

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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Lola the Coalgirl / Lola la Piconera (1952)

Luis Lucía Mingarro (1914-1984)

OVERVIEW

Auteur Luis Lucía Mingarro was a prolific director and screenwriter for the principal film studio in twentieth-century Madrid, CIFESA. Born in Valencia in 1914, Luis eventually moved to Madrid when his father became the Spanish Minister of Communications in 1935. As a young man, Luis studied law and worked as CIFESA's primary attorney. Over time, however, he realized that he had a talent for screenwriting and casting. By the late 1940s, Lucía had established himself as a respected film director under Franco's regime. Like his contemporary Juan de Orduña, Lucía excelled at historical epics, melodramas, and musical comedies. He wrote and directed films well into the 1970s. He died in Madrid in 1984.

Film *Lola the Coalgirl* (1952) is a black-and-white historical drama and musical set during the Peninsular War (also known as the Spanish War of Independence), which lasted from 1808-1812, roughly. The timeline for this particular film is the Siege of Cádiz (1810-1812), when the Napoleonic French forces invaded and occupied this crucial port city in Andalucía. The plot involves a young Spanish innkeeper, the eponymous Lola, who falls in love with a French captain. The role of the Captain Lefevre was played by Virgilio Texeira, who was one of the most popular romantic leads in CIFESA's historical epics. He played the major love interests in two big hits of the same period, *Agustina de Aragón* (1950) and *The Lioness of Castile* (1951).

Background *Lola the Coalgirl* is yet another successful Spanish historical drama of the early 1950s. The screenplay was based on the play written by José María Pemán, which writers José Luis Colina, Ricardo Blasco, and Luis Lucía himself adapted into a screenplay. In addition, the filmmakers leaned into Andalusian song and dance styles in order to create Flamencan musical interludes. Juanita Reina, the actress who played Lola, was a well-known cabaret singer and lent her vocal talents to the film's many musical numbers. The dominate studio in Francoist Spain, CIFESA, produced and distributed the film.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

<i>Lola</i>	Andalusian innkeeper and chanteuse
<i>Captain Gustavo Lefevre</i>	Napoleonic soldier who grew up in Cádiz
<i>Mariscal (Marshal) Víctor</i>	Gustavo's uncle and marshal of the French forces
<i>Rafael Otero</i>	Spanish rebel and Lola's suitor
<i>Juan de Acuña</i>	Congressman who betrays Spain
<i>General Albuquerque</i>	Spanish general who defends Cádiz

SYNOPSIS

In the midst of the Spanish War of Independence in 1810, the French troops under Napoleon had tried to take over Andalucía (the southern-most province of Spain). After they successfully sack Seville at the beginning of the film, the French set their sights on Cádiz, another important port city on the Mediterranean.

The French marshal Víctor enlists his nephew, Captain Gustavo Lefevre, with spying on and negotiating with the inhabitants of Cádiz. His intention is to gain the city's peaceful surrender in order to avoid a battle, and the marshal knows that his nephew grew up with the Andalusians—and therefore understands the Spanish culture and mindset. Gustavo reluctantly agrees to act as ambassador but admits that he has an old flame in Cádiz—the songstress and innkeeper, Lola. Coincidentally, one of the prisoners of war from the battle of Seville is Rafael Otero, who also knows Gustavo and who also is in love with Lola.

Gustavo visits Cádiz and relays his uncle's mandate of surrender, but the gaditanos, from the Spanish general Albuquerque to the peasants in the street (including Lola), answer that they will never surrender. When Gustavo's diplomatic efforts fail, the French decide to collect intelligence instead. The pedantic congressman, Juan de Acuña, acts as a spy for the French while he makes patriotic speeches in Madrid.

Acuña and Gustavo meet at Lola's inn and make a plan to hand over the Spanish strategy to the French. Acuña uses his friendship with Lola (and Lola's feelings for Gustavo) to convince her to carry a message to Gustavo and then to General Ballesteros, but instead of the actual orders, it is a blank piece of paper.

Gustavo accompanies Lola on her mission and offers to run away with her so that they will not have to be political enemies. The two share a magical night with a tribe of Roma travelers and flamenco dancers, but she decides to leave the camp in the middle of the night. After attempting to deliver the message to Ballesteros, Lola is intercepted and arrested by the French. The marshal reluctantly sentences Lola to death, and the French execute her before Gustavo realizes what has happened. Gustavo and Rafael mourn their lost love together.

SCENES

Drunken Victory Celebration As a male chorus sings a hearty march, the narrator explains that the French Napoleonic forces successfully took Seville in the Peninsular War and have set their sights on Cádiz. The camera moves from a flag with the French coat of arms to a rowdy post-battle scene. There are several panoramic shots of the French troops dancing, singing, and leap-frogging over each other. Many are extremely drunk and stumble about a courtyard, while another soldier roasts a pig over an open flame. An especially drunk soldier keels over on the porch in front of the French headquarters.



