Spanish Civil War Cinema and the Transition to Democracy

by

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

History and Film Studies have always been inextricably linked in my mind. As a kid growing up in Arizona, images of Mel Gibson’s family farm in The Patriot perfectly summarized my conception of the American Revolutionary Era. As far as I was concerned, New York City was stuck in the colorful 1950’s world of Rear Window and all of New England resembled Little Women. Even though I grew up, moved to New England and saw for myself that New York City had entered the digital age, I still hold onto those memories of place and historical moment in the way I first saw them: on a film screen. When it came time to choose my thesis topic, I knew I would never be happy writing about something that did not involve cinema. As a double major with Film Studies, it was important to me to be able to use my training in film language and creative arts to bolster any historical argument I might make.

I began to think about cinema as an active part of history. My above examples are films mostly set in the distant past, but what about films made today, about the events of today? How will films like United 95 and World Trade Center contribute to the future historical study of September 11th? Or Lone Survivor and Zero Dark Thirty to the Iraq War? I wanted to try to measure some of cinema’s impact on cultural memory of a recent historical event and found after some digging that the films made about the Spanish Civil War during the period leading up to Franco’s death fit my interests perfectly. At the suggestion of Javier Castro, my Historiography professor, I began to seriously consider the topic for my thesis. Then I watched Cría cuervos, fell in love with the sorrow and disillusionment that was so prevalent in the aesthetic of the film, as well as in Ana Torrent’s huge brown eyes, and the rest is (forgive me) history.

The topic has altered considerably since I began the project. I realized the enormity of the subject, and reduced my area of concentration to the cinema of opposition rather than a general representation of the war. I also realized how difficult it was to measure audience reception short of time travelling to the 1970’s, standing outside of every auditorium with Canciones para despúes una guerra and asking every single person as they exited what they thought. I had to adopt a more speculative approach, drawing from the facts that I had access to and making informed arguments about the rest. In the film archives in Madrid and Barcelona, I was able to gather primary sources such as original film reviews from newspapers of Franco’s Spain, theatrical posters and set photography, director’s notes and box office statistics. Armed with these resources, I set about the most challenging academic work I have ever attempted. It’s been a wild process. At some times agonizing, others exhilarating – it’s an experience I’ll never forget and definitely never regret.

I want to first and foremost thank the Davenport Committee for giving me the opportunity to make the most of this thesis. Going to Spain last summer was one of the most amazing things I’ve ever had the privilege of doing. I learned so much from the archives, and even more from flying solo in a foreign country. Thanks to the staff at the Filmoteca de Española in Madrid, specifically Alica, and the Filmoteca Catalunya in Barcelona for their help with my research and patience with my Spanish. I also need to emphatically thank Professor Antonio Bernardo González. My Friday morning meetings with him during the fall semester were a wonderful mix of lively intellectual discussion and pleasant conversation. I’ll always be grateful to him for taking me on as a thesis advisee, even though he didn’t know a thing about me and had no reason to believe in me. I’m so thankful that he did. Professor Cecilia
Miller also took the time to provide me with valuable advice during her sabbatical, for which I am so grateful. Thanks to my lovely housemates, Anika and Marika, for 3A.M. Dunkin’ Donuts runs, and all the non-concrete love and support, too. Thanks to Furhad and J.D.D. for snack subsidies, Pat Mo for stimulating Gchat conversations and anyone that listened to me rant about how great Furtivos is; including (but not limited to) Emma, my siblings, Harper, Taylor Steele, my parents, and all the unfortunate strangers who were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Last, I want to thank Professor Ann Wightman. I like to think I could have done this on my own but, in all honesty, Professor Wightman is the one who made it happen. Her insightful comments and detailed editing consistently humbled me and made me want to work harder. Her strict deadlines helped with that, too. In all seriousness, from the bottom of my heart, I am so appreciative that she used her valuable time to bestow a little bit of her brilliance on my thesis. I hope I did okay.

- L.M.
“Spanish Cinema is politically useless, socially false, intellectually low, aesthetically negligible and industrially ailing.”

- Juan Antonio Bardem

Conversaciónes de Salamanca, 1955

Spanish cinema suffered through a long, complicated history in the 20th century. My original academic interest in Spanish film arose from a desire to map the effects of the cinema of opposition on the national memory of the shared, traumatic event of the Spanish Civil War. Because Franco kept the Spanish film industry insulated, and filmmakers were forced to develop a subversive method of communicating their attitudes toward the war, I am able to use several different tactics in order to gauge the effects, if any, of art-house, popular and documentary cinema on the memory of the Spanish Civil War – and what it meant to be Spanish – during the Transition Era in Spain.

I start with the assertion that since filmmakers are people, the ways that they have received and reinterpreted themes and aesthetics of filmmakers before them, and in turn that their films are similarly received and reinterpreted by the next generation of filmmakers, are an important clue to the legacies of their own films. Therefore, I have focused the attentions of my
prologue on three important Spanish filmmakers of the 1940’s and 50’s: Luis Buñuel, Luis García Berlanga and Juan Antonio Bardem. My epilogue, framed by Javier Cercas’ impactful work *Anatomy of a Moment*, discusses the effects of the transition era filmmakers on filmmakers of the 2000’s such as Guillermo del Toro and Pedro Almodovár.

My focus, however, is the cinema of filmmakers that were most influential during the 1970’s and the transition to democracy. The films of this era provide insight into the cultural attitude during a key moment of transition in Spanish history. These important filmmakers include Carlos Saura, Jaime Chavarrí, José Luis Borau, Jaime de Armiñán and Victor Ericé, among many others. I have divided my discussion of these filmmakers by three categories: documentary filmmakers, openly controversial and artistic filmmakers, and filmmakers of popular cinema. I will argue that in each of these categories, the filmmakers that represent these divisions were greatly influenced in aesthetics and thematic focuses by the Berlanga-Bardem era, and in turn that they influenced the themes and aesthetics of the next generation. Generally, the aesthetic influence can be characterized as tending toward art-cinema, something that was against the inundation of the typical Hollywood narrative, utilized by these directors (even in popular cinema) to disguise subversive content. Thematically, all three generations trend toward a critique of the three pillars of Francoism: the Church, the family and the military – in differing degrees of focus and acidity.
The other important aspect of this thesis is the impact of these films at the time they were produced, both in Spain and internationally. To study this, I have divided each chapter into three subcategories: conception, production and reception. The conception of each film ties into the idea of filmmakers as representative of Spanish people of their era: I look at biographies of each filmmaker and the different ways the Civil War touched their lives, and how those experiences shaped their characters and their films. I also look at family life, social status – anything that could have influenced their perception of the war and their personal place in Spanish society. For example, Carlos Saura, a son of upper-class parents with high places in Franco’s regime had a different experience than José Luis Borau, whose middle-class parents refused to send him to school for fear of Nationalist influences.

The second subsection, production of the film, emphasizes the role of contemporaries and collaborators on each filmmaker, as well as self-proclaimed directorial intent and undeclared intent. These facets can be determined from the advertising and marketing of each film. To assess these influences, I have gathered archival research from Madrid and Barcelona that consists of personal director’s notes and autobiographies, as well as visual evidence from several key films’ original Spanish advertising campaigns.

The last subsection, reception, is the most complicated. I look at original reviews from Spanish newspapers and film journals, also procured from the film archives in Madrid and Barcelona, which provide an important look at sentiment from Spanish academics and those trained in film language
in regards to each film. I can also glean from these reviews, as well as simple box office statistics, the effect of some of these films on the general population. Last, I include information about film festivals and these films’ reception abroad, which differs greatly between the three chapters (documentary, arthouse and popular) but is also important for the understanding of authorial intent and the conception of “Spanishness” internationally, asserting that the perception of Spanishness abroad had a domestic effect as well.

These sections are complicated by the timeline of censorship during this era. The documentary filmmakers I study, more operative during the 1960’s and early 70’s, were under harsher censorship guidelines than later filmmakers, in addition to having a different set of parameters due to the nature of documentary filmmaking as opposed to fictional. As the 70’s progressed, and especially with Franco’s death in 1975, the censorship laws became significantly more lax and the popular cinema directors of the late 1970’s had more stylistic and thematic freedoms than their recent predecessors. This is a topic I address in the prologue, and touch upon in each chapter as an important external consideration in the influence of these films.

There are undoubtedly things I cannot possibly address in this thesis. Hundreds of films were produced in Spain during the decade of the 1970’s and there is no way to analyze every one for subversive content. For this reason, I have chosen films by prominent directors that aroused polarizing attention upon release in hopes that they are representative of cultural tides.
Additionally, the overall effect of the cinema of the Transition cannot be understood solely by resurfacing societal criticisms across generations, but these criticisms are at least evidence of lingering tensions in modern Spain. Many other factors also contribute to my conclusion that the *pacto de olvidos* (pact of forgetfulness) still exists in Spanish culture. In cinema, films of the Transition Era were unable to reach the entire population let alone a widespread audience (though some were more successful in this regard than others). Additionally, there were so many ideological sides to this war that only studying films made by oppositional directors, often elitist, wealthy upper-class artists, cannot possibly create a holistic portrait of the repercussions of the war on the average Spaniard. But a Spaniard is a Spaniard; therefore even minority testimonies are an important part of the narrative.

Throughout this thesis I maintain an emphasis on the personal, the individual, wherever possible. Watching cinema is an individual experience that benefits from collective discussion. Films are narratives that tell different aspects of individual human lives in a visually interesting way. The Spanish Civil War was an event that affected the daily lives of every citizen of Spain, and not only them, but also their children and their children’s children. People are still alive in Spain today who remember the war and the battles that took place on the streets of Madrid and Barcelona, the cities they still inhabit. The war did not only disrupt and end lives physically, but it also instigated emotional and ideological battles in people’s minds and families. This is why
I include details about each filmmaker’s life and childhood, as well as his relationships with his collaborators, his producers, his actors and his reviewers. The individuals that were involved in the making and viewing of these films were part of the war-torn generation I am studying, and therefore their stories are important to mine.

To this end, I would like to recount one of my stories, when I met a Spanish person for the first time last summer. He was the young man sitting next to me on the plane from Philadelphia to Madrid, returning home for the summer after his first year of college in the United States. We struck up a conversation about the academic reason for my Spanish summer vacation. As I explained the concept of my thesis, his eyes began to narrow. He explained to me that his family was Falangist, that his grandparents still had a photograph of Franco in their foyer. I assured him that I was trying to take a neutral view of the events of the Civil War, that I was not supporting the anti-Francoist agenda but instead was trying to provide a holistic view of attitudes about the war, albeit by studying the cinema of opposition. He laughed at me. “Excuse me, but that is not possible. Everyone in Spain has a side. You really don’t know what you’re doing. You’ll be all right if you don’t try to convince anyone of anything. Just let it be.”

Despite his lack of faith, I find myself now able to draw some conclusions about the reception of oppositional cinema in Spain during the transition to democracy. I will show that the cinema of the transitional era of the 1970’s was important to the national memory of the Spanish Civil War
and the conception of “Spanishness” both domestically and abroad. However, I expect to also show that because the same themes that the Saura generation dealt with in the 70’s continued in the post-2000’s, it must be concluded that the cinema of the 1970’s was incomplete in its discussion of the effects of the guerra civil on the Spanish psyche. The Spanish people have much yet to uncover in order to have closure for this traumatic event in their recent national past.

INTRODUCTION

David Archibald, in the introduction to his essay “Representations of the Spanish Civil War,” eloquently makes the case for the study of popular cinema to understand history. He writes: “Until relatively recently most historians cared little about cinematic representations of past events. But in a world where the visual immediacy of the cinematic image increasingly works to displace traditional historiography, these representations have become increasingly important. It may be a commonly held belief that audiences do not visit the cinema for lessons in history, but when historical events that have been suppressed over generations are projected onto cinema screens, these representations become increasingly important for formulating how audiences conceptualize past events.”1 Especially in the case of the Spanish Civil War, where the population was actively repressing memories of the war, the cinematic representations of the war were of marked importance. The filmmakers of the 1970’s broke new ground in their cinema of opposition:

they managed to use film as their platform to begin to discuss the trauma of Spain’s collective recent past.

Here, I would like to briefly insert the academic framework for the theory of reception that is so crucial to this thesis. Hans Robert Jauss wrote *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* in 1982, a book that has become seminal for the understanding of art as history. Jauss writes: “One might conclude…that the claim ‘man makes his own history’ is most strongly borne out of the realm of the arts.” Jauss writes about literature, architecture and paintings as his chosen art forms, but I would argue that cinema is an even more important collective ‘making of history’ by members of a historical moment. Cinema is by nature a collaborative medium. One filmmaker convinces a hundred or so others to follow his vision and together they create a work of art. Thousands of people review and discuss this film, spending their own intellectual capital making assessments about its cultural value. After, millions of people serve as the audience for the film. This audience chooses to spend the duration of the film invested in its story, characters and message; at least some extent contributing to its influence by expending their own personal money, time and often emotional energy in the product. In addition, each film, each work of art contributes to a historical narrative simply by its concrete manifestation. Jauss writes:

> It cannot be disputed that the emancipatory and socially formative function of art represents only one side of its historical role in the process of human history. The other side is revealed in the fact that works of art are “directed against the course of

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time, against disappearance and transience”…the glorified immortality of the work of art is something that has been created against transience and within history itself…rejuvenating the great wealth of human experience preserved in past art, and making it accessible to the perception of the present age.3

Jauss contends that works of art record a moment of human history against the passage of time, and this record is valuable to future historians. From this theory I draw two points: One, the audience of a work of art lends credibility to its existence and its creators by active viewership and two, that works of art can help to construct a concrete representation of a past event that can still be analyzed and understood after the historical moment has passed.

The expanding spheres of influence generated by a cinematic work create a tidy parallel for my organization of this thesis. At the core, the smallest level of influence, a film involves the filmmaker and his crew. These people are the informed members of the product, privy to its path of conception and the various facets of artistic choice that went into its creation. The second sphere is composed of the intellectuals, the film reviewers that are informed about the medium itself but are not part of the inner circle of creation. They are therefore compelled to spend intellectual energy understanding and evaluating the film for artistic and thematic merits, which they share with the next sphere. The largest sphere is the audience, the general public. Films often try to appeal to as much of the population as they can, and this population receives the film as entertainment.

3 Jauss, Hans Robert, Timothy Bahti, and Paul De Man. Toward an Aesthetic of Reception, 75.
In regards to the films of the Spanish transition to democracy, I will make the argument that the documentary films of the 1970’s were created to influence other filmmakers and members of the informed public that had a vested interest in the content of the films for academic rather than entertainment value. They represent the smallest sphere of influence, if only because documentary films are a category of filmmaking all their own that draws an audience that, for the most part, already knows what they are going to see. The films of Carlos Saura, and the movement of *Nuevo cine de Español* as a whole, created works meant to appeal to intellectuals, especially members of the international film community. The directors of popular cinema were broader in their aspirations. They made films for the general public, wrapped in human interest and entertainment value, in order to expand their audience as widely as possible and influence the attitudes of a larger portion of the population. In any case, I contend that all three types of filmmakers helped to construct the national memory of the Spanish Civil War by visually representing a historical moment that is now in the past, and preserving it for future generations.

The filmmakers of the Saura generation were influenced by many factors; including personal experiences during the Spanish Civil war, famous films from the international community, and collaboration with other filmmakers of the era. However, holding with the argument that artists influence the next generation of artists, one of the greatest influences on these men was the troupe of Spanish filmmakers who preceded them. Luis Buñuel,
Luis García Berlanga and Juan Antonio Bardem were the first Spanish filmmakers of the Franco era to directly challenge censorship codes and plant subversive messages in their works. All three filmmakers were active throughout the 1950’s, making films that caused controversy and even forced Buñuel into exile. All three also can be seen to have impacted aesthetic and thematic choices made by the directors of the 1970’s across art-house, documentary and popular genres. I have separated this thesis in terms of “generations,” which I define as filmmakers who were active primarily during the 1950’s, 1970’s and 2000’s, respectively. What the filmmakers of the 50’s began, those of the 70’s received, reinterpreted and reproduced. That, in turn, was received and reinterpreted by the generation of Javier Cercas, whose biting book Anatomy of a Moment exemplifies the failures of the Saura generation and serves as the framework for the epilogue of this thesis.

Buñuel, Bardem and Berlanga, however, comprise the focus of the prologue. Un muerte du una ciclista by Bardem, Viridiana by Buñuel and ¡Bienvenido Mr. Marshall! by Berlanga were all formative works for the next generation. Examining important thematic and aesthetic elements of these major films will provide context for understanding some of the influences behind the controversial films of the 1970’s, as well as support the argument that all of the filmmakers of the 70’s were the heirs of those who went before, just as the filmmakers of the post-2000’s are, at least in part, the product of the artists of the 70’s. In addition, this prologue will provide context for a discussion of the trauma of the Spanish Civil War in general. It is important to
explicate some of the historical events behind the cultural shifts that took place during this turbulent time, as well as to discuss the timeline of censorship in Spanish cinema during the Transition Era.

A (VERY) BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WAR

The Spanish Civil War was, reductively, complicated. The sides were never clear-cut, both factions ended up allying with groups that were ideologically different than them and both sides committed atrocities between 1936 and 1939. However, one side won. General Francisco Franco and his military uprising took control of Spain in 1939 and he did not relinquish his dictatorship until his death in 1975, “one of the longest terms of one-man rule in modern European history.”

It began with a military coup, led by Franco and for allegedly conservative interests, against a Republic that had began with the silent withdrawal of King Alfonso XIII, one that had established a democratic system in a monarchical country almost overnight. Most of the Spanish middle class was very conservative and staunchly believed in the three pillars of Francoism as the tenets of Spanish society. The remainder was left needing the alliance of the protelariat parties. The coalition of non-conservatives was radical: the Socialist party (PSOE) and its trade union joined with the anarcho-syndicalist union (CNT) and the left-leaning Republicans. The monarchist hard Right found a Socialist Republic

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unacceptable and began to plot a violent overthrow. As Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi write:

With hindsight we can see that it was the bourgeois Republicans’ attack on the church which gave outraged conservative interest the banner of the persecuted church…The Civil War was the last of the European religious wars. It was also, *grosso modo*, a class war. In Nationalist propaganda it was presented not only as a war against freemasons, the historic protagonists of anti-clericalism, but also as a war against Marxists, out to bolshevise Spain. Threatened less by the legislation of the Republic than by the rhetoric and the revolutionary atmosphere of the spring and summer of 1936, the Spanish upper classes were enthusiastic supporters of the rising. The middle sectors of society were less consistent. Young intellectuals and professionals supported the Republic, the older generation…withdrew their alliance.⁵

There was also a separatist component to the *guerra civil* – the Republic had given autonomy to Catalonia, which the Right saw as a betrayal of the unity that Spain had fought so hard to create. Issues of Catalan identity versus larger Spain surface throughout Spain’s history, and are very important to the works of Basilio Martín Patino (among others).

Franco had many important factors on his side. The Republic was torn apart by factions – anarchists and revolutionaries were aligned with more liberal members of the bourgeoisie – but under Franco, a political monolith made of Nationalist soldiers paired with the ideological and religious authority of the Catholic church emerged as a powerful, unified movement “dominated by conservative monarchists and soldiers.”⁶ Wartime atrocities were committed on both sides. In the first days of the Civil War, members of the Republican army massacred priests in the thousands. Franco, on the other side, quietly rounded up and killed political opponents and dissenters throughout his regime. Hundreds of thousands of Spaniards died during the

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⁵ Carr, Raymond and Juan Pablo Fusi *Spain: From Dictatorship to Democracy*, 4.
⁶ Carr, Raymond and Juan Pablo Fusi *Spain: From Dictatorship to Democracy*, 7.
war, tens of thousands were civilians, often caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. One famous instance was the bombing of Guernica, immortalized in Picasso’s famous painting, which was an overhead bombing of a civilian town by the Falangists. In another horrific story, over 500 members of the International Brigades were slain by the Communist “Butcher of Albacete.”

Within a month of the military coup, over 17,000 Madrileños were executed in the streets of Madrid. The war was short, violent and brutal and ultimately, the Nationalists won. Despite the fact that industrial resources, gold reserves, and most of the navy and air force in the hands of Republicans, the Nationalists had a stronger unified wartime government as well as superior army discipline and significant help from Germany and Italy. Franco, who presided over a much more ideologically unified army than the fragmented Republicans, saw Spain’s problems simply: “Great Spain, the Spain of the Catholic kings and their vast American empire, had been destroyed by democratic parliamentarianism based on universal suffrage.”

Franco was a pious man, a family man. Many of his supporters saw him as a distinguished soldier that wanted to restore Spain to its former glory. He appealed to conservatives and Catholics with his steadfast, unwavering commitment to his principles. At the end of the war he promoted, and for the most part achieved, social peace. He believed that uprisings by social minorities such as labor unions and Marxists were influenced by foreigners.

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8 Carr, Raymond and Juan Pablo Fusi *Spain: From Dictatorship to Democracy*, 17.
and did not represent the true Catholic roots of Old Spain. As Carr and Fusi write, “Francoism was more than the personal rule of a dictator. He gave his name to a political system much more complex and adaptable than his opponents would admit. If the negative element was the exclusion of those who did not share the ideals of the Crusade, the positive side was the articulation in changing forms within the system of the conservative interests which the monarchy had protected and which the Republic of 1936-39 had threatened.” Franco’s power rested in the three pillars of Francoism: The Falangist army, the Catholic Church, and the traditional family structure (nuclear, patriarchal, hetero-normative) embraced by conservative Spaniards.

In 1941, José Luis Sáenz de Heredia directed a film called Raza (Race) that tells the story of a noble sea captain during the Spanish Civil War that exemplifies all of the grandiose virtues that Franco wished to bring back to Spain. The film was supposedly written at least in part by Franco himself, under the pen name of Jaime de Andrade. In the prologue to the book, “Jaime de Andrade” gives a monologue about the virtues of Spanishness that aptly summarizes Franco’s political and ideological platform:

You shall witness the scenes in the life of a generation; unpublished episodes of the Spanish Crusade characterized by the nobility and spirituality typical of our race. An honorable family is at the crux of this work, a faithful reflection of the Spanish families that have resisted the most violent attacks of materialism. Sublime sacrifices, heroic deeds, gestures of generosity, and actions of lofty nobility will pass before your eyes. Nothing contrived will you find here. Each episode will bring to your lips various names….Many! For that is Spain, and that is raza.  

9 Carr, Raymond and Juan Pablo Fusi Spain: From Dictatorship to Democracy, 21.
Franco proposed to return Spain to its former glory; a Catholic, conservative beacon of light in a world that was growing dark. As Peter Besas writes, “Eyes were cast back to the glorious days of the Catholic Monarchs and the Spanish Conquistadores and to Spain’s Golden Age of literature. All the humiliating history in between ceased to exist.”

After the Nationalists won the war, Franco declared a return to a Spanish monarchy, but never gave up his own rule in his lifetime. When he became seriously ill in 1975, he finally handed over his powers to Juan Carlos, the next declared king of Spain, but when he recovered he took them back. Franco died slowly. He was bedridden for many years before 1975, and Professor González told me that everyone he knew in Spain had a bottle of champagne waiting in his cupboard for the day Franco finally died. He only truly surrendered his rule with his death

Under his regime, Spain was a “self-sufficient, self-capitalising economy protected from outside competition by tariffs and administrative controls…regulated by state intervention….Spain [was] forced to produce everything it needed, regardless of cost…cut off from the outside world by a massive programme of import substitution.”

This attitude carried over into filmmaking and other aspects of culture for a large portion of the 20th century, however, it proved to be unsustainable. The majority of the intelligentsia in Spain had sided with the Republicans. It was difficult for the Nationalists to

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12 Carr, Raymond and Juan Pablo Fusi *Spain: From Dictatorship to Democracy*, 51.
gain any shred of intellectual legitimacy within Spain and especially the international market. Hollywood films still dominated cinemas. Only one Spanish film was shown for every four foreign films, and Spanish films that actually had commercial success tended to be spaghetti westerns or folkloric comedies.\textsuperscript{13} The only other Spanish films that had any success were the controversial films made by subversive directors, ones that gained respect internationally and therefore piqued interest domestically. Buñuel, Bardem and Berlanga made some of the more important films of this type.

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF CENSORSHIP**

At Franco’s ascent to power, censorship laws were most extreme. As years progressed, and his influence declined, the cultural tide in Spain began to change - especially concerning cinema. In 1955, film professionals gathered in Salamanca for the famous *Conversaciones de Salamanca*, Salamanca Conversations, in which they discussed the state of cinema in Spain. Juan Antonio Bardem famously said that Spanish cinema was “politically useless, socially false, intellectually low, aesthetically negligible and industrially ailing.”\textsuperscript{14} García Escudero also attended the conversations, and so when he was appointed as the director of the *Departamento de Cinematografía y Teatro* he began to implement the agenda suggested at the consortium. In 1962, under Escudero’s leadership, Spain made an effort to enter the international film market. He was able to establish a category for *cine de*

\textsuperscript{13} Carr, Raymond and Juan Pablo Fusi *Spain: From Dictatorship to Democracy*, 129.

