

# **MODERNITY AND FEMALE FIGURES IN *LA CIUDAD NO ES PARA MÍ\****

OLGA GARCÍA-DEFEZ

## **I. A PROGRAMMATIC CYCLE**

*La ciudad no es para mí* (The City Is Not for Me, Pedro Lazaga, 1966) is the first of eleven films starring the actor Paco Martínez Soria made in the ten years from 1965 to 1975. These films, all produced in the late Francoist period, all comedies and all discursively in line with pro-developmental rhetoric, could be classified as a “programmatic cycle” in view of the presence of certain “thematic, narrative, and formal constants” (Huerta Floriano and Pérez Morán, 2012: 297) and of the homogeneity of their discursive positioning, reflecting the economic and social transformations of a contemporary context marked by rapid social change.

The screenplay for the film was an adaptation of the play of the same name, written under a pseudonym by Fernando Lázaro Carreter in 1961.<sup>1</sup> Performed with great success by Martínez Soria in theatres in Madrid (where it premiered in February 1963) and other parts of the country,

it was the actor himself who pursued its adaptation to the screen with Pedro Masó’s production company, and the application to begin shooting was submitted on 30 September 1965.<sup>2</sup> Once the script had passed the mandatory censorship board review and permission to shoot the film was received, filming began and continued into December of that year. It premiered on 15 March 1966 and was a box-office hit, with ticket sales of 4,296,281, according to data from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (ICCA, 2017). This success contrasted with the rejection of the application to classify it as a “special interest” film, a classification for films of particular cultural or artistic merit.<sup>3</sup>

Its commercial success, its huge popularity, and its status as the first in the cycle has turned it into the film that has received the most attention within the limited scholarship on Spanish popular film history (Pérez Perucha, 1997; Fernández-Mayoralas, 1998; Richardson, 2000; Richardson, 2002; Faulkner, 2006; Huerta Floriano

2012; Huerta Floriano and Pérez Morán, 2012; Huerta Floriano and Pérez Morán, 2015; Rincón Díez, 2013; Poelzer, 2013).

Without doubt, *La ciudad no es para mí* set the course of Martínez Soria's subsequent film career—fourteen more films until his death in 1982<sup>4</sup>—as it became the precursor to a series of films whose male protagonist is always a variation of the stereotyped character of Agustín Valverde (Martínez Soria), the small landholder from the little Aragonese town of Calacierva, who takes on the character of the unsophisticated rural immigrant (or *paleto*) when he travels to Madrid. This migration is what sets the action of the film in two physical spaces presented as opposites by the voice-over in the introduction, and what has oriented the analysis of the film towards a discourse that gravitates around the country/city dichotomy as the expression of a clash between tradition and modernity that can only be understood in the specific context of developmentalism; thus, for Sally Faulkner (2006: 53), “[a]s *aperturista* propaganda, its purpose is to reconcile the key contradiction of 1960s Spain: tradition (here figured as the country) and modernity (here represented by the city)”, while for Nathan Richardson (2002: 72) it is the “first and most popular film of the *paleto* subgenre” and “[i]ndeed, in the context of 1960s economic change the therapeutic revenge-of-the-immigrant effected in *La ciudad no es para mí* is transformed instead into a celebration of the rising commodity culture that he is confronted with, wherein revenge is realized by way of the very capitalist formulas that the *paleto* protagonist presumes to attack.”

The contradiction that Faulkner alludes to originated with the modernity that began to take hold in the “swinging sixties” as a direct consequence of initiatives designed by the government itself and of unforeseeable international factors, such as the Second Vatican Council. Irrespective of their origins, these changes contributed to a social evolution further fuelled by the slow but steady increase in women's access to formal education and

paid employment, as well as demographic changes resulting from immigration and birth control and an exponential growth in tourism. These factors created a series of tensions and mutations that popular cinema—as an integral part of a broader cultural niche—reflected on without stepping beyond the lines imposed by the mandatory censorship reviews. *La ciudad no es para mí* is thus an example of the assimilation of these tensions into a film's plot.

Lazaga's film presents a threefold discursive positioning, with an acceptance of the economic transformations, a rejection of certain social changes, and outright opposition to the introduction of changes to the moral behaviour of women and the structure of the family. It is a positioning that also avoids any direct reference in the plot to the institutions of the State, immersing the characters in a kind of apolitical limbo. This partitioning of the discourse has a direct effect on the female characters, who are conditioned by a plot that subordinates them to the male protagonist and allows them the benefits of the economic transformation, while holding back full access to the social changes and denying them the changes in family structure altogether.

This participation of the female characters in the film's narrative and discursive structure is the focus of this article, which aims to explain their role in the construction of the story and their relationship to the concept of modernity in a film that established repetition as a creative system. To do this, I have used the tools of film analysis, while integrating basic ideas from gender studies and drawing some connections with Michel Foucault's concept of biopower and Aurora Morcillo's neo-baroque reading of the Francoist regime to establish three initial hypotheses.

