

Forja de Almas (1943): Francoist Appropriation of Andrés Manjón's Pedagogy to Construct a Model Image of Teachers through Cinema

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ABSTRACT: Cinema interests historians of education as it represents an opportunity to analyse and study the aim of creating collective imagery around different educational topics, such as schools and teachers in the past. This contribution takes a specific look at cinema's influence in Spain in the early years of the Franco dictatorship, which aimed to conjure model teachers and educational practices from a new approach supported by the regime, through an analysis of the film *Forja de Almas* (1943). The research also intends to analyze the Francoist appropriation of Andrés Manjón's pedagogy. Our initial hypothesis is that the film may help us understand the collective perception and imagery put forward by the Franco regime to construct and impose a type of model teacher in Spanish society.

EET/TEE KEYWORDS: Public History; School; Cinema; Propaganda; Spain; XX Century.

Introduction¹

Cinema's interest to historians of education lies in its dual perspective: as an educational element in informal education (the ability to analyse conveyed ideas and their underlying intent) and as a visual and audible source and document on formal education in a specific period². In line with this, cinema also represents a chance to analyse and study the intention to create collective imagery for different educational topics, e.g. what schools and teachers were like in the past. It thus plays a standout role in public history in a broad general sense through historical narratives distributed over different channels, conveying a history constructed within or outside academy, or in joint collaboration.

In this sense, this study aims to take a specific look at cinema's influence in Spain in the early years of the Franco dictatorship to conjure collective imaginations of model teachers and educational practices from a new approach the regime intended to establish, via an analysis of the film *Forja de Almas* (1943)³. Directed by Eusebio Fernández Ardavín and written by Ricardo Mazo and Inocencio Guzmán, the film was granted the Sindicato Nacional de Espectáculos Award (National Union of the Performing Arts) by the Falange fascist political organisation in 1943. *Forja de Almas* has been framed as the foundational film for the National Catholicism subgenre: charity, paternalism, equality between men from different classes and a driving force for social morals. It was also the first film in the Francoist regime to have a priest as the main character rather than in a supporting or testimonial role for the usual 'heroes'⁴. Alongside other films set in or including schools, *Forja de Almas* and other productions have been highlighted as examples of ideal schooling in the Franco dictatorship, framed by autarky, patriotism, anti-Communism, Falangism and National Catholicism⁵.

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² M.C. Agulló Díaz, *Forja de almas (La escuela rural en el franquismo a través de su cinematografía)*, in J.M. Santacreu Soler (ed.), *Historia contemporánea y nuevas fuentes*, Alicante, Universitat d'Alacant, 1995, pp. 233-243.

³ *Vid.* E. Fernández Ardavín (Director), *Forja de Almas* [Film], LAISSA, 1943. Filmoteca de Catalunya, Library, Ref. V526. The analysis of *Forja de Almas* has been carried out, mainly, from an instrumental approach to determine the value of the film from the study of its contents. L. Zavala, *El análisis cinematográfico y su diversidad metodológica*, «Casa del tiempo», n. 30, 2010, pp. 65-69.

⁴ R. Colmenero Martínez, *La producción cinematográfica, el cine religioso y su relación con el Estado franquista (1939-1959)*, in A.M. Moral Roncal, R. Colmenero Martínez (ed.), *Iglesia y primer franquismo a través del cine (1939-1959)*, Alcalá de Henares, Universidad de Alcalá – Servicio de Publicaciones, 2015, pp. 19-45.

⁵ V. Durán Manso, P. Álvarez Domínguez, *La imagen de la escuela en la primera etapa del cine español del franquismo: autarquía, patriotismo y nacionalcatolicismo (1939-1950)*, «Educació i Història: Revista d'història de l'educació», n. 31, 2018, pp. 59-88.

Filed in the image and likeness of the US film *Boys Town* (1938) – directed by Norman Taurog and known as *Forja de Hombre* in Spain – *Forja de Almas* exemplifies the Franco regime's interest in promoting model teachers to the general public through cinema, under the auspices of the Falange, during a period where control over education was disputed by the Catholic Church. Both films look at the work of the Catholic Church in educating orphan children; the Spanish film being dedicated to the life and work of Andrés Manjón (1846-1923) and the original American version to Edward Flanagan (1886-1948). Film historians have outlined the evident response from National Catholicism in *Forja de Almas* to Norman Taurog's film⁶. In this vein, the film includes clear elements that praise National Catholicism through the character of Manjón and his work with orphans in the Ave María schools in Granada. It also advocates for the Franco regime's approach to education, by appropriating, vindicating and reinterpreting the life of Father Manjón as the ideal for model teaching and education practices in line with its own principles. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church and its ministers distanced themselves from the film's implicit message and repercussion, since the Falange stressed patriotism over spirituality in its adoption of Manjón life and work⁷.

Our hypothesis is that analysing and studying *Forja de Almas* as a filmic example of public history in a broad sense could help us understand the collective perception and imagination the Franco regime aimed to construct and impose on Spanish society with regard to model teachers and educational practices. The regime used the mass medium of cinema to reinterpret the life of Andrés Manjón based on its own precepts and parameters, during a time when the Falange and the Catholic Church were competing for control over education.

1. *Public history (of education) and cinema*

Defining public history is a slippery task as, according to the Liddington, professionals, academics and geographical settings use a wide range of meanings and connotations⁸. These different meanings and uses should, in turn, nudge

⁶ Vid. J. Estivill, *El somni franquista de la renovació pedagògica: dues curioses pel·lícules dels anys 40 sobre el món de l'ensenyament*, «Spagna contemporanea», n. 14, 1998, pp. 149-158; J.M. Minguet Batllori, “*Forja de Almas*” (1943), *la parábola de la autoridad*, «Cuadernos de la Academia», n. 9, 2001, pp. 207-2018; Colmenero Martínez, *La producción cinematográfica, el cine religioso y su relación con el Estado franquista (1939-1959)*, cit.