**interés especial**, special interest films that were artistically inclined and against the grain of the war films, folklore musicals and historical epics that comprised the majority of Spanish films and allowed for the Nuevo cine español, New Spanish Cinema, to evolve. Elías Querejeta was instrumental in “packaging the violence and distortions of the Spanish experience in a style both visually interesting to a foreign audience and, more importantly, permissible by the Franco regime.”¹⁵ The government devised a way to control the output of New Spanish Cinema by controlling distribution of these films. Censors created a system of art theatres, the arte y ensayo system in 1967. Only 380 theatres in Spain, which could not seat more than 500 each and only existed in urban areas of more than 500,000 inhabitants, could play films from the New Spanish Cinema. Crowds were small and consisted solely of wealthy, educated patrons. Within five years, the system was abolished. The following years saw strict censorship codes, though many filmmakers were able to make a living off of challenging these restrictions, as will be discussed in later chapters. When Franco died in 1975, things changed immeasurably.¹⁶ Censorship laws were weakened to almost nonexistence. Jose Luís Borau’s *Furtivos* in 1975 was the first film to be released domestically without an official license from the censors.¹⁷

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¹⁷ Triana-Toribio, Nuria *New Spanish Cinema*, 98.
In 1983, the Socialist Party took power in Spain and appointed Pilar Miró director general of cinematography.\(^{18}\) She established the Miró Law in 1983, which gave money to “serious” filmmakers and “virtually turned its back on the traditional ‘commercial’ directors and producers.”\(^{19}\) This law was disastrous in Spain. It did not take into account the audiences wishes and “entertainment” and “commercial” became dirty words in Spanish cinema. These films simply did not interest popular audiences and they began to shun domestic products. According to Peter Besas, the Spanish film industry is still reeling from this law even today. Now, the screen quota in Spain has expanded to allow films from other European Union countries to count as the required one Spanish film per each two non-Spanish films. U.S. films still accounted for 72% of total box-office gross in 1994.\(^{20}\) It can be surmised from this information that educated audiences in urban settings were the only patrons of Spanish domestic films.

Most of the films I discuss in this thesis would have been played in arte y ensayo theaters or only in large metropolises. This is certainly an important context for the research I have done, and their effects on the general Spanish population. However, as I have argued above, even if it is only known

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\(^{18}\) Pilar Miró is another incredibly important subversive director of the 1970’s. Her 1979 film, *El crimen de Cuenca*, took on the Guardia Civil and their practice of garroting during the war. She remains the most famous female director of the Transition Era in Spain, however; unfortunately I do not have time to delve into every oppositional director of the era. As such, I will focus on her contributions to the overall film industry in Spain.

\(^{19}\) Besas, Peter “Financial Structure of Spanish Cinema,” 246.

by a certain segment of the population, cinema may still have a greater effect on popular ideologies than most other forms of political discussion.

The directors of the 1950’s, more so than those of the 1970’s, would only have reached a small portion of the population. This population, though, included the important directors of the next two generations and therefore their contributions are still important to the development of the national narrative about the Spanish Civil War and post-war society in Spain.

LUÍS GARCÍA BERLANGA (1921 – 2010)

Luís García Berlanga was born in Valencia in 1921, to an affluent family of Republicans. His father was a prominent member of the Republican national parliament that was sentenced to death after the Civil War. Luís, who had fought against Franco during the war, volunteered for Franco’s División azul in order to commute his father’s sentence from death to a jail sentence. He attended the National School of Cinema in 1947 where he was one of the first graduates. Schwartz writes, “From the beginning of his career, Berlanga developed a sharp, satirical style…his true genius manifested itself in his lampooning of certain aspects of Spain’s political and social worlds and his hysterical satirizing of certain Spanish foibles did not endear him or his films to the Franco regime.”

Berlanga was heavily influenced aesthetically by

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Italian neorealism, something that is evident in his most famous film ¡Bienvenido Mr. Marshall! in 1952.

¡Bienvenido Mr. Marshall is a gently satirical film about a small village preparing for a visit of a member of the Marshall Plan commission. They are told that they will receive monetary aid depending on the “kindnesses” that the locals show to the visiting Americans. In a rush to please the upcoming visitors, the villagers “invest all their pesetas in creating this stereotype, dream-like vision of a town in Southern Spain, masking their own misery and poverty, dreaming of future wealth and riches because of Mr. Marshall.”

They present a view of traditional, stereotypical Spanishness – organizing a bullfight, a fiesta complete with men and women in traditional folkloric garb. Dream sequences reveal what they think the United States is like, including an Old Western town “replete with saloon, gambling wheels, gunfights and bar girls; Berlanga’s other images of the Ku Klux Klan and the House Committee on Un-American Activities-McCarthy Hearings are also adroitly portrayed.”

Two specific themes emerge here which continue into the works of the next generation. First, the stereotyping of Spanishness, which would later appear in the works of Carlos Saura (specifically in La caza and Los golfos.) Also, the satirical view toward America and Hollywood cinema, accompanied by a dream-like, escapist quality, appears in the films of the popular genre filmmakers such as Pedro Olea and Jaime de Armiñán.

Berlanga also uses aesthetics that influenced the later generation, including neorealist techniques. As Schwartz writes, “Berlanga also took this film out of the studio and actually used local townspeople in the village of Guadalix de la Sierra, giving the film the kind of neo-realistic authenticity of a de Sica or Rossellini film.” Neo-realism has an inherent level of social commentary. It puts the onus of realism on itself, legitimizing its own messages within the world of the film. Carlos Saura as well as, more theoretically, the documentarians of the 1970’s would later absorb the neorealist tendencies of Berlanga and Bardem. As John Hopewell wrote, “Neo-realism attracted supporters right across the political spectrum of Spanish cinema. It was the perfect rallying call for a reconciliatory policy. Its origins in the aftermath of Italian fascism allowed militants to exploit the international belief that Spaniards, through their cinema, were fighting fascism in Spain.” According to Hopewell, neo-realism appealed to virtually anyone that opposed fascism. This aesthetic was carried forward by the next set of filmmakers.

**JUAN ANTONIO BARDEM (1922 – 2002)**

Juan Antonio Bardem was born in Madrid in 1922. His family consisted mostly of actors; they were part of the intelligentsia and mostly Republican. When the war broke out, he was thirteen years old. His family moved from Madrid to Barcelona, then San Sebastian, then Sevilla, then back

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to Madrid to avoid the worst of the battles. In 1947 he entered the Instituto de Investigaciónes Cinematográficas with Jose Luís Berlanga. He was denied a diploma from the I.I.E.C. because of his political affiliations, but managed to begin a successful film career regardless. He wrote ¡Bienvenido Mr. Marshall! in 1952, just the first of many collaborations with Berlanga. Bardem was adamant about making specifically Spanish films. He once said, “An artist cannot transplant his roots; I can speak only of that which I know well: Spain.”

His best-known film, Muerte de una ciclista, is considered a classic of Spanish cinema. It was filmed in 1955 and caused incredible controversy on its release. It tells the story of a pair of young lovers having a clandestine affair that inadvertently run over and kill a bicyclist on their way back from a rendezvous. The woman, María, refuses to admit to the crime despite Juan’s (the man, a university professor) pleas. She tries to flee the scene in her car, ends up swerving to avoid another cyclist and crashes to her death. The basic structure of the film is an unobtrusive melodrama; however, as Schwartz writes: “The subplots of the film are more interesting. We learn that Juan holds his university position through the patronage of influential rich friends. It is he who foments the student reform movement...he envisages his own guilt as part of the wider guilt of the privileged toward the rest of society.”

Further, Bardem critiques the social subjugation of women by casting two similar-looking actors as Maria’s husband and Juan. This allows the audience

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to question the social structure that has landed her with one of these men (one she is allowed to be with due to her social status) over the other. Women’s low status in the social hierarchy is a theme that resurfaces in *Cría cuervos*, *Tormento*, and ¡*Pim, Pam, Pum, Fuego!* among other Transition Era films. The film is about the powerlessness of the individual in the face of a rigid, oppressive society, and its ramifications on the post-war Spanish citizen.

Bardem uses aesthetic techniques that echo in the next generation. In a famous sequence of the film, he includes footage from a No-Do (*noticarios y documentales*, the government-issued news bulletin that preceded all Spanish films) that satirizes its truthfulness. The documentary filmmakers of the 1970’s later also used footage from No-Do’s in contexts that disproved their validity. The re-appropriation of approved governmental footage was a huge step in a controversial direction that Bardem took first, and other directors were able to follow. *Un muerte de una ciclista* is also shot in the neo-realist style. Editing is disjointed, timelines are incomplete. Carlos Saura used this tactic often in later works, albeit in more of an art-house capacity than Bardem before him.

Kinder also believes that *Muerte de una ciclista* critiques Hollywood’s traditional alignment with the bourgeoisie. She writes that Bardem “shifts abruptly between Hollywood and neo-realist conventions… it is used as a class discourse.”

Therefore, this aesthetic discontinuity is thematic as well; the two strata of society (rich upper class and poor students from the middle and

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lower classes) are presented in extremely opposite ways. The “good” are the poor people, though their motivations are banal. The rich are decidedly evil, ruthless and decadent. Bardem uses aesthetics and thematic strands to present a biting social commentary that managed to evade censors and affect both the cinema-going population as well as the next generation of important filmmakers.

**LUIS BUÑUEL (1900-1983)**

Luis Buñuel is the oldest director I am examining from the 1950’s and his career began long before that of Bardem or Berlanga. However, I have chosen his 1961 film, *Viridiana*, as an example of a film that was received and reinterpreted by the next generation. Buñuel is perhaps the most famous Spanish director of all time, though because of his long exile he is thought of more as an international artist, similar to Pablo Picasso or Salvador Dalí. Buñuel began making films in 1929 and did not stop until his death in 1983. He was born to a wealthy, bourgeois family in Calanda, Spain. He was the oldest of seven children and by 1924 he was enrolled in the Film Academy in Paris. Buñuel became friends with Parisian surrealists, and his first film, *Un chien andalou* is certainly surreal.³¹ By 1932 he had made his first film in Spain, *Tierra sin pan*, which was a surreal documentary parody that exposed the country’s poverty and misery. Both the Republican government and the Franco regime censored it. When the war broke out in 1936, Buñuel fled to the United States where he worked as a film editor at the Museum of Modern

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Art in New York. He moved to Mexico in the 1950’s, where he became internationally famous for his works. His next film made in Spain was *Viridiana* in 1961, though it was banned from popular screenings until 1977.\(^{32}\)

Censors had issues with the film’s script from its conception, but Buñuel was able to film it almost exactly as he intended. It was filmed at Juan Antonio Bardem’s studio in Madrid with a low budget and efficiently production. The hard part was the film’s release. The film is about a young nun named Viridiana that goes to visit her uncle and benefactor, Don Jaime. Don Jaime tries to seduce her and fails, at which point he drugs her and tells her that he raped her. Viridiana is horrified and leaves, causing her uncle to hang himself. Viridiana renounces her vows and takes up residency at Don Jaime’s mansion but has to share it with her cousin, Jorge, whom she lusts after. The film culminates with a parody of the Last Supper, where Viridiana has invited twelve beggars to sup at the mansion and they manage to have an orgy before Viridiana and Jorge are able to expel them from the house.

Obviously, the film contains strong anti-Catholic sentiments. Mocking the Church was not something taken lightly – as Pavlóvic writes: “it became the subject of a resounding international debate…but the film achieved worldwide success beyond Spain’s borders.”\(^{33}\) It is an allegorical tale, where Viridiana symbolizes the naïve innocence of belief in Christian charity. As Marvin D’Lugo writes, “She is situated between two extremes personified by the beggars and her cousin Jorge…the beggars embody the notion of

\(^{32}\) Pavlóvic, Tatjana *100 Years of Spanish Cinema*. 38.
\(^{33}\) Pavlóvic, Tatjana *100 Years of Spanish Cinema* p. 99
instinctual reality that cannot be denied by religious rhetoric; Jorge is the pragmatist who is not so naïve as to believe he can change anything in society, but simply tries to better his own lot. The symbolic struggle between Viridiana and these two foils leads to a larger allegory about the Spain Buñuel has returned to after twenty-five years of exile, torn as it appears to be between the dogma of the past and the need to confront modernization.\textsuperscript{34}

Carlos Saura, Victor Ericé and Pedro Olea would proceed with the theme of religious backwardness in the face of modern intellectualism, as did many other filmmakers of the Transition Era. Additionally, like in \textit{Viridiana}, confronting taboos of incest, sexual perversion and gratuitous, animalistic violence associated with sex are hallmarks of popular Spanish filmmakers such as Olea, Borau and de Armiñán. Spanish society craved sexuality in films during the repressive Franco era, and directors like Buñuel introduced it in the most erotic and explosive way that they could.

Aesthetically, Buñuel is known for his rejection of the “pretty shot.” José Luís Borau would also do this, though his rejection tended to veer toward an acceptance of the kinetic Hollywood convections that require action-packed frames rather than merely rejecting “pretty.” \textit{Viridiana} is fraught with elliptical editing techniques, moments of surrealism and other art-house techniques later used by Carlos Saura. Additionally, the profane use of the reconstruction of \textit{The Last Supper} was a controversial move by Buñuel, but

later directors followed his lead in appropriating famous paintings and references to pop culture in order to critique (and blaspheme) the societal structures that had created them. Last, Buñuel establishes a series of visual motifs that surface throughout *Viridiana* in order to construct a meaningful symbolism, another tactic used by many directors of the next generation. D’Lugo writes, “Prominent among these [motifs] is a child’s jump rope used by Rita, the daughter of Jaime’s maid….Jaime uses it to hang himself and then it reappears in the hands of one of the beggars who restrains Viridiana while attempting to rape her. These repetitions underscore the process whereby everyday objects are often imbued with sacred and profane meanings.”35 Creating symbolic visual motifs from repeated depictions of a certain object is a filmmaking tactic used by all of the art-house directors, specifically Saura and Ericé, in later years.

CONCLUSION

Juan Antonio Bardem, Luís García Berlanga and Luis Buñuel were of instrumental importance to the next generation of filmmakers. Aesthetically and thematically, they created threads of Spanish specificity that the filmmakers of the Transition Era adopted as they made their own works in the 1970’s. All three filmmakers were also active in the 70’s, some even collaborated with the next generation (Buñuel and Saura were correspondents and great friends), which added to their influence on each other. However, their efforts were only the beginning of the narrative of the national trauma of

the Spanish Civil War. The filmmakers of the Transition Era were next, emboldened by their predecessors and weakening censorship laws, to attack the oppressive institutionalization of the pillars of Francoism through cinema.
CHAPTER ONE: DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKERS IN THE TRANSITION ERA

INTRODUCTION

In order to assess the effect of documentary filmmakers on the filmic legacy of the Spanish Civil War, there are a few different considerations to be taken into account than with fiction films, but the basic framework is the same. Even working within the genre of nonfiction, the famous documentarians of the transition era in Spain inherited aesthetic and thematic traditions from the filmmakers of the 1950’s such as Luis Buñuel, Juan Antonio Bardem and Jose Luis Berlanga and reinterpreted them in their own unique ways. In order to gauge the impact of the documentary films made by Jaime Camino, Basilio Martín Patino and Jaime Chavarrí, I must examine the various routes to conception and production that played parts in the film’s eventual releases, as well as their domestic and international receptions.

I will first explain the historical moment of the first post-war documentaries in Spain, followed by an analysis of several key documentary films’ important sequences and implied meanings. This section will include a discussion of the biographies of Chavarrí, Camino and Patino, which will help establish their allegiances and involvements in the historical narrative of the Spanish Civil War. Then, I will derive filmmaker intent from interviews, press releases and images used to advertise the films. Last, a discussion of international and domestic box office success, along with original film reviews and other visual evidence will provide clues to the influence of these
documentaries on the national memory of the Spanish Civil War in their own
generation as well as the next.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The cultural landscape when the most famous Spanish documentary
filmmakers were more active was one in most ways identical to that of the
arthouse and popular cinema filmmakers. Jaime Camino, Basilio Martín
Patino, and Jaime Chavarrí all began their careers in the mid-1960’s, and
continued into the early 80’s. During a 5-year period (1974-1979) that aptly
encapsulates the transition from dictatorship to democracy, these three
Spanish directors made four crucial documentary films that were among the
first of their kind. While Carlos Saura had been critiquing Franco subtly under
the guise of metaphor, the documentarians used a different lens, one with the
weight of authenticity and objectivity, to view the recent historical events still
fresh in the minds of their audience.

Objectively, documentary films claim to represent the truth of a
historical event. They are a medium thought to be more similar to a news
bulletin than a film. There is still a belief among popular audiences that
documentaries are realistic depictions of true events, though that conception
has shifted in the cinema-rich years that have followed. During the transition
to democracy, beginning in the 1960’s, documentary films were uncommon in
Spain and the only genre of non-fiction visual content that was well known to
Spanish audiences was the NO-DO. NO-DO stands for \textit{noticarios y
documentales}; short, public announcements controlled by the regime that
would often play very purposefully before international as well as domestic films in Spain. In “Documenting the National,” Marsha Kinder writes: “In 1942, a government ban was imposed on the shooting, editing and processing of any documentary footage other than that produced for the state-controlled *Noticias Documentales*.” Kinder argues that this ban did three things for Spaniards understanding of documentary films: it made nonfiction films a battleground for control of popular memory; it made Spaniards suspicious of the ideological functions of nonfiction film; and it created a divide between documentary and “art-documentary” – the guise that allowed documentaries like Carlos Saura’s *Cuenca* to exist despite strict censorship laws.

Kinder argues that the documentary films produced by Camino, Patino and Chavarrí helped to reflexively refigure the nation at a key point in the transition to democracy by repurposing the previously government-held medium of nonfiction film into a platform for subversive speech. Nonfiction film held enormous cultural weight in Spain during the 1970’s due to NO-DO’s, something that Bardem and Berlanga satirized in a famous sequence from *Un muerte de una ciclista*. Spaniards saw the nonfiction film as “major historical events as well as the banalities of everyday life, both naturalized through a mediating Francoist point of view.” So, depending on one’s political allegiances, either NO-DO’s were accurate depictions of the country or a complete ideological spin in favor of Franco’s government. Either way,

37 Kinder, Marsha “Documenting the National,” 68-69.
38 Kinder, Marsha “Documenting the National,” 67.
Spaniards were unused to nonfiction films produced by anyone other than the government, which put a great amount of cultural weight on the first post-Franco documentaries to surface and they were automatically viewed as a sign of the government’s weakening power.

**BASILIO MARTÍN PATINO: 1930 -**

Basilio Martín Patino, the oldest of the important documentary filmmakers, was born in 1930 – a child in the years of the Civil War. Patino spent his childhood years in Lumbrales, Spain, a small town, and his parents were schoolteachers. He attended school in Salamanca, and founded a cinema magazine at the university that was shut down by Franco’s censors. After school he began working in advertising and television commercials. His experience in advertising is evident in most of his films – Patino is a master of subtle editing, giving sequences implied meaning simply by where he makes the cut. His tendency toward the power of editing surfaces in all his films, but is perhaps most important in his works of nonfiction. Patino has said of his work, “It is purely personal cinema. I do what interests me, and documentaries interest me most.” According to Ronald Schwartz, personal and intense cinema is what Patino does best. Patino said in an interview with *Cinema 2002* in 1977 that he is “even more neurotic than José Luis Borau. But I do not want to popularize Spanish film as a whole, like Borau. I want to make

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41 Pavlóvic, Tatjana *100 Years of Spanish Cinema*, 59.
42 Pavlóvic, Tatjana *100 Years of Spanish Cinema*, 59.
extremely personal films." He has also said that working under oppression incited creativity in him. In a 1985 interview with *Dirigido por* he described “una especie de adrenalina rabiosamente fecunda” a “rabidly fruitful adrenaline” that he felt while assembling *Canciones* in a basement. This type of energy is also evident in his works, with their upbeat soundtracks and rapid editing. He is described as a “shy, reclusive person whose chief film interests are his collection of old projectors and magic lanterns.” This self-image is also obvious in interviews and images of Patino: he is quiet, serious and intense.

In an interview about the origins of *Canciones*, Patino explains his thought process behind the film. He said, “I had realized that music is enormously evocative and always brings images to mind…that’s where I wanted to start. And then I thought that certain Spanish songs were based on that terrible postwar period and had a meaning in relation to its reality and that there was a close link between the songs and the period.” Patino also remarked that censors did not immediately know what to do with the film, and it initially was approved with 27 cuts for release in Spain in 1971. However, a reviewer for the Right-wing *El Alcázar* wrote a scathing review of the film before its release, saying that Patino had hoodwinked the censors. As a result,

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47 See Figure 1.1
48 Besas, Peter *Behind the Spanish Lens: Spanish Cinema Under Fascism and Democracy*, 108.
it was retracted from cinemas before it premiered. It was finally released after Franco’s death in 1976. Despite that, or perhaps because of it, the film immediately caused controversy with its frank, open critique of Francoism using archival footage and ironic juxtaposition.  

*Canciones para después de una guerra* is a film that almost exclusively uses soundtrack to construct its ideological meaning. All the footage used in the film had been approved by Franco’s censors, but Patino contrasts the footage with popular songs of the time period (40’s and 50’s) to showcase his sense of irony. For example, a popular love song plays over footage of people waiting in bread lines in Madrid. Small children wait for their handouts; mothers hide their faces in shame. The lyrics of the song state: “I don’t need anything, I don’t want anything but your kiss.” The contrast of this line with the archival footage of masses of people who need quite a few things is an explicit statement on the condition of post-war Spain. The favorite artists of Franco, the rich, the winning side – they can afford to say they don’t need anything but a lover’s kiss. However, this hyperbole becomes purely malicious in context of bread lines and starvation.

Patino even goes so far as to literally tint the footage depending on the perceived bias of the source of the footage, a tactic that reveals much about the intent behind the use of each sequence. Tatjana Pavlovic writes: “In using these ideologically charged filters, Martín Patino manipulates the images as a way to show the ideological differences between the two main factions.

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49 Besas, Peter *Behind the Spanish Lens: Spanish Cinema Under Fascism and Democracy*, 108.
involved in the Spanish Civil War. Throughout the entire film the colors alternate, visually marking the discredited Republican past against the beginning of Franco’s new regime with all its supposed promises of a brighter future.” Tinting his footage, yellow or blue for the Nationalists and red for the Republicans, lends an unmistakable ideological bent to the film that censors and audiences recognized.

He juxtaposes many images of what the outside world would recognize as stereotypical “Spanishness,” such as bull running and Flamenco dancing, with American popular songs to critique the way that Spain has branded itself backwards way, folkloric. Franco called these things a nostalgic harkening to Spain’s former glory, but Patino satirizes that notion in Canciones. Images of Spanish dances play under dialogue from United States news releases about the atomic bomb, emphasizing Spain’s isolation from the technologically advancing west. Patino made this film in secret before Franco’s death but was not able to release it until he died in 1976. Patino assembled the archival footage out of country, in Berlin, “practically in hiding.” Marsha Kinder argues in her article “Documenting the National” that the delay of Canciones release lessened its impact in the historical moment. Canciones was finally released in November 1976 in Barcelona, and by Christmas in Madrid. Ronald Schwartz writes: “Originally produced for $70,000 in 1971, it grossed 1.5 million by the end of 1976.”

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50 Pavlóvic, Tatjana 100 Years of Spanish Cinema, 56.
51 Pavlóvic, Tatjana 100 Years of Spanish Cinema, 54.
52 Schwartz, Ronald Spanish Film Directors (1950-1985): 21 Profiles, 150.
fairly successful in the domestic box-office after its long-delayed release, but Patino felt that he had to remain underground. “Either I could play ball with the government or I could work freely, by myself. I chose the latter way.”

The aesthetics of *Canciones* are innovative in many ways, but many techniques are inherited from Bardem and Berlanga as well as international directors. Montage editing, or the quick splicing together of unrelated images in order to impress a certain effect upon the audience, was developed as a means to convey subversive content in 1920’s Soviet Russia by Sergei Eisenstein, a filmmaker Patino certainly studied at the Film Institute in Madrid. However, perhaps the most influential filmmaker to Patino’s *Canciones* was the exiled Spaniard Luis Buñuel. Between 1939 and 1945, Buñuel was at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, dubbing and reediting Spanish versions of documentaries – including Leni Riefenstahl’s fascist *Triumph of the Will*, to give them ironic meanings. Kinder argues: “The film [*Canciones*] implies this subversive form of mental editing was accessible to those so-called inner exiles living within Francoist Spain, who could use their own popular memories of quotidian life to challenge the official meanings imposed by the state.” These inner-exiles were most of the audience for *Canciones*, as it only opened at *arte y ensayo* theatres and was “not well-received by the public.”

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55 Pavlovic, Tatjana *100 Years of Spanish Cinema*, 60.
The posters used to advertise the film look like advertisements for a music show. They are bright yellow; a large radio takes the most prominent position, surrounded by music notes. The block letters are yellow and red, the colors of the Spanish flag. Only the figures of people in a bread line are in black and white, making a stark contrast to the figure of a Nationalist soldier marching, holding a red flag with his mouth open in song. Patino also sold an 8track, designed with the same cover, which contained the songs from the film. This type of advertising gave Patino plausible deniability of the subversive content to his films. Antonio Izquierda, a newspaper writer for *Arriba*, the official newspaper for Franco’s Spanish state, wrote an article in 1971 vying for the film’s release. He wrote: “Dos objeciones se ocurren, sin embargo: ningún documento histórico es inconveniente o inoportuno y, en caso improbable de que esa antología de la epopeya española de los años cuarenta no responda a un criterio de rigurosa objetividad, la culpa no la tiene, seguramente, Basilio Martín Patino.” This statement relieves Patino from his responsibility as the creator, giving him the benefit of the doubt in the controversy surrounding the film.

Most critics were positive about the film after its eventual release in 1976. Because of the death of Franco, they were able to openly discuss the reasons for its initial ban. Diego Galan in 1976 reviewed the film as “un

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56 See Figure 1.2
57 Izquierda, Antonio. "Canciones para despues una guerra." *Arriba* (Madrid), June 6, 1971. “Two objections occur (to the ban of the film) – no historical document should be inconvenient or inopportune. In the improbable case that this anthology of popular Spanish songs from the 40’s does not stand up to the rigorous criteria of objectivity, surely the fault is not with Patino.”
narrativo ironíco\textsuperscript{58} that could not possibly create a collective memory, but performed an admirable work by displaying some of the realities of postwar life. In \textit{Dirigido por} in 1985, Patino said that it was his most exciting film to create, and that the “un estado de dudas y inseguridad permanente…resultado final mis películas prohibidas”\textsuperscript{59} caused him to re-assess his film’s importance constantly and strive to make it as personal and accurate as possible. Though Patino occasionally came under attack for his personal approach to cinema (one reviewer subtitled her article “Los exorcismos de Patino” – also calling the film a pretended monopolization of a national history)\textsuperscript{60} his critical success was positive, much more so than his next important documentary film, \textit{Caudillo}.