The first is that the power structures, relations and dynamics established in the film are inseparable from the binary concept of gender. The general construction of the discourse is founded on a morally conservative and patriarchal conception of the female, which coincides with the image rein-

forced by the Francoist regime and connects to a tradition based on sexual differentiation and on a vertical system of family organisation, viewed as natural and immutable, that determines the characterisation, actions and desires of the female characters.<sup>5</sup> This line of thought adopted by National Catholicism, which looked back to past eras carefully chosen by the regime while eliding the country's liberal tradition, would have been transferred by the screenwriters Vicente Coello and Pedro Masó from the text of the original play to the screenplay, and by Pedro Lazaga to a univocal and canonical audiovisual language. The second hypothesis is that the urban female characters serve a dual function in the narrative and discursive structure of the film: an active function, because they perform actions that the male protagonist categorises as problematic; and a passive function, because they are subjected to a coercive and corrective action determined by the metatext of the film. And the third hypothesis is that within this scheme, which identifies Agustín Valverde as the active subject and the women in his family as the active/passive objects, there is a discernible distinction made between the women related to a generational differentiation that creates a crack in the apparently closed discursive structure.

## 2. THREE GENERATIONS, TWO FAMILIES, ONE MODEL

---

Agustín Valverde is a character type with roots in the Spanish *sainete*<sup>6</sup> and *costumbrista* traditions, with a certain parodic tone and elements reminiscent of the *figurón* of Spanish theatrical comedy (Fernández San Emeterio, 2013: 151-164), who is externally recognisable by his uncouth speech, his manner of dress and his use of certain objects that effectively identify the iconic image of the *paleto* in the Spanish collective memory. But more important is his narrative function, comparable to other characters of sixties cinema,<sup>7</sup> which positions him at the very centre of the film “because there are

very few passages in which the protagonist is not present—physically or emotionally” (Huerta Floriano and Pérez Morán, 2012: 303-304). This androcentrism of the narrative conditions the pyramid structure of the characters, placing the most important women, i.e., the women in Agustín's family and the maid, in a position below Agustín, both in the story and in the family structure, which again relates to the hierarchic arrangement imposed by the male character and responds to the binary notion of genders that associates specific family and social roles with each sex.

At the same time, a series of differences are established between the characters based on chronological criteria, family types and moral conduct. Chronologically, they belong to three different generations, and they are divided into two families in the legal sense because they do not live in the same household and because Gusti (Eduardo Fajardo), Agustín's son, has created a new family by getting married, since “marriage, with its conjugal and parent-child relationships, is the basic criterion of distinguishing one or more families” (Bullón Ramírez, 1946: 198). These three generations can be placed on a historical timeline thanks to the fact that the diegetic time of the film is the same as the time of its release, another common characteristic of popular comedy. Thus, we can calculate that Agustín and his wife were born in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, which implies that he would have participated actively in the Spanish Civil War, that his son and daughter-in-law (Doris Coll) would have experienced it as teenagers, and that Sara, his granddaughter (Cristina Galbó), would belong to the “innocent generation”, born under the dictatorship. The passing of the torch from a generation that had lived through both the Second Republic and the Civil War to a new generation educated under Francoism, whose members reached adulthood during the transformations of developmentalism, is a theme that appears quite often in Spanish cinema of the sixties (*Nueve cartas a Berta* [Nine Letters to Berta, Basilio Martín Pati-

no, 1965], *El arte de vivir* [The Art of Living, Julio Diamante, 1965], *Los chicos del Preu* [The Pre-University Kids, Pedro Lazaga, 1967], *Me enveneno de azules* [I Poison Myself with Blues, Francisco Regueiro, 1969], etc.), and in the film it serves to stratify the female characters, becoming a constant in the rest of the films of the cycle.

A feature common to both families is the very low birth rate in both, in clear contradiction to the procreative role assigned to the woman by National Catholicism and the social legislation of the regime in support of large families. This birth rate does not reflect the contemporary reality either, given that in 1965 Spanish families had an average of 2.79 children, according to a report by the FOESSA Foundation (Fundación FOESSA, 1966: 45). This feature should not be read as a defence of the “sad fate of the only child” (Vallejo-Nájera, 1938: 40-41), but as a plot simplification necessary to the dramatic structure—bearing in mind that the film was based on a play—that would reduce the number of characters to the minimum required to express what, according to Lázaro Carreter, was its moral: “it is not about the clichéd ‘disdain for the big city’, but something closer to us: the impossibility of communication between people of different cultures, even when there are blood ties between them” (Ángel Lozano, 1963: 61).

But this impossibility of familial communication is more complex and finds its narrative core in the relationship between Agustín and his son, which at the same time becomes the trigger for the active/passive role of the female characters and for the triple discursive response of the film. This father-son relationship is articulated, firstly, around the transition from an extended family model dictated by rural expectations to a nuclear family model, and, secondly, around the temporary transfer of patriarchal power between them, with Agustín assuming that power during the time he is in Madrid, without this excluding his circumstantial and transitory status of *paleto*. The scenes in which the father and son apparent-

ly clash do not imply a substantially antagonistic relationship, because there is a constant flow of money between them that reflects a naturalised transition from the autarkical and the developmental mode of production; rather, they reflect the adaptation necessary to the continuous transmission of family models and, above all, of patriarchal power, which has endangered the maintenance of the norms of female behaviour. This positioning in the family structure had its corresponding legal and administrative expression in the figure of the head of household. Under Spanish law, Agustín Valverde is not a head of household in the strict sense, because he constitutes a separate household of only one member, while his son would be the head of a household that included his wife and daughter. Nevertheless, in the aforementioned interchanges, Agustín becomes the temporary head of household in his son's house, not in the statistical or legal sense, but because he holds the power and authority implicit in the role. The indivisible nature of this role becomes clear if we relate the figure of the patriarchal father and head of household to concepts like the Greek *oikodespotes* and Roman *pater familias*, which shared the common feature that there could only ever be one of them in each family home.

