

FILMIC SPACE, SOCIAL PROTEST AND URBAN MEMORY: IMAGES OF VALLECAS IN QUINQUI FILMS SET IN MADRID (1977-1981)*

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WHERE THE CITY CHANGES NAME: QUINQUI AND THE OUTSKIRTS

In the period from 1977 to 1985, the film genre known as *quinqui* took Spanish cinemas by storm, telling audiences of the adventures and misadventures of street delinquents and other marginalised youth during the Spanish Transition to Democracy (Cuesta, 2009). Emerging in a social context marked by political change, economic crisis, rising unemployment and increasing drug use, this genre began as a reflection of the new forms of public violence and petty crime (purse-snatching, mugging, robbery and car theft) that swept through Spain's cities during this period and monopolised the news headlines.

Their appearance on the big screen was largely due to the “exacerbation of the new discourses” that accompanied the shift towards democracy (Imbert, 2015: 59) and the commercial objectives of the genre itself, which was defined by two dif-

ferent modes of representation. The first was a realist mode with leanings towards a documentary style, which sought to document a range of social issues and exhibited an interest in biographical approaches, sometimes with didactic touches in their detailed depictions of criminal activity and illegal drug use. The second was a sensationalist mode, with a propensity for addressing topics deemed taboo or shocking at that time in Spain, such as prostitution, drugs or abortion, leading to its classification as a Spanish version of the exploitation film (Cuesta, 2009).

Germán Labrador (2020: 28) defines the *quinqui* style as a socially widespread “field of forces and representations” present during the Transition in various cultural products and social practices beyond cinema, establishing a “network of meanings” that “wove together social imaginaries (i.e., representations of society), political transformations, urban metamorphoses and a very particular socioeconomic context resulting from the

crisis of 1979.” Not all the films of this movement attempted to delve into “the layers of history and sociology necessary to understand their position” (Labrador, 2020: 17), as many filmmakers were content simply to exploit and *mythologise* “the *quinqui* style”. However, the general attention that *quinqui* films gave to processes of spatial, economic and even legal marginalisation (García del Río, 2020) has resulted in the genre being typically understood as a counter-narrative of the Transition (Matos-Martin, 2015).

The outskirts of Spanish cities, which were undergoing intense processes of protest and transformation during this period, would occupy a central position as settings and backgrounds for the characters in *quinqui* films. Some of these suburban areas were already being explored as early as the 1950s in a few social realist films (Deltell, 2006), but unlike such one-off cases, *quinqui* films would systematically explore “the stories of the *barrio*”, according to Castelló Segarra (2018: 118), bearing “witness to the extreme dehumanisation of the peripheral neighbourhoods in contrast to the hope that characterised life in the city proper.” The city outskirts are presented in this genre as “the territory where the jurisdiction of the hegemonic collapses under the weight of the marginalised” (Alfeo & González, 2011: 1), offering images of what could be considered the “anomic inverse of the normative city, which directly challenges the late-Francoist dream of urban development, consumerism and integration” (Imbert, 2015: 61). The special interest that *quinqui* films took in social issues such as juvenile delinquency and drugs was thus coupled with a concern—whether explicit or implicit—with presenting the socioeconomic phenomena that caused these problems, placing the main focus of attention on the living conditions in the outer suburbs and among the marginalised classes that lived there.

In the case of Madrid, by the mid-1970s the city had two clearly distinguishable urban realms:

the central core, bounded by the city’s innermost ring road (the M-30); and the outskirts, which included practically all of the former municipalities surrounding Madrid that had been absorbed by the city between 1948 and 1954. While the first was “a compact, continuous, structured and relatively well-serviced space”, the second, organised into different neighbourhoods and housing projects, was “a collection of fragments of different sizes, compact inside each one but chaotic and unstructured as a whole, with serious gaps in infrastructure and services” (López de Lucio et al., 2016: 80).

The former municipality of Vallecas is one of these old urban hubs absorbed into the Spanish capital to form part of “Greater Madrid” (Valenzuela, 2010). Today it is comprised of the districts of Puente de Vallecas and Villa de Vallecas, although in the past it was subdivided in other ways less sensitive to its history and geographic organisation.¹ From the 1940s to the 1980s, mass migration and the proliferation of shantytowns and housing developments all over Vallecas, especially in the areas that now form part of Puente de Vallecas, would turn it into one of the paradigmatic districts of the peripheral belt around the city. As recently as 1973, despite various public and private initiatives beginning in the 1950s aimed at eradicating the shantytowns, a census of the Madrid municipal area found that 39.3% of shanties in the city were located in Vallecas, making it the district with the biggest concentration of such substandard housing, and the place where, according to Valenzuela (1975: 40), “the slum problem [had] become the most widespread and the most harmful.”

