

**A cinema of resistance: subversive  
cinematographic practices under  
political repression and propaganda  
during the first “25 years of peace” in  
Francoist Spain**

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## **A cinema of resistance: An Introduction**

There is a need for censorship; I say it and repeat it, even in a moment where it would be more popular to claim the opposite in certain media. There is a need [for censorship] because cinema is meant for the masses (...). Classifying, forbidding, or in other words: censoring, it is the logical consequence of the potential hazards of cinema. (45)<sup>1</sup>

—José María García Escudero (1962)

Ever since its inception cinema has been – especially in totalitarian societies – subject to state control, both in terms of censorship and propaganda. Official censorship has existed since the dawn of cinema until well into modern democracies. In the case of Spain the earliest controls were regarding moral aspects and date back to 1913, when a Civil Governor denied public exhibition rights to films that offended public morality (D’Lugo, “Film and censorship” 677). With respect to the years previous to the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) film historian Caparrós Lera cites a decree from 1935, which sets out the state intervention in the exhibition of cinema regarding political issues. This decree dating from October 25, entrusted the Minister of Governance with the authority to ban any kind of films that seek to distort historical facts or to discredit the reputation of institutions or dignitaries of the motherland (60). Although the period subject of my study is from 1939 onwards the citation is relevant in this case to make clear that censorship existed before Francoism and that it was not a novelty for Spanish filmmakers to be confronted with it in the period from 1939 to 1975. However, the system set up during Francoism strengthened the already existing one, intensifying a moral censorship with the inclusion of the ecclesiastical hierarchy as an active agent in Spanish censorship. The political situation in Spain, which suffered a dictatorship under National Catholicism for almost 40 years, placed Spanish cinema at the bottom of world cinema precisely because of the political and the religious censorship.<sup>2</sup> During that time, especially in the first decade, Spain’s cinema

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<sup>1</sup> All translations from Spanish are mine unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> National Catholicism was a distinguishing mark of Francoist ideology characterized by the close relation

was mainly based on escapist folkloric films, and on historical and religious films produced and/or supported with the regime's consent to serve as propaganda. On the top of this, the regime exerted repression under rigorous control and censorship. However, this control was most of the time arbitrary due to a lack of public written rules in the form of a code, which will be finally implemented in 1963 by the General Director of Cinematography José María García Escudero.<sup>3</sup> Until then there was no guideline to be followed by censors and filmmakers in terms of what was or was not acceptable to portray in a film, in which way, and with what nuances. Rather, the personal criterion of each of the censors prevailed, which led to some contradictions within the Francoist institutions and to the search of subtle ways to avoid censors' cuts.

During Francoism (1939-1975) a series of political repressive laws and organizations were laid down. The first aim of these control mechanisms was to suppress any possible dissidence while maintaining and spreading the political and moral ideas of the extreme Catholic and fascist regime. They remained active, to varying degrees, during the almost 40 years of dictatorship and during the transition period to democracy (1975-1978), at the end of which censorship was definitely abolished. Used as a tool for dissident's repression, this state control led some filmmakers to the search of alternatives and sideways to avoid or minimize the constraints and the restrictions of censorship. Through these alternative ways, which I call subversive cinematographic practices, dissident voices were in continuous struggle with censorship, while at the same time they had to fight to free the spectator from the chains of the propaganda machinery. The propaganda in turn, was not only state's official documentaries and newsreels but also feature films from directors who followed the ideological principles of the regime. These directors, in accordance with their ideals, supported the idea of the justification of the *coup d'état* (July 18, 1936) against the democratically elected government of the Second Spanish Republic, which preceded and led to a Civil War (1936-1939) and to a posterior dictatorship (1939-1975) with its resulting repression. Those directors supporting the regime strengthened this justification through a historical cinema portraying heroes' great deeds that could show the strong

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between Church and state.

<sup>3</sup> José María García Escudero held the position of General Director of Cinematography in two occasions during the Franco regime between 1951 and 1952 and between 1962 and 1968. The book that he wrote in 1962, *Cine español*, from which the opening quotation stems, was already analyzing some of the important themes incorporated in the 1963 norms.

nation Spain was before the Republicans coming to government and through a religious cinema propagating the Catholic morals and values defended by the regime, against the “amoral” left Republican ones.

This thesis will then provide to the reader with a study of both forms of control – censorship and propaganda – during the first 25 years of Francoism, as well as of a study of the resistance it encountered. Following several directors from different ideologies during that time, I will illustrate this black period in Spanish cinema. This research was triggered by the idea of reconstructing the immediate past in order to fight against the loss of memory and to revive a Spanish history of film that should not be denied nor forgotten and that is barely known and studied by international scholars. Furthermore, it also responds to the aim of digging in a period in which, despite the intention to extinguish creativity and aesthetic experiment, which was encouraged by the state’s repression and coming to power of Franco, some films became an instrument for social criticism. In addition to this, I aim to challenge and question the efficiency of the mechanisms used by the state. I will do that by focusing on dissident practices that in turn were being repressed by the state apparatuses. I will approach to the ways this criticism manifests itself and the reasons that made this criticism possible in a repressive regime like Francoism. I will address this through the work of both internal and external dissident voices. In other words, I will explore the works of directors that were ideologically close to the regime but still critiqued their policies, and through the works of directors absolutely opponents of the regime.

This thesis sets out to demonstrate the artistic, political and social importance of some of the movies produced in this period. These works need to be re-evaluated, both despite and because of the imprint of censorship and self-censorship that unfortunately will always remain there. As director Juan Antonio Bardem stated in his memoirs: “because dear reader, Franco’s censorship will last forever” (210). This responds to the lamentable fact that the copies available to the public and to researchers are most of the time the censored ones as the Administration of that time had the tendency to destroy the cut scenes. I wish then to bring to light those films and disclose to the reader what only archives may provide today, i.e. the censorship they suffered and the real intentions of the filmmakers. In this thesis I also wish to give visibility to a cinema that is ignored in many college courses and

even today remains unseen especially outside Spain, except for their *premières* at International Film Festivals in the time of their release, and that incidentally permitted a small audience to be able to watch the uncensored versions. As Bardem suggested in an essay written while he was imprisoned in 1976:

Sometimes those foreign audiences saw its uncensored versions and had the chance to see the films in its true and original dimension. They were able to see scenes that Spanish audiences had been deprived of with the tacit consent of Spanish censors and that tacit consent demonstrates two things. The first one is the poor conception that the Administration had of the mental maturity of the Spaniards. And the second is the implied acceptance that their censorship criteria and mechanisms nullify Spanish cinema for the competition with foreign cinema. (*Arte, política, sociedad* 20-21)

From such point of view, it is understandable that unlike other European cinemas such as Italian Neorealism, the French *Nouvelle Vague* or the British Social Realism, the Spanish cinema of this period does not stand out today. While other countries experimented with the medium of cinema, Spanish *auteurs* barely existed in the 40s and the well-known directors of the time were either exiled, censored, or part of the propagandistic machinery that was controlled by the state.

In the pages of this introductory chapter and before continuing with the structure of the thesis, I will give an accent of the historical context of Spain and summarize some important events from that period and with which the subsequent chapters will be easier to follow. Throughout the chapters I will also clarify any political terminology that will appear in the text either within the body of the text or as a footnote when required. For an accurate depiction of the historical events and particular history details I have consulted several sources from different historians, publishing dates and ideologies. One of the main obstacles I encountered was the fact that, especially from this period, often history books offer biased perspectives. After referring to some books on the history of Francoism by Spanish historian Ricardo de la Cierva, the easily perceived partisan view of his writings led me to discarding any of his accounts as a historical reference for this thesis.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> As an example of the biased and propagandistic viewpoint of the Spanish historian Ricardo de la Cierva, I would like to mention the following lines written after a chapter entitled “La República imposible” (The Impossible Republic) in a textbook on the history of Spain; “we will be delighted if our readers, at the end of this chapter, would retain this only conclusion; the Republic was the last phase of the corrupted Restoration,



Alternatively, I decided to make a more suitable approach by looking at this topic through the work of foreign historians and journalists such as Herbert R. Southworth, Hugh Thomas and contemporary historian Paul Preston, thanks to whom the propagandistic books on contemporary history of Spain have been challenged.<sup>5</sup> British historian and prestigious hispanist expert on Francoism, Paul Preston, has been taken as a main reference in this regard due to his vast research and writings on the period. By the same token, I have taken as a reference within the purview of history of film the accounts of Spanish professor Román Gubern, including his books about legislation. Works such as *Un cine para el cadalso* (1975) and *La censura* (1981) have guided me during the research phase. These will be the main sources I draw on throughout the chapters in terms of what I have considered the most accurate information regarding the historical events and legislation on censorship. Most of the historical references that will appear throughout the chapters will be, as the reader may have already noticed, the immediate antecedents of Franco's regime, i.e. the 1936's *coup d'état*. But it is also important to briefly mention within this historical context what happened right before this uprising due to the fact that the propaganda apparatuses of the state and its followers were, from then on, mainly focused on justifying the events with films that nurtured and kept alive for a very long time the myth of the evil communism. To this I will turn now.

The Second Republic in Spain was established on April 14, 1931, and it was the democratic political regime that replaced Alfonso XIII's reign and the political regime prior to Francoism. At that time, middle-class liberals (left Republicans) and moderate

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and it is the historical antecedent of the inevitable Civil War" (275). This statement, which clearly justifies the *coup* that led to the Spanish Civil War the same way the Franco regime was trying to justify through historical films, was certainly not a very objective way of presenting a historical account, especially when stating the opposite a bit later; "our analysis will be neither pro nor against the Republic" (275).

<sup>5</sup> Some of these authors such as Hugh Thomas or Herbert R. Southworth published books at the time of Franco's regime in *Ruedo Ibérico*, a publishing house of the leftist exiles in Paris. Due to their attempts to refute the official ideology of Francoism and their fight against propaganda introducing their books clandestinely in Spain, they may be considered as counter-propaganda. However, they are internationally highly recognized today. For instance, Herbert R. Southworth's *Guernica! Guernica!* (1977) on the air raid on the city of Guernica on April 26, 1937, has been revisited in 2013 by Dr. Ángel Viñas, who added to this account a research study on the attempts of Francoist historiography to disguise the facts. Historian Paul Preston highlighted in an article written in 1982 how Ricardo de la Cierva's 1968 "unusable" bibliography of the Spanish Civil War, although remarkable by its extension, was worthless for its "shameful errors and omissions" [stresses made by Preston]. In turn, Ricardo de la Cierva himself also discredited publications such as *El mito de la cruzada de Franco* by Herbert R. Southworth in his work *Historia básica de la España actual: 1800-1975*. As the reader may have noticed, the discredit and critique comes from both sides. However, with these examples I hope I had given credit to my decision on which sources to rely on.

Socialists came to power in coalition hoping to introduce progressive social and secular reforms against right-wing policies that were mainly granting privilege to the upper classes and the Church. However, the creation of CEDA (Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas / Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Right-wing Groups), – a conservative Catholic party that would later embrace fascism – achieved in 1933 to destabilize the left coalition, which went then separately to the November 1933 elections without being able to finish the aimed reforms. The non-Republican right formed by CEDA and the Liberal Party got the majority of the votes. However, it was the center-right Republicans, the PRR (Partido Radical Republicano / Radical Republican Party), the ones who formed government with CEDA. This new government, which stopped the reforms that initially started the first Republican government, incited with its policies groups of socialist, communist and anarchist miners to rise up in Asturias in October 1934; the so-called Revolution of October 1934. In this way, what had started as a general strike action – although only succeeding in Asturias –, turned into armed riots that were finally defeated by the Army coincidentally under the command of General Francisco Franco. At the same time, the left wing parties made a new alliance after the experience of this government and in February 1936 won again the elections as Frente Popular (Popular Front), which was formed and supported by several left-wing parties, unions and also some anarchist groups such as CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo / National Confederation of Labour). Unions mobilized themselves against factory owners, and right-wing propaganda reinforced the idea of a “red threat” in the society building the idea of a crusade against communism and the Republic as an extension of it. This way, both political sides were being enraged one another, and the intriguers finally plotted the overthrow on July 18, 1936, against the democratically elected government. The Spanish Civil War had then commenced with this military intervention that was meant to be followed by risings all over Spain. A quick intervention was expected by the plotters who did not anticipate the strength of the working-class resistance, and the unsuccessful attempt of the *coup* led to a long Civil War, which was won in 1939 by the insurgents – also known as the National Side –with the aid of the Italian and German fascisms. As a result, the democratic Republican regime that was established in 1931 – known as the Second Republic – was turned down and replaced by a 40 year-dictatorship.

The insurgents, who ultimately won the fratricidal war and established the following dictatorial regime, achieved to present under only one label a wide range of ideologies, movements and even creeds in the form of an “evil” communism, which was necessary to avoid and fight against. This was pursued through propaganda – not only film propaganda – in such a way that even today there is still a great division of Spanish society between those who firmly reject any possible justification of these events, and those who, if no longer supporting a dictatorship and the repression that it brought about, and whilst denying any kind of violent repression, are still justifying the *coup* due to an unsustainable form of government carried out by the different Prime Ministers of the Republic until 1936. Furthermore, even today, being leftist – either supporting or belonging to the political left – or just defending a possible future Republic in contemporary Spain, is considered by many, especially within the most conservative circles, as following the creeds of communism, using this term pejoratively.

I have chosen the first 25 years of dictatorship in Spain as a time frame for this research because those were the years in which the bases of Francoist censorship and cultural repression were founded. They were also the most arbitrary and contradictory years regarding the repressive and propagandistic actions taken by state apparatuses – which do not make it a less pernicious censorship. These were also the years in which the most determined dissidents, both internally and externally, raised their voices against the regime’s policies. The subsequent period of the 1960s and 1970s has been discarded on account of the fact that there existed a transition between generations who, at the same time, created their own identity hallmark. These filmmakers belonged to either the so-called NCE (Nuevo Cine Español / New Spanish Cinema) or the Escuela de Barcelona (Barcelona School) and are prolific enough to have their own dissertation. The time frame object of study in this thesis also corresponds to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Civil War, which had ironically been referred to by the regime as “the 25 years of peace.” This anniversary, that was nationwide celebrated with military parades of ex-combatants, and that was ultimately fostered and supported by the propagandistic documentary *Franco, ese hombre* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1964), was as a matter of fact aimed to justify the *coup d’état* that gave rise to the Spanish Civil War (1936-9). Hoping that the aforementioned explanations will help the reader to politically and historically frame the

period in discussion and to better follow the argument of the thesis, I would like to move forward to the methodology I have used and the structure of what comprises this thesis.

For the completion of this thesis on the subversive cinematographic practices under Francoism it has been necessary to research not only on those practices but also on the censorship and propaganda machinery that those dissident voices were fighting against. As stated before, Román Gubern's accounts on film history and legislation from the Francoist period have been an important source for the underpinning of this research. Besides these secondary sources I have consulted directly the historical sources in archives and newspaper libraries. Some of these sources are the film magazines that were being published at that time, especially the official Francoist magazine *Primer Plano*. In this way, through the consultation of this particular publication I have been able to understand both the commercial propaganda given to the films, as well as the political propaganda in terms of cinematographic policies that the regime was offering to the public. In addition to the research on the mechanisms (organizations, laws, propaganda...) that the regime was using in order to silence the dissident voices of the regime, the research has been completed through the consultation of archives recently opened to the public. In particular, the General Archive of the Administration (AGA) and the Filmoteca Española (Spanish Film Archive) have played a decisive role in this study. Many of the films objects of study and the rest of the work of the directors explored in this thesis were discontinued and therefore no longer available on the market. Hence, the Spanish Film Archive has been an important source for the viewing of these films as well as for the consultation of some scripts. The General Archive of the Administration in turn holds a huge collection of official documents produced in the period of 1939-1975. However, the complexity of the database and the fact that it can only be consulted *in situ* made the searching process extremely slow and rather ineffective. At the same time, and although the AGA conducts restoration and preventive treatment of the holdings, it was very unsatisfactory the disorganization and poor condition I encountered of some of the folders in which these historical documents are stored. In addition to this, because the copies of available scripts are in process of being transferred to the Spanish Film Archive, the consulted database made the research very complex due to its lack of accuracy. Nevertheless, the archival material that I have consulted such as the censorship reports from the films' case-studies have been very valuable as reference tools

to elaborate the theses that this dissertation raises. Regarding the sources, I would like to inform the reader that all translations from Spanish (excerpts from films, archival, critical, and legal sources) are mine, with the exception of the dialogues extracted from the film *¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* (José Luis García Berlanga, 1953), which belong to the subtitles of a DVD copy. In the case of the legal terms, the names I have used in this thesis respond to the original form with which they were issued. As nuances may vary according to country's legislation, I would like to clarify them here for the Spanish case, making a distinction between "decree" and "order." The first one refers to a rule of law issued by the Head of State, and the latter refers to a legal norm put into effect by any of the Ministers (Ministerial Order) and is hierarchically below the decree. Lastly, I have used the words "law" and "norm" in a broad sense to refer to any of the rules enforced to govern behavior, including decrees and orders.

In this thesis I have followed a historical and aesthetic approach in order to understand the Spanish cinematographic practices of a concrete political period – a dictatorial regime – in which surveillance was a crucial way of repression to make sure that anything out of the one-party state ideology could reach the masses. At the same time this repression, which not only has been exerted through censorship but also justified by propaganda, has been challenged by dissident voices. Correspondingly, this thesis has been set up with these two tendencies in mind. On the one hand censorship and propaganda and on the other hand the resistance it encountered. In chapter one I will address the state intervention both through censorship and through propaganda, and the propaganda carried out by those directors who were not civil servants but whose ideology – closely related to the regime's ideology – led them to justify what the regime was defending. The regime was using these repressive mechanisms in order to silence the dissident voices and any attempt to depict identities that differed from the principles of the Movimiento Nacional (National Movement), which, also through propaganda, was setting the moral and political ideas of the regime.<sup>6</sup> In chapter two and three I will then address two kinds of dissidence that challenged those repressive mechanisms. The case studies chosen in chapter 2 and chapter 3 as a leitmotif for the

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<sup>6</sup> Movimiento Nacional (National Movement) or simply known as Movimiento was the totalitarian organization led by General Francisco Franco which through its Falangist and fascist ideology set out the Catholic morals and political ideas of the regime. It was composed of the only-one party (Falange), a yellow union (Sindicato Vertical) and all the civil servants working for the regime.

research of film censorship respond precisely to the idea of subversion that I put forward in the title of this thesis. This subversion worked both as internal and as external opposition. In chapter 2, José Antonio Nieves Conde, a Falangist filmmaker closely related to the regime, represents the internal dissidence with a realist style. Chapter 3, on the contrary, presents the external dissidence during the same years through directors Luis García Berlanga and Juan Antonio Bardem, the latter of whom was a member of the unlawful Communist Party. I will examine the first collaborative films of these two directors who fought and critiqued a regime that had them prisoners of freedom of speech.