In this way, the father-son relationship underscores the need to perpetuate patriarchal power in the family structure and, at the same time, exemplifies the acceptance of the transition from an



*La ciudad no es para mí* (Pedro Lazaga, 1966)

economic system of local production and self-consumption to an incipiently capitalist, consumerist system similar to that of Western democracies, coinciding with the official discourse of a regime that would claim the country's economic development as its own achievement, despite the obvious deficiencies and negative consequences identified by some Spanish economists around 1965 (Huer-tas and Sánchez, 2014: 63).

Immune to these criticisms, the propaganda apparatus of late Francoism persisted in its efforts to present the economic transformations as an achievement, an idea hinted at as early as 1960 by Francisco Franco himself (1960: 52) when in his Christmas speech he alluded to the "great phase of economic expansion that we must fully embrace, pursuing this Spanish policy that has multiplied our nation's wealth."

The film participates in this praise of developmentalism through the character of Gusti, who leaves the production economy behind and joins

the urban middle class through the medical profession, but also through his wife, whose transformation from the humble Luciana to the sophisticated Luchy encapsulates the assimilation of the economic changes.

Thus, in the diegesis of the film we have three coexisting generations, two different families that fuse into one during Agustín's stay in Madrid, and one single model for the family and for female behaviour, which is imposed by the protagonist on the basis of his own identity and of the characterisation he conveys of his deceased wife. As noted elsewhere (Faulkner, 2006: 55; Huerta Floriano and Pérez Morán, 2015: 201; Richardson, 2002: 79), the portrait of Antonia that Agustín brings with him from Calacierva and his stubborn insistence that it take the place of the Picasso in his son's living room serves a comic function which, like other elements related to food, clothing and verbal expression, represents the opposition between tradition and modernity, but it also serves



*La ciudad no es para mí* (Pedro Lazaga, 1966)



a discursive function that makes its appearance in different scenes anything but coincidental.

Antonia's portrait, bearing witness to her physical absence and to her iconic status frozen in time, serves as a model for the behaviour of the other women of the family, an idea conveyed cinematically through the visual motif of the mirror. The first time Agustín's granddaughter appears on the screen, she is looking at herself in the living room mirror to the sound of diegetic music with a modern air, and in the same scene we see Luchy exercising, following the instructions of a voice on a tape recorder—a device which, along with the record player, serves as evidence of the incipient consumerism. Both characters talk while moving rhythmically. They are in the same environment and share the same lifestyle; they are in synch with each other. This contrasts with the scene that follows, where Luchy bumps into Filo (Gracita Morales), the maid, and scolds her, underscoring the social class division that separates the women and the different roles they play in



*La ciudad no es para mí* (Pedro Lazaga, 1966)

the domestic context, as Luchy's rise in economic status frees her from domestic labour, but such labour continues to be one of the only work options for a rural emigrant. This same mirror is featured again near the end of the film, when the granddaughter reads a letter to Agustín—who is possibly illiterate—that informs him that a street in Calacierva is to be dedicated to him. At that moment, the mirror reflects the portrait of the girl's grandmother, who has won her battle with “that Pegaso fellow”, and the scene ends with a zoom-in that hints clearly at both her iconic triumph over the modernity of Picasso and the establishment of her character as a mirror and a model.

The standard of female behaviour conveyed by the portrait of Antonia serves as a pattern for another threefold categorisation of the women in the film. The first category, associated with the rural/tradition binomial and represented by Antonia herself and by Belén, the young woman with polio who lives in Calacierva and whom Agustín condemns to a life constrained by the ultraconservative values that he defends: “you'd better stay sitting at home, knitting sweaters.” The second includes Luchy and Sara, who have fully adapted to the economic dimension of the developmentalist lifestyle, but whose moral integrity is endangered by the perils of the urban/modern binomial, their behaviour being the main distortion that Agustín must straighten out. And between these two extremes is the maid, who shifts from a position of empathy for Agustín to become his antagonist with an unwanted pregnancy, revealing another dimension of the corrupting power of the big city.

### **3. FEMININITY AND PUBLIC/PRIVATE SPACE**

The whole film is organised narratively and discursively around a dual pattern of opposites, a pattern that also applies to specific elements, such as the symbolic use of physical space to articulate a narrative in defence of ultraconservative values with respect to the woman's role in society and in



*La ciudad no es para mí* (Pedro Lazaga, 1966)

the family. In *La ciudad no es para mí*, the spaces depicted present marked dichotomies (Calacierva/Madrid; country house/city apartment; public space/private space) and are very explicitly associated with either tradition or modernity in accordance with the strict univocity of the film and a mise-en-scene placed as the service of highlighting their differentiation.

