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**Author:** Joanna Aleksandrowicz

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**Joanna Aleksandrowicz**

University of Silesia in Katowice

ORCID: 0000-0001-5095-7706

**FOURTEEN KILOMETRES TO PARADISE.  
IMAGES OF MIGRATION TO ANDALUSIA  
IN SPANISH CINEMA**

**CZTERNAŚCIE KILOMETRÓW DO RAJU.  
OBRAZY MIGRACJI DO ANDALUZJI  
W KINIE HISZPAŃSKIM**

**ABSTRAKT**

Filmowe reprezentacje migracji pojawiają się w kinie hiszpańskim od drugiej połowy lat dziewięćdziesiątych XX w., wraz z nasileniem ruchów migracyjnych. Andaluzyja jako region autonomiczny położony najbliżej wybrzeży Afryki jest w tych narracjach urzeczywistnieniem snu o Europie, choć często pełni jedynie rolę przystanku na drodze do bardziej uprzemysłowionych regionów Hiszpanii lub do innych krajów Europy Zachodniej. Lejtmotywnym większości tych filmów stała się przeprawa przez Cieśninę Gibraltarską, a 14 kilometrów, wyznaczające jej długość w najważniejszym miejscu, stało się metaforą wykorzystywaną zarówno przez socjologów jak i przez filmowców, aby oddać paradoks międzykontynentalnej odległości – życia tak blisko i zarazem tak daleko. W narracjach filmowych dominują dwie odmienne perspektywy. Pierwsza z nich reprezentuje spojrzenie mieszkańców Andaluzji i podróżujących na południe Hiszpanów, druga natomiast próbuje pokazać problemy międzykulturowych spotkań z

punktu widzenia samych migrantów. Niekiedy jednak perspektywy te nieoczekiwanie się splatają, a przynależność do miejsca w globalizującej się Europie oraz złożoność jej historii okazuje się nieoczywista i kontestująca wzajemnie konstruowane stereotypy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** kino hiszpańskie, migracje afrykańskie, Andaluzja, nowy rasizm

### ABSTRACT

The article depicts narrative strategies in twelve Spanish films about migration from North Africa to Andalusia. This problem has been gaining increasing interest of Spanish filmmakers since 1990s, which is a concomitant of intensification of migration itself. Andalusia, as an autonomous region located closest to Africa is a fulfilment of European Dream but also a place of disillusionment. Oftentimes it is also merely a brief stop on way to the more industrialized regions of Spain or other countries of western Europe. The fourteen kilometres that separate Africa from Europe in the narrowest spot of the Strait of Gibraltar eventually became a metaphor in order to render the paradox of intercontinental distance. The analysis focuses on different narrative perspectives, racial stereotypes and new racism reflected in cinematography images.

**Keywords:** Spanish Cinema, African migration, Andalusia, new racism

Cinematic images of migration from North Africa have been gaining increasing interest of Spanish filmmakers since 1990s, attaining the peak of their popularity at the beginning of the 21st century, which is a concomitant of intensification of migration itself. Therefore, it seem sensible to acknowledge that in 1986, when Spain entered the European Union, migration tendencies have begun to gradually reverse – beforehand, it was Spaniards who left their home country, while after the said caesura Spain began to absorb the ever more numerous inhabitants of North Africa and Latin America, and later those from Asia and eastern Europe [Elena 2005, p. 55]. Over subsequent years, with economic crisis on the increase and military conflicts tormenting African states and the

Middle East, we witnessed a skyrocketing number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean to reach Spain, a significant portion of whom arrives on the country's south shore. Andalusia, as an autonomous region located closest to Africa is, for many of them, a fulfilment of their European Dream but also a place of disillusionment. Oftentimes it is also merely a brief stop on their way to the more industrialized regions of Spain or other countries of western Europe [Rosado, Lara 2019, p. 105]. The fourteen kilometres that separate Africa from Europe in the narrowest spot of the Strait of Gibraltar eventually became a metaphor utilized by sociologists [González Ferrera, Vera Borga 2008] and filmmakers alike, in order to render the paradox of intercontinental distance – of living so close and far from each other at the same time.

As I shall expand upon, the migration topics have also slightly altered the cinematic image of Andalusia by becoming a tributary of realistic current characteristic for Spanish cinema at the threshold of the 21st century. The said tendency observed in the films made in the south of Spain pertains to another conspicuous one, namely – to strip away the region of its colourful stereotypes connected with flamenco and *corrida*; which, according to some scholars, leads to producing new stereotypes – the ones unequivocally identifying Andalusia with ubiquitous poverty and lack of living prospects [Fernández Pichel et al. 2011, p. 230]. Touristy city centres along with their recognisable landmarks, which had become iconic to the region, are now replaced by anonymous boroughs, entirely devoid of local flavour. Among this ramshackle cement landscapes, camerawork usually centres on socially excluded individuals who are helpless when it comes to changing their fates. The interest paid by filmmakers is conducive to popularization of the migration theme.

