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7

From Franco's Nightmare to a Globalized Spain: A Cinematic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Spain has had a long history of determining its own identity through successive regime changes, national crises and shifting international alliances. With *Las Chicas de la Sexta Planta* (Le Guay, 2011), *Torremolinos 73* (Berger, 2003), *Miente* (De Ocampo, 2008) and *The Way* (Estévez, 2010) as a guide, I examine the distinctive characteristics of Spanish identity across three notable sections of its history: Francoist Spain (1939–1975), “free” Spain (1975–1986), and Spain as a member of the supranational European Union (EU) (1986–), or the European Economic Community (EEC) at that time. These films and time periods help to shed light on important changes of Spanish opinion/behavior towards Europe and vice versa. Finally, I analyze some of the observable results, both good and bad, of European unification (Europeanization) in modern Spain, and conclude that while the Spanish cultural landscape has become much more open through Europeanization, it has also experienced negative repercussions like a rise of xenophobic/nationalist sentiments surrounding the European identity and the concerning activity of cross-border human trafficking.

KEYWORDS

Spain, Spanish identity, Francoism, Europeanization, human trafficking

1. INTRODUCTION

Spain has had a long history of determining its own identity through successive regime changes, national crises and shifting international alliances. With *Las Chicas de la Sexta Planta* (Le Guay, 2011), *Torremolinos 73* (Berger, 2003), *Miente* (De Ocampo, 2008) and *The Way* (Estévez, 2010) as a guide, I examine the distinctive characteristics of Spanish culture and identity across three notable sections of its history: Francoist Spain (1939–1975), “free” Spain (1975–1986), and Spain as a member of the supranational European Union (EU) (1986–), or the European Economic Community (EEC) at that time. These films and time periods help to shed light on important changes of Spanish opinion/behavior towards Europe and vice versa. Finally, I analyze some of the observable results, both good and bad, of European unification (Europeanization) in modern Spain. Ultimately, I conclude that while the Spanish cultural landscape has become much more open through Europeanization and the free movement of goods, people and services throughout most of the continent, the country has also experienced some negative repercussions like a rise of xenophobic/nationalist sentiments surrounding the European identity and the concerning activity of cross-border human trafficking.

2. THEMATIC TIMELINE THROUGH FILM

Each one of the selected movies traces primary themes through the timeline of Spanish development from Francisco Franco’s infamous dictatorship to the present time. With their creative characters and plots, these movies contribute to a political and social reality experienced in their respective years. *Las Chicas de la Sexta Planta* (henceforth, *Las Chicas*; Le Guay, 2011) is a French film that takes place in Paris in the 1970s with principal characters Maria, Conchita, Carmen, Dolores, Jean-Louis and Suzanne. Jean-Louis and Suzanne are a wealthy French couple who employ Maria as their household servant. Maria and the other women on the list of characters are Spanish immigrants who live above the couple in the servants’ quarters on the sixth floor (*sexta planta*) in very poor conditions. There they experience classic socioeconomic class tensions while also confronting stereotypes associated with Spaniards: bullfighting, flamenco, paella, and being perceived as loud, unhygienic, and overly sexual. Although the women and Jean-Louis, a Frenchman of high status, eventually become friends, their initial wariness towards each other represents the same attitudes that Spain and France had towards each other at this time. Jean-Louis and Maria eventually establish a strong connection and finally a romantic affair because of Jean-Louis’s openness to learning the Spanish language and culture, as well as using his means to help the Spanish women. While the movie mostly employs a comedic approach, it gives an appropriate glimpse of the real experiences of Spanish immigrants in Europe (France, specifically) during the Franco regime and before globalization within the EU: nationalist inclinations/protection from the “outsider” as a result of Franco’s propagandist agenda but with a slow and positive shift toward the acceptance of European neighbors that will eventually result in a push for a united Europe. Moreover, for the purpose of this investigation, the film helps us explore the question of how Spaniards were treated/seen outside of Spain in the final years of Franco’s reign and if that situation compares with present conditions.