This problematic situation would serve as the stimulus for the development of a new “unique and independent” identity for Vallecas (Fernández Montes, 2007: 38), replacing the historically rural identity of the district, cultivated both by the stigma imposed from the outside by inner city residents, who had come to view Vallecas as

“tarnished by a black legend of shanties, squalor, delinquency and marginalisation” (Fernández Montes, 2007: 57), and by cultural, political and social protest movements of the period within the district itself:

Immigrants from other parts of Spain with minimal education, shantytowns and precarious housing, unemployment, delinquency, drugs, local solidarity, activism by working-class priests and underground political movements, social protests, cultural associations and residents’ organisations, artistic and cultural events with a social purpose... all formed an explosive cocktail that would crystallise in the early 1980s with the emergence of an internal identity that was forged in Puente de Vallecas but aspired to include the whole district (Fernández Montes, 2007: 71).

Given its situation and its marked identity, it is hardly surprising that Vallecas in general, and particularly some of its more representative neighbourhoods such as Pozo del Tío Raimundo and the various areas of Palomeras, would become recurring points of reference in Madrid’s *quinqui* films at that time.

MAPPING QUINQUI FILMS SHOT IN VALLECAS

It is undeniable that cinema establishes complex and productive relationships with the field of geography. According to Teresa Castro (2009: 10), films articulate “a particular way of seeing and looking at the world, a visual regime” that has a strong affinity with the practice of cartography. This “mapping impulse”, as she calls it, is especially evident in three “cartographic shapes” that are typical of cinema. Establishment shots, like panoramas, offer the observer a complete picture of the location. Like maps, high-angle shots and aerial shots can offer an abstract view of the geometric organisation of a place from their elevated position. And montages, in a manner similar to an atlas, effectively create a collection of imag-

es of a space articulated by a common discourse. All these practices “contribute to the shaping and structuring of geographic imagination—and to the transmission of geographic knowledge—through images” (Castro, 2009: 13).

Based on this premise, the objective of this article is to analyse the use of different areas of the districts known today as Puente de Vallecas and Villa de Vallecas as locations in various *quinqui* films of the late 1970s and early 1980s and the consequent audiovisual representation of those areas. To this end, the analysis focuses on images or audiovisual forms that express the “mapping impulse” identified by Teresa Castro (2009: 10) as typical of the *quinqui* genre and of special relevance to the processes of formation of the urban imaginaries associated with the neighbourhoods of Vallecas.

This study builds on a series of contributions by other authors who have taken an interest in exploring the relationship between *quinqui* and the outskirts of Spanish cities, whether considering the types of peripheral spaces most commonly featured in these films (Alfeo & González, 2011; Olaiz, 2016) or examining specific examples of characters’ relationships with the spaces in question (Whittaker, 2008; Bloch-Robin, 2013). However, this article differs from these other studies because it focuses on a specific area (Vallecas), giving special attention to the geographical identification and urban characterisation of the real locations shown in the films, which I consider to be an original approach.

This research has been conducted using two complementary methodologies. First, with the aim of ensuring an effective analysis of the relationships between territory and narrative (Hallam, 2014; Aertsen *et al.*, 2019), detailed research has been carried out to identify the filming locations for *quinqui* films shot in Madrid.² The analysis of these images has made it clear that *quinqui* films function as historical archives, in the form of an audiovisual inventory of the different

neighbourhoods on Madrid's outskirts in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Based on this research, the five most relevant films featuring images of Vallecas have been chosen: *Hidden Pleasures* (Los placeres ocultos, Eloy de la Iglesia, 1977), *La patria del 'Rata'* [Ratsy] (Francisco Lara Polop, 1980), *Navajeros* [Knifers] (Eloy de la Iglesia, 1980), *Chocolate* (Gil Carretero, 1980) and *Faster, Faster* (Deprisa, deprisa, Carlos Saura, 1981). All these films are set in the same period they were filmed, i.e., at the historical moment when protests calling for improvements to the living conditions in the neighbourhoods shown on screen were at their peak. The results of this identification and geolocation have been compiled in the form of a digital map available online for consultation.³

The second research method adopted involved a textual analysis of all the films selected in order to identify the strategies of representation used to depict these spaces and to explore the urban realities and experiences expressed through those depictions. The meanings given to each film by the use of these real and recognisable spaces of Madrid are also considered. As will become evident in the following sections, the images of Vallecas offered by these films explore an urban reality in transformation, whose characteristics are emphasised by the strategies of representation chosen by the filmmakers, which in the process turns the footage into an extraordinary document of protest and urban memory.

