

AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO (*At least, it's dawning, 1989*) and ›surruralism‹ in Spanish cinema through music

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Abstract

Over the years, the Spanish film AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO [At Least, It's Dawning] (E 1989, José Luis Cuerda) has emerged as the paradigm of surreal (or preferably ›surrural‹¹) film in Spain. Although recognition of this production is growing as we move away from its release date, there are no studies addressing its music and the role it plays within the general plan of the film. Usually, theoretical approaches have focused on meaningless dialogues and rural scenes, omitting the value of the musical aspect. Therefore, we propose an analysis of this film, with forays into other similar productions, to inquire about how the music played by actors contributes decisively to the surreal pattern that surrounds the whole atmosphere. Also, we will try to identify the strategies that are used to make music essential, aimed at achieving a global understanding of the ›surruralism‹ that is present as the philosophy of the film.

Methodologically, we will extract the most relevant scenes that serve to illustrate our thesis and, in addition to this, the study will include mentions to interviews with privileged informants who participated in the realization of these films and other audiovisual documents, in order to provide a thorough picture of the phenomenon described.

¹ This term is recurrent in accordance with the characteristics of the films discussed by Úbeda Portugués 2001 and Méndez-Leite 2002.

Introduction. ›Surrural‹ music?

The purpose of this study is to provide an in-depth examination of *AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO* [At Least, It's Dawning] (E 1989, José Luis Cuerda)², a prototype of surrealist cinema (it seems that the term ›surruralist‹ would better fit what the authors had set out to achieve) with a growing number of followers that has recently become a benchmark in Spanish cinema.

The release in an international publication of a study on musical performance in its narrative context in this film is a challenge, considering that it has taken several years for the movie to achieve due recognition, its prestige building over time. Likewise, and of the utmost importance to this reflection, is the fact that foreign readers are not always quick in grasping the criteria that lead to the growing value of this production in the Spanish-speaking world³.

Thus, the interest in pursuing musical research based on this film rests mainly on two aspects. On the one hand, the merely analytical element that lies in the attempt to understand the score as a whole within such an atypical

² Director: José Luís Cuerda; director's assistant: Emiliano Otegui; screenplay: José Luís Cuerda; original music: José Nieto. I would like to thank the composer, José Nieto, and the soprano, Elisa Belmonte, for their contribution by providing very relevant data for the understanding of the film's music. Likewise, the input provided by the pianist, Marisa González – an extra – and by the members of the group of followers, known as *amanecistas*, who kindly shared their views with me, was extremely interesting.

³ Let us consider, for example, that, in some of the interviews with the film's director, the issue of the difficulties foreigners have in initially understanding the codes that make it so paradigmatic in the eyes of Spanish viewers is addressed. See, for example, the interview conducted by the left-wing politician Pablo Iglesias in his programme *La Petaka*, where such a circumstance is corroborated.

context as that pictured in the film, with its nonsensical and hilarious dialogues and, on the other hand, a musical approach to the explanatory keys to the phenomenon of such an intense reinvigoration of the film over the years, taking into account the fact that its collateral impact (fans, interviews and documentaries) keeps growing over the years since its release in 1989.

Regardless, despite the fact that our purpose will be to focus our attention on the music of the film, we recognize that this aspect cannot be dissociated from the totality of the film. In fact, the music is but one part of the mechanism which enables the common thread: the demonstration of a different model of film making by way of subversion and outlandish situations in the late eighties and early nineties. In the process, they nod to earlier cinematographic tradition which embodies a new critical and resolved look at social, religious, and sexual elements, which can be understood as components of a dynamic Spanish context which begins to glance towards the end of the transition.

The storyline, which can hardly be explained in a linear way, is set in a village of unknown name. Thus, Teodoro, a teacher of engineering at the University of Oklahoma, who is enjoying a sabbatical year, arrives at the place driving a sidecar where his father also travels. While they seek lodgings, they come across some of the most unbelievable situations, which they, nevertheless, deal with in a perfectly natural way. Throughout their adventure, these two characters face the most unlikely circumstances, such as hanged people who provide reasoned arguments for their refusal to be taken down; two agents of the Spanish Civil Guard that arrange turns to get the villagers drunk in an orderly fashion; a priest who delivers mass amidst the cheers of those attending; a villager who has befriended a pumpkin; a

teacher who elaborates extensively on irrelevant topics such as the relationship between the groin and the world; a physician who enjoys watching how well a patient dies; a woman from the north of Spain that speaks with a broad Andalusian accent; a group of Latin America people whose main characteristic is that, on alternate days, they either smell good or levitate; a woman who gives birth a few minutes after becoming pregnant; and an endless string of situations among which we will focus on the musical performances such as that starred by the teacher who teaches to the beat of gospel, field labourers who sing madrigals on their way to work or the pub's entertainer who, accompanied on the piano, regales her audience with opera arias.

With such a winding storyline, the difficulties in turning the film into a successful production lied in its very context of creation. In the words of Jarne Esparcia (2010, 57):

We are talking of the late eighties, a time when Pedro Almodóvar, Bigas Luna and Fernando Trueba were succeeding with proposals portraying a modern and fresh image of our country. Faced by such reality, how could a film set in the basest rural scene and starred by human beings directly out of the deepest Spain be a success?

