

# COKE CANS, THE OSBORNE BULL AND SPANISHNESS: SPACE AND THE MALE BODY IN *JAMÓN, JAMÓN* (BIGAS LUNA, 1992)<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article observes Bigas Luna's film *Jamón, jamón* as a text that approaches the issue of Spanishness as an aesthetic issue and as an exploration of modernity. It explores the male body of the film's three male characters: José Luis (prototype of the globalized man), Raúl (the *macho ibérico*), and Manuel (who embodies the idea of Europe), observing how Luna shows the confrontation between them as a metaphor for the historically assumed Spain's resistance to modernity, thus making the film a renegotiation of Spanishness against the emergent neoliberal economy of the early 1990s.

**Key words:** Bigas Luna, Spanish cinema, male characters, Hispanicity.

LLAUNES DE COCA-COLA, EL TORO D'OSBORNE I L'ESPANYOLITAT: L'ESPAI I EL COS  
MASCULÍ A *JAMÓN, JAMÓN* (BIGAS LUNA, 1992)

## Resum

Aquest article analitza el film de Bigas Luna *Jamón, jamón* com un text que aborda el tema de la Hispanitat com a qüestió estètica i com a exploració de la modernitat. L'article explora l'ús del cos dels tres personatges masculins: José Luis (prototip de l'home globalitzat), Raúl (prototip del mascle ibèric) i Manuel, que representa la idea de Europa, i de quina manera Luna explora la confrontació d'aquests cossos com una metàfora de la històricament assumida resistència d'Espanya cap a la modernitat, convertint el film en una renegociació de la idea d'Hispanitat davant l'emergent economia neoliberal dels primers anys dels 90.

**Paraules clau:** Bigas Luna, cinema espanyol, personatges masculins, Hispanitat.

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LATAS DE COCA-COLA, EL TORO DE OSBORNE Y LO ESPAÑOL: EL ESPACIO Y EL CUERPO  
MASCULINO EN *JAMÓN, JAMÓN* (BIGAS LUNA, 1992)
**Resumen**

Este artículo analiza el filme de Bigas Luna *Jamón, jamón* como un texto que aborda el tema de la Hispanidad como cuestión estética y como exploración de la modernidad. El artículo explora el uso del cuerpo de los tres personajes masculinos: José Luis (prototipo del hombre globalizado), Raúl (prototipo del macho ibérico) y Manuel, quien representa la idea de Europa, y cómo Luna explora la confrontación de estos cuerpos como una metáfora de la históricamente asumida resistencia de España hacia la modernidad, convirtiendo el filme en una renegociación de la idea de Hispanidad ante la emergente economía neoliberal de los primeros años de los 90.

**Palabras clave:** Bigas Luna, cine español, personajes masculinos, Hispanidad.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Scholars exploring Spain's cultural specificity tend to consider Francisco de Goya's painting *Duelo a garrotazos* (1820–23) a visual synthesis of the so-called “Being of Spain” or *Hispanidad* (Spanishness). This painting, in which two unknown men fight in the middle of an arid, desolated landscape, is often discussed in relation to the phenomenon of Spanish culture known as *cainismo*, which means the fraternal antagonism within Spanish society (Deveny, 1999, 5). Although some consider this image of Spain as a country rooted in a permanent, fratricidal fight as a distorted construction rather than fact (Zunzunegui, 1999, 10–11), both Goya's painting and the concept of *cainismo* agree on portraying the existence of something primitive, irrational, and quasi-savage in the Spanish land. This perception marks the difference of the country in the European context while, at the same time, it seems to condemn it to the impossibility of accomplishing the “normalcy”<sup>2</sup> or rationality (and so the progress) that countries like France or the United Kingdom have accomplished.

To explain this assumed anomaly in the Spanish land was a serious concern for turn-of-the-century intellectuals after the loss of Spain's last three colonies in 1898 (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines), and the awareness of the country's backwardness regarding other nations. As Dena Crosson states, “[t]he final collapse of Spain's once enormous empire left the nation-state floundering with issues of national self-definition” (Crosson, 2009, 67). Both the awareness of that backwardness and a sensation of doom made thinkers like Angel Ganivet, “Azorín” or Miguel de Unamuno explore the possibility of an essence (or cultural identity)

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<sup>2</sup> My quotes.

named *Hispanidad* (Spanishness)—an essence that would define Spain’s diversity to explain the source of its problems, to prevent confrontations between regions, and to contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of the country.



**Imagen 1.** *Duelo a garrotazos* (Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, 1820-1823)

Fuente: The Prado Museum. Series number P000758. Retrieved from:

<https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte/duelo-a-garrotazos/2f2f2e12-ed09-45dd-805d-f38162c5beaf>

The debate about the Being of Spain initiated at the turn-of-the-century turned into the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), the apex of the aforesaid *cainismo*. It brought, along with the subsequent Nationalist-Catholic dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939–75), a very defined cultural imaginary that largely embraced the designated locus for redemption and rebirth that many intellectuals had suggested as a solution to this problem of national identity. In Franco’s Spain, the country/Spanishness was Catholic, rooted in the values and aesthetics of the Castilian landscape (i.e., dryness, austerity, strength), isolated from the rest of Europe (whose modernizing ideas had only brought the disgrace to the country), and with the purpose of preserving the memory of glorious past conquests. Difference and dissidence were severely punished. The regime encouraged such a national identity until its end (1975–78), only accepting Spain’s cultural diversity as a touristic strategy from the 1960s onwards. Since the death of Franco in 1975, the transition of the country from a dictatorship to a democracy, its acceptance into the European Common Market (1986), or the landmark that the year 1992 represented<sup>3</sup> helped consolidate the idea that, by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Being of Spain/Spanishness was an issue that had been overcome (Tomás, 1998; Seco Serrano, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> That year Spain hosted the Olympic Games of Barcelona, the Universal Exposition of Seville and the designation of Madrid as the first European Capital of Culture.

It was in 1992 when Spanish filmmaker Bigas Luna (1946–2013) released *Jamón, jamón*. Unanimously seen today as one of the clearest examples of contemporary Spanish artists who have both explored and interrogated the nature of Spain's cultural specificity, Luna (a former industrial designer) always paid special attention to the idea of Spain's primitivism that impedes its complete embrace of modernity (*Imprescindibles*, 2014). His *oeuvre* touches several genres: film, theater, literature, video art and painting, and it explores human passions by means of a strong interest in the interconnections among space, sex, objects, food and women. Luna's filmography is divided into two parts, and *Jamón, jamón* (1992) represents the turning point between both. Prior to this work, his films were dark, depressive, and very influenced by underground aesthetics.<sup>4</sup> Later, they became more luminous and consciously commercial, giving predominance to both long shots and the detailed reconstruction of landscapes. Despite this shift toward more commercial endeavors, scholars unanimously recognize that his later films, although simplistic in tone and structure, are as complex as his early films (Wharton 2004, 134).