On the one hand, we are dealing here with cinematic depiction of authentic issues, often alluding to particular real-life events; on the other hand, they are artistically moulded images of migrants and

desired attitudes of Spaniards towards the more and more numerous non-natives. Especially intense tension between artistic creation and searching for realism sustains in film sequences which show the crossing of the Strait of Gibraltar, a sequence that has become a kind of leitmotif for the films in question. As Lidia Peralta García [2015, pp. 144, 148] rightly notices, choosing Andalusia as a setting for numerous fictional films and documentaries is related to the fact that, next to the Canary Islands, it is one of the destinations most frequently chosen by migrants. Yet, decisive factor here also remains the fascinations with the passage motif itself connected with the motifs of journey, path to Eden, tragedy, death, and the forces of nature. Therefore, it is all about choosing a topic with the mightiest dramatic potential in comparison to other issues stemming from migration, such as identity crisis, or intercultural conflicts occurring amongst second-generation migrants – threads and storylines virtually neglected in Spanish cinema [Peralta García 2015, pp. 148–149]. Simultaneously, it is worth noticing that the motif of a raft crossing the Strait of Gibraltar over the previous decades has become an element of collective imagination and in a way a symbol of illegal migration.

The said fictional thread appeared already in *Letters from Alou* (*Cartas de Alou*, 1990) by Montxo Armendáriz, recognized by scholars as the first Spanish picture fully concerned with migration-related issues [Castiello 2005, p. 45; Elena 2005, p. 56]. Images of tempestuous seas and a night-time attempt at crossing the Strait of Gibraltar had been utilized here as an opening sequence full of dramatic tension, yet the motif of journey by boat tormented by winds will also return in the final scenes. After the eponymous Alou (Mulie Jarju) is deported back to Senegal, the story has run a full circle and is to be concluded with another attempt at getting into Spain. In-between those images framing the narrative, we are able to track the journey of the protagonist throughout Spain; wintertime and grey Madrid with its railway station

populated by thieves, unfriendly and intolerant Catalonia. The part of our interest, the one depicting Andalusia, was filmed on the shore. Like in the further phases of the journey, here also the Senegalese is lent a helping hand by migrant community, despite language barriers thwarting the communication of characters originating from various parts of Africa. Initial meetings with Spaniards are also made uneasy by the lack of mutual comprehension, which, however, does not stymie our protagonist in finding work on plantation or picking up girls at a disco. At the same time, positive attitude toward aliens has strict limits to it. Spanish women treat black migrants as exotic entertainment, however, they do not want to be seen by neighbours in their company. The intolerance is also further complicated by a love story involving a waitress met by the character in Catalonia – despite the girl's involvement, her father, who runs a local bar, accepts Alou solely as a customer and a game partner to play checkers with; whereas work relations between migrants and their employers, even when they are well, fundamentally stem from the demand for cheap labour force.

*Letters from Alou* represents a look from the outside, which contributes to the specificity of Spanish migrant-themed cinema [Castiello 2005, pp. 38–39]. Those are always stories told by Spaniards, and voices of migrants could only be heard in singular utterances captured in documentaries; however, at the level of whole narratives they are missing, which is obviously a consequence of economic and production-related limitations of filmmaking. So, the Euro-centric perspective prevails, however filled with empathy and willingness to familiarize the figure of a stranger. Yet, it is worth emphasizing that Armendáriz's picture has been acknowledged by migrants themselves as realistic in terms of depicting their situation and even included as a part of anti-racist education classes in Spain [Santaolalla, 2007, pp. 468–469]. What makes Alou special as a protagonist is the fact that he is not only the main character, but also the one empowered by having his own voice

and writing his own narrative in the form of titular letters (about whose content we learn by means of non-diegetic narration), which constitutes an exception in the Spanish migration-themed cinema [Ballesteros 2001, pp. 218–219].

Alou's subjectivity stands in sharp contrast to the total objectification of the migrant character in *Bwana* (1996) by Imanol Uribe based on a theatrical play *Dark Man's Gaze* (*La mirada del hombre oscuro*) by Ignacio del Moral [1992, 2005]. The playwright had been inspired by a press photograph of bodies of Africans washed ashore, who had drowned while attempting to reach Spanish shore [Castiello 2005, p. 51], yet the film adaptation of the play diverges from the said realistic take. A starting point for both the narratives is a family trip to collect some clams in one of the beaches of Almeria. The weekend idyll is interrupted by an encounter with a black man, who has apparently survived the boat crash. A significant shift of accent is observable already at the level of titling. The film in question does not concentrate upon "the dark man's gaze", referred to by Ignacio del Moral, but rather on the condition of the white man described by a Swahili word that means 'master' referring back to colonial categories and genre conventions related to them. Contrary to premises of the theatrical play, in the case of Uribe's film adaptation we are not provided the migrant perspective, who has been symbolically deprived of his own voice – the lines uttered by him prove incomprehensible not only to remaining characters, but even to the viewers, since they are not subtitled. What is more, the Spanish family do not do so much as to embark upon communication, and even though the foreigner emphatically presents himself as Ombasi (Emilio Buale), they refer to him impersonally as "black" (*negro*). Ombasi's objectification is also underscored by an instance of erotic phantasies of a white woman, in which the Negro appears as an object of glance and desire. As claimed by Isolina Ballesteros [2001, p. 223], we deal here with a "distorted vision of colonial encounters, where an African rather than a