In the scenes following Agustín's arrival in Madrid, the maid informs him that his daughter-in-law Luchy "spends the day out and about, playing bridge, playing canasta, buying clothes, or the charity raffle for poor kids." This verbal information contradicts the visual information offered in the film, as Luchy only appears outside the home when she goes to her husband's office and meets Ricardo (Sancho Gracia), the young doctor who sends her anonymous love letters to woo her, and when later she has a secret date with him at the Hotel Richmond. With these two outings of Luchy's, the woman leaving the private sphere of the home and her incursion into the public sphere

is identified with the danger of moral corruption represented by adultery and the loss of female virtue. In this way, the Madrid apartment becomes the visual motif of the enclosure, establishing an inside/outside binary that alludes directly to the maintenance of certain moral codes, where the outside is associated with their disruption. Female access to the public space, which was greater in real Spanish society than in the diegesis of the film, will not be possible for Luchy until she completes her re-assimilation to the moral values lost in the city. This will take place in Calacierva, in the final tribute to Agustín.

This process connects to the assertion that "[i]n the new Spain of 1939, the State will revive the virtues of the Golden Age: devotion, purity and domesticity" (Morcillo, 2015: 11), assigning such importance to female virtue that efforts would be made to control it both through social pressure and through legislation (the criminalisation of adultery and the obligation, until 1961, to give up paid work in order to marry). This theory of the

neo-baroque character of the Franco regime posited by Morcillo Gómez reminds us that the history of literature related to the rules of female behaviour, both in and outside marriage, stretches back to the Middle Ages, although it was during the Counter-Reformation in the sixteenth century that a series of works were published that would subsequently serve as an ideological foundation for National Catholic morality. These can be detected in parts of the discourse of the film, which, it is worth remembering, was based on a play written by the very erudite Lázaro Carreter. Thus, some of the ideas present both in the play and in its film adaptation seem to be a kind of audiovisual translation of texts by Juan Luis Vives, author of *De institutione foeminae chistiana* (1524) and *De officio mariti* (1529): “The woman is an animal with considerable inclination towards the pleasures: the home shall be for her a vast city, so that she shall rarely leave it, and whenever she sets foot beyond the threshold, she shall do so as if she were embarking upon a pilgrimage” (Vives, 1994: 171), or of Fray Luis de León, a cleric who gave special attention to the marriage institution, and therefore to the role of the woman within it, writing *La perfecta casada* (The Perfect Married Woman) in 1583, in which he exhorted the woman to explore “every corner of her house, so that it be understood that her place should be in her home, and that she should be present always in every corner thereof, and that, because she must always be present there, she should never go about outside” (De León, 1967: 242-243). This identification of the domestic sphere as the natural space of the woman was, as can be seen, a much older idea absorbed by National Catholicism, but it was an idea that began to founder in the sixties due to certain economic and social changes that were evaluated differently in the films of the period, becoming, for example, one of the central themes of the cycle of films starring Manolo Escobar (Crumbaugh, 2002: 261-276; Huerta Floriano and Pérez Morán, 2013: 189-216). In the case of *La ciudad no es para mí*,



*La ciudad no es para mí* (Pedro Lazaga, 1966)

Luchy and her confinement to the private sphere reflects this neo-baroque revivalism that echoes developmentalist discourse and its “resistance to accepting *all* the consequences of development” because “it is fine if development means an increase in the enjoyment of material goods, but not if it entails changes to more complex structures.”<sup>8</sup>

In the process effected by Agustín to redirect Luchy’s actions in the public sphere, there is a scene that encapsulates his authoritarian capacity derived from power relations dependent on his positioning in the family structure. When he discovers that Luchy is going to meet with Ricardo, he goes to the Hotel Richmond, and after confronting the young man (“don’t get cocky with me”; “go, get out of her, but for good”), he waits for his daughter-in-law to arrive. She appears on screen elegantly dressed, highlighted by a slightly angled camera position. Once she is made by Agustín to sit down, a shot-reverse shot sequence follows that is peppered with a string of judgements like: “the little girl has grown into a lady, and has forgotten the respect she owes her husband”; “What did you come here to do? To get together with that good-for-nothing who only wanted to laugh at you?”; and “Your problem is that you’re getting old, and you want to grow young branches, and at your age, that’s very embarrassing and very funny.” With these pronouncements, Agustín turns into the judge of Luchy’s soul, as it is not an action he is judging, but a thwarted desire. This scene,



in which no element of the *mise-en-scène* is left to chance, places the set, the performances, the camera movements and the editing at the service of the narrative tension represented in Luchy's attempted sin and her punishment with public derision before the film audience made jury, so that in this public humiliation she may find her penitence. This demonstration of power on the part of Agustín recalls the Counter-Reformation tradition described by Foucault that centred the practice of confession on disobedience to the sixth commandment ("you shall not commit impure acts") and turned the body and desire into instruments of sin. But a clarification is needed here. Luchy's actions are not explained as the product of her sexual appetite, as at no point does she express any physical desire for Ricardo; rather, it is identified as a consequence of another kind of deficiency, an affective deficit resulting from the lack of attention she gives her husband, thereby invoking the idea of the maternal/asexual nature of the female. On the other hand, Luchy's readiness to submit to Agustín ("but don't you realise that I'm talking to you more like your own father than Agustín's?") arises from an idea deeply rooted in the patriarchal system through the Biblical monomyth of the *Akedah* or "our willingness to trust our fathers" (Garret, 2008: 50-52), which prevents her from questioning his authority. Having submitted, Luchy appears again in the next scene with the camera located on the same an-



*La ciudad no es para mí* (Pedro Lazaga, 1966)

gle, highlighting her presence, but this time she is dressed in simple household clothes and is in her living room. She has returned to the domestic space where she belongs.