In this article, I analyze *Jamón, jamón* as a text that explores the issue of the Being of Spain as an aesthetic issue and an exploration of modernity. Unlike writers and artists of the turn-of-the-century who tried to visualize the most representative space of that Spanishness, Luna assumes and integrates Spain's geographical diversity to construct his movie and to explore the Being of Spain. I will explore the male body of the film's three male characters: José Luis (Jordi Mollà: prototype of modern man), Raúl (Javier Bardem: the semi-savage *macho ibérico*), and Manuel (Juan Diego: who embodies the idea of Europe), observing how Luna explores the confrontation among these bodies as a metaphor for the historically assumed Spain's resistance to modernity, thus making the film a renegotiation of Spanishness in the context of the emergent neoliberal economy that took the country during the early 1990s.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. THE MOVIE, THE CONTEXT, THE SPACE, THE NATION

*Jamón, jamón* is the first part of Luna's "Iberian/Red Trilogy," a series of films whose purpose was to explore the heterogeneity of the Spanish landscape and culture,<sup>6</sup> as well as "[una]

<sup>4</sup> See Luna's *Bilbao* (1978) and *Caniche* (1979).

<sup>5</sup> With some exceptions (Sabin, 2017), the male body has usually been overlooked, or cited briefly, when approaching *Jamón, jamón*. On the contrary, the female body has received more scholarly attention. See Deleyto (1999), Wharton (2004), and Sanabria (2007, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> The other two films of this "Iberian Trilogy" are *Huevos de oro* (1993) and *La teta i la lluna* (1994). *Huevos de oro* takes place in the city of Benidorm, in the Levantine Coast, and it narrates the story of Benito (Javier Bardem), a social climber and *hortera* during Spain's real estate speculation of early 1990s, who marries the daughter of a

reflexión consciente en el redescubrimiento de lo local” (Sanabria, 2007, 7).<sup>7</sup> It narrates the story of Silvia (Penélope Cruz), a poor teenager who lives with her prostitute mother Carmen (Anna Galiena) in the desert of Los Monegros—an arid area of Northern Spain. Silvia is pregnant by José Luis (Jordi Mollá), the son of Concha and Manuel (Stefania Sandrelli and Juan Diego), who are in an unhappy marriage, and run the successful *Sansón* [Samson] brand of underpants. Concha is extremely protective of José Luis. Because she does not want him to marry Silvia (whom she thinks just wants her son’s money), she hires Raúl (Javier Bardem), a prototypical *macho ibérico*, to seduce Silvia. Raúl and Silvia fall in love with each other, but Concha (who during the story had an affair with Raúl and now does not want to lose him) tells Silvia that she hired the man to seduce her. In the meantime, José Luis (who is continuously depicted as a weak and indecisive young man who is humiliated by everyone) discovers Raúl and Silvia’s relationship, and the affair between his mother and Raúl. Furious, he confronts Raúl, and the two men fight in the middle of the desert with two ham legs. In the fight, Raúl kills José Luis. The movie ends with an image in which Manuel and Silvia, Concha and Raúl, and Carmen and José Luis all embrace, all looking at the sky. *Jamón, jamón* was a large success inside Spain and abroad, and still holds a cult status because of its balanced mixture of excess, surrealism, comedy, tragedy, and eroticism.



**Imagen 2:** Raúl [5:08]



**Imagen 3:** José Luis [57:25]



**Imagen 4:** Manuel [21:32]

The release of *Jamón, jamón* in 1992 seems paradoxical in retrospect. For Spain, 1992 was a chance to show its definitive inclusion into modernity, offering an image of discipline, professionalism, and modernity, and positioning itself within the orbit of other Western countries. In this context where an intensely desired sensation of normalcy and acceptance into modernity finally seemed accomplished, it is paradoxical, I repeat, that Luna (up until then considered an *avant-garde* filmmaker) decided to make a film like *Jamón, jamón*, a

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builder in order to get rich. *La teta i la lluna* takes place in Catalonia, and it narrates the story of Teté (Biel Durán), a nine-year-old boy who is obsessed with the women’s breasts. While *La teta i la lluna* puts less emphasis on the space than *Jamón, jamón* and *Huevos de oro*, the film contains detailed depictions of Catalanian cultural traditions, like the *castells*, the *barretina* or the *senyera*. Carolina Sanabria has provided insightful scholarly work on this “Iberian/Red Trilogy.” See Sanabria (2007, 2010, 2016, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> “[a] conscious reflection on the rediscovery of the local.”

movie in which many of the cultural stereotypes about Spaniards that had always been considered symbols of backwardness by Spaniards themselves were praised. As Spanish film critic Ramón Freixas stated in his film review for the magazine *Dirigido por*, Luna depicted with precision “la España de puticlubs, de jubilados, de carretera y polvo: la idiosincrática España de ajo arriero y tortilla de patatas con cebolla” (qtd. in Deleyto, 1999, 271).<sup>8</sup> In other words, Luna depicted with precision a part of Spain pejoratively labeled as “España profunda” because of its connotations with the rural and the backward.<sup>9</sup>



**Imágenes 5, 6 y 7:** The desert of Los Monegros in *Jamón, jamón* [2:37 (left), 25:23 (center), and 1:02:26 (right)]

The choice to set *Jamón, jamón* in the desert of Los Monegros is not accidental. Luna takes a space which had been considered for many years the trademark of Spanishness (the Castilian landscape, so fiercely promoted by Franco's dictatorship), and praises it again in a moment in which Spain's freedom after the death of Francisco Franco had “metamorphosed into corruption and greed against the backdrop of increasing globalization” (Wharton, 2004, 134). The years between the beginning of democracy (1978) and the release of *Jamón, jamón* (1992) had witnessed the displacement of this landscape in favor of the Southern and Mediterranean coasts, as well as urban centers like Madrid or Barcelona. At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, two situations thus converged: on the one hand, the rejection of a landscape (the Castilian landscape) which, though it had been praised during Franco's dictatorship as the most accurate representation of Spanishness, had been rejected after the death of the dictator in favor of the coasts and the South. On the other hand, a growing sensation among Spaniards that, despite the overcome of the idea of the country's backwardness, increasing globalization was attacking the cultural roots of the country. Luna's purpose in *Jamón, jamón* is therefore to analyze what makes Spain culturally distinctive in a context of increasing depersonalization because of globalization.

