

THE FEMME FATALE
IN RICARDO GASCÓN'S CINEMA OF THE FORTIES:
CUANDO LOS ÁNGELES DUERMEN
[WHEN ANGELS ARE ASLEEP]

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The context in which Ricardo Gascón's cinema emerges is complex. It is a decade in which all production is normalized with the intention of controlling it. In order to understand the presence of the *femme fatale* in a cinema with such particular characteristics for this kind of character, explaining the history of the concept and the referential framework upon which the term is modeled might help the reader of this article to familiarize themselves with it. The echo coming from the press of that time represents the social gaze towards this character – directed by the Franco regime – and, at the same time, the dictation of the character's expectations. Thus, Gascón's film that contains the *femme fatale*, as we will see here, is constructed on the basis of this cinema and this public.

1. SPANISH CINEMA IN THE 40S

The public powers before the Civil War did not define a serious and exhaustive cinematographic policy, so the new regime made the most of this in order to install a very clear one. As Monterde notes: "[...]always to the service of the system of interests which structured the new regime, submitting cinematographic activity above all to two forms of control: repression and protection" (188). For such a mission, a complex framework of state organisms was created, that was continually modified at the same time as the regime's general politics: in the middle of the War, the year 1937, the *Delegación de Prensa y Propaganda* was created, and within this the *Departamento Nacional de Cinematografía* was born, in the year 1938. On the flip side, the *Subcomisión Reguladora de Cinematografía* appeared in 1939, made up of producers, intellectuals and directors. In 1941 the cinematographic competencies were transferred to the *Vicesecretaría de Educación Popular de FETE y de las JONS*, within which the *Delegación Nacional de Cinematografía y Teatro* was born. In the year 1942 the *Sindicato Nacional del Espectáculo* (SNE) was created, which substituted the *Subcomisión Reguladora*.. Its power was short lived, given that in 1945 the cinematographic competencies were transferred to the new *Subsecretaría de Educación Popular*, correspondent of the *Ministerio de Educación Nacional*, which showed very clearly the predominance of the catholic sectors over the *falangistas* in terms of the control of propaganda and cinema, all brought about by the defeat of the Axis powers in that same year. In this way, we can claim that cinema, between 1939 and 1951, was under the influence of four state departments: Government, Commerce and Industry, *Secretaría General del Movimiento* and National Education.

In terms of the policy of control, the first decade of the Francoist dictatorship offered three

clear mechanisms of control: censorship, prior supervision (censorship) of cinematographic scripts and the *NO-DO*. The censorship was the most evident, despite the fact that compulsory dubbing of films was decisive. The censorship appeared just after the Nationalist camp's declaration of war. Gubern defines censorship in the following way: "Censorship is, in principle, a restriction of liberty of information and/or expression. From this point of view, the object of censorship is the messages which circulate between transmitters and receptors of information [...]"¹ (8), contained within the debate that the author establishes regarding censorship during the dictatorship.

Thereafter, the *Junta Superior de Censura Cinematográfica* was established in 1938, with its head office in Salamanca and with the "[...]moral supervision of cinema in its political, religious, pedagogical and military aspects" as its aim, as Monterde notes (188). Furthermore, there was also a prior censorship of cinematographic scripts in place. First of all, on the part of the *Servicio Nacional de Propaganda* and, later, motivated by the aim of creating the *Dirección General de Propaganda*, they ceased to define the powers that the Higher Board and the Commission of Cinematographic Censorship held, which was the institution that was charged with the day-to-day jobs: the supervision of domestic film scripts to be shot, the concession of filming licenses, the licenses to exhibit Spanish and foreign films that were displayed in Nationalist territory and the film ratings in relation to the diverse ages of the public. However, the bases of its function was not written down in any document, which made the work of the script writers and directors difficult when it came to volunteering material that would be later damaged by a censor.

The third mechanism of control was the creation of the newsreel *NO-DO*. Following the Italian model *LUCE*, from 1943 onwards editing any newsreel or documentary of any type other than the *NO-DO* was prohibited. Furthermore, no cinematographic operator could obtain reports unless they belonged to the *NO-DO* and, to top off this information monopoly, the following was dictated: "[...][*NO-DO*] will be projected by obligation in every cinematographic locale in Spain and its possessions during their sessions"² (Tranche-Sánchez Biosca, 593).

The philosophy of this censorship was configured differently for the cinema produced in Spain, a discrimination that Gubern explains in the following way: "[...]the phases and mechanisms of such a censorship apparatus were configured differently for the cinema produced in Spain and the cinema produced abroad, a discrimination that disfavored Spanish cinema and was inherent to its own legal regulations (which would constitute a subject of permanent complaint within professional circles)[...]"³, and that was greatly

1 "[...] La censura es, en principio, una restricción de la libertad de información y/o expresión. Desde este punto de vista, el objeto de la censura son los mensajes que circulan entre emisores y receptores de la información[...]"

2 Original text in Spanish: "[...] se proyectará, con carácter obligatorio, en todos los locales cinematográficos de España y sus posesiones durante las sesiones de los mismos"

3 "...las fases y mecanismos de tal aparato censor se configuraban como diversos para el cine producido en España y para el cine producido en el extranjero, discriminación censora desfavorable para el cine español e inherente a la propia normativa legal (lo que constituiría un tema permanente de queja en los medios profesionales)..."

detrimental to domestic production. This author speaks to us about six identifiable mechanisms of the censorship apparatus: "[...]1. Prior censorship of the script; 2. Subsequent censorship of the finished film; 3. Linguistic censorship amongst the distinct national identities of the State (compulsory use of Castilian Spanish); 4. Censorship exercised by the selectivity of state economic protection; 5. Prohibition of the production, distribution and exhibition of newsreels (monopoly of the NO-DO); 6. Censorship of the films' advertising materials[...]".⁴ Meanwhile, the censorship exercised over foreign cinema imported to Spain only contained the following points that Gubern resumes: "[...]1. Prohibition of original versions (compulsory use of dubbing); 2. Censorship of each film; 3. Prohibition of distributing and exhibiting foreign newsreels; 4. Censorship of the films' advertising materials"⁵ (81).

As well as all these kinds of censorship, a moral censorship criterion was established for the cinema. The magazine *Primer Plano*, in the year 1946, reproduced a summary of two pages, based on a lecture by Francisco Ortiz Muñoz. In regards to the criteria and norms of moral censorship, we read: "[...]To the cinema one can bring hard and raw human problems, infidelities, the dramas and tragedies of life,...as long as they come under these three conditions: that the intention be proper, noble and decent; that the development of the anecdote and its visual production be decorous and meticulous, without pornography or concessions to the lascivious instinct, and that the ending be exemplary or instructive"⁶ (*Primer Plano*, no.298).

