
Miscellaneous

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Flawed Fatherhoods in the Cinema of Jaime Rosales: The Father's Unmet Gaze

Abstract

Since his beginnings, Jaime Rosales has directed seven feature films: *The Hours of the Day* (2003), *Solitary Fragments* (2007), *Tiro en la cabeza* (A Shot in the Head) (2008), *Dream and Silence* (2011), *Beautiful Youth* (2014), *Petra* (2018) and *Wild Flowers* (2022). In his films, the maternal-filial bond becomes the strongest factor in the lives of his characters, but in almost all of his films this bond is treated in parallel with paternal-filial relationships –which this research focuses on. Rosales portrays various models of fatherhood, some clearly failed and others in the light of positive construction. This study aims to analyse, through qualitative and filmic analysis, the design and evolution of these characters, to search for a pattern of fatherhood with common characteristics, to determine if it is a personal theme in the films of Rosales, and to investigate cinematographic resources that specifically make an original portrait of fatherhood. In this sense, we discover that in Rosales' cinema, the father's gaze hardly meets that of the son, daughter, or couple, and for this, the director uses various visual strategies such as polyvision, the subjective shot, or panoramic shots to ensure that these gazes, in fact, almost never meet.

Keywords

Fatherhood, Jaime Rosales, family bonds, postmodernity, film analysis.

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1. Introduction

We propose a qualitative investigation, whose objective is to define if there is a proper portrait of paternity or paternities in the cinema of Jaime Rosales, and if so, to determine which are the main characteristics and the problems of these models. We part from the hypothesis that the postmodern crisis of fatherhood, object of countless academic studies –and of film scripts (Visa, 2019)– is an issue that is not indifferent to Rosales and which is quite present in his filmography. In addition, we think that, within this concern, Rosales –a family man himself–, has prioritized some elements and factors over others, as we will attempt to outline. If, as Rosales assures us, the “only subject of a film is life” (2018, p. 17), we suspect that fatherhood has relevance in that life he wants to show, to unravel the surprises and contradictions of the father figure (p. 22). The justification for this research is framed by the aforementioned proliferation of academic studies on the new attempts at fatherhood/fatherhoods that have emerged in the postmodern, post-patriarchal and feminist society of the 21st century. Such a profusion of studies highlights the social and cultural relevance of the current redefinition of the paternal role and paternal-filial relationships.

The crisis of fatherhood in postmodern society is one of the major research topics in the fields of psychology, sociology, anthropology and pedagogy. The dissipation of the symbolic figures of the authoritative, traditional, or ideal reference father has led to the birth of a range of new forms of fatherhood, from the absent father, to the “tool father,” or more testimonial or affectionate modalities. “The evaporation of the normative-function of the Father, rather than freeing us from the father, has to allow his ethical rehabilitation as the father of the testimony and not as the Father of the Name” (Recalcati, 2015). In other words, postmodern fatherhood renounces its character of authority *per se* and the father can only aspire to be an example for his children on some occasions, without claiming to be a lecturer. E. Laurent expresses himself along the same lines when he speaks of the “children arising from post-parenthood, from the post-paternal era, that is, who no longer depend on the father of tradition [...] Nowadays parenthood is responsible and contractually negotiated” (Laurent, 2018).

The dissolution of the traditional concept of fatherhood and the emergence of new forms of it are reflected in cinematography and are expressed in many ways that show the generational contrasts in the way of living fatherhood. Amongst the filmmakers concerned with this issue, the Spaniard Jaime Rosales devotes attention in his filmography to parenthood (motherhood and fatherhood), and critically shows various models present in our society (Figuero & Orellana, 2023). He represents them not only as plots developed in a script, but also with staging resources of symbolic or metaphorical character. Therefore, in this article we will move within the framework of studies on neo-fatherhoods, but we will stick to the case study of an authorial filmography that will be approached from a methodology of audiovisual analysis.

For his part, the director has been the subject of several scientific studies which have analyzed his narrative through comparative studies with other filmmakers, such as Robert Bresson (Bravo, 2016) or Yasujiro Ozu (Bravo, 2017), where similar parameters of reflection appear; others have inquired into the links between genre and auteur cinema (Aguilera, 2010; Malpartida, 2012; Praga, 2015) to reveal the hybrid character of *The Hours of the Day*, between auteur and mass cinema (Yáñez, 2006); reflections on the transcendence of the everyday and its abrupt rupture in Rosales' filmography (Gordillo, 2016) or characteristic resources of his cinema such as polyvision and its symbolic constriction (Venet & Rubira, 2019).

2. Method

When wondering about the importance of the story narrated in a filmic text, Aumont and Marie do not hesitate to affirm that fiction is “above all a way of telling us something about our existence, about our relationship with the world and society” (2014, p. 82). The enormous transcendence that the theme of paternity is acquiring in many of the cinematographic proposals

has led to investigate this issue in vogue through a methodological triangulation that oscillates between descriptive analysis and filmic analysis.

