RURAL HOSTILITY IN THE HORROR FILMS OF LATE FRANCOIST SPAIN: *THE VAMPIRES NIGHT ORGY*

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INTRODUCTION

Developmentalism under the Franco regime resulted in some major transformations in Spain. The changes included a massive rural exodus and accelerated urbanisation, which fostered the incipient growth of a consumerist, capitalist and individualist culture (Radcliff, 2017: 244-245). The aspirational goals of modernity, such as owning a Seat 600 automobile and being able to drive to the countryside or the beach, coexisted with the persistence of a rural world characterised by traditional structures and a slow-paced daily life. However, the rapid spread of the urban bourgeois mentality took place in a context of continued totalitarian control over most of the population. It is important to understand that the last years of the Franco dictatorship were characterised by a questioning of the National Catholic values and institutional repression that defined the regime. On the one hand, various sectors (students, workers, intellectuals and progressive religious leaders of the younger generation) were calling for a more open society and the establishment of a democratic system. On the other, the regime, in its need to maintain a positive international image, continued to use repressive instruments to quell any actions it deemed subversive (Babiano et al., 2018: 133-134). The creation of the Tribunal of Public Order (*Tribunal de Orden Público*) in 1963, which took over responsibility for trying political offences from the military courts, was one example of this dual reality of modernity and authoritarianism.

The dichotomy was also evident in Spanish cinema. Alfredo Landa's comical depiction of the country's social frustrations and the acerbic critiques of Francoist Spain by filmmakers such as Luis García Berlanga and Juan Antonio Bardem reflected the tensions of the time. Spanish horror filmmakers also located these tensions at the heart of their stories. The horror genre was en-

joying international success at this time thanks to American filmmakers such as Wes Craven and Tobe Hooper, the work of Britain's Hammer Film Productions, and a European movement that combined horror with eroticism and excess (Olney, 2013: 21). In Spain, the horror boom took place in the wake of the government corruption exposed by the Matesa scandal in 1969, the decline of the Spaghetti Western, and the promotion of international co-productions as a funding solution (Pulido, 2012: 36-37). In fact, horror films became so successful in the final years of the Franco regime that a third of all films produced in Spain between 1968 and 1976 belonged to this genre (Lázaro-Reboll, 2012: 11). However, their box office success did not ensure a stable industry, as the studios behind these films, with the exception of Profilmes, tended to disappear after making one or two titles.

Spanish horror film narratives were characterised by a markedly internationalised approach (traditional monsters, international production teams) and by an aesthetic based on erotic and macabre excess. Their hybrid style gave them an appeal beyond national borders, although in Spain alone they regularly managed to attract around 300,000 to 500,000 spectators. Outside Spain, co-production and the presence of established distribution and exhibition circuits expanded the reach of these films (Lázaro-Reboll, 2012: 17).

Despite their apparently apolitical nature given their focus on breaking taboos and achieving box office success, Spanish horror films were also capable of exploring the social upheavals of the late Francoist period (Willis, 2003: 75). In general, the relationship in the horror genre between the monstrous and the normal—the protagonists and their context, as well as the attitudes, behavioural norms and beliefs they represent—constitutes a cultural response to something whose presence is denied or which exposes some form of historical oppression based on gender, class, ethnicity, etc. (Poole, 2019: XVIII). In the specific case of Spanish horror, images of explicit violence and eroticism symbolised the struggle between modernity and tradition or between authoritarianism and the desire for democracy. At the same time, the conflict between city and country facilitated the idealisation of the urban model, which was associated with bourgeois rationalism, and the denigration of the rural space, which was portrayed as macabre and sinister. Examples as diverse as *The Witches Mountain* (El monte de las brujas, Raúl Artigot, 1972) and *Bell from Hell* (La campana del infierno, Claudio Guerín, 1973) presented the rural world in similar terms, as an oppressive, isolated setting that reacted aggressively to outsiders.

The Vampires Night Orgy (La orgía nocturna de los vampiros, Leon Klimovsky, 1973) was one of the films that engaged with the aforementioned tensions through the depiction of monsters radically different from the protagonists biologically (undead vampiric creatures), as well as socially and culturally (cannibals subject to a strict hierarchy controlled by a noblewoman). In this confrontation, the parameters of tradition-primitivism and modernity-rationalism serve as narrative resources that at the same time reveal the prejudices and discursive contradictions of developmentalist Spain. Moreover, the violent encounter reflects the turbulent context of crisis that the dictatorship was experiencing at the time while connecting with the highly successful folk horror tradition. All the films in this subgenre, which include the American picture *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974) and the British film *The Wicker Man* (Robin Hardy, 1973), depict the city-country conflict as a survival scenario in which urban classism and the moral superiority of rationalism were meaningless in the face of communities governed by very different norms.