Spanish production was also encouraged with incentives in a deceptive way. As Monterde explains: "[...]the more films they produced, the greater number of foreign films that were imported, in such a way as to reduce the possibilities of the Spain's own cinema in its natural market and the speculative attitude concerning the professionalism that went into production was boosted, turning the producer into a mere intermediary"⁷ (197-8). The protectionist framework was going to broaden in so far as screening was concerned, establishing a screen quota, that was variant from the year 1941 –one week of Spanish cinema per six weeks of foreign cinema, - to 1944, when the number of weeks for foreign cinema was reduced to five: "[...]But furthermore, one took the aberrant position that any Spanish film that ran over the initial week of screening was not recompensed with the accumulation of excess days in favor of subsequent foreign films, in such a way so that what

4 "1. Censura previa del guión; 2. Censura posterior de la película concluida; 3. Censura idiomática en las nacionalidades del Estado (obligatoriedad del castellano); 4. Censura ejercida por la selectividad de la protección económica estatal; 5. Prohibición de la producción, distribución y exhibición de noticiarios (monopolio del NO-DO); 6. Censura del material publicitario de las películas".

5 "...1. Prohibición de las versiones originales (obligatoriedad del doblaje); 2. Censura de cada película; 3. Prohibición de distribuir y exhibir noticiarios extranjeros; 4. Censura del material publicitario de las películas."

6 Original text in Spanish: "Al cine pueden llevarse los problemas humanos duros y crudos, las infidelidades, los dramas y tragedias de la vida,...siempre que se den estas tres condiciones: que la intención sea recta, noble y digna; que el desarrollo de la anécdota y su realización plástica sean decorosos y pulcros, sin pornografía ni concesiones al instinto lascivo, y que el desenlace sea ejemplar o aleccionador."

7 "Cuántas más producciones se realizasen, mayor número de filmes extranjeros se importaba, de forma que disminuían las posibilidades del propio cine español en su mercado natural y se propulsaba la actitud especulativa por encima de la profesionalidad en la producción, convirtiendo al productor en un mero intermediario."

was in principle a support for Spanish cinema turned into its limitation[...]"(200). What is more, another consistent channel of gratification was accorded in the *premios*, the most relevant of which were awarded by the *Sindicato Nacional del Espectáculo*, under the epigraph 'National Premios of Cinematography'. From 1945 onwards, various *premios* of an artistic character also appeared emulating the Hollywood Oscars, with the presentation of a diploma and an artistic object.

All the methods exposed up till now had a bearing on the finished product and took as its point of departure the finished Nationalist films. The necessary support in order for these films to be carried out was the instrument created for such an end, the so-called syndical credit. The requirements were the submittal of the script, the film budget, the financial plan and the artistic and technical teams. Thus, a credit of up to 40% of the budget was provided, which was returned in monthly payments starting from the moment of the film's operation. Porter i Moix has spoken about the difficult times and of industrial waste: "[...]it is particularly sad and distressing that no one was able to make the most of, due to political and cultural circumstances, the relative liberty of the 1931-1939 period... the decade from 1941-1950 turned out to be more regular, not because something really notable was done, but rather precisely because we have the excuse that one only did what one could do[...]"⁸ (223).

Finally, Domènec Font speaks to us about the type of cinema from this period as being the years of autarky: "[...] autarky – and the state interventionism that legitimized it – mark the guidelines for a politics of development of financial capital through the concentration of the banking sector. This sector turned into the principle financial source for the industrialization process with systems of credits and guarantees, in the face of the difficulty of getting hold of foreign capital"⁹(75).

All of the facts mentioned thus far revert into a clearly poor industry, as Monterde explains: "[...]close to half a thousand films were produced by some one hundred and fifty five companies, which reveals that the atomization of the film industry into small companies was one of the most deficient characteristics of that time, although in fact extendible to the whole history of Spanish cinema" (204). Furthermore, the author, as of the key date of 1939, establishes three demarcated groups of filmmakers of artistic or professional prominence: the veterans emerging from silent cinema, the members of the generation born with the Republic and those that debuted at the end of the Civil War. Of the first group, of particular importance are Benito Perojo and Florián Rey. Of the second group, José Buchs, Fernando Delgado, Francisco Elías, José Gaspar, Eusebio Fernández Ardavín, Ricardo Gascón, José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, Edgar Neville, Luis Marquina, Eduardo García Maroto, Ingacio F. Iquino, Luis Buñuel and Carlos Velo. The latter two clearly opted for a commercial

⁸ "Resulta particularmente triste y angustioso que no se hubiese podido aprovechar, por circunstancias políticas y culturales, la relativa libertad del período 1931-1939...la década de 1941-1950 resulta más normal, no porque se hiciese alguna cosa realmente notable, sino precisamente porque tenemos la excusa que sólo se hizo aquello que se podía."

⁹ "La autarquía -y el intervencionismo estatal que la legitima- marcan la pauta de una política de desarrollo del capital financiero mediante la concentración del sector bancario convertido en la principal fuente financiadora del proceso de industrialización, gracias al sistema de créditos y avales y ante la dificultad para la entrada de capitales extranjeros."

cinema. In the third group, with the absence of Luis Buñuel and Carlos Velo, we find a new generation of film directors during the first post-war years: Rafael Gil, Antonio del Amo, Antonio Román, Carlos Serrano de Osma, Juan de Orduña and Luis Lucía.

José Luis Guarner, in an article for the magazine *Fotogramas*, makes reference to the priorities of the producers of that time: “[...]During this time, in their legitimate desire to be moral, the only thing that our filmmakers managed to do was to be moralizing: the more they strove to be exemplary, the more than distanced themselves from reality, from life, that is, from love”¹⁰ (*Fotogramas*, no.1019).

In so far as the Spanish production is concerned, between 1939 and 1950 there are, according to official records, 442 titles. However, the productive level of some producers stand out such as for example Cifesa, with 41 films, Suevia films, with 38, Emisora films, with 25; Faro y Pesca, with 9, Manuel del Castillo, Peninsular Filmes, Sagitario Filmes and Usifa, with seven, amongst the most relevant. As this author confirms, apart from the case of Cifesa, Suevia and Emisora, for production it turned out to be complicated to establish production plans, build company infrastructure and organize distribution agreements. As regards financing, in the words of the author: “[...]the financing of Spanish cinema depended much more –as someone said– on the orange harvest or the aspirations of some chorus girl lover of some rich black market dealer than on public or private banking.”¹¹