Next in order is *Torremolinos 73* (Berger, 2003). It takes place in 1973 Spain with a strong Scandinavian influence on ideas and characters. Alfredo and Carmen López are an average couple who are trying to start a family when they unexpectedly become part of a pornographic cinema project for the Institute of Sexology in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Similar to *Las Chicas*, this movie shows Franco's weakening impact in the final years of his dictatorship, where Spaniards are becoming more curious about European ideas that were previously restricted in the fascist, conservative Spain. Alfredo and Carmen's sexual liberation and exploration is, therefore, a signal of acceptance towards European ideas/influence, as well as working with other Europeans (Scandinavian pornography experts, in this case) who would usually be cautiously regarded as cultural and linguistic "others." It is important to show, however, that other supporting characters that decline to be a part of the scientific study are representatives of the still-present traditional and conservative thought that was promoted in Francoist Spain through the decades, demonstrating that there were factions of Spaniards that saw Spain's future going vastly different directions. But with the death of Franco shortly after in 1975, the destiny of Spain aligned more closely with the attitudes displayed by Alfredo and Carmen. Just like *Las Chicas* but switched, *Torremolinos 73* explores questions of Spanish opinion towards outsiders in Spain at this time.

Finally on the timeline is *The Way* (Estévez, 2010) and the short film *Miente* (De Ocampo, 2008). Both films happen in post-Franco and post-EU accession Spain, but they present very different themes. *The Way* is the emotional, fun and inspiring story of Dr. Tom Avery who takes the pilgrimage from St. Jean Pied-du-Port, France to Santiago de Compostela, Spain along El Camino after his only child dies during his own pilgrimage. On the journey he is periodically joined by fellow travelers Sarah, a Canadian woman, Jost from Holland, and the Irish writer Jack. The latter two are able to freely travel through Europe because of their EU citizenship status. The film and the actual path through southern France and northern Spain represent the beauty of open borders and shared culture between Europeans, where all are free to experience religious, gastronomic and other cultural differences of their neighbors because of Europeanization. In the previous films, the characters' precaution towards outsiders is very different; *The Way* shows a celebration of travel and "otherness" that challenges national stereotypes of many Europeans, with the exception of a slight tension between nationals perhaps as a result of increased contact and deep-rooted historical disagreements. For a realistic investigation, on the other hand, *Miente* (De Ocampo, 2008) provides a brief view into one of the dark sides of globalization: human trafficking. It tells the story of a young Romanian named Doina, a victim of human trafficking that has ended up in Spain. Her abusive relationship with her trafficker gives a glimpse into the dangerous situation that many trafficking victims face when they are sold in Europe with relative ease because of the open borders throughout most of the EU. The short film also shows how someone, in this case Doina's younger sister, can be trafficked into the system without knowing it. Fortunately, Doina is able to warn her sister/family and she herself is saved at the end of the film in a police raid. As a pair, *The Way* and *Miente* respond to questions about the results of globalization, both positive and negative, in Spain as part of the EU and complete the historical analysis timeline for this paper.

3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

3.1. FRANCO IN EUROPE

In Spanish and European history books, Francisco Franco is one of the most notorious villains. He is the infamous *caudillo*, or military leader, who took power following the victory of the *nacionalistas* in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). Under Franco, Spain became very closed off from its neighbors and focused on curating its own national Spanish identity. Really the only meaningful interactions that Spain had with Europe during the Civil War

and the Franco regime was with other fascist regimes: Adolf Hitler's in Germany and Benito Mussolini's in Italy, and when these regimes fell during World War II, it left Franco's Spain without any allies (Díaz-Plaja & Cressey, 1997). The Spanish identity that was promoted by the dictator was very traditional in the sense that it expected "good" Spaniards to be devout Catholics who maintained a patriarchal family structure/stereotypical gender roles, produced and raised children to supply the depleted armed forces, and loved Spain unequivocally. These ideals did not leave much space for untraditional non-Spaniards and therefore Spain did not receive a lot of visitors under Franco (at least for the majority of his regime), nor did scarred Spaniards necessarily want outsiders in their country while they rebuilt from a devastating civil war and tried to survive a dictatorship. In fact, not only did Spain experience little immigration under Franco, it actually saw a major diaspora or *la retirada* as Spaniards opposed to Francoism fled the country to neighboring states (like Maria in *Las Chicas*), the U.S and Latin America (Valero-Matas et al., 2010).