However, as the above author admits, *AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO* has become a cult film within Spanish filmography, one that more than pleases the public that approaches it⁴. As time goes by, Jose Luis Cuerda's work

⁴ In 2013, at the renowned Valladolid International Film Week it received the award for best Spanish film of the last seventy years by popular vote. Online: <http://www.abc.es/local-castilla-leon/20131010/abci-Amanece-poco-mejor-pelicula-201310101305.html> (Last accessed: 01.09.2018).

gains followers, on the one hand are those who are already familiar with the film and are greatly fascinated by its ins and outs, and on the other hand, there is a large number of new viewers who become stalwart fans of it, among which there are even those that were born shortly before its production. Thus, a new group adds to the former.

Likewise, the increasing impact of the film can be perceived in many elements, among them the growing amount of merchandising derived from it, featuring images of the protagonists or reflecting famous sentences, its inclusion in the list of best Spanish films (alongside others such as Buñuel's), or its major influence on a number of current Spanish comedians, who base their assumptions on dialogues that border on the absurd or highlight grotesque situations, often rooted in La Mancha, which is where the film at issue is set⁵.

Accordingly, the film was recorded in Molinicos, Liétor and Ayna, three villages of the province of Albacete (Castile La Mancha). These are hard-to-reach places, or at least of limited access, insofar as visiting them requires the specific intention to do so, since they are located next to the motorways that run through the southern plateau of Spain. These communities share certain characteristics that set them apart from the dry sites that surround them a few kilometres away, such as a strategic location and a certain amount of greenery, which establishes them as an oasis within an area characterized by its dryness and extreme temperatures. Among the locals that were recruited to work as extras, some of them even as actors speaking a few lines, are one or two in charge of promoting the film's plaudits in its

⁵ This fact is acknowledged by some of these currently successful comedians that have forged their career as monologists or in television. Cf. VEINTE AÑOS AMANECIENDO, QUE NO ES POCO [The route of: At least, it's dawning] Documentary. (E 2010, Gabriela Martí).

own context⁶.

Moreover, the actual hordes of followers created a favourable atmosphere for the government of Castile La Mancha to make capital out of the film's landscape, so that it arranged a tour of its sites, which were prepared with references so that visitors could pilgrim, in the almost strictest sense of the word, to the scene of the events. It is particularly curious to observe how this type of tourism develops in parallel with the other famous route of the area, the route of Don Quixote, which is not very far away and highlights the places used by Miguel de Cervantes in his work of fiction on the mentioned character. Thus, two of the most absurd conceptions born in this land, one from the sick mind of an alleged knight errant and the other from the most nonsensical assumptions, have been elevated to attractions of a land of contrasts that is often unknown to the visitor.

After this first approach to the subject of study, it is time to address the specific features that make this film so special, to finally reach the issue of how the score is integrated into the whole audiovisual compendium to become an essential part of it.

When watching it for the first time, the viewer may be driven to catalogue it, not entirely without reason, as surrealist. However, the film's director agrees with the term coined for this product by Gianni Toti, who speaks of ›surruralism‹⁷. In this regard, rather than epitomizing surrealist cinema in Spain, which could perfectly be the case, it is understood as the model for

⁶ Such is the case of the »depressed boy«, played by Juan Ángel Martínez, devoted since 2009 to promoting tourism related to the *Ruta Amanecista*, as pointed out by Margarita Lázaro (2014) in a press article.

⁷ Although there are not many references to this term, Martín Rodrigo 2013 can serve as a reference.

›surruralism‹, as reflected by Marsh, Perriam, Woods and Zunzunegui (2012, 197):

Cuerda himself has labelled it [...] wryly as ›surruralism‹, but it also feeds on tradition of rural film comedy indebted to the sainete (Berlanga's BIENVENIDO MISTER MARSHALL! being an obvious example) and the zarzuela (e.g. Fernando Fernán Gómez EL EXTRAÑO VIAJE / STRANGE VOYAGE, 1964)

What is, therefore, ›surruralism‹? Even though it was not easy to provide an accurate definition for the term, it is obvious that it draws on the rural environment and on dialogues and conversations on complex topics in situations that debunk them, implausible situations that take such contradictions for granted as a maxim, distortion at the heart of the action. Thus, it is yet another turn of the screw on a whole tradition of renowned Spanish film directors, which introduces itself taking relevant aspects from each of them. Margarita Lázaro reminds us that José Luis Cuerda, the film's director, »draws on Luis García Berlanga and Rafael Azcona«, two emblems of Spanish filmmaking (Lázaro 2013). Other authors, even those who do not agree with such type of cinema, acknowledge these influences that do nothing but praise his work:

[Cuerda] preserves the chorale style of the first [Luis G. Berlanga]; a certain surrealist touch from the second [Luis Buñuel]; and his own ›magic realism‹ (Caparrós Lera 1999, 33).