In chapter one the work of José Luis Sáenz de Heredia appears as a case-study through which I will explore the boundaries interweaving between censorship and state propaganda. I will address this by analyzing *Raza* (1941) and its new release 10 years later as *Espíritu de una raza* (1950), and the already mentioned *Franco, ese hombre* (1964). These films have in common not only the fact that Sáenz de Heredia directed them, but that they are all films-homage of the *Caudillo* – military dictator, as Franco was referred to. Whereas *Franco, ese hombre* is a hagiography of Franco, *Raza* has the peculiarity that it was based on a novel written by Franco himself, although this fact was disclosed two decades later.

In chapter two I focus on the case-study of José Antonio Nieves Conde who, as a Falangist, constitutes one of the main contradictions in terms of cultural dissidence in Francoist Spain. Among the long list of films he directed, the ones presented here are the ones that the director himself was very proud of and – as stated in some interviews – the kind of cinema he was mainly interested in. Although some Francoist doctrines are embodied in the discourse of Nieves Conde – as the reader will notice – he was at the same time concerned with the social situation in Spain and the autarchic policies of the regime that were bringing nothing but poverty to the Spanish peoples. In this way, Nieves Conde carries out a critique that suffered fiercely the consequences of censorship. The films presented in this chapter are *Balarrasa* (1950), *Surcos* (1951) and *El Inquilino* (1958). These last two presented with a neorealist aesthetic, much like the films made in Italy after the Second World War.

In chapter three I follow this focus on dissidence and on the same period. However, the directors presented here were instead outspokenly opposing the regime, and the kind of

cinema they were doing was presenting a critique to the political and social situation of the time in a subtler way by means of the use of comedy to avoid or minimize censorship. *Esa pareja feliz* (1951) and *¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* (1953) are the films that I will analyze in this chapter and that were collaborative works done by directors Luis García Berlanga and Juan Antonio Bardem at the beginning of their careers. Although they had their own particular style in directing, I will show how they together challenged both the social and the cinematographic conventions through their films. In addition to their films I will address the First National Cinematographic Conversations, an event known as the Salamanca Conversations, which took place on May 1955 building a spirit of change within the film professionals that assisted.

Whereas I have approached the first chapter in a rather descriptive way by introducing to the reader the legislation, mechanisms and principles of the censorship machinery that were to remain in place until 1978, three years after Franco's death, I have needed a more analytical approach in the case of chapters two and three, together with an archival research on the *oeuvre* of the directors' subject of study. I have focused on the ways those who were being persecuted by the "institutional scissors" managed to either avoid or minimize those restrictions and I have tried to reveal how different the work of these filmmakers have been from their original intentions. Nonetheless, one of the main challenges I have encountered especially when trying to excavate the primary intentions of these directors, has been the lack of the first versions of the scripts sent to the Censorship Board. The reports from the censors consulted in the archive were constantly making references to this or that idea stated in the script but it remained precisely that: an idea, an interpretation made by the civil servant. This is because the scripts submitted were returned to their owners after its revision. Only the officially registered copies of scripts, the approved ones, and therefore the ones that correspond with the filmed version, were the ones available. Before I examine the cinema of resistance through different dissident practices such as internal and external dissidence, which I address in chapters two and three, I will first concentrate on the state control mechanisms of censorship and propaganda in chapter one, to which I will now turn.





## **Part I      Crusading Cinema**



# 1

## **The onset of censorship and the propaganda machinery: the fascist myth of race and the evil communism in José Luis Sáenz de Heredia's films**

The good men will always win the battle. They are the ones who feel very deeply the supreme seed of the race. They are the chosen ones to lead the project of returning Spain to its destiny. They are the ones who will raise the flags in the triumphal altar. For them the happy Victory Day will arrive.

—Excerpt from the film *Raza* (1941)

In the following pages I will introduce the propaganda and censorship machinery of the Spanish fascist regime (1939-1975). I will explore the mechanisms that were used to rewrite a part of the history of Spanish society, and present the principles that were used to silence any possible dissident voice that could constitute a threat to the values of the regime, before turning my attention to these dissident voices in the next chapters.

First, it is important to explain for the understanding of this particular case how was done the organization of censorship and propaganda during the Civil War and how all these administrative procedures slowly established the Francoist censorship and propaganda machinery. In addition to the legal mechanisms adopted to establish censorship, I will explore the production of what has been called “Cine de Cruzada” (Crusading Cinema). This cinema refers to a patriotic cinema from the beginning of Francoism that addressed religious and military topics to enhance the moral and social values of the regime. The main goal of this propagandistic cinema was to indoctrinate a citizenship that had recently emerged from a fratricidal conflict resulting from an attempted *coup d'état* and that was necessary to justify in order to perpetuate the dictatorial regime. Hence, the importance of *Raza* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1941) from which the opening quotation stems. This film, which was written by General Franco himself, ended up being self-censored only to be released ten years later under a different name, *Espíritu de una Raza* (1950) and with a new soundtrack aimed this time for an international audience. In addition to this fiction

film and its subsequent self-censored version, I will also analyze in this chapter another film by the same director, José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, who again put his cinematographic skills at the service of the regime. The main purpose of this chapter is to present the mechanisms of censorship and propaganda through a close-analysis of two of the most clear cinematographic examples that helped and ensured a regime prevail until 1975. These mechanisms, together with the political ideology of the regime itself, and the kind of cinema that it established would soon be challenged by the dissident filmmakers that will be analyzed in the subsequent chapters.

### **The onset of censorship and the propaganda machinery**

As already indicated with some detail in the introductory chapter, a military uprising took place in Spain on July 18, 1936. Right after this attempt to quickly usurp the democratically elected government of the Second Spanish Republic, General Francisco Franco was appointed Head of State at the end of September 1936 taking control of all state powers. However, the resistance of the Republican government and its followers managed to avert the *coup* at the time, which led the country into a Civil War that would last until April 1, 1939. This Civil War divided the Spanish society into two, the one side known as the National Front or National Side – the insurgents; the other as the Republicans, who, thanks to the propaganda machinery of the regime, have been known for years as ‘the Reds’. With this situation of a divided country, and with the main cinematographic infrastructures – Madrid and Barcelona – within the Republican Side, Franco did not only search for support in Lisbon, Berlin or Rome for his propaganda productions during the war (Gubern, *Historia del cine español* 164), but he also promptly started to lay the foundations of censorship in every single “liberated” territory.<sup>7</sup> Spanish cinema, which was artistically quite developed at that moment, dropped significantly with the advent of the war. This situation turned the Spanish film production into a propaganda battle. Whereas the National Side had to deal with the lack of production infrastructures and materials, which they found in ideologically aligned countries, the Republican Side not only had access to cinematographic equipment and facilities but they were also supported

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<sup>7</sup> The National Side, in their crusade against “the red threat”, was – in their words – “liberating” territories. Thus, the liberated territories are those that the insurgents besieged and captured while advancing with their troops.

by international intellectuals and filmmakers such as Esfir Shub, André Malraux, Joris Ivens or Ernest Hemingway among others, who endorsed the Republican cause with films that are well-renowned today.<sup>8</sup> Despite this support, it seems that the propaganda from the Republican Side failed to success because it was quite divided in different factions, each of them following and propagating their own mottos. The National propaganda was however singing unanimously encouraging and giving rise to a heroic emotion that was needed to save Spain from those who they thought had led the country towards decadency.

Together with this propaganda that was already justifying the military uprising, one of the first things Franco did as the Head of State was to create a preventive censorship to hinder the propaganda from the Republican Side.<sup>9</sup> This way, the recently created state banned and controlled any kind of media activity or artistic expression that could be considered endangering or contradicting the founding principles of the upcoming regime, whose power was sprouting at that time and ultimately lasted until the dictator's death on November 20, 1975. Consequently, on March 21, 1937, the General Government of Spain issued an Order in which the Censorship Cabinets of Seville and Corunna were established, which set in the film censorship apparatus. After that, on October 19, the General Secretariat of the State transferred out both Cabinets to report directly to the recently created Press and Propaganda Delegation. In turn, this Delegation created the Supreme Film Censorship Board by Order of November 18, 1937, which also established the composition of the boards and its functions, as well as the service fees that were used to finance the costs of the commission and the civil servants working in it. The Supreme Film Censorship Board was based in Salamanca, and the Sevillian Cabinet would have to report directly to it while the Cabinet of Corunna was extinguished. Both institutions, the Sevillian Cabinet and the Supreme Board, were comprised of a president and a secretary appointed by the Press and Propaganda Delegation and three officers representing the

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<sup>8</sup> For instance, Esfir Shub filmed *Ispaniya* (1939). André Malraux filmed *L'espoir - Sierra de Teruel* (1945), which was based on his own novel *L'espoir*. This film was shot between 1938 and 1939 and financed by the Republican government. However, the film could not be used as propaganda because it was not edited until its European release in 1945, and it was not shown in Spain until 1978 when censorship was definitely abolished. As for Joris Ivens, he filmed in 1937 the medium-length film *The Spanish Earth*, a propaganda documentary with Hemingway's voice over in the English version.

<sup>9</sup> Although the War did not officially end until April 1, 1939, with the unconditional surrender of the Republican forces, it was on October 1, 1936 when Franco was appointed Head of State. However, on April 19, 1939, a military parade known as "desfile de la Victoria" (the victory parade) was held on the streets of Madrid symbolizing the end of the conflict that will lead to a new period known as Francoism.

military, the ecclesiastical authority and a representative of the Falange Española tradicionalista y de las J.O.N.S.<sup>10</sup> This “trinity” of Army, Church and state would control both the production and the exhibition of cinema for the following four decades.

By means of these two mechanisms – film propaganda and censorship – the regime tried to enhance the idea of Spanishness and control the moral of what was considered a good Spaniard. For that, imported films also had to be put under the strictest control. Whereas the Sevillian Cabinet was the institution in charge of censoring both the national production and any imported film aimed for exhibition in Spanish territories, the Supreme Board, as the highest authority, was responsible for censoring newsreels, documentaries and the scripts from the “liberated” territories, being also in charge of revising the decision of the Sevillian Cabinet on appeal. As the propaganda from the National Side was gaining power, they started to breed the idea of not taking reprisals against the defeated when in fact they did suffer a very tough repression.<sup>11</sup> An example of this kind of propaganda is *Prisioneros de guerra* ([*Prisoners of War*] Manuel Augusto García Viñolas, 1938), a short documentary, which, according to the director himself, was made upon General Franco’s initiative (qtd.in Diez Puertas, 95-96). The director, García Viñolas, was chief of the National Film Department during the Civil War (1936-1939) as well as a member of the Supreme Film Censorship Board, and he also became director of the Falangist film magazine *Primer Plano*.<sup>12</sup> This initiative from the Head of State and directed by the head

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<sup>10</sup> Also known as La Falange, this was the totalitarian one-party during Franco's regime and which together with the *Sindicato Vertical* (yellow union) and all the civil servants constituted the Movimiento Nacional (National Movement), the totalitarian corporate mechanisms and organizations from the regime.

<sup>11</sup> Historian Paul Preston states in the prologue of his book *The Spanish Holocaust* that “approximately 20,000 Republicans were executed after the rebel’s victory at the end of March 1939” (...) “Many others died of disease and malnutrition in overcrowded, unhygienic prisons and concentration camps” (xi). Incidentally, the existence of concentration camps is denied today by Spanish society in general, even though the controversial Ley de Memoria Histórica (Historical Memory Law) issued in 2007, recognized this fact in its section “Statement of reasons.”

<sup>12</sup> Manuel García Viñolas signed in 1940 an editorial in the magazine *Primer Plano*, on the necessity of film censorship, legitimating its usage and justifying the solely and exclusive use of it by the state (n.pag). In 1937 it was already clearly stated by law that every film must pass through the control and censorship of these institutions prohibiting also any ulterior act of censorship by any exhibitor as the control had to be done exclusively by the state (Order of Nov. 18, 1937). However, censorship was not always done exclusively by governmental institutions. Although it was explicitly and deliberately prohibited in order to have the utmost control of what was being exhibited all over the country, it was a widely practiced exercise in many small towns that exhibitors or majors considered to make cuts to the films on their own. Whether there was an economic or moral reason behind this, the fact is that the people who were deciding on this, had for a moment the feeling of authority and jurisdiction, which they in fact did not hold. The film *El camino* (Ana

of the Film Department was consequently produced in the same tone as *Noticario Español* (Spanish Newsreel) – the national propaganda newsreels that were made during the war years – and in the same tone as the official newsreels that the Spaniards would continuously be exposed to during the next four decades in the form of the No-Do (*Noticiarios y Documentales* / News and Documentaries).<sup>13</sup> The film *Prisioneros de guerra* depicts the supposedly fabulous conditions in which the defeated combatants from the International Brigades who, abandoned by their own troops (the Republicans), and both starving and wounded, were allegedly received with open arms by those from the National Side who would certainly offer them mercy.<sup>14</sup> The final sequence in *Prisioneros de guerra* (see fig. 1.1-1.8), which is supported by the following fragment extracted from the voice-over of the propaganda documentary, illustrates the fascist content and symbols, as well as the propagandistic message with which the National Side was trying to reinforce in the society the idea of a messiah of the nation;

We enforced order and inspired confidence in the proletarian masses and in the international crowds. Resentment fades away, and as a cripple stretching his closed hand, these men opened their fists. And the brotherhood of the open hand and outstretched arm received them with the generosity with which the Spanish Empire once always had to overcome. This is our justice, while an infamous propaganda was creating us enemies; Franco's Spain was making from these enemies its men.

In addition to propaganda films like these, the regime slowly had started to configure the foundations of censorship during those war years. The first laws mentioned above were followed from 1938 on by a series of orders and decrees that eventually would configure, with ever increasing requirements and mainly bureaucratic measures, a definite organization of the censorship machinery of the regime. This represented the transition

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Mariscal, 1963) will put this on the record by depicting a gathering with a group of nosy women and the village priest. In this assembly, one of the characters suggests “to put a light during the exhibition and fiercely censor the film ourselves,” alluding to “inappropriate” affections and embraces from couples in the darkness of the movie theatre.

<sup>13</sup> *Noticario Español* was mainly broadcasted during the war years and it was the propaganda newsreel produced by the National Film Department (32 episodes and several documentaries such as *Prisioneros de Guerra*). The No-Do was also aimed to spread the Francoist values and to glorify the figure of the dictator. It was broadcasted during the period from 1942 to 1976 and it was required to be screened before each film in every single movie theatre.

<sup>14</sup> The known as the International Brigades were military units formed by volunteers from 52 countries that arrived in Spain in support of the Spanish Republic during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

from a preventive censorship to a well-organized censorship machinery that both enhanced and affected any kind of film produced in Spain from that time onwards.



Fig. 1.1-1.8: Final sequence in *Prisioneros de guerra* (Manuel Augusto García Viñolas, 1938)

By Order of November 2, 1938, censorship was entrusted to the Film Censorship Commission and to the already created Supreme Film Censorship Board under the authority of the Minister of Interior. Although this law did not yet implied censorship of the film scripts and only applied to completed films, to ensure its effectiveness it established that every single film should be submitted to the commission completely edited as it would be projected to the audience and with an accompanying certificate from the printing laboratory stating the exact meters of printed film and the exact number of copies. If the film had already been censored and permission of exhibition was refused, a revised version could be then requested after the necessary adaptations of what motivated its denial. The board would then require to be provided with the removed cuts. In addition to this, this Order would revoke any prior provision that could contradict what this one established, thereby becoming a law reference on this subject matter. This Order established a very precise and efficient system in terms of control of any film that was being produced in Spain, although it was only once the Civil War was over, in July 1939, that scripts also had to be submitted for approval. This did not mean that the film no longer had to go through the screening before ultimately being given the green light to its exhibition; it meant that there was a second filter that was prior to the films even being made. Although the system was efficient and severe in its control, it should also be noted that at this period in time, the censorship criteria were not yet explicitly predefined. There was nothing such as a code, a moral or political guideline, which both censors and filmmakers would have to follow.



Only the judgment of the members of the Censorship Board, who often upheld their own personal criterion, would allow a script to be filmed and a film to be shown, or would demand changes on either the script or the finished film. This arbitrariness on the subject matter of censorship was one of the constant claims from the film professionals who suffered censorship in Spain during this period and who requested over and over again a set of rules to know what to expect. This request would not be answered, however, until 1963 when a new law establishing new norms and censorship criteria took effect.

### **Controls on foreign cinema and the repression of Spanish diversity**

As pointed out before, censorship did not only apply to the productions that were made in Spain. The international cinematographic industry was clearly affected by the restraint mechanisms carried out by the regime as well. An Order dated on April 23, 1941, by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, set the compulsory dubbing for all international films binding to exhibit films in Spanish language with the aim to control and manipulate this foreign cinematographic exhibition. This was another one of many control measures on foreign cinema such as for instance the black list that on April 2, 1940, the Press Office had already published prohibiting the reference in billboards, articles or any advertisement of the names of those US professionals that openly supported the Republican cause. According to historian Román Gubern, among the 29 names on the blacklist – whose censorship affected exclusively to their names but not to the films due to economic interests –, were for instance Charles Chaplin, Bette Davis or Lewis Milestone (*Un cine para el cadalso* 28). Interestingly, this last filmmaker was involved in one of the most “outrageous and surrealistic” manipulations that the mandatory dubbing brought forth. Gubern details how in *Arch of Triumph* (Lewis Milestone, 1947) there is a scene in which Ingrid Bergman is asked “Is he your husband?” and she, while clearly shaking her head “no” utters a most unexpected “yes” (37). The reason for such a bizarre alteration in the dialogue despite its unambiguous visual narrative is what could be seen as the regime and the civil servant’s impoverished conception of Spanish audiences, whom they seem to regard incapable of realizing about the modification. The absurdity of the given example does not end with this anecdote, nevertheless. Many other foreign films were also ludicrously censored and manipulated for moral or political reasons. In *Mogambo* (John

Ford, 1953), for instance the adulterous relationship between the characters represented by Clark Gable and Grace Kelly is paradoxically transformed into an incestuous relationship, as the censors decided to change the dialogues presenting them to the audience as siblings instead of as lovers. Other examples are *Some Like It Hot* (Billy Wilder, 1959), which was banned because it was considered a transvestite film, or *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942), which was significantly altered by changing the past of Rick (Humphrey Bogart) from being a member of the International Brigades to being an adversary to the entry of the Nazis in Austria. These are only a few examples of the extent to which the Administration was eager to ban what they considered “immoral”, without thinking of how absurd the alternative was, or simply underestimating the Spanish Audience.

This mandatory dubbing was then, despite some odd alterations, an efficient mechanism to manipulate and control the foreign cinema seen by Spanish audiences. Moreover, the binding to exhibit films in Spanish language did not remain confined to foreign films. It also affected films produced in Spain itself, which has a variety of regional languages. As from this moment, it was no longer possible to shoot a film in regional languages such as Basque or Catalan. This move was in line with a more general tendency which imposed Castilian Spanish as the country's only language subjugating the other Spanish languages.<sup>15</sup> As early as 1938 and 1939 it became forbidden to register a child with a non-Castilian name, and the Basque Provinces and Catalonia were forced to change the names of streets and companies that had a non-Castilian name. By the same token, the fervor of the motherland would never permit a film in any other language rather than Castilian, which became another instrument of oppression and repression.

