

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Goya Tableaus / Goyescas (1942)

Benito Perojo (1894-1974)

OVERVIEW

Auteur Benito Perojo was considered a pioneer of silent film in Spain and a prestigious film director throughout Europe. As a trained engineer, Perojo employed new technology to the burgeoning invention of film. He created shorts in Madrid and in France during the 1910s, then transitioned to musical talkies in the 1920s and 1930s. Like his contemporary Florián Rey, Perojo loved to explore the “exotic” Andalusian culture of southern Spain, including an emphasis on flamenco music. He also frequently adapted zarzuelas, or Spanish operettas, for the screen, including *Paloma Fair* (1935), *Goyescas* (1942), and the *Songstress* (1946).

Film *Goya Tableaus* (1942) is a black-and-white historical musical set at the turn of the nineteenth century. The original operetta, or zarzuela, was written by Enrique Granados for the stage in 1916. The plot involves a young countess and her poor doppelganger, Petrilla, both of whom fall for the Marquis de Nuévalos. The roles of the countess and Petrilla were played by Imperio Argentina, who was one of the most popular musical actresses in the CIFESA films of the 1930s and 1940s. She also starred in several other films, including Florián Rey’s *Sister San Suplicio* (1951).

Background *Goya’s Tableaus* was one of the biggest musical hits of the 1940s. While the songs were written decades earlier by composer Enrique Granados, the screenplay was adapted by Fernando Periquet, the dramatist Antonio Contero, Luis de Vargas, and Perojo himself. The dominate studio in Francoist Spain, CIFESA, produced and distributed the film. Although the libretto, or plot, involves a romantic triangle and several musical numbers, there are also highly impressive recreations of Francisco Goya’s most famous paintings.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

<i>The Countess of Gualda</i>	Noblewoman who falls for the Marquis
<i>Petrilla</i>	Songwriter who also pursues the Marquis
<i>Luis Alfonso de Nuévalos</i>	Marquis who courts the countess
<i>Pepa, the Gypsy</i>	Flamenco dancer
<i>El Corregidor</i>	The older mayor who is in love with Petrilla
<i>Captain Fernando Pizarro</i>	The army captain who courts the countess
<i>Ministro</i>	The judge who visits the inn at Rioja

SYNOPSIS

The Countess of Gualda, a lusty noblewoman of Madrid, and Petrilla, an accomplished singer and dancer, look and sound identical—except for their clothing, which indicates their class distinction. Along with their similar looks, the two women have similar tastes in men and use their feminine wiles to influence officials in high places.

Early in the film, both women are interested in the Marqués Luis Alfonso, who is the countess’s current lover and Petrilla’s ex-lover. Throughout the film, Petrilla is obsessed with stealing Luis Alfonso back from the countess, to the point that she stalks him. She also flirts with the Corregidor, or mayor, in order to gain information about the countess and the marquis. When the mayor brings Petrilla to the countess’s mansion and commands his men to arrest the marquis, Luis Alfonso climbs out the window and tries to escape. The marquis ends up fighting off the guards and even stabs the Corregidor, who jumps in to duel with the marquis. With the Corregidor dead, the marquis flees and assumes a new identity—Antonio, the leader of the gypsy caravan.

With the marquis hidden away, the countess is courted by a new beau—Captain Fernando Pizarro. Petrilla continues to look for the marquis and keeps an eye on the countess. When the singer finds out that the countess is in love with the captain, she sings seductively to the judge (another fan) so that he will transfer Fernando to the West Indies. Then, she uses the leverage to try to blackmail the countess.

The two women continue to jockey for position until they are both arrested as part of a peasant uprising (which alludes to the historical event known as the Mutiny of Aranjuez in 1808). In jail, the countess and Petrilla forgive each other and realize that they are no longer rivals. Petrilla has always been in love with the marquis, and the countess genuinely loves the captain. The countess tells Petrilla where Luis Alfonso is hiding, and she asks an audience with the judge who ordered the captain's transfer. As Petrilla rides to find her man, the countess and the captain reunite at the royal palace.

SCENES

Layered Painting and Flamencan Song As the credits roll, a series of Goya's early period paintings, framed in luxurious silk cloths, are thrown down one after the next. The paintings depict nobles picnicking and dancing. The opening scene becomes a pan of the auditorium of the audience at the famed Teatro de la Cruz in Madrid. We hear a woman singing a Flamencan song and playing castanets. The camera moves towards the stage, where we see Petrilla dancing and singing with grace and charisma.



The Nobles Watch the Performance and Gossip The camera cuts to a box seat where the countess and the marquis watch the performance. The countess complains about Martín Galán falling for a common actress. The marquis assures her that he only has eyes for her. The nobles in another balcony box gossip about many lovers of the countess, but they note that her current date is Luis Alfonso, the Marqués de Nuévalos. The marquis gets increasingly irritated by the countess's "test," and asks to leave. The countess acquiesces. Petrilla continues singing and swinging her skirt seductively. An old man with a monocle gazes at her lasciviously from his balcony box.