The link between distinguished Spanish film productions and the film that concerns us reaches many dimensions. For example, the very casting endeavours to reclaim actors that worked in productions which grossly influenced the cinematography of José Luis Cuerda, such as in the case of the legendary Manuel Alexandre, who made his film debut as the mayor's secretary in BIENVENIDO MR. MARSHALL (E 1953) closely guided by Luis García Berlanga (a great model within the Spanish context). As it happens, the roles in this film and the plot it develops are distorted by Cuerda, to the point where obvious links can be found to the ludicrous approach carried out by the former. The pathways by which Garcia Berlanga covertly revealed the miseries of Francoist society are transformed in Cuerda's work in a game of mirrors where the image changes from blurry to exaggerated: the Americans continue to hold a predominant role in the world, but from one film to the next they begin to practice a distinct model of colonialism, almost touristic; the mayor continues to carry out his role, based, in both cases, not only on the power that his position entails, but also on the authority conferred upon him by his fellow countrymen, in spite of which Cuerda trivializes this figure; religion, which, among many other aspects, had to be presented through a censored filter, is portrayed as a revered power, legacy of an ultra-catholic tradition, mass itself is elevated to a spectacle which only takes on meaning within a ridiculous paraphernalia... Accordingly, it is not surprising that the musical contributions that are scattered throughout the scenes in the temple so blatantly disobey the rules of rationality to embed themselves in this ludicrous and critical ideology.

The set described serves to shape the film's ultimate identity. In any case, among the influences received, one of the most remarkable is the well-known reference to Buñuel, since his experimentalism with music can be understood as a key starting point. As Cooke (2008) points out:

The film [L'ÂGE D'OR, 1930, Buñuel and Dalí] demonstrated how well-known music by revered classical composers could, with ironic wit, accompany images of decomposing bodies (Mozart, *Ave verum corpus*) or the sucking of a statue's toe (Wagner's *Liebestod*), gestures thus made more disconcerting than might have been the case had the original plan to commission a modernist score...

The combination of the above serves to build the ultimate identity of the film, developed in an indefinite time and place (Ríos Carratalá 2008, 55). Everything, including the score, of course, is required to establish the intended atmosphere and be able to develop the play of contrasts. Regarding the music's influence on the achievement of such purpose, it is enough to look at the opening lines of the project of the series from which the film is born:

At least, it dawns. A rooster crows, as usual, and is answered back or hindered by a saxophone enveloped in the fog. A clown's saxophone that leads us to the streets of a village after dawn. A clumsy saxophone that is engulfed by the sound of a trumpet, to proceed along the village streets while evening falls, telling us that there has been a change. Of more world. Cosmopolitan, even... (Cuerda 2014, 55)

It might be said that the musical development that takes place draws from a set of more or less prototypical conventions, such as the use of a main topic that is presented during the starting and final credits and how it is approached to generate tender, tense or funny moments through the use of different timbres, sound additions or *tempi*. Therefore, the film's background music does not include any peculiarity that makes it more

special than any other that might be adapted to other types of feature film. Thus, for example, there are certain instances where there is a tendency to clichés (rhythms associated to the character of Ngé Ndomo, whose main defining feature is that he is the only black person in the village).

However, everything becomes more complex when focusing on music in its own context. Consequently, before approaching the musical analysis of the scenes, and to conclude this introduction, special attention should be drawn to the crucial role played by this music, a role that is at least as important as the rest of the film's parameters. The expression ›La España de pandereta‹, translated as tambourine Spain, is frequently used to refer to rural or almost folkloric contexts in Spain. Nonetheless, in *AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO* we can find all kinds of instruments, save for this humble one. Opera arias⁸ or madrigals give evidence of the continuous contrasts and musical complexities. In general, the musical style tends towards transgression, incoherence and clashing with the images. Likewise, other limits are also trespassed. An example of this can be observed in the description of the screenplay for the first of the school lessons scene:

Mr. Roberto follows the 'spirituals' teaching method. That is to say, he, as choir director and soloist, and the children, in several voices, sing, as black communities sing their psalmodies, about the driest subjects of human knowledge, in this case, the heart.

Atriums and ventricles, veins, arteries, tissues and functions make up the lyrics of the song that the children

⁸ Although, according to the script consulted, these operas are added subsequently, after organizing the rest of the film. Therefore, in the above script does not refer the music of the tavern and there is no allusion to the soprano. Script available in the Fondo José Luis Cuerda (Filmoteca de Albacete) and, partially, in <http://Amanecequenoespoco.es/la-pelicula/guion/> (Last accessed: 01.09.2018).

passionately sing, at a frenzied pace and building to an unstoppable crescendo. They sweat and get excited.⁹

Thus, when music whose origin is clear is performed, the musical treatment conveys transgression and incoherence, while also being wholly at odds with the images. It is curious to see, for example, that alongside the introduction of the opera after the first drafting of the script, the opposite has also happened, namely, the elimination of certain scenes accompanied by music when they are too crude and identify with the characters and their uncouthness. Since this is not the message intended, they are removed. Such is the case of a scene that is not in the film where a group of young troublemakers serenade the mayor banging on pots and pans and bottles while they sing.¹⁰

