

REDEEMING REALISM: ALTERNATE HISTORICITIES IN
SPANISH LITERATURE AND FILM

by

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To Ela, my wife, and my son, Cem,
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Abstract

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by

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Located at the nexus of literary criticism and film theory, this dissertation examines the relationship between two conceptions of realism: as representational style in film and literature, and as rubric for the writing of history. Through close readings, the dissertation draws attention to how Spanish cultural texts ranging from the 19th to the 21st century foreground that realist fiction's capacity to redeem and preserve certain events that have been left out of contemporary Spanish public discourse. The introduction presents a discussion of the views on history of Walter Benjamin, Hayden White, and Michel De Certeau, as well as a study of the different conceptualizations of literary realism by Georg Lukács and Bertolt Brecht, and filmic realism by André Bazin, Siegfried Kracauer, and Gilles Deleuze. The first chapter analyzes three novels, Benito Pérez Galdós's *La Primera República*, César M. Arconada's *Reparto de Tierras*, and Ramón J. Sender's *Mr Witt en el Cantón*, and Luis Buñuel's film *Las Hurdes; Tierra sin Pan*. These four works have at the center of their focus the two periods of republican

governance in Spain, in the late 19th century, and in the first half of the 20th century. The second chapter examines Carlos Saura's film *La Caza* and Luis Martín-Santos's novel *Tiempo de Silencio* in relation to the discontent towards the dictatorship not only at the social, but also at the personal level. My analysis shows how both works highlight the failure of Francoism through the representation of individuals who had not been assimilated by the pervasive narrative of the regime. The third chapter questions the unresolved problems generated throughout the Civil War and Francoism, and that the Transición tried to sweep under the rug. By focusing on repressed memories as represented in Suso de Toro's novel *Non Volvas*, and the social exclusion generated throughout the post-Franco years in Alejandro González Iñárritu's film *Biutiful*, my analysis engages with the unsettled past, upon which a shaky present has been built.

The dissertation further examines how conceptualizations of literary and filmic realism have changed over time, responding to transformations in Spanish society by adhering to a commitment to exposing the sufferings and contradictions inherent in society, and a strong interest in the everyday life of the middle and lower classes, challenging conceptualizations of history and time in Spain's development as a nation.

Chapter 1

Introduction- Redeeming Realism: Unfulfilled Democratic Change in Spanish Literature and Film

Reminiscences, even extensive ones, do not always amount to an autobiography. [...] For even if months and years appear here, it is in the form they have in the moment of recollection. This strange form—it may be called fleeting or eternal—is in neither case the stuff that life is made of.

(Walter Benjamin, *A Berlin Chronicle*)

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, critics have consistently identified realism as the most representative of Spanish literary genres.¹ However, realism appeared to have lost its prominence during the first half of the twentieth century, during the first fifty years of the twentieth century. Indeed, for a great part of the past century, critical theory focused on the vanguards that took over the literary forefront in the years of instability leading up to the Civil War. Such analysis was often influenced by the concept of *generación* José Ortega y Gasset and Leopoldo Alas (Clarín) had developed to illustrate their idea of a literary elite. But as literary scholar Janet Pérez points out in her essay “The Social Realist Novel” (2008), realism did never in fact disappear. Here, she argues that fascist writers like Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui or Ignacio Agustí continued the kind of realism that had been prominent in the nineteenth century with considerable commercial success—even as realism had vanished from literary-critical view. However, other forms of realism were not as successful, particularly in the case of social

¹ See, for example, the works of Francisco Álamo Felices (*La novela social española*, 1996), José Antonio Gómez Marín (*Aproximaciones al realismo español*, 1975), Ricardo Gullón (*La novela española: Ensayos críticos*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1994), Juan Carlos Martín Galván (*Voces silenciadas*, 2009), Alejandro Martínez Obregón (*Realismo, Representación, y Realidad*, Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 2010), Rafael Soto Vergés (*La realidad y la expresión*, 1971), or Gonzalo Torrente Ballester (*Panorama de la literatura española contemporánea*, 1965).

realism, which suffered in popularity due to the success of modernist avant-gardes, defended by prominent figures of Spanish culture such as the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset. Given his significance for the Spanish discourses on culture, I will briefly discuss his approach to realism and modernist art, while comparing and contrasting his conceptualizations with those of Marxist philosopher Georg Lukács, which constitutes one of the analytical arcs of my dissertation.

Looking at international debates on realism and their importance with regard to discourses on history and historiography, allows us to illuminate the contours of realism in Spanish debates on literature and film.

In his books *España invertebrada* (*Invertebrate Spain*, 1921), and *Meditaciones del Quijote* (*Meditations on Quixote*, 1914) José Ortega y Gasset hypothesized about the reasons for Spain's failure to fully enter modernity during the 19th century with regard to the problematic literary group known as *Generación del '98*. Here Ortega presents his conceptualization of the basis needed for national re-founding and regeneration that would make him the leader of a tone-setting program for the creation of a Spanish national identity and consciousness, one which would survive for most of the 20th century. Furthermore, Ortega's philosophy constitutes an opposition to literary realism for two main reasons. First, there is Ortega's maxim, the cornerstone of his philosophy: "I am I and my circumstance," which stands in utter opposition to both philosophical idealism and realism.² For Ortega, every subject is conditioned by and is thus inseparable from its social, political, and/or religious context, therefore realist representation (the depiction of reality without the "I," a reality undetermined by the self) is ontologically impossible. Secondly, 19th century realism was part of the Spanish literary

² Ortega, *Meditaciones*, 22.

tradition, and as such meant for the bourgeoisie to develop a consciousness of itself as ruling class.

As he explains in his 1925 essay “La deshumanización del arte,” (“The dehumanization of art”) works of literature that downplayed aesthetic elements in order to give prominence to represent “the fiction of human realities” were, in fact, “only partially works or art, artistic objects.”³ In opposition to the tradition of literary realism, Ortega calls for new styles and forms of art, forms that would help transform the reality occupied by the masses in accordance with the intentions of the elite. It is no surprise that such an approach to art would be in complete opposition with the views of one of the greatest theorists of realism, Georg Lukács, who maintained that “a campaign against realism, whether conscious or not, and a resultant impoverishment and isolation of literature and art is one of the crucial manifestations of decadence in the realm of art.”⁴ Importantly, for Lukács, art can alter or advance society not through a complete break from the tradition of realism, but rather through its continuation, because “only the major realists are capable of forming a genuine avant-garde.”⁵

Because of Ortega y Gasset’s writings, and the importance they had culturally after the death of Galdós and Clarín, literary realism lost its prominence in Spain, particularly in academic circles, for a good part of the 20th century. According to literary scholar John W. Kronik, in his essay “La resonancia del realismo,” (“The Resonance of Realism,” 1999) Galdós’s, and 19th Century realism fell out of favor with the academic world until the late 1940s, when their rehabilitation began at American universities. The studies on Galdós’s works,

³ “la ficción de realidades humanas...solo parcialmente son obras de arte, objetos artísticos.” Ortega, “La deshumanización del arte,” 321.

⁴ Lukács, “Realism in the Balance,” 58.

⁵ Lukács, “Realism on the Balance,” 48.

for Kronik, have shown how his novels, besides being set in the 19th century, “unfold, in their narrative techniques, and their ideological positions, dimensions that perfectly match the modern—and postmodern sensibilities of the late 20th century.”⁶ Contributing to this scholarship in this dissertation, and expanding the temporal relationships realist narratives can create, I analyze novels and films that deal with the representation of moments in modern Spanish history in which social and political changes were represented as possible, but were thwarted by opposed forces claiming to be defending quintessential Spanish traditional values. Rather than settling on one prescriptive (or proscriptive) definition of realism, my work encompasses and considers differing practices of realist representation, ranging from the apparently neutrality- and objectivity-focused realisms of the late 19th century, to highly experimental and subjective, conflictual realisms of the late 20th century and present day. Furthermore, in my analysis of these works I have identified the need to move beyond traditional labels of realism, because I consider that through such a prescriptive approach, the intrinsic characteristics that make each text important can be lost. However, two characteristics shared by all the works I will analyze are, first, a commitment to representing social life without idealization; and, second, a strong interest in everyday life among the middle and lower classes which gives particular importance to social factors and the environment in which the characters develop in.

Paradoxically, the only thing that has been *constant* in Spanish history of the last two centuries has been social and historical *change*. Already before the constitution of a liberal democratic republic in 1873, Spain had seen much turmoil; losing most of its American colonies entailed a questioning of the interior political organization of the country. After the short-lived first republic (1873-74), Spain has lived under a variety of political systems, ranging from

⁶ Kronik, 96.

monarchic restorations to dictatorships and ostensibly progressive democratic monarchy (including a second republic in the 1930s). Throughout these alternating periods of stability and internal conflicts, Spanish culture's relationship to socio-political life varied in terms of the responses it provided to the situations people were being faced with. Thus, throughout most of the nineteenth century, liberal writers who desired social change in Spain, such as Benito Pérez Galdós or Emilia Pardo Bazán, started adapting the naturalist-realist style of Emile Zola to their own goals. In order to do so, they produced novels focused on Spanish social life which implied that problems such as economic and technological backwardness were the consequence of the power that tradition wielded over all aspects of life in the country. Beyond this, their novels also re-conceived of Spain as a modern nation, underlining a cultural connection with other European countries and thus rejecting long-held notions that Spain, unlike other European countries, was unsuited to the political systems they had developed for themselves. The work of these authors was continued in the early 20th century by others who, like César M. Arconada with *La turbine* (*The Turbine*, 1930), or Joaquín Arderius with *Campesinos* (*Peasants*, 1931), were socially committed and wrote about the plights of the workers, both in developing industries, and in the traditional farming lands of the centre of Spain. Not only were they critical of some of the characteristics of traditional life in Spain, but also of the new government models that were being tried: both the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera, and the liberal Second Republic. In the realm of cinema, a similar case can be made about Luis Buñuel, who saw his documentary *Las Hurdes: Tierra sin Pan* (*Land Without Bread*, 1933) banned for containing material that the government found to be at the same time inaccurate and subversive.

After the fall of the Republic and the Civil War, and due to the firm grip over censorship that the government and the Catholic Church had during Franco's dictatorship, most films

and novels had to privilege escapist and allegorical, moralizing subjects in order to see release or publication. However, realism regained strength as a means of making visible what the government claimed did not exist. Accordingly, throughout the 1940s writers like Camilo José Cela with *La familia de Pascual Duarte* (*The Family of Pascual Duarte*, 1942), or Miguel Delibes with *La sombra del ciprés es alargada* (*The Cypress Casts a Long Shadow*, 1948), revived the realist tradition, achieving great success with readers and critics alike.

Accompanying this resurgence of realist literature was the influence of Italian cinematic Neorealism on Spanish cinema. Despite having reached Spain when it was nearly dead as a movement in Italy, Neorealism showed a generation of young Spanish filmmakers like Juan Antonio Bardem and Luis García Berlanga, who started making films in the 1950s, that cinema could be something completely different from what was being made in Spain and Hollywood (which was at the time the biggest foreign influence).

Besides being linked to representational media like literature or cinema, realism has also been linked to historiography, a relationship I will discuss in the following. As the philosopher of history Hayden White has pointed out, both literary realism and historiography were presented in a *realistic* narrative form, and were both part of a reaction against Romanticism in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁷ The relationship between these two forms of narrative—literary and historiographic realism, has been often underestimated, despite the fact that both offer different, and at times conflicting, perspectives about society. My analysis of realist novels and films shows how the representations they provide defy hegemonic discourses about Spain's glory as a once imperial nation, particularly at moments in which such hegemonic tendencies could be

⁷ See *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historic Representation*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987.

challenged and changed. A central contention will be that even as they represent specific segments of reality, these works point towards what Michel de Certeau calls “the particular,” which for him marks “the limit of what can be thought” because only “universal issues are thought,”⁸ toward something much larger. For both Certeau and White, with the writing of history particular elements are discarded while an attempt to produce an explanation and interpretation of the facts, that can have universal projection, is produced. In what follows, I will analyze three different approaches to history and historiography that challenge any traditional teleological focus, while questioning the relationship between the act of narrating events, and the events themselves.

I. Histories of Benjamin, White, and Certeau

In the first of his “Theses on the Philosophy of History” (1940), Walter Benjamin writes that “‘historical materialism’ is always supposed to win,” as long as the use it makes of theology, backing up its premises as a model of historical analysis in order to complete its discourse, remains hidden.⁹ In this work, Benjamin advances a notion of history informed and fueled by historical materialism. Such a philosophy of history stands in opposition to historicism, since historicism is ultimately a narrative that takes sides with the victors and “thus comes to benefit the current rulers every time.”¹⁰ Historical materialism goes against such an interpretation of history and is ultimately infused with an aura of Messianism that derives from the non-teleological vision of history it opposes to historicism. Consequently, historical materialism “establishes a concept of the present as that of the here-and-now, in which splinters of messianic

⁸ Certeau, *Writing*, 84.

⁹ *Illuminations*, 253.

¹⁰ *Illuminations*, 254.

time are shot through.”¹¹ Furthermore, Benjamin ties messianic time to the Torah tradition according to which our understanding of the past will open a door in the present for the entry of the Messiah. Beyond the religious metaphor, for Benjamin this means the possibility for political action in the present, connecting the past and the future through the potential to change both.

For Benjamin, social democracy and fascism have gained control over the past through their dominion over the present and their version of historical discourse, historicism. In his view, both political ideologies are hostile to oppressed classes, inasmuch as they refuse them their rightful self-consciousness as “depositor[ies] of historical knowledge.”¹² Social democracy displaces the role Marx saw for the working class as redeemer of past generations, and replaces it with a hope for the liberation of future generations, thus draining the working class of its potential to challenge the dominant ideologies and take control of the means of production. Furthermore, in doing so, social democracy leans closer to fascism, as it convinces the working class that progress is “the progress of mankind itself (and not just advances in men’s ability and knowledge).”¹³ This confusion leads in turn to the (ideo)logical conclusion that if progress is indeed the progress of all mankind, then by contributing to this abstract progress rather than its own concrete progress, the working class will be contributing to the redemption of its future generations. For Benjamin, this is the social democratic counterpart of Fascist technocracy and its vision of labor as the exploitation of nature for the profit of mankind, and also marks its “servile integration in an uncontrollable apparatus.”¹⁴ The working class must therefore face progress, and see it (and make it seen) for what it is. This process of interpretation and

¹¹ *Illuminations*, 255.

¹² Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 260.

¹³ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 260.

¹⁴ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 258.

representation entails confrontation with social democracy and fascism through which history might be ripped free from the clutches of historicism.

This is clearly seen in Benjamin's famous historical-philosophical Thesis IX, which illustrates the relation between progress and history through the figure of the angel. Referencing a Paul Klee painting, in which an angel is staring at something unknown, Benjamin creates the figure of the angel of history, which would look very much the same as Klee's, "with his face turned toward the past."¹⁵ The angel's view of the past lacks the "causal connection between various moments in history" that historicism establishes.¹⁶ Instead, the angel "sees one single catastrophe that keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet," which he cannot rearrange because he is being blown into the future by the wind of (what we call) progress.¹⁷ Accordingly, progress works in tandem with historicism. It enables the elaboration of the linear, causal narrative of history's victors by impeding the participation of the only figure that could in any way challenge such an elaboration. To this version of the past, Benjamin opposes historical materialism, which has at its core the redemption of the past and with it of the whole of mankind.

This, for Benjamin, is the task of the historical materialist: just as the wish of the angel of history is to "stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed," the historical materialist must write a history other than that of the victors, a history in which the "tradition of the oppressed" is present.¹⁸ This kind of history differs from historicism in that it holds that

¹⁵ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 257.

¹⁶ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 263.

¹⁷ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 257.

¹⁸ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 257.

“nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history.”¹⁹ Such an understanding of history and past time is in complete opposition to what he calls “homogenous, empty time,” the past time of historicism.²⁰ For historicism, the present gives purpose to the past’s existence, as part of a transition into the eternal promise of the future. As a consequence, everything that happened in the past time is dead for historicism, and everything that has not been registered in the narrative of the victors is lost and unredeemable, unworthy of redemption or further attention, thus rendering the redemption of the working class and its history impossible.

However, according to Benjamin, historical materialism makes possible the redemption of that time which has passed and is supposedly lost. Through this process, the redemption of the working class also becomes possible. As he explains, this redemption is connected to a feeling of happiness; not the happiness generated from the false hope for the future that social democracy has swindled the working class into believing, but a happiness that comes from an envious remembrance of the discovered past: “[h]appiness that could arouse envy in us exists only in the air we have breathed, among people we could have talked to, women who could have given themselves to us.”²¹ Once again, the power of redemption is linked to the past. In this instance, it is not merely the redemption of every past fact without exception, but also the redemption of the possibilities, of the actions that *could have* taken place, but, like the liberation of the working class, did not. Reflecting upon these possibilities, and pondering on the “temporal index” that the past carries with it, will contribute to the recognition of the conditions of oppression from which the working class must free itself.²²

¹⁹ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 254.

²⁰ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 261.

²¹ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 254.

²² Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 254.

But how can the unstoppable narrative of the victors be interrupted? How can the oppressed shake off the state of lethargy the ever-promised future freedom has imposed upon them? The answer is, of course, historical materialism, which provides for Benjamin the scientific knowledge of a “present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop.”²³ Against the continuum of history posited by historicism, Benjamin holds that the present in which history is written is a break from that flow, a stop in the current of progress, a moment of rest for the angel of history. This moment allows for another perspective, through which “historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the past,” a past that is already other than the immutable past of historicism, and one in which new facts can be seen once the pause of the moment has allowed the dust of catastrophe to settle.²⁴ This pause allows the historical materialist to constitute a relationship with the past that does not become a “tool of the ruling classes” but instead allows for the realization that all moments that are considered historical are not so intrinsically, but have instead become historical by the historicist obsession with causation.²⁵ Making proper use of the tools that historical materialism provides, a historian understands the present as the time of the “here-and-now,” in which it is possible to establish a connection with an earlier time, brushing aside all deterministic preoccupation with causality and thus providing a scientific account of a redeemed past that might then redeem the present.

It is precisely the quality of scientificity that Benjamin and Marxism in general have ascribed to historical materialism that historian Hayden White holds against the historicist conception of time and history—and this despite the similarities that can be found between Benjamin’s criticism of traditional history and his own. Deeply influenced by the works of

²³ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 262.

²⁴ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 262.

²⁵ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 255.

philosopher Paul Ricoeur, White developed his conceptions of history and time based on both hermeneutics and a criticism of conceptions of history as science in the absence of hermeneutics. For White, the inclusion of hermeneutics in the elaboration of history can remove the wool that post-Hegelian historians pulled over their own (and everybody else's) eyes: that behind the narrative that purports to be *the true story* lies politics, which "was represented as being primarily only a vehicle for or an occasion for storytelling."²⁶ In the introduction to his groundbreaking book *Metahistory* (1973), White explains his conception of the writing of history as an activity guided by certain tropes to which historians add their findings and their particular imaginations. With an approach he describes as formalist, White analyzes a series of 19th century historians whose writing he considers representative of different styles of historical thinking and writing.

White isolates five modes inherent to the writing of history: "(1) chronicle; (2) story; (3) mode of emplotment; (4) mode of argument; and (5) mode of ideological implication." Each mode builds on the previous ones in order to produce a more compelling historical narrative, through which the simple facts registered in a chronicle become part of a story which is sequentially explained, proved to be an example of a universal law, and made part of an ethical or moral perspective. In the case of Marxism, which he categorizes as argumentatively "mechanistic," White claims it "*studies* history in order to divine the laws that actually govern its operations and *writes* history in order to display in a narrative form the effects of those laws."²⁷ The fact that historians shape history into a narrative, and that there was such a lively and intense debate about the nature, form, and role of history during the 19th century, leads White to establish

²⁶ White, *Content of the Form*, 30.

²⁷ White, *Metahistory*, 17, emphasis in the original.

a connection between 19th century literary realism and its coeval academic counterpart. Accordingly, while 19th century historians were trying to “produce images of history which were as free from the abstractness of their Enlightenment predecessors as they were devoid of the illusions of their Romantic precursors,” they began producing “realistic” visions of history as varied as their literary correlates.²⁸

That this parallel evolution of both literary and historical realism is a reaction to “unrealistic” forms of both Enlightenment and Romantic literary and historical writing is made particularly evident by the fact that the realist view was defined negatively rather than positively. While fiction writers and historians alike knew what they did not consider “realistic,” an agreement on what *was* “realistic” proved to be impossible to reach, due to each individual’s epistemological and ethical tendencies. However, despite the rejection of some of the characteristics of the 18th century movements, 19th century realism did not reject the Enlightenment’s “presumed 'optimism,' or the doctrine of progress which usually accompanied it.”²⁹ Drawing on Kant’s conclusions on the study of human history, White establishes a parallel with his own taxonomy of modes of narration, qualifying them as “comedy, tragedy, and irony (if considered from the standpoint of the plot structures they impose upon the historical panorama) or idealism, cynicism, and skepticism (if considered from the standpoint of the world-views they authorize).”³⁰ From this analysis, White concludes that the role of politics in the writing of history, and in Kant’s (and his own) division of modes of historical writing,

²⁸ White, *Metahistory*, 45.

²⁹ White, *The Content of the Form*, 47. This has already been discussed above, with respect to Benjamin.

³⁰ According to White, Kant established a taxonomy of historical accounts, divided into three groups: the ones that considered that human race was in continuous progress (called “eudaemonism” by Kant), secondly those that considered the human race was in continuous degeneration (which Kant identified as “terrorism”), and finally those characterized by seeing the human race at an unchanged level of development (what Kant called “farce”) (*The Content of the Form*, 47).

establishes a connection with pre-modern modes of writing. Therefore, the first step for a historian to truly see through the political layers imposed upon historical texts is to identify the rhetoric immanent to each of the modes. Only then can history as a discipline claim for itself the capacity to settle the disputes among all the different “realistic” writings of history throughout the 19th century and most of the 20th and their narratives.

Furthermore, White proposes, the work of the historian consists of arbitration between “the *historical field*, the unprocessed *historical record*, *other historical accounts*, and an *audience*.”³¹ In order for the historical work to reach the *audience*, the historian has to make it presentable in a way that will ensure the understanding of the findings. Therefore, all the facts found must be organized and interpreted so that the historian can make sense of them; regardless of the political or ethical agenda of the historian, this process must always take place in order to transform the historical field and record into language, and thus make it communicable. This transformation, alongside an engagement with other historical accounts, can only be achieved through the use of language and the establishment of a narrative, which for White “has always been and continues to be the predominant mode of historical writing.”³² For this reason, White contends that historians must understand the role of narrativity in the production of history in order to understand the inner workings of historical discourse.

As we have seen, White traces the rise of narrativity in both 19th century realist literary works and realist historical works. In the case of the realist novels, the bourgeois and nationalistic thrust that fueled their political and ideological characteristics was a “realistic” view of the world that accorded with the rise of the bourgeoisie to a hegemonic position in society.

³¹ White, *Metahistory*, 5, emphasis in the original.

³² White, *Figural Realism*, 3.

The same claim can be made of historiography, as the 19th century saw renewed attempts to make it a science. By adopting a realist narrative as its mode of representation, historiography assumed a position in line with bourgeois ideology; this was an act of self-preservation, or self-justification, in the face of social change, and the likelihood of the collapse of the discipline. As White claims, it is “historians themselves who have transformed narrativity from a manner of speaking into a paradigm of the form that reality itself displays to a ‘realistic’ consciousness.”³³ But narrativity not only affects how events of the past are represented and made knowable in relation to the dominant ideology and worldview; it also transforms our relationship with time. Again following Ricoeur, White describes time as having three different levels of organization: “within-time-ness,” which is reflected in representations of time in the present, “historicality,” which would comprise those representations of time stressing past-ness, and “deep temporality,” which would mean an attempt to represent past, present and future at once.³⁴ As a result, “historicality” is the content of historiography represented through narrativity; it entails a relationship with the past in which the present transitorily ceases to be, and through historical narration is replaced by that same past, filtered through the mode that informs the narration. Likewise, the relationship between history and the theory of history is mutually constitutive, blurring all division between them by degrees of the plausibility of the narration. Of course, it is the role of the historian, through hermeneutic analysis, to identify “history proper,” and to determine which theory is more “realistic,” and which more speculative.

A very different view of the return of the past in the present is offered by Michel de Certeau, whose contribution to the study of history points towards interdisciplinarity of

³³ White, *The Content of the Form*, 24.

³⁴ White, *The Content of the Form*, 51.

historiography itself. *The Writing of History* (1975) offers his most significant conceptualization of history, and his most complete analysis of the writing of history. In fact, most of this collection of essays involves his attempts to explain the process of understanding through writing, as well as the role of language within historiographic texts and in relation to historical discourse. These sets of relations, which are crucial in the elaboration of historical discourse, can be compared to White's conceptualization of interpretation as the necessary process for the communication of knowledge about the past. For de Certeau, the process of understanding through writing implies that history bridges a gap between a "past that is its object, and a present that is the place of its practice."³⁵ Crucially, for de Certeau historiographic research is always embedded in a place of production with its socioeconomic and political characteristics, and it is "in terms of this place that its methods are established, its topography of interest can be specified, its dossiers and its interrogation of documents are organized."³⁶ In fact, the structure of the book is based on the importance of those places: "Part I: *Productions of Places*" is followed by a study of the development of time in history, Part II: *Productions of Time: A Religious Archeology*." In the second half of the book, de Certeau analyses the relationships established between language and history (Part III: *Systems of Meaning: Speech and Writing*), and concludes with an attempt to explore historical writing in psychoanalytic terms (Part IV: *Freudian Writing*).

A look at this structure's logical progression reveals de Certeau's conceptualization of the inner mechanisms of history at work. First, a place is established in the present through which relationships with other places in the past can be articulated. Second, a temporal relationship is

³⁵ Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 34.

³⁶ Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 58.

established between the here and now, and its *other(s)*: those place(s) in the past, which are set in the structure of time as far away as the difference in place can allow. After these two steps, history (or historiography) elaborates its own analytic language, with which all practices have to comply. This language is then deployed in historical discourse, which privileges writing as one of its characteristics while reducing its Other, the past, to just speech, therefore denying it duration and the possibility of enduring self-representation. De Certeau's fourth and last step is an attempt to move beyond the study of historical discourse and its mechanisms, and into the analysis of historical consciousness and its unconscious, though a certain differentiation is made between historiography and psychoanalysis. He initially opposes historiography to Freud's concept of the *repressed*, examining the uncontrollable relation with the past that the return of the *repressed* represents, and considering it as a model for thinking about the relationship with the past established by historiography. Such is the case in *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (1986), in which he claims that "[p]sychoanalysis and historiography thus have two ways of redistributing the *space of memory*... Psychoanalysis recognizes the past *in* the present; historiography places them one *beside* the other."³⁷ However, in *The Writing*, he blurs that differentiation, when he claims that historical writing "speaks of the past in order to inter it."³⁸ From this, it is clear that in the practice of writing history, a series of events is preserved and maintained for and in the present, at the same time that they are also certified as dead.

The recording of past events in historiography means moving them into the place that is the *other* of the place where writing happens. Historiography thus "uses death in order to

³⁷ Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, 4, emphasis in the original.

³⁸ Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 101.

articulate a law (of the present).”³⁹ Furthermore, for de Certeau the writing of history is also necessary for the planning of a future. This means history is “always ambivalent: the locus that it carves for the past is equally a fashion of *making a place for a future*.”⁴⁰ Consequently, through the writing of history, the historian provides the past with a meaning that enables a given society to have closure with it and prepares it to move on into the future, once the past has been buried. For de Certeau, what makes this relationship between the past, writing, and the present more ambiguous is his claim that fiction is as much a part of historiographic method as are the facts. Indeed, fiction is the tool needed to create a “staging of the past” from which the aforementioned place of the past is created; this staged *place of the past* must be adequate to the realism of the historical account expected in the present.⁴¹ History must strive to be “realistic,” in the sense that it must be based in facts and present an account of them which is plausible, not only in the present place it is being written in, but also in the past place into which this interpretation is articulated. The difference between historical and literary realism is, for de Certeau, rooted in an assumption Benjamin and White would both agree and disagree with: the assumption that behind historiography there is always a “will to objectivity.”⁴² As I have shown, both Benjamin and White criticize the supposed objectivity of the historical accounts derived from 19th century philosophy of history and its claims of scientific knowledge. However, despite their denial of any kind of objectivity in those historical accounts, both Benjamin and White would include that characteristic as having been the ultimate methodological goal in the writing of history.

³⁹ Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 101.

⁴⁰ Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 85.

⁴¹ Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 9.

⁴² Certeau, *Heterologies*, 4.

Nevertheless, de Certeau's conceptualization of history insists on the hierarchical separation of present and past. Unlike Benjamin, who considers the final goal of history to facilitate the redemption of the past in the present, but not unlike White, for whom writing history drags the past into the present and infuses it with that present's predominant ideology. For de Certeau, past and present are two distinct places, organized in a clear hierarchy, precisely because it is always the present that has the upper hand over the past, which history constitutes as much as it (re)constructs it. In this relationship, between the present as a place of agents and the past as the object those agents act upon, the present is constructed not only as a *now*, but also as a *here*, as *our own time and place*, while the past is presented as the *other*. Due to the nature of this relationship, and the importance of differences between the *self* and the *other*, de Certeau identifies "elucidating the meaning of the gaps in the theory" as the definitive contribution psychoanalysis can make to the writing and understanding of history.⁴³ Here, the relationship established between the repressed and the present returns in a different fashion: the creation of the past place(s) and time(s) is necessarily accompanied by the displacement towards the present of affects about the past. Consequently, and despite the desired hierarchy between present and past, the past *contaminates* the present with parts of it that the practice of history as a science cannot control. De Certeau explains this as the failure of science to explain all elements of history: "an abyss opened before scientific reason in the form of objects that it winds around without reaching."⁴⁴

Through writing, the historian therefore has access to these *other* objects, which would be intangible and unattainable by scientific means. In *Tropics of Discourse* (1978), Hayden White

⁴³ Certeau, *Heterologies*, 14.

⁴⁴ Certeau, *The Writing*, 40.

wrote about historians and literary writers that “the techniques or strategies that they use in the composition of their discourses can be shown to be substantially the same, however different they may appear on a purely surface, or dictional, level.”⁴⁵ As we have seen, de Certeau explains the same kind of relationship, and, like White, he focuses on the role of the metaphor as conveyer of meanings which are beyond the terms of what can be articulated in the language of the present. This conceptualization of history as a narration through metaphors clearly establishes it as a narrative of loss, not only as the loss of the parts of the past excluded from the places history creates, but also as the loss of the richness of those aspects of the past which cannot be represented directly, and can only be explained through the figural use of language. Although Benjamin holds that through the correct use of historical materialism, everything that happened in the past can be redeemed, for de Certeau historiography does not exist as a complete science. Nor, however, can it be disregarded as just a fictional narration; on the contrary, “science-fiction is the law of history.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, history needs narration—not only in order to establish an interpretation of the facts of the past, but also in order to turn the spatial separation between the place where history is written and the place where those events happened into a chronological relationship, thus creating a temporality for its own purposes.

II. Literary Realism: Lukács Vs. Brecht

The aforementioned academic and critical discussions regarding the role of realism in cultural production and the writing of history, parallel the political isolation of Spain during the last decades of the 19th century, and the beginning of the 20th century. Even when two of the most important Marxist literary theorists, Georg Lukács and Bertolt Brecht, argued over different

⁴⁵ White, *Tropics of Discourse*, 121.

⁴⁶ Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 347.

conceptualizations of realism as the Spanish civil war was raging, no attention was paid in their writings to realism in Spanish literature. However, I consider that these critical exchanges happening outside Spain at the time are crucial for a better understanding of the differences on conceptualizations of realism at the time, as well as of how these seemingly unrelated theories influenced Spanish literature and film in later years. The "Expressionism debate," is how the controversy developed between Lukács and Brecht in the second half of the 1930s has been referred to, although, as noted by many scholars, it was centered on the issue of realism, most notably on a definition of 19th century realism and what 20th century realism should strive to be.⁴⁷ However, the discussion was also not only between Lukács, and Brecht, as it also involved other contributors to the journal *Das Wort*, most notably Bernhard Ziegler and Ernst Bloch. Ziegler was the pseudonym of Alfred Kurella, editor of the journal, who had expressed his affinity for Lukács's thoughts on expressionism. The debate was initiated by an exchange between Ziegler, reproducing arguments from Lukács's 1934 essay "Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline," and Bloch, who responded not to Ziegler, but directly to Lukács and his essay. In turn, Lukács replied with his famous essay "Realism in the Balance" (1938) in which the question of whether expressionism or realism were to be the utmost Marxist literary style was first brought forward. It was also during this time that Lukács produced two of his most important works on realism and literature beside the essays already mentioned: *Essays on Realism*, and *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*.

Lukács argued against the aesthetics of modernism, represented primarily by expressionism, and in favor of traditional realist aesthetics, by drawing on the works of authors as diverse as Honoré de Balzac, Leo Tolstoy, or Thomas Mann. He claims that despite working

⁴⁷ See Fredric Jameson in "Reflections in Conclusion," Bloch, et al. *Aesthetics and Politics* (1977).

with confused, bourgeois, or even reactionary political views, they had achieved a full portrayal of society in their time and place. Portrayal in the best of these texts is far from the detached or naive, “descriptive” works by later writers like Émile Zola, which (he claims) lack the “realist synthesis,” the representation of the contradictory nature of the bourgeois order.⁴⁸

Furthermore, Lukács also claimed that, by continuing in their path, which delves into abstraction and introspection, modernist novels, and art in general, lose their capacity for political action, as they move into the "private realm of morality," instead of providing something new, which could reveal a greater truth about society.⁴⁹ However, it is through the close examination of the personal and moral journey of Mann’s work that Lukács drives his argument with most strength. In his *Essays on Thomas Mann* (1965) he suggests that even before 1914, Mann had already begun to expose the contradictions at the center of the bourgeoisie; and in *The Magic Mountain* (1924), Mann ventured that Germany would have to face a choice between democracy and dictatorship.⁵⁰ For Lukács, then, Mann’s grasp of the intellectual and cultural life of his time would be the ideal that 20th century realism should strive for, thus redeeming the progressive elements within bourgeois culture for the benefit of revolutionary art.

