

# CINEMATIC DEPICTIONS OF THE GUADALQUIVIR MARSHES: SOCIAL AND TOURISM CONTEXTS OF A FORGOTTEN PLACE (1943-2014)

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## INTRODUCTION: AN APPROACH TO THE GUADALQUIVIR MARSHES AS A FRONTIER SPACE

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This article analyses the relationship of a unique frontier environment (the Guadalquivir Marshes) with cinema and its promotion for tourism, taking the film *Marshland* (*La isla mínima*, Alberto Rodríguez, 2014) as a starting point and considering its status as a “different” territory rarely explored in film. In the preface to the screenplay, the writer Gutiérrez Solís suggests that “classicism turns into modernity when it explores spaces, themes, environments and peripheries that cinema has historically ignored”<sup>1</sup> (2015: 8-9). This study thus characterises the Guadalquivir Marshes as a “forgotten place” in the region (Márquez Ballesteros, Boned Purkiss & García Moreno, 2016), which has nevertheless exhibited qualities in films that reflect the social contexts and attitudes to tourism of the era in which they were made (Nieto Ferrando, Del Rey Reguillo and Afinoguenova, 2015).

The Guadalquivir Marshes are notable for their complexity: their boundaries extend across three Spanish provinces (Huelva, Cádiz and Seville), offering landscapes filled with contrasts (pine forests, meadows, flooded wetlands, rice paddies, mobile dunes) and productive activities in apparent collision (agriculture, stockbreeding, hunting, fishing, tourism). From a bird’s-eye view, the marshland is a fascinating place: its combination of wild nature (Doñana) and domesticated land (Isla Mayor) is evident in both its chromatic and formal boundaries when viewed from above. Down at ground level, the marshland is revealed as a traditional frontier space between civilisation and desolation, between progress and neglect: in short, between the centre (Seville) and its profitable periphery (rice fields).

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that the cinematic depiction of the Guadalquivir Marshes as a mysterious frontier space did not begin with *Marshland* (*La isla mínima*, Alberto Rodríguez, 2014), but in fact has a long history, associated with



Image 1. The gaze of the Other in the three films studied. Private collection.

the idea of a grim and barren territory. To this end, I examine three ostensibly very different films: *Misterio en la marisma* [Mystery in the Marshland] (Claudio de la Torre, 1943), *The Revenge of Trinity* (*La collera del vento*, Mario Camus, 1971) and *Marshland*, analysing both the “implied author” behind the creation of these three films and the “implied spectator” to whom they are addressed (Casetti & Di Chio, 2007: 226). In this sense, each of these three films posits a particular view of the marshland as a frontier territory (photo 1), with a curious gaze that reveals the territory to the spectator, who thereby becomes a kind of tourist (Urry, 2002), and which has given rise to the contemporary interpretation of the territory in question.

In this way, by combining the interpretive and structural dimensions of film analysis (Zavala, 2010), this paper seeks to offer the reader an insight into the promotion of a real location that has swung from the use of biodiversity as a strategy for attracting hunting tourists (the “different” Andalusia of the 1940s) to the depiction of a radical, turbulent place (the marginalised Andalusia of the 1970s), and finally the idea of a space that interacts with spectator-tourists and immerses them in an adventure that they can replicate in the place it-

self (the Andalusia of the film routes of the 2010s). These three films have established the marshland as a hostile frontier territory, where secrets and crimes are camouflaged in a landscape as beautiful as it is desolate; a place of mystery that converges today with a new appreciation of its natural environment for tourism and the conception of inauthenticity sought by the post-modern tourist.

### A “DIFFERENT” ANDALUSIA FOR THE EARLY FRANCOIST PERIOD: MISTERIO EN LA MARISMA

*Misterio en la marisma* was one of very few films made in the Andalusia region in the 1940s. It is an extraordinary picture as much for the motivation behind its creation as for the resulting product. Utrera (2010: 124) notes that “in a promotional interview for the films, Lloset mentioned that the intention of the producers at Sur Films was to bring a different side of Andalusia and everyday life in the Andalusian countryside to the screen.”<sup>2</sup> The Franco dictatorship had decided to turn these barren marshes into fertile rice fields that would supply a region that had supported Franco’s Nationalist uprising from the beginning. It was an arduous

process, as it was necessary to “flood [the vast areas of salt lands, until then infertile] to desalinate them, and in the water-covered areas [...] to plant rice paddies, whose yield would improve as the soil lost its salinity” so that, little by little, “we could expect to see the beginning of a redemption of these deserted lands”<sup>3</sup> (Sermet, 1953: 306-307). And this film would show them for the first time on screen.