Methodology

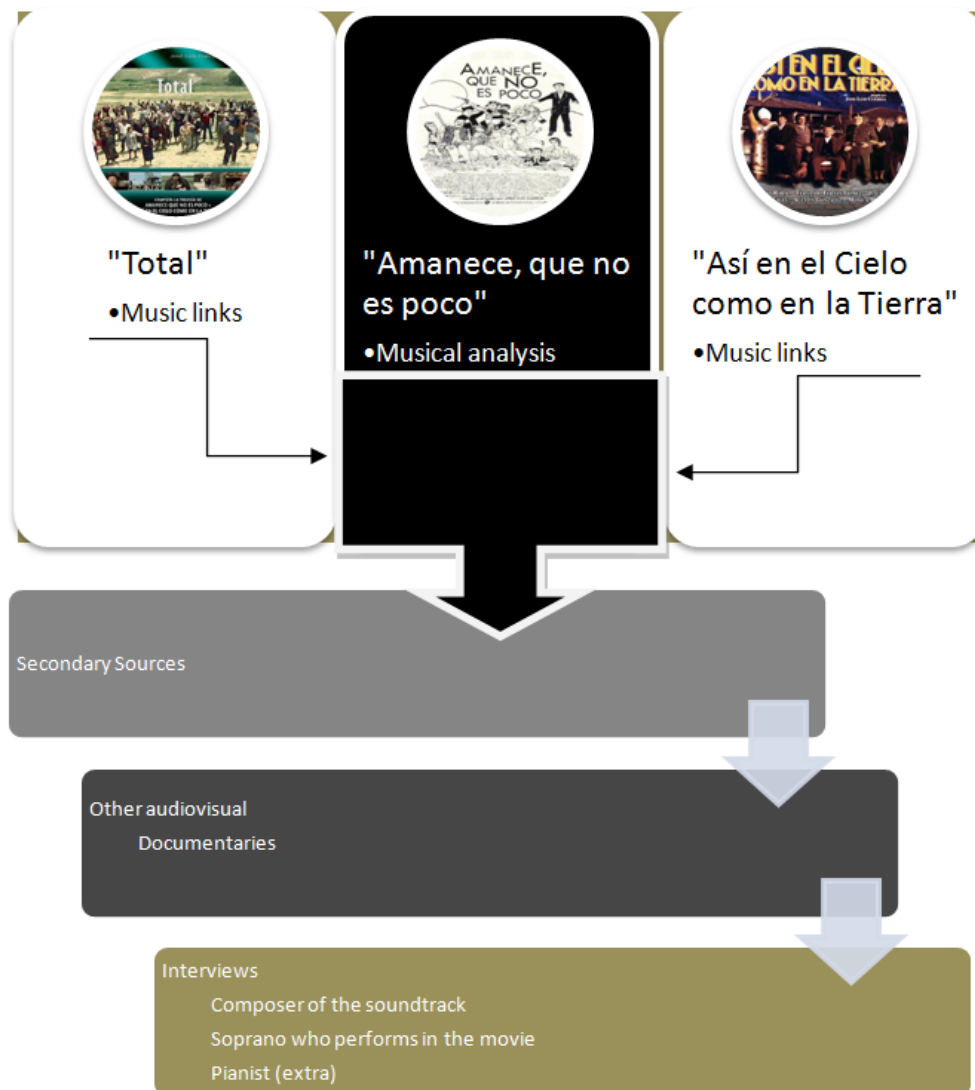
Despite the above, there is a clear lack of studies on the role of music within the film¹¹. This is rather surprising, since the particular nature of this creation rests not only on the dialogues or staging, but the score unquestionably plays a crucial role. However, as mentioned, the study of incidental and diegetic music, which is the focus of this study, is rarely considered.

⁹ Script. Scene 23.

¹⁰ Scene 50 (deleted).

¹¹ While it is true that there are studies on the film itself, there are not as many devoted exclusively to its music.

To this end, as presented in the diagram below, we suggest a broad approach that goes beyond the merely analytic:



An approach focused only on analysing the different parts where musicians or people playing instruments are involved would make no sense in global

terms; it should be taken as a whole, which requires addressing other essentials. We have chosen to use a variety of sources in the attempt to overcome the difficulties that may arise from the understanding of the phenomenon from a global perspective. They are as follows:

- Analysis of the main scenes where diegetic music is included, paying particular attention to the musical performance itself and its role in each of them.
- Search for similar productions by the same director. Although they cannot be strictly termed as a prequel and a sequel, *TOTAL* (E 1985, José Luis Cuerda) and *ASÍ EN EL CIELO COMO EN LA TIERRA* [As Heaven as It is on Earth] (E 1995, José Luis Cuerda), by the same director, unquestionably include aspects that reflect the musical roles and provide the keys to interpret them, since they are developed according to very similar parameters. Likewise, we can observe the link between the evolution of the storyline and that of the score.
- Declarations recorded in the different TV programmes and documentaries on the film. Among them, personal interviews with the music composer and arranger (José Nieto), the soprano (Elisa Belmonte) and the pianist that appears as an extra (Marisa González), to receive a first-hand impression of whether there was intentionality in conveying the feelings provoked by the film, or whether they are a matter of chance or other circumstances.