The Vampires Night Orgy is an ideal case study for four key reasons. The first is related to fundamental processes behind the changes that were occurring in late Francoist Spain, such as the emigration of large numbers of Spaniards to other countries, the rural exodus, and the trans-

formation of gender roles. The second is that the monster, rather than being constructed as an individual creature, forms part of a hierarchical social system that replicates a vision of the Franco regime. In this sense, although there was no intention to make a political statement against the dictatorship (Leon Klimovsky's work was always oriented exclusively toward achieving box office success and turning a profit), certain similarities can be identified between the monster and Francoism, such as the tyrannical power exercised by the noblewoman and the use of violence and coercion to maintain social stability. The third reason is that the film distorts the cinematic stereotype of the Spanish peasant, the so-called *paleto*, depicting him as an insatiable monster. A recurring figure in Spanish comedy films, the *paleto* became the most familiar embodiment of the rural isolation that modernity had given rise to. But in this case, the figure is transformed from the good-natured, innocent country bumpkin into a voracious vampire who destroys outsiders without hesitation and turns them into slaves. And the final reason is that the sinister depiction of the town of Tolnia and its inhabitants challenges the familiar nature of a setting like this for Spanish spectators.

AN OVERVIEW OF SPANISH FOLK HORROR DURING THE LATE FRANCOIST PERIOD

The term "folk horror" was originally used to refer to a series of British films made in the 1960s and 1970s that explore the terrifying aspects of witchcraft or rural folklore. Of these, *Witchfinder General* (Michael Reeves, 1968), *The Blood on Satan's Claw* (Piers Haggard, 1971) and *The Wicker Man*, collectively known as the "Unholy Trinity", are considered the founding films of the subgenre due to their focus on the violent reaction of rural communities to strangers (Thurgill, 2020: 42). In the wake of such films, folk horror stories explored pagan traditions and engaged in a dialogue with the fear inspired by the association of countercultural values with the murders committed by the Manson family (Scovell, 2017: 13). The formula spread to other countries, with the invariable pattern of city dwellers discovering a rural community that exists outside the norms of modernity, inevitably resulting in brutality being unleashed by both sides.

In this way, such films could explore the protagonists' fear of an encounter with the unknown and the fragility of the barriers separating their urban rationality from rural savagery, as the futility of laws and urban sophistication in the rural context forces them to defend themselves using the same violence that they have always disdainfully attributed to these communities (Pinedo, 1996: 22). The narrative and aesthetic violence of folk horror could thus subvert the political (metropolis-colony), economic (power-powerlessness) or cultural (modernity-backwardness) hierarchies established under the capitalist model (Williams, 1975: 297), which were justified on the basis of educational or technological levels. For example, films such as *The Hills Have Eyes* (Wes Craven, 1977) show the futility of firearms against the savagery of people familiar with the local terrain. Through this central conflict, this sub-genre engaged in a dialogue with other social issues, such as the coexistence of consumerism and poverty embodied by the protagonists and the family of rednecks in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, or concerns among older generations about young people questioning social structures such as Christianity in *The Blood on Satan's Claw*, where the ritualistic murders of children represented a distortion of the values of hippy culture.

Spanish cinema similarly produced a series of films that projected the anxieties over the country's rapid transformation onto the rural world (Palacios, 2019; La-Janisse, 2021). Although many of these films imitated international successes, the recycling of stories and monsters did not prevent the inclusion of uniquely Spanish aesthetics

and symbols, as evidenced by *Night of the Blood Monster* (Il Trono di Fuoco, Jesús Franco, 1970) and its resemblance to *Witchfinder General*. Both films use witch hunts in 17th-century England to offer a horrific depiction of authority figures, but the choice of a sadistic judge (*Night of the Blood Monster*) rather than a sexually abusive lawyer (*Witchfinder General*) allows the Spanish version to allude to the abuses of power and arbitrary decisions that characterised the Franco regime's judicial system in the post-war years.