In the case of Filo the maid, who is of the same generation as Luchy but separated by the gap between social classes, the principle of reducing the woman to the private sphere also applies, as she only appears on screen outside the house when the public space, the supermarket, is an extension of her domestic duties, and when, accompanied by Agustín, she goes to the market to confront the man who seduced her, in a scene that reinforces the idea of the public space as the place where a woman's virtue is lost.

#### **4. CONTROL OVER THE FEMALE BODY**

The second hypothesis posited in this article refers to the dual function of the film's female figures, active because they perform actions that elicit a reaction from the male protagonist, and passive because a control is exerted over them that assigns them the docility described by Foucault, who defined the docile body as a body "that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault, 2012: 129). Based on this definition, Luchy's body is docile, as it is subjected to the discipline of her daily exercises to keep slim, and its sexual freedom is restricted; as is Belén's body, condemned to a physical and vital stagnation; and Filo's body too, over which she has no power to decide, as it is delivered to a husband to fulfil its reproductive role within the constraints of marriage. Filo is the most polysemic character in the film, because in social terms she represents the explication of emigration as a new change associated with the transformations of the economic sector and forms of production,<sup>9</sup> in economic terms she is differentiated from a progressing and consolidating middle class, and discursively she undergoes an evolution that takes her from the establishment of points of contact with Agustín by virtue of their shared rural origins to a temporary antago-



*La ciudad no es para mí* (Pedro Lazaga, 1966)

nism due to extramarital pregnancy. But, above all, she exemplifies the control and domination over the female body which, through National Catholic principles and the creation of the New State, would be systematically exerted over women. The scene in which Filo adopts the status of “thieving maid” (Pedrosa, 2011: 5-17) is a narrative moment that allows both Agustín and the viewer to discover that she is pregnant from a fleeting sexual encounter, provoking a reaction from him (“it fills me with anger and rage to see that you are as you are, without a crumb of knowledge”) that leads to a personality switch in order to secure a forced wedding—the “only means of establishing the family” (Bullón Ramírez, 1946: 190)—that entails a curtailing of Filo’s freedom on every level: sexual, bodily and legal. But it is also an attack on the version of the Don Juan myth created during the second half of the nineteenth century which, with the elimination of the religious and supernatural components present since the Baroque and the Romantic eras, focused on the purely libertine nature of carnal activity (Fernández, 2000), achieving a redirection of the male sex drive to the sphere of marriage—a drive which in the film appears sublimated through the copious amounts of food that Filo begins providing exclusively to her new husband.

The resolution of Filo’s situation and the previously mentioned episode with Luchy have the common feature of exemplifying the level of surveillance of a society which, through the law and through social control (“I can’t go back to my town,” says Filo), attempts to determine the identity, sexuality and any other aspect of women’s lives. In the film this role is assumed by a character who, from his patriarchal position, employs a system of panoptic

vigilance (what he doesn’t see he overhears directly or on telephones and intercoms) that turns the female body into an extension of the masculine, nullifying the woman’s autonomy. This control was already foreshadowed in the story with the character of Belén, whose stagnation, reinforced visually by her trouble walking, is the counterpoint to the freedom of movement enjoyed by Sara, whose future, despite Agustín’s insistence in tying it to Calacierva, shows a hint of something different.

## **5. THE FUTURE HAS ARRIVED**

The stratification of the female characters is revealed in the narrative treatment of Sara, whose relationship with her grandfather seems less affected by his authority, and there are some efforts at understanding on his part that are absent in his relationships with the other women in the film (“sit down, grandfather, here beside me; I want us to talk about a very serious matter”; “I need you to help me, because I can never talk to my parents”). These efforts reach a decisive moment when he accompanies her to the public space of the pub, establishing a scene-type with modern diegetic music that will be repeated in subsequent films in the cycle. This scene suggests a clear association



*La ciudad no es para mí* (Pedro Lazaga, 1966)

between pop music and modernity, with traditional Aragonese music restricted to scenes in which a correspondence with tradition is being established; the pop music in the film is always presented diegetically, as an invasion of modernity into the narrative, while traditional music is used in constant extra-diegetic *leitmotifs*, except in the final scene in Calacierva. In this way, the film forms part of “a cinematic tradition in which, like films aimed at all audiences, there are clashes between tradition and modernity, which the Francoist regime was wrestling with in those years of liberalisation, that gave rise to a hybridisation between the popular music of the young, loaded with connotations coming from Britain and America, as a modern element, and the native tradition and values put forward by the government as a symbol of cultural identity” (Olmo Cano, 2015: 1).