European plays a role of the survivor, yet the stereotypes concerning the 'savage' remain all the same: infantilization, animalization, cannibalism, lack of personal hygiene, being uncivilized, and exotic behaviour". Even the eventual romanticizing of the migrant character, who appears to be standing in glaring opposite to the egoism and moral decay of the whites, does not lead to awarding him with a flesh-and-blood hero status. Ombasi nonetheless remains a cultural cliché of "the noble savage" and an innocent victim.

Staging this encounter, so filled with prejudice against the Other, on the shore of Andalusia, from where centuries before ships set off on their journey to conquer unchartered lands and "wild" tribes, seems to amplify the irony. Secluded and sandy beaches of Almeria turn out to be full of incomprehensive rules and hidden dangers. The portrait of white participants of this meeting in Uribe's film, at the same time, is no less exaggerated than the one of the dark-skinned migrant. An ignorant taxi driver sporting his apparent machismo, his ditzzy blond wife embodying the housewife stereotype, and their two children make up a caricature of Spanish family. As Ballesteros [2001, pp. 223–224] puts it, "an impression that we are watching a comic book-like, satirized family, as if they appeared in a joke, is reinforced by utilization of pop-cultural clichés, and by casting Andrés Pajares as the father – a comedian and actor popular in Spanish comedy since the seventies".

The said Spanish family is not in the least the only jeopardy awaiting the foreigner in the seaside scenery. Scriptwriters of *Bwana* included also a thread telling of a group of skinheads trying to hunt down illegal aliens. Uribe has emphasized that he wanted to contrast two types of racism that way, wherein the every-day, passive and ostensibly harmless type represented by the mentioned family is to eventually prove to be equally dangerous as the one motivated by violence and ideology [Castiello 2005, pp. 51–52]. In the end, however, hate-filled skinhead characters come out as equally trite as the all remaining ones.



*Tuna and chocolate* (*Atún y chocolate*, 2004) by Pablo Carbonell features the migrant stereotype played out in an entirely different way. The film in question shows life in a small town located in Barbate community and its title refers to the two most popular professions taken up by the town's inhabitants – fishing tuna and trading in hashish smuggled from Morocco, the latter dubbed “chocolate” in Spanish parlance. According to Carbonell, his intention was to make a film on social issues, but it could not have been sad, since the Barbate inhabitants are cheerful by nature [Gómez Pérez 2013, p. 229]. Therefore, the film's characters approach their financial difficulties daringly and with humour, and the director's gaze is filled with empathy and understanding. Ups and downs of their lives are depicted as bittersweet, drama transforms into comedy, and realism transfigures grotesquely, bringing to viewers' minds the *esperpento* esthetics, which puts distorted mirror to reality.

The very same convention is put to use in the film while the byplay of migration is narrated, balancing the stereotype and its negation. Also in *Tuna and chocolate* an African man is an individual arriving to and not already settled in Spain. In one of the scenes a group of homeless boys “patrol” the coast looking for crashed boats in hope of finding hashish. When one of them enthusiastically swims towards a colourful item of what supposed to be a bag and a chance at easy money, the item turns out to be a dead body. Equally calculated attitude to foreigners is exhibited by a grotesque character called El Cherife (Antonio Dechent). His desperate efforts to obtain hashish are in the end ridiculed, and his commonness and inability to speak a foreign language juxtaposed with refinement and academic education of a migrant. The latter has reached the shores of Andalusia carrying a diploma in philosophy and literature in his bag and a contraband consisting of hashish in his stomach. While the diploma lays worthless and unused under a bridge, right next to *Exodus* by Leon Uris, the hashish has a genuine market value in Spain. Eventually, however, it is scooped by El Cherife, who will go to any

lengths in order to obtain the valuable package, including rummaging through faeces.

Characteristic is the scene of the characters' initial encounter. One evening in one of the town's quaint streets, an enormous shadow appears on houses' white walls, which is accompanied by non-diegetic Arabian music. The director here satirizes oriental clichés and societal phobias, in his peculiar way alluding to intertextual motifs – the shadow of a migrant is nothing more than an ironic reference to the famous scene from *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (*Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens*, 1922, dir. Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau). The character who casts the said shadow appears to be a Moroccan man named Omar ("Biri" Mohamed Abbelatin). While escaping a police car – which patrols the town streets to the tune of romantic freedom-themed songs – the man meets El Cherife and asks him: "Is France this way or that way?" pointing at opposite street ends.

