

THE PORTUGUESE CINEMA AND THE ESTADO NOVO: “O PÁTIO DAS CANTIGAS”

O Cinema Português e o Estado Novo: “O Pátio das Cantigas”

SANTOS, Leonor ¹; RODRIGUES, João Bartolomeu ²

Abstract

The present article aims to conclude how cinema was used to maintain the collective imaginary that Salazar wanted to transform; how Portuguese comedies served both the interests of the state and their audience; and finally, through an analysis of *Pátio das Cantigas* (1942), to understand why the film emerges as a fundamental element in understanding Portuguese society at the time.

Resumo

O presente trabalho pretende concluir de que forma o cinema foi utilizado para a manutenção do imaginário coletivo que Salazar pretendia transformar; como as comédias à portuguesa serviram tanto os ânimos do estado como os ânimos do seu público; e, finalmente, mediante uma análise sobre o *Pátio das Cantigas* (1942), perceber porque é que o filme surge como um elemento fundamental à compreensão da sociedade portuguesa da época.

Key-words: *Estado Novo; Cinema; Portuguese Comedies; Pátio das Cantigas (1942).*

Palavras-chave: *Estado Novo; Cinema; Comédias à Portuguesa; Pátio das Cantigas (1942).*

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¹ LEONOR SANTOS – Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro. PORTUGAL. Email: leonormargaridalm5@gmail.com

² JOÃO BARTOLOMEU RODRIGUES – CECS &UTAD. PORTUGAL. Email: jbarto@utad.pt

INTRODUCTION

Given our curiosity about cinema in the new state, fostered by paternal encouragement, which always encouraged us to watch the films of the time, we have now decided to approach the same Portuguese comedies, not from the perspective of the simple curiosity of a cinephile, but under the watchful eye of the researcher who takes her first steps on the path of investigation. Now, it means – precisely – the moment in which we celebrate fifty years of April 25th. As a starting point for our investigation we chose the following: problematic: to what extent did cinema constitute an ideological weapon of the Salazar regime? As a representative sample of the population to be investigated, we chose as the object of analysis the film *O Pátio das Cantigas* (1942), trying to understand the instrumental excerpts that subordinated art to the regime, always from the ideological perspective of the formation of the citizen, based on an axiology, whose values They were, after all, the pillars on which the Estado Novo regime was based.

For a better understanding of the article, it is considered necessary to briefly address Salazar's ideology. Fascist regimes had, in common, in the context of their political spirit and, consequently, propaganda, the characteristic of creating the myth of the New Man. The new man is referred to as a being who allows himself to be fully invaded - in public and private life - by the thoughts of the established regime, generally regarding moral, religious and military convictions.

António de Salazar wanted to distance himself from the political discourses of the remaining totalitarian countries in Europe. This means that he intended to make his regime singular and original, thus, in the Portuguese case, Man should internalize Salazar's Lesson: God's Fatherland, Family, which constituted The Trilogy of National Education. The national myth, combined with populist ultranationalism, became the motto for many artistic productions of the Estado Novo, in the sense that it mirrored the values, ethics, and attitudes of the ideal of the New Man.

The culture, the ideological system, already integrated into Portuguese society over the centuries, was now strengthened by the disciplinary and, above all, doctrinal organization of the Estado Novo. Thus, Salazar, instead of converging his speech with propaganda and clear ideological manipulation, camouflaged the myth in community pedagogy - “Whenever I have addressed this subject I have linked propaganda to the

political education of the Portuguese people and I have attributed two functions to it – information first; political formation afterwards” (Salazar, 1935).

In fact, this perspective on the regime camouflaged the totalitarian idea that haunted it, to give it an interventional meaning, that is, one that seeks to inform rather than train, in order to do so, defend the Nation and its community, demonstrating corporate nationalism, through propaganda practiced in serene and socially accepted paradigms.

Bearing this in mind, “political training” presupposed a pedagogical system on how to be patriotic. The Estado Novo, using simple but appealing means, such as pamphlets, proposed the renewal, reconstruction and reconquest of the spiritual order and the Portuguese essence, appealing to religiosity and the traditional-popular imaginary, and, consequently, whoever decided to guide If he followed a path different from this vision of the country, he would be named anti-nationalist, and therefore an enemy.