Around the final decade under his command, Franco seemed to ease the tensions and started to promote tourism within Spain to help its weak economy. He even applied for Spain to join the European Community (EC) in 1962, but was unanimously denied because of ideological objections to Franco's fascist dictatorship. Nevertheless, the tourist campaign was very successful but also very reluctant and calculated because Franco did not want foreign customs to entirely erode the national, conservative Spanish identity that he enforced throughout his rule; a small example was the introduction of the bikini to Spanish beaches in 1953 (first in Benidorm), something very scandalous at that time (Lal, 2018). Thus, although there was a rise in tourism to Spain, there was still a population of traditionalists that approached other Europeans with heightened caution. However, it should be noted that this cautious sentiment was mutual between Spain and France, as seen in *Las Chicas*. Before she grows closer to him, Carmen has many doubts about trusting Jean-Louis's kindness: in one scene, she recalls her familial history during the Spanish Civil War in which her parents were killed by Franco's men and their bodies were dragged through the streets (Le Guay, 2011, 30:44-31:09). This is to say that she is a strong woman who is not naive enough to trust someone from the French upper class, just as she will never trust someone like Franco who has proven to cause grief and pain. It is especially important to emphasize this apprehensive experience that Spaniards had in France because France, although stereotypically considered rude and self-interested, was one of the first proponents of a united Europe (starting with the European Coal and Steel Community between France and West Germany in 1951). Although France's President around that time, Charles de Gaulle, supported European unification, he imagined it with an intergovernmental character, not a supranational one where states would have to give up part of their sovereignty for the sake of a strong European entity. In other words, he wanted to conserve France's power while simultaneously associating with other European states for economic and peace-keeping benefits. Despite his diplomatic motives, Jean-Louis's kids are taught in school that "de Gaulle is a degenerate who betrayed France, lost Algeria" and that he is a "dictator and a tyrant" (Le Guay, 2011, 36:24-36:47). These comments, along with the "screw Franco" remark (or rather, screw Spain), are used to explain a common sentiment that circulated around France during this initial period of globalization that feared sacrificing French power/sovereignty to the "others." This is the sentiment that the Spanish maids have to confront while living in Paris and also why the French society women are apprehensive about hiring Spanish help in the first place in *Las Chicas* – because they represent the "other."

3.2. THE END OF FRANCOISM

On the other hand, *Torremolinos 73* takes place in the final years before Franco's death in 1975 and demonstrates the changing attitudes around a previously taboo subject: sex. While a lot of the traditional, conservative, Catholic Spaniards in the film initially reject the idea of creating pornographic videos (a stereotypically *European* idea for the seemingly liberal and nonchalant attitude towards sex), the main couple fully accepts the idea of sexual liberation and expression. Although they do receive financial compensation for their work, Alfredo and Carmen's openness to sex and their interactions with the Danish couple who teaches them film techniques, show that they are inherently more open than their conservative acquaintances who scoff at the idea of even talking about their sex lives, let alone filming it or having Scandinavian adult film stars teach them anything. Alfredo and Carmen on the other hand share a silly and excited glance during the introductory presentation for Dr. Johansen's audiovisual sex encyclopedia from the Institute of Sexology in Copenhagen. In this, they represent a small celebration of a once-repressed sexual identity as well as the prospect of a more European identity in the final years of Franco's dictatorship and in the future. Both films, *Las Chicas* and *Torremolinos 73*, show that opinions were changing in regard to Europe throughout the Franco dictatorship, which was made abundantly evident after his death and the subsequent transition to democracy.