With all these laws, the organization of the censorship machinery went from the revision, to the prohibition, and eventually to the manipulation of films in the case of foreign films after its mandatory dubbing. This gradually created a system that was put in place to make the Catholic morals and the fundamental principles of the regime prevail. This system was further pursued by a new Supreme Censorship Board, established by Order of June 28, 1946, under the auspices of the Ministry of National Education. This new Board emphasized the importance of the Church representative as a censor, who, “worthy

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<sup>15</sup> Castilian is the Spanish language, especially when it comes to distinguish from other vernacular Spanish languages such as Basque, Catalan or Galician, which are in fact considered not dialects but languages.

of respect” on moral issues, would become also the only member of the Board with the right to veto.

### **Crusading Cinema: building a national identity**

At the beginning of this chapter I pointed out the idea that during the first years of Francoism and with a fierce machinery of propaganda and censorship expanding rapidly, the most prolific cinema done at that time was a kind of cinema identified by film historians such as Caparrós Lera or Gubern as “Cine de Cruzada” (Crusading Cinema). This was a patriotic cinema aimed at enhancing the moral, political and social values of the regime and building a national identity after the Civil War. The most representative film and with the largest budget of this era is *Raza* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1941), a film written by Franco himself under the pseudonym of Jaime de Andrade.<sup>16</sup> The importance of this film not only lies in its authorship, but also in a series of circumstances that represent what Marc Ferro would call “a complementary study, when, after its production, the filmic work has a history of its own”, and what Nancy Berthier, referring specifically to this film, has described as a “*película-acontecimiento*” (“film-event”), i.e. a film that constitutes a historical event *per se*, bound much more to the general history than to the history of cinema (53). The script of *Raza*, based on a novel by Jaime de Andrade, was published the same year the film was released, as *Raza: anecdotario para el guión de una película* (*Race: Sketchbook for a film script*), which was produced by the recently established Consejo de la Hispanidad (Hispanic Council).<sup>17</sup> This fiction film depicts the story of the Churruca family, whose patriarch Pedro is an honorable Marine and parent of four siblings; Pedro, José, Isabel and Jaime. Pedro, the father, is continuously absent from his family because of his military duties in the Cuban War, frequent journeys from which ultimately he does not return, as he is killed in action. After some years, the grown up children face the breaking up of the Civil War in Spain: Isabel, married to a military who is fighting in

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<sup>16</sup> The authorship of Franco’s script, although apparently a “well-known secret”, was not officially disclosed until February 26, 1964, when a copyright entry was submitted to the Spanish Society of Authors, the institution in charge of the copyright management.

<sup>17</sup> The Hispanic Council was created in 1940 as a paternalist organization within the imperial Francoist and Falangist vision. In 1945 it changed its name for Instituto de la Cultura Hispánica (Institute for the Hispanic Culture) an institution ascribed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the international cooperation of Spain with and within Hispanic America and in response to the international isolation that forced Spain to bond cultural ties with these countries.



Fig. 1.9: Pedro Churrua. *Raza* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1941)

the National side – the plotters –; José, also a military, who is caught by “their enemy” – the Republicans – and sentenced to death from which he miraculously survives escaping and fighting again for the national cause; Jaime, a priest who takes care of orphan children in a convent that will later be plundered and destroyed by militiaman fighting on the Republican Side; and finally, Pedro, the “hopeless case” of the family, a military and politician on the side of the Republicans. The latter is depicted as

a miserly and unscrupulous man who lets down and betrays not only his family but also the Republican cause for which he is fighting. However, this character takes a turn at the end of the film and restores the family’s honor pronouncing the speech from which the opening quotation stems (see. fig 1.9).



Fig. 1.10-1.21: Final sequence in *Raza* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1941)

This epic film finally praises the victory of the insurgents at the end of the Civil War, performing a military march, with the fascist outstretched arm and open hand, which in Isabel's words and endpoint of the film is, “the race” (see fig. 1.10-1.21). The myth of race is represented in the story within the fascist discourse of the race, in which the lineage, the blood, and the people are united in one cause. Ultimately, the race is presented to a citizenship that needs a regeneration of the social, political and cultural life together with the regeneration of the traditional moral values that were supposed to be lost in the

previous years of leftist governments with the need of a collective sacrifice, which is encouraged through emotions. In the same way, the repressive measures carried out by the totalitarian regime are therefore also justified for the common good of society. All the characters depicted in the film symbolize the Spain that the Francoist regime attempted to create through propaganda and that would prevail in the Spanish imagery denying even the possibility of a reconciliation of its peoples. Thus, the military men joining the National Side are seen as heroes while the military men remaining in the Republican side are seen as betrayers for not fighting against the immoral, the savage, and the evil. Conversely, the Republicans who are portrayed as destroying churches and killing priests represent the anti-Spanish, i.e. the uneducated, the menace to the good moral and religious values. In the film, Jaime, the priest, is depicted as a good and innocent man who takes care of orphan children. The militiaman, depicted here as beasts, assault a convent where only harmful priests and kids are in. A montage that encourages and strengthens these emotions supports the images. This is visually exemplified in the following scene, in which the image of a terrified child predisposes the audience for something dreadful (see fig. 1.22-1.29).



Fig. 1.22-1.29: Militiaman from the Republican Side burst into the convent where Jaime takes care of orphan children. *Raza* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1941)

Similarly, the following images represent in what is one of the longest scenes of the film, a group of priests that are taken to the seashore in order to be executed (see fig.1.30-1.44). As we visually see the indifferent reactions of their executors – some of them eating sunflowers seeds – (see fig. 1.38-1.39), the solemn and ceremonial music enhances the idea of the evil, amoral and unscrupulous Republicans.



Fig. 1.30-1.44: Seashore sequence in *Raza* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1941)

Fig. 1.38-1.39 (middle right): Militiaman eating sunflowers while preparing the execution of the priests

### **The question of authorship and direction of *Raza*, a tailored film of Francoist propaganda**

It is important to elaborate here the issue of the authorship of this film, because there has been much discussion about the parallelism between the characters in this film and Franco's own life, and it has often been said that it is a clearly autobiographical story. Psychiatrist Enrique González explains this argument saying that "it is a story in which the author, through sublimation and fantasized idealization, intended to exorcise the family demons that had marked his childhood and youth" (qtd.in Sebastián 195). Following this perspective it is true that there are some parallelisms between the Churruca family depicted by the author, Franco – as Jaime de Andrade –, and the dictator's own life. Both Franco and Pedro Churruca come from Galician families with an old military tradition serving in the Navy. Like Pedro, Franco's father fought in the known in Spain as Cuban War (Spanish-American War) in 1898. Franco had two brothers and one sister – as in the film –, one of them a military and Republican politician, member of the Republican government prior to the Civil War, who – although the causes were never known – also ended up joining the National Side.

Taking into consideration that this film was meant to be a propaganda film, the issue of who would direct it could not be taken as a minor subject or arbitrarily. An assessment through which the candidates had to write the first 100 shots of the film was carried out in order to choose the director. One of those was José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, who upon trimming and adding some sequences to the story, it is said that a thoughtfully Franco

announced: “We do not have to further conduct any tests. Entrust it to Sáenz de Heredia” (qtd.in Crusells “Franco, un dictador”, 129). It is most likely that Franco’s motivations to choose this director were not so much determined by the fact that he changed and appropriately justified the modifications, nor by his little experience as a filmmaker at that time. Despite this little experience, Magí Crusells brings to her account on Franco’s film an unsigned report, archived in the Documentation Center for Historical Memory in Salamanca, and addressed to the head of the Military Household. The report recommended Sáenz de Heredia as “a young man with a profound knowledge of cinematography and a great sense of montage” (130-131). In addition to this, Sáenz de Heredia was innately related to the fascist ideas of the regime, as he was the nephew of a former dictator in the recent Spanish history, Miguel Primo de Rivera, and cousin of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, founder of the Falange, the totalitarian one-party during Franco’s regime. Following this historical fact, I would argue, and it is not my purpose to take away credits on his cinematographic talent, that Sáenz de Heredia was the perfect choice to create a tailored film of Francoist propaganda and give glory and enhancement to the Army, while justifying the 1936 *coup d’état*.

Despite de fascist imagery and the myth of race that the author was representing through this story, the fact that the film was mainly targeted at Spaniards with a propagandistic message of justification of a national cause was the reason for the film not being as well received in Germany as the Spanish authorities had hoped. The film was a success in Spain, where it was well received by critics and awarded the Prize of the National Syndicate of Spectacle, which may not come as a surprise as this yellow union was established by the government after a decree on February 19, 1942. It also did well internationally, as in Portugal, Argentina, the Vatican, and in Italy at the Venice Film Festival, many supported and welcomed the fascist production, with almost any objections. One cannot help but notice, though, how paradoxical was the fact that negotiations with the German government for the exhibition of the film in the European Nazi occupied territories did not go well despite the ease with which should have been carried out due to the fascist ideas both countries had in common. This resulted in the failure of not screening the film on the battlefield as a propaganda strategy for the Spanish volunteer troops<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Spanish volunteers were permitted by the regime on the Axis side on the condition that they would fight

### Spain as an isle of fascism and self-censorship in *Raza*

The end of the Second World War put also an end to any possible political alliance or support to the Spanish regime within Europe and to the regret of Franco and his supporters in Spain; the country had become the sole isle of fascism within Europe at the time. The establishment of the United Nations in 1945 brought back peace to Europe after the defeat of German and Italian fascism. In 1946 it decided to veto the entrance of Spain into the organization, as the last remaining fascist regime in Europe, and recommended the withdrawal of ambassadors from Madrid. In an attempt to avoid the country's isolation by the international community, the regime adopted a series of political measures in order to open up to the international community in the first post-war years. Among these measurements – and anecdotally – the regime decided by way of a national referendum in 1947 to endorse the law of succession that formally established the Kingdom of Spain, while allowing Franco to appoint his successor. Regardless of these attempts, Spain became increasingly isolated in this period, as the international community imposed a socio-political and economic blockade that coerced Spain to self-sufficient policies in the late 1940s. However, both the international interests in Spain in the fight against communism, and the liberalizing strategies adopted by the Spanish government in the early 1950s in an attempt to benefit from the European Recovery Plan (Marshall Plan) had consequences in Spanish politics. In 1953 both Spanish and American authorities signed the so-called Pact of Madrid, through which the United States undertook economic and military aid to Spain in return of permitting the construction of military bases in Spanish territory. It also brought a decrease in the international isolation of Spain, being the country finally admitted in the United Nations on December 14, 1955. These politics had an imprint in Spanish cinema, especially in the already discussed *Raza*.<sup>19</sup> The film, which will remain known as Franco's film, was in 1950 self-censored and presented mainly as an anticommunist film in a new release made on July 3. *Espíritu de una Raza* – the new title given –, in which all images and dialogues that in the previous version had praised fascism were eliminated (see fig. 1.10-1.12), was publicized by the critic Gómez Tello in the

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against Soviet Communism on the Eastern Front, and not against the Western Allies or any Western European occupied population.

<sup>19</sup> In chapter three I will elaborate on the film *¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* (1943) that precisely addresses the promised aid by American authorities.



section *Crítica Libre* of the magazine *Primer Plano*. The review, which is presented here in its unabridged version, says as follows:

The film that is now exhibited with this title is a reviewed version of *Raza*, the unforgettable production by Sáenz de Heredia which, based on the work of Jaime de Andrade, sets up the authentic origins of postwar Spanish cinema. A very convenient new launch in which a refinement of details has been carried out, not only because young people today do not know it – and in the spirit of its author the film was precisely addressed to the youth –, but also because of the permanent cinematographic interest that it has for film buffs. In 1940 and 1941 was needed a film that would give confidence to our cinema, a film through which new ways would be constructed, and a film that would set a pattern of values and enthusiasms. And *Raza* emerged with its deep spiritual meaning and with its aesthetically and thematically Spanish identity. The story of a typical and traditional family of our motherland in its vicissitudes of a little over half a century ago was the plot of this film in which the most dramatic events of Spanish life were accurately described. From the soft images of the last years of the century, through the bitterness of a period of decay – those intellectuals and politicians who disoriented the nation –, and ending up with the horrific events performed by the militiaman, and the Liberation War. (n.pag)

The Francoist magazine *Primer Plano* thus glorifies the film through a review that hardly reveals the changes made on it. And as the government destroyed all the copies of the original version, it was only after the discovery of a German copy in 1993 in the UFA archives in Berlin that it became possible to compare both versions. Following this comparison, it can be perceived today how the plot and the ideological message addressed to the Spanish audience remain the same, while the difference lies in the message sent to the international community, which was changed in accordance with geopolitical interests. Whereas in the 1941 version Spain was depicted as an honorable nation following the Catholic morals and values of Spanishness as well as a fascist ideology, in the new version from 1950 any small allusion to fascist symbols or dialogue had been trimmed and/or softened. No less important are the omission of racist and xenophobic comments against the “masonic” US nation and the role of the American government in the loss of the last Spanish colonies (references to the 1898 Spanish-American War). In the 1950 version these comments were replaced for anticommunist remarks and sentiments. The new version was for this purpose released with a new soundtrack. The added dialogues were part of a whole dubbing of the film in order to make unnoticed the difference in the voices, which allowed

changing the geopolitical discourse of the film, although it still exalted the moral and patriotic values intended to the Spanish audience. In this way, the new version reveals the Spanish support to the Western Block and especially to the United States in its anti-Bolshevik fight during these first years of the Cold War. This becomes particularly clear with the insertion in the new version of an opening intertitle (see fig. 1.45), which reads as follows;



Fig. 1.45: Opening intertitle in *Espíritu de una Raza* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia (1950)

The story you are going to witness is not a figment of our imagination. It is pure history, accurate and almost universal, which can be experienced by any society that does not succumb to the catastrophes that communism brings.

At the same time, again, the *coup d'état* and the Civil War were justified, but this time enhancing even more the idea of the fight against the “communist” Republicans.<sup>20</sup>

*Raza* was considered at that time as a historical film on account of these propaganda efforts to present as factual and objective the historical background in which the story of the film is included. However, this description as “historical” raises some doubts today since the regime used this denomination for that cinema that has been identified as “Cine de Cruzada” (Crusading Cinema). The film is representative of this genre that strived to give a partisan veracity to the events of the Civil War and to justify the regime and its policies. Rather than reflecting historical events, films such as *Raza* became ideological messages, turning a framed or biased view on reality into pure propaganda of the regime. There were other films who served the regime in the same way Sáenz de Heredia’s *Raza* did. Like for instance *Sin novedad en el Alcázar* ([*The Siege of the Alcazar*] Augusto Genina, 1940), a Spanish-Italian co-production about an actual episode during the Spanish Civil War. This film praises the heroic deeds and resistance of National military against the Republican forces that besieged the military fortification in Toledo between July 22, 1936, and September 27, 1936. The same way as in the film *Raza*, an opening intertitle

<sup>20</sup> As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, not every Republican was leftist. However, it was more powerful in terms of propaganda to fight against a one whole “evil-communist” Republic and try to change the governmental system.

strengthens the idea of veracity in *Sin novedad en el Alcázar*; “[the film is] inspired by testimonies and documents of absolute historical accuracy.”

Coming back to *Raza*, the state paternity together with the fact that Franco made the decision of electing the director, also justifies describing it as propaganda despite the efforts that the Falangist magazine *Primer Plano* shows in the advertisements and reviews of the film at that time. This is the case of an earlier review by Francisco Casares in an article named “El cine en función de Historia” (“Cinema as a function for History”) bringing to light the necessity of a historical cinema that allows to comprehend the history of the country and in which he takes *Raza* as an exemplary case due to its emphasis of the historical dimension of the past and the glorification of the racial values (1).

### ***Franco, ese hombre. An (un)official justification and exaltation of Francoism***

I will finish this chapter exploring another film from José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, who once again was awarded the Prize of the National Syndicate of Spectacle for this film. The film, titled *Franco, ese hombre* ([*Franco, that man*], 1964), is also characteristic of the abovementioned tendency to present as historical film what in fact is a propaganda film. Made 25 years after the end of the Civil War, the film was part of a propaganda campaign launched by the Ministry of Information and Tourism, which was named “the 25 years of peace.” The campaign was organized to celebrate the nation with military parades all around the country and had no other purpose than to, once again, justify to the Spanish people what could not be justified: the fratricidal war that as a result of an unsuccessful *coup d'état* was meant to usurp a legitimate power by way of force. According to director José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, the General Director of Cinematography offered him to make a biography of Franco with the director's own production company, Chapalo Films. The idea of using Sáenz de Heredia's own production company was in response to persuasive effectiveness, in order that the film not be seen as an official production (Crusells “Franco en el cine”, 217). This way, the film could be presented as a documentary film, even though it was in fact a hagiography of the *Caudillo* filmed under the auspices of the Ministry of Information and Tourism and representing the interests of the regime. Among those interests was the need to present Franco as both a hero and as a more humanized figure. The film depicts Franco as a hero that through effort and devotion always served to

the motherland as a military man, and who saved Spain first from the clutches of communism and later from fascism. It also presents a more humanized figure by depicting Franco as a family man, good husband and better father, and as someone who likes nature and painting. At last, it presents Franco in a clearly staged interview at the end of the film praising those Spaniards who witnessed and experienced the victory of the National Side “for maintaining the pride of having been contributors to the revival of the motherland.”

The music – dramatic and heroic at times – and the voice-over play a significant role in this film. The archival images of the Civil War that appear in the film, both still and moving images, do not speak by themselves and they need the support of a theatrical voice-over to (re)construct the history of Spain by way of which the audience is guided through the institutional point of view. The narrative of this voice-over – at least when heard today – does not give the impression of neutrality or distance required or expected in a documentary. Using this narrative, the film brings to the spectator the historical events that have occurred in Spain since the time Franco was born, and that to a certain degree have shaped him both as a person and as a military. In this way, the voice-over for example at some point states: “Franco grew up with the idea that it was necessary to defend a sick and offended Spain.” At the same time, the narration continuously brings forward the idea of a divided society, the idea of the two Spain and the enduring discourse “with me or against me” that in my view unfortunately is still prevailing today. From the 90 minutes that the film lasts, it is only in the minute 70 to 80 that the Civil War is mentioned. What is striking about this section is that it is presented in a rather different style than the rest of the film. Instead of depicting found footage of the atrocities of the war period, the film substituted the issue with an interview with the Spanish Ambassador in New York at that time, Manuel Aznar, who explains the achievements of Franco during the war, as well as his distinctive features such as having “a profound religious faith, great self-confidence, and the bold conception of the virtues of the Spanish people” [translation my own]. It is a clear justification of everything that led to the Civil War, visually omitting its horrors, and an exaltation of the life and personality of the dictator.

The Crusading Cinema of the first years of Francoism is thus a cinema of propaganda, masked as historical films and objective documentaries, that praised the principles of the dictatorial regime and specially the justification of the attempted *coup d'état*, which was

ultimately a justification of Francoism. At the same time, these films transform into a myth the idea of fighting for the National cause celebrating a man who had usurped by way of force what the Spanish people had decided with their votes. Furthermore, with these ideas embedded in those propaganda films, the regime enhanced a series of censorship mechanisms as means of repression that had consequences in the way some directors approached to their films. These repressive mechanisms in the form of censorship and propaganda encountered however some dissident voices that challenged the propagandistic and censorship mechanisms subverting the social and political Establishment and the established way of making films. In the following chapters I will draw two politically different lines of dissidence, i.e. internal and external, both of which entailed a turning point in Spanish cinema. In the next chapter I will elaborate on the internal dissidence whose major advocate is the Falagist José Antonio Nieves Conde.



