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# Biographies in TVE series, 1982–1996. *Felipism* and Spain's new image

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## Abstract

Cultural policies of Felipe González's government were intended to reshape a certain national identity. We will focus on these legitimisation strategies through TV series, and particularly those with historical background produced and exhibited by the public broadcasting institution, Television Española. The recovery of some liberal mythology from the 19th century and its adaptation to the 80s will allow us to connect the promoted national identity with the concept of constitutional patriotism defended by important figures of the PSOE since the transition to democracy until nowadays.

## Keywords

Felipism, constitutional patriotism, TV studies, historical and biographical TV genres

Studies of Spanish audio-visual production during the government of Felipe González (1982–1996) have been dominated by research on the film industry, and in particular on the consequences of a regulation approved during the 1980s. The so-called Miró legislation<sup>1</sup> was conceived to standardise the quality of audio-visual productions and help to disseminate a certain image of the country as it joined the EEC, particularly through their commercial export and presence of films at foreign festivals.

The process of political and economic opening initiated with the Moncloa Pacts and the approval of the 1978 Constitution would take on a new impetus under the Socialist government, for which cultural planning would become a vital aspect. Updating the country's image in line with a modernising and democratic sensibility was both a challenge and a necessity for the new government. This implied confronting the problematic

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relationship between Spaniards and their national identity following the dictatorship, under which a monolithic and exclusive image of Spanish nationalism was imposed for almost four decades.

In this paper, I propose that those in power used coherent and consistent models and strategies than can be perceived in biographical and historical fiction as an effort to rehabilitate and reach a consensus regarding Spanish identity. I would like to prove that these types of production demonstrate certain models, themes and attitudes that reflect a particular desire to establish an image of the country, both for the national viewer, using cultural creation as a constituent element of the population's informal education, and for the international public, where it would function to showcase the regeneration of the country's image and attract economic investment.

I contend that these two didactic and economic factors are crucial to understanding the reformulation of Spanish nationalism during the 1980s and early 1990s. The use of public television as the government's privileged loudspeaker, which was denounced at the time as propagandistic (Gutiérrez and De Miguel, 1989: 13 and 286), is also reflected in the television series produced and broadcast on *Televisión Española* (TVE), especially given that it was the only available platform for Spanish television viewers during the first socialist legislature.

In order to support my claim, I will discuss the interpretation of the 'patriotic constitutionalism' concept by prominent socialist politicians as an example of the new nationalism they supported. Using the film analysis methodology, I will demonstrate that this type of vision is embodied in the fictional universe that viewers of the time were able to appreciate in the historical and biographical series produced by the public broadcaster. Furthermore, our focus on the biographical genre will help us to analyse the mechanisms of identification and recognition that these products put into practice.

### *The image of the homeland*

In his appearance at the Congress of Deputies in May 1985, the Minister of Culture, Luis Solana, explained the policy of his ministry in the first two years of the legislature as such:

(The allocation to culture in the General Budget) has been aimed fundamentally at generating a cultural infrastructure in our country which it has regrettably lacked. Unfortunately, our country has lacked a sufficient cultural infrastructure and, therefore, any effort, or rather, any effort that can be made to generate and create a more dignified cultural infrastructure in our country, I believe that these efforts are well worth making. (Diario de Sesiones. Congreso de los diputados. Núm. 76. 21 May 1985: 3)

The expressed will to change the image of the country<sup>2</sup> through culture posed a challenge that can be presented in terms similar to those used to designate the process of transition from dictatorship: continuity or rupture. As events unfolded, the oxymoron of the 'agreed rupture' (Rodríguez López, 2015: 94) also took place in the field of cultural policy. If at first it would seem that, in this area, *Felipismo* made use of the mythology of 19th and early 20th century liberalism and *regenerationism*, at the same time, following the postmodern cultural pattern, it recycled the National-Catholic myths to create a

synthesis that has been paralleled with a German-inspired ‘constitutional patriotism’ (Núñez Seixas, 2013: 118) in its adaptation to the political needs of a socialist government.

