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Linda M. Willem  
*Butler University*, [lwillem@butler.edu](mailto:lwillem@butler.edu)

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***From the Streets to the Screen: The Music of Madrid  
in Saura's Deprisa, deprisa***

**Linda M. Willem  
Butler University**

With a distinguished career as a director of over thirty-five feature films, Carlos Saura has been a prominent figure within the international film community for nearly fifty years. One of his most critically-acclaimed works, *Deprisa, deprisa* [Hurry, Hurry], is a documentary-like portrayal of a group of friends—Pablo, Angela, Meca, and Sebas—engaged in ever-escalating acts of crime and violence in Madrid in the early 1980's. This is Saura's second film to deal with the topic of alienated urban youth. In 1959 his very first feature film, *Los golfos* [The Hooligans], focused on a young gang of thieves in one of Madrid's poorest neighborhoods. These were the children of Spaniards who emigrated to the city from rural communities in search of an economic prosperity that was never realized for them. *Los golfos* was thematically and stylistically similar to the Italian neorealist cinema that Saura had been exposed to during a week-long screening of films by De Sica, Visconti, Germi, Fellini and Antonioni at the Italian Institute of Culture in 1954.<sup>1</sup> But Saura's all too realistic portrayal of the bleak social conditions in the Spanish capital during the Franco regime caused censorship problems which resulted in a three year delay for the release of the film and sixteen minutes being cut from its length. Censorship had been abolished by 1980 when Saura returned to the urban genre with *Deprisa, deprisa*, so he was able to achieve a degree of realistic detail that would have been unthinkable during the dictatorship.

Interestingly, for this second urban film Saura revived the Italian neorealist practices he had employed in *Los golfos* some twenty years earlier. These included shooting in natural locations rather than on sets, and using only non-professional actors. Saura has spoken at length about the process he used to bring this film to fruition (e.g., Alberich 20-21; Saura n.pag.; Hidalgo 21-22; Sánchez Vidal, *El cine* 145-51; Sánchez Vidal, *Retrato* 84). He spent months in working class neighborhoods on the outskirts of Madrid interviewing or auditioning hundreds of local young people to play versions of themselves.<sup>2</sup> He also used the film's rehearsals as a testing ground for his script, encouraging the actors to rewrite the dialog to reflect their own way of speaking, thereby achieving a greater authenticity of expression. As with *Los golfos*, Saura originally based his script of *Deprisa, deprisa* on newspaper clippings of actual crimes committed by delinquents. But over the course of the film's shooting, Saura fleshed out scenes and added material based on conversations he had with the socially and eco-

nomically marginalized young people he met in bars, restaurants, and discos. Two key insights into how to portray his characters emerged during this time. The first was their ability to live entirely in the present: acting without reflection; reacting quickly and spontaneously to what happens around them. The second was the concept of *libertad* [freedom] as the driving force that justifies everything. This freedom was loosely defined as their desire to be dependent on no one, controlled by nothing, and having the ability to do whatever they wanted at any time.

*Deprisa, deprisa* won the coveted Golden Bear Award at the 1981 Berlin Film festival, where Saura was praised for his even-handed portrayal of his protagonists. He neither condemns nor glorifies their lifestyle. He simply shows them as another generation in Madrid living the same cycle of poverty, crime, and violence as the protagonists of *Los golfos*. This second urban film also occasioned censorship problems for Saura, but ironically, this time they occurred outside of Spain. Saura's portrayal of the strong friendship among the characters and his failure to take a stand against their actions nearly resulted in *Deprisa, deprisa* receiving an X rating from the French Censorship Commission, which cited the morally dangerous influence it might have on its audience (Caparrós Lera 201). But on the contrary, Saura's transparent presentation of the characters should be viewed within the context of his 1980 revival of the Italian neorealist aesthetic of the late 1940's and early 50's. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith speaks of these Italian neorealist films as having a "strongly humanist and reformist impulse," wherein "the honest portrayal of ordinary life would be sufficient to create a bond between audience and film such that the protagonist would display his or her inherent humanity and the audience would grasp the nature of the circumstances which had to change if that humanity was to display itself more fully" (37).

In *Deprisa, deprisa* Saura helped to forge that bond through music. In so doing, however, he went beyond the standard usage of music in Italian neorealist cinema. To understand how music functions differently in Saura's film, it is important to keep in mind the basic distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic music. Diegetic music pertains to the world of the characters and is presented as originating from a source within the story itself, such as a stereo, a radio, or musical instrument being played. Non-diegetic music does not belong to the space of the story, but rather, it exists in the background of the film. It is heard by the audience, but not by the characters. As Richard Dyer has observed, characters in Italian neorealist films often listen to popular music, yet these songs "rarely appear in the background music, which runs the stylistic gamut of concert music from mid-romanticism to early modernism. This discrepancy . . . is a gap with bitter implications for a movement presumed to be about creating a cinema genuinely expressive of ordinary people's reality" (28).