## **Part II      Subversive cinematographic practices**





## José Antonio Nieves Conde: a Falangist voicing dissident

Others may have achieved it, but I confess that nobody wanted to produce many of the films that I wanted to do with a social tone. And I assure you that the world depicted in [the films] *Surcos* and *El inquilino* is the world I was interested in. (qtd.in Cobos 127-128)

—José Antonio Nieves Conde (1997)

One of the major contradictions within Spanish cinema during Francoism and subject of this chapter is the director José Antonio Nieves Conde, a Falangist who had been enrolled as a volunteer in the insurgent side – supportive of the *coup* – during the Civil War.<sup>21</sup> As supporter of the fascist doctrine embraced by the regime, one would expect a continuation of a cinema of the previous years: i.e. a historical and religious cinema in which mainly the upper classes were represented and that was firmly defending the values of the *Movimiento* such as “race”, “motherland”, “family”, and the moral and religious traditions. Yet Nieves Conde broke with this *status quo*, leaving behind a cinema that was far away from the social reality, and producing amongst his extensive *oeuvre* some films that were marked by a realism that Spanish cinema was not accustomed to. Although not his entire work can be considered dissident, nor do all his films include political content, I will show in this chapter how in *Balarrasa* (1950), *Surcos* (1951) and *El inquilino* (1958) Nieves Conde stood out aesthetically and politically against the cinema of his time in Spain, questioning and criticizing the Establishment and the established way of making films. Notwithstanding that *Balarrasa* has been considered by some scholars as part of a religious

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<sup>21</sup> Falangism is a Spanish political doctrine promoted in 1933 by the *Falange*, the political party whose ideology was inspired in the Italian Fascism and which underpinned the Francoist ideology. Hispanist Stanley G. Payne highlights the similarity of its slogan “Una Patria, un Estado, un Caudillo” with the German “Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer” (260). The *Falange*, which became in 1937 the one and only legal party in Francoist Spain, was according to Gabriel Jackson “very useful to the *Caudillo*, precisely because it had neither a coherent program nor an outstanding leader, and its fascist phraseology constituted an escape valve for pressures which might otherwise have taken a truly revolutionary direction, and General Franco sprinkled his own speeches with the adjectives national-syndicalist, social, unitary, imperial, and missionary” (419). Together with the *Sindicato Vertical* (vertical trade union) and the civil servants working for the regime, the *Falange* constituted what is known as *Movimiento Nacional* (National Movement), the totalitarian corporate mechanisms and organizations from the regime.

cinema following the morals of the regime, I will demonstrate how there is in this film also an implied critique of the upper-class society of the time that the censors did not see, or did not consider as dangerous, and which has not yet been analyzed by scholars. In the case of *Surcos* and *El inquilino* the working-class and their problems are at the center of the narratives. The working-class was a social stratum barely depicted until that time in mainstream Spanish cinema that was patronized by the state. Whereas the aim of Crusading Cinema was to make prevail the moral values of the conservative and Catholic upper-class in the Spanish society – which was in turn sustaining the regime –, I will demonstrate what Nieves Conde did through the depiction of this other society: i.e. to show, and in a way to denounce, some situations derived from the consequences of poverty and the autarchic policies implemented by the regime in the post-Civil War years.

Before embarking on an analysis of these three films, I would like to stress that Nieves Conde was not a scriptwriter and most of the films he directed were assignments from different producers, which means, outside initiatives in which he could not necessarily have been engaged or involved in the creative voice of the film, as at that time in the Spanish cinema, with a few exceptions, the director's figure was more technical than creative. However, this does not invalidate my argument about his social engagement and dissidence because as the film critic Francisco Llinás assures after interviewing the director, what interested Nieves Conde in *Balarrasa* was not the religious side but the social one (77), *Surcos* must be considered a very personal film, and in *El inquilino* the director was more actively involved in production tasks through a film cooperative (21). Furthermore, the director himself has recognized in several interviews that he worked intimately with the scriptwriters to accomplish these projects, and that this kind of cinema, social cinema, was the one he was interested in. This personal choice on a cinema socially committed marked Nieves Conde as an uncomfortable director for the regime, something that I will demonstrate through the analysis of these films and its censorship files.

### ***Balarrasa* and the critique that censors did not see**

Despite being framed under the label of religious cinema, *Balarrasa* presents an undercover critique of the *bourgeoisie* of the time. Composed almost entirely as a flashback, this film begins with the last day of the protagonist, Javier Mendoza, a military

who has become a missionary man of God and now, trapped in a snowstorm in Alaska, and knowing that his life is therefore coming to an end, remembers how his life has been. Using this narrative technique of the flashback, the film depicts a young soldier coming from a well-off family, Javier, who is known by his friends as “Balarrasa” (the reckless) and whose only concern in life is to live off the land. His most heroic deeds do not go further than to trick his superiors to be able to spend a night in a brothel at the time he is supposed to be working, and to deceive his mates in order to avoid his duties. However, after losing a friend in the war while on call, and driven by the guilt of being the one who was supposed to be on guard duty, Javier decides to give his life a shakeup by entering the seminary school and following the Catholic values as a man of God. Before taking his final vows, the superior of the seminary asks him to first go back home and confront with his old life to be sure that nothing from the old “Balarrasa” remains in him. Besides this, the



Fig. 2.1-2.6: Different visual allusions to the deceased mother in *Balarrasa* (José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1950)

superior suggests him that during this return he might also be of help to his family. Javier, who certainly has overcome his infantile, selfish and irresponsible behavior, finds out after five years away from his home that all

the members of his family – including his father – have lost any moral values. This is implicitly attributed to the lack of a maternal figure, as it is visually suggested through the montage and dialogues. The portrait of the deceased mother is physically and verbally present in many of the scenes in the film, implying how different things would have been if the mother was still among them (see fig. 2.1-2.6).

Driven by an expensive and luxurious life Javier’s three siblings and father do not seem to care about anything in life anymore except for their own comfort and joy. This egotism and sloppiness is presented in the film by the characters not questioning anything that would endanger their lifestyle when indeed they all know that every whim is sustained by the illegal trades of Mario Santos, the boyfriend of the eldest sister Lina. This way Mario becomes the economic protector of the family, manipulating them at his will. For instance,

he coerces Fernando, Lina's brother, into his dollar smuggling business, which they sneaked in the country inside magazines.<sup>22</sup> After some days in the house, Javier realizes this entire situation and, with effort, he successfully convinces his family and brings them back to the "right path" with a missionary heroism that corresponds to a man of God; a happy ending except for the eldest sister Lina, who barely realizes the importance of a united family and trust in her boyfriend, the person who accidentally will lead her to death.

After Javier finally receives his vows as a priest, the film finishes how it had begun, i.e. with the last day of life of Javier who dies peacefully having accomplished his assignment in life. In this way, and using the narrative technique of the flashback, the director Nieves Conde puts forward the idea that through the Catholic morals, people can avoid going astray. Because of this overarching theme, the film has been considered as indoctrinating, an appropriate definition perhaps, but only if we remain on the surface of the plot. This has been precisely what many scholars have taken into account to frame it under a religious cinema of the Establishment like for instance José Enrique Monterde who defines it as "unquestionably Francoist" (267) on account of its moralizing ending. Though I agree with this idea it is important to note as well that in the film there is also an implied critique to the morals of the upper class society represented in it, an aspect that has not yet been considered by many scholars. To support my argument I will refer to the constant ironic undertone and atmosphere of some scenes depicting an idle upper-class family without a penny to their name. Some dialogues can serve as an example of this. For instance, the one in a scene in which Fernando says ironically to Lina when leaving the house "Let's suffer a bit!" and immediately adds looking at his brother Javier "Boy, you don't know how hard is to have fun!", or in this other one in which Javier is chatting with his sister Maite when she comes late from one of many nights out;

Javier: Did you have fun?

Maite: So-so, as usual

Javier: What did you do?

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<sup>22</sup> This situation seemed to have been a common practice at that time, as Nieves Conde explained in an interview with Francisco Llinás. He states that this was a problem derived from the lack of currency in the country, and customs officers were forced to check magazines one by one in order to control this crime (77).

Maite: Well... we had a drink before lunch in the club, and then we went to a new bistro they just opened. Or... was that yesterday? No, no, it was today! In the afternoon we played tennis, to keep in shape. Then we went for a cocktail and we have been dancing until now.

Through these dialogues the film reveals its critique of a vacuous and frivolous upper-class family, a social group that conversely had been until now venerated in Spanish cinema and depicted as representative of the values that a nation under Francoism should follow. Likewise, the military men depicted in this film have nothing to do with those other honorable and disciplined professional military at the service of the motherland that were being depicted in the already analyzed *Raza* for instance. Instead, they all appear to be regular citizens that somehow have been forced by the circumstances to quit their jobs and to join the War for the National cause. Even the high-ranking officials are presented as accomplices of this lack of honorability and discipline. This becomes clear, for example, in a scene in which a commander, with a subtle smile of complicity utters to Javier: “next time when you grease the machine, take care not to stain your cheek with lipstick.”

These critiques, however, were only a hint of what would come with *Surcos* one year later. Being a member of the Falange provided director Nieves Conde during those first years of his career of a certain credit within the Spanish institutions. Apparently, the exemplariness of the main character in this film was satisfactory enough to consider it as indoctrinating; the censors very well welcomed the film, whose main plot contributed to a favorable and enthusiastic granting as National Interest.<sup>23</sup> The censorship report stated: “It is not only worthy of mention in *Balarrasa* the highly exemplariness and indoctrinating spiritual meaning, but also its artistic values” (Balarrasa. Concesión Interés Nacional). These artistic values did nonetheless go unnoticed in Cannes Film Festival where *Balarrasa* was the Spanish representation in the 1951 edition.

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<sup>23</sup> The National Interest was the highest concession with which the government was protecting the Spanish cinema. The order by which this rating was created in 1944 specified the granting of National Interest “to those films with remarkable demonstration of the exaltation of moral values, or films teaching our moral and political principles” (Order of June 15, 1944 Deputy Sec. of Popular Education). Thus, it became a sort of canon formation somewhat shaping the direction that some films were taking in order to be granted as National Interest.

### **The controversial *Surcos***

In 1951 José Antonio Nieves Conde directed the film *Surcos*, whose original script was entitled *Surcos en el asfalto* (*Furrows in the Pavement*). This is the first film that can be considered a true social cinema in the *oeuvre* of this director. By defining this film as social cinema I want to denote a cinema in which social problems are exposed, a cinema with a social consciousness, and ultimately, a committed cinema which evokes the idea of dissidence. *Surcos* depicts the social drama of the rural-urban migration of the late 1940s and 1950s in Spain. The film offers a portrait of a society of the time and a reality that despite the efforts from the government to keep silent cannot be denied.<sup>24</sup> The attempt to prevent a problem such as the rural emigration to the cities was part of the Falange political agenda. However, the drama that those affected by poverty in the postwar years were suffering, had already been strengthened by the autarchic policies followed by the regime during the late 1940s, which brought other problems such as black market. Nieves Conde addressed these topics in *Surcos*, as a result suffering important problems with censorship.

*Surcos* follows the story of the Pérez family who, as many others, has been obliged by the abovementioned social circumstances to leave their home in the countryside and their job as peasants, to look for a better life in the city. At their arrival at Madrid train station, they are portrayed as a scared and disoriented family overwhelmed by the hectic pace of the city yet with the enthusiasm and *naïve* dream for a better life. In the course of the film, this encouraging dream, full of hope and excitement will slowly derive into tragedy. Once in Madrid, the Pérez family stays at the house of a relative who lives with her daughter Pili in a *corrala*, a block of flats typical from some working-class neighborhoods and slums in Madrid where different apartments lead to a central courtyard. The film introduces this way an atmosphere with which the Spanish audience was not accustomed to on the big screen: i.e. the depiction of poorer areas. The problems in this family emerge as soon as the father and one son – both Manuel – try in vain to find a job. When they go to the unemployment office and say they are farmers, the civil servant responds offensively; “And where are you going to dig, in the pavement?” After some more unsuccessful attempts to find a job, and

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<sup>24</sup> Tomás Valero Martínez reveals in “*Cine Historia*” that in 1951 – the same year the film was released –, “a total of 60.000 people emigrated outside the country and 100.000 emigrated within Spain,” and Román Gubern states that around 250.000 emigrated between 1951 and 1956 (*Un cine para el cadalso* 66).

not being capable of sustaining the family, the father is relegated to the housework losing his status as “the patriarch.” Also the youngest brother fails to maintain the job that he finally has found as an errand boy and receives the reprimand of the whole family. In the meantime, the eldest brother, Pepe, is the only one bringing home some money, but not precisely from a very legal business. He works for Don Roque – known as Chamberlain –, a gangster who deals with dirty trades. Pepe is involved in the stealing of sacks of potatoes, which Chamberlain then sells on the black market. This job will eventually lead Pepe to death; alone and betrayed by his team-mates. Meanwhile, the youngest sister, Tonia, who started working as a housemaid for Chamberlain’s mistress, ends up being his own mistress. All of these happen with the elusive consent of the mother who turns a blind eye to what is going on around her, including the way Tonia has turned into someone morally reprehensible for the honor of the family. In view of these circumstances, and with the body of his dead son still present, the father finally takes over his family and while burying his son utters a decisive “We have to go back!” The only hope is the younger son Manuel who, after having experienced some difficulties, ends up working with a kind and good-natured puppeteer with whose daughter he will fall in love.

It is worth noting that this same hope was initially also present in the character of Tonia in the original script, which was later censored. In the original ending, while the family returns to their village ashamed of their failure in the city, Tonia escapes jumping out of the train notwithstanding that the only future that holds her in the city is in the underworld of prostitution. However, censors forced the director to change this final scene to avoid an open “misinterpretation” on the part of the audience with regards to the courage of this young girl facing up to reality and deciding by herself her own future. According to the imposed modifications, needed in order to get the shooting permits, the censors solely asseverated, “Tonia must go back to the countryside” (Surcos. Expediente de rodaje). Censors used this imposition to instruct the audience that it is not worth migrating to the city, as the only results are the disgrace and gibes that they will receive after an obvious and necessary return. This way, the regime was trying to avoid what had become a major problem: i.e. the mass migration to the cities. From this point of view, and in addition to the previous imposition, censors forced the director to eliminate another scene from the ending in which a second family was coming to the city. Whereas the original script was

implying that the same story would repeat itself over and over again, the regime opted to leave out this idea of the daily nature of this exodus. In the version finally shot was then a much more moralizing closed ending without any glimmer of hope in which the whole family returns together to the countryside, where they ostensibly belong.

*Surcos* depicts the harsh reality of the struggles that this family suffers when leaving a poor but undisturbed rural environment for the rush and individualism of the city. In addition to this, the film depicts a city which, overwhelmed by the mass migration, will socially reject and alienate those who try to get on in life decently, even forcing them to commit offences. The moral of the story and the Falangist origin of the director raise questions about the real intentionality of this film. Besides what the censors finally imposed to change, the depiction of this harsh reality was both repudiated and defended by civil servants of the Censorship Board. Thus, this film became subject of disputes. Some censors were advocates of softening the “crudeness” of some situations and expressions, while others were in favor of not censoring that crude reality for considering it positively moralizing (*Surcos. Informes de censura*). There were also some disagreements that were documented in the official reports regarding the reception of the film in the different Spanish provinces.<sup>25</sup> Whereas some thought that the film was of a breathtaking realism, some others thought it was not doing justice to reality and that it must have been prohibited. Diverse and adverse reactions such as fascination, consternation or anger were also received within the film industry. The director recalls some of the discordant reactions from film professionals who suggested either that this film was a propaganda from the Ministry of Agriculture, a shameless film to be prohibited, or even a representative picture of reality (qtd.in Piñuela). The dominant reception of the film is that it was generally perceived as a Falangist interpretation of the Castilian rural society, on account of the political ideas of the director, which may lead to the assumption that the criminality to which the characters have been pushed to in their new life in the city, was a strong enough ground to think that ideologically could serve to set an example for those pretending to pack up and leave behind the misery of the countryside.

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<sup>25</sup> During the archival research, I have noticed that some files contain reports regarding the *première* and reception of the film in the different Spanish provinces. These reports sent to the Censorship Board by the provincial Delegates were reporting both the reception of the general public and *connoisseurs*, as well as the particular opinion of the provincial civil servants, and the critics.





Fig. 2.7-2.8: Commercial film posters.  
*Surcos* (José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1951)

The commercial posters of the film (see fig. 2.7-2.8) also support this idea. For instance, the first poster (see fig. 2.7) depicts a caricature of what is awaiting to those who come to the city with almost nothing more than the clothes they wear. The extended arm of a gangster, who is depicted as an evil gigantic figure, appears to metaphorically “grasp with his clutches” those who left everything

behind to start a new life in the city. In some way, the gangster in the film, Chamberlain, is represented in this film poster as the embodiment of everything that is bad in the city, as a usurper of the morals of the good people. But regardless of the main theme and alleged primary intention of the film, and despite the effort of the censors to present what was a common practice as a one-off event, the truth is that *Surcos* has become a testimony of a time in which poverty was forcing people to flee to the cities with the hope for a better life that not always would come along. And not only has it become a testimony of a time, but it also voices a critique of a society and of certain situations that the population was suffering: i.e. unemployment, poverty, housing shortage, lack of social welfare, crime, black market, and the mistreatment of women. Most of these social problems derived from the consequences of a civil war and were strengthened by the autarchic policies that the regime imposed in the subsequent years. In short, *Surcos* depicted social problems that the government had not been capable of solving. The cinematographic representation of all these actual problems and the representation of the working-class is what give *Surcos* its social character.

In addition to being subject of censorship, of disputes within the Censorship Board, and of discordant opinions among the film professionals, *Surcos* took part in one of the major controversies in Spanish cinema at this time, which led its director – until now a filmmaker highly regarded by Francoists – to be considered as an uncomfortable director for the regime. The recently appointed General Director of Cinematography, José María García Escudero, defended the protection of Nieves Conde’s film as National Interest to the detriment of Juan de Orduña’s *Alba de América* (1951), an example of the kind of historical film that was sponsored by the government. Both *Surcos* and its director, Nieves Conde,

suffered the critiques of the Catholic Church that did not like how some offensive topics such as prostitution were handled in the film, and classified it as “highly dangerous” according to the moral classification. The report reads as follows:

We find practically the whole script dangerous, intolerable scenes and shots, and objectionable expressions (...) Since we consider that it presents serious problems in the moral aspect, we suggest its immediate denial and complete revision if it is considered that the authors have the possibility or will to amend the script until it turns out to be decent. (Surcos. Informe de censura de guión)

After its release, one of the provincial delegates responsible for the reports regarding the reception of the film wrote: “Censurable script unconnected to reality. We think that at least partially it should not have been authorized, let alone being worth of National Interest” (Surcos. Informes de estreno y acogida). As a consequence of this controversy, José María García Escudero was dismissed from his position, which he held barely for one year.<sup>26</sup> The new Director of Cinematography, Joaquín Argamasilla, awarded then the National Interest to *Alba de América*. Nevertheless Surcos did not lose its granting and, furthermore, it was paradoxically permitted to attend Cannes Film Festival, whose organization selected it for the *Grand Prix du Festival* in 1952.