José Luis Almenares, who lives alone (“like a savage”) at a hunting ground in the Guadalquivir Marshes, is haunted by an apparition of a mysterious lady and the story of a beautiful necklace hidden in one of the bedrooms of the manor house. His appearance on screen is preceded by a brief documentary that introduces the marshland as if it were one of the film’s characters, by means of meticulous editing that privileges wide shots of the marshy landscape: pine forests, deer, wetlands, cattle, birds, wild boars... all shown to the spectator like an elegant invitation to a top-quality tourist destination.

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In an attempt to escape from his gloomy visions, the protagonist decides to return to civilisation (Seville), thereby introducing the film’s first binary: modernity versus tradition. Thus, while the hunting ground is characterised as the place of ancestral memories and age-old values, the city is shown filled with cars, luxury and modern conveniences, in what Octavi Martí defined as “the swansong of a snobby, aristocratic Falangism” (quoted in Utrera, 2010: 127). It is worth noting that the film does not show a single establishing shot to identify the picturesque city of Spanish silent film, Republican cinema or the incipient

regional folkloric cinema of the dictatorship. Instead, Claudio de la Torre depicts a cosmopolitan environment that juxtaposes jazz and flamenco and that receives an unusual tourist lambasted by the locals because she drives all the men crazy: a Polish countess named Vera de Linford.

It is the fear of the Other in our midst whose new point of view will help the director to reveal a second of the film’s binaries: the city (or the sophisticated lifestyle) versus the country (simplicity): “My feeling is that you’re not going to like it there [...]. Life there looks awfully simple. There are animals wandering free under a blue sky, beside a blue sea... [...]. In the marshes, even the loftiest acts have a simplicity that is... charming.”<sup>4</sup> The marshland is thus rendered synonymous with healthy innocence, in contrast with the perverse city that is gradually being homogenised with the rest of Europe. Vera’s meeting with the newly arrived José Luis can thus be viewed as a metaphor for the hunting ground and its wonders, while a plan is made for a group tour to the marshes.

Soon the visiting aristocrats will understand that life in the marshland is not simple, thanks to one of the most memorable scenes in the film. Led by a local guide, the entourage gets lost in the arid immensity of the landscape shown in a wide shot:

- It isn’t very heavily populated here, is it?
- Oh no? Well, there ain’t no wild creatures of every kind here or anythin’. [...] You don’t think it’s very populated? Why, there’s an enemy lurkin’ behind every bush. Looky there, looky there, the smallest ones.... [pointing to a camel].<sup>5</sup>

The marshland is thus transformed into a place where the abnormal becomes an unbreakable rule, a frontier space where the most outlandish things can happen. In this way, in contrast with Seville, which symbolises reason, the marshland represents mystery. While out horse riding, dressed traditionally in local garb, José Luis and Vera hide from the “buzz of the hunters” and begin their passionate romance (photo 2). The director makes use of different long and medium



Image 2. The protagonists from *Misterio en la marisma* (Claudio de la Torre, 1943) in the Doñana pine forest. Filмотека de Catalunya.

shots to locate the characters in the middle of the pine forest. Vera admits that “everything around us is mysterious” and that even in broad daylight she is afraid: “I’m frightened by this solitude, this immensity of the marshland.”

The elegant lady traveller will become the trigger that reveals the secret of the marshes. Her resemblance to José Luis’ ghostly vision uncovers a story that takes the spectator 100 years back in time through a flashback concerning the disappearance of two of the protagonists’ ancestors. Once their tragic story is known, it is discovered that the necklace in Vera’s possession is authentic, a gift from her lover’s great grandfather, while the stolen replica is returned by some French adventurers camouflaged among the party of tourists.

The film received mixed reviews. It proved difficult to produce a coherent work out of such a hodgepodge of genres and influences. With his disjointed combination of American and European sophistication along with markedly traditional Spanish features, Claudio de la Torre had tried to make a film that defied classification, in a convergence of genres: comedy and documentary, film noir and melodrama. In this respect,

the Spanish publication *El cine en 1943* describes the film as “well done”, “a film which, while not a masterpiece, is acceptable” (V. A., 1944: 184), sidestepping the question of the documentary scenes of the marshland, which were the source of controversy after the film’s release (Pena, 1997), as some critics viewed these scenes as poetic digressions (their sweeping wide shots contributed to this impression) that had little to do with the plot and distracted from the film’s high comedy tone.

Other critics, however, were more appreciative, suggesting that the Guadalquivir Marshes

constituted a main character in the story. For example, after its première in Madrid’s Palacio de la Música, Gómez Tello noted that “framing the conflict [is] the magnificent panorama of the marshland from which the camera has extracted all its possibilities. The hunting scenes set a rhythm of premeditated violence that underpins the tone of mystery that marks the whole story”<sup>6</sup> (Gómez Tello, 1943: 12).