The Marshal and the Captain Discuss the Next Moves The captain opens the door to the headquarters and complains about the soldiers' drunkenness, but the marshal says "let them have their fun—we don't know what tomorrow will bring." Inside, Víctor and Gustavo discuss the next moves in the war. The marshal declares that as Spain goes, so goes Europe. He brags about the increasing power of the French Empire, which has spread from the sands of Egypt to the snowbanks of Russia. The two soldiers admit that invading Spain was harder than expected, although Gustavo reminds the marshal that he lived among the Spaniards and understands them. The marshal retorts that Gustavo would have been better off growing up in France rather than being a diplomat to the Andalusians. He also accuses Gustavo of being too soft on the Spanish in battle, but Gustavo replies that France and the Emperor always come first. The marshal offers a toast to the French Empire.



Gustavo "Interrogates" the Captured Spanish Prisoners As the marshal and the Gustavo toast the French victory, a soldier enters and reports that there are Spanish prisoners from Seville who were captured. Gustavo goes out to interrogate three terrified prisoners and recognizes the most defiant one as his childhood friend, Rafael de Otero. He takes Rafael aside and tells him that he will interrogate him "unofficially" so that they can talk freely. Gustavo asks after Lola, and Rafael replies that she is still a coal girl in Cádiz. Rafael mentions that she may have another suitor whom he didn't recognize, and Gustavo becomes agitated. When the captain threatens Rafael, the Spaniard reminds him that their conversation is not a true interrogation.



Gustavo Asks Rafael about Andalusian Sentiment Gustavo backs off and asks Rafael if he and the other gaditanos remain as fiery and determined to fight the French as they have been. Rafael says yes and that he will fight the French before he will give up any Andalusian territory to Napoleon. Gustavo remarks that perhaps Lola will be less loyal to Spain when she learns that he is a French captain. Rafael

warns Gustavo that he should quit perusing Lola, because she will always rail against the French—if not him, then his uniform. Gustavo swears never to give her up.

Lola Sings at the “Coal Heap” Inn There is a close up of a street sign that say “Coal girl Heap.” Inside, the tavern is packed with patrons, most of whom look adoringly at Lola as she sings a song about Andalucía. Lola walks around the inn and flirts with the men as she sings; she wears a class black mantilla. One man with a long, crocheted cap gets up and heckles her for singing folk songs. Lola retorts that if he doesn’t like it, the “two of you can leave—you and your cap.” The audience laughs at the clever insult, and the man sits back down. The men join in and sing the chorus as Lola continues with her song. She ends with a series of vocal runs and a flourish.



Rafael Reports on the War The French marshal asks Rafael to deliver a message when he goes back to Cádiz: the French are coming with huge numbers, and the city had better surrender to the French or be completely razed. Rafael reports back to the Spanish generals, and everyone agrees that the French numbers (50,000 troops) will be too many to defeat. Still, the Spanish general suggests that their geographical location (surrounded by the Mediterranean) will help them. They decide to place troops and canons on a hill facing the sea. Acuña, one of the advisors, doubts the success of this plan.

Rafael Visits the Inn Rafael walks with a local doctor down the streets of Cádiz and becomes excited as they get close to the inn and hear Lola singing. The doctor declares the inn to be the most successful business in town, although he admits that he had to loan Lola some money to get by on occasion. The doctor implies that Rafael should have stayed, married Lola, and supported her rather than running off to war. Rafael climbs the stairs as Lola vocalizes, and he announces his presence by telling her that her voice has not aged. She greets him warmly. He asks whether she still loves him, but she does not give him a straight answer.

The French Arrive at Cádiz The French stand outside the city gates and notice that the doors are closed, which is a sign of Andalusian defiance. The marshal tells Gustavo that they will need to shoot canons at the city to let the gaditanos “feel like heroes.” After several rounds of fire, the general orders the captain to negotiate an unconditional surrender. Gustavo rides along the beach on white steed, then is blindfolded at the city gates. When he enters, the residents rush to watch the procession. The women comment that the French negotiator is handsome, and Lola decides to show off by singing at him. The crowd cheers her on, and she walks alongside the blindfolded Gustavo, singing about the Spanish resistance to the French artillery. The lyrics explain how the gaditanos will laugh in the face of the bombs and cavalries and keep fighting. When she finishes, the crowd applauds. Lola quips that they are applauding not for her performance, but for the sentiment of the lyrics. Although still blind-folded, Gustavo recognizes Lola’s voice.



The Spanish and French Officers Decide How to Proceed At the Spanish headquarters, the generals discuss the impending attack on Cádiz. Gustavo, now acting as diplomat, explains that the marshal Víctor wants them to surrender the city. The Spanish general replies that they only recognize one king—Fernando VII. One of the Spanish officials reads (out loud) a threatening letter to the French declaring that Cádiz will outlast the French empire and the Spaniards will fight to the last breath. The camera cuts to the marshal reading the letter at the French headquarters. Gustavo waits patiently to discuss next moves. The marshal reports that the letter he is reading is not what Gustavo thought it said. Gustavo reads the letter and realizes that the text is actually from the Spaniard who did not agree with holding the line--Juan de Acuña. In the text, Juan offers to defect from the Spanish and meet in secret in San Sebastián. Gustavo warns the marshal that a traitor cannot be trusted. The marshal commands that Gustavo return to Cádiz and investigate the true situation.

