

RUIZ-CASTILLO AND GASCÓN, BIOGRAPHIES OF OBSOLETE OBSESSIONS

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Anniversaries, always so opportune and unsettling, sometimes send us along paths lined with disinterest. In this case, they have pushed back to a position between limbo and oblivion. Few have rushed to salvage from the storage rooms of film libraries the figures of Arturo Ruiz-Castillo and Ricardo Gascón, two artists who had the misfortune of being born in a period favorable to the awful arts, in which it was easier to hold fast to the extremities of a production system that obligated a bondage to their rules and enslavements; a joyous state of mind for those who sought to solve in film the professional aspects of a trivial vision of the seventh art, understood as a spring board for the correction of a technical report. The Spanish film library has been a good measuring stick of the disturbing and forgotten state that has caused the current illustrious memorial that honors the centenary of the birth of Arturo Ruiz-Castillo and Ricardo Gascón.

In a similar situation, Edgar Neville was the object of a meticulous study about his filmography thanks to his immeasurable contribution to the cultural and social aspects of the Spanish way of life, and the Spanish film library, with the help of the Ministry of Culture and the *Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales*. He saw himself with the duty of leading a careful publication with the goal of pondering the wondrous personality and film of a great interpreter of Spanish literature and especially of the *sainete*. A key and heterodox man he mimicked in his movies a plethora of influences of difficult coexistence, such as the influence of the vanguard and the Spanish tradition, such as the detective novel, the *sainete*, and the expressionism or the *feuilleton*. Such is the case in *La Torre de los Siete Jorobados*, showing signs of his singularities and of his rich presence between the two shores of Hollywood and Spain. This is a result of his ability to reach understandings with the agents that permitted a privileged and unquestioned career. Due to this, the Filmoteca Española rushed to celebrate his centenary. Santiago Aguilar was in charge of cataloguing and revising the contribution of this key figure of Spanish film in the book *Edgar Neville: tres sainetes criminales* (Cuaderno de la Filmoteca Española), an essay in which the dissuading and hypnotic powers which Neville held over the Madrilenian public are redeemed, and highlighted is his decisive role in the popularization of the *sainete*-like structures in the collective imagination and in the creation of new filmic devices which nourished the connection between the arts. In Neville's movies a constant interrelation existed between the different artistic disciplines such as painting, theater or film. The painting of Solana and Goya impregnated by Arniches and other popular authors like Wenceslao Fernández Flórez, are objects of inspiration for Ricardo Gascon as will be studied further on. The Madrilenian *sainete* is one of the key engines of Spanish popular theater and it left a

profound mark on Spanish film thanks to Edgar Neville, son of a diplomat and friend of Hearst and Chaplin. A man of his time: humorist, poet, film director, and theater author. The *sainete* maintains a choral structure, usually framed in a love story interpreted by type characters, easily identifiable, with a strong presence of secondary actors. At the same time they tell flexible, every day, stories which seek truthful answers.

Literature in Neville was the engine in which a popular and recognizable rhetoric was inspired for a public that sought to enjoy a story-line diluted in favor of the setting and the language (*Domingo de carnaval* [Carnival Sunday]). Hence, it was unavoidable that Neville, an absolute admirer of Arniches and of the *La señorita de Trevelez* [The Miss from Trevelez],¹ would recover his scepter as the creator of a genre (el *sainete* madrileño). He also showed his mastery and ironic distance with respect to Francoism, and no one argues his influence and inclination toward popular speech in order to rebuild a lively and personal production. His inclusion of the representation of another member of the Generation of '27 alongside Ponce or Mihura attests to the historical approximation to a fundamental persona in the popular Spanish tradition. As Vicente Alberto Serrano remembers,

At every moment José López Rubio defended the existence of a second Generation of the 27. In his induction speech for the Royal Academy, in 1983, he gave an account of it, and he extensively explained that he himself, along with this friends Tono, Edgar Neville, Enrique Jardiel Poncela and Miguel Mihura conformed it.²

Continuing with resurrected and revisited authors, Asier Aranzubia Cob, a current professor at the Carlos III University of Madrid, devoted his doctoral thesis to the meticulous study of another director who has practically been pushed into oblivion and is a member of another important cinematographic group: one of the telluric sort, Serrano de Osma, author of the celebrated *Embrujo* (1947). Aranzubia writes, "Without trying to be polemical or contradictory, I can only affirm, in effect, that Carlos Serrano de Osma is an unjustly forgotten Spanish director."³ His thesis director, professor Santos Zunzunegui situates him within the limits of a cinematographic ambiance as simple as the Spanish. Julio Perez Perucha goes even further in a definition over Carlos Serrano de Osma which can be useful in our analisis of the two subjects in our study (Ruiz-Castillo and Gascón): "A prototype of a filmmaker (...) mistreated by the critics, economically ignored by a protectionist administration, and publicly disdained (...) his movies remain today (...) as

¹ I like it because it is very much a Spanish and human subject. Much more than flamenco stuff and nuns ["Me gusta porque es un asunto tremendamente humano y absolutamente español Mucho más que las flamenquerías y las monjas"].)

² José López Rubio en todo momento se empeñó en defender que existía otra generación del 27. En su discurso de ingreso en la Real Academia, en 1983, dio cuenta de ello, y explicó extensamente que lo formaban él mismo, junto con sus amigos Tono, Edgar Neville, Enrique Jardiel Poncela y Miguel Mihura.

³ "Sin ánimo de ser polémico o contradictorio, no me queda más remedio que afirmar que, en efecto, Carlos Serrano de Osma es un director de cine español injustamente olvidado."

an unexpected conjunction of film texts that even today are capable of moving forward, from their complex texture, the contemporary spectator.”⁴ As Aranzubia interposes, Serrano de Osma was more of a film man than a film director, a definition which unavoidably would lead us to the next question: Were Arturo Ruiz Castillo and Ricardo Gascón film men that dialogued with the different artistic disciplines and were supporters of experimentation, or on the contrary, should we classify them as two simple directors?

No one has taken up the task of rescuing two allegedly provincial and minor directors such as Arturo Ruiz-Castillo and Ricardo Gascón, two chronically ill individuals as José María García Escudero, the restorer of Spanish Film, would eventually call them: “Our cinema has seen doctor after doctor, even shaman after shaman, trying medicines and even the most inconceivable house remedies, more than once with only adverse results.”⁵ In his study of Spanish film he avoided giving the names of the decision-makers that understood movies as an extension of filmmaker’s tasks and heavily criticized the narrow-mindedness of some intellectuals. That being said, it is time to fully submerge ourselves in the object of this study: the personas of Arturo Ruiz-Castillo and Ricardo Gascón, two authors that have the unique and fortuitous common link of sharing their birth date and to follow two opposing yet parallel paths.