QUINQUI FILMS FUNCTION AS HISTORICAL ARCHIVES, IN THE FORM OF AN AUDIOVISUAL INVENTORY OF THE DIFFERENT NEIGHBOURHOODS ON MADRID'S OUTSKIRTS IN THE LATE 1970S AND EARLY 1980S

WHEN THE NEED IS PRESSING: THE SHANTYTOWNS

The protagonists of all five films selected for this study either come from or live in one of the neighbourhoods that were built in Vallecas out of need, urgency or speculation during the years of the Franco dictatorship as a consequence of the processes of absorption of successive waves of migrants and the subsequent plans aimed at solving the problems of public housing in the city (Image 1). Their construction, in any case, was the product of various processes. On the one hand, the housing shortage and a lack of public policy gave rise to self-building on unlawfully appropriated subdivisions using low-quality materials, resulting in vast working-class neighbourhoods of low-income housing, and shantytown settlements on the city outskirts (Valenzuela, 1974). In the mid-1950s, the government began implementing a series of public housing construction plans in an effort to eradicate the slums, giving rise to a variety of settlements and housing estates, some of which were intended to be temporary, such as the "neighbourhood absorption units" (*Unidades Vecinales de Absorción*, or UVAs), while others were permanent, like the *Poblados Dirigidos* (Sambicio, 2004; López Simón, 2018). On the other hand, private companies became fully involved in the construction of working-class housing as of 1957 with the *Plan de Urgencia Social* (PUS), which established a system of "coordinated urban development" (Valenzuela, 1974) aimed at reducing the costs to the public purse through contributions of private capital to the solution of the housing problem (Burbano Trimiño, 2020).

Several of these neighbourhoods are shown in *Navajeros*, which is probably the *quinqui* film that offers the most explicit analysis linking juvenile delinquency to the living conditions in the urban periphery. In the middle of the film there is a break in the narrative flow produced by a montage sequence showing the journalist



Image 1. Aerial photo from 1980 showing the area of Vallecas, with some of the neighbourhoods and locations mentioned in the article. Map source: Nomencllos (Institute of Statistics of the Community of Madrid). Prepared by author

(played by José Sacristán) visiting different parts of what today is the district of Puente de Vallecas in order to see El Jaro's place of origin first-hand. Although the sequence revolves around his search for one particular neighbourhood, it is presented as a kind of atlas of peripheral areas in which the images enact a process of discursive homogenisation of the different spaces shown, whose problems and deficiencies are depicted as identical.

Despite their diversity, all these neighbourhoods are characterised by their peripheral status in the context of the urban and socioeconomic fabric of Madrid, where "separation from the city (not in terms of distance or a physical barrier, but in terms of difficulties of access to the larger urban structure) and the negative values associated with their marked physical precariousness" (Arredondo, 2005: 101-102) condition the existence of their inhabitants. The concepts of distance (separation, isolation) and precariousness (deficiency,

deterioration, shortage) are extremely important for the analysis of how the spaces of Vallecas are represented in *Navajeros* and the other films.

The sequence begins with images of the shantytown of Pozo del Huevo (Image 2), which developed spontaneously in the 1950s near the motorway from Villaverde to Vallecas, along with the nearby settlement of La Celsa. The images clearly display the fragility and inadequacy of the housing, built between high voltage electricity pylons with a notable absence of municipal services. A series of wide shots around the perimeter underscore its isolation in a lifeless field stretching to the horizon, with the hilltop of Las Barranquillas looming in the background. The image makes it clear that this muddy, squalid location would hardly be conducive to the personal and social development of its inhabitants.

Many of the original residents of this settlement were relocated to the former UVA in Vallecas, the housing project featured next in the



Above. Image 2. Pozo del Huevo in *Navajeros*
Below. Image 3. Vallecas Neighbourhood Absorption Unit (UVA) in *Navajeros*

montage (Image 3). Built as a temporary measure in 1963 with the aim of providing alternatives to the shantytowns, the precarious nature of these so-called “neighbourhood absorption units” ultimately turned them into a kind of “planned slums” (Capel, 1975: 60). This is made clear in the image shown in the film, whose foreshortened perspective highlights the uniformity of the prefabricated geometric shacks that comprise the UVA and the limited size of their liveable space. Stretching out before them is an unpaved road and a plot of undeveloped land dominated by stunted trees concealing the National Motorway No. 3, which crosses immediately behind without any traffic control or safety measures.

Most of the montage images that follow take the spectator towards the northern boundary of Vallecas’ Pozo del Tío Raimundo neighbourhood, “an archetype of the shantytown hub of immigration in the 1950s” (Valenzuela, 1974: 623), and of the movements formed by local residents to call for improvements to public services and living conditions.⁴ Its informal growth on the other side of the Madrid-Zaragoza railway line, which initially helped keep it free from municipal oversight, conditioned its subsequent isolation so that together with the adjacent neighbourhood of Entrevías it formed a triangular island surrounded by train tracks on all sides. Until 1994, the closest Metro station was Portazgo, the last station on Line 1, located 2.5 kilometres from the nearest point of the Pozo neighbourhood. Moreover, despite the omnipresence of railway tracks, the neighbourhood would not be served by Madrid’s commuter rail service until 1996, when a *Cercanías* station was built at this intersection between the two neighbourhoods. These are significant distances, especially when the route to these stations ran through undeveloped areas where rainy weather would turn the roads to mud that would stick to the residents on their way to the station, revealing their origins and increasing their stigmatisation (García-Nieto, 1987).