Passionate Speech at Congress Acuña gives a long, pedantic speech in front of the Cortes. He lauds the spirit of Spanish independence and alludes to several historical events (such as when the Celtic Spaniards resisted invading Roman troops in 133 BCE). The members from the other party call Acuña the nightingale of congress and make fun of his showboating. One member warns of losing the cultural war to France, even if the Spanish manage to keep French troops out of Cádiz. When Acuña finally stops talking, he declares that he will sit down on the rock of “popular pride.” Another congressman quips that it must be a very hard rock, and Acuña retorts that the “opposition” will act as his pillow.



The Spanish Talk Strategy After Acuña’s speech, the congressmen, generals, and president of Spain meet to discuss how to defend Cádiz. They agree that the best defense remains placing troops and canons on the hill so that the French are trapped in the strait of San Fernando. Moreover, the mission is to push the French back further towards the sea so that their canons won’t reach as far. The president commands that spies relay the plans to General Ballesteros, who will lead the Spanish defense. Acuña asks for the exact date of the battle, but the general says he hasn’t decided yet.



Acuña Visits the Inn and Lola At the inn, Lola ends her “set” by acknowledging Acuña in the audience and calling him a patriot. She goes over to chat with him. When he asks how she is doing, Lola replies that she has two hard jobs: running the inn and keeping up the soldiers’ spirits as they go into battle. Acuña leaves and tells the soldiers in the audience to keep fighting the good fight while he advocates for liberty at congress.

Gustavo Tries to Meet with Acuña at Night Later that night, Gustavo rows himself into the harbor at Cádiz. When the watchmen interrogate him, Gustavo claims that he works for General Ballesteros and has a “secret mission” to convey. The watchmen let him pull in and get out of the boat. Inside the city, the soldier who accompanies Gustavo recognizes his face. The two draw their weapons and shoot at each other. Gustavo fires the mortal shot just as Acuña emerges from the shadows. Acuña points him in a direction so that he can flee the scene. Gustavo runs into Lola’s inn and realizes that he was shot in the shoulder. Acuña remains in the streets and calls out for the police. When they arrive, he commands that they search for the traitor.

Lola Helps Gustavo Lola sings another jaunty song, and Rafael watches her admiringly. When she finishes her performance, Rafael compliments her as she walks off to the kitchen. Lola enters the dining room and is surprised by a wounded Gustavo. She realizes that he is severely wounded and losing too much blood. Gustavo lays down in bed and asks to kiss Lola’s pendant. She agrees as long as he is still a “believer.” Gustavo reminds her that the pedant was his present to her long ago. Lola hardens and declares that she will always be loyal to her country.



Lola and Juan de Acuña Pretend to Search for Gustavo As Lola re-enters the tavern, Juan de Acuña appears and tells her that he saw a strange man sneaking into the inn. Lola feigns ignorance and offers to search for the thief with Juan. The two walk around the kitchen area. Acuña accuses her of hiding a French official, and Lola laughs heartily. Upon pressing her, Lola admits that an old lover visited her, and he is like the water that always returns to the mill. Juan asks her to leave so that he can interrogate the Frenchman.

Juan Gives Gustavo Inside Information Gustavo, now upright and in a sling, lets Juan into the bedroom. Juan asks about his wound, and Gustavo replies that it is just a scratch. Juan chides him for hiding in Lola’s inn, and Gustavo explains that even though he longed to visit Lola again, he will return to France as soon as he can. Juan reveals the Spanish strategy to defend Cádiz but admits that he does

not know the date of the battle yet. The congressman suggests that the French look for an emissary to travel outside the city and contact Ballesteros, as that will be the sign that the battle is about to begin. Gustavo asks whether this is a trick, but Juan swears that he is on the side of the French—and that he requires a fee to seal the deal. Gustavo criticizes his opportunistic, traitorous attitude but offers Acuña 30 coins.

Lola and Gustavo Flirt and Quarrel When Acuña leaves, Gustavo emerges from the bedroom. Lola and Gustavo reminisce, and Gustavo admits that he never forgot Lola or her voice. She teases him about his presumptuous nature and French accent when they were kids. Gustavo recites the lyrics to a love song that Lola used to sing to him, and Lola warns him that the meaning of the song has changed. She grabs her guitar and sings Gustavo the new lyrics, which describe her depression when Gustavo left her. Gustavo tries to kiss her at the end of the song, but she blocks him with her hand. Gustavo admits that he is still in love with her.