⁷ Estivill, *El somni franquista de la renovació pedagògica: dues curioses pel·lícules dels anys 40 sobre el món de l'ensenyament*, cit.; Id., *Forja de Almas (1943): Un reflejo de la sociedad española de posguerra*, «Archivos de la filmoteca: revista de estudios históricos sobre la imagen», n. 33, 1999, pp. 8-23.

⁸ J. Liddington, *What is Public History? Publics and their Pasts, Meanings and Practices*, «Oral History», vol. 30, n. 1, 2002, pp. 83-93.

us away from any dogmatic statements about definition. Indeed, Liddington suggests public history is less about the “what” and more about the “why”. In turn, Gardner and Hamilton reference the ivory tower of academe and its own approach to history⁹. The authors urge for it to be presented and shared differently, addressing a broader general public in collaboration with different social groups. In line with this approach, Antonio Viñao states all societies recreate their past and generate collective memories. He paints a possible scenario of academic historians losing social influence if they preach to the choir, becoming isolated and disconnected from the process of reconstructing historical memory¹⁰. Catalan historian Josep Fontana delves deeper into this issue, stating that historians become detached, undermining problems of interest to everyday citizens¹¹. Fontana highlights the demand for history in the world outside academe, since it plays a role in shaping the identity of individuals and groups. If historians fail to provide this in-demand history, others will seize the mantle¹². This situation has led to the emergence of what was initially termed applied history and is now known as public history. As stated, public history is a hard-to-define concept, although it includes all activities aimed at making history more relevant and useful in the public sphere. Regardless of how certain US academics insist on outlining the methodological simplicity of public history, Liddington sees it as offering excellent opportunities for creative collaboration between academics and other professionals, such as history consultants, museum workers, archivists, oral historians, chroniclers, cultural managers, local historians, writers, journalists, film producers, the media, ecc. All these stakeholders share an interest in and commitment to making history relevant and useful for a broader audience¹³.

The potential of the public history of education is a research field that has made recent contributions to the top European journals in history and education, such as *History of Education*, *Paedagogica Historica* and *History of Education & Children's Literature*. A further example of the nascent international interest in the topic is the 2022 book *Exhibiting the Past. Public Histories of Education*, edited by Frederik Herman, Sjaak Braster and Maria del Mar del Pozo¹⁴.

⁹ J.B. Gardner, P. Hamilton, *Introduction. The Past and Future of Public History. Development and Changes*, in Idd. (edd.), *The Oxford Handbook of Public History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 1-25.

¹⁰ A. Viñao, *Public History between the Scylla of Academic History and the Charybdis of History as a Show: A Personal and Institutional Experience*, in F. Herman, S. Braster, M.d.M. del Pozo (edd.), *Exhibiting the Past. Public Histories of Education*, De Gruyter Oldenburg, 2022. pp. 91-108.

¹¹ J. Fontana, *¿Qué historia enseñar?*, «Clio & Asociados», n. 7, 2003, pp. 15-26.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹³ Liddington, *What is Public History? Publics and their Pasts, Meanings and Practices*, cit.

¹⁴ A. Viñao, *Public History between the Scylla of Academic History and the Charybdis of History as a Show*, cit.

Focusing now on education, standout publications in the field of public history of education over the years include journals, books, documentaries, exhibitions, catalogues, websites, wikis and films¹⁵. With regard to the latter category, Antonio Viñao mentions consulting for films and documentaries as one of the many new participation methods in the field of public history, which uses an ever more common approach that combines past and fiction, as well as historical images and imagined depictions of the past¹⁶. Although the purpose of this article does not concern film consultants, one should recognise its focus when analysing an education-themed film from the early years of the Franco regime in Spain.

The inherent potential of cinema in providing accessible and exciting (hi) stories to the general public is well known. Indeed, it has been used to promote information on historical and cultural events from its early days, bringing to life key moments in human history in early silent films to more recent blockbusters. In this vein, if public history aims to make history relevant and accessible for general audiences, film could be a valuable tool to achieve this goal. It can be used to tell stories about historical events and characters, cover major historical periods or episodes, and foster critical reflection about the past and its relationship to the present. In turn, it can provide a stage to tell stories that official history has ignored or belittled, as well as help raise awareness about the struggles and experiences of historically marginalised groups. Nevertheless, it can also be used as propaganda for certain less-than-rigorous values and ideals that do not align with historical fact or democratic values. In a recent approach to the topic, Marta Gouveia de Oliveira looks at how cinema and literature today can contribute to spreading historical knowledge, albeit with commercial and marketing priorities as opposed to historical accuracy¹⁷. Along similar lines, José Luis Sánchez Noriega stated that in historical cinema with a commercial bent, «se prefiere, en este formato, la dramatización espectacular que pone en escena personajes atormentados, pasiones desatadas y heroísmos sobrehumanos a la consideración de factores sociales, ideológicos o económicos que expliquen los cambios sociales o los sucesos del devenir de la historia. Los procesos sociales de protagonismo colectivo quedan en un segundo plano, ocultados por las gestas individuales de personajes mistificados por la costra de las leyendas o por el anecdotario de exitosa divulgación regido por el dicho ‘se

¹⁵ Indeed, an analysis of many of these productions is one of the specific goals on the research project led by the History of Education Research Group (GEDHE/IRIE) entitled *Public History of Education in Spain (1970-2020). Social Perceptions, Memories and Construction of Imaginaries about Teachers and their Practices*, R&D&I project PID2020-113677GB-I00, funded by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033.