It is precisely at the pedestrian bridge that joins the two neighbourhoods where Eloy de la Iglesia places his camera (Image 4). The shot underscores their location “on the other side” of the tracks, while the elevated perspective shows the homes sinking into the depression of the land that rises again behind them, reinforcing the sensation of isolation. The elevated perspective also offers a broad view of the tangle of squalid dwellings that stretch on to the horizon, and a gentle pan leads the spectator’s gaze from Pozo to Palomeras, highlighting the topographical proximity of the two neighbourhoods and their physical separation as a consequence of the transport infrastructure, which dominates the image, tracing a scar across



Image 4. Pozo del Tío Raimundo in *Navajeros*

the urban space. The incessant movement of buses and cars observable on both sides of the bridge reveals not only the hustle and bustle of the district, but also the importance of these vehicles for bridging the distances that separate it from other more established areas of the city.

The isolation of Pozo del Tío Raimundo is similarly highlighted in an establishment shot in *Chocolate* (Image 5) in which El Jato (Manuel de Benito) and El Muertes (Ángel Alcázar), two friends who moments earlier proudly acknowledged their Vallecas roots, go to visit El Jato's mother there. The location chosen once again stresses the isolation of the neighbourhood, although in this case with a shot taken from its easternmost end. The scenery could be mistaken for rural if it were not for the little houses packed tightly together in the background and the vast stretch of barren land in the foreground. The railway tracks appear again as a defining element of the composition and of the urban experience of the neighbourhood, with the hostility of the infrastructure underscored by the invasive noise of a train that seems to be approaching but never arrives. Between the tracks and the houses is a vast “no man's land” where we can see the earthworks for the construction of the future M-40 motorway, whose original design included the location of a large clover-shaped in-



Image 5. Pozo del Tío Raimundo in *Chocolate*

terchange over Pozo del Tío Raimundo, a “mechanism that came to be customary as an expeditious way of eliminating substandard housing” (López de Lucio, 2012: 178), but which due to pressure from local residents would end up only imposing on the edge of the neighbourhood.

The film also introduces the spectator to the adjacent neighbourhood of Palomeras Bajas, which forms part of the district of Vallecas. In a later scene, El Jato is shown driving a motorcycle down the old avenue of Palomeras Bajas and a parallel street, both of which have since disappeared from the map. Pan shots in both cases reveal the provisional nature of the physical environment, a network of asphalted roads with unfinished pavements, dilapidated houses and undeveloped plots. In any case, it is in *La patria del 'Rata'* that we can find the most eloquent images of Palomeras Bajas, the home neighbourhood of El Rata (Danilo Mat-

THE RAILWAY TRACKS APPEAR AGAIN AS A DEFINING ELEMENT OF THE COMPOSITION AND OF THE URBAN EXPERIENCE OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, UNDERSCORING THE HOSTILITY OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE

tei) and his childhood friend (Javier Viñas), and a place notable in the 1970s for having the greatest concentration of substandard housing in Madrid (Valenzuela, 1975).

The sequence begins with a brief montage which, like the one in *Navajeros*, offers a snapshot of daily life on the edges of the neighbourhood, where the shantytowns are most in evidence: children playing football, women washing clothes, men playing cards and goats grazing on the grass around whitewashed houses and asbestos shacks built on unpaved ground. The shots include one of a woman filling a washing bowl from a public fountain—a significant image for a neighbourhood that had no running water until 1975 (García-Nieto París, 1987).

The series of images comprising this small atlas of the neighbourhood culminates with an eloquent shot showing the protagonists walking down one of the main streets of Palomeras Bajas, occupied today by Javier de Miguel Park (Image 6). The camera pans across the scene, and then an upward tracking shot expands the field of vision to offer a glimpse of the geometric organisation of the space. Its frontal composition highlights the rows of houses stretching to the horizon on both sides of the road, with no other buildings in sight

despite the wide perspective offered. This image is thus highly effective in showing the reality of a spontaneously constructed neighbourhood where the only evidence of urban planning is to be found in the spaces left for some transit areas and the alignment of the buildings (Valenzuela, 1974: 609). It is also made clear that the area contains practically nothing but dwellings and roads, as the pavements are scarcely serviceable, the public facilities are non-existent and a leafless tree peeking out from behind a wall is the only sign of nature. The public space available is designed to serve the simple function of facilitating pedestrian and vehicle traffic, for which purpose it has been paved. But the *monofunctionality* of the urban design does not prevent it from being used by the local residents for other purposes (in fact, it may actually encourage it), as evidenced by the children playing and the adults chatting on a roadway intended for cars. In this way, the shot reveals the value of cinema as a means of documenting a space that has since disappeared and the ways its inhabitants lived and moved around in it.

