

Wounds, survivals, transformations

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Recent polemic approaches to Spanish cinema of the 1940s and 1950s show a growing interest in the historical and formal study of a period of our film history which is still as reviled and misunderstood as it is fascinating. The first of these two decades is traditionally considered a pure product of Franco's regime and therefore unworthy of thorough analysis, whilst in the second decade true value was only recognised in certain titles associated with a supposed *Regenerationism* very superficially linked to Italian Neorealism. The detailed study of the surviving films from this period, carried out from new analytical and historiographical perspectives by a number of historians in and outside Spain since the late 20th century, has outlined a new panorama in which the possibilities of study are constantly multiplying and growing richer.

It is clear, then, that we are dealing with a period of cinema as variable as it is full of titles of indisputable aesthetic and cultural quality, which cannot be critically assessed using the hackneyed dualistic prism applied until recently (Italianising *communist* dissidence vs. Francoist *costumbrismo*), and that, in short, there are not only isolated and *exceptional* films of interest, but trends, movements and *generations* which, once the Civil War was over, strived to continue a cultural project as problematic as it was meritorious that had already begin to bear fruit in a small number of excellent films in the tragically brief Republican period.

In this context, the Notebook section of *L'Atalante's* issue 20 presents a series of articles that delve thoroughly into the at once comical, melancholic, rough, dense and desolate movements of Spanish post-war cinema, conducting an analysis of the films themselves, but also of their literary sources (for example, the undeniably popular style of the writer Wenceslao Fernández Flórez), of the importance of theatrical and painting traditions—which continue to exert themselves *in spite of everything*—derived from the silent era and the Republican period and of their complex *rubbing up* against the narrative and visual devices of the prevailing “International Model”, of the existence of hybrid films resulting from unexpected mixtures of apparently contradictory elements...

These are also articles that highlight the filmic (and historical) transformations of the period studied. Thus, for example, certain “Stylistic Models” that emerged in the 1940s (such as the model for which we propose the name “Obsessive-Delusional,” closely associated with a war wound, whose features are clear in films characterised by a masculine gaze obsessed with the loss of his object of desire, well exemplified in *La sirena negra* [Carlos Serrano de Osmá, 1947] or *Vida en sombras* [Llorenç Llobet-Gràcia, 1948]) disappear almost completely in the next decade, in which, nevertheless, a progressive tension would emerge between the enunciative approach and the *costumbrista* materials only barely maintained in the 1940s—thanks above all to Edgar Neville's exemplary filmography—that would result in a *modern*, grotesque and caricaturesque Model, best represented in the films of Fernando Fernán-Gómez, Luis García Berlanga or Marco Ferreri.

This issue of *L'Atalante* is rounded off, in the Dialogue section, with the reproduction of an interview with the filmmaker José Antonio Nieves Conde—a key figure in post-war cinema, one of the so-called reformists or *renovadores*—which presents a consideration of his filmography that goes beyond the clichés and superficial reviews; and in the (Dis)agreements section, where the voices of five film historians engage in an exercise of theoretical and historiographical reassessment of this period of Spanish cinema that is the focus of this 20th edition of the journal.

Of course, there is also a space in *L'Atalante* for the diverse perspectives offered by the Vanishing Points section. In this section, we cover the role of the woman and gender readings of the blockbuster epic film; the metacinematic aspects of films that challenge the hegemonic model, as in the case of Lars Von Trier's *The Idiots*, (Dogme #2: Idioterne, 1998); the close connections between architecture and cinema based on a study of the interrelated films *Intolerance: Love's Struggle Throughout the Ages* (D.W. Griffith, 1916) and *Good Morning, Babylon* (Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, 1987); new forms of participatory production in the contemporary documentary; the shared filmic heritage of Yasujirō Ozu and Hou Hsiao-hsien; and the contradictions of the process of proletarianisation of women in Argentinean cinema of the late 1930s and early 1940s which, moreover, had a particular impact on Francoist Spain at that time.

We conclude with an important note: this issue 20 of *L'Atalante* will be the last print edition. Budgetary issues are obliging us to abandon this format which, beyond nostalgia, pragmatism and different modes of consumption and entertainment, allows physical contact with the words and the thinking that lies behind them. This last print edition is offered to those who think of the cinematic medium as a celebration of this physical intimacy and its aim—hopefully successful—to engage the reader/spectator. ■