The need to delve effectively into the subject has made it necessary to limit the study to an author. The film director Jaime Rosales has been chosen because of his insistence on investigating transcendental and current issues which are changing social reality worldwide, paternity being one of them. The study sample consists of five of Rosales' seven feature films. The films *The Hours of the Day* (2003) and *Tiro en la cabeza* (A shot in the head) (2008) are excluded because of the limited importance of their plots in our object of study. By choosing a descriptive investigation, the aim is to investigate and "detail the behaviour" (Berganza & Ruiz, 2005, p. 54) of the father figure in the films of the filmmaker.

The filmic analysis will focus on searching for fatherhood-related content in the films, understanding by content "the set of ideas, information and effects that the narrated story can arouse" (Aumont & Marie, 2014, p. 84). This content is firstly expressed through audiovisual narrative procedures, determined in the script, vicissitudes, resources and anagnorisis that allow filmmakers to approach a theme and structure a story.

All of this narrative design will have its audiovisual expression through filmic and editing resources. The purpose of the filmic analysis carried out here is to clarify how the *mise-en-scène*, the camera narrative and the subsequent editing help to show and reflect on the theme of paternity in the films of Jaime Rosales. Specifically, the following audiovisual categories are addressed in the representation of fatherhood, which will be collected in a table of analysis: Duration of the shots, Framing, Diegetic space, Characters, Action, Gazes. In some cases, when their relevance is notorious, we also delve into some aspect of sound or editing. All these categories will focus in a special way on the gaze of the father towards the other characters, especially to the sons, daughters and couples, since we discover that this look is represented in a peculiar and allegorical way in Rosales' films.

3. Analysis and results

3.1. *Solitary Fragments* (2007)

Adela and Antonia are two mothers unknown to each other, but who share a tremendous loneliness, shown through various dramatic episodes in their lives. Adela, the youngest, will have to face a terrorist attack; Antonia, close to retirement, will have to face the illness of one of her daughters, the continuous arguments among her three daughters and death.

The story begins with Adela, a single mother, and two absent fathers: the father of the little boy and Adela's father. She starts to prepare the child's food, the phone rings and she picks up. It's her father: "Yes, come on... I'm preparing the food... Don't be long..." He hangs up. Later we see Adela very busy working in her office.

It is not until the next scene that we meet the father of the little boy and Adela's ex-partner. He appears lying on the floor, playing with his son and a ball. Someone knocks at the door; it is Adela. She comes running and apologizes for being late. She is upset to learn that Pedro, her ex-husband, has just given the little boy fruit: "The boy has a schedule, he's not going to eat dinner now, man." Adela collects all the child's things. "The slippers? There they are," Pedro points out. Adela continues to pick up all the child's things, the father does not lift a finger. Then she says to her ex-partner: "Pedro, you haven't given me a penny for two months..., Miguelito doesn't live off air." All these first brushstrokes make it clear that Adela is alone: she is the one who works, inside and outside the house. The father figures collaborate very little. She appears standing or working in front of a computer; Pedro is shown lying down.

Due to space limitations, in *Solitary Fragments* we will focus only on the figure of Pedro's father, for two reasons: he is the one that has a more elaborate development, and he is the one that provides deeper reflections on fatherhood. The next time we see Pedro and Adela together will be from minute 37, after Adela decides to leave town. She moves to Madrid and Pedro goes

to visit Adela and see her new home. In the scene of Pedro's visit to Madrid, Jaime Rosales effectively uses the resource of polyvision, which consists of dividing the screen into two to simultaneously show two spaces of the same action.

This resource will be especially revealing of the lack of communication between the two, because as the director explains, the polyvision "adds expressiveness to the scenes in which the characters, despite wanting to, do not manage to be together" (Vidiella, 2008). Adela and her ex undoubtedly enjoy some time together, but there is an unpleasantness that conveys a certain affliction to the encounters. When Adela and Pedro savour dinner, he asks out of the blue: "Hey, Adela, could you lend me some money?" Adela does not believe it. She looks at him flabbergasted and replies: "I can't believe it, Pedro, are you asking me for money? But how can you have so much nerve, man?" And that is all there is to it. This encounter/non-encounter is visually portrayed through the impossibility of sharing a shot, except for a small moment when Pedro inspects the house and Adela suddenly appears in the frame. In the rest of the scene, both characters appear in separate shots, on a split screen by the use of polyvision (Figure 1), which expresses that common isolation resulting from the impossibility of an encounter of glances, and therefore of an effective and sincere intimacy.

Figure 1. The polyvision resource makes it impossible for the gazes to meet.



Source: Caption from *Solitary Fragments* DVD.