Benedict Anderson defines a nation as an “imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 1991, 6). A nation is “*limited*

<sup>8</sup> “the Spain of whore houses, jubilees, highways and dust: the idiosyncratic Spain of garlic and Spanish omelets with onion.”

<sup>9</sup> “Deep Spain.”

because even the largest of them... has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations" (7). It is also "sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm" (7), and it is "a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, it is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (7). Building upon Anderson's definition, Anthony Smith defines "nation" as "a named and self-defined community whose members cultivate common myths, memories, symbols and values, possess and disseminate a distinctive public culture, reside in and identify with a historic homeland, and create and disseminate common laws and shared customs" (Smith, 2005, 96). Both Anderson and Smith describe what is known as "perennial nationalism," which was the way in which Spanish intellectuals saw Spain at the turn of the nineteenth century (Crosson, 2009, 68). According to Eric Hobsbawm, perennial nationalism is the view of a nation that incorporates the materialist conception of modernist nationalism while simultaneously seeks to explain the power of myth and memory in nationalist ideology, yet not exactly as imaginary and contingent, but as necessary components toward an authentic nation-state where citizens share a common story and a sense of place (Hobsbawm, 2005, 80). Therefore, historical forgetting and nostalgia are important for the construction of that mythic past since they serve as a bridge between the agrarian past and the dislocation that modernity produces (Smith, 1998, 44). Instead of being dismissed as a sort of brainwashing, the nationalist sentiment thus serves to provide continuity to the rapidly changing and disorienting action of modernity (44).

### 3. THE MALE BODY: STEREOTYPES AND EVOLUTION IN SPANISH CINEMA

*Jamón, jamón* can be read as the story of the stereotype of the "Spanish male's self-deluding fantasy of his own sexual and social potency in an age of radical economic change" (D'Lugo, 1995, 70), thereby reimagining his role within the national sense of self. According to the Spanish sociologist José Luis Sangrador García, stereotypes are "not only a reflection of reality, [but] they help to create it" (qtd. in Fouz y Hernández, 2007, 15). Bruno Mazzara, on his behalf, explains how, even though there are socio-historical reasons which assist in the formation of stereotypes, people have a need to simplify reality and to recognize otherness, along with a need to belong to a group that shares some of their characteristics, whether those characteristics are the product of generalizations or not (Mazzara, 1999, 93).

The character of Raúl in *Jamón, jamón* has been seen as a representation of the

stereotypical Iberian *macho ibérico*. However, this image of the Spanish male body has not always been rigid in Spanish cinema. When thinking of the stereotypical representation of the Spanish male in Spanish cinema, most Spaniards still tend to think of the characters portrayed by actors like José Luis López Vázquez or Alfredo Landa, very far away from the *macho ibérico* image that an actor like Javier Bardem entails in Luna's film. The so-called "average Spaniard"<sup>10</sup> that López Vázquez or Landa portrayed in the so-called Francoist *comedias celtibéricas*<sup>11</sup> was considered, for many years, "the epitome of Spanish maleness" (Jordan and Allinson, 2005, 127). Nevertheless, rather than the strong, muscular, and healthy man that Raúl signifies in *Jamón, jamón*, the average Spaniard was a "short [...], balding, a little overweight and not [a] good-looking" man (126) from whom, "when stripped down to his underwear, the sight of his bent legs always seemed [to] guarantee a good laugh" (Fouz-Hernández and Martínez Expósito, 2007, 11). Additionally, men in the *comedias celtibéricas* became a symbol of the "surface of embarrassment" that revealed the contrast between "fantasies of endless sexual activity" and "the reality of anxious and incompetent lovers" that characterized those narratives (Pavlović 2003, 82). For many years, this "average Spaniard" was the dominant stereotype of masculinity in Spanish cinema. For despite the embarrassment, the fantasies of endless sexual activity and the reality of incompetency as lovers, the *comedias celtibéricas* also celebrated an interest in the so-called *producto nacional*,<sup>12</sup> which means, in those elements that used to make Spain culturally distinctive and which foreign females had discovered when they started to flood Spain in the beginning of the 1960s thanks to the touristic boom in the country (Fouz-Hernández and Martínez Expósito, 2007, 11).

While the so-called *destape*<sup>13</sup> films that followed the dictatorship were prodigal in the exposure of female bodies, male actors kept most of their clothes on, thus accentuating the "objectification of women and the self-confidence of men, who rarely had to expose their own bodies or put under scrutiny their physical adequacy as sex symbols" (12). The decade of the 1980s gradually changed this attitude towards the male body. The success of filmmakers like Pedro Almodóvar, and the presence of good-looking actors like Antonio Banderas or Jorge Sanz introduced the possibility of exploring the male body more openly, as an object of desire, by means of the inclusion of sequences of explicit sex in which both male and female actors shared identical exposure. Next, Spanish cinema in the decade of the 1990s sought to

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<sup>10</sup> My quotes.

<sup>11</sup> Celtiberian comedies.

<sup>12</sup> National product. "Product" is understood here as everything that is typical Spanish.

<sup>13</sup> Nudity.



blur the differences between the Spanish male and his Northern European counterpart, placing the Spanish man within a modernized global context of metrosexuality. In addition to this repositioning within the European context, the Spanish male body was also repositioned *inside* Spain, thanks to the new *autonomías*.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, filmmakers of the 1990s and 2000s started to pursue the (mostly humorous) depiction of Spain's stereotyped national diversity far away from the former pejorative or exotic connotations often ignored from a certain norm sustained on the Castilian model.

Chronologically, *Jamón, jamón* is in such a period of transition where former stereotypes coexist with new approaches towards the male body. The resulting tension from this location in a period of transition is projected in the film. According to Marvin D'Lugo, the narrative of the film is "informed by a dialectical tension between a pristine sense of Spanish tradition and the entrepreneurial exploitation of that tradition" (D'Lugo, 1995, 69). This derives, according to Luna, in the menace of a loss of personality; the most remarkable problem that the Spain of the neoliberal era faces in terms of nation. Although this issue of a loss of Spanishness that Luna explores in *Jamón, jamón* can be seen similar to the issue that intellectuals like Unamuno, "Azorín" or Machado used to discuss in the past, he [Luna] faces his task by depicting Spain's cultural diversity as an inclusive, positive element of identity rather than an exclusive, negative one. *Jamón, jamón* is therefore "a film that serves as a contestatory text, questioning the static forms of traditional Spanish culture while re-semanticizing the representation of that culture around notions of multinational commodification" (68). Homi K. Bhabha conceptualizes this D'Lugo's statement about the re-semanticization of the representation of a [the Spanish] culture by observing that, when attempting to create a national culture, different national cultures shift and develop a "critique of the fixed and stable forms of the nationalist narrative," making imperative "to question those Western theories of the horizontal, homogeneous empty time of the nation's narrative" (Bhabha, 1991, 303). In other words, by means of recycling cultural symbols that were always the object of controversy and confrontation, Luna achieves in *Jamón, jamón* their unification into a balanced whole to contest the cultural implications that the inclusion of the country within the expected modernity can imply (Sanabria, 2020, 155).