Petrilla Complains to Her Maid Backstage After finishing her performance, Petrilla angrily demands a report about Luis Alfonso (the marquis) from her maid. The maid says that she watched his house for three days but did not see him, nor did she hear any gossip in the city. Petrilla becomes increasingly agitated and asks whether the maid is hiding information from her. She further declares that when she wants something, she gets it. The maid says that Luis must have fallen into a ditch, and Petrilla retorts that the maid better go dig him out of it.

The Corregidor (Mayor or Government Official) Visits Petrilla Backstage Petrilla's maid lets in the Corregidor, who lavishes praise on Petrilla. He compliments her deft hands, cheeky smile, and bewitching voice. Petrilla bows coquettishly at his praise and sings a verse for him acapella. The Corregidor gets flustered and admits that he gets too carried away with music—which is an undignified state for his official duties. The two banter with word play, and Petrilla quips "entre la dulzura y hermosura, locura." ("between your sweetness and my beauty, madness.") The Corregidor's demeanor changes suddenly, and he mentions that he knows she is in love with Luis. Petrilla equivocates, and the Corregidor suggests that Petrilla marry him instead. He describes her as a drink of cool water for the thirsty pilgrim. The two continue arguing with witticisms and metaphors. The official tries to convince Petrilla to give up on the Marquis and take "one more step" towards him, but she refuses. Hurt, the Corregidor reveals that the marquis has found love with a high-born lady who looks just like Petrilla. Petrilla asks for the location of the noblewoman's house, and the Corregidor offers to take her there in his carriage—for a price.



Petrilla and the Corregidor Get in the Carriage Petrilla grabs a shawl and runs out to meet the Corregidor's carriage out front. As she leaves the theater, several male patrons shout catcalls at her. The camera cuts to the couple sitting in the carriage and watching shadows of figures at a balcony window. The Corregidor reveals that Luis's current lover is the Countess of Gualda, but Petrilla says she won't believe it until she actually sees the marquis's face.



Dream Sequence with the Painting *Maja vestida* There is a sudden fade to Petrilla (or is it the countess?) lying on a chaise with her arms up at her head, and we realize that she is imitating Goya's painting of *Maja vestida* (circa 1800)—Goya's portrait of a reclining woman (there is a clothed and nude version). The marquis approaches the chaise and confesses his love. The portrait dream ends abruptly, and the camera cuts back to the carriage. The Corregidor tells Petrilla that she now has proof.



The Corregidor Tries to Arrest the Marquis, and a Duel Ensues

The Corregidor decides to confront the lovers inside. He knocks on the door and demands that Luis Alfonso appear. The countess suggests that Luis leave by climbing down the balcony. He does so, but Petrilla spots his escape and calls out to the guards. One guard runs over, and the two men engage in an extended duel. The Corregidor watches from the street, amazed at the marquis's talents. The mayor jumps in when he realizes that Luis is besting his men. At first, the Corregidor gets an advantage on Luis when the marquis is backed into a corner. Petrilla cries out "Defend yourself, Luis!" Shortly after, Luis gains the advantage and pushes the mayor back. The two women watch from the balcony and the street, respectively, as Luis triumphs and stabs the mayor in the chest. Both women scream in horror.



Everyone Reacts to the Corregidor's Death The guards rush over to check on the mayor, and Luis runs away. Petrilla, horrified, backs away from the scene and runs down a separate street. The countess retreats from the balcony window and flings herself, sobbing, on the chaise. There is a fade to the countess dressed in a black dress and mantilla, looking at herself in the mirror. She remains in a pose for a few seconds, and the viewer recognizes Tableau II: Goya's painting *The Black Duchess* (1797), which depicted the Duchess of Alba (Goya's frequent subject and possible lover) in her mourning dress. The countess goes to church and prays before the cathedral altar, which is covered with long, lit candles. As she prays, a distinguished soldier looks at her several times. The soldier follows the countess and greets her as she is getting into her coach. He offers his condolences, and when she asks how he knew her, he replies that he recognized the grace and beauty of the Countess of Gualda. The countess asks for the gentleman's name, and he replies that he is Fernando Pizarro, Captain in the Spanish army. The countess offers to let him accompany her in the coach, and he accepts.



Captain Pizarro Courts the Countess Inside the coach, the captain and the countess discuss their faith and leisure time. The countess invites Fernando to join her at the summer festival, or verbena. He replies that any time spent with her will be enjoyable. He further declares that his new purpose in life is to adore her.

Maja Picnic Several ladies with parasols stroll outside. Petrilla walks outside in the Parque del Buen Retiro (similar to Central Park in NYC) and watches the madrileños playing games and enjoying a picnic. The revelers strike poses imitating three paintings of Goya's early and court periods: *The Straw Man* (1791)—featured in this image, *The Maja and the Masked Men* (1777), and *Blind Man's Bluff* (1788). Petrilla visits several groups and gets into a wine-drinking contest with a man at the bar. She then banters and flirts with a cowboy who is drinking shots.