¹⁶ Viñao, *Public History between the Scylla of Academic History and the Charybdis of History as a Show*, cit.

¹⁷ M.G. de Oliveira Rovai, *Historia pública: la comunicación y la educación histórica*, «Hachetetépe: Revista científica de Educación y Comunicación», n. 14, 2017, pp. 13-26.

non è vero è ben trovato'. Todo tiene explicación y todo se desenvuelve según un esquema de planteamiento, nudo y desenlace que tiene que ver mucho más con las prescripciones de la poética antigua que con el saber histórico y, por supuesto, que con la realidad constatada»¹⁸. Nonetheless, this statement in no way entirely invalidates historical cinema since it may, according to Noriega, contribute to spreading knowledge about our past and drive interesting reflections on educational and moral values¹⁹.

This being said, and with regard to a comprehensive, balanced understanding of history, it is important to bear in mind that cinema is not a primary historical source itself but rather a representation of history. It is therefore essential to critically assess historical interpretation in films from an ethical perspective committed to historical truth, considering authorship and financing sources, as well as the surrounding historical, cultural and political context.

Siegfried Kracauer's pioneering work in this field, *De Caligari a Hitler* (1947)²⁰, includes many interesting historiographic references on film as a source for historical knowledge through an analysis of films from the Weimar Republic. The author establishes a direct link between the content of these films and society at the time, concluding that they are highly valuable historical documents and a reflection of people's mindsets at a specific time in history. French scholar and historian Marc Ferro added refinements to this Germanic approach, stating that what we see through images is incomplete and partial, and can only be useful to historians when contrasted with other sources²¹. The sociologist Pierre Sorlin sees all films as exhibits of the prevailing ideology at the time they are made²².

Some top historians in Spain underline the value of cinema as social testimony within a specific timeframe, as well as a fundamental source for history, since it reflects mindsets from a specific era. They also highlight its educational value for teaching history. Josep María Caparrós, María Antonia Paz and José Luis Sánchez Noriega, renowned lecturers and researchers in the history of cinema, classify the seventh art as an agent for collective memory and a medium to

¹⁸ «The preference is for a dramatic spectacle, depicting tormented characters, ignited passions and superhuman heroics within social, ideological or economic factors that explain changes in society or historical events. The social processes of collective protagonism remain in the background, superseded by individual feats from characters mystified in legends or successful collections governed by a 'se non è vero è ben trovato' approach. Everything has an explanation, a beginning, middle and end, more in line with ancient poetry than historical knowledge and, of course, proven reality» (J.L. Sánchez Noriega, *De la "película histórica" al cine de la memoria*, in G. Camarero, V. de Cruz, B. de las Heras Herrero (edd.), *I Congreso Internacional de Historia y Cine*, Madrid, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid – Instituto de Cultura y Tecnología, 2008, p. 66).

¹⁹ Sánchez Noriega, *De la "película histórica" al cine de la memoria*, cit.

²⁰ S. Kracauer, *De Caligari a Hitler: una historia psicológica del cine alemán*, Barcelona, Editorial Paidós, 1996.

²¹ M. Ferro, *Cine e historia*, Barcelona, Ariel, 1995.

²² P. Sorlin, *Sociología del cine, la apertura para la historia del mañana*, Ciudad de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1985.

reveal different attitudes²³. Images transmit recollections and, thanks to their accessibility and impact, they are effective in fostering an understanding of history, as well as being a useful medium to decode messages about collective mindsets²⁴. Likewise, in the specific field of the history of education, the works published by Virginia Guichot should be highlighted²⁵.

2. A concise approach to the educational thinking and practice of Father Andrés Manjón

The life of Father Andrés Manjón (Sargentos de la Lora, 1846 - Granada, 1923) and his contribution to education at the Ave-María schools he founded have been analysed in many important studies and anthologies on his texts, alongside critical editions. Analyses of his work continue to arouse interest and controversy in academe today. Some consider him to be an *avant la lettre* example of the New School movement in Spain; others see him as a less-than-innovative educator, in contrast to how educational historiography painted him for years²⁶.

²³ Vid. J.M. Caparrós, *El Cine como documento histórico*, in M.A. Paz, J. Montero (edd.), *Historia y Cine. Realidad, ficción y propaganda*, Madrid, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1995, pp. 35-46; M.A. Paz, J. Montero (edd.), *Historia y Cine. Realidad, ficción y propaganda*, Madrid, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1995; J.L. Sánchez Noriega, *Introducción*, in Id. (ed.), *Diccionario temático del cine*, Madrid, Cátedra, 2004; Id., *De la "película histórica" al cine de la memoria*, cit.

²⁴ F.J. Zubiaur Carreño, *El Cine como fuente de la Historia*, «Memoria y Civilización», n. 8, 2005, pp. 205-219.

²⁵ Vid. V. Guichot, J.D. Rueda, *El cine como mirada a nuestro pasado educativo: "Los días del pasado", recurso para analizar la educación en el período franquista*, «Cuadernos de Historia de la Educación», n. 7, 2010, pp. 39-70; V. Guichot, *Hacer cine, ver cine: estrategias para estudiar la Historia de la Educación española de la segunda mitad del siglo XX*, in *II Jornadas de Innovación Docente. Prácticas Innovadoras en Docencia Universitaria*, Sevilla, Universidad de Sevilla – Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación, 2012; V. Guichot, *Socialización, política, afectividad y ciudadanía: la cultura política democrática en el cine de la Transición española*, «Historia y Memoria de la Educación», n. 5, 2017, pp. 283-322; V. Guichot, *Cine y memoria histórica: la interpretación del pasado reciente nacional en el cine de la Transición española (1975-1986)*, «RIDPHE_R. Revista Iberoamericana do Patrimônio Histórico-Educativo», vol. 3, n. 1, 2017, pp. 70-96.

