

The image of the Late-Francoist Spain in the films of Manolo Escobar

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Abstract: As part of a research project that examines the 200 most popular films during the Late-Francoist Spain, this article offers a qualitative analysis of the ten films that were produced from 1966 and 1975 and were starred by the actor and singer Manolo Escobar, who was the most profitable artist of that time and delivered the most explicit messages. The analysis focuses on the values, ideas and beliefs transmitted by these films, which were presented to the public as just entertainment but were in essence ideological vehicles. The male dominance, the subservience of women, the exploitation of other Celtiberian issues that had relevance at that time, the glorification of the all things Spanish when in presence of foreignness are some of the characteristic features of these musical comedies whose happy endings suggested that success was within the reach of anyone who complied with the prevailing codes of conduct of the late-Francoist Spain.

Keywords: cinema; ideology, late-Francoism; musical number; story, aesthetics.

Contents: 1. Introduction, objectives and methods. 2. Characteristic content features of the films. 3. Main themes. 4. Characteristic formal features. 5. Conclusions. 6. Bibliography. 7. Notes.

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1. Introduction, objectives and methods

Since its inception, cinema has demonstrated its effectiveness as a transmitter of values across the world. The Spanish cinema, for its part, has had very productive periods both as a propaganda machine for the dominant ideology of the moment and as a weapon of protest against the official discourse. The Franco regime [1] defended itself with films as paradigmatic as *Raza* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1942), *Rojo y*

negro (Carlos Arévalo, 1942) and *Alba de América* (Juan de Orduña, 1955), while the opposing groups and, subsequently, the New Spanish Cinema and the school of Barcelona tried to articulate artistic positions that challenged the official ideals.

However, within the national borders, during those years when the combat was more or less buried, there were voices that warned of a semantic error. The critic Diego Galán –in “El cine ‘político’ español” (The ‘political’ Spanish film), included in the collective work titled *Siete trabajos de base sobre el cine español* (Seven base works on Spanish cinema)– has argued that people “often defines political cinema as those works that offer a critical view of the established order” (several authors, 1975: 89). However, Galán argues that this perception is wrong because there are other types of political films that indirectly defend the established order.

Galán is talking about the pro-government films that were a box-office success during the late Francoism and that sometimes were known as ‘neighbourhood cinema’ or *Españolada*, which is a pejorative term that existed long time before the emergence of these films and was used to refer to the comedy films and the *género chico* (A Spanish form of lyrical drama) that offered a stereotypical image of Spain.

Most of these pro-government films were at the service of certain liberal intentions of the regime, targeted the domestic market, and were superficially unconcerned by the social reality of the time but at the same time legitimated the *status quo* through the most decidedly ‘commercial’ form of cinema. The writer Francisco Umbral understood the significance of these films in the following way:

“In the future the late-Francoist Spain will be known more by the films of Alfredo Landa than by the works of the great filmmakers of that time, which we all know who they are. In other words, the former group of films offer more involuntary social documentary, because their directors and producers just tried to make descriptions of the Spanish customs because, naturally, this is what social documentation is all about, which was not the case in the films of the great filmmakers, who always portrayed reality more intellectually and objectively” (in Recio, 1992: 30).

In order to contextualise the study of cinema during the late Francoism we must address some regulations that influenced, more or less tangentially, the cinema policy of that time: the First Development Plan of 1964, which contained the new rules for the development of cinema; the Press law (*Ley de Prensa e Imprenta*) of 1966 and its exemplary and very controversial second article [2], which defended the freedom of expression; and the appointment of José María García Escudero as the general director of Film and Theatre.

These three regulations, along with others more specific, caused a polarisation that conditioned the development of the Spanish cinema. The films that Garcia Escudero promoted to a greater extent were destined to succeed in international festivals, to raise the quality of the national cinema, and to promote the image of a liberal regime. On the other hand, the films that were more successful at the box-office were aimed at the domestic market and their quality was proportional to their critical spirit. This type of productions, usually comedies and melodramas, only aspired to make profits and lacked artistic ambitions, which prompted its exclusion from film studies. The rebellious groups despised these films due to their allegiance to the dominant values. The ultraconservative classes, on the other hand, defended their escapist, cheerful and carefree character.

As a consequence, this type of cinema was studied only in a general and superficial manner, as proven by the absence of literature on the subject. With the exception of some authors (like José Luis Castro-de-Paz) and some recent works –like *Historia de un género cinematográfico: La españolada* (History of a film genre: La Españolada) of José Luis Navarrete-Cardero– which marginally address the late Francoist period, the popular cinema of this time was in need of a detailed analysis, to detect its ideology, values, and beliefs. Regardless of the ideological considerations, these films were neglected by historians despite their undeniable increasing popularity –based on box office data–. In contrast, today these films have become priceless historical documents that serve to understand the dominant mentality during the late-Francoism, following Umbral's arguments.

The historical relevance of these films is what motivated the research project titled “Ideology, values and beliefs in the neighbourhood cinema of the late-Francoism (1966-1975)”, which aims to analyse the highest grossing films of the Spanish cinema during the last decade of the Franco regime (1966-1975). The sample of films consists of 200 entirely-Spanish productions that achieved the highest box-office sales during that decade. The creation of this list was subjected to various corrective indices [3] and only took into consideration those films that sold a minimum of one million box-office tickets.

The box office sales were used to determine this list because they indicate the degree of influence of such films, which in turn conditions the approach of the study: when a bundling method is necessary the next thing to do is to determine what the most appropriate method is. This group of films could be analysed according to their directors or producers, but the most coherent approach would be to study them according to the elements that attracted the public at the time. The Spanish public used to choose what films to watch according to the stars that appeared in them and

therefore their success depended on their protagonists, be they Paco Martínez Soria, Lina Morgan or Manolo Escobar. The singer from Almeria is, according to box office sales, the most profitable actor of that period [4] and is the protagonist of a group of films which can be approached as an object of study.

Thus, this article offers an analysis of the ten films starred by Manolo Escobar [5] during that decade, all of which had more than one million viewers and offered a description of Spanish customs which makes them suitable to be studied as ideological vehicles [6]. The ten films analysed in this article are:

1. *El padre Manolo* (“Father Manolo”, Ramón Torrado, 1966).
2. *Un beso en el puerto* (“A kiss at the port”, Ramón Torrado, 1966).
3. *Pero... ¿en qué país vivimos!* (“But... what country do we live in?”, José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1967).
4. *Relaciones casi públicas* (“Almost public relations”, José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1968).
5. *Juicio de faldas* (“Skirts on trial”, Sáenz de Heredia, 1969).
6. *Me debes un muerto* (“You owe me a corpse”, Sáenz de Heredia, 1971).
7. *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella* (“When children come from Marseille”, Sáenz de Heredia, 1974).
8. *En un lugar de La Manga* (“A place in La Manga”, Mariano Ozores, 1970).
9. *Entre dos amores* (“Between two loves”, Luis Lucía, 1972).
10. *Me has hecho perder el juicio* (“You have made me crazy”, Juan de Orduña, 1973).