The film thematic concern with the social and actual problems such as the rural-urban migration, together with realist aesthetics in the use of non-professional actors, local people as extras, and the use of live sound and deep of focus, bring this director closer to the Neorealist cinema that some years earlier had had major success in Italy and that now was starting to be known in Spain. For these reasons *Surcos* has been considered by some scholars as for instance D’Lugo, as obviously inspired by the Italian Neorealism on account of its content and aesthetic (*Guide*, 97). There is also a reference in a dialogue in the film to the term Neorealism. In this dialogue, the Italian movement is defined as “depicting social problems and working-class areas”, to what someone responds “I do not

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<sup>26</sup> In July 1951, a new Ministry of Information and Tourism was created taking over the activities related to Press, Propaganda, Radio broadcasting, Cinematography, Theater and Tourism. Headed by the ultraconservative Gabriel Arias-Salgado, this ministry appointed José María García Escudero as General Director of Cinematography. This figure is of paramount importance not only for this controversy but also for his outspoken defense of censorship when he was again appointed General Director of this Organism in 1962 by the new Minister of Information and Tourism Manuel Fraga, in the paradoxically most liberal period during Francoism.

understand what is attractive in bringing to light the miseries; the life of millionaires is very beautiful!” From this ironic comment can be inferred that the director – who also took part in the adaptation of the script – had some kind of sympathy for this cinema, as *Surcos* is depicting social problems and working-areas itself, and a critique of the lack of social commitment in the upper-classes. The director, however, has denied this characterization or even influence from Neorealism in several interviews. Instead, he chose to identify the film as Spanish realism; “if it has to be based in something is in the Spanish realism, [*Surcos* would be] a literary consequence of the classical Spanish realism” (qtd.in Sánchez). Seen from the perspective of the “Neorealism” theorized by Cesare Zavattini in his essay “Some Ideas on the Cinema”, the film *Surcos* would definitely be a Neorealist film for facing reality in such a way that brings awareness of the contemporary social problems depicted in it. Bernard P. E. Bentley states, however, that although there is a clear influence of Neorealism in some Spanish directors – attributed to the Italian Cultural Institute’s promotion of Neorealist films in its cinema weeks of November 1951 and March 1953 –, caution is needed, stipulating that it is important to distinguish between the term Neorealism, applied for the cinema that emerged in Italy after 1945, and a “neo-realist” style, term with which would be more accurate to define *Surcos* (130).

Regardless of the label, what interests me the most in *Surcos*, is that it can be read and interpreted in different ways. This was probably the most intelligent thing a filmmaker could do in times of censorship because, as Nieves Conde once said, “Spanish censorship is happy, as any bureaucrat is. I was putting in front of them situations that did not interest me – nor interested the film – to deceive the censors and to be able to tell other things that were important”

(qtd.in Piñuela).

The film presents, therefore, different levels of narration with the idea of what I think has a double intention.



Fig. 2.9-2.14: Images of the *corrala* in *Surcos* (José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1951)

Whereas the main narrative of the film appears to be following the ideological approach of the regime, the sublevels represent narratives that criticize the morals of this society. In other words, the loss of moral values that menaces those who decide to emigrate to the city represent what could be consider as the “official” position of the film, and the sub-narratives of the film depict other problems such as the unemployment or inadequate housing, the widespread mistreatment of women, prostitution and the need to sell on the black market as a source of income.<sup>27</sup> Without contradicting the main theme of the film, those sub-narrative levels represent a *mise en scene* that offers the audience a testimony of a time and a reality that was never before depicted in a Spanish film and that some were afraid of it being exposed to the masses. The images below give some expression of how implicitly, on a visual level, the critique of some problems in society such as Spain suffering from poverty.

Fig. 2.9-2.14 (previous page) show for instance the frequent gathering of kids around the *corrala*, something that can be a commentary on poor school attendance. The widespread of poverty is also emphasized through the gestures and guises of a crowd of kids begging for candies in one of the scenes (see fig. 2.15-2.19), something that is much



Fig. 2.15-2.19: Kids begging for candies. *Surcos* (José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1951)



Fig. 2.20-2.27: Manuel walks aimlessly through a shanty town and queues for food. *Surcos* (José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1951)

<sup>27</sup> The difficult conditions of the oppressed peoples and the autarchic policies of the regime in previous years (1940s) gave rise to a common practice: i.e. the flow of goods on the black market.

more explicit in a scene in which one of the characters walks aimlessly through desolate places of the shanty town where he lives, having turn to charity to be able to eat something (see fig. 2.20-2.27).

Connected with this idea of different narratives existing in the film discourse I would like to address a last thematic which is the mistreatment of women and the role of women in society. Although the controversy *Surcos* was involved in was not due to the mistreatment of women, this is a thematic that may be considered strikingly controversial when re-evaluating the film today. The role of the women becomes particularly important and worthy of mention as the film was made in a moment of change within the Spanish cinema that breaks out with the established order of the values of the *Movimiento*. The socially committed attitude of the advocates of a neo-realist style is not necessarily a supporter of women's rights, as we understand them today. However, and because the aim of this aesthetics is to depict everyday life, women and children become new characters and many times particular emphasis is placed on them in these films. Thus, they present domestic spaces and the inequalities in them. Having said this, scholar Asunción Gómez agrees that Nieves Conde reflects in *Surcos* a conservative ideology especially depicted in his "unfortunate treatment of women" (582). Although she admits the effective use of neorealist conventions in this film for its depiction of social problems such as the rural-urban migration, the way women are depicted in this film show the conservative ideology that, it can be argued, corresponds with Nieves Conde's Falangist ideology. However, I argue, *Surcos* is one of the first examples in Spanish cinema in which women stand out in most of the cases as strong and empowered women who can act for themselves. Whereas it is true that in *Surcos* there is not yet a completely independent woman, and women are still depicted with some kind of male domination (in accordance with the times), the role of the women is depicted in this film in a very different way than the one the audiences were used to see on the big screen: i.e. that of a submissive woman and always suppressed by a masculine figure.<sup>28</sup> The role of women is necessarily bound precisely because of this male

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<sup>28</sup> As an example of the role of women depicted in the previous cinema I return to the film *Raza* in which the female characters are suppressed literally and figuratively. The woman that appears at the beginning of the film is figuratively not Isabel but the wife of Pedro Churruca – Isabel Churruca – and mother of three kids who spend her life comforting her husband when he comes from his heroic deeds. Any representation of behavior out of this stereotype of the "woman as wife" was avoided or suppressed. Thus, after representing in the first version of *Raza* a woman who wants to enlist in the military to fight against the Republicans, in the

domination – and especially at that time – with gender violence. In *Surcos* there is almost no woman that does not suffer this violence at some point. This is probably the “unfortunate” treatment of women that Asunción Gómez refers to, and that at the same time reflects the most conservative and traditional morals of the time. Following this idea, some of the mistreatments appear in the film – mainly from the father to his wife and to his daughter – in the privacy of the home (see fig. 2.28-2.34).



Probably because this mistreatment occurred behind closed doors – something more accepted at those times –, it is not portrayed as a critique to this misbehavior, but instead as a sort of



Fig. 2.28-2.2.30 (above) Manuel beats his wife.  
Fig. 2.31-2.34 (right) Manuel beats his daughter when he realizes she has turn into Chamberlain's mistress.  
Fig. 2.35-2.41 (left) “El Mellao” beats his girlfriend Pili publicly.  
*Surcos* (José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1951)

justification in which the father is motivated by the disgracefulness of the daughter becoming the mistress of Chamberlain and the mother permitting it. With this attitude the father somehow regains the lost authority as a man and as the head of the household. However, I disagree that the director made a statement in favor of the mistreatment of women in these scenes, as some have indicated. Instead, I see in these scenes a critical reflection of the society of the time by depicting topics that were otherwise not brought to light. Furthermore, I would argue that there exists a critique of these behaviors, which

surfaces in a subtle way in some scenes. This happens for instance in a scene which shows “el Mellao” publicly beating his girlfriend Pili in the courtyard of the *corrala* where she lives (see fig. 2.35-2.41). At that very moment all the neighbors who gathered around reproach him for his attitude.

To conclude with this thematic, I will show the following scene (see fig. 2.42-2.46) that corresponds to the most violent episode depicted in the film, which is paradoxically the one that comes through a theatrical representation done by the good-natured puppeteer. This scene, shocking and outrageous when we see it today, represents a puppet theater scene in which a man beats wildly his wife while saying “You have been disrespectful to me. You will see now! Lean your head! Hahaha! This is the best argument that can be used with women.” Although these words are very disturbing, I contend that this scene involves a big criticism precisely for whom it comes from; a man depicted in the film as kind and caring, gentle and very far away from the stereotype of an abusive man. Therefore, I argue, this scene appears not as an advocate of the mistreatment of women but instead must be read as a critique of this way of acting. Once again, this director introduces a critique to the society of the time.



Fig. 2.42-2.46: Puppet theater scene  
*Surcos* (José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1951)

*Surcos* may have been according to Nieves Conde the film that closed off all avenues for making the social kind of cinema that he stated he was interested in. However, despite the problems he faced with censorship in *Surcos* and after some films that went almost unnoticed, Nieves Conde turned again in *El inquilino* (1958) to a social cinema in which he addressed several problems and social critiques. This time *El inquilino* was introduced to the public without having severe problems with censorship, but its exhibition was put off after already being authorized – as will be seen – due to an incident that would delay its revival almost seven years. I will turn to this film now.

### ***El inquilino (The Tenant)* censored by the Ministry of Housing**

*El inquilino* (1958) presents a family with four children forced to move from the house in which they live because the new owner, the property developer MUNDIS, has decided to demolish the apartment. When the unconditional notice to vacate expires, the young couple, Evaristo and Marta, still has not been able to find a decent house for the six of them. During their endeavoring search, urged by the imminent eviction, the protagonists will face the lack of affordable and decent houses due to property speculation and eviction without alternative housing. It is important to note that, in the film, all this happens with the Administration's consent, which in turn seems to further the interests of a few major corporations. This lack of protection from the public institutions to the ones who need it is clearly put forward in some dialogues, as in the following one in which the representative of MUNDIS goes to the house to put into effect the eviction.

MUNDIS representative: I am sorry but you have to leave the house.

Evaristo: I know you are right, but she [Marta] does not know it is the last due date. If you could give me some more days!

MUNDIS representative: You already had six months!

Evaristo: Yes, that is not in dispute, *I know the law is on your side* [my emphasis] and that is out of the question! I only say it for the kids...

This critique of an Administration that is acting for the benefit of a small group instead of protecting those in need went unnoticed for the censors at first. Paradoxically, they also did not see the critique of the rigid and complex bureaucracy and therefore its inefficiency; with an excessive formalism and procedures of the welfare services, as negative for the Institutions. This critique is exemplified by the following comical scene in which Marta and Evaristo go to the welfare organization and end up with a pile of application forms without having solved anything (see fig. 2.47-2.50). The images are supported by the following dialogue between Evaristo and the woman working in this state organization;

Evaristo: And all this entitles us to an apartment?

Civil Servant: Sir, with this we will open a file. Then you will be within all these dossiers you see around [showing a wall full of filing cabinets], and the apartments are delivered in strict order of arrival.





Fig. 2.47-2.50: Marta and Evaristo at the welfare services. *El inquilino* (José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1958)

The critiques that most of the censors considered hazard-free are shown, like in this scene, in the many comical remarks, and caricatured dialogues sometimes to the extent of saying the exact opposite of what is shown on screen through gags and word games. In opposition to the crudity of the already analyzed *Surcos*, *El inquilino* shows a critique acquiring a satirical tone. Despite the irony and caricature with which the characters in the story are presented – the good ones are very good and the bad ones are very bad –, the film remains a document about the property speculation and a testimony of the time depicted.

*El inquilino* touches on the major problem of housing shortage that affected Spain mostly since the 1950s. This problem was especially derived from the emigration that Nieves Conde already depicted in the previous analyzed *Surcos*, a problem that was further enhanced by the property speculation that this film sets out in a comedy tone. It is precisely this satirical tone that may have softened the critique in the eyes of the censors, who *a priori* offered mainly good words, except for one of them who questioned the intentions of the film in the following way: “the major deficiency in the film is not being clear in its intention. Is it drama, comedy, satire, humor? Who knows! Most likely demagogic!” (*El inquilino*. Informe de censura. Rep. March, 18). Notwithstanding this negative comment, this censor did not oppose to its approval. Thus, a critique exposed in the film, which the censors recognized, they did not see it as biased and against the Institutions, but instead as “against those private individuals exploiting cynically those who are looking desperately for a house.” Most of the censors saw the film as a caricature or humor piece based on a contemporary reality but ideologically or morally hazard-free. Thus, it got past the censors for audiences above 16 years old. Only some minor changes were requested such as the softening of some affectionate scenes and kisses of the married couple in order to be authorized for younger audiences, and the omission of a gathering of workers that in the view of one of the censors seemed like a mass meeting (*El inquilino*. Informe de censura. Rep. Feb., 12).

The problems, however, came after its authorization and *première* on February 24, 1958. Due to the unfortunate circumstance that the Minister of Housing, José Luis Arrese, went to the theater to watch this film, it could only be seen in its original conception for some months as it was soon pulled out of circulation. Arrese immediately denounced it as “offensive”, forcing the censors to suspend its exhibition until a new revision was carried out. This incident brought about the prohibition of the film in November 1958 and the authors were compelled to change its ending in order to be authorized again. These changes were carried out and the film was again authorized in December 1959. However, it was not until 1965 that the film could be seen again in some theaters. What enabled its exhibition again was not a minor change but rather a change in signification, as a result of which the film made a U-turn, creating a new complete meaning of the film. Thus, in the original ending Evaristo finds himself on a corner of a street with all his furniture set as an actual living room – yet open air – and ironically voicing out loud to the crowd gathering around: “Come in ladies and gentlemen! It is free! Enjoy watching a homeless citizen!” (see fig. 2.51-2.53) With this circus spectacle Nieves Conde left unclosed once again a family drama with a hopeless future. However, after the incident with the Minister of Housing, the censors imposed a new ending that had to be shot after the film was pulled out of circulation to be able to show it again. This new ending presented a paradoxically hopeful Evaristo who, far from being pessimistic and discourage, and despite the disgrace of not having found a house for his family, rather cheers up the workers who are helping him to move things out from the apartment. Through the following words of Evaristo, it can be inferred how the blame in the film’s discourse switches from the institutions to



Fig. 2.51-2.53 (above): Original ending *El inquilino* (José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1958)

Fig. 2.54-2.57 (bottom): Imposed ending

Evaristo, who accepts his own blame;

Worker: This is a very difficult situation Don Evaristo!

Evaristo: It is fate my friend, and relying on luck!

Evaristo: Come on, men! It is better to die than to lose your life!

The story suddenly turns into a happy ending, which is completely opposed to the pessimistic original version, when Marta and the kids appear in a van with a sign stating “Barrio La Esperanza” (Hope district) and effusively shout “Daddy, we have an apartment” (see fig. 2.54-2.57). Fortunately for Spanish cinema today it is possible to compare the two versions thanks to a copy of the original found 30 years after the release of the film, which is now available at the *Filmoteca Española*. Whereas the original ending was showing the failure of this family to find a proper house despite the individual efforts of the protagonist, the new ending lays the blame on fate and reliance on luck and state’s aid. The new ending suppressed this way the idea of a lack of protection from the public institutions suggested in the original version, to deliberately put the blame on Evaristo in this new version. This idea was enhanced by the heading imposed by the censors for the opening scene, which reads as follows:

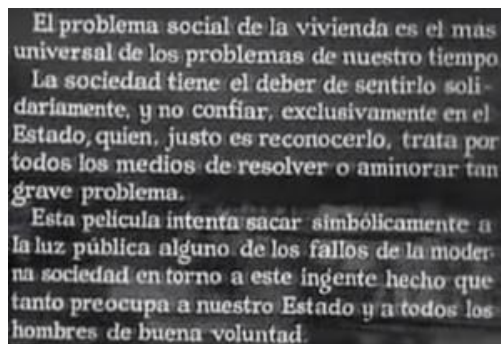


Fig. 2.58: Imposed opening intertitle

The social problem of the housing shortage is the most universal problem of our time. The society has the duty to feel it as its own and do not trust exclusively in the state that in turn, it is fair to admit, tries by all means to either solve or lessen such a serious problem.

Symbolically, this film tries to bring to light some of the failures of modern society in regards to this crucial issue that so much worries our state and all men of good will. (see fig. 2.58)

It is thus possible to see how the censors transformed the critique of the institutions and its bureaucracy – which can be inferred from the original version – into the idea that the state is guarantor by all means possible of the fundamental right of access to decent housing. This is something that can be defined as a propagandistic attempt to get rid of any responsibility for the causes and the bureaucratic inefficiency to solve the problem

presented.

After drawing attention in chapter one on the top-down repressive apparatuses and mechanisms to build a national identity that could legitimate a regime imposed by way of force, I have looked in this chapter at the work of Nieves Conde, a director who I argue, can be seen as a reference point of an internal dissident cinema. The importance of this director is that through some of his films he becomes a pioneer within Spanish cinema making films that were no longer alienated from a social reality, including characters that does not belong to the upper class. This way, the living conditions and problems specific to a working-class that after more than ten years after the war were still suffering of unemployment and poverty could be seen on the big screen. Despite the problems Nieves Conde faced with censorship, he managed to produce a social and realist cinema that ultimately got to past the censors probably due to the number of themes it addressed. In the next chapter I will examine what I have referred to as subversive comedies through the collaborative works of Juan Antonio Bardem and Luis García Berlanga, main advocates during the 1950s of a cinematographic external dissidence.

## **Dissident Voices: the subversive comedies of Luis García Berlanga and Juan Antonio Bardem, and the Salamanca Conversations**

I tried to convey my particular *Weltanschauung*, my own view of the world through my films; offer through them the possibility to have access to a better world, freer, more democratic, more participatory, more respectful towards our own natural space, and more just. I always wanted to offer a critical testimony of a here and now. Because cinema will be either a witness or it would be nothing at all. (369)

—Juan Antonio Bardem (2002)

With this statement Juan Antonio Bardem declares in his memoirs *Y todavía sigue. Memorias de un hombre de cine* his commitment to carry out a socially and politically engaged cinema that would be critical enough to be able to raise some kind of awareness and foster critical thinking among the audience. Journalist and former director of Filmoteca de Valencia (Valencia Film Archive) Joan Álvarez makes a comparable remark about the intentions of Luis García Berlanga in his biographical study on the filmmaker. According to Álvarez, what the director gained in his film school years was a new idea of what cinema was, a new way of looking into his profession thanks to which cinema could also be an instrument for ideological and cultural change (96-97). These remarks are indicative of a generation of filmmakers who started working during the 1950s and entailed a turning point in Spanish cinema. If José Antonio Nieves Conde broke the molds of directors close to the regime and became a critical voice within the Falangist ideology – which was the political body of the regime –, then Juan Antonio Bardem and Luis García Berlanga became the main advocates of an external opposition during the same decade, dissident voices that propagated a non-conformist cinema. Bardem was an outspoken dissident of the regime, clandestinely supporting the back then illegal Communist Party. Berlanga, on the contrary, never made clear his political ideas and, notwithstanding being a volunteer in the Blue Division,<sup>29</sup> he was at certain point considered by Franco as “something even worse

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<sup>29</sup> The Blue Division was a group of military units, sent by Spain, which fought within the German Army

than a communist; a bad Spaniard” (Treglown 209). As a result of this ideological encounter with the official ideology, both directors were under continuous scrutiny from the censors and the state, and Bardem got arrested several times. In this chapter I will examine how these directors accomplished the idea of film-testimony through the first films they made together. These films –it will become clear –, immersed in both a realist style and a comical tone, helped them introduce a subtler critique to the society of the time that got past the censors.

