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## Goodbye, Mr. Marshall: The Dreamworld of Francoism

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*One spends one's time dreaming,  
one doesn't only dream when sleep*  
Jacques Lacan

### Abstract

This essay examines the symbolic use of dreams in *Bienvenido Mr. Marshall* (1953) by Luis García Berlanga. During Francoism, oppositional filmmakers strategically planted dream sequences such as those of *Bienvenido* to bypass Francoist censorship, smuggling through classical Freudian dream-work distortion—condensation, displacement, symbolization—subversive ideological and political contents. Despite their critical importance, *Bienvenido*'s dreams have never been adequately examined. The dreams, I argue, hold the key to interpreting a film that, due to its apparent ideological ambiguity—needed to avoid the sharp scissors of Franco's censors—has been understood both as a conservative film, upholding Francoist fascist values, and as a subversive film, undermining those very same values. In my reading, *Bienvenido*'s dreams provide the key to unlock the film's political unconscious. Each dream in the movie features a distinctive cinematic style: German expressionism, film noir, Hollywood western, Soviet social realism, and the cardboard historicism of *Cifesa*'s bombastic epic melodramas of the 1940s and 50s. Each was selected to convey the feelings of desire, guilt, frustration, fear, and paranoia of the main characters: the priest, the old nobleman, the mayor and the farmer. These dream sequences ultimately serve as a veiled critique of Franco's willingness to put the country up 'for sale' for his own political survival, as represented by the transformation of the Castilian village into an Andalusian theme park for the pleasure of foreign visitors.

Key Words: Francoist film, Francoist cultural politics, García Berlanga, Freudian dreamwork, *Aperturismo*, *Españolada*

### Resumen

Este ensayo examina el uso simbólico de los sueños en *Bienvenido Mr. Marshall* (1953) de Luis García Berlanga. Durante el franquismo, los cineastas de la oposición emplearon estratégicamente secuencias oníricas, como en el caso de *Bienvenido*, para burlar la censura franquista pasando de contrabando un contenido político e ideológico subversivo al régimen a través de la distorsión del 'trabajo del

sueño' freudiano—condensación, desplazamiento, simbolización. A pesar de su crucial importancia, los sueños de *Bienvenido* no han recibido la atención crítica que merecen. En *Bienvenido* los sueños son la clave para la interpretación de un film que debido a su aparente ambigüedad ideológica—necesaria para escapar las afiladas tijeras de la censura franquista—ha sido calificado simultáneamente de subversivo y conservador. Solo mediante el análisis detallado de la función simbólica de los sueños en el film podremos descifrar su inconsciente político. Los cuatro sueños que aparecen en la película de Berlanga están rodados en un estilo cinematográfico específico que va desde el expresionismo alemán, al *film noir*, pasando por el western de Hollywood, el realismo socialista Soviético y el historicismo de cartón piedra de los melodramas históricos de CIFESA de los años cuarenta y cincuenta. Cada estilo fue elegido para comunicar el deseo, la culpa, la frustración y la paranoia de cuatro de sus personajes principales: el cura, el viejo hidalgo, el alcalde y el campesino. En última instancia, estas secuencias oníricas son una velada crítica a la voluntad de Franco de poner el país 'en venta' para asegurar su propia supervivencia política como simboliza la transformación de un pueblo castellano en un parque temático andaluz para disfrute de los visitantes extranjeros.

Palabras Clave: Cine franquista, Política cultural del franquismo, García Berlanga, Trabajo del sueño freudiano, Aperturismo, Españolada

Luis García Berlanga's *¡Bienvenido Mr. Marshall!* (1953) was the film that put Spanish cinema on the international map. The film received great critical acclaim and it was recognized at the Cannes Film Festival with the *Prix international du film de la bonne humeur* in 1953. And, after a private screening in Madrid, Cesare Zavattini himself—the most influential Italian neorealist screenwriter—heralded *Bienvenido* as the future of a Spanish neorealist cinema. (Berriatúa 326).<sup>1</sup>

A rural comedy, *Bienvenido* is a choral film that tells the story of Villar del Río, a traditional Castilian village which unexpectedly receives a visit from the *Delegado General* from Madrid to inform its mayor (José Isbert) that the Americans are coming to visit and that the village is expected to organize an official welcoming celebration. The story is narrated by an anonymous voice-over (Fernando Rey) that uses an intimate tone of complicity with the spectator and a

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<sup>1</sup> The film also had a successful run in Spain where it featured for almost two months in the Spanish capital. As José María G. Santamaría observes, “gracias a la buena acogida que le dispensó el Festival de Cannes, dispuso de buenas de buenas ventas al extranjero. La película no funcionó mal en Francia, Inglaterra y en algunos países centroeuropeos.” (41) [thanks to the warm welcome it had at the Cannes Film Festival, the film did well abroad. It also performed well in France, England and in some Central European countries]

paternalist relation towards the characters.<sup>2</sup> After an unsuccessful round of discussions with the village's elites, the mayor finally settles on an idea proposed by the agent (Manuel Morán) of an Andalusian singer (Lolita Sevilla) who is performing in the village. The singer's agent—who, having supposedly lived in Boston for fifteen years, claims to be well acquainted with the tastes of the Americans—proposes to transform Villar del Río from a Castilian into a typical Andalusian village with all its inhabitants dressed in Andalusian garb, because this is what the Americans expect to find in Spain. Despite the strong objections to this identity switch welcoming celebration by one impoverished nobleman, whose ancestors, as we learn, participated in the American conquest only to be eaten by native American cannibals, the measure is unanimously approved.

On the eve of the day of the American arrival to Villar del Río—which is an obvious metaphor for Franco's Spain, an internationally isolated country—after gathering in the main square to make up a list of the gifts they want to receive from the American 'Magi,' the villagers retire home to sleep. At this point, the film features four dream sequences visualizing the dreams of four of the main characters: the priest, the nobleman, the mayor, and the farmer. These dreams, lasting a total of 14 minutes, play a crucial role in the critique the film undertakes of Franco's regime and its ideology of National-Catholicism, which went undetected by the feared *Junta Superior de Censura Cinematográfica*, Franco's official censorship agency. In classical Berlanga fashion, the film—mostly featuring cacophonous sequence shots in which characters tend to talk at the same time, constantly interrupting each other—comes to a frustrating close as the Americans finally arrive to Villar del Río, but to everyone's disappointment their motorcade passes through the town at a vertiginous speed without ever stopping or even saluting, leaving just a cloud of dust behind.

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<sup>2</sup> José Luis Castro Paz cites Hollywood's *It's a Wonderful Life* (Frank Kapra, 1947), and the Spanish films, *El hombre que se quiso matar*, (Rafael Gil, 1942) and *El destino se disculpa* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1945) as major influences in *Bienvenido*'s use of the voice-over (204). According to Manuel Hidalgo, Berlanga cited the narrator of Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1947) as a reference (149-150).





Despite their critical importance—notwithstanding a few illuminating but brief remarks by Kathleen Vernon, Steven Marsh, and Manuel Vila, among others—*Bienvenido*'s dreams, the focus of this essay, have never been adequately examined. The dreams, I argue, hold the key to interpreting a film that, due to its apparent ideological ambiguity—needed to avoid the sharp scissors of Franco's censors—has been understood both as a conservative film, upholding Francoist fascist values, and also as a subversive film, undermining those very same values. In my reading, *Bienvenido*'s dreams provide the key to unlock the film's political unconscious, in which all ideologies across the spectrum sleep.<sup>3</sup>

Each dream in the movie features a distinctive cinematic style: German expressionism, film noir, Hollywood western, soviet social realism, and the cardboard historicism of *Cifesa*'s bombastic epic melodramas of the 1940s and early 1950s. Each was selected to convey their character's feelings of desire, guilt, frustration, fear, and paranoia.

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<sup>3</sup> Searching for art's political unconscious and aided by Freud's notion of wish-fulfillment and Lévi-Strauss's concept of the savage mind ('pensée sauvage'), Fredric Jameson approaches "the cultural artifact as the symbolic resolution of a real contradiction, an attempt to resolve on an imaginary level the intolerability of a lived dilemma" (Dowling 119). For Jameson, the central question is not "what does a particular text mean" but "why it exists in the form that it does" (<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100334787>). Similarly, I examine why *Bienvenido*'s dreams are presented in their distinctive cinematic styles and how this specific form helps unveil Francoist social and cultural contradictions.

Berlangu strategically planted dream sequences to ingeniously bypass the state's censorship codes.<sup>4</sup> Unlike in real life, where dreams are the hermetic language of repressed, unconscious processes—the “royal road to the unconscious,” in Freud's celebrated definition—these film dreams are intentionally crafted for symbolic narrative purposes. Disguised by dream-work distortion, these sequences were able to smuggle in oppositional ideological and political contents. In *Bienvenido*, the crafting of dreams of the gifts the US would finally bestow with the Marshall Plan has a clear political intent. These dream sequences serve as a veiled critique of Franco's willingness to put the country ‘up for sale’ for his own political survival, as represented by the transformation of the Castilian village into an Andalusian theme park for the pleasure of foreign visitors.

In Berlanga's oppositional Spanish cinema, the manifest film dream text—like the manifest content of dreams that, according to Freud, has to be distorted in order to ‘fool’ the psychic censor—is consciously distorted to ‘fool’ the Francoist censor.<sup>5</sup> Working within the constraints of Francoist censorship, oppositional Spanish films such as *Bienvenido* needed to smuggle in its subversive content. Considering how *Bienvenido*'s was interpreted by Francoist censors, the use of dream sequences perfectly served this purpose. Oppositional Spanish filmmakers like Berlanga thereby also cast the spectator in the role of the psychoanalyst who, by analyzing the film's manifest dream text, can decode the film's oppositional content. Needless to say, there is no guarantee that spectators would be able to decode these film dreams successfully. Nevertheless, from early on oppositional Francoist filmmakers prompted the Spanish spectator to read films esoterically, not to be “fooled” by surface appearances.<sup>6</sup> This kind of vigilant spectatorship would reach its apogee during the late 1960s and early 70s, when Francoist dictatorship clamped down on political and sexual content after the *aperturismo* of the mid-1960s.

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<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, pro Franco films such as *Un traje blanco* (Rafael Gil, 1957) use dream sequences to reinforce in the spectator the reactionary, masochistic moral values of Franco's National-Catholicism.

<sup>5</sup> Freud compares dream distortion to the political writer's need to avoid censorship, “[t]he political writer who has unpleasant truths to tell to those in power ... moderates and distorts the expression of his opinion. According to the degree of severity and sensitivity of this censorship, he will find himself forced either just to hold back on certain forms of attack or to speak allusively instead of in plain statement, or he will have to conceal his objectionable views behind a harmless-seeming disguise ...” (112-113).

<sup>6</sup> In “Persecution and the Art of Writing,” Leo Strauss explains how writers, for instance, can circumvent political censorship by writing esoterically. Persecution, he wrote, “gives rise to a peculiar technique of writing, and therefore to a peculiar type of literature, in which the truth about all crucial things is presented exclusively between the lines ... [t]herefore an author who wishes to address only thoughtful men has but to write in such a way that only a very careful reader can detect the meaning of his book” (491).

*Bienvenido*'s conscious artistic attempt to represent the characters' 'unconscious,' however, is itself haunted by its own unconscious motivations, which form part of the larger textual unconscious of the text. The textual unconscious leaves its mark on the formal, stylistic register of the text—which in Freudian terms would correspond with the manifest content of the dream.<sup>7</sup> Unable to retrieve the dream's latent thought, since it is a fictional construct, it is at the level of cinematic style and *mise-en-scène* that the true political intent of Berlanga's film will reveal itself. In line with Christopher Bollas's analytic approach to dreams, which focuses on the dream setting itself to explore why the unconscious material is distorted in a particular way, I will examine *Bienvenido*'s dreams' *mise-en-scène* and cinematic style to uncover what Bollas calls "the dramaturgy of dreams," which, in real dreams expresses the "ego's unconscious refashioning of the self," and in *Bienvenido*'s cinematic dreams, reveals the aesthetic mechanisms by which the film conveys its veiled critique of Francoism.<sup>8</sup>

Given the satirical tone of the film in describing situations and characters who represent different classes of the Spanish rural society, it is surprising, for a film made during Franco's dictatorship by a liberal republican with anarchist tendencies, that the film was not censored. This is even more surprising considering that Berlanga co-wrote the script with his then friend the filmmaker Juan Antonio Bardem, who was a member of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), and whose assistant director, Ricardo Muñoz Suay, was also a member of the PCE and a major figure in the successful implementation of the party's clandestine operational network in the country during the 1950s.<sup>9</sup>

*Bienvenido* did not face any serious challenges from Franco's censorship because narratively it functioned as an ideological double-edge sword. On the one hand, the film could be read as a fierce attack on the expanding US cultural, political and economic hegemony in Western Europe, thus pleasing Falangist hardliners for whom the US represented a materialist, evil power antagonistic to Spanish spiritual, evangelical values. But, on the other, the film's implicit critique of American political and economic interventionism in global affairs, made manifest by the Marshall Plan (1948-1952), was ideologically in sync with Spain's left-wing

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<sup>7</sup> Reading Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* "as a text concerning textuality," Peter Brooks argues that, "there can be a psychoanalytic criticism of the text itself that does not become-as has usually been the case-a study of the psychogenesis of the text (the author's unconscious), the dynamics of literary response (the reader's unconscious), or the occult motivations of the characters (postulating an "unconscious" for them) (299).

<sup>8</sup> As Bollas writes for real dreams, "To create this dream fiction requires an aesthetic: a mode of transforming thought into dramatic representation." (66). For Bollas, Freud himself, "suggests this in one of his countless definitions of the dream when he writes that 'a dream is the form into which the latent thoughts have been transmuted by the dream-work' (1900, p.183). He compares the dream to the literary text" (66).