The analysis of these films is based on the examination of the characteristic content and format features, which allow the better understanding of this group of works and their documentary value.

2. Characteristic content features of the films

This analysis follows a deductive approach and a critical qualitative method of analysis, which accepts the premise of the subjective rationalism, i.e. the idea that the

texts are open to different interpretations. The analysis begins addressing general questions (about time and space) and then focuses on the study of characters, and finally on the different themes.

2.1. References to the economic context, prompted by the protagonist's humble background

Firstly, explicit references to the First Economic and Social Development Plan of 1964 are made in several of these films, mainly in *Un beso en el puerto*. These references are made by Manolo Espinar (Manolo Escobar) and, at the beginning of the film, by the narrator of the fake documentary who describes the rise of Benidorm and indirectly outlines the socio-political framework of the late Francoism. This is because the discourse of the preamble, which lasts five minutes and ten seconds and presents 52 sepia shots that simulate to be part of an old recording- tries to convey the apparent liberal attitude of the regime during the period under analysis, because it mentions the entry of tourists and foreign currency and because it refers to a period of economic boom that was facilitated by elements that, either in Benidorm or across the country, maintain clear analogies with the regime. Thus, the introductory story for this coastal town serves as a synecdoche for a historical period of Spain and as a unique daguerreotype that is advanced through the protagonist's ironic comments about the Development Plan.

In the rest of the films these references are more implicit despite tourism is a constant theme in all of them –this will be confirmed in section 2.3– and that the social class conditions the references. Manolo Escobar plays a low-middle class man in *Me has hecho perder el juicio*, *En un lugar de La Manga*, *Un beso en el puerto*, *Me debes un muerto*, *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella* and *Relaciones casi públicas*, but in *Pero... ¿en qué país vivimos!* and *Entre dos amores* he interprets millionaire men who are very proud of their very humble origins.

In the first group of movies, he complains about how difficult it is for people to live comfortably if they just work hard and are honest. When the character is a millionaire, the humble origin is also a disadvantage because sometimes the absence of lineage becomes an obstacle. This situation reflects the class differences, which is exemplified by Manolo Espinar (Manolo Escobar), in *Un beso en el puerto*, who thinks that it is impossible to get the rich girl (Dorothy, played by Ingrid Pitt) because he is just a simple car mechanic, which is a profession frequently used as a symbol of the middle-class in Spain. Even when Manolo is not playing a car mechanic, there is always a scene devoted to those typically masculine tasks: in *En un lugar de La Manga* he fixes his car, in *Juicio de faldas* he fixes his lorry, while in *Relaciones casi públicas* he fixes a flat tire which his female travel companion is not able to fix.

The social status of the protagonist, however, will not be an obstacle to overcome the social barriers, which are broken in favour of equality. The characters played by Manolo Escobar always manage to succeed in honest ways. When he is tempted by a malicious woman, he stays true to his principles and demonstrates that "anything is possible in Spain".

With the exception of *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*, this is one of the main message in the films starred by *Escobar*. The funny thing is that in the last film Manolo faces a French Gypsy, who has not principles and rejects the culture of hard work. Another 'economy-related' theme that is constant in these films is the contempt shown by all the protagonists towards money. In *En un lugar de La Manga* and *El Padre Manolo* –where the protagonist donates his profits to charitable institutions– love and service to others are always above money.

2.2. Minimal explicit references to the political context

Un beso en el puerto offers one of the few references to politics, obviously expressed in general terms, when the narrator states that "in those days everyone knew about politics... and that is how politics were". At the same time, the film shows some village people but the way they look suggests that they are ignorant about politics, which changes the meaning of the sentence, frustrating the critical comment. It seems that the criticism of the narrator is directed to those who express their opinions about politics and may be responsible for the course it takes. Thus, it would not be irrational to affirm that the criticism expressed by the narrator is trying to legitimise the dictatorial regime (in the opposite sense, which suggests that the political situation is bad because people want to influence it).

The rest of the films are characterised by the absence of political comments, although the public authorities appear in several of them as an involuntary reflex of the leaders of the Regime, who inaugurate public works (a mayor opens a school in *Relaciones casi públicas*) or preside over bullfights (like in *Me has hecho perder el juicio*). These political leaders are depicted as well-off, chubby, fatuous and somewhat coarse figures. The politicians presented in these films are always from rural population centres and this gives way to the rural/urban dialectic which will be analysed more closely later. However, these films never represent the city politicians, the official leaders, the guardians of the Franco regime, although *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella* makes more explicit references, either about the social welfare of the neighbouring country or the problem of Algeria [7]. Of course that here we are on the other side of the Pyrenees. In that movie, the French civil servants are portrayed as incompetent, naive and racist, and personify the Gallic bureaucracy.

Me has hecho perder el juicio and *Juicio de faldas* depict the judicial bodies. Both films present a very positive picture of the judges, as balanced and tolerant people. Jails are also portrayed positively in these two films and in *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*. The prison system and jails are presented as idyllic locations, where the protagonist sings freely and the musical genre serves to reflect the joy of these sites, which in all three cases are populated by Gypsy 'tenants' who are happy to be locked up and claim to be better off there than outside. Complementing the depiction of the institutional 'families' and the minorities, the police is positively portrayed in *Me debes un muerto* and *Un beso en el puerto*, where the police inspectors are depicted astute and conciliatory.

2.3. Touristic enclaves, the mirror of Spain and foreign currency magnets

Closely related to the socio-political situation, many of these films take place in tourist destinations, with the following connotations: a) the Regime and the Spanish reality were necessarily changed by this phenomenon, and b) the luminosity of these sites and the fact that they are dominated by leisure and party –due to their touristic nature– make them ideal settings for these musical and escapist light comedies that associates the portrayal of the country to recreation-related themes.

Benidorm in *Un beso en el puerto* and La Manga del Mar Menor in *En un lugar de La Manga* are some examples of the touristic destinations portrayed in these films. Curiously, these films contain higher doses of entanglement, more carefree situations, and less touches of *thriller*, which are reserved for films where the action takes place in other places. For instance, in Marseille (*Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*), in the Workers City and the mythical port the social comments are emphasised, while Madrid is the setting for films that are more 'transcendental' (like *Entre dos amores* and *Relaciones casi públicas*) and that aim to explore the differences between the town and city life (like *Juicio de faldas*).

Finally, the story of *El Padre Manolo* is located in a marginal yet idealised neighbourhood where the protagonist runs a parish. Consequently, the tone is radically different. In fact, only *El Padre Manolo* and *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*, which takes place in France, are the only films in which sorrow invades the characters, which are much more sinister. Moreover, these are the only films that have touches of thriller, which makes them to stand out from the rest of the films.

Thus, it is possible to establish the tone of the film based on the place where the characters interact, although this relation could also be reversed, i.e. the tone could determine the main place of action. It must be stressed that the scarier movie is the only one that does not takes place in Spain and has a male protagonist that is not the ideal hero archetype, as he declares to be a French-born gypsy.