I cannot fail to cite and recount the chronic disinterest that these two film directors have brought about, the two of whom have been practically ignored or tarnished by film critics and historians,. It is somewhat paradigmatic that in the *Diccionario de Directores de Cine español (1951-1978)*, coordinated by Ángel Á. Pérez Gómez and José L. Martínez Montalbán, Ricardo Gascón appears with the following name which could mislead an average reader: José Gascón Ferré.

The conclusion to which they arrive after analyzing Arturo Ruiz-Castillo’s filmography is shattering. “Una obra, pues, mediocre, llena de frustraciones y penosas ambigüedades.”⁶ A bruising appraisal that should be examined or revisited with further detail and to discern if Ruiz-Castillo’s filmography is undeserving to that degree. The challenge for is none other than reinterpreting the stories and subterfuges that are hidden behind any language and image taxonomy. And to analyze the context in which the voices of damned and forgotten characters stormed into the tired and limited Spanish industry in which they are still present. Voices that are evident in two historical centers: Barcelona (Ricardo Gascón) and Madrid (Arturo Ruiz-Castillo).

NEW FILM IN SPAIN WITHOUT RUIZ-CASTILLO AND GASCÓN

It’s no coincidence that both Arturo Ruiz-Castillo and Ricardo Gascón would set

⁴ “Prototipo de realizador (...) maltratado por la crítica, ignorado económicamente por una Administración proteccionista, y desdeñado por el público (...) quedan hoy sus películas (...) como un inesperado conjunto de textos fílmicos que aún hoy son capaces de interpelar, desde su trabajada textura, al espectador contemporáneo.”

⁵ “Nuestro cine ha ido de médico en médico, incluso de curandero en curandero, ensayando medicamentos y hasta los más inconcebibles ungüentos caseros, más de una vez con el único resultado de agravarse.”

⁶ A work, thus, mediocre, full of frustrations and shameful ambiguities.

their careers with the arrival of the innovators of the 60s, and that they would take some time to put in place projects that did not match the ambitions of directors that sought the creation of new languages and to incite a more fluid understanding with the audience with sincere and more contemporary themes and titles that motivated international prestige not achieved until that point. Thanks to personalities such as Pere Portabella an influential production company known as Films 59 was created, this served as a stage for the flourishing of significant and transcendental films such as *Los golfos* [*The little devils*] (1959), *El cochecito* [*The little car*] (1960), and *Viridiana* (1961). It is worth mentioning that these powerful proposals shaped in part the future of Spanish productions, that were at last able to show their face on the international stage and to converge for the first time, as it was the case with *Los golfos* directed by Carlos Saura, on the path of modernity and of the uncontested changes in the narrative structures and in the visual language that was taking place in the world, and especially in France.

The French appropriated *Los golfos* to themselves thanks to the contribution of Luis Buñuel, who embraced Carlos Saura and Pere Portabella following the showing at Cannes. "People exploded then into a great ovation. The French had already claimed Buñuel, and on top of that we were following the line of the *Nouvelle Vague*. It was a total blessing."⁷ recounts Pere Portabella in the conversation that took place with the historian and critic Quim Casas in the book *Los "nuevos cines" en España. Ilusiones y desencantos de los años sesenta*.

Portabella proposed that *Los golfos*, a movie that had a short track and a late and not too transparent exhibition, had repercussions on the international scene and that a creative proposal Spanish was valued at a festival of such an importance as Cannes. Once again, literature was a luxurious companion for *Los golfos*, which could be better understood with a book as striking as *El Jarama*, with which it morally coincides in the litany of a Madrid sheltered on the periphery. Pere Portabella favored new film in Spain under the power of the law that Escudero designed in matters that interfered for instance at the box office. This was an unequivocal sign to end the congenital isolation of the national film industry. In 1960, as Luis Escudero warns us, "73 movies needed 56 production companies, and in 1961, the proportion was 91 films and 62 companies (there are 127 registered production companies). Could you call it an exaggeration to affirm that in Spain an organized industry does not exist, a true professionalism is missing?"⁸

Spanish film, badly connected historically with the international film industry, started to feel itself valued despite specialized film magazines that did not agree. *El cochecito* opened a profound debate within Spanish criticism, blinded with respect to the propositions accustomed to expressing something different that would vary from the

⁷ "La gente estalló entonces en una gran ovación. Los franceses ya se habían apropiado de Buñuel y encima nosotros íbamos por la línea de la *Nouvelle Vague*. Fue una bendición total."

⁸ "73 películas han requerido 56 productoras, y en 1961, la proporción ha sido 91 películas y 62 productoras (hay 127 productoras inscritas). ¿Se puede tachar de exagerado a quien afirma que en España la industria organizada no existe, falta la verdadera profesionalidad?"

common quality standards. *Nuestro cine* was an example of the diverse views of the critics that questioned the deforming vision of reality because it argued that this was not the best option for understanding reality.

What were Arturo Ruiz Castillo and Ricardo Gascón doing in the mean time? Where were they situating themselves while film directors' aspirations were being reborn starting in 1960?

Ricardo Gascón began his career with amateur film and in 1931 he entered the professional film industry. And following the paths of the unions, he moved through the necessary ranks to settle himself into the industry, and soon he landed the position of assistant director of the CAMPA productions in of Inquino. He debuted as a director in 1945, and twelve years later, he abandoned his cinematic activities. As the Directors Dictionary points out, he received several syndicate prizes and some of his movies were declared of "national interest."

Jesús Angulo, current director of the International Film Week in Valladolid (SEMINCI), talks about "a lack of tradition within Spanish film of such a codified genre such as *film noir*. It begins in Barcelona in the beginning of the decade (sixties) the production of a police film series that achieve an esteemed level (...) A film industry ever subject to the eyes of a careful censorship."⁹ In this field we can find Ricardo Gascón's filmography, a specialist in storytelling that did not leave a deep mark in police-film stories or *film noir* in Spain, despite working in one of the epicenters of this industry: Barcelona. Without a doubt, Franco's regime gave thumbs up to his films.

And what happened to Arturo Ruiz Castillo? He will go down in history because of his work in theater. He founded, along with Federico García Lorca, the mythical university theater group *La Barraca*. In 1946, he created Horizonte Films Production Company in order to make his first full-length movie, for which he obtained the Premio del CEC for the best new director of the year. "After the Civil War, I began to make my artistic documentaries, totally separating myself from politics and propaganda, though always subject to handicaps due to the problems of censorship."¹⁰ he explained in an interview published in *El cine español, según sus directores*, by Antonio Gregori for Cátedra. Two opposing directions in life: a life dedicated to documentaries, to the exploration of every genre type under adverse circumstances and dedicated to the world of literature, as was the case of Arturo Ruiz-Castillo: and the other, linked to the ambiguities of the strong censorship controls, in which he developed his career without problems.