By using popular music both diegetically and non-diegetically in *Deprisa, deprisa*, Saura closed the gap noted by Dyer. Furthermore, he completely eliminated the concert-style non-diegetic score typical of Italian neorealist cinema. Rather, the musical soundtrack for *Deprisa, deprisa* is entirely composed of pre-existing popular songs drawn from the streets of the city. All of the songs in the film are ones that Saura repeatedly heard playing on boom boxes and radios throughout the poorer neighborhoods of Madrid. He amassed a collection of nearly three hundred tapes of songs given to him by the young people he came in contact with, and out of those he chose the handful that are present in the film. Critics have considered Saura's use of flamenco pop songs to be an effective and highly appropriate way of reflecting the social background of the protagonists because that form of music originally had been associated with the gypsies who moved to Madrid from the south of Spain in the 1950's and 60's, and within that urban environment, it gradually became associated with Madrid's marginalized populations in general (Ballesteros 11-13; Sánchez Vidal 147). But these songs also are fundamental to the documentary-like accuracy Saura strove to achieve in his character portrayals. This is the music that the actors portraying the fictional characters in the film actually listened to in their real lives.

As such, when taken together, these songs form an aural representation of Madrid of the early 1980's as experienced by its young citizens. Film scholars have described the setting of this film, which includes Madrid and the bleak suburbs on its southern periphery, as a dystopia filled with sprawling expressways, blighted inner city neighborhoods, massive block apartment buildings, and debris-strewn country sides (e.g., D'Lugo 169-70; Jones 118-20). But onto this visual depiction of dehumanizing urban space, Saura overlays a musical soundtrack that personalizes the environment through the songs of its inhabitants. In addition to the realism and cultural evocations that music collectively conveys in *Deprisa, deprisa*, four individual songs—*Ay, que dolor*, *Un cuento para mi niño*, *Hell dance with me*, and *Me quedo contigo*—are of particular importance due to their lyrics. As their words being sung on the soundtrack interact with the images being seen on the screen, the inherent humanity of the film's characters is communicated to the audience.

*Ay, que dolor* by Los Chunguitos is played while the opening credits of *Deprisa, deprisa* are shown on a black background. Its privileged position at the opening of the film signals it as an important piece of music, and the black screen focuses the viewer's attention on the song without the distraction of moving images. This is the only non-diegetic occurrence of this song. For the remainder of the film it will be heard by us only when it is heard by the characters as well. The first time this happens is immediately after Pablo and Meca steal a car in the film's initial scene, and as they speed away, Meca places a cassette in its tape player, thus visually establishing the diegetic

status of the song. The lively beat of the music corresponds well to the youthful exuberance of the characters who are relieved to have successfully stolen the car. But the joyful sound of the music belies the sadness contained in its lyrics, which tell of the pain of abandonment:

*Ay, qué dolor*

*Oh, what pain*

Hiciste la maleta  
sin decirme adiós,  
ay, qué dolor.  
¿Cómo me abandonó,  
ay, qué dolor,  
y solo me dejó?  
Ay, qué dolor.

You packed your bag  
without saying goodbye to me,  
oh, what pain.  
How could she abandon me,  
oh, what pain,  
and leave me alone?  
Oh, what pain.

*Ay, qué dolor*  
*Ay, qué dolor*  
*Ay, qué dolor*  
*Ay, qué dolor*  
*Ay, qué dolor*  
*Ay, qué dolor*  
*Ay, qué dolor*

*Oh, what pain*  
*Oh, what pain*  
*Oh, what pain*  
*Oh, what pain*  
*Oh, what pain*  
*Oh, what pain*  
*Oh, what pain*

Por más que me pregunto,  
no encuentro la razón,  
ay, qué dolor,  
para dejarme así,  
ay, qué dolor,  
sin una explicación,  
Ay, qué dolor.

No matter how much I ask myself,  
I can't find an answer,  
oh, what pain,  
for leaving me like this,  
oh, what pain,  
without an explanation,  
Oh, what pain.