<sup>9</sup> For Muñoz Suay's militancy in the PCE see Rimbau (195)

political opposition, for whom the US represented a capitalist evil seeking hegemony all over the world in order to advance its self-interested geopolitical agenda.<sup>10</sup> This was indeed the reading proposed by *Bienvenido*'s own assistant director, Muñoz Suay, for whom the film was "an indictment of the United States and a critique of the submissive attitude of the dictatorship which could help contribute to raise an anti-Francoist awareness" (Villena 85).<sup>11</sup>

*Bienvenido* was an ideological kaleidoscope by which every Spanish political faction could feel conveniently represented. The film's apparent chameleonic ideological ambiguity and its comedic tone were certainly the main reasons why it mystified even the almighty "Junta de Clasificación y Censura," which concluded that it was "a just representation of the Spanish situation vis-à-vis the United States of America" (Berriatúa, 325). Upon reading the original script, the Francoist censors only gave the producers a few warnings: mainly that the character of the priest should be treated with the utmost respect as they were concerned by the burlesque tone of his spoken Latin; that the burial scene which actually was never shot should be neither "macabre nor disrespectful"; and that the planned dream sequence of the female primary school teacher not "deviate into the erotic" (325-26). As Spanish film historian Luciano Berriatúa points out, and as these minor warnings seem to indicate, the censors did not at all suspect that the film was enacting a critique of Franco's regime (325).

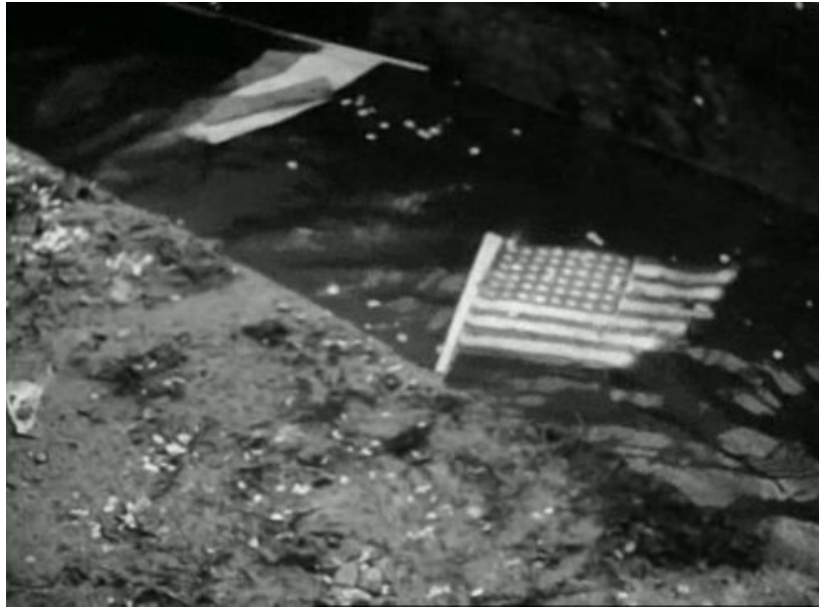
After passing the strictest ideological hurdles at home, nonetheless, the film was soon surrounded by scandal abroad. After viewing the film at Cannes, a member of the festival's jury, Hollywood actor Edward G. Robinson—who in the 1950s' had denounced some of his colleagues to the House Un-American Activities Committee—vehemently protested one of the final shots of the film in which a small American flag was shown lying in an irrigation ditch.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, according

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<sup>10</sup> *The American Penetration in Spain* [*La penetración Americana en España*—as the title of highly influential book published in 1974 by Catalan author Manuel Vazquez Montalbán bluntly put it two decades later—would create and undesirable bourgeoisification of the Spanish working classes.

<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the film could also be understood as benign, well-intended "sátira del poder," or simply as a 'costumbrista' comic portrayal of Spanish rural society during the 1950s (Villena 81).

<sup>12</sup> Ironically, the Francoist censors did not complain about the appearance of the Spanish flag in the same shot.



to Berlanga's biographer Miguel Angel Villena, the president of the festival finally agreed to cut that shot before the film's international distribution (Villena 89). Ironically, then, the only cut directly imposed on the film did not come from Francoist censors but due to the pressure of a famous Hollywood actor. Also, to add to the controversy, Berlanga himself was briefly detained by the French police, accused of money counterfeiting because, as a promotional gimmick, he had fake dollar bills featuring facial portraits of the film's three main actors—José Isbert, Manuel Morán and Lolita Sevilla—printed and distributed. The ripple effects of



these events, though, prompted unwanted attention to the film at home, soon reaching the highest levels of the Spanish government and finally Franco himself (Villena 89).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Over this negative exposure, Berlanga wrote in his memoir: "When several of Franco's ministers insisted that I was an anarchist, a Bolshevik and a communist, he responded: 'Berlanga is not a

Although the film did not encounter any major problems with Francoist censorship the memo the producers wrote to the *Dirección General de Cinematografía* accompanying *Bienvenido*'s application for the coveted classification of 'interés nacional,' reveals their awareness that the film *did* contain a subversive political content. The memo reads as a clear attempt to preemptively defend the film from the potential wrath of the 'Junta Oficial de Censura' and to avoid its mutilating cuts. In the memo, the producers present the film as fully in line with Spain's political and diplomatic position on the "the Santa Claus world psychosis" created by the Marshall Plan and insisted that the authorities could only be pleased by the film's political perspective (Berriatúa, 325). The memo takes pains to explain that the goal of the film was to criticize America's Santa Claus mentality, which had taken hold in post-WWII Europe and which had reduced Europeans to infants dreaming of the gifts provided by the Americans, as captured in the dream of the peasant where the three crew members of the American cargo plane delivering packages are dressed as The Three Magi, who in Catholic Spain were in charge of delivering the Christmas gifts to children.

Against this infantile softening of the European will, according to the producers, the film proposes instead self-reliance and hard work. For them, they cleverly suggested, this is precisely the moral of the film: that Spain should not rely on foreign aid, like other European countries did, but on "the selfless union of Spaniards against these *Magi* that in their not stopping [in Spain to deliver their financial aid], they made us realize that we have to help ourselves so God can help us" (Exp. Adm. No 11.60 qtd. Berriatúa 325).

The producers' memo thus interprets the film's ending in which Spain is cut off from the financial aid of the Marshall Plan—which would help rebuild other European countries—into a happy ending. As they write, something "new and more important happens the next day: it rains. And with that rain the fields would improve and the harvest would be more bountiful. And while the sun is out, work begins anew. But it is better to trust one's own effort" (qtd. Berriatúa, 325).

As the producers' memo indicated, the film's final shots thus imply that after a period of daydreaming, the village wakes up to a harsh but morally edifying reality of hard work and self-reliance. This glorification of the honest hard work of small-holding Castilian peasants was the purest embodiment of Francoist *Hispanidad*—as seen for example in *Surcos* (1951), an influential fascist film produced two years

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communist, he is much worse, he is a bad Spaniard'" (qtd. in Villena 89). However, Muñoz Suay told Jorge Semprún that when Franco watched the film his only comment was, "Spaniards make fun of everything" ["Estos españoles lo toman todo a broma"] (Rimbau 176). Muñoz Suay added, "I don't think that in that moment he was able to capture the real meaning of the film, although it could not be discarded that the regime had allowed the film to be produced to prove its 'independence' from the Americans" ["[c]reo que en ese momento no captó todo lo que la película significaba, aunque no se descarta que el régimen haya querido, permitiéndola, dar una prueba de 'independencia' en relación con los americanos"] (Rimbau 176).

earlier about the broken dreams of Castilian peasants. *Bienvenido*'s producers invoked the reactionary ideology of *Hispanidad* to suggest the moral antidote to the seductive but morally pernicious nature of American influence in Europe.<sup>14</sup> The producers' memo treats the film as a literary fable of this ideology of self-reliance. For them, the moral of the story is that "... it's better to trust one's own effort" than to believe in childish dreams.<sup>15</sup>

But *Bienvenido* is not a moral fable promoting *Hispanidad*, as the producers wanted Spanish officials to believe. It is anything but that. The film is a humorous but powerful indictment of Francoist Spain as a lethargic and stagnant nation dreaming outside history, as the broken clock in the town hall and the dried fountain in the main square seem to suggest. It is also a critique of the desperate and



hypocritical efforts of Franco's regime to survive against all odds in the new world order by peddling the country's kitsch, romantic dreams to European and American tourists. By capturing the transformation of a Castilian into a picturesque Andalusian village—full of whitewashed little houses standing in tortuous, narrow streets with iron wrought windows and flowered balconies—the film ridicules the Francoist kitschy appropriation of nineteenth-century orientalist, romantic

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<sup>14</sup> Ironically this notion of *Hispanidad* was being subverted from within the Francoist regime itself, which during the Cold War in the 1950s began allowing the US to build American bases in Spanish soil in exchange for financial aid and international recognition.

<sup>15</sup> For Berlanga himself, the film is "...un cuento, una fábula. Los americanos son como los reyes magos y el plan Marshall equivale a los regalos que hacen soñar a los niños. Es la única película que he hecho con la estructura de una fábula." (Villena 86).] [... a folk tale, a fable. The Americans are like the Three Magi and the Marshall Plan are the gifts children dream about. It's the only film I structured like a fable]

representations of Spain made to attract millions of foreign tourists and their precious currency. As seen in this dramatic transformation of the Castilian



village—now inhabited by flamenco-playing-cordobés and hat-and-mantilla-wearing Andalusians—the film argues that Francoism cynically prostituted itself to the orientalist dreams of the despised other.



The film thus wittily brings into contrast two repressive ideological dreams: the Francoist dream of Spain as a nation “rooted in an atemporal principle of permanence” (quoted in Herzberger 22.), represented by the sleepy village of Villar



del Río, which exists in an ahistorical limbo, and the kitschy, orientalist dream of foreigners who project into the country their naïve romantic longings and treat Spain as a theme park while ignoring Spain's dark politically repressive reality.

It is the film's emphasis on *dreaming*, I argue, which provides the gateway to understanding the complexity of the film's ideological point of view—which, as mentioned earlier, has often been mistakenly perceived. *Bienvenido* appealed to a broad ideological spectrum, and because of its ambiguity, everyone could see themselves reflected in its content. This polarized critical reception of the film has largely continued to this day. Important Spanish film historians and scholars such as Augusto Torres and Enrique Monterde have characterized Berlanga's film as ideologically conservative. To the contrary, Steven Marsh has worked to develop "a theory of film comedy" within which "the cinema of Berlanga [and *Bienvenido*] acts subversively upon the nation-state (100).<sup>16</sup> While I generally agree with Marsh's skillful close reading of the film, I believe that a detailed analysis of *Bienvenido*'s dreams provide a 'royal road' to unlock the film's true political intent.

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*Bienvenido* is one of the first Spanish films (not including Luis Buñuel's films made in exile) that pioneered the use of dream sequences to structure its narrative. As David Bordwell explains, dream sequences became a common practice in Hollywood cinema during the 1940s, when, due to a constellation of historical factors, filmmakers were looking for creative ways to get inside their characters' heads as effectively as novels do.<sup>17</sup> Spanish cinema incorporated dreams associated with film characters in the late 1930s and 1940s—*Nuestro Culpable* (Fernando Mignoni, 1938), *Las aventuras de Shanti Andía* (Arturo Ruiz Castillo, 1947) *San Ignacio de Loyola* (José Díaz Morales, 1949) [*Loyola, the Soldier Saint*], etc.—but *Bienvenido* was the first film to do so extensively using dreams to express in distorted fashion the film's main thematic preoccupations.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Mobilizing Gramsci's notion of the popular, De Certeau's concept of the art of the 'in-between' as "practice by a subaltern figure" and Bakhtin's concept of the literary artistic *chronotope*, Marsh reads the film as a parody of Francoist myth-making: parody understood as a mimicry realized from within the discourse parodied, unlike satirical discourses which run "parallel to its object but exists independently of it" (115); as seen, I argue, for instance in the mayor's dream.

<sup>17</sup> Thus, during the 1940s onward, Hollywood films began featuring dream sequences which in some films were extremely elaborate, *The Lady in the Dark* (Mitchell Leisen, 1944), while in others were structurally relevant, *The Woman in the Window* (Fritz Lang, 1944). The wave of 'freudian' movies, featuring dream sequences, hit the screen in the second half of the 1940s. Dream sequences were mainly used as vehicles to convey the character's hidden traumas as in the case Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1946), whose famous dream sequence was designed by Salvador Dalí. For a comprehensive examination of Hollywood dreams see Chapter 7: "Into the Depths" (273-296) and Chapter 8 "Call it Psychology" (297-326) of David Bordwell's *Reinventing Hollywood*.

<sup>18</sup> For Vila, "the four dreams . . . linked by the editing constitute a kind of oneiric suite" (94) [ "los cuatro sueños . . . encadenados por el montaje, constituyen una especie de *suite onírica*" ].

The film has four long dream sequences each dramatizing the dreams of four main characters representing important segments of village social hierarchy: Don Cosme (the dogmatic priest), Don Luis (the idle/impoverished nobleman), Don Pablo (the entrepreneurial mayor), and Juan (the destitute hardworking farmer). Berlanga also designed, as mentioned earlier, a dream by the village female teacher which he never shot because it contravened the expressed wishes of the censors that scenes not “degenerate” into the erotic.<sup>19</sup>

*Bienvenido* does not deploy dream sequences to establish a clear demarcation between waking and dreaming, but, rather, it questions the very dream/reality distinction. Seen from this perspective, the ‘moral’ of this cinematic fable is not that the Spanish villagers, after the dreaming prompted by the arrival of the Americans, finally wake up to reality, to the harsh but moral reality of *Hispanidad*, but, to the contrary, the ‘moral’ of the story is that after ‘awakening’ they continue to live in the repressive ideological dream world of Francoism.

## The Four Dreams

### 1. Don Cosme’s Inquisitorial Nightmare.

The dream of Don Cosme, the village priest, is the most formally complex of the four dreams in *Bienvenido* and the only one which stylistically borrows from more than one cinematic genre to express a paranoid state of mind. Don Cosme’s dream is structured as a traditional nightmare following the visual clichés of American film noir and German expressionism. These two cinematic styles constitute the most suitable aesthetic vehicles to express the film’s critique of both the inquisitorial witch-hunts of the dogmatic, repressive Francoist Spanish church, and also of the American prosecutorial congressional hearings during McCarthyism.

The dream narrative begins with Don Cosme comfortably snuggled in bed with a beatific expression on his face, an expression subtly undermined by a shadow cast on the pillow by his own face. In contrast with the beatific expression of the face, the shadow evokes a foreboding expression which foreshadows the impending nightmare.