#### 4. THE COMMODIFYING BODY/CULTURE: RAÚL

*Jamón, jamón* is the story of the kidnapping of desire by Europe (Luna and Canals, 1994, 35). That desire is embodied by Silvia (Penélope Cruz), while the three male characters of the

<sup>14</sup> Devolved administrative territories that were constituted with the arrival of democracy.

story, Raúl (embodying a traditional Spain), José Luis (embodying a Spain progressively globalized and depersonalized), and Manuel (embodying a Spain which looks at the European continent and seems to offer a middle point between tradition and modernity) compete for owning her. Raúl embodies Spain's interior. He is the symbol of the "secano, de lo más profundo de Iberia" (31).<sup>15</sup> José Luis, on his behalf, is "[t]rabaja siempre para su padre [...] La Visa Oro [es] su favorita. Las marcas son su obsesión. No tiene cojones para nada" (33).<sup>16</sup> Manuel is "[l]a voz de Europa. El poder" (35).<sup>17</sup> He embodies the North, whose destiny is in the South (Silvia), to whom he kidnaps (35).



**Imágenes 8, 9 y 10:** Silvia as the embodiment of desire by Raúl [47:35], José Luis [19:44] and Manuel [1:22:35]

The film begins with a shot of a Spanish road under the *testículos* (testicles) of what is known as the Osborne bull [2:10 – 2:28]. In the Spanish language, the testicles are also named *cojones*, and are a symbol of masculinity.



**Imagen 11:** The Osborne bull

Fuente: Pixabay. <https://pixabay.com/photos/el-toro-de-osborne-spain-bull-1526966/>

<sup>15</sup> "[He is the symbol of the] dry-land, of the Deep Iberian.

<sup>16</sup> "[José Luis] always works for his father [...] The Golden Visa Card is his favorite. The good brands are his passion. He does not have balls for anything.

<sup>17</sup> "[Manuel is] the voice of Europe. The power."

The *Osborne* bull is a former brandy advertisement featuring a black bull, which can be seen across Spain roads, and which has become a symbol of Spain's countryside. However, in this very first shot of *Jamón, jamón* no bull is contemplated. Instead, Luna films the back side of the advertisement, only concentrating the attention in the testicles and the space that is below: the arid, dry and quasi-lunar desert of Los Monegros. The credits sequence thus gives us the clue of how Luna is going to observe Spain: by means of "the manipulation of point of view and the use of space" (Deleyto, 1999, 273). Additionally, "the shot also declares that this new perspective is inevitably and spectacularly gendered... and oversexed" (273). The bull silhouette also announces, "the commodification of a certain historical notion of Spanishness as the central theme of the film" (D'Lugo, 1995, 74) while it "shows the discrepancy between the static forms of the past and the movement that is engendered by contemporary commerce" (74).<sup>18</sup> The bull is the symbol of Spain par excellence. It embodies masculinity and uncontrolled sexuality (Sanabria 8), as well as uncontrolled violence (Chevalier and Gheebrant, 1986, 2431). Yet the bull that Luna shows is fake and not a real animal. Its testicles are slightly broken too. The movie is going to be observed under the perspective of the animal, the sexual, the cultural (Evans, 2004, 40) because Spain's culture, Luna seems to claim, is animalistic and sexual. However, the broken testicles indicate that they are in danger –i.e., that Spain's culture is in danger.



**Imágenes 12, 13, 14 y 15.**

From the *Osborne* bull's broken testicles to Raúl's freedom, and need of money [2:14 - 4:26]

<sup>18</sup> The *Osborne* bull is, as D'Lugo accurately observes, "a Spanish variant of Andy Warhol's *Campbell's* soup can [...] that embodies a broader culture of commerce" (D'Lugo 1995, 74-75).

The following sequence shows two young men, Raúl and Tomás, fighting a fake bull [2:29–4:25]. The camera focuses on their crotches, seeking to establish a connection of bull fighting as a sexual act. Marsha Kinder considers this immediate transition from the *cojones* of the Osborne bull to the testicles of Raúl as part of a visual dynamic constantly associated with consumerism, and in which the camera (by means of close-up shots) pursues the objects of desire (Kinder, 1993, 31). The sequence also introduces a context in which tradition and modernity coexist (Evans, 2004, 40): the bull ring is actually a soccer stadium. Furthermore, the sequence has social connotations because “it captures in a visual tableau the scenario of social ascent that has been a commonplace in Spanish culture for nearly a century: the idea that the *corrida* [sic] represents for Spain’s marginalized [...] rural males access to rapid social and economic success” (D’Lugo, 1995, 75).<sup>19</sup> Luna thus sets his story of myths and symbols of Spanishness based on the idea of Spaniards’ need and battle for economic improvement (75), which suggests, that even if many think it is spiritually superior, Spanishness cannot ignore the existence of (and need for) both money and a material world.

Next, we the spectators see a casting of the male underwear company *Sansón* [4:55–5:34]. The casting seeks the best crotch. While different young men (among them, Raúl) are recorded, Concha, the woman who runs the company, observes them from a monitor. Sophisticated, she witnesses the casting with captivated attention. Soon after, her business skills are revealed as she discusses with her husband, Manuel, the new advertisement of the company: women are (she says) those who really buy the underwear for their husbands, so the company’s advertisement must be addressed to them [the women] in the most explicit way: “un buen paquete, vende,”<sup>20</sup> she concludes [5:22]. Concha embodies the modern Spanish woman, who has come to assume the position of power in contemporary Spain, and Luna’s movement “from phallogentric iconography [of the audition] to Conchita’s private television monitoring Raúl’s audition foretells the cultural logic through which Spanish social and economic power is now seen as driven by the female” (76).