Highlighting this aspect as well is an article written by Juan Sierra (Sierra, 1943: 9), which also refers to the “strange but real landscape, nestled mysteriously in the very heart of Andalusia”; to the “real countryside, real horizon, genuine horsemen and hunters”; to “a total Andalusia, deep, seldom visited, over the grandiose, permanent spectacle of a hunting reserve, known to be the best hunting ground in Europe, offered through this film as the most extraordinary documentary of the year, in descriptions of unparalleled visual beauty, portraying the most diverse range of hunting scenes, from the chase and capture of a stag by a fierce pack of hounds to the manly sport of the wild boar hunt.”<sup>7</sup> In this way, the film was identified as a promotional piece for hunting tourism for Spain’s high society.



Utrera also underscores the constant central role of the location, as “the landscape of the marshland is shown to us in such detail with both its wild fauna and its desert, beach and meadow flora; journeys on foot or on horseback are combined with deer hunting and other surprising attractions for both locals and outsiders” (Utrera, 2010: 125), suggesting that “the mystery in the title refers as much to the features of the park where wild animals, from the camel to the boar and from the deer to the bull, live in their natural habitat, as to the mysterious theft of the necklace”<sup>8</sup> (Utrera, 2010: 126) on which the plot ostensibly turns.

In this way, while it could not be described as a masterpiece, the number of fronts it explores from the outset make it a noteworthy film, and at a time when technical innovation in Spanish cinema was practically impossible, the value of its approach and its originality lies precisely in the pleasant combination of genres and the uniqueness of its setting shown up close.

### A MARGINALISED ANDALUSIA FOR THE LATE FRANCOIST PERIOD: THE REVENGE OF TRINITY

According to Suárez Japón, the final years of the Franco dictatorship in the marshland were “years when ensuring day-to-day survival was the shared aim and objective of all these communities” because “the time of economic and socio-political bonanzas that brought increasing urbanisation, changing everything, was still a long way from even showing its first signs” (Suárez Japón, 2010: 42). In fact, after the colonisation of the 1940s, “it was a bit like the Wild West. Great sweeping plains with barely any grass, covered in amaranth and a few cows in the distance”<sup>9</sup> (Pedro Beca, quoted in Suárez Japón, 2010: 131).

*The Revenge of Trinity* was a Spanish-Italian co-production which, in this context, inevitably adopted the style of a Western. Set in a place located outside time and the rule of law, easily compa-

rable to the Wild West of the outlaw films shot in Andalusia, the film offers a subtle criticism of the conditions of exploitation on marshland farms in the late 1960s while presenting an extraordinary anarchist uprising to Spanish audiences in the late Franco era (Frayling, 1998: 242). The film was made at a time when rice production in the marshland was at its peak, but also in a period of inequalities and worker exploitation that Alfonso Grosso and Armando López Salinas documented in their 1966 book *Por el río abajo* (photo 3), a context that the film’s creators were not prepared to ignore.

Wessels stresses the film’s transnational character and notes that “Spaghetti westerns are often either set in a nondescript and unidentified dusty landscape (recalling the American West) or specifically identified as being set in the United States or Mexico. *Revenge of Trinity*, on the other hand, is set in Andalusia at the end of the nineteenth century, and uses the specific context of the conflict between local laborers and the aristocrats to form its political narrative” (Wessels, 2014: 9). In this respect, Utrera also points out that “the absence of specific temporal and geographical references locate the time and place of the action in an ambiguous space, which was possibly the crea-

Image 3. Italian poster for *The Revenge of Trinity* (*La collera del vento*, Mario Camus, 1971), which locates the action among the crops of the marshland. Biblioteca Provinciale La Magna Capitana, Foggia.



tors' intention," but that this "does not prevent us from identifying it as Andalusia (the marshes are mentioned and the filming locations, according to the title credits, were Almonte, Rociana, Niebla, Coto de Doñana, Matalascañas, El Rocío, Villarrasa and Seville) and the era as the beginning of the twentieth century"<sup>10</sup> (Utrera, 2005: 123).

Although it is not one of its director's most acclaimed films, Mario Camus is undeniably a master when it comes to locating the action in a frontier setting where abuses of power and violence are the norm. In this sense, while Claudio de la Torre sought to publicise the exclusive setting for his mystery (making use mainly of wide shots), Mario Camus constantly locates his characters in the landscape through medium and medium-long shots that highlight key scenes in the plotline.

In a climate of latent tension, the story, written by the critic and screenwriter Manolo Mariñero, begins with a violent death in the square of an unspecified town (shot in Rociana del Condado) on the morning of a festive holiday. Marcos (a very restrained Terence Hill, just before shooting his big successes together with Bud Spencer) and Jacobo are a pair of killers for hire who are settling a score. When their identity is revealed, they decide to slip out of town and flee south, where their services are called for. The two gunmen then arrive at an unspecified location in Andalusia, a place governed by norms and codes very different from the urban context from which they have come.