The dream opens to the haunting, somber music of a traditional Spanish Easter nocturnal parade moving slowly down a narrow street. Not hooded like the rest of the penitents, and looking visibly nervous, Don Cosme is immediately recognizable

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<sup>19</sup> In his biography of Ricardo Muñoz Suay, Esteve Rimbau writes, “The dream of the teacher, performed by Elvira Quintillá, who seems content after being sexually assaulted by a team of American football was never shot. As Berlanga stated, ‘we searched for seventeen blond strong men but were unable to find them.’” (171) [“El sueño de la maestra interpretada por Elvira Quintillá, satisfecha tras ser violada por un equipo de fútbol americano, no se llegó a rodar, ‘[b]uscábamos a diecisiete muchachos fornidos y rubios pero no los encontramos,’ afirma Berlanga”].

in the crowd. He is being escorted by two hooded figures wearing dark robes,



reminiscent of the Spanish Inquisition. Quite abruptly, the procession turns the street corner at an increased speed and we get to see the letters KKK (the initials for the Klu Klux Klan) embroidered on the back of the robes of his captors. In this exact moment, the music pivots from the lamenting, somber music of Spanish Easter into the ebullient, fast paced sounds of New Orleans jazz. In the next scene, a group of detectives gathered around a single, dangling lamp interrogate Don Cosme, their faces distorted by the extreme and tilted close-ups typical of film noir aesthetics. The scene parodies the cinematic conventions of film noir, its



characteristic high and low camera angles, its black and white contrasts and its play with deep shadows. Along with the energetic jazz music, we hear inarticulate sounds evocative of the nasal tone of American English. Visibly terrified, the priest

covers his eyes with his hands. Seconds later, he opens his eyes to find himself in a courtroom at his own trial.

The trial setting is reminiscent of German film expressionism, as Kathleen Vernon points out, and more specifically of the films of Fritz Lang (42). The dream's physical setting, with a judge (a figure reminiscent of Dalí who designed the famous dream sequence in *Spellbound* (1945), another intertext of this scene) perched on a tall podium, the accused priest sitting alone in a corner, also reminds us—in the almightiness of the judge and hopelessness of the accused—of an Inquisition's trial. The Spanish words, “Comité de actividades anti-americanas”—



referring to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)—appears on the base of the Judge's podium. Above the committee's name, also engraved in the podium, there is a scale, the conventional representation of justice. The scale's needle, in the shape of an arrow, points upwards while the sides of the scale, with weights on, counterbalance each other. At each side of the Judge's podium and clad in dark robes, two hooded figures stand menacingly. Pulling a lever installed above him, the judge turns on the speaker which replays the exact words the priest had used to negate the schoolteacher's list of impressive American economic accomplishments she laid down to the villagers to educate them about their expected visitors: the US “is the largest producers of sins, at millions of tons annually. There are 49 million Protestants, 10 million Anabaptists, 10 million spiritualists, one million Mormons, four-hundred thousand Indians, two-hundred thousand Chinese, 13 million Blacks, 5 million Jews and 10 million whatever.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> All translations are from the English version of the film titled *Welcome Mr. Marshall* (García Berlanga, 1953) available at *The Criterion Channel*.

While the incriminating words of the priest resonate through the justice hall, the judge instructs the members of the jury to declare their final verdict. Wearing dark robes and hooded conic hats, except for one who is dressed completely in white, like a Klansman, the eight jurors stand up one by one to signal their unanimous condemnatory verdict by pointing their thumbs down like the Roman emperors did at gladiatorial contests. This shot is followed by a high angle shot showing the priest



in his corner looking helpless and vulnerable. Unlike the rest of the courtroom, the floor and the back wall in the priest's corner of the set are painted in a pattern of large rhomboid figures.



Through a deep focus counter shot, we get a view of the courtroom taken from Don Cosme's perspective. From the upper side of the frame, a noose slowly descends towards Don Cosme's head, signaling his impending death by hanging; the noose also reminds us of KKK public lynchings. Finally, a medium low angle



shot frames the judge, who is looking down at the priest while smirking and nodding. A dissolve shot, marking the transition between dream and reality, takes



us back to Don Cosme's bedroom. Safely in bed, the priest wakes up in a panic by thrusting himself suddenly forward, the classic ending of film nightmares that, as Lesley Helpert points out, is a stylistic convention completely alien to real human

behavior (59-60). As if attempting to assuage his dread, the voice-over utters, “It’s nothing, Don Cosme. Nothing at all. Just a nightmare. An absurd nightmare.”

But Don Cosme’s dream is not an ‘absurd nightmare.’ It is, rather, laden with politically subversive meaning. Unlike real dreams, whose imagery is the result of involuntary unconscious wishes distorted by dreamwork, film dreams are conscious artistic fabrications. The manifest content of a film dream is crafted to refract the main themes of the film. So, unlike in orthodox psychoanalytic dream interpretation, the film dream interpretative process does not have to work in reverse to try to unveil the repressed latent thought produced by an individual’s unconscious. Film dream interpretation stays at the aesthetic surface of the text to reveal how and for what purposes the *mise-en-scène* dramatizes the film’s main thematic content, and why a particular theme is expressed in that particular form.

In the priest’s dream in *Bienvenido* two classical elements of Freudian dreamwork stand out: condensation and symbolization. By combining several elements into one single representation, condensation is particularly suited to expressing the conscious purpose of the priest’s dream, which seeks to denounce both American world hegemony after WWII and Francoist dictatorship.<sup>21</sup> This double goal is achieved by juxtaposing the 1950s US anti-communist witch-hunt of the McCarthy era with Spanish Francoist Inquisitorial trials. For that reason, elements belonging to both ideological systems are condensed into a single oneiric film representation.

A perfect example of condensation in the priest’s dream is the way in which an aesthetic element belonging to one world—the Falangist emblem of the yoke and the arrows—blends seamlessly with the traditional representation of democratic justice of the other: the scale. As Marsh points out, “...between the seated judge and the inscription there is a wrought-iron arrow reminiscent of the seven arrows of the Falangist insignia” (114). The Falangist symbol of the arrow

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<sup>21</sup> In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud writes that the *work of condensation* becomes apparent when “...comparing the dream-content with the dream-thoughts...” (212). The dream, Freud writes, is “scant, paltry, laconic in comparison to the range and abundance of the dream-thought” (212). This comparison proves that the dream has been subjected to a high degree of compression (212).



appears disguised as the balance needle, an integral part of the mechanism of the scale. The arrow—which is also echoed in the pointed hats of the two guards who appear in the shot—thus transforms a universal representation of justice into a tool of ‘Falangist justice.’ So, in the dream, the scale symbolizes the Falangist type of ‘justice’ deployed in the thousands of summary trials in which, without even the minimal due process, Francoist judges condemned Republican political prisoners to death, including Berlanga’s own father.<sup>22</sup> Falangist justice made a mockery of the supposed equanimity of the legal justice system typically represented by the two level arms of the scale. Therefore, by inserting an iconic Falangist symbol, the arrow, into the scale and right above the inscription “Comité de actividades antiamericanas,” the priest’s dream condenses two distinct symbols—belonging to two different political systems—into one and, by extension, criticizes both. Falangist justice and the American Cold War witch hunt are reduced to their common denominator: politically motivated ideological repression. This co-joined simultaneous critique expressed through visual condensation apparently was lost on the Francoist censors.

<sup>22</sup> Berlanga’s father was a republican politician and parliamentarian of *Unión Republicana*, a party ascribed to the Spanish Popular Front. After a brief exile in Tangiers, after the Spanish Civil War, he returned to Spain where he was imprisoned and sentenced to death by Franco. As a show of good will, which Berlanga and his family thought might improve his father’s chances to be pardoned, the filmmaker joined the ‘División Azul,’ the Falangist battalion Franco sent to the Russian front to help Hitler against Stalin (160).



The curve-shaped yoke, which in the original Falangist emblem, is juxtaposed with five arrows, is also suggested in the protruding molded curved piece above the judge which forms part of the hall's loudspeaker system through which the priest's comments are announced. Also, one of the members of the jury is wearing a white robe, reminiscent of the KKK.<sup>23</sup> Choosing the thumbs down as the jury's delivery method—a practice which brings to mind Imperial Rome and its bloody circuses—the dream also seems to associate the members of the jury with Italian fascism, since Mussolini borrowed most of his iconography, including the fascist salute, from Imperial Rome. After all, Italian fascism, introduced to Spain by intellectuals such as Ernesto Giménez Caballero and Rafael Sánchez Mazas, was much more influential than German Nazism; it was the main ideological and iconographic influence on Spanish Falangismo and on José Antonio Primo de Rivera, its founding father.

Therefore, in Don Cosme's dream, visual condensation is employed to conflate the Francoist fascist variant of National-Catholicism (itself influenced by Italian fascist iconography) with the racist, militaristic ideology of the United States. As the priest's dream suggests, it was the general paranoia against the spread of communism that made the US and Franco's Spain ideological bedfellows. It was this "American and Spanish fear of communism," as Vernon wrote, that brought the US, "in the form of the military base accord, to Spanish shores" (42). Through this condensation, the dream attacks the dogmatic ultra-right ideology of Francoist National-Catholicism and the racist, ultra-conservative American Cold War ideology brutally represented by J. Edgar Hoover and Senator Joseph McCarthy's inquisitorial hearings. The film thus denounces the hypocrisy of the US foreign policy which, while exporting democracy abroad, resorts to repressive measures at home.

Don Cosme's dream resorts to Freudian dream symbolization to critique the Spanish church's repressive patriarchal ideology. As described above, the floor and the back wall of the corner where the accused sits is painted with a pattern of large black rhomboid figures.<sup>24</sup> Rhomboid or diamond shapes, used extensively in many

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<sup>23</sup> As Alison Kinney observes, the conventional representation of the Klansmen's outfit originates in the wide popular success of D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) which adapted Thomas Dixon's novel and play *The Clansman* (1905) for whose first edition illustrator Arthur I. Keller "depicted the Reconstruction-era Klansmen in an anachronistic uniform of white, shoulder-length, face concealing hoods beneath spiked caps" (7). As she explains, Griffith's mother "had sewn costumes for his Klansman father" (8).

<sup>24</sup> In his analysis of the *Bienvenido*'s sets, art historian Javier Hernández Ruiz, mentions that "El terrazo de baldosas ajedrezadas recuerda el sueño de *El padre de la novia* (*Father of the Bride*, Vicent Minelli, 1950) en el que Spencer Tracy se mueve con enorme dificultad en un suelos de cuadrículas bamboleantes, o previamente el de *Recuerda* (*Spellbound*, Alfred Hitchcock) en el que Gregory Peck esquía en los Alpes; Salvador Dalí fue el autor reconocido del set onírico en la película de Alfred Hitchcock, al mismo tiempo que, indirectamente, el inspirador de la citada secuencia de

pre-modern civilizations, “represents the ideal of a human being that has achieved [an] ... inner balance within self and has focused throughout his life on revealing or un-veiling his unconscious, veiled Yin polarity.”<sup>25</sup> In the priest’s dream, the large black rhomboids which decorate the corner of the accused thus figuratively call attention to the lack of balance of the inner sense of justice which got “lost” with the arrival of patriarchal dogmatic religions, symbolized by Don Cosme, the dogmatic, reactionary Catholic priest. This lack of balance contrasts ironically with the supposed symmetrical balance of the scale of justice. It also points to the healing power of real dreams which, as Jung observed, attempt each night to restore the balance of the various parts of the self, that in these two particular cases (the US and Francoist Spain) have been skewed by ideological fanaticism, as the rigged Falangist scale and the rhomboid figures symbolize.

The rhomboid signifies even more than that. For Mircea Eliade, the shape “... is the emblem of the female sexual organ” (cit. Eliade, 17). Both as a symbol of inner balance and of female sexuality, the rhomboid pattern thus represents that which was lost, in the first case, or brutally repressed, in the second, by patriarchal Francoist ideology, represented by Don Cosme as the embodiment of the Francoist ideal of National-Catholicism.

However, the analyses of the *mise-en-scène* of Don Cosme’s dream would be incomplete without addressing why it was shot in these two specific cinematic styles—German expressionism and film noir. As Siegfried Kracauer explains in *From Caligari to Hitler*, because of its emphasis on visual distortion and its ability to reproduce hallucinatory states of mind, German expressionism in the 1920s was the film style best equipped to articulate the emergence of authoritarian figures—vampires and monsters such as Nosferatu or crazy evil geniuses like Dr. Caligari or Dr. Mabuse—which embodied the ‘procession of tyrants’ foreshadowing the dawn of Nazism.<sup>26</sup> In *Bienvenido*, German expressionism allows Berlanga to mobilize the gothic horrors that the crimes of the Spanish Inquisition and also the KKK’s murderous rituals—also alluded to by the jury member dressed as a Klansman—conjure up and its violent nocturnal parades that seem to foreshadow fascist aesthetics. As for the use of film noir aesthetic—itsself heavily influenced by some well-known German and Austrian Jewish filmmakers and cinematographers who emigrated to the US such as Fritz Lang, Otto Preminger, Robert Siodmak and Billy

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Minelli, reconocido admirador de la plástica surrealista.”(49) [The rhomboid floor resembles that of the dream in *Father of the Bride*, Vicent Minelli, 1950, through which Spencer Tracy moves around with great difficulty or that of *Spellbound*, Alfred Hitchcock, when Gregory Peck skied in the Alps; Salvador Dalí was the author of the dream sets in Hitchcock’s film, and indirectly he also inspired Minelli’s dream sequence since admittedly he was a fervent admirer of surrealist art.]

<sup>25</sup> Eternalsymbols.com <https://www.eternalsymbols.com/a-global-and-an-eternal-symbol/>.

<sup>26</sup> Dr. Caligari, writes Kracauer, “is a very specific premonition in the sense that he uses hypnotic power to force his will upon his tool—a technique foreshadowing, in content and purpose, that manipulation of the soul which Hitler was the first to practice on a gigantic scale” (72-73).

Wilder—its darkened visual sensibility was the most suitable aesthetic for capturing the mood of “insecurity, suspicion, and the anticommunist paranoia of the McCarthy years” (Vernon 42).