During the decade of the 40s, Cifesa, in contrast to the majority, experienced its greatest splendor. It had been created by Casanova in the 30s, and was dedicated to production and distribution, its productions being of a clear Francoist color. Cifesa’s objective was to constitute a study of a Hollywood kind, promoting the long-term contracting of artists and technicians, producing films that assigned themselves to well defined genres, and searching for a style that allowed them to stand out from the rest of the Nationalist production and provide them the possibility of penetrating deep into the Hispano-American market. However, Suevia films, created by Cesáreo González, constituted itself as the competition over the predomination of Cifesa from the middle of the decade onwards. Directed by Cesáreo González, Suevia Films placed itself as the most relevant producer and distributor as of the second half of the decade. It started in New York, where it opened a distribution head office, but its big objective was Latin America. In the words of Castro de Paz y Cerdán: “[...]the great entrepreneurial operation that Suevia Films Cinematographic Distributions prepared is without doubt in Latin America – these “twenty Spanish speaking nations” of which the necessity for cinematographic conquering was repeated over and over again.”¹² (70). This way the producer and distributor established commercial relations with the United

10 “Durante esta época, en su legítimo deseo de ser morales, lo único que nuestros cineastas consiguieron fue ser moralizantes: cuanto más se empeñaban en ser ejemplares, más se alejaban de la realidad, de la vida, es decir, del amor”.

11 “[...]la financiación del cine español dependió mucho más –como alguien dijo– de la cosecha de la naranja o de las aspiraciones de alguna vicetiple amante de cualquier ricachón estraperlista que no de la banca pública o privada.”

12 “[...]la gran operación empresarial que Suevia Films Distribuciones Cinematográficas preparaba está sin duda en América latina –esas “veinte naciones de habla española” cuya necesidad de conquista cinematográfica González repetía una y otra vez.”

States, Mexico and Argentina. For its part, the producer based in Barcelona Emisora Films was created in 1943 and was directed by Ignacio F. Iquini until 1949, when he started up his own company. Emisora's productions were controlled at the level of investment and objectives, despite the fact that they managed to dynamize the studies in Barcelona. However, it is important to stress that we are talking about some relatively modest levels of production, with Cifesa producing between eight and ten annual productions, - and as of 1944 no more than 4; Suevia Films with a maximum quota of six titles and Emisora Films with a average between two and three films per year.

On the other hand, the conditions of the country's isolation frustrated the possibility for co-productions. It was not until 1950 that a certain normalization is noted, that would increase continually over the decade of the 50s. Only some co-productions took place, these being with Italy and Portugal. Although maladroit with the exterior, the industry maintained a strong dependence on the outside for its existence in regards to the provision of raw materials, the celluloid and the technical equipment inherent in production. All of these industrial difficulties were seen in the crisis that took place mid-decade. The specialized press of that era echoed this fact, whilst at the same time it is from 1944 onwards that an abrupt decline in the productions is noted in comparison with the quotas of just the two preceding years. One particular article brings to light the emerging crisis in Spanish cinema, despite its eagerness to put the lid on it by presenting praiseful articles. In an editorial for the magazine *Primer Plano*, we can read: "[...] The spectator of Spanish cinema has been born with a sixth sense, which is the sense of understanding our own things. Above all, in contrast with the foreign"¹³(*Primer Plano* no.377). Furthermore, and in a less triumphant tone, Sáenz Guerrero interviewed Sidney Horen, supervisor for 20th century Fox in Spain, Portugal and North Africa, in 1947. In the interview, they are commenting on the state of Spanish cinema and the tastes of the public"[...]Sydney Horen beats us to our intentions by speaking to us about Spanish productions, asking herself – and us – about the causes that determine the disfavor on behalf of the Spanish towards its cinematographic productions... some have told me that there was a spell of bad films, and that could have influenced the public's spirits [...]"¹⁴(no. 8).

Despite the crisis in the sector, the means that were taken were fairly light: the proportion of dubbing licenses for each Spanish film produced was altered, and doubles of programs were banned in order to thus resolve the film's capacity and manage to cover the distribution needs, amongst others.

2. WHO IS THE *FEMME FATALE*

In order to explain the history of the concept *femme fatale*, it is necessary to go back to

13 "[...]Ha nacido el espectador de cine español con sexto sentido, que es el sentido de comprensión para nuestras propias cosas. Sobre todo, en contraste con las foráneas."

14 "[...]Sidney Horen se anticipa a nuestra intención para hablarnos de la producción española, interrogándose a sí mismo – y a nosotros- sobre las causas que condicionan el disfavor de parte de los españoles hacia sus realizaciones cinematográficas...unos me han dicho que hubo una racha de películas deficientes, y que eso puede haber influido en el ánimo del público[...]”

the end of the 19th century. Even though it was not a usual expression, *femme fatale* is already detailed in the Oxford English Dictionary. A letter from G. B. Shaw in 1912, which the editors included in the 1972 edition of this same dictionary, is evidence of its use at the beginning of the century. Thanks to the editors, today we have proof of this.

Allen, in her study on the iconography of the *femme fatale* in the plastic arts, concludes that the original source of the term is the obscure place of conceptual duality in the feminine eternal, that is, the dichotomy Mary/Eve. This is dichotomy between two female typologies that represent two existing types of women of relevant importance at that time, both visually and in terms of character. Yet it is difficult to define the 'obscure place' that Allen speaks to us of, as it is undefined and we can only base our assumptions on visual, written and, later, sonorous documentation in order to define it with any precision. What is clear, however, is that this duality existed and still exists, and it helps us to define in more detail these two opposites and at the same time the distance that separates them from one another. The author is one of the first to claim that the expression *femme fatale* itself emerged from 1900 onwards, whilst the images that the authors refer to when they were using it emerged before 1900. Doane reiterates the claims that Allen makes in regards to the dates and adds that, as an emerging and central figure of the 19th century, it is very relevant to the texts of writers such as Théophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire, and in the works of painters such as Gustave Moreau and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, amongst many others. But it is Mario Praz who really explored in greater depth the archetype of the *femme fatale* in relation to romantic literature and then calls this archetype '*mujer fatal*'. Despite this fact, given the omnipresent nature of its imaginary, there has been a relatively limited study into that which concerns its historical emergence. Praz is considered the first scholar that specified in any rigorous way a historical and social framework and a broad number of examples in order to discover the feminine figure that was the *femme fatale*. This historical-social framework was illustrated with significant examples from English, French and Italian art and literature.

Allen adds that there has been a general tendency to call practically any image of a seductive woman *femme fatale*, even those that initially do not have a malign appearance, but that can reveal some kind of character that is not stereotypical, that is to say, that does not repeat itself and is unknown. In as far as what concerns the use of the expression in this early period, we cannot claim that it was Shaw who invented it, but rather the fact that this author used the expression in one of his letters in 1912 was a direct consequence of the frequency of its use during those times. It could be that it appeared in oral use and passed to written language through more popular journalism that was able to embrace it: theatre and theatrical reviews. This fact illustrates the Anglo-Saxon conviction that sexy and erotically dangerous women 'were' normally French and, expressed in other terms, all French women 'were' sexy. In fact, this was a belief not at all documented and unjustified if not for the fact that, geographically, the abundance of women in cabarets, cafés with live music and music-halls in the French capital had led to this conclusion. Furthermore, the concept of the French evil, the syphilis illness, could have been detected as an evil brought about by women; French women as promoting men's disaster.