It would be interesting, therefore, to look at the image that the socialist party produced of the country in the last years of Franco’s regime and its evolution up until the party came to power in October 1982. In this respect, it is important to bear in mind the tradition of struggle against the dictatorship that many of its cadres championed during the years of the Transition, and the somewhat diffuse legitimacy that the party’s republican heritage had among part of the electorate. They were part of a generation of young students from the wealthy classes, many of them were children of the Civil War victors, and some even from Franco’s own administration, for whom the attraction of republican values meant both a transgression and a political opportunity in the face of the evident political change that could be sensed at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s.

Between the ‘recognition of the Iberian nationalities’ or ‘self-determination of the peoples’ – defended before and during the 1974 congress (Gutiérrez and De Miguel, 1989: 153 and Sepúlveda, 2013: 93) and used to both engulf the regional socialist parties and attack the Suárez government – and the recovery of the patriotic discourse against an ‘emptying of the State’s competences’ with the development of the State of autonomies once in power (Núñez Seixas, 2013: 116), a decade passed. Throughout this decade, there was time to present a discourse of moderation and consensus, as Gregorio Peces Barba, one of the most visible figures within the party, wrote: ‘Self-determination does not fit into the Constitution (...) I am sure that both Azaña and Pérez Galdós would share this version of constitutional patriotism that I suggest in these lines’ (Peces Barba, 2003: 57–58).

The fact is that patriotism would be instrumental for legitimising the socialist position and demonstrating the defence of ‘national sovereignty’, which was done to initially oppose entry into NATO and, from the mid-1980s onwards, to call for NATO membership. During this time, elections had been won with the most absolute majority harvested to date by a party in democracy, the result of a strategy of expansion to the left and right that harnessed discourse on the homeland and national history. Given that the Republican heritage was defended against the PCE at first in order to win votes on the left, and the Restauración (1874–1923 liberal regime) was taken up again as a political model in which the hereditary authoritarianism of the UCD and AP/PP has no place in order to appeal to the right, we can see how the recovery of history became a fundamental element of political discourse.

### *The constitution and the homeland*

In the aforementioned text, Peces Barba alluded to a concept that was to be accepted by leading figures in socialism: constitutional patriotism. According to Habermas (1989: 94), the main propagandist and disseminator of the concept coined by Rolf Sternberger, constitutional patriotism involves detaching oneself from certain anti-democratic aspects of a country’s history (national-socialist purification in the case of Germany or national-Catholic in Spain) to create a common, open and consensual identity rooted in the humanistic values that the philosopher recognised in his European neighbours’ resistance to fascist or

communist totalitarianism<sup>3</sup>. While Peces-Barba takes up this idea to affirm that ‘overcoming exclusionary nationalism means returning, in some way, to the enlightened national state, which is rational and universalist, which is the state of abstract citizens’ (2003: 52), he goes on to qualify this by calling for the presence of ‘a people’s own identity (which) ultimately conditions each model of constitutional patriotism and gives it its own profile’.

Note in the above extract that, for the socialist politician, exclusionary nationalism is not that which was imposed after the Civil War, which was never officially condemned by the forces that signed the Constitution (Núñez Seixas, 2013: 118), but was exemplified in Basque and Catalan nationalism and their expression during the first years of the ‘78 regime. In the same way, he recovers Sternberger’s defence of the value of the state for social democracy, an authentic political model for Spanish socialism, ‘as opposed to Marx’s anti-statist theses’ (Peces Barba, 2003: 52).

The criticisms received for the adoption of this idea of constitutional patriotism for the Spanish case point to an intentional deformation of Habermas’s theorisation. This is due to, among other things, the perversion of the idea of a rational and consensual Constitution, which in reality is a text with little room for reform and drawn up by a commission of experts in a dogmatic and elitist manner (Bastida Freixedo, 2002: 224–225). Drawing inspiration from the latter author, Campuzano Carvajal (2007) also points out how this idea of constitutional patriotism, conveniently recovered by the Popular Party later on, aims to delegitimise the sovereigntist demands for ‘peripheral’ nationalisms in favour of a common and indivisible homeland, as opposed to the pluralism and territorial consensus advocated by Habermas.