At the same time, this work aims to conclude how cinema was used to maintain the collective imagination that Salazar intended to transform; how Portuguese-style comedies served both the mood of the state and the mood of its public; and, finally, through an analysis of *Pátio das Cantigas*, understand why the film appears as a fundamental element in understanding Portuguese society at the time.

Cinema, a tool of persuasion

The 20th century, with its inherent technological revolution and the growth of dictatorial regimes, significantly instrumentalized propaganda. With the aim of exploring new tools for cultural and social persuasion, the written and radio press is consumed and disseminated uniformly, as well as the use, on large scales, of image and sound, namely through intervention of cinema and television. The population quickly embraced the fascination and novelty surrounding technical-digital media. In effect, power and political propaganda intertwined and allied themselves with image, photography, sound and letters to transmit and disseminate their ideology.

In the 30s and 40s, cultural space, in particular cinema, quickly achieved a place of merit in propaganda for the maintenance of totalitarian regimes. Portugal recognizes its advantages, since on October 26, 1933, the National Propaganda Secretariat (SPN) was created, later replaced in 1945 by the National Information Secretariat (SNI).

Cinema was never compatible with Salazar's aesthetic sensitivity, who considered the seventh art "horribly expensive". Despite preferring simple rural and traditional forms to the modernities of city public life, Salazar understood that, in fact, the moving image and sound constituted a preponderant and effective means of disseminating his thought. His influence on cinema was not exactly direct, but rather, mediated by the right person and the right organization, through the appointment to the direction of SPN/SNI, his disciple António Ferro.

António Ferro, journalist, writer and cinephile, was an "organic intellectual... (who) related his vision of society and politics to his cultural and aesthetic choices" (Torgal, 2005, p. 240). Ferro was a fundamental part of what he called the "spirit policy" of the regime, as he legitimized and put into practice the national culture in favor of the regime's ideological orientation, compiling the symbols, customs, behaviors and beliefs of the Portuguese. Furthermore, his management of political-communicational vectors, namely at the level of radio, cinema, theater, ballet, plastic, decorative and graphic arts, music, literature, press and tourism, proved to be, simultaneously, avant-garde and patriotic, innovative and traditional, audacious and authoritarian.

From an institutional point of view, cinema was not completely under the regime's power. In fact, film production companies were private, with, as an example, the production companies: Lisboa film (1928), Sociedade Portuguesa de Atualidades Cinematográficas (SPAC, 1938) and Tobis Klangfilm (1932), in 1943, called Tobis Portuguesa. However, any film construction that deviated from the regime's imagery program would be censored or banned by the General Inspectorate of Shows (1929). On the other hand, those films, which from an aesthetic and ethical perspective, confirmed the values of the Estado Novo were praised through awards. Thus, beyond the reprimand system, which effectively controlled not only cinema, but all artistic creations, it cannot be said that there was another means of control, or an official, direct, intrinsic link between the 7th art and the Salazar's state.

It is also interesting that the implementation of sound cinema in Portugal was a result of the growing dimension that foreign cinema was taking on in Portugal. Afraid that the nation's morale would fall into an abyss of the Other-extra-Portuguese, the proposal of the Commission for the General Inspection of Spectacles to finance a studio - Tobis Portuguesa - was put on the table to make "films spoken in Portuguese, (given that) only Portuguese can weave and feel national arguments, making films with good

artistic and intellectual propaganda” (Marques 2016, v. 35, p. 22). In this context, in 1932, work began on the studio of Companhia Portuguesa de Filmes Sonoros Tobis Klangfilm, in Quinta das Conchas, in Lisbon, assembled with various materials from Germany, precisely from the company Tobis Klangfilm. Therefore, the state provided for the subscription of shares by the general public. The low cost of the shares (50\$00 each, which can even be paid in five monthly installments), and the various privileges inherent to paying for them - “the right to visit the Company's facilities, watching filming and receptions in the studio” or “ the right to attend the first screening of all films produced” (Government Gazette, 06/08/1932), generated a wave of enthusiasm in the country, especially among film buffs, who became shareholders of the company.