The filmmakers had different filmmaking styles, something that can be seen when following their individual development. Bardem was more interested in social dramas and Berlanga stood out in the comedy genre. Some of their films, such as Bardem’s *Muerte de un ciclista* (1955) and *Calle Mayor* (1956), and Berlanga’s *Los jueves, milagro* (1957), *Plácido* (1961) or *El verdugo* (1963) have become milestones in the history of Spanish cinema as critical films that voiced a dissatisfaction with the regime and its institutions. Despite their differences in style, the two filmmakers are bound together, in this criticism, and especially through their first projects, some of which they envisaged and wrote together. These collaborative works, which constituted both a starting point in their respective careers as filmmakers and a turning point in the history of Spanish cinema, form the cases I will analyze in this chapter. I will put emphasis not only on the two completed collaborative projects *Esa pareja feliz* (1951) and *¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* (1953), but also on some of their projects that eventually did not come to light. What interests me in these filmmakers, is how they used oblique ways such as metaphors, satires and humor, as a way to minimize the cuts of the censors, thus developing a filmmaking style that put Bardem and Berlanga at the forefront of a dissident cinema. Thus, I will explore these alternative narrative methods which, I argue, combined with the arbitrariness and a lack of a censorship code within the censorship machinery at the time, allowed their films to represent society with a critical dimension that ultimately got past the censors. Against this background of resistance, I will in addition examine the transcripts of a series of important gatherings of the film industry at the time, which were initially announced as the Primeras

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against the Soviet Union. Although Spain did not officially joined the World War II (1939-45) it did change its neutral initial position into a non-belligerent one after Hitler asked for Franco’s support in return to the support given by Germany during the Spanish Civil War. Due to Spain’s non-belligerent position, the country did not send any units to fight against the Western Allies.

Conversaciones Cinematográficas Nacionales (First National Cinematographic Conversations), but would later become known as the Conversaciones de Salamanca (Salamanca Conversations). With Bardem as one of the organizers and Berlanga as an attendant, these gatherings were held in May 1955 at Salamanca University. Significant figures in the political and cultural scene, both national and international, were invited to participate and talk over the situation of the cinema in Spain. Immersed in an unusual outspoken non-conformist atmosphere, the participants appealed to a radical change in the then current cinematographic and censorship model. On the one hand, these Conversations had its breeding ground, in the arbitrariness of censorship due to the lack of a code, which I have already addressed a few times in this thesis. On the other hand, they found fertile grounds in the cinema that was being produced mainly in the previous decade and from which a new generation of filmmakers wanted to distance themselves. Thus, I will show how the Salamanca Conversations arose out of a need and desire to pursue a change in the kinds of films that were made, and the ways in which censorship was executed. In this way, the Conversations must be seen, I argue, as a declaration of intentions on how to solve the artistically and politically impoverished Spanish cinema of the time. The importance of these two dissident voices is therefore not only what is reflected through their films, but also their role in the social and cultural panorama in which they also tried to convey their oppositional ideas.

### **An uncertain starting point**

The work of Bardem and Berlanga is bound together especially by their first projects and their shared interest in challenging the cinematographic conventions as well as the social ones. They studied together at the IIEC (Instituto de Investigaciones y Experiencias Cinematográficas / Institute of Research and Cinematographic Experiences), the first official film school founded in Spain, which opened its doors for the first time in 1947. As an end-of-year project in 1948-1949 Bardem and Berlanga, together with Agustín Navarro and Florentino Soria, submitted a short-film titled *Paseo por una guerra antigua* (*Stroll*

*Through an Old War*), a project from which only a few unused shots from the negative and some film dailies have survived.<sup>30</sup> (see fig. 3.1-3.4)

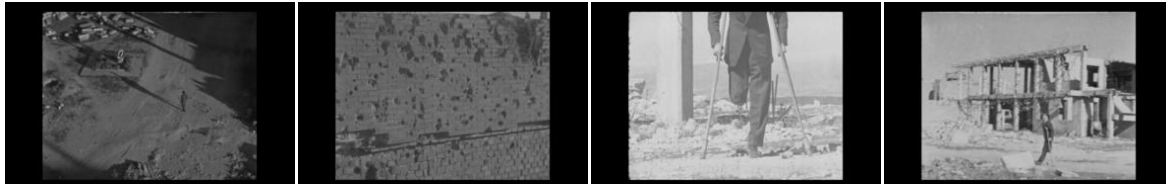


Fig. 3.1-3.4: Stills from unused shots. *Paseo por una guerra antigua* (1949)

The remaining images from the shooting of *Paseo por una Guerra Antigua* show a cripple holding his crutches and walking around what it used to be a battlefield during the Spanish Civil War. This way, the film was showing this man who appears to be remembering what once happened there while looking at fragments from exploded artillery and what has remained from the buildings that are reduced to rubble. As an experimental film symbolizing the devastating consequences of the civil war, *Paseo por una guerra antigua* would have never got past the censors if it had been subject to censorship. However, as stated in Oscar de Julián's book *De Salamanca a ninguna parte*, the film school had its own rules, which were much more permissive than in the rest of the country and the Administration accepted its existence as a "lesser evil" (31), as the projects were never meant for public exhibition.

In 1949, once Bardem and Berlanga had finished their education at the film school, they founded the production company Finis-terrae with which they intended to carry out their first projects as independent filmmakers. They wrote several scripts from which *Cerco de ira* (1949) and *La huida* (1949) were also a combined effort from both filmmakers. None of these projects, however, were ultimately finished, despite having received their filming permits in 1949. In the case of *Cerco de ira* (*Siege of Anger*) – again a joint project with Agustín Navarro and Florentino Soria –, Bardem explains that they in fact started filming but could not finish the project because they ran out of money (qtd.in Cañeque, 117). As for *La huida* (*The Escape*), the filming was apparently abandoned 24 hours before they had planned it. What remains from the project is only the original script available at the Filmoteca Española (Spanish Film Archive), which dates from January 1950. The plot goes

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<sup>30</sup> Images from *Paseo por una guerra antigua* are available at *Berlanga Film Museum* ([www.berlangafilmuseum.com](http://www.berlangafilmuseum.com)) thanks to the preservation program for the *oeuvre* of Luis García Berlanga (Filmoteca Española – IVAC)



as follows: In the wake of a jewelry robbery perpetrated by a group of thieves, one of them gets involved in a shooting when trying to escape from the Guardia Civil (Civil Guard) who, following a number of failed attempts, finally misses the target.<sup>31</sup> In Bardem's memoirs, he recalls that censors considered this failure from the Guardia Civil an inadmissible situation because it was going against the interests of this military force (*Y todavía sigue*, 81). Despite this negative comment mentioned by Bardem, the archival files evince that the filmmakers obtained the filming permits, which date from December 3, 1949. Although they continued for a while with the project doing some location scouting, they finally decided to abandon it before even starting the filming. The reason however remains unclear, as in the censorship files that I have consulted there is no reference to what Bardem suggests the censors reported as an inadmissible situation with the Guardia Civil. In fact, the censors suggested the authorization of the script and did not raise any objections regarding the moral and political values, except one of them who stated that he was against the approval of one particular scene. His report reads as follows: "I do not see any moral inconvenient except for the scene in page 120, which is exaggeratedly brutal and of questionable taste" (*La huida. Expediente de rodaje*). Because there is no record of a 1949 script and the censors did not specify the content of that scene on page 120, it has not been possible to verify if this scene was the one related to the shooting with the *Guardia Civil*, neither to find out the exact reasons why this project failed to prosper after being approved.

Bardem remembers another unfinished project from 1949-1950 in whose script both filmmakers worked together; *El hombre vestido de negro* (*The Man in Black*), whose original and copies have disappeared (24). These three frustrated projects did not however stop them from founding another production company, Industrias Cinematográficas Altamira, S.L in which Berlanga and Bardem – with other students from the IIEC – were only assuming film technical work rather than providing capital, a task that was carried out instead by a group of thirty small investors. However, they also held management positions within the company to assure some kind of independence and be able to make their own

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<sup>31</sup> The Guardia Civil is a military force with police duties that still exists today as one of the organizations responsible for the enforcement of laws. During Franco's time, the Guardia Civil acquired a reputation for being brutal and repressive due to the indiscriminate tortures and abuses against detainees. For an extensive study of these abuses see "La tortura en España bajo el franquismo" by J. Alberto Gómez Roda.

decisions with regards to their projects. In 1951 they finished their first feature film, *Esa pareja feliz* (*That Happy Couple*) within that recently created company. To this film I will turn now.

### **The feature debut in tandem**

Written in a comedy style, the film *Esa pareja feliz* (1951) portrays a social reality of a lower middle-class couple, Juan and Carmen, who recently got married. The couple is obliged to live in a lodged room, as they are unable to find a proper house to raise a family due to money shortage. Hoping for a job with a better salary, they are constantly dreaming of a wealthier future, seeing money as a means to happiness and personal fulfillment. This idea leads Carmen to participate in different sweepstakes and Juan to start a business trusting in someone who ends up being an impostor. As a result Juan loses not only all he has invested but also his self-respect, as well as his own job at the cinema studios where he worked as a technician. Luck, however, intervenes when Carmen wins one of those contests organized by the soap brand *Jabones Florit*. As a prize, for one day, Juan and Carmen become “the happy couple” enjoying *haute cuisine*, galleries, theaters, jewelers and music. This dream for the working-class, which was a life that was only accessible to the upper classes, soon comes to an end, however, when Juan, tired of being the main attraction and realizing the ridicule of this situation in which they are exploited by advertising, decides to finish the farce, ending up at the police station because of a fight. Finally released, the couple only wants to get rid of all the presents they have received in the last hours, as they realize this is not what makes them happy.

The censorship files from September 1950 barely mentioned any social, political or moral nuance, although it is worth mentioning the only two things that they pointed out that had to be removed or softened from the script for the shooting permits to be issued. First they specifically stated take 569 had to be deleted (*Esa pareja feliz*. Expediente de rodaje). This take belongs to a scene related to the incident at the very end of the film when the couple Juan and Carmen is sent to the police station after a fight in a nightclub. The Chief Inspector asks them for identification and the only thing they can find in their pockets is a certificate as “the happy couple” from the organization of the contest. The script reads as follows:

Chief Inspector: In which country do you think we are living? It is not enough to be happy to be able to go around! There are obligations... you have to carry your ID or something... (take 568) ... something that allow you to go around without being bothered by policemen...! You make a scene in a nightclub and you are not even carrying the ex-combatant military ID... Unbelievable! (take 569)

Although the take 569 in this scene may at first sight appear to be irrelevant, the censors were acutely aware of the significance of the sentence in it: i.e. “ex-combatant military ID.” They forced the authors to change it, and Berlanga and Bardem introduced wittily in the final dialogues the word “ration book” instead. This change modifies the whole meaning of the intended critique, but does not leave the speech devoid of any content and wit. Probably the reason why censors were so decisive to ban it was the fact that having an ex-combatant identity card implied, first of all, having been a soldier supporting the *coup* in the National side during the war, and second, it entailed having some privileges such as certain freedom within the institutions, administrative and political favors and social position.<sup>32</sup> The new incorporation of the word “ration book” into this dialogue, still hints at the existence of a war, and the idea that implies that there are some people benefiting from certain privileges, as “something that allows you to go around without being bothered by policemen” remains part of the dialogue. The irony is, that although this change was meant to prevent a criticism of the institutions, I hold that the original one would have more easily gone unnoticed by the public than the second one, as the “ration book” clearly refers to and thus uncovers the pertinent shortages of food and poor conditions of living in the postwar era.

The second allusion in the censorship reports to change something in the script was more a suggestion than a ban. In this case several censors agreed on the fact that Juan’s implied sexual desires for his wife had to be suppressed. Censors considered that some comments and attitudes, although morally reasonable because they were married, could not be admitted in a film. In this way, they stated that “in the moral aspect we do consider

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<sup>32</sup> Historian Ángel Alcalde has a whole account on this subject. In his book *Los ex-combatientes franquistas (1936-1965)* he holds that there was an entire legislation for ex-combatants to incorporate them to work in the post-war years, especially for the volunteer soldiers, who were better regarded when it came to receiving favors from the regime. They were given positions within the local institutions, as well as in the state repressive apparatuses, the regime generated loyalty and patronage that ensured their support and sustainability.

excessively provocative when Juan enters the house at night waking up his wife with very much clear intentions” (Expediente de rodaje Esa pareja feliz). This was a common behavior in some censors, especially the religious ones. They were so obsessed about censoring what they considered immoral situations that many times they failed to include in their reports a symbolic, cultural and/or ideological opposition to the regime and its ideas. Thus, although the authors had to soften some comments with regards to Juan’s desires for his wife, their critique of the *bourgeoisie* and consumerist society went unnoticed by the censors – or at least no substantive changes were enforced. The script was then approved and the shooting permits were issued without any other thing to highlight except for the positive comments and the common impression among the censors about the chances for a good comedy. One of the censors, Fermín del Amo, pointed out for instance the “high level of artistic expression rarely seen in our scriptwriters” (Esa pareja feliz. Permiso de rodaje).

In addition to the favorable reception of the script among the censors, Bardem and Berlanga succeeded in the completed film to portrait a new social problem that goes one step further than criticizing a certain way of living by choosing to shoot the film in a realist style in terms of natural settings. The new social problem they addressed was labor poverty and precariousness. The film’s ending leaves the situation of the characters unresolved, although they are now aware that they belong to a certain social class and that there is a world out there to which they simply do not fit nor belong. Despite the name of the movie, *That Happy Couple*, and the idea that Juan and Carmen may be happier now because they realize and accept their class condition, the film makes also clear that the circumstances in life, which led them to try to change their lives by venturing on a fake business and participating in a contest to be “the happy couple,” remain the same. The filmmakers succeed in depicting the story of a family that will never overcome a social condition and class, and for whom the only chance to experience the life they would never be able to lead was through a contest, sarcastically called “the happy couple.” They manage to do so, first and foremost, through the use of humor and satire. Thus, even though the film offers a critical and pessimistic portrait of the working class and their position in the society, of class struggle, economic inequality, labor poverty and precariousness, and of the price of consumer goods in a capitalistic society, it is important to point out that the filmmakers

manage to voice this criticism mainly through the use of humor and satire. The filmmakers used comedy and an unresolved narrative to subvert the social, political and moral status of the time.

Through this subversive comedy Bardem and Berlanga succeeded to soften and make subtler their criticism in a way that could avoid censorship. In this way Bardem and Berlanga also succeeded to criticize censorship itself, to ridicule the historical cinema of the late 1940s and to make a fool of the morals of the time and even to parody Franco. The following comical situations visually illustrate some of these critiques and references to the society of the time and the regime.



Fig. 3.5-3.10: Scene in the Movie Theater.  
*Esa pareja feliz* (Bardem and Berlanga, 1951)

innocent kisses. With this scene the directors also reminded the audience of the existence of censorship in Spanish cinema, something that not even the censors bothered to avoid in this case.

In the opening sequence of *Esa pareja feliz* (see fig. 3.11-3.18) the filmmakers show again a film within the film, as the film starts with what turns out to be images of a shooting of a historical film in a movie studio. This scene

Fig. 3.5-3.10 represent a scene in which Carmen and Juan go to the movies. Within the film that they are watching in the theater, a couple is affectionately speaking to each other and when they are about to kiss, a sudden cut is clearly shown and someone from the audience grumbles “Oh well! They cut the kiss again!” This situation shows how commonly censors made cuts such as simple affection or



Fig. 3.11-3.18: Opening sequence  
*Esa pareja feliz* (Bardem and Berlanga, 1951)

can be interpreted as a parody of the kind of cinema that was mainly produced in the late 1940s and 1950s by those supporting and supported by the regime; i.e. a historical cinema portraying heroes' great deeds during colonial times and Spanish Empire. Although the scene has nothing censurable, it depicts in any case a cinema alienated from a contemporary reality, a cinema that this new generation of filmmakers were trying to fight against, which they demonstrated both through the cinema they were making and through the demands they endorsed during the Salamanca Conversations in 1955. The fact that this scene is used as the opening sequence of *Esa pareja feliz*, I argue, can be seen as a statement from Bardem and Berlanga against the cinema they opposed to. Thus, once the director utters "Cut!" unveiling the *mise en scene* and the studio where the film is being shot, it is as if the actual directors were announcing to the spectators of *Esa pareja feliz* "this is not one of those films to which you are accustomed."



Fig. 3.19-3.22 Sequence of a Spanish Zarzuela sung by a tenor.  
*Esa pareja feliz* (Bardem and Berlanga, 1951)

This last example (see fig. 3.19-3.22) belong to what Berlanga has assured is a reference to and a parody of General Franco which censors failed to pinpoint (qtd.in Cañeque, 76-77). Berlanga explains how these images, which show a tenor singing a typical Spanish opera known as *zarzuela*, is a reference to the dictator. The tenor resembles Franco physically – short and plump – and through his clothes, as he is dressed in a marine's uniform similar to what Franco used to wear when sailing on his yacht *El Azor*.<sup>33</sup> Apparently the opera sung by the actor was one of Franco's favorites and the directors used it as a metaphor of the regime, implying – in Berlanga's words – what many Republicans were hoping and expecting since the beginning of Francoism: the collapse of the regime, even with a military intervention of the Allies if needed, something that did not happen until the dictator's death (Cañeque 76-77). The lyrics are as follows; "They say I am leaving, they

<sup>33</sup> *El Azor* was a yacht built for the Chief of State Francisco Franco and used as a recreational ship for fishing and during his vacation periods with his family.

say I am leaving but I stay.”