Rafael Confronts Gustavo Rafael appears at the top of the stairs and interrupts Gustavo and Lola's romantic conversation. Rafael reminds Lola that she asked him to help her lock up, and she replies that she forgot. Rafael descends the staircase and approaches Gustavo. He asks Lola whether she is willing to love a French soldier who interrogates prisoners. Lola declares that she only sees Gustavo as an old friend, and Gustavo confirms that nothing happened. Rafael offers to turn a blind eye and facilitate Gustavo's departure from Cádiz—rather than turning him in as a spy. Gustavo thanks him and bids Lola farewell.



Acuña Looks for Gustavo Acuña returns to the inn and knocks on the bedroom door. Lola appears and tells him that the "French one" is no longer there. Acuña accuses her of conspiracy, but Lola explains that she was watching the show in the tavern and that the intruder probably rode out in the middle of the night.

The Spanish Recruit New Soldiers Several common gaditanos sign up to fight the French. The first is a bumbling peasant, while the second has some experience. When Rafael shows up, the registrar tells him there are no more officer positions. Rafael, unfazed, tells the man to sign him up as a regular soldier. The camera cuts to Gustavo and the marshal walking in the streets of Paris. The marshal expresses irritation that the Spaniards have not made a move for seven days. Gustavo replies that either they have given up on the military operation or they were purposefully leading him astray. Gustavo declares that he wouldn't mind attacking Cádiz after the Spanish deceived him.



The Spanish President and Generals Pull the Trigger Back in Madrid, the president and generals are pleased at how many Spaniards volunteered to fight. The general decides that it is time to send for Ballesteros and begin the battle. The president asks whom they should send on the mission. Acuña casually suggests that a woman might be a better choice. When the others scoff at the idea, Acuña reminds them that beautiful women are a weakness for the French. He further suggests that due to her craftiness, passion, wit and seductiveness, Lola would be a good choice. The others agree that Lola should be the spy but that she should memorize the message rather than leave a paper trail.

Acuña Convinces Lola to Be a Spy At the inn, Acuña explains the Spanish plan to Lola, who is willing to help (at first). When Acuña reveals his alternate plan—that she is to deliver the message to Gustavo instead of General Ballesteros—Lola becomes increasingly alarmed and vows not to be a traitor. Acuña reminds her that love and war don't mix and that she must serve her country. Lola looks out the window with a pained expression. She tells Acuña that she may not be able to deliver the message when the moment arrives.

Lola Travels to the Border The camera fades to a shot of Lola, in shadow, walking on a beach at night. She sings resolutely of her mission and what is happening to her in real time. She continues walking on a hill, where there is a long shot of French soldiers approaching her. The soldiers ask her questions, then guide her in another direction. She eventually enters French headquarters, and she flirts with Gustavo as if she only came to visit him.



The Marshal Reacts to the Spanish Plans Gustavo delivers Acuña's message to the marshal, and the Frenchman creates a line formation for the invasion of Cádiz—including a line for the strait of San Fermín. When the troops leave with their marching orders, Gustavo stays behind and confesses his worries to his uncle. Gustavo admits that he carries a torch for Lola and that she was the one who hid him and treated his wounds at the inn. The marshal remarks that their relationship is a beautiful, war-time romance. Gustavo reminds his uncle that without Lola, there would not be a French victory. The marshal commands Gustavo to keep spying on his love but also to avoid "tragic endings."

Lola and Gustavo Take a Lover's Stroll Lola and Gustavo walk through a field near the headquarters. Gustavo asks Lola about a flower in her hair, and she simply replies that she plucked it from a flowerbed. Gustavo offers to buy her jewelry or a trinket, but Lola declares that she can make her own necklace easily. When a gypsy caravan appears on a nearby road, Lola walks out to greet them.

Longing for the Gypsy Life There is a wide shot of a series of covered wagons and men walking alongside; all the travelers sing a folk song about their lives of wandering. Gustavo observes that gypsies have their own ethnic identity and their homeland is wherever they rest their head. He remarks wistfully that he wished he could live in a similar way without being tied to a nation and forced to fight in wars. Lola agrees and adds that gypsies also have the freedom to marry whomever they love. Lola begins to sing with the caravan as they walk together. The coachmen in front invite Lola to get in the caravan, and an old woman shouts at her: "Keep singing to us, young one!"



Jokes and Serenades at the Campfire The camera cuts to a campfire later that night. Lola tells jokes to the tribe, and they remark that she might have a few drops of gypsy blood in her. When Gustavo expresses his yearning to be a vagabond, the elders invite him to join the tribe. Lola quips that Gustavo might also have Roma blood, as he is probably not the first wayward Frenchman to hook up with a caravan. Everyone laughs, and Lola decides to sing a flamenco song and dance while the Roma guitarists play. Later, a group of male dancers jump up on a platform and dance a vigorous flamenco, followed by a sensual female dancer who gyrates close to the campfire. The scene turns into a lavish production number of several minutes.