The Countess and the Captain Rendezvous The countess arrives in a fancy carriage, and she asks a rotund man if he's seen the marquis. He replies that the marquis is obsessed with Petrilla due to her beauty and her talent. The rotund man teases the countess by saying that even though she has dressed in fine clothes, he recognized her as the entrancing singer. The countess plays along, admits that she is in "disguise," and flirts with him. The man delivers her to a room where the captain is waiting for her. They both express their joy at seeing each other and profess their love. The countess describes their love as a dream, and the captain declares himself her prisoner.

Petrilla Corrects the Peasant Slander and Investigates Petrilla continues to drink with the peasants, who begin to gossip about the countess's arrival and the corregidor's death. They claim that the marquis Nuévalos killed the mayor. Petrilla gets irritated and declares that that version of the story isn't true. She announces that she will investigate whether the countess has arrived. Petrilla approaches the countess's footman and offers him a drink. She asks him about his mistress, and he complains about having to cart her all over Madrid. Petrilla learns that the countess is meeting Fernando Pizarro.



Petrilla and the Countess Sing Insults at Each Other Armed with new information, Petrilla grabs a guitarist and asks to sing a song just outside the room where the countess and the captain are having their tryst. Petrilla serenades the group with an outdoor performance. The lyrics of her song conveniently describe how a lady from San Fernando is seducing captains. Inside, the captain becomes increasingly angry at Petrilla's brazen accusations. The countess reminds him that making a scene will only inflame the town gossip, so she decides to take matters into her own hands. The countess walks to the window and sings a verse at Petrilla, accusing her of being lowly, vulgar, and with no talent. Petrilla counters with another verse in which she declares that the insults do not reach her and that her fame flies as high as a flag. The crowd cheers the wit of both singers. The countess retorts that Petrilla's "mud" and "needles" will not stain or prick her. Petrilla, furious, tries to break into the inn. The rotund man runs in and suggests that the lovers escape. He tells the captain that Petrilla and the countess are so similar that they are like two drops of water. The rotund man goes outside to try to calm down the mob, but Petrilla charges him and beats him. The crowd tosses him up and down on the trampoline, again referencing Goya's early painting.

Stop at the Best Inn in Andalucía Petrilla decides to leave Madrid going south with a gypsy caravan. One particularly dashing rider, Paquiro, chats and flirts with Petrilla as she sits on the wagon. He promises to cheer her up. The caravan stops at an inn where the employees are trying to corral wild chickens. The gypsies enter the tavern and order drinks. Paquiro urges Petrilla to forget the marquis but reveals that he knows where Luis Alfonso is hiding. Their conversation is interrupted by a child who reports that a minister's coach has lost a wheel. The owner runs out, excited to have a high-born guest. He brags to the captain that he has the best inn in Andalucía. The official replies that he had better fix his coach, and the owner promises that his boys will do so. The owner offers the official a special, fragrant wine.



Petrilla Resists Meeting the Judge Back at the bar, the members of the Roma caravan drink and chat. Petrilla gets up to sing a melancholy song about lost love. The judge hears her enchanting voice from the adjoining room and watches her performance through the blinds. The men cheer her performance when she sits down. The judge asks the owner about Petrilla, and the owner describes her as the best singer in Spain. The owner offers to bring her over to meet him, but when the owner grabs Petrilla, she resists. Petrilla declares that while he may be a powerful judge of the nation, she is the queen of her own province—her body. She goes on to describe each "region" of the "territory," with her usual wit. The owner reminds her that if she flirts with the judge, she might be able to gain influence over the countess and the marquis. Petrilla agrees reluctantly to butter up the judge.

Petrilla Flirts with and Performs for the Judge Petrilla enters the room and bows before the judge. He asks her to rise and tells her that supplication is reserved for Jesus. The two compliment each other and flirt. The judge asks her to sing “just for him,” and she agrees. Instead of merely singing, Petrilla dances for several seconds in a flamenco style. The judge watches her lustfully. She continues to sing right to him and dance several interludes. At the end of the performance, she asks the judge for a favor—to send her one true love, Captain Fernando Pizarro, to the Americas so that they can live in peace together abroad. The judge agrees and writes out an order. Petrilla flatters him profusely and runs out with the papers.



The Countess Hosts a Folk Dance Troupe Petrilla sneaks into the countess’s mansion by imitating her noble doppelganger. There is a grand ballroom where about thirty couple are performing a folk dance with castanets. The countess and the captain watch the dance from a luxurious settee. When the female dancers break off in formation, Petrilla jumps on stage and dances with them. There is a sudden cut to one of the servants snuffing out long candles throughout the ballroom.



Lovers’ Tryst The countess and the captain meet each other on the stage and profess their affection for one another. The countess promises that they will be together forever.