One of the recurring themes of this subgenre is the idea of the journey from the city to the countryside as a trigger for an encounter with an isolated realm that is hostile and alien to the capitalist world. Examples can be found in *The Witches Mountain*, *Horror Arises from the Tomb* (El espanto surge de la tumba, Carlos Aured, 1972) and *Who Can Kill a Child?* (¿Quién puede matar a un niño?, Narciso Ibáñez Serrador, 1976). where the perspective of the city dweller suggests a markedly classist gaze on the exotic or socially and culturally inferior locals. The migration of millions of Spaniards from rural zones to the cities between 1950 and 1975 coincided with the popularisation of an urban bourgeois lifestyle and the abandonment of traditional ways of life by the younger generations. The government's promotion of this lifestyle resulted in the deterioration of rural health and education services (FOESSA Foundation, 1966: 258-260) and in the movement of most young Spaniards to the cities (Paniagua, 2015: 163). The image of the *paleto* was used in Spanish cinema to embody a dual discourse on the rural population, navigating between their inability to adapt to modernity due to illiteracy or primitivism and their resistance against urban secularisation and corruption to protect their Catholic values (Rincón, 2014: 172-175). In horror narratives, their uncouth appearance and uneducated nature was used to construct a savage, brutal image of monsters that would attack any outsider who wandered into their territory.

The confrontation between the urban and rural worlds was always based on ignorance and physical and psychological distance. Physically, the modern style of the urbanites' bell-bottom trousers, denim jeans, miniskirts and patterned shirts contrasts with the country peoples' plain outfits, white work shirts and old-fashioned skirts and jumpers in *Who Can Kill a Child?* In films such as *Night of the Seagulls* (La noche de las gaviotas, Amando de Ossorio, 1975), the old, ugly and shabbily dressed rural inhabitants are presented in opposition to the youth and sophistication of the protagonists, who dress and look much like the Spanish celebrities and pop stars of the era. Psychologically, a discourse of moral decline and superstition is used to represent the rural world, as reflected in the beliefs of the household servants in *Horror Arises from the Tomb*. More specifically, the superstitions of the rural peasants are used as a way of highlighting the protagonists' recklessness in ignoring the taboos imposed by local curses, or as a tool for the perpetuation of a rural hierarchical structure by privileged rulers who control the villagers through fear. For example, in *Night of the Seagulls,* the locals are forced to provide the Templars with young girls for ritual sacrifices to keep them from wiping out the whole village. From a cultural perspective, the connection made in these films between traditionalism, rural life and tyranny evoked the Franco dictatorship's rigid control of rural society in the post-war years, as its close relationship with the religious and political authorities facilitated surveillance and the identification of rebels (Román Ruiz, 2018: 318-319).

The recurring image in Spanish folk horror of the repressed rural community reinforced the stereotype "of the countryside as a world subjugated and immobilised by the repressive apparatus of the regime" (Ortega López, 2011: 303) while associating that subjugation with violence, ignorance and poverty. This resulted in an anachronistic portrait that permeated films depicting a journey

from the city to the countryside and others set entirely in a rural context. Among films in the latter category, both *Bell from Hell* and *Night of the Seagulls* depict a place dominated by a feudal hierarchy and a rigid morality that demands the expulsion of any who do not obey its rules. The rural setting was thus constructed based on a series of characteristics eschewed by modernity: disease, death and the grotesque (Schlegel, 2015: 25). This construction of the rural world thus stands in opposition to a society that identifies hygiene and technology as essential qualities of the modern lifestyle and that aims to eliminate any practices deemed primitive. The abjection of the location is established in scenes that revel in violence such as the scenes of torture in *Night of the Seagulls*, or the scenes showing blood spurting from a lamb being cut to pieces and the unconscious cannibalism in *It Happened in Nightmare Inn* (Una vela para el diablo, Eugenio Martín, 1973). Such depictions revive the so-called Black Legend of Spain, represented in *The Ancines Woods* (El bosque del lobo, Pedro Olea, 1970) by the women dressed always in mourning, the austerity of the humble dwellings and the funeral rites that combine Catholic and pagan practices. The obscurantist nature of these images and the transgressive prominence of death (corpses, bodily fluids, blood) evoke a vision of a backward Spain rife with superstition and poverty and steeped in the religious fanaticism of the Inquisition, whose funeral rites and gloomy festivals are features of everyday life (Núñez Florencio, 2014: 55).