Gustavo Asks Lola to Run Away with Him After watching the joyous flamenco dance, Gustavo asks Lola if they could run away together. Lola asks him to consider his duty as a Frenchman, but Gustavo retorts that his homeland lies in her. He asks her to imagine a happy ending and says: "Let's dream." A couple of flamenco dancers approach and begin a new sequence—this time, the couple dance a balletic pas de deux that expands into a dream ballet sequence reminiscent of Rogers and Hammerstein musicals. In one moment in the ballet, the dancer playing "Lola" opens the gates literally and metaphorically. The dancer performs a series of turns in the finale and ends the dance by climbing up into the caravan. Lola emerges as "herself," which marks the end of the dream ballet.

Lola Leaves the Roma Camp Lola sneaks out of the cabin and approaches a young Roma woman who is sleeping on the ground. The young woman wakes up, and Lola reveals that she is going to leave Gustavo before morning. Lola expresses her undying love for Gustavo and tells the other woman that she does not care that he is a French soldier. The girl vows to convey Lola's message of love to the "deserving gentleman." Lola runs off through the forest, but a French soldier sees her departure.



Lola Reports to the Spanish Lola runs into an inn and says she has a message for General Ballesteros. The employees of the inn do not know of the meeting, but one young man offers to deliver the message. Upon mounting his horse, however, the French soldiers ambush the inn and shoot the rider. The camera cuts to Madrid, where the general reports that he will give the order to attack. The general and the president assume that Lola managed to deliver the orders to General Ballesteros. Acuña agrees and plays along with the assumption, and he even offers to give an inspirational speech to the troops before they depart.

The Marshal Tells Lola the Truth When Lola is brought before the French marshal, he shows her that the paper she was carrying was blank. Lola realizes that Acuña has tricked her and remarks that she ended up acting as if she were a spy for the French. The marshal praises her bravery but reminds her that if the gaditanos had caught her with a blank paper, she would have suffered a worse fate. He goes on to tell Lola that if the French officers had not captured her, he would have let her go and swept the whole incident under the rug. Lola thanks him for his kindness but realizes that her destiny is to be a martyr for Spain. She begs the marshal not to let Gustavo know what happened to her, and he agrees. Lola is escorted out to the beach by several French troops.

Lola is Executed on the Beach Shortly after Lola leaves, Gustavo enters the wine cellar to check in with his uncle. The marshal suggests that Gustavo move back to Paris and get away from war. The camera cuts back and forth between the marshal and Gustavo drinking wine and Lola preparing herself for execution on the beach. When a French soldier offers her a blindfold, Lola declines and instead asks to look out over the ocean. Back in the wine cellar, the two men hear the rifles fire, and Gustavo is rattled. His uncle calms him by describing the beauty of Paris, and the marshal declares that for the first time, he is tired enough to long for peace. The French soldiers carry Lola's body away, and one of the soldiers enters the wine cellar. He hands Lola's cross to the marshal, and Gustavo realizes that Lola was just executed. The marshal reports mournfully that he did his duty. Gustavo runs out, screaming in anguish.



Gustavo and Rafael Mourn Lola Gustavo and French troops carry Lola's body towards the city gates. Rafael and the Spanish troops spot the procession and come down to meet them. Rafael sees Lola's body and runs to her side. Gustavo comforts him and says that he understands Rafael's pain. The Spanish declare that they will take Lola's body back to Cádiz and give her a heroine's burial. Gustavo kisses Lola's hand and says that her song will echo in his ears forever. Rafael and Gustavo agree to a truce and shake hands. There is a montage of flashbacks of Gustavo and Lola's romance which ends with their declaration of love at the campfire. The last shot is an extreme close-up of Gustavo, whose eyes well up with tears.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

LOLA LA PICONERA

Lola is the beautiful and intriguing owner of La Piconera inn. She is charming and seductive, and she is witty both in her performances and in conversation. Her passion and loyalty extend both to Gustavo and to the state, with the latter winning out in the end.

Witty Along with being a good performer in general, Lola has a quick wit that she uses both in her songs and in conversation. She chooses the song whose lyrics best reflect the situation, and she has good comebacks when the crowd heckles her—most notably, when she takes on the surly patron with the knit cap. When Lola and Gustavo spend a night with the gypsies, Lola comes up with jokes on the spot that delight the hosts.

Passionate Lola is passionate with everything that she does, from running the inn to expressing herself through song. She wears her patriotism on her sleeve and animates the troops. At the end of the film, she is almost willing to abandon her mission to run away with Gustavo.

Loyal Although she plays coy with Gustavo on his return, it is obvious that Lola carries a torch for her childhood love. She remains loyal to him by doing Acuña's bidding, then by asking the marshal to hide her execution from Gustavo in order to spare him pain. Lola is loyal to her country in that she is willing to give up her chance at love (and ultimately, her life) in order to help the Spanish gain their independence from France.

