labour and pleasure that repeats old patterns but which we now see from the point of view of the Spaniard. The defamiliarisation of the cold landscape stresses the alienation of the labour that Carmen must undergo, and the trace of this alienation remains with her very blond child. But the hinterland spaces are the spaces in which Carmen continues her upward mobility, and if the child was conceived by the seaside of Torremolinos it is back home where she can enjoy the fulfilment of her desire, as the film closes on her delight at the child’s birthday celebrations.
The uses of space and place in these three films demonstrate how Spain traces itself across the landscape, as they invoke explicitly the notion of being at home while yet existing in a position as exotic other. Their call to belong comes precisely through their status as Spaniards who are needed to participate in an industry so profitable to the country. Yet the films also evoke the ways in which such a desire for association – even if undertaken reluctantly as a means to an end – allows for the fulfilment of personal desire or at least raises the possibility. The Spanish beach and hinterland in tandem reveal the possibilities of pleasure for those to whom Spain is home rather than abroad. The characters make different uses of the spaces, including the relationship between beach and hinterland, in each film, but they also demonstrate the fluidity of movement between the two which not only suggests the blurring of boundaries but also the imbrications of each space with the other for locals. The blurring occurs on another level as well as the Spanish come to resemble tourists themselves at times: romance with a foreigner (Costa Brava), travelling around Spain (Hola, ¿estás sola?) and travel to the seaside (Torremolinos 73). All these activities are bound up with their roles as workers servicing the desire of incoming tourists for the exotic other in their roles as bar staff, tourist guide or even sex worker. Again, this suggests that the two roles are closely imbricated with each other.

In the process, the status of the women as independent desiring subjects rather than exotic objects is also stressed. For both Anna and Carmen the beach is an induction into fulfilment of their desires in which sex is clearly a key component part if not necessarily the ultimate goal: a stable lesbian relationship for Anna and a baby for Carmen. Their sexuality in tandem with their own positions at home allow them to see to their own desires rather than service the desires of foreigners (although the foreigners’ desires are also in fact satisfied, but the emphasis in both films does not lie here). For Niña and Trini, it is their turn to use the foreigner (Olaf) as an opportunity for casual sexual pleasure: sex thus becomes simply one element among others that confirm the girls’ freedom as they wander around Spain, exploiting their position as tourist workers to fund their own freedom even if they are exploited in their turn. This movement from object to subject is seen through the ‘desire to belong’ of the Spanish woman in her inversion of the tourist gaze – to see herself ‘at home’ and Spain as the site where personal desire might be fulfilled. The differences between the films lie with how far space and place allow us to see the fulfilment of Spanish female desire in spatial terms: satisfaction for the woman if not the man (Torremolinos 73), a constant search for a fulfilment that never arrives but which may always be sought (Hola, ¿estás sola?), or an awareness that personal desire and national space are ultimately incompatible (Costa Brava). The nation is traced across all these desires, but the satisfaction of desire is by no means guaranteed.
Note

1 *El verdugo* is perhaps more blatant than most in its allusion to sexual desire, as the central character becomes an executioner only in order to have sexual access through marriage to the previous executioner’s daughter (as well as a home of his own). But the issue does not impinge on the protagonist and his family’s interaction with tourism.