In July 1932, in a press release, Tobis Portuguesa expressed its purposes, justifying them in the recognition of: “the social importance of sound cinematography as a means of education and culture, as an instrument of information, documentation, propaganda and publicity”, [adding that] “we are moved, much more than any considerations of an industrial or commercial nature, by an eminently patriotic thought: that of making possible the creation of a national art that in many aspects and under many titles can and should have a vast influence on the life and progress of the Nation” (AREAL, 2011, p. 40). The Tobis Portuguesa project describes itself as a system that “works (...) towards the creation of Portuguese cinema, made in Portugal with Portuguese elements and for exclusive national utility” (AREAL, 2011, p. 40).

Although cinema was not directly aligned with the regime, Portuguese filmmakers were committed to transmitting a narrative that conformed to the parameters praised by the State. Tables are constructed that represent the diffusion of reality, socially recognized values, and Salazarist ideology.

In fiction films, cinema characters are idealized archetypes in a world fantasized by the regime, occupied by citizens who seek stability in the social hierarchy, or peace in human simplicity. In cinema, the imagery movement of national unity proliferates, see as an example the film “Pupilas do Senhor Retor” (1935), by Leitão de Barros, based on the novel by Júlio Dinis. The film praises the rural world, virtue in work and the conciliation of classes, therefore, the General Inspectorate of Shows notified “Pupilas do Senhor Rector” as a means that “will bring Portuguese people scattered around the world a beautiful expression of art nationalist that will firmly link them to the common HOMELAND” (General Inspection of Spectacles, in *O Century XX Português*, p. 245)

At the same time, documentary films, although with a smaller number of followers, appear as a resource for the ennoblement of works of Salazar, both in the context of public works, but also in agricultural and military development, disseminating acts of civic, political and cultural life. In order to corroborate this, see as an example the documentary “Inauguration of the National Stadium” (1944), produced by SPAC, which publicizes the regime's commitment to sport and its players, as well as the stadium's architecture.

Portuguese comedies

The Portuguese comedies of the 30s and 40s seem to introduce the same themes at a narratological level, in fact, they all unfold through small dramas in the characters' interpersonal relationships, in love, in conflicts and in adventures that end up being resolved, harmoniously, in comic denouements. Furthermore, the settings are invariably urban neighborhoods, very similar to small rural villages, where neighbors establish friendly relationships. It should also be noted that the social class of the characters repeatedly complied with the lifestyle of the lower and middle bourgeoisie, which, in fact, are the social classes that frequent cinematographic spaces. Effectively, the comedies were part of the subversive tradition of the theatrical revue, much appreciated by the public, as both contained a lot of laughter and feelings of (self) recognition.

Therefore, given the high consumption by urban populations, which filled cinema and theater rooms, it is expected that cinematographic productions would be inspired by their recipients. Thus, the objective would be for the characters to blend in with their audience, so that they could imagine and see themselves in creation. However, Salazar's ideology was not completely absent from this attempt to reflect Lisbon's city society. In fact, moralistic models and state propaganda were conveyed, directly or indirectly, to comedy. Through the exposure of the characters' behaviors - the poor but honorable; the good family man and good Catholic; the zealous mother; the subordinate wife and keeper of the home; the chaste, gifted maiden, ideal for marriage, built and projected the affirmation and praise of those who were considered exemplary citizens and, correspondingly, condemned and ridiculed their counterexamples. In the sense of this paradigm, the Estado Novo, before trying to institutionalize a way of life, tries to promote the naturalization of reality. The people, to a large extent, were already poor, fatalistic, resigned, uneducated, lacking freedom, little given to mobility, respectful of hierarchies, with few or no cultural habits, rural, simple, poorly educated, conservative, Catholic and

carefree. In this way, moviegoers didn't have to do much more than merely reproduce collective experience and imagination, common social types. In a mimetic situation, it was interesting to develop figures related to everyday life, whose functionality, more than just training drivers, could contribute, lightly, to the policy of a pacifying spirit, where fun and laughter spread with national clichés - fado and popular festivals, offered the most effective means to grant it.