The Black Legend also served to evoke the brutality of the Franco regime, which upon its establishment had imposed a strict social order through militarisation and punitive justice. Despite the apparent softening of its approach in the 1950s, the dictatorship continued to make use of states of emergency, police surveillance or legislation to perpetuate the repression (Babiano et al., 2018: 133-136). Indeed, it never abandoned its practice of purging subversive elements deemed anti-Spanish (communists, anarchists, nationalists) through the excessive use of force. The horror film genre established a dialogue with this violence, using monsters who justified their crimes on the pretext of moral purification (*It Happened in Nightmare Inn*), the sacrifice of individuals due to their outsider status (*Night of the Seagulls*) or the danger represented by the stranger's difference (*Who Can Kill a Child?*).

Spanish folk horror connected with cinematic models developed in Britain and the United States and adapted their formula to a context in which the growth of a modern urban society was displacing Spain's rural traditionalism. The horror genre took the stereotyping of the Spanish countryside to the extreme, turning it into an obscure, macabre setting where savagery, backwardness and poverty pervaded both the land and its inhabitants. This discourse of otherness, based on the austerity and lack of sophistication of the rural world, also signalled the conflict in a society moving away from the values of a regime that continued its repressive practices with the aim of subjugating its people. Like the vampires of Tolnia, the dictatorship presented a modern face while nevertheless seeking to perpetuate itself by eradicating subversion and maintaining a submissive, depoliticised society.

MONSTROUS RURALITY IN *THE VAMPIRES NIGHT ORGY*

The Vampires Night Orgy, released on 30 June 1973 and taking 12,740,509 pesetas in box office receipts, was a modest success compared to other horror titles, such as the blockbuster *The House that Screamed* (La residencia, Narciso Ibáñez Serrador, 1969) (Pulido, 2012: 56). The setting for the story is Tolnia, a fictitious village in Romania, where a bus taking workers to a castle in the region is forced to stop after the driver's sudden death. Although at first the village seems deserted, the travellers soon discover that it is in fact in-

habited by some kind of cannibalistic spectres in thrall to a noblewoman known simply as La Señora (Helga Liné). One by one, the protagonists are devoured and turned into spectres, joining a gang of vampires forever trapped in Tolnia. The only survivors, Alma (Dyanik Zurakowska) and Luis (Jack Taylor), manage to flee after killing La Señora; however, the disappearance of the village upon her death means that the crimes committed there will go unpunished as Alma and Luis are unable to convince the police of the village's existence.

The most notable aspect of the story is the theme of outsiders arriving at a village whose inhabitants are hostile toward them. In contrast to films such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, which uses the narrative resource of the pleasure trip to signal class inequality, the journey in this case is associated with a search for opportunities, an idea that ties in with the importance that the rural exodus had acquired in developmentalist Spain as a result of the economic shift toward the industrial and service sectors. The consequent demographic changes to the rural population, which became older and predominantly male, and the impoverishment resulting from technological backwardness (FOESSA Foundation, 1970: 299) were two of the biggest problems that devastated rural Spain during this period.

The image of the rural exodus is represented in this film with the arrival of a bus at an empty village, a prelude that elicits a sensation of uncanny familiarity both from the characters and from Spanish spectators with rural backgrounds. In cinematographic terms, this idea is expressed with the initial cut from a wide shot to medium shots of a typical country village without a single inhabitant to be found either in the local tavern or in the square. This arrival is quite distinct from the positive depictions in comedy films, where the triumphant, consumerist emigrant returns to his hometown for the holidays and shows off the success he has achieved in the city (Rodríguez Tranche & Sánchez-Biosca, 2007: 63). Instead, Tolnia is a place that the characters find familiar yet at the same time alien. First of all, the knowledge that the characters believe they possess proves useless here, as reflected in the first conversation between Alma and Luis, when she suggests that the villagers may all be at church, alluding to a custom in her hometown, but he dismisses this possibility because there is no church to be found in the village. And secondly, Tolnia is a village in Romania, a remote country that is totally unknown to the protagonists, who, as Alma remarks, have been travelling for more than a day and a half on their way to a castle where an employment agency has arranged work for them.