The decade between Franco's death and Spain's accession to the EU was filled with many extraordinary changes to the Spanish way of life. Politically, Spain became a practicing democracy with the first free election that made Adolfo Suárez the first Prime Minister after nearly forty years of dictatorship on the peninsula. Devastated by years of extreme-right authoritarianism, Spanish voters in their first election chose the center: a heterogeneous collection of liberals, Christian-democrats, repentant Falangists and Juanista monarchists that was called The Union of the Democratic Center (UCD), leaving aside the extreme right and extreme left (Díaz-Plaja & Cressey, 1997). Despite the middle-ground coalition government, post-Franco Spain exploded with celebrations of everything that was once prohibited under the caudillo, a period that has come to be known as *la movida madrileña*: rejecting heteronormative behaviors/identities, sexual liberation, political competition, open discussions about ideological differences, and free artistic expression, to name just a few. In terms of immigration, incoming populations only increased slightly in this decade, probably as a result of its transitioning landscape which could have made it less desirable than other, more stable European countries (Valero-Matas et al., 2010). The economic growth during this period was evident and although it might have started under Franco, it became even stronger in the democratic transition to an open market economy. The economic gap between Spain and other large European countries still existed at this point, but it was growing smaller. The Seventies definitively showed that Spain wanted to cultivate and celebrate their post-Franco identity and applied to join the EEC in 1977 as a move towards globalization by allying itself with the continent that it had mutually ignored for so long.

4. SPAIN IN THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (EEC)

4.1. POSITIVES: EASE OF TRAVEL AND ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES

After a long process of accession, Spain finally joined the EEC with Greece and Portugal in 1986. The benefits to EEC membership meant that Spain became part of the economic union in 1986, the political union in 1992 when the EEC transformed into the EU, and the monetary union (the eurozone) after Spain was one of the first members to adopt

the euro in 1999. The advantages of the economic and political union were the first and easiest to see. These benefits included the free trade of products and services without tariffs or non-tariff trade barriers (for example, a national law that impedes the sale of another country's wine in its markets because of its alcohol content level) and the free movement of people across national borders. The film *The Way* beautifully displays Spain's new connection with its fellow Europeans through various experiences on the religious pilgrimage known as El Camino de Santiago. For example, Tom and Jost take a break at an outdoor cafe in Navarra to eat, and it is there that they learn that "tapas" (appetizers, small plates) is not used in that region but rather "pinchos" (Estévez, 2010, 44:53-46:00). This granular example is one of many that demonstrates the exchange of culture and knowledge among EU citizens through travel, slowly disrupting possibly negative preconceived ideas or uncertainties of European neighbors. Additionally, a Dutch traveler like Jost can explore and enjoy the beautiful aspects of Spanish culture because of Spain and the Netherlands' shared membership in the EU. Europeans from many different countries walk together, or alone but still respectful of other pilgrims, across national borders while enjoying the history and freedom of this pilgrimage to the city of Santiago de Compostela in Northeastern Spain.

On the economic front, European integration has allowed Spain to achieve countless successes that never would have seemed possible forty years before. The Spanish economy has seen its fair share of challenges, but in the years of preparation before and the years after EU accession, the economy experienced many notable improvements. Despite the advances during the "Spanish miracle" years between 1959 and 1974, the Spanish economy still lagged behind many other Western European markets (Solsten et al., 1990). But about halfway through the Eighties, Spain "experienced a growth rate and a level of foreign capital investment that were the highest in Europe. Budget deficits were reduced, inflation was lowered, foreign currency reserves were greatly increased, private enterprise enjoyed record profits, and consumer spending grew" (Solsten et al., 1990). This progress was useful in the transition to the EEC, where an open European market with foreign investments, a rise in tourism, and a lack of trade barriers all boosted Spanish modernization. The economy as a whole experienced great improvements, though there were obvious regional discrepancies throughout Spain, as well as a growing economic gap between Northern and Southern European states (Dinan 1999, 373-87). Fortunately, the EU undertook many initiatives to close these gaps with regional development and cohesion funds, money that could be used to maintain historic paths like El Camino that is seen in *The Way*, as well as many other infrastructure projects for example. These developmental initiatives mostly ended with the 2008 global economic crisis and the subsequent 2009 European debt crisis, in which Spain was one of the derogatory "PIGS" (Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain), whose governments could not repay nor refinance its public debt and bail out its national banks. These issues placed a heavy burden on other EU states that had to help in their fellow member states' economic recovery so as not to tank the whole EU economic system. However, despite its recent precarious situation, the Spanish economy unquestionably benefited from integration within the EEC/EU. If it had not experienced such progress years ago, then it perhaps could have been much worse off today after major [global] economic downturns.