Music Analysis: Analysis of the main scenes

In the light of the above, this paper pays special attention to how the score develops within the film's narrative context and its contribution to creating the mentioned ›surrural‹ atmosphere¹². The first step to achieve this purpose is to identify the most relevant instances of music:

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 0:00:00– 0:03:16 | Credits. Images of a herd, in a parallel with Total. |
| 0:06:56– 0:07:45 | Church. The Eaton group of students sings a hymn (»The yellow rose of Texas«) when the priest consecrates the Eucharist ¹³ . |
| 0:07:48– 0:08:27 | Non-diegetic music for the appearances of the Civil Guard agent, pursued himself (music that is reminiscent of Total) and of Ngé Ndomo (rhythms intended to express his particularity). |
| 0:10:05– 0:10:31 | Giovanni Gastoldi (1550–1622). Madrigal »Sonatemi un balletto«. Filling in a gap where the dialogue between Ngé Ndomo and his mother takes place is one of the crucial moments to understand music's full potential in the film, since the labourers' singing of this madrigal carries the antagonisms residing in each character to an extreme. |

¹² To complement the musical analysis with other structural consulting: Martínez Casalé/Bruquetas Callejo 2015, 55–67.

¹³ It appears modified in the script (scene 10), where we find »El Himno de la Imaginaria Universidad Eaton«, which should appear in the film subtitled, as planned.

| | |
|----------|--|
| 0:10:49– | |
| 0:11:33 | |
| 0:13:19– | Georg Friedrich Händel (1685–1759). Aria: »Lascia ch’io |
| 0:13:47 | pianga« (<i>Rinaldo</i>). First appearance of the soprano, who sings, accompanied on the piano, before the pub owner. |
| 0:14:14– | |
| 0:15:11 | It can still be heard very softly until it takes effect again when the sequence returns to the tavern. |
| 0:18:05– | Very soft music while changing character is proposed. |
| 0:18:17 | |
| 0:18:30– | School. José Nieto (1942): »El corazón« [The heart song]. |
| 0:21:08 | Teacher and students present the relevance of the heart to the rhythm of gospel. |
| 0:22:44– | José Padilla (1889–1960). Pasodoble: »Valencia«. This popular |
| 0:23:57 | melody from the city of Valencia is used to welcome the mayor when he returns to town. <i>A capella</i> singing ¹⁴ . |
| 0:25:32– | The scholarly character burns on account of his fiery ideas, |
| 0:25:40 | which is expressed by means of a brief musical performance that illustrates the magical nature of the process. |
| 0:26:23– | Non-diegetic music. Accompanying the ode to the pumpkin. |
| 0:27:08 | |
| 0:28:11– | Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643). Canzonette: »Hor care |
| 0:29:00 | canzonette sicuramente andrete« (SV 21). In parallel to their previous intervention, the field labourers’ now return singing Monteverdi. |

¹⁴ To make the situation even more bizarre, old women in mourning dance.

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 0:29:45– 0:31:02 | Fun fair. Noise and soft background music |
| 0:33:17– 0:34:09 | The music seeks to illustrate the suicide suspense. The issue of credits appears distorted. |
| 0:35:06– 0:36:52 | Georg Friedrich Händel (1685–1759). Aria: »Lascia ch’io pianga« (<i>Rinaldo</i>). Third appearance of the soprano. She repeats her previous performance as background music for the main dialogues. |
| 0:37:32– 0:38:04 | Non-diegetic music for Ngé Ndomo and the goats. |
| 0:38:13– 0:40:19 | Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924). Aria: »Chi il bel sogno di Doretta« (<i>La Rondine</i>). Magda’s aria. Once again, the aria is used as a background track. |
| 0:43:08– 0:44:40 | Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924). Aria: »Tu che di gel sei cinta« (<i>Turandot</i>) ¹⁵ . To illustrate the pub owner’s discourse. |
| 0:45:49– 0:46:16 | Tender music to illustrate the dialogue between Jimmy and Teodoro (»I remember mother...«) |
| 0:55:46– 0:56:14 | Fandango. Sung while the mayor and Ngé are hanged. |
| 0:59:25– 0:59:41 | Ngé walks while his characteristic sounds are listened. |
| 1:00:05– 1:00:33 | Ngé says he serves »to dance pachangó« and, again, the drum sounds are heard. |

¹⁵ Liù’s aria. In the film it can be heard from the second sentence »da tanta fiamma vinta«.

| | |
|--|--|
| 1:00:44– 1:00:59 | Ngé leaves accompanied by musical fragments of the credits along with own musical elements. |
| 1:01:22– 1:01:29 | Iván Petróvich Lariónov (1830–1889). Canción: »Kalinka«. Russian folksong during mass. |
| 1:02:10– 1:02:28 | It is repeated several times. |
| 1:03:13– 1:03:49 | The man who springs from the soil is baptized. |
| 1:10:20– 1:11:04 | The South American admits when it leaves the black hole he cannot do what their countrymen. The music indicates that circumstance. |
| 1:14:04– 1:14:50 | School. José Nieto (1942). Canción: »Los ríos de Europa« [The rivers of Europe]. In a style similar to the previous musical intervention at the school. Now featuring a remarkable soloist among the children. |
| 1:16:32– 1:16:52 | Non-diegetic music. It starts to rain rice. |
| 1:16:59– 1:18:13 | A new treatment of musical credits for the scene in which the man who is sprouting is taught to kiss. |
| 1:25:24– 1:25:40 1:25:56– 1:26:02 | The character is levitating (sound effects) |
| 1:26:51– | Sound tension at the suicide scene. |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1:27:04 | |
| 1:27:20– 1:27:52 | Music <i>crescendo</i> as the image of the moon is seen. Finally, Teodoro smiles. |
| 1:32:24– 1:34:56 | Typical music to the fairground. |
| 1:34:56– 1:35:21 | The sounds become more rigid with the appearance of the guard Fermín. |
| 1:39:38– 1:40:13 | The shadow of the dawn generates tension musical that grows. |
| 1:41:02– 1:45:39 | As the sun rises, the march sounds. That brings us to the main theme and, consequently, to the final credits. |