Like the characters in the film, millions of Spaniards who emigrated to other parts of Europe were forced to confront realities outside their experience. The protagonists' working-class status is underscored by their unskilled professions (housekeeper, cook, butler, gardener, driver), except for the teacher among them, and by fact they have travelled by bus, with the exception of Luis, a professional sales agent who has arrived at the village in his own car. In late Francoist Spain, the possession of a car (especially a Seat 600) was significant, as it symbolised a higher social status (Martín-Sánchez, 2019: 949). However, the sheen of freedom afforded by their modern modes of transport is quickly stripped away when the group is forced to stay in Tolnia after the bus driver's sudden death, leaving them unable to complete their journey. The strange village grows progressively sinister with the protagonists' inability to leave, their unconscious cannibalism (the inhabitants serve them human flesh, pretending that it is animal meat) and finally, their enslavement.

Tolnia is also characterised as an anachronistic society based on the feudal servitude of its locals and the absolute domination of La Señora, a noblewoman who reveals her upper-class status in the refined tastes she has inherited from her grandfather, "an actor, author, poet and director; a life-sized Shakespeare," and a sophisticated style

that distinguishes her from the rest of the women of the village, who are all dressed more simply. La Señora imposes a hierarchy that places Boris the Mayor (José Guardiola) and an axe-wielding giant (Fernando Bilbao) in intermediate positions, responsible for maintaining order and carrying out her wishes through diplomacy with the outsiders (mayor) or by force (giant). While the mayor communicates with the strangers, conveys orders and solves supply problems, the giant assumes the executive task of dismembering the villagers for the purpose of feeding the newcomers. At the bottom of the hierarchy, the rest of the villagers are responsible for manual labour and depend completely on La Señora as the guarantor of their survival, as illustrated in the scene where she herself tosses the teacher's body from her balcony as a gift to the hungry inhabitants. In this scene, the editing accentuates her domination through low-angle shots that underscore her superiority and high-angel shots of the villagers that make them look smaller.

Moreover, the close connection between La Señora and her underlings is made clear upon her death, which causes the disappearance of the whole village. This connection seems to allude to certain aspects of the dictatorship that positioned Franco as an all-powerful, uncharismatic leader (Saz, 2019: 127-131) closely identified with the regime itself. However, Tolnia's monstrosity is also based on the challenge it poses to the established gender hierarchy, as it undermines the patriarchal order imposed by the dictatorship that had relegated women to the private sphere, to marriage and Christian motherhood. Although it is true that during the developmentalist period women were given increased access to work and education and greater autonomy as consumers, the domestic role was still considered to be their main contribution to the nation (Morcillo Gómez, 2015: 311). The female monstrosity of La Señora thus defied this model with the depiction of a female ruler who enjoys political agency and unquestionable power. Indeed, the horror genre often used constructions of femininity for pedagogical purposes, portraying women who had characteristics of goodness or virginity as survivors, in opposition to doomed women who displayed deviant or dangerous qualities (García Fernández and Cordero Domínguez, 2017: 50). In *The Vampires Night Orgy*, this opposition is established in terms of class (La Señora occupies a position of privilege while the women in the group of protagonists work in typically female caregiving roles) and sexual-affective relationships (La Señora's relationship with the teacher is exclusively sexual and ends with his grisly death, while Alma and Luis's relationship transcends sexuality and has a happy ending). Sex is often associated with death in Spanish horror films (Pulido, 2012: 49-52), whose stories often stress the abject and perilous nature of vampirism as a threat to the patriarchal order.

In short, Tolnia's horrific nature as a rural space evoked the tensions between urban modernity and the persistence of traditional ways of life despite the fact that most Spaniards were living modern urban lifestyles by this time. The film stresses this image of the village as a site of danger because of a backward culture that has produced half-witted villagers and an aberrant, antiquated political system. This anachronistic quality characterises both the setting and the monsters who inhabit it, whose dual nature as vampires and *paletos* symbolises a rural population that should be dead and a lifestyle that ought to be abandoned.

THE *PALETO* VAMPIRE AS A RURAL MONSTER IN *THE VAMPIRES NIGHT ORGY*

Like other films of the genre, *The Vampires Night Orgy* is a visual pastiche of different international influences, with a plot similar to *Two Thousand Maniacs!* (Herschell Gordon Lewis, 1964) mixed with local Spanish references (the small town of Patones, an hour's drive north of Madrid, is the

location chosen to represent Tolnia). For Spanish audiences, the film's local origins were immediately recognisable, as is evident from the comments entered on the censors' file: "Vampires *a la española*" and "just another horror film *a la española* with *paleto* vampires" (Ministerio de Información y Turismo, 1973). In addition to the dismissive tone of these comments, the use of the word *paleto* highlights the rural setting and evokes the stereotype of the coarse, uneducated Spanish peasant (Rincón, 2014: 156-157).