Both Gascón and Ruiz Castillo bid farewell at a time in which they considered that they had little more to give, having reached a creativity maturity that was severed with the new demands of the public and the producers that did not take them into account.

⁹ "Falta de tradición dentro del cine español de un género tan codificado como el cine negro. En Barcelona se inicia a principios de la década (sesenta) la producción de una serie de películas policíacas que alcanzan un nivel estimable (...) Un cine siempre sometido a la mirada atenta de la censura."

¹⁰ "Después de la Guerra Civil volví a hacer mis documentales artísticos, totalmente al margen de la política y de la propaganda, aunque siempre condicionado por los problemas de la censura,"

Ruiz-Castillo discontinued his film activities in 1965 with *El secreto del capitán O'Hara* [Captain O'Hara's Secret], and at the end of his life he did not discard the option of returning to television and thus to direct TV series.

BARCELONA AND MADRID, TWO WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING THE GENRE

Historically, Madrid and Barcelona have disputed the captaincy of Spanish cinema, and they created logical hostilities to foster the illusion that each of these capitals had an individual idiosyncrasy for which to argue and distinguish themselves. The Barcelona School was created to counteract the effects of the style of the films from Madrid and to look ahead to the European cosmopolitan modernity that came from Paris. However, before these differences were practically irreconcilable, as Arturo Ruiz-Castillo was a distinguished personality in the construction of a movement called *los renovadores*, a denomination that comes from the hand of historians that sought to band under a common denominator the formal and thematic elements that encompassed their common characteristics. Along with Ruiz Castillo, directors such as Nieves Conde or Antonio del Almo shared a similar vision about the socio-political circumstances. They began their mission as filmmakers at the end of the Second World War, and each of them maintained a specific type of dissidence against Franco, perpetrated in its majority in their republican wants. In fact, Ruiz-Castillo worked for CIFESA for the making of a series of short films and documentaries, with the misfortune that the production company, which belonged to the side that lost the war, progressively was losing work.

The first full length feature of Arturo Ruiz-Castillo coincided with the filming of *Embrujo*, by Serrano de Osma, a key figure for understanding a specific moral and formal position before the industry. Serrano de Osma was an important individual for the creation of a key magazine, *Cine experimental*, which had a good reception within some renovators and grassroots movements.

This last movement was aligned with the thoughts of the magazine that incorporated a theoretical and analytical will. But at its core, as Aranzubia argues, it went unnoticed, which lead to a result which "for many it constituted a supposed and perhaps pretentious Puritanism."¹¹ In his filmography, Ruiz-Castillo tried his luck employing a wide range types of genres and literary influences as a wild spirited horse. A confrontation between genres and styles, with which he submerged himself with pleasure in historical film, documentaries, movies of patriotic spirit, folkloric film... a filmmaking which did not adhere to the city which saw his birth and which did not violate the aspirations of the censors, who barely had to hold him accountable. An initial motivation which was aborted in his documentaries where he sought to interpret reality, but recognizing that with the Civil War, was mobilized like all of them without wishing it. There is a before and after in the vision of Ruiz-Castillo; the before and after the war. A prior self-censorship that lead him along a path which many of his friends did not understand. Some expectations which never were able to become reality in a career

¹¹ "Para algunos constituía un supuesto y acaso pretencioso puritanismo."

limited by his lack of ambition and a theatrical vision of film.

Ricardo Gascón was not the prodigal son of Barcelona either, and he barely followed his colleagues who sought to explore the police films or genre films in Spain during the 50s. Many historians do not even mention him in studies that have been done, mostly choosing authors that were not the most praised, such as Wenceslao Fernández Flórez, to talk about topics of conspiracy, persecution or moving forward. Precisely when Barcelona was the most interesting city for the development of an alternative culture to the collapse of genre. The same city, that as Jesús Palacios, a specialist of genre who recognizes the movements that take place in the Barcelona of the 50s, warns us, was a perfect place for the consumption of the detective and criminal novel that had great players in the editorial and literary world, and in the cinematographic field. Editorial houses such as Caralt, Bruguera (Servicio Secreto), Editorial Albur... Thus, as Jesús Palacios defends, it was no wonder that Barcelona was the focal point of Spanish film noir of the 50s that, against all odds, managing for a couple of years in creating the illusion of a possible national detective genre, "capable of comparing itself, if not to the Hollywood-like that the prolific studies of IFI were trying to emulate, founded by F. Iquino, yes at least they were already established opposed to our French neighbors."¹²

Regretfully, Ricardo Gascón unaligned himself with those with whom he could have had much in common and he did not link himself to true geniuses like Mihura or to other dramatists of renowned success on the Spanish cultural scene. During the decade of the 50s in Spain, published were works that catered to the existing demands of the public and that required translating from the big screen into writing the kind of stories that were being seen in the *noir* films of Hollywood; and in 1953 a fundamental and defining work was published: *El Inocente* [*The Innocent*], one of the predecessors of the modern Spanish dark novel. However, we would have to wait until Franco's death to see the true expansion and flourishing of this genre, with writers as popular and respected as Vázquez Montalbán and Juan Madrid. The Spanish and Catalan dark novel premiered with the work *Es vessa una sang fácil* [Blood for a low price], written by Manuel de Pedroso. However, the communion between literature and film has not been as fruitful as could be expected, and, as historian Roberto Cueto cites, "the noteworthy incommunication that has existed and continues to exist between film and detective literature in Spain, is something that does not occur in the American and French film industries."¹³ Despite that, there are film directors who do not subscribe to the epigraph *Spanish noir film* due to political and traditional circumstances. Miguel Iglesias Bonns (Barcelona, 1915), author of the *El fugitivo de Amberes* [*The Fugitive from Antwerp*] (1954), *El cerco* [*The frame*] (1955), or *Muerte en primavera* [*Death in Spring*] (1966) considers that in the Spanish detective genre, any social or political criticism is non-existent, and due to this,

¹² "Capaz de equipararse, si no al hollywoodense al que intentaban emular los prolíficos estudios IFI, fundados por F. Iquino, sí al menos al entonces ya bien establecido polar de nuestros vecinos franceses."

¹³ "La llamativa incommunicación que ha existido y sigue existiendo entre cine y literatura policíaca en España, algo que no sucede en el cine americano o francés."

one cannot speak of Spanish film noir (*Dirigido por* [400], 78).