Thematically, Patino can be seen to draw his re-appropriation of NO-DO footage directly from the satirical sequence in Bardem and Berlanga’s \textit{Muerte de un ciclista}, but he draws his most important thematic influences from them in another intimate depiction of a post-war family, this time Franco’s family itself in \textit{Caudillo}. Patino assembled the ironic portrait of the “Military Boss” from archives in London, Paris and Lisbon in 1974, but censors also delayed its release until 1976.\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Caudillo} was the first film to begin the demystification process of Franco as a person. \textit{Raza, el espíritu de

\textsuperscript{58} Galan, Diego. ""Canciones para después una guerra"." \textit{Triunfa} (Madrid), November 22, 1976.: \textit{ironic narrative}
\textsuperscript{59} Cristóbal, Ramiro. "Entrevista con Basilio Martín Patino." \textit{Dirigido por}, August 18, 1985.: \textit{The state of permanent doubt and insecurity…finally resulted in my prohibited films.}
\textsuperscript{60} Escudero, Isabel. "Los exorcismos de Patino." \textit{Cinema 2002} No. 23, October 1, 1976: \textit{Patino’s exorcisms.}
\textsuperscript{61} Higginbotham, Virginia \textit{Spanish Film Under Franco}, 122.
Franco, which followed Caudillo in 1977, was a fictional parody of Franco’s Raza, but Caudillo was important for its primacy and, similarly to Canciones, its use of archival footage.

The film attempts to explain the rise of a dictator in Spain by juxtaposing Franco’s rise with dictators in other countries, such as Hitler and Mussolini. A review has the headline: “Hace tres meses fue Hitler. También se ha aliado Franco a esta ascensión?” Patino contrasts images of the Nationalist armies in cities where they had strict control, drilling on the streets with precision, with Republican villages where “the populace mobilized for war with few authoritarian forms of behavior and a lack of structured discipline.” Film footage from Franco’s life, images of him playing with his children in his backyard, plays under a voiceover of triumphant pronouncements and speeches made by Franco, as well as the infamous slogan “Viva la muerte,” “Long live death,” which became a war cry of the Nationalist army, an example of the glorification of death that Franco’s regime was often criticized for encouraging. Patino also criticizes the murder of famous poet García Lorca by showing newspaper clippings of his death along with graffiti that states “assassin of the Spanish people,” quickly then cutting to an image of Franco looking into the camera.

The use of Franco’s image and specifically of his personal life, contrasted with violent images from the war and a soundtrack of the grandiose

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62 Cábala, Antonio. "Franco Superstar." Que (Madrid), November 21, 1977: Hitler was three months ago. Has Franco partnered this ascension?
63 Higginbotham, Virginia Spanish Film Under Franco, 122.
64 Higginbotham, Virginia Spanish Film Under Franco, 122.
promises made by Franco during his rise and dictatorship, conveys the disillusionment of the Spanish people in their understanding of the military boss who ruled them. Higginbotham writes: “Patino’s montage of images from Franco’s career is not a history but a dialectic whose ironic dialogue and commentary convey revulsion and ridicule of his central figure.” Caudillo shows visually the disrespect that many Spaniards had for their leader, their fallen father, and Patino uses the Franco family to emphasize the gap in generational understanding, the sons’ distaste for the war of their fathers.

Advertising for Caudillo was not subtle in this regard. Most posters and promotional materials consisted of a profile of Franco’s face taken late in his life, when his face was much fatter than it had been as a young man. Patino said of Caudillo that he thought it was his finest film, and he originally intended to do a sequel about the latter part of Franco’s life, but lost interest in the project – perhaps the historical moment was truly gone, as Kinder argued. A later review of the film, in 1977, includes a picture of a 1920’s flapper girl, garter peeking out under her skirt, with Franco’s head (complete with top hat) imposed over the woman’s, with the title: “Franco Superstar.”

The film was presented at the 1976 Berlin Film Festival, where it received mixed reviews. Some critics called it an honest, unflinching portrait of the man who had become so important in Spain. Angel Harguindey called it a “filme honesto” that for the first time made the protagonist of the war “el

65 Higginbotham, Virginia Spanish Film Under Franco, 122.

66 See Figure 1.3


pueblo español.” Felix Martialay, alternatively, said it was “confusa y caótica, irrelevante. Ese es el balance final de la película: absolutamente inane.” It caused trouble at the Berlin Film Festival as well; Spanish officials prevented the circulation of posters and other promotional material for *Caudillo* at the Festival. A news blurb for the festival wrote that when this “incidente” happened, the press was furious and called even more attention to the film, attesting that it was too ambiguous to objectively ascribe meaning to and trying to promote it that way.

*Caudillo* was Patino’s third and last film in his “trilogy of memory” that included *Canciones* as well as *Queridísimos verdugos* (Dear Executioners), a film that documented men who worked as executioners for Franco and practiced garroting as capital punishment, something that was highly contentious throughout Franco’s regime and was later critiqued in *Pascual Duarte* among other films of popular cinema. *Caudillo* was an important beginning to the process of Spanish people coming to terms with General Franco himself, the self-proclaimed father of a nation that had grown disappointed in him. Basilio Martín Patino was a figure in the cinema of opposition for his entire career, but *Caudillo* and *Canciones para después una

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guerra remained his most important and controversial works. He became weary with the subject. In 1977, he sighed: “I’ve become rather fed up with documentary cinema, with the Civil War, with the past. I think I’ve fulfilled that mission and to go on with it for my whole life is pointless.”

JAIME CHAVARRÍ: 1943 -

Jaime Chavarri, director of El desencanto, was born in 1943 in Madrid, after the war’s end. Younger than many of his contemporaries, he learned about filmmaking as an apprentice on early films by prestigious directors Carlos Saura and Victor Erice. In the National Film School, he met Elías Querejeta, who financed and produced El desencanto in 1976. Schwartz writes of Chavarrí that, “his sensitivity to people and feelings is his most salient trait as a filmmaker,” and this sensitivity is what coaxes the most intimate, human details from the subjects of his film. Perhaps in some ways the storyline of El desencanto resembles Chavarrí’s own life. He was from a prominent family; the great-grandson of Antonio Maura, five-time Prime Minister of Spain. His family though took the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War and many of the more radically Communist members of his extended family went into exile during Franco’s dictatorship. Chavarrí was no stranger to the pressures of a high-profile family in Francoist Spain, which is perhaps why he relates the story of the Panero family with such grace,

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especially when one examines his relationship with his close friend and
documentary subject, Michi Panero.

*El desencanto* was his only documentary film and it, more than the
works of Camino or Patino, strove for an artistic sensibility, centered on the
idea of a family portrait as a microcosm of a larger problem. The film records
interviews with the family of a famous poet who worked under Franco’s
regime, Leopoldo Panero. His widow and three sons were exemplary of the
“Francoist Family,” a happy, Catholic, wealthy and intelligent class of people
that are loyal to their country and their leader. However, through the course of
the interviews conducted by filmmaker Chavarrí (staged as a type of
“retrospective” on their late father following the installation of a statue of him
in Astorga) it becomes increasingly obvious to the audience that this is
anything but a happy family. Marsha Kinder writes that “the disenchantment
in the title refers to the gap between the idealized image of the Fascist family
that is displayed at the ceremonies and the tangle of mutual recriminations,
bitter rivalries and painful memories that lie hidden behind the façade and that
are the primary focus of the film.”  

The film begins with a black and white family portrait, which
dissolves into footage from the installment of the Leopaldo Panero statue, and
the family in their most convincing façade. The family sits, all in black, in a
line, while voiceover from the NO-DO that told of Panero’s death and his
important national legacy as a poet for Franco and the glory of Spain plays

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over the images. Then, the camera turns to long, tracking shots through the huge, deteriorating mansion that the family inhabits. Panero’s widow, Felicidad, tells the story of her life growing up as a doctor’s daughter, and being famously courted by a favorite of Franco during the Spanish Civil War. She speaks wistfully of the life she thought she would have with Panero, and her sons maliciously mock the way she talks about those days with rose-colored retrospection. Her sons also reveal throughout their interviews the extent of their father’s madness, infidelities and struggles at balancing the roles of artist and father. It is also revealed that the most successful of the three sons, another poet named Leopoldo Maria, has attempted suicide and also suffers from mental illness and depression. He says, “In childhood, we live. Afterward we survive,” a blunt statement that attests to the worldview of this broken family.

While this domestic saga could simply be seen as a human interest piece about a famous family, the way Chavarrí has situated the interviews to revolve around the homage to Leopoldo Panero, along with the cold way he treats Felicidad as the delicate remnant of a long and structurally unsound façade, imply that he has more subversive motives in his choice of subject. The family, one of the strongest pillars of Francoism, has crumbled, and Chavarrí uses one family’s personal narrative to illustrate that point with alarming clarity. Chavarrí himself identified with this. He said of the film, “As a kid in the 1940’s and early 1950’s, in the social world I knew, there was

never any personal relationship between children and parents, as there was to be later. It was a relationship of protocol…one’s relationship with one’s father is a relationship with power.”

Thematically, the film is focused on the disintegration of the family unit and disillusionment of the sons’ ideals about their father - as well as their mother. This theme is presented in *El desencanto* differently than in *Caudillo*, but it is a prominent analysis nonetheless.

The film also arguably contains the theme of sexual incest, also an attack on religion, an element that appears time and again in the Spanish films of the 1970’s and continues into the Cercas generation. Juan Luis, the oldest of the three sons giggles when asked about Felicidad, stating that he “became her husband” after the death of his father. He recounts a story of a waiter mistaking him for a gigolo, and says, “Imagine being taken as a gigolo to your own mother, it excited me sexually.” Kinder argues that *El desencanto* portrays an Oedipal rivalry, one where all three sons are vying for their mother’s bed, denied the right to kill their father, and this is what causes the bitterness and discord among the sons. The youngest son, Michi, was also a poet, albeit unsuccessful, and his friendship with Chavarrí was the impetus of the film’s production. Chavarrí remarked about the family that the Panero’s “[have] not known what work is for the past four or five centuries.”

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78 Besas, Peter *Behind the Spanish Lens: Spanish Cinema Under Fascism and Democracy*, 163.
80 Higginbotham, Virginia *Spanish Film Under Franco*, 123.
relative of the prominent Maura family, Chavarrí may have had a similar life to Michi had his family chosen the winning side of the war.

The film’s use of a single family as representative of the disenchanted family as a whole is paralleled in the way it was advertised to the public. The poster resembles a page from an old poetry book, with a black and white photograph of the three sons as young boys. The title in cursive and a single red rose is in the foreground, leaking petals that obscure a portion of the photograph. The audience is primed to understand that this film is not going to be a happy one. The famous Panero family has lost its strength and prestige, visually symbolized by the withering rose and the depiction of the boys when they were young as opposed to their much less robust appearance in the footage from the documentary.

The other important aspect of the promotional materials for the film is the prominently displayed, above the title and more obvious than even Chavarrí’s name, line: “Una producción Elías Querejeta.” Querejeta, in his signature style of controlling most aspects of publicity and release along with conception, co-wrote the script with Chavarrí. Chavarrí said of the producer, “para un director, que trabaje con él es muy difícil no comunicar lo que Elías comunica sin ser consciente de ello.”

Chavarrí and Querejeta also collaborated on Chavarrí’s most popular film, about one of García Lorca’s homosexual relationships, *A un Dios desconido* (1977), but the two split ways.

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81 See Figure 1.4
82 Whitaker, Tom. *Elías Querejeta: A Producer of Landscapes*, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2011. 2. *It is hard to communicate with Elías, he communicates without being aware of it.*
after that film\textsuperscript{83} and Chavarrí went on to make a series of unimportant and unpopular fiction films.

Most of \textit{El desencanto}’s advertising was done through interviews with Chavarrí and Michi Panero, the two friends that had conceived of the project. Both are quick to give credit to Chavarrí over Querejeta, saying that \textit{El desencanto} was a “película de Jaime…Jaime la virtud que ha tenido es que con un tema que podía ser pretencioso se ha atenido a retratar una situación.”\textsuperscript{84} Michi Panero also later wrote an open letter to Querejeta in which he claimed that his family had not been properly compensated for the film, which Querejeta denied and never recompensed.\textsuperscript{85} However, Michi later wrote a book called \textit{El desencanto} in which he chided Chavarrí’s exclusion of an uncle Luis, who had died during the war, from the film. Kinder argues that Michi knew that his performance in the documentary was his only chance at fame – in fact, he persuaded another filmmaker friend, Ricardo Franco, to make a sequel titled \textit{Después de tantos años} in 1994, so perhaps his commentary on the film is not objectively motivated but rather motivated by a desire for the waning spotlight.\textsuperscript{86}

\textit{El desencanto} sparked controversy on its release at the 1976 San Sebastian Film Festival and was withdrawn from the festival by censors.

\textsuperscript{83} Schwartz, Ronald \textit{Spanish Film Directors (1950-1985): 21 Profiles}, 74.
\textsuperscript{84} “Entrevista: A cuestas con la familia Panero.” \textit{Flashmen}, 1976: It was Jaime’s film. He had the virtue to portray a topic that could be pretentious but make it about the situation instead.
\textsuperscript{86} Kinder, Marsha \textit{Blood Cinema: The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain}, 203.
causing a financial loss of 15 million pesetas. In an interview with a festival publication, a censorship official accused Querejeta of intentionally entering the film after he had received several formal letters warning him not to do so, as it would not be allowed to be screened, in an attempt to create buzz around the film. It may have worked – the film was domestically successful and won the Cinema Writer’s Circle Award for Best Film in 1977, and was “one of the most successful Spanish documentaries of the transition period.” Critical reviews were positive about the film, calling it daring, “cine distinta, una perspectiva diferente.” One reviewer described the reaction in his auditorium to the film: “Es película difícil para el espectador, obligado a no distraer la atención. La he visto ya alejada de la noche del estreno. La sala estaba llena de un público compuesto en su mayor parte por jóvenes. Aplaudieron al final. También a ellos había alcanzado el poder de la cámara.” This simple sentence alerts a historian to the type of influence this film had, a film that is difficult to follow, yet an auditorium of young people certainly understood what it meant, perhaps because they had experienced this disenchantment in their own lives.

JAIME CAMINO: 1936 -

87 T. Trenas, Gaceta Illustrada 1976
88 T. Trenas, Gaceta Illustrada 1976
90 Pavlóvic, Tatjana 100 Years of Spanish Cinema, 144.
92 Sanchez, Alfonso. "El desencanto." Informaciones (Madrid), September 27, 1976: It’s a difficult film, the spectator can’t be distracted. I saw the film on opening night with a crowd of mostly young people. They clapped at the end. They too, understood the power of the camera.
Jaime Camino, who shot *La vieja memoria* in 1976, was born in Barcelona in 1936. He studied music and law before entering the Catalan Film Institute, and he remained a key figure in the Barcelona School after graduation. He started his own production company in Barcelona and founded the Institut de Cinema Catalá. Camino’s distinctive Catalan perspective is evident in all his films, including *La vieja memoria*. His films are imbued with a strong sense of region and a critique of the marginalization of Catalonia under Franco. When discussing his experience with the Spanish Civil War, he said “no son personales directamente pero sí lo son en la medida que corresponden al recuerdo o a la historia de un mundo que me ha sido muy próximo, puesto que se trata del mundo de mis mayores y el de toda una capa de la burguesía en la que yo me ha amamantado.” He certainly seems to want to capture the memory of a group of people, avoiding the topic of himself, and *La vieja memoria* reflects the idea of a collective, albeit subject to individuality, memory.

*La vieja memoria* is an interesting exercise in authorial intent hidden very implicitly in the techniques of film form that Camino chooses to employ. Camino conducted hundreds of entrevistas with members on both sides (or, more accurately, the approximately ten sides) of the Civil War. There are interviews with the Nationalists, the Falangists, the Democrats and the

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94 Roig, Monserrat. "La vieja memoria." *Tele-Express*, April 15, 1976. *I don’t have personal experiences, but I communicate with the memory and history of the bourgeoisie, a world which I was very close to, that nursed me.*
Anarchists. Camino uses only stock footage and interviews; there is no narration to attempt to reconcile the differing narratives of the several speakers. And their narratives, as can be expected, are very different. Ideological and hindsight of ideology bias both play a role told by the interviewees, and Camino subtly reveals these biases mostly through the ordering of the interviews. Frequently throughout the film, one of the Falangists will recite a statistic from the war and Camino will cut to stock footage of a newspaper debunking what has just been said. Camino will also show an interview with one of the Nationalists recounting a personal anecdote of his struggles and poverty during the years of the war, and then contrast it with footage of regular civilians starving in the streets, and an interview with an Anarchists talking about how most of the members of their family died in battle or on the streets. All of the interviewees are from a higher class and were actually active participants in the ideological war of the Civil War, but the Leftist spokespeople Camino chose tended to have more stirring back-stories. The images Camino uses are real, the interviews and opinions he solicited in his interviews are also allegedly completely factual, but the Anarchists, Republicans and especially Communists (in the personality of La Pasionaria, Dolores Ibarruri) who were interviewed happen to be the most influential and well educated of that party in Spain, including the famous journalist Eduardo de Gúzman, while the Republicans chosen were mostly low in the administration. The way the interviewees speak as well as the ordering and contrasting footage that Camino uses to accompany each of their
narratives points to a very ideologically one-sided interpretation of the Spanish Civil War.

Higginbotham argues that Camino also uses the soundtrack to make ideological points, drawing upon Camino’s training as a musician. Camino uses a stirring score to dramatize the words of certain speakers, and “the Falangist director Primo de Rivera is accompanied by Strauss’s Thus Spake Zarathustra, which echoes the speaker’s pomposity.”95 Camino also uses personal memory, juxtaposed with archival footage, to further incriminate members of the Nationalist army. A member of the Nationalist firing squad recounts the horrors he was forced to perform, but the tone of his narration is sarcastic, and is intercut with slow-motion graphic footage of executions as well as dramatic music and transitional wipes between images; all of these obvious filmmaking techniques reveal “the constructedness of the sequence, these devices heighten rather than diminish its emotional power.”96 Indeed – Camino chooses this moment, when the National soldier is telling his story, to make it glaringly obvious to the viewer that he is watching a documentary. This effect of active camera work makes the audience pay close attention to the words of the subject, who discusses his own trauma on the firing squad even as the camera shows the slaughter of anonymous hundreds. It is not hard to see where Camino intends the audience to place their sympathies.

95 Higginbotham, Virginia Spanish Film Under Franco, 123.
Higginbotham writes that the participants (who also included Christian Social Democrat Gil Robles, Falangist secretary-minister Raimundo Fernández Cuesta, Primo de Rivera and many others) serve as a kind of family photograph, a collective memory including all sides and angles of the war. This type of representation of the documentary is obvious in the advertisements, posters, and press releases that led up to the film’s release. The poster depicts members of the Nationalist party and the Republicans, three with red bandanas and three with blue. The corner of the poster is designed to look as though it is burning, and both sides are caught in the flame. This advertisement places both sides in the same fire, not giving preference to either in terms of prominence or numbers. A promotional pamphlet for the arte y ensayo publication shows a similar image, and contains a brief synopsis of the film: “La memoria no es objetiva. No lo es la individual, tampoco, la coletiva. La memoria no es la historia sino recuerdo subjetivo. Durante cuarenta años, la memoria fue reprimida…Perdieron la memoria realmente? Otro aspeto de la cuestión: el acervo de recuerdos que supone la memoria puede ser manipulado…el sujeto pudo querer creer que eran de una forma contradictoria con la realidad… se huye de la declaración de principios, del recuerdo formal, para hurgar en la memoria perdida, la vieja memoria. Se intenta romper el miedo a recordar. Se enfrentan memorias que

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97 Higginbotham, Virginia Spanish Film Under Franco, 123.
98 See Figure 1.5
se contradicen en sí mismas, unas con otras.” The way in which Camino and his producers chose to advertise the film emphasizes his claim that the film portrays, without directorial bias, the events of the war from all sides as well as he can manage it with his own inherent subjectivity – a claim easily in dispute on actual viewing of the film.

*Vieja memoria* also evokes, according to Román Gubern, one of Camino’s collaborators on the conception of *La vieja memoria*, a rumination on authorship and authenticity, as well as the representation of “truth” in cinema. The editing, which is rapid, and juxtaposes narrative with documentary footage, at points creates a sense of conversation between subjects who were not conversing with each other. *Vieja memoria* certainly creates this type of illusion. Gubern wrote, “Camino constructed an interactive montage of false dialogue, in which people seemed to be listening to and contradicting each other as if seated around the same (and impossible) table…emphasizing their weaknesses, manipulations and contradictions…*Vieja memoria* implicitly demanded a critique of the neutrality of the archives…the first of those archives being the individual’s

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99 *See Figure 1.6: Memory is not objective. Not the individual, nor the collective. Memory cannot be recorded without subjectivity. During the 40’s, memory was repressed. How much of the recorded memory was real? Another aspect to the question, the memories surrounding the overall memory can be manipulated. The subject might want to believe something that is contrary to reality. This formal statement is a reminder to delve into the lost memory, the old memory. [Camino] is trying to break the fear of remembering. Memories that contradict themselves must face each other.*
own memory." The contributors to the narrative of *Vieja memoria* do at times, due to editing of responses and spatial tricks, appear as though they are talking to each other, like a big family arguing about politics at the dinner table. Camino collectivizes his subjects, strictly controlling the overall narrative while appearing to let them all have their say.

The narrative of family disintegration therefore is still present in *Vieja memoria*, though less pronounced than in Patino or Chavarri’s documentary films. Camino’s next film, *Las largas vacaciones del 36* deals with the same subject of family torn apart by the Spanish Civil War, though *Vieja memoria* uses fictional characters and childhood nostalgia to do so. Camino’s most autobiographical element of *La vieja memoria* lies in his treatment of the Catalanians. Marvin D’Lugo argues that Camino emphasizes “interviews and periods of the war that relate directly to Catalonia in general and Barcelona in particular. Instead of ending with the authorized images of fascist victory in Madrid, Camino emphasized the repressed footage of destruction, defeat and exile and of Catalonia’s marginalization.” Additionally, Camino’s other films also focus on the fall of Catalan autonomy, such as in *El largo invierno* when members of the Catalan family protagonists are forced to change their names from Catalan to Spanish names.

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101 Schwartz, Ronald *Spanish Film Directors: 21 Profiles*, 61.
Reception of *La vieja memoria* was surprising: the film was commercially fairly successful and positively reviewed by most publications, despite being three hours long and “repetitive”.\(^{104}\) Censorship laws had been completely abolished in 1977 and *La vieja memoria* was among the first films to blatantly depict the trauma of the Spanish Civil War. A review in a festival publication wrote “en la noche del estreno sonaron los aplausos para *La vieja memoria*. La cinta lo merece. Es el logrado trabajo de un excelente profesional que ha sabido unir el sentimiento con el documento,\(^{105}\) a strong achievement for a documentary filmmaker. A reviewer for *El País* wrote that “capítulos dedicados a Madrid y Barcelona, a los intentos de revolución por parte de los anarquistas, a sus enfrentamientos con los diversos grupos políticos, se analiza el pasado en boca de sus protagonistas, a ratos con ira y a ratos con humor, y siempre con un respeto matizado que no borra la emoción en los momentos mejores.”\(^{106}\) This review was advertised in the *Arte y Ensayo* publication about the film. Reviewers clearly thought Camino managed not to be biased in his telling of the saga of the Spanish Civil War, though active viewing tells a different story.

\(^{104}\) Schwartz, Ronald *Spanish Film Directors: 21 Profiles*, 58.

\(^{105}\) Masó, Angeles. "La crítica opina." *La Vanguardia* (Barcelona), September, 1978: *On opening night, applause for ‘La vieja memoria’ rang out. It deserves a ribbon. It is an excellent work by an accomplished professional that knows how to unite feelings about the documentary.*

\(^{106}\) See Figure 1.6: *Chapters dedicated to Madrid and Barcelona show the intentions of the revolutionaries, the anarchists, and their confrontations with the diverse political groups, through the mouths of the protagonists themselves. Sometimes with anger, sometimes with humor but always with a respect and care to not erase the nuances of emotions in big moments.*
While documentary films claim a stake in truth, a theoretical argument can be made for removing them from that type of pressure. Studies on the Kuleshov effect show what editing and montage can do to convince a viewer of the truth of what they’ve seen. Even documentary footage, when spliced by an expert hand, can be used for authorial intent. These documentary films were important for the ideological battle in the 1970’s because they represented a “new reality” using the same footage that the regime had been using to express their narrative of the war. There is no “truth” to be found in the documentary films, despite Gubern’s claim that *La vieja memoria* “presents the most complete eye-witness account and the most complex exploration of the politics of both sides of the Civil War in Spanish film history.” The documentary films of the transition era managed to use the exact footage used by the regime to tell a completely different story. This fact immediately calls into question the veracity of any documentary, or work of nonfiction, produced during the Transition to democracy.

**CONCLUSION**

The relative success of these documentary films domestically in Spain, especially compared to the success of art-house films by Saura, attests to the power of the nonfiction medium. Kinder argues that the documentary films of this era were important because they were the first to take the archival footage

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and change the story it tells. Their influence stretched beyond just reception by current audiences – they undeniably made an impact on the filmmakers of the next era and the inscription of this historical moment into an understanding of the war as a whole. Ricardo Franco made the sequel to *El desencanto* in 1994, but the three Panero brothers refused to be filmed together and Felicidad had already passed away. Franco said of the film, “It is not a film on the Panero family, which no longer exists, but the story of three men of my generation, the story of *my* generation.”