There are also signs in the image of the lack of services and utilities in the neighbourhood. The area had no sewerage system, as can be seen from

Image 6. Palomeras Bajas in *La patria del 'Rata'*



THE SOCIAL LIVES OF THE CHARACTERS IN *QUINQUI* FILMS TAKE PLACE IN VACANT LOTS, DISUSED PLOTS OF LAND AND OTHER RESIDUAL SPACES LOCATED ON THE MARGINS OF THE CITY

the very rudimentary roadway. Cleaning services for public spaces are also notable for their absence, which explains the presence in the shot of local women cleaning their section of the road. On the other hand, the marked absence of trees contrasts with the plethora of haphazardly arranged wooden posts holding up the power lines that began being installed in some homes at the end of the 1950s, “after repeated requests were made and a significant sum of money was paid” (García-Nieto París, 1988). The wires criss-cross the sky in a tangle that should raise safety concerns, weaving a kind of spider’s web in which the residents appear to be trapped. Fittingly, it is precisely at this location that El Rata and his friend discuss the lack of job opportunities for them and the other young locals, forcing them to look for other less honest ways of making a living.

As the urban anthropologist Manuel Delgado points out (2011: 73-74), although social morphology has the last word on urban development “in relation to what a particular built-up area is for and what it means,” it is an established fact that “the physical stimuli elicited by a projected environment are able to trigger certain patterns of behaviour or at least predispose [inhabitants] to them.” In the case of the peripheral areas described above, their deficiencies will obviously shape the living conditions and possibilities of those who live there. In this sense, Arredondo (2005: 101-102) notes that the physical precariousness of such environments “characterises the inhabitable space (the dwelling), the services and functions external to it related to living needs, and an external space that lacks the capacity to meet the

community’s needs for social engagement.” When they are shown, the rooms inside the protagonists’ family homes are presented as small, cramped and lacking in privacy. And the neighbourhoods they live in lack public spaces that could facilitate human interaction. As a result, the social lives of the characters in *quinqui* films take place in vacant lots, disused plots of land and other residual spaces located on the margins of the city, where they can “recreate social hubs based on the gang as a micro-community to compensate for the deficiencies of the family model” (Imbert, 2015: 61).

This is what happens to the protagonists in *Navajeros*, the youngest characters in the films analysed here, and it is thus unsurprising that they are also the characters most marked by feelings of rootlessness and social exclusion. In the absence of a family home or an urban environment with public spaces to facilitate social interaction and give meaning to everyday life (Borja, 2003), their reality has been relegated to a series of residual spaces where they can at least roam freely: an open space located inside the Nuestra Señora de la Almudena cemetery, Madrid’s biggest graveyard, and two places located in the interstices between city and countryside: an island of shanties and an industrial complex. Located outside the production processes and consumer flows that govern the established city, these are the only spaces they are permitted to enter without coming into conflict with other uses or having to spend money. In these urban corners the marginalised can find a space where they are able to socially interact.

WHEN PLANS GO AWRY: PRIVATE DEVELOPMENTS AND SETTLEMENTS

Beginning in 1957, various stimuli were introduced in the form of subsidies and loans for the urbanisation of rural areas (Betrán Abadía, 2002) to encourage the private sector to get involved in construction projects, including “major complexes”, with the same aim as the public projects to

relocate the largest possible number of people in the shortest possible time (Valenzuela, 1974: 643). Although they offered some improvements, they were far from the ideal solutions that the Franco regime boasted they would be. The quest for the optimal use of space at the lowest cost meant the use of cheap materials that inevitably affected the quality of the housing. Construction projects were developed without any broader urban planning scheme, “conceiving of the buildings as isolated entities, without seeking to fit them into a wider community network” (López Simón, 2018: 189-190). In most cases, this resulted in neighbourhoods which, like the shantytowns, lacked public infrastructures such as pavements, lighting and street furniture, not to mention schools, medical clinics or other basic services.

Miguel (Tony Fuentes), the young protagonist in *Hidden Pleasures*, is also from Palomeras, as he announces the first time he meets Eduardo (Simón Andreu). But unlike El Rata, Miguel is from Palomeras Altas, an area located in the east end of the district closer to the Avenida de la Albufera, the arterial road along which the planned growth of the community would be organised. This explains why the two neighbourhoods shown in the film are characterised by the coexistence of self-built low-income housing and private developments. Miguel’s girlfriend Carmen (Beatriz Rossat) lives in a house on the

street known today as Calle Guillermo Pingarrón (Image 7), whose seven-storey buildings loomed over a row of white bungalows (where Plaza Roja de Vallecas is located today). Despite being a planned development, it is striking to note that this street is also unpaved, even in the areas closest to the buildings. Miguel’s house, on the other hand, although forming part of a larger cluster of substandard housing, is located next to the San Agustín complex (Image 8), a group of buildings constructed by a private developer but of equally “low quality” (García-Nieto, 1987) and just as cut off from the city, which is why public transport constituted one of the key demands of local residents during the Transition (Pérez & Pérez, 1998). It would not be the only demand in a neighbourhood whose urban environment “was characterised by the concrete and dirt of roads streaked with the black shadows of the power lines” (Pérez & Pérez, 1998), features that Eloy de la Iglesia’s camera captures very clearly.