It is also important to note that comedy, with its theatrical roots, in its various models, was probably the spectacle favored by the Lisbon public since the second half of the 19th century, crossing all the political regimes of contemporary Portugal. Therefore, it is not surprising that Portuguese comedy was an operative means of Salazarist morality. Regardless of its effectiveness, the person responsible for the national propaganda secretariat did not stop criticizing this genre. By the way, António Ferro went so far as to state that Portuguese-style comedies were “the cancer of Portuguese cinema, they didn’t even need to be pornography to be rude, trashy and vulgar” (Ferro, 1950, 34).

Film analysis: O Pátio das Cantigas (1942)

Figura 1 - O Pátio das Cantigas



Fonte: António Lopes Ribeiro, diretor de *Pátio das Cantigas*, in <https://www.google.com/search?q=ant%C3%B3nio+lopes++ribeiro~cineasta>, dezembro de 2023).

Technical Data

Pátio das Cantigas, premiered on January 23, 1942, in Lisbon, with a duration of 127 minutes, was produced by the company Tobis Portuguesa and directed by António Lopes Ribeiro. The film became one of the great successes of Portuguese comedy, being considered a canon of Portuguese cinema.

Its success was significantly due to the cast of actors, very well known at the time, and the caricatured characters played by: Maria José das Neves (Mrs. Rosa), Vasco Santana (Narciso Fino), António Silva (Evaristo Droguista), Laura Alves, (Celeste, Evaristo's daughter), Barroso Lopes (João Magrinho), Carlos Otero (Alfredo), António Vilar (Carlos Bonito), Maria Paula (Amália), Graça Maria (Susana, Amália's sister), João Silva (Mr. Heitor), Carlos Alves (Engenhocas), Eliezer Kamenesky (Boris Dunov), Regina Montenegro (Margarida), Armando Machado (Marques), Maria da Graça (Maria da Graça), Ribeirinho (Rufino Fino, son of Narciso).

Pátio das Cantigas is set against the backdrop of a Lisbon neighborhood – Pátio do Evaristo – and is framed, temporally, at the time of the Second World War, more specifically at the Santos Populares station - Santo António and São João. The genre The narrative of the script is novelistic, where various situations from everyday life in Lisbon are presented, without a strictly necessary thread between the episodes. The main attractions of the film are the euphoric and dysphoric relationships between the characters.

The social classes

The social and economic conditions of the characters in Pátio das Cantigas are in line with those of its audience, however, this does not mean that the film provides a completely real representation of Lisbon's city society. In fact, Portuguese-style comedies strive to hide the most uncomfortable realities of the Estado Novo. The situations experienced by social groups, which also occupied urban space, such as beggars, marginalized people and the industrial proletariat, were not represented.

Furthermore, the discourse evident in *Pátio das Cantigas* is that of joy in poverty as the best expression of nobility. The conflict between poor and rich spreads into a sentimental and inter-relational conflict and disappears when the upper classes are integrated into the lower classes: in their day-to-day life - the courtyard is inhabited by people of different incomes, or through the marriage - Evaristo, owner of a drugstore, gives his daughter's hand to skinny João, his employee.

In fact, more than condemning emotional conflicts, the characters' desire for social advancement is rebuked. Carlos Bonito tries to convince Amália to travel to Brazil, to try their luck in music, with the argument that Maria de Graça quickly became successful there. His plans fall apart when his brothers refuse to give up part of the inheritance they intended to spend on the trip to Brazil. This dream was surpassed when Carlos Bonito was unfairly accused of robbing Mr. Heitor. After time in prison, Carlos resigns himself to his humble courtyard, and the interclass balance is restored.

In the famous episode of Narcissus and lamp, there is also an apology for the acceptance of the natural social hierarchy, at a time when he states that there are many people who “think they are someone, without remembering that there are others who are much higher”.

In this context, the statement could fit the character of Evaristo, who tries to impose himself on the other inhabitants of the neighborhood, because he calls it “Pátio do Evaristo”.