As far as the linguistic inclusion of the expression *femme fatale* in the dictionaries is concerned, it was not detailed in the encyclopedic dictionary *Pequeño Larousse*

Illustré but it did indeed appear as part of the definition of the adjective 'fatal', in which it was accorded a brief description at the end of the entry in question which dictated; "who seduces irresistibly" (419), and for "vamp" we find "English word; star of the cinema that interprets the role of the *femme fatale*". To define "vampirism", it states the following: "a skill they have with which they make themselves rich off of the good fortune of others" (1062). From this definition we can conclude that the *femme fatale* sucks from others, not necessarily material goods but rather any item, feeling, person or situation which could be useful for them in a determined moment in order to get where they need to be.

The Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language does not contain the expression *femme fatale* or 'fatal woman', but it does contain that word which we have already begun to accept within what would be the world of moving pictures and that represents a synonym for the Anglo-Saxon world; the word "vamp", that is defined in the following way: "A woman of seductive charm and sensuality that does not have any scruples about exploiting men", and is followed by a second definition which explains the transitive form of the verb "vamp" and reads: "to use one's feminine seductive charms to seduce"¹⁵ (1579). As regards the definition and the use of the expression, the twenty-first edition of the *Diccionario de la lengua española* (RAE) defines *femme fatale* as "she whose power of amorous attraction gives rise to an unhappy end for herself or for all who she attracts. Applied principally to fictional characters, mainly from the cinema, and to the actresses that represent them" (1414). In a parallel way, the word "vampiress" is defined as a "woman that makes the most of her ability for amorous seduction in order to benefit at the expense of those that she seduces" | | 2. *femme fatale*"(2059). On the other hand, the *Diccionario de la lengua catalana* does not include the expression *femme fatale*, despite the fact that it offers a definition of 'vampiress' which is defined as a "woman who uses her erotic fascination in order to seduce and exploit men"¹⁶(1845). Therefore, these definitions coincide in defining this character as one that is tremendously attractive, erotic and seductive to men. In the same way, we can accept the version of the Larousse and the RAE, according to which 'vampiress' and 'femme fatale' are synonymous expressions. The common characteristics of all the definitions of *femme fatale* is the same: a woman that drives men to danger, destruction, even death, by means of her seductive charms.

Under Allen's criteria, the fact that the expression is originally French does not necessarily mean that the French invented it, despite the fact that we apply a direct and broad relation between the fact that it is a French expression and the existence of this kind of character at the end of the 19th century, just at the turn of the century and coinciding with the appearance of the first moving pictures. It is for this reason that we can offer a preliminary thesis according to which the word "vamp" was used in order to connect this expression to cinema specifically and separate it thus from other artistic representations that constructed and established the term as a specific archetypal image.

Regarding the referential framework in which the term was modeled, *femme fatale* is

¹⁵ "Utilizar los encantos femeninos seductores de un mismo para seducir."

¹⁶ "Aquella cuyo poder de atracci3n amorosa acarrea fin desgraciado a s3 misma o a quienes atrae. Apl3case principalmente a personajes de ficci3n, mayoritariamente de cine, y a las actrices que los representan."

normally described as an image that becomes famous during the last decades of the 19th century. This is characterized in the art and literature of the aesthetes, in Decadence and in Symbolism. The character of the *femme fatale* was inscribed in a social universe of transition, that still codified behavior in a rigorous way but that conferred at the same time a broad autonomy for individuals, all thanks to the new model of values linked to the democratic regime. According to the claims of Mainguenaueau, this is a world between two worlds, in the paradoxical picture of a Bourgeois society which has destroyed the traditional world but that aspires to reach a stabilized order, in a world in which the integrity of honest women is constantly threatened, in which the *femme fatale* appears and establishes itself. In these last decades of the 19th century, a population of women that exceeds traditional categories appears. They are not a question of exceptional female characters, such as high-flying free spirits, the Prince's favorite, women of letters or patron aristocrats of the arts, figures capable of standing out within a determined universe. In this period a true industry of the spectacle was developed in the big cities; the cafés with live music, cabaret, operetta, theatre, and the music-hall, which put in motion a broad amount of female personnel, around which circulated a dense quantity of business men and patrons. As a referential piece of information, in the year 1890 there were more than a thousand cafés with live music in Paris. To all this we must add the development and improvement of new technologies that are, at the turn of the century, photography, and, thereafter, cinema. It is within this framework that the character of the *femme fatale* is modeled. We are not talking about a prostitute or any of the women that belong to the world of honest women, nor even the world of working class women. This kind of woman, that cannot be described as a mother, or wife, or prostitute, is able to emerge simply as a woman. It is a category which men are resistant to give any status to. And, in fact, the figure of the woman, until then protected and second rate, would not have aroused any kind of reaction in the collective imaginary if it had not been associated directly with death. After the war in 1870, society experienced a reactivation of the syphilis disease, and the character of the destructive woman appears immersed in it due to the anguish before the venereal evil and the degeneration that its consequences cause: it is alongside these 'malign creatures' that the men of honorable families run the risk of tarnishing the illusion of a fruitful lineage. Given the scientific ignorance around any subject related with illness, slowly but continually the ideas of syphilis and of women were being connected and was giving shape to the *femme fatale*. A woman that leads men to a fatal destiny.

The image of the *femme fatale* assimilates the visual characteristics of the design style of Art Nouveau. The common characteristic of its representation is that of the seduction and destruction of men, and in this way it is presented via characters such as Circe, Cleopatra and Salomé, amongst others. Their names and the way that they are presented are so varied that they evoke an automatic curiosity.

Allen puts forward a detailed description of the *femme fatale*'s attraction – one that has served to create a pictorial and action-based composition as regards the behavior of this archetypal image before its appearance in cinema – to the symbiosis between artistic and literary protagonists in some works that are dedicated to describing a particular painting. Praz speaks to us of this symbiosis referring to, amongst others, Mérimée and to the

representation of Carmen; to Keats and the “Belle Dame sans merci”, and of how painters such as Burne-Jones give these characters expression in their work.