Marcos takes a room at the town's only inn, a solitary Andalusian saloon that is a place of flamenco dancing, gambling, alcohol abuse and depravity, run by Soledad (former Miss Italy contestant Maria Grazia Buccella), a young woman whose silence conceals many secrets. She is a character very similar to the grieving Rocío in *Marshland* even in terms of characterisation, and who, despite her submissiveness to the local landowner, is intrigued by this outsider who has the appearance of a defender of lost causes.

From this moment, the marshland is viewed from the perspective of this rootless gangster (or of the unreflecting spectator of the era), who wavers between duty—civilisation and order, embodied by the owners of the land—and justice for an underdeveloped region held hostage to barbarism. It is a view that must have jump-started the consciences of those spectators who, expecting the escapism of the typical Western, were suddenly confronted by the poverty of a part of Spain traditionally ignored by the cinema. Mario Camus offers a raw ethnographic portrait of the local inhabitants and the arid landscapes that hold them captive, shaping their lives and fates and forcing them to give up their freedom in exchange for protection from their employer. The landscape thus becomes another character in the story, with the most emotional moments underscored by means of engaging wide shots.

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Tragedy strikes soon after the appearance of a revolutionary who has come to teach the servile people of the town about the concept of freedom, revealing a glimpse of the progress that by then was making its presence felt in Spain's bigger towns and cities. Although the historical context was not conducive to making political statements, the film's writers were bold enough to paraphrase the words of the anarchist leader Buenaventura Durruti in his famous interview for the *Toronto Star* shortly before his death in 1936, which in

the picture are placed in the mouth of the fictional revolutionary: "It is we who built these palaces and cities here in Spain and in America and everywhere [...]. We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth; there is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeoisie might blast and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. But we carry a new world here within us, and that world is growing every minute. It is growing while I speak to you."

These words of the outsider would not be welcomed by everyone: the local landowner Don Antonio (Fernando Rey), and especially his son Ramón (Máximo Valverde), will do whatever it takes to get rid of this troublemaker who is such a threat to their interests. Still under the influence of a social order he fails to understand, the hired killer Marcos takes out the anarchist, just as a wave of anger over the landowner's oppression sweeps through the town (the "raging wind" of the film's Spanish title), fanning the flames of a peasant uprising that will result in the destruction of the town's main winery (the Bodega San Antonio in Rociana del Condado).

But when Marcos and Jacobo are then hired to kill the only landowner who has decided to raise the workers' wages, Marcos hesitates, as he begins to see more reasons to side with the peasants of this disadvantaged place. Jacobo, however, is determined to carry out the job... but because he now knows too much, he is cut down by Don Antonio's henchmen. In revenge, Marcos joins the peasant uprising, leading to a series of extremely intense duelling scenes in the marshes that combine pan shots with medium-long shots. The violence then moves to the final encounter with Soledad and Jacobo on the Doñana sand dunes. These are the only moments that give a little fresh air to a highly claustrophobic film, an "impossible anarchistic Western" (Sánchez Noriega, quoted in Utrera, 2005: 123) in the final years of the dictatorship, more of a bleak and tragic vision of Andalusia than the smiling depiction of the tourism

campaigns that would follow it after Spain's transition to democracy.

### AN ANDALUSIA READY TO BE DISCOVERED BY THE POST-MODERN TOURIST: MARSHLAND

"And where is the "Isla Mínima" where they shot Alberto Rodríguez's film?" asks the traveller.

"Good film, eh?" says Paco. "That island was created in the eighteenth century when they wanted to eliminate a bend in the river that caused problems for sailing, so they made a canal, called Corta de los Jerónimos, through the island called Isla Menor, which created a little island that was called 'Isla Mínima', or tiny island, because of its size."

"In the film it looks like a pretty inhospitable landscape," says the traveller.

"It is, but that doesn't mean it doesn't have a beauty of its own," replies Paco.<sup>11</sup>

ESLAVA GALÁN (2016: 315)

Alberto Rodríguez's *Marshland* was made at a time of crisis in Spanish history (2014) and is set in the period of the country's transition to democracy (1980). Throughout the film there are thus constant allusions to uprisings, strikes and the social unrest that marked both these periods. The protagonists discuss the changes happening ("This country isn't democratic; it's not used to democracy"), although worker protests and exploitation continued to be the norm in those early years after the end of the dictatorship. The beginning of the 2010s was also a time of changes to the traditional structures, as reflected in the new methods of film distribution, with the rise of digital distribution platforms offering series that enjoyed an unprecedented peak in popularity; and in the conception of post-modern tourism, where new tourists have increasingly found entertainment in the inauthenticity of the interactive spectacle offered to them at a given location (Urry, 2002: 12).