Film noir aesthetics, as Paul Schrader explains, was the result of the increasing disillusionment of many sectors of American society with post-WWII realities which progressively eroded the American dream myth.<sup>27</sup> Film noir’s disenchantment was aesthetically expressed by its use of unsettling framing devices and stark black and white contrasts, but it was also conveyed by the pessimistic world outlook of its main character and, particularly, by cynical, tough detectives with an idealist past, such as Philip Marlow or Sam Spade, both successfully portrayed on the silver screen by Humphrey Bogart. In short, film noir meant to convey a sense of relentless fatalism caused by the darkening of moral clarities, and thus it is ideally suited for the priest’s dream. After all, Don Cosme is a character who sees the world in black and white and claims moral certainty, while he is morally tainted by the church’s complicity with the crimes committed by Franco’s regime: the war crimes during the Civil War and the brutal repression thereafter. Ironically, the priest’s words, “guilt, guilt, guilt” that the judge replays at the trial and that he had used to characterize an “impure” US society filled with millions of Protestants, African Americans, Chinese and Jews, characterize his own moral sins caused by his collaboration, and that of the Spanish Catholic church, with Franco’s dictatorship. In short, these two cinematic styles—German Expressionism and Film noir—were the ideal aesthetic vehicles to express the film’s critique of the repressive behavior of the Francoist Spanish church and the anti-communist paranoia of American McCarthyism.

The priest finally falls back asleep to the consoling words of the voice-over: “Don’t worry it is just an absurd dream.” Now, the shadow of his face on the pillow becomes less menacing and corresponds more naturally with his facial features. But the words, like the priest’s comfort, are ironic. Don Cosme’s dream masks his guilt. His dream may seem absurd to the naive viewer but it is filled with politically subversive content.

## 2. Don Luis’ Dreams of Grandeur

While in Don Cosme’s dream condensation and symbolization are used to smuggle the film’s subversive political content in, the nobleman’s dream resorts to Freudian displacement and a playful *mise-en-scène* to do the same. The dream of the nobleman is much shorter and less formally complex than that of the priest. But its apparent simplicity it is no less revealing of the film’s critique of the traditional Spanish values, which constituted the ideological core of Franco’s National-

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<sup>27</sup> For a lucid explanation on the socio-economic circumstances which affected the genre, see his “Notes on Film Noir.”

Catholicism understood as a conventional repertoire of ideological lexemes that defined Spain as a nation endowed with a manifest destiny, perfectly captured by José Antonio Primo de Rivera's celebrated phrase describing Spain as a "unidad de destino en lo universal" ("a unity of destiny in the universal").

If the priest's dream borrows stylistically from German expressionism and film noir, the nobleman's dream draws from the kitsch aesthetics of the "Spanish historical epic" popularized by Cifesa—the most important film production company in Franco's Spain (Vernon 40). It is through its use of artificial cardboard settings that Don Luis's dream parodies Cifesa's bombastic, historically falsifying historical melodramas such as *Alba de América* (Juan de Orduña, 1951), a biopic of Christopher Columbus that greatly pleased Franco.

The nobleman's dream is preceded by a short preamble in which a medium shot takes us inside Don Luis's decadent mansion in the evening where he is comfortably seated reading a book next to the fireplace. As he reads, he dozes off while the voice-over rhetorically asks, "Goodness! Don Luis is still awake? But not for very long. Almost there." These words are punctuated by the camera zooming in on Don Luis as he finally falls asleep. The same misty dissolve shot, used in all of *Bienvenido's* dreams, takes us to a long medium shot of a ship at a harbor readying to depart. Don Luis enters the frame from left to right followed by a large entourage.

First, we see a marching band formed by soldiers wearing armor plates and capped with their characteristic 'morion' helmets. Given that Don Luis wears a similar 'conquistador' uniform, we are led to believe that his dream takes place during the early modern period in the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century at the height of the Spanish Empire. However, the character of the aristocrat leading the civilian group behind the soldiers wears the cassock and braided ponytail on the back of the head typical of French eighteenth-century enlightenment dress. The woman who accompanies him is also dressed following eighteenth-century French fashion. And the populace



at the back of the entourage is dressed in typical nineteenth-century Andalusian garb, the same outfits the villagers cheaply bought in Madrid and plan to wear to welcome the Americans: the men are wearing Cordobés' hats, short jackets and wide belts, and the women traditional 'Manola' scarfs and ruffled sleeves dresses. In short, the crowd seeing Don Luis off for this voyage to America is a confusion



of anachronistic forms of dress, which corresponds to the Cifesa's movies' own historical anachronisms and factual inaccuracies.<sup>28</sup>

As he boards the ship, Don Luis waves to the crowd while bowing ceremoniously. Quite comically, he drops a few nostalgic tears for the Spanish motherland he is leaving behind which he wipes off with a large white handkerchief. Moments later, he gives the signal to his pilot to sail on. Kneeling

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<sup>28</sup> By anachronism is meant here the traditional concept as understood by Lucien Febvre referring to a detail or a way of thinking which does not make sense in the historical context of the time, and not to Jacques Ranciere's deconstructed notion of the term for whom this traditional notion of anachronism is in itself "anti-historical because it obscures the very conditions of all historicity" (14). Because as he writes, "[t]here is history insofar as men do not 'resemble' their time, insofar as they act in breach of 'their' time..." (14).



down and humbly lowering his head to the crowd gathered at the harbor, he ventures into the unknown.

The next shot frames Don Luis alone on board a small boat called “Purita” (diminutive for the Spanish name “Pura” meaning ‘pure’). Apparently, he has



finally arrived at some Caribbean island just as Christopher Columbus did on his first voyage. Entering the frame from right to left, Don Luis assumes a theatrical triumphal posture, standing on one knee while holding a lance with a military

banner attached to its head in his right hand. The dream is set in a cheap, rudimentary theatrical stage like that of Spanish popular baroque theater. The shot's backdrop is a naïve, painted representation of the ocean and the coastline, with two Spanish galleons visible on the horizon, the small boat and the little waves at the shore represented by individual moving layers of cardboard.

Upon putting his feet on the shore, Don Luis comically shakes water from his big conquistador leather boots. With an expression of utter satisfaction, he proceeds to plant his lance (with the banner on top) in the ground of the new territory he is set to conquer. This gesture visually translates the Castilian expression “poner una



pica en Flandes,” (‘to put a lance in Flanders’) referring to the considerable expense and arduous effort that the Castilian monarchy employed to send its feared *tercios de Castilla* to Flanders to crush its separatist rebellion.<sup>29</sup> The long lances of the *tercios de Castilla* must have been in the minds of Berlanga and Bardem when writing *Bienvenido*'s script, which was influenced by Jacques Feyder's *La Kermesse Heroica* (1935), a film about a small Flanders town, which in the seventeenth-century is expecting the sudden arrival of the feared Castilian troops.<sup>30</sup> It also reminds us, in another perfect illustration of dream condensation, of the

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<sup>29</sup> Famous for their long lances, the “tercios” were immortalized by Velázquez's painting *La Rendición de Breda*, also known as “Las lanzas” (“The Lances”)

<sup>30</sup> Spanish film Scholar Manuel Hidalgo explains that, initially, Bardem and Berlanga wanted to do a rural drama inspired by the films of “El Indio” Fernández whom both admired (149). As Hidalgo writes, the original idea was based, according to Bardem, on a poem of his which dealt with the “la incidencia y el impacto de la instalación de una planta de Coca-Cola en un pueblo que vivía de sus viñedos” (149) [impact of a Coca-Cola plant in a village that lives off of its vineyards]. In the script's initial stages, Bardem and Berlanga soon turned to Jacques Feyder's *La kermesse héroïque* (1935) for inspiration (149).

infamous ‘Requerimiento,’ the legal document that “a member of the conquistador's force would read [...] in Castilian before a group of Indians on the shore” and which gave Castile the legal rights to rule over all new territories and peoples ‘discovered’ during its royal expeditions.<sup>31</sup>

After theatrically looking left and right for signs of life, a group of suspicious native Americans enter the frame. Don Luis greets them effusively and caresses a female native on her cheek, a gesture she rejects, visibly displeased, by retreating backwards. The natives form a circle around Don Luis and slowly escort him



inland. He seems pleased by the welcoming natives, unaware of their hostile intentions—a slow reverse tracking shot reveals a human-size boiling pot in the foreground. The natives forcibly throw him into the boiling pot and a close-up of his face shows Don Luis tasting the boiling liquid in utter panic. Like the noose

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<sup>31</sup> According to Hugh Thomas, one of the main drafters of the document, Professor Palacio Rubios, “could see the macabre side of reading on, for example, a tropical beach, a document of this nature before the Indians who could understand neither the language nor the concepts presented. Bishop Las Casas said that he did not know whether to laugh or to weep when he heard of the instruction” (72). A Spanish conquistador “described reading the *Requerimiento* to two chiefs of the Cenú in what now is Colombia. The chiefs accepted that there might be one God, and that He might rule earth and sky, but they thought that ‘the Pope must have been drunk’ when he gave to the catholic kings so much territory which belonged to others” (72).





slowly descending over Don Cosme's head, the boiling pot is visually treated as the punch line of Don Luis' nightmare, which comically punctures Spain's grandiose dreams of conquest. He perishes in the same way as did all his ancestors: eaten by American cannibals.

After this climactic shot of the boiling pot, we are back at Don Luis' mansion in Villar del Río, where a cat wakes him up. Like Don Cosme when he was startled by his nightmare, he leaps from his chair. The voice-over intervenes to 'comfort' him, "Yes, it's only a dream. Pay it no mind." But the vigilant oppositional spectator knows that, as in the case of the priest's dream, Don Luis's "is not only a dream," but an allegorical narrative device laden with subversive political content.

If Don Cosme's dream was a critique of the Spanish church, Don Luis' dream is a critique of the military—the name of Luis meaning 'warrior'—and more specifically of Spain's grandiose dreams of imperial conquest, whose realization, with the active blessing of the church, was accomplished by genocide. Spain's dreams of glory, ironically, also resulted in Spain's financial ruin at the end of the seventeenth-century. In the dream, this dark past is alluded to by the simple gesture of the female Native American moving backwards visibly upset when Don Luis attempts to caress her cheek. This apparently innocent gesture is a reminder of the generalized practice of the rape of female native populations by the Spanish conquistadors, which is here smuggled in to the film by a process of Freudian displacement (or Lacanian metonymy)—a dream-work mechanism which expresses a socially unacceptable unconscious wish, typically attached to one particularly subject-object/situation, by means of another which at face value could

seem trivial<sup>32</sup> In this case, Don Luis's seemingly innocent caress stands in metonymically for the *conquistadors* common practice of sexual assault.<sup>33</sup>

As in Don Cosme's dream, this dream's manifest content and its apparent naïve settings deliver the oppositional content. The cardboard production values of Don Luis' dream are a veiled, humorous critique of the bombastically hollowed Cifesa's custom melodramas favored by Francoist officials, including Franco himself. These were, as Luis González has observed, kitsch historical reconstructions sponsoring the main values of National-Catholicism.<sup>34</sup> The nobleman's dream thus unravels an important nexus of Francoist ideology: the combination of cheap, kitsch aesthetics, melancholic longing for a lost Empire, glamorization of death (here parodied in Don Luis' cannibalization), and the substitution of history for nostalgic ahistorical clichés (that of the glorious imperial conquest which was Spain's evangelical mission).<sup>35</sup>

Through Don Luis' character—a proud, impoverished 'hidalgo,' who, like Don Quijote, is out of touch with reality—the film offers a critique of the increased Spanish isolation from the rest of Europe from the seventeenth-century onwards which, with the exception of the short-lived years of the second Republic, continued almost uninterrupted throughout the Francoist autarky of the 1940s and early 50s. It was precisely the catastrophic economic hardship of Franco's autarkic period which, out of mere necessity, motivated his regime to initiate a politics of rapprochement towards the US and set in motion the film's parody of the abject dependence of Spain on the United States.

<sup>32</sup> Thus for Freud, "... those originally trivial elements are no longer trivial once they have assumed by means of displacement the value of psychically significant material" (140).

<sup>33</sup> During the Spanish Civil War, the threat and practice of rape was extolled by General Queipo de Llano in the 'reconquest' of Málaga. In his infamous radio broadcasts, he use rape as a terror tactic, "nuestros valientes legionarios y regulares han demostrado a los rojos cobardes lo que significa ser hombres de verdad y de paso también a sus mujeres. Esto está totalmente justificado porque éstas comunistas y anarquistas predicán el amor libre. Ahora por lo menos van a saber que son hombres y no milicianos maricones. No se van a librar por mucho que berreen y pataleen" [our brave legionnaires and 'regulares' have proved to those cowardly reds what it means to be true men and also to their women. This is completely justified because they, being communists and anarchists, preach free love. At least now they will know what real men are made of unlike those effeminate militia men. They will not get away by crying or kicking.]

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4w20m0jsWk>).

<sup>34</sup> As Spanish film scholar Luis González has written, these films "re-enact situations in which the fatherland is besieged and in danger of succumbing to foreign forces" (*Fascismo, kitsch y cine histórico español* 178). These series include films such as *La princesa de los Ursinos* (1947), *El santuario no se rinde* (Arturo Ruiz Castillo, 1949), *Lola la piconera* (1951), *Agustina de Aragón* (1951), *La leona de Castilla* (1951), and *Los últimos de Filipinas* (1945), among others.

<sup>35</sup> Berlanga explains that Don Luis' dream made fun of "Spanish historical and imperial cinema. The original films had a large budget but we purposely made it cheap, as if it was a theater play." (Rimbau, 174) [el cine español histórico e imperial. Las películas originales se hacían con mucho dinero pero nosotros, voluntariamente, lo hicimos muy pobre, como si fuese una obra de teatro.]