Carbonell's irony is meted out not only against the migration-related stereotypes, but undermines the scenes of his very film, too. Finally, despite the cross-cultural misunderstandings, Omar is given shelter by the main character, the good-natured Manuel (played by the director himself). In order to divert attention of coast guards from an instance of stealing tuna to be eaten during Manuel's wedding reception, the Moroccan suddenly appears in the sea and presents an overplayed impression of himself, once again asking about the best way to France.

A peculiar mixing of conventions and treating serious issues half-jokingly also pertains to meta-cinematic matters. The film concludes with a wedding ceremony – amongst the invited guests sits, wrapped with a blanket, grinning Omar, a priest catches a wedding bucket of the bride, prior to which he pours a bucket of water on her unbaptised son. During the wedding reception, which features tuna as a leading star, the characters pose for a photograph against the backdrop a screen typical for Andalusian cinematic theatres painted on a house wall,

under the naked sky. A dolly shot gradually reveals the film crew and their equipment, rendering the status of actors/characters blurred, and a family photograph transforms into a film-set photograph. Moreover, the Moroccan thread may also be read as a way of subverting the played-out conventions of depicting migrants – devoid of either political correctness or patronizing, cruel and funny at the same time, yet undoubtedly empathetic.

The motif of crossing the Strait of Gibraltar is also a recurring one in works of Valeriano López, especially renown for the project entitled *Top Raft* (*Top balsa*, 2007) combining photography, video and installation art. The creating process of *Top Raft* is also a subject of a short documentary under the same title. The word *top* appearing in both the titles, is an order ‘stop!’ and a clear reference to a Spanish phrase *top manta*, which signifies illegal street trading in products laid out on – usually rectangular – cloths which, thanks to strings hidden in their corners, may be conveniently rolled up and the traders are able storm off the scene when the police arrive. *Top manta* also featured in the film’s initial scene, where the director is chased by the police hand in hand with one of the characters of his story. The project is centred around the development process of a photograph stylized as the painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1819) by Théodore Géricault. What is at stake is, however, not an aestheticized fiddling with art quotations. The Géricault’s painting pertains to a history of a raft built by passengers of the French frigate *Méduse*, which sank in 1816 near the coast of Africa. The painter captures the very moment when a rescue ship looms on the horizon, the ship that eventually finds and rescues the survivors. The severe sentence received by the *Medusa*’s captain for forsaking the ship and her passengers, due to his ethnic origin was interpreted by the French public opinion as an attack on emigration. Géricault depicts the tragically ending sailing to Senegal, whereas López shows a sea journey in the opposite direction, to emigrants’ European promised

land. Contrary to the past event, this time no one rescues the *Top Raft* survivors. As emphasized by Juan-Ramón Barbancho [2011, pp. 88–89], the sphere of dreams and illusions is also evoked by CDs which are utilised as material for creating sea waves in the photograph in question. At the same time, those records refer to the bitter end to the dreams of illegal immigrants, who most frequently wound up making their living in Spain of selling pirate DVDs, at least that is what *top manta* consisted in when López's project was completed – today it is mostly trading in fake designer clothes.

In his earlier short film *Strait Adventure* (*Estrecho Adventure*, 1996), López also took aim at the topic of migration. The film's first part is a video game-stylized animation giving account of subsequent stages of emigration: from obtaining money for travel, through crossing the Strait of Gibraltar, to finding a job and eventual assimilation in Spain. The said convention, a non-interactive computer game is to remind us that the gamers are Moroccan children, and not the film's European audience. The inhabitants of Europe themselves are merely denoted by iconic tourist items that get off the coach in order to visit one of the imperial cities' medina quarters. In the maze of streets, the players' task is to steal several tourists' items and escape the local police. Not only the characters of tourists are treated with irony in the film, but this approach is also applied in the case of Spain's and Andalusia's symbols intertwined into a story of xenophobia and anti-migrant attitudes. The likeness of Hercules featured in the emblem of Andalusia, instead of docile lions, has two dangerous dogs at his sides that, along with a heavily-guntotting representative of Guardia Civil shield the entrance to Europe, and over their heads, in the place of original *Dominator Hercules Fundator* we may read a phrase *Non Plus Ultra* (No further beyond), which alludes to the motto of Spain featured in the country's emblem. Subsequent levels of cinematic video game, in addition, present the obstacles met by migrants in Andalusia, illegal work on plantations and

cultural differences. In the film's second part, the director does away with animation and focuses on young Moroccans, who have just left internet café having completed all the levels of the said game only to start a new one – this time in the real life.