Once the film was completed, the censorship reports from January 1952 evince that the film was rated as Category 1 (suitable for any audience, including children), the highest category according to moral issues until that time.<sup>34</sup> While *Esa pareja feliz* did not draw the attention of the censors, who barely imposed any cut as I previously revealed, the film did not draw the attention of exhibitors either. Despite the positive response to the film not only from the censors but also from critics and university *cineclubs* as well as El Pardo Palace,<sup>35</sup> the film was not really released until two years later, probably boosted by the success of another subversive comedy by Bardem and Berlanga entitled *¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* (1953), and which I will discuss below. For some reasons that I cannot explain following the available documents in the censorship files, the commercial movie theaters did not distribute *Esa pareja feliz* in what could be perceived as a kind of commercial censorship at first sight. According to the abovementioned files, the distribution company who bought the rights of the films to Altamira, S.L wrote several letters to the National Board of Spectacle and the General Direction of Cinematography demanding the enforcement of the existing legislation for the exhibitors to implement their obligations in case there was any kind of legal irregularity due to their refusal to exhibit the film. There is however no record of any action or reprisal from the Administration to these exhibitors. Nonetheless, thanks to an article published in the magazine *Objetivo* by J.G. Maesso – also a student of the IIEC and co-founder of *Altamira, S.L* –, I could bring some light to this arduous situation. Maesso assures that the large amount of small investors from different parts of the Spanish geography and the different approaches on how to manage this production company led to an impossible harmony among the 30 investors. Thus, the most coherent solution in order to dissolve the corporation would be selling the rights to a distributor.<sup>36</sup> The import licenses of this film, however, had already been sold at the time,

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<sup>34</sup> On March 8, 1950, the *Oficina Nacional Clasificadora de Espectáculos* (National Rating Office), a specialized organism within the Catholic Church, was created. It recommended a classification for films that, despite being intended as a guideline, they were rigorously used by censors in their reports, which shows how much influence the Catholic Church could exert. The rating guidelines were as follows: 1. Suitable for any audience, including children. 2. Restricted to audiences below 14 years of age. 3. Authorized for audiences as of 18 years of age. 3-R. Partially authorized for audiences as of 18 years of age. 4. Highly dangerous.

<sup>35</sup> El Pardo Palace, located in the surrounding of the city of Madrid, was the official residence of General Francisco Franco since the end of the Civil War. Interestingly as in the case of Hitler, it is known that Franco was a film lover and that he regularly used a cinema in the theater room at the Palace for screening films.

<sup>36</sup> According to the existing legislation at that time, when the Censorship Board approved a film, it was

and the film had been left unprotected, not being able to be exhibited in public theaters until two years later (43). In the meantime *Esa pareja feliz* was sent to the 6<sup>th</sup> Edition of Cannes Film Festival in the non-competitive exhibition, which occurred at the same time as their next film, *¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!*, was invited to represent Spain in the official selection for the Grand Prize of the festival. *Esa pareja feliz* was highly commended by the international press, and soon after that released in Spanish cinemas for de general public.

From all this can be inferred, I argue, that *Esa pareja feliz*, can be defined as a subversive comedy with a certain class struggle ideology embedded in the script. If the filmmakers achieved with this film to voice certain criticism of the social structures through the use of satire and humor, their next film, *¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* goes far beyond the critique of Spanish institutions. To this film I will turn now.

### **“The Spanish bomb.” A subversive comedy born from an alleged folklore film**

*¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* (1953) was again a common project written by both filmmakers and intended for a co-direction between Berlanga and Bardem as in the case of *Esa pareja feliz*. However, some problems with the production company UNINCI, who hired them to write and direct the film, led Bardem to sell his shareholdings in the company – which was a payment in kind – and to being immediately excluded from the direction of this film (Cerón 98). Despite the fact that the film was eventually only directed by Berlanga, the critical content on which I am mainly focusing was a common project from beginning to end. Therefore, I have regularly cited both filmmakers in regards to the authorship in this thesis. Having said this, the assignment was to write a typical folkloric film that could permit the promotion of a young dancer, Lolita Sevilla, who had been

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granted according to its classification with a specific number of import licenses to be able to import and distribute foreign cinema. Although this measurement was supposed to be a protection mechanism for Spanish cinema against the international one, it was only in the phase of production that it became effective, but not in its exhibition phase. Spanish production was then warranted when exhibiting foreign cinema, and distributors would probably accept to buy the rights of a Spanish production only if it was accompanied of any import license that they could in turn sell to the exhibitor. However, the problem laid in the fact that those licenses could be sold separately from the film. This not only generated a black market of licenses but also that exhibitors could buy those imports without necessarily having to exhibit Spanish cinema. The only protection mechanism for Spanish exhibition – if it can be called protection – is the mandatory exhibition of one week of Spanish cinema for every six weeks of foreign cinema (Order December 10, 1941. Ministry of Industry and Trade)



working in Spanish theaters but had never played a role in cinema. Although this was not the sort of film that Berlanga and Bardem would make, considering their commitment to the society through their cinema, they somehow complied with the request, using the occasion to transform the idea into a parody of precisely these kinds of films, and a critique of the Americans and their policies, the Spaniards, and the society of the time.

The story begins as a classic fable in terms of narrative, introducing the small town of Villar del Río and its inhabitants through a voice-over whose satirical intonation already announces the comedy tone of the film, stating:

There was a Spanish town, a very ordinary town, and it happened that one morning, this morning... No, I think you should get to know its houses, its inhabitants and its customs before... Well, before what's going to happen actually does happen.<sup>37</sup>

The filmmakers then depict a poor and uneducated Castilian small town and its most representative figures, who will be the main characters in this story: the mayor, Don Pablo; the priest, Don Cosme, the teacher, Señorita Eloísa; the doctor, Don Emiliano; and even an *hidalgo*, Don Luis.<sup>38</sup> Everything goes as any other day in the calm and small town of Villar del Río until a retinue of four officials of the Provincial General Delegate, their *chauffeur*, and two motorized security patrols arrive in town with the sound of warning sirens, which destabilizes the peace of this rural environment (see fig. 3.23-3.32). Everyone stops their duties and jobs to desperately notify the mayor who should not make this high-ranking official wait. This frantic way of looking for the mayor for the purpose of being at the immediate disposal of the Delegate, and the disproportionate convoy of the Delegate offers a first critique of the social and political hierarchies of Spanish society. Along with this critique, Berlanga and Bardem introduce through the announcement from the Delegate the main theme in the film, which is the arrival of a Marshall Plan Commission that should be appropriately welcomed.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> All the excerpts from ¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall! are extracted from the English subtitles of a DVD distributed by Tribanda Pictures.

<sup>38</sup> The concept of *hidalgo* is common in Spanish literature especially since Cervantes most famous novel *Don Quixote* (1605). The word means nobleman but without any hereditary title or money.

<sup>39</sup> The European Recovery Program, also known as Marshall Plan, was an aid program from the United States intended for the Allied nations that took part in the Second World War. Although Spain was not directly involved in the WWII, it gained initially the recognition of the aid as the regime was considered as a guarantee of the US crusade against communism. However, the support was finally not supplied as the film ¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall! parodies.



Fig. 3.23-3.32: An official retinue accompanies the Provincial General Delegate at his arrival at Villar del Río. *¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* (Luis García Berlanga, 1953)

The citizens must now prepare and decorate the town for welcoming this Marshall Plan Commission, assuming that the money assigned will probably depend on the kind of reception the Americans receive. There were rumors that the neighboring towns have everything already prepared with fireworks, flags, triumphal arches and luminous gushing fountains. In an attempt to let Villar del Río stand out, the mayor, Don Pablo, decides to take the advice of Manolo, a singer's representative who happens to be in the town, and who comes up with the idea of transforming the place into a typical Andalusian town. As he tries to convince the citizens that this is the best way to welcome the Americans Manolo exclaims:

I have been in America my friends. I know those noble but infantile minds and I tell you that Spain is known in America because of Andalusia. But you must not think that they do not love these deep-rooted Castilian towns as they should. But the fame of our bullfights, our bullfighters, our gypsies and our flamenco songs, has erased everything else. They want folklore.

Here the critique goes against the Americans who are depicted as ignorant people, but also against the Spanish people, who are portrayed as if they would do everything possible to receive the promised aid. Some of the characters, however, do not agree to this farce or to the whole idea of welcoming the Americans itself, mainly due to a lack of trust.

In one scene, for example, the priest utters some words in Latin which immediately afterwards he translates into Spanish: "It is better to receive than to give. But when the giver's intention is not known, no gift can be accepted." This sentence manifests not only the priest's refusal and his lack of trust in the Americans but also seeks to question and critique in a very natural way the Christian charity, captured in the words of no less than a priest: "it is better to receive than to give." In the version of the script that must probably

was used by the censors, these exact words do not appear.<sup>40</sup> In that version, while it is true that the priest says and translates from Latin the same idea of distrust, there is no evidence of the critique of Christian charity. The censors did however make a comment about this scene on the script. They considered that Don Cosme's Latin was inadmissible, though it is not clear if this comment was regarding the accuracy of the language or they saw it as mocking. They also remarked that the producer should take care of depicting Don Cosme with the dignity that corresponds to the highest representative of the religious institution in the town (¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall! Expediente de rodaje). It seems however that the censors failed to pinpoint again this remark in the censorship reports with regards to the final version of the film.

In the meantime, in the story, Señorita Eloísa instructs the citizens in some knowledge about the United States and, in an outburst of anger and Anti-Americanism, the priest interrupts her (see fig.3.33-3.40);



Fig. 3.33-3.40: Don Cosme speaks out in front of some citizens about the moral dangers that may bring an American aid. *¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* (Berlanga, 1953)

[...The United States is the world's largest producer of (Eloísa)] (Don Cosme) sins with millions of tons per year. There are forty nine million Protestants, four hundred thousand Indians, two hundred thousand Chinese, five millions Jews, thirteen million blacks and ten million... nothings! So what? Do not think you can stand there and receive without giving in exchange! For each grain of wheat, for each ton of coal, there is a soul to be saved. They may have trains to spare, but we have something else; souls, peace of mind. And that has to be our gift. You may not know that only in one year, in the United States there were one million divorces, seven thousand murders, seventeen thousand rapes, eighty thousand armed robberies and sixty thousand burglaries. After all that, what do you think America is going to give us?

<sup>40</sup> Fortunately, the version available in Filmoteca Española dates from Feb. - April 1952, right before the issuing of the filming permits, which means that this is most probably the script used by the censors. It is therefore possible to know what exactly the censors wanted to ban or change – as in the censorship files the page of the script they were referring to was stated –, and to compare it with the final filmed version.

Regarding these lines, the censors demanded “millions of sins” to be deleted from the script. Although the script consulted was explicitly marked with the words “Revisar. En expediente” (To revise. [Stated] in report), Berlanga did not change it, nor did the censors ban it in the filmed version. Furthermore, these words are repeated several times, for example when the priest literally dreams of the arrival of the Americans. In this dream Don Cosme appears in a House Committee on Un-American Activities composed of members with distinctive costumes similar to the ones of the Ku Klux Klan. This jury condemns him to the gallows for these exact words, which, in his dream, he once stated when being suspicious about the intentions of the Americans with their aid plan (see fig. 3.41-3.55).



Fig. 3.41-3.55: Priest's dream. Caption check if noir cinema images are included  
*¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* (Berlanga, 1953)

In the same way that the subconscious of the priest is depicted in his dream, the personal desires and feelings of the other characters are also represented in their own dreams, in which the protagonists envision the arrival of the Americans. Moreover, through these visual representations of the subconscious, the film offered a parody of the film genres of cinema at that time. According to Berlanga, whereas the dream of the priest Don Cosme parodies American *film noir*, the historical Spanish cinema of conquests is depicted in the *hidalgo's* dream (see fig. 3.56), and in the case of the mayor Don Pablo the dream offers a parody of the Western (see fig. 3.57, qtd.in Cañeque, 17-18).



Fig. 3.56 (left): Hidalgo's dream  
Fig. 3.57 (right): Don Pablo's dream  
*¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* (Berlanga, 1953)

As already explained, when issuing the filming permits, the censors had suggested small changes in the script that were actually never followed up. Only in the case of Eloísa's dream, in which she was chased by a whole team of American Rugby players to sleep with her, and the censors had stated in the files "make sure Eloísa's dream do not degenerate into something erotic" (Expediente de rodaje *¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!*). The dream was never filmed the way it was scripted.



Instead, in the film Eloísa appears, asleep in her bed, and her gestures imply the erotic content of a dream that does not appear on screen, but are suggestive enough to be understood (see fig. 3.58-3.59).

Fig. 3.58-3.59: Eloísa in bed.  
*¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* (Berlanga, 1953)

Let us return to the main plot for a bit. Following the idea of transforming Villar del Río into an stereotyped Andalusian town, the citizens agree to dress up in typical Andalusian costumes, learn how to dance typical Andalusian dances, and transform the streets of Villar del Río into a genuine Andalusian landscape with the use of props. They even prepare and rehearse a song to welcome the commission (see fig. 3.60-3.63):

The Yankees have come  
laden with charm and gifts,  
and they are going to give  
airplanes to all the kids,  
jet-propelled airplanes  
that fly through the air,  
and skyscrapers as well,  
all with cold air.  
Americans,  
are coming to Spain  
like Santa Claus



Hurrah for the extravagance  
of this mighty people.  
Hurrah for Virginia  
and Michigan  
and log live Texas.  
Americans,  
we welcome you with joy.  
Hurrah for my mother,  
hurrah for my mother-in-law  
and my aunt (...)  
[original in Spanish]

Fig. 3.60-3.63: The citizens rehearse the song they have prepared to welcome the Americans dressed up in regional Andalusian costumes.





Fig. 3.64-3.73: Final scene in *Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* (Berlanga, 1953).  
The Americans pass-by

But when, despite all their efforts, it turns out that the Americans do not stop but pass-by this small city (see fig. 3.64-3.73), the voice-over ironically states: “Villar del Río is again what it always was, an ordinary little town.” With this voice-over ends a fable in which the moral – according to Berlanga – is to believe in nothing else but in the own commitment and work effort, “a Marxist ending possibly designed more by Bardem than by me” (qtd.in Cañeque, 18).

At the beginning of February 1953 the film was approved and the Board of Censors did not raise many objections to the film. In fact, they highlighted it as a delightful and original script, with a wonderful intention and direction, and even politically much appreciated (¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall! Informe de censura). However, the film was not granted the recognition of National Interest. Instead, *¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* was classified as First Category, which entitled the film with a non-refundable grant of 35% - 40% – instead of the 50% given only to the films granted as National Interest – of the invested capital.<sup>41</sup> The production company UNINCI, based on the compliments received wanted the film to be granted as the highest category and requested a revision of the censors’ verdict. In a new report in response to the revision requested by UNINCI, the censors highlighted again that the film had an original argument, it was full of satirical talent, very well performed, and the sound, photography and other technical values were higher to what they were accustomed. But despite these flattering comments, the granting as National Interest was once again denied until its success in Cannes (¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall! Informe solicitud Interés Nacional). In Cannes, although

<sup>41</sup> This was the official classification that was established by Order of July 16, 1952 and according to which the films were granted with a non-refundable percentage of the invested capital. The classification was as follows: Interés Nacional - 50%; 1A - 40%; 1B - 35%; 2A - 30%; 2B - 25%; 3 - 0.

it did not win the *Grand Prize* for which it was nominated, it won the International Prize for best comedy film and a Special Mention for the screenplay. Only then, the film was finally given the favorable recognition as National Interest upon proposal from the General Director of Cinematography on June 1953. According to a letter sent by UNINCI to the General Director of Cinematography dated on December 30, 1953, and which appears in the censorship files there are references to some comments and critiques from several publications. For example, one entitled “Franco sets off a cinematographic bomb in Cannes.” Or general remarks from the audience such as “Is there no censorship in Spain then?” (¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall! Carta de UNINCI)

The way Bardem and Berlanga managed to transform in the script what it was supposed to be a folkloric film at once into a satire of the rural life in Spain, a critique of the American policies regarding a promised aid that never came along, and a critique of the Spanish people and its social and political hierarchies, is remarkable. It once again shows the non-conformist attitude of Bardem and Berlanga. They succeeded in making a cinema they both were interested in; a social and politically committed cinema, critical enough to be able to raise awareness and foster critical thinking among the audience. The use of humor, satire and metaphors as an oblique way to convey what they really wanted to transmit has been coined by Virginia Higginbotham as *estética franquista* (Francoist aesthetic) and Marvin D’Lugo speaks of the aesthetic of repression (56).<sup>42</sup> However, this style has never been deeply analyzed and to do such an analysis would require more research into the specific traits and directors belonging to this aesthetics as scholars do not agree on which generation of filmmakers it concerns. While Sally Faulkner puts the emphasis on the metaphorical cinematic idiom of the 1960s with filmmakers such as Carlos Saura or Victor Erice among others, Virginia Higginbotham puts Bardem and Berlanga forward as its advocates. In any case, the fact is that there exists since the early 1950s a new way of making films in Spain, which was the direct result of the attempt to both avoid political censorship and criticize the official Francoist ideology and the morals of a National Catholic upper-class that was sustaining the regime and its values. As a result, a new aesthetic was born from an environment of repression that allowed

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<sup>42</sup> As D’Lugo, I prefer to use the English term “aesthetic of repression” rather than “Francoist aesthetic” as the latter may lead to the assumption of an official style. On the contrary, this cinema is a reaction to the repression carried out by the censorship machinery of the state.

filmmakers represent through their works the society of the time with a critical dimension and that ultimately got past the censors. Bardem and Berlanga play a key role in raising these dissident voices.

Their importance when talking about oppositional ideas to the regime lies not only on what is reflected in their films, but also on their commitment to a better Spanish cinema in what would become known as the Salamanca Conversations, to which I will turn my attention in this final part of the chapter.

### ***Conversaciones de Salamanca. A Manifesto towards a new Spanish cinema***

During the 1950s and after experiencing some problems with the Administration, dissident filmmakers, critics, and intellectuals related with the film industry began to discuss the problems of Spanish cinema in an outspoken manner. These problems were not only related to censorship itself but also to other conditions under which Spanish cinema was being produced, and the aesthetic, economic, intellectual, social, and industrial problems it encountered. It was therefore necessary to trace those problems and to do a self-critical revision on the way cinema was being made. Very much bound to this spirit of change was the magazine *Objetivo* – which ran from 1953 until it was banned after nine issues in 1955–, having the filmmaker Juan Antonio Bardem as part of its editorial board. This magazine can be seen, I argue, as a counter publication to the Falangist *Primer Plano*. Whereas *Primer Plano* was being used to legitimate governmental measurements regarding censorship or to praise propaganda films, *Objetivo* gave voice to national and international professionals in the field, including those closer to the regime such as José Luis Sáenz de Heredia or José María García Escudero, the latter of whom published in this periodical an essay entitled “Los problemas del cine español” (“The Problems of Spanish Cinema.” In this atmosphere of criticism and self-criticism, *Objetivo* became a springboard for a new aesthetics and new political ideas on Spanish cinema. It also gave a boost and widely covered the earlier mentioned Conversaciones de Salamanca (Salamanca Conversations).

During these Conversations, which were in fact a series of lectures and debates, held at the University City of Salamanca from 14-17 May 1955, filmmakers and critics appealed to a radical change in the then current cinematographic model with the support and



engagement of professionals and politicians from different ideologies, including some states representatives. Although the Conversations did not generate the expected rupture with the established way of doing things, they did however have long-term impact on both the way of making cinema in Spain, and on the legislation regarding cinema. It gave rise to a new generation of filmmakers, some of whom participated in the Conversations, and whom became particularly significant in the following decade. This late consequence is, however, not a matter of detailed study in this thesis for the reasons already explained in the introduction. As indicated, the focus of this research is on what led these professionals to raise their voice, and to try to change things. Among the several things these professionals wanted to change, the arbitrariness of censorship due to the lack of a clearly defined code, and a cinema alienated from reality were the most visible ones. In other words, there was a need among these professionals to pursue a change in the way cinema was being made and in the way censorship was executed. In this way, the conclusions reached by the participants became a kind of manifesto to carry out a change in the artistically and politically impoverished Spanish cinema of the time.