CAPTAIN GUSTAVO LEFEVRE

Gustavo is a distinguished soldier in Napoleon's army, but he also identifies somewhat as a Spanish citizen. As the star-crossed lover in the film, he is charming and handsome, but also his conflicted nature imbues him with sadness and yearning.

Yearning Throughout the film, Gustavo yearns for love and a sense of belonging to a homeland. He admits and declares his love for Lola on multiple occasions, and he even tells Rafael (during the interrogation) that he will never give her up. His passion for Lola and his disillusion with the war leads Gustavo to "run off" with the gypsies, plan an elopement with Lola, and divorce himself from the French Empire.

Conflicted Like many heroes of the Spanish historical dramas, Gustavo must choose between love and duty; he also must sacrifice for the war effort. Unlike other heroes, however, Gustavo also suffers from an identity crisis—his family and position lie firmly with the French Empire and Parisian culture, yet he grew up in Spain and understands the Andalusian culture intimately. As a result, Gustavo does not truly believe in the French cause.

MARSHAL VÍCTOR

As a high-ranking officer in Napoleon's army, one could assume that the marshal is the villain in this pro-Spanish propaganda film. Instead, the marshal's character is nuanced and complicated, and one could argue that he espouses the audience's perspective. Despite fulfilling his duty, the marshal shows empathy for both his nephew and Lola.

Practical The marshal is framed as an efficient and wise officer in the French army. He strategizes well both in regards to battle and to espionage, which is evident when he describes the uniqueness of the Spanish campaign (as opposed to the "easier" conquest of Egypt). The marshal also understands diplomacy and realizes that Gustavo's connection to Andalusian culture might help avoid a battle all together.

Empathetic The marshal feels compassion for his troops, his nephew, and even Lola. Even at the very beginning of the film, the marshal allows the French soldiers to have a drunken party because he knows how grueling the invasion of Spain has been. Because he is weary of war, the marshal tries to avoid conflict and spare death. He implies that he would like Gustavo and Lola to be together, and he

even suggests turning a blind eye to Lola's espionage. He tries to hide Lola's execution from his nephew to spare him pain.

THEMES

SOCIETY

National and Regional Identity As discussed above, the political conflict of this period is the Peninsular War (1808-1814), which included War of Spanish Independence, in which the French army under Napoleon attempted to occupy various parts of Spain. The fight to regain Spanish autonomy becomes the driving force for the Andalusian characters in this film. The film mostly takes place in Cádiz, a port city in southern Spain, but there are also a handful of scenes that occur in Madrid at the Cortes, or Spanish parliament. In both locations, the Spanish resent the French invaders and refuse to give them more territory. In addition, the Spaniards are in agreement that Fernando VII is the rightful king of Spain and vow to oust Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon's brother. Unlike other films about this period (such as *Agustina de Aragón*), the future of the Spanish nation-state and the nature of the battles is not the primary focus of the film. Instead, director Luis Lucía leans into the regional culture of Cádiz and Andalucía in general. The gaditanos express a defiance and bravery that even the Sevillians did not have, and there are several quotes about the specific character of the city. On top of the characterization of Cádiz, the film revels in Andalusian performance: Lola sings five songs throughout the film, and the "gypsy" tribe performs an elaborate flamenco ballet that lasts for over twelve minutes. Lucía suggests that Andalusian culture is synonymous with gypsy songs and flamenco dancing, which is a stereotype that Franco would continue to embrace throughout his dictatorship.

Illustrative Moment: Lola Sings Defiantly at the Negotiator

The women comment that the French negotiator is handsome, and Lola decides to show off by singing at him. The crowd cheers her on, and she walks alongside the blindfolded Gustavo, singing about the Spanish resistance to the French artillery. The lyrics explain how the gaditanos will laugh in the face of the bombs and cavalries and keep fighting. When she finishes, the crowd applauds. Lola quips that they are applauding not for her performance, but for the sentiment of the lyrics.

This scene characterizes both national and regional patriotism and culture. The song is about resistance to French interlopers and fighting back, which expresses the Spanish pride and resilience on a national level. In addition, Lola's Andalusian style of singing and moving reminds the viewer that the action takes place in southern Spain and shows the audience the fiery character of Cádiz, specifically.



POLITICS

Conflict There are several conflicts at play in the film. On the macro level, the Peninsular War did not just "resolve" the question of Spain's independence, but also involved the control of Europe in general and established which country (England, France, Portugal, or Spain) would become the "winner." The film focuses specifically on France versus Spanish Andalusia, but the impending battle of Cádiz is framed within the larger context of a waning Napoleonic Empire and Spain trying to find itself as a modern nation-state. Even though Spain eventually gains its independence and writes a democratic constitution, the country immediately installs an authoritarian ruler, Fernando VII, who rules Spain from 1814 to his death in 1833. On a micro level, almost all of the main characters suffer from internal conflict. Gustavo and Lola must choose between love and duty (see those themes below), Rafael must choose between friendship and duty (which is also complicated by his love for Lola), and Marshal Víctor must choose between loyalty to family and duty. For the most part, the characters reluctantly choose duty over their relationships, but they all suffer bitterly for having made that choice. These four characters all experience a yearning to escape from their positions and duties so that they can live life the way they wish: Marshal Víctor wants to retire and retreat to a life of Parisian flowers, and Gustavo and Lola plan an elopement and revel in Flamencan fantasy. The tragedy is that no one can follow their bliss—war destroys everything. The one character who is not conflicted is the villain, Juan de Acuña. Along with being a traitor and a liar, the viewer senses that Acuña is not motivated by conviction or a particular ideology, but