On the other hand, mythical and ancient figures and characters, such as Aphrodite, Lilith, Venus and other historical and legendary characters such as Messalina and Cleopatra, were reused in a nomenclatural fashion by 19th century artists and poets. This fact could lead us to believe that the *femme fatale* is not a new figure but rather a variation of an eternal and ancient theme. However, there are a number of arguments against this theory. First of all, we have the large quantity of decorative objects and details which appeared at the end of the 19th century in Europe which supports the theory that there was a flood of images of what we would now call *femmes fatales*. Secondly, there is the alteration and intensification of the imaginary of the *femme fatale*. And, thirdly, we have the erotic art of the preceding centuries, which suggests to the observer innumerable images of sexual objects. Although these are not considered *femmes fatales*, Ticiano’s nudes in the 16th century, Rubens’s in the 17th and Boucher’s in the 18th centuries are suggestive in their emergence: pictorial precedents which will pave the way for the appearance of the archetypal image in question.

However, and in agreement with texts written by the ancient men of letters, this figure has always existed. Mario Praz, at the beginning of the chapter dedicated to the *femme fatale* in art, expresses the following: “[...]this chapter could start by verifying what is most obvious. There have always been *femmes fatales* in myth and literature, because myth and literature do no more than reflect fantastically upon aspects of real life, and real life has always offered more or less perfect examples of arrogant and cruel femininity... in order to show how, even classical antiquity, this kind of femininity could proliferate to the point of being obsessive, we could turn to the first stanza of Oresteia’s *The Libation Bearers*¹⁷” (347).

We can find similar groups of *femmes fatales* in the literature of all eras, and even more so in difficult times such as the post-war period, which promotes the unsettled inspiration of creative artists. What Praz is unable to find is a normalized use of the expression ‘*femme fatale*’, although he does manage to find substitutes, which are: deadly trap, amorous devil, witch, reaper, comic vampire, hungry tigress or woman of fatal power. But in the first phase of Romanticism and the end of the 18th century, despite there being many *femmes fatales* in the arts, the type of image and the label itself does not exist. One would have to wait until she is stereotyped and turned into a cliché before it would be developed as an archetypal image in the different artistic currents of the 20th century. George Bernard Shaw, in the preface letter to *Man and Superman*, had already warned the reader about the alterations – which for him were worrying – of the imaginary in the arts. In his “Letter to Aruthur Bingham Walkley”, he makes the comment that in the time between Goethe and Byron on the one hand and Ibsen on the other, “Don Juan has changed sex and has been replaced by Doña Juana, leaving her doll house and defending her right as an individual, at no point a tool for moral purposes” (13). Once again, the self-affirmation of the woman as an individual

¹⁷ “[...]este capítulo podía comenzar como una comprobación de las más obvias. Siempre ha habido mujeres fatales en el mito y en la literatura, porque mito y literatura no hacen más que reflejar fantásticamente aspectos de la vida real, y la vida real ha ofrecido siempre ejemplos más o menos perfectos de femineidad prepotente y cruel...para mostrar como incluso en la antigüedad clásica el tipo pudo proliferar hasta hacerse obsesivo, puede recordarse la primera estancia de las Coéforas de Esquilo.”

implies a sexual threat for the men. Therefore, the commentaries that Shaw makes at the beginning of the 20th century are more like testimonies to the evolution of its iconography both at the visual and verbal level.

Cinema, as with the rest of the arts, could not only offer angelical feminine characters, virtuous wives and feminine models of exemplary behavior. It also needed to offer its contrary, opposed characters that Allen describes and analyses so well in his work, in a conclusive way. Even if we do not want to admit it, the Manichean character will always been present in our society: the good will always be in opposition to the bad. According to Azzopardi, it could be that the Catholic religion is responsible for this abusive classification. In the Old Testament, we are told that heaven was populated by purely spiritual beings which served as intermediaries between God and men and were called angels. In the same way, the Old Testament also tells us of a second category of angels: the bad angels or angels of darkness, and that God went to exile after the uprising they organized. It would be interesting to ask ourselves if these rejected angels would not be in eternal conflict with the angels of light, and in fact it is Azzopardi who opens the debate as to the existence and promotion of the images of these angels in film.

This opposition between kind-hearted and angelical characters and malign and wicked characters was studied due to the increased interest awoken by pre-Raphaelite painting. Due to this fact, attention began to be dedicated to a kind of character opposed to the *femme fatale*, that we have come to call angelical but that the scholars have called *la mujer frágil* and that is just as frequent as the former. This *fin-de-siècle mujer frágil*, ethereal and spiritualized was even suspected of being a saint. Hinterhäuser puts forward the invention of this term to a mere question of “happy phonetic equivalent to *femme fatale* [feliz equivalente fonético de la mujer fatal]” (91-121). Hinterhäuser dedicates an entire section of his book to elaborating a study in which he analyses with careful detail examples of romance narratives, amongst which we find the Spanish narrative.

3. THE FEMME FATALE IN 40S SPANISH CINEMA

The cinematographic magazine *Primer Plano* in January 1941 described the Vamp in the following way: “[...]The very distinguished and not very trustworthy House of ‘Vamp’ is one of the oldest in the cinematographic world... Its first representatives were possibly in those comic films or bloodthirsty dramas in which a woman with intensely black eyes would put her back against the walls and sprain herself in a reptilian way in the corners, whilst giving a disturbing look to the unsuspecting handsome young man who is contemplating her... They are always dark, broad and solid women, a natural reflection of a time which still loves dark hair... It is a difficult moment for the *femmes fatales*. The race of dark vampiresses is dying out... Before, the vampiresses had form and depth. Now, they are passionate, blonde vampiresses rise to the call of the demand, but last about as long as a leaf in the wind. They are styles without consistency. The *femme fatale* is not complete in these films...Decadence? Perhaps only a parenthesis. The ‘vamp’, that women that has tasted all that is out there, will

still have the last gesture; *Puisse-je mourir en brûlant!*"¹⁸ (no.12). Macià Serrano, in the magazine *Primer Plano*, describes the vampiress as follows: "[...]the vampiress is nothing more than a common woman who always wants men under the weight of the most difficult circumstances and that, when these men disappear, this love brings lots of pain[...]" (*Primer Plano*, no.32). In an editorial in the magazine *Cámara*, the concept of the *femme fatale* is spoken about in the following way: "[...]There is no doubt that it is always right to claim that vampiress implies the idea of the *femme fatale*, as the expression has an aroma of paradoxical parallel between the adorable and the demonic[...]" At the same time, this author describes the effects of the characters in the plots that the vampiress brought about very serious moral collapses (*Cámara* no.15 – 16).