Not surprisingly, in his response to Lukács, Brecht attacked the implication of this reasoning: namely, that the proletariat needed the bourgeoisie’s revolutionary power in order to develop its own revolutionary strength. Unlike Lukács, Brecht, in his response to “Realism in the Balance” was not as influenced by the pre-war era literature, but rather by the sociopolitical situation in Germany between the World Wars, as well as by the development of New

⁴⁸ Lukács, "Narrate or Describe?" 112.

⁴⁹ Lukács, *Essays on Realism*, 96.

⁵⁰ Lukács, *Essays on Thomas Mann*, 32.

Objectivity in the Weimar Germany. Brecht did not begin his study of Marxism until the mid-1920s, after experimenting widely with modernist techniques, and with expressionism as the most influential modernist movement in Germany, in his earliest plays. Contrary to Lukács's privileging of a literature that showed the inherent tensions and contradictions of the bourgeoisie, Brecht's aesthetic plays and essayistic works were influenced by the concept of disassembling and reassembling reality characteristic of cubism and Russian constructivism. While bourgeois-realist art focused on the faithful representation of the bourgeoisie and of its inherent tensions and contradictions, Brecht embraced Eisenstein's concept of montage as an intrinsically dialectical artistic device. Furthermore, in collaboration with producer Erwin Piscator, Brecht developed a style of didactic theater he called "epic," departing from works that aimed at entertainment and instead moving toward to instruction through theater.⁵¹ Instead of establishing empathic connection between the work and spectator, Brecht sought to create a critical distance between the spectators and the characters, thus doing away with the Aristotelian principle of catharsis.

In "Against Georg Lukács," Brecht attempted to justify his concern with theatrical realism and didacticism, and make them applicable to all literature while contesting the argument against the use of modernist techniques. Starting from the same standpoint, that of a Marxist writer, Brecht accepts Lukács's analysis of their contemporary reality, claiming that he "can follow Lukács in all these observations and subscribe to his protests."⁵² However, Brecht disagrees with Lukács about the conclusions he reaches, and the solution he deems will be best, articulating his critique on three points: the role of "dehumanization" in art, the formalistic

⁵¹ Esslin, 23.

⁵² Brecht, "Against George Lukács," 69.

approach, and the concept of popular art. Lukács considered modernist art and its “dehumanizing” strategies, celebrating the union of men and machine, a hindrance for art in general, and realism in particular, without particular concern for the disruptive ideological impact of such art. Lukács, Brecht argues, “sweeps away ‘inhuman’ technique. He turns back to our forefathers and implores their degenerate descendants to emulate them. Are the writers confronted by a dehumanized man? Has the spiritual life been devastated? ... That his proposals are impracticable is obvious.”⁵³ Brecht’s criticism of Lukács points towards the rapidly changing and changed conditions between life as 19th century writers experienced it and the present in which 1930s writers find themselves. Arguing that as writers and other artists face a changing reality, they must find new ways to represent it, Brecht moves on to condemn Lukács’s excessive focus on the novel, and lack of consideration for other literary forms.

Into the debate on realism, Brecht includes lyric poetry and theatre, as those two genres were more familiar to him and part of his repertory as artist. But there is a further reason as well. Citing his multi-faceted production, which meant that he was working “on two novels, a play, and a collection of novels,” Brecht defends himself against his critics, arguing that he is not failing to recognize the importance of classical realism; rather, Lukács and others are failing to recognize the cross-genre approach he proposes as valid.⁵⁴ Brecht was at the height of the popularity of his theatre production, having penned a number of successful productions, both aesthetically and in terms of spectator reactions. Drawing on this success, he criticized the constraints of realism: “so complicated are the problems involved, and so primitive is the

⁵³ Brecht, “Against George Lukács,” 69.

⁵⁴ Brecht, “Against Georg Lukács,” 70.

vocabulary which the aesthetic of realism—in its present state—offers me.”⁵⁵ His constant formal and technical experimentation, Brecht claims, in fact constitute an engagement with the representation of reality in terms that are new and striking, and which can convey his message to the masses. This expansive conception of realist representation makes him question Lukács’s understanding of popular art.⁵⁶

Brecht frees realism of the aesthetic constraints imposed upon it by Lukács, making it instead into an artistic style that aids the oppressed masses throughout history, inviting in his own production “daring, unusual things for the proletariat so long as they deal with its real situation.”⁵⁷ “Popular,” for Brecht, was not that what “the people” enjoy reading, listening, or hearing as a result of tradition and common practice, because those are the characteristics that establish the social order they have been inscribed in as unchangeable. On the contrary, for Brecht

Popular means: intelligible to the broad masses, adopting and enriching their forms of expression / assuming their standpoint, confirming and correcting it / representing the most progressive section of the people so that it can assume leadership, and therefore intelligible to other sections of the people as well / relating to traditions and developing them / communicating to that portion of the people which strives for leadership the achievements of the section that at present rules the nation.⁵⁸

This definition of what a popular, realist work of art must be implies the constant instruction that didactic theater has at its core—an instructiveness that Brecht felt the Lukács group viewed as pointless. Criticizing dismissive claims that a certain novel or play is too difficult for the masses

⁵⁵ Brecht, *ibid.*, 71-72.

⁵⁶ Brecht, *ibid.*, 70-76.

⁵⁷ Brecht, “Against Lukács,” 84.

⁵⁸ Brecht, *ibid.*, 80.

to understand, Brecht argues that those who underestimate the capability of the proletariat will be pushed aside, while the workers “come to a direct understanding with the artist.”⁵⁹

Furthermore, for Brecht the work of art is never a complete, finished whole, but a constant work in progress, for two important reasons. First, because a changing work of art, or style, can never be reified or commoditized in a manner that would turn it against the masses, and into an instrument of their oppression; and second, because by reworking his own plays, often giving them contradictory endings, Brecht highlighted the dialectical nature of his theater, opposing it to a glorified pulpit from which unchanging truths were bestowed upon the audience. Brecht’s approach to realism will be crucial in my analysis, not as much as in the shape of his theoretical essays on the subject, but in the praxis of those aesthetics and poetics, and the maxim of changing the modes of representation in order to represent the ever-changing reality. As I will show, César M. Arconada’s *Reparto de tierras* is organized structurally as the enactment of a dialectical confrontation between peasants and landowners; Luis Martín-Santos referred to the style of his novel *Tiempo de silencio* as “realismo dialéctico;” and Carlos Saura’s *La Caza* incorporates instances of Russian *montage* to refresh Neorealist aesthetics. However, my readings of film in this dissertation, will also be informed by the writings of André Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer.

III. Bazin and Kracauer: Reality and Redemption in Film

The French film critic and theorist André Bazin considered cinema a realistic art form. In “The Ontology of the Photographic Image,” his most famous essay, he claimed that “[p]hotography and the cinema ... are discoveries that satisfy, once and for all and its very

⁵⁹ Brecht, *ibid.*, 84.

essence, our obsession with realism.”⁶⁰ However, a definition of cinematic realism—as a representational style, rather than an ontological function—remains elusive throughout the text until the second volume, where a tentative definition of realism is made in the essay “An Aesthetic of Reality: Neorealism,” where he states that “[w]e would define as ‘realist’, then, all narrative means tending to bring an added measure of reality to the screen.”⁶¹ Furthermore:

[T]he realism of the current Italian films has been frequently contrasted with the aestheticism of American and, in part, of French productions. Was it not from the outset their search for realism that characterized the Russian films of Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovjenco as revolutionary both in arts and politics, in contrast with the expressionist aestheticism of the German films and Hollywood’s mawkish star worship? *Paisa*, *Sciusca*, and *Roma Citta Aperta*, like *Potemkin*, mark a new stage in the long-standing opposition between realism and aestheticism on the screen.⁶²

Such an oppositional argument relates the subject back to the days before photography and cinema, when art was divided into two tendencies: the realist and the aestheticist. Accordingly, Bazin embraces realism as the tendency of art towards true knowledge of reality through representation, while discarding aestheticism as deceitful and misleading. The artistic achievement of realism is, therefore, the creation within the frame of a world similar to the real one, but which at the same time we would know to be art—that is, one which we’d recognize as different from reality. Cinematic aestheticism, on the other hand, would make us admire its beauty while at the same time presenting itself as real.

Advancing the argument that technological innovations can heighten the realistic quality of cinematographic representation, Bazin argues that “it would be absurd to resist every new technical development aiming to add to the realism of cinema, namely sound, color and

⁶⁰ Bazin, I, 12.

⁶¹ Bazin, II, 27.

⁶² Bazin, II, 16

stereoscopy.⁶³ Bazin, however, only defends technological improvements as augmenting the power of the camera to represent reality; developments in technique, like styles of editing, he deems expressionistic and deceitful. Criticizing Eisenstein's montage as one such form, Bazin attacks the institutionalization of revolution; that is, when montage was advanced as a means of adding further realism to cinema, editing represented an evolution in cinema, inasmuch as it offered a whole new set of possibilities. However, when it became pervasive, montage opposed realism precisely because it became an aestheticizing rather than revelatory practice; at this point, a new means of expressing realism was needed. Italian Neorealism, which in turn could follow the same path into stagnation, appeared to take up this task. Here, Bazin warns that such a way of making films has not been used very often because it has in it itself the basis of its own exhaustion.⁶⁴

Accordingly, the struggle between realism and aestheticism would always be perpetuated in terms of development and replacement; what was realist becomes aestheticized, and then a new realism develops which breaks with the aesthetics of the previous one, opening up the possibilities for new realistic representation. As an illustration of this, and developing parallels with the Lukács-Brecht debate on literary or theatrical realism, Bazin describes the relationship between realistic representation and narrative techniques, and the influence of novels on film:

It is a long while since the modern novel created its realist revolution, since it combined behaviorism, a reporter's technique and the ethic of violence. Far from the cinema having the slightest effect on this evolution, as is commonly held today, a film like *Paisa* proves that the cinema was twenty years behind the contemporary novel. It is not the least of the

⁶³ Bazin, II, 26.

⁶⁴ In Bazin, II, 24

merits of the Italian cinema that it has been able to find the truly cinematic equivalent for the most important revolution of our time.⁶⁵

This illustrates literature's influence in Bazin's conception of cinema as art by means of opposition, but that interplay between literature and realism had been achieved through Neorealism, or the cinematic adoption of modern novel realism.

Writing also during the early years after World War II, but as an exile in the United States, Siegfried Kracauer is, with Bazin, one of the most prominent theoreticians of cinematic realism. Indeed, Kracauer distinguishes between two tendencies which could be compared with Bazin's notions of realism and aestheticism: the realistic and the formative tendency. Of course, the characteristics Kracauer assigns these tendencies differ from the ones mentioned by Bazin; as a consequence, the two theorists' definitions of realistic art also differ.

Defining *realistic* and *formative* tendencies, Kracauer takes into account aspects of content as much as technical characteristics; therefore, the differences between both tendencies are not only defined by the kind of shots or camera movements used, but also by the content they represent. The realistic tendency favors the representation of movement through filming actual "objective' motion," and through camera movement and editing.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the physical reality represented has to be related to everyday events and actions: the goal of realism is to represent cinematographically "real-life shots," even if the represented actions or the sets have been deliberately created for such goal.⁶⁷ On the other hand, the formative tendency would be best represented by fantasy and experimental films, as well as some documentaries, inasmuch as

⁶⁵ Bazin, II, 40.

⁶⁶ Kracauer, 34.

⁶⁷ Kracauer, 34.

the former are “not even designed to focus on physical existence,” while the latter may overdo the representation of reality by reduplicating image and sound.⁶⁸

As for Bazin, for Kracauer the problem of cinema as both intentional representation and mechanical reproduction is multiplied by the ontological characteristics of cinema, since films “picture movement itself, not only one or another of its phases,” while “[d]ue to its fixed meaning, the concept of art does not and cannot, cover truly ‘cinematic’ films [...] If film is an art at all, it certainly should not be confused with the established arts.”⁶⁹ Furthermore, the filmmaker’s role as an artist is clearly defined: “his creativity manifests itself in letting nature in and penetrating it.”⁷⁰ This dilemma is similar to Bazin’s discussion of the issue of adaptation, and although Kracauer does not elaborate the means by which cinema can be art, he attempts a definition of the film artist:

A man who sets out to tell a story but, in shooting it, is so overwhelmed by his innate desire to cover all of physical reality—and also by a feeling that he must cover it in order to tell the story, any story, in cinematic terms—that he ventures ever deeper into the jungle of material phenomena in which he risks becoming irretrievably lost if he does not, by virtue of great efforts, get back to the highways he left.⁷¹

Such description corresponds with the previous one while at the same time establishing a new bridge to Bazin, and to his discussion of realist aesthetics. Bazin’s argument relates the artist’s measure to his ability to *re-present* reality in representation, as becomes evident in his following statement: “Some measure of reality must always be sacrificed in the effort of achieving it.”⁷²

⁶⁸ Kracauer, 36.

⁶⁹ Kracauer, 33.

⁷⁰ Kracauer, 40.

⁷¹ Kracauer, 255.

⁷² Bazin, II, 30.

But how is that reality represented so that we can experience it? Movement would seem to be the cinematic quintessence for Kracauer. Movement (and its representation) is one of the characteristics that made cinema different from photography for Kracauer. However, he also establishes a set of affinities between both mediums. In doing so, Kracauer suggests that for film to express endlessness, film had to “establish the continuum of physical existence,” that is, to represent all possible aspects of whatever physical phenomena the camera captures.⁷³ Kracauer defines five different ways filmmakers might achieve such a goal: by covering “vast expanses of physical reality”, by following the “chain of causes and effects responsible for some event,” by caressing “one single object long enough to make us imagine its unlimited aspects,” by expressing a series of possibilities, or by representing “an indefinite number of material phenomena.”⁷⁴

Through the creation of an “ideal world in the likeness of the real,” to return to Bazin, cinema creates the realm of its own artistic possibilities. And by helping us understand the relation between movement, time, and image, cinema helps elaborate on concepts of thought, which draw us closer to knowledge.⁷⁵ The redemption of physical reality takes place through a new realism that is brought to our attention by means of images in which cinema is no longer “objectivity in time,” but objectivity through time.⁷⁶

No work in the main corpus of my dissertation can be said to represent an exclusively *Lukácsian* or *Bazinian* aesthetic of realism, or even a *Brechtian* one. Rather, as I will demonstrate, more than one of these approaches informs the style and content of the works I

⁷³ Kracauer, 63.

⁷⁴ Kracauer, 64, 65, 68.

⁷⁵ Bazin, I, 14.

⁷⁶ Bazin, I, 14.

analyze. If the narrative development of a work of history or literature can occur following different modes, and the form must change according to changes in the material in order to maintain a realist representation, then seemingly opposing definitions of realism must not be denied an interaction. I call this presence of various aesthetics in one work *particularist* realism, joining de Certeau's definition of "the particular" with Brecht's approach to art, and White's approach to history and narrativity.

Throughout the following three chapters, my analysis will foreground the aesthetic strategies writers and filmmakers use in order to represent the changing realities they are immersed in. These different modes of representation, I argue, contribute in turn to establishing temporalities in these texts that differ from the hegemonic temporality of historicism, which is central to the development of Spain as a modern nation it is today. The first chapter will discuss three novels, Benito Pérez Galdós's *La Primera República*, César M. Arconada's *Reparto de Tierras*, and Ramón J. Sender's *Mr Witt en el Cantón*, and Luis Buñuel's film *Las Hurdes; Tierra sin Pan*, which cast different lights on the two periods of republican governance in Spain, in the late 19th century, and in the first half of the 20th century. These four works, present traits of traditional 19th century realism, surrealism, and socialist realism, coalescing in their representation of events that could open the door for profound sociopolitical change. Furthermore, I analyze them as offering an assessment of those periods which is by no means idealized or even positive, focusing on their representation of the mistakes that contributed to the republican sociopolitical breakdown, as much as they do present a criticism of the alternatives that took over power.

The second chapter examines Carlos Saura's film *La Caza* and Luis Martín-Santos's

novel *Tiempo de Silencio*, particularly how both works highlight the failure of Francoism through the representation of individuals who had not been assimilated by the pervasive narrative of the regime, leading to discontent towards the dictatorship not only at the social, but also at the personal level. The analysis of these works will be based on a stylistic evolution of Neorealism in the case of *La Caza*, and the use of Brechtian practices of montage in the case of *Tiempo de silencio*.

The third chapter questions the unresolved problems generated throughout the Civil War and Francoism, and that the Transición tried to sweep under the rug. By focusing on repressed memories as represented in Suso de Toro's novel *Non Volvas*, and the social exclusion generated throughout the post-Franco years in Alejandro González Iñárritu's film *Biutiful* my analysis engages with the unsettled past, upon which a shaken present has been built.

Finally, in my dissertation I conclude that, through these varying temporalities, those past elements, which the hegemonic temporality and narrative had discarded, can be redeemed for the present, and with them, a completely new relationship with the past is established. As a result, the Benjaminian "moment of danger" points towards the danger that Fascism, socialdemocracy, or, in this case, neoliberalism, will once again control the narrative, and cancel the new relationship of past and present. Therefore, I argue that realism, as the most apt style for the representation of the tensions inherent to society, and the dialectical relationship established between those in power and the oppressed, has as its task to lay bare the processes by which the "moment of danger" can be prolonged, and redemption made feasible.

While the preceding discussion has attempted to frame the concept of realism both historically and theoretically, and the analyses below will refer to this discussion, this

dissertation does not merely weigh the texts it reads as examples of *one* current within realism, or of another. Such an approach overlooks the specific characteristics of each text, and the specificity of the information they make available through representation. Instead, my analysis presents the characteristics that make each of the texts a realist one. Commonalities and differences alike must be registered, enabling a deeper engagement with the perspectives put forward in each text, and with the consequences they have for political and social action. Furthermore, I will not limit the use of theoretical sources used to guide the analysis, but rather use a variety of perspectives for each source; this too leads to a deeper understanding of the works, their aesthetics, and political implications.

Chapter 2

Republican Realisms

Societies exist in time, and conserve images of themselves as continuously so existing. It follows that the consciousness of time acquired by the individual as a social animal is in large measure consciousness of his society's continuity and of the image of its continuity which that society possesses; and the understanding of time, and of human life as experienced in time, disseminated in a society, is an important part of that society's understanding of itself -of its structure and what legitimates it, of the modes of action which are possible to it and in it.

(J. G. A. Pocock, "Time, Institutions, and Action.")

I. Republic of Spain

Like many 19th century writers, Benito Pérez Galdós wrote both historical novels (most notably *Episodios nacionales*) and realist novels. As we have seen, Hayden White and Michel de Certeau agree that the difference between the writing of history and of literary realism lies in their methodology more than in their ontology, since they both set off to present plausible narratives that explain the (positively given) world from a "realistic" perspective. Such was the case with Galdós, who did extensive historical research which served as the basis for realist novels into which he also inscribed fictional characters. His novels, for the greater part, thematize a confrontation between a liberal bourgeoisie and the more traditional sides of Spanish society, often presenting the modernizing progress associated with liberalism in a positive light,

while condemning traditional Catholicism's grasp over society.⁷⁷ It is difficult to gauge the points at which the historical aspect of his novels subdues his literary realism, or those at which the opposite happens; as such, they can be read not only as detailed portrayals of the society of their time (and of its recent past), but also as an effective means of producing liberal, progressive propaganda.

Though Spain's two periods of republican governance have been brief, they were memorable—albeit more in terms of the controversy and discussions surrounding them than in terms of lasting political achievements. The first Spanish Republic lasted less than two years (February 11th 1873 – December 29th 1874), during which socio-political instability became rampant, and ended with the restoration of monarchy after a military insurrection led by General Arsenio Martínez-Campos, which saw Alfonso XII rise to the throne of Spain. His son and successor, Alfonso XIII, saw his own kingdom ended by the Second Republic in 1931, after a period of dictatorships. The Second Republic was interrupted by another military insurrection, led by General Francisco Franco in 1936, which caused the Spanish Civil War. In 1939 the Republic was defeated and Franco constituted his dictatorial regime, which would endure a further thirty-six years. Besides their short duration, both periods shared a profound desire for change, for the modernization of the country, and for a reconfiguration of its political life. However, crucial changes, such as a land reform that moved Spain away from a feudal society, or an educational reform like others found throughout Europe, failed in both instances.

⁷⁷ A clear example of this is *Doña Perfecta* (1876). For a more detailed discussion see Stenzel, Hartmut, and Friedrich Wolfzettel, eds. *Estrategias narrativas y construcciones de una "realidad": lecturas de las "Novelas contemporáneas" de Galdós y otras novelas de la época.*

Historians have cited a variety of factors to explain both failures, but the breadth and scope of the reforms that were attempted is taken to have been very debilitating for both Republics. As Nigel Townson has pointed out, in 1873 people were fighting to include in the new Constitution “universal suffrage, freedom of press, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of education, religious freedom, trial by a jury of peers, administrative decentralization... council meeting in Sevilla, Málaga and Cádiz went as far as to demand separation of Church and State.”⁷⁸ Carolyn Boyd has shown that, torn as it was between all the different petitions and reforms, the Second Republic failed to even develop a cohesive nationalist plan for Spain; this fueled the support of some sectors of society for Franco.⁷⁹

In what follows, I engage with representations of these historical processes by analyzing texts offering different perspectives and in different mediums and modes. These texts deal with different aspects of both Republics: in particular, with political chaos and with the impossibility of modernizing the country and achieving an effective land redistribution. These historical “failures,” I show, are not represented as failures, but rather as opportunities for reassessment of the situation, exacting redemptive characteristics. Ordered chronologically, the works I analyze are: Benito Pérez Galdós’s novel *La primera república* (*The First Republic*, 1911), Luis Buñuel’s documentary *Las Hurdes: Tierra sin Pan* (*Land Without Bread*, 1933), César M. Arconada’s novel *Reparto de tierras* (*Land Redistribution*, 1934), and Ramón J. Sender’s novel *Mr. Witt en el canton* (*Mr. Witt in the Canton*, 1936). Regarding their temporal relationship to the subject matter, these works can be divided into two groups: those that engage historical

⁷⁸ “sufragio universal, la libertad de prensa, la libertad de reunión y asociación política, la libertad de enseñanza, la libertad de cultos, el juicio por jurados, la descentralización administrativa... incluso se llegó a pedir la separación de Iglesia y de Estado, por parte de las juntas de Sevilla, Málaga y Cádiz.” Townson, 91.

⁷⁹ Boyd, 302-07.

moments to which they are coeval, and those that adopt the stance of a realist historical novel. Buñuel's film and Arconada's novel thematize key problems unsolved by governmental reforms, such as underdevelopment, and the still feudal concentration of farmland; both were made during the years of the Second Republic. On the other hand, Galdós's and Sender's novels both engage with a First Republic that is already removed from them in time. However, both works' construction of the narrated past is crucial; for instance, Sender's work frames the beginning of the Civil War in relation to the 19th century wars that brought about, and ended, the First Republic. I focus not only on how these writers and filmmakers relate to their subject matter, and represent the specificity of historical times and places, but also on how present-day engagement with these materials can lead to a different understanding of these texts' subjects, and of the relationship between historical events and aesthetic production.

II. Galdós and Historical Memoir

Benito Pérez Galdós has long been considered a paradigmatic representative of 19th century realism in Spain, as well as the paragon of literary realism for Spanish criticism thereafter. As previously noted, his interest in realist literature grew from his job as a journalist, and his interest in history. After having worked as a journalist since the mid-1860s, he published his first novel, *La Fontana de Oro* (*The Golden Fountain*, 1871), with a clearly historical tendency, in which the eponymous café was the stage in which events of the “Trienio Constitucional” (1820-23) were played.⁸⁰ Following this publication, Galdós alternated between writing his novels and working as a journalist, which made it possible for him to travel quite

⁸⁰ This three-year period, also known as “Trienio Liberal,” meant the resolution of the tensions that had been building up in Spain after the declaration of the 1812 Constitution and the aftermath of the Napoleon invasion of Spain and ensuing War of Independence. However, although the “Trienio Constitucional” meant some of the problems were solved, during those three years other internal confrontations developed, which ended with the king stating his authority after asking France for 95,000 soldiers to end all upheavals.

freely around Spain and even into other European countries. Though even Galdós himself has divided these novels into “realist” and “historical” categories, I find that a separation is warranted neither stylistically nor thematically, especially in light of the fact that novels such as *Doña Perfecta* (1876) present an in-depth level of research, while his *Episodios Nacionales* (*National Episodes*, 1873-1912) are written with a very similar style to his realist *narration*. Furthermore, all his works thematize two overlapping issues: the history of Spain and its recent past, and the often frustrated attempts of the bourgeoisie to become the leading class in the country. Ultimately, the lengths to which Galdós goes in situating the characters and stories of his novels in a specific time frame make his novels—and *La Primera República* is no exception, here—both historical and realist.⁸¹

In *The Historical Novel*, Georg Lukács discusses the history and interrelation of historical novels and realist bourgeois novels as two different modes throughout most of the 19th century.⁸² The case of Spain, however, was different: liberalism entered the political arena slowly, and even peaks like the “Trienio Constitucional” had been followed by political repression and regression. If for Lukács, Zola’s work was already a sign of the decline of bourgeois realism, for Galdós—and therefore, for realism in Spain in general—Zola’s work would finally empower Galdós’s realist technique, following a series of trips to Paris as a journalist. Bourgeois realism did not become fashionable in Spain until the late 1860s, illustrating a contrast between Spanish literary history and that of countries like France or Germany, on whose literature Lukács had based his

⁸¹ Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, 199.

⁸² As previously discussed, Lukács identified a decline in realism after the revolutions of 1848, and more precisely following the collapse of the bourgeois revolutions and the rise of reactionary forces that regained power throughout Europe. See Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, 190.

studies.⁸³ Therefore, the kind of realism that is characteristic of Spanish literature of the period was already influenced by the post-1848 novel, in which the historical and realist tendencies appeared to Lukács to be “devitalizing, dehumanizing and at the same time making-private of history.”⁸⁴

It is precisely at the intersection of private and public, of local and national histories that Galdós works in *La primera república*. Presented as a collection of scenes which do not seem to be pulled together by a clear plot, the novel is one of Galdós’s *Episodios nacionales* (*National Episodes*), which he wrote over a period of thirty years (1872-1912), covering the history of Spain between 1805 and 1880. Contrasting the main narrative mode of the *Episodios Nacionales*, which primarily rely on an episodic narrative style close to both historiography and journalism in order to give added realism to his writing. Indeed, the fragmented pieces of stories and personal musings that make up this narrative is, in my opinion, a deliberate stylistic decision that Galdós made to offer a more realistic representation of the turmoil lived in Spain around the time of the first republic. This particular novel tells the story of Tito Liviano and Mariclió (personification of Clio, the muse of history), both recurrent characters in the series, as Tito gets involved in the political life of the country when he gets a job as a journalist covering the events at the Spanish parliament. The novel represents the connections between the psychological life of the main characters and the external reality of the historical moment, highlighting how they run parallel to one another. Tito, a journalist and supporter of the Republic—and thus a figure representing Galdós—travels throughout Spain and encounters the problems caused by instability in the

⁸³ Galdós’s first novel was published in 1873. Other examples of early Spanish literary realism include Juan Valera’s *Pepita Jiménez* (1874), Pedro Antonio de Alarcón’s *El Escándalo* (*The Scandal*, 1875), Leopoldo Alas ‘Clarín’s *La Regenta* (*The Regent*, 1885), or Luis Coloma’s *Pequeñeces* (*Little Things*, 1890).

⁸⁴ Lukács, *Essays on Realism*, 96.

Republic's government. Tito reflects upon the flaws and excesses of the Republic, which he thought would be solved through the freedom a Republic would provide. Tito's musings are one of the three main narrative styles that can be found in the novel, alongside loosely connected scenes and portraits of characters and places that Tito encounters. In these passages, a comedic approach is dominant as Galdós/Tito takes on the role of the eye-witness, testifying not only descriptively to the fall of the political system, but offering a personal questioning of the support given to it. The interiority of these passages creates an aura of authenticity and regret that could have otherwise been impossible.

At the beginning of the novel, Tito lives in Madrid. Besides frequently attending parliamentary sessions due to his work and contacts, he spends more than half his time contributing to the organization of liberal propaganda, seducing women, and taking part of parties in which food and drink are not scarce. Though Spain is still immersed in the regional wars of succession and the central government had temporarily moved away from monarchy, Tito belongs to a sector of the bourgeoisie that attempts to balance the revolutionary efforts with a more hedonistic approach to life. However, the multiple problems the Republic has to face, from internal divisions in political parties to irresolvable differences in terms of education, land reform, and the role of the Catholic Church, make Tito realize that the project may well not be long-lasting. In another challenge faced by the centralized Republic, Tito sees a possibility of success: the Cantonal Revolution.⁸⁵ Excited about the possibility of success of this bourgeois and proletarian endeavor, Tito travels to Cartagena, where the last third of the novel takes place.

⁸⁵ This popular uprising was perhaps the closest Spain has ever been to the establishment of a federal government, since each of the cantons sought to establish a relatively independent government, which would still hold ties to other cantons, but without recognizing the authority of the central government over them. For a detailed discussion

The novel opens with an invitation to lean in, and lend an ear to the story that is about to be told, in a colloquial style more reminiscent of a storyteller than of a novelist, due to its orality:

Come here once again, faithful parishioner of these pages, and listen to the voice of that good Tito, meddling inquirer of people and things, well-known little devil who entertained you with the vague history of the Savoyard King; do come here once again, and he will tell you how Spain jumped from the royal throne to the stage of the republic, the fatigues, displeasures, and horrible discords that afflicted this our fatherland, as spirited as incautious, and, lastly, the nervous and epileptic rattling that precipitated it to its disgraceful fall.⁸⁶

Here are a series of claims to authenticity and reliability that invite the reader to believe the story that Tito will be telling. By establishing a connection to the previous novel in the series (the Savoyard King, of *Amadeo I*⁸⁷), and commenting on Tito's interest in questioning and interfering with historic events, the novel purports to be an agent in the creation of the historical record. Not only is Tito the narrator, but he has also borne witness to the events he will narrate. Remarkably, such events are not presented to the reader or audience in a way in which they can relate to them from their removed place; by contrast, they must "come here." We recall that Michel de Certeau describes this "here" as the place of history, a place and a time that is different from both the place and time proper to the audience, *and* from the place and time the writing took place in.

Furthermore, the representation Tito makes of that time and place he is introducing is not without controversy, and the assessment he makes of the situation and context of the First

of the cantonalist uprising, see "*España Res publica*": *nacionalización española e identidades en conflicto (siglos XIX y XX)*, Pere Gabriel, Jordi Pomés, Francisco Fernández Gómez (eds.). Granada: Comares, 2013.

⁸⁶ "Venid acá otra vez, fieles parroquianos de estas páginas, y escuchad la voz de aquel buen Tito, entrometido indagador de cosas y personas, familiar diablillo que os entretuvo con la vaga historia de del rey saboyano; venid acá otra vez, y os contará cómo salió España del trono mayestático al tablado de la república, las fatigas, desazones, y horribles discordias que afligieron a esta patria nuestratan animosa como incauta, y por fin, el traqueteo nervioso y epileptic que la precipitó a su desdichada caída," 7. Unless otherwise stated, all translations of Spanish texts in this chapter are mine.

⁸⁷ *Amadeo I* was the previous novel in the *Episodios Nacionales* series, and it narrates the ending of the reign of Amadeo of Savoy, before the beginning of the first republic in 1973.

Republic is not positive. Still addressing the reader, Tito evokes the year 1873, in which Spain was “such a matted jungle or swamp that it is difficult to open paths in its dense vegetation. It is part luminous, part dark and sinister, interwoven with undergrowth against which the ax of the wood-cutter can hardly fight.”⁸⁸ The metaphor further includes birds of prey, as well as carrion-feeders, and several pests that fill the air with noise and blot out the sun. By this recourse to metaphor and exaggeration, the novel develops its own myth of the First Republic, and the forces set against it, while providing an explanation for the exacerbation of the sociopolitical situation, and its eventual downfall.

Historian José María Jover Zamora, presents a close reading of Galdós’s novel vis-à-vis his own research regarding the movement, as well as an assessment of its historiographical reconstructions between 1873 and the publication of Galdós’s novel forty years later.⁸⁹ For, Jover Zamora, in the novel, the First Republic is represented as “an unfinished bourgeois revolution...with the historical process of the liberal, bourgeois revolution as the utmost framework.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, Jover Zamora claims, the novel registers a certain utopian approach that obscures some of the shortcomings of the Republic; disavows some of the merit it could have as historical document. However, he concedes that the importance of the novel stems from the “reflection by a witness, passionate about the history of his time, who wonders, precisely here, about the mysterious relationship between yesterday and tomorrow.”⁹¹ It is precisely this

⁸⁸ “selva o manigua tan enmarañada que es difícil abrir caminos en su densa vegetación. Es en parte luminosa, en parte siniestra y oscura, entretejida de malezas con las cuales lucha difícilmente el hacha del leñador.” Galdós, 7-8.

⁸⁹ See Jover Zamora, *Realidad y Mito de la Primera República (Reality and Myth of the First Republic)*, 1991).

⁹⁰ “una revolución burguesa inacabada...con el proceso histórico de la revolución burguesa, liberal, como plano principalísimo de referencia,” 212.

⁹¹ “reflexión de un testigo apasionado de la historia de su tiempo que se pregunta, precisamente aquí, por la misteriosa relación existente entre el ayer y el mañana,”. 213.

consideration of temporality that I view as the crucial element that shows the potential for redemption this novel can unfold in its pages.