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<sup>19</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>20</sup> “a big prick sells well.” It is interesting that the actress who plays Concha (Stefania Sandrelli) is Italian and is dubbed. On the other hand, the actress who plays Silvia’s mother, Carmen (Anna Galiena) is also Italian, but she is not dubbed, speaking Spanish with her foreign accent. According to Wharton, in a film about Spanishness as *Jamón, jamón* “it must be of interest to the critic that the audience clearly identifies the two matriarchal signifiers of modern Spain as non-Spaniards against the backdrop of an unrecognizable and alien landscape which is in fact Spain” (Wharton, 2004, 135).



**Imágenes 16 y 17.** Concha monitors Raúl's audition for *Sansón* [5:00 – 5:33]

To this point, we the spectators have witnessed a world of primitiveness embodied by Raúl, who has been presented as someone who enjoys to being outdoors, physically appealing, strong, and with a homoerotic appeal (Kinder, 1993, 34), but also in need of money. In other words, Raúl [i.e., Spain/Spanishness] is free, but poor. On the other hand, these sequences have also presented a materialistic/commodified world. Raúl, in the casting, is only a crotch, something to be sold. Symbols traditionally understood as part of the Spanish cultural space are therefore presented as mere commodities, as part of the free market that modernity entails. Concha's son, José Luis, is presented in this context as a good, obedient boy.

## 5. THE COMMODIFIED BODY/CULTURE: JOSÉ LUIS

After a couple of sequences in which Carmen (Silvia's mother) is introduced and her need for money is exposed, the movie focuses on Silvia and José Luis. Notwithstanding that they are presented by means of another long shot of Los Monegros (again from the *Osborne* bull), when the action takes place, both are inside José Luis' car, listening to music [8:55–14:00]. José Luis eats an omelet, and he does not listen to Silvia's complaints about her tiredness of the economic problems that her mother and her sisters suffer. Then Silvia faints and confesses that she is pregnant. Instead of avoiding the situation, José Luis decides that they will get married, giving her the ring of a Coke can as a symbolic wedding ring. Immediately, he begins to taste Silvia's breasts. Silvia asks him about the taste of her breasts. José Luis says that they do not taste like anything, but he would want them to taste like an omelet. Concha calls and interrupts the moment.

Unlike Raúl, José Luis is presented here exhibiting his high economic status. Physically, he is not very strong, and he is obsessed with material things like his car and

stereo. Despite his sweet tone of voice and his noble response toward the news of Silvia's pregnancy, he does not show a strong personality. His lack of personality is also emphasized when he is asked about the taste of Silvia's breasts, and he answers that they do not taste like anything. Finally, his link with a materialistic world is strengthened when he takes the ring of the Coke can and puts it on Silvia's finger.



**Imágenes 18, 19, 20 y 21.** The introduction of José Luis: his car, Silvia's pregnancy, the Coke/wedding ring, and Concha's call [8:55-14:00]

These ideas regarding José Luis are emphasized in the next sequence. That night, he visits Carmen's *puticlub*<sup>21</sup> with his friends [15:25-17:15]. Before going in, he urinates on the road, and his friends laugh at him. Again, his weakness and lack of personality is remarked upon by two ways: first, when he says to a friend "No me pongas nervioso que ya sabes que cuando me cabreo tengo muy mala leche"<sup>22</sup> [15:45], and second, when that friend nicknames him as "Sansón, polla de maricón"<sup>23</sup> [15:48]. The former is a sentence that José Luis repeats constantly throughout the story, a kind of warning of violence that he in fact lacks, but also a warning that preludes the final confrontation with his nemesis Raúl once the violence he

<sup>21</sup> Slang, colloquial expression for brothel.

<sup>22</sup> "[y]ou know that, when I get angry, I get in a very bad mood."

<sup>23</sup> "Samson, fag's prick." The sentence in Spanish contains a rhyme: "Sansón - maricón."

continuously represses explodes. The latter plays with the antagonism of the terms *Sansón* (Samsom) and *maricón* (fag). Although the name of the company that he will presumably inherit from his mother represents strength, the use of the term *maricón* is cataloging him as someone weak. A shot that Luna introduces in this sequence (in which the boys urinate over a Coke can [15:52–15:57]) has been understood as one of the most explicit expressions in Luna's career about his position regarding the most universal symbol of the U.S. culture (Sanabria, 2007, 8).



**Imagen 22:** The urinated Coke can [15:53]

However, Luna does not criticize specifically the U.S. culture neither here nor during the rest of the film. Instead, he uses the *Coke* can as a signifier of the global economy. As Evans states, American culture is very present in *Jamón, jamón*, but only as representative of a broader scenario in which the cultural symbols of other countries are now more accessible for Spaniards, creating a confrontation with the traditions of the country (Evans, 2004, 44-45).<sup>24</sup> Inside the club, José Luis talks with Carmen about his plan to marry Silvia [16:16]. Carmen is skeptical. She knows Concha will never let him marry Silvia. Although José Luis insists he will get married even if his mother does not approve it, Carmen is not convinced that he will confront his family. From their conversation, it is implied they are lovers, and that

<sup>24</sup> The *Coke* brand is also present in *Huevos de oro*, the second film of the “Trilogía Ibérica”. There an excavator crushes a *Coke* bottle during the construction of a skyscraper [22:00]. Gonzalo M. Pavés states that Luna did dislike *Coke* and, by extension, the relationship Americans have with food and eating, seeing it just as an act of consumption, and not as an act of nutrition, pleasure and enjoyment (Pavés, 2020, 304, 313). This idea is depicted at the end of *Huevos de oro*, where the character of Benito blames American hamburgers, fried chicken, and coffee because they are tasteless [1:20:10]. In an interview with Antonio Weinrichter, Luna repeats this criticism towards American food, *but not* to American culture. Regarding the time he worked in Los Angeles, he said: “Es una parte de mi vida de la que tengo grandes recuerdos, la tierra californiana es maravillosa y espero que con el tiempo mejore el café” [“It’s a part of my life from which I have good memories, California is a wonderful land, and I hope coffee can improve in the future”] (Weinrichter, 1992, 86–87).

Silvia does not know this fact.

The company of Concha and Manuel holds an annual banquet for the employees of *Sansón*. Carmen and Silvia go there with many omelets that they have prepared [17:22–18:45]. When José Luis introduces Silvia to his mother, Concha ignores her. Instead, she blames Carmen because she sees her talking with Manuel. Offended because her mother has been insulted, Silvia leaves the party. Not without difficulties, José Luis comforts her, but Silvia is very angry because he has not defended his mother in front of her [19:05–19:45]. For the first time in the movie, Silvia remarks on José Luis' lack of *cojones*, or virility. That night, at home, Concha and Manuel discuss [21:13–21:55]. From that discussion (in which she reproaches him for Carmen's presence at the banquet), we gather that Manuel and Carmen had an affair in the past.