Cinematographic critique made efforts to distinguish itself from the traditional image of the *femme fatale* in the rest of the world. In an article by Adolfo Luján, in which he asks the actress Ana Mariscal about the vampiress, we can read: "[...]For a kind of vampiress woman there is not difficult man. If a vampiress fails, she is no longer a vampiress... she is a boring little creature, and more so here, where her cinematographic function is always secondary"¹⁹ (*Primer Plano*, no.39). In fact, Ana Mariscal was considered a *femme fatale* because of her neckline in *la florista de la reina*. As Comas explains, speaking about the actress in relation to the character of the *femme fatale*: "...with her regular astuteness, Mariscal answered the question of what a vampiress is. She was right, in this Spanish cinema (and throughout several decades more) 'the evil woman' revealed herself as a representation of sin without entering into excessive psychological or social considerations". Comas is of the opinion that the actress Mercedes Vecino was the official for her bad girl characters. Ruiz Ferrón, talking about the actress, explains: "[...]Mercedes Vecino leaned towards 'fatality' in her first films, but later took on other paths... this Spanish lady... is a well behaved bourgeois lady married to Jaspe."²⁰ (85-86). With an explicit will to completely nullify the trace of that character, the Spanish cinema of the time, via cinematographic criticism, made its rejection explicit: "[...]One could say that Spanish cinema does not have either vampiresses or *femmes fatales*. Here, all the artists want is to get married to Alfredo Mayo, and none of them resign

¹⁸ "[...] La muy ilustre y poco leal Casa de la "Vamp" es una de las más antiguas del mundo cinematográfico...Posiblemente sus primeras representantes estén en aquellas películas cómicas o truculentos dramas, donde una mujer de ojos intensamente negros aplica su espalda a las paredes y hace un reptileco esguince en las esquinas, mientras mira turbadora al incauto galán que la contempla... Son siempre mujeres morenas, amplias y macizas, natural trasunto de una época que aún ama las cabelleras profundas...Es un momento difícil para las mujeres fatales. La raza de las vampiresas morenas se extingue...Antes, las vampiresas tenían forma y fondo. Ahora, son pasionales, las vampiresas rubias brotan al calor de la demanda, pero duran lo que una hoja en el viento. Son estilos sin consistencia. La mujer fatal no se da por completo en ellas...¿Decadencia? Tal vez sólo un paréntesis. La "vamp", esa mujer que ha saboreado todos los climas, tendrá aún su último gesto: *Puisse-je mourir en brûlant!*"

¹⁹ "[...]Para una mujer en plan de vampiresa no hay hombre difícil. Si una vampiresa fracasa, ha dejado de ser vampiresa...es un animalito muy aburrido, y más aquí, donde su función cinematográfica es siempre secundaria."

²⁰ "Fatalidad" en sus primeros films, pero luego emprendió otros caminos....la española...es una buena burguesita casada con Jaspe.

themselves to perverse roles unless by force. Is the talk about *fatales* maybe over?²¹ Santos Fontenla is of the opinion that postwar Spanish cinema described amorous relations in more conventional terms and within the most strict morality. As regards the Spanish vamp, this author says the following: “[...]Women are girlfriends, wives or mothers, although from time to time... one or another is a ‘vamp’...there are also in the 40s amongst the star figures some women who are ‘bad’ or at least ‘too modern’”. Amongst the first that we would have to cite, we begin with Mercedes Vecino, followed by Mery Martín... In the rest of the cases, the ‘bad women’ are always ‘the others’, never the protagonists. These are Lily Vicenti, Marta Flores. Characteristics representative of the woman ‘with a past’ which forms a part, at the same time, of the protagonist’s ‘past’. Antonio Walls comments on the invariability of the vampiress throughout the history of humanity. In an article published in the magazine *Primer Plano*, he warns his readers about the dangerousness of this character and makes this explicit in the national cinema of the time: “[...] Also in our cinema, Conchita Montenegro is a reflection of this magnetic and international type of character” (*Primer Plano*, no. 89). The actresses were generally subtly introduced into the archetype, but it seems that neither the industry nor the actresses themselves were very open to the idea of such an unpopular character.

The origin of the Spanish stars was diverse. On the one hand, the folkloric stars were true stereotypes made to offer to the public. Santos Fontenla defines the folkloric characters in French with the word ‘allumeuses’, in the way in which he defines the myth and the character. Furthermore, in respect to the folkloric actresses, he adds: “[...]They were, at the same time, female-objects and female-subjects; they were, above all, ‘women’ in a sense that perhaps only Spanish cinema has used, that is to say, not in the sense of human beings belonging to one of the two sexes that the species is divided into, but rather creatures at once above and below the human, and of course in no case comparable, never mind equal, to men”²² (113 – 115). In the words of Comas, “[...]simple but virtuous girls in rural surroundings, subject to man and that distinguished themselves by their personal charms, humor and sparkle, and by their singing and dancing ability. The objective was... to look good”²³ (86). In this context, the *femme fatale* was a thing of the past, like the provocative characters. The actresses that can be qualified as precursors are Imperio Argentina and Estrellita Castro. Imperio Argentina was a big star in the 30s and 40s, the most popular in Nationalist cinema. Sara Montiel relieved the former from her duties from the 50s onwards. She was a star on a completely artistic level: she sung, she danced, and she had a good command of verse in any genre, she had special charisma that Hollywood had described as

²¹ “[...]Puede decirse que el cine español no tiene vampirasas ni mujeres “fatales”. Aquí todas las artistas quieren casarse con Alfredo Mayo, y ninguna se resigna, si no es a la fuerza, a interpretar papeles perversos. ¿Se acabó, tal vez, la cantera de las fatales?”

²² “[...]Eran, a la vez, mujeres-objeto y mujeres-sujeto; eran, sobre todo, “mujeres” en un sentido que quizá sólo haya utilizado el cine español, es decir, en el sentido no de seres humanos pertenecientes a uno de los dos sexos en que la especie se divide, sino de criaturas a la vez por encima y por debajo de lo humano, y desde luego en ningún caso equiparables, ni menos iguales, al hombre.”

²³ “[...]muchachas sencillas pero virtuosas en ambientes rurales, supeditadas al hombre y que se significaban por sus encantos personales, su gracia y su salero, y por su arte cantando y bailando. El objetivo...era que luciesen.”

'star quality'. Her filmography defines her as a typical Spanish woman: frank, loyal, with a familiar personality and vocation, happy, carefree and modest. She is the ideal typical feminine character for folkloric and *costumbrista* cinema. The actresses that stood out most in this *costumbrista* cinema, interpreting the *femmes fatale* in the *españolada* productions and in following with their precursors, were Antoñita Colomé, Conchita Piquer, Juanita Reina, Lola Flores, Carmen Sevilla, Pastora Imperio, Mariemma and Carmen Amaya.

In reference to fashion and its relation with the *femme fatale*, cinema – by way of some newspaper publication that did its propaganda – also served as an instructive instrument, establishing implicit rules in regards to the dress of female characters. In the newspaper publications directed at women, numerous in the postwar period, there existed a series of articles in which what was acceptable and what was not was dictated in reference to fashion.