The performance of music during the sequences, therefore, acquires a very characteristic value. For example, the adaptation of the song »The Yellow Rose of Texas«, which is transformed into an ecclesiastical hymn, is part of a transgression by which the Americans pay respect to the priest's doings, but to a tune that has served to standardize the clichés related to different moments of the Yankee life. A similar personification process takes place with the »Kalinka« song that is later performed.

»Sonatemi un balletto«, Gastoldi's madrigal, is the following musical intervention with interest for us. As Vicente Galbis (2009, 237) very rightly points out, if this madrigal had incidentally accompanied the scene of the field labourers' on their way to work, the performance would have been weaker, while, in this case, its power arises from the fact that it is the labourers themselves that sing it while they march. The intended effect, combined with their movements to the beat, contributes to the surrealism

(>surruralism<) of the scene.

In the script itself, it is expressed as follows:

they march to their fields singing madrigals by
Monteverdi, in various voices and with good taste¹⁶.

Indeed, Monteverdi's music, as mentioned before, is reserved for the field labourers' return. In any case, the sublime nature of the music, conflicting with the farming tools and rural clothing is a fact from their first appearance.

On this occasion, the reference made in the screenplay is to their singing, emphasising the need for it to be »in perfect tune«¹⁷. We thus highlight the specific guidelines »in various voices«, »with great gusto« and »in perfect tune«, since they set the bases for successfully achieving the planned transposition.

The other highpoints where music takes centre stage are the appearances of the soprano in the pub. The first of them is the one that most clearly reflects what is intended. Handel's music visibly pleases the pub owner, implying that he understands the potential of such type of music. Shortly after, this character is able to produce a highly complex discourse on literature, which is doubtlessly one more instance of the pub owner's abilities, even if his job would imply otherwise.

In other words,

¹⁶ In the script it is in Scene 13 although a handwritten note redirects it to Scene 35.

¹⁷ Script. Scene 31.

the distortion is twofold: not only is the singer's style completely foreign to a business of such characteristics, but the aria's lyrics are absolutely incongruous if compared with the ludicrous dialogue between the pub owner, the Civil Guard agent and the first drunkard. To further exaggerate the distortion, the soprano and the pianist are dressed as if they were going to perform at a concert hall (Galbis 2009, 238).

The expression »cómo canta la jodía« (she can damn well sing), a catchphrase repeated ad nauseam by the staunchest followers of the film that is blurted out by a young drunkard at the pub's doors, substantiates how somebody can boast about his own inexperience in musical matters while at the same time acknowledging the singer's merit. Indeed, the other two appearances of the soprano and her pianist are by far less splendid, since they provide a background to particularly relevant dialogues. In any case, they serve to support the feeling that such music is appropriate for a place where the clientele gets drunk one minute, and discuss novels or elaborate on philosophical aspects the next.

The fandango that accompanies the mayor and Ngé's hanging is another of the noteworthy moments. The singing of this fandango seems to stem from the interest of the amateur actor himself, a local, in appearing in the film in such manner. Within the general context of craziness, it is simply accepted.

To conclude this approach to the sequences with live music (either totally or partially), it is obligatory to mention the songs sung at the school. In a time when theories on making learning playful to improve students' motivation were being proposed, teacher Roberto manages to reach his students quite successfully through live musical performances. Beyond the old-fashioned

environment conveyed by the classroom's furniture and the clothing of one or two of the students, the musical styles, so far away from rural reality (gospel and a certain derivation of pop music), come as a great surprise that ensures the perfect success of the absurd.

Connections among the TOTAL – AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO – ASÍ EN EL CIELO COMO EN LA TIERRA trilogy

When speaking about AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO, it is common to ask its director to relate it to TOTAL, a TV production lasting less than an hour, which most obviously precedes it. Even before, but especially following the publication of the book *Amanece, que no es poco (La Serie)*, José Cuerda (2014) shows us how the film addressed in this study stems from TOTAL, after being commissioned by the Monte-Carlo Film Festival to produce an approximately one-hour long comedy. Once it had been broadcast on Spanish Television and after the odd negative review¹⁸, it was awarded the Special Jury Prize and the Critics Award, resulting in the opportunity to use its ideas to produce a TV series (the unsuccessful AD URBE CONDITA), which ended up becoming AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO (a film drawn from the five-hour storyline that had been prepared for the series). The plot of TOTAL is also difficult to understand, since it brings us to the year 2598, shortly after the end of the world, and describes some of the uncanny events

¹⁸ Especially the one by Ángel Fernández-Santos »Total, nada« in the newspaper *El país* (28/12/1983), which ends with a completely negative opinion on what was to follow: »Original dialogues, since they couldn't be worse«. Online: http://elpais.com/diario/1983/12/28/radiotv/441414002_850215.html (Last accessed: 01.09.2018).

that take place (the appearance of a woman, children that age surprisingly fast, collapses, cows that want to learn at school...).

