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## Images and Voices from Beyond the National: How the 'Trans' Affected Spanishness in the Cinema of J.A. Bardem

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### Abstract

*This article explores how the national character or Spanishness in Juan Antonio Bardem's films was gradually compromised due to both the implications of European co-productions and, in part, to Bardem's prolific use of intertextuality and obsessive focus on the "other cinemas" as an aesthetic and cultural starting point that both suited his political vision of nationhood and his vision of cinema as an industry. It also explores how the use of foreign actors and intra-national dubbing bespoke a political and aesthetic detachment, and how commercial and marketing strategies might have ended up suffocating identity and political detachment. It suggests that while the Francoist's enforced policy of dubbing foreign films into neutral Castilian Spanish helped nationalise foreign cinema and avoid international cultural and political intoxications, the use of foreign actors to represent Spanish roles in the films of Bardem contributed to a cancellation of the nationalistic purposes of such policies. Bardem's cinema, although maintaining a detached position vis-à-vis Francoist official national narratives and aesthetics, was able to communicate Spanishness from the perspective of dissidence as long as his films were read as art cinema that contested other national cinema. On the other hand, the article also highlights the fact that the increasing tendency of co-productions with the purpose of counteracting or levelling up with the hegemony of Hollywood in Europe proved that the imbricate hybridised internalisation not only cancelled national discourses but also the identity of films, and as a consequence, of the director.*

**Keywords:** J.A. Bardem, Spanish Cinema, Transnational Cinema, Pastiche, Subtitles and nationality, European cinema

## Introduction

Juan Antonio Bardem (1922-2002) is a key cineaste if one wants to understand the evolution of Spanish cinema and its place in the history of European and World cinemas today. Since the 1950s, Bardem contested official nationalist cinema with often hermetic and symbolic narratives that spoke about Francoism's cultural backwardness, its rigid religious and moral values, and its strict repression against those who lost the Civil War. With major critical and commercial successes as *Muerte de un ciclista/Death of a Cyclist* (1955), *Calle Mayor/Main Street* (1956), Bardem achieved world recognition as an auteur, and started a career characterised by a clear fetish, hybridised transnational aestheticism. His cinema's promiscuous relationship with Italian Neorealism and the conventions of the Hollywood genre film would eventually favour a hybrid cinema, which influenced the representation and the expression of identity within the national environment of Francoism. Therefore, a study of Bardem through the post-modern lenses of transnational cinema seems most suitable to unmask certain thematic and aesthetic auteur traits, and see how they interact in order to express Spanishness or cancel Spanish nationalist ideology, and to achieve prestige within the Spanish and European cinema industries.

The first section of the article focuses on questions of transnationalism with a special focus on concepts of aesthetic and cultural hybridization. It looks at how the cinema of Bardem, since its early days, entered into a cross-section of different international discourses and aesthetics that helped counter-act the nationalist discourse of Francoism, while also favouring prestige and exoticism. In most cases, the discursive and aesthetic hybridisation in place benefited from the co-production status of some of the films, allowing the use of foreign actors, musicians, and technicians to reinforce the international value of narratives. *La Venganza/Vengeance* (1957) is a perfect example of how transnational intertextuality and cultural cross-fertilization speaks through the gaps of an Italian-Spanish co-production. This allowed Bardem to depict a divided Spanish nation through the appropriation of stylistic, generic, and narrative strategies absorbed from non-Spanish films with highly social and political innuendos, which at the same time enhanced the aesthetic value of the film.

The dubbing into neutral Castilian Spanish for non-Spanish actors who played Spanish roles in Bardem's films is the focus of the second section of the article. It explores how dubbing, although considered a practice that colonised and nationalised meaning, performance, and cultural identity, could have interfered in the national character of the film, regardless of place of production, nationality of the director, and cultural specificity of the story. It assumes that the audience's association of the aural component emanating from the dubbing actors, with the international actors compulsorily dubbed for national exhibition, would have triggered a meta-communicative effect between the work and the audience, thus effacing part of the Spanish specificity, and ultimately diminishing identity. Most of Bardem's films during Francoism benefited from the allure of European stars, who, when dubbed into Spanish, contributed to a creative internationalisation, not only through their image but also through their dubbed voices. This practice also allowed Bardem's cinema to attain aesthetic sameness vis-à-vis other European co-productions categorised as European-art cinema that sought commercial success by using different actors from different European countries, but that still were perceived as signifiers of the nationality of the director.

Last, in the final section, the article focuses on how the excessive emphasis on commercialization undertaken by some European co-productions in order to emulate and at the same time counter-act Hollywood's hegemony in the markets ended up in a complete and unnatural hybridity. With the purpose of reaching to a broader audience through celebrity actors and a director of prestige, these "Euro-puddings" not only cancelled any identification with nationality or cultural specificity, but also eradicated identification with the auteurist vision of their directors. *Los Pianos Mecánicos/The Uninhibited* (1965) was Bardem's first immersion in such bland and unnatural co-productions. Within the generic limitations of a happy-ending bittersweet melodrama, and relying on a multi-lingual and multinational cast, the film intended to show a sunny version of the 1960s views on love, sex, and their limits through a group of expatriates living in a Spanish coastal town. The film is emphatic on the idea of loss: loss of roots, loss of language, loss of love, loss of nation, and ultimately loss of ideology.