It referred to characters from foreign public life as well as local characters as means of example. Amongst others, in the magazine *Y*, we can read an article in which women are instructed by means of the example of other women about their hair style, clothing, way of speaking and public behavior. In an editorial from 1946 in *Primer Plano*, we can read: "[...]We recognize once more the large influence of cinema in our tastes, uses and habits, even in our personality[...]" Furthermore, a standard of the *femme fatale* is defined in agreement with the fashion of the time in the cinema: "[...] the vampiress standard: leather, diamonds, mascara on their overwhelming eyes. They walked with their hips...their nails were inspired by tiles – large, curvy and red – and their police-detective film eyelashes seemed to put forward a question that was without response"²⁴ (*Primer Plano*, no.286).

4. RICARDO GASCÓN'S FILMS WITH THE *FEMME FATALE*.

Two productions present the character of the *femme fatale* in the filmography of this Spanish filmmaker" *Cuando los ángeles duermen* and *Ha entrado un ladrón*. Of the first, there is a copy conserved in the *Filmoteca Española de Madrid* archive. Of the second, there is one copy –with no possibility of accessing it– in the *Filmoteca de la Generalitat de Catalunya*. Getting permission to see the cinema from the 40s continues to be restricted due largely to problems of tracking down and conserving the productions. In this context, our film analysis has been given in relation to the research on the first of these productions. Therefore, we will include the film information and an analysis of the visa for *Cuando los ángeles duermen*.

<p>Title: <i>Cuando los ángeles duermen</i> Director: Ricardo Gascón Script Writer: Ricardo Gascón Ferré (technical script). Productora: Pecsá Films (under the support of the Crédito del Sindicato)</p>
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²⁴ "[...]Reconozcamos una vez más la gran influencia del cine en nuestros gustos, usos y costumbres, incluso en nuestra personalidad..." . Además, se define un uniforme de mujer fatal acorde a la moda del momento en el cine: "[...]el uniforme de vampiresa: pieles, diamantes, rímel en los ojos abrumadores. Caminaba apoyada en sus caderas...sus uñas se inspiraban en las tejas –largas, curvas y rojas–, y sus pestañas de película policíaca ponían una interrogación sin respuesta"

<p>Nacional del Espectáculo with 437,500 pesetas).</p> <p>Año de producción: 1947</p> <p>Genre: Drama</p> <p>Location: Archivo de la Filmoteca Española de Madrid, in 35mm, good state (in process of digitalization).</p> <p>Principal actors: Amedeo Nazzari (Blin), Gina Montes (Bárbara), Clara Calamai (Helena), María Eugenia Branco (Blanca).</p> <p>Name of character: Elena (Clara Calamai)</p> <p>Antagonist character: Bárbara (Gina Montes) and Blanca (María Eugenia Branco).</p> <p>Duration: 1h.45'</p> <p>More information</p> <p>Based on the novel by C. Benítez de Castro</p>
<p>Plot</p> <p>A man, called Blin, leaves his town of birth to work in the city. A woman in love with him, Bárbara, follows him and lives in the same guest house as him. Helena and Blanca fight over Blin's love. Helena, who is the owner of a factory, manages to embroil him in a series of misunderstandings that end with Blanca's death, victim of a heart attack.</p>
<p>Reason for the appearance of the character in the film</p> <p>She is the owner of the establishment that Blin works for.</p>
<p>Physical description of the <i>femme fatale</i></p> <p>Dark, tall, thin, big, round and dark eyes</p>
<p>Psychological description of the <i>femme fatale</i></p> <p>Powerful, dominant, seducing, determined, egocentric, upper class, a liar</p>
<p>Personal seductive characteristics</p> <p>Her security and her initiative, the glamor that is part of her social status</p>
<p>Antagonists</p> <p>Bárbara, the girl that follows him from his city. Blanca, the daughter of the porter</p>
<p>The <i>femme fatale</i>'s victims</p> <p>Pablo (nicknamed Blin).</p>
<p>Dress, props</p> <p>Ring with a rectangular stone on the right hand, with leather, broad-brimmed black hat with a white feather on the left, a screen in front of her face, black three-quarter length jacket, black gloves and small, squared handbag. Smoker, with her right hand. Pearl necklace with a knot in the front.</p>
<p><i>Femme fatale</i>'s profession</p> <p>Owner of a factory.</p>
<p><i>Femme fatale</i>'s fate, film's message</p> <p>She leaves, fulfils the actions that he has always wanted, and he stops following her.</p>

The film begins with two cloud figures in human form. The screen looks towards the starry sky, and the two cloud-textured human figures begin a conversation. A female voice off screen introduces the filmic text:

(1'36"-2'20")- "Can you hear that? What a clamor! It seems to fill the space When will it end? Surely never whilst man fills the earth. What is it that he will look for with such anxiety? I figure it will be happiness, riches and vanity. How worthy of compassion they turn out to be, right? They would not be if it weren't for the fact that the angels inside them were sleeping. Man is not evil, his words are eternally in heaven, amongst the stars. Can't you hear? Let's listen to one of them, at random, this one, one who is living a life that will pass him by, the wind is bringing it towards us[...]" At this moment the protagonist is introduced into the plot, his name is Blin. Blin remembers, in images and dialogues that are superimposed over his image: a woman appears, his mother and his priest uncle who don't understand his ambitions. We also see Blin as he tells Bárbara, in love with him, to leave him alone, that she shouldn't get involved in his plans. When the flashback finishes, we see Blin has started to drink. In a dance, we see the first shot of the protagonist, Bárbara, unhappy, a victim of a marriage arranged by her dad. She is in love with Blin, and she follows him out of the bar in which they are celebrating their engagement. He asks her to go and not to complicate things, but Bárbara defies him and asks him if he is scared of being engaged. The tone she uses is seductive and at the same time is pushing this tough guy's buttons, who needs to show his masculinity. It is an activity carried out by a *femme fatale*. It starts to rain and she has to stay in Blin's house.

(8'50'')- Blin caresses his margarita and looks at Bárbara, they love each other

(9'30'')- Bárbara tells him that she will not do anything to be his wife, she won't chase him

-You know I've always loved you, but you shouldn't worry, I have not come here for you to accept me as your wife, I came only...to get away from Jas
-Well, that's something else – Blin responds.

At this point, we can see that Bárbara is hatching a plan. Once again, the priest uncle prays to God for his nephew. The image of a belfry, Christ and the priest, praying out loud, appear on screen.

For the other part, the mother approves of the relationship between Blin and Bárbara, and presents him with all of her savings. The treatment of the son towards the mother is cold. The mother is like a grandmother when with her son, degrading for a woman who, devoted to her son, gives him everything she has. Once again, the belfry and the priest uncle appear blessing the nephew, who then leaves.