Andalusia is often not so much a narrative location, as it is a stop before the further journey. The already mentioned migration tendencies reflect this. Apart from *Letters from Alou*, a good example of this type of narrative is *Saïd* (1999, dir. Llorenç Soler). The title character, having crossed the Strait of Gibraltar, set off for a journey from Almeria to Catalonia, and the latter region is where the lion's share of plot takes place. Stylistically, the film resembles documentaries due to the hand-held camera shots, ascetic narration, close attention to authenticity of details and language (Arabian spoken in the film is not merely ornamental in juxtaposition with dialogues in Spanish). His penchant for documentaries is underscored by the director pointing out that *Saïd's* plot is based on a true story, and the individuals acting it out originate from the Maghreb [Soler 2012, p. 219].

Another film that follows quasi-documentary convention is entitled *14 kilometres* (*14 kilómetros*, 2007) and directed by Gerard Olivares. It tells a story of emigrants whose itinerary this time is from Nigeria to the coast of Spain. However, whereas in *Saïd* the images of Andalusian coast are the narrative's starting point, in *14 kilometres* they make up the concluding section of their journey. In the final scene we can see a couple finally managing to reach Tarifa. A gentle seaside landscape and an empty beach on a cloudy day serve as a backdrop to the scene of protagonists' escape from the Spanish coast guard. Despite a coastguard'sman catching up with them, they are not taken into custody but instead the guard vanishes without a word allowing for a half-hearted happy ending to play out. For as audience we are already aware that what awaits the protagonist is a toil of finding their place in the new reality.

A film that, in turn, is focused on the situation of migrants immediately after their arrival in Andalusia is *36th Parallel* (*Paralelo 36*, 2006) by José Luis Tirado, filmed mainly at the seaport and on beaches of Tarifa. There was no coincidence in that choice. According to the film's end credits, only in 2003 as many as 25,000 migrants passed through the Strait of Gibraltar, of which 6,795 individuals were detained at the shores of Andalusia, of which a half in Tarifa. During the same year 115 dead migrants were found, which extends the number from the preceding year threefold.

No wonder that Tirado's documentary's stylistics brings to scholars' minds the subgenre of Direct Cinema [Deveny 2012, p. 66; Loska 2016, p. 280]. What is especially in line with the said current, is an attempt at capturing reality in a way as objective and as free of played-out narrative patterns as possible. This raw, realistic perspective is, however, enlivened by animations intertwined into the documentarist's gaze – a pair of shoes abandoned on the shore suddenly come to life and start wandering by themselves, a yellow truck drawn by a Moroccan teenager drives across black-and-white scenery of Andalusia. Through these narrative means the director depicts children's outlook on migration and translates into visual layer the tales told by the underage protagonists of his documentary. Utilizing such contradictive poetics of the film's particular fragments stresses the incommensurability of dramatic experiences and the young age of boys appearing in the film.

What may seem characteristic, *36th Parallel* hardly shows any cross-cultural encounters – the migrants are detained by coast guard, nonetheless, they have no contact whatsoever with day-to-day lives of Spaniards and tourists flocking to Andalusian beaches. The said contrast is reinforced by montage sequences which juxtapose, following the rule of visual counterpoint, clothes washed away by the sea and migrants' shoes with stores' displays where mannequins present the season's most in-vogue cuts. Beachgoers notice only from afar the

police cars chasing by, which does not disturb their careless vacations. Those takes resemble the famous series of photographs entitled *Death at the Gates of Paradise* (*Muerte a las puertas del paraíso*, 2000) by Javier Bauluz. In one of the photos the author captured a couple resting under a beach umbrella on Tarifa. The summertime idyll is made complete by beer cans and portable fridge. In the background lays a black man's corpse washed ashore by the sea. Another photograph of the series reverses the foreground/background relation – a close-up frames four coastguardsmen carrying a coffin, while in the background a couple wearing bathing suits enjoy a game of beach tennis. One thing, however, is striking in both the photographs – an invisible division line which facilitates the existence of the two worlds within the same space but does not allow them to meet. The parallel dividing Europe from Africa that provided the title of Tirado's documentary seems to perform a similar, symbolic function. Even after crossing the geographical border between the continents migrants remain separated from Europeans. Only a woman who smuggles a Moroccan boy in the truck driver's cabin manages to transgress the boundary of indifference and strangeness.

The migration-themed films do not only pertain to journey, and the culture clash situations do not exclusively relate to arrival of a stranger. Creators also undertake a thread of domesticated otherness, showing everyday life of illegal immigrants in Spain. The migrant characters in question become more and more pronounced when featured in cinematic images of Andalusia. *The Suit* (*El traje*, 2002) directed by Alberto Rodríguez seems to be the most relevant film narrative giving an account of mundane day-to-day life of a migrant. The origin of this picture has been reported by its director in the following words: "Day in, day out I noticed at the same crossing a Nigerian man selling newspapers. I imagined him wearing an expensive suit and suddenly he turned in some Denison or Jordan. Then I realized what was the situation of black people, on the one hand, they are symbols of modernity starring

in television advertisements, and on the other hand, impoverished Africans washed ashore by the sea” [Santaolalla 2005, p. 126].