As we have been seeing throughout this article, belonging to a community, in this case a national one, depends on the adoption of certain symbols and myths. These elements depend on the creation of an affective bond such as that which Juan José Laborda<sup>4</sup> (Peces Barba, 2003: 58) called for in relation to constitutional patriotism. This concept had to be made attractive and comprehensible to the Spanish population. Film production, due to its persuasive power, could become the disseminator of the new identity that would structure the country’s history in the agreed direction: the defence, promotion and international projection of liberal democracy.

### *The representation of history*

The Spanish audio-visual industry, and the film industry in particular, had been in crisis since the 1970s in the face of competition from television, foreign films and, following the abolition of censorship, films that could be shown in cinemas for the first time, to name the most important factors. Through platforms such as the First Democratic Congress of Spanish Cinema (December 1978, Madrid), film professionals demanded a renewal of protectionist measures and guidance in promoting a new national cinema that would correspond to the new democratic period.

Many of these producers and directors, those integrated in the so-called New Spanish Cinema and students of the Official Film School (EOC) in particular, discovered a favourable situation for the promotion of a certain type of cinema through the rise of the PSOE, reinforced by the professional experience they acquired in the late 60s and early 70s. It was a generation that was also internationally recognised by festival juries, although

not by the Spanish public on a massive scale. The challenge was to ‘democratise’ or, more accurately, to popularise the cinema they had previously made.

The two main objectives of the famous ‘Miró legislation’<sup>5</sup> were to reduce the quantity and raise the quality of audio-visual products – objectives that it undoubtedly achieved, and which in the opinion of most professionals and researchers today proved indispensable for Spanish cinema. At the time, the legislation was widely criticised for, among other things, the progressive marginalisation and disappearance of smaller productions such as ‘S’ (softcore) or horror films, whose consumption was being abandoned, or at least privatised, following the arrival of the first home video players (Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, 2001: 32). A ‘quality’ cinema, partly adapted to the consumption patterns of Spaniards, was thus imposed. It can therefore be said that the productions promoted by the administration through public television and cinema destined for commercial consumption in theatres played off each other both aesthetically and in terms of production models. In fact, the archaic classicism of the aesthetics of many of the productions of the 1980s has been pointed out and criticised, even though it mimics a specific type of historical cinema that has traditionally been used to forcefully legitimise governments and political systems across different periods.

History as an element in the construction of a national identity has been the subject of innumerable studies which, in any case, unfailingly refer to the classic texts of Anderson and Hobsbawm. I am interested here in the use of historical narrative in audio-visual productions to create a bond of belonging to a culture, community or nation – an outcome demanded by the specialised press at the time (Triana-Toribio, 2003: 117). The press sought a cinema that reflected the ‘true artistic and literary roots’ of Spain, as opposed to the previous cinema characterised by papier-mâché and the national-Catholic epic. What was demanded, in short, was that national myths be updated to reflect a pluralistic and democratic society. It is therefore understandable that the cinema of the period under study is ‘marked by an obsessive focus on the past, both narratively and thematically, through a retro style and a prodigious taste for nostalgia’ (Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, 2001: 8).

What would emerge was a classical cinema that would end up sclerotising production by pushing debut directors to follow an increasingly rigid and conformist model and cornering any kind of formal or technical innovation (Monterde, 1993: 112). This brand new ‘cinema de qualité’ would also receive initial backing from Hollywood after the aseptic, nostalgic, technically perfect, timidly condemnatory of Francoism and much more clearly legitimising of the monarchy *Volver a empezar* was awarded the Oscar for best foreign film (Garci, 1982). This miniseries of the past opened the way for the legitimisation of the present, which, as Hopewell denounced (quoted in Triana-Toribio, 2003: 119), distanced the production from the critique of contemporary society.

If, during the 1970s, metaphorical and documentary films served to criticise both the political situation and the historical events that had produced the dictatorship, social criticism in the 1980s was confined to a condemnation of the past that had little to do with the idea of the ‘new modern, liberal and technocratic Spain embodied in the PSOE’s 2000 programme’ (Gutiérrez and De Miguel, 1989: 170). The shift towards the centre of the political spectrum, the basis of the socialist party’s electoral success, would be reflected in a cultural policy ‘without ideological ties and free of political rhetoric’ (Quaggio, 2013: 457) that coincided with a defence of the market economy through literary and artistic creation.