Meanwhile, the bright and sunny places are the perfect excuse to include the inevitable bathing at the beach: in *En un lugar de La Manga*, Manolo Escobar (Juan) plays in the beach with Concha Velasco (Alicia), who wears a bathing suit as skimpy as the one she wears in *Juicio de faldas*. Bathing suits are also used by Paca Gabaldón (Ana) in *Me has hecho perder el juicio* and Ingrid Pitt (Dorothy) in *Un beso en el puerto*. Interestingly, these erotic-aquatic scenes provoke reactions in the male characters, which are also admired by the beautiful women. In two films the reaction of the secondary male characters is identical: Both Don Felipe (played José Luis López Vázquez) in *En un lugar de La Manga* and an administrator (played by José Orjas) in *Un beso en el puerto* stare lewdly at women through a pair of binoculars, which are the symbol of voyeurism in this repressed country.

2.4. Manolo Escobar as the archetypal hero: honest, romantic and masculine

The characters embodied by the Andalusian actor [8] showcased his brilliance. Ambiguity is hardly present in the creation of the characters, with the aforementioned exception of *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*. Still, the picaresque genre, taken from the Hispanic tradition, was widely present. In *Un beso en el puerto*, *Me has hecho perder el juicio*, *Me debes un muerto* and *Relaciones casi públicas* the protagonists cheat in different ways but never moved by their own initiative, i.e. their unlawful acts (which are presented as harmless) are initiated or promoted by others. Jaime, Diego, Irma and Marta are the brains behind the different scams, which are initially rejected by Manolo, who prefers "to be straight" and fully honest. However, the rhetorical ability of his partners and the adverse circumstances (which actually justify those behaviours) convince Manolo to take advantage of the tourists, to succeed as a singer with dubious abilities and even to commit murder [9].

In the rest of the films, Manolo Escobar plays honourable and incorruptible men: the idealistic person from *En un lugar de La Manga*; the unfairly accused tireless worker from *Juicio de faldas*; the successful singer from *Pero... ¿en qué país vivimos!*; the falsely accused millionaire from *Entre dos amores*; and the flawless and shrewd priest from *El Padre Manolo*.

The last film is an exception, because in it Manolo Escobar interprets a man that is not the clichéd irresistible Don Juan. Despite his clerical status, this character attracts the sympathy of the female parish. These allusions are implied –and personified in Piluca (Laly Soldevila). In contrast, in the other films Manolo makes women fall in love with his voice and Spanish manly looks and becomes violent when his manliness is questioned or his women are attacked. As synthesis of these principles, in *Me has hecho perder el juicio* the dead father of Manolo Montes (Manolo Escobar) speaks to his son from the heavens and says: "Do not accept any cocky attitude".

2.5. Tricky and obtuse women use their physical charms to succeed

These films do not offer a diversity of women, whose role is limited to being love interests or the downfall of the central male characters. Regarding the protagonist female characters, Marta (Concha Velasco) from *Relaciones casi públicas* is not very scrupulous and does not hesitate to cheat, even if deep down she has a good heart. She is a modern young lady who sacrifices her career for the success of the male protagonist. In *Me has hecho perder el juicio*, Ana (Paca Gabaldón) is a masculine businesswoman who becomes a docile and feminine housewife to please her lover Manolo Montes.

Similarly, *Juicio de faldas* includes Marta (Concha Velasco), a promising lawyer who succeeds thanks to her physical charms and the recommendations of a family member, but eventually becomes subordinated to her macho man. Likewise, in *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*, Maria (Sara Lezana) initially takes care of her children but later falls for the tricks of the male protagonist, who will make her to end up to jail. In addition, Irma (Concha Velasco) from *Me debes un muerto* starts by being an independent professional woman but her cheating ways and love for Manolo lead her to depend on him and become his servant, at least romantically.

In these films foreign women –Dorothy (Ingrid Pitt) from *Un beso en el puerto* and Patricia (Irán Eory) from *Entre dos amores*– fit the archetype of the beautiful and dumb blonde. The first woman is a wealthy heiress whose only interest is to follow Manolo Espinar (Manolo Escobar), while the second one is an independent teacher that suddenly wants with all her heart to just become a housewife, to love her husband and to give him children.

In *En un lugar de La Manga* these foreign long-legged women are fought by Alicia (Concha Velasco) in order to conquer the idealist male protagonist. *El Padre Manolo* is the only film that does not have a beautified female character. The woman interested in the Padre Manolo is the unattractive Piluca (Laly Soldevila), who has limited intellectual capacities and excessive naivety. She enhances the list of secondary female characters, among which Gracita Morales dominates over the rest. She interprets the whiney Sofia in *Me debes un muerto*, the clumsy Gracita in *Juicio de faldas* and the unrepentant spinster in *En un lugar de La Manga*. In all cases her unattractive appearance frustrates her expectations and pigeonholes her in simplistic comic roles.

Returning to the female protagonists, they are subjected to a growing 'feminisation', in which they lose their strong character due to the captivating presence of a man. This evolution is reflected in the clothes and hairstyle. The most notorious cases appear in

the first examples listed at the beginning of this section. The initially androgynous Anna (Paca Gabaldón) from *Me has hecho perder el juicio* is a business woman who ends up taking care of her husband, while Marta (Concha Velasco) from *Relaciones casi públicas* ends up as a stewardess and completely in love with Pepe de Jaén (Manolo Escobar).

In a more explicit level, some phrases suffice to capture the sexist spirit of these productions. The policeman from *Un beso en el puerto* says that "women are inconstant even to denounce crimes", while Antonio Torres (Manolo Escobar) from *Pero... ¿en qué país vivimos!* –in which the feminine lady is a successful professional who of course falls in love with the protagonist– shamelessly claims: "If a woman does not sew and does not pray, I do not believe she is a real woman". In the same film Rodolfo Sicilia (Alfredo Landa) makes sexist claims about women, like "sometimes women also have dignity" and "ideas are like women. If they are presented smelly, without make-up and in flip flops, they mean nothing".

2.6. Binary association: ugliness/evil and beauty/good

We have talked about the 'frustration of expectations' due to the ugliness of female characters. In contrast, it is known from the outset that the beautiful women will succeed and will get the love and passion of the protagonist. In all circumstances, the female love interests are physically beautiful: from Concha Velasco (who was the love interest of Escobar on five occasions) to Paca Gabaldón, and including Ingrid Pitt and Iran Eory, who only had one protagonist role. Other women seek the attention of Manolo Escobar, but they fail partly due to their appearance, which was the case of Tina Sainz in *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella* and Laly Soldevila in *Me has hecho perder el juicio*.

These films highlight the elegance of Manolo Escobar as an all-charming figure and the lack of grace of his friends. Revealing examples of the later are: Andrés Pajares (*Me has hecho perder el juicio*), José Sazatornil (same film), Miguel Ligeró (*El Padre Manolo*) and Antonio Garisa (*Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*).