The first thing that stands out in the musical treatment of *TOTAL* is the near-absence of diegetic music and the huge variety of music introduced in the transitions between scenes, mostly used to emphasize implausible situations through music that conveys a touch of mockery. When compared to *AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO*, the former does not reveal the great importance of the role that musical performances will later play. Speculations could be here made on the possibility that the higher impact of the film as compared to this shorter product mainly lies in its bringing together all the tools of the audiovisual product to create the ›surreal‹ atmosphere, which in *TOTAL* is still rather blurred as far as the soundtrack is concerned, since the clichés used are still very repetitive and even predictable, which is in complete contradiction with the need to contrast disparate elements that can be appreciated in *AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO* and, of course, in the film that completes the trilogy.

In this regard, *ASÍ EN EL CIELO COMO EN LA TIERRA* is assumed to be the last film of this sort of trilogy whose author presents a ludicrous picture that portrays elements that are inherent, although obviously distorted in these productions, to the particularity of rural environments. A certain degree of evolution in the musical aspect can also be observed, since the plot of this last film is more open to displays of music developed in the images themselves. In this motion picture, the death of one of the characters serves as the excuse to present heaven, its inhabitants and its landscapes, which turns out to closely resemble a mid-twentieth century Spanish village. Not happy with the world's course, God decides to send a second son to Earth but, persuaded by Jesus, they end up planning an apocalypse to regenerate

the human condition, which is not easy, since their possibilities are rather basic and humans, perhaps, too rebellious.

As already mentioned, while in *TOTAL* the treatment of the musical aspect is very clear and in *AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO* the score is an integral part of the desired atmosphere, the stronger plot of *ASÍ EN EL CIELO COMO EN LA TIERRA* allows for even greater musical presence following the trend suggested above. Thus, the standardization of surrealism under clearly defined premises (rural environment, crazy situations, contradictory dialogues in specific contexts...) is supported more efficiently by music when the plot gives cause for it. Below is a summary of the distribution of the musical display in *ASÍ EN EL CIELO COMO EN LA TIERRA*.

In this sense, musical appearances have a number of aspects that make certain continuity with the previous film. In *ASÍ EN EL CIELO COMO EN LA TIERRA* the first diegetic sounds remind us of the Spanish National Anthem, often interpreted crudely, trying to illustrate a past time, supported by the large number of flags in the country, does not refer us to progress or frantic industrial activity, but to a rural environment. Frequent are also intentionally farcical performances and the songs of San Isidoro, who acts as a teacher in a similar way as master Roberto in *AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO*.

In the first case, the procession marches, so common in towns across the Spanish geography, are parodied mercilessly while, between the walls of the classrooms of the school, children's choirs reappear. Also noteworthy are other musical performances as *saetas* or singing *a capella* of San Isidoro, since both moments are heirs, unfailingly, the fandango that is sung by the mayor and Ngé Ndomo while they are hanged in *AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO*. However, there is a clear evolution in the 1995 film: since, in this

case, the dialogues are not as absurd, and the music presents a component of coherence not always apparent in the previous production. The described music intermingles on the scene when necessary, it is modeled to appear non-diegetically or tailored specifically to the diegesis if or when the situation requires it (as in the case of joyful fanfares signifying the progress of the entourage of the apocalypse which suddenly become disjointed when they return defeated). The use, therefore, can be defined as more prototypical and, as noted above, ›surrural‹.

Testimonies

There are many testimonies, recorded and accessible from the *web*, on the issue of the keys to interpreting *AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO*, especially based on the director's own words. However, not as much attention, if any, has been paid to reflecting on its music, which is why we have chosen to bring together relevant data from the available audiovisual documents and our interviews with José Nieto (the music composer of *TOTAL* and *AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO*), Elisa Belmonte (a soprano playing the role of »pub entertainer« in the film) and Marisa González (a pianist that appears as an extra), with the purpose of finally approaching the former analysis in the most appropriate way, providing data that could maybe add to the ideas already introduced.

Some of the noteworthy aspects are the relevance attached by the production department of the film to the musical quality of performances. It has already been mentioned that to be able to enhance the contrast between rural environments and the clichés that are supposedly far from them in musical

terms, it was essential that music displays be of top quality, since a questionable performance would not achieve the intended effect. José Nieto himself stressed the importance of ensuring that the recordings made prior to the film's play-back were clear and that they involved first-class performers. In the case of the schoolchildren, the voices belonged to the Choir School of the Valle de los Caídos, while the Elisa Belmonte's singing was accompanied, as she told us, by Manuel Gas, one of the greatest pianists of the moment. The soprano herself, whose musical quality, supported by a well-established career, is unquestionable, remarked that she was amazed by the pianist's almost intuitive coordination skills during the recordings in the Madrid studios.