The first two dreams of *Bienvenido* parodically subvert the two main pillars of National-Catholicism which were also the main foundations of Franco's dictatorship: the church and the army. Wrapped in humor and with a shrewd manipulation of Freudian dreamwork (condensation, displacement and symbolization), *Bienvenido*'s first two dreams assault the ideological, poisonous heart of National-Catholicism, the Francoist variant of the traditional idea of Spain as a nation "rooted in an atemporal principle of permanence" (quoted in Herzberger 22). As the name "Purita"—as assigned to the small boat that carries Don Luis to the shore—humorously implies, Spain was the true custodian of Christian values whose universal mission was to evangelize pagans abroad while purging its traditional internal 'heretic' enemies—Jews, Muslims, or Republicans—at home. Fascist 'purity' (understood as a brutal cleansing and self-cleansing process) was what during the 1950s and 60s Francoism needed to leave behind in order to welcome the Americans to its shores to guarantee its own political and economic survival—even as this welcoming of American influence threatened to cannibalize—as did the 'savages' in Don Luis' dream—those very values that Don Luis's boat 'Purita' represented.

The crowd seeing Don Luis off on his voyage to America is, as we saw, a *mélange* of anachronistic forms of dress, encompassing several centuries of Spanish history: from the age of the ruthless Spanish military conquest of the Americas in the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries through the short-lived Spanish enlightenment project of the eighteenth-century—a phase captured in Goya's portrait of Melchor Gaspar de Jovellanos, who wears the same 'afrancesado' outfit as the male aristocrat in Don Luis's entourage—and finally, to the nineteenth-century, represented in the background by the common people dressed in the conventional Andalusian garb popularized by the European romantic orientalist imagination.

This use of historical anachronism in the farewell scene of the nobleman's dream mocks Francoist-backed Cifesa's historical super productions. But it also mocks Franco's cynical policy of rapprochement towards the US, as seen in the anachronistic welcoming celebration, which is both temporally and geographically displaced, as Villar del Río is transformed from a mid-twentieth century Castilian village into a nineteenth-century Andalusian romantic theme park. The representation of the Native Americans in this dream is also a mixture of attires, weapons and cultural behavior. While some of them remind us of traditional representations of Central American Indians, others are wearing personal ornaments we tend to associate with native populations of North America popularized by Hollywood westerns. While Don Luis boils in the pot, some of them also circle around emitting the characteristic 'pow wow' chanting popularized by Hollywood. As we will see through the analysis of the mayor's dream, *Bienvenido*

not only mocks the orientalization of Spain but also of the Spanish exoticization of the US.<sup>36</sup>

Shot in 1952, *Bienvenido* is the first cinematic attempt to represent a kind of marketing strategy later undertaken by the Spanish 'aperturista' government under the stewardship of Manuel Fraga Iribarne, Franco's Secretary of Information and Tourism. Using as its commercial hook the widely successful publicity slogan of 'Spain is different,' during the 1960s, the Francoist government embarked on a vast commercial operation to transform the country into a gigantic Villar del Río. The fascist idea of Spain as "unity of destiny in the universal" was now replaced by the idea of Spain as 'universal tourist destination.' This commercial stunt allowed Franco not only to attract foreign tourists and consolidate a tourist mass industry as a main source of financial revenue, but also to hide its brutally repressive nature behind a mist of a romantic reverie, a mist reminiscent of the hazy visual effect used in the dissolve shots, which in *Bienvenido* serve to transition from 'reality' into dream and back.

The content of the dreams of the priest and the nobleman punctured this mystifying romantic reverie through nightmares that revealed the paranoia and guilt resulting from the cultural anxieties felt by these two staunch representatives of National-Catholicism induced by the imminent arrival of the Americans. Nightmares, as Freud and Ernst Jones have observed, are the only exceptions to the Freudian notion that every dream is a wish fulfillment. But being cinematic nightmares strategically planted by the filmmaker, these two dreams are an exception to Freud's exception since they could both be best perceived as dreams of wish fulfillment. For anti-Francoist spectators, the execution of Don Cosme and the cannibalization of Don Luis is the fulfillment of their wish for historical poetic justice, in this case, imparted by their former victims: the 'heretic,' represented by the native American pagan 'savages,' and by the 'impure' Americans living in a nation which, as the priest jeremiads, is filled with Protestants, Jews, Chinese and Blacks.<sup>37</sup>

The two remaining dreams, of the mayor and the peasant, also smuggled in oppositional content but now not through the use of nightmares but through an erotic dream and classical dream of wish fulfillment.

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<sup>36</sup> Wendy Rolphs remarks that, "the same process of falsification evident in the fabrication of a cartoon Andalusia is extended to a similarly exoticized America, both through the interpolated didactic documentary and through the expressionistic presentation of the villager's dreams and nightmares" (14).

<sup>37</sup> But as Santiago Vila argued they could also be read as dreams of wish fulfillment for the priest and the hidalgo since its paranoid content confirms their blind faith based on their belief that the world is full of 'savages' and 'heretics' the latter descending from the former (95).

### 3. Don Pablo's Duel in the Sun

The dream of Don Pablo, the village mayor, has often been understood as an erotic fantasy with Carmen Vargas, the Andalusian singer who performs in his establishment. But, more importantly, I argue, it also expresses a Francoist anxiety about the country's future, about the unpredictable consequences of the desperate Francoist policy of rapprochement with the US to save the country from financial ruin. It conveys Franco's difficult balancing act between opening up the country for business and maintaining complete political control.

The dream expresses this anxiety through a duel between Don Pablo and Manolo, Carmen's fast talking self-confident manager. The duel, dramatizing Don Pablo's jealousy of Manolo, may be interpreted as a duel over controlling Carmen Vargas, the Andalusian singer. Through its conventional western duel, and through the character of the mayor who, in my reading, stands for Franco himself, the mayor's dream stages the dictator's own fears of losing his grip over the country, represented here by Carmen, who, like many female characters of the same name in fictional works (from Prosper Mérimée onwards) allegorically represents Spain.

Carmen appears in the mayor's dream sequence to perform two songs—a Spanish version of “Oh Sussanah” and “De Sevilla al Canadá,” an original song composed for the film by Juan Solano, José Antonio Ochaíta, and Xandro Valerio, whose lyrics provide important clues for its interpretation. Through the song's lyrics, *Bienvenido* plays with the notion of dream versus reality and of fakery versus authenticity. Both songs capture the main theme of the film—the performativity of national identity—by producing relentless *mise en abyme* effects that question any stable notion of national identity. In so doing, this sequence of the mayor's dream erodes *Hispanidad*'s implied solidity which was the main pillar of Franco's National-Catholicism.

Like the dreams of the priest and the nobleman, the mayor's dream—the longest of the four—is visually constructed following the convention of a well-known cinematic genre, in this case the Hollywood western, of which it is a crude parody. As the voice-over tells us, Don Pablo (like Franco) is a true aficionado of the genre which he assiduously consumes in the weekly sessions of the makeshift village cinema, set in his own café, as Franco did in his official residence.

While Don Cosme and Don Luis represent a traditional Spain, which is “rooted in a-temporal permanence” but also in decay, the mayor embodies an emerging rural bourgeoisie. Don Pablo is the village's only entrepreneur. He owns several vineyards, a bus company, the café/cinema/music hall, and the hotel above it. He has been simultaneously described as a parody of the landowning class (Woods Peiró 17) and as a modern Quijote in Sancho's clothes (Richardson 9). But unlike the priest and the nobleman, who symbolize the rigid ideology of National-Catholicism, Don Pablo is a more ambiguous character. As the mayor of a forsaken Castilian village he undoubtedly depicts an authoritarian old Spain, but as his

multiple businesses imply, he also embodies the spirit of a nascent Spanish capitalism. His entrepreneurial spirit is also narratively underlined by the fact that he is the only character from the village who ever ventures outside, as when he travels to the Spanish capital to buy goods on credit. He thus represents a less ‘pure’ brand of rightwing ideology, and is always ready to strike a good financial deal, as he does with Carmen’s manager when he agrees to buy on credit all the needed paraphernalia to transform his Castilian village into an Andalusian theme park to impress the Americans.

Given his short stature<sup>38</sup> (Pablo means small), his authoritarian demeanor, his peculiar voice, and his political cunning—he is selectively deaf in the council meetings to his own advantage<sup>39</sup>—the mayor could be seen as a parody of Franco himself, particularly, as Brigid Pastor has observed, in the scene of his ludicrous speech from the town hall’s balcony (936).<sup>40</sup> In this celebrated scene, as a broken record, the mayor keeps repeating the same lines over and over again: “Fellow citizens of Villar del Rio! As your mayor, I owe you an explanation. And this very explanation, I will give you now”—until he is finally pushed aside by Carmen’s manager, who, as a charismatic orator, is able to win over the crowd. Undoubtedly, this absurd, comic scene daringly alludes to Franco’s lack of charisma and his empty rhetoric, on full display during his infamous speeches from the balcony of his presidential palace. Berlanga himself seems to have given credence to this comparison by beginning the dream of the female teacher he filmed in 2002 to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Bienvenido*’s release, with real footage of General Franco giving a speech from the Royal palace at the plaza de Oriente, where he is dubbed by an actor who verbatim utters the mayor’s absurd lines.

Unlike the nobleman, who refuses to participate in the welcoming masquerade, and the priest, who reluctantly takes part in it (although he opportunistically plans to request a new bell for his church from the Americans), the mayor strictly follows the orders of the ‘Delegado General,’ a typical Francoist technocrat (Woods Peiró 17). Unable to come up with any original ideas, he fully embraces Carmen’s manager’s idea of converting his Castilian village into a picturesque Andalusian one.

The mayor’s eager embrace of the manager’s plan parallels Franco’s desire to befriend the Americans as the only financially viable solution to cure the country’s ills resulting from dire poverty and economic stagnation caused by a disastrous

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<sup>38</sup> Franco’s Minister of Foreign Affairs (August 1939–October 1940), Juan Luis Beigbeder Atienza, upon hearing about his sudden dismissal referred to Franco as “the dwarf of the Pardo” (Preston, 391).

<sup>39</sup> As US ambassador Paul T. Culbertson said of Franco, “He listens to what he wants to hear, shuts his mind and ear to all other” (Preston, 598)

<sup>40</sup> For this scene, admittedly, Berlanga was also inspired by Mussolini’s exaggerated gesticulations (Vila 83).

period of civil war and autarky.<sup>41</sup> However, Franco was also anxious to ensure that this economic opening up of the country was done carefully so as to not risk losing his political grip over the country. Franco's outrage about his brother-in-law Ramón Serrano Suñer's suggestion that Spain should open up to the world is illustrative in this respect. When Suñer "criticized those 'without vision' who could not see that Spain could not permit herself the luxury of trying to live isolated in the world," Franco exclaimed: "'I'll exile this arrogant Serrano to the Canary Islands' ... 'if it's necessary to shoot Ramón, he will be shot too'" (Preston 585). In short, unlike Don Cosme and Don Luis, who wanted things to remain unchanged, Don Pablo becomes an active agent of the village's transformation in order to receive 'gifts' from the Americans. The dream expresses his anxiety about the unpredictable consequences of this transformation.

The *mise-en-scène* of the mayor's dream is a crude parody of Hollywood westerns and, as Spanish film historian Santiago Vila has remarked, reminiscent of the Marx brothers' *Go West!* (Buzzell, 1940), their own parody of the genre.<sup>42</sup> The Hollywood western—also Franco's favorite genre, which, as we have seen, he consumed regularly in el Palacio del Pardo as Don Pablo does in the makeshift movie theater installed in his own cafe—conveys the mayor's (and Franco's) revealing anxieties about cultural colonization. Formulaic Westerns, which Franco relished, are characterized by themes of moral clarity staged through predictable plots of good versus evil where the 'good guy' always wins. These Westerns also embody an American frontier ethos of survival and self-reliance which is at the foundation of American imperialism. The genre offers up epic narratives of origins that efface a brutal history of the colonization and genocide of native populations.

The formulaic western film genre is thus a fitting expression of Don Pablo's political and financial interests. As the village mayor and like a western sheriff, he represents the true and sole embodiment of the law in an isolated territory. And as the village's only entrepreneur, he is endowed with a competitive ethos and individualistic goals of survival and prosperity. Providing entertainment, transportation and lodging, the success of his businesses mainly depends on the village's connections to the outside world, as reflected in his question to the visiting *Delegado General* regarding when the railroad will finally arrive at the village. The

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<sup>41</sup> Aided by the anti-communist Cold War climate of the 1950s abroad—exacerbated by the invasion of South Korea by North Korea in 1950—and pressed by Spain's bleak economic prospects at home, Franco opted, against the wishes of Falangist hardliners, for cooperating with the Americans in exchange for the needed financial credits and agricultural imports.

<sup>42</sup> Pilar Pedraza and Kepa Sojo Gil reference John Emerson's *Wild and Woolly* (1917) starring Douglas Fairbanks as an antecedent to *Bienvenido* (Pedraza 269 and Sojo Gil 104). In Emerson's humorous film, a western American town *put on a show*—pretending to be the stereotypical wild west town of popular culture imagination—to impress the son of an East coast tycoon who is obsessed with the long-gone wild west portrayed in the cheap novels he reads. As in *Bienvenido*, the villagers do this to charm the son and thus secure the needed investments from his father.

mayor's various businesses in fact presciently anticipate the fundamental economic building blocks of Spain's miracle boom of the 1960s courtesy of a massive tourist industry, a boom that was fraught with the social tensions that developed out of the conflict between political control and economic laissez faire policy.

The mayor's dream stages these larger tensions in its reenactment of a duel between Don Pablo and Don Manolo. In their respective roles of sheriff and bandit, the stand-off, which takes place at a stereotypical western saloon while Carmen performs on the stage, allegorizes Spain's cultural anxieties and internal contradictions resulting from its potential, sudden incorporation into the new post-World War order after almost two decades of international isolation.<sup>43</sup>

The mayor's dream sequence begins following now familiar narrative patterns. A medium shot shows Don Pablo already asleep on his bed while the voice-over rhetorically asks, "Wouldn't you like to see what picture our mayor is contemplating? I would. I am curious." A dissolve shot identical to that in the previous two dreams gives us a risqué shot of the inner thighs (visually materializing, in another example of condensation, the rhomboid symbol in the priest's dream) of female can-can dancers, suggesting the erotic nature of the mayor's dream. A reverse track shot reveals the stage where the dancers perform. This is followed by a long shot of the saloon. We see rowdy men drinking, smoking cigars and playing cards, and a few prostitutes making rounds between tables.