The most painful moment of the film occurs when Adela loses her son in a terrorist attack on a bus. After the event, we see Adela in various very painful scenes, usually alone or with a lack of empathy on the part of those who share the shot with her, such as the bank employee. Adela returns to the village. We see her with her father, who assures her that he remembers nothing of that day. The use of polyvision is, once again, very effective, because, although they are actually looking at each other, the split screen produces the effect of their backs to each other as they talk, creating a visual abyss between them.

After the attack, Adela never calls Pedro –nor does she take his calls– and it is in the village bar that we learn of this circumstance, when Adela is talking to two locals and Pedro appears in the bar and bursts out, "you fuck up my life and now you don't want to talk to me." Although there is no polyvision in this moment, once again both characters never share a shot, the foreshortenings are brutally cut, there are frames in which Pedro appears headless at the shoulder or elbow, which visually causes an effective isolation between them and, incidentally, a portrait of how Pedro loses his mind for a moment.

Then, we see them together at his house. The polyvision is cruelly effective in detonating that gulf of unbridgeable lack of communication between the two of them. They speak more quietly, distantly, and sincerity does not seem to bring them much closer, something once again confirmed by the split screen. Figuero and Orellana (2023) give an account of this moment in their study of motherhood in the films of Rosales:

She explains that she didn't call him because she felt guilty about everything that happened because she had left for Madrid. You blame me too, don't you? –she asks, and he answers yes, but, she adds, he also blames himself. Why, she asks. The answer goes to the core of Rosales's cinema as far as paternity is concerned: “For not being there, for having separated me, for having let you leave, for everything” (Rosales, 2007, m. 82).

Is the absence of the father responsible for all this tragedy that destroys the son and therefore the family community? This “not being” of the father figure, which includes the marital separation, as Pedro himself clarifies to Adela, seems to have for him a transcendent weight in the subsequent drama. Adela blames herself for having moved to Madrid, Pedro blames himself for her absence, for the separation, for having let her go and for everything. The spectator is aware that in this moment of pain both unjustly accuse themselves, but the event is an occasion for reflection on what incidents can lead to tragedy in life, and the absence of the father takes on an important weight in these deliberations.

3.2. *Dream and Silence (2011)*

A married couple, Oriol (architect) and Yolanda (teacher), with two young daughters, live and work in France. During the summer vacations, the family travels to Barcelona, to the grandparents' house. There, a terrible accident will completely change their lives and the relationships between them, as each of them faces the tragic event in very different ways.

Although the father in the story could be categorized mainly as the archetype of the breadwinner who provides economic provision for the family (López, 2022), Rosales also presents the fatherly figure relating to his daughters in some specific moments. In the third scene Celia, the eldest daughter, reads a story to her father (lying down and in the background), who comments on the text. Later he appears working, he is an architect, in a meeting and at the construction site. But the camera will again record another moment of the father with his two daughters waiting for a teacher in what looks like a music school, and later, in a full family meeting in the parents' bed where Oriol and his wife tell their daughters the memories they both have of the birth of the girls.

During a vacation stay, we see different moments of Oriol, on a barge with his father-in-law or at the pier with his mother-in-law and one of his daughters, preparing a barbecue, lying in the garden talking on the cell phone with a friend, amongst others. And we will not notice him again until after the accident in which his eldest daughter loses her life. He and his daughter were in the car.

When the father recovers, communication between the couple is difficult, the mother does not want to talk; she isolates herself, seeking solitude. Until, in a surprising twist of the story, the mother sees her deceased daughter in the park and talks to her quite naturally. When the mother meets her husband Oriol, she tells him what happened and encourages him to go to the park to see if he can see her. The father, disconcerted but understanding, agrees to go in search of his daughter.

We find here one of the moments where Rosales makes, using the narrative of the camera, the inability of the father figure to connect with his deceased daughter most evident, as opposed to the ease with which the mother figure can do so naturally. Figuero and Orellana (2023) analyze from the narrative of the camera the situation that the father experiences when he arrives at the park, which they describe as follows:

The last shot is perhaps the most eloquent from the point of view of audiovisual narrative: the camera follows the father from behind and very close as he wanders through the park. At one point the camera stops and the father continues walking and walks away. Suddenly, the father stops and turns to the camera, which at that moment clearly represents the point of view (POV) of his daughter Celia. The father looks for a few seconds in a last attempt to warn his daughter, but nothing, he is unable to see her, so he ends up turning again and walking away from the camera (we repeat: POV of his daughter) and the park.

Figure 2. The lonely father with his back turned cannot see, nor perceive, his daughter.



Source: Photographed caption from the *Dream and Silence* DVD.

Oriol is unable to see his daughter. Yolanda sees her without a problem, talks to her, jokes with her, and has a great time with her missing daughter. Why can the mother see her and the father cannot? Especially considering that, from the camera's point of view and using offscreen as a narrative resource, it is obvious that the girl is there. When she shares the scene with the mother, we even hear little Celia talking offscreen.