The characterisation of the granddaughter through her leisure activities, musical tastes, linguistic resources and urban lifestyle, as well as her higher degree of engagement with the public space and her belonging to a generation that was experiencing modernity in adolescence, positions her at a different level from her parents, so that she is treated more permissively by Agustín because the changes she signals are social but not yet moral, as her age places her in a pre-sexual phase of life. In his article “¿Una sociedad pasiva? Actitudes, activismo y conflictividad social” (“A Passive Society? Attitudes, Activism and Social

Unrest”), Pere Ysàs (2007) raises the question of the general political attitude adopted by this new generation of Spaniards with better living conditions, who were wrestling with whether to quietly accept the regime or to challenge it. In the film this question is left unanswered, because despite its closed and circular narrative structure—which exploits the emotional charge of Agustín’s public recognition in Calacierva, both by his family and neighbours and by the actual inhabitants of the town of Loeches, who are anachronistically depicted in Aragonese dress—the ending is not complete, and the average spectator could intuit that in real life Sara would have a different future, in which modernity would overtake tradition.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

*La ciudad no es para mí* constitutes an exemplary first film in a cycle based on the repetition of formal, narrative and discursive elements. Conceived as a popular comedy that sought to repeat the commercial success of the play on which it was based, which could be defined as a “developmentalist comedy”, it has been analysed as a paradigmatic example of the opposition between tradition and modernity, identified with a group of films containing cinematic mechanisms, both visual and narrative, that adopt the mode of gender representation and the conception of intrafamilial power relations in accordance with the norms of the patriarchal system and National Catholic morality in a very specific context of change and evolution.

This article has focused on the role played by the female characters, necessarily secondary in an androcentric narrative structure, reflecting the fact that the film is positioned discursively with an acceptance of the economic transformations of developmentalism while at the same time articulating a fierce resistance—wrapped up in an apparently mundane plot peppered with comic gags—against any kind of change that would have a direct impact on female virtue, the role of the

woman inside and outside the home, or changes to the vertical, patriarchal family structure.

The fictitious family in *La ciudad no es para mí* reflects certain economic and social changes that occurred in Spain in the 1960s, such as the transformations to the economic production systems, the conversion of the “producer father” into a “provider father”, the consolidation of an urban middle class that embraced an incipient consumerism, wider access to higher education, new forms of leisure, and an urban lifestyle that individualised social relations. But it also problematises certain activities generated by modernity itself, related to the possibility of a break with the constructed concept of femininity, to a loss of control over the “docile” female body, and to a weakening of the patriarchal system as the basis of the family structure. All of this is done through a narrative structure that highlights the dual role of the female characters, who, on the one hand, are tasked with serving as narrative motors following impulses classified as immoral that thus trigger the action of the male protagonist, and, on the other, accept their surveillance and control with total passivity and without question, so that the extradiegetic future of the character of the granddaughter is left as the only possibility for change.

## NOTES

- \* This research was supported by a scholarship from the of the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport's University Professor Training Program (FPU).
- 1 The pseudonym used by Lázaro Carreter was Ángel Lozano. *La ciudad no es para mí* premiered at the main theatre in Palencia in June 1962, at the Talía theatre in Barcelona in August 1962, and at the Eslava theatre in Madrid in February 1963. The script was published by Escelier in 1965 (No. 448 of its theatre collection) and republished by the same publishing house in 1970. For an analysis of the play, see Laura Arroyo Martínez's thesis (2013).
- 2 Archivo General de la Administración. Box (3) 121, 36/04926.

- 3 Archivo General de la Administración. Box (3) 121, 36/04926.
- 4 “*La ciudad no es para mí* would transfer Martínez Soria's success from stage to screen and initiate a period of intensive production of films that were cut to the same pattern and nearly always moulded by the able hand of Lazaga, with whom he would film as many as ten films in twelve years” (Pérez Perucha, 1997: 595).
- 5 The conception of masculinity during the regime was not homogeneous, and in the film there are signs of the changes taking place. For an exploration of this question, see: Muñoz Ruiz, 2007, 245-285.
- 6 There are references to the *sainete* in the film itself (“I enjoy these types of *sainetes*”) which tie in with Ríos Carratalá's discussion (1997) of the absence in Spanish cinema of *sainetes* (a genre of farce restricted to the theatre), and the presence of “*sainetesque*” features in certain films, visible in the mise-en-scene, the plots and the performances.
- 7 In this respect, the films starring Martínez Soria during the late Francoist period overlap discursively with those of the cycle of films featuring Manolo Escobar and Marisol. According to Pérez-Gómez (2010: 153), “[t]his portrayal is repeated in two other films in this cycle by the artist [Marisol], in *Un rayo de Luz* and *Ha llegado un ángel*, in which a girl of humble origins arrives at the home of close relatives of good economic standing but with somewhat loose morals, as occurs with the character of the grandfather in *Un rayo de Luz*. Marisol plays a character type who comes from her rural home to correct the vices of modern living provoked by life in the city, as elements that are destroying the family, because the small towns and rural settings supposedly preserve the traditions and virtues of the Spanish people. This character type was taken to an extreme by Paco Martínez Soria in the diptych *La ciudad no es para mí* (1965) and *Abuelo Made in Spain* (1969), both directed by Pedro Lazaga, in both of which the main character, lacking the charm and amiability of the characters played in that period by Marisol, arrives in the city to impose the strict marital and moral customs of traditional Spain, leaving the protagonist's relatives no room for freedom.” Rincón Díez (2013: 90-101) has also compared them with Marisol's characters.