## **Bardem's transnational identities and *La Venganza/Vengeance* (1957)**

Concepts of transnational cinema are complex and divergent in film studies, in which intertextuality, pastiche, concepts of otherness, de-territorialisation, co-production, global artistic and marketing/financial strategies, and the aesthetic value of the internationalisation of cast and crew are applicable. The transnational opposes the national in many ways and fashions, and once concepts of "alien influence", "imitation of style", "quote", "homage", "the other cinema", "counter-cinema" enter into tension within the understanding and classification of cinema; we cannot exclude Bardem's cinema from that intellectual tendency. It is difficult to divide transnational cinema into subcategories. It seems studies of the transnational in film have mainly focused on marginal cinemas, cinemas labelled as "ethnic", "accented cinema", "identity cinema", "exiled cinema", "post-colonial cinema", "Third World cinema", and processes of production and marketing in the emergent and increasingly global digital distribution. All these labels can only exist with their subsequent contrary categories, "classic cinema", "genre cinema", "auteur cinema", "national cinema", and local, regional, national production and marketing processes. The binary classifications are encapsulated within a wider theoretical frame established by film scholars Elisabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden. For them, transnational cinema is 'the recognition of the decline of national sovereignty as a regulatory force in global coexistence [hence] the impossibility of assigning a fixed national identity to much cinema', regardless of 'place of production, and/or setting and the nationality of its makers and performers'.<sup>1</sup> According to Ezra and Rowden, it implies 'Hollywood's domination of world film markets' and 'the counterhegemonic responses of filmmakers from former colonial and Third World countries'.<sup>2</sup> They also observe the possibility for categorising a certain Hollywood cinema as *Transnational Hollywood*, whereby Hollywood has influenced other cinemas and at the same time been influenced by foreign films, which 'allows us to recognise the hybridity of much new Hollywood cinema'.<sup>3</sup> Not only new: Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916) was influenced by Pastrone's *Cabiria* (1914), Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront* (1954) was influenced by

<sup>1</sup> Elisabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden, "General Introduction: What is Transnational Cinema?" in *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader*, Ezra and Rowden Eds. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 2.

Neorealism as was early Scorsese with films such as *Mean Streets* (1973) or *Raging Bull* (1980).

Some directors (filmmakers, film authors) are categorised under a national cinema, and have become flagships of that national cinema; for example, Scorsese or Tarantino represent American film, Almodóvar represents Spanish national film, and François Ozon represents French film. Their films, notwithstanding, trespass frontiers of the national by means of appropriation of other cinemas, for instance, Asian cinema in *Kill Bill* (2003), the cinema of Hitchcock, Douglas Sirk or even Wilder in Almodóvar's *Volver* (2008), and Georges Cuckor's comic intrigues and Sirk's melodrama in Ozon's *8 Femmes* (2002). 'Transnationalism is not a new phenomenon'<sup>4</sup>, as Ezra and Rowden believe, an assertion shared by most scholars. 'Transnationalism is as old as cinema', as Perriam, Santaolla, and Evans state, 'which from its earliest days has been a hybrid art'<sup>5</sup>. It is not a unique post-modern trait. In fact, we can speak of European auteur transnational cinema, as in the case of *Stromboli* (Rossellini, 1950), where the transnational works at every level, from discursiveness, representations of displacement, representations of the foreigner, to practices of production, being an Italian-American co-production and distributed worldwide by RKO pictures.

Since 1954, Bardem worked with international actors, technicians, musicians, and producers that contributed to the sense of distancing both poetically and politically. Furthermore, Bardem's films were reinscriptions of discourses and aesthetics from other non-Spanish cinemas and film movements poured into the matrix of Francoist Spain. *Death of a Cyclist* replicates genre motifs of Hollywood film noir, dialogues with Neorealist testimonial discourses, adapts Antonioni's *Cronaca di un Amore/Story of a Love Affair* (1950) to the Spanish context, and imitates its poetic style. Furthermore, Bardem used three Italian actors, one of them, Lucia Bosé, playing the same role as in *Story of a Love Affair*. For *Calle Mayor*, the formula was repeated with similar transnational elements: Hollywood melodrama interacted with the Spanish farce, American Betsy Blair played the arch-type of the Spanish spinster, French-Ukrainian Michel Kelber was in charge of the film's cinematography, and French-Hungarian composer Joseph Kosma wrote part of the music score. Furthermore, the film borrowed themes and aesthetics from Fellini's *I Viteloni* (1953). This cross-fertilisation in terms of multi-national talent, discourses, and aesthetics was one of the *auteur* trademarks of Bardem's cinema for the majority of his films, especially during the 1950s and 1960s.