As I have already discussed, through Tito's introduction, the novel establishes the places and time of its events as a specific place, in the same sense that de Certeau talks about a historian constructing the past as an other place. De Certeau's account adduces the concept of chronotope theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin as

intrinsic connectedness of spatial and temporal relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. It expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space). In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history.⁹²

This definition implies an acknowledgement of the existence of a series of generic or archetypal chronotopes, with which several values, emotions, or identities can be associated. In the case of *La Primera República*, all chronotopes are dedicated to the redemption of the positive characteristics of both the Republic and the cantonist movement; the Cartagena Canton acts as a chronotopic likeness of the whole of Spain during the same period.

Upon arriving in Cartagena, Tito narrates the quiet atmosphere existing in the Canton, devoid of demonstrations or other strife, as he goes on a walk on his own. Shortly afterward, he meets an old friend of his, who explains to him how a few months had seen "this wonder of creating a State, rudimentary as you might, but State nonetheless."⁹³ This peace and balance between the different parties, achieved by a system of shared responsibilities in the organization of the Canton, comes slowly to an end after the central government begins to put down the

⁹² Bakhtin, 84-85.

⁹³ "este prodigio de crear un Estado, rudimental si quieres, pero Estado al fin," 132.

cantonal uprisings, an aggression that destabilizes the life inside the Canton.⁹⁴ As Jover Zamora notes, this is one of the most true-to-life descriptions of the historical events in Cartagena, where the republican model had taken hold better than anywhere else in the country.⁹⁵ The novel, therefore, is situated precisely at the link between realist historiography and literature signaled by Hayden White; as a chronotope, its articulation of Cartagena anchors both a fictional *and* a historiographical disentanglement of the conflicts surrounding the First Republic.

As we have seen, Walter Benjamin felt dialectical materialism's purpose was to break the chain of events that positivistic historicism considered stepping stones necessary to reach the present moment, and that, according to him, are arranged in a "homogenous, empty time" which is devoid of meaning, and can never be regained for the present. By establishing the Cartagena Canton as a chronotope of the Primera República, in which all the societal and political tensions are enacted and manifested in time and emplotted in space, *La Primera República* establishes a temporality different from that of the nation. This different temporality allows for the redemption of a series of values such as the aforementioned Lukács-defended collaboration between bourgeoisie and proletariat, federalism as political organizing system, and faith in social change. These characteristics, crucial for the republic, would be important once again in the moment of crisis within which monarchic restoration would take place after the collapse of Prime Minister

⁹⁴ Galdós, 133-140.

⁹⁵ Jover Zamora, 150-1. The degree of peaceful cohabitation in Cartagena prior to the attacks from the central government can be verified against texts such as *Historia de la interinidad y guerra civil de España desde 1868*, (*History of temporariness and civil war in Spain since 1868*) by historian Ildefonso Antonio Bermejo, or *Memoria y comentarios sobre el sitio de Cartagena* (*Memory and commentary on the siege of Cartagena*, 1877) by General López Domínguez.

Antonio Maura's top-down revolution⁹⁶, and in preparation of the possibility to bring about a Second Republic.

III. Second Republic—Neither Land Nor Bread

Set in the region of Extremadura, Luis Buñuel's *Las Hurdes: Tierra sin Pan* (*Land Without Bread*, 1933) and César M. Arconada's *Reparto de tierras* (*Land redistribution*, 1934) both deal with the failure of the Second Republic to do away with the backwardness of the countryside and its traditional late-feudal socio-economic relationships. *Las Hurdes*'s status as a documentary has been questioned due to Buñuel's deliberate intervention in the events shown in the film, such as the shooting of a goat or covering a dead donkey in honey so that flies would pester it; his claim that it is a surrealist film augments this uncertainty. However, the film does examine those unrepresented and disposed of during the Second Republic, figures dealt with in even more depth by Arconada, whose novel's very title points towards one of the Republic's greatest failures: the inability to give land to those who worked somebody else's land but could have never owned any themselves. In light of this approach, Arconada's and Buñuel's works resonate with Brecht's conception of "realist writing," which for Brecht is "writing from the standpoint of the class, which provides the broadest solutions for the most pressing difficulties human society faces."⁹⁷ Just as Galdós wrote about the First Republic from the standpoint of the then-ascendant revolutionary bourgeoisie, Buñuel and Arconada articulate their criticism of Spain from the standpoint of the proletariat, against the new elite that the bourgeoisie had formed with aristocracy.

⁹⁶ Antonio Maura y Montaner was Prime Minister between 1907 and 1909, and in that period tried force a series of liberal reforms, often echoing the ones proposed throughout the different juntas of the Primera República, most of which were not passed, the most notable exception being the ban of anarchist presses and unions.

⁹⁷ Brecht, "The Popular and the Realistic," 114.

Las Hurdes is one of the most controversial documentaries produced in Spain. This controversy is, at least, twofold; first, around its aesthetics: Is it possible to talk about “an ethnographic surrealist film,” like Jeffrey Ruoff does?⁹⁸ Does this mean it is not completely factual, or that it wavers in its surrealism? Second, the film is controversial because of all the complications about its distribution, prohibition, and multiplicity of versions. Buñuel himself has stated that he made *Land Without Bread* because he was concerned with the conditions in which these people lived, but also because his vision about reality had changed: “I saw reality very differently from the way in which I would have seen it before surrealism.”⁹⁹ Though at the time the film was made, Buñuel’s split with the Surrealists was nearly complete, the film keeps some of the characteristics of the movement: particularly its desire to show a reality that must be transformed. However, André Bazin also claimed that Buñuel’s surrealism “is no more than a desire to reach the bases of reality; what does it matter if we lose our breath there like a diver weighted down with lead, who panics when he cannot feel sand underfoot.”¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, some of the images, like the bull coming out of one of the houses at the beginning of the film, the donkey that is stung to death by bees, or the dead baby who breathes heavily, together with the raw depiction of the harrowing life conditions in the villages and farmsteads, add with their surrealist extremity and allusiveness to the aesthetics of a portrayal of a reality that is beyond that which is commonly known.

⁹⁸ Ruoff, J. (1998), “An Ethnographic Surrealist Film: Luis Buñuel’s *Land Without Bread*”, *Visual Anthropology Review*, 14: 1, 45-57.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Kyrrou, A. (1963), *Luis Buñuel: An Introduction* trans. A. Foulke. New York: Simon and Schuster) 113.

¹⁰⁰ André Bazin, “Cruelty and Love in *Los Olvidados*,” *The Cinema of Cruelty*, 51–58, 57.

Such uncommon reality makes Buñuel such an interesting director for Bazin, who referred to him as “one of the rare poets of the screen—perhaps its greatest.”¹⁰¹ It is precisely through Buñuel’s ability to create “poetic” images, particularly allegories, that the connections between what the film shows and the problematic reality of Spain at the time are shown, under layers of Benjaminian rubble. The two most telling allegories are articulated through figures of power or authority, namely the school and the Church. In discussing education reform, which had been a central issue in Spanish politics for over a century, *Las Hurdes* denounces the failed approach and poor results the education system is producing. The local school, which constitutes for the children one of the very few sources of bread for the region, nevertheless provides an education which is simultaneously out of touch with the lives of the children, and in complete collusion with the ruling classes. The voiceover reports: teachers “teach these hungry children, like everywhere, that the sum of the angles of the triangle is equal to two right angles.”¹⁰² The inadequacy of this education, designed to contribute to a uniform development, but incapable of providing any concrete means for these children to improve their livelihoods, is further underscored by the panning movement of the camera, showing their confused faces, before finally showing a drawing of a noblewoman, and the bare feet of the children [Figure 2.1]. Furthermore, the lesson the children learn in school is “the moral that prevails in our civilized world: Respect the goods of others.”¹⁰³ [Figure 2.2] This teaching becomes an obscene joke in the face of the children’s situation; neither they nor their families possess any goods, while at the same time they are being reminded to respect the property of those who do have. This

¹⁰¹ André Bazin, “*Subida al Cielo*,” *The Cinema of Cruelty: From Buñuel to Hitchcock*, ed. François Truffaut, trans. Sabine d’Estrée with Tiffany Fliss (New York: Seaver Books, 1982), 59–63, 63.

¹⁰² 8’20”-8’29”.

¹⁰³ 9’30”-9’37”

ecumenical principle is a mechanism not so much of repression as of conditioning its audience to accept the social order as unchanging.

The pervasiveness of the Catholic Church in everyday life is manifest throughout the film: from the writing on the La Alberca houses' thresholds at the very beginning, to the mourning woman who wanders the village praying for the dead at the end. In two other instances the relationship between the Church's influence and the ruined, abject status of the hurdaños is quite clearly depicted. The first one is the abandoned monastery, located between the more fortunate villages and Las Hurdes proper. In his study on tragic drama, Benjamin claims that "allegory is in the realm of thought what ruins are in the realm of things."¹⁰⁴ In the film, the ruins of the monastery present an allegory for what Las Hurdes really is: a place outside time, where even the Church has failed to keep a permanent physical presence. Despite the collapse and abandonment of the monastery, and all its hermitages, religion is still at the center of the life in the villages, and its prominence becomes extremely clear when the film shows the interior of the church in one of the poorest villages [Figure 2.3]. Emerging as the only example of anything that can be considered luxurious, the interior of the church, with its altar and a small altarpiece, stands in stark comparison with the interior of the average houses, in which "a roll trimmed and the alignment of pans and pot covers denote a certain sense of decoration"¹⁰⁵ [Figure 2.4]. Whereas Benjamin insists on the redemption of the past as part of the process to undo capitalism's control of social life, *Las Hurdes* redeems the present, counterbalancing the myths of both the glorious past of the nation-Empire, and the equally glorious future of a modern Spain, whose contemporary reality is being ignored by the government.

¹⁰⁴ *Trauerspiel* study, I, 354.

¹⁰⁵ 24'00"-24'38"

This reality, however, was to be kept hidden for several years. Las Hurdes, the inhospitable region of Spain the film shows, became widely known outside of Spain after Maurice Legendre published a 1927 study of the region and its very poor conditions.¹⁰⁶ The uproar caused by the book was so widespread that the King himself visited the area and ordered the construction of a highway leading to the region. Buñuel's film criticizes this failed attempt to modernize the region by showing, at the very beginning, the contrast between the highway and the streets of La Alberca, the biggest village in the area. Criticism of this kind was not well received by the Spanish government. In 1933, during the Republic, all films needed a permit from the Secretary of Fine Arts in order to be exhibited; thus although it was not called censorship, the practice was very much alive at the time. The first screening of *Land Without Bread* took place in 1933 as a press screening in Madrid, which was followed by a governmental ban.¹⁰⁷ After this, Buñuel convinced the president of the council for the region of Las Hurdes to watch the film with him, while he read the text aloud, as he had done in the press screening.¹⁰⁸

At the end of the screening, the council director told Buñuel that the film showed a horribly distorted vision of the entire region, that it had insulted all the region's residents, and that he had seen with his own eyes "Carts filled in extreme abundance with wheat" and that "the dances of the Alberca are among the most beautiful ones in the world,"¹⁰⁹ to which Buñuel replied he had been in seventeen villages where nobody had ever seen bread. Not only was the

¹⁰⁶ Buñuel talks about this in one of the interviews that form part of Colina, J. de la & Pérez Turrent, T., *Buñuel por Buñuel*. Madrid: Plot, 1993.

¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any newspapers articles about these events. The exposition that follows has been made following the aforementioned interview with José de la Colina and Francisco Aranda's *Luis Buñuel: A Critical Biography*.

¹⁰⁸ This is related by Aranda in his book and also by Buñuel himself in his interview with de la Colina.

¹⁰⁹ Also related by Buñuel in the interview and by Aranda in the biography. This text in my translation of Buñuel words during the interview.

film banned for exhibition in Spain, but the government also issued communications to Spanish embassies throughout the world asking for immediate action to keep the film from being shown anywhere. This ban lasted through the last years of the Republic and also through the Civil War. Franco's dictatorship maintained the ban, due to the film's being "defamatory against Spain," and added a warrant for the arrest of Buñuel.

In 1937, Pierre Braunberger began distributing what at the time was the only print of the film; this version, according to Buñuel, had been spliced together on a table at his home with the help of a magnifying glass, before he fled the War.¹¹⁰ Abel Jacquin was hired to record the text that Buñuel and Pierre Unik had originally written for its release in Spain in French. Brahms's *Fourth Symphony* was also included as the musical soundtrack.¹¹¹ Later that year, Buñuel supervised the dubbing of a version in English, which became the "official" distribution copy for the United States, and which included the same musical accompaniment. A copy of this version is preserved at the City University of New York.

This print is the source for the first of the two versions of the film available in English, with the other being one that Buñuel himself re-edited and donated to the MoMA in 1940.¹¹² Certain differences between the two texts can be attributed, as Marcé Ibáñez has pointed out, to Buñuel's change of heart about the political situation in Spain. The differences can be appreciated in the voice-over commentary, but they deeply affect the impressions the film can cause over the viewer. Both versions differ in their presentation of *Las Hurdes* and the conditions

¹¹⁰ Buñuel in his autobiography, *My Last Sigh*, 137.

¹¹¹ Aranda, in the biography, claims the music was used for the first time at the press screening in Madrid, but Buñuel, in his interview with dela Colina, places the origin of the music on Braunberger's distribution prints.

¹¹² In Ibáñez, Marcé, *Serious Experiment: Land Without Bread, 1933', Luis Buñuel: New Readings*, eds. Peter William Evans and Isabel Santaolalla (London: British Film Institute Publishing, 2004), 27-42.

of life there; while the beginning of the 1937 version merely points to the way in which two skulls seem to preside over the destiny of the villages, the 1940 version includes a commentary on how feudalism is still very much alive in the area, and the skulls are actually on the wall of the church in the main village, thus associating the problems of the village to the backwardness and the increasing power of the Catholic Church in Francoist Spain. Later on, but still toward the beginning of the film, during a celebration in the village, we see a baby laden with silver pendants. These are compared with “religious charms of barbaric tribes,” in the CUNY version, but as “charms of African natives” in the MoMA version. This difference reinforces Buñuel’s move from the criticism of the Republican government and Spaniards that was present in the 1937 copy towards a criticism of the Francoist regime; here he pinpoints the role of Christianity in the misery of the *hurdaños*. Although the commentary in both versions underlines that the trinkets are Christian, by removing the “barbaric tribes” from the second commentary, the film humanizes the inhabitants and puts the blame on the religious organizations that rule over their customs.¹¹³

Multiple stories have been told about the film, from the ones told by colleagues and friends to the ones written by political enemies and film critics and historians, or by Buñuel himself. Further, the constant changes Buñuel applied to the film have made it nearly impossible to ascertain which print is closer to the original idea he had in mind when he decided to make it. This approach, similar to Brecht’s reworking of his plays, and desire to challenge established aesthetics or predispositions about art, suggest we regard Buñuel’s engagement with the reality of Spain at various times as transcending a mere surrealist approach, and instead representing discrete, repeated challenges.

¹¹³ For a more detailed discussion of the differences between the two prints, see Ibarex, *ibid.*

César Muñoz Arconada is a strange case in the cultural history of Spain in the first half of the 20th century. His first publication was a self-published book-long essay on the music of Claude Debussy,¹¹⁴ and he was initially part of the editorial board of *La Gaceta Literaria*, between January 1927 and December 1928, before becoming chief editor, a position he would hold until September 1929.¹¹⁵ Besides his editorial and essayistic work, he prolifically published poetry, drama, novels, and short stories. And despite an early flirtation with fascism, he became a fervent proponent of communism, and slowly developed his own approach to the aesthetics of socialist realism.¹¹⁶ He continued his role as editor in the newly founded Ediciones Ulises, and even earned his own entry in the “Enciclopedia Espasa” in 1930. However, he took a critical stance on the Second Republic, based on what, for him, was insufficient reform, and after the Civil War broke out, he became a reporter in the Asturian front for *Mundo Obrero*, and later for the communist journal *Mono Azul*, before he became an exile in the USSR, where he died in 1964. During his years in exile, he continued his literary production, more centered on theatre, and was founder and editor in chief of the journal *Literatura Soviética*, published in Spanish in Moscow, and which continued after his death. Despite all these achievements, Arconada remained an obscure figure until very recently, and there are still few studies devoted to his sizable works.

¹¹⁴ *En torno a Debussy*, 1926.

¹¹⁵ *La Gaceta Literaria*, published between 1926 and 1932 was the main outlet of the vanguards of the late 1920s, and particularly of the so-called *Generación del '27*. In the words of its founder and director, Ernesto Giménez Caballero, the journal “was the precursor of the Vanguards in Literature, Art, and Politics...from *La Gaceta* would emerge the first communists and fascists. [*La Gaceta* fue la precursora del Vanguardismo en la Literatura, Arte y Política. Una política que por dos años resultó unitiva y espiritual y desde 1930 divergente, pues la juventud se fue politizando. Y de *La Gaceta* saldrían los inspiradores del comunismo y del fascismo en España]” (Giménez Caballero, 66) My Translation.

¹¹⁶ He helped Giménez Caballero translate Curzio Malaparte’s *Italia contra Europa* (1923) as *En torno al casticismo italiano* (1929).

Reparto de tierras (1934) is set in the same region of Spain as *Las Hurdes*. It narrates the story of a clash between two social classes, and between two ways of understanding reality. It is organized in a very curious structure, divided into a prologue, a first part, an intermission (“Intermedio”), a second part, and an epilogue. The prologue, intermission and epilogue, although amounting to less than a fourth of the whole length of the novel, establish and summarize what is narrated in the two main parts. In the prologue we are introduced to the two groups of characters: the rich and the poor, and describes how power dynamics are constituted between and within each group. The intermission highlights the unwillingness and incapacity of the ruling classes to adapt to modernity and its challenges, particularly those presented by Marxism, which is discussed at some length over five pages. The epilogue presents the possibility of change embodied in the school, which at the beginning of the novel had been under the control of the landowners, and at the end is controlled and attended by peasants. Between these sections, tension develops between landowners and workers, as the latter slowly awaken to their alienation from the fruit of their labor, until they decide to take over and collectivize one of the bigger pasture fields in the region. This, in turn, causes their repression by different police groups, at the behest of bourgeois power, although the ending leaves some room for the possibility of change.

The novel thus presents a quasi-Manichean view of social relations at the time, unlike his previous novel, *Los ricos y los pobres* (*The Rich and The Poor*, 1933), which, despite its title, is not as unwavering in its defense of the proletariat and its condemnation of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy as *Reparto*. During his exile in France, shortly before his final move to the USSR, Arconada wrote about the criticism he had drawn for such an approach in this novel: “[i]f in this semi-feudal Spain I would devote my novels to intellectual digressions and spiritual

problems, which nobody would understand, I would commit, on the one hand, a grave dialectical error, and on the other hand, a treason to the proletariat.”¹¹⁷ Arconada’s approach diverges from what Lukács would consider proper socialist realism, because social contradictions are not located within the bourgeoisie but rather emerge from the dialectic between them and what Brecht would refer to as “the masses.” The same didacticism that fueled most of Brecht’s realist “epic” theatre is also present in Arconada’s approach to socialist realism. Explaining his interest in the plight of the peasants, he claims that “my love of the ‘peasant’ is my hate of the feudalism that makes him a slave, that brutalizes him, and as I am convinced that only the revolution may free him, I want to teach him to be revolutionary, which equals to teaching a prisoner how to break the bars of his cell.”¹¹⁸

The process by which such a transformation must be achieved begins with a denunciation of the Church, though the subtitle of the prologue: “Let us praise God, for He has made Extremadura rich.”¹¹⁹ The prologue then moves on to a criticism of the education system, and of the way it robs the children of their days of leisure. The complete disparity between their lives and what they are taught underscores the utter pointlessness of their instruction. More than merely adding to the criticism already stated in *Las Hurdes*, here it takes another turn, focusing also on how schooling takes for granted the time the children are to be in the classroom. Their reality, however, is quite different, as they must be ready to leave school and go help with chores and farm work at a moment’s notice. Responsibility for this situation is split not between the

¹¹⁷ “Si en esta España semifeudal, me entregara en mis novelas a divagaciones intelectuales y a problemas espirituales, que nadie comprendería, cometería, de una parte un grave error de dialéctica, y, por otra, una traición respecto a la causa revolucionaria.” Arconada, *Nueva Cultura*, Valencia, Vol. 11, March-April 1936, 37.

¹¹⁸ “mi amor por el «campesino» es mi odio contra el feudalismo que lo hace esclavo, que le embrutece y, como estoy convencido de que sólo la revolución puede liberarle, quiero enseñarle a ser revolucionario, lo que equivale a enseñar a un prisionero a romper las rejas de su calabozo.” *Nueva Cultura*, Valencia, Vol. 11, March-April 1936, 38.

¹¹⁹ “Alabemos a Dios, que ha hecho rica a Extremadura.” Arconada, *Reperto*, 69.

school and the parents, but between the school and the bourgeoisie, who make it impossible for the farmers to hire more hands, and therefore condemn the children to receive an education which will be both incomplete and irrelevant.

As in *Las Hurdes*, pronounced cynicism about the relationship between indoctrination and the children of the proletariat is exemplified in the teachings they receive. Discussing the geography of Spain, the teacher tells them about Extremadura, the region where they live, which is “the most glorious region of Spain.”¹²⁰ Such glory is related to all the men who died for Spain, who took part in the discovery and conquest of the Americas. Furthermore, the teacher goes on to say, Extremadura is so majestic due to the richness of its land, where “everything grows, that has everything, fruit, cattle, prairies, oaks, bountiful orchards and pasture fields.”¹²¹ The exulting speech is contrasted by the grim feeling the children share when they leave the class to go work on the glorious fields of Extremadura.

The first half of the novel continues the dialectical confrontation outlined in the prologue, expanding it to include the relationship between landowners and workers who are mainly represented by the unnamed first person narrator, Damián, a peasant, and the new village doctor. At issue are the consequences of the doctor taking a political stance. After the first labor reform laws of the Second Republic had been passed, a few workers found themselves unemployed, and homeless, due to the decisions the landowners had taken. This leads to a meeting, in which a schism between the workers is made evident: the older ones claim that complaining and demanding better work conditions will only cause them more trouble, while the younger ones decide to continue their demands for shorter hours and better pay. When the landowners decide

¹²⁰ “La región más gloriosa de España.” Arconada, *Reparto*, 76.

¹²¹ “Aquí se cría de todo, hay de todo, fruta, ganados, prados, encinas, dehesas productivas.” Arconada, *Reparto*, 76.

the land will not be worked, thus leaving all workers jobless, the situation escalates to the point that the workers decide to make good the unfulfilled promise of the government, and give land to those who want to work it. After they begin working the land they were thrown off of, the landowners call the Guardia Civil, and all workers are arrested and taken before the judge. Facing the accusation, Damián wonders, “Wasn’t the Republic supposed to give us land? I’ve been given none, and plenty of truncheons, instead!”¹²² This confrontation ends with the workers sent home, empty-handed, and with the threat that if they repeat their offense, they will be put in jail. The section ends with an allegorical reference to the unattended fields, that becomes an incitement for further actions: “when other ploughs enter and remove the feudal society that lives off the fields, these fields will be turned over to the peasants, and the weeds and grass of rabbits and game will become crops, full of corn, and of bountiful harvests.”¹²³

Throughout this first half of the novel, there are several conversations about issues such as class struggle, and unionizing, and “communist” is used as an insult by the landowners, the Guardia Civil, and the judge. However, the strictly dialectical confrontation is delayed until after the intermission. Divided into three small episodes, the intermission acts as a hinge between the thesis and antithesis represented by the novel’s two main parts. If the first half of the novel had been centered on the peasants, with very little presence of the landowners other than through their proxies, the intermission, subtitled “On the other end,” is focused exclusively on the landowners.¹²⁴ The first mini-episode of the intermission, entitled “Feudal lords enjoy their

¹²² “¿No decían que la República nos iba a dar al tierra? ¡Pues lo que veo es que nos da guardias de la porra!” Arconada, *Reaprito*, 175.

¹²³ “Solo cuando otros arados entren y remuevan la sociedad feudal que vive de las dehesas, las dehesas se entregarán a los campesinos, y la hierba silvestre de los conejos y la caza se transformará en hierba cultivada, de trigos y cosechas provechosas.” Arconada, *Reparto*, 176.

¹²⁴ *En el otro confín*.

coffee,”¹²⁵ shows the landowners enjoying a meal as they meet with the priest, the judge, and the mayor to discuss the situation that has been unfolding. The episode then stands in contrast with the beginning of the novel, when the workers had no food, or institutional concern or support for their problems. The second mini-episode, “What is Marxism?”¹²⁶ narrates the discussion these men have about the issue that they understand is at the center of their worries: the development of a social conscience amongst the peasants, and their desire to change the social and power relationships. Ironically, the role of explaining what Marxism is not given to the workers, but instead is left for the men in power, who fail to understand it. Again, the landowners, the judge, the mayor, and the priest, who is about to retire, meet to enjoy their leisure time and material abundance. Then, when talking about the priest who will replace Don Pantaleón, they begin to philosophize about the changing, unsafe world they live in, as they rue the fact that the young doctor is siding with the peasants. This new situation makes them contemplate the possibility that the new priest may also abandon their group, which could exacerbate the instability of their social situation.

What they consider a betrayal by the doctor is explained by the priest as the work of communism and Freemasonry. Everybody else agrees, even though most of them do not know what a Freemason is, and certainly several do not understand what Marxism is, either.¹²⁷ The priest attempts to find the meaning of the word by looking it up in a dictionary “from his days at the seminary,” but he cannot find it there, upon which he admonishes all those present that it is a word of the devil, and must not be uttered at all.¹²⁸ Through these scenes, the novel accuses the

¹²⁵ “Los señores feudales toman café con leche.”

¹²⁶ ¿Qué es el marxismo?

¹²⁷ 187.

¹²⁸ “de su época de seminario.” 188.

rich and powerful not of denying the possibility of change because they have good reason to do so, but of remaining willfully ignorant of the situation, as if the power they hold over the land would thereby remain uncontested. Furthermore, the novel, by avoiding presenting even a working definition of Marxism which might constrain or color narrated events, focuses instead on the performance of dialectical representation at the level of its structure. Thus in the second half, after in the third mini-episode of the intermission, one of the landowners claims that “it seems everything is back to normal.”¹²⁹

This normality is soon disturbed by events ranging from the first civil wedding in the village, which is opposed by all powers-that-be, through an anarchist bombing, to an outbreak of malaria—all of which drive the narrative towards the unavoidable resolution of the dialectical relationships represented. After the landowners conspire with the judge and the mayor to reject the land redistribution which is ordered by the central government, Floriano, one of the most active peasants, decides to blow the Church up with dynamite he steals off one of the landowners. Refusing to single him out, and staying together in solidarity, several of the peasants are arrested and taken to prison, where they receive the visit of the doctor, who had been previously expelled from the village, and replaced by another doctor, closer to the views of those in power. This seemingly negative ending is counterbalanced by the news the doctor gives Floriano: more people have decided to take over unused lands, and nobody is now out of work due to the whims of the landowners. Furthermore, despite the apparently grim outlook of the situation, the doctor brings some good news for the men in jail: the old teacher, under whose teachings the indoctrination into compliance of several generations had take place, died. The new teacher, a member of the “Education Workers’ Union” and a communist, brings with him a new

¹²⁹ “Parece que se vuelve a la normalidad.” 193.

approach to teaching. He eliminates physical punishment, ends mandatory mass attendance, and, more importantly, brings a new perspective.¹³⁰

This new perspective, a result of the dialectical confrontation narrated throughout the novel, incorporates part of the teachings from the very beginning, particularly the message that Extremadura is a very rich region. However, following all the strife the workers of the region faced for over a year, the lesson has been modified and improved, as the teacher states that “[c]hildren, dear friends, yes, Extremadura IS rich...but for the rich!”¹³¹ The children change their attitude towards the school, becoming more engaged with what they are taught, and although the arrested workers will still be in prison for years, they know that in the new generations, there is hope for the future. Redemption, in the novel, follows therefore the Benjaminian index of the past, for it is with the new generations that the redemption lies, not only of their own future, but of the previous generations who could not fulfill the downfall of feudalism in Spain. However, as we will see, such redemption is still pending, following the events that ended in the Spanish Civil War.

IV. Return to the Canton, Redeem the Republic

The last work I will be analyzing in this first chapter connects back to the events of the Primera República narrated in Galdós’s novel. Ramón J. Sender’s *Mr Witt en el Cantón* focuses on a British citizen who is in Cartagena when the city and the surrounding area declared its autonomy from the rest of Spain. As a result, he becomes Britain’s makeshift ambassador to the region. With both a narrative structure and style similar to Galdós’s in *La Primera República*, the

¹³⁰ “Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Enseñanza.” 272.

¹³¹ “¡Niños, queridos amigos, sí, Extremadura es rica...pero para los ricos!” 275.

novel tells the story of a frustrated insurrection that had tried to achieve a different society in the middle of the turmoil of the First Republic. Written in 1936, the novel is as infused with Sender's own political and personal experiences and thoughts about the Second Republic as Galdós's about the first. *Mr Witt* presents, through the evocation of a past revolution, the conditions of failure of the then current one, which would also be crushed by a military uprising. Engaging with the sociopolitical situation at the time it was written by working through the turmoil surrounding the 19th century republic, this novel relies on an apparently neutral third person omniscient narrator to connect its representation of the past to its coeval milieu. It is precisely through the neutral stance of the narrator and the abundance of historical details that this novel connects with *La Primera República*, and *Reparto de tierras*.

Ramón J. Sender was very politically active before and during the civil war, and his literary production has been a repository of his political interests. Like Arconada, he also had a change of mind that led him to be a proponent of Communism in the last years of the Second Republic. However, Sender began as an anarchist. As a member of the CNT (Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores, National Federation of Workers), one of his most influential jobs was as a columnist for the CNT's newspaper, *Solidaridad Obrera* (*Workers' Solidarity*). However, his criticism of federalism, which had entered the Spanish political debate in the 19th century via Mikhail Bakunin's conceptualization, meant the beginning of his movement away from anarchism and toward communism. In a series of articles published during 1934, he criticized the republican system as social democracy, viewing it as a state of connivance between the socialist party and the bourgeoisie. In September 1934, he directly attacked Francisco Largo Caballero, a socialist who had been Minister of Labor during the first two years of the Second Republic, and who would become its Prime Minister during the Civil War. Sender's criticism was based

on Largo Caballero's claim, as chair of the Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT, Workers' General Union), that peasants were not true proletarians, and that because of that they would not be part of the "dictatorship of the proletariat."¹³²

Mr Witt en el Cantón was written after Sender's departure from *Solidaridad Obrera*, and distancing from the CNT, fueled by the lack of fulfillment of the objectives the government of the Republic had set for itself. By 1934, the CNT had become very passive in its treatment of the government and the slow pace of reform, even after the conservative turn of 1933 general elections, led by Alejandro Lerroux with the support of the Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (CEDA, Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Right-Wing Groups). The conservative measures taken, including the expulsion of all non-right wing groups from the government, led to mounting tensions that ended in the Revolutionary General Strike of 1934. This strike, which was initially followed throughout Spain, was rapidly stopped by the government, until the most gruesome episode developed in Asturias. The fight in this region unfolded into a full-blown military conflict, ending in a total of 2,000 casualties and over 25,000 prisoners, in the course of two weeks, from October 5th to October 19th. The sociopolitical aftermath of these events was an even deeper turn towards conservatism, accompanied by a greater discontent from the left-wing movements and the then unrepresented working classes.

Mr. Witt en el Cantón was written between the 1934 uprising, and the coup d'état that, on July 18th 1936, would mean the beginning of the civil war. Due to its temporal location, and its content, it can be read as both an assessment of the 1934 events and as a warning about the dire possibilities for the future, through the lens of a study of humanity in one of the most violent

¹³² Sender, Ramón J., "Proponemos la modificación del nombre: Alianzas Obreras y Campesinas", in *Mundo Obrero*, September 31st, 1934.

episodes of the First Republic. The novel is thus shot through with different temporalities, from the recreation of the Cantonalist rebellion, to an allegorical representation of the events of 1934, and even in relation to the pre-republican rebellion of 1868.¹³³ Following a similar narrative structure to that of Galdós's *La Primera República*, the narrative of *Mr. Witt* initially establishes two different narrative registers, historical, and personal: the events of the Cartagena uprising, and Mr. Witt's relationship with his wife, Milagritos. Furthermore, the novel includes a pattern of recurring memories related to the 1868 rebellion, by which a personal connection is established through Mr. Witt with the past of the city.

Charles L. King describes Mr. Witt as “a highly civilized gentleman, an intelligent, book-collecting man of liberal views who believes in progress and justice.”¹³⁴ Witt's identification as a foreign engineer, thus linked to progress and foreign influence, as well as to a good social and economic standing, casts him as one of the characters who could be the hero in a Galdós's novel. However, this image slowly dissolves throughout the novel, as he comes to embody the values of the progressive bourgeoisie that faced its moment of inner turmoil during the First Republic in Spain, and which then failed to act or understand its situation. Whereas the First Republic government essentially comprised members of the bourgeoisie, the cantonalist rebellion had at its base an important anarchist component, including the *Bakunian* federalist ideal and the petty bourgeoisie. Mr Witt's reaction to the uprising and his evolution as a character bespeak his (and Milagritos's) relationship to the city and the different social classes.

¹³³ Known as the Glorious Revolution, it meant the destitution of Queen Isabel II, and the beginning of the period known as “Sexenio democrático,” which ended in 1874 after the collapse of the *Primera República*.

¹³⁴ King, Charles L., 60.