Ironically, one of them is played by the schoolteacher, a stereotypical Francoist

<sup>43</sup> Although Eisenhower's visit to Spain, culminating in the famous embrace of the two heads of State will not occur until 1959, by 1953, few months after *Bienvenido*'s release, Spain had already signed a number of treaties signaling the changes ahead. Thus as Sojo Gil explains, "...during the 1950s, Spain enters gradually in the FAO (1950, OMS (1951), UNESCO (1952), OIT (1953) y ONU (1955), besides, in 1953, signing a treaty with the Vatican" (115).



repressed spinster. The *mise-en-scène* and the jaunty music place us within a Western, which the dream parodies. After a few medium shots of men drinking and playing cards at their tables, Don Pablo bursts in through the swinging saloon doors in characteristic Western fashion. But before he moves towards the bar, gun in hand, as if parodying a paranoid, defensive gunslinger, he comically turns around to make sure nobody is behind him.

As the big star on his vest indicates, in his dream, Don Pablo is the sheriff of this wild west town. He sternly walks to the bar counter and imperiously orders a



drink using the same parodic nonsense American English we heard in the priest's dream. The prostitute/school teacher approaches him flirtatiously but he gruffly dismisses her. The sheriff proceeds to check the time on his pocket watch against the time displayed in the bar's clock. After complaining to the bartender that the bar's clock is running behind, he takes out his gun and shoots at the clock whose hands now speedily march forward. The sound of gunshots outside the saloon is now loudly heard and a few wounded cowboys enter through the doors and fall dead inside, seconds later.

The outlaw, played by Manolo, Carmen's manager, whose reward poster features prominently on the saloon wall, now bursts through the doors followed by his three-man gang. He rips the poster off the back wall, tearing it to pieces, and proceeds to walk menacingly towards the bar carrying guns in his holsters.



Moments later, after everyone else has disappeared from the frame, scared by the anticipation of violence, the two men walk slowly towards each other while the outlaw angrily kicks a spittoon standing in his way.

In classical western duel fashion, the camera alternates between medium close-ups of the sheriff and of the bandit. A medium shot reveals the sheriff's fear and insecurity by showing his shaking hands. Eyes locked, they comically circle each other a couple of times and then proceed to walk back to their corners. The bandit



pulls his gun first to taunt the sheriff, a gesture he mimics, and after the same gesture is repeated twice both men go back to their initial places at the bar. From the performing stage, the saloon manager orders the reluctant musicians to continue playing. Carmen now appears on stage against a painted backdrop featuring a European romantic setting, exotic from the perspective of the wild west: luscious gardens behind a marbled fence, a marble *baldachin* and a pond in the middle with a large white swan prominently displayed.



Dressed in black and wearing a large hat, Carmen begins performing a western song, whose initial musical chords are a variation of the famous “Oh Susanna,” followed by another song titled, “From Sevilla al Canadá.”<sup>44</sup> These two songs, as we will see later through an analysis of Carmen’s performance, suggest questions about cultural mimicry that pertain as well to the village’s own performance of national identity. At this point, Don Pablo approaches a table near the front of the stage and orders its occupants to leave. He sits and, assuming a daydreaming, adoring posture, listens attentively to Carmen sing.



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<sup>44</sup> The lyrics of “De Sevilla al Canadá” run like this, “I was raised in Sevilla but I have come to Canada to see If I can find a man who can manage to sweet-talk me. The men keep drinking and pretend to babble in English. What a great opportunity to do my Mae West. There is a savage at my door with his horse and spurs. He gave me a dress embroidered with sequins. He wants to run off with me to seek his fortune in the west. But I’m dying to see once again the waters of my Guadalquivir. Seville is my passion just like a carnation. Oh dear Canada of my dreams you’ve played out your part. I want a house in Triana and a well fried churro and stop fooling around ...”

During her performance, Carmen gets off the stage and approaches Don Pablo to caress him on the cheek. The outlaw, who was watching the performance in the



back of the saloon, jealous of the attention the sheriff has been getting from the singer, suddenly stands up with his men and a stereotypical western saloon brawl ensues, with punches and chairs flying and shots fired. In the brawl, the bandit shoots the sheriff, who, fatally wounded, attempts to embrace Carmen while falling to the ground. He barely manages to hold on to Carmen's right leg. Carmen's legs, which the mayor admires several times throughout the movie, are his true object of desire, and the reason why the dream has often been understood as the mayor's erotic fantasy. The same misty dissolve shot seen in the other dreams takes us back



to Don Pablo's house in Villar del Río. He appears on the floor holding on to the leg of his bed, an ornamented piece of traditional furniture standing in for the woman's leg in the dream.

Dazed and confused, Don Pablo finally wakes up. The voice-over once again has the final word: “Don’t worry Don Pablo. Tomorrow you’ll kill the bandit and marry the girl. Every movie and every dream ends like that. Now holster your gun and get some rest. Why don’t you try to dream with your vineyards?” Unlike in the previous dreams, in which the voice-over dismisses the dreams as being no more than meaningless mental dribble, this time it tries to assuage the dreamer by reassuring him that next time the dream narrative will flip and his wishes will eventually have a happy ending.

If examined through a *Gestalt* interpretative approach, which treats every character in dreams as representations of different facets of the dreamer’s self, the sheriff and the outlaw symbolize the two sides of Don Pablo. On the one hand, Don Pablo, as the town’s sheriff, embodies his authoritarian fantasy to be a heroic figure like the glamorous and fearless solitary sheriff of his cherished westerns—like Gary Cooper in *High Noon*, a movie which was released in Spain in February of 1953 and which, incidentally, has a political anti-McCarthy subtext.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, the outlaw played by Manolo, Carmen’s unscrupulous agent, represents Don Pablo’s commercial side as business owner. Although the mayor has embraced Manolo’s plan to transform the village, he seems to fear that this ambitious plan could put in peril his complete dominion and control of the village, as hinted in his balcony speech in which the mayor is relegated by Manolo to a secondary, purely ceremonial role.



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<sup>45</sup> Glen Flankel writes, “Each generation has imposed its own politics and values onto *High Noon*. Yet what has largely been forgotten is that the man who had written the script [Carl Foreman] had set out with a very specific goal: to make an allegory about the Hollywood blacklist, the men who sought to enforce it, and the cowardly community that stood by silently and allowed it to happen” (Vanity Fair, February 22, 2017).

Manolo, the fast-talking con artist who came up with the idea of ‘selling’ Villar del Río as an Andalusian village to the Americans, could be said to represent that pragmatic side of Francoism, which actively pursued the Americans after the end of WWII in order to survive economically.<sup>46</sup> As Manolo informs the mayor, he has lived in Boston for 15 years so he is well acquainted with the tastes of the Americans, an assertion whose truth we are likely to question but cannot disprove. His negotiating skills between Spain and the US are alluded to when he is tasked with playing the part of Mr. Marshall during the village’s dress rehearsal before the Americans’ arrival. Manolo represents that pragmatic side of Francoism fully aware that despite all his qualms about the US being a Protestant, ‘Freemason,’ materialist nation, it is Franco’s only salvation for political survival in the new world order.<sup>47</sup>

But as his role of outlaw in the dream suggests, Manolo also represents the dark side, the potential threat of this economic liberalization. This threat is implied, for instance, in the balcony speech scene, which is an obvious parody of Franco’s own infamous speeches. Don Pablo’s personal control of the crowds gathered below is considerably diminished by Manolo’s presence. In this scene, Manolo takes over by pushing the deaf old man to a corner. And as the agent of Carmen, whose name in film and literature, as mentioned above, often functions as an allegorical representation of the country, he is closer to her than Don Pablo and the only one who profits from her performances. The fact that Franco was aware of this potential threat of losing partial control of the country is clearly visible in his furious reaction about his own brother-in-law’s comments quoted earlier and the fact that in February of 1950 “he had a number of prominent monarchists arrested in night-time swoops by the secret police and imprisoned for ‘conspiracy to restore the monarchy’ (Preston 593).

During the dream duel, Franco’s fear and anxiety is visually signified in the medium shot of the sheriff’s shaking hands during the duel. Representing the duel as a Mexican standoff where nobody wins also indicates that Don Pablo’s two

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<sup>46</sup> Of the commodification of the villagers, in her insightful analysis of the film, Eva Woods Peiró writes that “the citizens of Villar del Río are consistently treated as consumers, advertisers, or commodities through the ‘enlightened’ town leader’s attempt to ‘sell’ versions of Andalusianess or Americanness. For the villagers to be valuable to the Americans, then they must present *themselves* as commodities—commodities that ironically invoke the most extreme form of localism” (21-22).

<sup>47</sup> In his definitive biography of Franco, Preston explains that when in October 1948, General Marshall told the French foreign minister “that the recognition of Franco presented no problem for the United States”, “Franco conveniently forgot years of contemptuous insults about the ‘masonic super-state’ and the mindless materialism of the Americans” (583-54). As Preston writes, “The Caudillo treated the correspondent of the New York daily to a virtuoso display of the most servile pro-Americanism and made offers of Spanish participation in a US-Spanish alliance, which were not published in Spain” (584).

sides—the authoritarian represented by the sheriff, the pragmatic/commercial signified by Manolo—uncomfortably coexist. Seen from this perspective, the mayor's dream is a political fantasy attempting to assuage his fear of losing control of the situation by getting closer to Carmen, an allegorical representation of traditional Spain, and thus retaining his total power over the country; in short, to continue being the only sheriff in town. The sheriff's death in the shootout after the duel represents his fear of losing control of the country, as his action of barely holding on to Carmen's leg seems to suggest. This move, which, as mentioned earlier, could also be understood as a wish fulfilment of his erotic wishes for Carmen, hints at that his complete control of the village (and of Spain) might be sliding away.

In their waking life, the relationship between Manolo and Don Pablo seems free of tension. They get along well and have a mutually beneficial relationship: Manolo is Don Pablo's ideal customer since he travels on his bus, lodges at his hotel and eats and drinks in his café, while in turn providing the mayor's establishment with the needed services of the singer Carmen Vargas. In short, the mayor and the agent are the two sides of the same transactional coin and they need each other to survive and prosper.

As the dream reveals, despite their mutual interests and friendly interactions, Don Pablo remains suspicious of the very plan he has agreed to support. This tension, I argue, is what the dreams reenacts in the form of their duel: a pragmatic, forward looking Francoist Spain, aware of the need to open up the country to the world to guarantee its survival, and a backward looking National-Catholic Spain, embodied by the priest and the nobleman, which is suspicious and afraid of the unpredictable consequences of that change. This paranoid split was also visible in Franco's three pen names—Jakim Boor, Macaulay and Hispanicus—and particularly in Jakim Boor's obsessive articles against Freemasonry, which as late as 1960 accused the masons of being an essential part of the "Contubernio Judeo Masónico izquierdista" that wanted to destroy Spain.<sup>48</sup> The Mexican standoff style of the dream thus stages these ideological tensions of Francoism. When Don Pablo wakes up from his anxiety dream, the wooden leg of his old, traditional bed is strangely reminiscent of the pillars of the Masonic temple called Jakim and Boaz, which according to Paul Preston is what inspired Franco's pseudonym (563).

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<sup>48</sup> For Preston, "The Caudillo naively thought that the pseudonym Jakim Boor permitted him to give free rein to his views of Freemasonry as an evil conspiracy with Communism while publicly expressing admiration for all things American" (599).



The mayor's dream expresses Francoism's difficult balancing act between liberalizing the country for business and maintaining complete political control. As he wakes startled by his own death the voice over comforts Don Pablo by assuring him that next time he will kill the bandit and marry the girl, as always happens in westerns. And, as it turned out, Francoism lived to see this happy ending, as Franco, playing Don Pablo's and Manolo's roles simultaneously, ended up reaping the material benefits of his marriage of convenience with the US without having to pay any major political price for it.

In this sense, the sheriff's shooting at the clock to make it go faster, an action that ironically contrasts with the fact that the town hall's official clock has been broken for ages, alluding to the village's lethargic existence outside history, could be interpreted as meaning that Don Pablo, like Franco, wants things to change but everything to remain the same; or, to use Franco's own famous expression "*dejar las cosas atadas y bien atadas*" ("to leave things well tied up"). From that perspective, the dream seems to suggest that from now on the village will run on two different times: the frozen official time, represented by the broken town hall clock, and the financial time of modernity, speedily running forward to catch up with the times represented by the saloon clock.

The duel between the sheriff and the outlaw is at the very core of a political interpretation of the mayor's dream and of the film itself. But it is Carmen's songs, I argue, that provide the key to getting closer to the dream's 'navel,' to use Freud's expression (88).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> For Freud, a dream can never be fully interpreted, since "[e]very dream has at least one place where it is unfathomable, the navel, as it were, by which it is connected to the unknown" (88).



The conventional western duel in the first part of the dream stages Franco's fear and anxieties from Don Pablo's (that is, Franco's) point of view, as if in order to contend and oppose everything that Francoism represents, the film has first to bring Francoist subjectivity to life. During Carmen's performance, though, the dream shifts point of view to resume the film's critical vantage point toward Francoism, which we also encountered in the dreams of the priest and the nobleman.

Carmen's performance during the mayor's dream produces a dizzying *mise en abyme* resulting in what could be called a *theatricalization* of national identity which punctures Francoist ideological illusions of *Hispanidad*. In the dream, she sings two songs: a short Spanish variation of the famous "Oh, Sussannah" and a song titled "De Sevilla al Canadá." Both songs heighten the film's critique of the fake, mythical notion of national identity Francoism utilized for political purposes. Carmen's opening song is a variation of "Oh, Sussannah," a song in which the poetic voice reveals a dream about his beloved Susanna, "I had a dream the other night, when everything was still; I thought I saw Susanna dear, a comin' down the hill." Uncannily setting up the *mise en abyme* effect from the outset, the initial verses of the original song echo that likewise Carmen in this sequence is not real but a creation of the mayor's oneiric hallucination.