Obviously, Spanish circumstances were not the best to create story lines inspired in covert reality due to the parameters of Francoist propaganda, which internalized the idea that Spain was a country free of crimes and villains. *El Caso*, the mythical weekly journal of events in Barcelona, whose first edition came out in 1952, showed a particular criminal snapshot without having any political motivations. These were simple transitory observations that ended up exploding in the face of public disbelief, primary pathological feelings led by marginal groups (gypsies) or insane people incapable of controlling their impulses and envy. Without the state of social decay, perversion, or mystery of a delirious society, a context could not be developed and because of that, a Spanish detective genre could not be created. The primary supporter of the genre, F. Inquino, born in 1910, like Ruiz Castillo and Ricardo Gascón, declared in *Documentos del cine español: Ignacio F. Inquino. 50 años del cine español* (*Dirigido por*, [130], 24-35) that "Following the Civil War the best course of action was to make movies of diversion, so that people could forget the problems and daily challenges, grudges (...) if I alternated genres, it was not due to external conditions. I sought success. Many times I achieved it and some other I crashed. This is the venom of film."¹⁴

This is a view of commercial film in which we could include Ricardo Gascón, author of a series of films moved or motivated by light and homespun suspense, such as *Un ladrón de guante blanco* [*A White Glove Thief*] or *Ha entrado un ladrón* [*A Thief has entered*]. The very vicissitudes of climbing the ranks to director often obligated the acceptance of scripts for practical reasons. Josep María Forn, author of detective works and other works with neorealist and *costumbrista* influences such as *La piel quemada* [*Burnt Skin*], recognizes that he created his first film in order to officially become a director. Arturo Ruiz-Castillo, on the other hand, sought another path of rich tradition: the adaptation. He thought of Valle-Inclán, the great Spanish master of deformity and the grotesque, and when he faced the reservations and rejection of the censorship machine, he decided to follow the lead of the great writer Pío Baroja, friend of his father, editor of Baroja's *Obras completas*. "Though his works had been banned for a long time, there came a time when they could be made. I proposed to Baroja the possibility of making a movie of his novel and he thought well of the idea. I made an adaptation, wrote new dialogues, read more than thirty of his novels and designed the costumes and the decorations (...) however, soon after starting, the producer disappeared. Then, with great efforts and different combinations, I took charge of the production duties, with which I became a producer in addition of being a script writer, director, adaptor, and figure creator."¹⁵ Suffice to say; the occasional difficulties during the shooting determined

¹⁴ "Después de la Guerra Civil lo más adecuado era hacer cine divertido, de evasión, para que la gente olvidara los problemas y penalidades cotidianas, los rencores (...) Si alternaba los géneros no era por condicionamientos externos. Yo buscaba el éxito. Muchas veces lo conseguí y otras me estrellé. Esto es el veneno del cine."

¹⁵ "Aunque sus obras habían estado prohibidas durante mucho tiempo, llegó un momento en el que pudieron hacerse. Yo le propuse a Baroja hacer una película de su novela y le pareció muy bien. Hice una adaptación, escribí diálogos nuevos, leí más de treinta novelas suyas y diseñé el vestuario y los decorados

the final result. It is true that the film succeeded in being declared of “national interest”, a device of Francoism to honor and continue a specific type of film in line with the ideological ends and the coercive machine that it had in place. No one was able to bring Baroja’s great social works to the big screen because that task was strictly prohibited, but as Ruiz-Castillo attests, they gave him the distinction because of the “great quality of the film.” Baroja was an admirer of celluloid and a follower of the seventh art. An American journalist who interviewed him just before his death was left with the conviction that she had indeed interviewed a film director. To many, among whom J.M. García Escudero found himself as General Director of Cinematography on two occasions, a position from which he modernized Spanish Film, Baroja was especially gifted in the film industry. It has been said that his work is a treasure of cinematographical plots, though only *Zalacaín* and *Shanti-Andía* have been taken to the screen. He is one that should have been adapted into film.”¹⁶ Why shouldn’t we think that, alongside essay writers and pure *literarati*, that generation, which had its painter in Zuloaga, could have had in Baroja their Zavattini, many years before Zavattini? In that same way, he considered his lack of style the best test of his ability to become himself in a frustrated screenwriter.

OBSESIÓN, BY ARTURO RUIZ CASTILLO (1947)

Obsesión, the second film of the Madrilenian director, was neither an easy nor a pleasant task. “In *Obsesión*, I mixed every human problem, human passions, with the catastrophes, of nature, tornados, wind gusts, hurricanes, and later on, war.”¹⁷ Written and directed by Ruiz Castillo himself, he took charge of the design and production under the hand of Horizonte Films, which presented it to the public as a “super-production.” Alfredo Mayo, one of the main actors in *Raza*, is also one of the performers in *Obsesión*. But history always remembers him as the alter ego of Franco, the author of the script for *Raza*, in which his lack of narrative talent and his lack of intensity in recounting the history of Spain and in distinguishing between the innocent and the guilty converge in another disproportionate attack against the defeated side from the Spanish Civil War.

In *Obsesión*, Ruiz-Castillo goes to equatorial Africa in order to narrate an obsessive and fatalistic story about love and emotional unbalance. Ruiz-Castillo’s script tells us a story full of false romanticism, abnegation, and a series of common places where there is an obsessive relationship of impotence that ends in the murky African waters, where guilty engineers and submissive serfs do not raise their voices. The movie presents the dilemma of a few servant girls raised in an orphanage where the only

(...) Sin embargo, a poco de empezar, el productor desapareció. Entonces, haciendo grandes esfuerzos y extrañas combinaciones, me hice cargo de los gastos de producción, con lo cual además de ser guionista, adaptador, director y figurinista, me convertí también en productor.”

¹⁶ “Se ha dicho que su obra es un tesoro de argumentos cinematográficos, aunque solamente se han llevado a la pantalla *Zalacaín* y *Shanti-Andía*. Es él quien debería haber sido llevado al cine (...)”

¹⁷ “En *Obsesión*, mezclé todos los problemas humanos, las pasiones humanas, con las catástrofes, de la naturaleza, los tornados, los vendavales, las galeonas y, más adelante, la guerra.”

possible way out would be the un-dissolvable Spanish matrimony, with its romantic mysticism and a declaration of a patriotic love. Franco would find in this movie the necessary impulse to reconstruct dams and lakes throughout Spain. This is the mission assigned to the engineers that have been transferred to African lands, where a materialization of the contrasting female desires are drawn: the purity of a woman who gives herself to her husband, which supplants the truth. A mistake allows for the protagonist to fall in love with a woman without having ever seen her, because she sends him the picture of her friend, from which he fatefully falls in love. A worn out portrait of the Spanish *femme fatale*, made up by the patriotic excitement of some pure Christian behavior converted into madness by the primitive African winds and its ancestral dances, perfectly integrated in the scene transitions to corroborate the idea that moral depravity is a result of a malignant conditions.