Another extremely interesting issue derived from the interview concerns the repertoire, in particular the one used by Elisa Belmonte in her role as the pub entertainer. According to her, when José Luis Cuerda asked her to sing and act she prepared the pieces that she considered most appropriate for her role (mainly lively fragments of zarzuela, such as those taken from »La corte del faraón« or the well-known »Anda jaleo«) and was surprised to learn that he wanted opera arias. It seemed that composer and time were irrelevant; the idea was that the soprano herself was to select from her repertoire and share the works that were considered the most elitist, the closer to art music, the better. This was no doubt a good way to contrast the tastes and interests expected from the pub's clientele with their complete opposite. Another of the requirements to achieve this was that the soprano be made up to look older, to be able to intensify the nuances described.

Conclusions

It is always interesting to study the music in films whose prestige has increased over the years. To begin with, the mere fact of observing whether the score has the same connotations as the rest of parameters that make up the audiovisual product (costumes, dialogue...), or if it is used to enhance them and stimulate this revival phenomenon is encouragement enough to justify music-oriented research on the film addressed. Considering that, as we have pointed out in the main part of the study, the film has always been approached from the perspectives of the traditionalism of its plot or its hilarious dialogues, apart from rare exceptions such as the case of Galbis, we believe that this study might fill in a gap in the analysis of the Spanish filmography, since the significance of this film in Spanish cinema and its influence on either side of the screen are well-established facts.

In an attempt to avoid labels that do not refer to the specificity of the topic, the director breaks away from the term surrealist to frame the film as what he terms ›surruralist«, so that the identifying features are a series of elements that can be traced to before and after the production at issue. In this regard, it should be noted that the film is not born from scratch and that, as stated above, there is logical continuity from TOTAL and AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO to ASÍ EN EL CIELO COMO EN LA TIERRA. The very chronology of the productions and their plots (more incoherent in the TV production and much easier to grasp in the last film) are a reflection of how music has been involved in the scenes. As stated by the score composer of the first two, the nature of TOTAL rendered diegetic music almost unnecessary, while in AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO it plays a crucial role in typifying the antagonistic situations that we have described. As a logical consequence of

this extension of the role of music in the sequences as plots acquire greater consistency and continuity, *ASÍ EN EL CIELO COMO EN LA TIERRA* includes moments when the musicians serve to explain and articulate the plot itself.

The analysis conducted proves that the creation of a cult film like the one discussed cannot be achieved without the concurrence of the musical aspect which, in this case, is of utmost relevance. The pub scenes, where arias by Handel and Puccini are performed before a motley audience that includes intellectual farmers or drunken physicians, is a maximum point of attraction within the extreme distortion that leads to the film: the naturalness of the surprising. In such cases, what is truly significant from the perspective of the musical performance is not so much the message conveyed by the specific arias that are sung, but the fact that the interviews conducted have made clear that the aim was to introduce a completely unexpected type of music in such context. The other noteworthy moment when the pre-existing music raises as the protagonist (the madrigal by Giovanni Gastoldi) fits perfectly into the concept of ›surruralism‹, which is enhanced, as mentioned, not only by the musical performance, but also by the gestures of complicity, idleness and timing of the field labourers, identified as such by the tools they carry, since by their expressions and behaviour they could well pass for skilled musicians. On their part, the school performances (the other two scenes where music takes a central place) further contribute to the display of distortions and, in line with it and thanks to perfectly tuned voices, a type of music-based learning is conducted that would be difficult to achieve at a school in postwar Spain.

Thus, it is interesting to underline that music has a decisive effect on the distortion of reality, forcing us to face what we might become in a very

particular, even grotesque, way, but a way that can be, nevertheless, framed within a geographical context that would seem uninteresting in terms of what it really is: a complex knot of multiple relationships and contradictions. Let us remember that one of the productions addressed in this study provides evidence of how one of the villages where the filming took place (Liétor) organizes a successful series of organ recitals that attracts many music lovers. In *AMANECE, QUE NO ES POCO* we can observe how musical transgressions are taken to an extreme, although they do not cease to be grotesquely exaggerated parts of concerns or aspects that might arise at a smaller scale, however much the location used is a remote place in La Mancha.

As a final conclusion, we could raise a question about the extent to which the musical performances in the film contribute to set up the surrealist or ›surruralist‹ atmosphere. As previously set forth, it addresses yet another way of subverting the image of modernity presented by the state by resorting to diverse sources. The absurd and irreverent is understood as the source of a new society, Spanish society, which does not necessarily need to move towards the models drawn up by film-makers more tightly bound to new trends. In this sense, the film—and the director's own filmography—constantly remind us to what extent Spanish society draws upon outdated traditions, yet does so with a curious symbolic efficacy.

If, as we have noted, the costumes and dialogues run in opposite direction to the music, contributing to the contradictions in such a peculiar society, the musical pieces are doubtlessly essential to intensify such contradictions and asymmetries. While it is highly unlikely for villagers in an undetermined place of the deepest Spain to become irritated because someone has plagiarized Faulkner, it is far more bizarre and difficult to find people who

know Gastoldi's madrigals, or even the arias sung by the soprano Elisa Belmonte who, as already stated, had the feeling that they came to be better known, though not famous, as a result of their enactment in the film. In this regard, the phenomenon of cult worshiping of the film is decisively underpinned by the musical performances, since their contribution to the so-called ›surrural‹ or absolutely genuine style is as important as the dialogues themselves or the rest of comical situations.

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