Krzysztof Loska [2016, pp. 264, 278] has analysed the images of migration in Spanish cinema in the context of neo-racism phenomena that have been developing in Spain since the early 2000s, when the dramatically increased number of migrants started to influence the locals’ attitudes to strangers. Etienne Balibar [1991, pp. 23–24] points out that the very idea of “racism without races” occurred in the Iberian Peninsula much earlier – already in the period of *Reconquista*, or later persecutions of Jews during the Inquisition period, involved a culture-based forms of race discrimination. What is interesting, the ramifications of the said conflicts can be traced even today when we read some of the migration-themed films’ interpretations. Thomas G. Deveny [2012, p. 65], while describing the final scene of *West* (2002, dir. Chus Gutiérrez), notices a reference to “the reconquest” in a shot showing migrants leaving Andalusia after some acts of violence perpetrated by the locals. The moment when one of the protagonists is shown turning back in slow motion to look at what he leaves behind, is likened by the author with the Moor’s last sigh – alluding to popular yet historically unconfirmed legend, according to which Muhammad XII, the Moorish king of Granada known as Boabdil, upon leaving the city in 1492, was supposed to look back regretfully and weep [Echeverría 1814, p. 217]. The Moor’s Sigh (*El suspiro del moro*) was later called a mountain pass from which, during a journey to the south one may look at Granada one last time. This motif has been frequently utilized in culture and art. In the case of Gutiérrez’s film’s final scene, it is by no means the only interpretation. For instance, Linda Materna [2007, p. 67] associates this very scene with archival footages of Spaniards fleeing their homeland after the civil war (1936–1939). The shot of departing migrants also brings to our minds a television footage used in the film in which a strikingly similar sullen procession of African migrants fleeing a war



appears. Portraits of the persecuted exiled out of the place they wanted to belong to, are similar every time.

However, to go back to the issue of new racism, contemporarily it is said to be connected with colonization and migration of peoples out of former colonies. Ideologically, the new racist attitudes are not motivated by biological questions, but civilizational ones, namely, incompatibility of cultural traditions and lifestyles [Balibar 1991, p. 21]. These themes appear in both *Letters from Alou* and *West*, yet the most insightful in portraying the new racism seems to be *The Suit*. The portrait of a black Guinean named Patricio (Eugenio José Roca), who tries to make his living by washing cars in the streets of Seville, is not focused on race but on the economic reasons of social exclusion. The titular suit is here a status symbol and concurrently of superficiality of contemporary society. For it appears that the poor immigrant, when dressed in expensive attire, is treated quite differently. Shop attendants suddenly behave extremely politely, and an attractive girl allows him to ask her out, comparing him to an elegant Negro from a commercial. Also telling is the initial sequence, where the protagonist receives a suit in exchange for a wheel replacement in an expensive car of a rich young black man. The gap between the lifestyles of the both characters evokes only class and economic differences, and not the skin colour.

Santaolalla [2005, p. 125] classifies *The Suit* into the *buddy film* genre, that is, a film about male friendship. Yet, there are no chances whatsoever for this friendship to be stricken up between the owner of luxurious car and a window cleaner. Instead, a petty hustler and thief nicknamed Pan Con Queso (Cheese on Rye) becomes Patricio's friend, an almost picaresque character, played flawlessly by Manuel Morón. Giving us the account of this friendship, the director shows that the individuals residing in the margins of today's Spain are not only black migrants, but also destitute marginalized Spanish people. Even if the members of the former group remain in the country illegally, and

the latter were born with Spanish citizenship, it changes very little in their daily struggle for survival, the feeling of hopelessness, lack of perspectives and marginalization. By eliciting differences between the window cleaner and a dark-skinned star, the director underscores the commonality of experiences between Patricio and Pan Con Queso – even if the former, against all odds and stereotypes, and in opposite to the Andalusian petty criminal, turns out to be impeccably decent and the very idea of theft is revolting to him.

In the end, the Guinean's life is not transformed even by the title suit. All it does is create an intermittent, attractive façade, which does not translate into a permanent improvement of social status. In the film's finale the protagonists take aim with stones at a commercial banner featuring an elegant basketball player wearing a suit, whereas Patricio is filmed without the suit, but instead wearing a dirty, wrinkled shirt. His final disillusionment is accompanied by friendly solidarity and a surreal funeral ceremony arranged for a stuffed lion on the hills surrounding suburban housing estate consisting of blocks of flats. This scene ironically refers back to one of the film's earlier threads, namely, when Pan Con Queso finds a job as a watchman at a pet cemetery, where affluent city dwellers bury their pampered pets. The stuffed lion, that has fallen out of grace of their owners and wound up at the city's landfill, is rendered its last service by characters similarly excluded as the said animal, while non-diegetic music playing in the background constitutes a bitter-sweet counterpoint giving this film a closure.