Certainly, the interplay of the international within the national at the level of production and postproduction becomes a layer by which to interpret and decode intention, extra meaning, reception and impact. Re-wording Perriam, Santaolalla and Evans' statement about transnational Hollywood émigré directors, we could say that Bardem intended to bring "with them [non-Spanish cast and crew] the tastes and mannerisms of their European [or other] heritage."<sup>6</sup> Certainly, we can draw similarities between the economically and culturally isolated Spain of the 1950s and early 1960s with the developing countries of today. Bardem counteracted the official nationalist cinema of Franco's Spain. However, he also competed with "the other

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>5</sup> Chris Perriam, Isabel Santaolalla and Peter W. Evans, "The Transnational in Iberian and Latin American Cinemas: Editor's Introduction," *Hispanic Research Journal* 8, no.1 (2007): 3.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 3.

cinema”, i.e., the hegemonic Hollywood and European cinema of his time, by dialoguing and deconstructing it (e.g., *Calle Mayor*). As Perriam, Santaolalla and Evans discuss, within the deconstructionist tendency in film studies there is a fascination “in recent times by the convergence of artistic and industrial talents and expertise from different cultures in the making of a film”<sup>7</sup>. If we remember that Francoism isolated the nation for almost 40 years (especially until the mid 1960s) and that Spanish cinema could be considered as marginal, even within the ever-changing boundaries of Europe as a defined political and economical entity, it would not be too far-fetched to view Spanish cinema as an emergent cinema with an inferiority complex. Therefore, looking up to Trans-Pyrenean and Trans-Atlantic cinemas and their poetics would make total sense, and consequently the use of foreign actors, musicians or directors of photography would empower that inferior cinema with artistic resources and skills not yet recognised at national level.

Perriam, Santaolalla and Evans state that “transnationalism also functions as ideology camouflaged as genre and aesthetics”, by which the act of camouflaging gives value to the ‘trans’ and reinforces the ‘national’<sup>8</sup>. They also assert that where ‘the ‘trans’ is taken by the nationally positioned cinema to signal exoticism, [it] is used to add perceived cultural depth or prestige, or is made to indicate an unproblematic, idealizing and seamless sameness across nations and industries’<sup>9</sup>. Bardem’s *La Venganza/Vengeance* (Spain-Italy, 1958), for instance, absorbed aesthetics and narrative conflicts from *Non c’è pace Gli Ulivi/ No Peace under the Olive Tree* (Giuseppe De Santis, 1950). Bardem absorbed De Santis’ main political and social objective, i.e., to show the division of farmers and the injustices of an archaic labour system, which, in turn, affects and disrupts the love story between Francesco (Raf Vallone) and Lucia (Lucia Bosé), hence the Romeo-and-Juliet-type of rural melodrama, which is also present in *La Venganza*. This strategy allowed Bardem to allegorically point at the division of Spain since the Civil War, and the suppressed history and memory of the vanquished. Apart from the appropriation of generic narrative discourses, we can see an appropriation of forms and technical devices. Both films start with a circular panoramic shot and a voice-over narrator, with similar didactic and social objectives that set the social and political tone of the films. The voice-over in *La venganza* associates the reapers of the film with the “the workers of the *risaias* of the Po region in Italy”, which clearly draws on *Riso Amaro/Bitter Rice* (1949), another film by De Santis, where the hard labour conditions of rice pickers of Northern Italy acts as the social and political setting for a story of love and murder. The third reference is to John Ford’s *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), as the voice-over narrator also pairs the reapers with “the pickers that travel from Oklahoma to Golden California”. In addition to that, we could claim that the opening sequence in the above films is not too dissimilar to Ford’s opening sequence, where Tom Joad (Henry Fonda) returns home. Moreover, the three films contain the recurring motif of a main character returning home from prison – Tom, Francesco and Juan –deprived of any riches and work opportunities. The three films operate within a social narrative that deals with labour’s hardships and depravation of work. In the middle of the film, Bardem symbolically denounces the mechanization of labour as one of the reapers

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 4. The editors are referring to an unpublished discussant note for Chris Perriam by Song Hwee Lim, ‘The Actor as Deterritorialising Body,’ presented at the Workshop on Theorising World Cinemas at University of Leeds, June 22, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

attacks a harvester machine. We could surely identify John Steinbeck's story as a direct legacy, filtered through film from Ford's adaptation. We can argue that De Santis' film also looked back at Steinbeck and Ford in order to extrapolate meaning and impact from *The Grapes of Wrath*. That may have possibly been the conceptual and visual catapult for Bardem's work too. This exercise of transnational intertextuality and cross-fertilization assured Bardem the projection and continuity of ideological concepts that were censored or self-censored. To a further matter, Raf Vallone also stars in Bardem's film, which can be read as another transnational element that bridged Bardem's film and the political and moral innuendos derived from Italian social realism. Raf Vallone was also an exotic star, whose prestige in Europe added to the prestige and cultural depth of the national character of Bardem's narrative, and of his persona. In Cannes 1958, Bardem received the Critics Prize for *La Venganza*. The film was distributed by MGM and was the first Spanish Oscar nomination in the category of foreign film in 1959, which confirmed and ratified the international projection of European co-productions. However, as Perriam, Santaolalla and Evans conclude, the hybridisation that takes part in the creation of the transnational "is not necessarily a breaking free of the boundaries and binds of the national construct"<sup>10</sup>. *La Venganza* remains a Spanish film with a Spanish director, and Spanish themes and characters. It aimed to paint a fresco of the life of peasants in Spain, and it represents Spanish specificity through a subjective point of view of its author, although in fact, it was a transnational reinscription from other cinemas. In other words, transnational cinema is a means to obtain prestige, to get closer to the "other cinemas", but at the same time, a way to speak of, boost, promote and enrich the national.