Another positive result from Europeanization is the ease of migration throughout Europe. The motivations for emigrating are varied: work, education, and political or religious persecution, to name a few. This relatively unrestricted movement can be seen in the recent migratory route from Romania to Spain after Romania joined the EU in 2007 which

enabled Romanians “to acquire the status of European citizens and the right of residence, followed by the full opening of the labor market in 2009” (Bygnes & Flipo, 2017, 202). Currently, Spain’s growing economy and demand for labor benefit from the “soft borders” within the EU—now as a destination country. Work-related travel in the EU’s labor market can be seen (in part) through the character of Jack: Jack, the neurotic writer from Ireland, is able to travel freely through France and Spain on El Camino to cure his writer’s block (Estévez, 2010, 52:35–56:47). Although he is not traditionally employed within the EU labor market, he demonstrates the basic framework for *how* an EU citizen could travel in search of employment given the open borders. Without the Schengen Area, the 26 countries that have abolished their border controls along their internal shared borders, Jack and more realistic employment-seekers would greatly struggle to find unique opportunities and in that, *The Way* shows a strong benefit of European unification.

4.2. DRAWBACKS: LEGAL ISSUES, EUROSCEPTICISM, IDENTITY COMPLICATIONS

While European integration has brought many benefits to Spain, the unavoidable drawbacks started to become evident after some time. Although the EU prides itself on the free movement of people and the ease of travel as discussed above, this same feature can make it easier for human traffickers to conduct their business across national borders. Although the EU showed progress on tackling the issue in its 2011 Directive, there is still room for error in coordination between member states that could ultimately fail in fully protecting victims of forced movement and let perpetrators off scot-free. The Directive for “the short-term residence permit issued to victims of action to facilitate illegal immigration or trafficking in human beings who co-operate with the competent authorities” is mostly unchanged from the previous policy (Chou, 2008, 76–80). However, the current policy seems to offer more commitment to this system while still maintaining the same ambiguity of implementation. This ambiguity in language like “national monitoring systems such as national rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms should be established by Member States, in the way in which they consider appropriate according to their internal organization” as well as the initiative of providing an *appropriate* amount of assistance to victims of trafficking can be interpreted and implemented at the national level in many different ways, leaving the whole mechanism for combating human trafficking systems and protecting victims unreliable (EU Parliament and Council, 2011). This difficulty in establishing an all-encompassing policy to fight the major human rights issue of human trafficking is understandably difficult at the national level, but with the added layer of a supranational organization like the EU, the task becomes even more monumental. Human trafficking unfourtantly seems unavoidable in modern Europe (and the rest of the world) and is made that much easier by the open borders throughout the EU/Schengen Area, which demonstrates not only the perpetuation of the issue through a major EU practice, but the complication in resolving that issue as well.

As mentioned earlier, the migration route between Romania and Spain is relatively new and brings an increasing number of Romanians to Spain. A not insignificant number of these migrants, however, are forced to move through known human trafficking routes, as seen through the short film *Miente* (De Ocampo, 2008). As one author explains, “Romania’s location at the crossroads of Northern, Eastern, and Western Europe, as well as its 2007 integration into the EU and its prospective 2010 inclusion into the Schengen space, the country occupies a key position along the Balkan route of illegal migration” (Vreja, 2007, 30–1) and additionally their large, poor population does not help the country’s situation as a country of origin for enslavement/trade (33). This is the same issue presented in *Miente*: a working

class/working poor family in Romania with daughters that are vulnerable to human traffickers who will forcibly bring them to Spain. It is essentially the older sister, Doina, that saves her younger sister from being kidnapped into the human slave/sex trade and calls for help for herself, not the protection of the law or the Spanish/European authorities. The authorities eventually intervene, but only after Doina is seriously injured (De Ocampo, 2008, 11:37-12:35). This short film, although only about 15 minutes, accurately describes the experience of a young person who has been trafficking into this system from Romania to Spain, with little help from the EU's supposed comprehensive policy to combat human trafficking.