Dream and Silence (2011) shows the impossibility of the father to see and recognize the missing daughter in the park, while the mother is able to do so with great ease. In fact, the end of the story will show the motherly figure contemplating her two daughters playing in the park. What is there in each of these figures –maternal and paternal– so that what one perceives so easily is mission impossible for the other? Even more so since it is indisputable, from the narrative of the camera, that the girl is present. Figuero and Orellana conclude, in this case, that one possibility “is that the light that makes the mother see is her love for her daughter, while the shadow that blinds the father is due to his veiled selfishness, to being so focused on his work and his criteria, his firm rationality” (2023). In any case, as the director himself states, he is always interested in showing in his films human relationships and, in particular, how men and women react to different realities (Cineuropa, 2012). Father and mother constitute two relevant characters in Rosales' films, with different experiences and views. The father figure appears in many of his films as someone absent, a rational person focused on his work (the breadwinner), less open to the relationship with the children, to the mysterious and transcendent, which so interests the director, uneasy about the foundations of the civilization we are building: “I worry that it is a civilization that does not know how to give an answer to the spiritual needs of human beings” (Rosales, 2018). Once again, the camera shows the failed gaze of the father, this time with different resources: the father does not know how to look, falls asleep, is distracted or is unable to listen to Celia, as the mother manages to do.

3.3. *Beautiful Youth* (2014)

Natalia is a young woman who lives with her estranged mother and her younger siblings. When Natalia becomes pregnant with her boyfriend Carlos' child, her mother encourages her to have an abortion. She stays with her father, who supports her, but only morally, without getting involved in specific help. Shortly after the baby is born, she goes to Germany to look for work, leaving her son in the care of her mother and Carlos.

The first paternity we find in the story is, paradoxically, the absence of it. The shots of the first sequence in the house frame the different female characters that inhabit it: Natalia, her mother and her sister. In this succession of shots, the absence of the husband-father figure is evident, with a somewhat claustrophobic framing.

In the third sequence we meet Carlos, Natalia's boyfriend and father of her unborn child. An unrealistic dreamer. In one shot we see Natalia alone and reflective sitting on the grass in a park. The camera pans to the right to frame Carlos, who is playing at throwing stones into a pond. The camera movement links two characters in solitude, and at different levels of maturity (see Table 1).

The absence of the father figure is evident also when the camera takes us into Carlos' house, where he lives with his sick and depressed mother. Carlos has to play the role of caregiver-husband to his dependent mother.

One day Carlos proposes making a porn movie to Natalia. In the producer's interview, she states that Carlos "delivers." He's up to the task sexually, but will he also be up to the task of fatherhood? This question is immediately raised, because as soon as Carlos learns of his girlfriend's pregnancy, he tells a friend: "I won't be able to be a good father, I won't be able to give her anything," and adds: "And I still want to continue doing my own thing."

Finally, Rosales shows us Natalia's father, to whom she goes to tell that she is pregnant, that she wants to have the child, but that her mother wants her to abort. The father tells her that "we are all here to support your decision," but immediately, when the question of where to live is raised, the father tells her: "I can't help you in any way either. I'm sorry, daughter, but I have to go." The camera narrates the dialogue in four brief pan shots, moving from one to the other as it did before with Carlos (see Table 1). Father and daughter share a shot, but not a frame; they are linked but distant, separated. Of the four pan shots, two are back and forth (Natalia-Father-Natalia, and Father-Natalia-Father).

In the next shot they embrace to say goodbye. The father leaves the field and Natalia is left alone in the shot, underlining the absence of the father, of her father. This same planning structure appears in the 81st minute, when Natalia is again in the park with her father so that he can meet his granddaughter (see Table 1). A pan shots and father and daughter at opposite ends of it without sharing the frame. In fact, this is a formula that Rosales uses quite a lot in his filmography when he shoots dialogues, but there is no doubt that in scripted situations like the ones we are describing, this resource acquires a much greater semantic density.

Later, Natalia will talk about her father to her brother, who will affirm: "He doesn't give a shit about me, he doesn't give a shit about me." At another point, when Natalia's mother suggests that she ask her father for money, Natalia states: "Dad has been gone for a long time." This absence of the father is expressed in the semantics of the shot that follows the aforementioned pan shot and that we see below: their bodies and their gazes prevent them from meeting each other.

Figure 3. The The gazes of Natalia and her father do not meet.



Source: Caption from *Beautiful Youth* (Filmin).