At the beginning of the novel, after the Republic has been constituted, and the first liberal reforms are being passed throughout the country, Mr. Witt enjoys a position of privilege. The most he can be bothered by lower class people is when they mispronounce his name, calling him “Mr. Güí.”¹³⁵ Milagritos, on the other hand, is a slightly secluded character, despite being very outgoing and lively. This ambivalence in her character is linked to the event from the 1868 rebellion that reappears at different moments in the novel: the execution of one of her relatives. Froilán Carvajal de Rueda, Milagritos’s uncle (although she refers to him as “cousin”) was executed by firing squad due to his revolutionary activism, and Milagritos cannot forget that despite his position and influence, Mr. Witt did nothing to save him. As the novel progresses and the Catalanist uprising occurs, Mr. Witt becomes more secluded, realizing that the turn of events may be against his interests, while Milagritos begins to take a more active part in the life of the Canton. Mr. Witt observes the events in the city through his binoculars from their house, and becomes a detached witness of most of the events that follow, from the relatively peaceful daily life, to the violence following the central government attack on the Canton. Like de Certeau’s historian, Mr. Witt remains detached from his object of study, refusing to take part in any of the actions, or to let events affect him. The narrator describes the insignificance of his relationship with both the *leales* (those who supported the central government) and the *federales* (supporters of the rebellion), as follows: “[w]hen we say that both sides accepted his reflections, we mean at the personal level, very limitedly, and by only a few members of each tendency.”¹³⁶ Milagritos, by taking a more active role, saves Mr. Witt’s life at the end of the novel, giving them a chance to obtain a different future for themselves.

¹³⁵ Sender, p. 13. This pronunciation, ironically, underscores Mr. Witt’s character as a “yes-man” through its similarity with the French “oui.”

¹³⁶ “Cuando decimos que los dos bandos aceptaban sus reflexiones nos referimos al terreno personal, mu limitado, de algunos representantes de cada tendencia.” 216.

The changes in both characters, as well as the representation of the rebellion, are deeply affected by Antonete, a very controversial character who is intrinsically connected to the uprising.¹³⁷ As pointed out by Francis Lough in his essay “History and Fiction in *Mr. Witt en el Cantón*,” Antonete “does not appear in the flesh in the first six chapters—the build up to and the declaration of the insurrection.”¹³⁸ This characteristic, together with his capability to make soldiers change sides and join the rebellion, make Antonete an allegorical character, in opposition to Mr. Witt, and his lack of involvement in life. However, that Antonete, like the cantonalist rebellion, does not side with any of the factions fighting for the control of the Republic, ultimately causes his downfall. Without any support from outside the Canton, Antonete is forced to go into exile, but if Antonete’s future in the Canton is foreclosed, so is the Canton’s future itself, as the search for alliances outside leads to the intensification of the attacks. As Lough points out, at the beginning of the novel Antonete was the driving force of the rebellion, but later on, “both he and the reader learn that this idea may find some place in the minds of the military and popular leaders of the Canton, but that it is not powerful enough to overcome the instinct of self-interest.”¹³⁹

Once again, Mr. Witt’s lack of action is detrimental to the rebellion, as he fails to help Antonete by talking to the British Consul. Antonete hoped Mr. Witt could convince the Consul to keep Great Britain from interfering, after the central government had declared all Canton ships pirate, and requested that all sovereign states attacked any Canton ships they encountered. Furthermore, in Antonete’s absence, the war for the Canton develops parallel to the

¹³⁷ According to historian María Alice Medioni, a man by the name of Antonio Gálvez was crucial in the development of the rebellion as a moderate one. 13.

¹³⁸ Lough, 280.

¹³⁹ Lough, 286.

disintegration of Mr. Witt and Milagritos's marriage, as Mr. Witt becomes more and more self-involved (fearing Milagritos may be having affairs with different men). For her own part, Milagritos abandons Mr. Witt due to his detachment, and his jealousy. However, at the very end of the novel, Milagritos makes up an alibi to avoid Mr. Witt's execution after he contributed to the sinking of the floating battery Duque de Tetuán.¹⁴⁰ After they are both released, they both go to Madrid, where Milagritos wants to undergo treatment for sterility before returning to Cartagena, although Mr. Witt would much rather leave for London. Milagritos ends all possible argument with a surprising "when we come back, you will properly penetrate me, alright?"¹⁴¹ Following this exchange, Mr. Witt reaffirms his passivity by watching her cry, and wondering whether she cried "For Carvajal? For Colau? For the Canton? For herself?" but continues to ponder his age instead of attempting to offer her any kind of consolation.¹⁴²

Through the dynamics of Mr. Witt and Milagritos's relationship, and the ties they establish with other characters throughout the novel, *Mr. Witt en el Cantón* mirrors the convoluted balance at the center of the Republic and of the bourgeoisie as its ruling class that *La Primera República* also offers. This approach, consistent with the brand of realism Lukács would approve of, is enhanced, unlike in the case of Galdós's novel, by a more detailed representation of the different stages of pre-rebellion, rebellion, and a possible aftermath in which the main characters will, after all, return to the scene of conflict. By representing the inherent contradictions at the core of the bourgeoisie, riddled with emotional instability, and shifty political and moral orientations against the background of such a violent historical episode, *Mr.*

¹⁴⁰ A ship by the same name was part of the siege of Cartagena, and was captured by the rebels, but not destroyed, as it was part of the Spanish coast defense during the Spanish-American War of 1898.

¹⁴¹ "A la vuelta me calas hondo, ¿eh?" Sender, 270.

¹⁴² "¿Por Carvajal,? ¿Por Colau? ¿Por el Cantón? ¿Por sí misma?" 271

Witt... combines, like *La Primera República*, historical research and realist fiction to warn about the danger of the present, more than to criticize the past.¹⁴³

Therefore, the value of this account does not lie in whether the historical events are told as they happened, but as Benjamin puts it, in taking “control of a memory, as it flashes in a moment of danger.”¹⁴⁴ Sender’s moment of danger, as already mentioned, is the brink of the collapse of the Second Republic, when conservatism grew stronger and the promise of the progressive movements waned. However, the novel also opens the door for the possibility of redemption, through the temporality that is established in the examination of the different “moments of danger.” Creating a temporality that challenges the time of the nation, *Mr. Witt en el Cantón* connects all the moments that have *not* been crucial in leading Spain to its current state. Not crucial, that is, for all of them are moments of defeat, from the Gloriosa, to the Primera República, and the Cantonalist Movement, as well as democratic *Restauración*, or the high hopes at the beginning of the 1930s. All these moments that had been brushed off by the official timeline of the nation, and expelled from the “homogenous empty time” of sequenced events and naturalized causality, recover meaning and vitality here.

The characteristics I have discussed in this chapter give the narratives presented in these novels and film an air of authenticity, of being “realistic” about their subject matters that makes them important examples of the convergence of naturalist-realist 19th century style and 20th century innovations such as the inclusion of the Marxist movements and class struggle. Furthermore, by establishing the past as a place that has to be constructed from the present, as it

¹⁴³ In fact, according to historian Luis López Martínez, the two sources Sender seems to have followed as central for his research are Galdós’s novel and historian Antonio Puig Campillo’s account of the rebellion.

¹⁴⁴ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 255.

is the case with *La Primera República*, or *Mr. Witt en el Cantón*, or representing their present as heir of all the wrongs of the past, do as *Las Hurdes: Tierra sin Pan*, and *Reparto de Tierras*, together these works form an index of potential temporalities through which the redemption of their realities, and other realities they may reach, can be accomplished. In a more concrete fashion, they constitute a record of how the “tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the “emergency situation” in which we live is the rule.”¹⁴⁵ In this exceptional rule, these works constitute a center of resistance from which reality can be perceived and constructed anew.

¹⁴⁵ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 257.

Chapter 2: Image Index¹⁴⁶
Figures 2.1-2.4 *Las Hurdes: Tierra sin Pan* (1934)



Figure 2.1- *Las Hurdes: Tierra sin Pan* (1933)

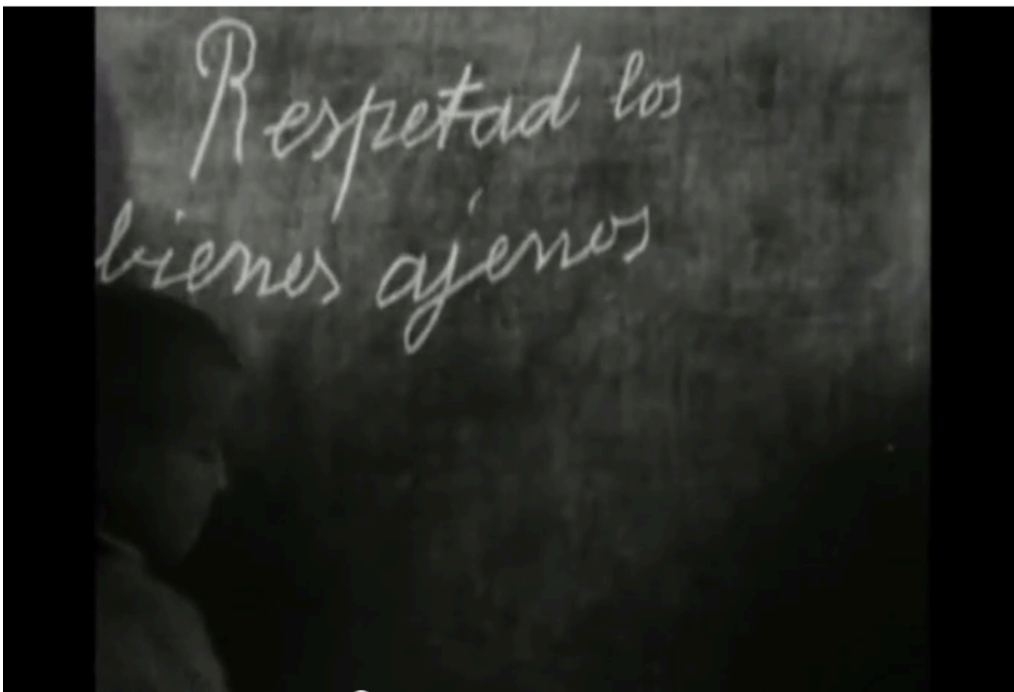


Figure 2.2- *Las Hurdes: Tierra sin Pan* (1933)

¹⁴⁶ All images copyright Luis Buñuel.



Figure 2.3- *Las Hurdes: Tierra sin Pan* (1933)



Figure 2.4- *Las Hurdes: Tierra sin Pan* (1933)

Chapter 3 Individual Redemption.

I. Neorealism and Beyond

For some scholars, realism, as a politically and socially committed film style, has become the cornerstone of modern Spanish literature and filmmaking. This development can be linked to the desire to establish a link between cinema and the literary tradition—both novelistic and theatrical—and thereby grant cinema a prominent cultural status.¹⁴⁷ This critical tactic was not always a viable one, for two main reasons: from its beginnings, Spanish cinema was not deemed to be of much cultural value and, secondly, realism was viewed as a lowbrow aesthetic practice. Moving pictures were considered the lowest form of entertainment, and viewed as always quick to borrow heavily from the dignified Spanish stage tradition to spark audience interest.¹⁴⁸ Further, many of the writers of the so-called Generation of '98, inspired José Ortega y Gasset and other followers, to reject realism and its decadent and hegemonic tradition (among other 19th-century arts).¹⁴⁹ The dismissal of the aesthetic of realism largely dominated the first half of the 20th century and—not unexpectedly—permeated not just the elitist avant-garde movements, but a whole range of film genres including melodramas, musicals, and even propaganda newsreels.¹⁵⁰

In control of the film industry, the Francoist regime expressed contempt towards realism and for propaganda purposes privileged morality tales (often based on a much imagined and

¹⁴⁷ See Nuria Triana-Toribio (2003).

¹⁴⁸ See García Escudero, José María (1967) for an ample discussion on the relationship between cinema and theatre, and also of the neglect of the early Spanish cinema reels.

¹⁴⁹ Gonzalo Muñelo examines the relationship between the writers of '98 and cinema, and the repercussions it had throughout the first half of the 20th century.

¹⁵⁰ See García Escudero for a detailed discussion of the main styles and topics in films made up to the Civil War.

mythical past) and bourgeois melodramas molded on the Italian *telefoni bianchi* model. At the time, Italy and Spain enjoyed excellent relationships and reciprocal support, particularly due to the fact that the Spanish Fascist party, Falange, was modeled after the Italian Fascist Party, although Franco began purging falangists off his government by the mid-1940s. However, it was precisely through the practice of importing Italian films that a few, early neorealist films found their way into Spanish cinema. This was not without consequences.

The first neorealist film to be authorized for distribution in Spain was *Ladri di biciclette* (De Sica, 1948), which had to wait two years for its distribution. Censors modified its title into the singular *El ladrón de bicicletas*—by deleting the final scenes in which Antonio tries to steal a bicycle. A moralizing message about the choice between stealing and living an honorable life replaced the closing footage. Other neorealist films were released much later, including *Bellissima* (Visconti, 1951), released only in 1957, and *Roma, città aperta* (Rossellini, 1945) which premiered in Madrid in 1969. However, Spanish filmmakers assumed neorealist aesthetics as early as 1951; Nieves Conde's *Surcos* (*Furrows*) was a propaganda product disguised as a neorealist, socially conscious film. As Marsha Kinder notes at the beginning of *Blood Cinema* (1993), the film shares all or most of the aesthetic and technical characteristics of neorealist films, but its message toes the line of the Franco regime in their efforts to stop the massive migrations of people from the countryside to the cities. These two attempts made to neutralize the antifascist power that neorealist films had developed already in Italy—the presentation of non-neorealist films disguised as neorealist, and the adoption of neorealist aesthetics for fascist indoctrination—were complemented by the first “Semana del Cine Italiano,” a festival organized by the Italian Institute in Madrid with support from the Italian Embassy, and which started just two days after the pseudo-neorealist *Surcos* opened in the

theaters. The selection of films presented in this “Semana” seemed to be an attempt to mitigate the effects of neorealism, or to create confusion about what neorealist films looked like and were about. Among the films shown¹⁵¹, only *Miracolo a Milano* (*Miracle in Milan*, Vittorio de Sica, 1951) can be identified, with reservations, as neorealist. All the others are melodramas, released within a year of the festival; they are symptomatic of the similarities of the Italian and Spanish cinema of the time. Even *Luci del varietà* (*Variety Lights*, Fellini, 1950), which was screened in clandestine fashion, cannot be said to be subversive enough to deserve such undercover presentation.

Another remarkable characteristic about these films is that all of them were produced when neorealism was under attack in Italy. As Mira Liehm points out in *Passion and Defiance: Film in Italy from 1942 to the Present*, around 1949 the American film industry started taking over the distribution of films in Italy, which made shooting socially conscious films risky business, as their ties to Italian communism made them problematic in the Cold War. In Spain, the institutional and commercial climate was not hospitable for neorealism at the time: heavy censorship, explicit poetic kinship with leftist politics, and the clear perception of a increased difficulty to compete with the growing presence of American cinema.¹⁵² Against all these odds, Luis García Berlanga, with the help of Juan Antonio Bardem, made *¡Bienvenido, Mr. Marshall!* in 1951, a film that combined neorealist aesthetics with humor to produce a caustic critique of both American involvement in Europe through the Marshall Plan, and of the Francoist

¹⁵¹ *Miracolo a Milano* (*Miracle in Milan*, Vittorio De Sica, 1951), *Il Bivio* (Fernando Cerchio, 1951), *Cronaca di un amore* (*Story of a Love Affair*, Michealangelo Antonioni, 1950), *Domani è troppo tardi* (*Tomorrow is too late*, Léonide Moguy, 1950), and *L'edera* (*Devotion*, Augusto Genina, 1950).

¹⁵² In fact, the situation in Spain was very similar, with more American films authorized for distribution than Spanish ones, to the ratios of 86 to 72 in 1950, 74 to 48 in 1951, 109 to 43 in 1952, 140 to 55 in 1953, 158 to 69 in 1954, and 127 to 94 in 1955. See Kinder, 25.

government's incapability to satisfy people's needs and modernize the country. Surprisingly, the film was Spain's selection for the Cannes festival that same year, although it also earned the contempt of older generations of filmmakers and literates, who claimed the film had failed to accurately represent the essence of Spain, even though that clearly was never the filmmakers' intention.

The social turn after the second “Semana del Cine Italiano”

Bardem and Berlanga had met at the Instituto de Investigaciones y Experiencias Cinematográficas (Institute of Cinematographic Investigations and Experiences), a center inaugurated in 1947 as a means to improve engineering students' theoretical knowledge and, most cogently, the practical know-how of motion pictures. This technological approach, coinciding with the rise of the technocrats in the Francoist government, aimed at producing highly trained filmmakers who could best serve the propaganda goals of the regime. These students had access to films that were largely forbidden in Spain. Paradoxically, their incorporation into the production of propaganda exposed them to Soviet socialist films, uncensored American films of all genres, and even Spanish films, such as those made by Luis Buñuel, that had been forbidden after the expatriation of the director.

But the turning point was these individuals' exposure to precursors of neorealism such as *Quattro passi fra le nuvole* (Blasetti, 1942), which opened in Spain in 1950, neorealist films like the aforementioned *El ladrón de bicicletas* and the upper-class variation in neorealism of Antonioni's *Cronaca di un amore*. The variety of these films showed Spanish filmmakers like Bardem and Berlanga that through neorealism, cinema could be used in ways they had never thought of. Bardem and Berlanga co-wrote several scripts before co-directing *That Happy*

Couple in 1951, a comedy satirizing the romantic comedies of the times. That same year they co-wrote and started the pre-production of *¡Bienvenido Mr. Marshall!*, but Bardem was expelled from production before the shooting started due to problems with the producers. These problems also led to a falling-out with Berlanga, who stayed on the project after Bardem invited him to pull out of the film unless he (Bardem) was reinstated. Berlanga omitted all information about this dispute from his 2005 autobiography *Bienvenido, Mister Cagada (Welcome, Mr. Cock-Up)*, but provided a full account of the problems and differences they had prior to shooting *Esa pareja feliz*. Despite his efforts, Bardem was removed from the project, but the conflicting personalities of the two writers emerge through in the film. As Marsha Kinder points out, in *¡Bienvenido Mr. Marshall!* neorealist aesthetics and themes are combined in dream sequences with both Soviet realism (in the case of the peasants who dream about good irrigation systems, and tractors to modernize their farming) and American westerns and *film noir* (in the case of the figures of authority: the mayor and the priest). The controversy generated by this film, together with its critical and commercial success, sparked the interest of some of the great *auteurs* of Italian neorealism, and led to a cultural exchange that had one of its peaks in the second *Semana de Cine Italiano*, in 1953.

If the first festival had been more of a diplomatic effort than anything else, the 1953 edition of the festival was more welcoming to filmmakers and cinephiles alike, as well as more open to the general public. The second edition also involved the participation of Roberto Rosellini, Luchino Visconti, Luigi Zampa, and, particularly Cesare Zavattini, who became very interested in the work of Berlanga and Bardem. The films that were shown included dramas like *Due soldi di speranza* (Castellani, 1952), *Il cappotto* (Lattuada, 1952), and *Processo alla città* (Zampa, 1952), as well as the neorealist films *Il cammino della speranza* (Germi, 1950),

Bellissima (Visconti, 1951), and *Umberto D.* (De Sica, 1952), these last two co-written by Zavattini. Besides the “official” screenings, two more films were shown clandestinely: *Ossessione* (Visconti, 1943), very controversially considered by some the first neorealist film, and *Paisà* (Rossellini, 1946).

Zavattini was so interested in Bardem’s and Berlanga’s approach to the possibilities of neorealism in Spain that he decided to return on several occasions during 1953 and 1954 to work on a joint project that could never be completed—ironically, due to differences between Berlanga and Zavattini, and between Spain and Italy. Ricardo Muñoz Suay, a journalist who had collaborated with Bardem and Berlanga in the writing of *¡Bienvenido, Mr. Marshall!*, had the opportunity to interview Zavattini during the first “Semana.” Following the interview, Zavattini and other members of the Italian delegation were shown the film. He liked the film so much, he remarked, “Può aprire un nuovo cammino al cinema spagnolo” (Muñoz Suay, 9). Upon Zavattini’s return to Spain for the second “Semana,” Muñoz Suay was determined to initiate a collaboration between Za, as Zavattini was often called, and Berlanga.

Both Berlanga and Zavattini were initially very excited about working together, but due to economical and political circumstances they had to work from a distance: Zavattini was in Rome, and Berlanga and Muñoz Suay were in Madrid. After the second “Semana,” they would not meet again until 1954 in Rome, when they started working on Berlanga’s idea: a film set during a film festival. Zavattini’s contribution was to make it a film festival in which all films would be pacifist films. The storyline included abundant material from at least five films presented at the “festival.” This caused the producers to panic, considering the high costs such a film would entail, costs that neither the Italian nor Spanish side were able or willing to bear.

Furthermore, Berlanga started to have doubts about the tone of the film, which he deemed too optimistic, and which he was afraid would cause trouble in Spain, considering what a pacifist stance could mean at the time. Zavattini's plan to get rid of these fears was, according to Muñoz Suay, to have the members of the festival jury "fighting each other at the end of the film, with a mushroom cloud as the last onscreen image, and a superimposed text that read 'The End—of the film and of the world'." ¹⁵³

Zavattini's twist did not have the necessary strength to change the mind of either Berlanga and the producers, who cancelled the project. Zavattini, more adamant than Berlanga at that point, suggested that he should spend enough time in Spain to properly get to know the country, always with the idea of working something together in mind. In the summer of 1954, Zavattini, Berlanga, and Muñoz Suay toured Spain for over a month trying to find material for a film divided in chapters that would be the first "real" Italian-Spanish co-made film. The trip was to give Zavattini a chance to find material from which he could develop storylines, which, with the help of Berlanga and Muñoz Suay, would become "more Spanish." However, Zavattini had to return to Italy before the stories had moved beyond the initial stages, and as Muñoz Suay recalls, "as soon as Cesare returned to Rome, Berlanga became hesitant... he was neither excited nor committed to the new project." ¹⁵⁴ After two years and two initiated projects, the collaboration between Zavattini and Berlanga striving for a new Spanish neorealism had hit a dead end. Maybe the initial differences, despite their mutual interest, were irreconcilable. In his autobiography, Berlanga admits "I have always tried, in vain, to be sincere, and tell stories of our land without a dogmatic or teaching attitude... But everybody wants you to take a side... I have

¹⁵³ Muñoz Suay, 11.

¹⁵⁴ Muñoz Suay, 16.

been fascist because I wasn't communist, communist because I wasn't fascist...escapist because I don't believe in indoctrinating drivel."¹⁵⁵ On the other hand, Zavattini had told Muñoz Suay on the very first night they met that, "If Italians made cinema in Spain, they would make it with Italian spirit. You must make it yourselves. You must make *España mía*."¹⁵⁶ This allusion to his never-completed project *Italia mia*, could have very well been a foretelling of the outcome of the project they embarked on.

However, and despite having yielded neither film nor script in time for the festival circuit, Zavattini's collaboration with Berlanga and Muñoz Suay had very important consequences for Spanish cinema. In 1953, following the impulse that the first "Semana" had meant for Berlanga and Bardem, *¡Bienvenido, Mr. Marshall!* won both the International Prize for Comedy Film and a Special Mention for the script at Cannes, which created even greater conviction that a renewed neorealist style could have in Spain despite the tight control of the government. The main body of censorship was the Junta Superior de Ordenación Cinematográfica (JSOC), controlled by the Catholic Church, which had already had its problems with neorealism in Italy, and was very watchful of its implementation in Spain, as the case of *Bicycle Thief* illustrates. Accordingly, neorealism as it entered the Spanish cinematic palette of styles had to be adapted to a new milieu with an old enemy that was already several steps ahead. However, according to Muñoz Suay, one of the aspects of Francoism that befuddled Zavattini the most was the apparent permissibility of the regime towards people like Berlanga and Bardem, who could write a film as politically critical as *¡Bienvenido, Mr. Marshall!* and still be allowed to continue working. Particularly in the case of Bardem, who was quite openly communist, while

¹⁵⁵ Franco, 55.

¹⁵⁶ Muñoz Suay, 9.

Berlanga's family belonged to a bloodline of landowners, such contradictions in Francoism meant for some possibilities for change. But not all that glitters is gold.

Aperturismo* and *Conversaciones de Salamanca

I am a realist filmmaker. I am one of those interested not in human tones situated in an ideal plane, but in the immediate problems of the man of our time. Given that I am a filmmaker, and a Spanish filmmaker, I am interested in:

- a) making movies. By this I mean: transmitting what I have to transmit in the most direct way, with high cinematographic rigor.
- b) using cinema as the vehicle for that transmission.
- c) telling exactly, testifying as rigorously possible the Spanish man and the Spanish world today.¹⁵⁷

Bardem made this statement in an interview in Buenos Aires in 1961; it was reproduced in his 1962 autobiography, during a period of self-imposed exile. As Berlanga explains in his autobiography, Bardem had always had a rebellious streak, which was what pushed him to join the illegal Spanish Communist Party in the early 1950s, and to abandon the Institute of Cinematographic Investigations and Experiences after three years because he felt there was no real room for artistic expression in the institution.¹⁵⁸ Once separated from his collaborator due to the fallout over *¡Bienvenido...!*, Bardem was free to pursue the idea of film he had envisioned at the intersection of his film studies and the viewing of Italian neorealist films. In his first solo film, *Cómicos* (*Comedians*, 1954), he used neorealist aesthetics that involved natural light, and a mainly unknown cast of real-life people to tell the story of a traveling theater company in contemporary Spain. Several of the film's themes showed a side of Spain that did not fit the dominant narrative of Francoism, such as the dire economic situation of artists and the working people who went to their shows, as well as depicting the level of promiscuity inherent in the

¹⁵⁷ Bardem, 17.

¹⁵⁸ Berlanga talks about his relationship with Bardem at length in the second chapter of his memoirs.

artistic world, and the sexual exploitation of young aspiring actresses by powerful men. Such content caused Bardem more problems with the censors, who inexplicably allowed certification for the film, which had very little commercial success in Spain, despite being well received by critics (and despite the press at Cannes nearly forcing the jury to watch it although it was out of contest).

Bardem's troubles with the censors continued with his next film, *Felices pascuas* (*Happy Easter*, 1954).¹⁵⁹ It is set in an unknown city and depicts the happenings and misfortunes of a poor family during the week before Christmas Eve. This new film was a failure both in terms of critical and popular reception, for reasons that Bardem attributed to the dual style of the film: "The beginning is a neorealist comedy, quite charming, but suddenly, half way through the film it changes into a sort of farce. Such a compound did not work."¹⁶⁰ The film also included a dream scene that cast a dark light over the Church and the Spanish Army, which caused Bardem to receive yet another warning from the censors, but he managed to get by unscathed. Fortunately, after the fiasco of *Felices pascuas*, Bardem still found funding from one of the longest-standing production companies in Spain, Suevia Films, to make the film that gained him undivided international recognition: *Muerte de un ciclista* (*Death of a Cyclist*, 1955). This film, which according to Bardem was directly influenced by *Ossessione*, struck at the core of the hypocrisy of Spanish society under Franco. Its critique relies on a combination of neorealist and melodrama aesthetics. The film tells the story Juan, of a man who has an affair with a married woman who used to be his girlfriend, before the war separated them. Following one of their meetings, they accidentally run over a working man, and after a series of troubled encounters,

¹⁵⁹ In Spain, "pascuas" is used for Christmas, while the singular "pascua" for Easter.

¹⁶⁰ Abajos de Pablos, 34.

Juan ultimately decides to leave his place in bourgeois society, and confess to his crime. The film was heavily censored in Spain, but a director's cut was sent to the Cannes Festival, offset by the cinematic apple of the regime's eye: *Marcelino, pan y vino* (*The Miracle of Marcelino*, 1955), a very Catholic film about an orphan boy who is raised by monks in a monastery. While the latter film managed to get two special mentions, one for the director, and the other a specially created "Special mention to a child actor" for the boy playing the title character, Bardem took back to Spain the FIPRESCI (Fédération Internationale de la Presse Cinématographique-International Federation of Film Critics) award. Unsurprisingly, this did not sit very well with either the censors or the rest of the Spanish representation at Cannes. However, Bardem would win the FIPRESCI award again the following year, with a film considered his masterpiece: *Calle Mayor* (*The Lovemaker*, 1956).

In many aspects, Bardem was lucky that Francoist Spain had started opening up to the world in the early 1950s, in an attempt to move beyond the isolation the regime had sought after the Civil War which ultimately led to Spain's entry in the UN, what was called in Spain *aperturismo*. In its effort to be accepted into the UN, and also to form part of the negotiations that led to the signing of the Treaties of Rome, the regime toned down its levels of control and repression (albeit with exceptions). This general apparent loosening of past restrictions was what allowed the two "Semanas" to take place, and made possible Zavattini's and Berlanga's failed attempts to work together. After the second "Semana," Muñoz Suay was also involved in another connection between Spanish and Italian neorealism: the creation of the new journal, *Objetivo*. Running from July 1953 until July 1955, it was closed after nine issues by a government mandate following the publication of a manifesto against the state of cinema in Spain. From its inception, *Objetivo* served as a Spanish version of *Cinema Nuovo*, the journal Guido

Aristarco had started in Italy in 1952. The first number of *Objetivo* included essays by Bardem and Muñoz Suay, who were already positioned at the forefront of the Spanish neorealist vanguard, and it also showcased translations of theoretical writing by Zavattini, Aristarco and Chiarini. The journal's name plays with double meanings; "objective" is an adjective referring to something that is intent on dealing with reality, and is also a noun that denotes the viewfinder of a camera. Despite being constantly watched by the censors and the police, *Objetivo* also sparked the interest of some students at the oldest Spanish university, the Universidad de Salamanca. In 1954 these students started their own journal, *Cinema universitario*, following the same interest in neorealism. Due to the connections between the two journals an event took place that definitely shook the foundations of Spanish cinema: the "Conversaciones de Salamanca."

Due to the close connection between literature and cinema in Spain at the time, the Conversaciones were not only instrumental in articulating a sense of movement amongst Spanish filmmakers, but also in corroborating cinema's influence on literature. In the late 1940s, novels such as *La sombra del ciprés es alargada* (*The Long Shadow of the Cypress*), written in 1947 by Miguel Delibes, or *Las últimas horas* (*The Last Hours*, 1949), by José Suárez Carreño returned to a kind of realism that seemed to mimic the "objectivity" of the film camera, and presenting subtle social and political criticism. *La sombra del ciprés es alargada*, for example, is set in the fortified city of Ávila, surrounded by a Romanesque wall, which is depicted not as sheltering but as locking its inhabitants away. The novel further emphasizes this sense of enclosure by establishing identification between singular characters and the city as a whole, thus connecting the claustrophobic life of the characters (particularly the childhood friends Pedro and Alfredo)

with the situation in Spain during the years of autarchy.¹⁶¹ The aesthetic practice of “objectivity” to convey the harshness of Francoist Spain continued throughout the 1950s, and influenced cinema, as well as the slow penetration of Neorealism exerted influence on literature.

Cross-influence between film and literature was, however, not limited to the poetic level, but also occurred on the biographical and institutional levels. This meant the rise of younger authors and directors, who had been trained at some length to become the new producers of regime propaganda. As Santos Sanz Villanueva notes, many of these writers had been involved in cinema as “screenwriters (Sueiro, Marsé, Quevedo, for example), and there were novels whose origins were as screenplays or they were thought as such (*The Island*, by Goytisolo).”¹⁶² Furthermore, writers such as Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio (son of Rafael Sánchez Mazas, an important Falange ideologist and creator of the catchphrase “¡Arriba España!,” one of Franco’s slogans) and Jesús Fernández Santos were students at the EOC, with the latter having directed a film in 1964. Unlike filmmakers, novelists had a longer tradition in which to inscribe themselves. As discussed in the previous chapter, not only 19th century realism, but also the “New Romantics,” group in which both Arconada and Sender can be included, reacted against the escapism of the vanguards’ “art for art’s sake.” As a consequence, several writers developed a style which overcame both Francoist escapism and idealistic “objectivism,” and in which stories “arise from sociopolitical injustice, and are not, as a consequence, inevitable.”¹⁶³ The *Conversaciones* were very important as a means to share ideas and discuss aesthetic practices

¹⁶¹ For a deeper discussion of the role of space in the novel see Mascia, Mark J. "Spatiality and Psychology in Miguel Delibes' *La sombra del ciprés es alargada*." *Letras Peninsulares* 15.3 (2002-2003): 615-627.

¹⁶² Sanz Villanueva, S., 99.

¹⁶³ Pérez, Janet, 61.

that were at that point extremely controversial and could have attracted dangerous responses from Franco's cultural authorities.

Participants in the *Conversaciones* from Spain and abroad agreed that something radical had to be done in order to keep Spanish cinema from dying as an art and also as a spectacle was for the first time openly discussed. The tagline in the call for the conference was "Spanish cinema has died. Long live Spanish cinema!"¹⁶⁴ Three major figures set the conference's tone: Aristarco as philosophical guru of Italian neorealism; Bardem, the neorealist opponent of Francoism from within, and Zavattini, whose ideas, although he could not attend and participate, could be felt throughout the talks and conversations. In his opening remarks, Bardem described Spanish cinema in the following terms: "Politically inefficient; socially false; intellectually abject; aesthetically null and industrially miserable. We believe that our cinema must acquire a national personality, creating films that reflect the situation of the Spanish man, his conflicts and reality."¹⁶⁵ Despite these words from a communist like Bardem, this event was still supposed to be "completely integrated in the system."¹⁶⁶ This view of the *Conversaciones*, downplaying them as a simple intellectual entertainment that really did not achieve anything, followed from the fact that none of three main organizers, Bardem, Muñoz Suay and Eduardo Ducay, director of *Objetivo*, were arrested. However, this approach completely disregarded the international composition of the conference at a time when much of the world had an eye on Spain: the period of its application process to join the UN. Furthermore, no news of the "Conversaciones" appeared on either *Ya* or *ABC*, two of the biggest selling newspapers in Madrid during the 1950s, both very close to the regime.

¹⁶⁴ Guido Aristarco quotes this in his essay "Il credo di Salamanca," (1959).

¹⁶⁵ Santos Fontenla, 143.

¹⁶⁶ Guarner, 68.