*Ay, qué dolor*  
*Ay, qué dolor*  
*Ay, qué dolor*  
*Ay, qué dolor*  
*Ay, qué dolor*  
*Ay, qué dolor*  
*Ay, qué dolor*

*Oh, what pain*  
*Oh, what pain*  
*Oh, what pain*  
*Oh, what pain*  
*Oh, what pain*  
*Oh, what pain*  
*Oh, what pain*

Sí, yo todo lo tenía  
y ya no tengo nada,  
ya no tengo nada.  
Perdido voy por el mundo  
sin saber a donde  
y como un vagabundo

Yes, I used to have everything  
and now I have nothing,  
now I have nothing.  
I go through the world lost  
without knowing where  
and like a vagabond.

Above all the song is defined by its oft-repeated refrain, "Ay, que dolor" [Oh, what pain]. At this point in the film, the lyrics seem to have nothing to do with the action on the screen, and when the music stops as the car arrives at its destination, the viewer can accept the song as simply contributing to the fast pace of the action.

But when *Ay, que dolor* is played by Meca again after the next robbery, we become aware that Saura is using this song as a leitmotif. Traditionally, a leitmotif is a musical theme that is used to refer to a person, event, place, object, emotion, or concept. It originated in opera but was quickly adopted by the movie industry.<sup>3</sup> Cinematic leitmotifs function by acquiring associations based on what is seen on the screen during the initial instances in which certain music is heard. Subsequent appearances of that music will then evoke these associations regardless of whatever else is happening on screen. As such, leitmotifs serve as a form of musical communication with the audience. The diegetic presence of *Ay, que dolor* after the first robbery in *Deprisa, deprisa* associated the song with the emotional euphoria of a successfully executed crime, and that association is reinforced when it is played in the car after Meca and Pablo (along with Sebas and Angela) flee from their next successful robbery. Once again the diegetic nature of the music is highlighted as the gang members lightheartedly tease Meca for always playing the same song. In this way *Ay, que dolor* acquires an additional association—one of friendship and camaraderie among the members of group—that now accompanies the existing association of joy and success. Both sets of associations are subsequently reinforced after the next robbery when *Ay, que dolor* is played during the gathering to split up the money stolen during that robbery. As Meca's tape of *Ay, que dolor* plays, a celebratory mood is evident. Toasts to friendship and solidarity are offered by the various characters, followed by dancing to the music. All of the associations with the *Ay, que dolor* song now are at their peak. But by the end of this scene its carefree tone is undermined by Angela's fears of having killed the guard she shot, thereby anticipating the tragic conclusion of the next crime.

After having progressed from robbing a car, to robbing a factory, to robbing an armed truck, the characters finally undertake their boldest robbery yet: that of a bank. But their simple plan is no match for the bank's security system, and although they do escape with the stolen money, this is certainly not a successfully executed crime. With the dead Sebas left behind, and Pablo bleeding in the back seat from a serious gunshot wound, Meca takes his usual position behind the steering wheel of the getaway car, but this time he does not play his tape of *Ay, que dolor*. This is what Claudia Gorbman in her discussion of operatic leitmotifs calls a "structural silence," which "occurs where sound previously present in a film is later absent at structurally corresponding points. The film thus encour-

ages us to expect the (musical) sound as before, so that when in fact there is no music, we are aware of its absence" (19). Indeed, Meca's song that is missing but would have been there had things gone as the characters had planned, calls to the viewer's mind the words of its characteristic refrain: "Ay, que dolor". The lyrics of the song now do correspond to the situation of the characters, who experience both physical and emotional pain. And as each of the gang members dies, Angela finds herself in the same position as the singer who laments "Perdido voy por el mundo sin saber a donde y como un vagabundo." At the close of the film she too is lost like a vagabond going through the world but not knowing where.

Richard Dyer has noted that "[p]op music is nearly always associated with corruption" in Italian neorealist films (32), and Saura plays off of that convention with the two songs that accompany Angela's introduction in the film: *Un cuento para mi niño* by Lole y Manuel, and *Hell, dance with me* by Cappuccino.

*Un cuento para mi niño*

*A story for my son*

Erase una vez,  
una mariposa blanca  
que era la reina  
de todas las mariposas del alba.

Once upon a time there was,  
a white butterfly  
that was the queen  
of all of the dawn butterflies.

Se posaba en los jardines,  
entre las flores más bellas,  
y les susurraba historias  
al clavel y a la violeta.

She would perch in the gardens,  
among the most beautiful flowers,  
and she would whisper stories  
to the carnation and the violet.

Feliz la mariposilla,  
presumidilla y coqueta,  
parecía una flor de almendro  
mecida por brisa fresca.

Happy little butterfly,  
vain and flirtatious,  
she looked like an almond tree flower  
rocked by a cool breeze.

Más llegó un coleccionista,  
mañana de primavera,  
y sobre un jazmín en flor,  
aprisionó a nuestra reina.