- 8 Reflections of the sociologists responsible for the FOESSA report, issued in 1965 (Fundación FOESSA, 1966: 19).
- 9 On this point Huertas and Sánchez (2014: 47) note: "As to data related to the working population, by sector and in the same years, we find that the percentage of workers in the primary sector (agriculture) fell from 42% in 1960 to 30% in 1966; in the secondary sector (industry), it rose from only 28% in 1960 to 45% six years later; and, finally, in the tertiary sector (services) the number of employees rose from 30% to 35%."

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ángel Lozano, F. (6 February 1963). "Autocrítica de *La ciudad no es para mí*, que se estrena hoy en el Eslava." *ABC*, 61.
- Arroyo Martínez, L. (2013). *Crítica literaria y creación teatral en Fernando Lázaro Carreter*. Doctoral thesis. Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid.
- Bullón Ramírez, A. (1946). "El concepto español de cabeza de familia." *Revista de estudios de la vida local (1942-1984)*, 26, 185-201. <http://dx.doi.org/10.24965/real.vi26.5868>
- Crumbaugh, J. (2002). "Spain is Different: Touring late-Francoist Cinema with Manolo Escobar." *Hispanic Research Journal*, 3(3), 261-276.
- De León, F. L. (1967). *La perfecta casada*. Madrid: Aguilar.
- Faulkner, S. (2006). *Cinema of Contradiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Fernández, L. M. (2000). *Don Juan en el cine español. Hacia una teoría de la recreación fílmica*. Santiago de Compostela: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela.
- Fernández-Mayoralas Palomeque, J. (Spring-Summer, 1998). "Ideología y evolución socioeconómica en el cine del franquismo." *Tiempo y Tierra*, 6, 153-190.
- Fernández San Emeterio, G. (2013). "Del teatro áureo a la zarzuela decimonónica: *Entre bobos anda el juego y Don Lucas del Cigarral*." *EPOS. Revista de Filología*, 29, 151-164. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5944/epos.29.2013.15187>
- Foucault, M. (2012). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.
- Franco, F. (30 December 1960). "Mensaje de fin de año del Jefe de Estado a todos los españoles." *ABC*, 52.
- Fundación FOESSA (1966). *Informe sociológico sobre la situación social de España*. Madrid: Fundación FOESSA.
- Garret, G. (2008). *Holy Superheroes! Exploring the Sacred in Comics, Graphic Novels and Film*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Huerta Floriano, M. Á. (2012). "Realización y montaje en el cine popular del tardofranquismo (1966-1975): la tradición idealizada." In C. Mateos Martín et al. (eds.), *Actas del IV Congreso Internacional Latina de Comunicación Social* (pp. 1-14). La Laguna: Universidad de La Laguna.
- Huerta Floriano, M. Á.; Pérez Morán, E. (2012). "La creación de discurso ideológico en el cine popular del tardofranquismo (1966-1975): el 'ciclo Paco Martínez Soria'", *Comunicación y sociedad*, 25(1), 289-311.
- (2013). "La imagen de la España tardofranquista en las películas de Manolo Escobar." *Revista Latina de Comunicación social*, 68, 189-216. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2013-974>
- (2015). "De la comedia popular tardofranquista a la comedia urbana de la Transición: tradición y modernidad." *Historia Actual Online*, 37, 201-212.
- Huertas, P., Sánchez, A. (2014). *El desarrollismo en la España de los 60*. Madrid: CVG.
- ICAA Catálogo de Cine Español. Catálogo de películas calificadas. 2017. Retrieved from <http://infoicaa.mecd.es/CatalogoICAA/Peliculas/Detalle?Pelicula=4050>
- Morcillo Gómez, A. (2015). *En cuerpo y alma. Ser mujer en tiempos de Franco*. Madrid: Siglo XXI Editores.
- Muñoz Ruiz, M. d. C. (2007). "Género, masculinidad y nuevo movimiento obrero bajo el franquismo." In J. Babiano (ed.), *Del hogar a la huelga: trabajo, género y movimiento obrero bajo el franquismo* (pp. 245-285). Madrid: Catarata.
- Olmo Cano, J. (Autumn 2015). "Tradición y modernidad en los números musicales del cine pop español: un estudio de caso." *Cuadernos de Etnomusicología*, 6, 44-67.
- Pedrosa, J. M. (2011). "La criada 'que hurtó la taça o perdió el anillo': Alfonso X, Fernando de Rojas, Lope de Rueda." *Criticón*, 113, 5-17.
- Pérez-Gómez, M. Á. (2010). "Tómbola como paradigma del cine con niño español." *Frame*, 6, 146-158.
- Pérez Perucha, J. (ed.) (1997). *Antología crítica del cine español. 1906-1995*. Madrid: Cátedra/Filmoteca Española.
- Poelzer, M. (2013). *The Representation of Development in the 1960s in Popular Spanish Films*. Doctoral thesis. Ottawa: Carleton University.