The “Conversaciones” managed not only to draw international attention to the new cinema that had been brewing in Spain during the previous years, but also to connect university students to a group, formed by Bardem, Muñoz Suay, and many others, who were trying to bring about radical changes in Spain. Just a few months after the event, in early 1956, the first student-led demonstrations against Francoism started taking place all over Spain. The government declared a state of emergency, and while he was filming *Calle Mayor*, Bardem was arrested. Production on the film stopped for the fifteen days he was imprisoned. In an essay on the *Conversaciones* published four years after its conclusion, Guido Aristarco writes: “One cannot say that in the last years a will to rejuvenate Spanish cinema is lacking...the works of Bardem (together with the Buñuel of *Viridiana*, and with the young Iberian poetry, narrative and criticism) join the strikes in Madrid, in Barcelona and in Asturias to cause the fall of Francoism.”¹⁶⁷ Perhaps he was a little too optimistic, but the resonances of the work they had started in Salamanca continued throughout the remaining twenty years of the dictatorship, even if new voices often distinguished themselves from these forerunners.

Confrontation of Younger Generations-1960s & 1970s

What Aristarco called the “will to rejuvenate Spanish cinema,” received a determinate push in the early 1960s, when a new generation of filmmakers came out of the re-founded Instituto de Investigaciones y Experiencias Cinematográficas: the Escuela Oficial de Cinematografía (Official School of Cinematography, EOC). Developed by José María García Escudero, who had been appointed National Director of Cinema in the early 1950s and returned to that position in 1962, the School yielded a group of directors who have been called “Nuevo

¹⁶⁷ Aristarco, “Il credo di Salamanca,” 415.

Cine Español” and even “los chicos de García Escudero” (García Escudero’s boys).¹⁶⁸ Despite being very involved in the regime, García Escudero had strong views about the effects of films that had been promoted throughout the 1940s and most of the 1950s could have on the Spanish people, particularly Spanish men. As Nuria Triana-Toribio explains, García Escudero thought early Francoist films, with their privileging of maternal figures and their heroic depictions of former queens and female saints had “feminized and infantilized the nation.”¹⁶⁹ With this view in mind, García Escudero decided to back films about the countryside and the city streets—about those putatively masculine spaces where Spanish manhood would be reasserted.

Such were the settings of the first films by director Carlos Saura, a former student at the EOC and pupil of Buñuel. He approached first feature film, *Los golfos* (*The Delinquents*, 1959) as a “documentary on slum life in Madrid.”¹⁷⁰ This approach, for which he chose neorealist techniques such as natural light, shooting on location, and non-professional actors, conflicted with his own stated rejection of neorealism, which followed the lines of Buñuel’s critique (Buñuel held that it was too passive in light of its non-intervention into the subject matter). The film was not considered neorealist, despite those characteristics, and due to political reasons.

If neorealism had been kept away from most of the Spanish population during the 1940s and early 1950s, due to its humanist approach and pursuit of redemption in the face of Fascism’s horrors, by the late 1950s neorealism had become ideologically dangerous for a different reason: it was branded as foreign. Following the *Conversaciones de Salamanca*, and the international success of both Bardem and Berlanga, Francoism was trying to use the cinema emerging from

¹⁶⁸ Triana-Toribio, 66.

¹⁶⁹ Triana-Toribio, 67.

¹⁷⁰ Marvin D’Lugo, 33.

the Italo-Spanish exchange as a new symbol of national identity: no longer was Spanish cinema a collection of historical films and folkloric musicals. The new Spanish cinema had vibrant new stories to tell, in ways that were exclusively Spanish. García Escudero commented on *Los golfos*'s indictment of neorealism:

neorealism is only apparent when the film portrays Madrid, which, if to some foreign critic it has appeared 'irreconcilable, squalid and sad,' it is probably because that critic knows Madrid only through tourist postcards; but that portray lacks what neorealism...put over everything—a patina of tenderness...we don't have the right to disavow the arch-Spanishness of the line to which Saura belongs in *Los golfos*: an unforgettable film, passionate and harsh like the red wine that sticks to the palate and makes the throat grow hoarse.¹⁷¹

Through this statement, published in a special issue of the journal *Temas de cine* devoted entirely to *Los golfos*, García Escudero stressed the difference between Italian neorealism, infected with tenderness and sentimentalism, and the new Spanish cinema, which he defined as virile and stout. García Escudero aimed to take the technical and formal aspects of neorealism and turn it into the ultimate propaganda art form, something Zavattini and Aristarco—whose ideas had been known to the students of the EOC in the form of the declaration of Salamanca—could not have imagined in their worst nightmares.

One response to this new dominant view on (and dismissal of) neorealism came from Marco Ferreri, an Italian who had moved to Spain and taken a job and who ended becoming a nearly self-taught filmmaker. Nearly thirty years younger than Zavattini, Ferreri learned the aesthetics of neorealism from Spanish films, and was not allied with the technically-savvy directors closer to his age. Given his auto-didacticism, his films could escape the “moral vision” García Escudero was trying to impose on all the students who went through the EOC. One of the

¹⁷¹ García Escudero, *Temas de cine*, 24.

best examples is *El cochecito* (*The Little Coach*, 1960), a film about an elderly man (played by José Isbert, the actor who had played the mayor in *¡Bienvenido, Mr. Marshall!*) who decides to get himself a mechanized wheelchair against the opinion of his family. Marsha Kinder has argued that the film “departs from *Surcos*, *Muerte*, and *Golfos* by mocking the conventions from both sides of the neo-realist-Hollywood dialectic and their respective Spanish senses, playing them off against each other.”¹⁷² Furthermore, the film managed to connect with one of the figures of the Generation of '98, Valle-Inclán, who revolutionized Spanish theater through a mix of realism and *esperpento*, a distortion of reality through the insertion of absurd elements or situations, through which a satirical effect is added to the depiction of reality. Associating the old man with his machine, the film critiques a society in which mechanization has robbed man of his original freedom and identity. This was highly controversial; at a time when the Francoist government was betting on the rise of technocrats to make Spain's economy and society reach the same level as their European neighbors, the film presented the idea that Spain as a country faced the same confused situation it had the beginning of the 20th century. The possibility for change through cinema had arrived through Italian neorealism and was leaving through its definite dismissal.

According to records from the Sección de Información y Censura, novels written in realist style during the 1950's in Spain tended to be scrutinized by the State. They were divided into five main groups: neorealist novel, novel of realist vision, bourgeois novel, novel of socialist realism, and travel novels.¹⁷³ All these books, each in its way, engaged with the contemporary reality of Spain in a way perceived to be dangerous by the regime, which imposed line-item

¹⁷² Kinder, 113.

¹⁷³ Cf. Francisco Alamo Felices. *La Novela Social Española* (Spanish Social Novel) (1996).

ensorship, and even outright bans, to prevent their publications. The novel that most abruptly broke away from the prevalent mid-century aesthetics of realism was Luis Martín-Santos's *Tiempo de Silencio* (1961), which suffered censorship because of its content and its form. Martín-Santos tried to move beyond common practices and categories that were being used, moving yet another step away from working within the cultural discourse of the dictatorship. This step beyond realism was what he called "dialectical realism", which, according to him, meant "move beyond the simple static description of alienations, in order to present the real dynamics of the contradictions *in actu*."¹⁷⁴ This new realist style would then go beyond the criticism of the social situation of Spain that the *other* realisms articulated, instead working against the very contradictions of Spain's government and society as a repressive system and refusing to employ the language that authorized and concretized them. As Jo Labanyi writes in her book *Ironía e Historia en Tiempo de Silencio* (1983), "it is worth noting that Martín-Santos writes not about the social context, but the historical context," a characteristic that differentiates him from most realist writers¹⁷⁵, who tended to de-historicize their works.¹⁷⁶

Throughout this novel, a complex, epoch-spanning dialogue is established with some of the most representative elements of Spanish cultural history, such as Cervantes, and Goya, and also two of the most representative members of the Generation of '98, Ortega y Gasset and Unamuno. Though the novel destabilizes the realist practices of the 1950's, and mockingly relates to the Spanish cultural tradition, it has ironically found an important place within the Spanish canon. In fact, the way in which the novel has been treated in recent years can be

¹⁷⁴ "pasar de la simple descripción estática de las enajenaciones, para plantear la real dinámica de las contradicciones *in actu*." Martín-Santos, quoted in Ricardo Doménech, 74.

¹⁷⁵ Two well known authors that fall in this category are Jesús Fernández Santos and Nobel Prize winner Camilo José Cela.

¹⁷⁶ Labanyi, 73.

exemplified by Thomas Franz's claim that "it is not only...that Martín-Santos parodies the outmoded historiography and racial theories of some of the writers of 1898 that Falangist ideology later used, but that he also recuperates many of their still applicable insights."¹⁷⁷ (437) This reading contradicts the sociopolitical ambitions Martín-Santos revealed to Janet Winecoff: "To modify Spanish reality (and also to have some fun)." This bold statement is immediately backed by another statement, in this case shedding light on what the role of the novelist in society is. As he claims, the novelist's function is "what I call desacralizing-sacrogenetic: Desacralizing—it destroys through a sharp critique of what's unjust. Sacrogenetic—at the same time, it works towards the construction of the new that then become the new Holy Scriptures of tomorrow."¹⁷⁸ Combining these two statements with the tentative definition of dialectic realism, we might define a dialectical realist novelist as an author who would aggressively and critically describe the sociopolitical milieu, then proceeding to (and through) its destruction before setting up foundational myths for a new reality.

Mid-century realists (or neorealists, as some authors have called them) defied the ideological base of Francoism on two levels: first, by showing that realism can acknowledge the involvement of the subject in the world and the world's presence within the subject, thus disavowing Ortega; and second, by stating their own visions of reality, they presented themselves as subjects, clearly differentiated from the homogenous society planned by Francoism, a society in which people would be instructed by the government how to perceive

¹⁷⁷ See Franz, "*Tiempo de silencio* and Its Cela-like Resonances of the Generation of 1898" *JOURNAL TITLE???* (1996) 437.

¹⁷⁸ Winecoff Díaz, 237.

society, and to which they would have to conform¹⁷⁹. Although the neorealist writers criticized Francoist society in their writings, they were criticized by contemporary writers and critics alike for being too descriptive, and not sufficiently incisive, in their novels.¹⁸⁰ This conflict emerged from the mutual interactions of the writers' subjective representation of the reality they were part of, on the one hand, and the austere style with which they were trying to express their worldview, on the other. This style that sometimes bordered on objectivism, a "simple" neorealist style, which minimized explanations and descriptions. Indeed, descriptions are used only in those areas where dialogue cannot reach, because it is precisely through simple dialogue, reduced to short sentences exchanged between the characters, that the story unfolds and that the oppressive Francoist society is represented. As a result, some authors criticized the homogeneity of themes, a certain division between rural and urban topics, and the austerity of the writing style. They further identified this neorealism's mere portrayal of what the problems were and who they affected as the reason for the collapse of this genre, which lived very intensely for less than a decade in Spain.¹⁸¹

Such criticism insisted that by presenting a very limited critique of Francoist society through its representation, the 1950s neorealists actually reproduced (or, to use Lukács's word, *reified*) the structure of that society. Early neorealist novels were written by writers who knew their visions of reality conditioned the ways in which they would frame and narrate their novels. Writing in the plain, "simple" style that exposed the reality of Spanish society in which they

¹⁷⁹ See, for example, Francisco Alamo Felices and Luis Miguel Fernández. Following Fernández's conceptualization I will refer to the realist style of the 1950s "novela social" Cf. *Neorealismo en la Narración Española de los Años Cincuenta* (1992).

¹⁸⁰ Writers like Luis Martín-Santos, Juan Benet, and Juan Goytisolo defended their aesthetics as a necessary break from the plainness of other coeval writers' styles.

¹⁸¹ Janet Pérez, Chris Perriam, and Barry Jordan, among others.

knew themselves to be inscribed helped develop in readers the impression and knowledge that they were also inscribed in that society. Thus, through empathy with the characters in the novels, readers of the 1950s' "novela social" would not only identify with them, but also very likely accept their fate, which would entail a total failure of the writers' stated intentions of those writers. Barry Jordan's reading of the ending of Jesús's Fernández Santos's *Los Bravos* (1954), one of the earliest neorealist novels, shows how this dynamic operates. After denouncing the situation in an average village in Spain, Jordan notes, the lesson or moral the novel offers is that "the destiny of a people is a function of their character – only in this case it is a character forged in the inexorable, unchanging cycle of rural underdevelopment."¹⁸² Rural underdevelopment, unemployment, and forced migrations were some of the themes the neorealist novels of the 1950 set out to tackle, but somehow they only managed to make them a normal, unremarkable, and—most importantly—unalterable part of Spanish life.

Neorealist writing's break with the "simple" forms of previous writers also shows in the richness and complexity of the grammar, which purports to disentangle and lay bare the complex relationships established in society, as well as in the characters' personalities. *Tiempo de silencio* will be, alongside Carlos Saura's *La Caza* (*The Hunt*, 1966) the central object of study of this chapter. Through a close examination of both texts, I will analyze the ways they (re)present their contemporary societies as a repository of the violence exerted not only through the Civil War, but more importantly through the years of Francoist dictatorship. Furthermore, the following pages will also continue with the examination of the redemptive characteristics present in the aesthetics of realism analyzed in this dissertation.¹⁸³ In this case, the rubble Benjamin's Angel of

¹⁸² Jordan, 161.

¹⁸³ See Introduction and First Chapter.

History beholds is that of two projects of individual freedom, hindered and stunted by the weight of their outcomes. In *Tiempo de silencio*, Pedro's dreams of living in a classless society, inserting himself in the flowing history of Spain's capital, are crushed by the Dictatorship's pervasive apparatus of power. In *La Caza*, Enrique's narcissistic approach to life without any notion of the future or knowledge of the past is cancelled by the weight of the Civil War and its aftermath—a weight silently exerted Enrique and his close surroundings. These works represent fascist oppression not only at the group or societal level, but also in a more introspective, individual way, as a result of the annihilation of personal individuality for the *greater good* of Spain.

Borau vs. the Stories of Spanish Cinema

Considering the relationship of the “generations” of filmmakers to the Francoist institutions which regulated neorealism—a relationship founded on an awe that oscillated between admiration and hate—this situation raises several questions: Why, even in Spain, has the role of Italian influence been downplayed to the extent that the label of “neorealist” is denied to Bardem's and Berlanga's films by some contemporary authors? Can it really be that the voices raised against Francoism were indeed coopted by the regime? José Luis Borau, a filmmaker of the same generation as Saura, tried to provide some answers to similar questions in the prologue he wrote for the volume edited by Peter William Evans *Spanish Cinema: The Authorist Tradition* (1999). In his “The Long March of the Spanish Cinema towards itself,” Borau claims that despite the putative mediocrity of pre-Bardem and pre-Berlanga films, more than a few brilliant Spanish films from the first half of the 20th century are still being rediscovered after years of inattention and event contempt. The existence of these films and filmmakers thus contradicts one of the most important narratives around Spanish cinema: that before the emergence of Bardem and

Berlangu, the only *auteur* worth mentioning was Buñuel. Borau also comments, however, that for most filmmakers the films “were subjected either directly or indirectly to certain constraints—social, cultural, political—that both tied them down to various positions and limited their aesthetic achievement to the demands, from a strictly cinematic point of view, of alien interests.”¹⁸⁴ For filmmakers working both for and against the regime, these constraints were exacerbated during the early years of Francoism; those working in line with the government had to submit their creativity to the often propagandistic and/or escapist storylines they were expected to provide the people with, while the ones working against the regime, such as Bardem, Berlangu, Saura or Ferreri, had to find ways to metaphorically or even allegorically present their ideas in order to avoid having problems with the censors. For Borau, Spanish cinema had sought to liberate itself from those constraints, in order to become a truly independent cinema.

This approach still leaves several aspects to be explained, such as why the achievements of those filmmakers, like many coming after *¡Bienvenido...!* have been buried or consigned to oblivion. Why, despite all the examples of cohesion and unity amongst the different filmmakers who attended the “Conversaciones,” read the manifesto that circulated clandestinely for years in the EOC, and worked on either or both *Objetivo* and *Cinema Universitario*, have these figures been denied the identity as a group or movement their Italian or French counterparts enjoyed. I would argue the answer to both questions is the triumph of Francoism as a shifting ideology clinging to power. If the pre-Civil War filmmakers Borau talks about were scrapped off the history of Spanish cinema, initially by Francoism, but also forgotten during the transition to democracy, this was so precisely due to the original self-image of the regime. In this view, no

¹⁸⁴ Borau, xviii.

cinema made in Spain before 1939 was worth knowing, because it belonged to the old Spain: the one whose sickness was to be cured by Fascism.

In the case of Bardem, Berlanga, and the ones that followed them (even if not in the same ideological path), the answer can be found in the conflict between Spain and the rest of the world, in the process of national identity development as seen by the Francoist government. In his first interview with Muñoz Suay, Zavattini had raised concerns about the effect that this ideology, a mix of original myth and anti-foreign influence, could have on filmmaking as national Spanish activity: “If Italians made cinema in Spain, they would make it with Italian spirit. You must make it yourselves. You must make *España mia*.” Indeed, the erasure of the Italian influence in films by powerful figures such as García Escudero was aimed precisely at re-imagining the films of Bardem, Berlanga and Saura as devoid of Italian influence, and thus contributing to the myth of the nation. Furthermore, the denial of a group identity for these filmmakers also contributed to the dominant discourse of Francoism. After all, when discussing film movements, what are the commonalities of De Sica’s and Rossellini’s films, or Truffaut’s and Godard’s? Are *Los golfos* and *Muerte de un ciclista* so radically different as to not be considered part of a Spanish realist movement with its roots in Italian Neorealism? The Spanish filmmakers had it all: an international conference to steer the path of national cinema, a manifesto and two journals for the dissemination of their ideas and proposals. Despite all this, most histories of Spanish cinema still depict these as separate filmmakers, rather than as a movement. Perhaps these histories are mainly continuing the narrative set by Francoism, isolating the filmmakers from each other. After all, for an authoritative power structure, depicting them as lone film renegades nursing individual cinematic grudges against the regime

was more useful than to admit the existence of a considerably strong and cohesive group discontent with the socio-political situation.

II. Saura's Individual Realism

As a consequence of the regime's insistence on the individuality of the directors, Carlos Saura emerged as an even more tenacious *auteur* in his denunciation of Francoist oppression. The writers and filmmakers who adopted Neorealism did so in an attempt to dismantle the ideological apparatus of propaganda that had been built around escapism in literature and film. However, they could not film "España mia," partly because the socio-political situation was so different from the one that had served as projector and canvas for Italian Neorealism. Overcome by the impossibility of changing the whole of society through their art, a few writers and filmmakers opted to change *individuals*, by portraying socio-political injustices as projections of their inner conflicts. I contend Carlos Saura's *La Caza* represents the development of a new approach to realism that, even as it draws on the aesthetics and poetics of Neorealism, recovers individual perspectives, thus making possible the redemption of a lost past through personal memories.

As a student of the EOC, Carlos Saura had been a participant in the Conversaciones in Salamanca in 1955, where he later recalled he was "a spectator, although totally fascinated by something which has never crossed my mind before: the formulation of Spanish cinema in political terms; the possibility of making films rooted in reality; the return of realism."¹⁸⁵ This notion of a *return of realism* became very important for Saura in his formative years. After seeing the Italian films that had been smuggled into Spain, he understood the aesthetics and the

¹⁸⁵ Saura in Brasó, 1974, 34—quoted in D'Lugo,

production style of Italian Neorealism laid the basis for a “a cinema within the terms of Spanish underdevelopment, that is to say, with more of a basis in realism, and a cinema of a very modest production scale.”¹⁸⁶ This way of making cinema, for Saura, and for Spanish cinema in general, meant a break from previous modes of production. Not only from the escapist and/or indoctrinating productions that had the best technical means at their disposal, but also from the films that directors such as Bardem and Berlanga were making, which studios were still preferred when shooting. As Mario Camus, assistant director for *Los Golfos*, and renowned *auteur* has pointed out, there were “films that were locked up in indoor settings, even when the film took place in a shantytown, [they] were shot in a studio. And suddenly for us it was going out into the street.”¹⁸⁷

Saura’s first two films were documentaries, shot with a very small crew, and on a small budget. One of them, *Cuenca* (1958), had been commissioned by the government of the Spanish region, which gave him the opportunity to travel to France to participate in a conference on Hispanic cinema. Being exposed to films made in Spanish, but without the restrictions imposed by censorship, Saura began to develop the aesthetics that would configure his first feature films. Furthermore, he also had access, for the first time, to the films of Luis Buñuel, whose style and thematic approach would deeply influence him.¹⁸⁸ For him, Buñuel had managed to find a balanced way of expressing a singular, personal reality, an approach he could use

There was never truly a possibility of confronting a Spanish problem head-on. And then I discovered Buñuel’s films. It was a fantastic solution: on the one hand, the encounter with a whole prior cultural and historical process; on the other, because he was a man who worked on reality in his own films, and Spanish reality, and to all of that he had a

¹⁸⁶ Saura in Brasó, 1974, 31—quoted in D’Lugo

¹⁸⁷ Saura in Villegas, 1976, 12—quoted in D’Lugo, 30.

¹⁸⁸ As discussed in the previous chapter, Buñuel’s films had been banned in Spain after *Land Without Bread*, and even students at the EOC had no way of watching them.

personal world to express, a critical, even a moral way of seeing things.” (Saura in Brasó, 1974, 40—quoted in D’Lugo, 27)

Buñuel’s influence in Saura has been noted in scholarly works, along with the fond friendship that developed between them. But the relationship was a two-way street; Saura exerted a certain influence on Buñuel, as well.¹⁸⁹ This relationship caused Saura several problems with censorship, and even made it difficult for him to continue teaching at the EOC. In fact, Buñuel’s influence became so apparent to the censors, that they cited it as a reason not to grant permission for the shooting of *La Caza*. Luis Gómez Mesa, one of the censors in charge of the preliminary report on the script, wrote that anybody who knows cinema “will notice right away—very remarkable—influences of Buñuel’s cinema. But like all imitation, a withered ‘Buñuel style.’ And with all its defects.” Furthermore, he claims, it should be rejected due to the script’s lack of “anything positive, and the insistence on the themes and the deformation that defines Luis Buñuel. It seems evident that Carlos Saura’s ideal is to be considered his disciple.”¹⁹⁰ Despite the difficult situation this relationship with Buñuel meant for Saura, he convinced Buñuel to return to Spain to film *Viridiana*, using all the influences his position in the EOC could grant him.

Through Buñuel’s influence, Saura found a way to disrupt the line of “generations” that had anchored narratives of Spain’s cultural history, and which the Regime had hoped to establish in Spanish cinema through the EOC. Even though films by Bardem and Berlanga were critical of the socio-political situation, they had been partially accepted by the government, and even defended, in the aforementioned intervention by the EOC director. By choosing to build on the aesthetics and approach of a *forbidden* author over those of his immediate predecessors, Saura

¹⁸⁹ See Kinder (1993), or D’Lugo (1991) for further information and details.

¹⁹⁰ Gómez Mesa, Luis, 1.

caused a stir. In a way, this contributed to the emergence of the so-called “Nuevo Cine Español”—even though he himself loathed this denomination. In a 1978 interview with Marsha Kinder, he claimed that for him, “the New Spanish Cinema does not exist. What does exist is a number of individuals who make films. I don’t know what this label refers to—is it Buñuel? Is it me and Chávarri? Of course, there are several magnificent directors who are working now in Spain, but I think it’s wrong to generalize.”¹⁹¹

Despite Saura’s laments, even if we resist applying a homogenizing label to these filmmakers and dubbing them a “generation,” it is very hard to deny that, just like in the case of Bardem or Berlanga, Saura’s early films helped bring about an important change in Spanish cinema. Saura’s role as teacher and temporary director at the EOC had, of course, much to do with the influence he exerted onto his students—albeit unwittingly. Although production modes changed—with young directors Mario Camus, Víctor Erice, or José Luis Borau shooting with small crews and few characters—many films were still very socially focused. However, these films’ approach and focus differed from most of the films made in the 1950s. Saura expressed this difference the following terms:

In the fifties and sixties what they spoke about most was the need for a realist cinema, one that posed social problems.... But most of the time they confused things and when they talked of “social” films they meant films about workers’ grievances, social injustice, films about the proletariat, and rarely did they consider the possibility of an incursion into the intimacy of the individual, to probe his contradictions and his sense of abandonment.¹⁹²

The shift in Saura’s films was not away from social criticism, but inwards, into the effects that Francoist repression and social stagnation had on individuals. These effects often functioned in

¹⁹¹ Saura, in Kinder (1979), 15.

¹⁹² Saura in Harguindey, 119.

the films as metaphors or allegories. Saura and this cohort of filmmakers thus had to find ways of telling socially resonant stories while circumventing the constraints of censorship, and still infusing their films with a sense of realism.

La Caza (1966) marks a clear detour from the Neorealist representation of post-Civil War life in the city. The film tells the story of four men who go on a one-day hunting trip, with a focus on the tensions at the center of the group, which is representative of the new Spanish bourgeoisie. Three of the men (José, Paco and Luis) are middle-aged, and have been friends for a long time, although they have somehow grown apart. The fourth one, Enrique, is a young man in his early twenties, and his only relation to the older men is that he is Paco's brother-in-law. Through the interactions between these four central characters, the film examines the relationship between knowledge (and lack thereof) and history, thus unveiling of past events; history, the film argues, is controlled and dismissed by the older generation, and unknown to the younger generation.

The film opens with a shot of a small cage in which two restless ferrets pace, seemingly reacting to the unnerving, warlike music of the score. This foreshadowing title sequence sets the stage for the unrest and conflicts riddling the film. The image fades into black after closing in on one of the ferrets. Fading then into view is a wide shot of the vastness of the Castilian fields, which underscores the isolation of the four hunters in a Jeep who approach a bar by the side of the road. As they stop to go for a drink, the configuration of relationships between the four men begins to show: Paco and José, who were seated up front in the Jeep, walk together, and sit together at the bar, the camera focusing on them, while leaving Luis and Enrique as peripheral to the shot, and thus to their fellows. [Figure 3.1] Paco is the first one to speak, and he does so as if he were giving instructions to the other three. In conversation with Luis, Enrique tries to get

information, but when his questions are not answered—a constant occurrence throughout the film—he does not press. In the few first exchanges among the characters, it becomes clear that José and Luis are somehow close, but Paco has not known much about them for a while: he does not know Luis' wife left him, or that José is separating from his wife, and neither José nor Luis know Paco has a son. Despite their closeness, José's and Luis's relationship is also strained; José verbally abuses Luis, and even hits him later on in the film.

Once they arrive at the hunting property, different traits of the characters, which will define them for the duration of the film, become manifest. José is faced with the abject poverty of Juan, the keeper, and his own; this is the first of a series of signposts for social separation and stagnation in Francoist Spain throughout the film. Outside, Luis continues to be infantilized; he childishly attempts to ride a donkey, and is thrown on the floor. Meanwhile, Enrique has noticed Carmen, Juan's young niece, and he leers at her calves while she goes about her farm duties. José's obsession with age and the passage of time is highlighted when, after helping Luis up from a fall, he comments that, although Luis is the youngest of the three older men, he has aged badly. Paco, once again, assumes the role of leader and insists that they must get going to begin hunting. As soon as they reach the valley where the hunt will take place, the differences between Paco and José start to emerge: when José mentions Paco's humble origins as a truck driver, he dismisses the comment, telling Enrique to pay no mind because that was a long time ago. This insistence on the side of the three older men in not discussing past matters, particularly when it is Enrique who asks, is restated immediately: Luis tells him that many men died in battle in that same place, but insists that it was a long time ago, and avoids saying which war. While the men prepare their guns for the hunt, there is an interruption of the narrative in a conversation about hunting, in which all four characters say their lines staring straight into the camera. This

interruption, which escalates the tension between the characters, is underscored by a succession of cross-cut shots of José and Paco taking aim, apparently at each other. Next comes a shot of the Luger pistol Enrique has borrowed from his father for the day; this links him to the División Azul, the division of Spanish volunteers that fought on the Nazi side between 1941 and 1943.

Following this latest reference to war, the four men start prowling the valley, but not before Paco reasserts his leadership role in the group. Enrique demonstrates his eagerness to start shooting, and Luis mocks José's attempts to organize their positions, reminding him it is not a military operation. As soon as they start spreading throughout the valley, and they become even more isolated, three interior monologues are introduced, representing the thoughts of Enrique (expressing an uncanny feeling of having been in that place before), José (thinking about the real reason he organized the hunting outing, which was to ask Paco for a loan), and Paco (reinstating eugenic thoughts about the weak, and his suspicion that José will ask him for money). Shortly thereafter, the first of three hunting scenes begins, and its open violence proves that, as stated in earlier conversation, rabbits do not stand a chance when chased by a dog, and shot at by four men. The photograph taken with Enrique's camera, showing them with their trophies, closes the first of three "acts" in the film.

After the hunt, they go back to their camp, where the three older men try to relax while Juan and his niece prepare paella for them, and Enrique tries to take photographs of everybody; refusing to accept his age, José, cooling by the withered stream, tears the polaroid Enrique has taken of him. Under the canopy, Luis reads science fiction novels, while Paco checks out a *men's magazine*, which Enrique has brought with him. Slowly, Carmen creeps behind him to look at the pictures, and Enrique begins then to take pictures of her, and they playfully flirt while Enrique takes more pictures of her. Feeling he needs to be alone with Paco to ask his

favor, José sends Luis and Enrique to buy bread from a nearby village, and then, in order to be away from Juan and his niece, tells Paco he wants to show him his “secret,” something nobody else knows about. This secret is the skeleton of a dead soldier, that José found there years ago, and that—like his financial problems—turns out not to be such a secret. Paco reacts with disgust to this finding, and also refuses to loan him money; in this scene, they again stare right into the camera as they say their lines, thus presenting a Brechtian breach of the fourth wall that briefly disrupts the Neorealist style dominating the film.

Meanwhile, Enrique asks Luis about Paco’s life, more with childish curiosity than inquisitorially, but only receives evasive answers. Luis offers a very ambiguous warning statement about Paco, which is at the same time a warning about Luis himself, and advice to stay close to him. They finally find a tavern, which is empty, because the owner and all potential customers are slaughtering a lamb at the back.¹⁹³ Once all four are back at the camp site, the pairs are rearranged, beginning conversations about their exchanges in the previous scenes: Luis, as José’s junior business partner, wants to know if the request has been successful, while Paco wants to know whether Luis has told Enrique something about him, or their past. The trope of miscommunication continues throughout lunch, when José and Paco start talking about the virtues and qualities of rabbits and rabbit hunting (“conejo,” Spanish for rabbit, being also slang for vagina), while Enrique, still eager to learn about hunting, fails to notice or understand the innuendo; Luis then starts talking about a future world in which rabbits and rats will be the dominant species. After lunch, José and Paco lay down for a *siesta*, while Enrique explores the

¹⁹³ According to the censorship reports on the original script, this scene would have been marked by two distinctive features: first, the fact that the tavern’s name was “Spain,” and all people in it were but old and withered, and there would be a priest overseeing the slaughter and carving of the lamb. However, and in the light of information provided by both Carlos Saura and producer Elías Querejeta in the documentary *El productor (Producer)*, (Fernando Méndez-Leite, 2006) that could have been deliberately “planted” by Querejeta to divert the censors’ attention to the most obvious references to the sociopolitical situation in Spain.

valley with his binoculars, and Luis paces around a mannequin they brought back from the village. This scene marks the ending of the second *act* of the film, and I will return to it later for a more detailed analysis.

The third part of the film sees all the tension that had built up during the first hour finally explode, and cause the destruction of the group. Luis, who throughout the film has been shown squishing different kinds of bugs, stabs a beetle with a pin needle, sticks it on the mannequin, and begins to shoot at it. Paco and José awaken, and Enrique runs back to the camp to find that José has punched Luis. Enrique scolds José, but Paco tells him to stand down, and takes José back to the canopy, while Enrique helps Luis back on his feet. Enrique decides to burn his magazine, which has been read by everybody but José, and stares into the fire while José tries to apologize to Luis, who simply walks away and feeds the mannequin to the fire, causing it to spread out of control. Luis, Enrique, Paco, and Juan, who has just arrived with the ferrets to burrow out more rabbits, fight the fire with what they have, while José, who owns the property, simply sits under the canopy, shrouded in despair by his unsuccessful plan, and by his loss of self-control.

Having put out the fire, José, Paco, and Enrique go hunting with Juan and the ferrets, but Luis stays at the Jeep, reading. Paco is the only one interested in hunting, and continues to criticize José in his monologues. Paco kills the ferret, but José is unable to say anything, though both Juan and he suspect Paco had killed it on purpose—possibly to further reassert his authority. Finally, under the canopy, José confronts Paco, and the tension keeps on mounting. José goes to apologize to Luis, and Paco reloads his gun, but Luis does not respond, and just walks away. Luis asks Paco for a job, and they talk about how José has changed. Enrique, who is still eagerly wanting to kill a rabbit with his father's Luger, announces he is going for another outing,

and when Luis goes to help Enrique, Paco yells about the job, making sure José hears, and further humiliating him. While the other two go hunting, José loads his gun and stalks Paco, who is looking at his reflection in the mirror, realizing his age, and attempting to stretch his wrinkles. As a rabbit runs away from Enrique and Paco, José kills Paco, and Luis drives the jeep on him. José shoots back, but before dying, Luis still manages to kill him. Enrique tries to help Paco while all hell breaks loose. With all three men dead, Enrique runs uphill, but the last frames of the film freeze him in his escape while his panting continues after the image fades out to black.