He also acknowledged that the three brothers had carefully cultivated personas throughout the entire film, and that rather than a true documentary this was a fiction film about complex familial relationships and the destruction of the Spanish family during the postwar era. However, the fact that Spanish people were still interested in the Panero family twenty years later attests to the lack of closure in the dialogue about generational miscommunication.

The documentary filmmakers of the transition era all have another major technique in common: the juxtaposition of personal narrative with historical moment. Camino, as a Catalan filmmaker, prioritizes the concerns of his region in his story about every supposed side of the war. Patino’s personal filmic interest in close, intimate portrayals of people and their families drives the “narratives” behind *Caudillo* and *Canciones para después una guerra*, just as Chavarri’s real-life family relations and friendship with Michi Panero complicate his depiction of a decaying, once-powerful

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Francoist household. This juxtaposition of personal and historical continues in works of the next generation of directors, especially del Toro, which points to the domestic influence of these films and their thematic intentions.

Kinder summarizes the impact of the documentary films of the transition era: “these works acknowledge the ‘fictional’ nature of their representations and thereby imply that subjects can choose to refigure themselves and their nation…”

Spanish audiences did not expect truth from the documentarians of the 1970’s, nor did they get it. Audiences of these documentary films knew what they were going to see, especially as all of these films received limited release in Spain. The legacy of the documentary films of the transition era is two-fold. First, documentaries were important for taking back the archival record and allowing the losing side to display some of their trauma for the first time since the war ended. Second, more negatively, these films also served to further alienate some of the public from the conversation on memory of the war. Patino, Camino and Chavarrí all provided an excellent critique of the establishments of Franco, but even in Camino’s many-sided portrait of the war some sides were left marginalized or excluded. The prominence of a Communist leader, La Pasionaria, overwhelmed the other members of the Republican Army, just as the pompous Primo de Rivera remained the focus of the accounts from the Nationalist Party, despite interviews with more moderate members.

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Additionally, it is important that these films were all much more successful in Spain than for international audiences. While this means that they achieved some measure of success in speaking directly to their intended audience, it also means that they lacked widespread appeal. All four of these films, Caudillo, Canciones para despues una guerra, La vieja memoria and El desencanto were difficult, long, confusing films that required active viewership. These films only affected Spaniards who were already interested in seeing this history re-represented from an obviously partisan point of view. The audience was an already-informed minority of the Spanish population. Aesthetically, these films advanced techniques of documentary filmmaking in Spain with their explorations into montage editing and use of soundtrack for subversive content, but they may have missed their moment in Spain. Kinder argues that because they were all delayed release until after Franco’s death, there was less immediacy and therefore less discussion.

Camino, Patino and Chavarrí were under some of the harshest censorship guidelines of the Transition era. While Saura was able to release his controversial films under the guise of fiction, Patino, Camino and Chavarrí did not have this excuse. They all tried to maintain a discourse about objectivity surrounding their films, often repeated by critics, but could not get past the censors in order to let the public see their hidden transcripts until after Franco’s death. Camino contradicts himself with his statements about La vieja memoria when he writes that memory is, like history, subjective - but then also claims to present a holistic view of the divisive issues behind the war, a
feat he certainly does not accomplish. The individualism of each of these directors also lessens the impact of their works – each director focuses attention on individual memory over collective – leaving out large sections of the population in the process. The films represent their own stories and biases, rather than a realistic portrait of the war. Spanish people were distrustful of documentary and nonfiction film long before Saura made his Cuenca or Basilio Martín Patino assembled Canciones and Caudillo. The sequence in Un muerte de una ciclista where the protagonist watches a NO-DO exemplifies the attitude of Spaniards toward so-called nonfiction: they expect to be lied to, and they are never disappointed. While the documentary filmmakers of the 1970’s played an important role in bringing the conversation about history and memory of the war to the national stage for the first time post-war, they were limited in their influence. This was partly due to the censorship that delayed releases, and partly to their respective, narrow focuses on the issues most important to the filmmakers themselves - the very same subjectivity that can easily plague any contributor to the historical national memory.
CHAPTER TWO: THE INFLUENCE OF NUEVO CINE de ESPANOL and CARLOS SAURA

INTRODUCTION

The films of Carlos Saura are foundational for the study of the cinema of opposition in Francoist Spain. He, Luis Buñuel and later Pedro Almodóvar, are the only Spanish filmmakers to have enjoyed widespread international success and acclaim, while also achieving some measure of popularity and influence over the social conversation within Spain itself. Saura can be defined as a director of “art-house” cinema, which includes unconventional editing and aesthetics as well as emphasis on intellectual themes. Saura’s films are aesthetically influenced by Juan Antonio Bardem, Luis Buñuel and Luis Berlanga, along with foreign art cinema directors of the period such as Jean Luc Godard and Vittorio De Sica. However, the Spanishness, the cultural trauma associated with the national memory of the guerra civil is often directly inspired taken from his own life and childhood.

The influences of foreign directors can be seen in a tendency toward realism and non-linear storytelling, but the influence of Spanish specificity is seen in thematic critiques of the pillars of Francoism: the military, the family and the church. Saura’s frequent collaborators, not least of which was producer Elias Querejeta but also included Geraldine Chaplin and celebrated cinematographer Luis Cuadrado, helped to allow him to establish international legitimacy. Saura’s films are not always subtle in their Francoist critiques, leading to great difficulty with censors, but by sending the films to
international festivals and Querejeta’s obstinacy, he was able to gain enough 
popular support to sway the censors into allowing domestic release.

As discussed briefly in the prologue, the timeline of censorship within 
Spain was a large factor in the subsidization of Querejeta’s projects. José 
María García Escudero was reinstated as Director general de cinematografía 
(General Director of Cinematography) in 1962, and in 1968 he created 
Cinespaña – the first distribution company whose first priority was marketing 
Spanish films abroad.\(^{111}\) He purported that Spanish films needed to be more 
intellectual, more artistic than the folkloric and historic romantic comedies 
that were popular. As Nuría Triana-Toribio wrote: “García Escudero uses the 
then highly influential arguments of the politique des auteurs to conjure up a 
desirable cinema that ‘recuperates film from is designation as merely a 
commercial and industrial enterprise, and incorporates it within the realm of 
classical art.’”\(^{112}\) University-educated men like Carlos Saura and Victor Ericé 
were subsidized by a special category, Interés especial (special interest) that 
protected them internationally though not necessarily domestically.

Escudero championed the filmmakers of the Nuevo cine de Español 
(NCE), an important group of men educated at the Instituto de Investigaciones 
y Experiencias Cinematográficas, or IIEC, during the 1960’s. These men 
include Bardem, Berlanga, Saura, Victor Ericé, Jaime Chavarri and Manuel 
Summers. Nuría Triana-Toribio writes that films of the NCE were destined for

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\(^{112}\) Triana-Toribio, Nuría *Spanish National Cinema*, 68.
international markets. They adopt international aesthetics, such as Italian 
neorealism and elements of the French New Wave (both movements were also 
most prominent during the late 1950’s and early 1960’s). Films of all three of 
these movements, French New Wave, Italian neorealism and New Spanish 
Cinema, often focus on anti-heroes working against institutions of oppression. 
Films of these three movements also are aesthetically differentiated from 
Hollywood conventions of narrative filmmaking by use of elliptical editing 
and temporal discontinuity, traits that did not endear them to mass audiences. 

New Spanish Cinema appealed to European art-house cinemas and 
Hollywood cinephiles, who viewed films of Nuevo cine as the 
“representatives of the Spanish cinema industry to international film 
festivals…It was assumed that these films, which represented Spain abroad 
‘with dignity’, would have been the films that audiences would have chosen 
as their national cinema in preference to the ‘general mediocrity of Spanish 
cinema’ had Spanish audiences not been restricted by censorship.”¹¹³ So, 
while NCE was important for bringing widespread attention to Spanish 
cinema, I make the argument, as does Triana-Toribio, that NCE was part of a 
larger international cinematic movement that appealed to an educated 
minority rather than a broad domestic audience. 

In order to assess the legacy of Saura and other directors of Nuevo cine 
de Español on the discourse about the Spanish Civil War during the Transition 
Era, I will use the model from the first chapter in which I discuss conception, 

¹¹³ Triana-Toribio, Nuria Spanish National Cinema, 82.
production and reception of several of Saura’s key films. Conception includes childhood and upbringing, anything that may have contributed to the director’s ideological worldviews. It also includes collaborations with other famous filmmakers of the time, something that speaks to how Saura wanted to present himself to his audience. Production refers to the manner by which Saura’s seminal works came about, including attempted sabotage by censors. When discussing production, I will also illuminate aspects of each film’s advertising campaigns, which were carefully orchestrated to alert cinema audiences that what they were watching was not simple, mindless fare but rather often an acerbic commentary on the cultural landscape of post-war Spain (consistent with the NCE model). Last, I will discuss the reception of each of the major films by Carlos Saura. This includes original reviews from Spanish newspapers of the 1970’s, recovered from archival research in Madrid and Barcelona. These reviews, combined with box office statistics will

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114 Victor Ericé and his Espiritu de la colmena (1973) also belong in this chapter. Ericé, like Saura, is remembered as an important representative of Nuevo cine de Español and Spanish cinema abroad. Espiritu tells the story of a young girl, played by Ana Torrent, as she grapples with the emotional disintegration of her family in the post-war era. It is a beautifully shot, moving film where the colmena, beehive, represents family life under Franco: organized but unimaginative. Ana is a disillusioned child that has already witnessed trauma in her young life. She escapes into a Hollywood film, Frankenstein, which she sees at a travelling cinema. Like Ana y los lobos, the film is set in the Andalusian countryside and its barren landscape represents the isolation of post-war Spain. Similarly to Saura’s major works, Espiritu performed admirably in the international market and won the Golden Seashell at the San Sebastian International Film Festival in 1973. However, domestic audiences reviled it and booed at its premiere (DVD supplemental material, Criterion Collection). Ericé’s career was sparse after Espiritu, which is why I have chosen Carlos Saura to be the representative of art-house Nuevo cine de Español, and have delved into his works, rather than attempting to include a holistic portrait of Ericé as well.
help to show some of the popular reaction to these controversial films within domestic Spain at the time of their creation. Throughout the discussion of each film, I will also point to thematic and aesthetic threads that traverse these works, elements that will be reiterated by filmmakers of the next generation.

**CARLOS SAURA (1932 - )**

One of the many threads that binds the personal life of the filmmaker, Carlos Saura, with the powerful representations of the war that he puts onscreen is his preoccupation with childhood, the past, and perhaps the total absence, rather than loss of, innocence. He has said of his upbringing:

I remember my childhood very well and in a certain fashion I think the war marked me even more than I know. I remember an infinity of things with incredible vividness: the war songs, the children’s games, the bombings, the lights being turned off, the hunger, the death. For me, these memories are violent: a bomb that fell on my school and one of the girls in class all bloody with pieces of glass having cut her face. And this is not some literary invention…it’s a fact. For that reason I think that the atmosphere of war weighs upon me…and weighs upon the things I do.¹¹⁵

Carlos Saura was shaped by his memories of the Civil War. His characters, his narratives, and the sense of confusion that pervades many of his works, explicitly the ones that feature children, reflect this fact.

Carlos Saura was born in Huesca, a small town in northern Spain in 1932, but by 1935 his family had moved to Madrid – just in time to witness the outbreak of the Civil War. His family, like most Spanish families, was divided in allegiances. His parents were intellectual professionals, his father

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an attorney and his mother a pianist. Saura has said that he believes his parents sympathized with the Republican People’s Front, but they, like most upper-class citizens, supported Franco as their benevolent caudillo by the end of the war. Saura has spoken of the confusion he felt about the war as a child. When the war ended in 1939, he was in Barcelona. “Barcelona was a Republican zone. When Franco’s troops arrived, I was very confused because the ‘good guys’ became the ‘bad guys’ and the ‘bad guys’ were now the ‘good guys.’ I did not understand at all what was happening.” When the war ended, Saura was separated from the rest of his family and sent to live with his ultra-conservative, religious grandparents in Huesca where he had “the very antithesis of the kind of education he had begun to receive in the Republican zone. Removed from his brother and sisters, he felt himself the outsider in his own family – a stigma that is perhaps most indelible of his memories of this period.” The isolation of this time in his life further intensified his traumatic memories of the war, and when he was reunited with his family in Madrid he settled in for an affluent but average life as an engineer. However, his brother Antonio, a fairly well-known abstract-expressionist painter, knew of Carlos’ passion for photography and prompted him to enter the National Film

116 Higginbotham, Virginia Spanish Film Under Franco, 77.
118 D’Lugo, Marvin The Films of Carlos Saura, 14.
School (Instituto de Investigaciones y Experiencias Cinematográficas: IIEC) in 1952.\textsuperscript{120}

While in the IIEC, Saura was exposed to many international films that had been gaining acclaim in the cinematic community, such as Jean-Luc Godard’s \textit{A bout de souffle} and films by Luis Buñuel, the most famous Spanish filmmaker at the time. Italian Neorealism, popular at the time, had a profound impact on the aesthetic style Saura would become known for in his early years. Italian neorealism refers to a style of filmmaking that uses non-actors, loose plots, largely unscripted dialogue and an interest in the mundane, quotidian lives of the working-class. Saura’s first full-length film, \textit{Los Golfos} (\textit{The Hooligans}) (1962) was a neorealist, gritty examination of the lives of teenagers in the slums of Madrid, teenagers that aspire to change their situation but find that only disappointment and death await their high hopes.\textsuperscript{121} Saura’s first film was also his mostly explicitly critical of Franco’s regime. The regime was encouraging escapist films and films of national pride, such as \textit{Raza}, and musicals and historical films about Spain’s glorious past.

\textit{Los golfos}, though Saura attested that it was not neorealist, used a cast of non-professional actors who had responded to a newspaper advertisement.\textsuperscript{122} The film was mostly improvised and has an open, ambiguous ending that leaves the viewer feeling unsatisfied. It also invokes classic Spanishness with a bullfight – but instead of ending in heroics, the

\footnotesize{
\textsuperscript{120} D’Lugo, Marvin \textit{The Films of Carlos Saura}, 14.
\textsuperscript{121} Schwartz, Ronald \textit{Spanish Film Directors (1950-1985): 21 Profiles}, 168.
\textsuperscript{122} Higginbotham, Virginia \textit{Spanish Film Under Franco}, 27.
}
fight ends with Juan, the protagonist, botching the slayage of the bull so badly that the watching crowd boos him. Also consistent with neorealism, much of the film is simply dialogue among the teenagers, dialogue that drifts between pertinent to the loose plot (Juan’s desire to make money as a bullfighter) and completely unrelated, with elliptical editing techniques that linger on the dead space between lines and onscreen actions. The film’s neorealist style is clearly inspired by Bardem and Berlanga’s *Muerte de un ciclista* as well as by Italian neorealism, despite Saura’s assertions that his work stands alone. Saura said that making the film was “a marvelous experience in which a group of people who were associated with the Film School worked together. My idea was…to make a film cut like a documentary, a straightforward film, direct and immediate, done in natural settings and taking advantage of my experience in photography and documentary cinema.” As always, he denies the influence of other filmmakers upon his work and expresses surprise when it is successful (the film was picked for the Cannes festival).

Regardless of Saura’s claim to his own experience for the aesthetic of the film, the neorealist influences that helped to build the *estética franquista* (Francoist aesthetic) of the Spanish filmmakers that went before Saura such as Bardem, Berlanga and Buñuel are perhaps most obvious in *Los golfos* but continue to be important as Saura’s filmography progresses. The film also received some official ire. Spanish censors cut ten minutes from the film,.

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123 Saura, Carlos and Linda M. Willem in *Carlos Saura: Interviews*. Interview with Vicén Campos, 1976. 34
including much of the dialogue of the drifters, such as the sighed line, “It’s difficult to be somebody here (Madrid),” seeing the comment as an affront to the power of Francoism to better the lives of the working class. The film was given limited release by officials as well – the first of many times that Saura would find himself fighting for his films. However, the overall subject matter – slums and the working class, is a subject Saura never revisits.

*La caza (The Hunt)* in 1965 is a much more metaphorical film than *Los golfos*, but manages to be even more obviously dissident, and marks a shift in cinematic discussion of the Spanish Civil War. Three middle-class businessman, representative of the average Nationalist infantryman, meet to hunt rabbits on one of their estates. The hunt is an analogy for war, recognizable in the first scene, which begins in a long shot of four men with long rifles appearing over the rise of a hill. They march in time to a drum bear. Their prey, the rabbits, is helpless against the men’s precision and violence and many are riddled with bullet holes in a demonstration of the excessive violence that the Franco army was famous for. The three businessmen are not hunting for food, simply for sport, and only young Enrique (a stand-in for the postwar generation) seems horrified by the grisly and wholly unnecessary violence of the hunt. In *Blood Cinema*, Marsha Kinder describes the sequences where rifles are being loaded as “fetishized,” with close-ups and increasingly frantic music. The film uses rapid montage editing, borrowed

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124 Higginbotham, Virginia *Spanish Film Under Franco*, 78.
125 Higginbotham, Virginia *Spanish Film Under Franco*, 78.
from Sergei Eisenstein of Soviet and *Battleship Potemkin* fame, a film Saura surely would have seen at the IIEC. The film works entirely within censorship codes while simultaneously being one of the most daring critiques of the Nationalist army and the Spanish Civil War of the time.

Saura uses an anecdote from his own life in the film as well in a sequence where one of the film’s characters finds a skeleton of a deserted Republican soldier in a cave, something that Saura encountered in his youth. The film builds aggressively, using rapid montage editing techniques to establish tension between the main characters until they finally, inevitably, turn their violent tendencies onto each other. The film ends in a brutal bloodbath that is utterly unnecessary but completely expected. The film borrows heavily from Bardem’s *Muerte de un ciclista* in its use of a former battlefield as the narrative space, implying the underlying cause behind all the action of the film is the conflict that took place before. The film was well received internationally, winning the Silver Bear for Best Director at the Berlin International Film Festival and brought Saura to the stage of world cinema.

Saura’s next few films are his most famous, and much more in line with the subject material he liked to explore. They are broadly defined as political allegories, some with overlapping characters and many with overlapping actors. These films cemented Saura’s place as Spain’s foremost filmmaker while also flying in the face of many censorship codes. The first,

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128 Pavlovic, Tatjana *100 Years of Spanish Cinema*, 126.
En jardín de las delicias (The Garden of Delights) in 1970 uses a paralyzed man who has lost his memory to represent the disillusionment of Spaniards in the postwar era. The next, Ana y los lobos (Ana and the Wolves) in 1973 uses an allegorical storyline, as well as an aesthetic steeped in symbolism and enveloped in updated neorealism, to portray the violence, isolationism and misogyny of the era.

Ana is a young, naive foreigner, played by Saura’s mistress Geraldine Chaplin, who travels to a Spanish home to be a governess to one of the three son’s three young daughters. The family lives in a huge, traditionally Spanish style mansion that is far out in the countryside, completely isolated from civilization. The matriarch of the home is a bedridden, obese woman who has indulged her three sons to the point where all three grown men are reliant on her and doting during her unexplained fainting spells. José, the oldest son, is a retired member of the military. He wears his military uniform and introduces himself to Ana as the patriarch. He proudly shows her his medals from the war, and tries to impress her by shooting a paper bird that one of the children makes in a strange act of bravado and excessive violence. Juan, the middle son, is the married father of the three children Ana is governess to. He immediately desires Ana, and writes her obscenely sexual letters that he sends to her with foreign stamps. The third son, Fernando, is part of a mysterious cult that uses incantations to achieve levitation. He lives in a cave near the family house and pretends to ignore Ana, but when she seeks out his company in the cave and falls asleep there, he inexplicably tries to cut her hair. The
three sons, representing handily the military, the family and the church, all prove themselves to be quite mad throughout the film while their mother, useless and corpulent in her bed, continues to tell them, and Ana, how wonderful they are. Virginia Higginbotham writes that she “has kept her sons from maturing by nurturing their obsessions”\textsuperscript{129} and it is not long before their obsessions turn to Ana. The madness of the sons, the wolves, builds to a climax when Juan’s wife, Luchy, discovers the lewd letters he has been sending and, shrieking, rouses the house with her complaints about her husband. In the final scene, Luchy climbs to the roof of the mansion and threatens to commit suicide. Mama tells Ana that she must leave the house, and Ana sets off across the vacant desert but the three sons apprehend her and begin to systematically destroy her. Juan rapes her while Fernando cuts her hair off. When they’ve both finished, José shoots her. The final shot of the film is a freeze-frame of Ana’s bloody face, frozen in terror and agony and lying on the ground. The metaphor is clear: the mother has ruined her sons, kept them in isolation and when a foreign element is introduced, they destroy it, afraid of elements that do not fit into the self-assigned culture. Isolation and complacency have turned reason to madness and monstrosity. Religious fanaticism, military \textit{machismo} and repressed sexuality have created obsession and ultimately, destruction.

The aesthetics of the film, shot by Luis Cuadrado and produced, as always, by Elías Querejeta, borrow from neorealism, and the thematic

\textsuperscript{129} Higginbotham, Virginia \textit{Spanish Film Under Franco}, 86.
symbolism bleeds into a highly stylized visual symbolism as well. While classic neorealism depicts lives of the working-class while editing for realistic lapses of time rather than purposes of story, Saura utilizes elements of these techniques without the emphasis on poverty and non-actors. The film lingers on moments that do not enhance the story, such as numerous shots of Ana doing mundane things such as brushing her hair or cleaning the house. Saura also revels in close-ups of Ana’s wide, unblinking eyes drinking in her surroundings in confusion. However, the most significant stylistic choice in *Ana y los lobos* is the symbolism. A long shot of the mansion, visibly deteriorating and surrounded by nothing, ticks for five seconds, forcing the viewer to absorb the clearly Andalusian landscape and its relative loneliness—a symbol for the dilapidated and isolated Spanish country. When Ana visits Fernando in his cave, he is dressed all in black, a somber clergyman reciting incantations and Ana, the embodiment of foreignness as well as innocence, wears a white, American-style dress. Fernando levitates a candle and a two-shot shows the two of them with the candle between their heads. Fernando’s eyes are fixated on the candle, whereas Ana’s are fixated on the ground. Seconds go by with neither changing their pose, and the viewer understands how mad this religious fanaticism appears to the foreigner. In a shot where Mama, outside of the house for the only time in the film, faints, her three sons rush to catch her. It takes all three grown men to support her weight, and the camera lingers on this moment, literally putting onscreen the three pillars of

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130 See Figure 2.1
131 See Figure 2.2
Francoism struggling with the weight of their old-fashioned and ailing mother. Spatial arrangement as well as shot duration and costuming turn *Ana y los lobos* into a visual as well as thematic parable.

Parallels to Saura’s own life and experiences can be found in *Ana y los lobos* as well. In a 1976 interview, Juan Carlos Rentera asked Saura if he considered religion, sex and the army to be the three taboos of Spanish society and Saura answered: “I suppose that Spanish society has many more…but they are the most important ones….at this point I’ll confess that they’re considered to be the essential conditioning elements of my life.” Sex was certainly important to Saura. He was married twice and fathered at least seven children with four different women, including one with Geraldine Chaplin, the star of nine of his films (and Charlie Chaplin’s daughter). He said in the same interview, “the majority of things that happen have the woman as the nucleus.” Saura’s treatment of women and sexuality in his filmography is exemplary of the Spanish *machismo*. He has said: “I realized that the bourgeoisie, and by extension that of the world, and including the middle class, has a series of fixed images: a medieval notion, concerning feelings, primarily held by men toward women. It is that notion of woman as object.”

Saura exploits this theme visually throughout all of his films, especially in the

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132 See Figure 2.3
133 Saura, Carlos and Linda M. Willem in *Interviews: Carlos Saura*. Interview with Juan Carlos Rentero, 1976. 29.
persona of Geraldine Chaplin. *Ana y los lobos* was received favorably by most critics, many calling attention to its aesthetic similarities to the films of Luis Buñuel\(^{136}\) with its obvious symbolism.

The next year, Saura released *La prima Angélica*, another contentious film. Fundamentally incestuous, it tells the story of Luis, a grown man who journeys from Barcelona to Madrid to bury his mother’s ashes in the family plot, and reunites with his cousin, Angelica, his childhood love. The basis for the story comes loosely from *Ana y los lobos*, when Mama in passing mentions a flirtatious cousin Angelica who used to spend summers with her family. The actor José Luis López Vásquez plays both the adult Luis and the 9-year old, as the story fluctuates between flashbacks to Luis and Angelica as children in the summer of 1936 and their present relationship. This non-linear structure recalls works of Buñuel, who “stressed the force of dreams by photographing them on the same level of perception as daily reality”\(^{137}\) (*Un chien andalou* comes to mind)\(^{138}\), and the juxtapositions of the present with the past, with the same Luis in both, blur temporal lines and make clear the point that the nine-year old, afraid of war and guns and Falangists like his cousin Angelica’s parents, still lives inside the adult Luis.

The narrative moves fluidly between the recollections and the present without warning. For example, Luis and Angelica as adults explore the attic

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\(^{137}\) Higginbotham, Virginia *Spanish Film Under Franco*, 88.

\(^{138}\) *Un chien andalou* is a surrealist film by Luis Buñuel. The film attempts to explore the psychology of dreams in hyper-sexualized sequences with disjointed editing and unclear spatial environments.
they frequented as children. They climb out on the roof and reminisce about their summers together as children, when suddenly Angelica’s husband (played by the same actor that played her father in the past sequences) yells for her to come inside. The camera switches to inside the attic, and the child Angelica climbs back in the window, leaving adult Luis on the roof as bewildered as he was when they kissed on the same roof as children. The film ends with a recollection from the past: Angelica and Luis try to run away together on bicycles and are stopped at the Nationalist border. They are returned to Angelica’s father, a Nationalist soldier, who whips Luis with a belt while Angelica, in the next room, has her hair brushed by her mother and cries. The storyline, which depicts adults living in the past, still traumatized by the events of the war forty years before was controversial enough, but visual elements added to the outrage that censors and critics felt about the film. In a shot of Angelica’s aunt, uncle and their grandmother walking across a graveyard, Uncle Anselmo’s arm, wounded in battle, is bandaged so that it is raised in a permanent Fascist salute. In another shot, a nun sits with her hand in water, waiting to be healed, across from Uncle Anselmo. This image links quite explicitly “an obsessive church with rigid fascism.”