After a curious montage sequence constructed with cell phone screens, we discover that Natalia has finally become a mother. We deduce from the messages that she spends a lot of time alone. The first time Rosales shows us Carlos with his daughter is to give her an Atlético de Madrid t-shirt. In the next scene Natalia tries to sleep, but she does not succeed, because Carlos is unable to get hold of the baby, who cries non-stop. In the following moments, Carlos takes on certain tasks with his daughter, but when he meets his friends, he continues to have adolescent conversations. There is a shot resorting to a smart use of the depth of field in which Carlos is seen in the foreground talking to his friends about the Internet, and in the background, Natalia is seen, alone, walking the baby with the stroller. Finally, Natalia goes to Germany alone and leaves her daughter with her mother. Carlos goes to see the child, takes her out for a walk, exercising a partial paternity, under the guardianship of his mother-in-law.

In this film there are, therefore, two paternal figures. Natalia's father is an absent father, but not absolutely absent. Natalia wants to maintain a certain bond and meets him sporadically. The father gives her some advice regarding relationships but does not really involve himself or offer real help. His relationship with Natalia's siblings is non-existent. We are faced with a resigned, elusive and clearly failed paternity.

In contrast, Carlos is a "developing" father. He lacks sufficient maturity, but he does not give up his paternal role. He walks a slow but steady path, and little by little he discovers and accepts his paternity. He is an incomplete, defective father; we can think that in the future he will make it. There is, therefore, no sufficiently solid and consistent father figure in the film. But undoubtedly the young father is more promising than the adult one.

3.4. *Petra* (2018)

Petra goes to work in Jaume's artistic workshop because she is convinced that he is her father. He denies his paternity. Petra will begin a sentimental relationship with his son, Lucas, who hates his father and by whom Petra will become pregnant. Later, Jaume will confess that he is Petra's father, so Lucas commits suicide because he is starring in a case of incest. However, Jaume's wife, Marisa, tells Petra a secret: Lucas was the son of a lover, not of Jaume. After some time, Petra and her daughter begin a sincere relationship with grandmother Marisa.

The film is structured in chapters exposed in a disorderly way. In the first shots, only women appear –as in *Beautiful Youth*–, but all of them refer to Jaume. The first thing Marisa tells Petra about Jaume is that nothing can be learned from him, except how to earn money. Next, Petra meets Jaume's son, Lucas, who is the same age as her. Lucas tells her that his father despises him. Rosales has given us a terrible portrait of an elided male –father and husband– of whom we only know what others think of him.

Following is a chapter in which we are finally introduced to Jaume, with his back turned. He is giving orders to his employees in the workshop. Shortly afterwards, Lucas asks him to give Pau, the son of Teresa, the cook, a job. Jaume agrees in exchange for sex with her, whom he informs that he is going to tell his son Pau, "so that he will wake up." Therefore, Teresa commits suicide. Lucas thus confronts his father in a scene that is cinematographically told through the back-and-forth panning shot dialogue system we saw in *Beautiful Youth*. But although Jaume does not come out at the same time as Lucas, Jaume's reflection in the mirror does, signifying the weight that this castrating paternal image has on Lucas (see Table 1). As a consequence of the above, Lucas decides to leave home, far from his father. The farewell is again narrated in a very suggestive way. More or less in the middle, when Jaume is in the frame, Lucas leaves, entering the shot from the offscreen, with his back turned. It is the definitive disagreement between father and son. The position of the bodies again shows a father with his back to his son. It is a shot similar to the one we analysed in *Beautiful Youth*, and in which the paternal-filial glances cannot meet.

Figure 4. The gazes of Jaume and his son do not meet.



Source: Caption from *Petra* (Filmin).

In chapter IV Jaume denies his paternity. We jump to chapter VI, in which we find that Petra and Lucas have married and have had a daughter. We see in a shot how Lucas plays the father, trying to calm the crying baby. Jaume, with great coldness, summons the couple to tell them that he is indeed Petra's father, in order to "put an end to this false happiness that you have created for yourselves." Later, Lucas tries to kill his father, but finally commits suicide. The rest of the film continues to tell Petra's relationship with Marisa in disarray. Shortly before the end of the film, Teresa's son, treated by Jaume as if he were his own son, murders him in the middle of the field, presumably knowing of his mother's tragedy.

In this film there are three paternal figures. The most significant, without a doubt, is that of Jaume. The script focuses on the narcissistic and egocentric aspects of the character. Jaume is a self-made man, selfish, materialistic and without moral conscience. Rosales defined him in an interview as a psychopath and sociopath (Pena, 2018). He is deplorable as a husband and as a father. His only function with regard to his family is economic (breadwinner). He feels no affection for his son, whom he despises for not being his own clone, an extension of himself. And not only does he despise him, but he is capable of the greatest cruelty, such as letting him get married and then summoning him and informing him that his marriage is incestuous. The only thing he gets from his son is that he hates him until the point of wanting to kill him. Jaume is both an absent father and a castrating father. He is authoritarian but lacks moral authority.

The second father is Lucas who, in the short time he will be able to exercise his paternity, seems to want to be a good father, in the antipodes of Jaume. But, as in *Beautiful Youth*, in the end he becomes nothing more than "a father in the making." The generational scheme is also repeated. Failed older fathers, young fathers in the process of development.