In the Spanish version of the song, which alters the lyrics of the original, the singer tells us that "Because I am in Arizona, I'll sing a bit like Mae West." This opening brings to the fore the question of cultural mimicry raised as well in Villar del Rio's attempt to appropriate Andalusian culture—"Oh Susannah" has been often performed in 'black face' at minstrel shows, which echoes Villar del Rio's own 'Minstrel Show' performed by Castilians in 'gypsy, Andalusian face' during the welcoming parade to greet the Americans.<sup>50</sup>

The song's next line, "although [you] may be chewing gum I bet you cannot say Olé," reflects the cultural anxiety resulting from the potential threat of imitation of an increasingly global dominant American culture gaining influence all over the world—symbolized here by American "chewing gum"—could pose to traditional Spanish culture. The lyrics counteract this threat by opposing the vulgar, individual habit of chewing gum with the sublime collective utterance of "Olé" associated with bullfighting, also known as "la fiesta nacional." It keeps the Americans at bay since despite their threatening influence and proximity—they are at the village's door steps—they are too vulgar to ever become like 'us'.

Carmen's short musical intro is thus a cultural re-appropriation of the famous western song through Spanish folklore and, through its reinvented Spanish lyrics,

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<sup>50</sup> During 1943-44, Leni Riefenstahl shot *The Lowlands* [*Tiefland*], released in 1950. Sinisterly, as Susan Tegel explains, for the film to add 'local color' to some of the scenes, Riefenstahl used Roma and Sinti extras. She used "more than 100 Gypsy extras taken from two Gypsy internment or collection camps: Maxglan . . . outside Salzburg and Marzahn . . . on the outskirts of Berlin" (Tegel 21).

it both registers and opposes (through a kind of reverse minstrelsy) the anxiety of cultural importation and imitation produced by the imminent arrival of the Americans. The song's famous chorus "Oh Susannah" is replaced with "Oh Sevilla," making explicit the need to cherish a sense of 'Spanish' identity in the midst of impending cultural and socio-economic changes. Ironically, it maintains Spanish identity by rewriting American culture from within, by reimagining one of its most iconic songs. Carmen's opening act blends the foreign and the native into an ironic, hybrid, self-orientalizing performative form and thereby smuggles into the film a critique of Franco's ideological manipulation of Spanish identity through the lynchpin notion of purity. We are reminded here of the historical pastiche in the dream of the nobleman which exposed Francoist notions of purity as a cardboard ideological construction.

Carmen's next performance crystallizes the workings of the Francoist transvestitism of national identity for financial gain. She performs her second song, "From Seville to Canadá," in a way that amplifies her Andalusian, Spanish identity. After the short musical preamble provided by the Spanish version of "Oh Susanna," Carmen adopts a full-blown 'tonadillera-copla' style and through the lines "[e]ven if I'm in Arizona [which is as dry as Villar del Rio] I'll sing in Flamenco." After putting out her cigarette and taking her hat off she strikes a dramatic flamenco pose as she begins to perform.



The song's lyrics describe the exploits of an Andalusian woman "raised in Seville" who goes to Canada in search of a sweet-talking man. The song also traces the film's main theme of Spanish-American relations. In the song, stuck in a foreign

land, the poetic voice expresses nostalgia for her native Seville and a desire to return to her native land and “live in a house in Triana,” the most ‘typical’ neighborhood of the city of Seville. In other words, after her adventures abroad and possible love affairs, the song’s protagonist is finally anxious to reclaim her Andalusian identity which, during Franco’s time, was a synecdoche for Spanish identity.

The song continues building a persistent *mise en abyme* effect initiated by the lyrics of “Oh Sussanah.” Through it, the mayor’s dream sequence turns into a thematic echo chamber of the film’s principal theme: Francoist hypocritical transvestitism of Spanish national identity. Through Carmen’s performance, the mayor’s dream becomes an oneiric prism that reveals the artificiality of Franco’s essentialist notion of *Hispanidad*. The song’s lyrics contribute to this by their mirroring effect as when, for instance, they comment on what is happening in the dream itself, “The men keep drinking and pretend to babble in English.” This line accurately describes how the men—several of them recognizably Castilian villagers—are behaving in the saloon while she is singing: pretending to be American westerners speaking English when they are actually Spaniards from Villar del Río; a mirror image of them also playing at being Andalusian for the sake of the Americans.

A perfect example of the Russian doll effect, Carmen’s song thus can be understood as a micro narrative that rehashes the same cultural tensions and anxieties derived from befriending the Americans that the dream itself stages through the duel between Don Pablo and Manolo. The song, however, provides the spectator with the critical narrative background needed to properly understand the nonsensical simplicity of the duel’s metaphor.

Creating a disorienting spatial effect, the song performs a geographical displacement parallel to the historical one enacted in the nobleman’s dream, as, for example, when the lyrics abruptly shift the scene from Canada to the US. Carmen sings: “there is a savage at my door with his horse and spurs,” echoing a line echoing the imminent arrival of the Americans whom, for Don Luis, are the direct descendent of the “savages.” And the confusion increases as she sings about the savage who “wants to run with me to seek fortune in the west but I’m dying to see again the waters of the Guadalquivir.” The savage-cowboy with a horse and spurs, clearly signifying the west, wants to go west to seek fortune. Any straightforward understanding of the narrative line of the song is thus sabotaged by these spatial incongruences. Finally, after exclaiming “Seville is my passion just like a carnation,” the song’s protagonist seems to put an end to the charade, “Oh Dear Canada of my dreams (caressing the mayor’s face) you’ve played out your part. I want a house in Triana and a well fried churro. And stop fooling around....”

This song seems to suggest that its female protagonist is tired of pretending to be someone else, tired of imitating “Mae West.” The song’s final line—“Oh Dear Canada of my dreams you’ve played out your part”—discloses what its disorienting

spatial effect was already hinting at: that the narrative seems to be describing not an actual experience but the fantasies of a young Andalusian woman, as she daydreams about going to America seeking adventure without knowing anything about it, a woman who, after playing out her wild fantasies using Canada as a main stage—a place which, via French culture seems more inhabitable to the Spanish imagination than the wild west—finally snaps out of her reverie to appreciate what she already has back home.

This reading of the song as conveying the singer's daydreaming of foreign adventures would explain the spatial and cultural mystifications of describing a Canadian "savage" cowboy "with his horse and spurs" who wants "to seek fortune in the west," and the fact that the girl imagines everyone to babble in a language she does not and cannot imagine how it would sound. In the film's original Spanish version, the singer uses the Spanish verb "Chamullar"—a slang word originating from Caló language, meaning "to jabber"—which refers to the act of speaking a language badly for lack of true knowledge of it, which in the film's English version has been translated as "babble." This word choice seems to be a humorous dig at the perceived vulgarity of American culture also captured by the old cliché that, as the girl also seems to believe, Americans do not know how to properly speak English, a refined European language that they butcher as they speak.

This contrast between Spanish European 'civilization' and American 'barbarism' is also alluded to in the stage backdrop painting depicting Europe through another cliché: that of a romantic landscape of a manicured garden, a marble Italian Baldachin and a giant white swan, parodying typical nineteenth-century European gallant representations. In short, this dream sequence pairs a cliché representation of the barbarous wild west, represented by the typical saloon filled with trigger-happy-rowdy-drunken-cowboys, against another cliché representation of civilized European culture, where nature—both flora and fauna—has been artistically tamed. This pairing of one cliché against another underlines the film's humorous deconstruction of the simplistic ways in which national cultures and identities are typically perceived: thus the film plays the exotic, Andalusian, representation of Spain which Franco appropriated for its own conservative goals against the also exotic representation of the US as a land inhabited by chewing gum savages on horses and spurs butchering, Shakespearean, British English.<sup>51</sup>

Carmen's songs in the mayor's dream bring to center stage cultural mimicry. As Vila noticed, in the film Castilians had to imitate Andalusians if they wanted to be considered real Spaniards by the Americans. This cultural performativity, the

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<sup>51</sup> Woods Peiró remarks of this double exoticization of the other, "Berlango's orientalizing of Andalusia—dressing up Villar del Río as caricature of what foreigners expect—parallels an equally disruptive reification of America in terms of its mass culture and commodification, and even more pressingly, its notion of progress and individualism" (20).

film suggests, is done cynically to secure the gifts and material goods from the American ‘savages,’ as signified by a “sequin dress” the Andalusian woman gets from the cowboy. The singer, tired of imitating, of acting like “Mae West”, however, wants to return to her Andalusian roots to live in a house in Triana and eat “a well fried churro” which indirectly reminds us of the Spanish saying of “mojar el churro” referring to the sexual act, or here to the desire of the woman from Seville to be with a real Spanish man, not a savage American cowboy.

The singer’s yearning to reclaim her ‘original’ identity, I argue, is undermined by the *mise en abyme* effect that the dream stages early on. In this hall of mirrors, original and copy become irrelevant concepts since the ‘original’ is always already, to use the Derridean formulation, a copy. Carmen’s songs thus perform a complex mirroring effect which simultaneously reclaims and undermines the very concept of identity which, refracted by its multiple mirror reflections, is destabilized. The singer’s dream about going to America where she will get a “sequin dress” mirrors the mayor’s erotic reverie, his own daydreaming while he watches Carmen perform, as “Oh Susannah” mirrors the song’s dreaming of Susannah as the mayor dreams of Carmen. Ironically, sequin, tinsel and shiny fake objects such as pearls, etc., which were the preferred objects of ‘exchange’ the colonizers brought with them to pacify unknowing savages are here used by the culturally ‘savage’ but technological advanced Americans to buy out pre-modern, backward Spaniards.

This is not to claim that Carmen is aware of this complex mirroring effect that her performance triggers and that results in the deconstruction of Francoist national identity. Carmen is merely a vessel for the film’s oblique criticism of Franco’s Spain. Ingeniously set up to produce a multiple mirroring effect, her performance, which seems to cement Franco’s notion of *Hispanidad*, offers instead a critique of *Hispanidad*. Her performance calls attention to Francoist Spain’s process of cynical self-orientalization, as reflected in Villar del Río’s transvestite welcome celebration to the Americans. In this way she performs what we might call a ‘reverse minstrelsy.’

In Spain, during the 1950s and, more intensely, during the 1960s, these internal tensions between opening up the country to foreign capital and maintaining its self-identity were rehashed at the cultural level in popular film and music. The Spanish film production of these years exhibited an acute anxiety over what it meant to be Spanish in the midst of an increasing flood of Hollywood films representing a fully urbanized (and Americanized) capitalist environment. As seen in such films as *La ciudad no es para mí* (Lazaga, 1966), *Pero... ¿En qué país vivimos?* (Sáenz de Heredia, 1967), *El turismo es un gran invento* (Lazaga, 1968) among many others, at its most reactionary, Spanish popular culture worked into overdrive to create ideologically and aesthetically hybrid cultural products in which Spanish values remained intact, even when dressed in Hollywood clothing; as also seen in Carmen’s version of “Oh, Sussanah.”

The ‘españolada’ referring to Spanish films featuring popular Andalusian singers like Lola Flores, Carmen Sevilla, Imperio Argentina, etc., had a wide popular appeal in Spain from republican times through the late 1950s. As a film, *Bienvenido* was originally supposed to be an ‘españolada’ which could secure financial backing under two conditions: that it was a musical starring Lolita Sevilla, an upstart Andalusian singer and lover of the main producer, Falangist Albert Reig, and that it was set in Andalusia.

As it did with the traditional notion of Spanish identity, the director also subverted the traditional ‘españolada’ genre from inside. Berlanga and co-script writer Bardem loosely adhere to these conditions by giving the young singer a very minor speaking role—limited to uttering cliché Andalusian expressions like “Jozú” and “Vaya” and four musical numbers to perform. To fulfill the other condition, they decided to convert the entire village of Villar del Río into an Andalusian village, thus exposing the reactionary ideology behind the orientalist core of the ‘españolada’ Francoism used for its political purpose.<sup>52</sup> In short, *Bienvenido* became an ‘españolada’ that undid itself.<sup>53</sup>

*Bienvenido*’s Andalusian travesty during the village’s transformation turned out to be prophetic. The film predicted the general changes about to occur, which ended in Spain’s *aperturismo* of the mid-1966 marshaled by Manuel Fraga Iribarne, Franco’s young and energetic new secretary of information and tourism. But, as if to confirm the prophetic ability, which traditionally has always been ascribed to dreams, in *Bienvenido* Carmen’s agent, the fast talking, charismatic, and overweight Manolo eerily resembles Fraga Iribarne himself, the fast talking, charismatic and overweight minister in charge of ‘aperturismo,’ with whom, uncannily, he shares a first name.

#### 4. Juan’s Regeneracionist Dream

Unlike the dreams of the priest, the nobleman and the mayor, which convey the paranoia of Spain’s traditional and emerging upper classes, the dream of Juan, the farmer, centers around the inner desires of the Castilian peasant, the mythical

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<sup>52</sup> However, the film also reconnects the genre with a genuine Spanish popular tradition (Woods Peiró, *Rehearsing 14*), (Marsh 107) and with the Spanish ‘Esperpento’ and Sainete traditions (Castro Paz 209-210).

<sup>53</sup> As history has shown, however, Francoism was able to move forward by forging a hybrid of the traditional and the modern. This was encapsulated by the iconic, and sensationably popular, blond, blue eyed child singer actress Marisol, also known as “la flamenquilla de la Coca-Cola,” because of the famous commercial she made for the Coca-Cola company. Marisol lent her northern European face to traditional Spanish popular culture to become the poster girl of Francoist ‘aperturista Spain.’ Ironically, as if inspired by Berlanga’s diabolical plan of deconstructing from within, as an adult, Marisol became a member of the Spanish communist party.

embodiment of *Hispanidad*.<sup>54</sup> Unlike the other dreams which are a mixture of nightmare and wish fulfillment, the farmer's dream is typical Freudian dream of wish fulfillment, comparable to that of a child. Its childish quality is alluded to in the fact that the three crew members of the American cargo plane in charge of delivering Juan's tractor are dressed as Magi. In Juan's dream the Americans literally become the three Magi of post-WWII Europe and, as mentioned earlier, it was this 'Santa Claus' mentality that the producers of the film were criticizing. And yet, Juan's simple dream unveils a powerful 'regeneracionista' critique of the wretched condition of the Spanish peasantry which has been traditionally exploited, starved, and kept illiterate by the landed nobility and the church.