La prima Angélica has some direct parallels to Carlos Saura’s own life. Saura, like Luis, was sent to live with his staunchly Catholic, Nationalist relatives during the war at about the same age. A sequence of the film also depicts the bombing of a religious school in Madrid and a young boy is shown

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139 Higginbotham, Virginia Spanish Film Under Franco, 90.
in close-up with glass in his eye, something Saura speaks freely about witnessing himself as a child. He said of the film, “I think that Luis…was someone profoundly touched by the Civil War. Personally, I never agreed with the widespread idea that childhood years are the golden years of one’s life – maybe because of my own experience.”  

An interviewer in 1976 asked Saura if Luis was an autobiographical character, to which Saura responded “I insist I won’t deny a certain proximity to my personality…but never reaches the point of being me.”

Aesthetically, *La prima Angélica* departs from Saura’s previous works, especially by forgoing neorealism. Instead, it draws from Buñuel’s dreamy surrealism, blending together the past and present in what Ronald Schwartz calls “a unique blend of nostalgia and realism unlike anything in his previous films.” Visually, the past is much more beautifully shot than the present, if only in the persona of Angelica. Young Angelica is shot in perfectly lit close-ups, always laughing – her eyes seem to have a constant glimmer and she wears her hair in two perfect, shiny braids. Present Angelica is a disillusioned housewife. She rarely smiles, her hairstyle is dowdy and the lighting on her face is harsh. Luis is not in love with adult Angelica, only the girl she was in 1936.

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La prima Angélica is perhaps most famous because of its reception in Spain. Saura tried to quell some of the backlash by claiming that the film was psychoanalytic rather than political, saying that “Adler, Jung and Marcuse have already said it. I’m only echoing them,” but authorities, as well as the public, were not convinced. Censors rejected the first two versions of the script outright, and when the film was finally approved it was distributed in limited release but without any cuts. Saura said of the film that he did everything he wanted to do – that evoking memories of the war from a child’s perspective allowed him to evade censorship. Querejeta also had a hand in keeping Saura’s vision intact. Despite unofficial threats from unnamed censorship officials to cut the sequence with the Falangist in a Fascist salute, Querejeta refused, saying that he would start legal proceedings against anyone who tried to intimidate him into suppression. Right-wing critics panned La prima Angélica, and it soon became a nationwide scandal. The premiere in Madrid evoked violent audience reactions – booing, protests outside the theater and shouting during the film. However, due to Escudero’s cine de interés especial the film was still chosen to represent Spain at the Cannes Film Festival, where it sparked even further controversy when several masked men broke into the projection booth and stole two rolls of the film. The most violent reaction occurred in July of 1974, when the Balmes Cinema in Barcelona was firebombed during a successful run of the film. At that point,

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143 Higginbotham, Virginia Spanish Film Under Franco, 91.  
144 D’Lugo, Marvin The Films of Carlos Saura, 116.  
145 D’Lugo, Marvin The Films of Carlos Saura, 117.
many theater owners decided it was too risky to continue playing the film and it received an unofficial ban domestically. Saura, however, received a special award at Cannes for the film and it was still the most successful box-office collaboration from Saura-Querejeta domestically.\textsuperscript{146} Pío Cabanillas, the head of the Information Ministry resigned in October 1974 amid criticisms for the scandal that ensued during his term.\textsuperscript{147}

\textit{La prima Angéllica} presents the audience, especially in the last sequence, with a mirror into their own collective, recent and extraordinarily painful past (Luis Buñuel reportedly broke down in tears the first time he watched the film). In the final image, the camera turns to Angelica and her mother both staring into the camera, breaking the fourth wall, as tears roll down Angelica’s cheeks – and the audience understands the pain that the war has inflicted upon the middle-class, especially women, rendering them helpless before the force of history. As Marvin D’Lugo has commented, this sequence leaves the audience to “ponder the significance of the Civil War as a yet-unfinished page of history that each Spaniard needs to confront on a personal level.”\textsuperscript{148} The intended effect of this film, despite some of Saura’s claims to the contrary, seems to ruminate on the lack of closure in the forty elapsed years since the war, paralleled in Luis’ inability to close that part of his life. Audiences and censors were outraged at having this discussion triggered for the first time since the war – \textit{La prima Angéllica} was the first film

\textsuperscript{146} D’Lugo, Marvin \textit{The Films of Carlos Saura}, 118.
\textsuperscript{147} D’Lugo, Marvin \textit{The Films of Carlos Saura}, 118.
\textsuperscript{148} D’Lugo, Marvin \textit{The Films of Carlos Saura}, 125.
since the war’s end to portray the losing side (Luis’ family) in a sympathetic light, while repeatedly casting the Nationalists as petty, over-violent, brutal and simply wrong. Spaniards understood implicitly that Angélica was much more than a psychoanalytic story of a boy returning to his childhood home. It was a slap in the face of Francoism, and a well-crafted wrench into the painful national memory of the war that Spaniards had been trying to ignore.

The last of Saura’s films I will discuss in-depth is Cría Cuervos (Raise Ravens), released in 1975. Here, Saura presents, like in Prima Angélica, a hazy, non-linear story that showcases the suffering and stagnancy of women made powerless by the tenets of Francoism. The story also centers on a child, Ana, played by Ana Torrent (of Erice’s Espíritu de la colmena) – a girl both obsessed with and confused by the death that has pervaded her household. Her father, a military man, dies in the opening sequence of the film after having sex with a faceless woman – apparently of a heart attack. Ana’s mother, played by Geraldine Chaplin, is revealed to have become ill and died a few months before, though Ana still sees her in visions walking about their house. Ana blames her mother’s death on her father, and takes revenge by attempting to kill her father by poisoning his milk, something she believes she succeeds in. However, Ana’s satisfaction at having poisoned her father does not last – her aunt, a strict and bitter woman, soon moves in and assumes control of the household. Ana is preoccupied with death, or with killing the people she doesn’t like: she offers some of the white powder to her paralyzed, voiceless
grandmother (who turns it down) and later tries to poison her aunt and is disappointed when she fails.

The film contains numerous lapses in time, jumps forward to 1995 when Ana is a 29-year-old woman - also played by Geraldine Chaplin, adding to the temporal confusion – reflecting on the past twenty years of her unhappy life. Ana’s childhood self and future self are wrapped up in the image of her mother, who died far too young and in torment, writhing about on the same bed her husband later dies in, exclaiming, “I don’t want to die!” The film, like La prima Angélica, also contains an image of Chaplin and Torrent breaking the fourth wall by staring directly into the camera, lost in the reflection on their lives as powerless women within a repressive society. The film ends ambiguously and reflexively with Ana as a child walking down a street, summoned by the bells of the religious school she attends. The implication may be that Ana will be like her mother, unable to break out of the system she is ensconced in, one where brutal militaristic men like her father and his friends have the power to subjugate their wives and cause them to die of misery, like Ana’s mother did, while reveling in their own sexual and economic freedoms. The film is underscored by an audio motif of a popular song, ¿Por qué te vas? a haunting, melodic song that repeats the phrase, “Why are you going away?” Saura, however, denies symbolic meaning of the lyrics of the song, saying that he chose it because it “sticks in your head.”149 Ana

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clearly struggles with understanding death and absence, like any child, but the social metaphor is more complex.

Aesthetically, *Cría cuervos* comes close to something like neorealism, with emphasis on quotidian activities and shot durations that linger on dead moments. However, interestingly, Saura updates neorealism to focus on the lives of the affluent middle-upper class rather than the working poor, which Italian Neorealism was famous for depicting. For example, a scene of Ana and her brother and sister playing in their attic drags on for a duration unwarranted by the narrative, while the chilling ¿*Por qué te vas?* plays in the background, underscoring the simplicity and naïveté of childhood days while lingering on average moments. Thematically, *Cría cuervos* is consistent with Saura’s thread of trauma witnessed by children. This theme is visualized in Cuadrado’s filming of Torrent – her wide, unblinking brown eyes are the subject of many close-ups. Many shots of the film are simply her drinking in her surroundings, the camera lingering on her facial expressions rather than showing the audience what she is looking at. This pushes forward the theme that the viewer is not to focus on what Ana sees but rather the effect that seeing has on her. Saura also is strongly interested in *Cría* in the mother-daughter dynamic, something explored in *Angélica* as well, seeing the women as the heart of the story. Saura himself stated: “The relationship between mother and child attracts me. For example, the physical aspect attracts me. I like the sensuous attraction between mother and child.”

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150 Saura, Carlos and Linda M. Willem in *Interviews: Carlos Saura*. Interview
the film primed the audience to see the connection between mother and daughter, especially emphasizing the physicality of the relationship, with a beautiful, haunting image of Chaplin and Torrent, clad in dark colors and side by side, focusing their big, sad brown eyes directly at the viewer. 151 Another filmic sequence that emphasizes the repressive gender roles that the women of the middle class were expected to obey is a powerful image of young Ana and her sister applying garishly red lipstick, rather poorly, in front of a mirror. They also apply eye shadow and mascara – straining their faces and opening their eyes in a childish attempt to put on make-up that freezes both their faces in unnatural grimaces. The two young girls stare into the mirror, and directly at the audience, their faces marred with the standard of adult female beauty, and seem, while not happy, satisfied with their appearances. This is part of their play, but with the muted color scheme around their faces, the red lipstick creates a grotesque effect. 152

On the surface, Cría cuervos could be seen as a simplistic story of a child dealing with the death of her parents, but the temporal discontinuities paired with the double casting of Chaplin as Ana’s mother and future Ana herself disallow this mild explanation. Censors could not reasonably ban the film, though, citing only the offense that Ana’s father, a member of the military was also an adulterer. 153 Audiences, however, seem to have not missed the message, judging from reviews in newspapers and the film’s

151 See Figure 2.4
152 See Figure 2.5
controversial legacy. The film was released without cuts and became Saura’s most domestically commercially successful film, and Spain’s sixth-largest grossing film of 1976.¹⁵⁴

**LEGACY**

Saura’s films had a profound effect on the landscape of Spanish cinema’s reputation abroad. Saura said of his work that, “In Spanish cinema there has always been a strange fear of showing our sensibilities. One of the causes of that is that a false image has been given to us. Outside of Spain one supposes that being Spanish means being brutal, elemental, violent, when it would be just as easy to show the sensibility of our writers and our painters.”¹⁵⁵ The thematic threads of “Spanishness” to the international audience were violence, sexual perversion, Flamenco, aggression and religious corruption among others, but Saura did not consider himself a part of that tradition. The Spanishness that Saura attempted to portray, rather, was dictated by the demands of an academic (and mostly foreign) audience.

The relationship between Saura’s conception of himself, his critical conception by the popular press, and the collaborative structure he worked in on so many of his films is a discussion that warrants examination. He said in a 1988 interview: “I am one who understands himself to be an auteur, though this word causes me anxiety because it’s so grand. When one says auteur, it sounds as if one is expressing something boastful, being kind of a big

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dictator…it can be good or bad but I never shove the blame for my work onto other people. My work is mine, it makes no difference whether it’s good or bad, the responsibility is mine. In this sense, of course, I try to control everything.”

Despite Saura’s claims that he feels anxiety at being thought of as an auteur, the most common critiques of Saura center around his being pretentious, snobby and academic. A reviewer for La Vanguardia, Pablo Ramos, wrote in May 1974 that La prima Angélica was full of “intellectual pretensions” that Saura and his team might consider brilliant, but the viewer is overwhelmed with confusion at this “cine intellectual.” The bourgeois settings of Saura’s films, such as the mansion in Angélica, caused one reviewer to comment: “You can tell Saura has never caught the metro.”

In Saura’s childhood, his father’s high position made sure the family was always well off. The Saura sons were able to pursue their artistic dreams, Carlos at the Film School and Antonio as a painter, because they had the money to do so – a luxury not afforded to most Spaniards in the immediate postwar era. Other reviewers accused Saura of blatant plagiarism, citing the final scene of

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Ana y los lobos as a rip-off of a sequence from the well-known El manantial de la doncella by the more popular director, Ingmar Bergman.\textsuperscript{159}

In interviews, Saura often comes off as contentious and argumentative – asserting his own opinions over the analysis of his interviewers. Appearance-wise, he is a tall, gaunt-looking man with wispy hair and thick-rimmed glasses, often wearing scarves or berets – the very image of a proper Spanish intellectual with creative prowess. When an interviewer explains that he felt that three of Saura’s films, Peppermint frappé, Stress es tres, tres, and La madriguera form a trilogy that pays homage to Geraldine Chaplin, Saura bluntly responds: “There is absolutely no homage to her in these films.”\textsuperscript{160} Many comments like this sprinkle Saura’s interviews. His responses to interviewers often seem frustrated and impatient, one of his most repeated phrases is “I have already told you this.”\textsuperscript{161} While slightly rude responses in interviews are not necessarily an indicator of intellectual condescension, it can be seen that Saura expresses a sense of entitlement over his films and dislikes when others try to apply meanings of their own. He claims that interpreting films for others is like betraying himself, but when an interviewer suggests that the mother in Ana y los lobos represents Spain, he calls the explanation

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[160]{Saura, Carlos and Linda M. Willem in Carlos Saura: Interviews. Interview with Juan Luis Rentero, 1976. 25.}
\footnotetext[161]{Saura, Carlos and Linda M. Willem in Carlos Saura: Interviews. Interview with Vicén Campos, 1976. 35.}
\end{footnotes}
“simple” and “absurd.”\textsuperscript{162} In an interview about \textit{La caza} he calls the interviewers interpretation a lie: “It was never the idea that at any moment \textit{La caza} was the symbolic acting of the Spanish war. That’s a lie…that was never my intention."\textsuperscript{163} From primary sources and interviews with Saura, he presents himself as an intellectual in the strictest sense – an auteur, an artist, and, importantly, a stand-alone in respect to his works.

However adamant Saura may have been about his own personal control over his works, the amount of collaboration, especially repeated collaboration with the same people, that went into the making of his most famous works is something noteworthy. Elías Querejeta, the producer behind many subversive and influential Spanish films during the Transition era worked with Saura on several films and has a reputation as a very hands-on producer. In Tom Whitaker’s book about the formidable producer, he writes that: “[Querejeta’s] creative presence permeates all other artistic and formal aspects of the film-making process, which are usually placed under the guidance of the director.”\textsuperscript{164} Querejeta himself stated that the producer must “be aware of all parts of making a film. He must work rigorously not only with the director, but among many other elements: the lights, the settings, the costumes.”\textsuperscript{165} This is a far cry from the typical role of a producer, especially as a producer is understood in Hollywood cinema. A famous anecdote from

\textsuperscript{163} Besas, Peter \textit{Behind the Spanish Lens}, 238
\textsuperscript{165} Whitaker, Tom. \textit{Elías Querejeta: A Producer of Landscapes}, 2.
the premiere of *El espíritu de la colmena*, another seminal work in the cinema of opposition that Querejeta produced and Cuadrado filmed, involved Cuadrado pinning Querejeta against a wall and yelling that he was “un brujo” (a witch). Saura’s next film after *Cría cuervos, Elisa, vida mía*, was also produced by Querejeta. Allegedly, Querejeta insisted that the film be ten minutes longer than Saura wanted – and he got what he wanted, which makes one wonder how much of Saura’s work is truly stand-alone when he so frequently worked with such an authoritative, opinionated producer that sometimes had the final say in a film’s length.

Querejeta also worked with a group of industry professionals – gaffer, cinematographer, sound technician, production manager, costume designer and composer – who accompanied him on every film he produced. The talented Luis Cuadrado was the cinematographer of “la factoría Querejeta.” When Saura collaborated with Querejeta, which he did on thirteen films including every one analyzed thus far with the exception of *Los golfos*, he received without choice the technicians from la factoría. Saura states in a 1988 interview that he works with people he trusts, he chooses people that are more or less like himself. However, in any film that Saura worked with Querejeta on, Querejeta was likely the only actual choice he made. Their collaboration began on *La caza* in 1966, and continued until *Deprisa, deprisa*

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in 1981. Saura has stated that he took the script for *La caza* to several producers, and only Querejeta was the only one who had the courage to produce it.\(^{170}\) When describing the process the two would have to go through to evade the censors, Saura said: “We simply wrote something and handed in whatever they wanted, but the other script, from which the film was made, we kept to ourselves…Elías was much cleverer than I; he always handed in the false film scripts.”\(^{171}\)

However, despite evidence that Querejeta had a great deal of creative control over the films, Saura asserted that Querejeta let him do whatever he wanted, that their collaboration was friendly (unlike Querejeta’s contentious collaboration with Victor Ericé, which climaxd in a cancellation of the film *El Sur* only four weeks before it was set to begin filming) – something which there is also some evidence for in Querejeta’s other works. Querejeta knew how to market his directors and their films; he created a *cine de calidad* (quality cinema) that was state subsidized in many cases. His production company had much more freedom commercially and creatively than most other film production companies in Spain at the time because of the tenor Querejeta applied to himself and the filmmakers he worked with.\(^{172}\) The way that Querejeta chose projects, assigned directors and technicians of quality, and then later advertised those films and their filmmakers to the general public


\(^{172}\) Whitaker, Tom. *Elias Querejeta: A Producer of Landscapes*, 12.
is arguably the reason for their acceptance by the censors and success with critics and audiences.

Press books and posters for the major Saura films, *Cría cuervos*, *La prima Angelica*, *El jardín de las delicias* and *Mama cumple cien años*, among others, attest to the power that visual advertising brought to the reception of these films. The originally released poster for *Ana y los lobos* is striking, the terrified face of Geraldine Chaplin superimposed over three shadowy, male figures. With the title large and looming, it is impossible to miss the assignment of “wolves” to the three sons of the film. One of the posters for *Peppermint frappé* (1967) is a sepia-toned image of a little girl with a decaying doll out in the woods, a visually intriguing image that primes the viewer for an aesthetically pleasing film.

The posters from Saura’s films stand in stark contrast to what was popular in Hollywood at the time (think *Star Wars* in 1977). A still from *Mama cumple cien años (Mama Turns 100)* (1979) that was given to reporters prior to the film’s release shows Mama lying in bed, all in white, flanked by Chaplin (miraculously still alive in the sequel to *Ana y los Lobos*) and Antonio. A ludicrously large cross hovers over her head, signifying the daftness of religious fervency that Saura so often critiqued. Elías Querejeta set his directors apart from the international crowd as well as the popular domestic filmmakers, before his films even premiered, with artistic

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173 See Figure 2.6
174 See Figure 2.7
175 See Figure 2.8
advertising imagery and set photography, steeped in unmistakable metaphor.
D’Lugo remarks that Querejeta pushed Saura toward an international style and themes of dictatorship and Spain’s backwardness, recognizing that the international community was more interested in these topics than themes that may have been more important to the Spanish people.¹⁷⁶

Querejeta understood the cultural currency that could be gained by legitimizing Saura as an artist, and so did most of the intelligentsia in Spain that reviewed his films for newspapers and film journals. The reviews for films like *Ana y los lobos* and *La prima Angélica* were positive across the board by reviewers for film journals and cinema clubs, Saura was highlighted by all of the major film publications of the time including foreign ones like *Cahiers du cinema* and the American *Sight and Sound*, as well as the Spanish *Dirigido por*. Carlos Saura was clearly seen, even in his time, as an art-house filmmaker which endeared him to critics, but perhaps not to the general public. The legacy of Carlos Saura must be seen in the light of his authorial intent, which can be summed up in a comment he made in a 1966 interview: “The truth is that cinema is not made for the general audience. First it can’t be and then it shouldn’t be.”¹⁷⁷ Saura certainly seems to gear his films toward an intellectual crowd rather than an average one. His characters, with the exception of those in *Los golfos*, are typically members of the bourgeoisie. He focuses on the deterioration and disillusionment of members of the upper-

middle class, people who can afford governesses and lives of apathetic wanderlust. His films contain many references to Spanish literature, theatre, poetry and art. Marvin D’Lugo explains Saura’s inspirations for his most experimental film, *Elisa, vida mía* (*Elisa, My Life*) (1977) as coming from a poem by Garcilaso de la Vega, as well as a childhood photograph of Geraldine Chaplin and an effort to blend literature and cinema an unconventional way.\textsuperscript{178}

*El jardín de las delicias* is named after a “Hieronymus Bosch triptych displayed in the Prado Museum.”\textsuperscript{179} Saura clearly wanted to associate himself with great artists and the literary and artistic tradition of Spain, though perhaps not with it’s cinematic tradition.

I have pointed to specific examples in which Saura draws upon traditions established by the directors of the 50’s, such as surrealism in *La prima Angélica* inspired by Luis Buñuel and neorealism in *Los golfos* inspired by Bardem and Berlanga, but it is important to note that his associations with these men went beyond simple cinematic appreciation. Saura was close friends with Buñuel, the famous Leftist filmmaker who collaborated with Salvador Dalí and went into exile when Franco took power. Buñuel despised neorealism – stating that it was “partial, official and above all reasonable…but poetry and mystery are utterly lacking in it.”\textsuperscript{180} Saura met Buñuel at Cannes in 1962, where he was showing *Los golfos*, a neorealist film, and the two began to talk and became good friends. It seems implausible that Saura should deny

\textsuperscript{178} D’Lugo, Marvin *The Films of Carlos Saura*, 139
\textsuperscript{179} D’Lugo, Marvin *The Films of Carlos Saura*, 97
\textsuperscript{180} Kinder, Marsha *Blood Cinema: The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain*, 32
that this new friendship affected his aesthetic, seeing as his films after that point veered far away from neorealism and instead toward convoluted temporal structures and dreamy imagery such as Buñuel was famous for.

Saura’s legacy from Bardem and Berlanga is more complex. *Muerte de una ciclista* undoubtedly influenced Saura’s early aesthetic, and Saura’s choice to focus his narrative energies on members of the bourgeoisie can be traced to the melodramatically allegorical legacy of films such as the Bardem-Berlanga collaboration *Esa pareja feliz*. However, the most interesting connection between Saura and Berlanga and Bardem comes from their controversial film ¡Bienvenido Mr. Marshall! The film, as discussed in the prologue, shows a traditional Andalusian town in the countryside preparing for the arrival of American foreigners. It is satirical to the extreme as the town arrays itself in marks of traditional “Spanishness,” disguising their modern conveniences and storefronts with stereotypes of Spain’s former glory. It is simultaneously a critique of the Hollywood domination of foreign film markets and of Franco’s regime, which keeps the Spanish people from modernization by insisting that they stay true to their cultural heritage.\(^{181}\)

I attest rather hyperbolically that Saura, with his unflagging catering to the international film community, acts like the overeager Spanish peasants that want to receive acclaim for their Spanishness and legitimize their place in the international community. In addition, Saura’s obsession with his own personal experiences as a child of the bourgeoisie limits his exploration into the deeper... 

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ramifications of the *guerra civil* as they affected Spain as a whole. Saura’s films fail to connect with the Spanish general public not only because he writes as an intellectual and a rich man, but because he falls victim to the trappings of international acclaim, encouraged by Elías Querejeta – ironically the very thing that allowed him to begin making controversial films in the first place.

Nuría Triana-Toribio echoes this point in *New Spanish Cinema*. She writes that the *Nuevo español* (championed by Querejeta and Escudero) attempted to “represent Spanish reality as problematic and engage in existential realities and political opposition to the regime; therefore directors were forced to adopt an allegorical style to evade censorship. For these reasons, these films foreground their style in such a way that the public is constantly aware of watching a work of art, a technique which in the eyes of critics and scholars prevents escapism and promotes awareness and engagement.”¹⁸² The films of New Spanish Cinema were validated by international audiences and sent to film festivals as representative of Spanish cinema despite their failure to reach large domestic audiences.

After Franco’s death in 1975 and the disbanding of the censorship codes in 1977, Saura’s films take a significant turn. Rather than centering on the Spanish Civil War, he begins to make comedic films, dramatic films, even musicals, still working within the realm of art-house cinema, but without explicit Francoist critiques. His Flamenco trilogy of the 1980’s was

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¹⁸² Toribio-Triana, Nuría *Spanish National Cinema*, 74.
enormously popular abroad. *Bodas de sangre* was nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film, and he enjoyed slightly more success domestically as well. In a 1977 interview (post-Franco), when asked about the changing landscape of Spanish cinema, Saura responds condescendingly: “The most important event for me in the last few years is that the Spanish audience is now coming to see our films; what I mean to say is they have redirected their attention away from the overtly commercial products and toward a cinema that is more mature, refined…What is also interesting is that since Franco’s death, Spanish cinema no longer carries the label ‘Francoist’ abroad.”

Saura seems to be arguing here that before Franco died, it was necessary to make films that were distinctly anti-Francoist in order to gain any sort of international respect. The Spanish Civil War seems to not have been the most interesting issue for Carlos Saura, though I speculate that pressure from Querejeta, the liberal intelligentsia in Spain as the American obsession with the Spanish Civil War may have forced his hand. The American public had long been fascinated with the Spanish Civil War, due partly to the influence of the writings of Ernest Hemingway and the presence of Picasso’s *La guernica* in New York’s Museum of Modern Art during the 1970’s. It is reasonable to suggest that Saura used Hollywood’s obsession with *la guerra civil* to bolster his reputation in the international film market.