Ruiz-Castillo proposes a dual play of mirrors: between reality and fantasy. Between a woman that has learned to love through custom and obligation, and the other, the fruit of a love at first sight. Following the philosophy of Jacques Lacan, one of the proponents of psychoanalysis, "What is real is always present but is continually mediated by images and symbols."¹⁸ A kind of madness and homicide, God's punishment, submerged in lands not suited for the coexistence of civilized beings that lose their bearing.

CATALINA DE INGLATERRA (1951), BY ARTURO RUIZ-CASTILLO

Official Francoist films have a short but solid itinerary in the treatment of characters and historical events involved with the patriotic spirit. A para-state project like *Alba de América* [*Dawn in America*] was conceived of by Carrero Blanco, Franco's right hand and later his continuation during the transition. The state-related Spanish film industry also examined the life of Agustina of Aragón in *La Leona de Castilla* [*The Lioness of Castile*] (1951), directed by Juan de Orduña. This type of individual personalities was characterized by a patriotic and Catholic exaltation and has the peculiar effect of magnifying rhetoric, mannierism and aesthetical stiffening, and a feeding of dramatic hypertrophy.

In the face of this strong and rigid context, Arturo Ruiz-Castillo had the courage to favor another kind of historical character. One more sign of the proliferation of the female heroes that decorated the big screen: Inés de Castro, Isabel la Católica, Eugenia de Montijo, Juana de Loca, Agustina de Aragón... or Catalina de Inglaterra. Before this genre's decadence would take it down another path, another characteristic title was done (*¿Dónde vas Alfonso XII?*), directed by the Argentinean Luis César Amadori.

Arturo Ruiz-Castillo did not adhere to the stiff models of the already so-called historical cinema, and he gave some humanity and life to the figure of Catalina of England. "Nosotros no podíamos hacer lo que hicieron los italianos con el neorrealismo porque no se podía reflejar la realidad y la situación del momento que vivíamos

¹⁸ "Lo Real está siempre presente pero continuamente mediado por lo imaginario y lo simbólico."

entonces en España, ya que la censura no lo permitía y, si mentíamos, ya no era cine realista,”¹⁹ Ruiz-Castillo affirmed. In *Catalina de Inglaterra* [*Catalina of England*], he once again makes his mark on the cinematographic script, and he takes charge of the direction. An adjusted and less rhetorical counter point, compared to that of the state-related cinema, he does not completely break loose of the grasp of historical film. The setting, more relaxed and healthy, speaks of the historical relationships between two vulnerable partners like Spain, the constant spiritual reserve of the West, and England. It is a mistreated history, decided by ambitions, with some counter points that avoid the rhetorical rigor of its predecessors.

A light sense of humor and a more exquisite script to satisfy the need of representing the political and social context of a kingdom skillfully ruled by decisive women willing to take the reins of the government. A defense of the truth, of the return of justice mixed in with a bunch of skirts, from the contemporary perspective of dramatic theatricality. Without much technical achievement, and with a certain freshness that does not disturb the intertwined encounters between the different concerned parts. Mild and metaphorical reproaches of capital sins. A representation of treason and nobility. Arturo Ruiz-Castillo admitted that he enjoyed watching how one could take a heavily embroidered dress, with many decorations, through a series of movements and a way of being and acting which he considered very much contemporary. A paradigmatic tale.

HA ENTRADO UN LADRÓN [A THIEF HAS ENTERED] (1949), BY RICARDO GASCÓN, UNDER THE INSPIRATION OF WENCESLAO FERNÁNDEZ FLÓREZ

Ricardo Gascón did not commit to detective film of a high, serious, social or reflective nature, and everything indicates that he conceived of film as a game of chess where the only important thing was to save the queen from any possible attack by the bishops or knights. A calculated exercise where he did not risk a thing and he would choose the authors according to their position on the board... of the censorship. *Ha entrado un ladrón* as well as *La mujer de nadie* (Gonzalo Delgrás, 1949) would be two movies that only sought a simple and definitive dialogue with the censors, that favored the projects as a function of the degree of social commitment, or the conflicts or insurgencies that their hidden messages could provoke. Wenceslao Fernández Flórez and José Francés were two of the personnel charged with cataloguing the functionality of movies and cutting those scenes that were uncomfortable for the Regime. However, they did not take much pleasure in their work as censors given that both Gascón, choosing the work of Fernández Flórez, as well as Delgrás, who chose a novel of José Francés, did not pose much resistance. Only in this way can the choice of Fernandez Flórez as an author be understood in context, with the change that was taking place before the imminent presence of projects that would be classified within the New Spanish Film. Even so, there

¹⁹ We couldn't do what the Italians did with Neorealism because the reality and the situation that we lived in Spain could not be reflected, given that the censorship did not allow for it and, if we lied, the film would no longer be realistic.

were directors who were reluctant to take a chance and to bet on films that would go beyond the existing common places.

Rafael Gil, adapted a great number of the classical Spanish literary works of writers such as Galdós, Lope de Vega, Jardiel Poncela, and Wenceslao Fernández Flórez, in addition to cultivating historical and religious film. A generous statement by Carlos Fernández Cuenca, published in *Revista Internacional del Cine* (11–12), well qualifies his cinematographic impulse: “De no existir el cine cuando él abrió los ojos a los gustos y a la razón, lo habría inventado; porque el cine, para Rafael Gil, llegó a ser una auténtica necesidad física.”²⁰ Rafael Gil himself decided to approach once again the work of Fernández Flórez in 1959, an example of countercurrent film, impregnated with a congenital and disciplined lack of temporality when it would be required to show respect to the very censors who would judge the worthiness of the proposed projects.

Ricardo Gascón is situated within in these parameters established by the seat of power. Nonetheless, the cited literary source was a double-edged sword. Fernando Fernán Gómez, a key individual in the Spanish film history due to his brilliant and ingenious presence in almost every area, said that

A good part of what the Italian neorealism brought to film, we had here already in the books of Fernández Flórez. The Spanish medium, of the city, was portrayed there with more spontaneity, more truthfulness than in the theatre of Arniches and Benavente. His characters were less singular than those of Baroja, but closer to us; we could find in them our neighbors, and sometimes, recognize ourselves.²¹

Moreover, the man in question could not be better situated. He was a personal friend of Franco and a strong defender of the cinematographer. And he did not doubt at any moment to give the okay to the submissive Ricardo Gascón, who began to produce the film the same day that he received the authorization for the shooting, on the 27th of August of 1948. Wenceslao Fernandez Flórez was not satisfied with just giving directions as a censor and to prompting film directors from several generations to take him to the big screen. He would also request the necessary orientation to comprehend some key cinematographic points. From the pages of *Primer Plano* magazine in an article titled “El mundo donde no deben engañar las apariencias” [The world in which appearances should not deceive], he expressed that “the majority of the Spanish film directors have been damaged by their decision of not trusting appearances and their disdain towards

²⁰ Had cinema not existed when he opened his eyes to taste and reason, he would have invented it; because film, for Rafael Gil, became eventually a real physical need.