Furthermore, while his neighbors enjoy dancing to the typical Portuguese music produced by the Engenhocas machine, Evaristo systematically tries to overlay the volume of his graphonola with Italian opera music. In fact, in one of the scenes, Evaristo is ridiculed by the others and, indignant, vents to the already empty patio - “Fadistas! They only like trashy music accompanied by the guitar! They don't know how to appreciate classical music, nor opera, which is the most suitable music for working people!” But if no one heard her words, they were answered in the verses of the song that Amália will sing, shortly afterwards, - “There are many people out there, who do not feel and believe, that this Portuguese song is certainly the most beautiful (...)”.

The places

Pátio das Cantigas, like other Portuguese comedy films, takes place in the urban environment of Lisbon. Taking into account the spaces where the petty and medium bourgeoisie moved and worked, it appears that the choice of film scenarios is not unconscious. The spaces represented in Pátio das Cantigas are attempts to provide the viewer with a feeling of belonging and identification with history. Effectively, the film exposes the places that cinema goers visit: from shops, grocery stores and the market. Spaces where people coexist, where they catch up, where they meet their needs and where they earn their living.

The characters' homes are characterized by their low cost. Humble, the interior of the houses is presented with few small rooms, poorly lit, modestly furnished and little decorated, with just a few vases of flowers, lamps, embroidered cloths and some saints. The popular house stands out for its typical courtyard house architecture, with few floors, organized around a small area common to all inhabitants, and separated from the big city by an arch. In this way, it appears that there is, in the production of the film, an attempt to reproduce the cultural roots of the people; to transport rural houses, which are limited to serving basic needs, to the city environment; and to reject foreign influences, with more progressive building styles. At the same time, the neighborhood or courtyard feels like a small village where all the neighbors know each other and maintain their friendships.

As already mentioned, during the Estado Novo period there was an “ideological war” between the city and the countryside, with victory for rural values. The speech and course of the film Pátio das Cantigas could not ignore this rural or anti-city ideal. In fact, the film shows how the city is a driver of vices - Narciso Fino is an alcoholic; of conflicts - Narciso Fino and Evaristo, the druggist, are in permanent dispute and discussion; of violence and disorder - during the Santo António festivities there is a huge riot in the courtyard that even causes injuries. Thus, it appears that no urban environment can replace the peace and security characteristic of rurality.

The city's streets are also shown as dangerous and labyrinthine places, where strange individuals meet and mismatch, becoming disoriented in the midst of the anonymous crowd. The streets of the city are rarely seen in Pátio das Cantigas, however, we know, from the dialogues between the characters, that it is in the streets that Senhor Heitor is robbed.

The work

The relationships established in the professional environment, namely between boss and employees, are associated with authority and obedience, respectively. Take, for example, the conversations between Evaristo and his employee, João Magrinho. Evaristo systematically condemns João's laziness and negligence, even when the latter does nothing wrong. On the other hand, João never protests to his boss, his discrepant behavior, nor at any point in the film does he say goodbye. Really, these episodes in the drugstore are understandable insofar as the regime praises work and the hierarchy of classes, so everything is resolved in the natural order of things in which workers work and bosses rule. Furthermore, any revolutionary thought in a film would lead to awareness of rights and the demand for better living conditions, and these facts would be censored by the General Inspectorate of Shows.

From another point of view, the labor relations shown in the film never go beyond the scope of either the small related company, as is the case of the Fino family's grocery store, or the small company, whose employees are neighbors of the boss, as is the case in the drugstore. From Evaristo. Regarding Evaristo and João, the conflicts that exist between the two are explained by the bad temper of the boss, who "deep down is a good person", since Evaristo, a man from the middle bourgeoisie, ends up giving his daughter's hand to João, a man from the lower bourgeoisie, in marriage. Thus, the superiority of the boss ends up spreading to an almost paternal image, of an authoritarian but supportive being, corroborating Salazar's trilogy - "God, Country and Family".

The Saint Anthony Episode

The episode of the Santo António festivities is marked by a small fight between Narciso Fino and Evaristo that turns into a fight between the inhabitants of the courtyard. The film, with clearly political contours, intends to represent a parody of the Second World War, with all its military elements - the physical violence between the characters, the jail, represented by the imprisonment of Evaristo in a cage, the wounded taken to the nurse of Cruz Red, simulated by Rufino Fino, the shots simulated by dry powder bombs and the corks of sparkling wine bottles.