The film is divided, as I have already mentioned, into three sections, each of which represents a step in the accelerated aging of the characters, a temporality that is encapsulated in three very distinct images. In her study of the film, Sally Faulkner has noted that cinematic “form is used so that the whole film may be likened to an unflattering photograph of ageing men.”¹⁹⁴

Although Faulkner suggests that José, Luis, and Paco are shown to have aged before and throughout the film, I think has a specific catalyst. Indeed, my contention is that their return to the valley, the place of the history they are trying to repress, causes this acceleration in their life-cycles, ending inevitably with their deaths. The setting of the film plays an important role in this understanding, as it is made clear that it was a battlefield during a war, which remains indeterminate throughout, but which is identified as the Spanish Civil War. Carlos Saura has commented on this ambiguity as follows:

Only the phrase ‘the war’ is used, and it winds up taking on a strange meaning. By way of this indirection, one gets the feeling that this is an oppressive environment, that there is a sense of violence, not only in the characters, but in the setting itself, because everyone understands that there’s been a war; there are trenches, a dead soldier’s bones, and all the

¹⁹⁴ Faulkner, 466.

elements that give the presence of ‘the war’ an abstract meaning if you like, but without any concrete allusion.¹⁹⁵

Therefore, for Paco, Luis, and José this is a return to the site of the war they knew, a war that extends its “presence” from the past into the present time of the film.[Figure 3.2] The persistence of the memory of the war, instead of having a rejuvenating effect on them, makes more patent the passage of time, and the effects that time has had on them.¹⁹⁶ This return is not only to the scene of war, but also a return to a more recent past for them, a past of friendship, which contrasts with the mistrust and restlessness amongst them in the film. For Enrique, on the other hand, it is a stunted journey of initiation, which results in him not knowing enough to understand the disputes and violence he sees unfolding before his eyes.

As already mentioned, the film is divided into three parts, of roughly thirty minutes each, in an attempt to realistically compress the time of the day into diegetic time: the first part ends with the taking of the photograph after the first hunting session, the second part runs until the end of the *siesta* scene, and the third, from there to the film’s end. I will analyze these three images later on, but for now I will focus on how different topics and relationships are developed and represented in each of the three sections. The introduction of all characters is done chorally, all together, without skewed camera angles that may cast them in a particular light. Furthermore, all of the four main characters are given equal screen time, even when it comes to the representation of their musings or their worries, thus providing a uniformly rounded exposition of each of their personalities. In the first part, the relationships between the characters are introduced: Paco and José are the leaders of the group, while Luis and Enrique appear to be relegated to the

¹⁹⁵ Saura in Alonso 1968, 7-8—quoted in D’Lugo.

¹⁹⁶ Ironically, the first line of the film, spoken by Paco is: “It will do us good to spend a day in the countryside, and get some exercise.”

background. This is further reinforced by the fact that Luis, once José's business partner, is now his employee, and Paco has only brought Enrique as a means to get ahold of the jeep, which belongs to Enrique's father. However, that Paco is the first character to speak, the driver of the car (and thus leader of the group), expresses a hierarchy between the two of them; this is compounded by the fact that when they arrive at José's property, he seems to decide what to do and when. This power differential dissolves over the course of the film. This has been noted by Marvin D'Lugo, who has pointed out Paco's linkage to General Franco himself, both through the name of the character and the actor playing him.¹⁹⁷ Alfredo Mayo, a film star of Francoist Spain, played the character based on the dictator himself in the nearly-hierographic film *Raza* (*Race*, José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1942), in which the events of the Civil War are represented as a necessary evil through the figure of a leader, signaled by divine providence, will emerge. This leads D'Lugo to conclude that Mayo's character is "a shattering statement of the passage of time and the transformation of a bygone mythic hero into a venal and narcissistic old man" (57). In the first third of the film, Paco reasserts his authority, which is solidly based in his socio-economic status; but this authority is challenged, and ultimately dismantled, towards the end of the film.

The first part of the film also establishes the aesthetic framework of the film: shot on location, with a reduced cast and crew, and with hardly any additional lighting or extradiegetic music. Cinematic form also helps establish the relationship between the characters. I have already mentioned how, in the jeep, Paco and José are seated at front, and Luis and Enrique at the back; this separation in twos continues not only in the scene at the bar, in which the camera, panning from left to right and vice-versa, shows only two characters at the time, but throughout

¹⁹⁷ "Paco" is short for Francisco, the dictator's first name.

the film as well. Furthermore, the film alternates between long, wide shots of the valley and surrounding areas, and tight middle shots or close-ups of the four men. This contrast in perspectives underlines the scale of the unrest and conflict which is voiced throughout the film: Luis states repeatedly how he would like to trade places with other people, José begins to have doubts about his plan early on, and Paco seems to be wanting to leave the valley the moment they arrive there. The decision to shoot the film on location, and in the middle of the summer, also helps in creating the discomfort and unrest among the group, due to the heat and its effect on the actors' portrayal of the characters. Marsha Kinder notes, "Saura's films achieve extraordinary subtlety in their psychological realism. He makes unusual demands of his actors, whose facial expressions and physical gestures must simultaneously convey both the masks required by the society and the underlying passions and ambivalences."¹⁹⁸ In this case, with the support of the location and weather conditions, tensions surface within the group, and in each of the character's thoughts. This unmasks the cracks in the supposedly homogenous Francoist Spain.

The first part of the film concludes once the first beat is done, and the four hunters pose for a photograph, the first of three images that define the film. [Figure 3.3] This photograph, taken with Enrique's camera, exposes the dynamics within the group, and the role of each of the characters. The separation between the pairs, José-Paco and Luis-Enrique, is highlighted by their positions: Paco and José are very close to each other, Luis has his back turned against them, and Enrique is away from all three. The general posture of their bodies is also very revealing; Paco and José show signs of tiredness, while Luis adopts an over-the-top pose (associated with his interest in fiction), and Enrique, holding his rabbits up high, stares defiantly into the lens. Enrique's role in this is extremely important: not only is he in the photograph, but he is also

¹⁹⁸ Kinder, 1979, 17.

taking it. Through this double role, he records this moment even as he participates in it. In fact, Enrique is constantly associated with optical artifacts, such as the camera, the telescopic sight of Luis' rifle, or the binoculars he will later use to survey the valley, but all this viewing cannot contribute to knowledge. Despite all his attention, all his interest in knowing and belonging to the group, he cannot achieve either, for both are denied by the other men. Therefore, the photograph taken by Enrique becomes a false witness to the existence of the four men as a group, and so unmasks the tensions between them, pushing forward the dismantlement of their supposed community.

The second part of the film further examines divisions within the group and society, which are once again highlighted by the consistent framing of two characters at a time, in dialectical relationship to each other. If this happened only occasionally during the first half hour of the film, as a means of splitting or dividing group scenes, in this second part the division in pairs is complete. My contention is that during this second part, the conflict becomes a dialectical contradiction between José and Paco, each of whom tries to assert authority over the past as a means to control their present. José sends Luis and Enrique to get bread, as a prerequisite of the conversation he wants to have with Paco, but they also have to leave their camp, because Juan and his niece are there, and cannot be witness to that conversation. As a ruse, José tells Paco he wants to show him his secret, taking him into the wilderness. He then lies to Paco, telling him nobody else knows his secret and thus positioning himself as the keeper of a specific version of past which he hopes can be the temporality to unravel the passage of time that has led them to this situation. However, as soon as they arrive at the place where this secret is kept, José's power begins to dwindle, as he realizes somebody has tampered with the lock that keeps the secret shut off the world. Realizing Paco is in control of their present, José attempts to

destabilize this situation by showing him a relic of their past: the skeleton of a dead soldier. But Paco's reaction is nothing like José had expected, and his knowledge of this secret soon becomes something Paco can use against him, as a sign of a morbid obsession with the past. Furthermore, what José could have intended as a gesture of camaraderie, through a macabre token of their shared past in the war, is, in my view, taken by Paco as a failed attempt to blackmail him with the memory of that violent past, which is exacerbated when José finally asks him for money.

Meanwhile, the scenes with Luis and Enrique become a detached, powerless analogue to what is happening in the valley; close-ups and medium shots of each alternate as the pair's conversations ensue. For example, Paco's questions about the "secret" as they leave the camp are cross-cut with Enrique's questions to Luis about the past of all three of them, and about their deceased friend Arturo. However, all questions remained unanswered, receiving only evasive replies, or dry remarks from Luis about Enrique's conducting a police interrogation. This mirroring of scenes also produces a spectacularization of death and the past, through the juxtaposition of the moment in which José and Paco enter the cave, and Luis and Enrique enter the tavern in the village. Both places are represented as dark, incompletely enclosed—the lock to the cave, as already discussed, has been tampered with, and over the tavern's entrance hangs a beaded curtain, and all four must go through it to find what lies at the end. For Enrique and Luis, what they find is the ritual slaughter of a lamb by the owner of the tavern, with a group of people watching. In her book *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), Cathy Caruth discusses the relationship between trauma and representation, arguing that "it is at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of the traumatic experience precisely meet" (3), and that a traumatic event "is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time"

(17). In this intersection between the death of the lamb as a spectacle for the village, on the one hand, and Luis showing the dead soldier to Paco on the other, death and ritualistic exhibition become traces of a violent past which act upon the present. Accordingly, José, as a representative of the war's victors, claims control of the past by possessing the skeleton, but his claim is disavowed by Paco, who, as a presently more successful member of Francoist society (and thus capable of greater hegemonic control over the past), states José should have buried the soldier "como Dios manda."

Furthermore, throughout these scenes, Paco's assumption of a role above those of the other three men is reinforced by the advice Luis gives to Enrique, to stay close to Paco if he wants to be successful. This advice turns out to be also for himself, as he will later ask Paco for a job, leaving his years-long partnership with José. Enrique, for his own part, struggles to be seen and constructed as something other than a child and be accepted in the same level of knowledge as the older men. Throughout the film, as already noted, Enrique is represented as a child-like figure by means of the age difference with respect to the other three, and by being called the diminutive *Quique*. This indicates not only the difference in generations, but also the fact that he does not know anything about the war and depends on the others for knowledge about it. He also contributes to his infantilization by accepting the diminutive name and wearing exaggeratedly short shorts (children were supposed to wear shorts, men trousers), and playfully chasing young Carmen.

All these characteristics render him a much more child-like character than his apparent age should indicate; as Sally Faulkner has stated, this "treatment of youth indicates a new

generation ill-equipped to bring about change and assume adult responsibility.”¹⁹⁹ However, in this middle part of the film, Enrique begins to challenge his role; he asks more questions, not accepting the evasive answers he receives, and even questioning the assumptions the other men make about him. Further, a voice-over interior monologue proves his questions to Luis were motivated by his realization that José wanted to be alone with Paco for a specific reason. Despite his attempts, he still depends on the others to access knowledge about the past, and so, when they return to the camp, he is questioned by Paco about, to which Enrique replies in turn by asking about Paco’s conversation with José, and the identity of their dead friend, Arturo. In this bargaining process, Paco tells him how Arturo committed suicide, giving him a small piece of information while keeping the answers to all other questions Enrique asks shrouded in secrecy.

The end of this middle part is marked by the *siesta* scene, in which Paco and José lay down for a nap, while Juan and his niece go back to work, Luis takes the mannequin for a walk, and Enrique takes his binoculars and a magazine to the top of the valley. After an initial pan in which the camera shows the disposition of the characters in the valley, as the sound of the music on the radio is gradually drowned by the cicadas, the scene moves on to a close pan of Paco and José, lying down, which highlights their age and the decay of their bodies, while voice-overs of their dreams/memories mix with the cicadas. This attack on the Francoist love for youth and healthy bodies is further heightened by the following shot: a right-left pan of one of the women in Enrique’s magazine, as seen through his binoculars. This repetition and double framing, followed by another left-right pan, again focalized through Enrique, which ends in him looking at Carmen bathing, suggests a feminization of the two, older men. The suspension of action, and the treatment of the characters and of biological time have led Sally Faulkner to consider it an

¹⁹⁹ Faulkner, 471.

example of a Deleuzian “time-image,” which unfolds as the basis for Saura’s approach to a realism based on the individual.

In his taxonomy of film images elaborated over the his two *Cinema* volumes (1983, 1985), Gilles Deleuze distinguished two radically different ways of making cinema; the pre-World War II method, most aptly exemplified by classical Hollywood cinema, which he identified as “movement-image.” According to Deleuze, in “movement-image” films, time and space are subordinate to plot and action, and all events proceed through linear succession in a temporal present. However, after World War II, the exhaustion of the “movement-image” made it necessary for a new cinematic mode: that of the “time-image,” in which action and space are subordinate to time. Setting aside the fact that, despite Deleuze’s clear-cut taxonomy, it partially ignores that the emergence of the “time-image” did not mean the complete demise of the “movement-image,” Faulkner notes that in *La Caza*, even though the “movement-image” is the more prevalent mode, the *siesta* scene is a crucial example of “time-image.” Furthermore, she claims that this scene “is unsettling because it disrupts time and space, and thus questions the viewer’s extra-cinematic knowledge and expectation of each.”²⁰⁰

Though I don’t disagree with this perspective, I interpret *La Caza*’s disruption of time and space as directed not towards the elicitation of perceptions or emotions in the viewers, but towards the inner world of the film, the metaphorical representation of Francoist Spain. In disrupting the common association of time and space with the positivistic notion of progress, this scene opens up a possibility for the questioning of hegemonic discourses regarding the war and post-war society. The only person apparently capable of reassessing these relationships is Enrique, due to his constant questioning about the past, and his artifacts for observation and

²⁰⁰ Faulkner, 479.

record keeping. Accordingly, when during this scene he climbs to the top of the valley, and occupies the same point of view as the first general pan, he re-examines the valley as a physical space, but also as the locale where these new temporalities emerge; included in this panoptic stocktaking are the effects these temporalities have on their present.

In the last part of the film, all the tension and violence between Paco, José, and Luis finally implodes as they take on each other. The tense tranquility of the *siesta* scene is abruptly interrupted when Luis shoots at a beetle he had pinned to the mannequin they brought from the village. After José lashes out at him and knocks him to the floor, Enrique, challenging his infantilization, is the only one to attack José for his actions, reminding him that hitting a drunken man “no es de hombres,” despite Paco telling him to stand down and shut up. The suppressed memories of the war, which Paco, José and Luis had tried to keep from Enrique, echoing the “25 años de paz” slogan which had become part of the official imaginary regarding post-Civil War Spain, gain momentum as they surface.²⁰¹ The escalation continues when a fire started by Enrique to burn his magazines gets out of control after Luis feeds the mannequin to it. After chastising them for playing with fire, Paco fights the fire with them and Juan, while José sits under the canopy, drinking and thus handing sovereignty over his property to Paco, and partially admitting his defeat.

The definitive breach in the group, however, does not occur until Paco kills a ferret Juan is using to stalk rabbits as a vicarious way of sublimating his loathing of cripples and sickness represented by Juan and José. Margarita Pillado-Miller has pointed out that by killing the ferret, which at that time was a member of their group, Paco violates the sanctity of the group, and thus

²⁰¹ 1964 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the end of the war, and Minister of Information and Tourism Manuel Fraga Iribarne, began a propaganda campaign aimed at erasing the traces of the war, what had been central to the Regime’s discourse, and promoting the centrality of peace during the dictatorship.

breaks the loyalty they owe to each other. After confronting Paco, blaming him for deliberately killing the ferret, José goes to apologize to Luis, but he just turns his back on him without replying, and goes to talk to Paco, who offers him a job. Paco further humiliates José by shouting to Luis about meeting later that week, while José sits behind some reeds, pondering what to do. The film ends after the last shoot-out, with Enrique trying to flee the valley, until he is frozen in the last significant image of the film: we see the frozen representation of his stunted escape, as we hear the background sound of his panting. Building on Sally Faulkner's understanding of this ending as a "time-image," I propose it is in fact a more specific kind of image in Deleuze taxonomy: the "crystal-image."

For Deleuze, the "crystal-image" is the kind of image that can denote pure time, merging two different kind of images: the actual-image of the present, and the virtual-image of the past and/or future, which he derives from Bergson's conceptualization of the present as a fluid interpretation of past and future.²⁰² Actual-images therefore present more plausible interpretations of lived reality, whereas virtual images have a lesser degree of closeness to the present as plausible category, and instead blend what is past and what is to come. Sally Faulkner bases her interpretation of the ending as a "time-image" on her view that the "shot indicates man trapped by time: both the vertiginous rush from the past (the panting on the soundtrack) and the terrifying stasis of the present (the freeze-frame)."²⁰³ However, the freeze-frame becomes an image through which Enrique is represented as having surpassed the barriers imposed on his knowledge, and having gained the ability to see time. [Figure 3.4] The collision of actual and virtual, of the present and its past-future, constitutes for Deleuze the purest form of "crystal-

²⁰² Deleuze, 68.

²⁰³ Faulkner, 476.

image,” a scenario in which the “actual optical image crystallizes with its own virtual image.”²⁰⁴ By endowing Enrique’s image with attributes of the present, and the past, and the potentiality of the future, the ending of the film puts forth the possibility of a constant re-examination, reassessment, and reconfiguration of the past through the multidirectional flux of time.

III. Undoing Francoism: Dialectical Realism in *Tiempo de Silencio*

The second section of this chapter explores the novel *Tiempo de Silencio* (*Time of Silence*), written by Luis Martín-Santos in 1961. This novel dismantles the program for the development of national identity in Francoist Spain, which was linked to the nostalgia for, and even denial of the loss of, its former Empire. Part of my argument will be based on how the novel portrays divergent subjectivities and the existence of social classes which point towards the instability lurking under the surface of the unified community of the nation, thus hindering and opposing the project of a homogenous, unified nation the Franco regime had planned. Furthermore, I will also analyze how the tensions that rise between these subjectivities, classes, and the ideological structure of the nation, are manifested through the relationship between the characters’ personal stances and the elements of the power of the state, such as the organization of society. Through this confrontation, some of these characters emerge as what Antonio Gramsci would call members of the “subaltern classes” on the one hand and “intellectuals” on the other hand. Understanding the former group as the classes that are not and cannot be unified, and the latter as the figures that can develop from the emerging classes and bring about their organization and unification, I argue that the relationship between these two groups is one of mutual interdependence. Lastly, it is my contention that this relationship between classes strikes

²⁰⁴ Deleuze, 69.

directly at the basis and threatens the hegemony and stability of the classless socio-political project of nation Francoism envisioned.

As already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Luis Martín-Santos's *Time of Silence* (1961) suffered censorship because of its content and its form. As already discussed, Realism in Spain during the 1950's was classified into different categories, both by writers and by the government. Luis Martín-Santos, allegedly tried to move beyond the categories and practices that were being used, moving yet another step away from the cultural discourse of the dictatorship. This step beyond Realism was what he called "dialectical realism", which, according to him, meant "to pass from the simple static description of various alienations in order to set-up the real dynamics of the contradictions *in actu*."²⁰⁵ This new realist style would then go beyond the criticism of the social situation of Spain that the *other* realisms would elaborate and work against the very contradictions of Spain's government and society as a repressive system. As Jo Labanyi writes in her book *Ironía e historia en Tiempo de Silencio* (1983), "it is also worth noting that Martín-Santos writes, not only about the social context, but also about the historical context," a characteristic that differentiates him from most realist writers, who tended to de-historicize their works.²⁰⁶ In the pages that follow I will discuss the degree to which such a stylistic approach moves beyond the denunciation of social injustices and reveals the inconsistencies within the project of an unified nation that Francoism was trying to build.

Time of Silence tells the story of Pedro, a young researcher investigating in a Madrid institution whether cancer is genetic or transmitted through a virus. His research comes to a full

²⁰⁵ Martín-Santos, *Apólogos*, 74.

²⁰⁶ Two well known authors that fall in this category are Jesús Fernández Santos and Nobel Prize winner Camilo José Cela.

stop when the laboratory mice he had imported from Illinois die out. However, he discovers that someone had kept alive part of the stock of the animals previously stolen from the lab, and goes to the shanty town where this man (El Muecas) lives and is breeding the mice. Some days later, Muecas goes to Pedro's house in order to ask for his help for his dying daughter Florita. Upon arriving at Muecas's shack, Pedro discovers that she has actually been victim of an illegal abortion, performed in the very same shack. After Muecas and his family tried to hide the abortion and the death of Florita, Pedro is accused of performing the abortion, which turns him into a victim of the Francoist prison system. During the days he is imprisoned, his fiancé, Dorita, and his best friend, Matías, unsuccessfully attempt to convince the authorities that he has nothing to do with the abortion, until finally Florita's mother exonerates Pedro of all fault by revealing that the abortion had been performed by Muecas. The last pages of the novel, however, see Pedro's final defeat, as he is expelled from the research institution and Dorita is murdered by Florita's lover, who still considers Pedro to be responsible for her death.

Besides the apparently traditional plot structure of the text, the novel has been praised for its innovative narrative technique, deeply influenced by James Joyce's *Ulysses*, including a narrator who provides metafictional commentary by switching between voices, mixing some of his observations with other characters' thoughts and dialogues. These innovations, together with the descriptions of the difficult life conditions in Madrid after the civil war, led to the censorship of the novel and caused legal problems for the author. Furthermore, throughout the novel, a complex dialogue is established with some of the most representative elements of Spanish cultural history, such as Cervantes, and Goya, and also two of the most representative members of the "Generation of '98", Ortega y Gasset and Unamuno. However, and despite that the novel is an attempt to destabilize the realist practices of the 1950's, and mockingly relates to Spanish

cultural tradition, it has found its place within the Spanish canon. My contention is that this kind of analysis limits the possibilities the novel offers by encompassing it in the very same tradition it goes against. I will therefore attempt to analyze the ways in which the novel lays out a deep critique of Spanish national history, and the extent to which it disavows the concept of nation as a possibility for Spanish society.

The fact that the novel is set in Madrid is not trivial. In fact, the city, as the capital of Spain in the process of forming itself as a nation, is the second main character that is introduced, right after Pedro. However, the way in which the city is presented is radically different from what it would be expected of a city that was once the center of an Empire:

The city is so stunted, so lacking in historical substance, treated in such an offhand way by arbitrary rulers, capriciously built in a desert, inhabited by so few families rooted in its past, far from the sea or the river, ostentatious in the display of its shabby poverty, favored by a splendid sky which almost makes one forget its defects, ingeniously self-satisfied like a fifteen-year-old girl, created merely for the prestige of a dynasty, endowed with hidden immaterial treasures which cause one to forget its material deficiencies.²⁰⁷

This introductory paragraph sets the city's present in relation to Spain's past. As a city, Madrid, the capital of the Empire, has been stopped in its development, a development that started in 1561 when Phillip II decided, at the height of the Spanish Empire, to turn a small town into the center of his dominion. This passage also points towards the self-satisfaction of the city, knowing itself to be the center, if not anymore of the Empire, then at least of the country, the place from which all decisions emanate. But, at the same time, the text emphasizes that Madrid has been founded on a certain uprootedness, highlighting the fact that throughout the centuries, and particularly after the Civil War, Madrid grew due to the constant immigration from other regions of Spain, such as Asturias, in the case of Amador, Pedro's assistant, Toledo (capital city of Spain

²⁰⁷ Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 11.

in the Middle Ages), in the case of El Muecas, or many other different places, as in the case of the residents of the guest house where Pedro lives.

Pedro, the medical researcher, from an unknown place that remains unmentioned, comes to this city to fulfill his dream of carrying out research worth of winning the Nobel Prize. Madrid, the city that was founded capriciously, that has come to a halt in its development and where people arrive without any sense of the history it has seen before their arrival. Throughout the novel, Pedro is presented as an intellectual who could potentially belong to a new selected elite called to put Spain back on the front page of history, who would contribute to the modernization of the country and help scientific research gain international recognition. Proof of this status is the treatment he receives at the guest house where he lives; night after night he is entertained by the three different generations of women that own the place: the grandmother, the mother/daughter (Dora), and the (gran)daughter, Dorita. Every night, after supper, Pedro sits and chats with them, in what in small steps becomes a game not of seduction but of entrapment of Pedro into “a protective and oppressive family.”²⁰⁸ Pedro is chosen, from all the other lodgers, also coming from outside of Madrid, to spend time with the long-settled family because he has “the great advantage of being a young man. The female trio sensed the importance of that fact too well to confuse him with any other kind of creature during his stay in their house.”²⁰⁹ He is then selected because, as a figure of the new elite that will build the future of Spain, he has also been identified by the grandmother as worthy of marrying the youngest of the women, as worthy of becoming part of the group of people who belong, after several generations, to the center of the nation, and of the Empire. Furthermore, this would allow Pedro to be considered a *madrileño*

²⁰⁸ Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 32.

²⁰⁹ Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 33.

(a true inhabitant of Madrid, belonging to a long-settled family) and anchor himself in the capital, thus eliminating his rootlessness and making his belonging to the center possible.

It is worth noting that, besides the three women of the guest house, the only other character who has deep roots in Madrid that Pedro has real contact with is his friend Matías. The two young men spend together most Saturday evenings and nights, participating in literary circles, getting drunk, discussing paintings with German expressionists, and visiting a high standing brothel. If the guest house was Pedro's entry into Madrid's petit bourgeoisie, it is precisely through his friendship with Matías that Pedro enters the world where the old aristocracy and high bourgeoisie meet. By taking part in the same activities Matías undertakes, Pedro fits into the community of the young writers who discuss the great figures of the Spanish literary canon in a café, where "the city became conscious of him in one of its liveliest corners: he existed."²¹⁰

However, from the very beginning, the novel also presents Pedro's attempts to become *madrileño* as failures. The very first page has him working under the gaze of a painting of Ramón y Cajal, the only Spanish scientist to ever win the Nobel Prize for Medicine, just at the moment when he finds out that the last of the mice imported from Illinois has died. These events lead Pedro to think that his efforts have been in vain, and that he or other Spanish scientists "will never receive the cup and the laurel from the tall Nordic King."²¹¹ Furthermore, the acceptance he receives in the boarding house is really a trap in disguise, a trap that is woven by the grandmother to ensure that the granddaughter has something better than the waning boarding house, to which a series of personal disgraces have confined the three women. The impression of

²¹⁰ Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 64.

²¹¹ Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 4.

entrapment becomes even stronger for Pedro when he joins the literary circle, where he is identified as a member of the community he cannot see himself as a member of. In fact, Martín-Santos takes advantage of this situation to introduce part of his aesthetic theory when the narrator reflects Pedro's thoughts about the other members of the circle: "down-to-earth realism of their life did not rise to the intensity of a style. Its end result was nil."²¹² In addition, his failure as a research scientist is brought to the foreground when he meets Matías's mother, who immediately recognizes him as a scientist because he has "a scientist's face."²¹³ This points, first of all, to the fact that Pedro has not been accepted into Matías's social group because of his merits, but because of appearances, a revelation that causes him to unveil that his research is "not really very original," and that in fact "[s]ome Americans have already studied it before me."²¹⁴ All the contradictions related to Pedro described here cast a shadow of doubt over the status and condition of Pedro within the different groups he is trying to belong to, or is made to belong to, as a scientist, and as a cultured man interested in literature, and eventually as a *madrileño*. This situation, where identification is always attributed to him by others in terms of place, class, and profession, invites the question as to what kind of an intellectual Pedro is. Is he really trying to contribute to the discourse that dominates the society he lives in, or is he trying to be subversive? Is he trying at all, or is he just letting himself be put into the various categories through which he can be defined?

Antonio Gramsci established a dichotomy of intellectuals, which he divided into "traditional" and "organic." For him, "the 'organic' intellectuals which every new class creates alongside itself and elaborates in the course of its development, are for the most part

²¹² Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 67.

²¹³ Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 125.

²¹⁴ Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 125

‘specializations’ of partial aspects of the primitive activity of the new social type which the new social class has brought into prominence.”²¹⁵ This kind of intellectual would be in opposition to the other “categories of intellectuals already in existence and which seemed indeed to represent an historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms.”²¹⁶ Considering these two possible categories, Pedro does not seem to fit either of them. If, on the one hand, he seems to be taking a highly specialized place within the society the class he aspires to belong to (the bourgeoisie), he is incapable of performing, or rather, of carrying to term the experiment he is working on, which seems to be doomed and redundant right from the beginning, because for something already done, he will never receive the recognition he’s striving for. This behavior seems to rule him out as what could be a bourgeois ‘organic’ intellectual. However, Pedro’s desires to liken himself to figures such as Cervantes or Ramón y Cajal, while belonging to a different social group, disqualify him as a possible ‘traditional’ intellectual. The problem that the apparent impossibility to analyze Pedro according to either of these categories poses may be solved by considering the way in which anthropologist Kate Crehan explains the relationship between what Gramsci understands as ‘intellectual,’ the individual against the collective, and the production of knowledge. She writes:

Gramsci, however, shifts the focus from the intellectual as individual to ‘the ensemble of the system of relations’ within which knowledge is produced, and how this activity is located ‘within the general complex of social relations’. In other words, he is interested in the institutions and practices that produce socially recognized knowledge and how individuals are situated within these, rather than in lone individual thinkers.²¹⁷

Considering this turn from exclusively individual intellectuals to intellectuals as a function of the structure that determines what acceptable knowledge consists of, the situation of Pedro is

²¹⁵ Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, 138.

²¹⁶ Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, 6-7.

²¹⁷ Crehan, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, 133.

overdetermined by a series of institutions and practices: the research center where he works, the literary circle of the café, which is itself an example of the places where Spanish literary elite groups would meet and determine what was literary and what not, and the meetings at Matías's house, where he enters even higher into the bourgeoisie world, position him as a member of the new group of intellectuals who will produce "socially recognizable knowledge." These intellectuals, then belong exclusively to a certain social class, which determines the grounds for the development of the relationship between that social class and the others. In terms of Martín-Santos's dialectical realism, these intellectuals would be the key to activating the proper dialectical relationship between the social classes, leading to a synthesis that will resolve the social tensions hegemonic discourse is trying to mask. However, Pedro's dialectical potential is soon neutralized.

Such a situation correlates with the study of the cultural tradition that justified Francoism as described by Christopher Britt Arredondo in his book *Quixotism: The Imaginative Denial of Spain's Lost Empire* (2005). In this book he examines how the Generation of '98 incorporated the figure of Don Quixote into the debate on Spanish national and imperial decadence. In his analysis of their works Britt Arredondo argues that these intellectuals intended to convince Spaniards to embrace quixotic heroism in order to end the nation's decadence and regain its former domain. Britt Arredondo further claims that Quixotism was used by fascists during and after the civil war as a justification of positive liberty inasmuch as people were required to forgo their own freedom for the good of the nation. According to Arredondo, Quixotism has been a constant in political and cultural discourses throughout the 20th century and the construction of Spanish national identity. In his understanding of the way in which the writings of the Quixotists were used by Francoism, he claims that the ruling classes defended the notion that all Spaniards

should be capable of “ascetic discipline: in order to regenerate, the nation’s Sanchos had to submit their will to the self-sacrificial ideas of the nation’s Quixotes.”²¹⁸ Considering that this hierarchy was established during the dictatorship, by which the Quixotic elite would tell the Sanchos of the common people what to do under all circumstances, it is possible to see how Gramsci’s understanding of the intellectual as a group that produces a certain kind of acceptable knowledge can be a tool to gain a deeper insight into Francoism. In the hierarchy between Quixotes and Sanchos the people’s acceptance of their role as a group led by the elite is based on the obedience the esquire owes to his lord, an obedience that in the pre-modern world was justified by divine right. However, the elite still needs the means to articulate the language, the knowledge through which the people will be convinced that their purpose is really that which is being assigned by the elite. Francoism thus deploys its own brand of *intellectuals* as the means to transform the ideological articulations of reality that the elite want the people to live by into realities and sets of knowledge that the people will have to accept.

In the novel, Pedro is put into this position of intellectual by a series of mechanisms: the research center, the family (through his acceptance into the guest house family unit), the literary circle, and bourgeoisie, but, as I have previously discussed, it is not completely clear that he wants to belong in those groups. The deaths of his mice, however, give him a chance to enter into a completely different group: the inhabitants of the shanty town, the Spaniards who, somehow, would not fit into the scheme of Quixotes and Sanchos because they are even too abject to be an embodiment of the people. The journey that Pedro and Amador, his assistant, undertake in order to retrieve the stolen mice from El Muecas takes them to the periphery in two ways: it is a centrifugal, or outward, journey, moving from the city centre on to the outskirts, but

²¹⁸ Britt Arredondo, 175.

also a downward journey, constantly descending a seemingly unending slope. They walk through different areas of increasing squalor, each of which Pedro thinks is the shantytown, and, although they are described as shanty towns, he is told by Amador that those are just neighborhoods of the city. Indeed, the walk through the poor areas of Madrid seems to efface differences between both of them, until they become “unaware of any social difference arising from their respective origins, indifferent to any discrepancy of culture which might inhibit their conversation, and oblivious to the effect which the difference in their dress and appearance might have on others.”²¹⁹ The fact that the novel highlights the difference in social class between them and also how it is diminished as they enter the world of the underclass is particularly important for a discussion of Francoism and Spanish fascism, because one of the goals of the Falange, the Spanish Fascist party, the only legal party during the dictatorship, was, like any other Fascist regime, to eliminate class struggle by eliminating classes. To this extent, their own manifesto, the “26 Points of Falange Española” clearly states, under the first point that “[a]ll individual, group, or class interests must be subordinated without question to the accomplishment of this [the Falange’s] task.” Furthermore, in relation to class struggle and its socio-economic repercussions, the manifesto maintains that their “regime will make class struggle totally impossible, since all those cooperating in production will constitute an organic whole therein.”²²⁰ In narrating the disappearance of the difference in social class between doctor and assistant, the novel points indeed to the very heart of the hypocritical and self-effacing social hierarchy of Francoist Spain, where different social classes do exist, despite the efforts of the ruling groups to present their society as homogenous and non-discriminating. But it is also very important that the difference

²¹⁹ Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 23.

²²⁰ Payne, 39 – 40.

between the classes that belong to Francoist society is erased at the very moment when they have to face the other group, the underclass that does not belong in or to society, what Antonio Gramsci would call the subaltern social group.