²⁶ The critical anthologies of A. Manjón's extensive body of work edited by J.M. Prellazo's, A. Palma and J. Medina stand out. Vid. J.M. Prellazo, *Manjón educador. Selección de sus escritos pedagógicos*, Magisterio Español, 1975; A. Manjón, *Escritos socio-pedagógicos. Educar enseñando*, edited by A. Palma Valenzuela, J. Medina Ocaña, Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 2009. The following are key 21st century works amongst the many studies analysing specific aspects of Manjón's contribution to pedagogy and standing as testimony to the ongoing interest and debate surrounding the man and his work in academe: C. Labrador, *Andrés Manjón y la educación para todos*, «Padres y Maestros», n. 262, 2001, pp. 31-34; A. Capitán Díaz, *Humanismo pedagógico en la España contemporánea (1875-1951)*, «Revista española de pedagogía», vol. 60, n. 23, 2002, pp. 461-480; J. Medina Ocaña, *Andrés Manjón*, Madrid, Fundación Emmanuel Mounier, 2006;

The major themes to his pedagogical approach can be found summarised in his 1897 inaugural lecture at the University of Granada, which he himself considered as the basis of Ave-María schooling. The lecture focused on the topic of «Pedagogical Conditions for a Good Education and Those We Are Missing», looking at: what pedagogy (“the science and art of education and instruction”) and education (“making perfect men”) meant to him; and how education should be singularly comprehensive and non-contradictory, beginning from the cradle and continuing gradually, being progressive, traditional and historical, organic and harmonious, active for both pupil and teacher, sensitive or aesthetical, moral, religious, open, artistic and manual²⁷. Moreover, in the later work *El Pensamiento del Ave-María* (1900)²⁸, Manjón set out a series of education principles which, according to him, were applied at his schools. Thus, he argued that the Ave-María schools he founded were i) “inclusive” and non-exclusionary; ii) open to the “transcendent side” of individuals as an inherent element of the education process; iii) mainstream institutions for the “ethical and moral instruction” of future citizens; iv) particularly “sensitive to the needs

J. Montero Vives, *Aportaciones de D. Andrés Manjón a la educación en España*, «Communio», v. 39, n. 2, 2006, pp. 485-552; C.M. Moreno Fernández, *La caracterización del Patrimonio Educativo: el caso de las escuelas del Ave María del Sacromonte en Granada*, «ERPH: revista electrónica de patrimonio histórico», n. 4, 2009, pp. 1-34.; C.M. Moreno Fernández, *Una escuela de Cármes. El patrimonio arquitectónico de las escuelas del Ave María de Granada*, «Cabás», n. 1, 2009, pp. 5-30; C. Sanchidrián, *Las escuelas del Ave María de Málaga. Cien años de educación social*, Málaga, Gráficas Urania, 2009; C.M. Moreno Fernández, *La herencia educativa de Andrés Manjón: aprender jugando en las escuelas del Ave María*, «Cabás», n. 4, 2010, pp. 13-24; A. Palma Valenzuela, *El canto escolar como expresión cultural y educativa*, «Revista de antropología experimental», n. 13, 2013, pp. 507-5014; J. Álvarez Rodríguez, A. Palma Valenzuela, *Vigencia del pensamiento educativo de Andrés Manjón en la formación del carácter*, «Participación educativa», vol. 4, n. 6, 2015, pp. 73-80; I. Real García, *La enseñanza de las matemáticas en Andrés Manjón*, in M.R. Sánchez García (ed.), *La construcción de la identidad pedagógica española: entre la Institución Libre de Enseñanza y las escuelas del Ave María*, Madrid, Síntesis, 2015, pp. 221-232; X. Torredadella Flix, J. Brasó Rius, *El patriotismo nacionalizador del padre Andrés Manjón y la “nueva pedagogía católica” en la educación física española (1889-1936)*, «REXE: Revista de estudios y experiencias en educación», vol. 18, n. 36, 2019, pp. 137-159; A. Palma Valenzuela, *Bibliografía sobre Andrés Manjón y Manjón y su obra (1869-2022)*, Granada, Universidad de Granada, 2023. Finally, Manjón continues to spark interest today for PhD theses on specific aspects of his contribution to pedagogy, or linked to his social and educational work, such as: A. Palma Valenzuela, *El seminario de maestros del Ave-María de Granada: un compromiso por la renovación social y educativa* [PhD thesis, University of Granada], 2003; C. Rostand Quijada, *Análisis y proyección actual de los principios morales del padre Manjón* [PhD thesis, Complutense University of Madrid], 2004; F.E. Delpierre Tosetto, *Andrés Manjón y la educación en virtudes. Proyección en sus obras* [PhD thesis, Francisco de Vitoria University, 2016].

²⁷ A. Manjón, *Discurso leído en la solemne apertura del curso académico de 1897 á 1898 en la Universidad Literaria de Granada por el Doctor Don Andrés Manjón catedrático numerario de la Facultad de Derecho*, Granada, Imprenta de Indalecio Ventura, 1897. Vid. A. Manjón, *Escritos socio-pedagógicos. Educar enseñando*, cit., pp. 129-169.