### The biographical genre

A process of depoliticisation or deproblematism of the present can thus be observed in a cinema in which the past is re-imagined through the prism of nostalgia, with all its emotional charge. Biography adds a crucial element to the consolidation of the historical narrative through nostalgia: the introduction of the personal point of view and the blurring of History in the individual memory, emotions and psychology of the characters, such that the personal becomes the political (Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, 2001: 12).

The biography therefore reinforces a point of view that is in line with the rise and consolidation of individualist culture, adopted by social democracy as a model for the Spanish left, in which individual freedoms and identities replace the demands of class and social justice. This narrative choice implies commenting on history from a subjective point of view and may unintentionally downplay the importance of social conditions in line with the offensive against Marxist interpretations of history during the 1980s and 1990s.

Both because of the biographical genre itself and because of the television series format, childhood acquires singular importance in the processes of both the viewer's identification with the character and the introduction of the narrative plot. This period of the character's life is usually truncated, if not directly occupying the first episode or two, and presents the fictional universe that has to maintain coherence throughout the series and secure the audience's 'loyalty'. The commonplace identification of the mother with the homeland appears, for example, in the first scenes of *Goya* (José Ramón Larraz, 1985), the beginning of which is prototypical of the type of productions we are studying here:

Even in the bitter silence of these days of deafness and exile I often hear my mother's voice calling me, the terrible drylands of Aragon, my village, Fuentetodos, so small, seen from the height of the last years of my life. (4:46–5:05)

The centrality of the family in the story makes it possible to associate the experiences seen with the spectator's own childhood, as can be seen in such singular genres as the 'cinema with a child' of the 1950s and 1960s or the metaphorical cinema of the late Franco era. It is in this way that the first episode of *Ramón y Cajal. Historia de una voluntad* (José María Forqué, 1982) deals with the childhood of the protagonist where the first memories are, once again, his mother calling him in the distance.

It is apparent, then, how most of the series studied here are narrated by means of flashbacks threaded through the character's memories: in *Goya's* letters to Martín Zapater, Arturo Barea's novels, *Ramón y Cajal's* autobiography, for instance. In short, they feature middle-class men whose achievement of status and a social ascent resonates with a large part of the viewers, who were thus inclined to compare the deprivations of the Franco regime with the prosperity achieved in democracy. The biography manages to ensure that both the narrator and the reader or viewer share a vision of the past; it is from the present, which is different in both cases, that past acts are remembered for both subjects, establishing the conditions for a greater identification with history.

The viewing of these television series tends to be highly ritualised. Esquenazi (2017: 35–36) draws attention to the significant role that the home and family life play in the television consumption of these products, which on most occasions, and certainly in

their most emblematic products such as *The Simpsons* or *Cuéntame cómo pasó*, occupy a large part of the narrative plot. These products are usually broadcast at prime time, during or just after dinner, when the whole family spends a certain amount of time in front of the television. In this way, television fiction regularly features different characters with which different generations and sexes can identify.

It should be noted here that in most of the biographies studied, however, the almost exclusive focus on a main character encompasses different generations, at least in the case of the men, by presenting different stages of their life stories played by different actors. Meanwhile, as a rule, women are presented as their assistants or necessary accomplices: devoted wives, beautiful young women who have previously aroused the passions of the protagonist or sweet mothers who, as mentioned previously, touch the protagonist and incidentally the spectators by recalling their childhood.

### *The myths of modern Spain: from Azaña ...*

If the political representatives of the PSOE had been moving away from references to the Republic after the marginalisation of PS ancient cadres, the party's cultural policy needed the participation of intellectuals and artists who, during the last years of the dictatorship, had been particularly active in the creation of alternative imaginaries to Franco's official culture. Many of them were militants or sympathisers of the PCE during these years and up to the turn of the decade, and worked to defend the image and values of the democratic period of the 1930s.