And of course, the antagonists do not possess the features Escobar has. In this regard, the differences are more evident. Evil people are identified through their frightening and unattractive physical appearances. This is the case of the violent, abusive, and murderous gypsy Rufo (José Guardiola) in *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*; Gastón (Antonio Ferrandis), the angry French man who tirelessly harasses the protagonist and wears unflattering clothes; the perfidious and immoral cousins who face the priest in *El padre Manolo*; Gregorio (José Sazatornil) in *Juicio de faldas*, who feels a tremendous envy of the handsome Manolo, who has "benefited" his wife;

Euclides (Agustín González) and Bernardo (Roberto Camardiel) in *Me debes un muerto*; and José Luis López Vázquez in *En un lugar de La Manga*.

All of these characters lack subtleties and respond to generic archetypes. In comedy films –the majority– the antagonists are the one-dimensional bad guys: Gregorio (José Sazatornil), the fraudulent lawyer who is eventually ridiculed in *Juicio de faldas*; and the blackmailer and the libidinous magnate in *Me debes un muerto*; a contemptuous Marquis in *Entre dos amores*; the unscrupulous manager in *En un lugar de La Manga*; and Gastón, the faithful representation of the Gallic threat in *Entre dos amores*. Meanwhile, in the films with touches of thriller, the one-dimensional antagonists include Rufo from *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella* and the two cousins from *El Padre Manolo*, as well as the gunman that inherits the Manichaeism of the *cinema noir*. A special mention is deserved by the irreducible evil figure of 'el jefe' (the boss), in any of its manifestations, which is related to the protagonist's social class and limited economic resources.

As already noted, a striking feature of these films is that all foreigners in them are depicted as despicable or unsubstantial. This is the case of the paradigmatic Gastón. Meanwhile the female foreign characters respond to the archetype of the beautiful, not-so-smart and romantic blond tourists who cannot talk Spanish. Examples of this archetype are Patricia O'Connor (Iran Eory) from *Entre dos amores* and Dorothy (Ingrid Pitt) from *Un beso en el puerto*.

With regards to the characters that are used to provide the comic relief or to introduce the moral lesson, Jaime (Arturo López) from *Un beso en el puerto* plays both roles, since Manolo is honest and trustworthy, while the former is an immoral and carefree *bon vivant*. Something very similar happens with Natalia (Isabel Garcés) in *Entre dos amores*, because she conveys the most ideological discourse. She contrasts with the rest of the characters due to her age and supports Gabriel Rivera (Manolo Escobar), who is escorted here by not one but two lovers. In addition, the lost children (endearing orphans) operate here as a kind of Greek chorus at the service of the hero.

In *El Padre Manolo*, the funny and grouchy attitude of uncle Pepe (Miguel Ligeró) counterweight the "modernity" of the nephew. Like in *Entre dos amores*, in *El Padre Manolo* the contrasting characters unfold in relation to their sidekicks: the rural and good-natured driver Roberto (Ángel de Andrés) and the candid and not-so-smart Piluca (Laly Soldevila) get sentimentally involved to add even more harmony to the end. Finally, in *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*, given its lower degree of comedy, the only comic contrast is Domingo 'El Jaulero' (Antonio Garisa), which plays the dual role of Pepito Grillo and the ingenious liar and is used to make some scenes more interesting and enjoyable.

In the rest of the films the moral references are attenuated in favour of the one-dimensional buffoons, paradigmatically personified in *En un lugar de La Manga* by Don Felipe (José Luis López Vázquez, who appears as a witty buffoon for the second time) and Galpaña (Manolo Gómez Bur), a fool who must endure the lecherous intentions of other men towards his fiancée. Meanwhile, in *Me has hecho perder el juicio*, Diego (Andrés Pajares) is the funny man who get his friend Manolo in trouble, and Pepe (José Sazatornil), the lawyer who struggles to provide for his family, defends Manolo in his bizarre crusade against the cosmetics company, and in doing so counteracts Manolo's naivety.

Prisco Matilla (Antonio Ozores) is the comic character in *Relaciones casi públicas*. In *Me debes un muerto* the comic relief is provided by Gracita Morales, who acts as a whiney victim and a goofy clown. In *Pero... ¿en qué país vivimos!* the comedy is provided by Rosarito, a secondary character that accompanies Rodolfo Sicilia who complements the jokes of his assistant (this characters had an almost protagonist role at first but gradually lost relevance as the film advanced).

2.7. Use of side characters to bring about major changes

The pyramid which includes the most and least important characters also includes fleeting appearances of other characters whose only function is to twist the plot according to the narrative needs. Their exploitation is as obvious as the role of Dorothy's father in *Un beso en el puerto*, as his brief intervention pushes the story to the end. In *Entre dos amores*, the display of lineage by the Marquis played by Alfredo Mayo wakes up the pride of Gabriel Rivera (Manolo Escobar), which indirectly causes the misfortune of his daughter. Another important intervention is that of Gabriel's ex-wife, Elena (María Elena Marqués), whose altruistic resignation to recover his family morally legitimates Gabriel to rebuild his life. In *Relaciones casi públicas*, the secondary character of Javier Solana (José Sacristán) helps Manolo to showcase his singing talents. Meanwhile, the Mayor of the town of Guadalajara (Ángel de Andrés) propels the actions of Manolo and leads to the satisfactory resolution of the conflict.

In *Juicio de faldas* there are two interventions that help in the resolution of the conflict in favour of the kind protagonist couple: Cachirulo (Manolo Otero), who intervenes without a reason to clarify certain doubts, and the hotel waitress, who has been courted by the rapist. This key female character is integrated in the plot only to give resolution to the confusion, as Marta (Concha Velasco) learns of this event in the most casual way. *Juicio de faldas* also integrates a side character that makes key inquiries: a friend of Marta. This role is very similar to that played by Rosarito (Gracita Morales) in *Pero... ¿en qué país vivimos!*, who shows her boss Rodolfo (Alfredo Landa) how to overcome the obstacles he faces.

However, three are the films that better exemplify the use of side characters. The first film is *Me debes un muerto*, where a violent criminal provides Manolo with some incriminating tapes and increases the inspector's suspicions about the protagonist. This is the only function of this sort of character, who at the end is romantically approached by the woman hidden by Bernardo (Roberto Camardiel). The second film is *Me has hecho perder el juicio*, which introduces the character of Remigia (Laly Soldevila), the wife of the Mayor, only to free Manolo and Diego from jail. Thus, this character serves as a mockery of the female condition and as a tool to unravel the confusion. Similarly, in *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella* the necessary premise is delivered through the dead woman who appears in the newspapers and whose corpse is found next to a hospital in Marseille. This is how the film begins but without explaining the relation of this event with the rest of the story.

There are only two films in which the main characters solve the conflict: in *El Padre Manolo*, father Pepe (Miguel Ligeró) allows the protagonist to use his dove to inform the police about his location. Then, the protagonist's sagacity and the stupidity of the evil enemies do the rest. Meanwhile, in *En un lugar de La Manga*, the female protagonist, Alicia (Concha Velasco) plots a plan that solves all the problems of the couple and even pleases the greedy speculators. However, it is the past actions of the grandfather Juan what eventually lead to the legitimate union of the two lovers.