Much like the setting in *Navajeros*, the obvious deficiencies of their environment forces the youths of these neighbourhoods to seek out alternative spaces where they can socialise, with vacant lots and nearby derelict buildings being the preferred options. But in the case of *Hidden Pleasures*, these residual spaces are given a more negative connotation, highlighting the tensions they introduce into the urban and social fabric

Image 7. Palomeras Altas (Calle Guillermo Pingarrón) in *Hidden Pleasures*



Image 8. Palomeras Altas (San Agustín neighbourhood) in *Hidden Pleasures*



of the city. Nes (Ángel Pardo) and his group of friends from the neighbourhood spend their days smoking and scheming amid the rubble of a partly demolished shanty on the street Calle Guillermo Pingarrón. As they stagnate in this space for social interaction, the urban void is presented here as a prison sentence for the young people of the district, a place where they seem to be forced to take refuge and shut themselves in due to the lack of opportunities offered in the neighbourhood, resulting in increasingly marginalised codes of behaviour.

Miguel aspires to improve his situation and integrated into the dynamics of the established city, as indicated by his initial desire to study “accounting and general culture” and the enthusiasm with which he accepts the job Eduardo offers him. And his aspirations are also reflected in the locations where he spends time with his girlfriend. Instead of resorting to the nearby vacant lots to find an intimate moment, they share their time on the borders between their neighbourhoods and other more established areas of the city they hope to become a part of. Their first meeting is near the Portazgo Metro station, nearly two kilometres away from Miguel’s house, at the more consolidated end of Avenida de la Albufera, next to the Vallecas football stadium. A little while later we see them on their way to the only urban green space available in the whole district in those days, the nearby Azorín park. Eloy de la Iglesia’s choice of these two locations not only speaks volumes about the characters, anchoring their desires for social mobility to the spaces where they live, but also proves consistent with the urban fabric and the options available in those years to Palomeras residents. This active search for options on the neighbourhood limits contrasts with the stagnation of Nes and his friends in the residual spaces of the neighbourhood, whose characterisation as places of doom is underscored in the second last scene of the film, when for the first time we see Miguel enter a large vacant lot with his bro-

ken-down motorcycle, where he will end up receiving a beating from Nes and his gang.

The housing projects built with private money in the peripheral neighbourhoods play a central role in *Faster, Faster*, a film that gave the *quinqui* genre its aesthetic legitimacy (Cuesta, 2009). The image Carlos Saura offers of these neighbourhoods also highlights their systemic deficiencies, as he uses establishment shots to emphasise the isolation and squalor that characterised them in this period.

The first residence shared by Pablo (José Antonio Valdelomar) and Ángela (Berta Socuélamos) is introduced with a pan shot taken from a point at what today is known as the Entrevías Lookout, displaying a clear mapping impulse with its totalising view of the location, taking the spectator from the skyline of the established city—with glimpses of the Telefónica Building and the skyscrapers surrounding the Plaza de España—to the northeast end of the Almendrales neighbourhood, and specifically, the housing project of the same name located in those days in the Mediodía district. Along the way, the spectator’s gaze will pass over a broad stretch of middle ground where different train tracks and motorways converge, dominating the visual space while fragmenting the physical space.

The protagonists’ next home, in a privately built residential block located at the northern end of Villa de Vallecas (Image 9), is shown twice with an establishment shot taken just “on the other side” of a railway track along which a train is rushing towards the camera, helping to emphasise the division of the space (Bloch-Robin, 2013: 70). The passing train gives rise to a pan shot that gives special attention to the physical conditions of the environment while seeking out the protagonists’ residential block: with no pavements or asphalt, streetlights or benches, the various constructions are built on a barren stretch of ground whose emptiness is broken up only by a few children playing and some parked cars. If a

true public space is capable of “fostering the social redistribution of goods and services, facilitating social relations and giving meaning to everyday life for all groups” (Borja, 2003: 221), the introductory image offered by Saura here reveals the dismal failure of this project as a site for coexistence and civic development.