On the other hand, the process of stigmatisation of Eurocommunism capitalised on by Felipe González and Alfonso Guerra<sup>6</sup> in Spain correlates with the attraction that the young politicians exerted on some of the creators, who, in any case, had a privileged platform for exhibition from 1982 onwards. In this way, limiting discussion to the field of cinematographic fiction, professionals known for their political commitment and ideological affiliation began to work for the public broadcaster, coinciding, moreover, with the aforementioned policy of Pilar Miró from the General Directorate of Cinematography and later from RTVE.

One of these artists was Juan Antonio Bardem, who was known for his sympathies with the PCE since the 1950s and was commissioned to make the biography of Federico García Lorca (1987). 'El llanto', the title of the fourth episode of the series, covers the years 1929–1935 and begins with documentary images that evoke the arrival of the Granada-born artist in New York. Throughout the series, voice-over narration serves to contextualise the period of the writer's life with the most important international events. It is interesting, then, that in this particular episode the narration and the documentary image only appear a second time after two and a half hours of footage.

The unmistakable pedagogical will that the series acquires here is evident in these extracts, which also include black and white sequences in which we see the actor playing Lorca on board a ship to the USA, for example. This long introduction covers the first 10 min of the series, in which the financial panic of 1929, the period the poet spends in Cuba and the resignation of the then dictator, Miguel Primo de Rivera, are linked. Fiction takes over again to present us with the public reading of one of the verses from *Poeta en Nueva York* before returning to the documentary sequences that



narrate the arrival of the Second Republic after the elections of April 12th. Images of crowds in the streets of Madrid, again interspersed with images of Lorca shouting with his companions ‘Spain will be Republican tomorrow’, precede images of the King’s abandonment.

Fiction then begins to take centre stage, but we cannot fail to notice the explanatory narrations throughout the episode concerning the ‘triumph of the conservative forces’ and later the revolution in Asturias, again accompanied by documentary images. The emphasised importance of these sequences in comparison to the rest of the series is therefore striking. There is a pedagogical desire to contextualise the crisis of capitalism and the years of the Republic. The working class, the left, the terrified bourgeoisie, the right and so on are merged, in many cases in line with Franco’s historiography, to conceal the diversity of the movements and political, social and cultural forces that were in the fray during those years.

The risk taken in delegating the teaching of history to cultural production is that of reifying and schematising social processes. The Republic thus becomes a myth, a symbol which by its very nature needs no explanation. In this simplification of historical facts, a process of ‘settling the scores’ has been widely denounced, drawing attention to the inversion of arguments and roles and using the same Manichean schemes of previous productions (Monterde, 1993, Sánchez Biosca, 2006). TVE would be one of the targets of these attacks for producing at least seven feature films on the Republican period, the Civil War and the early Franco regime<sup>7</sup> and no documentaries during these years.

As for television series, we identify 20 period fictions made between 1982 and 1993 (Jurado, 2021b: 231), including one of the most expensive productions in the history of TVE, *La forja de un rebelde* (Mario Camus, 1990), in which 2300 million pesetas (almost 14 million euros) and three years of work were invested (El país, 30-iii-1990). Stories like Barea’s, who was himself a PSOE militant in the 1930s, had the advantage of marginalising and relativising the importance of the Communist Party in Spanish history, in line with the trend in discrediting Marxist ideology after the fall of the Soviet Union and the triumph of liberal technocracy.

### ... to Galdós. Uchronicity and the symbolic density of myths

The transposition of historical schemes to different periods is one of the characteristics of historical cinema, and its study allows us to unravel the actual and intended readings it projects onto certain events. This is why it is interesting to analyse, for example, the allusions to republican ideas in fictions that do not deal with the period; the forced nature of their inclusion and the symbolic versatility they offer allows a connection with liberal or regenerationist traditions.