**CONCLUSION**

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Triana-Toribio writes that the New Spanish Cinema only retrospectively became the national cinema of the transition era. It was the cinema of the elite minority that allowed “the disaffected petite bourgeoisie the possibility of brooding about their own misery, about their own marginalization and unhappiness.”\(^{184}\) Marvin D’Lugo ruminates on this topic in his book on Carlos Saura. He writes that Saura received criticism for his concentration on the bourgeoisie inside Spain, certainly, but outside of it as well. He writes that “Saura and Querejeta appeared to be merely puppets of the regime’s cultural politics, involved in a cinema made by and for a small fraction of the upper and middle class which has no other connection with any other groups of Spaniards…Indeed, he seemed even to authenticate the dictatorship by showing affluent Spaniards who appeared to be not so very different from their counterparts in the U.S. and elsewhere.”\(^ {185}\) However, I must also note that, while Saura may not have wanted to make films explicitly associated with the cinema of opposition, he may have made in *La caza* and *La prima Angélica* two of the most important contributions to the very *Nuevo cine de Español* that he mostly disavowed association with. He is the most representative and famous figure of the NCE movement today.

Saura used the desire of Spanish intellectuals to be recognized abroad to make the films he wanted to make - about the upper-middle class, family, sexuality and childhood– while maintaining a critique against Francoism that foreign audiences were excited to see. Saura’s Spanishness shaped him as well.

\(^{184}\) Triana-Toribio, Nuria *Spanish National Cinema*, 81.
\(^{185}\) D’Lugo, Marvin *The Films of Carlos Saura*, 68.
as impeded him. In a 1969 interview he summed up his feelings: “I believe that this obsessional search for a kind of simple, primitive realism is out-of-date. This is the same kind of reproach they gave to me in Spain, but it’s a false problem. They said to me: ‘you’re Spanish. So you should present a Spanish reality, but not the bourgeoisie because the Spanish bourgeoisie is dead, past. We have to think about the future. You have to study the lives of the working-class.’ I find such utterances stupid…I’m not interested in making a film about a particular subject. I’m stimulated by something else.”

Perhaps it is unfair to fault Carlos Saura for failing to fully connect with the Spanish general public about the Spanish Civil War when that seems to have never been his desire or intention. He was a product of his time and his childhood, self-proclaimed, and his works were seminal in bringing Spanish film to a higher standard of production as well as to begin to open the discussion about the war among Spanish intellectuals who had been living for forty years under a regime that disallowed any negative mention of the battle that had split the country in two and left brother fighting brother on the streets of Madrid. Saura’s legacy is important for the artistic merit of the Nuevo cine de Español movement as well as the international discussion of totalitarian rule, but a different conclusion has been drawn by the next generation, which criticized the Saura generation for its failure to reach the majority of Spaniards.

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186 D’Lugo, Marvin *The Films of Carlos Saura*, 68.
Michel Foucault in *Punish and Discipline* introduces the idea of “Panopticism.” This philosophy asserts that, theoretically, a government can exist where a central, anonymous power, a watchtower or central eye of sorts called the panopticon, keeps control over a population by disseminating the tyrannical authority throughout the population through networks and nodes of small, pervasive, multiple and institutional powers. These nodes appear unimposing, even friendly, because they are familiar to their prisoners. The prisoners begin to reflect these institutional nodes, later impose them in their own lives and the lives of others around them – even to the detriment of their own desires and beliefs. Applied to a community, this theory would purport that people unknowingly assimilate the values and laws of their societies, even if they oppose them internally.¹⁸⁷. I make the argument that Carlos Saura is governed by the institution of the bourgeoisie, the upper-middle class, in which he has rested comfortably all his life. To move from that class, or disrupt the class system, would cause Saura to lose wealth along with prestige. Rather than confront the centralized power of the dictatorship, Saura focused his cinematic energies on self-reflective, semi-autobiographical subjects that allowed him to express his visually striking aesthetic, his artistic sensibilities, while also focusing on the emotional issues that had plagued him and his peers since childhood: the early loss of innocence and disillusionment that came along with being children of a generation at war. The cinematic and literary tradition of melodrama is the dramatization of everyday life by

comfortable members of affluent societies, so when Saura snorts that the war affected him just as much as it affected soldiers despite the fact that he was a child, one can see a connection between a statement like that and an element of a melodramatic film.

This is not to make light of Saura’s hardships or the success that he had in bringing some of the issues left over from the guerra civil into public discussion. His films clearly struck a chord with some members of Spanish society, but those members tended to be his social equals rather than the whole of the largely impoverished Spanish people. Carlos Saura has received many awards from international festivals. He has received lifetime achievement awards from Istanbul, Montreal, Los Angeles and India. From Barcelona he received not an award for lifetime achievement, for representing the Spanish people or making a significant contribution to the national pride, but an International Award commemorating his importance in other countries.188

Saura was the heir of the cinematic Spaniards before him that had begun the discussion about Spanish identity in the post-war era, just as he was the inspiration for many filmmakers to come. The popular reception of his films, and NCE films more generally in Spain, excited the academic community as well as the cinematic community, who could see themselves in Saura and his characters. However, these same films also outraged the

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working-class, not just the Falangists and their children, but the Republican
families as well, who could barely recognize their country or their people in
the irreverent and often confusing temporal discontinuities that made Saura
and *Nuevo cine de Español* as a whole artistic but also unpalatable. Some of
Saura’s contemporaries, José Luis Borau and Jaime Chavarrí as fellow
representatives of the Querejeta-clan of acclaimed directors, had slightly more
luck with popular audiences; but still others also contributed effectively to the
cinematic representation of the national discussion of the Civil War, paving
the way for the next generation which would take up the mantle.

When I went to Spain I ended up talking to three or four of my cab
drivers about my thesis and what I was researching. All were in their fifties or
sixties and seemed enthusiastic about my interest in their country’s cinematic
heritage. Inevitably, I would mention Carlos Saura and invariably, I was met
with confusion. At first I thought it was my accent, my less-than-perfect
Spanish but with every single one, in every separate conversation, the truth
dawned on me about halfway through my recitation of Saura’s major works:
They had no idea who he was.
CHAPTER THREE: “POPULAR” CINEMA OF THE TRANSITION ERA

INTRODUCTION

So far in this thesis, I have discussed the works of documentary filmmakers of the 1970’s as well as internationally acclaimed directors of art-house Spanish cinema, Carlos Saura and Víctor Erice. However, in order to truly gauge the reception of cinema on popular audiences of the 1970’s it is necessary to study popular films as well, films that performed well in domestic Spain as well as abroad. To this end, I have chosen four important directors that created landmark films during the 1970’s that were top grossing as well as controversial in thematic content. Most of these directors also worked in more experimental filmic genres at various points in their careers, but the focus of this chapter is their works that enjoyed mainstream domestic success. These four directors, José Luis Borau, Pedro Olea, Ricardo Franco, and Jaime de Armiñan, all managed to create films that made an impact in the domestic box office as well as arousing the ire of censors and right-wing publications. As with documentary and art-house filmmakers, the “popular” filmmakers inherited aesthetic and thematic traditions from Berlanga, Bardem and Buñuel while also passing on different interpretations of some of these elements to the next generation.

One important difference prominent in films of popular cinema is a thematic and aesthetic adherence to Hollywood conventions. As discussed in the prologue, films from Hollywood made up, and still make up, the vast majority of films shown in Spain so it is not surprising that filmmakers borrowed conventions from the United States film industry in order to reach a
wider audience. More than the documentary filmmakers and art-house filmmakers, the popular directors utilized the aesthetic standards of Hollywood to make their films palatable to the general public. This trend, especially taken up by Borau and Olea, directly influenced Guillermo del Toro among others. Therefore, in this chapter, I will first discuss some of the industry impetuses behind the “Americanization” of the Transition Era film, and what defined Hollywood to the Spanish audience of the time.

Another important consideration in these chosen “popular” films is the use of symbolism and metaphor disguised in elements of genre. These filmmakers were able to market their films as standard fare in certain genres like romance, action, melodrama or period piece, but then made conscious narrative and aesthetic decisions that broke trends of these genres in order to critique Francoist society. This method of subversion is one of the hallmarks of the cinema of opposition in post-war Spain, though the directors of popular cinema used it productively to reach a widespread audience rather than simply to receive acclaim abroad.

I will then follow the structure outlined in the previous two chapters: conception, production and reception of the major films chosen from each director. I will discuss the childhood and possible external influences behind each filmmaker’s initial conception of their famous work, keeping in mind that each filmmaker stands for a representative of their generation at this specific historical moment. Second, I will analyze the actual production of the
film; including an eye for repeated collaborations as well as the perceived intended interpretation put forth by advertisements and press releases and statements from directorial interviews. Last, the reception of each film, read by original reviews, awards and box office figures, will leave the reader with a sense of what each film may have meant to the larger Spanish audience in the narrative of cultural trauma of the Spanish Civil War.

HOLLYWOOD IN SPAIN

Marsha Kinder writes that:

Both Hollywood and neorealist models could be used to challenge the regimes monolithic hold over Spanish culture, especially when they were set in dialectic opposition to each other...In the context of the 1950’s, both neorealism and Hollywood provided Spanish filmmakers with alternative ideologies. The ideological implications of these two foreign aesthetics were never fixed; the meanings of their discursive practices were surprisingly fluid...partly because they were always contingent on what they were being used to oppose within the Spanish context. ¹⁹⁰

The use of neorealism and Hollywood in Berlanga and Bardem was discussed in the prologue, but there is strong evidence that these same conventions were re-used by directors of the 1970’s in order to continue to oppose Francoist ideals. I discussed the conventions of Italian neorealism in the previous chapter. Typically, neorealism uses non-actors; focuses on quotidian stories and activities as well as has banal shot framing and gritty, urban settings. Hollywood conventions barely need to be explained. They are familiar to anyone that has ever watched a Hollywood film. There is a focus on grand, epic storytelling and clean, quick shots that follow action without lingering on excess moments. Continuity editing is also a trait: the shot-

reverse-shot method for filming conversations, as well as following a simple, linear thread of action was developed by Hollywood in the 1920’s and remains an important and recognizable aspect of the Hollywood aesthetic. The narrative also dictates cinematic style, i.e. a film about murder and intrigue will typically be shot in dark, muted colors whereas a romantic comedy will have a bright palate and tone. The 180-degree rule means that the camera will never move in a way that disrupts the cinematic space that has been established, and there will never be jump cuts that miss portions of an action. Films have a clear beginning, middle and an end, characters are well developed and their actions are motivated – though often psychologically.¹⁹¹ Some would argue that this is simply good storytelling, and perhaps it is, and that is exactly why directors of popular cinema in the 1970’s appropriated these conventions in order to make films that people actually wanted to see.

Bardem and Berlanga chose to satirize the obsession with the American Hollywood in *Muerte de una ciclista*, but the popular film directors of the Transition, 1971-1978, instead used Classic Hollywood Cinema conventions to expand their audience. Buñuel had used ideological reinscription of both neorealism and Hollywood conventions in order to make subversive films while he was in exile in the 1950’s, and the directors of the 1970’s followed through with his tactics as well. They combined the ideological uses of Hollywood conventions with their popular appeal in order

to create filmic works that challenged and entertained Spanish audiences; however, they lacked international appeal. Documentaries lacked international appeal because they required their audience to have knowledge of locations and regions in Spain, but popular films were unsuccessful abroad because they appeal to cultural elements of Spanish specificity. Some of these elements include, generally, an attack on the three pillars of Francoism. More specifically, repeated thematic elements in the popular cinema of the 1970’s include fetishized violence, sexual perversion, violence against women, generational discord, matricide, fratricide, and incest – all things that directly harm the Francoist message of family unity as well as faith in the Church and Military’s abilities to prevent such corruption and violence. These themes appear repeatedly in the films of the Spanish popular cinema, framed by Hollywood conventions with much of their subversive content hidden in these same conventions. Art-house cinema filmmakers, such as Saura and Ericé, managed to affect international audiences because they used unusual filmmaking techniques, ones that film festivals and members of the intelligentsia adored, but did not enthuse domestic audiences.

In this chapter, I will make the case that the films made by popular cinema directors José Luis Borau, Jaime Armiñan, Ricardo Franco and Pedro Olea during the Transition Era contributed more successfully to the national discourse on the trauma of the Spanish Civil War than the documentary or art-house films of the same era did. However, these directors (with the exception of Borau) all made a mistake in the execution of their message. They made
films that were grotesquely violent and therefore often offensive to the still conservative Spanish audience. Rather than engaging with their viewers in an intellectually compelling way, they buried their societal critiques in rapes, stonings and close-range gunshots. The films of Olea, Franco and de Armiñan, even sometimes Borau, are remembered more for their disturbing content than their intellectual impact.

JAIME de ARMINÁN (1927 - )

Jaime de Armiñan was born in Madrid in 1927, “into a family of writers and politicians.” Like many Spanish film directors, he began his career as a film critic, writing for prolific Spanish magazines. de Armiñán also wrote creatively, winning several national awards for his plays during the 1950’s. He began to antagonize censors while working in Spanish television. Schwartz writes that he “won a prize in 1968 for a musical satire on Spanish censorship entitled Stories of Frivolity.” He turned to filmmaking in 1970 and enjoyed a great deal of international success with many of his films. His film Mi querida señorita was nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the 1973 Academy Awards in the United States. Mi querida señorita was an incredibly daring film for its time: it dealt explicitly with the theme of bisexuality. Schwartz wrote that the film “has a whole range of Buñuelesque resonances because of the bizarre initial premise…nevertheless, it is a fascinating love story.” The film centers on a young woman who finds

194 Schwartz, Ronald Great Spanish Films Since 1950, 34.
herself attracted to other women, cross-dresses as a man and finds love with a serving girl who accepts her as both a man and a woman. The film performed well internationally, but de Armiñán’s next film, El amor del Capitán Brando, is most pertinent to the discussion of popular subversive cinema in Spain.\footnote{Another of de Armiñán’s important films, El nido (1981), also enjoyed international success and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. The film is often referred to as a “Spanish Lolita” and stars a teenage Ana Torrent. Using a well-known Spanish actress (famous, indeed for her roles in films by Saura and Ericé) in the principal role helped it to achieve popularity abroad. However, it skews more toward the art-house aesthetic with narrative ellipses and indirect allusions, which made it less popular to domestic audiences than Capitán Brando.}

\textit{El amor del Capitán Brando} was written and directed by de Armiñán in 1974 and, like most of his films, relies upon a strong script to advance its narrative more than aesthetics, though it was shot by one of Saura’s talented collaborators, Luís Cuadrado. The film is about a young schoolteacher, played by popular actress Ana Belén (who appears in many subversive films during the Transition Era). It also stars Fernando Fernán Gomez, one of the most famous Spanish actors of the time.\footnote{Fernán Gomez was an outspoken anarchist throughout his entire life. His films, as well as his theatrical and directorial works, almost exclusively deal with subversive, anti-Franco themes and he collaborated with essentially every major Spanish director, including Saura, Ericé and Almodovár. His extreme views are just another manifestation of the way that the Spanish Civil War forced people with immense ideological differences into being on the same “team,” both during the actual war and the battle for Spanish national memory about the war in the years that followed. (Michael Eude, The Guardian, Dec. 10 2007)} Fernán Gomez plays a Republican exile who returns to the small village where Aurora (Belén) teaches grade school, his home village from before the war. Juan, a boy in Aurora’s class, is fatherless, rebellious, and has a sexual obsession with Aurora. In the film’s
opening, he and a group of boys from his class watch through Aurora’s window as she undresses. Juan gets beat up by the other boys, and Aurora comes out and takes him inside to dress his wounds. In a quick close-up, the audience sees Juan’s eyes flick toward Aurora’s unbuttoned blouse, which she then self-consciously buttons up again. However, she does not scold him and a slight smile reveals that she may enjoy the attention. From the first sequence, de Armiñán establishes the inappropriate sexual tension between the two. When Fernando (Fernán Gomez) enters the film, Juan and Aurora are both immediately attracted to him, setting up a love triangle that continues throughout the film. Marsha Kinder writes that: “the returning Republican exile...becomes an important figure of sexual liberation...capable of displacing even a romantic Hollywood idol like Marlon Brando.”

Juan is obsessed with Marlon Brando in the film; he quotes monologues from Brando’s filmography, especially when trying to seduce Aurora. Kinder writes, “the way Armiñán [uses] Marlon Brando in El amor functions as a ‘pleasure out of reach’ for young Spanish boys coming of age in the repressive atmosphere of the 1950’s.” Juan transfers this obsession with “Otherness” onto Fernando upon his arrival, but is disappointed when Fernando fails to make Aurora fall in love with him. The love triangle, and disappointment Aurora feels with both her admirers, is mostly clearly symbolized in two parallel sequences. In one, Fernando and Aurora have

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consummated their affair in Aurora’s bed. Fernando’s chest is heaving and he lies back in bed with a cigarette, completely content. Aurora, on the other hand, looks over at him and sighs. They have a brief conversation before she rises from the bed and leaves. In another sequence, Aurora has let Juan stay the night at her house. This time, she merely watches him as he sleeps in her bed, once again disappointed by the lack of sexual satisfaction in her life - despite having two men that love her. The use of the same bed, and focus on Aurora’s facial reactions to her two romantic “partners,” compels the audience to compare the man and the boy in her life, seeing them as equals in the fight for her affections – a scandalous notion at best. Aurora, at the end of the film, is run out of town for insisting upon including sex education in her curriculum.

Aesthetically, the film is shot using standard Hollywood conventions. Conversations are depicted in the typical shot-reverse-shot fashion and there is very little dead space or time surrounding actions. De Armiñán relies on the force of the narrative to get his thematic elements across. Parallel imagery, such as the two bed sequences, helps establish the love triangle theme and convey Aurora’s lack of sexual enthusiasm for her lovers. Additionally, Juan’s obsession with Marlon Brando is depicted in the most simple, clear way possible: he watches a clip from a Brando film in silent reverence, and the audience immediately understands that he idolizes the actor, especially when he later parrots quotes from the film. Juan’s bedroom walls are also plastered
with photos of the actor, a visual and simple representation of an internal feeling.

*El amor del Capitán Brando* plays with ideas of sexuality and repression. At the very least, the initial premise of a romantic relationship between a teacher and an adolescent student is problematic for the Franco era. Additionally, the notion of a Republican exile’s return to his old village, a return complicated by assumptions of adventure, creates a strangely American-centric dialogue about the tendency of Spanish people at the time to hero-worship figures of American cinema when they cannot find heroes of their own in Spain. The film was controversial and popular because of its racy theme and because of its all-star actors. Advertisements for the film helped prime audiences to read the subversive theme of disillusionment and sexual repression in the Franco era.

The main image used to advertise the film, on posters and press releases, was one of Ana Belén in bed with Juan (Jaime Gamboa). Belén is watching Juan sleep; her eyes are narrowed but strangely desirous. The image presents Aurora in a very sexualized way, her hair is mussed and most of the top buttons on her blouse are undone. It is immediately a controversial image. By simply having the two in bed together, the film is crossing lines of sexual normalcy, exacerbated by Aurora’s visual sexual frustration. Another poster shows the same image, but also has a still of Juan in his bedroom with a Marlon Brando poster behind his head, with a tagline “Soy Marlon Brando y

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199 See Figure 3.1
la quiero con todo el alma.200 This also conveys to the viewer the extent of the Hollywood obsession, and its role in Juan’s coming-of-age. Another press release prominently features a still from the sequence in which Aurora teaches her class sexual education (the chalkboard simply reads educación sexual) – a clear representation of the theme that will be explored.

The film received mixed reviews. Right-wing reviewers like Felíx Martialay for El Alcázar praised the performances of Belén and Fernán Gomez, but wrote that “incoherencia” and undue focus on the unnatural teacher-child relationship ruin the “acento político.”201 A more positive review by Tomás García de la Puerta calls it “Limpio enfoque del problema sexual” and writes that “junto a la maestra surge un poético y mágico triangulo que cabe calificar del amor imposible.”202 The film won second prize at the Berlin Film Festival in 1974, but it also performed well within Spain.203 Schwartz wrote that de Armiñán had a talent for using “sensitivity, charm and psychological acuity…in dealing with somewhat controversial themes.”204 The film aesthetically adheres to Hollywood conventions but also confronts the specifically Spanish problem of disillusionment, sexual confusion (and perversion) and coming-of-age during the repressive 1950’s, while also putting heroic expectations on returning Republicans. Higginbotham includes

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200 See Figure 3.2 – “I am Marlon Brando and I love her with all my heart.”
204 Schwartz, Ronald Spanish Film Directors (1950-1985) 21 Profiles, 7.
El amor del Capitán Brando in her tercera via genre, or “third way,” which she describes as a hybrid genre of film that is neither a fantasy nor completely a social criticism, but rather a combination of the two. She writes that the conclusion of the film is that Juan’s future, as a boy with passions, confused, fatherless and isolated in a tiny Castilian village, will not be easy.\(^{205}\)

De Armiñán continued his career with films in Mexico and other international co-productions, eventually returning to television. His legacy is that of a popular director that managed to make films that were both compelling and controversial. His exploration of themes like bisexuality and other non-normative sexualities, as well as the confusion of coming-of-age in Francoist Spain, helped him to cement a place as an important director of Spanish cinema. Many of these same themes can be seen throughout the transition era, as well as in the next generation.

PEDRO OLEA (1938 - )

Pedro Olea was born in Bilboa, a northern city in Basque, in 1938. According to Ronald Schwartz, Olea began his studies as an Economics major but frequently “played hooky from school to see the big Hollywood productions he still admires so much today.”\(^{206}\) He eventually stopped studying Economics and entered the National Film School in Madrid (where he made a short film based on a Ray Bradbury short story). After graduation, he wrote for Nuestro cine and also worked in Spanish television. In his first feature films, he worked with famous international actors such as Geraldine

\(^{205}\) Higginbotham, Virginia Spanish Film Under Franco, 70.

Chaplin, Viveca Lindfors and Patty Shepard. The film that first gave him commercial domestic success was called *No es bueno el hombre que esté solo* (It’s not good for man to be alone) in 1972, which was about a man who falls in love with a doll (a theme very similar to Berlanga’s *Life Size*).  

Olea’s made two important films for the discourse on the Spanish Civil War back-to-back: *Tormento* in 1974 and *¡Pim Pam Pum Fuego* in 1975. *Tormento* stars Ana Belén, and is the story of a pretty servant girl having an affair with a priest when an *indiano* (a Spaniard who went to America to make his fortune) returns to Spain and falls deeply in love with her. It is an adaptation of a famous nineteenth-century novel by Benito Peréz Galdos, perhaps helping to make it as commercially successful as it was. The film is full of anti-Franco sentiments and attacks on the three pillars of the state. First, Amparo (Belén) is depicted as having a sexual relationship with a priest, Pedro, a man contemplating suicide and resentful of his priesthood (slandering both the Church and the Francoist family). Don Augustín, the rich *indiano*, wants a wife, but his family disapproves of his desire to marry Amparo, the servant girl. News of Pedro and Amparo’s affair reaches Don Augustín shortly before he asks to marry her, and, as Higginbotham writes, “he had expected to live a respectable life in the town with his loving wife” but this “virginal image of her is destroyed…the dream is gone.”

Don Augustín decides to leave to Paris and Amparo tries, but fails, to commit

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208 Higginbotham, Virginia *Spanish Film Under Franco*, 107.
suicide. When Amparo is compelled to explain her suicide attempt to Don Augustín, she reveals that Pedro took sexual advantage of her when she was an orphan. Her tale is “a woman’s story of poverty, dependence and exploitation.” Olea then cuts to a scene at the train station, where Don Augustín has boarded. Without a camera reveal, he appears to be talking to someone in his compartment as he waves goodbye to his family on the station. Rosario, the malicious matriarch of the household, whispers “puta” (bitch) as the train leaves the station. It is implied that Don Augustín has chosen to take Amparo with him to Paris as his mistress, a triumph of love over class hate.

However, a more subversive message can be read beneath the lines of class struggle. The film shows harshly and explicitly the subjugation of women under Franco’s regime. The realities of bourgeois society are emphasized by the aesthetics of the film: it is shot in bright color, as a spectacular. It is a historical extravaganza, a genre popular in Spain that could “manipulate public sentiment,” according to Higginbotham, where “the promilitary, patriotic right-wing glorified the family, sacrifice and heroism in battle, the opposition also attempted to impress its values by analogy.” Schwartz writes that the use of color emphasizes the materialism of Spanish society as well as hiding the subversive content under the guise of spectacle. Additionally, by adapting a famous literary work, Olea had little difficulty with censors despite the film’s controversial subject matter. Tormento could easily be read as a costume-drama and a love story, if it were not for the

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209 Higginbotham, Virginia *Spanish Film Under Franco*, 107.
210 Higginbotham, Virginia *Spanish Film Under Franco*, 106.
stunning aesthetic as well as the advertisement of the film, which made it difficult for audiences to miss the true social commentary.

The primary image for the film, which accompanied press releases as well as the theatrical poster, is an image of Belén lying comatose on the ground, with Don Augustín (Francisco Rabal) standing over her. His expressionless face is directly contrasted with a painting on the wall behind him, a man kneeling with his palms outstretched, staring at the sky in grief or agony.\(^{211}\) This immediately primes the audience to see the plight of bourgeoisie women, the lack of sympathy even from the men that claim to love them. Another poster is simply a red background, a white cross over it, a silhouette of a heart, and a backdrop of Belén and Rabal locked in a lover’s embrace.\(^{212}\) This advertisement is more misleading – allowing the film to present itself as a simple love story.

The film was Olea’s largest commercial domestic success.\(^{213}\) Aesthetically, it mimics the Hollywood blockbuster epics that Olea so admired as a film student. Tormento follows action and allows the narrative to unfold effortlessly, without detractions from irregular editing or cinematography (outside of the garish use of color, already explained as part of the period-piece spectacle genre). Some reviewers slammed Olea for turning Galdós book into a drama. Pablo Ramos wrote: “es desde luego, una película ideal para quienes gustan de que les cuenten un argumento con

\(^{211}\) See Figure 3.3

\(^{212}\) See Figure 3.4

muchos acontecimientos y mucho dramatismo - un público ciertamente numeroso - y gracias a ello puede alcanzar algún éxito.”