(13'50'') Blin leaves to look for his fortune, with the blessing of his uncle, the parish priest of the village, and the help of his mother who gives him her entire savings. When he is leaving the village, he finds himself in front of Bárbara who is waiting for them on order to leave with him, and he says:

-What are you doing here?
 -I was waiting for you.
 -But where are you going?
 -I don't know. I'm going wherever you are going, that's all I know.
 -I don't need your company. I know how to get there on my own.
 -I know you know how to get there on your own, but I understood that you need me and I'm going with you.
 -Bárbara, I've left my mother and I love her more than you, I brought forward my departure because of your childish games. I'm not going to let you follow me, ok?
 -Even if you don't want me to, even if you beat me, I will follow you. I've decided it will be this way; you'll have to kill me.

Blin looks at her and leaves. In a large plain we see Blin in front and Bárbara running behind. Blin, at a particular moment, moves her away from him with his arm, separating her from himself.

(15') – In the following sequence we can see train tracks, a long and far voyage takes the protagonists elsewhere. They install themselves in Madrid and Blin finds work in a factory. Bárbara is presented as a cousin, and this fact upsets her. They live in a guest house, 'La fonda de las flores'.

(20') – Blin's uncle, Bonifacio, visits them to propose that they get married but Blin says that he is not interested. Bárbara breaks into tears and the priest says to her:

-What are you going to do now? –He asks her, hoping that Bárbara will come back with him to the village
 -You know now, you shouldn't have come here.
 -That's all I needed. Well, you too, you brat. Who else other than you can be blamed for everything? And you're a stupid girl, a headache, and you're in mortal sin.
 -I'll do whatever Blin wants me to do, whatever he wants, whatever he wants...

Funnily enough, when father Bonifacio returns to the village, Blin's mother is very ill.

(29') – Bárbara asks him:

-Am I getting in your way?
 -Yes, this is unbearable. It's impossible to live in this house.

He decides to leave, gives her a couple of kisses and leaves the bar. When he returns home, Bárbara has left and left a letter for him:

Dear Blin: I've understood that my presence tires you and my tenderness bores you. I

wish you all the luck that I had one day dreamed of sharing with you, and don't forget that your Bárbara whether on earth or in heaven will be following your footsteps like on that short path one morning in Riévanas.

Forgive me, Bárbara

The following morning, he receives notice of his mother's death and on the same day he is promoted. He works a lot and spends the First World War and the postwar crisis there. The workers rebel and go on strike but Blin positions himself on the companies' side. His friend Visu moves into his house with a seven year old child.

(40') – Larios betrays him accusing him of being a loud mouth. There is a discussion with Blin and Larios dies in a shoot out. Thus, it is discovered that the child is Larios's child, who remains in the care of Blanca, a neighbor who falls in love with Blin, and visa-versa.

(49') – A new character appears in the plot, Helena, the owner of the enterprise. Now Blin has another name, Pablo Rivera. The child, who we discover is called Susanita, lives with Blanca, who is very ill and hides the truth from Blin.

(54') Helena declares her love to Blin who, as part of his ambitiousness, kisses her, although we already gather that he does not love her.

(57') Blin speaks with the director of the new corporation, and comments:

-That woman worries me, she is delicate, and your apparent indifference is doing her damage

-Dear Antonio, you have to take women with a bit of a safe distance. The more they love a person, the more they complicate their life.

(1h.00) In this moment, the two women come face to face with each other over Blin, a clear case of *femme fatale* activity:

-You are very young, I don't want to do you any damage – Helena Marcet says to Blanca, and continues with - ...I've not come to discuss anything, I've just come to warn you.

In an attempt to pursue their prey, the two women fight for their aim: they tell Blin to eat with them at the same time but it is Helena who, with her seductive halo, manages to get him to eat with her. They get engaged and Blin abandons the idea of marrying Blanca.

(1h.10') Blanca, upon finding out, dresses herself up as a fiancée with the dress that Blin had sent her and dies on the floor, at the foot of the bed, tragically.

(1h.11') Helena visits Blin, who is devastated by Blanca's death, and tells him:

-Just two words and then I'll leave. It upsets me what has happened to that poor young woman, she was sick from the romanticism in which she had

believed to have had found the man of her dreams in you, but you continue to be the same man without a heart...

Helena takes the actions that he needs in order to form the empire that he has been planning and, in reply, at Pablo's offer to pay her, she says:

-No, keep the check, it's only a compensation, for me this has only been a game, the most entertaining and most expensive game of my life.

(1h.27') Finally, the powerful Blin remains alone and drunk. The ghost of Larios that instructs him appears. He thinks back over the women that he has abandoned: Bárbara, Blanca and his mother. A voice off screen, his mother, poses the question:

-Why are you this way, my son?

We recuperate a memory of Bárbara and Blanca through Blin's father, who explains Bárbara's story and, in an attempt to explain the beginning of the film, in which we see two figures in the form of clouds, he says:

... they have taken you to this point tonight and will follow you to the heavens, Pablo. I'm sure that they have become good friends and they love you as only the angels know how.

The final twist of the film: a letter from Bárbara in which she confesses that he has a son, Emilio, the manager of the factory and engaged to Susanita.

The insistence of the cinema of that time to relate all of the characters, between them, in order to offer short dramatic surprises and thus keep the audience's interest, causes, at the same time, an insistence that the public did not demand. The tale ends with Blin going to the church. Here he drops to his knees, asks God for forgiveness and the priest appears, who accompanies him to the cemetery to visit his priest uncle's and mother's tomb. At his mother's tomb, he kneels, supports his head and cries, whilst caressing the tomb and saying between sobs:

-Sorry, mother, sorry.

Gascón creates a montage very much to the regime's tastes, inserting the image of a desolated Blin at the foot of his mother's tomb and the priest with the rosary praying and looking at the sky. It is night time, everything is dark and cloudy. The melodramatic music with a chorus of female voices intensifies the effect of the scene. The camera travels up towards the dark sky which opens the space once again for the woman off screen. We already now know that these are Bárbara and Blanca, and they tell us:

-If men knew that life is so short perhaps they would love with more intensity.
-I wish the angels could awaken their hearts in time.

Finally, and by way of conclusion, we come back to that woman that begins to be named at the beginning of the 20th century. It is a character used by the regime to instruct the society about the type of woman which one should not be. In Ricardo Gascón's production in particular, we have encountered two productions for the 40s with this character. In *Cuando los ángeles duermen*, we find reiterated this instructional show, especially at the end of the film, with an insistently moralizing sequence.

Translation by Peter Baker

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Editors' note:

In order to facilitate the reading of the text, during the translation of the original article, all quotations in Spanish from film scripts have been translated and presented only in English.