Take, for example, the opening sequence of the first episode of *Ramón y Cajal*, in which a copy of the constitution of the Second Republic presides over the table where the scientist is about to sit down to write his memoirs, occupying the lower central part of the image for the entire 3 min. The book is in fact the visual axis that accompanies the tracking shot that shows us the entrance to his house, how he takes off his coat, puts on his glasses and takes a book from his library (at which point the volume disappears and then returns to the centre of the shot from a much closer position) before sitting down at

his desk. As I mentioned previously, the introduction of the plot, the *mise-en-scène*, is essential for the narrative coherence of the television series. In this more or less subtle way, the symbol of the Second Republic is linked to one of the main symbols of regenerationism at the turn of the century.

Even more surprising is the presentation of *Proceso a Mariana Pineda* (Rafael Moreno Alba, 1984) in which, after the generic fade to black, it opens with a close-up of the protagonist's lips, played by Pepa Flores (Marisol), which speak:

After a fierce persecution, I have had to leave Spain. I am a republican, and in our land that means you are anti-Spanish. Today, in my forced political exile, we paid homage to Goya: flowers and verses on his French tomb, some of us burst into tears. Believe me, leaving the country is like leaving the world. (1:22–1:47)

Here, the extrapolation takes on several levels of interpretation. At first, reference is made to the Civil War in having to leave Spain because of Republican ideas, using the vocabulary coined by the national-Catholic rhetoric of Ramiro de Maeztu. Goya, who is conveniently buried in France, is then turned into another myth of Spanish liberalism, serving to close the circle of identification with the exile after the war. *Goya*, *Mariana Pineda*, and *Los desastres de la guerra* are three biographical series that have the birth of Spanish liberalism as their main focus.

The 19th century and myths such as the Constitution of Cadiz and, above all, the Second of May, would serve to revitalise a liberal patriotism that would move in the direction of a new national reconciliation. The best example of Spaniards' ability to set aside their political preferences in pursuit of the common good was the process of concertation that marked the transition from dictatorship to democracy and which included the constitution and the Moncloa Pacts, two high points of the new democratic stage.

Extremism had been overcome, something that could be seen in the audio-visual productions of the 1980s, and, consequently, the strength of the political documentary of the 1970s gave way to a dry period in this type of film-making. This lapse was interrupted by *La transición*, a documentary series written and narrated by Victoria Prego – and recovered years later under the government of José María Aznar (Elías Andrés, 1995) – which celebrated the new myths created after the dictatorship: the constitution, the consensus and the legitimacy of the new monarchy (Jurado, 2022).

During these years, an important symbolic effort was made to bring 19th-century liberalism in line with the regime of '78. The political legitimacy of the young democracy had to be built on symbols easily recognised by Spanish citizens in order to facilitate present-day identifications. The richness of certain metaphors, especially in the case of audio-visual productions, is reinforced by the use of familiar images, as can be seen in the most popular works of art. For example, in the long-awaited last chapter of *Lorca* (entitled '1936. Death'), the executions to which the sympathisers of the Republican government are subjected are presented as several *tableaux vivants* that reincarnate the executions of the second of May painted by Goya.

The War of Independence, as one of the myths most strongly embraced by both liberalism and 19th-century national Catholicism, would become the privileged object of the construction of a new national identity. Historical pastiche helps in the drafting of

a new narrative for the country. One example can be found in public monuments and celebrations, already studied for the 19th century by Álvarez Junco (2009) and for the contemporary moment by Aguilar and Humlebaek (2002). These authors pay attention to the inauguration ceremony of the monument to the fallen for Spain, presided over by Juan Carlos in 1985, which, curiously enough, is an addition to the monument to the heroes of the Second of May, and whose ceremony was accompanied by the presence of Republican and pro-coup fighters. Historical diachrony, the forgetting of recent suffering and the updating of national myths were mobilised in the service of the new democratic consensus.

### *Modernisation of the state and technocracy*

The adoption and dissemination of the liberal creed in Spain dates back to the 1950s with the rise of Opus Dei politicians and the approval of the first Stabilisation Plan. Its influence on the policy of cultural promotion, and audio-visual promotion in particular, has already been highlighted in another publication (Jurado, 2021a: 232–233). It is, however, worth noting here that the 1980s were the years of definitive consolidation of liberal democracy and its cultural expressions as hegemonic and globally accessible models.