## The anti-nationalist effect of dubbing in Bardem's transnational cinema

Bardem made use of a foreign actor for the first time as early as in *Felices Pascuas/Happy Christmas* (1954), his second solo film. French actor Bernard Lajarrige had worked in Jacques Becker's *Les Rendez-vous de Juillet* (1949), French René Clair's *Les Belles des Nuit* (1952), and was a well-known theatre and film actor in France, especially with memorable supporting roles, and with an extensive and successful career going back to the 1930s. It is clear that even when considered as a minor film by Bardem himself, a sort of innocent divertimento, he did pursue an international star. The question that emerges is: why a French actor like Lajarrige? Could have not Bardem found a Spanish actor for such a role? Cerón Gómez notes that there had been previous negotiations to cast Fernando Fernán Gómez – and Elvira Quintillá, the two main characters in *Esa Pareja Feliz*. However, Lajarrige could 'secure the film's distribution in France before its production'.<sup>11</sup> The rationale behind this practise bespeaks both a market-oriented purpose and an artistic purpose. By including a French actor for a main role, the possibilities of the film entering into foreign film festivals would increase, thus the chances of being distributed abroad would increase too. On the artistic or poetic side, Bardem could get closer to the universe of two of his most admired directors, Clair and Becker, as the film would end up attaining a particular international sameness with similar French social

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>11</sup> See Juan Antonio Cerón Gómez, *El cine de Juan Antonio Bardem*, (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 1998), 112.

comedies, in which the *trans* (Lajarrige) acted as a metonymical element by which the prestige of Clair or Becker could be absorbed. The choice of Lajarrige corroborates the international and transnational character that Bardem wanted to imprint onto his cinema, a tacit desire to distance himself from the Spanish cinematic tradition. Dubbing would also contribute to this distancing from the official national discourses.

Lajarrige played Juan, a Spanish barber, and had to be dubbed into Spanish by a Spanish dubbing actor. He was dubbed by Victor Orallo, who was the Spanish voice for Dana Andrews, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Henry Fonda, Richard Carlson, Bob Hope, Fred McMurray, just to mention a few. The voice of Víctor Orallo was a familiar voice, associated in the collective sub-consciousness of cinemagoers with non-Spanish films.<sup>12</sup> For this particular case, dubbing the French into Spanish obviously required a double process: translating the lines of Lajarrige's character from the original Spanish script into French, and then dubbing them back into the Spanish original. This second process also entailed the adjustment of the words spoken by the dubbing actor to the movement of the lips of Lajarrige so that de-synchronization is minimum and almost unnoticeable. However, we do not know to what degree that also entailed cutting or changing some words in order to synchronize his lips movement with the new dubbed sound track without affecting the original meaning. Lajarrige speaks with a perfect, clear and neutral Spanish. Compared with the rest of the Spanish actors in the film, his spoken word is highly articulate. Victor Orallo, as a professional voice actor, had to perform and (re)create the required vocal nuances of Lajarrige's actual performance in consonance with the contextual situations of the scenes and the overall narrative's points and character's arch. The voice of the dubbing actor took over Lajarrige's diction, erasing the possible pragmatics of his oral nuances and paralinguistic meanings, making up new ones, and ultimately colonizing his performance through language and the act of speaking. In the final dubbed version, the one that was distributed and released in the Spanish theatres, Lajarrige's performance was transformed into a hybrid of his original gestural acting tricks or methods, and Victor Orallo's voice-acting qualities and input, which favoured the standardisation of the diction, avoiding noticeable Spanish dialects. This was not a choice but a highly politicised norm that came into force in 1940, and as many film historians agree, was part of a campaign to *españolizar* and unify the nation through an artificial neutral Castilian.<sup>13</sup> As director, Bardem would have been responsible for giving guidance to the dubbing actor too, or at least, he would have had the final say in order to approve or disapprove the outcome. The *a priori* artistic consequences are negative: meaning is always lost in translation no matter how precise and exact translators are, and the actor's performance is linguistically colonised by the voice actor. However, in terms of reception *Felices Pascuas* contained a deterritorialising element that positions the film on the sound landscape of other international productions. Lajarrige was a foreign face, and when Lajarrige spoke, the words heard were those of Orallo, a familiar voice that came from the hegemonic cinema of Hollywood and of certain European successes. For the average cinemagoer of the times, Orallo's voice was associated with Hollywood, French, or Italian cinema. When Orallo's voice reverberated in the cinema, *Felices*

<sup>12</sup> Source: [www.eldoblaje.com](http://www.eldoblaje.com), database website for Spanish dubbing of film and television. Accessed on 7 June, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Ana Ballester, "Doblaje y nacionalismo. El caso de *Sangre y Arena*," in *La traducción en los medios audiovisuales*, Rosa Agost and Feredric Chaume eds., (Castellón de la Plana: Publications de la Universitat Jaume I, 2001), 167.