²⁸ A. Manjón, *El Pensamiento del Ave-María. Colonia escolar permanente establecida en los Cármes del camino del Sacro-Monte de Granada*, Granada, Imprenta de las Escuelas del Ave-María, 1900. Vid. A. Manjón, *Escritos socio-pedagógicos. Educar enseñando*, cit., pp. 171-295.

of the poor” from a disinterested evangelising approach; v) institutions that operated as a “seed for democracy” rather than through demagoguery; vi) not “stages for political activity” or spaces for ideological propaganda; vii) “a space for freedom and a platform for civic education” that respected all without any type of indoctrination; viii) educational institutions based on love and respect for the homeland; ix) places where “people saved people”, and x) home to “hope for society” rather than fear²⁹.

His extensive writings on pedagogy run to almost one hundred essays on education, including *El maestro mirando hacia dentro* (1915), *Hojas paterno-escolares ó el libro de los padres contrastados* (1916) and *El maestro mirando hacia fuera o de dentro afuera* (1923)³⁰. Scholars of the man and his work have, through these writings and Manjón’s work in general, highlighted essential aspects of his contribution to the idea of pupils as active subjects in their own education, as well as the concept of education as a joint exercise understood as a collaboration between different stakeholders. His approach to pedagogy also sets out his love for nature, outdoor education, the importance of play, a peaceful happy environment for education, manual crafts in schooling, a support for freedom in teaching and a condemnation of the state’s monopoly over education, the value of the family as an educational environment, a focus on education for women, didactic innovations, ecc. through a traditional Catholic concept or prism. It is with good reason that the harsh language used at times and inherent to 19th-century Spanish Catholicism, with apologetic overtones and intransigent elements, has been underlined³¹.

In the same vein, A. Palma and J. Medina have outlined the following repercussions of both the man and aspects of his contribution to pedagogy: a) his indictment of any attempt by the state to monopolise education (as he deemed it state intrusion into the lives of citizens and their right to educational freedom); b) his deeply traditional and religious beliefs (which led him to fight state secularism and oppose complete freedom of thought); c) his concept of religion as a source and basis for any educational approach, and of the Church as the only institution able to provide sense to crises in the era; d) his critical attitude regarding certain educational practices at religious schools where religious ideas

²⁹ A. Palma Valenzuela, J. Medina Ocaña, *Introducción*, in Manjón, *Escritos socio-pedagógicos. Educar enseñando*, cit., p. 57.

³⁰ Vid. A. Manjón, *El maestro mirando hacia dentro*, Madrid, Tipografía de la Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos, 1915; A. Manjón, *Hojas paterno-escolares ó el libro de los padres contrastados*, Granada, Imprenta del Ave-María, 1916; A. Manjón, *El maestro mirando hacia fuera o de dentro afuera*, Madrid, Tipografía de la Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos, 1923.

³¹ For example, affirming that religious instruction should be mandatory for everyone in schools, including children from non-Catholic families. Vid. J.M. Prellezo, *Andrés Manjón*, in B. Delgado Criado (ed.), *Historia de la educación en España y América. Vol. 3. La educación en la España contemporánea (1879-1975)*, Madrid, Fundación Santa María – Ediciones Morata, 1994, pp. 332-338.

were not incorporated into the general purpose of education, relegating spiritual content to religion classes instead of comprising a cross-cutting approach; e) his social awareness that led him to select popular solutions that promoted a “people’s education” to serve those most in need; f) his approach to and handling of socially relevant issues, such as democratisation in education or social care for sectors of the population abandoned by Church and state; g) his role as a social educator in line with Catholic social thinking and movements in Spain at the time, refusing to see education as a mere application of sociology, and h) his belief in the “historical protagonism of the people” and in the need to stand alongside them through educational and social betterment³².

In the words of A. Capitán Díaz, Manjón defended free, popular, social and Christian schooling. Education should be free for reasons of social justice. Popular, understood as education for and by the people, and dealing with the physical, intellectual, moral and social needs of children from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds. Social, as education should foster everyone’s involvement in their own communities: a harmonious relationship between families, the nation, religion and humanity. And Christian, since its essential constitutive element should be Christianity. According to Manjón, Christian education was an inalienable right of children and a mandatory duty for their parents³³.

As X. Torrebaddella and J. Brasó have recently underlined in a critical analysis of Manjón’s educational work, and specifically his contribution to physical education, his pedagogical approach needs to be questioned in terms of innovation. The use of physical education, games and children’s troops was solely aimed at providing military training for future citizens and indoctrinating them with spiritual and national unity. The authors conclude that Manjón was biased, playing on “symbolic violences” to underpin educational activity in line with a premeditated plan: feeding hatred towards heretics represented by anticlericalism, anti-Spanish nationalism, foreign liberalism, socialism, anarchism, masonry, ecc. Father Manjón’s take on physical education did not represent pedagogical renewal in traditional education at the time, since it continued to be a device for adult power. In short, the authors state Manjón was not an innovator in physical education but rather a patriotic traditionalist who indoctrinated pupils with the ideals of political, military and religious power through playful didactics and games, or physical recreations³⁴.

In this sense, it should come as no surprise that Father Manjón later became a doctrinal founder for National Catholicism, a movement that would

³² Palma Valenzuela, Medina Ocaña, *Introducción*, cit., pp. 51-53.

³³ A. Capitán Díaz, *Historia de la educación en España. II. Pedagogía Contemporánea*, Madrid, Dykimson, 1994, pp. 365-367.

³⁴ Torrebaddella Flix, Brasó Rius, *El patriotismo nacionalizador del padre Andrés Manjón y la “nueva pedagogía católica” en la educación física española (1889-1936)*, cit., pp. 151-152.

appropriate the man and his educational work³⁵. A clear example of this, and the desire to influence the general collective imagination by framing him as the ideal teacher in the Franco era, can be seen in the film under analysis here.