There is a third father, Lucas's biological father, of whom we only know that he never became a father, because he never even knew he was one. Another failed father of the same generation as Jaume's.

3.5. *Wild Flowers* (2022)

Julia is a young mother of two children. She is separated and lives at her widowed father's house with her children, Nico and Rita. She really wants to find a partner who is above all a good father to her children. One day she starts a relationship with Oscar, the brother of a friend. Oscar accepts his role as stepfather exclusively because he likes Julia. Little by little, Oscar strains his relationship with Julia's eldest son, while becoming violently jealous. After a brutal assault Julia breaks up with him. In a second chapter, Julia settles in Melilla to try with Marcos, the biological father of her children, a military man, a good person, but after a period of coexistence admits that being a father is more than he can handle, and Julia returns to Barcelona. Finally, she begins a relationship with Alex, a friend from school, father of a girl, and that, despite their problems, seems to be a stable relationship, which will also lead to the birth of another child.

The film introduces us to four men. One, Oscar, may become the non-biological father of Julia's children. Another, Marcos, who is the biological father and wants to become the "real" father. Alex will develop two facets, as the "adoptive" father of Julia's children and as the biological father of his own. Finally, we cannot forget Julia's father, Roberto, a widower looking to rebuild his love life.

Rosales' presentation of Oscar is very eloquent. We see him alone in a public park, in the middle of the morning –he gives the impression that he is a child–, with sweatpants and a naked torso full of tattoos. He appears very muscular and does physical exercises with a gesture that evidences a somewhat cocky and puerile attitude, inappropriate for his age. He seems a bit narcissistic and with a poor vital horizon. When he begins his relationship with Julia, he never asks her about her children. In the next scene, Julia and Oscar are already dating as a couple. We see how he plays with Nico –and not with Rita– and suddenly tells them that he wants them to call him daddy, because from now on "I am your daddy," to which Nico replies: "I already have a daddy." In his words and gestures, we can see that he fundamentally wants to have everyone –especially Julia– under control. There is a long shot in which we see Oscar kissing Julia in the centre of the frame, and each of the children at the opposite end of the frame. Julia's children are a toll he must pay to get Julia. But we never see any trace of responsibly assumed fatherhood. His possessive feeling is so obvious that he will immediately see Nico as a competitor, a little boy who also claims exclusivity with "his" girl, and therefore will begin to treat him badly and with total disaffection. The role of paternity fades for the sake of the role of alpha male who admits no rival. In a scene in a restaurant, Rosales composes the frame in such a way that Julia and the children form a unit and Oscar is left out, self-marginalized. He reproaches Julia that his children are the centre and not him. This is followed by the final sequence in which, in an absurd and pathetic fit of jealousy, Oscar ends up hitting Julia, who, after calling the police, ends the relationship.

The second chapter is dedicated to Marcos, father of her children. Rosales begins by once again using one of his favourite shots: a pan shot on the far right of which Julia and her father Roberto appear, leaning on each other and holding hands, and on the other Nico and Rita, together, but in the absence of a desired father figure (see Table 1). Roberto is a poor man, without resources, with blunt interests, like soccer, but he is a caring father, always available, without reproaches or blackmail. The first thing we see of Marcos is the opposite of what we saw of Oscar. We see him carefully ironing his clothes while listening to opera. He looks like a responsible man who is working for a future. Rosales establishes a parallelism in the sequence in which Marcos and Julia discuss the possible distribution of beds and mattresses. If Oscar had everything clear and there was no discussion, here Marcos and Julia converse and together they see possibilities in a reasoned and harmonious way. The third parallelism refers to Marcos' relationship with his children. It is a natural, affectionate relationship, and we see how Rosales frames Marcos with the children, leaving Julia out. The children are no longer a means to an end, as they were with Oscar. After a dramatic episode in which Rita goes astray, Marcos tells Julia: "I'm no good as a father." Julia disagrees, but he is convinced. Marcos confesses that he gets overwhelmed when he is with them, that he prefers to keep sending money from a distance. Julia tells him: "You're a child. That's not being a father," to which Marcos replies: "Well, that's the best father I can be." And Julia replies, "That's being a shitty father. That's fucking bullshit." And Marcos replies: "I know, but that's the best I can be. I do the best I can, and yet I don't do it well." After that conversation we see how the relationship declines and is filled with reproaches. That is how this episode ends, and Julia returns to live again with her father in Barcelona. When Julia is without a partner, we see how it is the grandfather who acts as a father figure for the children.