Petrilla Confronts the Countess Petrilla appears in the ballroom area and approaches the countess. The countess asks if she wants a job, and Petrilla replies that she would be a loyal servant. Eventually, Petrilla reveals her true motive: she asks the countess to tell her where the marquis is hiding, and she confesses that she is in love with him. The countess says that she never gives in to a rival. Petrilla argues that she wants the marquis, and the countess is dating the captain now; therefore, they can each have the man they currently desire. The countess rebuffs Petrilla and says that she has not forgotten the insults during their battle of wits at the fair. Petrilla apologizes and reminds the countess that she (the noblewoman) got the last word. The countess threatens to throw out Petrilla. Petrilla threatens her and says that she will destroy her relationship with the captain. The countess laughs, and Petrilla leaves.



Pizarro is Sent to the Caribbean Pizarro reports to his commanding officer, who gives him the transfer order. The captain’s superior explains that he does not know why Pizarro is being sent away, given that the captain is an excellent soldier and friend. Pizarro concurs and says that there is no logical reason for him to go to the West Indies. The captain suggests that there is some foul play at work, but he realizes he must obey orders. His superior orders him to report to Cadiz to disembark to America. Upon leaving, the captain says goodbye to his fellow soldiers. One suggests that the transfer is due to a woman, as mischief usually involves “skirts.” The captain asks his servant Miguel to tell the countess what has happened. Miguel creates an absurd plan, but the captain explains that he only has to ask to speak to the countess.

The Countess Sings and Conjures Up a Shadow Dance In her chambers, the countess plays a piano and sings a melancholy ballad. There is a round platform with a gossamer curtain at the end of the bedroom. As the camera pulls back from the countess’s face, there appear dancing shadows behind the gossamer curtain. We see dancing scenes from the first half of the film, including the picnic activities and the flamenco performance from earlier that night. The last shadow tableau is a reflection of the countess playing the piano. There is also a “framed” shot of the countess at the piano as seen through two columns.



The Countess Gets the Bad News Miguel sings a drunken song under the countess’s window until she tells her servant to let him in. The servant explains the injustice with the captain, and the countess

rushes to the Bourbon palace. The queen invites the countess in and promises to help her solve her problem—or at least commiserate with her. The countess explains the situation and asks the queen to get the king to overturn the transfer. The queen admits that she probably can't fix the problem in time, but she will try to annul the order. The countess thanks her profusely.

The Countess Tries to Intercept the Captain The countess leaves her mansion dressed as a male soldier. She rides through the forest quickly but gets lost as night falls. Two Andalusian bandits sneak out of the forest and try to steal the countess's horse and supplies. She cries out and confronts them. The two thieves laugh and ask why such a young boy is out in the woods in the middle of the night. When the countess doesn't answer, they blindfold her and take her to an inn where the gypsies are spending the night. They take off the blindfold, and the countess's long hair comes cascading down. The Marquis, who is also dressed in disguise as a gypsy, recognizes her immediately. Luis Alfonso yells at the others to stay back. One woman, Pepa, protests that he is going off with another woman. Luis Alfonso, playing the part of the gypsy Antonio, tells the woman that he is the master of the group.



The Countess and the Marquis Are Reunited Once the two are alone, the countess scolds the marquis for not letting her know where he was. He describes that he yearned to visit her by the cover of night, but resisted. The countess infers that the marquis no longer loves her, and she says that she, too, is in love with another. She relates the story of Fernando and the transfer. Dejected, Luis Alfonso laments that he should have let the Corregidor kill him in the duel. She reminds him that he can still be happy and that Petrilla continues to fight for him. The marquis vows to help the countess get the captain back.



Luis Alfonso (AKA, Antonio) Makes a Plan Luis Alfonso leaves the interior room, and Pepa once again expresses her disdain and jealousy about the new woman. "Antonio" commands that Pepa give the countess a dress, and he tells his men to prepare a horse for him. When the men ask why he is so protective of this interloper, "Antonio" explains that the woman is his old friend and singer, Petrilla. He also warns the group that men may still be looking for him. One man argues that Petrilla cannot be trusted and that she might be a spy of the government. Antonio counters by saying that she had to disguise herself. Pepa re-enters after loaning the countess a dress. She reports to the others that the woman is surprisingly elegant for a lowly singer.

The Countess Performs as Petrilla The countess descends the staircase, and the men swarm around her. She pushes them away, and the marquis rescues her by guiding her to the other side of the room. He introduces the countess as Petrilla and announces that he has told his men "everything." When the men ask for a song, the countess plays along and agrees to serenade them. Pepa insists that the interloper prove that she is real. The countess goes on stage and begins to charm the crowd. Everyone is convinced saved Pepa. When the countess twirls, the mandate from the queen falls out of her skirt. Pepa sees the paper and reads it, then gets up on stage and interrupts the performance. Pepa calls out the countess as a traitor, and the men demand the truth from Antonio. Antonio exhorts the men to trust him. The men accept Antonio's explanation and dismiss Pepa's anger as jealousy.