*Pascuas* sounded like a foreign film translated and dubbed into Spanish. The identity of “the foreign other” was absorbed and nationalised by Orallo’s voice in the process of dubbing, while the Spanish audience internationalised its result by aural association. The estrangement of this meta-communicative effect diminished the identity of the film, creating something that was both Spanish and foreign at the same time. The film eschewed part of a preconceived notion of Spanishness through dubbing, allowing for both an internationalisation of the product in terms of national reception, and an artistic alienation from other productions with complete Spanish cast.

Spain introduced the compulsory dubbed versions of foreign films in 1941. As Caparros Lera explains, ‘above all, in a display of “Spanishness”[sic.] – in part due to the isolation we [Spain] endured – it was aimed to defend the language of the country against foreign languages and possible barbarisms’.<sup>14</sup> As a further matter, the compulsory dubbing of films also allowed the State to control and monitor the intrusion of unwanted ideological or moral values in certain dialogues, which would be changed and adjusted in the dubbed version. A well-known example of this political colonization was *Ladri di Biciclette/ Bicycle Thieves* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948). First, the censors decided to use the singular for the title, *Ladrón de Bicicletas* (Bicycle Thief) instead of the plural of the original. In other Spanish-speaking countries, the film was translated as *Ladrones de Bicicletas* (Bicycle Thieves). Moreover, the censors introduced a completely inexistent voice-over at the end of the film:

“The future appeared full of anguish before this man, but now Antonio was not alone. The warm little hand of little Bruno held in his, spoke of faith, and hope of a better world, a world in which men, called out to understand and love one another, would reach the generous ideal of a Christian solidarity.”<sup>15</sup>

Dubbing acted as a colonizing abstract whereby the original language of a film was erased, and with it, some of its cultural, moral or political components. In fact, most of the authors that have probed into the art of dubbing and its development in Spain agree that it was a form of nationalism.<sup>16</sup> In 1943, the state devised a system of dubbing licenses granted to Spanish production companies depending on their film’s classification obtained from the State’s Classification Boards and the box-office collection. This permitted the import of foreign films or the selling of the licenses to importing and distribution companies.<sup>17</sup>

Even though the consequences of dubbing foreign films undermine the artistic and cultural authenticity of the original product at many levels (meaning, performance, identity, regional and political specificity etc.), Spain extended its use without much resistance from target audiences. It is important to note that Spain had become a rather illiterate country, a situation that was aggravated during the first decades of Francoism, with an important population that could nor read nor write,

<sup>14</sup> José María Caparrós Lera, *El cine español bajo el régimen de Franco, 1936-1975*, (Barcelona: Edicions Universitat, 1983), 30.

<sup>15</sup> Román Gubern, *La censura: Fucción política y ordenamiento jurídico bajo el Franquismo (1939-1975)*, (Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 1980), 62-63, 101, 200.

<sup>16</sup> Ballester, “Doblaje y nacionalismo. El caso de *Sangre y Arena*,” 168. Ana Ballester refers to film historians such as Gubern and Font, Pozo, Vallés, Fanés.

<sup>17</sup> Caparrós Lera, *El cine español bajo el régimen de Franco, 1936-1975*, 30.

especially in the rural areas where most towns and villages had one or two cinemas. Illiterateness was a national evil rooted in the social inequality fostered by Civil War and dictatorship, – including the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1923-1930).<sup>18</sup> During Francoism, dubbing would have allowed more equality regarding the access of people to popular entertainment but dubbing was mainly successful from the economic point of view allowing more people to go to the cinema.<sup>19</sup> The only resistance to dubbing came from within the industry: producers, directors that saw it not only as an artistic attempt against authenticity but also as a threat for their own national products, which soon would be exceeded in number by American productions, with which they could not compete. There is no doubt that dubbing was an act of nationalisation of foreignness, and in the case of Spain it served as an important ideological weapon to transmit a message of stabilisation and unification, and counteract the invasion of subversive cultural or political references via the power of film. It was what Candace Whitman-Linsen coined as a “cultural filter”.<sup>20</sup>

Mark Betz explores in his useful chapter “The name above the subtitle”, from his book *Beyond the Subtitle: Remapping European Art Cinema*, what he calls the ‘soundscape of European art cinema’,<sup>21</sup> with special focus on Italian cinema during the European co-productions of the 1950s and 1960s, but also referring to similar policies and cases within German, French and Spanish cinema. Using Christian Metz’s arguments, Betz sees dubbing as ‘an ideology’, a dictatorship, which permitted the use of stars from different countries to appear in the same film, and created an ‘international aesthetic that is like Esperanto’<sup>22</sup>. Betz also associates dubbing with Fascism:

Italy, Germany and Spain, all of which faced cultural boycotts in the mid-1930s and were ruled by fascist governments that were culturally defensive, allowed only dubbed versions of foreign films. The dictators of these countries were fully aware of how hearing one’s language served to confirm its importance and reinforce a sense of national identity and autonomy.<sup>23</sup>

One of the points of Betz’s exploration, which I find of utmost relevance to connect with the anti-nationalist/Francoist expression of dubbing in Bardem’s cinema, is that dubbing creates tensions

<sup>18</sup> See Morris Aaron Horowitz, *Manpower and Education in Spain*, (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1974), 62. See also Richard Gunther, Giacomo Sani and Goldie Shabad, *Spain after Franco: The Making of a Competitive Party System*, (Berkley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 1988), 25.