In this sense, and restricted to this geographical area of study, it would be interesting to depart momentarily from the biographical sphere to study the continuities between *Brigada central* (Pedro Masó, 1989), one of the most successful series of the period, and the police films of the late Franco regime, in which technocratic ideology and liberalism serve to blur the repressive image of Franco's police. While it is true that the realism that the former series acquires is achieved through a complexity in the psychology of the characters that was not possible during the dictatorship – notably the presence of homosexuals, alcoholics or corrupt people within the force – it is no less true that the staging is surprising for its similarity to previous models. Although this is not a series of a historical, literary or biographical nature, the opening sequences of this fiction can serve to guide us in our reflection on the updating of national myths under Felipism.

The commercial poster presents the characters – played by well-known actors of the moment such as Imanol Arias and José Coronado – next to an image of a helicopter flying over a city. I have previously noted (Jurado, 2017) that the vast majority of crime films from the last years of Franco's regime represented aerial shots, telematic communications and the speed of movement as commonplace occurrences in a fully developed country. Following this scheme, the credits of the first episode of Masó's series end with a still image from a tall building on Madrid's Paseo de la Castellana, which begins to move and travel across the urban landscape once the name of the director has disappeared. The traffic, the length of the central promenade and the image of the Bernabéu repeat the patterns we saw in films such as *Los atracadores* (Francisco Rovira-Beleta, 1962) and *091 policía al habla* (José María Froqué, 1960), which Masó himself produced. These models are therefore still valid and necessary to plead and be convinced of the success of the country's modernisation.

As Esquenazi (2017: 40) points out, the *mise-en-scène* is primordial for the configuration of the narrative story of a series. After the initial aerial shot, the chapter introduces

the protagonists in a way that is quite significant for our study. The narration begins under a suspenseful soundtrack that fades shortly after an image of a plaque where we read 'Dirección General de la Policía'. In an American shot, a man in a suit with glasses appears reading from a folder. To his left we can see the Spanish flag:

Each of you has been rigorously selected on the basis of your police merit and excellent service record to form the task force. A newly created group that this Directorate General has set up for high-level investigations. A support group, with free movement and absolute autonomy both nationally and internationally. This group will report to the central brigade and will have connections abroad: the European Economic Community, the United States, Brazil, Australia, Argentina... Bah! In a word, with all the member countries of Interpol with whom we have signed a mutual collaboration agreement. Until you get to know each other and complement each other, you will continue to perform routine functions, so that in the future this group will be the best I want you to work as a team, without individualism, and when you are fully trained you will each receive your respective missions. Don't let me down... And get to work!

At the same time, several cross-cuts introduce us to the different characters in the series, interspersed with several close-ups of the person in charge himself, with the charcoal portrait of King Juan Carlos on his right. The professionalisation and specialisation of the forces of law and order, international cooperation, efficiency and industriousness reappear updated to comprise the face of the new democratic order.

### *From compliance to defence of the crown*

The previous examples also present two relatively novel symbols in comparison with Franco's production: the constitutional flag and the figure of the king. The Socialist leaders presented the monarchy as a lesser evil, a symbol of the moderation needed to achieve a pact between the political forces of the Transition. We already know how the party's official position evolved, and the words of Gregorio Peces in the Cortes in 1982, now with a Socialist majority, are significant. He stated that monarchical values 'are general and more permanent, and transcend the person who embodies the institution at the moment' (Sarasqueta, 1985: 52).

Here, the politician and 'father of the Constitution' defends not the reign of Juan Carlos, often presented as an emotional element sustaining the form of state in the eyes of the population, but the monarchical institution itself, in particular the Bourbons, as the dynasty that brought the ideas of the Enlightenment under Charles III. It is important to note that the university which he personally committed to constructing and founding is in itself a tribute to the crown in general and to the descendant of Philip V in particular. In different articles in the same volume, Núñez Seixas (2013: 120) and Giulia Quaggio (2013: 470) point to the recovery of his figure for the reformist agenda, notably at the local level of the *villa y corte*, and for the promotion of the arts and culture<sup>8</sup> – objectives shared, three centuries later, by the new socialist government.