But along came a collector,  
one Spring morning,  
and on top of a flowering jasmine,  
he captured our queen.

La clavó con alfileres,  
entre cartulinas negras,  
y la llevó a su museo  
de breves bellezas muertas.  
Las mariposas del alba  
Lloraban por la floresta.

He fastened her with pins,  
between pieces of black cardboard,  
and took her to his museum  
of fleeting dead beauties.  
The dawn butterflies  
cried throughout the countryside.

*Hell Dance with Me*

Hell dance with me.  
 Come on, come on, come on,  
 Hell dance with me.  
 Come on, come on, come on,  
 Hell dance with me.

We see Angela for the first time as the waitress in the café that Pablo and Meca drive to after having stolen the car in the film's initial scene. Meca teases Pablo about not having the courage to talk with Angela despite being attracted to her, and he walks over to the juke box to play romantic music as an incentive for Pablo to act on his desire. The song's opening line "Erase una vez una mariposa blanca" [Once upon a time there was a white butterfly] marks this as a story to be listened to, and the clear sound of each of the words as they are slowly being sung signals its importance within the film. The camera focuses on Angela's face to identify the song's beautiful and carefree white butterfly with her. Significantly, just as Pablo asks Angela for a date, the lyrics tell us about a collector who came along one day and captured the butterfly, eventually imprisoning her in his black case. This story seems to be warning the viewer of the danger awaiting Angela with Pablo. Since the viewer has just seen Pablo steal a car and threaten its owner with a gun, expectations are raised that Angela will be harmed by Pablo, just as the white butterfly had been harmed by the collector. And for the contemporary viewer of *Deprisa, deprisa*, these suspicions would have been even further reinforced by the knowledge that this particular song, entitled *Un cuento para mi niño*, had been written by the well-know singing duo of Lole y Manuel as an allegory about violence against women. In the next scene when Angela dances with Pablo in a disco as the English song lyrics "Hell, dance with me" insistently repeat, the imminent danger to Angela seems to be confirmed.

At this point Saura uses a "sound bridge" to link the scene in the disco with the next scene in the shabby boarding house where Pablo lives. Sound bridges are used to make connections between the visual images of adjoining scenes. For example, the sound from one scene can briefly linger over the image of the next scene. Or at the end of a scene, the music from the next scene can be heard before its image is seen on the screen. As such, sound bridges can be used to sonically communicate information to the viewer. In this case, the ominous "Hell, dance with me" lyrics follow the couple as they climb the stairs to Pablo's room, adding to the viewer's unease about Angela's fate. Once in the room, Pablo professes his love for Angela and swears "on his freedom" to stay with her forever. Contrary to our expectation, he is sincere in this declaration. Saura has stated that

*Deprisa, deprisa* is "una historia de amor junto a una escalada de violencia" [a love story existing along side an escalation of violence] (Alberich 20). Indeed, in this film the two do not mix. Pablo is violent, but not toward Angela. By building expectations of danger in the viewer that are then reversed, Saura creates an element of surprise that obligates us to reevaluate our original conception of Pablo, and by extension, Meca and Sebas as well. Through Pablo and Angela's love story, Saura highlights the humanity of his characters, thereby establishing the bond with the audience that was sought by Italian neorealist directors.

That love story is given musical expression in the film's other major recurring song, *Me quedo contigo* [I'll stay with you] by Antonio Vega:

*Me quedo contigo*

*I'll stay with you*

Si me das a elegir  
entre tú y la riqueza,  
con esa grandeza  
que lleva consigo.

If you make me choose  
between you and wealth,  
with all of the magnificence  
that goes with it,

¡Ay amor, me quedo contigo!

Oh my love, I'll stay with you!

Si me das a elegir  
entre tú y la gloria,  
para que hable la historia de mí  
por los siglos.

If you make me choose  
between you and fame,  
so that my story will be told  
throughout the centuries,

¡Ay amor, me quedo contigo!

Oh my love, I'll stay with you!

Pues me he enamorado  
y te quiero y te quiero.  
Sólo deseo estar a tu lado,  
soñar con tus ojos,  
besarte en los labios,  
sentirme en tus brazos.  
Que soy muy feliz.

Because I've fallen in love,  
And I love you, and I love you.  
I only want to be by your side,  
dream about your eyes,  
kiss you on your lips,  
feel myself in your arms.  
I'm very happy.

Si me das a elegir  
entre tú y ese cielo,  
donde libre es el vuelo  
para ir a otros nidos.

If you make me choose,  
between you and that sky,  
where one is free to fly  
to other nests,

¡Ay amor, me quedo contigo!

Oh my love, I'll stay with you!