<sup>19</sup> Caparrós Lera, *El cine español bajo el régimen de Franco, 1936-1975*, 120.

<sup>20</sup> Candace Whitman-Linsen, *Through a Dubbing Glass: The Synchronization of American Motion Pictures into German, French and Spanish*, (Frankfurt am Maine: Lang, 1992). Cited in Ballester, “Doblaje y nacionalismo. El caso de *Sangre y Arena*”, 168.

<sup>21</sup> Mark Betz, *Beyond the Subtitle: Remapping European Art Cinema*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 51.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 90.

between the industrial and economic determinants of European art cinema casting and the personal vision of the director, between language as a root national signifier and nation builder, and between conflicting national and international ideologies.<sup>24</sup>

In the case of Spain, national productions in the vernacular that tried to compete with Hollywood box-office's hegemony were advocated to imitating conventions, narratives, or to creating Spanishized Hollywood's character types, which resulted in a mimetic tradition that blocked auteurism and innovation. Bardem's cinema did not eschew the mimetic tradition, as we can see in *Esa Pareja Feliz/This Happy Couple* (1951), *Cómicos/Comedians* (1954), *Muerte de un Ciclista* (1955), or *Calle Mayor* (1956). However, the multiplicity of influences from specific film movements (Italian Neorealism, French social and poetic realism, Soviet cinema), the critical subjectivity of narratives, the excessive aestheticism, and the symbolic content and characters, place his cinema on a difficult plane between European art cinema and European commercial cinema, especially after his successes in auteur-oriented film festivals like Cannes (*Bienvenido Mr. Marshal/Welcome Mr. Marshal* [as screenwriter], *Cómicos*, *Muerte de un Ciclista*) and Venice (*Calle Mayor*). His name was a brand that functioned as a mark of Spanish national cinema within Europe, as a European counterpoint for contemporary American directors in Film Festivals, and thus as a European sign of homogeneity together with French or Italian directors, to mention two national cinemas to which Bardem felt close.

As we gather from Betz, during the period of the European co-productions of the '50s and '60s, language became a sign of identity that attached the film and its director/author to a specific nation and culture.<sup>25</sup> European films of the 1950s and 1960s, however, had to resort to dubbing in order to keep language a predominant sign of nationality. Co-financing was a way to counteract big Hollywood productions, to become more popular and hence more commercial, but also diminished the authenticity of films in which actors from other European countries, or even from Hollywood, had to be dubbed into the language of the director, simply because they played the role of native characters. Betz states that these co-productions, aiming to compete with Hollywood in the box-office, were traditionally 'read as unnatural hybrids, as compromises of the *auteur's* vision or as cautionary examples of the damage brought upon Western European cinematic traditions by the commercialism and manifest destiny inherent in Hollywood's colonizing interests in Europe'<sup>26</sup>. This commercialisation or internationalisation also reached a certain European art film, in which we can include Bardem's cinema (*La Venganza*, *Sonatas*, *Los Pianos Mecánicos*). The opportunity to work or include European actors opened access to bigger budgets, and wider possibilities of international distribution; however the *auteur's* trademarks diminished, as did the specificity of the national. Bardem's *Los Pianos Mecánicos* is without a doubt a good example of it: a Spanish-French co-production, shot in French, on location in Spain, starring James Mason (UK), Melina Mercouri (Greece) and Hardy Krüger (Germany), and dubbed into Spanish by professional voice-actors, in which Bardem's previous critical subjectivity on the national is inexistent. On the other hand, when films fell within the label of European art cinema, as Betz believes, they were 'left free to carry on as signifiers of stable national cinemas and identities or as gleaming expressions of their *auteur's* vision, which has somehow been blurred by the determinants of cross-national

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 54.

cooperation that leave their marks everywhere on art films<sup>27</sup>. To what extent is the above statement true for Bardem's cinema? Was his cinema left free to carry on as a signifier of Spanish national cinema and identity and as a gleaming expression of Bardem's *auteurist* vision? To what degree does the expression of dubbing (although produced in co-operation with other European countries) in films that carry the mark of a particular national product affect the identity of the film, or its authenticity?

When dubbing occurred intra-nationally, i.e., when the inclusion of foreign actors playing the part of national characters entailed dubbing their voices into the language of the ascribed language, then the colonization of a language/culture by another language/culture through dubbing, rather than protect and monitor unwanted ideological signifiers, bespeak a necessity to transcend intra-national commercial boundaries. By the same token, it indicates European cultural homogeneity and certainly a loss of national character, although the international audiences/critics, who availed of the less intrusive subtitled versions, would have still associated the national paradigms of the film with those of the language and the country of origin of the director. This permitted French actor Alain Delon to play Italian characters in Visconti's *Rocco and his brothers*, or in Antonioni's *L'éclipse* (1962), and French actress Jean Moreau to star in Antonioni's *La Notte* (1961), without affecting the national constructs of the film nor the *auteur's* singularities. In Bardem's case, it allowed Lucia Bosé (Italy), Betsy Blair (United States), Raff Vallone (Italy), Jean Pierre Casell (France), or Nikolas Grace (UK) – who played poet Federico García Lorca in *Lorca, Muerte de un Poeta/Lorca, Death of a Poet* (1987) – to play Spanish characters, while the film, as the language of the final copy, remained Spanish. But how were those two parameters perceived at home when hearing the dubbed versions? In the case of Bardem, did it affect his projection as an *auteur* or the national perception of films?