3. *The Francoist appropriation, vindication and reinterpretation of Father Andrés Manjón's pedagogical work: a synopsis and analysis of Forja de Almas (1943)*

Directed by Eusebio Fernández Ardavín (1898-1965), a scriptwriter, poster-designer and director, and scripted by Ricardo Mazo and Inocencio Guzmán, with biographical details from Federico Ortega, *Forja de Almas* is a LAISSA-produced biopic on the life and work of Father Andrés Manjón and his Ave-María schools. It was given the 1943 National Film Award from the Sindicato Nacional de Espectáculos.

The film opens with introductory biographical texts as a prelude to what we see on screen, and moves through key aspects about the protagonist the film aims to commend: Andrés Manjón's humble background (he was born in 1846 «in the small Castilian village of Sargentos whose school believed in 'spare the rod and spoil the child'»), the financial support provided by a family member for him to take a doctorate in law and win a university position through competitive examination in 1873, his discovery of a religious vocation in Granada a few years later and, in 1886 as canon at Sacromonte Abbey, his «torment at the ignorance and misery of the children there»³⁶. In turn, a poetic lofty voiceover narrates his interest in teaching the disadvantaged gypsy population in Granada

³⁵ It was no coincidence that his collected writings were republished in the early years of the Franco regime in the *Edición Nacional de las obras selectas de don Andrés Manjón*, as well as in ten volumes published between 1945 and 1956. His teachings would then go on to be included in curricula for future teachers. *Vid. Edición Nacional de las obras selectas de don Andrés Manjón*, 10 vols., Madrid, Patronato de las Escuelas del Ave-María, 1945-1956: I. *El maestro mirando hacia dentro*, Alcalá de Henares, Ed. Redención del Patronato Central para la Redención de Penas por el Trabajo, 1945, 370 pp.; II. *Hojas evangélicas y pedagógicas del Ave-María*, Alcalá de Henares, Imprenta y Talleres Penitenciarios, 1946, 331 pp.; III. *El catequista. Hojas meramente catequistas del Ave-María*, Alcalá de Henares, Imprenta Talleres Penitenciarios, 1946, 378 pp.; IV. *Tratado de la educación. Hojas educadoras y coeducadoras. Educar es completar hombre*, Alcalá de Henares, Imprenta Talleres Penitenciarios, 1947, 426 pp.; V. *El pensamiento del Ave-María. Modos de enseñar. Hojas pedagógicas*, Alcalá de Henares, Imprenta Talleres Penitenciarios, 1948, 411 pp.; VI. *El maestro mirando hacia fuera o de dentro a fuera*, Alcalá de Henares, Talleres de Ediciones Castilla, 1949, 448 pp.; VI. *El maestro mirando hacia fuera o de dentro a fuera. 2ª Parte. Y otros escritos*, Madrid, Gráficas Nebrija, 1951, 437 pp.; VIII. *Hojas pedagógicas del Ave-María*, Madrid, Gráficas Nebrija, 1955, 483 pp.; IX. *Discursos. Las escuelas laicas. El gitano et ultra. Cosas de antaño*, Madrid, Gráficas Nebrija, 1955, 381 pp.; X. *Hojas circunstanciales. Hojas históricas. Hojas cronológicas del Ave-María*, Madrid, Gráficas Nebrija, 1956, 556 pp.

³⁶ E. Fernández Ardavín (Director), *Forja de Almas* [Film], LAISSA, 1943, 1 min. 24 s. to 2 min.

to counter their lack of knowledge through what the film terms “redemptive pedagogy”³⁷.

The film depicts different personal virtues of Father Andrés Manjón: charitable, humble, good-natured and patient.

The first dramatised scene shows a stereotypical presentation of the gypsy population from a traditional sentimental perspective through folklore, music and flamenco, as well as derogatory features attributed to them such as roguery (one scene has a gypsy child causing mischief with a catapult, whilst another has a battle between gypsy boys and girls in Sacromonte which Manjón witnesses), or laziness and uncouthness (one gypsy character refuses the opportunity to find work even though he has no job).

In turn, the film also dramatises Andrés Manjón’s childhood schooling through the stereotypes and clichés of tradition, authoritarianism, repression, ecc. in flashback³⁸ – a type of schooling the main character states he does not want the orphaned children in Albaicín and Sacromonte to have to suffer, when he announces his wish to create a school for local children where play is used as a «new concept of education». The idea of establishing a new school occurs to Manjón when he is drawn to a chorus of young girls singing and discovers a modest school for girls in a cave run by a woman who confesses that more than a school, it is a type of life support where she teaches «subtraction, literacy, the little I know» to the few girls in attendance. There is little money since only a few families pay for schooling. Manjón decides to provide the woman with some financial assistance, and this is the seed of what would become his first Ave-María school in a village garden. He expresses his desire to locate the geography class in an outdoor garden set «amongst flowers to cheer them up, under a sun to make them strong, so they can play with one another and feel the joy of a childhood that is clean, healthy and God-loving»³⁹. The film contrasts the cave school first discovered by Manjón with the first Ave-María school for girls established in 1889 in an outdoor scene of a grammar class, where the female instructor teaches subject-object-verb and states «there is no grammatical sentence without the verb; and without God’s verb – his son – there would be no wisdom, creation or redemption»⁴⁰. In turn, two scenes are contrasted as a reflection on the transformation in Albaicín and Sacromonte thanks to Manjón’s Ave-María schools. The children are shown going to mass with their teachers in a type of procession with religious songs to Our Lady, transformed now into good Christians in contrast to the initial images of abandoned children playing soldiers outdoors and getting up to mischief. The scene of the Ave-María children attending mass enables the producers to present Father

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 min. 25 s. to 5 min. 21 s.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 16 min. 51 s. to 17 min. 58 s. *Vid. Pic. 1.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 20 min. 58 s. to 21 min. 39 s.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 21 min. 40 s. to 22 min. 33 s.