Among the many different attempts to identify and define what he meant by that term, Gramsci talks about the “subaltern social group, deprived of historical initiative, in continuous but disorganic expansion, unable to go beyond a certain qualitative level, which still remains below the level of the possession of the state and of the real exercise of hegemony over the whole of society which alone permits a certain organic equilibrium in the development of the intellectual group.”²²¹ At all times the descriptions of the shanty town and its inhabitants available in the novel run closely parallel to this characterization by Gramsci. The shanty town grows constantly, fed by the never ending flow of immigration from all corners of Spain into Madrid, and, just like the unregulated human movements, construction of less than shacks sprouts all over the available land, which is suspected to be state or city property, but over which there cannot be any real control or measure. Just like Gramsci’s subalterns, the inhabitants of the shanty town cannot even aim for any kind of hegemony or equilibrium even among themselves, left alone in trying to stake their claim in front of the rest of society. A society for which they are invisible because they will never reach the “qualitative level” that will allow them to belong to it, because if they achieved that level they would then become part of society, individually, and no longer part of the subaltern group. This is particularly the case of El Muecas, who, after having moved to Madrid looking for fortune, ends up living in the shanty town, only then to start the most incredibly marginal jobs, such as capturing dogs and cats for scientific research at the same center where Pedro works, from where he has stolen some of the mice he now intends to sell

²²¹ Gramsci, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, 351.

back to Pedro. His scheme to sell the mice back to Pedro is just part of his plan to improve his and his family's situation, by reaching a certain economic "quantitative level" that will allow them to move away from the periphery of the city and into the center. However, in the process of making himself a man not of the subaltern group, he also achieves certain hierarchical status within the shanty town world, developing a sense of power and even of history, or belonging to the place. "Citizen Muecas, a well-established and notable veteran of the frontier, respected and consulted by his peers, [...] could see the stamp of ignominy and of an inferior race on the faces of the newcomers."²²² Here, through the commentary on the status of Muecas in the society of the shanty town, a further image of marginality is introduced: Muecas and the other inhabitants of the most external part of the shanty town are living at the frontier, between Madrid and the rest of Spain, between modernity and the past; however, even within this margin, the border beyond which the city ceases to be, there is a center, composed by Muecas and other "veterans of the frontier", and a periphery, composed by those members of the "inferior race" who are just moving in, settling at the bottom of the slope, unknowingly threatening the stability of the precarious social organization of the shanty town.

After the two visits Pedro pays to Muecas's shack (the second, to try to save the life of the young daughter, Florita, who has been forced to illegally abort in the shack), his connection to the bourgeois world he had started to join earlier on in the novel starts to shatter. This is very clear in a scene in which the novel mocks Ortega y Gasset's concept of perspectivism, but also the way in which the bourgeoisie upholds the traditional intellectuals as their own. The narration of the scene starts, unlike the description of the chaotic, anomic shanty town, with a statement of the order that is germane to the dominant social class:

²²² Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 45.

Like any well-arranged cosmos, the place in which the event was to take place was built in a number of superimposed layers. [...] the lower layer of this cosmos, which had no connection with or apparent relation to the two higher levels, was being used for a servants' dance. [...] the middle layer housed a crowd almost as great as the lower, but of different composition [...] and to conclude this summary sketch of our theogony [...] the third and culminating layer in the form of a movie theater had only a virtual or allegorical existence until the precise moment of the Master's appearance.²²³

It is worth noting that, whereas the journey towards the shantytown was described as a descent into the depths of the underclass, this progression is constructed as an ascent towards the heights where only those who are worthy of physically seeing the Master are allowed to tread. This division in allegorical layers also draws attention to an earlier comment on the hierarchical organization for Spanish society proposed by the Quixotist group (that the Master, Ortega y Gasset, belonged to) and applied by the Francoist regimes. Furthermore, hardly any details are given about the middle layer, while we are told that the lower layer is where the servants are and the top layer only comes into actual existence once Ortega was present and summoned it into existence. However, a couple of pages later we discover that Pedro and Matías, members of the new intellectual group I have discussed earlier, are indeed in the middle layer, and not amongst the highest-ranking members of the cosmos. Through this composition it can be seen, as much as through the ways in which Pedro related earlier in the novel to all the mechanisms that enable him to be in the position to become bourgeois how he is constructed as an “organic intellectual.” In this scene, Pedro appears as the mediator in the relationship between the elite, summoned into existence, called into being, by the traditional intellectual, and the servants, the workers, who are at the lower level, receiving the weight of the entire social structure that is being built on them.

The reception that follows the philosophical lecture, which is narrated in a very sarcastic way, boiling perspectivism down to the example of two persons seeing an apple differently

²²³ Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 132.

because of their different perspectives, seals the beginning of Pedro's separation from the bourgeois group whose members want him to be part of it. While he has a conversation with two women who cannot understand what the purpose of his job is, he feels stranded as Matías and Matías's mother, the only people he knows there, veer away from him; Matías chasing a young girl, the mother continuing her worship of the philosopher. Pedro's feelings of abandonment and entrapment lead him to the decision that he has to leave the hall where the reception is taking place, just at the moment when the second step in Pedro's separation from the bourgeoisie occurs. Dorita, Pedro's fiancé, appears there to let him know the police are looking for him in connection with Florita's illegal abortion and subsequent death. This announcement makes Pedro flee into the margins of society, only this time not to the shanty town, but to the brothel, where Matías can hide him for a few days, until he is finally found by the police. This further step away from the center of society and into marginality takes Pedro into jail, where, according to the laws of Francoism, he is held for interrogation without access to counsel for seventy-two hours. In the time he spends in prison, Pedro's inner thoughts are represented through a stream-of-consciousness soliloquy that shows how his personality is breaking under the weight of the constant interrogations and his guilt for having been to the shanty town, for not having been able to save the girl, and for having jeopardized his future due to his recklessness. The convoluted argument Pedro has with himself reaches its paroxysm when he thinks "[y]ou didn't kill her. She was dead. She wasn't dead. You killed her. Why do I say you? – I" manifesting the degree to which his personality has split under the strain of the circumstances.²²⁴ It is also while he is in prison that his pathetic passivity comes to the foreground and is addressed as one of the qualities of his life, when he thinks of his time in prison as a "time during which I shall live more

²²⁴ Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 179.

intensely [...] I exist. I'm alive. Time is passing, filling me. I am moving through time [...] It is only here that I can see that I'm completely in control. Nothing can happen to me. I'm the one who is happening."²²⁵ After letting himself be guided and put into a determined place in society, it is only through the absolute deprivation of freedom that he feels free, once he cannot be pushed in or out of his role as intellectual, as researcher, as *madrileño*, once he becomes an individual completely void of agency, he realizes he had never had agency to start with.

During the time Pedro is in prison, Matías and Dorita do all they can, as bourgeois, as members of the society he belongs to, in order to liberate him. However, as members of society, they are bound by it and cannot operate outside of its rules, and so all of their attempts end in the same result: he cannot be freed or talked to during the seventy-two hours. The solution to Pedro's imprisonment comes then from an unexpected place, from outside society, from one of the "round creatures, dirty, evil-smelling, encrusted with black and greasy substances in the folds of their flesh untouched by water," that represents the most abject of positions in society in her marginality: Florita's mother.²²⁶ Nearly unheard from throughout the novel, her words are the only ones that can exonerate Pedro; the first time this happens is when he realizes Florita is dead: "You did what you could, Doctor."²²⁷ The second time, after she has also been put in prison because of Florita's death, after she comes to terms with her entire life, brutalized under Muecas's tyranny, unable to speak, unable to stop her consort from raping their own daughter, incapable of anything but grief when he caused her death after forcing the illegal abortion: "It wasn't him...she was dead when he came."²²⁸ Using language, something alien to her until that

²²⁵ Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 181.

²²⁶ Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 203.

²²⁷ Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 111.

²²⁸ Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 206.

moment, as the means for her not only to free Pedro, but more importantly to make justice for herself and Florita, to see that Muecas receives the punishment he deserves, Ricarda/Encarna²²⁹ achieves what would seem completely impossible for her: not only does she as subaltern speak, but she also represents herself and Pedro in legal terms.

However, Pedro's exculpation of the crime does not mean he can return to the place he formerly occupied in society. First, his research grant is discontinued by the Director of the research center, who suggests to Pedro that he should leave Madrid because "all will be forgotten in the provinces. The Madrid papers don't get there, and even if they do, they're not read, or people won't place you. You'll have a quieter life."²³⁰ This clearly defies Benedict Anderson's theorization of the role of newspapers in creating a cohesive national imagined community, but the hiding of information and lack of communications between the different parts of Spain were actually facts of the Francoist dictatorship. Once Pedro has decided to take the advice and leave Madrid, on the last night they will stay in the city, Dorita is murdered by Florita's lover, who commits the murder without witnesses and goes unpunished, returning to the shanty town to occupy the place of Muecas as sovereign of that world of misery. Pedro then is forced to leave Madrid, expelled by all the elements of society who had before tried to make him fit in their own structure: without the possibility of attaining a position as an intellectual bourgeois, or of marrying into the bourgeoisie, he has no other path to take than to return to the nameless, placeless original locale which he abandoned at the beginning of his journey. This circularity is prefigured at the beginning of the novel, when Pedro, before going out with Matías on the night

²²⁹ She receives both names in different parts of the novel.

²³⁰ Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 215-6.

he is summoned to the death of Florita, sits at the dinner table to eat a whiting, which is described as follows:

The fish with its tail in its mouth appeared so completely appropriate on his plate, so emblematic, that Pedro could not avoid smiling at it. Eating that fish would draw him more intimately into the life of the boardinghouse and identify him with those martyrs of discomfort who form the very essence of a country that is not part of Europe. The domestic ouroboros had an ironic and grinning appearance.²³¹

The fish presented to Pedro becomes, through the narrator's intrusion in Pedro's thoughts, an ouroboros, the symbol of eternal return, of circular time, of the impossibility for him and for Spain to move beyond the rut in which they are stuck, which not being caused in part by not being considered part of Europe. This is particularly important considering that the late 1950s marked the beginning of a progressive and liberalizing process by which the dictatorship sought to increase contact with Europe. The response of the European countries however, was not very encouraging, and when the Rome Treaties of 1957 left Spain out of the European Economic Community. Furthermore, the motif of eternal return makes a comeback again in the last pages of the novel, with another of Pedro's soliloquies, although this time it is much more ordered and structured than when he was in prison. Arriving at the train station, Pedro thinks: "Who was this Príncipe Pío? Prince, principal, *in principio*, the beginning of all, the beginning of the end, the beginning of the evil. Here I am *in principio*, in the beginning, it's all over now, I'm all finished, I'm going away [...] This is where I began too. I arrived at Príncipe Pío, and I'm leaving from Príncipe Pío."²³² The question Pedro asks himself is not the relevant one, because more important than who was Prince Pío, is the signification of the place. Príncipe Pío is the place where the Madrilene rebellion against French occupation started; it is the site of the famous

²³¹ Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 59.

²³² Martín-Santos, *Tiempo de Silencio*, 239.

Goya painting *The Third of May of 1808*, also known as *The Shootings on the Príncipe Pío Hill*.

As such, Príncipe Pío has been one of the primal sites from which Spanish nationalism has emanated and keeps feeding itself. Being one of the historical points of entry into and idea Spanish nationness, the location of Príncipe Pío is used in the novel to highlight the circularity of Pedro's journey and to express how, through his oblivion of the importance of this site which for him is the gate of entry and exit into the project of Spain, the construction of the Spanish nation is doomed to fail, as is Pedro's research and life as national subject. *Time of Silence* proposes, through the examination of Pedro's failure to insert himself in the role bourgeois society had assigned him, that the national model Francoism was trying to implement in the country has failed, which is particularly highlighted by the fact that it is a novel that at all moments attempts to dismantle the myth of a homogenous nation. Despite the forceful attempts to eradicate social differences and with them social classes, the reality of Francoism was the radicalization of a hierarchical society that expelled those who would not assume their roles, like Pedro, like the inhabitants of the shanty town. This further unmasks the process of national identification as constantly feeding from an origin which is not only imagined but also mythical and that is used by the ruling classes to transform the present into Benjamin's "homogenous empty time."

Through its complex narrative structure, the establishment of an inner temporality that challenges and to some extent dissolves the possibility of establishing a unique, linear and historical representation, the novel also, through its inner temporality, disavows the difference between past and present, and points towards the persistence of the past in the present. Likewise, Carlos Saura's *La Caza* presents a similar take on the repercussions of the Civil War, and it draws heavily on the tradition of Neorealism, which itself poses a threat to the discourse built around Spanish national cinema. Furthermore, through the persistence of the specters of war,

different temporalities emerge, tilting the established hegemonic temporality and historical discourse emerge, opening up the possibility for the reincorporation of elements which had been left out of it, and thus re-defining the “reality” of Spain after the Civil War. Clearly highlighting the relationship between time and representation, both *La Caza* and *Tiempo de Silencio*, through further re-elaboration of the past through representation, propose two things as possible: first that it is possible to change the past through the present. Second, it is also possible to cause the disruptions created by these interventions to be greater and deeper, thus making time to be, “out of joint,” as Derrida would put it. These characteristics, shared by the two works analyzed in this chapter, hold in them the “temporal index” Benjamin assigned to the past, and which is carried on to the present for its redemption. The oppression of the masses, the annihilation of individuality, and a false official discourse of progress and stability within controlled change, were, as these works show, endemic of Francoism and its national project. However, and as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, they are characteristics that did not end with the dictatorship, and that are still at the base of the socio-political problems facing Spain nowadays.

Chapter 3: Image Index
Figures 3.1-3.4 *La Caza*²³³



Figure 3.1- *La Caza* (1966)



Figure 3.2- *La Caza* (1966)

²³³ All images copyright Carlos Saura.



Figure 3.3- *La Caza* (1966)



Figure 3.4- *La Caza* (1966)

Chapter 4

Postmodern Realisms: Present Pastiche of Time

I. Spain into (post)modernity

Since the 1960s, Spain has experienced a series of political and social changes, ranging from the end of the dictatorship after Franco's death in 1975, to its entry in the EU and adoption of the euro, in 1986 and 2000 respectively. In the past four decades, Spanish society has developed into a Janus-faced figure, looking toward a future of progress, while keeping an eye on unresolved issues of the past which hinder movement towards the future. Throughout most of the 1980s, particularly due to the "pact of forgetting," by which all political parties seemed to agree on suppressing Franco's legacy, there was limited questioning of the civil war and post-civil war period. However, things started to change slowly throughout the 1990s, accelerating after 1992, a year that symbolically marked the culmination of Spain's efforts towards modernization, democratization and convergence with Europe.

Once all the goals associated with 1992 (including hosting the Olympic games and the Universal Exposition, both affirming Spain's belonging to Europe and its connections to the entire world) were fulfilled, a sensation of uncertainty started to develop in Spain's society. This uncertainty was connected not only to the lack of a goal to reach, but also to political instability and economic stagnation in the mid-1990s. It cast doubt on the progressive policies put in place by successive Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party-PSOE) governments since 1982. Whereas a political turn towards the right in the 1996 elections was confirmed by the landslide victory of the Partido Popular (Popular Party-PP) in 2000, at a grassroots level, the questioning of the "pact of forgetting" became more palpable and

active, leading (among other things) to the establishment of the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica in 2000.²³⁴ Upon winning the 2004 elections, PSOE's José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero vowed to transform the efforts of those grassroots movements into what has been called the Historical Memory Law (Ley de la Memoria Histórica, LMH), which was passed in 2007, despite opposition from PP. Writing for a special issue of *The Economist* in 2004, John Grimond held that Zapatero's government mission was twofold: on the one hand, Spain had the opportunity to continue with the overall economic success the country had experienced since the end of the dictatorship. On the other hand, Zapatero should also foster "a new phase of democratic development."²³⁵ Both the Historical Memory Law, and the earlier achievement by Zapatero, a 2005 law granting marriage equality for same-sex couples, seemed to be moving Spain in that direction. However, opposition leader Mariano Rajoy argued that the Historical Memory Law would re-open "healed wounds," suggesting further that the law was revanchist, and thus contrary to the Transición spirit of unity. Therefore, Rajoy stated he would repeal the law if elected in the 2008 elections. PP representatives further criticized the government for being obsessed with the past while ignoring the most pressing issues of Spain's present, such as immigration and the loss of national identity. Although more pressing issues like the Eurozone crisis have diverted the focus of politics away from Spain's past, cultural productions continue to delve into it.

²³⁴ Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory

²³⁵ Grimond, J. *The Second Transition*, *The Economist*, (June 26, 2004). Ironically, the concept of "second transition" had been put forward by José María Aznar when, in 2000, he had won his second election. Besides Grimond, the topic has been treated by Omar G. Encarnación, in *Spanish Politics. Democracy After Dictatorship* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2008), and Charles Powell, in his article *A Second Transition, or More of the Same?* *Spanish Foreign Policy under Zapatero* Vol. 14 *South European Society and Politics* 4, (December, 2009), 519-536.

Unable to effectuate a recovery in Spain's economy, Zapatero was forced to call early elections in November 2011 and resign from office. The new PP government found in the 2008 crisis the perfect excuse to continue with the economic liberalization that had been pushed forward by José María Aznar during his 1996-2004 mandates, and also to defund the LMH. Under Rajoy, the LMH has effectively been neutralized; government budgets for 2012 saw funding for the mechanisms that would enact it cut by 60%, going from over six million euros the previous year to just two and a half million euros. For 2013 and 2014 the budget has reserved zero euros for its support. Arguably, the neoliberal policies imposed by the Eurogroup, the conclave of the finance ministers of the Eurozone, have thus impeded the examination of Spain's gruesome past.

In this chapter, I examine the representation of these two sides of Spain's entry into modernity under cultural and economic postmodernism. On the one hand, there is the presence of the unresolved past in contemporary society, represented in Suso de Toro's novel *Non volvas* (2000). On the other hand, there is the negotiation of the visibility of immigrants and the underclass as an ugly surplus of neoliberalism in 21st century Spain portrayed in Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Biutiful* (2010). Through a close reading of these texts, I analyze the pervasiveness of these issues in a Spain that can only be characterized as experiencing the full force of a conservative counterrevolution. Furthermore, I argue, these texts exemplify a cultural moment which is neither ahistorical nor narcissistically celebratory of the present, but rather is rather characterized by a critical engagement with both past and present. Although *Non volvas* explores the consequences for the present of a past that cannot be left behind, and *Biutiful* delves into a present that is denied the possibility to become past, both texts can be characterized as

examples of what literary theorist Linda Hutcheon has called “postmodern fiction.”²³⁶

Hutcheon establishes a series of three criteria a work of fiction must meet in order to fit her conceptualization of “postmodern,” all of which are connected to the notion of metafiction. Postmodern fiction draws attention to how reality is a narrative construction in which, perception, imagination, and memory play a fundamental role.²³⁷ Furthermore, a work of postmodern fiction is characterized by its self-reflexivity, and self-consciousness as a representation “interpreting (indeed as creating) its referent, not as offering direct and immediate access to it.”²³⁸ Finally, these fictions emphasize subject-formation as a process, which is in constant flux, a “gendered subjectivity, rooted also in class, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.”²³⁹ These characteristics describe texts, which question and denounce the mechanisms of exclusion imbedded in social structures which presuppose a sense of unity and community, whether local or national, concrete, or imaginary.

These considerations of narrative properties interact in interesting ways with Hayden White’s understanding of positivist historiography. We have seen how for White, narrative is an essential factor in the relationships established between the past, history, time, and ideology. The tropes and writing modes that characterize the writing of history must have as their subject matter not only the political or ethical concerns of the historian, but also facts, which must be at the base of such an endeavor. Consequently, the work of the historian consists of arbitration among “the *historical field*, the unprocessed *historical record*, *other historical accounts*, and an

²³⁶ Hutcheon, Linda, *Politics of Postmodernism* (New Accents, New York: Routledge, 1989).

²³⁷ Hutcheon, 40.

²³⁸ Hutcheon, 34.

²³⁹ Hutcheon, 38.

audience.²⁴⁰ Furthermore, and drawing on Kant's conclusions from his own study of human history,²⁴¹ White establishes a taxonomy of modes of narration, qualifying them as "comedy, tragedy, and irony (if considered from the standpoint of the plot structures they impose upon the historical panorama) or idealism, cynicism, and skepticism (if considered from the standpoint of the world-views they authorize)."²⁴² From this analysis, White concludes that the role of politics in the writing of history establishes a connection between modern (positivist) historiography and pre-modern, and indeed ancient, modes of writing.

Further pursuing my interest in how narrative forms and modes of writing interact with external historical changes, I propose that both *Non volvas* and *Biutiful* present characteristics that make them both ironical and skeptic, following White's taxonomy. These narratives are ironic, and create a critical distancing from the subject they are presenting, thus causing a questioning of the engagement with it. Furthermore, they are skeptical, because they disavow the notion of fixed, absolute knowledge. Furthermore, these interdependent narrative modes contribute to the development of distinct temporalities, whose interaction with Spain's political and social present I will analyze in detail.

²⁴⁰ White, *Metahistory*, 5, emphasis in the original.

²⁴¹ According to White, Kant established a taxonomy of historical accounts, divided into three groups: the ones that considered that human race was in continuous progress (called "eudaemonism" by Kant), secondly those that considered the human race was in continuous degeneration (which Kant identified as "terrorism"), and finally those characterized by seeing the human race at an unchanged level of development (what Kant called "farce")(*The Content of the Form*, 47).

²⁴² White, *Content of the Form*, 65.

II. Metafiction, Intertextuality, and Realism: Suso de Toro's *Non Volvas*

Instead of focusing on its present in narcissistic self-reference, Suso de Toro's novel *Non volvas* (*No vuelvas; Don't go back*, 2000)²⁴³ engages with the past through its involvement with the present, going even as far as to suggest, as Walter Benjamin might, that actions in the present can change the past. *Non volvas* tells the story of Encarna, a diabetic nurse who, during a hypoglycemic episode, seems to remember an image of her deceased mother and another woman she initially does not recognize. Together with a general feeling of dissatisfaction with her job and her life, in which she feels completely detached from her husband and daughter, this persistent memory makes her feel the urge to return to the village where she grew up before her mother took her to Santiago, where she currently lives. When she arrives at the village, an uncontrolled flooding of memories takes hold of her, and she starts remembering past events from her childhood, and even from before she was born. Her memories arise due to specific sights, sounds or scents—as occurs with Proust's madeleine—and almost as if the traces of the events were waiting for her to return and unleash them. Through them, she remembers all the details of her life in the village; she remembers that she used to have an imaginary friend called Meniña ("Little Girl"), who she later realizes was in fact the apparition of her aunt, her mother's sister, who had died before Encarna was born. Slowly but relentlessly, Encarna's unveiling of her and her family's past reveals the horrible truth that her grandmother and mother, both single mothers, had been raped by the local *cacique* and his son respectively. After unconsciously murdering the *cacique*'s grandson (an act that triggers the transhistorical memory of those rapes)

²⁴³ With *Non volvas* (*Non volvas: Filla da madrugada* in the original in Galician), Suso de Toro won the "Premio de la Crítica de narrativa gallega," an award that was created by the "Asociación Española de Críticos Literarios" in 1976, together with the "Premio de la Crítica de poesía gallega," and their counterparts in basque. It is worth noting that, while the awards for both narrative and poetry in Spanish had existed since 1956, the ones for these two "peripheral" languages had to wait until the end of the dictatorship. The awards for narrative and poetry in Catalan were first presented in 1962, although due to controversy were suspended until 1976 as well.

she decides to seek revenge for the women in her family and kill the patriarch, before returning to her life in the city.

The novel's eight sections have Biblical resonations: "Anunciación," "Tránsito," "Advento," "Ritual das primicias," "Os segredos do paraíso," "Antatema," "Dioivo," and "Resurrección" ("Annunciation," "Transit," "Advent," "Ritual of the offering of the first fruits," "The secrets of paradise," "Anathema," "Deluge," and "Resurrection"). Furthermore, each of the sections is introduced by a quote from Christian Friedrich Hebbel's tragedy *Judith* (1840), in which the Biblical story of Judith is retold with a different take on the personality of the eponymous character. This interpolation of texts suggests that in fact *Non volvas* can be read as a new version of the Book of Judith. However, this and the Proustian memory-work are not the only examples of intertextual openness in the novel, since even the original title signals connections with a song by revolutionary Portuguese singer-songwriter Jose "Zeca" Afonso.

Afonso fought to undermine the regime of António Oliveira Salazar, who had been in power between 1932 and 1968, and who had set up a dictatorial system which continued until 1974. Afonso's song "Grândola Vila Morena," banned at the time in Portugal, served as the starting signal for the April 25th Carnation Revolution which ended the dictatorial regime and opened the process for democratic reform. The song the novel's title refers to is "Filhos da madrugada," (Children of the dawn); it was written during his time in exile in Mozambique, then still a Portuguese colony, but already on the brink of independence. "Filhos da madrugada" deals with the feeling of uprootedness caused by exile, and the hardships of setting off to a new place, but it also presents an overtly positive outlook on the future, when the dawn will bring in a new day. This message, quoted from the song, opens the selection of epigraphs which preface the

beginning of the novel—a selection which also includes references to Sophocles, Clint Eastwood, Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector, and poet Reiner Maria Rilke.

According to literary critic and politic theorist Fredric Jameson in his book *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), pastiche, traditionally associated with parody and humor, has become, in postmodernity, “a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody’s ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse.”²⁴⁴ This kind of pastiche Jameson refers to elicits no critical engagement with whatever it may refer to, and so it creates a discourse in which the pastiche itself becomes the referent and the referred. The list of contributors *Non volvas* presents before its beginning would seem to point in that direction, or at least demand we wonder how or why such authors have been brought together. But rather than merely drawing the reader’s attention to the novel’s pastiche properties, these epigraphs present the main themes the novel will deal with: hope, justice, and revenge. At the same time, the (literary and cultural) past is “incorporated and modified, given new and different life and meaning,” through the creation of a genealogy that goes beyond national and regional literary histories.²⁴⁵

In the order the epigraphs are presented, the aforementioned “We are children of the dawn...awaiting the bright morning,”²⁴⁶ by José Afonso is followed by an excerpt from Sophocles’s *Antigone*:

ANTIGONE: Hades who gives sleep to all leads me living to Acheron's shore.

²⁴⁴ Jameson, 25.

²⁴⁵ Hutcheon, Linda. “The Politics of Postmodernism: Parody and History.” *Cultural Critique*, No. 5, Special Issue: Modernity and Modernism, Postmodernity and Postmodernism. (Winter, 1986-1987), 179-207.

²⁴⁶ “[s]omos filhos da madrugada... à procura da manhã clara.” De Toro, 7.

CHORUS: Glorious, therefore, and with praise, thou departest to that deep place of the dead: wasting sickness hath not smitten thee; thou hast not found the wages of the sword; no, mistress of thine own fate, and still alive, thou shalt pass to Hades, as no other of mortal kind hath passed.²⁴⁷

Here Antigone accepts her fate to be buried alive, punishment bestowed on her for having buried her brother Polyneices's body. This had been forbidden by Creon, the new ruler of Thebes, whose order not to bury Polyneices meant that the latter could never enter Hades, the world of the dead, thus becoming a ghost. Antigone's decision to bury him even, under pain of death, is an act of rebellion: not only against Creon's edict, but also as a means of regaining for herself the possibility to mourn the dead, which was socially very important for women. A similar relation to the earth, and to burying the dead, is presented in the next epigraph, taken from Clarice Lispector's novel *Perto do coração selvagem* (1943).²⁴⁸ It reads: "And knowing above all that the earth beneath her feet was so deep and so secret that she should not fear the flooding of understanding dissolving its mystery."²⁴⁹ Lispector's novel narrates in an apparently plotless, fragmentary manner, and using modernist techniques such as stream of consciousness, the life of a young woman called Joana, showing moments of her childhood and her life as a young adult. The passage cited in *Non volvas* is part of one of the latter moments, in which Joana ponders the challenges she will face as she enters into adulthood, and how she feels a connection with nature that helps her overcome her anxiety towards such a change.

The other remaining epigraphs have strong connections with death and vengeance. Reiner Maria Rilke's quoted text, "Each single angel is terrible," is part of the "First Elegy" of the

²⁴⁷ "ANTÍGONA: Oh Hades...condúceme aínda viva á beira do Aquerón.//CORO: Gloriosa e louvada. Sen padeceres nin enfermidade nin o ataque da espada, polo teu pé e viva, única entre os mortais, dirixeste ao Hades." Translated by R.C. Jebb. De Toro, 7.

²⁴⁸ It has been translated into English as *Near to the Wild Heart*.

²⁴⁹ "E sabendo principalmente que a terra embaixo dos pés era tão profunda e tão secreta que não havia de temer a invasão de entendimento dissolvendo o seu mistério." De Toro, 7.

Duino Elegies he wrote between 1912 and 1922.²⁵⁰ This first elegy and the second one have often been read together, as a prologue in which the main themes of the remaining eight elegies are presented. The line quoted in the novel (1.17) reflects upon the tragedy associated with angels, as they usher the dead into the afterlife. The final epigraph belongs to Clint Eastwood's film *Unforgiven* (1992), in which the actor and director plays William Munny, a retired gunslinger who decides to take one last job and avenge an attack on two prostitutes. The line quoted in the novel, "You better bury Ned right, better not cut up, nor otherwise harm no whores...or I'll come back and kill every one of you sons of bitches," announces a desire for vengeance, which resonates with Encarna's return to the village where she was born and the mission that will unfold before her eyes.²⁵¹ Revenge is also one of the main themes of story of Judith, which enters *Non volvas* through the filter of nineteenth century drama.

Although the pervasiveness of the story of Judith and references to Friedrich Hebbel's version have already been mentioned, it is worth examining its relationship with the novel in more detail. The *Book of Judith* is deuterocanonical work which narrates how a Jewish widow during the siege of Israel by Assyrian troops, becomes mistress to Holofernes, the invaders' general. After gaining his trust, she kills him, causing his army to disperse and thus saving Israel, only to then continue to celebrate and parade Holofernes's head around the country for three months. In the Hebbel play, Judith's personality and actions are changed. As Hebbel explains, "Judith is paralyzed by her deed, frozen by the thought that she might give birth to Holofernes' son; she knows that she has passed her boundaries, that she has, at the very least, done the right

²⁵⁰ "Todo anxo é terríbel." De Toro, 7.

²⁵¹ The original as it appears on the film, this quote is slightly longer than what the novel cites, "[d]illes que hei volver. E que hei levar conmigo o inferno." De Toro, 7.

thing for the wrong reasons.”²⁵² In the following, I discuss how the same convolution of desire for revenge and paralysis that takes hold of Judith dominates most of the narration in *Non volvas* and in particular the character of Encarna.

Each section of the novel is preceded by an epigraph which colors our reading of the narrative traffic of the section to come. “Anunciación” starts with the quote “We become what we look at.”²⁵³ This prefigures Encarna’s obsession with old pictures of her mother, which she always carries with her and looks at, trying to understand that woman, completely unknown to her. It also bespeaks the toll of her job as a nurse in the department of pediatric oncology in a hospital. “Tránsito” begins with “Behold, here I am as if outside of time and space; afflicted I await your sign to command me to rise and do your bidding,” which is connected to Encarna’s state of confusion as she travels towards the village, feeling there is a task ahead of her which she cannot glimpse, but which she knows she must fulfill.²⁵⁴ Re-encountering her childhood house triggers an uncontrollable flood of memories; this outpouring is preceded by the quote “Blessed be you, my eyes, for you have drunk fire and are now inebriated!” suggesting a thirst for knowledge that may be debilitating.²⁵⁵ “Your thoughts overcome you” introduces the confusion Encarna is immersed in after she starts connecting the loose memories and weaving them into a narrative of her and her family’s past in “Ritual das primicias.”²⁵⁶ In “Os segredos do paraíso” the following quote: “God makes you give birth so that you can be punished in your flesh and your blood, and this will chase you beyond the grave,” foretells Encarna’s discovery of

²⁵² Hebbel, 23.

²⁵³ “[c]onvertémonos naquilo que fitamos.” De Toro, 9.

²⁵⁴ “¡Olla, velaquí estou eu como fôra do mundo e do tempo; con anguria agardo unsigno teu que me ordene erguerme e obrar!” De Toro, 47.

²⁵⁵ “Louvados sexades, meus ollos; bebestes lume e estades bébedos!” De Toro, 57.

²⁵⁶ “Os teus pensamentos sobrepásante.” De Toro, 77.

incestuous lineage in her family, and of the knowledge that her father is her mother's brother.²⁵⁷ The section "Anatema" starts with an oath, "I would hate myself if I found in me the slightest sign of mercy. I will come out of myself like an unsheathed sword to claim your life!" which prefigures Encarna's short killing spree, during which she feels outside her own body.²⁵⁸ Before "Dioivo," "The tears that are not shed for oneself are allowed" alludes to the cleansing of the village by means of a deluge that destroys the two bridges that connect it to both the past of the cemetery and the present of the road to Santiago.²⁵⁹ The novel ends with "Resurrección," which starts with a question about the possibility of death and dying: "Do you think for sure that it is possible to die? I truly know all believe it, and that it must be believed so. I used to believe myself. Now, death seems to me absurd, something impossible," thus articulating doubt about the reality of life and death, and introducing the possibilities that open up for Encarna after her deeds are done.²⁶⁰

After the introductory epigraphs, *Non volvas* begins with a second prologue, which purports to be a sort of disclaimer, in which Encarna explains how she is unsure whether the story about to be told actually happened or it was just a dream. However, despite expressing that uncertainty, she goes on to claim: "I know what happened to me, I know it all because I lived it."²⁶¹ This conflict between the doubt about the actuality of the events and the certainty of

²⁵⁷ "Deus faite parir co fin de poder castigarte na túa carne e no teu sangue, e perseguirte así máis alá da tumba." De Toro, 117.

²⁵⁸ "Odiaríame a min propia se me atopase o menor movemento de piedade. ¡Eu sairei de min mesma como unha espada da súa vaiña, para cobrarme coa túa vida!" De Toro, 145.

²⁵⁹ "As bágoas que non se verquen por un mesmo están permitidas." De Toro, 169.

²⁶⁰ "¿Cres ti, de certo, que é posíbel morrer? Ben sei que todos o cren, e que así se debe crer. Antes, tamén eu o cría. Agora, a morte paréceme un absurdo, algo imposíbel." De Toro, 179.