2.8. Happy and pacifying endings from a perfect world

The use of side characters is associated with the resolution of conflicts, almost always in an implausible way and through different *deus ex machina*. *Juicio de faldas* ends thanks to Marta's (Concha Velasco) seduction of Prisco Matilla (Antonio Ozores), which triggers his stuttering and makes him to incriminate himself. In *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella* an imminent inspection is escaped without any explanation. *Me debes un muerto* ends with a scene in the house of horrors where the solution occurs by chance, just as in *El Padre Manolo*, who uses a dove, whose emergence is a little religious, to reveal his location to the police. In *En un lugar de La Manga* everything is solved satisfactorily thanks to an idea of Alicia (Concha Velasco), which could have been reached within the first ten minutes of the film. In *Entre dos amores* all the characters that represented an obstacle for the main couple suddenly disappear, while in *Relaciones casi públicas* and *Me has hecho perder el juicio* it is love what solves the problems in an improbable way.

The object that the hero desires and eventually gets through legitimate actions range from a farm (*En un lugar de La Manga*) and a flamenco bar (*Me debes un muerto*) to more general aspects such as fame (on five occasions). These objects of desire are compatible with the love of the girl and even with the triumph of the one-dimensional

antagonists: don Felipe (José Luis López Vázquez) obtains what he wants in *En un lugar de La Manga*, and Gastón (Antonio Ferrandis), who was dishonoured, will see his daughter getting married in *Un beso en el puerto*. These movies show a vision so idyllic that it suggests the possibility, rather implausible in terms of narrative, that everybody can be satisfied at the end.

Even in *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*, the only film where the protagonists end up in jail, Maria (Sara Lezana) and Manolo (Manolo Escobar) are given a break and allowed to get married in prison. Of course, this jail, which in reality represents the deprivation of liberty in poor conditions, is described in an idealised way. With a melodic interlude, this film presents the jail as a party place where prisoners dance jubilantly and the happy couple promises eternal love.

The musical numbers are intended to make the film to shine and look perfect, so it is not surprising that each of the ten films ends with a song, which of course is optimistic and takes pleasure in the resolution of the conflict. This element becomes even more important in *Pero... ¿en qué país vivimos!*, since the last musical number summarises two vital, almost political, conceptions: that of modernity, symbolised by Concha Velasco, and that of the Hispanic tradition, embodied by Manolo Escobar. As in the other endings, the ideological baggage is motivated by very direct discourse: in Spain everything ends well.

3. Main themes

The aforementioned endings, bearers of a heavy ideological baggage, give way to the discussion of certain themes, which in turn narratively condition the different endings. Let's take a look at the final messages that are repeated more insistently and are directly connected with the characters and the context of that time.

3.1. The contempt for money and the triumph of love

While in several films the central objective of the male protagonists is to achieve fame, these male protagonists show a total disinterest in money, which is seen as a corrupting element. The paradigmatic case is *En un lugar de La Manga*, in which Juan (Manolo Escobar) again and again rejects the offer of the speculators because he considers that greed is the cause of the prevailing pettiness, and he admires modest and honest people. Something similar is made by Antonio Torres (Manolo Escobar) in *Pero... ¿en qué país vivimos!* when he refuses the attractive offers he receives to participate in a music contest. *El Padre Manolo* also renounces to the personal gain in favour of the parish, to which he dedicates the high profits he obtains from the sale of his records, although here the money is valued less negatively. Likewise, in *Entre dos*

amores, the millionaire male protagonist says he is more concerned about the future social status of his daughter and about the love he feels for the Irish teacher.

Me has hecho perder el juicio illustrates the protagonist's attempts to reach fame but also his repudiation of the financial transactions as they involve unethical attitudes. For instance, he does not accept the gifts offered by Doña Florinda (Florinda Chico) and assaults the businessman who wants to hire him but does not pay attention to his song, which is titled *admiration* and talks about his rejection of money [10]. However, the contempt of money is more nuanced in *Relaciones casi públicas* where the two protagonists pursue wealth, through fame, and they transmit this message through the song titled *Eso lo consigo yo* ("I will achieve that") [11].

With regards to the other films, in *Me debes un muerto* the problem of the male protagonist is that he is not a capitalist investor and his actions depend on the decisions of Bernardo (Roberto Camardiel), the one with the money. Money is also the cause of all problems in *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*, where the downfall of the protagonist is his ambition to obtain more and more social benefits. This situation is repeated in an interesting analogy in *Un beso en el puerto*: the honest Manolo can enjoy the goods of his friend and this makes him to enter into a spiral that was previously unknown to him. Finally, the good economic situation of Manolo in *Juicio de faldas* (he has three lorries, which has earned with his hard work) leads Gracita's parents to want him to take care of their daughter and her child, despite Manolo is not the father of this child.

Money is thus depicted as the excuse for mediocre people, as the evil of the protagonist, and as the temptation that must be avoided. The moral lesson is presented and the ideological discourse argues that it is better to be honest than being ambitious, which is a conservative attitude propagated by the regime to reinforce its ideology.

On the contrary, love –either for a woman or a neighbour in *El padre Manolo*– is presented as the opposite pole of the dialectic, as it directs the messages, makes people succeed and achieve true happiness, which occurs without exception in all the films [12].

3.2. Allusions to the Spanish identity, according to the Francoist worldview

There is not a single film in which Spain is not a central theme or where the praise of the country is not pompous. In *En un lugar de La Mancha* the male protagonist is offered one million pesetas for his land, but he rejects the offer because for him this land is priceless and because he is "Spanish and old-fashioned". Before the end, the protagonist stands in front of the bulldozers and confesses to be very afraid, and says that "being Spanish has its disadvantages" (such as being unable to withdraw in view

of such adversity). *Entre dos amores* addresses the issue of patriotism in its second sequence, when Gabriel's daughter says that despite she has just arrived from England she is still very Spanish. Her reacts to that comment with a big smile and proudly says "that is good". An interesting detail here is that at some point Gabriel reproaches his ex-wife for leaving him and their daughter when they were abroad. In contrast, later Gabriel takes the Irish teacher in a trip across Spain, and shows her the most beautiful and emblematic parts of the country (like the Walls of Ávila and the Alcázar). This representation of Spain is very similar to a propagandistic sequence included in *Me has hecho perder el juicio*, although here the propaganda is more explicit [13].

Not in vain this same film begins in a harem with the main character dressed in a hijab and singing the story of a Moor who left Tetouan to come to enjoy the wonderful Spanish land, and repeats the idea of *conversion* which had been promoted earlier in *Entre dos amores*. Here, the musical numbers are the perfect channel to praise Spain: for instance, in *Un beso en el puerto* there is not a single scene where this idea is not executed.