Pic. 1. A still showing typical traditional schooling experienced as a child by Andrés Manjón



Source: E. Fernández Ardavín (Director), *Forja de Almas* [Film], LAISSA, 1943.

Manjón's desire to create a chapel for them at school in order to support their religious education, since the schools provided patriotic and Christian schooling to orphaned children. «Who are we? We are the poor. Why do we come here? We come to tell Our Lady of the Rosary that she is the protector and mother of the Ave-María schools. We also want Granada to know that we aim to take abandoned children to teach and educate them as God commands and as the nation requires. What tools do we have to achieve this? We have the children's prayers, whose value is priceless, the hearts of good people and the generosity of all, since this enterprise falls to each and every one of us», declares Father Manjón from the pulpit⁴¹.

The film takes a time jump to 1897, showing one of the gypsy girls, María Jesús – a student at the first Ave-María school – now working as a teacher at one of the schools for girls founded by Manjón. Likewise, Manjón continues with his idea of building a chapel for Ave-María schools, with a high altar and vault, a gallery for catechism lessons and a large portico as a respite for the chapel. An outdoor geography class scene with Andrés Manjón at one of the

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 26 min. 30 s. to 27 min. 23 s.

Pic. 2. A still of the outdoor geography class for boys with Andrés Manjón



Source: E. Fernández Ardavín (Director), *Forja de Almas* [Film], LAISSA, 1943.

Ave-María schools showcases some of the objects used to teach at the schools (and still preserved today) such as a model of the continents, oceans and seas, and a globe. In this scene, Father Manjón uses positive reinforcement by giving a reward to the student who answers a question correctly. Beyond its outdoor setting, there is little educational innovation in this teaching practice⁴². A new time jump transports us to 1905 and a sewing class for girls with María Jesús, including popular and religious songs⁴³. The producers express a clear will to show differentiated instruction for boys and girls in these two consecutive sequences on school practice, with Father Andrés Manjón and his pupil-turned-teacher María Jesús: the boys attend geography class whilst the girls learn how to sew. Nonetheless, it should be highlighted that another later scene does show the female teacher in an outdoor class instructing the girls on where the sun rises and sets.

In a scene of a geometry class with Father Manjón – also set outdoors – we see how the subject is linked to religious instruction (in the same vein as

⁴² *Ibid.*, 33 min. 2 s. to 34 min. 28 s. *Vid.* Pic. 2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 34 min. 29 s. to 36 min. 46 s. *Vid.* Pic. 3.

Pic. 3. A still of the sewing class with the teacher and pupils



Source: E. Fernández Ardavín (Director), *Forja de Almas* [Film], LAISSA, 1943.

an earlier scene shows the female teacher link grammar and religion). Here, Manjón uses geometric representation of the triangle to teach «the cathetus is the base and represents faith, from where the leg rises up in hope, and the hypotenuse which links faith and hope in charity – the greatest of virtues»⁴⁴. Finally, another class with Father Manjón takes place in front of authorities and a visit from the Minister of the Interior to an Ave-María school. It shows a geography lesson (outdoors, as always) where Manjón teaches his pupils about what makes a good leader: «a good leader must be intelligent, amiable, cultured, kind-natured, fair, honourable, charitable. Raise your hand if you have all these qualities... Nobody? Do you understand why not everyone can be a leader? Never accept anything you don't know how to do well and properly»⁴⁵. In a further scene, Manjón uses a maths lesson to link the minuend, subtrahend and difference to Catholic morals where «the creed and commandments go hand-in-hand, therefore whoever teaches faith, teaches love and whoever diminishes faith, diminishes virtue. Nothing should be diminished from what God

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 45 min. 15 s. to 46 min. 10 s. *Vid.* Pic. 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1 h. 2 min. 55 s. to 1 h. 5 min. 51 s.

Pic. 4. A still of the outdoor geometry class with Andrés Manjón, where he links the topic to religious instruction



Source: E. Fernández Ardavín (Director), *Forja de Almas* [Film], LAISSA, 1943.

teaches and commands, there is no minuend, no subtrahend and no difference. It is a sum without any possible subtraction»⁴⁶.

In his efforts to improve living standards for children, and in addition to establishing the schools, Manjón also created a “Children’s Clothes Bank”, with support from a women’s association, as an act of charity from the wealthier classes. In turn, much of the film emphasises the work of the “Children’s Troops”. As Manjón instructed children in a speech: «Get used to military discipline. I want to remind you that as well as being a game, it is about learning. After God, the nation comes first before anything and anyone else, and it is our duty to defend it to the last. The mother country is love, respect and veneration of our history, language and beliefs. Whoever fails to love their mother is evil and is not worthy of society’s respect. Whoever fails to love the Spanish motherland is a degenerate and is not worthy of living in a nation he hates. The homeland is true history. The more it fragments, the more turbulent it becomes. We must sympathise rather than envy. This is why I say whoever merely has to

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 h. 6 min. 55 s. to 1 h. 7 min. 50 s.

Pic. 5. A still of the Children's Troop parade created by Andrés Manjón around the streets of Granada



Source: E. Fernández Ardavín (Director), *Forja de Almas* [Film], LAISSA, 1943.

command themselves should be more than happy. Your teachers will tell you who have been chosen as leaders and who are their soldiers»⁴⁷. The film places a particular spotlight on the parade of “Children’s Troops” around the streets of Granada, garnering praise for the work and dedication of Father Manjón and his schools, «more than 400 in Spain» as one of the parishioners states at the parade⁴⁸. The scene ends with a recap of the schools in Granada, Badajoz, Seville, Malaga, Valladolid, Palencia, Madrid, Zamora, Pamplona, Corunna, Bilbao, Burgos and Dos Hermanas⁴⁹.