Another contributing factor is the evolution of the Guadalquivir Marshes in the collective imaginary, with Doñana declared a national park in 1969 and a nature reserve in 1989. This recognition, which marked the beginning of a new stage that we could call “biologist” or “naturalist” (Marchena Gómez *et al.*, 1992), along with the ecological disaster that affected the marshes when the Aznalcóllar dam burst in 1998, served to raise public awareness about the value of Guadalquivir’s natural environment.

However, the post-modern tourist of the twenty-first century has progressed towards a state of ecological “infantilisation”, appreciating such places not so much for their environmental importance as for their role as a setting for a fictitious high-risk adventure (Bell & Lyall, 2002). This is a tourist who wants to be immediately impressed by prefabricated cultural products, pastiches that distract but that do not require exhaustive knowledge, sacrificing the boundary between reality and representation for the sake of mindless entertainment (Urry, 2002: 76-77). This is why *Marshland* makes no attempt to highlight the environmental importance of the marshes, but instead immerses the spectator in a space of danger, turning the film into the natural heir to the visions of the marshlands of the 1940s and 1970s, although its strategies of promotion are clearly new.

Like *The Revenge of Trinity*, this picture is a modern Western, a reinterpretation of the genre that triumphed at box office, won ten Goya Awards and earned its star (Javier Gutiérrez) the Concha de Plata for best actor at the 62nd San Sebastián Film Festival. Alberto Rodríguez—the director of outstanding films like *7 Virgins* (*7 vírgenes*, 2005) and *Unit 7* (*Grupo 7*, 2012), and an exponent of what some critics have begun to call “new Andalusian cinema”—has repeatedly stated that his inspiration for the film came from both the superb ethnographic photographs of Atín Aya (1955-2007) and the work of the researcher Héctor Garrido of the Spanish National Research Council. It is thus a film which,



Image 4. Crossroads at the end of *Marshland* (Alberto Rodríguez, 2014). Dossier from the exhibition “*Marismas*” (2015-2016).

for the first time, offers a view of the marshes both from ground level and from above. Thus, on the one hand, Alberto Rodríguez depicts an anthropised place that everyone wants to leave, created out of snippets of Puebla del Río, Isla Mayor, Carmona, Dos Hermanas, Coria and Las Cabezas; a territory of “nothing but ghosts”, where heroin is common currency, where judges are obviously coerced by an ancient order outside the law (“You don’t know how things work around here”) and the criminals come out again with the rain, when the marshland turns into an quagmire (“*Watch out! This place gets really bad in the rain*”; photo 4). On the other, the director offers an outsider’s view of the uninhabited landscape, like a map of a brain (Gutiérrez Solís, 2015: 8), through the memorable digitally animated overhead shots by Juan Ventura and Manuel Huerta, which provide the spectator with a mental map of a complex place, acting “as bookmarks to be able to emotionally organise the narrative” (Alberto Rodríguez, quoted in Castaño, 2015).

Positioned in the middle of these two views are the protagonists, who conform to the conventions of the police thriller: two agents from Madrid, representatives of the old and the new Spain, who are



abruptly banished to the marshes for misconduct. Antagonists on their home turf (Juan is a former Social Investigation Brigade agent suspected of having tortured hundreds of people; Pedro is a promising cop who has railed publicly against the power abuses of the authorities), both men have become inconvenient for the precarious new social order and are sent off to solve a double murder in a place far away from their big city home. Their arrival as strangers to the marshland constitutes a very traditional starting point: two outsiders who enter a wild territory after having lost their way.

The film's writers, Rafael Cobos and Alberto Rodríguez, pondered the question: "Are they not too small to do this? I mean, how would our protagonists feel in the middle of nowhere, where the silence is total, a bird, a spade, and to dig up the dead [...]? I feel kind of sad for these tiny human beings in the middle of nowhere, with no idea about what happened" (Cobos & Rodríguez, 2015: 15). The marshland "is a very difficult place to explain visually, with no geographical variations; there aren't even any trees, just a flat horizon that conceals a kind of maze that is only easy to interpret from above"<sup>12</sup> (Alberto Rodríguez, quoted in Castaño, 2015).

It is thus hardly surprising that the "landscaped" bewilderment they suffer and convey to the spectator is related not only to their new point of view, but to all five senses: the constant buzzing of the mosquitoes (a noise replicated on the soundtrack); the chase, guns in hand, in the immensity of an arid setting; the kingfisher that appears unexpectedly in Juan's room, underscoring the idea that he is trapped by his illness, etc. The overhead views of the river, the graveyard, or the barge of the supposed medium only serve to accentuate the distance that is essential to the story in order to position us in the landscape and isolate us from the world we know, with the aim of intensifying our cinematic adventure.