In the midst of the confusion, Narciso Fino seeks to protect children, refugees from war, and it is in this context that the film takes on notoriously propagandistic proportions. Due to Salazar's apology, Narciso takes the children to a cart named after the dictator, telling them to remain calm there, as nothing will happen to them in that place.

Portugal, since the beginning of the great war, was presented as a port of shelter, or a proliferator of peace, thanks to Salazar's actions. This scene, at the popular festival, both cooperates with the ideology of neutrality in relation to the confrontation and ceases any fear that could arise from it, since, in the film, its dramatic charge is removed from the conflict through situation comedy sequences and language.

Marriage and women

Pátio das Cantigas reflects, at the same time, the morality regarding marriage, dating and the role of women in society and the family. This is because the traditional Portuguese family was understood as a means of guaranteeing social stability. With an analysis of the film plot, it can be seen that all the characters are either not yet old enough to get married, or are celibate or widowed and, in the end, they will all fall in love, with the exception of Evaristo, the anti-hero of the film. *Pátio das Cantigas*. In this way, the autonomy and freedom of the individual takes precedence over getting married and establishing a family unit. Better said, marriage is seen as a force capable of even extinguishing vices and curing illnesses, see the example of Narciso Fino who, after marrying Mrs. Rosa, reprimands everyone who gets drunk (his former fatality) and alludes to the people of the neighborhood drinking milk instead.

Another curious aspect of *Pátio das Cantigas* is that there is no male figure performing domestic tasks, instead, women are in charge of this work. This feminine appearance is also corroborated by *Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina*, which argued: “It is not serious that a woman does not know how to design a bridge, manage a company, defend a case in court - someone wrote; but it is very serious that he is not in a position to take care of a child or manage a house” (Torgal, 2001, p. 225).

CONCLUSION

Cinema, a mirror of life, could not, in carrying out its fundamental mission, fail to reflect, here as everywhere, the human spectacle that surrounds it.

(Ribeiro in Torgal, 2001, p. 231)

Although it is not possible to point out a direct correlation between the Estado Novo and cinema, in particular, Portuguese-style comedies; Also, it cannot be argued with certainty that the values of the Salazar regime were not linked to the films. Portuguese comedies were not a genre that was highly regarded by the body that supervised cinematographic production. However, its effectiveness was exceptional in terms of producing redundant mechanisms and figures that represented the system of social order and the regime's supporters, the small and medium bourgeoisie, as well as, at the commercial and economic level, given the high number of accessions.

If, as we saw, propaganda films intended the conversion or formatting of Man, comedies intended integration, or better yet, reintegration of people into the state. In fact, between the lines of the happy speech, irreverence and good disposition, which was analyzed in *Pátio das Cantigas*, there is, in fact, a profound apology for ideology and social conformism. In turn, this conformity is accepted, or even desired, by its spectators, as they reaffirm their continuity in the established social order, by which they recognize themselves.

Although the films present some conflicts, they are not of social or political origin, but emotional, that is, they are part of the character's own psyche and end up contributing to the comic. The satisfaction of seeing what one believes in reiterated, at the same time as witnessing the triumph of the characters with whom they identify, makes the viewer feel emotional and identify with the film, realizing that, in fact, cinema moved people ideologically.

Guedes de Amorim, a journalist who was born and lived during the 20th century, describes a caricatural image of the way the class experienced cinema. The picture of society was drawn with vibrant and euphoric people: “(the) pairs of workers and seamstresses who, very close to each other, copied the most tender scenes from the film they were watching”, and the scenarios were often accompanied by “screams, whistles, whispers” (Amorim in Rosa 2020, p. 102).

To conclude, there were no major obstacles in preparing the article and its PowerPoint, as the professor provided a list of books and theses for better work guidance and made himself available for any questions that might arise. Furthermore, the article was considered interesting for a better understanding of the new state, as well as the films that starred in this era.

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