**Imágenes 23 y 24:** Manuel and Concha's marriage: at the *Sansón* annual banquet (left [18:00]) and at home (right [21:30])

This discussion is the first moment in which the character of Manuel is presented with some depth, though not many clues about him are given. It is also the first moment in which Manuel and Concha are alone. The tension is palpable. However, the depiction of Manuel by Luna is ambiguous (not only in this sequence, but also during the whole movie) and, to some extent, not much difference between him and Concha is drawn here. He is a man completely disengaged from the rest of the world; someone who knows very well how manipulative and perverse Concha is: "Todas las mujeres tenéis una puta dentro"<sup>25</sup> [21:46], he says when Concha insults Carmen, defending the latter and implying that, not because she is prostitute, Concha is a better person.

When José Luis arrives home, Concha helps undress him to go to bed [23:05–24:03]. José Luis' room is full of objects and the light is low. The atmosphere is claustrophobic, depressive. José Luis is not happy. Concha undresses him and remembers when she was

<sup>25</sup> "All women have a whore inside."



pregnant and wanted him to be comfortable in her belly. The idea of a repressed desire is suggested here. This is one of the sequences which most visually defines José Luis as opposed to Raúl by means of the space (Fouz-Hernández and Martínez Expósito, 2007, 22). While Raúl has been presented outdoors, José Luis' room is a confined, claustrophobic space full of things like drums, light dumbbells, or computers. Also, in this moment we the spectators know everything about José Luis' family and his dependence upon it, but we do not yet know anything about Raúl's background, thus indicating his self-sufficiency and implying a self-sufficiency in Spaniards.



**Imágenes 25 y 26.** Raúl receives the visit of Concha (left [25:45]) and is tempted with material compensation (right [26:21])

## 6. THE IN-BETWEEN BODY/CULTURE: MANUEL

Determined to break up her son's relationship, Concha visits Raúl in the meat-packing plant where he works: *Los conquistadores* [The Conquerors], a solitary place in the middle of nowhere [24:42–26:10]. The use of this name ironizes the Spain's past as a colonizer empire. The location in that middle of nowhere reinforces the idea of self-sufficiency associated to Spanishness. Interestingly, the name [*Los conquistadores*] is included in a movie located in the year of the fifth centenary of the arrival of Spaniards in America (Sanabria, 2007, 9). Yet in an increasing de-personalized Spain, what in the past seemed a motive for pride has been reduced to an example of "commodifying historical culture" (D'Lugo, 1995, 76). That night, after accepting Concha's proposal to break up Silvia's and José Luis' engagement, Raúl meets Silvia [27:50–29:35]. From the beginning, he tries to seduce her, but Silvia rejects him. The next day, Raúl follows her to the disco, kissing her passionately while she is in the lady's restroom [31:00–33:40]. In the disco, José Luis tells his friends he has decided to present his father a project to improve the company's benefits: panties for dogs. Again, he repeats that he is going to get married. However, soon after Silvia and he fight because she has discovered he has not said anything yet to this family about her pregnancy. José Luis

reiterates his intentions of telling the truth. In these sequences, we the spectators see the evolution of Silvia, as well as how José Luis is shown as a character that is completely predictable and repetitive. On the contrary, Raúl's fearlessness in his courtship of Silvia makes him unpredictable, shameless, and rude, but also strong, decided and, in the end, appealing.

The project that José Luis presents to his father is received badly by Manuel, who accuses him of being childish. His idea is complete non-sense: "Esto no es América,"<sup>26</sup> he furiously asserts [35:15]. Again, we are in front of a sequence in which Manuel is furious. Although Manuel is a businessman (and thus associated with openness and innovation due to his embodiment of the capitalist market), he seems reluctant to pursue *any* kind of change.



**Imágenes 27 y 28.** Manuel despises his son's project [34:44 – 36:30]

This sequence, though brief, presents Manuel's character more clearly than the sequence in which he was with Concha at home. As an embodiment of the idea of Europe, Manuel certainly represents a space of capitalist market. However, he is also rooted in cultural and historical values that he is not willing to modify blindly. With Manuel's character, Luna seems to emphasize the cultural legacy of Europe in Spain against the absolute depthless of the globalized market that his wife and his son represent. In other words, Luna considers Europe the embodiment of a different type of capitalism, which must coexist with the global economy, but which also is not willing to surrender itself so easily. From this perspective, Manuel's anger should not be seen as an inherent part of his character, but as the expression of a *reaction* against the menace of depersonalization that both his wife and his son represent. It would also be (with the depiction of his anger elegantly repressed by the expensive suits he wears) a *body/space* between the charismatic and full of personality Raúl/Spanishness, and his standardized/depersonalized son José Luis/global market—an in-between *body/space* that is neither the clash nor the middle point of two opposed position,

<sup>26</sup> "This is not America."

but a body/space constituted as such and having its own identity. Alongside the fight that he had with Silvia the previous night, the discussion here between José Luis and Manuel makes the former to start to be aware that nobody thinks he is mature enough, and the latter someone in a sort of internal struggle between the awareness of depersonalization embodied by his son and a resistance for preserving some values of his own.

## 7. THE COMING OF THE TRAGEDY

Depressed, José Luis goes that night to Carmen's club. They have a private encounter, in which Carmen plays a song with a parrot, emulating the animal and with the bird being able to produce words like *polla*.<sup>27</sup> The connection between animality and humanity is made here again. The mention of the word *polla* (like *cojones*, a symbol of virility) by the parrot sounds ridiculous, making both the sequence and the character of José Luis goofy but also, to some extent, sad.



**Imágenes 29 y 30.** José Luis, Carmen and the parrot [37:23–40:20]

That night, Raúl and his friend Tomás break into the bullring of a rancher in order to fight a bull under the moon, naked [41:20]. This act is called *Hacer la luna*.<sup>28</sup> According to legend, the bullfighters who *hacen la luna* have an erection. The sequence reinforces Raúl's connection with nature, freedom and independence. French scholar Jean-Claude Seguin says that the bull is the *macho* par excellence in the Spanish culture because of its impressive size and its sex that is overtly exposed during bullfighting (qtd. in Sanabria, 2007, 9). *Hacer la luna* implies that the erection the bullfighter obtains connects him with the connotations that the bull embodies. Nevertheless, in the film, Raúl and his friend do not achieve their goals because they are discovered by the rancher and must escape naked. They

<sup>27</sup> Prick.