In this sense, the marshland is not a character or a setting in this film, but a moral and emo-

tional concept, a centre stage for the twenty-first century spectator. This is why Garrido observes that "this complexity is also evident in the fact that the film doesn't have a clear protagonist; suddenly, the element that takes on significance is the landscape, through the fractal patterns. The [film] has a structure as complex as life itself; the plot branches out just like a fractal lines, as if the weight of the marshy landscape had chipped away at the plot."<sup>13</sup>

Alberto Gutiérrez's marshland is not the pleasant land of Gutiérrez Acha's documentary *Guadalquivir* (2013) or of *The Missing Lynx* (*El lince perdido*, Manuel Sicilia Morales and Raúl García Sanz, 2008); its fauna is not emblematic of animal biodiversity but of weirdness, pain and human solitude. It is the ideal setting for twenty-first century rage: the perfect setting, in short, for a new, rebellious post-modern tourist.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS: THE MARSHLAND AND THE POST-MODERN TOURIST

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This study has explored the contexts of production (implied author and implied spectator) of three films which, over the course of time, have characterised the Guadalquivir Marshes as a "forgotten place", contrasted against the centrality of Seville as a synecdoche for Andalusia. Through the viewpoints of four characters—a mysterious, elite Polish tourist, a goodhearted mercenary from the North and two Madrid police officers at the time of Spain's transition to democracy—the three films locate the marshes in a frontier space far removed from civilisation.

The analysis has shown that the depiction of Guadalquivir in *Marshland* is the heir to a cinematic tradition born in the 1940s, which various filmmakers have contributed to consolidating in the collective unconscious. However, it is apparent that its promotion as a tourist destination has evolved in parallel with the evolution of its visitors, and even with that of film genres and

their technical innovations. The marshland thus went from being promoted through a kind of advertorial for hunting very much like the official Francoist newsreels of the 1940s (the wide shots with no horizons in *Misterio en la marisma*) to being sold as an interactive experience associated with post-modern cinematic adventure in 2014 (the overhead shots that establish the location in *Marshland*), while having been used along the way as the ideal “no man’s land” in a highly original pro-anarchistic Western in 1970 (the medium and medium-long shots in *The Revenge of Trinity*).

In this sense, it is revealing that the two more overtly political films (*The Revenge of Trinity* and *Marshland*) opted for a visual dynamic inspired by the Western and a territory suspended in time as a setting. In any case, there is a clear shift in viewpoint, as while Camus uses wide and medium shots typical of the conventions of the genre, Rodríguez plays with techniques new to fiction (subjective fractal patterns), fascinating post-modern spectators with overhead shots that increase their bewilderment when they enter into the story.

At the same time, the results of this research confirm that in all three films analysed, the landscape and locations “occupy a privileged position in the cinematic narrative, rivalling, and sometimes even surpassing, characters and plot in importance” (Kovacs, 1991: 17). But the view of *the beautiful* has also changed, and Andalusia’s cinematic diversity has swung from the centrality of Seville towards its less amiable side, relocating the flamenco parody of *Spanish Affair* (Ocho apellidos vascos, Emilio Martínez Lázaro, 2014) to the solitude of pink flamingos on the marshland and gradually blurring the different borders that mark this region.

In this way, the cosmopolitanism that was already evident in Seville by 1940 is spreading out over the marshes in the twenty-first century, turning Doñana into a place for an experience typical of dissatisfied urbanites, erasing the boundary between the entertaining city and its production-focused periphery. With the sophistication of its tourism, the marshland as a centre of tradition has also disappeared, along with the last signs of underdevelopment and supposed barbarism, so that touring the region’s cinematic locations results in predicta-

Image 5 (left). Cover of *Ruta del Cine de Andalucía*, No. 5 “La Isla Mínima”.

Image 6 (right). Doñana pine forest in the guide to film locations in the province of Seville. Seville Provincial Government.



ble activities (a variation on the “marshland safari” already described by Suárez Japón in 2010).

Far from the directorial contexts of escapist cinema, the protests of the late Francoist period or the early years of democracy, the Guadalquivir Marshes today continue to combine rice growing with bull breeding, but increasingly depend on the whims of the post-modern tourist. The success of *Marshland* results in the creation of a film route promoted by Prodetur and the Andalusian government through the Andalucía Film Commission, which was presented together with *Game of Thrones* (David Benioff, D. B. Weiss, HBO: 2011-2019) as the province’s major initiative for the FITUR tourism trade fair in 2015 (photo 5). The once forgotten landscapes of the Aljarafe-Doñana region, former settings for crime and disillusion, as they were in *Tenemos 18 años* [We Are 18 Years Old] (Jesús Franco, 1959), are promoted today by Seville’s provincial government as beautiful locations for shooting film and television productions in Andalusia (photo 6).