Another negative result from Europeanization is the recent resurgence of xenophobic and nationalist sentiments. Unlike the question of weak protection for human trafficking victims, this problem seems intrinsically related to the fundamental nature of the EU and therefore does not offer an easy solution. The fear of "others" and nationalist resurgence are almost unquestionably reactions to a growing supranational EU, where member states are expected to relinquish some of their national sovereignty to the EU. This is the only way in which the EU can enforce its initiatives because each member state has agreed to hand over some of its authority to the EU's highest power when they first join. This balance of power assumedly creates a sort of identity crisis, especially when the EU was first approved and all Spaniards, Germans, Italians (etc.) woke up one morning as "Europeans" as their highest, all-encompassing political identification. This is not to say that Spaniards or Spain's national government is opposed to the EU, because Spain is actually one of the most fervent supporters of its European association (Wike et al., 2019). Instead, this is meant to acknowledge the Eurosceptic and nationalist political movements that are making their way around Europe, and to which Spain has not been immune with its own right-wing, nationalist, conservative Vox party, among others.

This additional identity through the EU, which some citizens across Europe (namely Denmark and France according to their narrow approvals of the Maastricht Treaty) viewed apprehensively (European Council, 2017), complicated an ongoing problem in Spain: many autonomous regions like Catalonia and the Basque Country (País Vasco) have been fighting for their independence from Spain. Because these regions do not see themselves primarily as "Spaniards," their European identities through Spain's EU membership are complicated as well. The case of the Basque Country is unique. It is relevant to the conversation of cross-border activity/attitude because it extends to France in the *Pays basque français*. The region never fully supported French or Spanish national laws and institutions in the 19th and part of the 20th century, but was only granted autonomy in 1978 after Franco's death. Since then, Basque nationalism has "succeeded in penetrating civil society across the whole of the Basque Country" with a "secularization of Basque identity, so that those who feel Basque are presently less religious and more liberal on social issues" (Bray & Keating, 2013, 134). The El Camino route in *The Way* travels directly through Basque Country and the pride in the residents' Basque identity is evident in many conversations. To name one, the innkeeper at La Posada, where Tom first crosses from France into Spain, assures him that he is not just in Spain, but in "España vasca" (Estévez, 2010, 23:49-24:26). It seems that attitudes towards European integration could be complicated in situations like this in which we deal with complex, hybrid identities. It might be difficult to support a political, global identity like "European" when the basic needs of local ethnic and linguistic identities are not recognized. Again, this is not to say that the Basque Country is against Europeanization/globalization, but that there are different levels of identity (local/regional, national, continental) that com-

plicate the question and efficacy of Europeanization efforts. In reality, despite the Basque Country's own independence movements, it is probably one of the areas with the highest support for EU implementations like soft borders since its history spans the modern borders of Spain and France. Europeanization in this region would actually help connect the Basque people on both sides of the Pyrenees, allowing them to easily work, travel and live with their French/Spanish counterparts. On the other hand, other regions that have not had much experience with external contact *could* be more hesitant in welcoming Europeanization; this has perhaps led to increased Euroscepticism and xenophobic tendencies, as some groups may feel that their identities are being sacrificed for the good of the EU and foreign politicians' interests.

These recent trends of Euroscepticism, nationalism, and xenophobia that are seen not only in Spain but throughout Europe may be better explained as a resurgence of old ideas, rather than new phenomena. In Spain, many of the xenophobic, Eurosceptic and nationalist attitudes undoubtedly date back to Franco's dictatorship. Some of these ideas go back even further in history and were perhaps rejuvenated by modern Europeanization after World War II when the plan for a united Europe was foremost on the agenda. For an example of national tensions that stem further back in Spain's history, *The Way* presents a heated discussion between the Spanish owner of a hostel and one of the French pilgrims staying there on his journey. The two disagree about the death of one of King Charlemagne's military leaders, Roland, on the border between the two countries; the Frenchman claims that Roland died from a ruthless Basque ambush in what is now Spain, while the Spaniard argues that Roland's death was the result of Charlemagne's arrogant campaign to expand his empire and torture the Basques in Pamplona (Estévez, 2010, 33:15–34:10). Additionally, *The Way* tackles the unfavorable reputation of Roma/Gypsies in Europe as filthy thieves and liars. While challenging this reputation with a festive celebration scene between the Roma people, Dr. Avery and his European traveling companions, as well as an emotional appeal to the Roma sense of honor and family (Estévez, 2010, 1:27:30–1:32:48), the film helps demonstrate the historical disconnect between a single misunderstood European group [Roma] and the whole of Europe.