²¹ “Buena parte de lo que el neorrealismo italiano aportó al cine, lo teníamos aquí en los libros de Fernández Flórez. El español medio, de ciudad, estaba allí retratado con más espontaneidad, más verismo que en el teatro de Arniches y Benavente. Sus personajes eran menos singulares que los de Baroja, pero más cercanos a nosotros; podríamos encontrar en ellos a nuestros vecinos, y a veces, reconocernos a nosotros mismos.”

the old phrase that assures that the face is a mirror to the soul has damaged them.”²²

The faces of the characters in *Ha entrado un ladrón* do not show the true genesis and despair of the *noir* novel published in 1920, a masked sarcastic action transformed in a voyage from a village to the great city and the repeated humiliations of a character complete with an ironic goodness and a hopeless fate. Sarcasm spices up the story, a string of humiliations and misunderstandings that do not reach the grotesque or an Azconian climax. It should be remembered that the action of the movie is set in 1926, in the midst of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, when in reality it was to take place in 1923. Many directors of that time attempted to imprint a political background, that, for the most part, they did not know how to express.

It is important to note the contribution in this regard of the regional Film Library of Murcia, which not too long ago edited within its collection of cinematographic essays, the work “El mercado vigilado. La adaptación en el cine español de los 50”

UN LADRÓN DE GUANTE BLANCO (1945), BY RICARDO GASCÓN

Ricardo Gascón's first film gives us some clues to the storylines that he will progressively develop in his short career as a director and script writer. An attempt at humoristic satire of every passionate youth with truculent readings, those that entangle potential readers with absurd adventures where they can get lost, Ricardo Gascón gives proof of his taste for anti-quixotic escapist literature... understanding quixotic character as a consequence of utopia. In the mind of some researchers, an important ingredient of Don Quijote is the direct attack against the utopist mentality of the readers, which is mistakenly interpreted as an attack against the chivalrous mentality of the novels.

In this case, Gascón creates an inverse operation. He introduces to the spectator a collection of anecdotes that seek a false alienation derived from the incipient trend toward truculent readings, which Gascón does not come to classify as detective novel. *El ladrón de guante blanco* does not achieve the category of detective film or *film noir*. It is more probably light comedy that feeds off its references and the new demands of contemporary consumption (the short story, and the intrigue that the Spanish public required), used as an excuse, a diversion or occasional bourgeois pastime, as a mask or a pretext. Seeing this Gasconian adventure one would wonder whether this comedy of errors, which does not truly alter the humoristic possibilities of its linear script, meant a new inventive or impulse for filmmakers that sought to take *film noir* seriously in Spain, which as Antonio José Navarro states, is nothing more than another expressive modality of a much more ample cultural and/or poetic manifestation, which is the detective story, because *film noir* of the 50s tried to get closer to the public taste and to the collective imagination.

Spanish *film noir* or the Spanish detective film is not typified by the paranoid traits of the context or the characters. And *El ladrón de guante blanco*, though it does not

²² “A la mayoría de los directores del cine español les ha perjudicado mucho su decisión de no fiarse de las apariencias y su desdén hacia la vieja frase que asegura que el rostro es el espejo del alma.”

achieve the status of the genre, is a mild and poor diversion which brings to our attention a passing trend that is about to take its place among the public and the film industry, which welcomes productions that seek to alter the sense of tranquility and order that is established in an idyllic world. Because of that, the main character of Gascón's first work entertains himself by seeking alternatives to his boring life by helping with a bizarre kidnapping. It is an insignificant piece that keeps American culture in its sights, specifically speaking Chicago.

In his following film (*Cuando los ángeles duermen*) Ricardo Gascón brings to the big screen a novel by Benítez de Castro, an academic poet of the Real Academia de las Buenas Letras de Sevilla, whose most representative work is *El valle de las musas*. Curiously, in the *Congreso Internacional sobre Pedro Almodóvar: el cine como pasión*, the incidence of Ricardo Gascón's movie was remembered, as irrefutable proof of the Spanish film tradition of situating the main character at the starting point: the small town, the origin, the return home. The example served to explain the reaction of Chus Lampreave in *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?*

Apart from this reference to Almodóvar, *Cuando los ángeles duermen* offers an obtuse look at some exploited workers and two opposing worlds: the idealism of the countryside, with its masses and ancestral rituals, and the chaotic working world, and a call to the heavenly powers to center the life of earthly inhabitants, with their existential and amorous problems.

MISIÓN EXTRAVAGANTE (1952), BY RICARDO GASCÓN

This production from Española Films Asociada is based on a novel by Carmen F. Montero. An adaptation made for two markets (the Spanish and Argentinean), a story of borrowed identities, industrial espionage, love, a dose of Spanish identity, dramatic tension, and nonsense... a cocktail waitress, who in the hands of Ricardo Gascón becomes a mechanical and not too accurate association. A bullfighter called "El Marquesito," who possesses enough of the manners and gestures of manhood to become the movie's real leading man, which he becomes through a stroke of luck and due to the demands of an enterprise that sees in him a business formula.

Ricardo Gascón avoids the elements of *film noir* and eschews the possibility of combining the characteristics of a worn out thriller, with some touches of decaffeinated humor. The adaptation of Carmen F. Montero's novel offers us some aspects that do not fully create a mystery necessary for catching the spectator up in a roulette of consummated acts, carried along by inertia or animosity.

In neorealist key, this movie has a different base: the protagonist, who comes from an austere family environment, would be a poor bullfighter or a boxer that suffers of a series of calamities until he comes out on top.

Ricardo Gascón starts from rigid story that naturally begins with the logic and the importance of lineage and the established order in order to further the iconography of an officialist Spain. The female presence seems to be disposed to favor a film of *noir* reminiscences. One of females acts as a *femme fatale* that would have to shake and spy

on her prey (the bullfighter) with the intention that he not succeed in traveling to Buenos Aires to meet the Argentinean partners that would give him the patents.

The hurried and artificial love stories never solidify. The fruit of a script strategy that consists of bringing in inconsistent dramatic elements and supposedly tragic situations that make it difficult for the spectator to become immersed in the specifics of the main character, who is not diminished in his unfortunate attempt to succeed at the assigned task. Some disguises and characterizations that build up the desperate tone attract the attention of the spectator. It is an exercise that does not seek empathy or narrative rigor but rather the obfuscated way of bringing pamphlets of a detective sort to the big screen.