His assertion is that the film is over-dramatized, and belittles Galdós work. However, it is notable that El Alcazár was a very Right wing, Nationalist publication and there is a possibility that Ramos wanted to discourage his readers from seeing Olea’s film, despite its obvious public appeal.

¡Pim, Pam, Pum...Fuego! (1975) is also a period piece, set in Madrid in the 1940’s. Julio, played by Fernando Fernán Gomez, is an ambiguously politicized but decidedly villainous blackmarketeer. He falls in love with a woman named Paquita, who is a dancer at a dance hall, a “place customers come to escape from the miseries of postwar life.” Julio coerces Paquita into becoming his mistress, though she has already fallen in love with a man named Luis. When Julio finds out about Luis, he decides to torment Paquita secretly rather than confronting her. He pays a man to kill Luis, and lets Paquita realize, slowly, it was his doing. He takes her on a drive out onto a lonely stretch of road and shoots her in the head. He then pushes her body out of the door, turns the car, and drives at a normal pace back down the highway.

As Higginbotham writes, “the deliberate pace of this scene allows the

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214 Ramos, Pablo. "'Tormento,' de Pedro Olea." El Alcazár (Madrid), November 6, 1974. “This is an ideal film for people that like films with many events and a lot of drama – a large public, certainly – and thanks to them, this film will achieve some success.”

215 Higginbotham, Virginia Spanish Film Under Franco, 108.
spectator to absorb the surprisingly brutal ending and realize the horrible irony of the title of the film, which can be translated as ‘Just Like That, Bang!’”216

The film is notable aesthetically for its use of color, like Tormento. The bright, extreme colors of the dance hall are contrasted with sequences showing bread lines and poverty in 1940’s Madrid, which are shot in noticeably muted colors. ¡Pim! was the first film of the Franco era to show bread lines for more than just a flicker in a documentary film. The poverty of the post-war era is depicted realistically and frequently. Additionally, the film uses American music in the dance hall. The chorus girls dress like cowgirls, in hats and boots, and sing songs about California and Hollywood – another contrast from the grim streets outside of the dance hall. Otherwise, the film is shot by Hollywood conventions. The thematic thread of the glamorization of American culture and society as an escape from the harsh reality of postwar Spain is visually emphasized in coloring and stylization, as in Tormento. Another continuous theme from Tormento is that of the exploitation of women. Paquita is only worth as much as her two men will pay for her – Julio is violent with her throughout the film, because she owes her job at the dance hall to him. This theme, as well as that of the glamorization of American music and culture, was predicted by the theatrical posters and on-set photography released with the film.

Advertising for the film consists of a brightly colored illustration of Paquita, in short sequined shorts and heels, standing on a yellow background.

216 Higginbotham, Virginia Spanish Film Under Franco, 108.
Looming in the background is a profile of Julio, wearing a bowler hat (the traditional costume of Hollywood gangsters) and a red, broken heart that splits an image of Paquita and Luis. In one image, Olea has primed his audience to see a tragic love story, a mustachioed villain and a beautiful, blonde damsel in distress. A set photograph released with the film shows Julio pulling Paquita’s head back violently, another image that leaves the viewer with a sense of distaste and expecting to witness violence against women. Another theatrical poster, also an illustration, is of Paquita in a traditional dance-hall outfit standing on the barrel of a gun. All of these images show the audience that they are going to see a film with sex, violence and tragedy set in a lively world of music and dance.

Higginbotham argues that the unusual use of color detracts from the social commentary of the film. She cites a scene where Paquita and Luis are on a train, where “other passengers are dressed in dull garb” but Luis and Paquita are “radiant, and do not seem to suffer from postwar hunger.” However, I attest that this contrast was intended to show the delusional aspect of Paquita’s career that allowed her to escape into American entertainment as others suffered around her, while also allowing the film to circumvent the suspicions that would surely have been raised by censors if Olea were to depict a starving, war-ravaged populace in the context of the 1940’s.

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217 See Figure 3.5
218 See Figure 3.6
219 See Figure 3.7
Reviews for ¡Pim Pam Pum, Fuego! were mixed. Many reviewers, like modern film critics, felt the color stylization detracted from the story. However, most also recognized the film’s importance for its brave depiction of postwar life. A reviewer for FILA wrote in 1975:

Pedro Olea ha recordado sin duda el recurso de ¡Bienvenido Mr Marshall! - para comercializar un teme social. A pesar de eso o quizá a causa de ello, la película se resiente en su desarrollo general. No sería justo, sin embargo, condenar totalmente este película. En bastantes momentos brilla el talento descriptivo de Olea y muchas cosas de las que quedar dichas más arriba deben ser cargadas a la cuenta de la omnipresente autocensura de los intelectuales españoles. Por lo demás, un primer intento de recuperar parte de nuestro historia próxima.²²¹

He also wrote that the film was a sob story, an over-dramatized account that gave a false account of the post-war years with its depictions of the general populace. However, the film did well domestically - but failed abroad. Schwartz wrote that music hall life in post-war Spain was too specific a topic to appeal to international audiences. But, perhaps these international audiences were simply not privy to knowledge about post-war Spain and the pervasive desire for escapism, and so simply saw, as Schwartz did, an old story about “an older man who murders (a young woman) out of jealousy of her idyllic love for a younger man.”²²²

Both Tormento and ¡Pim, Pam, Pum, Fuego! deal with similar themes: the objectification and exploitation of women in the Spanish class system, as

²²¹ R.C. "¡Pim Pam Pum...Fuego!" FILA 12, September 29, 1975. “Pedro Olea certainly recalled the appeal of ‘Welcome, Mr. Marshall!’ in his commercialization of social fears.. In spite of this, or perhaps because of it, the film suffers in overall development. It would be unfair, however, to totally condemn this film. In some moments Olea’s descriptive talent shines and many of the things said above should be charged to the pervasive self-censorship of Spanish intellectuals. It is, moreover, a first attempt to recover some of our recent past.”

well as the tendency to seek escape in a perceived glamorous foreign life. Don Augustín made his fortune in America, leaving him free to do and have whatever he liked back in Spain – and even the ability to continue that freedom in Paris. Paquita sang about California in sequined shorts, dreaming of a world where a chorus girl could have respect from the men who loved with her. These themes were specifically interesting to Spanish audiences, and the use of Hollywood aesthetic conventions, especially those of the historical epic, only helped to tell their stories in a fast-paced, compelling way that subverted censorship and simultaneously offered social commentary on the state of post-war Spain.

RICARDO FRANCO (1949 – 1998)

Ricardo Franco was born and died in Madrid, Spain. The nephew of Spanish film director Jesús Franco, he got his start in cinema working for his uncle. He started making films in 1970, and Pascual Duarte was the most successful film he ever made, though his film La Buena Estrella was critically acclaimed and won a Goya award in 1997. Most of his other later films were deeply personal, and had little commercial success.223 He died at the age of 48 from a heart attack.

Pascual Duarte (1977) is frequently recognized as one of the most important films of the post-Franco era, though Ricardo Franco himself is little remembered or discussed in film circles. It was an adaptation of a novel called

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223 Ricardo Franco also directed the “sequel” to El desencanto, Despues de tantos años in 1994. The film did well domestically, but not internationally, as El desencanto had also done. Kinder, Refiguring Spain: Cinema/Media/Representation p. 91
La Familia de Pascual Duarte, written in 1942 by Nobel Prize winner Camilo José Cela. Loosely summarized, the book (and film), are about an “inarticulate peasant in pre-Civil War Spain, who kills his dog, his mare, his sister’s pimp, his mother, and the local patrician landowner, and then is executed by garroting.” The film is focused on violence in the repressive culture of impoverished Spaniards, and the larger implications that violence had on society during the war and the years that followed. Pascual Duarte is famous in Spanish cinema for its incredibly excessive, realistic and unflinching violence, sadism and matricide, as well as its thinly veiled social commentary.

Pascual Duarte was also famous because it was produced by the veteran of controversial cinema, Elías Querejeta, and shot by Luis Cuadrado – who went blind during the filming. Pascual Duarte has been called a very liberal adaptation of Cela’s novel: the film veers away from the first-person narrative of the book as well as making the violence of the story more important than in the novel. Cela himself had nothing to do with the screenplay, or the film itself. Franco said in an interview, when asked about Cela’s role: “We sent him the screenplay and he didn’t say anything. When we finished the movie, we showed it to him in his house and it seemed good to him.” Cela’s lack of involvement meant that the adaptation of his famous

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work was solely in the hands of a 26-year-old director and Querejeta, and their adaptation roused a great deal of ire in Spain.

The setting of *Pascual Duarte* looks visually similar at times to an American Western. In a harsh, Castilian countryside, a small, isolated village lives in impoverished circumstances while a strong military presence invades the scenery with tanks and guns, symbols of technology and wealth that have not reached the people, but rather are used to subjugate them. The film is told in flashback structure, beginning with Pascual’s arrest and transitioning through his life of violence and crime. Higginbotham describes the situation of Pascual’s life: “in addition to abysmal poverty, monstrous human ignorance keeps the peasants prisoners of their hostile, drought-stricken province. Pascual’s father can barely read the newspaper headlines. He frequently gets drunk.” Additionally, the representation of sex, as well as that of love, is completely linked to violence. Pascual abuses and rapes Lola, a village girl, and she marries him as a result. When she dies, he stabs a mule to death. The only person Pascual shows affection for is his older sister, Rosario. When he discovers that Rosario wants to leave the village with her pimp, Eusebio, he shoots Eusebio at point-blank range without a word or expression. Pascual goes to jail for murder, but is released a few years later. One night, sitting at the kitchen table, he wordlessly shoots his mother across the table. In the final sequence of the film, he finally is executed, by garroting, for this most heinous crime of matricide.

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227 Higginbotham, Virginia *Spanish Film Under Franco*, 110.
Because Pascual performs all of these murders without a hint of remorse, the audience could be moved to the conclusion that he is a sociopath, or otherwise mentally unstable. The lack of expression during violent, passionless killing, is also shown aesthetically. Pascual’s gaze when he kills is always shown close-up. When he shoots his dog, he waits for her to look directly at him before he pulls the trigger. However, Ricardo Franco, in words as well as with visual tactics, rejects this notion. Ricardo Franco said in an interview, “violence has been converted into the unique language viable for a class who have been deprived of any identity. Pascual only takes charge of his own life when he exercises that violence; he has no other medium for expressing his frustration.” Visually, Franco blames the poverty of the peasants’ situation, as well as their lack of education, for the violence in Pascual’s life. Higginbotham writes, “Mute and isolated, with the unexplained presence of force as their only model of behavior, these Spanish peasants can only express their frustrations by violent rather than productive means.”

This isolation, as well as the oppressive presence of military force, is expressed aesthetically throughout the film in long shots of the deserted, dilapidated village with huge tanks rolling through the streets, as peasants walk on foot or ride mules.

The institution of the Church is also shown to be an oppressive force that keeps the peasants in an endless cycle of violence. During a flashback to

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228 Kinder, Marsha Blood Cinema: The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain, 188.
229 Higginbotham, Virginia Spanish Film Under Franco, 111.
Pascual’s childhood, a village priest asks him recite the story of Abraham and Isaac in school. Kinder argues that Pascual reenacts these violent stories in his murders and execution. When he murders his mother, he is playing Abraham and when he goes to the garrot to die, he is Isaac.\textsuperscript{230} The film also contains the theme of American escapism. Pascual and Rosario go to the cinema to see a Buster Keaton film, \textit{Seven Chances}. Rosario and Pascual run through the streets, laughing, after they see the film – “displacement both for the incestuous desire of the siblings, and for the greater violence to come.”\textsuperscript{231} This moment, after they have seen an American film, is the happiest one in \textit{Pascual Duarte}.

Higginbotham writes that the final scene of the film, Pascual’s death by garroting (a medieval method where an iron collar is slowly tightened around the prisoner’s neck), is a metaphor for the “slowly asphyxiating, repressive culture” of Spain.\textsuperscript{232} The shot is striking in its intensity. Pascual has not shown a hint of emotion when presented with violence until this sequence, where he shrieks in excruciating terror while he is being dragged to the garroting chair. The film ends with a freeze frame, a profile shot, and Franco has said, “this shot, which I have seen as many as seventy times, still gives me the shivers.”\textsuperscript{233}

\textsuperscript{232} Higginbotham, Virginia \textit{Spanish Film Under Franco}, 111.
Violence, as John Hopewell has written, has become a major component of popular Spanish cinema. Hopewell writes,

Actions in many Spanish films seem undermotivated. The apparent cause of violence in particular seems hardly to justify the result...Behind the Civil War killings were reservoirs of sullen rancor unlocked by any petty incident which could justify public retribution. Motivation in Spanish films seems equally petty at times, the driving force of conduct lying outside the film in Spanish history itself. Hence the extreme importance of background detail and secondary experience as just one example of a collective condition within the fiction of the film; they inscribe that condition within a broader and enlightening historical framework.

In this statement, Hopewell is drawing a parallel between senseless violence in film, such as in Pascual Duarte, and the senseless violence of the Spanish Civil War.

The film is more visually interesting than many of the other popular cinema films, but its stylized look can also be attributed to the period piece genre, a film set in the past. The stylization and violence have also caused Pascual Duarte to be seen as a “B movie” of Spanish cinema, another aspect of its legacy. However, in large part the film follows aesthetics of Hollywood Cinema. The flashback structure, well known in Hollywood, allows for linear storytelling while disallowing any chance of a happy ending. The film used the image of Pascual’s death as the theatrical poster. Because it was an adaptation of a literary work, there was no need to keep the end of the film a surprise. Ricardo Franco and Querejeta chose instead to market it as a film about garroting, death and violence in the impoverished Castilian pre-war countryside.

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*Pascual Duarte* was a difficult film for a wide audience. Censors delayed it for a year. It was filmed in 1975 but was not released until 1976, after Francisco Franco’s death. Advertisements for the film made clear the explicitly violent nature of the film: the main image for the film is one of Pascual with a garrot collar around his neck. The topic of garrotting was already controversial because Nationalists had used garrotting to kill prisoners during the war, and they had been criticized in Spain and internationally for their use of the inhumane and antiquated execution method. Another on-set photograph released with press booklets showed the freeze frame of the final image, a striking silhouette of Pascual’s last moment. Audiences likely knew merely from this image that they had come to see a violent film that would be critical of the harsh Nationalist methods during the *guerra civil*.

Reviews of the film were mixed. Nando Lara, writing for *Triunfo* called it “una infinita frustración.” Like many other reviewers, he panned the film for its excessive violence. He wrote about Franco’s final, stirring image: “cuando una violencia que explica a sí misma, que con fria brutalidad, por la misma brutalidad, se le puesto como norma de la situacion social que le hacer perdido siempre realizar que realmente deseaba.” Other reviewers echoed this point, but found some hope. Angél Fernandez Santos wrote, “En

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235 See Figure 3.8
236 See Figure 3.9
238 Lara, Nando. "Pascual Duarte: Una infinita frustración." *Triunfo* (Madrid), May 15, 1976. When the violence explains itself with cold brutality, and this same brutality is put as the norm of the social situation - Do you realize you have lost what you really wanted?
Pascual Duarte, hay sólo sangre y ninguna necesidad de evidencia de ella. Hay, no obstante, hermosos momentos.”

Hernández Les wrote that the film “caused disruptions in the theatre at its premiere in Madrid” and the scene where Pascual kills his horse “provoked the irascibility of certain aspects of the audience.” The film is meant to create strong reactions. It explicitly deals with controversial themes: eroticized violence, incest and poverty-stricken peasants under oppressive militarization. In Francisco Franco’s idealized Spain, horrible things like these do not exist. Sex is for monogamous married couples, violence is a necessary evil and the power to exercise it rests solely in the hands of the noble military. For Ricardo Franco and Elías Querejeta to put such distasteful content on film scandalized the nation, and thus made a strong impact in the box office as well as on the cultural identity of the post-war Spanish people.

JOSE LUIS BORAU (1929-2012)

Jose Luís Borau, one of the older directors of popular cinema and one of few to have passed away at the writing of this thesis, was born in Zarazoga, Spain in 1929. He was the only child of parents who were almost old enough to be his grandparents. They were very protective – during the years of the Spanish Civil War, they homeschooled him rather than let him go to school under Falangist influences.

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239 Santos, Angél F. "'Pascual Duarte'." Cine Español, May 22, 1976. In Pascual Duarte, there is only blood with no necessity. However, there are beautiful moments.

His career began in academia: he received a law degree from the University of Zarazoga and worked as a film critic until 1956, when he enrolled in the National Film School.\(^\text{241}\) When Marsha Kinder interviewed him in Los Angeles in 1985, he said that “Ever since I was a child, I always loved movies – films by Fritz Lang, Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford,” and this was a love he carried into his career.\(^\text{242}\) A defining characteristic of Borau’s life, and cinema, was his obsession with American film. He studied Hollywood at the National Film School and his first feature film starred an American lead actor, a trend he continued in many of his later films.\(^\text{243}\) A quotation from Buñuel’s autobiography, *My Last Sigh*, appears as the epigraph to Borau’s essay “Without Weapons.” The quotation aptly summarizes some of his feelings toward the United States: “Steinbeck would be nothing without American weapons. I think the same is true of Dos Passos and Hemingway. If they had been born in Paraguay or Turkey, who would read them now? A country’s power determines who the great writers are. As a novelist Galdós is often on a par with Dostoevski, but who has heard of him outside of Spain?”\(^\text{244}\) Borau understood the power and influence of American cinema, which is why he moved to Los Angeles in 1983 to make the film *Rio Abajo*, hoping to tap into the international market by using American actors and a


traditionally Western setting. Borau wanted Hollywood to return to the classical Hollywood of the 1940’s and 50’s, rather than the “childishness of Lucas’s and Spielberg’s movies.” As Victor Ericé wrote about Borau’s experience working in the United States: “Borau’s American adventure implies, on the one hand, the accomplishment of a personal desire (to work in the U.S.)...and on the other hand, the verification of the abysmal difference that exists between the Hollywood of yesterday and that of today, between the cinema of the past and of the present.”

José Luis Borau was an enigmatic figure in Spanish cinema. He did hundreds of press interviews, even starred in some of his films, but managed to present himself as an eccentric, secretive intellectual. The most famous Spanish director of the transition era other than Saura, Borau in many ways represented Spanish cinema abroad. Ronald Schwartz writes that Borau was “the most cosmopolitan and international of all the Spanish directors.” His philosophy on filmmaking differed greatly from his auteurist contemporaries, one more in line with some of Buñuel’s writings. Borau said in a 1982 lecture:

You go to see a film and suppose the camera doesn’t exist. As soon as you see the camera move, it begins to develop its own personality and becomes somebody else. And I don’t need anybody else. In order to express myself, I need only the audience and me...If you say, 'how marvelous the landscape and

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248 See Figure 3.10
photography," then you are not thinking about the story. I want the audience to be watching the human beings in action, not the photography or the moving camera.  

In another interview, he said: “My films always look very ordinary but they are very strange from the inside. That way, the audience doesn’t expect the strangeness. When you make a film that is blatantly symbolic or surrealistic, then the spectator comes prepared for peculiarity. I think it’s stronger to surprise them.”  

Luis Buñuel also rejected the idea of the “pretty shot,” something that influenced his filmmaking tendency toward neorealism and surrealism – a somewhat similar concept to Borau’s rejection of art for art’s sake and the Hollywood tradition of emphasizing narrative over cinematography. According to Marvin D’Lugo, Borau’s emphasis on Hollywood conventions hurt his credit as an auteur: “Borau was seen by most audiences and critics merely as a commercial director following the patterns of the status quo, nonpolitical cinema.”  

However, I would make the argument that, at least with Furtivos, Borau managed to get a political point across.

Borau made Furtivos in 1975 but it was not released in Spain until Franco had died in 1976, and it was still a battle to release it without cuts. It was the first film to be released in Spain without an official license. Censors had problems with the film’s explicit nudity, which was cut from original release in Spain, but the eroticism between the mother and son, as well as

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252 D’Lugo, Marvin Guide to the Cinema of Spain, 132.
253 Schwartz, Ronald Great Spanish Films Since 1950, 44.
brutal hunting scenes, were allowed to remain in the film.\textsuperscript{254} \textit{Furtivos} is a cruel, gratuitously violent and perversely sexual film. It is, on the surface, an Oedipal story – one with a mother that seduces and tortures her son. As Núria Triana-Toribio writes, “it is ostensibly about an isolated and dysfunctional family and contains no overt political material.”\textsuperscript{255} Based on a true story, the film centers on a soft-spoken young man, Angel, who lives in the idyllic forest of Segovia with his mother, Martína. Angel is a poacher, the English translation of the title, hiding out in the forest, illegally hunting animals, and hoodwinking the governor (played by Borau) in the process.

On a trip to the village, Angel meets a beautiful girl named Milagros (Miracles) and brings her home. Milagros has a boyfriend – a famous outlaw named El Cuqui, and Angel knows that Milagros is using him to escape her shady past but he marries her in spite of it, much to Martina’s dismay. Milagros moves into Angel’s bed, taking Martina’s place at his side and Martina schemes to get rid of her. When El Cuqui comes to the forest looking for Milagros the governor pursues her, but Angel, the competent hunter, is the one to catch him. Milagros promises to stay with Angel if he promises to not report El Cuqui, so Angel lets him escape. However, when Angel returns to his home he finds that Milagros is not there. Martina tells him that Milagros ran away, but Angel remains obsessed with her disappearance. Around this time, the governor finds the pelts in Martina and Angel’s house and, rather than facing public embarrassment for not noticing the illegal activity taking

\textsuperscript{254} Schwartz, Ronald \textit{Great Spanish Films Since 1950}, 45.  
\textsuperscript{255} Triana-Toribio, Nuría \textit{Spanish National Cinema}, 97.
place under his nose, he gives Angel a job in the forest guard. In a chance meeting at the end of the film, Angel encounters El Cuqui who, much to Angel’s surprise, demands to know where Milagros is. Angel realizes that Martina has killed his wife out of jealousy and, in an eerie and violent final scene, takes a walk with his mother after Mass to a field of snow - where he calmly shoots her in the back of the head.

Higginbotham aptly explains the importance of matricide in this film. She writes, “The figure of the mother has never been very positive in Spanish theatre…mothers are frequently depicted as villains…Furtivos seems to equate the mother figure with Franco’s Spain, a motherland now corrupt and cruel. On a metaphorical level…the son, nurtured in corruption, punish[es] the parent who has sinned against him with almost tribal violence.” Carlos Saura repeats this same theme in La prima Angélica, and it also appears in Pascual Duarte. The role of the mother, and the theme of matricide, pervades Spanish film and culture of the 1970’s and continues into the Cercas generation. If Franco is the disappointing father, Spain is the mother that stood by and let it happen. The theme of incest is exemplified visually in a famous scene from Spanish cinema: when Angel pulls Martina out of his bed. It’s a violent sequence, the camera focuses on the physicality of the sequence and keeps Martina’s shrieks and facial contortions at the center of the action. After this violent upheaval, Milagros and Angel proceed to have sex in the same bed.

256 Higginbotham, Virginia Spanish Film Under Franco, 115.
The film is shot and edited in a very Hollywood way, Borau’s “purest application of the Hollywood classical aesthetic.” The focus is on linear storytelling and continuity editing. The film’s aesthetics mirror thematic elements of the film as well, which is also an important element of Hollywood filmmaking. Set in a forest, the characters appear and act like characters from a storybook. Milagros and Angel are both names with strong mythical connotations, and the shadowy trees provide a perfect setting for the animal sacrifices that will later become human. The governor, a hapless parody of Franco played by Borau, blunders his way through the film with round glasses and a cape – Franco was known to be a huntsman. The film is, in many ways, a fairy tale. A hunter, a damsel, a local king and a witch live beyond the laws of society in a shack in the forest. The fairy tale structure both allows the audience to see it as allegorical as well as obscuring its subversive content.

Like Pascual Duarte, Furtivos also associates sex with violence, representing sexual acts as crude and animalistic. A poster distributed to the San Sebastian Film Festival shows Milagros and Angel, half-nude, in an embrace on the ground of the forest while a hog munches on leaves in the foreground. Furtivos is filled with moments of vicious slaughter of animals, including a famous sequence where Martina bludgeons a she-wolf to death with an axe, clearly displacement for her young rival, Milagros. The scene where Angel and Milagros have sex in the forest is strangely predatory –

\[258\] See Figure 3.11
Angel stalks Milagros through the woods as she tends to pigs before they consummate in the leaves. When Milagros and Angel meet, she flirts with him by sitting on a bench across from him and opening her legs. Later, he offers her a bite of his sausage. The film poster used to advertise *Furtivos* introduced this theme of animalistic, crude sexuality to its audience before anyone, especially in Spain, had the chance to see the film.

The main poster for the film, and a very famous image in Spanish cinema, is difficult to see as anything other than a representation of an Oedipal narrative in a fairy tale setting. This colorful illustration depicts Angel in the center, a small profile of Milagros to the side and a scene of the house in the woods with the governor and his men descending upon it at the bottom of the frame. The most striking aspect, however, is a huge representation of Martina, faceless, with clawed hands gripping Angel’s shoulders. She looks like a succubus – her ribs and sagging breasts are prominent beneath a thin nightgown. This poster primes the audience to notice the allegory of the witch, the mother who clings too tightly to her child, destroying him in the process. Angel, meekly holding his gun, should be protecting her, but rather she is sucking the life from him – the gun in his hands an active object that predicts retribution. A film still released with the film shows Angel holding a newspaper, with a prominent headline reading: “*Debe ser un anticipo.*”

This headline has no purpose in the film, which raises a query as to why this still was released to the public before the film. I assert that the sentiment

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259 See Figure 3.12
260 See Figure 3.13 – *There should be an advance.*
highlights Angel’s inaction in the face of his oppressor, and foreshadows his turn from passivity in the climax.