In this film, the rural Spanish traits of humility and simplicity born out of poverty are distorted to portray a crowd of mindless ghouls dependent on cannibalism for survival. Their status as undead *paletos* relegates them to a repugnant otherness for two main reasons. First, their primitive nature automatically made them repellent to modern Spanish urbanites as a vestige of the autarky of the early Francoist period, amplified by their poor, degenerate, deformed and inhuman appearance (Murphy, 2013: 149-150), while their ability to control the outsiders symbolised the tension provoked by the ghost of a past that threatened to return, a ghost that was incompatible with the desired sophistication of a modern Spain. Second, vampirism blurs the boundary between life and death by fusing the two states into a single body (Carroll, 2005: 118), while the vampire's need to devour human beings in order to survive transgresses the moral order. In this case, the vampires' cannibalism is aberrant because of its function of feeding and social reproduction, as the victim serves as food for the other vampires while at the same time becoming another member of their anachronistic community.

The qualities that define the protagonists, such as friendship (Godó [Luis Ciges] and Marcos [Manuel de Blas]), love (Alma and Luis) and family (Raquel and her daughter), all vanish the moment they are infected and join a monstrous group that eschews Catholic values (there is no church or parish priest in Tolnia). The cruelty of the rite of passage into vampirism constitutes a dehumanising cycle whereby a victim, whose screams are ignored, ultimately becomes objectified and consumed as food, before being turned into a vampire who will behave in the same way. The best example of this cycle is the scene of Raquel's murder (at around the 69th minute of the film). After searching in vain for her daughter through the village and discovering that La Señora is actually a vampire, she locks herself in her room, weeping in desperation. At that moment, a shot/reverse shot shows her horrified expression on seeing her former companions, now turned into vampires, staring at her sadistically. A low-angle shot showing the group of spectres combined with a shot of her expression of fear as she realises her horrible fate reinforces the idea of the power imbalance between them. Next, a wide shot shows the gang of vampires as they push her onto the bed and brutally devour her while her screams fade into the background. In a manner similar to previous attacks, the group fuses into a destructive mass that dehumanises and subjugates a victim who, after dying a terrible death, will become another slave of Tolnia who must resort to cannibalism to survive.

This image further reinforces the stigmatising discourse of the rural world based on the new conception of poverty that began to emerge in the 1960s. According to the sociological report published by the FOESSA Foundation in 1966, the growth of the consumer culture in Spain led to the association of poverty with material scarcity, and thus social status came to be identified with the possession of consumer goods such as a television set or a car. Consequently, the lack of products and services outside Spain's towns and cities shaped an image of the countryside as a place of misery and deprivation (p. 276). In this context, Tolnia represented the Black Legend of a Spain "halfway between the stark reality of the homeland and the flatly grotesque" (Pulido, 2012:49), which, combined with cannibalism, evoked the

Gothic mode of Spanish horror and its perverse, sacrilegious aesthetic (Aldana Reyes, 2017: 200). Indeed, the repugnant nature of this cannibalistic village is central both in the film itself (Alma screams when she discovers that the meat that the locals had been serving them was actually the flesh of other human beings) and in the censorship file (which contains explicit comments on the cannibalism: "Cannibals, moreover, at least force others to be cannibals", "an indispensable condition for approval is the removal of the finger on the plate").

From a cultural perspective, cannibalism also becomes a rite of passage in an anachronistic system that automatically erases the victim's individuality and human traits. In this way, the infection of the *paleto* vampire and the alienation of the outsider foregrounds the conflict between rural traditionalism and urban modernisation. Being turned into a spectre meant being stripped of individuality, becoming one both physically and mentally with Tolnia and La Señora, thereby abandoning the possibility of social advancement represented by the journey onto the castle. In other words, it meant giving up the relaxation of customs, the individualism of consumer culture and the modern lifestyle that was taking over the country and had even begun to affect the Spanish language, with the incorporation of anglicisms such as *aparcamiento* (derived from "parking") (Sánchez Vidal, 1990: 156). It also meant the horror of returning to a past that developmentalist Spain sought to leave behind, and a reminder that these poor, remote rural villages still existed.