The film also includes different characters, in addition to the main protagonists of Father Manjón and his disciple María Jesús, the gypsy girl who becomes a teacher at the Ave-María schools: her brother Manuel, a disabled man with a love of music; her boyfriend Carlos Jiménez, an atheist journalist who will eventually embrace faith through his love for María Jesús thanks to mediation from Father Manjón and a desire to convert him into «a good Christian

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 55 min. 15 s. to 56 min. 44 s.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 56 min. 45 s. to 59 min. 58 s. *Vid.* Pic. 5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 59 min. 59 s. to 1 h. 0 min. 18 s.

believer»; and Curro, who wants to attend the school as an adult to learn how to read and thus inspires Father Manjón to establish a night school for adults, thus broadening his educational project. These characters enable the film to include aspects such as charity, conversion to the faith and adult education. In this vein, particular importance is given to the romance plot between María Jesús and Carlos, and María Jesús' existential doubts about her love for Carlos, his being a non-believer and the temptation to elope to Madrid. A crucial scene shows María Jesús come across a procession dedicated to Our Lady of Agonies when she plans to leave for Madrid. This meeting leads her to reconsider her decision to escape with her lover and finally stay in Granada «returning to the path of goodness with her chosen family», as Father Manjón states in his prayer for her to return to her job as a teacher. Finally, after a conversation between Manjón and Carlos, the latter changes his beliefs and accepts to be married in the church to María Jesús, in a ceremony officiated by Father Manjón himself.

The film ends with another time jump to 1923 and the last days of Father Manjón. It details social signs of concern, affection and public recognition from both the church authorities, the upper classes in Granada and the working classes in Albaicín and Sacromonte. The final scene has Manjón in a show of modesty recommend María Jesús, her daughter and those around his deathbed continue working on his modest contribution. A voiceover then reminds us that «the saint died as he lived. In complete Christian acceptance whilst the sad bell song signals the lament of all of Spain. He gave his entire heart, life and soul to the nation. Victorious Spain will not forget the glory of its most illustrious son, Andrés Manjón»⁵⁰.

As this synopsis and analysis of *Forja de Almas* shows, the film reflects the main features the Franco regime wished to highlight and transmit to society: the ideal model teacher and innovative Catholic education by appropriating, vindicating and reinterpreting, at times in line with its own principles, the life and social and educational work of Father Andrés Manjón. Lest we forget, the film was given an award by the Falange for its educational vision linked to religious instruction and the glorification of patriotism in different guises, as well as military and patriotic training for children through the work of the “Children’s Troops”. The film’s different sequences showcase differentiated education for girls and boys which, despite its surface aura of innovation through outdoor lessons and the inclusion of play, leads to segregated, dogmatic and instructive schooling in different scenes. Moreover, it introduces clear elements that glorify National Catholicism and advocate for education as defined by the Franco regime, at times even placing a patriotic schooling model before spiritual instruction.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 h. 12 min. 19 s. to 1 h. 15 min. 10 s.

4. *Review and initial conclusions*

As previously mentioned, *Forja de Almas* (1943) was produced in the image and likeness of the US film *Boys Town* (1938), and as a National Catholicism response to it. Both films look at the work of the Catholic Church in educating poor boys and girls. *Forja de Almas*, directed by Eusebio Fernández Ardavín and scripted by Ricardo Mazo and Inocencio Guzmán, was rewarded by the Falange with the 1943 *Sindicato Nacional de Espectáculos* Award in an attempt to promote the film, since it did not receive broad support from the Spanish Catholic Church upon its premiere and throughout its run. *Forja de Almas* has been framed as the foundational film for the National Catholicism subgenre: charity, paternalism, equality between men from different classes and a driving force for social morals. It was also the first film of the Franco regime to have a priest as the main character, rather than being relegated to a supporting role.

The film exemplifies the Franco regime's interest in promoting its model teachers to the general public through cinema, under the auspices of the Falange, during a period where control over education was being disputed with the church. It is an example of how a mass medium – cinema – was instrumentalised to transmit a specific perspective on education and vindicate patriotic National Catholicism schooling, by appropriating the social and educational work of Andrés Manjón. The film includes elements that glorify National Catholicism through its protagonist and the educational work he undertook with orphaned children in the Ave-María schools in Granada. In this sense, the work becomes a defence for the educational approach promoted by the Franco regime which it wished to convey to society at large. *Forja de Almas* is also a testimony with high historical and educational value, given it reflects the Falange's approach to education in the early years of the Franco regime, drawing a direct link between the content of the film and its backers. As indicated, the Catholic Church was reticent about the impact of *Forja de Almas*. Its criticism lay in the Falange's appropriation of Manjón the icon, over-emphasising the priest's patriotism above his religious vocation.

In short, the film reflects the main features the Franco regime wished to spotlight in terms of model teachers and a supposedly innovative Catholic education. Lest we forget, the film sets out an educational vision linked to religious instruction and the glorification of patriotism in different guises, as well as military and patriotic training for children through the work of the "Children's Troops". It showcases differentiated and segregated education for girls and boys which, despite its surface aura of innovation through outdoor lessons and the inclusion of play, leads to segregated, dogmatic and instructive schooling across different scenes. Consequently, the film includes clear elements that exalt National Catholicism. It also advocates for the Franco regime's approach to education by appropriating, vindicating and reinterpreting, in line with its own principles, the life of Father Manjón as the ideal for model teaching and education practices, at times even placing patriotic schooling above any spiritual vocation.