There are also plenty of references to the Quijote as a cultural symbol which was particularly appropriated by the regime: these references range from Cervantine references made in the title and the character of *En un lugar de La Mancha*, to the start of *Un beso en el puerto* (when the narrator starts by saying: "In this part of the coast, whose name I do want to remember..."). Other references are the repeated shots of mills from La Mancha during the musical numbers and the comparison between Cervantes and Shakespeare in *Pero... ¿en qué país vivimos!*, followed by a parallel dialectic between chamomile and whisky with the two protagonists, she represents the *ye-ye* song –impregnated with an Anglophile spirit– while he represents the traditional Spanish tunes, which are eventually the winners.

Also relevant in this regard is the start of *Relaciones casi públicas*, during which the unscrupulous character of Concha Velasco does not take patriotism seriously with an exceptionally unusual comment in which she ironically uses the “¡viva España!” [14]. Also worth noting is the behaviour of Manolo in *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*, where he sings in the Casa de España festival but his role model will is Napoleon. Both of these characters end up duly punished by their lack of attachment to their country.

3.3. Use of dreams to justify musical numbers

Following those interludes and their idealising function –as well as the analogy between Spain and the dreams–, the intentions of the musical numbers become explicit when they are motivated by the protagonist's 'dreams', in the two senses, which allows a double interpretation. On the one hand, the dream insists on the sublimation of the

different performances –music as a means to achieve happiness or a reflection of it– and, on the other hand, it encourages a certain exotic vision, even when the argument is not suitable for this purpose. The clearest examples are the four scenes in *Me debes un muerto*, which present pirates, a living nativity, bandits and even Romeo and Juliet imitators, despite the film takes place in a contemporary setting. *Entre dos amores* starts with a musical number that takes place in the far west, which is justified by the movie that the protagonist is filming.

Something similar happens in *Me has hecho perder el juicio*, which begins with a show that emulates the far east, since Manolo Montes and Diego attend the filming of a movie of Manolo Escobar. *Un beso en el puerto* presents musical number set in a gypsy village –similar to the Indian settlements presented in the westerns– when Manolo Espinar falls asleep in a dungeon. *Relaciones casi públicas* also present a musical number when the main couple dreams of what they can buy if they manage to succeed. This scene, in which Concha Velasco appears as a fairy godmother, is the best aesthetic example of the pro-regimen view transmitted by these productions.

The amount of melodic interludes per film ranges from five (like in *Juicio de faldas*) to eleven (like in *Entre dos amores*). Most of the films have more than seven melodic interludes and this high presence reveals another aspect: these numbers are at the service of the main star and consume most of the budget. These musical numbers are better produced than the action and dialogue scenes and facilitate the genre hybridisation because, as mentioned, the ten films under analysis were presented as comedies, despite two of them exhibit some necessary nuances: *Entre dos amores* is much closer to the melodrama genre and *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*, with its witty title and touches of humour, is similar to the chronicle.

Pero... ¿en qué país vivimos!, *Relaciones casi públicas*, *En un lugar de La Manga*, *Me has hecho perder el juicio* and *Un beso en el puerto* are romantic comedies and use more conventional codes. *Me debes un muerto* is also a romantic comedy despite its touches of thriller, just like *Juicio de faldas*, which also belongs to the police sub-genre. *El Padre Manolo* fluctuates between comedy and suspense, due to the two plots that get intertwined.

In addition to flirting with many popular genres, those musical numbers, far from advancing the story, serve to showcase the fame and the skills of the artist, to delight the public with his grace, and to elevate this icon of the late Francoism to the media's Olympus (the relevance of this icon will be examined in the next section). The previous strategies are part of a calculated plan, since both the comedy and musical genres and the presence of a protagonist –which exploits viewers' identification and projection mechanisms– aim to transmit a seemingly casual discourse that effectively

masks the ideological propaganda. This plan had been already noted by Román Gubern, in the foreword of *Cine español, cine de subgéneros* (“Spanish cinema, cinema of subgenres”):

"Between Manolo Escobar and Dracula there is only a difference of situational contexts and codes, because the imaginary of the subgenres derives with mathematical precision from collective frustrated desires, particularly the libido and the desire for power (which is a response to the real limitations of the viewer), covered with malleable masks (be they violence, dominance, social climbing, cruelty or sentimentality)" (several authors, 1974:15).

3.4. Meta-fictional references to the 'real' Manolo Escobar and other films

A very suggestive game was established between the protagonist character (which is called Manolo in six of the ten films) and the actor, who becomes a real character who plays himself. We can establish a comparison in three steps.

To begin with, we can talk about a *strong meta-fiction* in the case of *Me has hecho perder el juicio*, which begins with a scene about Manolo Escobar filming one of his movies. Manolo Montes, also played by Escobar under the skin of a fictional character, is in that recording studio. The presence of the real Escobar even conditions the plot, as Diego (Andrés Pajares), the scheming friend, does not want Montes to work as singer due to his extraordinary physical resemblance to the famous singer. Moreover, the films also plays with the fact that Montes can be Escobar's lookalike, which no one notices except for Diego and Montes (which is not credible), and the name of the star is mentioned all throughout the film.

Other films exhibit what we can call an *intermediate meta-fiction*. The main example is *Relaciones casi públicas* where a poster of Manolo Escobar is briefly replaced by that of his character, Pepe de Jaén. *Entre dos amores* and *Pero... ¿en qué país vivimos!* are also part of this category because, although they do not make any explicit allusion to Escobar, in both cases the figure and the status of the protagonist, as well as the number of records discs he sells, refer directly to the star.

Finally there is a *weak meta-fiction* in, for example, *Entre dos amores*, where the character of Gabriel Rivera speaks of the rumba titled *El Porompompero*, which temporarily takes the story out of its fictional world to make a reference to something real. This also occurs in *Relaciones casi públicas*, *Me debes un muerto* and even twice in *Pero... ¿en qué país vivimos!*

The Spanish celebrities of that time are also referenced to in these films. In *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*, Manolo and María get married over and over again, always using fake names: Carmen Sevilla, Empire Argentina and Sarita Montiel are some of them.

In addition to the references to real people, nearly all films contain references to classic American films. For instance, *Entre dos amores* makes references to *Juicio de faldas* and *Some Like It Hot* (Billy Wilder, 1959); *Me has hecho perder el juicio* includes a parody of *Ultimo tango a Parigi* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972), which becomes the last tango in Almenara del Duque when Remigia (Laly Soldevila) tries to seduce Manolo Montes. This film also makes allusions to the variety films of the Marx Brothers and to Billy Wilder's *The Fortune Cookie* (1966), through the wife of Pepe, a pettifogging lawyer who encourages his wife to pretend to be handicapped to take advantage of some people. Pepe is a blurred imitation of the character of Willie Gingrich interpreted by Walter Matthau.

The references to the *film noir* in *El Padre Manolo* lead the viewer to do literature research (Conan Doyle or Chesterton), while, at the national level, the prologue of *Pero... ¿en qué país vivimos!* makes allusions to *¡Bienvenido, mister Marshall!!* (Luis García Berlanga, 1953). Moreover, there are similarities between *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella* and its ideological antithesis, *Españolas en París* (Roberto Bodegas, 1971), which is the most representative film of what is called the third way. Similarly, the manager in *En un lugar de La Manga* offers a sagacious portrait, with different intentions, of the businessmen that appear in *en Los nuevos españoles* (Roberto Bodegas, 1974). Thus, the references to one film by another are peculiar *pars pro toto* to the unequal battle fought in Spain between the different film movements.