Tolnia and the *paleto* vampire thus embody the rural monstrosity of Spanish folk horror, which connects with other features of the genre identified by Adam Scovell (2017: 17-18). Geographical isolation is transformed into a menacing hostility when outsiders are dragged into a realm whose norms are alien to those of their urban places of origin. This small village is characterised by irreligious practices and a social order outside the modern world, defined by a kind of tyrannical feudalism imposed by La Señora. Yet despite the remoteness, the uncanny familiarity of rural Spain facilitated the construction of a discourse typical of Spanish folk horror films, which associated rural poverty with the degeneration of its people to the point of turning them into brutal, abject cannibalistic monsters. In this way, the *paleto* vampire provided an opportunity to explore the tensions between the desire to embrace modernity and the continued existence of traditional ways of life.

CONCLUSIONS

The Vampires Night Orgy offers an example of how the horror genre examined the tensions between the city and the country during the late Francoist period. In this film, the dark side of Spain explored by artists such as Solana and Goya is turned into a space of uncertainty and brutality that reproduces the stereotypes that had begun to emerge during the country's developmentalist period. The *paleto*, a stereotype of the Spanish peasant that had become popular in comedy films, is turned into a cannibalistic spectre belonging to a rigid, oppressive hierarchy controlled by a diabolical noblewoman. Male fears of women's liberation are thus mixed with new discourses that associate Spain's rural areas with violent traditionalism, old age and depopulation, in a territory of grotesque ugliness that attacks any who threaten to disturb its anachronistic order.

From a cinematic perspective, it is essential to understand the external influences on Spanish films that resulted in the adoption of international trends in the horror genre. On the one hand, their depiction of the rural world as a hostile space characterised by disturbing and sinister beliefs gives the film studied here a close resemblance to British folk horror. On the other, the conversion of Tolnia's inhabitants into vampires and the supernatural power of La Señora place

the film squarely in the vampire genre, as its title suggests. In *Vampires Night Orgy*, all these elements are used to evoke the Spanish reality of the period, including the rural exodus and the abandonment of a traditional way of life, the emigration of Spaniards abroad in search of better employment opportunities, and the efforts of the totalitarian regime to control the population and subdue any individuals who might stray from the ideals of National Catholicism.

Despite the reluctance among Spanish scholars to accept horror as a suitable genre for exploring sociohistorical changes in the country, this article has sought to show that the very nature of the genre, with its exaggeration of fears and anxieties through the depiction of the monstrous, offers opportunities to analyse the mentality of a historical period characterised by rapid transformations.

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RURAL HOSTILITY IN THE HORROR FILMS OF LATE FRANCOIST SPAIN: *THE VAMPIRES NIGHT ORGY*

Abstract

The tensions between modernity and traditionalism reflected in Spanish horror films provide a unique opportunity to examine these two concepts through their confrontation of city and country. As a folk horror film, *The Vampires Night Orgy* (La orgía nocturna de los vampiros, León Klimovsky, 1973) uses the isolated village of Tolnia as a metaphorical representation of Franco's dictatorship in the form of a hierarchy of vampires that eradicate any human being who enters their realm. In this way, this film evokes the rural exodus, the stereotyping of the rural Spaniard, and the changes to gender roles that were central to the transformations occurring in Spain in the 1970s. With this case study, the article aims to show that horror films can serve as reliable historical sources for understanding the sociocultural transformations that took place during the late Francoist period.

Key words

Spanish Folk Horror; Spanish Horror Films; *Paleto* Vampire; Late Francoist Spain

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HOSTILIDAD RURAL EN EL CINE DE TERROR TARDOFRANQUISTA: *LA ORGÍA NOCTURNA DE LOS VAMPIROS*

Resumen

Las tensiones entre la modernidad y el tradicionalismo encontraron en el cine de terror un espacio privilegiado donde explorarlas a través del encuentro entre el campo y la ciudad. A modo del *folk horror*, *La orgía nocturna de los vampiros* (León Klimovsky, 1973) utiliza al pueblo aislado de Tolnia como escenario metafórico de la dictadura franquista a través de una jerarquía vampírica que eliminan a cualquier ser humano que aparece. Así, en esta película se tratan el éxodo rural, la estereotipación de lo rural y las transformaciones de género, procesos esenciales para comprender las transformaciones durante la década de los setenta. Con este estudio de caso, el artículo busca situar al cine de terror como una fuente histórica válida para comprender las transformaciones socioculturales durante el tardofranquismo

Palabras clave

Folk Horror Español; Cine de Terror Español; Vampiro paleto; Tardofranquismo

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