Ricardo Gascón gives unequivocal signs that he is a consumer and lover of detective novels. That is why one of his characters declares that detective novels make you lose your mind, a declaration of intentions and of impotence of not being able to control the codes of this genre. Francisco Pérez-Dolz, a close collaborator of Ricardo Gascón in *Cuando los ángeles duermen*, and *Don Juan de Serallonga*, and director of *A tiro limpio* [Shoot at will], partially inspired in the adventures of Francisco 'Quico' Sabaté Llopart and Josep Lluís Facerías commented that he wanted his characters to have a political background. In this sense, in an interview in the film magazine *Dirigido por...* (number 400), he argues that Franco's censorship did not kill the movie as in other cases. And critics accused him of attempting to copy French films.

Ricardo Gascón did not have the same type of problems with the critics or the censorship because he would not give any reasons for anyone to mistrust him. *Misión extravagante*, as a pamphlet, creates enough curiosity to follow the occurrences and adventures of a man who lives his life and impersonates a priest, boxer, and a musician to successfully carry out his mission.

Also, Ricardo Gascón is not a master of the formalization and the creation of a basis of a believable love story, given that he treats it as an accidental and automatic form. A storytelling conditioning to achieve a final (happy) ending with a couple that celebrates the triumph of the logic of pure love.

LOS AGENTES DEL QUINTO GRADO [FIFTH GRADE ANGELS] (1954), BY RICARDO GASCÓN

This is probably the most respected and well-known film by Ricardo Gascón, who in this effort does not abandon the parameters of detective films. He pens the technical script of this story centered on different archetypes of people that work in teams and put their lives at risk in a clear example of responsibility and public service. Through *Los agentes del quinto grado* he solves his lack of resolve for a genre into which he was unable to fully immerse himself, due to his escapist and *costumbrista* view which does not aid in the consolidation of this genre. This movie is not the clearest example of a detective film either, but rather a film that is carried along by police officers that show certain drawbacks and a degree of immersion in a circle from which they cannot escape. Gascón faces the same problem, which once again introduces elements of or the value

of detective novel, a moral context in which his characters move, headed toward an impertinent heroism, a rare internalization of duty and the fear of losing current status.

In *Los agentes del quinto grupo*, Ricardo Gascón centers on the potential of detective literature, on the portrayal of the archetypical characters, each one with their ideals and characteristics that a voiceover narration foreshadows for us at the beginning of the movie, which does not escape the weight and literary structure that subdues its stories, failed prolongations that ignore the socio-political contexts and seek only to accumulate actions to justify the acts of the characters.

It is true that an action scene creates expectations that are not later fulfilled since Ricardo Gascón decides to develop and to immerse himself in the treatment of the archetypical characters. However, on that level, one can find the best attribute of this movie, which for once in Ricardo Gascón's career maintains a certain interest in the characters' evolution and in their decision making. As always, everything ends with a familiar mark of stability isolated from the corrosive weapons of the criminal underworld. A hackneyed climax found in the joint action of the agents, who will overcome their fears, moved by the responsibility and honor that underlay the security force that they represent.

CONCLUSION

Spanish newspaper *El Pais* published this obituary, a dispassionate portrait of Arturo Ruiz-Castillo:

[...] A man of theater and film: he filmed the melodrama *Obsesión* (1947), la religious history *La manigua sin Dios* (1948), the political film *El santuario no se rinde* (1949) —one of his greatest successes—, the folklorical film *María Antonia*., 'La Caramba' (1951), the historical film *Catalina de Inglaterra* (1951), the soccer film *Los ases buscan la paz* (1954), the children's film *Pachín* (1961). In other words, he participated in the most conventional and topical genres in which Spanish cinema was involved during the 40s and 50s.²³

A conclusive summary and the burial of an personality of certain relevance in the culture of the first half of the twentieth century, a character who has not awakened Spanish film historians' interest (and even less overseas interest) which, as Asier Aranzubia Cob argues, is motivated by the harshness with which the critical vision of the history of Spanish cinema has been drawn as "A desolate panorama upon which, with extreme difficulty, a small group of undistinguished filmmakers and a few memorable films have

²³ "...un hombre de teatro y cine: Rueda el melodrama *Obsesión* (1947), la historia religiosa *La manigua sin Dios* (1948), la política *El santuario no se rinde* (1949) -uno de sus mayores éxitos-, la folclórica *María Antonia*., 'La Caramba'(1950), la histórica *Catalina de Inglaterra* (1950), la futbolística *Los ases buscan la paz* (1954), la infantil *Pachín* (1961). Es decir, interviene en los más convencionales y tópicos géneros en que se debate el cine español durante los años cuarenta y cincuenta. (21 June 1994)."

been able to make their mark.”²⁴ To that end, a key piece in the historiography of Spanish Film was edited, *Antología Crítica del Cine Español*, a work written to rescue and strengthen the objective view which envisioned a discouraging environment of a sterile cinematography and that had hardly been able to focus on the genius of a handful of huge and universal directors like Luis Buñuel, Carlos Saura...

Arturo Ruiz-Castillo was a man of culture committed to the time that he lived and who undertook a courageous career in the field of documentaries and the artistic patrimony of Spain. An entrepreneur about whose work we cannot speak definitively because unfortunately his work from war years was lost. Many of those documentaries about the war and its consequences have not reached us. They were most probably a sincere testimony of what could not be fully appreciated, though a few scenes were saved and became part of productions such as *Morir en Madrid*, one of the most cherished documents about the Spanish Civil War, a patchwork of several points of view about the exceptional state of affair that had created Franco’s uprising. Its author, Frédéric Rosbif, one of the pioneers of French television, wished to leave a human and graphic testimony of the news that turned the world upside down: the international brigades, the death of the poet Federico García Lorca...

Arturo Ruiz-Castillo insisted on the contribution that he brought to documentary making, improvised or not, which required much determination and historical consciousness, in order to delve into the horrific reality of Civil War Spain. The words of the director of *Obsesión* leave no room for doubt:

It is a shame that this material has been lost or that it has been ignored for such a long time because the history that has been passed on during all this time does not have anything to do with what we believed was going to happen in Spain.²⁵

This same director contributed to the creation of the humble people of the deep Spain, that same people captured by Luis Buñuel for the creation the myths of a country trapped in bloody traditions and a deplorable quality of life. In his well-known documentary *Las Hurdes: Tierra sin pan*, Buñuel recovered and recreated a lasting and recognizable mythology of a dark and taciturn Spain. Meanwhile, Arturo Ruiz-Castillo helped many people develop an affinity for reading, and distributed many books in Extremadura, *Las Hurdes’* locale. He tells it in the following manner:

Some times four or five people would get together to put together a *pesetilla*, which was what a book used to cost. It was a truly interesting experience and it was very exciting to see how authentic villages from Badajoz, where there barely

²⁴ “un panorama desolador sobre el que a duras penas se recortaban las figuras de un puñado de cineastas insignes y unas cuantas películas memorables.”