3.5. Town-city dialectic and undisguised racism

As in other Spanish productions of that time, which were impregnated with the spirit of urban development, the films starred by Escobar represented the struggle between the town and the city environments and in this struggle the city was almost always victorious [15]. In *Juicio de faldas* the village is place of perdition, lies and insults, although also of party and tambourine. The villagers are depicted as ignorant in this film and in *El Padre Manolo -Piluca* (Laly Soldevila), for example- and in *En un lugar de La Manga* –whose small town protagonist is endearing but also the embodiment of the country bumpkin–. In *Me has hecho perder el juicio*, its fictitious town of *Almenara del Duque* is the object of mockery due to its bullfights and the mayor's zealous and red-neck wife.

The caricature is more detailed in *Relaciones casi públicas*, in which the first musical number (*Olé mi pueblo*) seems to praise the rural virtues but later –through the

symbolism of a stopped clock– depicts the rural landscape as stuck in the past and useless in comparison to the energetic capital city, which is the symbol of the Spanish identity, which has led to the contempt for all those groups of people that are different, be they gypsies or foreigners. In the first case, the paradigm is *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*, which portrays an ethnic group which supposedly riddled with thieves and murderers. This film also offers a stereotyped portrayal of the “gypsy love” through the figure of María (Sara Lezana), who is an ethnic, attractive and silent woman. This image is repeated in *Un beso en el puerto* from a much more stereotypical perspective. In order to understand the subsequent racism we just have to take a look at the depiction of the Indian village where the Calés live.

The portrayal of the eroticism of the Gypsy women is not favourable, because it associates this ethnic group with exoticness, which reflects the colonialist view deeply rooted in the Spanish mentality. This view is also present in the harem of *Me has hecho perder el juicio*, which misrepresents the "Moors" and, once again, the Gypsies, who are portrayed as envious. These films suggest that this ethnic group belongs in jail, where their flamenco joy makes them feel comfortable. According to most films, foreigners, or at least tourists, also belong in jail. Male foreigners are the object of mockery because they cannot speak Spanish properly, are not very smart and usually wear bizarre clothes. The female foreigners are blond, long-legged and the downfall of men, as this is exemplified in one of the verses of the *chirigota* sang by Manolo in *Juicio de faldas* [16].

In these films the Spanish men do enjoy the charms of foreign women but prefer the Spain’s real women, portrayed as the black-eyed women that inspired so many songs during that time.

This depiction of foreigners also reveals an important production strategy, since these films were intended exclusively for the domestic market and were never intended to be commercially exploited in the international market.

3.6. Male chauvinist mentality

Two points of view make up the prism of sexist resonances in these films. On the one hand there is the irony of the bold depiction of women. We have already mentioned the animal analogies and the extremely ridiculous names given to the female characters: *Me has hecho perder el juicio* includes Doña Florinda (Florinda Chico), who is stigmatised as a "cow", and Remigia (Laly Soldevila), who is the target of an insulting joke in which a donkey pulls a rope to tighten her corset; in *Juicio de faldas*, the absent Leoncia is called "ulcer", while the beautiful Marta (Concha Velasco) is the target of the flirtatious remarks made by some villagers mounted in a tractor ("that

woman is not a broom, is a luxury vacuum"); in *Me debes un muerto*, the wife of Bernardo is described as "pure dynamite", among many other similarly sexist remarks.

On the other hand, there are implicit allusions, which reveal a male chauvinist mentality. For instance, in *Me has hecho perder el juicio* Pepe (José Sazatornil) delivers a speech on television about the advisability of "punching women in the mouth" when they are not behaving well, while in *Juicio de faldas* Marta (Concha Velasco) claims that she does not like rapists but shows some pity for them. Moreover, in the last part of this film the public learns that Gracita was not raped.

Obviously, the distribution of gender roles in these films is very stereotypical, particularly with regards to household chores. For instance, in *Me has hecho perder el juicio* Manolo turns a businesswoman, Ana (Paca Gabaldon), into a hard-working housewife. The only exception is *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*, in which Manolo offers his help to Maria (Sara Lezana) while she is in the kitchen, although the offering does not become action.

Perhaps the best reflection of the male dominance was presented by *Pero... ¿en qué país vivimos!*, whose central plot revolves around the usual battle of the sexes, with the consequent and demeaning portrait of the status of women, who are the target of a multitude of profane comments, and many statements about the male hegemony [17].

4. Characteristic formal features

Manolo Escobar is the macho man who conditions more than anybody the different messages of the films, which exhibit a striking homogeneity and a clear subordination to the central figure and to the recurring themes, within certain academicism in the mode of articulating the different semantic and syntactical resources. Among the most expressive resources is the usual shot, a slightly low angle shot over the protagonist, which is used to highlight the superiority of the male (usually presented with medium shots). In more open spaces, where close ups are rare, the natural shot produces the *tableaux vivants* with little compositional interest and highlights the absence of forced angles, like the bird's eye shot. In terms of camera movements the travelling is the most common, which is a logical consequence of the production's austerity.

Conventional lighting practices are also used in these films, since the producers tend to fill the studios with light bulbs, to use bright outdoor locations and to avoid the use of zone lighting. As a consequence, shadows hardly appear in these films, except when *El Padre Manolo* delves into the territories of the intrigue. But at the end of this film, as in the other films, the sun and the radiant light of the ideal Spain dominate the screen.

In correspondence with those practices, the compositions of these films tend to be balanced, colourful and matching the spoofed reality that they want to transmit -with the exception of the aberrant shots of *Un beso en el puerto* and *Cuando los niños vienen de Marsella*, which interestingly are used in two scenes that take place in jail. Metaphorical shots are used only in isolated cases, usually with erotic intentions, either playing with the visual rhyme –in a sexist objectification– or resorting to the over used mirror to capture the Freudian obsession with women's limbs.

5. Conclusions

In order to summarise the main features of this group of films we must return to the double purpose of the mechanisms of projection and identification with the Manolo Escobar. Identification with the actor is particularly exploited through the humble background of the protagonist, which is directly connected with the social situation of the late-Francoist Spain:

"The economic development had strengthened the middle class, expanding it and making it more conformist. There was a relentless demand for a variety of professionals for the growing services sector, while the regime pampered what was largely a white-collar working class that did not want to recognise itself as such" (Alfaya, 2003: 25).

With regards to projection, there were authors who noticed it during that time:

"Manolo Escobar symbolises the Spanish 'miracle' of the 1960s, the utopian dream of the Iberian self-made man: who achieves the great success through singing, which in this area represents what *El Cordobés* represents in the field of bullfighting. The man who had nothing and later achieved everything (popularity, money, admiration), and gained the admiration of all the unskilled labourers, construction workers, metalworkers, operators and mail assistants, who saw him as a smiling and generous man, capable of making them believe in the happy future with his reassuring *pasodoble*, in that limbo where all Spaniards would be happy with having millions... of illusions" (several authors, 1974: 151).