The film route was an instant success, resulting in an increase in visits to the tourist dock on Isla Mínima. The media reported on the 5,288 tourists who visited the island in 2016, as well as approximately 2,000 more who did so in the first half of 2017 (“El éxito turístico de ‘La Isla Mínima’”, 2017). The statistics show that at least one out of every four cruise passengers were looking for locations from the film. Although these figures may seem modest, they represent a considerable achievement as they helped divert tourist flows away from the Andalusian capital (“Las rutas basadas en rodajes ayudan a descongestionar el turismo en Andalucía”, 2019).

The cinematic depiction of the marshland as a place of mystery continues to have an impact on tourists, but even this frontier is clearly more a consequence of its advertising than of its intrinsic value. Thus, despite the efforts of Seville’s provincial government to construct an added-value product (“La ruta de cine de La Isla Mínima es ‘mucho más de lo que se ve en la película’”, 2015),

it is evident that the complexity of the marshes can contribute to a slanted film-tourist experience. The fact is that today there are as many people who advocate doing more to promote the post-modern tourist experience as there are those who protest against this new form of local exploitation.

With the fever that the film started now subsiding, the *Marshland* route has become merely one more section on the colourful tourist website *Andalucía, destino de cine* (2018). Clearly, the key to designing products that will last in the minds of spectator-tourists lies in appealing to their egos through the idea of a shared history, beyond the connection with cultural displays subject to the fleeting nature of fads. What is needed, then, is a new narrative that can foster an integral interpretation of the marshes for the future, through products that look the Guadalquivir of the cinematic marshland square in the face without being afraid to show the reality of the place in 2020.

## NOTES

- 1 “El clasicismo se convierte en modernidad cuando recorre espacios, temáticos, ambientales y periféricos, que la cinematografía ha obviado históricamente.”
- 2 “Llorent en entrevista promocional del film aludía a que las intenciones de los productores de Sur Films eran llevar al cine una Andalucía inédita y la vida cotidiana del campo andaluz.”
- 3 “On les inonde [les vastes étendues de terrains salés, jusque-là inféconds] pour les dessaler, et dans les zones recouvertes d’eau [...] installer des rizières, dont le rendement s’améliore au fur et à mesure que le sol perd son sel», de modo que «on peut espérer y voir le principe d’une rédemption de ces zones à l’abandon.”
- 4 “Lo que siento es que no te va a gustar aquello [...]. La vida allí tiene una apariencia muy simple. Hay unos animales que viven en libertad bajo un cielo azul, junto a un mar azul... [...]. Hasta los actos más sublimes tienen en la marisma una simplicidad... encantadora.”
- 5 – No está esto muy poblado, ¿eh?