The last chapter is the one about her relationship with Alex. After a scene of their first date in a restaurant, in the next one, she is already pregnant and they are seen together in a preparatory training session. Let us remember that Alex is already a father. In the following sequence, the baby has already been born, Julia is trying to prepare for the public examination and Alex is

trying to stop the baby from crying. Right after that, we already see conflicts in the couple motivated by the different priorities of each character, especially in relation to work and home. When Julia hits rock bottom and says she wants to go with her father, that she cannot take it anymore and has an anxiety attack, Alex reacts, decides to be less selfish and spends more time with her and the children. In the last sequence, the whole family, the couple and the four children, is on an excursion. Rosales chooses the framing very well, with shots in which they all appear together. The end of the film shows Julia, who has stayed a little behind to take a selfie with Alex in the background, walking with the four children, like a devoted father of a large family.

In this film Rosales makes an accurate portrait of four forms of fatherhood. Unlike other films of his in which fathers over sixty are absent and failed fathers, in this one Julia's father, despite his human precariousness, is a man who has not resigned from his fatherhood. In Julia's three couples, all in their thirties, we see an evolution in the models. Oscar is incapable of being a father because of his narcissism. Marcos is a biological father and tries to be a father in action, but he is overcome by his fear. Unlike Oscar, he has parental qualities and skills, but he has stagnated and is unable to go all the way in his fathering.

Finally, Alex is a biological father and an "adoptive" father, he knows how to take care of the children and exercise his paternity, but he is tempted by independence. The difference with Marcos is that he comes to his senses and takes a leap of maturity. Let us say that these are defective paternities in process, of which only the last one seems to have reached a certain satisfactory development in the end.

Rosales himself, in an interview granted to DeCine 21, assumes this typification:

The film shows three men in the life of the protagonist. I think that between the first and the last there is a very big difference in every way. For me the first one is a rather primitive man. The film is told in the present and shows three stereotypes coexisting now, although the most primitive man is destined to disappear. He has five minutes left. Society itself is going to reject him, so he will disappear. The last one on the tape is a man who is more modern, even more feminized. He takes care of the children, he is giving them a bottle, and it seems normal to him, it is not that he is a hero (Sánchez, 2023).

This sense of the feminization of the father has to do with the crisis of the patriarchal model that, according to Lacan, is a consequence of the decline of the virile (Ubieta, 2019).

Table 1. The paternal gaze in Rosales' cinema in 2 scenes and 8 panoramic shots.

<i>Solitary Fragments. Scene 1</i>	
Duration: 4:41''	Scene 1. From minute 1:19:49 to 1:24:30
Framing	Polyvision: Split screen: Wide shots and tight shots
Characters	Adela and Pedro
Location	Adela's house in Madrid
Action	Conversation about guilt
Gaze	Polyvision prevents gazes to meet
<i>Dream and Silence. Scene 2</i>	
Duration: 5:44''	Scene 2. From minute 1:11:40 to 1:17:24
Framings	Long shot, medium shots from behind and POV shot from a worm's eye view
Characters	Oriol and his daughter (O/S)
Location	Park: different places
Action	Oriol looks for his daughter, watches tennis, sleeps on a bench
Gaze	Oriol from behind or asleep does not see his daughter
<i>Beautiful Youth. Pan shots 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5</i>	

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Duration: 34''	Panning 1. From minute 05:47 to 06:21
Framing	Full shot (Natalia) and Long shot (Carlos)
Characters	Natalia and Carlos
Location	Park: a prairie (Natalia) and park: a pond (Carlos)
Action	Natalia, thoughtful and sitting down, and Carlos kicking stones
Gaze	Natalia looks down and Carlos looks to the pond and the stones
Duration: 13''	Panning 2. From minute 32:07 to 32:20
Characters	Natalia and Father
Duration: 53''	Panning 3. From minute 32:21 to 33:14
Characters	Natalia - Father -Natalia
Duration: 25''	Panning 4. From minute 33:15 to 33:41
Characters	Padre – Natalia – Padre
Framing	From Extreme Close Up to Extreme Close Up
Location	Park
Action	Having a conversation
Gaze	They look at each other
Duration: 17''	Panning 5. From minute 80:49 to 81:06
Framing	Medium Long Shot and Extreme Close Up
Characters	Natalia's Father with grandson and Natalia
Location	Park: swings and Park: bench
Action	Grandfather swinging his grandson and Natalia sitting down, pensive
Gaze	Grandfather looks at the grandson and Natalia gazes down
<i>Petra. Pan shots 1 & 2</i>	
Duration: 85''	Panning 1. From minute 24:20 to 25:45
Framing	American Shot – Medium Shot – American Shot
Characters	Lucas (Jaume reflected in the mirror) - Jaume - Lucas (Jaume reflected in the mirror)
Location	Int. room – Sofa – Int. room
Action	Lucas asking - Jaume answers - Lucas reacting
Gaze	They both look at one another
Duration: 85''	Panning 2. From minute 27:10 to 28:40
Framing	Medium Close Up (Lucas) – Medium Long Shot (Jaume)
Characters	Lucas and Jaume
Location	Ext. <i>masía</i> (traditional Catalan house)
Action	Lucas informing and Jaume reacting
Gaze	They both look at one another
<i>Wild Flowers. Pan shot 1</i>	
Duration: 16''	Panning 1. From minute 42:25 to 42:41
Framing	Two shot (Julia and her father) and American shot (the kids)
Characters	Julia and his father and the kids
Location	A bench at the station and another bank
Action	Father and daughter in affectionate attitude and children playing together

Source: Own elaboration.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Analysing the films from the perspective of the treatment of fatherhood let us outline a sketch of the portrait that Rosales' films propose of the postmodern father figure.