An Angry Mob Soldiers ride through the forest looking for Luis Alfonso. Simultaneously, a mob of peasants storm the palace as the countess, still dressed as Petrilla, arrives in her coach. Two men recognize her as the countess and try to kidnap her. When she protests, they throw her into the palace, instead. A crowd continues to form at the gates, but the soldiers ride through and disperse them. Inside the gates, the countess and others are on a platform where the peasants ridicule them. One man lets her get down, but the men wrestle her and take her across the plaza. She protests and slaps one of them. The cavalry enters the gates and starts arresting people. Two soldiers grab the countess, assuming she is part of the rabble. She fights back as she did with the peasants.



NOTE: It is likely that this mob scene alludes to a real uprising in Madrid in 1808 at Aranjuez, in which Spanish peasants protested the corruption of the king Carlos IV's minister, Godoy.

The Countess and Petrilla Are Under Arrest In jail, Petrilla approaches the countess and calls out her true identity. The countess explains that she is only in jail because she tried to save the captain, but Petrilla accuses her of not having a heart. The countess tells Petrilla to stop seeking vengeance so that they can empathize with each other. The countess reveals that she never knew the marquis's whereabouts, but she pretended that she did because Petrilla offended her. The two agree to drop their feud. The countess tells Petrilla that Luis Alfonso was arrested and she should go to him. When the female prisoners are crammed into a wagon, Petrilla and the countess break away and run in the opposite direction. Two peasants look at the identical pair and try to figure out who is who. The countess identifies Petrilla and asks the men to take the singer to Antonio.

Both Women Get Their Man—Maybe Petrilla rides off with Antonio's men. The countess stays behind and pleads her case to the guards at the gate. They agree to let her see the minister. Inside the court, Fernando bids farewell to the judge. The judge replies that he is sad to see him go but was compelled to grant his request. Fernando explains that he did not request or want a transfer. The judge reveals that Petrilla asked him for a favor. Fernando reports that Petrilla was trying to get rid of him out of vengeance. The judge offers to rescind the order. The camera cuts back and forth from the countess ascending the staircase of the court to Petrilla wielding the reins and singing heartily as they ride into the forest. When the countess gets to the top of the staircase, she and Fernando embrace.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

THE COUNTESS OF GUALDA

The countess is a young and beautiful noblewoman and object of desire, but she also has agency as the protagonist of the film. She is both seductive and practical, and she uses her sex appeal and intelligence to get what she wants.

Lusty The countess is said to have had many lovers, and the implication is that she has seduced the marquis and potentially stolen him from Petrilla. She provokes scandal by inviting both the marquis and the captain into her home—and Petrilla and the Corregidor even see the marquis kissing the countess in her bedroom (via shadows in the balcony window).

Stubborn Rather than giving in to or reconciling with Petrilla, the countess persists in fighting her and hiding information about the marquis. She engages in the battle of wits at the fair, and she refuses to give in to pleas and blackmail at her house party. When the captain is sent to the West Indies, the countess finds various means of rescinding the transfer, including disguising herself as a male soldier to intercept him.

Practical Despite her unwillingness to give into Petrilla, the countess eventually understands that Petrilla belongs with her true love. The countess is the one who negotiates Petrilla's release and makes peace with her. The countess also uses the queen and her stature to annul the captain's transfer. In addition, the countess is willing and able to impersonate Petrilla when it is needed.

PETRILLA

Petrilla is a working-class singer who entrances men with her performance. She looks identical to the countess and is able to pretend to be the noblewoman. Petrilla is in love with Luis Alfonso and yearns to be with him. She is tenacious and witty in her pursuit of the marquis.

Witty Both women are highly intelligent and crafty, but Petrilla is also adept at word play and banter. When flirting with suitors or audience members, Petrilla flatters them with clever metaphors and aphorisms. For example, the Corregidor worries about his old age, but Petrilla reminds him that the ripest berry is the juiciest. When Petrilla needs to insult someone or escape, she is equally witty. She casts off

the men in the caravan with clever retorts, and she manages to confront the countess with her improvised verses about the noblewoman's promiscuity.

Tenacious Petrilla is stubborn and persistent in her pursuit of the marquis and her plans to avenge herself. She impersonates the countess in order to find intel and infiltrate the noblewoman's mansion. She tries several strategies to find the marquis, from flirtation to bribery to search parties. The final scene, in fact, is Petrilla driving the coach towards the jail where the marquis is being held.

MARQUÉS LUIS ALFONSO (AKA ANTONIO)

The marquis is the young, handsome, and charming nobleman that manages to seduce both the countess and Petrilla. Although he disappears after killing the Corregidor in a duel, his place at the center of the erotic triangle (and later, as leader of the caravan) makes him the most developed of the male suitor characters.