- ¿Que no? Pues no hay aquí bichos salvajes de *toas* clases ni ná. [...] ¿Que no está esto *mu poblao*? Pues debajo de cada mata está acechando un enemigo. Mire *usté*, mire *usté* los más chiquititos... [señalando un camello].
- 6 “enmarcando el conflicto, [se encuentra] la panorámica espléndida de la marisma a la que la cámara ha arrancado todas sus posibilidades. Las escenas de cacería ponen un ritmo de violencia meditada que da nervio al perfume de misterio que envuelve la trama.”
- 7 “paisaje inédito, pero verdadero, asentado misteriosamente en la misma entraña de Andalucía”; “verdadero campo, verdadero horizonte, jinetes y podenqueros auténticos”; “una Andalucía total, honda, poco frecuentada, sobre el grandioso espectáculo permanente de un coto de caza, con fama de ser el mejor cazadero de Europa, ofrecido, a través de esta película, como el más extraordinario documental del año, en descripciones de inigualable belleza plástica, donde quedan reseñadas las más diversas suertes de la montería, desde la persecución y agarre del ciervo por la brava rehala de podencos hasta el viril deporte cinegético de la caza del jabalí.”
- 8 “el paisaje de la marisma se nos muestra con detalle tanto en su fauna salvaje como en la flora de desiertos, playas y praderas; el paseo a pie o a caballo se combina con la caza del ciervo y otros alicientes sorprendentes para propios y extraños”; “el misterio del título se refiere tanto a las características del parque donde el animal salvaje, desde el camello al jabalí y desde el ciervo al toro, vive en su entorno natural como al misterioso robo del collar.”
- 9 “años en los que garantizar la pervivencia diaria constituía la aspiración y el objetivo común de todos estos pueblos”; “el tiempo de las bonanzas económicas y socio-políticas que fue luego extendiendo la urbanización, cambiándolo todo, estaba aún muy lejos de asomar siquiera sus primeras señales”; “aquello era un poco como el Oeste. Unas llanuras inmensas, apenas sin hierba, cubiertas de almajos y a lo lejos algunas vacas.”
- 10 “la ausencia de referencias temporales y espaciales concretas sitúan el tiempo y el lugar de la acción dentro de una ambigüedad posiblemente buscada por los autores”; “no impide su localización en Andalucía (se menciona a las marismas, y los lugares de rodaje, según los títulos de crédito, fueron Almonte, Rociana, Niebla, Coto de Doñana, Matalascañas, El Rocío, Villarrasa y Sevilla) y la época en los primeros años del siglo XX.”
- 11 – ¿Y dónde queda la Isla Mínima donde se ha rodado la película de Alberto Rodríguez? —pregunta el viajero. — Buena película, ¿eh? —dice Paco—. Esa isla se originó en el siglo XVIII cuando para suprimir un meandro del río que molestaba a la navegación se abrió a través de la Isla Menor un canal, la Corta de los Jerónimos, con lo que se formó una islita que por su tamaño llaman Mínima.
- En la película me ha parecido un paisaje francamente inhóspito —dice el viajero.
- Lo es, pero por eso mismo no deja de tener su particular belleza—replica Paco.
- 12 “¿no son ellos demasiado pequeños para hacer esto, quiero decir, cómo se sentirían nuestros protagonistas en mitad de la nada, donde el silencio es total, algún pájaro, una pala, y a desenterrar los muertos [...]? Me entra una especie de pena por esos pequeños seres en medio de la nada, sin comprender nada de lo que ha ocurrido”; “es un sitio muy difícil de explicar visualmente; sin accidentes geográficos, no hay árboles siquiera, solo un horizonte plano que esconde un sistema laberíntico fácil de interpretar únicamente desde arriba.”
- 13 “esa complejidad se ve también en que la película no tiene un protagonista nítido; de repente, el elemento que toma relevancia es el paisaje, a través de los fractales. La [película] tiene una estructura tan complicada como la vida misma; la trama se ramifica tanto como lo hace un fractal, es como si el peso del paisaje de la marisma hiciera mella en la trama.”

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## CINEMATIC DEPICTIONS OF THE GUADALQUIVIR MARSHES: SOCIAL AND TOURISM CONTEXTS OF A FORGOTTEN PLACE (1943-2014)

### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that the cinematic depiction of the Guadalquivir Marshes as a mysterious frontier space did not begin with *Marshland* (La isla mínima, Alberto Rodríguez, 2014). To this end, I examine three ostensibly very different films: *Misterio en la marisma* [Mystery in the Marshland] (Claudio de la Torre, 1943), *The Revenge of Trinity* (La collera del viento, Mario Camus, 1971), and *Marshland* (La isla mínima, Alberto Rodríguez, 2014), analysing both the “implied authors” behind their creation and the “implied spectators” to whom they are addressed (Casetti & Di Chio, 2007: 226). These three films have established the marshland as a hostile frontier territory, where secrets and crimes are camouflaged in a landscape as beautiful as it is desolate; a place of mystery that converges today with a new appreciation of its natural environment for tourism and the conception of inauthenticity sought by the post-modern tourist.

### Key words

Marshland; Guadalquivir; cinema; tourism; territory; forgotten places; heritage.

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## CARACTERIZACIÓN CINEMATográfica DE LAS MARISMAS DEL GUADALQUIVIR. CONTEXTOS SOCIOTURÍSTICOS DE UN TERRITORIO OLVIDADO (1943-2014)

### Resumen

Este trabajo pretende corroborar que la caracterización cinematográfica de las marismas del Guadalquivir como frontera misteriosa no nace con *La isla mínima*. Para ello, la argumentación gira en torno a tres films aparentemente dispares —*Misterio en la marisma* (Claudio de la Torre, 1943), *La cólera del viento* (La collera del viento, Mario Camus, 1971) y la propia *La isla mínima* (Alberto Rodríguez, 2014)— analizando tanto al «autor implícito» que los creó como al «espectador implícito» al que van dirigidos (Casetti y Di Chio, 2007: 226). A través de estos films, las marismas han fijado su imagen como territorio hostil y de frontera, donde secretos y crímenes se mimetizan con un paisaje tan bello como desolador, que converge hoy con su nueva valorización medioambiental para el turismo y la concepción de inautenticidad que el turista postmoderno busca.

### Palabras clave

Marismas; Guadalquivir; cine; turismo; territorio; lugares olvidados; patrimonio.

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