_Furtivos_ was the top-grossing Spanish film of 1976 and netted over three million dollars. The film was a critical as well as commercial success, winning Best Picture at San Sebastián in 1975.261 Francisco Casado, a reviewer for _El Correo de Andalucía_ gushed in 1975: “Furtivos es una película mas comercial, como antes también lo demostrara Víctor Erice con _El espíritu de la colmena_. Pero Furtivos nos parece más película, un tipo de cine más maduro que el del principiante Erice.”262 _Furtivos_ performed well internationally as well. A writer for _Año_ wrote a blurb about its premiere in New York: “La crítica, en general, destaca los valores del filme, principalmente el clima de opresión y su fuerza dramática, pero sobre todo realza el hecho de que el público de Nueva York haya tomado contacto con un director de singular talento.”263 The film is considered a masterpiece of Spanish cinema, both domestically and abroad.

Borau wrote, produced, directed and starred in _Furtivos_, and hired Luis Cuadrado, another famous Querejeta-collaborator, to film it. Borau has given dozens of interviews about the film and is often explicit about the

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261 Schwartz, Ronald *Great Spanish Films Since 1950*, 46.
262 Casado, Francisco. "'Furtivos'." _El correo de Andalucía_ (Sevilla), October 18, 1975. "'Furtivos' is a commercial film, like Victor Erice also achieved with 'Espíritu de la colmena.' But we think that 'Furtivos' is a more mature film than by the novice, Erice.
263 "'Furtivos' triunfa en Nueva York." _Año_ (Madrid), April 19, 1975. “Criticism, in general, emphasizes the value of the film, mainly the climate of oppression and dramatic force, but especially highlights the fact that New York audiences have made contact with a director of singular talent.”
thematic qualities. He has said that the film would not have been the same if the main character had not been a civil governor, but also that the interpretation is more complex than a Franco parody. He also said that he imagined the role of Martina as a female Saturn, a *Saturna*, based off of a Goya painting of Saturn devouring his own son – strong evidence for the theme of mother Spain. Reviewers picked up on these themes immediately. Francisco Casado also wrote in his review of the film: “Para el gran público puede ser simplemente la historia de amor entre un ingenuo alimañero y una chica de oscuro pasado con suegra de por medio. Para otros la historia es algo más, es el trasfondo, es el significado de ese bosque donde ocultamos lo que no podemos exhibir a la luz pública y donde se cuecen nuestros pecados.”

Borau taught filmmaking at the National Film School for many years – he was a mentor to Manuel Gútierrez-Aragon, director of *Camada negra* and co-writer of *Furtivos*, as well as Pilar Miro. He also produced de

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265 Casado, Francisco. "'Furtivos'." *El correo de Andalucia* (Sevilla), October 18, 1975. *For the general public, [the film] could simply be the history of a romance between a naïve trapper and a woman with a dark past. For others, the story is something else, the background, lies in the significance of the forest where we hide what we cannot display in the open and where our sins are cooked.*
266 *Camada negra* was another of the most important Spanish films of the post-war era. It tells the story of a group of Anti-Communist hoodlums who enlist a young boy to join them, carrying out violent deeds but never gaining power. Higginbotham writes, “The vows of vengeance and secrecy reflect the repression of the immediate post-Civil War years in which Franco systematically and silently killed thousands of political prisoners. The group’s targets are centers of culture, recalling the strong anti-intellectual attitudes and slogans of Spanish fascists (126).” The film is also a coming-of-age story, and in a famous sequence of eroticized violence, the young protagonist kills his
Armiñán’s Mi querida señorita and is well known for his teaching abilities as well as his willingness to pass on his knowledge.⁶⁷ He was the president of the Spanish Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences between 1994 and 1998, and served on several international film festival juries as well as the Real Academia Española. Borau’s influence went beyond his filmmaking – other filmmakers were literally taught by him, and the respect he engendered in the international community caused even more Spanish filmmakers to take lessons from his aesthetics and themes. He applied Hollywood conventions to Spanish specificities with more success than any other director of the time, succeeded later by Pedro Almodóvar. Borau had a long and illustrious career, but is most remembered for Furtivos and its influences on Spanish cinema. However, Furtivos is also rightly remembered for its contribution to the ongoing narrative of national memory of the guerra civil and its disastrous effects on the generations that followed.

LEGACY/CONCLUSION

Many films from the transition era in Spain were important for bringing issues about the Spanish Civil War into a national discourse, but Tormento, ¡Pim, Pam, Pum, Fuego!, Furtivos, Pascual Duarte, and El amor lover, during sex, by smashing her head with a rock and yelling “España.” Themes of sexualized violence and deterioration of the family are brought forth by the linear storytelling, and the film was incredibly controversial on its release for its stark portrayal of the confusion and trauma of the post-war years. Synopsis from Marsha Kinder’s Blood Cinema: Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain and Virginia Higginbotham’s Spanish Film Under Franco.

*del Capitán Brando* were especially seminal for their brave and innovative presentations of controversial themes. These films had incredible domestic appeal – fundamentally, they are films about sex, violence, hidden desires and the horrors of war. During the transition in Spain, these issues were inherently controversial and these films drew large crowds (but not always critical acclaim) for doing so. Where documentary filmmakers appealed to intellectual desires to see issues of post-war society displayed onscreen, the films of Borau and Olea appealed to basic human impulses by graphically depicting as much gratuitous sex and violence as possible. As a result, many critics and censors tended to get caught up in panning the directors for being gratuitous and unnecessary, seeing the films as pulp, or “B movies” instead of seeing the overarching social commentary.

Films like *Furtivos* and *Tormento* also used elements of genre, including masquerading as “B” films, to hide subversion. *Tormento* appears to be a historical love story, and *Furtivos* masquerades as magical realism, but both are more accurately depictions of the deterioration of the pillars of Francoism. Some of the directors, specifically Borau and de Armiñán, were more prominent internationally than others, but all of them achieved domestic success with films that defied censorship laws while offering sharp social criticisms of the Francoist regime. These directors all also displayed a strong interest in American culture and themes – something else that transverses each of the films.
Additionally, the use of conventions of Classic Hollywood Cinema also helped to endear these films to popular audiences. Linear storytelling, appropriate colorization and continuity editing helped to solidify these films’ popular appeal beyond their already sordidly fascinating themes and subjects. A major hallmark of the transition era culturally, even outside of cinema, was the newfound freedom of expression. These films, with frank discussions of sex and violence, quickly found an interested audience. All these films also use Hollywood, or ideas of American freedom, in the worlds of the films themselves. They all show a sense of idealism often associated with America, the culture that had been kept from them for so long that was now beginning to seep into their cinemas and music halls, providing an escape but also a depressing contrast. Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi write in their book, “The culture of evasion was double-edged. If foreign films allowed Spaniards to escape into fantasy, at the same time they could provide a painful contrast to the poverty of the 40’s and 50’s. ‘The cinema gave us a measure of our misery.’”

These films also may have been popular because, unlike the art-house films of Saura and Ericé, they focus on the working class and rural poor instead of the bourgeoisie. These films feature heroes from small villages, love stories between common folks and demonize authority figures such as priests, governors and members of the military. As a result, popular audiences

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268 Carr, Raymond, and Juan Pablo Fusi Aizpurua. *Spain: Dictatorship to Democracy*. 120.
found kindred spirits to empathize with in these films, people that looked, talked and lived like they did.

These films also clearly made an impact on the next generation of filmmakers. Their influences can be seen in thematic threads, certainly, but also in aesthetics and subversive use of genre conventions. In the epilogue I will discuss specific ways in which the films of the popular era affected directors and films of the Cercas generation. John Hopewell writes about the continuation of this trend, saying: “It is noteworthy that Spain’s two most successful young filmmakers – Pedro Almodóvar and Fernando Trueba – both mix Hollywood modes with Spanish genres or references.”

These directors of biting but blockbuster Spanish films were successful in beginning of the discourse about national trauma and memory of the Spanish Civil War. They portrayed Spanish issues with a Spanish specificity, but used conventions of popular Hollywood cinema in order to make their films domestic successes. None of these films, with the exception of *Furtivos* (which was an incontrovertible masterpiece) performed well in international markets. They were all too violent, too perverse and far too Spanish. Perhaps this mixture of Spanishness with Hollywood caused some misinterpretations by audiences. Kinder wrote (about Borau), “This strangeness was frequently misread, for it could easily be dismissed as merely

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a failure to understand or master the genre or as merely a result of the
transcultural adaptation to the Spanish context.**270

Perhaps these films could also not fully address the trauma of the post-
war era because their messages were often so hidden in the pulp. The same
distasteful content that made them popular and palatable, like sex and
violence, impacted their audiences more than the subversive messages. Only
Borau, with his intelligent use of setting and allegory, managed to create a
film that had both sharp societal criticism and broad appeal, but he was alone
in this success. Critics definitely took issue with this hyper-violent cinema and
audiences may have found themselves with many of the same complaints.

Nuria Triana-Toribio mentions the lingering, internalized morality of
Spain in *New Spanish Cinema*. She writes that there is a “internalized
censorship which derives from the morality of the country, the National-
Catholic creed absorbed through years of hegemony of the church, the
persistence of the traditional values of a religion fit for rural society.”**271
Spaniards were still very conservative in the 1970’s, and many saw the sudden
outpouring of violence and sexuality as offensive.

As Nando Lara wrote in his review of *Pascual Duarte*, these directors
used violence as a justification for more violence and harmed their impact in
the process.**272 At some point, the anger, pain and disillusionment that the

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271 Triana-Toribio, Nuria *New Spanish Cinema*, 104.
inundated the works of the popular directors could not possibly create a
constructive dialogue for a younger audience, let alone the older generation. It
is telling that these same unpleasant themes from popular films of the
transition era continue to resurface in the next generation of filmmakers.
While these films helped to bring the discussion of Spanish Civil War trauma
out of art-house and documentary circles and into popular culture, they were
still insufficiently intellectually compelling, and far too offensive, to provide
complete closure to the narrative of wounded Spanish identity.
“No Spaniard who’d reached the age of reason by 23 February 1981 has forgotten his or her whereabouts that evening, and many people blessed with good memories remember in detail – what time it was, where they were, with whom – having watched Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Tejero and his Civil Guards enter the Cortes live on television, to the point that they’d be willing to swear by what they hold most sacred that it is a real memory. It is not: although the coup was broadcast live on radio, the television images were shown only after the liberation of the parliamentary hostages, shortly after 12:30 on the 24th, and were seen live only by a handful of Televisión Española journalists and technicians, whose cameras were filming the interrupted parliamentary session and who circulated those images through the in-house network in the hope they’d be edited and broadcast on the evening news summaries and the nightly newscast. That’s what happened, but we all resist having our memories removed, for they’re our handle on our identity, and some put what they remember before what happened, so they carry on remembering that they watched the coup d’etat live.”

In the prologue to the 2009 novel *Anatomy of a Moment*, Javier Cercas describes the cultural phenomenon that surrounded the attempted military coup by General Antonio Tejero in 1981. The importance of this book, and this moment, is two-fold. First, this moment in Spain’s history transfixed the people. It was a surreal moment in which, for the second time in the living memory of many Spaniards, a military coup threatened to overthrow the democratically elected Parliament. The threat was, for most, perfectly terrifying. Six short years after Franco’s death, the democracy in Spain was still very new and untested. When Tejero rose in front of the Parliament, brandishing a pistol and his guards surrounded the members of the house, he instigated a sudden resurfacing of long-buried but never-resolved trauma. The events of February 23rd and the days that followed forced the Spanish people to put the overwhelmingly powerful military, the idea of a totalitarian regime, 

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behind them once and for all. Cercas writes, “23 February not only brought an end to the transition and to Franco’s post-war regime: 23 February brought an end to the war.”

Secondly, Cercas poetically describes the way in which the image of this moment held power over the psyche of the Spanish people. Cercas describes this moment as a “radiant, hypnotic image, real and unreal at the same time, meticulously stuffed with meaning: the Civil Guards shooting over the chamber, General Gutiérrez Mellado standing beside him (Suárez), the depopulated Parliament, the stenographers and ushers lying on the floor, the parliamentarians lying on the floor and Suárez leaning back against the blue leather of his prime ministerial bench while the bullets whizz around him, solitary, statuesque and spectral in a desert of empty benches.” Cercas writes that every man, woman and child remembers this moment and believes they saw it broadcasted live, though it was never shown live on any stations. The images from this event are infamous, burned into the minds of everyone who was there, who saw it. This striking visual has increased the meaning and memory of this event to the Spanish people; the event has become inseparable from the image.

Novels provide a different lens for analysis of pop culture than films do, but I do not wish to analyze Anatomy of a Moment for literary value. Rather, I use the book as an ideological framework for two important

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274 Cercas, Javier Anatomy of a Moment, 374.
275 Cercas, Javier Anatomy of a Moment, 375.
276 See Figure 4.1
concepts. Cercas’ book amply exemplifies the two key points I have made throughout this thesis: One, the horrors of the Spanish Civil War were still unresolved at the time of *El Terejazo* in 1981 and two, moving images are emphatically important for the installation of national consciousness about a traumatic shared historical event. With these ideas in mind, I want to very briefly discuss two filmmakers from Cercas’ generation that explore in their works many of the same themes that the films from the 1950’s and the 1970’s did. Cercas’ thesis that the generation of the Transition had not fully transited from the legacy of totalitarianism can be seen in works of filmmakers that came later. I have chosen two films that in some ways parallel the genres that make up the three main chapters of this thesis: *El laberinto del fauno* by Guillermo del Toro and *Volver* by Pedro Almodóvar.

**PERSISTENCE IN FILMS OF THE POST-2000’S**

*El laberinto del fauno* (2006) was a Mexican-Spanish co-production, but it is by far the most famous cinematic iteration of the Spanish Civil War in popular culture today. Guillermo del Toro, a Mexican, explicitly set the film in the early Francoist period of 1944. It is a fantasy genre film that blends elements of reality with magical fantasy in an allegorical narrative about the trauma of the Spanish Civil War. A young girl, Ofelia, escapes her cruel, Falangist stepfather by engaging in a fantasy about an underground labyrinth where she imagines herself as the heroine of this secret realm.

The interpretation of this film is often thought of as an anti-Catholic work. Del Toro himself said in an interview that he believed the Pale Man (a
child-eating monster that Ofelia escapes in one sequence) to be representative of the Church. He said,

The Pale Man represents the Church for me, y’know? He represents fascism and the Church eating the children when they have a perversely abundant banquet in front of them. There is almost a hunger to eat innocence. A hunger to eat purity. I didn’t want to avoid it, but I did not seek Catholic imagery. Nevertheless, I understand that redemption by blood and the rebirth by sacrifice is a Catholic conceit.277

Del Toro said in the same interview that he was appalled by the Church’s participation in Franco’s fascist regime and their contribution to Ofelia’s childhood trauma. Ofelia is a child, yet she has witnessed horrors, some even committed by her own adoptive father. A young female protagonist appears in Cría cuervos as well as Espiritú de la colmena, and reviewers have drawn parallels with El laberinto del fauno and both of these films. In both Espiritú and Laberinto, the young girl’s memories, fears and hopes are wrapped up in mythic folklore. In Cría cuervos, Ana’s inability to separate reality from fantasy is wrapped up in the figure of her mother and her ghostly appearance even after death. However, in all three, a young girl subjugated and marginalized by Spanish societal structure, and obsessed with death, escapes into a fantasy in order to elude the harsh and violent patriarchal world around her.

Aesthetically, El laberinto del fauno draws heavily from Furtivos. Set in the forest with metaphoric fairy-tale creatures and dark magic, there are multiple parallels to be drawn with the generic use of fantasy to disguise

messages that Borau and others used during the 1970’s. The film is also shot with pure Hollywood conventions: del Toro, after all is also the director of Hollywood blockbusters such as *Hellboy* and *Pacific Rim*. The film was a smash hit, nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the 2006 Academy Awards winner of Best Screenplay at the Goya awards in Spain. It grossed over 12 million dollars in Spain, and 80 million worldwide.\textsuperscript{278} It was, and is, the best-known representation of the Spanish Civil War in international cinema in recent years.

Pedro Almodóvar is the most important, influential and internationally successful film director that Spain has ever produced. He has written and directed many critically acclaimed and commercially successful Spanish-language films since he began his career in the 1980’s. He was born in 1949 in a rural town near La Mancha – the desolate land of Don Quixote. His parents were peasants. His father could barely read or write, and they sent him to religious boarding school when he was eight. However, he became enamored with cinema during his time at the boarding school, citing Luis Buñuel and Luís García Berlanga, among many international directors, as filmmakers that inspired him in his youth. He has said that his films are explicitly Spanish, but they are also incredibly personal. Many of his films deal with themes of homosexuality and violence, but most are comedies. Almodóvar has a very

distinct aesthetic: a bright color palate, rapid-paced dialogue, upbeat musical soundtracks and wacky costuming.\textsuperscript{279}

_Volver_ is not Almodóvar’s most famous or successful film. However, it is set in Almodóvar’s hometown among the type of working-class people he grew up with, and it incorporates many of the same themes expressed by directors of the Transition Era. The film is about a woman named Raimunda and her daughter Paula, as well as Raimunda’s sister Soledad and their late mother, Irene. In one of the first scenes of the film, Raimunda’s husband, Paco, tries to rape Paula, the daughter, and Paula stabs him to death. Raimunda hides her husband’s body rather than going to the authorities, and the events that ensue take the film even further into macabre comedy. The ghost of Irene visits Soledad and Raimunda, and the audience sees the extent of the emotional damage between these three women. It is revealed that Raimunda’s father, Irene’s husband, raped Raimunda as a young girl. After many tearful scenes and some light hi-jinks with corpses, Irene and Raimunda are finally able to posthumously repair their mother-daughter relationship.

These themes are familiar by now. Generational miscommunication, sexual violence, incest and fratricide have surfaced in several films in popular Spanish cinema, including _Furtivos_ and _Pascual Duarte_. The film’s setting in a low-class, blue-collar environment is also associated strongly with the backwards, folkloric setting of _Pascual Duarte_ and _Furtivos_. Almodóvar said of the film: “It looks like they are living a century before. But I tried to

\textsuperscript{279} D’Lugo, Marvin _Guide to the Cinema of Spain_, 116.
demonstrate that the same Spain, in the same local places with the same local characters, could be called ‘white Spain,’ because the neighbors are in complete solidarity, all the women join together and create a kind of family. The movie really talks about women who survive, women who fight fiercely.”

This is another familiar theme, one exemplified in films like Olea’s *Tormento* and ¡*Pim, Pam, Pum, Fuego!*

Buñuel influences the film’s aesthetics, though Almodóvar also utilizes Borau’s international editing style. In many ways the film is neorealist in the way that Bardem and Berlanga infused their films with Spanish neorealism. *Volver* centers on the working-class and, with the exception of protagonist Penelopé Cruz, uses many non-actors. The film was also shot entirely on location in La Mancha, Almodóvar’s own hometown. Other aspects are international. The comedic timing is very conventional of Hollywood, and it fits into the Hollywood definition of a tragicomedy: a film that uses a bright color palate to contrast against dark themes, mirroring the narrative content. The film does not explicitly mention the Spanish Civil War, but the thematic thread of family deterioration with its roots in previous generations, the sins of the fathers, is something seen repeatedly in Spanish cinema. The film grossed over 12 million dollars in Spain and 80 million internationally and was highly critically acclaimed.

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I bring up del Toro and Almodóvar not only to talk about aesthetic and thematic continuations, but also to highlight an unexpected difference between the two. Guillermo del Toro is not Spanish, yet he created the most famous, compelling, commercially successful and critically acclaimed narrative about the Spanish Civil War in modern cinema. Alternately, Almodóvar has insisted that he avoids the topic of the Spanish Civil War altogether. He said: “I never speak of Franco; I hardly acknowledge his existence. I start after Franco, and thus there is no nostalgia or anything like that…I think that since Franco died new generations have been coming to the fore, generations that are unrelated to the former ones, that are even unrelated to the ‘progressive’ generations that appeared during the last years of the dictatorship.”282 With this statement, Almodóvar is simultaneously critiquing the failures of Saura and Borau’s generation and also distancing himself from the Spanish Civil War. By establishing his generation as the true progressives, Almodóvar discredits the contributions of the Saura generation while also calling for a new representation of Spain, one that has moved forward from Franco enough to have totally forgotten him.

However, the repeated themes and aesthetics that Almodóvar borrows from Borau, Bardem and Berlanga as well as Ricardo Franco and Olea speak to a more complicated legacy. Try as he might, Almodóvar cannot avoid the psychological ramifications of the guerra civil on his society. Guillermo del Toro is eager to grapple with these issues in a fresh and exciting way, but

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282 Besas, Peter *Behind the Spanish Lens*, 217.
Spain’s most famous director chooses not to confront them, believing his own generation to be more ‘progressive.’ However, Almodóvar derives his aesthetic international success from his predecessors, and the sociological baggage he exploits is from the very dictatorship he purports to ignore.

Foreigners are excited to discuss the Spanish Civil War but Almodóvar, as self-proclaimed filmmaker for a new generation of vibrant Spaniards, makes cinema “as though Franco had never existed.”

Almodóvar’s works have undeniably struck a chord with the domestic audiences and put new life into Spanish cinema. Almodóvar has successfully revived the Spanish melodrama; he invokes the folkloric musicals of the 1930’s and uses elements of the traditional costumbrista (a genre containing recognizably indigenous behavior and traditions) to connect Spanish specificity with public appeal. While Almodóvar never explicitly contributes to the critique of Francoism or the painful legacy of the guerra civil, he makes films that are compelling, intelligent and most importantly: Spanish. Perhaps in purposefully refraining from re-opening the dialogue about Spanish Civil War trauma, Almodóvar is instead helping Spain uncover a new national identity, one that is optimistic about its future rather than disillusioned about its past.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis I have argued that 1970’s Spanish cinema was and is indelibly important to the national discourse about the Spanish Civil

283 Triana-Toribio, Nuria Spanish National Cinema, 142.
284 Triana-Toribio, Nuria Spanish National Cinema, 142.
War. I have argued that, since its inception, cinema has become the largest and most collective way that a nation writes its history. Cinema involves the hundreds of people who assist in its creation, the thousands who discuss, write and review it, and the millions who watch it. When a nation undergoes a significant historical event, the attitude that filmmakers portray in cinema about that event both influences and reflects the attitudes of their peers about that same event.

During the transition to democracy, documentaries, art films and popular genre films all contributed in different ways to the narrative of the war and the Spaniards who were struggling to find their identity within a post-war society. With an ever-widening sphere of influence, these films bored, confused, excited, scandalized and delighted the Spanish people during the tumultuous cultural landscape of the transition. These films are important because, first, they were part of a cinematic tradition, including thematic and aesthetic elements, which began in the 1950’s and continues today. The themes that unite the films from these three generations center around a critique of the three pillars of Francoism, or more accurately, the oppressive institutions that the three pillars became under Franco, and this critique is manifested visually through techniques of film form such as symbolism, genre and editing. Additionally, the filmmakers of the Transition Era are representative of their peers, the people of Spain, at a crucial historical moment. Filmmakers such as Carlos Saura, José Luis Borau and Jaime Chavarrí were personally and irreversibly affected by the war. The war altered
their childhoods, their families and especially their art – as it did for every member of the transition generation. As such, the attitudes toward Franco and Spanishness that permeate the works of these transition filmmakers can provide a lens through which to view the popular conception of the war as a whole during these pivotal years.

Furthermore, I have assessed audience reaction to these specific films during the 1970’s as another barometer for national discourse about the war. The public understood the cinema of subversion and intelligent audiences knew to watch for codes of criticism in the latest Saura film. Savvy producers like Elías Querejeta tailored advertisements and press releases to prompt moviegoers to see the hidden transcripts, the messages that evaded censorship and provided a true window into Spanish reaction to the guerra civil. The films I have included in this thesis range from domestic failures to domestic blockbusters but they all have one thing in common: they inspired controversy and discussion. All of the art films, documentaries and genre films analyzed above contributed to the Spanish national memory of the war, even if only in the paper trail from hundreds of polarized, incensed film reviewers.

Javier Cercas concludes Anatomy of a Moment with an anecdote about his father, who was dying at the time that Javier was finishing the book. After a long rumination on the political and cultural impacts of 23 Febrero, Cercas comes to realize that he did not actually write the book in order to understand the actions of Adolfo Suárez, or the events that led to the attempted coup d’état, but rather to try to understand his own father. Perhaps this conclusion
is akin to mine. Understanding the legacy of the Spanish Civil War’s representation in Transition Era cinema is not about overarching societal criticisms or the eradication of the *pacto de olvidos*, but rather about trying to understand the people that participated in that cinematic representation. The directors of the Transition Era wanted to write about the war, but if Pedro Almodóvar is any indication, the artists of today do not.

The films of the Transition Era left a complicated and polarizing depiction of post-war Spanish identity, and the traumatic effects of the war remain ambiguous and only partially rendered. Spain has not forgotten about the Civil War. But, if a nation’s history is truly written by its people, and this next generation is content without re-opening the *pacto de olvidos*, I guess I’ll heed the warning of the boy on the plane all those months ago and just let it be.
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Figure 1.1

"Entrevista: Martín Patino." Dirigido por (Madrid), August 18, 1985. Photo by Chema Conesa

Figure 1.2

Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Visuales, Photographic Records, Filmotéca Española, Madrid. Used with Permission.
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Figure 1.6
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Figure 2.1


Figure 2.2

Figure 2.3


Figure 2.4

Figure 2.5


Figure 2.6

Figure 3.1
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Figure 3.2
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Figure 3.3


Figure 3.4

Figure 3.5


Figure 3.6

Figure 3.7

Figure 3.8


Figure 3.9

Figure 3.10
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Figure 3.11
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Figure 3.12

Figure 3.13

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