Binding the discrimination experienced by migrants with their economic status appears also in *The Magic of Hope (El vuelo del tren, 2011)* by Paco Torres, even though in this case they are merely supporting characters, trying to survive in the streets, just as Spanish homeless. In majority of the cases we do not get a chance to learn about their individual fates, names, or nationalities. They are rather a part of multi-cultural crowd of the excluded. The society's attitude toward the arrivals in the

film is usually indifference, yet at times hostility – as it happens in a scene when racist slurs are addressed at a black guitar player. At the same time, the director romanticizes homeless people as always kind and helpful individuals. Language barrier is what often sustains between foreigners and the local have-nots, which nonetheless proves surmountable in the face of desire to communicate. A busker gives an African amulet to a poor man, who, in turn, provides help and care to a violated immigrant woman. Another noteworthy character is a black man who, dressed as Santa Claus gives away sweets pleading for donations for food. Later on, the same character, still wearing a Santa costume, hands as a Christmas gift a sandwich to a poor man sleeping on a pavement. The motif of Christmas is here an additional counterpoint to hunger and homelessness – when a man beats a pregnant girl, in the foreground we see Christmas decorations, and a beggar is not supported with a donation, yet he still wishes Merry Christmas to persons passing by.

However, questioning of the “me-the Other” dichotomy does not relate solely to migration depicted in the urban conditions. A perfect example here may be the already mentioned *West*, taking place on Andalusian tomato plantations. “The newcomers are always lost” says one of the migrants, while assisting Lucía (Cuca Escribano) in getting out of the maze covered with plastic overlay, when she is lost in her own homeland. The stranger here turns out to be a teacher from Madrid, despite the narrative taking place in her home region, and having been endowed by her father with a piece of land, she became an owner of plantation. As Lucia’s strangeness stems from the internal migration movements between provinces and the capital, in the same way a character by the name of Curro (José Coronado) is to remind us about foreign directions of Spanish emigration during the recent decades. This character, having spent years and years in Switzerland, is now treated in his homeland as the Other, too. There is no coincidence in the fact that it is Curro who befriends one of the immigrants working on the

plantation, and Lucía who demands their equal treatment, which finds no understanding from the town's inhabitants. Also, the love story between Curro and Lucía is a relationship of two strangers struggling to find their own place. An interesting aspect of the story is searching for a parallel in the fates of the excluded. In one of the scenes Curro plans with Adbembi (Farid Fatmi) to establish a kiosk with snacks on the beach, while knowing that neither of them is able to obtain a loan. When a Spaniard confesses to a friend: "You are happy to have roots", the friend replies: "My roots are your roots. We have the same ancestors. Spain for centuries was a country of Berbers". Dispersed around the world, Berbers have no state of their own, therefore, the said roots are also entangled into Curro's nomadic fate bringing to mind the words of lyrics concluding the film: "I have neither a homeland nor a baggage to call my own. I am from nowhere just like the sun". In this context, what catches our attention is the motif of amateur films from family archive. Saved from a fire by Curro, they move the audience deeply upon their screening bringing back memories of his émigré life in Switzerland filled with hardship. In the sequence of racial riots this motif returns, yet this time we can see scattered film reels and a destroyed film projector in the protagonist's vandalized home. For the perpetrators of violence, the Spanish migration history appears to be equally inconvenient as the Arabian past of the region. The tragic parallel is also created by Gutiérrez when painting a portrait of the riots' instigator who, by setting fire to Lucía's plantation and blaming migrants for it, unbeknownst to himself causes the death of his own son.

The real-life inspiration for the film where the events that took place in El Ejido, Almeria province [Materna 2007, p. 67]. In the year 2000, after the murder of a young Spanish woman by a mentally ill Moroccan man, racially-motivated attacks and riots occurred during which a local mosque was burned to the ground, along with restaurants, and some immigrants' households [Constenla: 2000]. Gutiérrez does

not attempt to re-enact the story faithfully, in order to allow her film's message to be universal [Torres Hortelano 2008, p. 196]. Concurrently, the director "avoids simplifying outlook, pointing out to cultural differences dividing the two groups of mercenaries: on the one side Moroccans who have been arriving to Spain for years, on the other side dark-skinned dwellers of sub-Saharan Africa. The only thing they share is being an object of the locals' aversion" [Loska 2016, p. 266]. Subsequent boats reaching the shore are commented upon by the town's inhabitants as an "invasion". Also, an idea is voiced that workers from Africa should be replaced with Latinos who at least "speak Christianese" (*hablan en cristiano*). This phrase, which is also uttered in *Letters from Alou*, refers back to Francoist rhetoric pertaining to the Spanish language and is imbued with strongly discriminatory, imperial character. At the same time, the idea of hiring workers from the closer cultural sphere refers to a genuine campaign, implemented in Spain in the years 2001-2002 [Rosado, Lara 2019, pp. 64-65].