- Richardson, N. E. (2000). "'Paleto Cinema' and the Triumph of Consumer Culture in Spain: The Case of Pedro Lazaga's *La ciudad no es para mí*." *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies*, 4, 61-75.
- Richardson, N. E. (2002). *Postmodern Paletos: Immigration, Democracy, and Globalization in Spanish Narrative and Film, 1950-2000*. London: Associated University Presses.
- Rincón Díez, A. (2013). "Marisol y tío Agustín: Dos paletos en Madrid. Un estudio del éxodo desarrollista a través del cine." *Eclética, Revista de estudios culturales*, 2, 90-101.
- Ríos Carratalá, J. A. (1997). *Lo sainetesco en el cine español*. Alicante: Universidad de Alicante.
- Vallejo-Nájera, A. (1938). *Política racial del Nuevo Estado*. San Sebastián: Biblioteca España Nueva.
- Vives, J. L. (1994). *De officio mariti. El oficio del marido*. Valencia: Ayuntamiento de Valencia.
- Ysàs, P. (2007). "¿Una sociedad pasiva? Actitudes, activismo y conflictividad social." *Ayer*, 68, 31-57.

## MODERNITY AND FEMALE FIGURES IN LA CIUDAD NO ES PARA MÍ

### Abstract

*La ciudad no es para mí* (The City Is Not for Me, Pedro Lazaga, 1966) is the most analysed of all of Paco Martínez Soria's films, as it was his first cinematic success, achieving great popularity and establishing a character type. But while most studies have focused on the country/city dichotomy, this article offers an analysis focusing on the role of female characters in the film's narrative and discursive structure, positing that these characters fulfil a dual active/passive role that makes them narrative motors and, at the same time, targets of the action of the male protagonist. Moreover, the film presents a threefold discourse in terms of its context, with the acceptance of the economic changes, the partial assimilation of the social changes and an outright rejection of the changes to moral values and family structure.

### Key words

*La ciudad no es para mí*; Paco Martínez Soria; Late-Francoist Cinema; Gender Studies.

### Author

Olga García-Defez holds a bachelor's degree in art history from Universitat de València, and master's degrees in art history and visual culture from Universitat de València and Universidad Jaime I de Castellón. She is currently completing a doctorate in art history at Universitat de València, where she is a FPU Fellow in the Department of Language Theory and Communication Sciences. She is also a member of Universitat de València's Aula de Cinema film club, vice president of the Asociación Cinefórum L'Atalante, and vice president of the Department of Geography and History's Asociación Pangaea at Universitat de València. Contact: olga.garcia@uv.es

### Article reference

García-Defez, O. (2018). Modernity and Female Figures in *La ciudad no es para mí* (Pedro Lazaga, 1966). *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 25, 205-220.

## MODERNIDAD Y FIGURAS FEMENINAS EN LA CIUDAD NO ES PARA MÍ

### Resumen

*La ciudad no es para mí* (Pedro Lazaga, 1966) es la película más analizada de las interpretadas por Paco Martínez Soria, ya que fue su primer éxito cinematográfico, obtuvo una gran popularidad y creó un modelo de personaje. Pero mientras que los análisis se suelen centrar en la dicotomía campo/ciudad, el texto plantea un análisis centrado en la función de los personajes femeninos en la estructura narrativa y discursiva, encontrando que estos presentan una doble función activo/pasiva que los convierte en motores narrativos y, al mismo tiempo, en receptores de la acción del personaje masculino principal. Además, el film presenta un triple discurso acerca de su contexto, con la aceptación de los cambios económicos, la asimilación parcial de los sociales y el rechazo de los cambios morales y en la estructura familiar.

### Palabras clave

*La ciudad no es para mí*; Paco Martínez Soria; cine del Tardofranquismo; estudios de género.

### Autora

Olga García-Defez es Licenciada en Historia del Arte por la Universidad de Valencia, máster en Historia del Arte y Cultura Visual por la Universidad de Valencia y la Universidad Jaime I de Castellón, doctoranda en el Departamento de Historia del Arte de la Universidad de Valencia y becaria FPU en el Departamento de Teoría de los Lenguajes y Ciencias de la Comunicación de la Universidad de Valencia. Actualmente es miembro del Aula de Cinema de la UV, vicepresidenta de la Asociación Cinefórum L'Atalante y vicepresidenta de la Asociación Pangaea de la Facultad de Geografía e Historia de la Universidad de Valencia. Contacto: olga.garcia@uv.es

### Referencia de este artículo

García-Defez, O. (2018). Modernidad y figuras femeninas en *La ciudad no es para mí* (Pedro Lazaga, 1966). *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 25, 205-220.

Edita / Published by



Licencia / License



ISSN 1885-3730 (print) / 2340-6992 (digital) DL V-5340-2003 WEB [www.revistaatalante.com](http://www.revistaatalante.com) MAIL [info@revistaatalante.com](mailto:info@revistaatalante.com)