Pouring our post-modernist gaze on 1950s Spain, we can only imagine, hypothesise about how it would have been, as there is no research nor data collected from audience's responses during the period. For instance, *Death of Cyclist*, as Cerón Gómez clarifies, had got its shooting permit as a Spanish production, but Bardem delayed the production in order to engage Italian Trionfalcine and thus integrate Lucia Bossé, which was the star in Antonioni's *Cronaca di un Amore/Story of a Love Affair*,<sup>28</sup> Bruna Corra (Matilde) and Otello Tosso (Miguel). Otello Tosso and Lucia Bossé played husband and wife, performed in Italian and were dubbed into Spanish. When they interact in a scene together, the film appears to be an Italian film translated and dubbed into Spanish, just as any film by De Sica or Antonioni would have sounded.

Dubbing foreign films into Spanish allows for a linguistic and cultural reinterpretation of films, since translation can never transmit the original in its totality, it rather re-transmits it. Therefore, the dubbed version projects an artistically, culturally and linguistically modified version of the original, adapted to the target audience. Further to the de-authentication through translation and adaptation, dubbing creates a parallel sound reality, which for me is the driving force of the distance and estrangement that dubbing created in some of Bardem's films. During the 1950s and 1960s, the process would erase accents, regional or ethnic, as voice-actors had to adjust their diction and intonation to neutral Castilian Spanish, as they did when

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Cerón Gómez, *El cine de Juan Antonio Bardem*, 122-123.

dubbing American or European films. This also rendered a completely new performance, whereby the original actor lost part of their performance, by losing their voice. However, audiences were used to it immediately, and began to associate foreign films with a specific aural construct. This aural construct contains a distinctive syntax, which is less idiomatic, less authentic than the original after the filtering/adaptation process of translation. Hence, we can argue that dubbed versions of films are travesties of their original, received, perceived, and accepted as genuine by the audience thanks to the artistic efforts of translators and voice-actors in combination with the linguistic suspension of disbelief of the audience.

When this happened in national films using international stars, we may argue that this linguistic suspension of disbelief of the audience cancelled nationalism, and projected internationalisation, which is the opposite effect to that pursued by the Francoist regime. Via this creative distance of dubbing, hearing Lucia Bosé or Betsy Blair speaking Spanish deterritorialises the identity of the film. The parallel sound reality and the meta-communication between audience and sound, creates an artistic equivalence between foreignness and Spanishness, and cancels the efforts of national unification and protection, displacing preconceptions of Spanishness and embracing the world of international cinema via dubbing. As Betz states ‘gestures and facial expressions that mark national character and acting styles are lost in translation’<sup>29</sup>, but when this occurred within national products directed by a national director, those marks remained and lived in conflict with national gestures and facial expressions associated with Spanish acting style and national character. With dubbing Bardem paid Francoism in kind. It endowed his cinema with the power to mitigate, fight, and cancel the intended nationalism rooted in Fascism. It also reinforces the idea of distancing, where dubbing acts as another element that slowly pushes his cinema towards internationalisation. Both the actor’s and the voice actor’s new aural reality associated with foreign films act as the *trans* that carry signifiers of the other while representing the self. It also clarifies why native critics doubted and questioned the Spanishness of his cinema, while foreign critics still saw it as a signifier of Spanish national cinema.

Elsa Fábregas was the habitual voice for Vivien Leigh, Maureen O’Hara, Doris Day, Gena Rowlands, and Ingrid Bergman, amongst a long list of other European and Hollywood stars. She was the dubbing actor for Lucía Bosé in *Muerte de un Ciclista*, Betsy Blair in *Calle Mayor*, and Jean Seberg in *La Corrupción de Chris Miller/The Corruption of Chris Miller* (1973), which conveyed a different and foreign ring to the diction and presence on film of non-Spanish actresses. There were familiar faces, with an alluring presence, foreign mannerisms drawing on specific cultural body language, and profoundly linked to the iconography of dominant cinemas and critical and financial successes by means of dubbing. Their acting style and expressivity through performance also conveyed an international mark that created estrangement, especially in parallel with the specificity of Spanish acting style and mannerisms of native actors. The list is vast, including Bruna Corrá and Otello Tosso (Italy, *Muerte de un Ciclista*), Dora Doll (France, *Calle Mayor*), Yves Massard (France, *Calle Mayor*), Raf Vallone (Italy, *La Venganza*), Jean-Pierre Cassel (France, *Nunca pasa nada/Nothing Ever Happens*).

<sup>29</sup> Betz, *Beyond the Subtitle: Remapping European Art Cinema*, 50.