The Salamanca Conversations, enriched by a neorealist atmosphere, were promoted and organized by a young Basilio Martín Patino who, supported by the chief editor of the magazine *Objetivo*, Juan Antonio Bardem, used this magazine to make an official announcement of the Conversations urging for a radical change in the current model (see fig. 3.74). The statement reads:

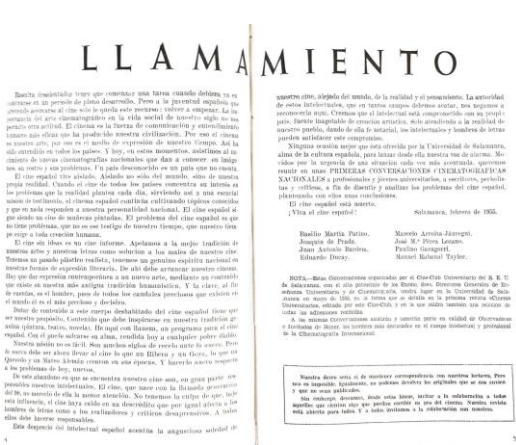


Figure 3.74: Announcement of the National Cinematographic Conversations in magazine *Objetivo*

The Spanish cinema lives isolated from the world and from reality (...). It is still a cinema of painted dolls. The problem that Spanish cinema has is that it has no problems; it is not a witness of our time (...). In the first National Cinematographic Conversations we want to gather together professionals and young university students, writers, journalists and critics, to discuss and analyze the problems of Spanish cinema and to draw together some conclusions.

Spanish cinema is dead.  
Long live Spanish cinema!” (“Llamamiento” 3-4)

In this announcement, the organizers were not only blaming the Administration for the situation of Spanish cinema, but also the intellectuals and film professionals – critics, writers, scriptwriters, and directors –, who were to engage with their own country paying attention to its reality (“Llamamiento”, 2-3). Among the guests invited to the opening of the talks there were public figures such as the Italian critic Guido Aristarco; the until 1953 exiled critic Manuel Villegas López; filmmakers José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, Manoel de Oliveira, Carlos Saura or Antonio del Amo; the ex-General Director of Cinematography, José María García Escudero; teachers and students from the IIEC; the actor, writer and ultimately director Fernando Fernán Gómez; José Antonio Bardem; Luis García Berlanga; and writers Fernando Lázaro Carreter and Fernando Vizcaíno Casas among others. The promoter of the Salamanca Conversations, Basilio Martín Patino, inaugurated the act in a spirit of discussion and democratic atmosphere. He remembers in an interview in *De Salamanca a ninguna parte* (Chema de la Peña, 2002), how back then he was advised by the local and national authorities present there that in every public act organizers must mention the *Caudillo* at the beginning of the event as a symbol of support and loyalty to Franco. When he heard this, he said in a very natural way “we will eventually vote and do what the majority say (...), and we did not do it [mention Franco].” Despite this anecdote and alleged freedom due to the presence of many figures who were very much dissonant to Francoist ideology, this atmosphere of independence and freedom vanished with the veto by the institutions of communist historian George Sadoul and Italian neorealist theorist Cesare Zavattini to attend the Conversations.

In the Salamanca Conversations two different generations of filmmakers and different professionals of the cinema world including state’s representatives joined forces against the artificial mode of representation that characterized the previous cinema, and staked a claim for a new realist cinema with everyday life themes. In these lectures and conferences – some of which were published in *Objetivo* –, references were made to the social, economic, cinematographic and official obstacles for Spanish cinema. Thus, matters such as what mandatory dubbing and the actual protection system entailed, the need of a new legislation regarding censorship, and the need of professional and honest critics capable of contributing genuinely to the Spanish cinema, were some of the discussions that took place (“Salamanca...” 5-31). Ultimately, a declaration of intentions and things to fight against,

which was included in Bardem's conference, has become the manifesto of the Salamanca Conversations. This has been coined "Bardem's pentagram" (see fig.3.75), and reads as follows:

The current cinema is

1. Politically ineffective
2. Socially false
3. Intellectually poor
4. Aesthetically worthless
5. Industrially underdeveloped.

("Informe sobre la situación... 33")

These statements about the current situation of Spanish cinema at the time, which filmmaker Juan Antonio

Bardem pronounced in his speech during the Salamanca Conversations, were subscribed by most of the present members with few exceptions, like for instance director José Luis Sáenz de Heredia from whom it is said that when he saw what was going on there, he went away (Julián 19). Along with these five statements, the participants agreed on a series of conclusions to the abovementioned problems that could be summarized as follows: to enhance and stimulate a cinema much more immersed in the social Spanish reality and to encourage young filmmakers to produce films. This needed to be achieved especially by way of governmental measurements not only by improving the IIEC but also by renewing a film industry that otherwise would clash with this new spirit of change.

As an active member of the Salamanca Conversations, José María García Escudero tried to implement some of these agreements when he assumed again the General Direction of Cinematography between 1962 and 1968. Changes were made in different scopes such as education, economic protection, and legislation. The film school was radically transformed and new economic protections for production and exhibition of Spanish cinema were established. Besides this, the Administration decided to promote "artistically ambitious" films substituting the old nationalistic National Interest Category for the new Special Interest Category (Ministerial Order August 19, 1964). But most importantly, a censorship code was established in the Film Censorship Norms adopted by Ministerial Order of

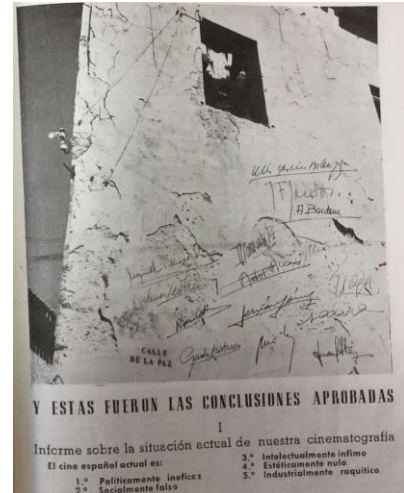


Figure 3.75: Bardem's pentagram and signatures of some of the representative figures who participated in the Salamanca Conversations

February 9, 1963 and which, although a late one, was an indirect consequence that proved the success of the Salamanca Conversations. This code was broad and specific enough to allow filmmakers to know what to expect from censors when submitting a script or a film to the board. Thus, it was stating what exactly was forbidden to represent in a film, in which way, and with what nuances, something that aimed to put an end to the arbitrariness of the censorship of the early years.

This way, although not immediately, Spanish cinema started moving in a new direction regarding legislation, and towards a new way of making cinema. This was the consequence of the effort of Spanish dissident cinema that needed a legitimation beyond the screens, and that ultimately found one in the Salamanca Conversations in 1955. Censorship did not cease to exist until 1978 but these Conversations laid the foundations for a change that many wanted, even those closer to the regime but with artistic concerns or with a sense of the importance of cinema for the development of culture and society.

Cinematographically this change was achieved through the personal commitment of some filmmakers that defended cinema as a testimony of a time and used it as a way to represent reality, even if that reality was their personal vision of the world, as Bardem says in the introductory citation of this chapter. What these filmmakers tried to do was use cinema as a medium that becomes a witness, a testimony of the society they were living and that in turn it could serve ultimately as an instrument for change. Bardem and Berlanga managed to minimize censorship while at the same time convey through their films a social reality, and subvert the political and moral status of the time. If a political and ideological change was not possible in those years, then a cinematographic one was accomplished that opened the way for further change to come.

## Conclusions

The objective of this thesis has been to provide the reader with a study of the subversive cinematographic practices in Spain during the period of political repression under Francoism (1939-1975). In foregrounding the non-conformist cinema of the time, it is my hope that this thesis contributes to the reconstruction of an immediate past in order to fight against the loss of memory, instigated by the dominant accounts of the history of that period, including that of the Spanish cinema. This thesis aims, then, to bring to light the repression that was encouraged by the state within the purview of film in order to hinder freedom of speech, and to revive a period of Spanish film history in which some films must be seen, I argue, as an instrument for social criticism. Against this background of repression I have, firstly, drawn attention on the institutional mechanisms and administrative procedures of censorship and propaganda – through which the state exercised control over the film making practices –, and the propaganda films made by directors who followed the principles of the regime, particularly focusing on the case of José Luis Sáenz de Heredia. Secondly, I have focused on different dissident practices that, I have demonstrated, have challenged those mechanisms of control and the established way of making cinema, and have marked this way a turning point in Spanish cinema. To study these forms of control and the resistance it encountered, I have proposed to divide this study in three chapters, plus an introductory chapter in which I have given an account of the historical circumstances as a framework to understand why and how Francoism emerged.

In chapter one I have provided a study of the repressive and control mechanisms, both film censorship and propaganda, which helped Franco to remain in power for almost 40 years. I here have focused on the first 25 years of Francoism for three reasons. First, it is within these years that the bases of Francoist censorship and propaganda were founded, while also being the most arbitrary and contradictory years regarding the repressive and propagandistic actions taken by state apparatuses. Second, those were the years in which the most dissident voices stood out subverting the social and cinematographic conventions. And third, this period also coincides with a propaganda campaign carried out by the government in 1964 to celebrate what the regime ironically had named as the “25 years of

peace”, which was, as I have demonstrated, first and foremost, an attempt to legitimate Francoism.

But how were censorship and the propaganda machinery set up to accomplish the aim to suppress any possible dissidence? Only by researching on the legal mechanisms issued by the regime, I have been able to show how the organization of censorship evolved since Franco took control of all state powers in 1936. It went from an initial revision of what was being produced, to the prohibition, and eventually to the manipulation of films, forcing to add or change scenes with specific instructions. This way, at the end of the 1940s, there was a perfectly developed repressive system with regards to the control actions taken by state apparatuses, which avoided any script or film from escaping the blue pencil. However, as became strikingly clear from the material I found in the archives from this period, censorship at that time was lacking of a code of written rules, in terms of what should not be allowed to present to an audience. This, I have argued, made censorship contradictory and arbitrary. Rather than working from a clear predefined criteria and regulations, the individual criteria and morals of the censors prevailed and brought about conflicting opinions among them. This has been particularly demonstrated in the case of *Surcos*, whose defense by José María García Escudero resulted in the dismissal from his position as General Director of Cinematography. Similarly, discordant opinions existed between filmmakers and censors on what was morally and politically acceptable, or on which grounds a film was granted one or another category – which involved age rating, and economic and prize awards. Only after the filmmaker’s demands during the Salamanca Conversations in 1955 and the measurements undertaken by the General Direction of Cinematography in 1963, an end was put to this arbitrariness.

By means of propaganda films, the regime pretended to perpetuate and place at the top of the power structure in the society, the official and social institutions of Francoism and the values that these institutions were defending. I have suggested that this was accomplished through the official propaganda films in the form of newsreels, which were required to be screened as a prelude to public exhibitions of films, and through the work of directors who followed the principles of the regime. In order to illustrate this point I have put emphasis, in this first chapter, on the work of director José Luis Sáenz de Heredia and his films *Raza* (1941), its self-censored version *Espíritu de una Raza* (1950), and *Franco*,

*ese hombre* (1964). These films, which I argue can be considered indoctrinating, aimed to spread the Francoist values and to glorify the figure of the dictator. Despite the fact that these films were presented as “historical,” and therewith objective, they can be referred to as Crusading Cinema on account of its patriotism and indoctrinating purposes.

The so-called Crusading Cinema was a cinema aimed to enhance the moral, political and social values of the regime under the principles of a fascist ideology. *Raza*, I have demonstrated, was a clear example of the representation of the fascist imagery and myth of race. This is revealed through the idea that lineage, blood, and people are united in one national cause and that a collective sacrifice was needed to regenerate the traditional moral values lost in the previous years of leftist governments. In this way, the regime aimed to justify the historical events that led Spain to a totalitarian regime. In addition to this, the building of a national identity was also presenting the traditional Catholic morals of the regime and the importance of family and religion as role models for Spanish society, which enhanced the fight and campaign against the “atheist” communism.

This brings me to *Espíritu de una Raza* (1950), which was a self-censored version of *Raza* that reinforced the fight against communism, for which purpose they eliminated from the previous version images and dialogues that were praising fascism. These changes, which were geopolitically impelled by the isolation of Spain as the last fascist regime in Europe, resulted in a completely new film yet publicized as the same film “in which a refinement of details has been carried out” (Gómez Tello n.pag). I have finished chapter one with an analysis of *Franco, ese hombre* (1964), which was directed and produced by Sáenz de Heredia, albeit under the auspices of the Ministry of Information and Tourism. The regime intended with this hagiography of the *Caudillo* to present, once again, as objective facts what was the biased and partisan official justification of the regime, and that they did by means of enhancing the values of the dictator, and with the aim of perpetuating the regime.

Against this backdrop and as a counterpoint to the official mechanisms, this thesis explores in the subsequent chapters what I have called the subversive cinematographic practices across internal and external dissidence. Through the case-study of José Antonio Nieves Conde in chapter two, and Luis García Berlanga and Juan Antonio Bardem in chapter three, I have demonstrated how these filmmakers started to challenge the

mechanisms of control and the regime itself – both aesthetically and politically. Their films, I have argued, convey critical views on the values supported by the regime and society of the time, and surface social realities for the first time exposed in Spanish cinema.

In chapter two, I have presented Nieves Conde as a reference point and main advocate of what I have referred to as an internal dissidence. Here, I argue that the ideologically close ideas to the regime of this director, as a member of the only party in Spain, the Falange, led the censors to fail to notice, in his film *Balarrasa* (1950), an implied critique of an upper-class, spoiled and vacuous, a social stratum that had been until that time taken as role model for Spanish society and Francoist values. Moreover, I have argued that the religious main theme in *Balarrasa*, has served to somehow hinder the censors from noticing this critique, who applaud it instead for its “highly exemplariness and indoctrinating spiritual meaning” (*Balarrasa*. Concesión Interés Nacional). On this subject, I am to a certain extent opposed to the argument put forward by scholar Enrique Monterde who also holds the idea that the film follows the Catholic morals supported by the regime, and defines it as “unquestionably Francoist” (267). Instead, I have demonstrated that the constant ironic undertone in the dialogues reveal a critique of an idle family and, by extension, the upper-class.

In the case of *Surcos* (1951), I have argued how its aesthetics – close to the neorealist aesthetics on account of its use of non-professional actors, local people as extras, and the use of live sound and deep focus – in addition to the thematic concern with several social problems, puts this film at the forefront of a true social cinema. Besides the film’s main thematic, which portrays the social drama of the rural-urban migration during the late 1940s, other problems such as poverty, black market, unemployment, housing shortage, lack of social welfare, crime, prostitution, and mistreatment of woman, have been included in the sub-narratives of the film. Owing to the large number of themes that the film addresses, it ultimately not only got past the censors albeit with important modifications, but, I have shown, it also has become a testimony of the time.

This leads me to *El inquilino* (1958), dealt with in the same chapter, which discloses a social problem derived from the emigration that Nieves Conde had already depicted in *Surcos*; i.e, the problem of housing shortage. Although the censors recognized that the depiction of this problem was voicing a critical point of view, they did not see it as against



the institutions. However, I have demonstrated through the dialogues how such a critique can also be inferred from *El inquilino*, as the institutions in the film are depicted as non-guarantors of a fundamental right such as the access to decent housing, benefiting instead a few major corporations. Here, I suggest that the lack of critical censorship or the politically hazard-free perception on the part of the censors can be explained on account of the use of humor and satire in the film, which, I argue, have diminished the critical intention in the eyes of the censors. Only as a result of the intervention of the Minister of Housing, who did see the critique of the institutions, the film was later pulled out of circulation and forced to shoot a new ending. The humor and satire in this film bridges Nieves Conde's work to that of José Antonio Bardem and Luis García Berlanga, to which I have turned my attention in the last chapter.

In chapter three I have explored the collaborative works of these filmmakers, and put emphasis on the ways they managed to minimize censorship, which, I argue, was also, as in the case of Nieves Conde's *El inquilino*, the use of humor and satire. In what I have referred to as subversive comedies, these filmmakers managed to raise a critical voice on the society of the time that got past the censors, turning humor and satire into instruments for generating social and political awareness undermining the established social and political status, and morals of the time. Their first completed feature film was *Esa pareja feliz* (1951), in which a critique of the consumerist society was exposed to the audience. The narrative of the film offers a critical and pessimistic portrait of the working class and their position in the society, economic inequality, and labor poverty and precariousness. Here, I have demonstrated how despite this portrait, the script was highly regarded by censors, who pointed out the chances for a good comedy and the "high level of artistic expression rarely seen in our script writers" (*Esa pareja feliz*. Permiso de rodaje). The abovementioned narrative was supported in the completed film by a realist style – in terms of natural settings–, which was reinforcing this way the idea of film testimony.

Their second script *¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* (1953), only directed by Berlanga, managed to transform what initially was an assignment to write a folkloric film that could permit the promotion of a young singer, into a parody of the cinema of the time, with a critique of the Americans and their policies, and critical views of Spanish hierarchies, poverty, Christian charity and the Spanish society as a whole. In this case, not only humor

and satire helped Bardem and Berlanga to convey criticism in a subtle way. Also the narration in the literary form of a fable with an instructive ending in which the moral is to believe in nothing else but in the own commitment and work effort enhanced the criticism. This ending, defined by Berlanga as “Marxist” (qtd.in Cañeque, 18), was however not opposed by censors, who instead, and once again, highlighted the script as “delightful and original” (¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall! Informe de censura). My archival research has also shown how, in both of the examined films, some censors were generally focused on censoring what they considered was against the Catholic morals. This, I have suggested, left unnoticed some portraits of the society of the time that were showing a social reality, and criticizing the Establishment and of the established way of making cinema.

Berlanga and Bardem’s commitment to the society becomes clear, besides through their films, through their active participation in 1955 in what has become known as the Salamanca Conversations. These were a series of lectures and debates where filmmakers and critics raised their voices and appealed to a radical change in Spanish cinema, both in terms of censorship and the way cinema was being produced. I have argued that, although the repercussions and success of their claims and conclusions – which were published in the magazine *Objetivo* in the form of a Manifesto – were not immediate, they did lay the foundations for a change in the current cinematographic model, which had indirect consequences during the next decade. By way of governmental measurements, and especially under the mandate of José María García Escudero in the General Direction of Cinematography, some of the agreements in the Salamanca Conversations were implemented in the 1960s. Although these measurements did not diminished censorship, they did however encourage a new generation of young filmmakers to produce a new way of making cinema.

In my attempts to offer the reader with a study of some of the dissident voices during Francoism, it is my hope that this thesis contributes to give visibility to a period in Spanish cinema internationally ignored today, and with the idea of reconstructing the past, to bring to light the repressive mechanisms from which these dissident voices wanted to make free. This need of reconstructing the past is particularly important in the case of Spain where the wounds of a Civil War and a repressive regime are still open in a divided society, and fighting against the loss of memory is crucial to healing and national reconciliation.

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