²⁵ “Es una pena que este material se haya perdido o haya sido ignorado durante muchos años porque la Historia que nos han estado contando durante todo este tiempo no tiene nada que ver con lo que nosotros creíamos que iba a pasar en España.”

was any electricity and people were interested in books and they would get money with which they could to buy them.²⁶

This was the way in which Ruiz-Castillo, a man of culture, curious, committed to the society of his time, carried out a career respected in his profession, without boasting or making a big deal of it, with limited commercial success. In the Spain of the 40s and 50s, the great productions of Cifesa were charged with building box office and successes given that a box office control did not exist. Ruiz-Castillo was also one of the visible leaders of the renovators, less experimental and vanguard than the more grassroots filmmakers, who had to overcome the scars of war during the decade of the 40s. The renovators whose most distinguished piece was the contribution of Nieves Conde, author of the mythical *Surcos*, declared to be of National Interest, who was one of the driving forces of the film reform breach of the mid-20th century, a film project endorsed by intellectuals or professionals that believed in the moral strength to promote compromise proposals, between officialism and patriotism.

Arturo Ruiz-Castillo is, for the most part, an illustrator of the narratives that moderately transformed the film industry; motivated by an artistic and reflexive sensibility, he applied to different genres a wave of change, sufficient to understanding and to promoting the true revolution that would come in the 60s with the beginning of the new Spanish film. At that point, authors such as he had a sufficient strength of character to end their careers and to make room for truly new renovating ideas, created mostly under the constitution of the IIEC (Instituto de Investigaciones y Experiencias Cinematográfica), the first great film institute from which came fully-trained professionals like Berlanga or Bardem, who promoted the critical dissidence that would ignore compromise.

Ruiz-Castillo was a self-taught man who began to investigate in 1933, with the collaboration of Gonzalo Menéndez Pidal, celluloid forms with experimental and vanguard works. In the cinematographic framework of the 50s, where the idea of an opening which the Franco regime wanted to sell abroad through the creation of a Ministry of Information and Tourism was practically unavoidable, personalities such as Ruiz-Castillo gave signs of their versatility, survival instinct and loyalty to their profession, and enough critical ability to believe that their contribution had been reflexive in one of the toughest times for creativity.

Ruiz-Castillo, more mistaken or inspired, made some advances in the neorealist interpretation in the formal and artistic field, and his *Catalina de Inglaterra* endures as a work that distances itself from the ancestral caricature of the film industry, and that gave some breathes of fresh air to other directors that reached greater success.

He shied away from the rhetorical language that thoroughly impregnated movies made by classic directors like Juan de Orduna, who also adapted Pío Baroja (*Zalacaín*,

²⁶ "A veces se reunían cuatro o cinco personas para juntar una pesetilla, que es lo que solía costar un libro. Fue una experiencia realmente interesante y era muy emocionante ver cómo auténticas aldeas de Badajoz, donde casi no había ni luz eléctrica la gente se interesaba por los libros y sacaba dinero de donde podía para comprarlos."

el aventurero, 1954), an influence of the Spanish Generation of '98 that became a heavy and claustrophobic undertaking in the subject of films. The majority of the adaptations were directed to more conservative muses such as Pérez Lugín, Concha Espina, Wenceslao Fernández Flórez, or José Francés.

Ruiz-Castillo will not go down in history as a great director, but he will as a man of great vision, loyal to the principles that left us a legacy that went beyond the temporality of a few movies and that is worth remembering in the face of our current fleeting principles.

Ricardo Gascón is another type of personality more effervescent in the officialist history of Spain, an honest man with a taste for a particular genre into which he immersed himself and developed a detective melodrama which summarized his cinematographic vision. We could not talk about *film noir* or detective film in a Gasconian world, only of the thematic introduction and some keys that contributed to a film carried by false dreamers that sought to shuffle a perfectly ordered and stable world. A film of police protagonism, which as Carlos F. Heredero cites, in "Cine español en los años 50. La vida bajo el silencio," included in the book *El cine español de los 50. 50 años de la Filmoteca Española*, ends up devolving later into apologies lacking the problematic quality of the characterization of law enforcement. A good definition for Ricardo Gascón and his stubborn way of understanding film and the servitude that is attached following the message preached by Franco's regimen.

Both Ruiz-Castillo and Ricardo Gascón personified the principal trajectory of Spanish film during the first half of the 20th century, where two ideas prevailed, according to Carlos F. Heredero:

The unilateral and countercurrent defense with modernizing interests, the heritage of neorealistic influences (*Surcos*, by Nieves Conde) and the counter point to the autocratic pomposity of the images defended by the official industry, like *Alba de América*.²⁷

A LESS THAN FAVORABLE CONTEXT FOR INTERNAL DISSIDENCE AND DEVELOPMENT AS A FILMMAKER WITH FULL RIGHTS

One hundred years after their births, there continue to be directors and cursed interpreters whose contributions have not been sufficiently valued or recognized. And this date that celebrates the centenary of the birth of such different figures as Ruiz-Castillo and Ricardo Gascón we take on the responsibility of comparing the creative and artistic universes of these two filmmakers that few have visited or honored. With their successes and failures, there are valued elements for the writing of a historiography of a poor film industry that has progressively overcome its complexes, and is speaking in its own diverse

²⁷ "La defensa unilateral y a contracorriente con pretensiones modernizadoras, heredero de las influencias neorrealistas (*Surcos*, de Nieves Conde) y el contrapunto al engolamiento autárquico de las imágenes defendidas por la industria oficial, como *Alba de América*."

voices.

Ricardo Gascón's voice has nurtured the idea that in Spain film was a professional activity, an occupation in which only a few directors faced the serious vicissitudes and limitations that the State machines imposed, a compliant film industry, while men like him made a comfortable career at the risk of projects that did not question the established order. In the end, a film of survival against a film of resistance (Ruiz-Castillo). Two faces of the same coin that the diverse families that have progressively created what is today known as the Spanish film industry make possible.

A tradition of dreams cut short, and projects that have been taken to full term thanks to the experiences and contradictions of others that decided to make movies, with the learned profession, or to experiment and work the magic of what continues to be Film.

Translation by Richard K. Curry and Héctor Weir