## Loss in trans-nation: the loss of the auteur's voice in *Los pianos mecánicos/The Uninhibited* (1965)

For *Los Pianos Mecánicos/The Uninhibited* (Spain-France-Italy, 1965) the cast was mostly international. Bardem would cast emergent Greek talent Melina Mercouri, dubbed again by Elsa Fabregas; James Mason, dubbed by his usual voice actor Francisco Sánchez; and German actor Hardy Krüger, dubbed by Jesús Nieto, habitual voice actor for Cary Grant. With *Los Pianos*, Bardem achieved a total detachment from Spanish cinema in terms of cast. The film benefited from the foreign allure of the international presence on screen of familiar faces and recognisable voices of dubbed Hollywood productions. They were actual high profile, successful stars of the time, as was James Mason after *Lolita* (Kubrick, 1962) or *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (Thomas Mann, 1964); and Golden Globe award nominee Melina Mercouri after *Phaedra* (Jules Dassin, 1962), *The Victors* (Carl Foreman, 1963), and *Topkapi* (Jules Dassin, 1964).<sup>30</sup> However, the *auteurist* vision achieved in previous production vanished.

*Los Pianos Mecánicos* is the perfect example of the so-called “Euro-pudding”, a type of film with ‘a policy-driven mixing of performers from various countries and cultural traditions’<sup>31</sup>; a category disassociated from art cinema and auteur vision, an unnatural hybrid, as we have discussed above, unable to ‘secure embodiments of nationhood’<sup>32</sup>. The loss of the prefix ‘art’ cancelled his political and artistic value. As Betz’s explains, the “Euro-pudding” was the object of severe criticism from European directors and producers, since it cancelled national discourses, and favoured the continuity of the hegemony of Hollywood, which both served as the target-model in terms of production values, while being the cinema meant to be counteracted.

*Los Pianos Mecánicos* marks the total departure of Bardem from European *auteur* cinema. It portrayed the liberalised, but morally corrosive, world of ex-pats in Cadaqués (Spain) – in the film with the fictionalised name of Caldeya– but failed to address issues that had been capital for the raise of Bardem as an auteur in the previous decade. In other words, the Euro-pudding cancelled the linguistic and cultural nationalism of Francoism but also the anti-Francoist counter-discourse embedded in previous narratives, since the characters are not attached to any national construct. They are loss in an environment that they do not contest, an environment that is a utopian paradise in a politically and morally dystopian system. While Bardem gave voice to a suppressed Spanish identity in previous films, even when played by international actors, *Los Pianos Mecánicos* proved that an excess of internationalisation could not speak the truth to power nor dismantle the nationalist discourse. In fact, the film itself becomes a representation of the loss of identity, or loss of the accented self, as if Bardem anticipated metaphorically his own loss of authorial voice. This is very clear from the start. The three main characters are played by three actors from different nationalities, and have different origins and mother tongues. In the diegesis of the film, they use Spanish (French in the original version never meant to be in the released print) as a lingua franca, but also other languages for their daily communicative activities. Regnier (James Mason) salutes the people he crosses in town in different languages. He speaks Spanish but he also mixes it with

<sup>30</sup> All the information and data about dubbing actors is from [www.eldoblaje.com](http://www.eldoblaje.com)

<sup>31</sup> Betz, *Beyond the Subtitle: Remapping European Art Cinema*, 56.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

English words or Italian catchy phrases: “La comedia es finita”, he says when a noisy group gather around a young girl who has failed to commit suicide with antidepressants in Jenny’s (Melina Mercouri) hotel-bar. The loss of language draws on the loss of identity, which is manifested in the scene in which Regnier invents an alphabet using an orange to communicate with a younger lover who does not speak any of his languages. First, he gives her lover a new name, and then he communicates with her through an object, a direct allusion to the deification of his lover and of language itself. There are only five words in this new language: sun, food, sleep, fuck and drink. The simplicity of the language created by Reigner draws on the simplicity of the Euro-pudding itself. Furthermore, the words Reigner needs in order to communicate with his lover manifest the basic forage upon which Hollywood commercial romantic comedies were constructed. The international pretension of the story extends not only to linguistic paradigms but also to sociological ones. The characters discuss modern international art and politics, but not a mention of Spanish affairs. As the film aimed to counteract Hollywood’s supremacy, as were most Euro-pudding productions, it ‘collectively bespeaks contemporary fears of American cultural imperialism and predicts the erosion of national cultures in the wake of globalisation’<sup>33</sup>.

## Conclusions

As we have discussed, Bardem’s cinema was a cinema of contestation, anti-Francoist in its ideological premises, and anti-Spanish in its poetic constructiveness. The inclusion of foreign actors and the necessity of dubbing added another layer of poetic and political distance from traditional Francoist productions. Together with transnational reinscriptions of aesthetics and discourses, the iterative practice of using foreign actors to represent national bodies becomes a surreptitious trait of the hybrid style of Bardem’s cinema. The result was commercially strategic, aesthetically enhancing, and politically subversive. The strange but effective para-cinematic communication achieved through dubbing between work/author and audience allowed his cinema to become closer to the cinemas and authors Bardem wanted to emulate, to eschew national/Francoist inclusion, and at the same time he remained an emergent Spanish auteur in the eyes of the European critics and audiences. However, as *Los Pianos Mecánicos* demonstrates, when Bardem resorted to international stars to play international bodies from a disparity of origins and languages, the critical foundation of the para-cinematic communication vanished, and identity was displaced to the void of the sameness of hegemonic, big-budget, genre-oriented, commercial Hollywood productions.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

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