<sup>28</sup> Literally, "to make the moon."

go to Silvia's house, who helps them dress [44:10]. The sequence is funny but also intimate. Silvia cleans Raúl's feet with olive oil (symbol associated with Spain, a natural product used to clean the artificial asphalt) and Raúl plays the role of another Spanish myth, the "Don Juan," trying not to be as rude as the previous times in his approach to Silvia. In this sequence, Silvia starts to see him more positively. The following day, Concha meets Raúl in a hotel, where they have sex [49:40–56:15]. Soon after, she buys him a motorcycle—again, Spanishness understood as something alternative/parallel to materialism, but which is tempted by money. With his new motorcycle, Raúl tries to impress Silvia, who pretends to be indifferent to his attentions. However, he has an accident, and Silvia finally accepts that she is in love with him [1:00:33–1:00:50].



**Imagen 31.** Raúl *haciendo la luna* [42:05]



**Imagen 32.** Raúl, the "Don Juan" [46:12]

José Luis, in the meantime, assumes that he will never be able to escape from his mother's influence. When he confesses Silvia's pregnancy to his father, Manuel does not seem interested in helping him. Again, José Luis is recriminated for having no personality. One evening, Silvia tells him that she does not want to continue the relationship because he does not have *cojones* [1:02:57–1:03:30]. Furious, José Luis rapes her and later, in order to prove that he is a real man, climbs the *Osborne* bull, and punches its testicles while shouting that he is fed up of the idea that the *cojones* implies—i.e., virility [1:04:48–1:06:03]. The testicles of the *Osborne* bull finally fall. José Luis leaves Silvia in the middle of the desert, and it starts to rain. Silvia then takes the *Osborne* bull's testicles and, covering herself with them, goes to a road restaurant where she finds Raúl playing with a slot machine. According to Sanabria, "[e]l enorme miembro representa la seguridad y el resguardo (viril) de los que la misma Silvia ha carecido y que busca en su acomodado novio [y] cree hallar en Raúl" (Sanabria, 2007, 9).<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> "The immense [genital] member represents security and (male) protection, from which Silvia has been lacking up until then, and which she looks for in her accommodated boyfriend and which she thinks she finds in Raúl afterwards."



**Imágenes 33 y 34.** Furious, José Luis rapes Silvia and breaks the *Osborne* bull's testicles [1:04:48 – 1:06:03]

The moment with the slot machine is presented through several close-ups emphasizing the machine and Raúl's face, and creating a hypnotic atmosphere, not only to serve as justification of Silvia *being attracted to Raúl*, but also to reinforce (after seeing his attitude with Concha's car, and later with his motorcycle) the obsession of Raúl with getting material security. In that sense, the close-ups of the lights and the lever of the slot machine, Raúl's concentration in the game, the sound of the machine... they work to depict what ultimately is a seduction game. When Silvia arrives in the road restaurant, Raúl and she kiss passionately, starting to make love in front of other customers [1:07:10]. Then the slot machine begins to eject coins, visualizing not the explosion of physical desire between Raúl and Silvia, but also Raúl's desire for money. After this moment (which encapsulates a brief point of understanding between the spiritual and the material, between primitivism and progress, between the local and the global), things accelerate to lead to tragedy.



**Imágenes 35 y 36.** Raúl and the slot machine: [1:02:47] (left), and [1:02:54] (right)



**Imágenes 37 y 38.** The seduction of Raúl, Silvia and the slot machine come together: [1:07:34] (left), and [1:08:00] (right)

Outside the road restaurant, José Luis sees Raúl and Silvia. Desperate, he goes home, and tells his mother everything. Meanwhile, Raúl takes Silvia to the store where he works, and they make love [1:11:41–1:13:10]. Just like José Luis did in the beginning of the movie, Raúl now tastes Silvia's breasts, but unlike Concha's son, he says that they taste like omelet, ham and garlic. Against a depersonalized José Luis, Raúl is all passion and sensuality. Concha, in the meantime, has followed them and observes the scene. José Luis goes to the meat-packing plant too and sees his mother. In order to comfort his son's sadness, she tells him that she will solve everything, but José Luis, completely deranged and crying like a kid, blames her. Once Raúl takes Silvia home, Concha visits her and says that she is also the lover of Raúl. Silvia cannot believe it.

## 8. THE TRAGEDY

The next morning, José Luis goes to Carmen's club demanding to have sex with her. She rejects his claims [1:19:50–1:21:35]. Furious, José Luis goes to the meat-packing plant where Raúl works and discovers his mother with him (Concha had gone to say that Silvia was pregnant, and they ended up having sex). For her part, Silvia goes to see Manuel [1:22:05] in order to get help because she intuits that José Luis and Raúl are going to fight. Manuel (who has been absent during most of this second half of the film) kisses her with an ambiguous, viscous kiss. The moment, surprising and somehow mysterious, suggests Manuel is attracted to Silvia. According to Luna and Canals, when Silvia goes to Manuel, she "busca a su padre, ahora representado por Manuel" (Luna and Canals, 1994, 34).<sup>30</sup> The kiss, however, also suggests what later, in the final shot of the moment, will be presented more explicitly, and

<sup>30</sup> "[Silvia] looks for her father, now personified by Manuel."

which Marsha Kinder considers as the restoration of an incestuous patriarchy (Kinder, 1993, 35).



**Imagen 39.** The kiss [1:23:05]

Meanwhile, in the meat-packing plant, José Luis fights Raúl with a ham leg in order to prove that he is a real man [1:22:55]. Raúl accepts the challenge and they hit each other, reproducing Goya's *Duelo a garrotazos* [1:24:55–1:26:50].



**Imagen 40.** *Duelo a garrotazos*



**Imagen 41.** *Jamón, jamón* [1:26:12]

Interestingly, in this sequence Raúl carries a robust ham leg while José Luis' is reduced to the bone. On one hand, this is coherent with the way both characters have been represented through the film: the meatless ham is carried by the skinny José Luis while the robust ham is carried by the muscular Raúl. On the other hand, the scene (while reproducing the terrible signification of Goya's painting) is somehow absurd. The ridiculousness of José Luis carrying a meatless leg and Raúl carrying a robust one (yet the fact that José Luis *still* can defeat Raúl) helps the scene, despite its violence, to have “tintes caricaturescos que alivianan la remisión a la barbarie que ha caracterizado a la España profunda” (Sanabria, 2020, 158).<sup>31</sup> When both Raúl and José Luis are exhausted and kneeling on the floor, José Luis hits Raúl's crotch. Raúl's face expresses an intense pain [1:26:18]. The symbol of virility, one of

<sup>31</sup> “caricature-like echoes that help alleviate the brutality that has traditionally characterized the Deep Spain.”

the major features of Spanishness, has been attacked. Raúl then hits José Luis' head, who dies. The reason and control those modernizing ideas have always signified for Spaniards have been violently liquidated by a primitive Spain that rejects their role within the peninsula. Individuals have been mutilated because of their inherently violent impulses (Evans, 2004, 42).