rather wishes to get ahead within the French Empire. In other words, his selfish wants trump any concern for the other characters or for the Spanish state in general.

Illustrative Moment: Lola and a Wounded Gustavo Reunite

Lola enters the dining room and is surprised by a wounded Gustavo. She realizes that he is severely wounded and losing too much blood. Gustavo lays down in bed and asks to kiss Lola's pendant. She agrees as long as he is still a "believer." Gustavo reminds her that the pendant was his present to her long ago. Lola hardens and declares that she will always be loyal to her country. This moment of reunification signals to the viewer that Gustavo and Lola still love each other, but Lola holds resentment for both Gustavo's abandonment and his allegiance to Napoleon. Concurrently, she cannot refrain from helping him with his wound and harboring him as a spy—her love trumps her patriotism. Gustavo, for his part, is wounded literally and figuratively. He is shot because of his mission for the French war effort; metaphorically, he carries the open wound of Cupid's arrow. He will never recover from the latter.



RELATIONSHIP

Love As with many other historical dramas and musicals of the 1940s and 50s, the main characters must choose between their love for the "enemy" and their love of country. Lola and Gustavo yearn for each other from afar, as they grew up together and had a romance before Gustavo returned to France. Like Romeo and Juliet, Gustavo and Lola plan for an elopement and escape—where, in Gustavo's words, national duty and war do not matter. Despite their hope for a better future, the two become star-crossed lovers, with Lola sacrificing herself for the supposed mission and Gustavo bearing the weight of his own sacrifice (a similar ending occurs in Lucía's most famous historical drama, *The Orsini Princess*). Unlike the characters in other Lucía dramas, however, Gustavo's loyalty to France wavers throughout the film. Despite his high position in the military, his heart seems to belong in Cádiz, where he grew up. In addition to Lola and Gustavo's complicated love affair, there is also the erotic triangle created with Rafael. Curiously, the men's rivalry plays out in the context of war more than in their respective courtships of Lola. The rivalry itself never lasts long, as both men "release" the other from imprisonment or arrest; moreover, the men comfort each other as they say goodbye to Lola's body. In addition, Marshal Víctor expresses affection and concern for both his nephew and Lola and wishes, like Gustavo, that the lovers could live together in peace. In this sense, the main characters share solidarity and empathize with each other throughout the film.

Illustrative Moment: Marshal Víctor Senses a Tragic Ending for the Lovers

When the troops leave with their marching orders, Gustavo stays behind and confesses his worries to his uncle. Gustavo admits that he carries a torch for Lola and that she was the one who hid him and treated his wounds at the inn. The marshal remarks that their relationship is a beautiful, war-time romance. Gustavo reminds his uncle that without Lola, there would not be a French victory. The general commands Gustavo to keep spying on his love but also to avoid "tragic endings." This moment alerts the audience to the reality that Gustavo and Lola will not end up together; it also allows for a graceful transition from battle plans and war strategy to the fantasy dance sequence and climax at the end of the film. The marshal takes on the position of a narrator or even audience member who roots for the lovers and also dreads the tragic ending.



ETHICS

Duty and Patriotism

As explained above, the virtuous characters in the film vacillate between their passion for the state and their affection for each other. Gustavo identifies as both French and Spanish, and he feels a sense of duty towards both his uncle and Napoleon and a love / concern for Lola, Rafael, and Cádiz. Although he proclaims allegiance to the French Empire in the early scenes, Gustavo struggles to put aside his love for Lola. In the penultimate scene, Gustavo is willing to abandon his post and run off with Lola, proclaiming that his duty and homeland lie in her. Lola also vows total allegiance to Spain, sings patriotic songs, and even takes on the dangerous mission to deliver documents. However, she too, longs to give up her duties and nationality to run off with Gustavo. Lola sacrifices herself for the cause and ultimately chooses patriotism over love. Perhaps the most poignant discussion of duty occurs at the end of the film, when Marshal Víctor decides to order Lola's execution and hide it from Gustavo, despite his affection for his nephew and admiration of Lola's bravery. Conversely, Juan de Acuña has no sense of duty or loyalty. He destroys the other characters' lives and only pretends to be patriotic (see **Deception** and **Performance** below).