Juan's dream is shot in the cinematic style of early Soviet cinema to allude to the exploited situation of Spanish peasants. The dream parallels the same narrative pattern of the others: Juan is in his bedroom at night as the voice-over sets up the scene. But, unlike the other three characters who were comfortably snuggled in their beds ready to fall asleep, Juan is wide awake. He is opening a window to let the moonlight inside the bedroom he shares with his wife and three children, while a baby cries inconsolably in its cradle. Juan returns to bed and the narrator takes pity on him: "Poor Juan, things are not going very well for him. He is weighed down by family, works from sunrise to sunset for peanuts and to top it off at night... Shut up, kid!" As soon as the farmer falls asleep, the same dissolve shot used in each previous dream introduces us to his dream world. During this visual transition, a medium shot frames the farmer against the metal bars of his bed headboard, his head resting outside the bars. This shot suggests that during the dream he will be temporarily free from his life of exploitation as an impoverished Castilian farmer.

*Bienvenido*'s previous dreams resorted to the aesthetic of German expressionism, film noir, historical melodrama and Hollywood western to convey the character's desires and fears. Juan's dream mobilizes early Russian film aesthetic to harness its revolutionary, utopian potential. A long shot shows Juan's entire family, including a pair of working oxen, in the middle a working field looking up at the sky. An American cargo plane soars above the Castilian plains. The three plane crew members, pilot, copilot and a third member—a Black man in charge of the cargo's inventory—are wearing the traditional Magi outfits. The three men check the names on their delivery list and cross out the name of Juan González, Villar del Río, Spain. In the next shot, the crew exchanges their air force hats for the crowns of the 'reyes magos' as they ceremonially stand and salute, while the Black king looks directly to the camera as if to explicitly reinforce the metafictional layers created by the mayor's dream. As if confirming the film's liberating

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<sup>54</sup> For psychiatrist and francoist ideologue Antonio Vallejo Nágera, "*Hispanidad* [Spanishness] supposes an ascetic posture in life...*Hispanidad* is asceticism of the person...hastening as soon as possible in this life the pure immateriality and intemporality of eternal glory" (Richards, 155).



mechanism of reverse minstrelsy, the presence of the Black soldier, directly confronting the spectator, presents a dignified portrayal of Black subjectivity which minstrel shows parodied and effaced. Through his appearance we also sense the shadow figure of the Spanish ‘gypsy’ emerging—a foundational figure whose exclusion was needed to create a false image of national identity through Andalusian culture, as seen in the village’s own minstrel show to please the Americans.<sup>55</sup> The Black soldier stands in for Balthazar, the Black Magi who in religious ceremonies in Catholic countries was played in blackface. Here, however, the Black Magi is played by a real Black person, as if the film wanted to further emphasize the liberating role of reverse minstrelsy examined in the mayor’s dream.

Dressed as King Melchior, the captain pulls a lever (the same form of mechanical deliverance used by the judge in the priest’s dream) and a large wooden box is parachuted out of the plane.<sup>56</sup> When the large package hits the ground, Juan runs towards it as excited as a kid in ‘el día de Reyes.’ A long medium shot reveals a brand-new tractor and the words USA printed on the wooden box. Juan and his

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<sup>55</sup> In *White Gypsy*, Woods Peiró discusses the progressive whitening/vanishing of the liminal but central figure of the ‘gypsy’—represented by folklórica singers such as Lolita Sevilla, who plays the role of Carmen Vargas in *Bienvenido*—in the construction of national identity. As she writes, “Not unlike the colonial administrator, the folklórica Gypsy stands between the colonizer and the colonized, animating other Gypsies and teaching them how to be of service to bourgeois and, then, to the state. These films applaud her integration into white capitalist society if and when she might ascend to normative Spanish identity” (Kindle 1807).

<sup>56</sup> Ranciere notes that for Lucien Febvre “to unburden (soulever) oneself of the belief system of one’s time, one must have, he tells us, a lever (*un levier*).”





family get onto the tractor. Juan's dream ends in a series of visually stunning shots of the tractor cruising through the fields with the parachute still attached to its back. From the back, the giant parachute looks like a giant white flower in bloom. In the frontal shots both tractor and parachute seem to form a new hybrid creature combining the mechanical solidity of the tractor and the malleable lightness of the parachute, which, pulled by the tractor, looks like a large evanescent medusa.



Through this poetic optical effect—over which the filmmaker and the director of photography, who said it was impossible to achieve, almost came to blows—Juan's gift from the Americans acquires a dreamy, chimerical quality. And, as Vila pointed out, it is also evocative of surrealist imagery, thus acquiring an oneiric dimension

befitting a dream sequence (94). The farmer's dream is charged with a heroic, epic



quality reminiscent of Soviet revolutionary cinema, and more specifically, as Vila pointed out of Eisenstein's 1929 *La línea general / Lo viejo y lo nuevo* (*Gueneralnais Linia / Staroie i novoie* (94).<sup>57</sup>

Unlike the other three dreams, Juan's dream does not express guilt, paranoia or fear but simply fulfills the farmer's wish for the tractor which, despite having been delivered by the American Magi, is a vital working tool he desperately needs to raise his family out of poverty. Through the dream of Juan González, a typical Spanish name, the film denounces the miserable life of all Castilian peasants, the supposed custodians of Spanish traditional values of *Hispanidad*, who were in fact destitute.

Using Unamuno's celebrated adjective 'intrahistórico' to define this Spanish farmer, Basque scholar Kepa Sojo Gil observes that Juan is the only character in the film who is "always portrayed with dignity" and never parodied, like the Black

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<sup>57</sup> As Vila writes, "the libidinal projection onto the mechanical object and its symbolic representation as a sexual organism seems to refer to a similar projection in Eisenstein's *La línea general / Lo viejo y lo nuevo* (*Gueneralnais Linia / Staroie i novoie*, 1929) in the image of the phallic creamer machine ["la proyección de la libido en el objeto mecánico y su representación simbólica como organismo sexual parecen remitir a la situación equivalente en *La línea general / Lo viejo y lo nuevo* (*Gueneralnais Linia / Staroie i novoie*, 1929) de Eisenstein con su desnatadora fálica. As he writes, "[t]he image of the parachute being inflated by the tractor's pull forward equates the potency of the machine with the excitation of the sexual act in a perfect oneiric logic, creating a mixed form of phallus and flower that, in its sheer beauty, belongs to the best achievements of surrealist imagery" ["La imagen del paracaídas inflándose por el empuje del tractor relaciona la potencia de la máquina con la excitación sexual en perfecta lógica onírica, componiendo una forma mixta de falo y flor que se inserta por su belleza entre los mejores logros de la plástica surrealista"] (94).

soldier (113). The film's respectful treatment of farmers like Juan situates *Bienvenido* within Spanish 'regeneracionismo,' which was pervasive in all spheres of Spanish public intellectual life after Spain's humiliating defeat against the US in the Spanish-American war of 1898.<sup>58</sup> Although the recipe to remedy Spain's socio-economically prostrated state of stagnation did widely vary—ranging from social revolution to the need of an 'iron surgeon'—<sup>59</sup> most 'regeneracionistas' would join in the film's critique of the miserable existence of farmers like Juan who, as the voice over reminds us, "work from sunrise to sunset for peanuts."<sup>60</sup>

The idea of collective dreaming is crucial to understanding the film's 'regeneracionista' critique of a prostrated Spain. In *Bienvenido*, the four dream sequences do not serve to delineate a clear demarcation between dream and reality. On the contrary, the film rejects such a strict divide. The line dividing the dreams of the characters and their waking life is blurred to suggest that their waking life is also a dream. Villar del Río itself was dreaming of its existence before the announcement that the Americans were coming, as illustrated by a shot in which the voice over 'surprises' one of the villager's walking zombie-like in a state of reverie. But, the film also suggests that the village continues to dream after the Americans leave.<sup>61</sup>

The blur between waking and dreaming is key to understand *Bienvenido*'s ambiguous ending, which has been often understood as expressing nostalgia for a vanishing, pre-modern past, where hard work replaces fantastical dreams of easy prosperity, as symbolized by the Marshall Plan. After the fiasco with the Americans, the long-awaited rain finally falls, ending years of suffocating

<sup>58</sup> For Company, "la cifra final de la metáfora regeneracionista puesta en pie por *¡Bienvenido Mr. Marshall!* sea la de una toma de conciencia de la realidad" (76).

<sup>59</sup> Joaquín Costa, the father of Spanish 'regeneracionismo', "thought that his 'revolution from above' would be created by an independent petite-bourgeois party, that, transcending class struggle, after taking power would implement petite-bourgeois reforms aiming at socializing oligarchic liberalism thus giving stability to the liberal state in Spain" ["creía que su 'revolución desde arriba' sería obra de un partido pequeñoburgués independiente, por encima de la lucha de clases que, tras conseguir el Poder, practicara una reforma pequeño burguesa con el fin de socializar el liberalismo oligárquico, estabilizando el estado liberal en España"] (Company, 68). As Company observes, "[s]uch a political program should elicit afterwards ... the sympathy and acquiescence of some sectors of Falange that felt represented by it" ["Tal programa político debía despertar posteriormente ... la simpatía y aquiescencia de ciertos sectores de Falange que se vieron reflejados en él"] (68).

<sup>60</sup> Spain's backward and lethargic state is perfectly captured in Unamuno's novella *Manuel, Bueno, mártir* (1936), about a priest who has lost his faith while his flock, the villagers of Valverde de Lucerna, dreamed their collective existence between a mountain and a lake.

<sup>61</sup> Referring to Franco's postwar Spain, Michael Richards notes that "the hopelessness of the situation dulled the senses" (29). For him, "[p]ersonal memories of what was a nightmare world for millions [of Spaniards] were partly shaped by the almost *dream-like state* into which people entered to get by" (my emphasis 29).

draught.<sup>62</sup> As the sun comes out, the film ends with a shot of the farmer Juan working his land with a pair of oxen next to him instead of the wanted tractor. He stops for a moment to look up at the sky, a movement which mimics the one in his dream. Juan's action of looking up is assigned a specific meaning by the voice-over



that closes by saying “and, as usual, those working the fields stop and rest or daydream while gazing at the skies. Because, after all, who does not believe in Santa Claus.” In short, as the producers had indicated, to prosper Spain needs to work, not daydream about being rescued by the Marshall Plan, which never came to fruition, even if the child in us could still fantasize about it.<sup>63</sup> Appropriately, the film ends with the narrator uttering the words “Colorín, colorado, este cuento se ha acabado,” the conventional Spanish ending for fairy tales.

The fairy tale ending is of course ironic, and in true ‘regeneracionista’ fashion, *Bienvenido* wants the village and the nation to wake up to reality. The film suggests that the organic naturalness of the Castilian peasant community lavishly praised by Falangist intellectuals was as artificial as the Andalusian identity Francoism appropriated for profit.<sup>64</sup> The eternal fascist Castile was a political construct much

<sup>62</sup> Spain, particularly the grain basket region of Castile, experienced a serious drought between 1944-54 which was commonly referred to as “la pertinaz sequía” [“the persistent drought”]. As Antonio Rivera observes, this expression became iconic in Spain “during the first years of Francoism.” For Rivera, the drought, although a true fact, was also used as an excuse to justify the terrible financial state of Francoism (*Antonio Rivera – La Pertinaz Sequía. El tiempo 13 Mayo 2014*).

<sup>63</sup> This critique of the stagnation of Spain was shared, as Manuel Hidalgo has written, by Marxists and Falangist hardliners—such as Ramiro Ledesma Ramos and Onésimo Redondo—alike. After all, Joaquín Costa, the father of the ‘regeneracionista’ movement did famously call for an ‘Iron surgeon’ to cure the ills of the land.

<sup>64</sup> Company identifies a clear “pensamiento agrarista” [“agrarian thought”] in Falange itself as clearly reflected, among others, in falangist writer Martínez Bedoya, “the revolutionary energy needed to create a new Spain will not be found among the city dwellers. It will be found in the

like Villar del Río's Andalusian sets, which its inhabitants built in order to charm and profit from the Americans.

The movie has an ironic vision of what is deemed “natural.” In this way it is astute about the workings of ideological mystification. The astutely placed freeze shots that opened the movie—of the church, the main square (with a waterless fountain in the center), the café, the school and the interior of a generic home—transformed those spaces into a movie set akin to the cardboard Andalusian sets the villagers created. This ideal Castilian hamlet is as unnatural as the exotic recreation of the village. The irony here is deepened when we consider that though the film's exteriors were shot on location in the real Castilian town of Guadalix near Madrid, the church building and the fountain at the center of the main square had to be built to evoke its ‘Castilian’ character.<sup>65</sup> In *Bienvenido*'s political imagination, Castilian



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villages of Castile” [“La energía revolucionaria para hacer una España nueva no se encontrará en los hombres de la ciudad. Se encontrará en los pueblos de Castilla”] (qtd. in Company 70-71).

<sup>65</sup> As Hernández Ruiz explains, *Bienvenido*'s set designer Francisco Canet built, “la fuente ubicada en el centro [y] la fachada de la iglesia parroquial” (59-60). He also observes that Francisco Canet amply surpassed the role of artistic director to become closer to the “*production designer* of Hollywood's golden age” (60).

authenticity, like Spanish authenticity, is an artificial creation, destabilizing, like Carmen's song, any essentialist concept of national identity.

But while *Bienvenido* criticizes the smoke and mirrors of Francoist ideological manipulation through its radical and multiple *mise en abyme* effects, its ending also suggests the forging of a community based on empathy and human solidarity, as hinted at by the presence of the Black soldier playing the role of King Balthazar. This idea of communal solidarity opposes the corruption and mismanagement of Franco's regime which abandoned each town to its own meager resources. As made clear in the mayor's official announcement before the organization of the celebrations, "the village coffers are empty." At the end of the film, each villager pitches in to repay the debt with the exception of Manolo, Carmen's agent, who flees the village despite having promised to stay. Several of the impoverished farmers generously donate to the community part of their meager produce and revenue.

By depicting this selfless act, the film criticizes an oppressive regime that starved its own people. Through this collective effort, a new utopian community is created, though this time, not one built on traditional Spanish values but on human solidarity. Even the nobleman Don Luis contributes his precious old sword, and the sly Don Pablo surrenders his ear piece, which earlier he had used for political manipulation. The vulnerability suggested by a weaponless 'hidalgo,' who now



becomes a true Don Quijote, and a deaf Don Pablo, now a true Sancho Panza, signifies a new type of social organization: a community built on peace and transparency and not on violence and coercive political manipulation.

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