This character should not be despised as a conscious or unconscious reflection of the referential figure [18] who favoured the high box-office sales and the representation of customs of all the films he starred, which subsequently allowed these films to become an intentional and fictional reflection of the society of that time. The censorship and the necessary traditionalist view conditioned the events of the different arguments and the conservative messages, but do not prevent people from interpreting these films

without focusing on the portrait of the repressed characters and the need of building an idealised vision of the national reality.

It has been proved to that the films starred by Escobar clearly convey the values, ideology and beliefs of the official late-Francoist institutions and of a good part of the Spanish population of that time. Thus, these films are priceless historical documents, which had already been pointed out in *Triunfo* magazine:

"The average Spaniard seems to be less influenced by the direct political propaganda, despite its omnipresence throughout several decades, with varying intensity and content, than by the propaganda expressed through aesthetic formulations or through myths that carry a message that may be diluted but is not less precise" (Altares, 1972: 33).

The status of women, the figure of the foreigner, the tourist enclaves and the references to well-proven literary archetypes –which were appropriated by the dictatorship in order to build part of its discourse– are elements that justify these idealised old images that we have analysed. However, we should not forget here that the comedy genre is the key container of and vehicle to transmit these representations. Perhaps the best summary of the nature of these productions is one of the verses sung by Manolo Escobar in *Juicio de faldas*, when he asserts: "with joy, they can take me anywhere they want".

The lack of aesthetic pretensions of the creators of these films do not prevented these films from having a number of style characteristics that are repeated again and again at the service of the key messages that gave form to this group of films, which is illustrative and worthy of study due to their value as historical testimony.

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7. Notes

1. In *La dictadura de Franco* (“The Franco dictatorship”), Tusell divides the regime in up to six stages: fascist temptation (1939-1945), exterior and interior survival (1945-1951), the heyday of the regime (1951-1959), the development (1959-1969), the alternatives of the open-mindedness (1965-1969) and late Francoism (1969-1975).

2. The contradictions of this article have been summarised by Reig Cruaños: "The Fraga law does not go beyond the suppression of the governmental appointment of the directors and the replacement of the prior censorship with preventive censorship, as a response to the threat of article 2" (2007: 104), which explicitly stated that "The freedom of expression and the right to the dissemination of information, recognised in article 1, will not have more limitations than those imposed by law", but then established a series of limitations that destroyed any suggestion of tolerance.

3. These corrective indices were applied mainly to co-productions, particularly Spanish-Italian productions, which usually belong to the famous Spaghetti Western subgenre. Thus, we eliminated from the list of the top-grossing 200 films those works whose production capital was not entirely Spanish, and replace them with the following top-grossing films (which exceeded two million viewers). There are two explanations for this: on the one hand, their inclusion would allow an approach to the collaboration system that had artistic relevance and influenced the film policies that sought to promote it. On the other hand, their exclusion would distort the sample because, for example, *La muerte tenía un precio* (Sergio Leone, 1966) was the most watched film of that decade, with 5,520,971 viewers, while the second most watched film, *No desearás al vecino del quinto* (Ramón Fernández, 1970), also had Italian capital.

4. A revealing fact is that five of the 22 top-grossing domestic films in the history of Spanish cinema, according to data from the ICAA, were starred by Manolo Escobar: *Pero... ¿en qué país vivimos!* (9th), *Mi canción es para ti* (10th), *Un beso en el puerto* (11th), *Juicio de faldas* (15th) y *El padre Manolo* (22nd).

5. In this respect, Navarrete Cardero makes an interesting digression, although we do not agree with his final assessment: "The replacement of Sara Montiel, the main figure of the last decade, with Manolo Escobar is quite striking. [...] The cause of this male for female replacement as protagonist of the future *Spañolada* [sic] is simply the evidence of the suppositions in a macho society. Indeed, the Spanish man is desired by

a multitude of women, which leads to a pretty funny pseudo-erotic pastiche, typical of much of the Spanish cinema of the late 1960s and early 1970s" (2009: 199).

6. Antonio Burgos noted the relevance of what he called the “Escobar phenomenon”, in a study published in *Triunfo* magazine, titled “Manolo Escobar, último baluarte del nacional-folklorismo” (Manolo Escobar, the last bastion of the national-folklore), where he pointed out that “The ‘Escobar phenomenon’ tries to cover the appearances of a genuine process of communication and to subtly convey the dominant ideology” (1976: 42).

7. "That must have been hell", thinks Manolo Moreno (Manolo Escobar).

8. The chapter titled “La ascendencia del andalucismo sobre la españolada” (“The Andalusian ancestry in the *españolada*”) included in Navarrete-Cardero (2009: 39-49) is illustrative in this regard.

9. Of course, due to the feel-good tone of these films, this murder never takes place.

10. "Because I only admire / all the things that matter, / all the things that matter, / except for money. / And although I know that without it, / without it nothing is worthy, / I prefer virtues / and the fire of the bright stars / knowing beforehand / that money owns the world".

11. "I want a car / that is big and elegant. / A nice Mercedes / a Rolls Royce / that takes me everywhere".

12. An example of the fusion of the two extremes is a verse of the *paso doble* titled *Te quiero*, included in *Relaciones casi públicas*: "You laugh at men / and despise money / and that's why I love you".

13. It is a sequence which, to the sound of *Y viva España*, promotes the Iberian touristic attractions. It consists of 70 shots that presented all the places praised by the Franco regime, from the Sanfermines to the quiet sunny beaches, and including any ideal image capable of covering the reality of the time. To complete the message, at the end of the sequence, Manolo is shown sleeping, as if Spain were a dream.

14. When his boss, the editor of the newspaper where she works, asks her to go to Pinseque Villanueva to cover an opening, she exclaims sceptically and seriously “viva España!”.

15. In the films starred by Paco Martínez Soria, for example, that battle is won by the rural space, which is presented as idyllic, a *locus amoenus* inhabited by endearing countrymen who are proud of their humble roots and put the interests of the group before their personal interests.

16. "Last year I was stopped / by a very astute Swedish woman. / Blonder than the wheat fields, / whiter than the mothballs. / And just for stopping / I've ruined myself. / Boys be careful, / with those women from the auto-stop. / And now the blond woman writes to me, / Lord, / I am the father of a boy. / What a horror. / And I do not like / that she wants to turn me into a Swedish man".

17. Two more examples are: in *En un lugar de La Manga* somebody says "a man should not be kissed, he should be the one kissing", and in *Juicio de faldas*, the protagonist is even more categorical: "Men's stuff should only be discussed by men".

18. Reig Cruaños affirms that "the ideological function of the warlordism required, and this important to us due to its impact on citizens' political culture, the deliberate manufacturing of 'charismatic leadership' with the media's massive and compact intervention" (2007: 79).

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