Charming The marquis is a charming companion and presumably a good lover, as he has won the attention of three women during the course of the film. He flatters the countess and courts her, even as they are watching Petrilla's performance. Later, the marquis manages not only to assume an alternate identity, but also to ingratiate himself with the gypsy caravan and become their leader.

Resourceful When the Corregidor confronts the marquis, he tries to avoid conflict and arrest by climbing down the side balcony. When the guards come at him, the marquis engages in duels skillfully and bests all of the men—including the Corregidor. For the majority of the film, the marquis hides among the gypsies, and no one discovers him until the countess is "arrested" by "Antonio's" compatriots.

THEMES

SOCIETY

Class As with most period melodramas and musicals of the 1940s and 1950s, the rival lovers in *Goyescas* represent two worlds: the nobles and the peasants. There is the "impossible" union between the marquis and Petrilla, which may or may not hold at the end of the film. Initially, the countess is framed as the appropriate romantic partner for the marquis, and his love affair with Petrilla seems to be a case of slumming it. The other officials who lust after Petrilla consider her as a frivolity or vice—not as a potential wife. Petrilla refuses the advances of her social equals and stays doggedly fixated on Luis Alfonso. The countess is reported to have enjoyed multiple lovers, but she picks fellow nobles and officers for her partners. Along with the problematic love affairs, the film and operetta highlight the cultural differences between classes in Madrid at the turn of the nineteenth century. Goya himself depicted the *maja* culture, which was essentially the fashion and attitude of the petit bourgeoisie and working class, while he was court painter. Goya also painted portraits of the Duchess of Alba, who sometimes dressed down as a *maja* and started a fashion trend. Along with recreating some of these paintings, Benito Perojo uses period costuming to capture the *maja* flavor of the period: male caps, female scarves and shawls, and particular breeches and dress silhouettes. Finally, the peasant mob at the end of the film refers briefly to the political side of class conflict. The working class disliked the weak king of the period, Carlos IV, who eventually abdicated to both Joseph Napoleon and his son, Fernando VII. Carlos IV's minister, Godoy, was said to be corrupt, stealing money, and also sleeping with the queen. This unstable monarchy paved the way for the Napoleonic occupation of Spain later that year (1808).

Illustrative Moment: The Countess (In Disguise) Is Arrested with the Mob

A mob of peasants storm the palace as the countess, still dressed as Petrilla, arrives in her coach. Two men recognize her as the countess and try to kidnap her. When she protests, they throw her into the palace, instead. The cavalry enters the gates and starts arresting people. Two soldiers grab the countess, assuming she is part of the rabble. She fights back as she did with the peasants. Although the countess knows nothing about this revolt, she is swept up with the mob because she is dressed as a *maja* and appears to be railing against the monarchy. The countess ends up in jail with Petrilla and the other peasants, which indicates that she has temporarily



crossed over class lines. Order is soon restored when the countess is released, but she lives as a poor person for several hours that night.

RELATIONSHIP

Love Versus Lust All of the principal characters in the film enjoy several romantic relationships and flirtations, and the women use their feminine wiles to manipulate men of influence. In particular, men of power attend Petrilla's performances and gaze at her lustfully. After the performance, the Corregidor and the judge both fantasize about the singer, and the judge enjoys a private dance in the adjoining room. Despite his misgivings about propriety, the Corregidor also wishes to pursue Petrilla as a full-time lover, if not wife. Because Petrilla is the object of the gaze (and by extension, a sexual fantasy), the older men think of her as a trophy to be won. Petrilla plays on this dynamic with quid pro quo—sexual titillation for a favor, or information. Petrilla, conversely, is only interested in men as means of getting to Luis Alfonso. She makes her position clear when the men at the fair man-handle her, and she declares herself king of her "province"—that is, her body. Surprisingly, the countess defies social expectations by taking multiple lovers and not marrying them. During a confrontation with Petrilla, the countess implies that she is not so much interested in keeping Luis Alfonso as she is interested in winning the fight over him. This initial attitude suggests that the countess equates sex with power and a sign of her class. Both women often prioritize vengeance and scoring points over their romantic pursuits. Eventually, however, the countess feels sincere love and devotion for the captain, and she is willing to sacrifice in order to keep him. This change shows that the countess believes that the captain can be her life partner rather than another fling. Petrilla shows a similar determination to rescue and be reunited with the marquis. In this sense, the lustful and vengeful distractions of the characters give way to true love by the end of the film.

Illustrative Moment: The Women Make Up and Pursue Their True Loves

In jail, Petrilla approaches the countess and calls out her true identity. The countess reveals that she never knew the marquis's whereabouts, but she pretended that she did because Petrilla offended her. The two agree to drop their feud. The countess tells Petrilla that Luis Alfonso was arrested and she should go to him. The countess identifies Petrilla and asks the members of the caravan to take the singer to Antonio. In this moment, both women have discovered whom they truly love. The countess agrees to let her former lovers go and pledges her loyalty to the captain.