Si me das a elegir  
entre tú y mi idea,  
que yo sin ella  
soy un hombre perdido.

If you make me choose,  
between you and my imagination,  
without which  
I am a lost man,

¡Ay amor, me quedo contigo!

Oh my love, I'll stay with you!

Pues me he enamorado  
y te quiero y te quiero.  
Sólo deseo estar a tu lado,  
soñar con tus ojos,  
besarte en los labios,  
sentirme en tus brazos.  
Que soy muy feliz.

Well I've fallen in love,  
And I love you, and I love you.  
I only want to be by your side,  
dream about your eyes,  
kiss you on your lips,  
feel myself in your arms.  
I'm very happy.

This song is used non-diegetically throughout the film. It is first heard as an anticipatory sound bridge that begins at the end of the scene where Pablo and Angela are making plans for the future. Pablo wants to buy a new car, and he agrees to Angela's preference for a red one despite his feeling that it is too flashy of a color. Similarly, Pablo agrees to move into a new apartment with Angela even though he prefers to continue sharing his boarding house room with her. Also, when Angela mentions that she wants to see the ocean, he promises to take her there. The music begins after these decisions have been made and the couple is lounging in bed. The music then continues into the scene showing Pablo and Angela strolling hand in hand on a hill overlooking the village where Pablo was born. The lyrics of the song speak of the singer's willingness to choose the woman of his life over all other things important to him: money, fame, freedom, and his own way of seeing things. As such, the song implicitly refers to Pablo, who has willingly conformed to Angela's wishes. That concept is reinforced during the next occurrence of the song, which plays in its entirety while the camera focuses on the faces of Pablo, Angela, Meca, and his girlfriend as they take a marathon drive to the sea in Pablo's new red car. The absence of any action on the screen focuses the viewer's attention on every word of the song, and Pablo's own words to Angela—"todo para ti" [all for you]—at the conclusion of the song when they have arrived at the seashore, further attests to his commitment to her.

But this relationship is far from one-sided. Angela clearly makes her own pledge of love and devotion to Pablo when she tells him before one of their robberies that no matter whatever happens, they will always be together. So when Pablo is fatally wounded in the bank robbery, Angela stays with him through the night, listening to the sound of his death rattle, despite the danger of her being apprehended by the police. It is not until

Pablo stops breathing that Angela leaves, carrying his memory with her in the form of a photo. Significantly, at the moment of Pablo's death, the song *Me quedo contigo* begins to be heard. Although this song originally had been emblematic of Pablo's love for Angela, it is she who ultimately fulfills the title of the song by remaining with Pablo to the very end of his life. The lyrics follow Angela as she leaves their apartment and walks through the urban environment that serves as a breeding ground for Madrid's alienated youth. Seen in a long shot, she is but one of many in the same situation, and the sounds of playing children at the conclusion of the song suggest yet the next generation that will live and die there.

"La música es una tirana" [Music is a tyrant], Saura once said. "Te puede destruir una cosa o darte una potencia tremenda" [It can destroy something for you or it can give you tremendous power] (Castro 62). Saura made full use of that power for his masterful reworking of the 1940's and 50's Italian neorealist genre in his 1980 film *Deprisa, deprisa*. By reviving the casting and location-shooting practices of Italian neorealist cinema, but breaking with its musical conventions, Saura was able to fulfill the humanist and reformist goals of that genre while representing more thoroughly the quotidian reality of the Madrid slums of the early 1980's. The film's compilation score of pre-existing popular music creates an aural representation of the urban environment as experienced not only by its fictional characters, but also by the non-professional actors who portray them. This aural representation simultaneously enhances the realism of those fictional characters and emphasizes the inherent humanity of the real urban underclass that they embody.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Saura repeatedly has refused to classify *Los golfos* as a neorealist film, but in an interview with Augusto Torres and Vicente Molina-Foix he did affirm that *Los golfos* was founded on "unos supuestos vagamente neorealistas" [some vaguely neorealist suppositions], and he acknowledged that Italian neorealism "es un movimiento que ha dejado huella en todos nosotros, de una forma o de otra" [is a movement that has left its mark on all of us, in one way or another] (28).
- <sup>2</sup> Indeed, the casting was so true to life that soon after the film's completion the young man who played Meca was arrested for a bank robbery and a decade later the film's male lead died of a heroin overdose.
- <sup>3</sup> The "classic" film music model, which emerged in the 1930's, was vigorously critiqued by Hanns Eisler and Theodor Adorno in 1947 in their landmark book *Composing for the Films*. For more recent discussions of leitmotifs in film music see for example Claudia Gorbman, Caryl Flinn, Scott D. Paulin, and Justin London.

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