First of all, we must highlight how Rosales portrays –through the narrative of the camera and editing– that failed paternal gaze, which does not meet the others', especially those closest to him: children and partner. Through visual resources, such as polyvision, the positioning of the characters or the panning movement, the protagonists are isolated in solitary and individual frames, which propitiate the non-encounter. These failed paternities have their audiovisual reflection in a physical language that manifests in a remarkable way the inability of closeness.

We also highlight that there seems to be a clear evolution in his filmography (Morán, 2018). As it progresses, the father figure is more present and has greater relevance, achieving a very significant weight in the plot of the last two films. From the completely absent father of the first two films, we move on to a father who is somewhat more present, although his presence can be toxic. In the last three films, positive or potentially positive fatherhoods appear. Curiously, Rosales' film career runs parallel to the story of his own fatherhood, since the filmmaker's first daughter was born in 2004 and the second in 2006.

It should be noted that the development of the theme of paternity is always treated by Rosales in parallel and inseparable from that of maternity.

Generally, Rosales establishes two very different generational models. On the one hand, he tends to paint a very negative portrait of the elderly –usually over sixty– paternal characters. They have failed as fathers, they have chosen to be absent from their children's lives (*Solitary Fragments*, *Beautiful Youth*), or any affective bond with them has disappeared (*Petra*). The exception would be Julia's father (*Wild Flowers*), who probably will not reach that age. Petra's father, a famous and admired man, is for his son Lucas a castrating and annihilating figure. As the famous psychoanalyst Recalcati would say, "the subject remains crushed under the thick shadow of the ideal Father." Jaume, far from being ideal, is a father whose freedom "is reduced simply to the absence of bonds, running the risk of precipitating into a narcissism without a future" (Recalcati, 2015). In contrast, the silent availability of Julia's father in *Wild Flowers*, responds to what Levinas defined as the most direct form that responsibility can assume in the face of another's claim: the "Here I am!," which perfectly embodies this character (Recalcati, 2015).

However, it is in the characters between the ages of 25 and 35 that Rosales constructs paternities in process, rather than failed paternities. In *Solitary Fragments*, *Beautiful Youth*, and *Wild Flowers*, we find fragile, immature, unsure of themselves characters, full of doubts and failures, but trying to learn to be fathers. Only in the last scenes of the last film does it seem that this fatherhood is finally achieved successfully. That is why we can speak of a positive progression of the father figure in the films of Rosales.

If we imagine a dramatic arc of paternity that runs through his filmography, it can be said that it starts from a periclitated and failed model, that of the father who is the breadwinner, who disappears as soon as he can from the family horizon. Faced with this failed model, Rosales proposes a path of attempts, of paternities in progress, for which there seem to be no recipes extractable from the experience of previous generations. In this sense, at the same time that Rosales writes the death certificate of a type of unattached fatherhood, he proposes a horizon of restoration of the father figure that goes through trial and error, a fatherhood in development. It is clear in the last father of his filmography, Alex, who finally understands that the old patriarchal model of being dedicated primarily to work while the mother takes care of the human and emotional needs of the children is no longer valid. A new fatherhood in which "although certain patriarchal patterns still exist, it is necessary to consider the possible transformation from a provider, authoritarian father to a closer and more affectionate one, with greater participation in the home, upbringing and education of the children" (Moreno, 2013).

Many authors, such as Jiménez Godoy (2004, p. 8), see the birth of these new modalities of fatherhood, far from the static rigorism of a patriarchy with little affection, as the only possibility for the future of the paternal role:

It is not strange for anyone to realize that new practices and representations of fatherhood are currently taking shape in the context of the home that modify, in some way, those mythical images, that rigidity characteristic of patriarchal society, when it comes to looking at the father, assigning him functions that, from an emotional point of view, looked down on the father-father relationship. The close presence of the father is a basic need for today's and tomorrow's generations.

It can be said that Rosales' films have become brighter, more hopeful: "My optimism arises because I believe that we are really getting better in all senses. For me it is very evident that societies are evolving for the better... socially as well. Women have nothing to do with it. It has gotten better" (Sánchez, 2023). This optimism, as has been reflected in this article, is also present in the development of the paternal figure through his films, which is posited with a more promising future than that of the past and even the present.

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