Illustrative Moment: Marshal Víctor Reluctantly Orders Lola's Execution

When Lola is brought before the French marshal, he shows her that the paper she was carrying was blank. The marshal tells Lola that if the French officers had not captured her, he would have let her go and swept the whole incident under the rug. Lola thanks him for his kindness but realizes that her destiny is to be a martyr for Spain. She begs the marshal not to let Gustavo know what happened to her, and he agrees. Lola is escorted out to the beach by several French troops. While the marshal does his duty, this climactic moment reveals that even the high French officials no longer believe in Napoleon's vision for occupying Spain. Along with his love for his nephew, the marshal is disillusioned with war in general. He proclaims that he wishes to retreat to Paris and live in peace. In essence, his patriotism has been replaced with weariness and compassion for "the enemy."



APPEARANCES

Deception As the villain throughout the film, Juan de Acuña constantly engages in manipulation, lies, red herrings, and deception in general. He attends all of the strategic war room meetings with the Spanish and helps them decide a course of action, then immediately reports on those secrets to the French. The Spanish peasants consider their senator the paragon of Spanish patriotism and pro-independence, and he performs this persona by giving rousing, intellectual speeches in Madrid. Behind the scenes, Acuña enlists both Gustavo and Lola in his ruses without telling them the whole story. The result is that the French arrest and execute Lola with the blank documents. This trope of stolen or manipulated documents appears in several historical epics of this period, including *The Orsini Princess* (1947) and *Madness of Love* (1948). In the latter, the villainous count "proves" the queen's madness by switching a letter with a blank sheet of paper—which she brandishes to the court in the film's climax. Lola suffers a similar fate via the curse of the blank document. Whereas Acuña exemplifies the master manipulator, the other characters cannot hide their passions and motivations. When they try to deceive, the truth quickly comes out. Even the Marshal Víctor struggles to do his duty and lie to his nephew, which indicates that the majority of characters on both sides have a shared moral compass.

Illustrative Moment: Acuña Manipulates Lola at the Inn

At the inn, Acuña explains the Spanish plan to Lola, who is willing to help (at first). When Acuña reveals his alternate plan—that she is to deliver the message to Gustavo instead of General Ballesteros—Lola becomes increasingly alarmed and vows not to be a traitor. Acuña reminds her that love and war don't mix and that she must serve her country. Lola senses Acuña's deception but does not realize that he is giving military secrets to



the French. She understands the danger of the mission, but Acuña deceives her doubly. He gives her the blank sheet of paper, thereby ensuring not only her execution if discovered, but also the failure of the mission as a whole.

Performance In the first half of the film, we see performance in two forms: that of Acuña pretending to be a patriotic senator, and Lola serenading her patrons at the inn and at the city gates. The former performance lends itself to the intrigue of a war drama, whereas the latter provides a break in the tension. Lola's songs also make sense in the context of the plot: she offers entertainment at the inn she runs, and she sings in other locations to stoke patriotic sentiment. The lyrics of the songs usually reflect Lola's interior monologue in any given moment. In addition, the frequent musical numbers give the film an Andalusian flair, which was very popular under Franco's regime and a trope of mid-century musicals in Spain. In the second half of the film, the performances veer from the central plot-line in the form of an extended flamenco ballet fantasy. Gustavo even presages the break from the world of the film by saying: "Let's dream." The style of the dream ballet imitates the big Hollywood musicals and Broadway hits of the 1940s. In this sense, the flamenco performance provides an escape for the lovers and the audience. When Lola comes back to reality, she delivers the blank document that seals her fate. The performance constitutes the dream of an alternate happy ending which will never happen.

Illustrative Moment: The Roma Revelry Turns into a Pas de Deux

After watching the joyous flamenco dance, Gustavo asks Lola if they could run away together. Lola asks him to consider his duty as a Frenchman, but Gustavo retorts that his homeland lies in her. He asks her to imagine a happy ending and says: "Let's dream." A couple of flamenco dancers approach and begin a new sequence—this time, the couple dance a balletic pas de deux that expands into a dream ballet sequence reminiscent of Rogers and Hammerstein musicals. The more balletic part of the production number is significant in that Lucía could have stopped after the traditional flamenco dancing, or he could have skipped the dancing all together. Beyond heightening the suspense of a tragic ending, the dance number does not have a practical purpose. The inference is that Lucía longed to create his own ballet in the style of multiple Hollywood musicals, and he also wanted to showcase the distinct style of professional flamenco dancers from Andalucía.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How is Lola's characterization similar and different than other Spanish "war" heroines? (HINT: compare Lola with the Castilian queens like Juana and female warriors like Agustina de Aragón).
2. How are the French characters sympathetic in this film?
3. How do Lucía and the other writers portray the Peninsular War in this film? What do the Spanish want, and what do the French want?
4. What are the Andalusian elements in this film? What is the effect of the long flamenco ballet at the end?
5. The character of Juan de Acuña is the villain of the film, yet he is an esteemed Spanish congressman. What is the effect of making the French characters sympathetic and the Spanish politician evil?