CHANGE

Transience Along with a consistent play on the concept of looking and seeing, Perojo and the other screenwriters explore the notion of the temporary versus the permanent. With regard to relationships, both the marquis and the countess flit from one romantic encounter to the next. Neither seem willing to commit until the death of the Corregidor sets new events in motion. It remains unclear whether the marquis will marry Petrilla, as he did not commit to the union despite the countess's explanation of her feelings. There are also references to the brevity of life and the shadow of death. The countess and Petrilla won't stay young and beautiful forever, and the elder statesmen are painfully aware of their old age and loneliness. The marquis could have easily been killed when trying to escape the city, and all of the characters are haunted by the death of the corregidor. In this sense, there is a subtle reference to memento mori—the artistic "reminder" that death is coming for everyone. The concept of performance also plays with the joy of the temporary, as every performance is ephemeral and unique to those who are on stage and those who are in the audience. The characters also slip into their alter egos as performances of identity—but only temporarily (see Performance above). Conversely, the paintings remain eternal. Even if the painting captures a particular moment in time (such as the majos playing blind man's bluff), the painting remains static and there for the viewer to look at and appreciate. In addition, Goya's images have become iconic and major works in the European canon, so they remain eternal in the realm of art history generally and Spanish culture, specifically.

Illustrative Moment: Dream Sequence with the Painting Maja vestida

There is a sudden fade to Petrilla (or is it the countess?) lying on a chaise with her arms up at her head, and we realize that she is imitating Goya's painting of *Maja vestida* (circa 1800)—Goya's portrait of a reclining woman (there is a clothed and nude version). The marquis approaches the chaise and confesses his love. The portrait dream ends abruptly, and the camera cuts back to the carriage. The Corregidor tells Petrilla that she now has proof.



This moment captures the dichotomy between impermanence and the eternal. The countess poses in an exact replica of one of Goya's most famous paintings—*La maja desnuda* / *vestida* will live forever in the mind's eye of Spaniards and anyone who has studied art. Ironically, this pose marks the end of the countess's short-lived relationship with the marquis, who ends up killing the Corregidor minutes later. Both the relationship and the Corregidor die in the blink of an eye, which underscores the transient nature of life and love.

APPEARANCES

Deception (Mistaken Identities and Disguise) Because the countess and Petrilla look “identical,” they can impersonate each other simply by changing into each other's clothes. As performers and intelligent manipulators, both women know how to imitate the other's mannerisms and speech in order to pretend to be “the other one.” Most of the time, the women can pass for each other without their audience suspecting anything, although the gypsy Pepa notices that the countess seems too proper to be Petrilla. At other times, the men mis-identify the women, and the countess and Petrilla play along with the incorrect assumption. The confused identity of both women persists until the very end of the film, when the countess has to tell the guards that she is the noblewoman, and the other one is Petrilla. This game of mistaken “twin identity” becomes the basis for several comic scenes; in addition, Perojo leans into the visual concept of reflection (see Artistic Frame below) and the greater themes of performing identities (see Performance below). In addition to the women's confused identities, Luis Alfonso uses an alternate identity to hide from authorities. The marquis becomes a gypsy vagabond, and he also must play the role. Ironically, the countess finds the marquis through her own ruse—she dresses as a male soldier in order to stop the captain from being shipped out to the Caribbean. What follows is yet another disguise—the countess puts on a dress and becomes Petrilla once again. It is only by becoming “themselves” at the end of the film that the proper pairs are reunited.

Illustrative Moment: The Peasant Mistakes the Countess for Petrilla

The countess arrives in a fancy carriage, and she asks a rotund man if he has seen the marquis. He replies that the marquis is obsessed with Petrilla due to her beauty and her talent. The rotund man teases the countess by saying that even though she has dressed in fine clothes, he recognized her as the entrancing singer. The countess plays along, admits that she is in “disguise,” and flirts with him. This moment of misrecognition is curious in that the countess is not in disguise, nor is she trying to impersonate Petrilla at the fair. The rotund man assumes that within the context of the fair, the majas and working-class women are there—not the hoi polloi of Madrid. Ironically, the peasant interprets the countess's fine clothes as a costume, and in some sense, the countess is indeed performing her “true” identity, as well.