This failure is expressed verbally in the film itself in another scene where the protagonists, after committing one of their robberies, get out of a car at a location on Calle Congosto (Image 10) in the very heart of Villa de Vallecas, between the Virgen de la Piedad community, built in 1964 with private capital, and the neighbourhood of Congosto, built in the early 1970s. Despite being adjacent to the centre of the former municipality, the lack of paving, organisation or any sign of street furniture once again offers an image of a provisional urban development where the public space functions interchangeably as a parking lot, a site for improvised play and a route for pedestrian traffic. But on this occasion, the location chosen by Saura offers him another chance not only to depict the inadequate living conditions of these projects on Madrid’s outskirts, but also to provide a glimpse of the residents’ movements that were fighting at that time for local improvements, as reflected on a huge placard hanging between two of the buildings, which reads: “The residents of this neighbourhood ask not for pity but for justice.” It is an affirmation that could easily be hung up in any of the neighbourhoods discussed above.

This offers clear evidence for Germán Labrador’s (2020: 35) argument that “the *quinqui* style formed part of a rich field of underground forces running through the margins of institutional politics and vast areas of everyday life,” establishing various nodes or “chronotopic hubs” such as prisons or working-class neighbourhoods, in which “the *quinqui* style joined in solidarity with a whole range of alternative political energies.” However, as Labrador himself would note, “in essence, *quinqui* films introduce us to marginalised youth act-

ing independently of the usual battles and forms of political action in the working-class districts” (Labrador 2020: 37). The analysis described in this article reveals how these battles, or at least the living conditions that gave rise to them, emerge in the films of the period through the depiction of the environments where the protagonists come from or where they live, as the lives portrayed are among the consequences of the social and urban development crisis that the residents’ movements were protesting against.

Indeed, in the same years when these films were made, the resident protests in these and other neighbourhoods on Madrid’s outskirts forced the government to implement the Neighbourhood Redevelopment Program (*Programa de Barrios en Remodelación*), an operation of unprec-

Above. Image 9. Buildings in Villa de Vallecas in *Faster, Faster*
Below. Image 10. Congosto de Villa neighbourhood in Vallecas in *Faster, Faster*



THE BATTLES OF THE LOCAL RESIDENTS, OR AT LEAST THE LIVING CONDITIONS THAT GAVE RISE TO THEM, EMERGE IN THE FILMS OF THE PERIOD THROUGH THE DEPICTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTS WHERE THE PROTAGONISTS COME FROM OR WHERE THEY LIVE

edented dimensions that ran from 1978 to 1985 (López de Lucio, 2012). Introduced as “a response to an explosive situation created over several decades, in which the government’s lack of sensitivity caused the problems to fester and grow and the solutions to become increasingly more difficult and costly” (Vinuesa et al., 1986: 87), the operation would involve the complete demolition and new construction of housing and facilities in 30 historic slum areas of Madrid, including Pozo del Tío Raimundo, the Vallecas UVA and the various areas of Palomeras. In addition, a range of isolated actions were taken in other neighbourhoods on Madrid’s outskirts with the aim of improving their infrastructures and services.

In this way, in their efforts to bring images to the big screen of the neighbourhoods of Vallecas and other peripheral areas of Madrid that had been stigmatised due to their physical and social precariousness, the *quinqui* genre not only documented the living conditions in these spaces, linking them to other social issues explored in these films, but also created an exceptional testimony to a Madrid that was on the verge of disappearing. Just a few short years after these films were made, the Madrid landscapes they captured would be completely transformed, turning the images the films contained into valuable historical records.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the sensationalist inclinations of their focus on the juvenile delinquency that proliferated

in Spanish cities during the period of the Spanish Transition, many *quinqui* films reflect an explicit interest in exploring or at least reflecting the socio-economic context that gave rise to it, pointing to the problematic living conditions and social exclusion of the outer suburbs as one of the key factors. This objective is clear in the *quinqui* films shot in Vallecas, which often feature —albeit briefly—establishment shots or montage sequences that expose the isolation and deficiencies of the neighbourhoods where their rootless protagonists live and interact.

This article has offered a critical analysis of the images of the neighbourhoods of Vallecas present in five iconic *quinqui* films made in Madrid, in each case considering the strategies of representation used to highlight the peripheral status of these areas, as well as the living conditions and limited possibilities of those who live in them. A combination of textual analysis and spatial analysis has been essential for this study, taking an approach to all the images analysed in which the precise identification of the filming location has been understood to be a question of primordial importance in the process. This exploration has taken in Madrid neighbourhoods as meaningful and significant as Pozo del Huevo, the Vallecas neighbourhood absorption unit (UVA), Pozo del Tío Raimundo and Palomeras, as well as several private housing developments in the Villa de Vallecas area. The identification of the specific locations where the footage was filmed can help explain the aesthetic choices made by the directors in the presentation of the neighbourhoods where their characters come from, making it possible to evaluate the depiction of these settings as real, dynamic, inhabited spaces. At the same time, their detailed geographical location on the Madrid map facilitates a better understanding of the discursive scope of the images offered, situating them in specific, recognisable historical urban contexts.