Yet the scene also questions that violence and the supposed victory of Raúl over José Luis (i.e., of primitive Space over neoliberal Spain) thus giving some victory over José Luis. The exaggerated depiction of both fighting with robust and meatless ham legs respectively helps mitigate the gravity of the events that are narrated, especially if we consider that, right after this moment, order will be restored as the last shot of the film will show us. Connecting how violence is depicted in this scene with the first minutes of the film when Raúl was bullfighting, Sanabria considers that Luna “se integra a la tradición de artistas que [ven] en este tipo de fiestas [bullfighting] un teatro de horror donde lo cotidiano es un combate y la muerte acecha en todas partes” (Sanabria, 2020, 159).<sup>32</sup> In other words, Raúl's pain when his crotch is hit by José Luis' ham leg represents a terrible moment because it means the extirpation of one the symbols associated to Spain's culture (virility, the *cojones*) but, at the same time, it means that the historically assumed quasi-savagery of Spaniards (represented by Raúl's bullfighting in the beginning of the film) *can be overcome* because, despite entailing freedom, sensuality, personality, so on, is violent, aggressive. The extirpation is possible but painful, castrating.

## 9. THE ENDING

At the end of *Jamón, jamón*, the destiny of the characters is tragic, but, as said, order is restored. After leaving the plant, Concha sees her son dead. In that moment, Manuel and Silvia arrive. Raúl hits Manuel's car with the ham leg, but he finally falls, exhausted and agonizing. Carmen arrives soon after. The final scene is a long shot that shows Concha and Raúl, Carmen and José Luis, and Manuel and Silvia looking at the sky [1:31:44].

This final shot shows Raúl kneeling in a penitent position close to Concha, and José Luis' body in Carmen's arms, suggesting his “quasi-religious status as a martyr to the forces of primitive violence embodied by Raúl” (D'Lugo, 1995, 78). The Iberian body that Raúl represents has forcibly been re-inscribed into the globalized space through the castration

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<sup>32</sup> “[Luna] joins those artists that have seen this kind of events [bullfighting] as a horror theatre where the quotidian is a constant fight and death is everywhere.”



executed by José Luis (Fouz-Hernández and Martínez Expósito, 2007, 26). However, when Raúl pulls off the Mercedes logo from Manuel's car in which he and Silvia arrive at the plant, the movie suggests that, *still*, Raúl's "body itself is used as a site of resistance against such re-inscription" (26). In other words, not because he has not died like José Luis, that means he is fully alive, or better, *complete*. He still resists the re-inscription of his body (which he knows has been modified by the hit of José Luis' ham leg on his crotch) by now identifying Manuel as potential menace.



**Imagen 42.**The final sequence [1:31:48]

Because it is Manuel the only male character that seems to have a future in this tragic scenario, now embracing Silvia. Europe, in other words, has finally taken in passionate Spain, liberating her from her past of savagery and impulsiveness, but also from an uncontrolled modernity which signifies depersonalization. The passion that Silvia embodies is protected by the Christian roots of Europe that many Spanish conservative thinkers have always considered both an inherent part of the Spanish soul and a proof of the European origins of the peninsula. This image of Manuel embracing Silvia relates to the moment before of Manuel's kiss, where the incestuous patriarchy was implied: "Not only does this painterly *tableau* [sic] evoke traditional Christian iconography," Marsha Kinder writes, but it also restores power to the rich incestuous patriarch [Manuel]" (Kinder, 1993, 35). The pair that form Silvia and Manuel also suggests, for D'Lugo, "a new formulation of the Spanish family, one forged from the very antagonisms that earlier defined the community" (D'Lugo, 1995, 78).

Although it is clear from this ending that neither Raúl nor José Luis can possess Silvia, it is interesting to question if Manuel will be able to possess her too. I want to resume, before concluding, my words before on his depiction as a bitter character. Because I shall say that perhaps my complaint with interpreting Manuel/Europe as the savior of Silvia/Spain's soul is

the way in which he has been portrayed during the story. Continuously as a bitter person and always on the defensive, the way in which he treats his son is very cruel. He is, in brief, unhappy; he does not seem less unhappy than José Luis, to be precise and honest. If he were (as the embodiment of Europe) the savior of Silvia and the Spanish soul, the future that he seems to promise her at the end of the film does not look very appealing. However, considering the way in which he embraces Silvia once the fight between Raúl and José Luis has finished, it is obvious that he will be protective. The way in which his character has been depicted suggests some irony from Luna since that protection will come from a person who has shown constant signs of bitterness. However, it also suggests the awareness of the perils of global market. As stated before, Manuel embodies a reaction against depersonalization produced by that global market; someone whose anger and impulses are controlled by the elegant suits he wears. This mixture of anger and repression is expressed under a protective/controlling binary. That is, Manuel, although protective with Silvia, is also a controlling force inasmuch he does not unfold, fully, Raúl's qualities. He is not as repressed as José Luis, but he is not as liberated as Raúl either. As an in-between body that represents an in-between space, Manuel is liminal, and thus someone who is both *limes* (limits, boundaries) and *limen*—possibility, opening (Tally Jr., 2019, 55).

Luna's view of Europe in *Jamón, jamón* is biased, but coherent with the moment in which the movie was made—a moment of high expectations for the future of Spain. In those days, Europe as concept inside Spaniards' minds had become ingrained as something positive—a space of social rights, modernity and democracy even though it also implied depersonalization. In that sense, *Jamón, jamón* appears somewhat outdated today. Although still valued, Europe is no longer seen as that idyllic place that can balance and satisfy Spain's problems. Yet *Jamón, jamón* is still useful for exploring how Luna re-semanticizes cultural symbols that have always been seen with a mixture of pride and shame, more the result of how others saw Spaniards than how Spaniards saw themselves. That re-semanticization of symbols helps construct a vibrant film where cultural identity is fragmentary but not exclusive, as well as not surrendered to any specific regionalism or space. As an artist, Luna accomplishes the goal of overcoming what were (for past artists and thinkers), insurmountable obstacles like the dichotomies between tradition vs. modernity, Spain vs. Europe, one landscape vs. many landscapes.

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