Torremolinos 73 and *Las Chicas*, although taking place in older decades, demonstrate similar ideas of national protection and a fear of foreign people/ideas that were imposed under Franco but have returned to common political discourse in the present day. While sexual expression and pornographic films are no longer an extremely taboo subject as they were in *Torremolinos 73*, Europeans in the EU still continue to debate the national laws and norms of "others." These differences are more than national disagreements because of the added pressure of being in a political union where most laws need to be in agreement in order to effectively promote European values, though those values are often viewed differently across the Union. *Las Chicas* also helps demonstrate this resurgence of [negative] attitudes in the sense that it takes place in the 1960s but was created in 2011. Despite the happy ending with the romantic reunion of French Jean-Louis and Spanish Maria and the film's comedic approach, it passively perpetuates old stereotypes to a modern audience by not denying them outright. With some exceptions, it is a movie full of banal stereotypes that do not do much to move away from the terrible reality that Spanish migrants have suffered in France (Suñer, 2017). Some of these stereotypes are present in the party scene where a French server becomes infatuated with Maria because he "ama España" ["loves Spain"], can bullfight, knows flamenco and enjoys paella. It also reestablishes the objectification of the Spanish woman/

body as an exotic and sexual being (Le Guay, 2011, 50:53–56:06). These subtle returns to outdated thinking are perhaps best hypothesized as the result of greater contact between Spain and the rest of Europe after EU accession, although greater contact more often creates increasingly progressive ideas towards “others.” Thus, although both films take place in the second half of the twentieth century, their themes have experienced a resurgence in the twenty-first century and have helped identify some of the current issues within Spain and the EU today.

5. COUNTER CLAIMS

Although these issues seem specific to Spain due to the location of the films, the negative trends that have resulted from Europeanization are evident throughout the continent, not just on the Iberian Peninsula. As seen through *Las Chicas*, which premiered in 2011, there are still negative ideas about neighboring states that remain or have returned since the project of uniting Europe began. The recent film did little to diminish the stigma of being an “other” (specifically a Spanish woman) in France, as it perpetuates stereotypes for the sake of the comedic effect; for example, there is no denial of the assumption that Spanish women are carefree, obedient, noisy, and sexy while the female characters dance, sing and clean the house to the song “Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini” (Le Guay, 2011, 15:30–16:05). Moreover, the same xenophobia and nationalism/Euroscepticism can be seen in political parties in almost every country in the Union. Fidesz in Hungary, for example, which has run the country since 2003, promotes Hungarian nationalism and discredits the EU for corrupting its identity and values with unwanted immigration among others. There was also an obvious wave of Euroscepticism within the Brexit debates and subsequent vote in which the UK elected to leave the EU as it no longer believed in the practices and benefits of the supranational organization. Movements that promote the protection of national values from “outsiders” and question the EU have gained momentum in Italy, Poland, France, and other European states as well. While Spain’s historically strong commitment to the EU is not in jeopardy, like every other country it has pockets of citizens that disagree with the pro-EU agenda. Considering Spain’s complicated history of associating (or *not*) with its European identity, its present unwavering support of European unification in the face of rising Euroscepticism, xenophobia and nationalism at home and in neighboring states is rendered even more impressive and encouraging for the future of Europe. Europeanization in Spain and elsewhere *has* problems, but it is not *the* problem.

6. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Given all of these historical factors, it is clear that Spain has undergone many drastic changes in its recent history. The evolution from Francoist policies to globalization in the context of the European Union, as seen through *Las Chicas de la Sexta Planta* (Le Guay, 2011), *Torremolinos 73* (Berger, 2003), *The Way* (Estévez, 2010) and *Miente* (De Ocampo, 2008), has enabled Spain to grow and experience the benefits of open borders and free markets. On the other hand, it is obvious that there have been some negative consequences as well, like the issue of transcontinental human trafficking, an increase in potentially damaging nationalism, and a renewed fear of “the other.” There are enough questions to justify further research into the depth and persistence of these trends, both in Spain and in other European countries. Moreover, while the EU has provided a lot of good for European and Spanish modernization and alliance, all members need to work together to find solutions to contemporary issues if they want the union to remain strong.

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