The second sequence of Goya's first chapter aims to contextualise the country's situation with an account of the historical events experienced by the painter, who, through the voice-over, tells us that 'he has worked for four kings'. It is with the first of these kings that the significant narration begins, in which a zoom through the royal gardens introduces us to the palace of the Orient:

These are the early days of the reign of Don Carlos III, who conscientiously and piously fulfilled his office as king, administered to the country the great medicines of the 18th century: The Enlightenment, the praises of work - unusual in a land of beggars, noblemen and friars - the royal factories, the censuses that will say that we are barely eight million vassals, wars against England and alliances with France, and what a hard road since then, my dear Martin<sup>9</sup>, through the passions of men to which I was no stranger. (5:06–5:45)

In the construction of a party-state (Sarasqueta, 1985: 22) this idea of ‘revolution from above’ that embodied the spirit of enlightened despotism fitted perfectly. The promotion of classical cinema, with an increasingly depoliticised ‘consensus’ national narrative, based on easily recognisable figures who could be extrapolated to the current situation, contributed to the consolidation of social-democratic modernisation.

## Conclusion

The 1980s were the years of the triumph and globalisation of neo-liberalism in the face of the agony of Soviet dictatorship and bloc politics. They were also the years that confirmed the shift to the centre of the Socialist party, which enabled it to become the party with the most votes for 14 years, with margins that remain unheard of in the recent democratic period. Culture played a decisive role in the consolidation of its political project.


In line with the party’s moderation, the political and cultural effervescence of an important part of Spain’s artistic and intellectual creation was diluted through its streamlining into official channels of expression. Given the importance that the public broadcaster attached to historical fiction, our analysis of key sequences of *Goya*, *Los desastres de la guerra*, *La forja de un rebelde*, *Lorca*, *Ramón y Cajal* and *Mariana Pineda* demonstrate the importance of establishing a new national mythology. In it, republican or nationalist demands other than the centralist one defended by the state were discarded in favour of a consensus based on a common, both centrist and centralist, identity.

Biographical series, I have argued, lend themselves to the recognition of certain patterns of sociability and national construction proposed by public institutions as is exemplified by the ‘constitutional patriotism’ concept here discussed. Protagonists of these fictions are chosen such that it becomes possible to celebrate their importance in the history of the country with a didactic purpose (artistic creation, tenacity, work, etc.) and to promote their projection abroad due to their international recognition. In short, they serve to establish a consistent national mythology rooted in history and conveniently recovered for the process of internationalisation – a process sought after for the sake of the country’s politics and economy, as well as for the creation of a national bond that would allow the confrontations of the past to be overcome via forgetting and those of the present (the plurinational reality of the country) via omitting.

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## Notes

1. For further discussion on this legislation, see Fernández Meneses, Jara, “Rethinking quality cinema”, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 26 (6), 2021 pp. 705–719.
2. “No lo iba a conocer ni la madre que lo parió” in words of Alfonso Guerra.
3. The original German text was published in 1987 and follows Hannah Arendt’s thesis on totalitarianism.
4. Socialist politician and Senate’s President between 1989 and 1996.
5. Pilar Miró, cinema director and EOC graduate was appointed Directora General de Cinematografía in 1982.
6. PSOE’s number two.
7. *Los santos inocentes* (Mario Camus, 1984), *Dragon Rapide* (Jaime Camino, 1986), *Espérame en el cielo* (Antonio Mercero, 1988), *¡Ay Carmela!* (Carlos Saura, 1990), *Madregilda* (Francisco Regueiro, 1993), *Land and Freedom* (Ken Loach, 1995) y *Libertarias* (Vicente Aranda, 1996).
8. This statement, so widely accepted in historiography, has begun to be if not questioned, then relativised, by historians such as Pedro Ruiz Torres (2008, *Reformismo e ilustración. Historia de España*, vol. V, Barcelona, Crítica - Marcial Pons), who point out the importance of the short-lived Fernando VI and his wife Bárbara de Braganza in the first Enlightenment impulse for the arts and sciences in the kingdom of Spain.
9. The historical license taken here is noticeable, for if it is a letter to his friend Martín Zapater, the latter died in 1803, before Goya had gone into exile.

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