*West* is additionally a story about dreams and disillusionment. In an interesting way, the said theme appears already in the opening sequence. A blurry landscape reminding of a paradisiacal beach with blue sky, golden sand, and azure sea, after sharpening the image, appears to be a colourful mock-up. Two boys pull it on a trolley through an ugly cement street, entirely incompatible with popular image of Andalusia. Also, the first shot of genuine landscape is filled with illusion – what seems to be the sea, in a close-up turns out to be a glossy piece of plastic covering endless crops. This peculiar disillusionment of landscape may be read both as a counterpoint to stereotypical images of the region, but also in the context of migration theme. The European Dream driving protagonists to crossing the sea is promptly dispersed, and they are coerced into leaving by violence.

The theme of migration is undertaken also in Gutiérrez's later film *Return to Hansala* (*Retorno a Hansala*, 2008). Her inspiration was in

this case again a real-life event – this time a press coverage of migrants-filled boat sinking near Tarifa showing the role of cloths in identifying the victims [Gómez Pérez 2013, p. 323]. Direct reference to the realities of migration can be also found in the end credits, where negatives of photographs along with press headlines and dramatic numbers of the drowned, lost, and detained individuals were utilized. The last thing we hear in the film is the monotonous sound of waves. It makes up a kind of framing device together with the opening sequence that, in turn, depicts the most dramatic scene of passage through the Strait of Gibraltar to be filmed in Spanish cinema. The impact of this sequence resides especially in subjectivization of shots – the hand-held camera does not expose the drowning protagonist, but instead shows waves flooding the screen. We can hear a person panting, coming up for air, and the noise of sea increasingly rumbling. The wavering horizon line eventually disappears. For a short while, the sun rays still filter through water, only to be replaced by muddy, dirty-green bottom. The consecutive sequences, that utilize parallel editing, alternate between everyday life of Leila (Farah Hamed), a Moroccan young woman settled in Spain, and Martín (José Luis García Pérez), whose work involves identifying and burying of dead bodies washed ashore. The drowning of the girl's brother will lead to the protagonists' shared journey to the titular Moroccan Hansala.

An interesting leitmotif of the film are the victims' clothes. Drying on clotheslines on the Spanish side of the Strait, they seem anonymous and insignificant. Taken back to Morocco, they become a part of particular stories, bringing about the emotions and empathy, despite the strongly emphasized cultural differences and language barriers. The final shot of the film shows the landscape of the Strait of Gibraltar. Through the fog we can see Africa, and in the foreground the shore of Andalusia. A ship on the sea between the two lands, and the two protagonists against the background composed of the sea, Africa, and Europe, which

is accompanied by reflection on paradoxes regarding proximity, what is near and what is remote.

Alou stubbornly crossing the sea, Patricio washing cars in the streets of Seville, Leila wanting to bury her brother in their home Morocco, or Adbembi dreaming of opening his own snack kiosk – these are only a few of the selected migrant portraits in Spanish cinema. Film scholars – who have been undertaking research within this scope especially from the early 2000s – concentrate also on Latin American migration images [Janecki 2011], with some fragments devoted to threads referring to Asia and eastern Europe [Santaolalla 2005, pp. 146–156]. However, their research concern films whose plot takes place in other regions of Spain. A separate issue is the representation of migration of Spanish nationals, both from rural to urban areas of Spain and into countries of western Europe [Caparrós Lera 2012]. It is worth emphasizing that, against this backdrop, the films depicting African migrations condemn the intolerance in the Spanish society especially strongly. Almost all of the migration narratives contest the stereotypical images of the Other, but in case of Africans they turn out to be deeply rooted, and so they prevent any optimistic conclusion of the stories.

During the year 2018 the largest number of migrants ever arrived in Spain. As many as 64,120 crossed the southern border – mainly by the sea, reaching Andalusia, the Canary Islands, and Balearic Islands, but also by land, crossing the border in Ceuta and Melilla. It means that the number of inflowing migrants, in comparison to the year 2017, increased twofold, and when compared with 2016 – quadrupled [Rosado, Lara 2019, pp. 101–102]. At the same time, 2018 has been the most tragic year for over a half of decade in terms of victims – according to the official statistics, probably underestimated, 1,164 human beings lost their lives while trying to enter Spain [Rosado, Lara 2019, p. 155]. It is to be expected, then, that in Spanish cinema new images of this not only topical, but also growing phenomena, shall appear. Probably, with

the lapse of enough time, migrant directors will undertake this subject, too, thereby filling the often mentioned gap, namely – the lack of stories told with “their own voice”. There is also a chance of some shifts in social attitudes, that are so carefully scrutinised by the contemporary filmmakers and that find their reflection in the discussed narratives. For now, however, like Alou and the pair of lovers in *14 kilometres* – the migration-themed cinema is still on its way to the happy ending.

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