The analysis of establishment shots and montage sequences in these films has also sought to

evaluate the “mapping impulse” of the film medium, whereby, according to Teresa Castro (2009), cinematic images contribute to the creation and transmission of geographical knowledge. Such images reveal the history and characteristics of the locations and their effects on the people who live there, which in turn can provide opportunities for a critical reflection on the urban environment, as *quinqui* films set in Madrid do. But also, as records of the physical and social environment of the neighbourhoods where they were filmed, the images serve as important historical documents of these locations, most of which subsequently underwent profound transformations. Taken together, the images in the five films analysed here constitute an audiovisual inventory of the different types of peripheral neighbourhoods that existed in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Vallecas, one of the most representative areas of Madrid. In this context, the identification and analysis of the locations aims to contribute to the “archive city” (Roberts, 2015) of Madrid and to the development of practices related to its urban cultural memory. ■

NOTES

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- 1 To facilitate comprehension, the geographical references used throughout the article use the name Vallecas or the names of the current districts into which the historical area of Vallecas are divided, although from 1970 to 1987 the area was organised very differently, also divided into two districts but with differ-

ent names—Vallecas and Mediodía—and geographical boundaries.

- 2 I would like to thank the members of the GeoCine research group at Universidad Carlos III de Madrid for their help with the process of identifying and georeferencing some of the filming locations, as well as Le Grimh (<https://grimh.org/>), Andrés Palomino (photographer) and José Molina Blázquez (Vallecas Todo Cultura) for their contributions.
- 3 An interactive version of the map (in Spanish) can be consulted at the URL: <https://geocine.uc3m.es/mapa-quinqui/>
- 4 For more information on the urban and social evolution of Pozo del Tío Raimundo, see the documentary *Flores de luna* [Night Flowers] (Juan Vicente Córdoba, 2008). See also Campillo (2021).

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FILMIC SPACE, SOCIAL PROTEST AND URBAN MEMORY: IMAGES OF VALLECAS IN QUINQUI FILMS SET IN MADRID (1977-1981)

Abstract

This article analyses the use and filmic representation of the neighbourhoods of the Vallecas district in five *quinqui* films shot in Madrid in the period from 1977 to 1981. Specifically, it explores images shown in *Hidden Pleasures* (Los placeres ocultos, Eloy de la Iglesia, 1977), *La patria del 'Rata'* [Ratsy] (Francisco Lara Polop, 1980), *Navajeros* [Knifers] (Eloy de la Iglesia, 1980), *Chocolate* (Gil Carretero, 1980) and *Faster, Faster* (Deprisa, deprisa, Carlos Saura, 1981). Establishing shots and montage sequences that present the protagonists' neighbourhoods in each film are subjected to both spatial and textual analysis, considering the strategies of representation, the urban realities and experiences expressed through them, and the meanings given to each film by the use of these real and recognisable spaces of the city. It is argued here that taken together, the images in these films function as an audiovisual inventory of the different types of peripheral neighbourhoods that existed in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Vallecas, one of the most representative areas of Madrid. At the same time, they serve as support for a critical analysis of the space and as documents of cultural memory.

Key words

Cinema and City; *quinqui* films; Urban Periphery; Madrid; Vallecas; Madrid in Film; Spatial Representation; Filming Locations.

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ESPACIO FÍLMICO, DENUNCIA SOCIAL Y MEMORIA URBANA: IMÁGENES DE VALLECAS EN EL CINE QUINQUI MADRILEÑO (1977-1981)

Resumen

Este artículo analiza el uso y la representación filmica de los barrios de Vallecas en cinco películas de cine *quinqui* rodadas en Madrid entre 1977 y 1981. En concreto, explora las imágenes presentadas en *Los placeres ocultos* (Eloy de la Iglesia, 1977), *La patria del 'Rata'* (Francisco Lara Polop, 1980), *Navajeros* (Eloy de la Iglesia, 1980), *Chocolate* (Gil Carretero, 1980) y *Deprisa, deprisa* (Carlos Saura, 1981). Combinando análisis espacial y textual, en cada caso se ha revisado los planos de situación y las secuencias de montaje en los que se presentan los barrios de los protagonistas, atendiendo a sus estrategias de representación, las realidades y experiencias urbanas que se expresan a través de ellas y los significados que aporta a cada producción el uso de estos espacios reales y connotados de la ciudad. En su conjunto, se defiende que estas películas funcionan como un inventario audiovisual de las diferentes tipologías de barriadas periféricas existentes a finales de los setenta y comienzos de los ochenta en Vallecas, una de las áreas más representativas de la ciudad, actuando las imágenes, a la vez, como herramienta de crítica espacial y documento de memoria cultural.

Palabras clave

Cine y ciudad; cine *quinqui*; periferia urbana; Madrid; Vallecas; Madrid en el cine; representación espacial; localizaciones de rodaje.

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