Artistic Frame and the Gaze There are three levels of frames at play in this film: the picture frame around the recreation of Goya's paintings, the frame of the proscenium stage when Petrilla performs, and the camera as the overarching frame for the viewer's gaze (which also mimics the picture frame and the stage frame in more subtle ways). These frames are enhanced by the visual trope of reflection and shadows, such as seeing figures through mirrors and the sequence that includes the dancing shadows behind the gossamer curtain in the countess's bedroom. Yet another early use of multiple frames is the moment when Petrilla and the Corregidor watch the shadows in the window of the countess's mansion. Then, both Petrilla and the countess become spectators to the elaborate duel between the marquis and the guards. There is also the trope of the two women as mirror images of each other. Perojo plays with the concept of frame within a frame multiple times throughout the film. Even during the credits, someone is throwing down frames of Goya's most famous paintings. These images prime the viewer for the

occurrence of the tableaux throughout the first half of the movie. Each time the characters recreate a painting, the actors remain posed for several seconds with the camera in place. Even if the viewer did not recognize the reference, they would know instinctually from the framing that this image is from a Goya painting. Perojo similarly emphasizes the act of watching Petrilla (and occasionally, the countess) as they perform. We do not just see Petrilla singing and dancing on stage; the camera cuts frequently to the audience members' reactions to her performance. In particular, the opening scenes show the Corregidor's lustful gaze as Petrilla coquettishly twirls around the stage. In this way, we watch the audience watching Petrilla. We also look at the figures in the paintings—first as part of the composition, then as characters in the plot of the film.

Illustrative Moment: The Countess Looks at Herself in the Mirror as the Maja Negra

There is a fade to the countess dressed in a black dress and mantilla, looking at herself in the mirror. She remains in a pose for a few seconds, and the viewer recognizes Tableau II: Goya's painting *The Black Duchess* (1797), which depicted the Duchess of Alba (Goya's frequent subject and possible lover) in her mourning dress. In this moment, there are three frames in play—the picture frame, the mirror as frame, and the camera framing the mirror and the countess standing in front of it. The viewer is looking at the countess looking at herself.



In addition, the original portrait was of the Duchess of Alba, so Perojo is equating the real historical noblewoman with the fictional character of the countess. Finally, the countess is dressed in black as her mourning costume, and her mourning performance (praying at the altar in the cathedral) occurs right after the mirror scene.

Performance As a film adapted from an operetta, *Goyescas* depends upon several musical numbers. As with many musical dramas of the 1940s, the lead actor and actress are accomplished cabaret singers and dancers who can successfully execute a demanding aria or folk song with multiple runs. In the case of Imperio Argentina, she was a veteran of the Argentine stage long before she was cast in Spanish films. Most of Petrilla's songs follow the normal pattern for an Andalusian-inspired musical—the enchanting tonadillera sings to seduce or convince her male audience, or if she is alone, she vents her sadness and frustration at lost love. There is also a folk dance with multiple pairs of dancers creating visual formations on stage. In addition to these conventional musical interludes, Perojo adds two more creative numbers: a dream sequence in the countess's bedroom, and the “rap battle” style of competitive singing at the fair. The intimacy of the dream sequence sets that particular performance apart from the others—we, the viewers, are the sole audience, as the countess plays the piano and sings to herself, alone. Along with the literal performances of the operetta score, the characters must constantly perform their identities. The countess tries to maintain her stature but occasionally indulges in alternate identities: Petrilla, or a maja in the style of the Duchess of Alba (one of Goya's favorite subjects to paint—and also possibly his lover). Petrilla performs on stage but also performs her identity in the streets and with other characters. She constantly engages in a battle of wits, and she even jumps onstage at the countess's mansion in order to infiltrate the party. Whether the characters are in the painting, on stage, or pursuing their loves in life, they are constantly performing.

Illustrative Moment: The Countess and Petrilla Sing Insults at Each Other

Armed with new information, Petrilla grabs a guitarist and asks to sing a song just outside the room where the countess and the captain are having their tryst. Petrilla serenades the group with an outdoor performance. The lyrics of her song conveniently describe how a lady from San Fernando is seducing captains. Inside, the captain becomes increasingly angry at Petrilla's brazen accusations. The countess walks to the window and sings a verse at Petrilla, accusing her of being lowly, vulgar, and having no talent. Petrilla counters with another verse in which she declares that the insults do not reach her and that her fame flies as high as a flag. The crowd cheers the wit of both singers. The countess retorts that Petrilla's “mud” and “needles” will not stain or prick her. This song not only shows off Imperio Argentina's acting and singing talents; it also becomes a performance of rivalry and identity. Both singers attack the other woman's class and moral character, which underscores the themes of the film in general. In true



rap battle style, the wittier their insults and comebacks, the more accolades the singers gain from the crowd. In this sense, the crowd at the fair acts as a judge of the women's performance.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do the characterizations of the countess and Petrilla align with and defy gender norms? How are they framed as objects of the gaze?
2. What is the effect of Imperio Argentina playing both the countess and Petrilla? Beyond looking alike, are the two women parallel characters or opposites?
3. Which paintings does the film reference, and why did Perojo and the other screenwriters pick those specific ones? Note: there are five obvious tableaus in the first half of the film, and all of those paintings are from Goya's early and middle periods (when he was a young court painter in Madrid).
4. What is the effect of the songs and dances in the film?
5. There are many witticisms throughout the film, including plays on words, clever insults, metaphors, and aphorisms. What is the effect of this clever banter in the dialogue?
6. How do you interpret the ending? Will Petrilla win back the marquis?