²⁶¹ "o que me ocorreu, seino todo porque o vivín." De Toro, 11.

having lived them is resolved by Encarna's understanding that she has gained something she did not have before facing the test she overcame:

There are nightmares in my dreams, but I am not afraid of them; I entered and descended into my own nightmare and I survived bringing its secrets, so now I am strong and master of my dreams. Besides, all dreams, even nightmares, make me stronger; it is them that fill my life and they made me learn to look at people.²⁶²

The novel thus presents the driving idea that dominion over oneself and one's actions and future can only be achieved after fully coming to terms with, and understanding, both positive and negative aspects of life, in this case represented by dreams, which are, for Encarna, the most important element in her life. The prologue ends with the suggestion that, dream or not, Encarna will not be telling the story, that "I am not capable of recounting what I found out, maybe if the dream itself could tell itself..."²⁶³ Literary scholar Robert C. Spires has stated in his book *Beyond the Metafictional Mode: Directions in the Modern Spanish Novel* (1984) that the role of metafiction in Spanish novels has "shifted from unmasking the conventions to foregrounding the process of creating fiction... there is a violation of the traditional distinctions among the act of narrating, the act of reading, and the narrated product." (16) In the case of *Non volvas*, the conflation of narrating, reading, and what is narrated does not so much foreground how the fiction in the novel is created, but rather how the novel's textual fictionality establishes intertextual and historical connections with textual and historical realities beyond the borders of its pages; this occurs through the progressive unraveling of the story to the main character, who is the initial narrator.

²⁶² "Nos meus soños hai pesadelos, mais non lles teño medo; entrei e baixei no meu propio pesadelo e sobrevivín traendo os seus segredos, así que agora son forte e dona dos meus soños. Ademais, todos os soños, tamen os pesadelos, me fan máis forte; son eles os que enchen a miña vida e fixeron que aprendera a ollar ás persoas." De Toro, 12.

²⁶³ "eu non son quen de relatar o que coñecín, quizais se o propio soño se contase a sí propio..." De Toro, 12.

The novel tells the story of what might have been a dream. But I view it as an example of how literature, even though fantastic, can facilitate a positioning vis-à-vis our most immediate and plausible reality. In her essay “Disquieting realism: Postmodern and Beyond,” literary scholar Katarzyna Olga Beilín dubs literature that opens such possibilities as ‘disquieting realism,’ in which “the possible and the apparently impossible, the visible and the invisible merge and give birth to a new vision of reality which extends beyond the limits of common sense.”²⁶⁴ This kind of realism, although connected to some extent to Latin American magical realism, records the persistence of the supernatural in everyday, contemporary Spain. For Beilín, this new conception of realism reinvigorates the subversive power that language can have through a questioning of “not only the traditional positivistic approach to learning, but also the structures of power and the sociopolitical discourses that accompany it.”²⁶⁵ In order to illustrate the breadth of this style, Beilín presents two novels as examples: Jose María Merino’s *Los invisibles* (*The Invisibles*, 2000), which tells a clearly fantastic story while insisting on its veracity, and Antonio Muñoz Molina’s *Sefarad* (2001), which narrates real events presenting them as fantasy. From this perspective, *Non volvas* is a different kind of novel; in the very first pages, the narrator engages in a very confusing monologue. Here, as we have seen, whether the story told is a dream or not is blurred by the narration. With this novel, that both are true: the events that the novel narrates happened to her and were dreamed.

In the novel, after an initial first-person monologue about the value of realness or the possibility of knowledge, a third-person omniscient narrator takes control of the narration. After that point, Encarna seems at several points to be having a dream within the dream she is having;

²⁶⁴ Beilín, 187.

²⁶⁵ Beilín, 188.

or, alternatively, she is taken over by daydreams that mix memories from her and her mother's past and glimpses of the future. Regardless of whether either scenario is actually predominant, the real crux of the relationship between the dreams and the reality they intrude upon is that they do not really represent a break or a rupture from it, but rather an act of renewal of the present, and an uncanny resurfacing of repressed memories.

The first chapters in the novel deal with Encarna's inability to belong in her life as an adult woman, being overwhelmed by her job, and feeling detached from her husband (a university professor) and teenage daughter. Her feelings of maladjustment increased with the proximity of the seventh anniversary of her mother's death, which somehow causes memories of her past to seep into her present. Furthermore, these memories, and the sudden desire to contradict her mother's wish that she would never return to their village, cause her to want to leave the quiet upper-middle class life behind. Consequently, she realizes that she "had to go, it was what should be done, and she was to go, she would go. Right now. She would go for something; she did not know what for, some thing. She would know when she was there."²⁶⁶ The insertion of "right now" signals to the displacement of temporalities that will be present throughout the rest of the novel: the categories of "now" and "then" become blurred, and time moves fluidly through them. Because her return to the village is not only to a different place in her present, but to the place of the past where (according to de Certeau) history happened, the place where she can find the information to understand her personal (hi)story.

This return is not without violence, and in fact the first blow against her identity is presented before she even reaches the village, while she is descending into the valley the village

²⁶⁶ "tiña que ir, era o que cumpría, e había de ir, iría. Agora mesmo. Iría a algo, non sabía a que, a alguna cousa. Cando fose saberíao." De Toro, 40.

lies in; she is robbed of her car and purse by a hitch-hiking heroin addict whom she tried to help by picking him up. Once she realizes her identity card is gone, she ponders that “Those numbers were the only thing she knew about herself, precisely what she needed to know was everything else, the essential of her life,” thus setting herself free of the constraints that had been put on her identity, and placing her on a path of discovery.²⁶⁷

Upon entering the village, Encarna feels she “was in that moment living a different time, which was new, although it consisted of searching through the old time.”²⁶⁸ This different temporality is intrinsically associated with the space of her childhood house and its surrounding area. The village is separated by a river from the road she arrived on, and by a second river from a mountain bearing the ancient cemetery in which her grandmother is buried. In this part of the village, only her house and the local *cacique*'s house stand. It is here, between rivers, that a narrative full of latency and displaced objects, change, and memories elapses. Encarna starts to see into her past, and learns that the *cacique* raped and abused her grandmother, who gave birth not only to her mother, but also to Eliseo, a mentally challenged boy (who, now a man, lives in the forest), and finally to a girl, who was raped and killed by the *cacique* in her turn. This girl's ghost, together with that of Encarna's grandmother, had become Encarna's childhood companions. All this, she had forgotten but now begins slowly to remember.²⁶⁹

In her book *Cultura herida: literatura y cine en la España democrática* (2002), Cristina Moreiras-Menor discusses the existence of “an intertextual space ontologically undecidable, like

²⁶⁷ “esas cifras era o único que sabía de si propio, precisamente o que lle faltaba saber a ela era todo o demais, o esencial da súa vida.” De Toro, 53.

²⁶⁸ “nese momento a vivir un tempo distinto, que era novo aínda que consistía en buscar o tempo vello.” De Toro, 54.

²⁶⁹ There is evidence that suggests Eliseo is, if not a maquis, at least an allegory of them and their stunted fight, which can serve as depository of the memory of Post-Civil War fighting, but remains sterile compared to the revisionist approach to the memory and history from the village women's point of view that Encarna represents.

a mode of reading and understanding situated between historic memory and imaginary construction.”²⁷⁰ That plot of land, caught in a temporality of its own, is the place of trauma where Encarna must go to achieve an understanding that she could not have reached otherwise, or anywhere else. She realizes she not only used to see these apparitions when she was a child, but can also feel them in her return, almost as if they were taking over her body. Those feelings do not come out of the blue for Encarna; rather, they are triggered; as soon as she arrives in the house, she starts finding material evidence of the life her mother and she shared in that house before she was ten: a 1961 calendar, her school utensils, field working attire, and the razor blade her mother used to kill Encarna’s father, and which she will use to kill her own half-brother.²⁷¹

Combining the finding of these objects in the house, together with her own memories, pieces of writing from her school days, and brief conversations with a couple of neighbors, Encarna becomes a sort of historian of her family. Like a historian, she sifts through her sources to create the most plausible explanation in order to then make it into a narrative. And it is precisely this activity, beyond the novel’s characteristics as an example of “disquieting realism,” that strengthen our consideration of *Non volvas* as a realist text. Through Encarna’s descent into her family’s past, the novel presents a story that is strangely true to the social situation in Spain under Franco’s dictatorship, with the repercussions and reverberations of violence resounding not only through Galicia but the whole of Spain. These are the same consequences Moreiras-Menor describes when she states that “These residues are women not only in the traces left by the past, but also in the new cultural forms which postmodernity and market hegemony and mass

²⁷⁰ “un espacio intertextual ontológicamente indecidible, como un modo de lectura y entendimiento situado entre la memoria histórica y la construcción imaginaria.” Moreiras-Menor, 125.

²⁷¹ This calendar, together with mentions of having been gone from the village for thirty-five years, and Encarna being forty-five, make 1996 the year in which the novel is supposed to take place, creating a link to an extra-diegetic time and history.

media have ushered into the ‘new’ democratic Spain.”²⁷² There is, however, a problem with the way in which the events unfold once Encarna has understood her history, and decides to seek revenge for the women in her family.

Applying the quote that introduces “Resurrección,” and the doubts it poses about the consciousness of death and dying, Encarna’s story has two possible implications. These are different, albeit interconnected. On the one hand, there is doubt as to whether the *cacique* and his grandson are really dead after she has killed them; on the other hand, Encarna cannot be sure whether the memories of her mother, her grandmother and her aunt will continue to haunt her. There is no certainty that the closure provided by the deaths of the men may rid her of those ghosts, in the same way that there is no assurance that the ghosts of the two men will not chase her once her deeds are done. And this uncertainty opens the door for the persistence of the past in the present, dragged into this moment in time by the ghosts and the affects of the past that have been repressed, but which still refuse to be left in the dark.

These lingering, unknown and unknowable elements match the description of what French philosopher Jacques Derrida called the *spectre*, which is:

Something that one does not know, precisely, and one does not know if precisely, it *is*, if it responds to a name and corresponds to an essence. One does not know, not out of ignorance, but because this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge. At least to that which one thinks one knows by the name of knowledge. One does not know if it is living or if it is dead.²⁷³

The indeterminate origin of the images of the past Encarna perceives, her doubts about the reliability of those visions, and the secrets of her family’s past force her to go beyond what she

²⁷² “[e]stos residuos se entretajan así no solo en las huellas dejadas por el pasado sino también en las nuevas formas culturales a las que la posmodernidad y la hegemonía de mercado y los medios masivos de comunicación dan entrada en la ‘nueva’ España democrática.” Moreiras-Menor, 17.

²⁷³ *Specters of Marx*, 6.

thought she knew about herself and her mother, beyond what she thought was possible to know, and to look for new, different means to make sense of what she is experiencing. Beilín claims in relation to ‘disquieting realism,’ drawing from Hal Foster, that “postmodern art is allegorical because it explores the space between the signifier and the signified and in doing so it illuminates reality.” She goes even further, citing Paul De Man’s contention that romantic literature transformed ancient beliefs into metaphors, stating that “metaphors become again part of the real and function as allegories.”²⁷⁴ In this case, the specter, the apparition of the restless soul, is turned into a metaphor of an unresolved crime in the past—a crime the novel links, through allusion, to the Civil War, and the killing of Republicans by men working for the local *cacique*. The crime is not only limited to killings, but also results in the rape of those men’s wives and girlfriends. It is linked historically to the early postwar period of Francoist dictatorship, during which the *cacique* keeps preparing his cadres to perpetuate the crime and ensure through repetition the submission of those women. But the metaphor is then transformed into something else through the particular case of Encarna’s family: from the singular to the allegorical. In the same place where all those crimes were committed, the *cacique*, lying in his deathbed, has to face his former victims, who are now to be his executioners. Although the deed is performed through the body of Encarna, the novel presents this scene as though hers were not the only consciousness controlling her body. In fact, when she meets the man, she says, “it’s me, you know. And I am my daughter and my granddaughter. I am the women of the house, you know.

²⁷⁴ Beilín, 192

The Little Girl. We, the women, the Little Girl, have come back, we are here, and I have come to get even.”²⁷⁵

The novel identifies the man not only as the *cacique*, but also as a member of the Fascist party, Falange. When Encarna enters his room, she sees a picture of him “looking just the way her memory of a very old woman remembered him, dressed in his blue shirt with the embroidered red spider and the crossed belt, standing firm.”²⁷⁶ The blue shirt, the martial attitude, and the yoke crossed by the four arrows, forming the body and eight legs of a spider, identify him as one of the winners of the Civil War. Encarna, and her mother and grandmother and the Little Girl, decide to kill him, humiliate him by urinating on his dead body, and then get rid of the evidence by dumping the carcass in his own pigsty. Moreover, at the allegorical level, the man who is being treated this way is Franco himself, who had been responsible for all the killing and damages that had been caused to those defeated in the Civil war throughout the thirty-six years he clung to power. We see this from the description of the general state of the man, connected to a life support machine, shielded off the world by the protective isolation plastic screen, a scene similar to Franco’s death bed. *Non volvas* seems to suggest that, by reconceptualizing plausibility, realist representation can articulate what hegemonic discourse has signaled as impossible. Accepting ghosts and apparitions as elements of reality, the novel develops a temporality different from the concept of time as empty, homogeneous, and linear that not only authorized positivist progress, but the very existence of the Spanish nation.

²⁷⁵ “Son eu, xa sabes. E son miña filla e son miña neta. Eu son as mulleres da casa, xa sabes. A Meniña. As mulleres, a Meniña, volvemos, estamos aquí e veño cobrarme,” De Toro, p. 165.

²⁷⁶ “tal como ela o lembraba na súa memoria de muller vella. vestido coas correaxes e a camisa azul coa araña vermella bordada, moi teso,” De Toro, p. 164.

Furthermore, the novel suggests, this different temporality makes it possible to write realist history in a completely new way. Since the death of Franco, hegemonic discourse had accepted as a given truth that with the *Transición* all problems of the past have been resolved; furthermore, this historical moment holds, the representation of those repressed by Francoism must also be repressed by the new democratic governments. Thus do the most conservative sectors of society and politics implore writers and artists not to reopen wounds that have already healed. *Non volvas* proposes that not only have those wounds not healed, but that the death of Franco, and the way the *Transición* was handled, did not solve any of the problems created during and after the Civil War; rather than remaining past, these problems persist as symptoms. It is not enough that Franco has died, the novel suggests; this does not serve as the final word on anything. Instead, its plural protagonist goes back in time, drags the past towards her/them, and kills him again on his death bed, desecrating his body and feeding it to pigs. *This* is the memory-work demanded by past traumas.

The possibility of any other sort of justice is voided, however, in the final pages of the novel, where as Encarna is fleeing the village, she sees how the rivers, swelling from the deluge, have torn the bridges, and even the strip of land on which the houses stood is being washed away. For Encarna this means the final liberation from the ghosts of her past after having fulfilled their revenge; she can now stop being “dead in life,” and return to her husband and daughter. However, all that destruction erases all proof of what has happened, and it remains unclear whether the impossibility of blaming Encarna for murder is perfect justice, or another turn of the Derridian trace of those who have not been allowed to leave their mark.

III. Accented Realism: *Biutiful*, Apocalyptic Barcelona

Even though Alejandro González Iñárritu's biography does not make him either an exile or a diasporic director, he has gained for himself an interstitial space that makes him what Hamid Naficy characterizes as *accented*: filmmakers who "do not live and work on the peripheries of society or the film and media industries. They are situated inside and work in the interstices of both."²⁷⁷ Starting in Mexican radio and television, Iñárritu managed, with just one feature film in Mexico (*Amores perros*, 2000), to find a place within the Hollywood industry. González Iñárritu is thus situated inside of different societies and film industries: Hollywood, Mexico, and Spain. In Hollywood he has access to high budgets and internationally saleable star actors; however, he also manages to keep a certain creative independence, probably due to his role as producer of his own films. In Mexico, for instance, he currently has a more active role as producer, but still he directed *Amores perros* and part of *Babel* there. Besides this, his contributions to the independent, multi-director films *11'09"01 – September 11* (2002) and *To Each His Own Cinema* (2007) and his latest to-date, *Biutiful* (2010, shot entirely in Spain) position him in a productive space that blends categories of national, local, international or global, but to which *accented* has something to add.

According to Naficy, *accented* filmmakers strive to make cinema which emanates from the experience of displacement. This can be the displacement experienced by the filmmakers themselves, and by their artisanal and/or collective modes of production; *accented* films are "interstitial because they are created astride, and in the interstices of, social formations and

²⁷⁷ Naficy, 46.

cinematic practices.”²⁷⁸ Although neither of González Iñárritu’s films has all the characteristics of the *accented* style, Naficy himself is the first to admit that not all of the characteristics are present in all films. Particularly in *Babel*, González Iñárritu uses features like non-naturalistic visual styles, experimental narrative structures, epistolarity, video-technological mediation of reality, character development, non-actors (particularly in the scenes in Morocco), foreign languages and accented second languages, and some of those characteristics are continued in *Biutiful*. Furthermore, in most of his films, González Iñárritu shows characters through the use of structures of feeling of exile that make his style, at least, partially *accented*. Besides this, his films are infused with a hybrid style, through the use of fast editing similar to that of music videos; he also employs an abundance of close-up shots which create a feeling of entrapment and claustrophobia; finally, long, panning shots and steady-cam work are mixed with hand-held camera shots.

González Iñárritu considers himself as an *auteur*, working with a group of contributors in different films and centering his films on stories apparently connected by chance and in which, despite the grim circumstances, a glimpse of hope is possible. However, his claims of complete authorship over his films has led to a falling out with Guillermo Arriaga, writer of *Amores perros*, *21 Grams*, and *Babel*, who had defended these films as “collective efforts.”²⁷⁹ Supposedly, this falling out led to González Iñárritu’s not allowing Arriaga to attend the Cannes festival with the rest of the crew; asked about this matter, Arriaga said “[R]ead my silence, [...] it’s interesting to be exiled.”²⁸⁰ Consequently, González Iñárritu is a director whose films have a series of characteristics which are common among *accented* cinema, and who also claims for

²⁷⁸ Naficy, 5.

²⁷⁹ Mottran, par.12.

²⁸⁰ Mottran, par.13.

himself a status of *auteuristic* authorship even if that means ending the relationships that supported that position for him. González Iñárritu, although he mostly does not live and work in his home country, is not an exilic or diasporic director.

As it has been pointed out in several reviews of the film, *Biutiful*'s Barcelona is very different from the one advertised as touristic destination. The cinematic Barcelona is so full of humanity it is about to spill its most gruesome reality out in the open. Uxbal, the main character, moves through different locations and social strata within the city: from the clandestine factory where Chinese illegal immigrants make knock-off merchandise, or the streets on which African illegal immigrants sell those goods, to the graveyard his father is buried in, or the red light district he lives in. Only one condition seems to be impinging on his mobility: Uxbal can travel anywhere he wants, provided he stays away from the areas of Barcelona where his presence can become problematic. This is clearly stated by Zanc, the corrupt policeman who takes a monthly *fee* from Uxbal in order to turn a blind eye on his activities as long as the sellers do not sell on the most popular streets. The question is one of visibility, but also of belonging; Uxbal and the immigrants belong to a group that does not belong in the places where the police do not want them to be seen. Therefore, these marginal characters traverse closed and open spaces, oscillating between (illegal) protection by the corrupt police, and the threat that being openly visible ultimately represents.

Naficy links feelings of exile in accented film(s) to the concepts of agoraphobia and claustrophobia, which he makes out to be manifestations of the same problem. These are usually related to “excessive adverse life events,”²⁸¹ and often leading to a “voluntary narrowing of the

²⁸¹ Naficy, 188.

living and bodily spaces [which] has psychological, political and symbolic meanings.”²⁸²

Following this line of argumentation, he concludes that “[w]omen and exiles may willingly whittle down the space that they occupy in order to fit the normalizing gaze of society about gender, sexuality and citizenship ideals—a way of “behaving themselves” by overcompensation.”²⁸³ The crucial word in this argumentation is “normalizing,” as it is precisely the roles they are expected to fulfill to which they restrict themselves. Through this aspect of the characterization of Uxbal, Marambra (his ex-wife), Ana and Mateo (their children), and Ekweme, Ige, Hai, and Liwei (the immigrant characters with more weight in the story) in a city composed of what Michel Foucault conceptualized as *heterotopias*, it becomes clear that all these characters inhabit a kind of exile.

The spaces that Uxbal and other characters occupy are important for their psychological characterization and their inscription into specific roles within their society. These spaces are mostly defined by varying degrees of hostility; from the initially indeterminate forest where the opening/closing scenes take place, to the streets of Barcelona, or to the apartments in which characters live, there is a bleakness to these places that makes them unlivable. In what follows, I will analyze the relationship between time and space in the locations that Uxbal traverses during the film, and the extent to which they condition his reality.

As noted by Naficy, the domestic space of the house is a very important and powerful chronotope for exilic films, particularly because

the house is an intensely charged place and a significant trope. As a trope, it signifies deterritorialization more than reterritorialization, for displaced filmmakers are fully aware

²⁸² Naficy, 189.

²⁸³ Naficy, 189.

that in today's age of "ethnic cleansing," possessing a house, a home or a homeland seems to require first the expulsion of its current residents.²⁸⁴

Although it is never stated in *Biutiful*, the houses and apartments characters live in preserve and re-present the violence exercised, if not in order to expel former residents, then at least on the daily lives of the current ones. Uxbal's apartment, Lili's shop, the factory where Hai keeps his slave workers, Ekweme and Ige's hovel, and even the clinic where Uxbal is seen at the beginning of the film, are presided by grime and decay. "Deterritorialization," a concept introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their work *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) is closely linked to globalization, and the changes in cultural and labor relationships associated with it. Here, aided by the films' cyclical structure, both deterritorialization and reterritorialization come full circle.

Biutiful opens around the figure of a ring that ties three generations of Uxbal's family: his parents, himself, and his daughter, with whom he is talking. This conversation relates the story of how the ring was given to Uxbal's mother by his father when he had to leave Spain before Uxbal was born. Furthermore, it also represents the moment of Uxbal's passing, and of his passing the ring on to his daughter, as he talks about a specific and uncanny memory: "[w]hen I was little, I used to listen to a radio station that played the sounds of the sea, and its giant waves. The noise was very scary... I was scared of the bottom of the sea, and the things that live down there."²⁸⁵ This memory, spoken off-camera, overlays the transition between a fixed, interior shot, and a left-right circular panoramic of a snow-covered forest, from Uxbal's point of view. The scene introduces a third character, who will remain unnamed for most of the film, walking into the shot in a direction counterposed to the camera movement, disrupting Uxbal's gaze. A conversation ensues between this young man and Uxbal, which as Benjamin would say, "establishes a concept

²⁸⁴ Naficy, 169.

²⁸⁵ "Cuando yo era pequeño, oía una emisora de radio que ponía los sonidos del mar, y sus olas gigantes. El sonido me daba mucho miedo... Me daba miedo del fondo del mar, y de las cosas que viven ahí debajo." (1'09"-1'48")

of the present as that of the here-and-now, in which splinters of messianic time are shot through,²⁸⁶ before the man walks out of shot, prompting Uxbal to ask “What’s over there?”²⁸⁷ [Figures 4.1 and 4.2]

In a forthcoming work, Cristina Moreiras-Menor has analyzed this scene as the beginning point of a story which she calls “autobiographic, the experience of history as an event, told so that the viewer can adopt it, interpret it, and extract from it its transformative potentiality.”²⁸⁸ Uxbal’s autobiographical narrative begins and ends in this scene, which is constructed as outside of filmic (and historical) time. As the film elapses, it slowly establishes connections between this primary timespace of autobiography and other scenes in the film: an old photograph reveals the other man to be Uxbal’s father, and the conversation they have is made up from bits of conversations Uxbal has with his children. However, most significant is the connection this scene establishes with what Uxbal sees and the film shows, from the prologue-epilogue to the first proper scene. After asking his father, the film shows Uxbal being diagnosed with a terminal illness, which he will suppress and deny through the entire remainder of the film as he strives for the redemption of his life, and also of his children’s and father’s, ultimately retelling their story of uprootedness, marked through different layers of immigration and exile.

Santa Coloma de Gramenet, the area just outside of Barcelona where many of the scenes were shot, experienced a major development in Francoist Spain during the 1960s and 1970s. Workers from all over Spain migrated to Barcelona, and its growth was more chaotic and less orderly than in the city-center which was then, and remains, the tourist’s Barcelona. Many of the

²⁸⁶ Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*, 178.

²⁸⁷ “¿Qué hay ahí?”

²⁸⁸ “autobiográfico, la experiencia de la historia como acontecimiento, y lo relata para que el espectador lo adopte, lo interprete y le extraiga su potencialidad transformative.” Moreiras-Menor, ““La pasión de la imagen: i-legibilidad del legado y deseo autobiográfico en *Biutiful*.” Presented at the 2013 MLA Convention. My translation.

working-class houses and apartments were left vacant as a consequence of reverse migration due to the loss of manufacturing jobs which being sent overseas, and recently, new immigrants have occupied those residences. In *Biutiful*, there is a symbiotic relationship between the neighborhood itself and these new immigrants, in terms of their representation and visibility. In his own comments on the film, Iñárritu has stated that “Uxbal was born to *charnegos* parents, and he is part of the 10% of Spanish speakers who remained in Santa Coloma.”²⁸⁹ Furthermore, referring to the choice to focus the representation of Barcelona on these run-down neighbourhoods, he added

it was not until a year later, as I was walking on the El Raval neighbourhood in Barcelona, that everything seemed to make sense. Barcelona is the queen of Europe. It is wonderful, but just like any queen, it has a much more interesting side than the obvious, and often boring bourgeois beauty usually admired by tourists and reflected on postcards.²⁹⁰

As a consequence, *Biutiful* presents a history of a Barcelona that is, very much like Madrid in *Tiempo de Silencio*, a composite of different generations of immigrants surrounding a very small, idealized center of permanence and stability. But this history has always been pushed aside and ignored in prevalent narratives. Just like Ekweme and the other Senegalese street sellers are not allowed on the high streets, Santa Coloma, like El Raval, and other ill-favoured areas of Barcelona grew away from the picture-perfect cosmopolitan image of Barcelona. In a state of decay and official abandonment, they are not part of the beautiful architecture Barcelona is renowned for. Reflecting the passage of time in a way that the officially narrativized

²⁸⁹ “Uxbal nació de padres *“charnegos”* y forma parte del 10% de castellanohablantes que se quedaron en Santa Coloma.” “Charnego” is a pejorative term used to refer to the out-of-Catalunya immigrants who moved to Barcelona.

²⁹⁰ “No fue hasta un año después, mientras andaba por el barrio de El Raval en Barcelona, cuando todo cobró sentido. Barcelona es la reina de Europa. Es maravillosa, pero como cualquier reina, también tiene un lado mucho más interesante que la obvia y, a veces, aburrida belleza burguesa que admiran los turistas y suele plasmarse en postales.”

architectural marvels of the city-center, preserved as they are, do *not*, this decrepitude is not only a reflection of the forsaken status of this district's inhabitants within Spanish society, but also of the state of Uxbal's health and his attempts for redemption.

Invisibility, however, is not limited to the new immigrants, as it has been part of the neighborhood's history as a whole; Uxbal suffers from it as much as the Asian or African newcomers. Considering this, the city seems to deny these characters citizenship in different levels. As Holston and Appadurai pointed out in "Cities and Citizenship," (1996) in contemporary life "formal citizenship in the nation-state is increasingly not a necessary nor a sufficient condition for substantive citizenship."²⁹¹ They differentiate the legal status of citizenship from "the array of civil, political, socio-economic, and cultural rights people possess and exercise," which would be substantive citizenship.²⁹² Uxbal shares this characteristic with Ekweme, Ige, and Hai, but in the case of the immigrants, this differentiation between formal and substantive citizenship was imposed on them by the nation-state government (something pointed out by Holston and Appadurai), particularly in the shape of a reduction of their substantive rights. If Uxbal is forced to endure his exclusion from substantive citizenship through governmental mandate—clearly enforced by the Police, Ekweme, on the other hand, is stripped of his natural rights (socio-economic, particularly) due to his lack of formal citizenship. In Uxbal's case, formal citizenship is given to him by the nation-state, but substantive citizenship is denied by the city and society. The film thus clearly states to a large degree citizens have been classified into a group in which they are in fact devoid of the rights they could be expected to have in a young democracy as Spain.

²⁹¹ Holston and Appadurai, 130.

²⁹² Holston and Appadurai, 130.

In a similar vein, French Philosopher Jacques Rancière has re-conceptualized the term *dèmos* to mean “those who have no share in the communal the distribution of the sensible.”²⁹³ The “distribution of the sensible” not only marks a separation between those in power and those ruled, but also governs, according to Rancière, the relationship between the visible and the invisible, determined by an aesthetic division previously established. In the realm of aesthetics, *Biutiful* problematizes the existence of these underclasses that old and new immigrants represent in touristic Barcelona.

The differences between the beautiful and the *biutiful* Barcelonas are highlighted by the cinematography throughout the film. Exterior scenes are usually filmed in long, open shots, which reinforce the feeling that all characters are displaced and unwanted: the streets of Barcelona, the work site where Uxbal and his brother are trying to place Chinese workers, or even the cemetery where Uxbal’s father was buried, are the background against which the solitude and uprootedness of the characters is framed. By contrast, interior scenes are mostly filmed in medium or medium close-up shots, which highlights the confinement of their social lives, and the reduction of their living space. All these spaces, indoor and outdoors, private and public, are connected through Uxbal’s constant movement between them, enjoying relative freedom, but not allowed everywhere. This makes him into what Zygmunt Bauman describes in “From Pilgrim to Tourist—or a Short History of Identity,” (1996) as a particular kind of wandering individual supposed to have inherited some characteristics of the pilgrim, whom he calls the *stroller*. The *stroller* is a variation on the well-known literary figure of the *flâneur*, but where for Bauman the *flâneur* “was the past master of simulation – he imagined himself a scriptwriter and a director pulling the strings of other people’s lives,” the more postmodern

²⁹³ Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*, 84.

stroller just follows the trails of the *flâneur*, unsuccessfully trying to find a place where he belongs to.²⁹⁴ Uxbal fulfills this role of the constant *stroller*, a new kind of cosmopolitan drifter, who cannot fit into any determinate space and keeps on moving trying to find his own.

Naficy, discussing homeland chronotopes, talks about utopian and dystopian chronotopes. Central to the chronotope of exile, as I have discussed, are the ideas of claustrophobia and agoraphobia. To study how Uxbal, as well as Ekweme, Ige, Lili, or Hai are established as exiles I would like to propose the use of heterotopia as the appropriate chronotope for exilic characters and stories such as the ones I have analyzed this far. Heterotopia is a term Michel Foucault theorizes in his essay “Of Other Spaces,” (1986) and that he defines as “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted.”²⁹⁵ Before discussing how the spaces in which Uxbal, Marambra, and Igé are inscribed can be understood as heterotopias, I will briefly summarize the six principles which Foucault determines as necessary for a heterotopia to fulfill in order to be considered as such. The six principles are, first, that all cultures create or constitute heterotopias; second, that heterotopias can be made to function in different ways by different societies, and such is the case with cemeteries, which can be placed in the center of a village, or on its outskirts; third, that heterotopias can juxtapose in them several apparently incompatible spaces, like the theatre and the cinema; fourth, heterotopias are associated with heterochronies, their temporal counterparts; fifth, heterotopias are not freely accessible, and are at the same time isolated and penetrable; and sixth, heterotopias have the function to create one of two kinds of space, either of illusion (where human life is reflected as

²⁹⁴ Bauman, 26.

²⁹⁵ Foucault, 24.

illusory) or of compensation (where human life is more organized than in reality). I would also like to point out that, very much like the characteristics of *accented* cinema outlined by Naficy, that these principles must not necessarily be present in all heterotopias. Accordingly, with the example of cinema, we can say that most contemporary societies create cinema (and some even inscribe its production into processes of national self-understanding). We can also say that, while some cultures prefer cinema to perform a role of instruction and indoctrination, others prefer cinema as an entertainment tool (which would be the coalescence of the second and sixth principle). Furthermore, and uniting the third, fourth and fifth principles, that for a certain period of time separated from the time outside the heterotopia (that is, the heterochrony), people who have willingly accepted to enter the cinema are compelled not to leave until they are presented with the series of juxtaposed incompatible spaces they see on the screen.

In *Beautiful*, characters find themselves in heterotopias that alter their identity as migrants and citizens. Ekweme and Ige, for example, live in a house with no interior separations, where living room, dining room, kitchen, and bedroom merge into the same space. All the houses seem to be at the same time isolated and easily penetrable, and the city itself is lost in the confusion of light, uncertainly split between day and night. The most heterotopical of the houses in the film however, is the basement where Lili and the other Chinese immigrants sleep. [Figure 4.3] Apparently controlled by outside forces, (Hai and Liwei, and, to a lesser extent, Uxbal) the basement suspends all time and space outside of itself, and cancels the hierarchies which, as part of a labor cohort, are established among them during the day. Bitterly, and through the acknowledgement of their situation, the basement also becomes the space in which they do not have to be afraid for who they are, and disavow the treatment of invisibility to which they are exposed, and to which they must contribute. In the basement, hidden away from the

normalizing view of the police, they can be family and friends to each other, and create a small, transient home in their exile. However, this basement will also be their deathbed, when the butane heaters bought by Uxbal fail and kill them all in their sleep. This gruesome scene turns then the basement sequence into a twisted visitation of Plato's myth of the cave: trapped in the underground, incapable of seeing more than a deformed version of the promised land, and being warmed by a fire that will eventually cause their destruction, they become what Benjamin called an allegory full of the "traces of inner rage."²⁹⁶

If Ekweme's expulsion from Spain is a result of his attempt to defy the limits imposed on him by the police, and Lili's death comes from her acceptance of her role and place in the underworld of Barcelona, Uxbal's, on the other hand, is a more complicated case for analysis because he has a greater mobility than any of the more recent immigrants, and his transformation into an exile is more gradual than in their cases. The club is a space in which different places and times coalesce (particularly through the uses of music of remote places and times), but they have also changed throughout time and they differ from each other according to their location. Furthermore, the mobility in and out of clubs is highly limited and takes place according to rules only existing in clubs; by contrast, while one is in the club, outside time ceases or is no longer relevant. For Uxbal, the club is also a place where organization and compensation (in lack) takes place, because it is there that the relationship previously established with his group is inverted and he is then forced to leave on his own. [Figure 4.4]

The most crucial heterotopia in the film, however, is the snow-covered forest which opens and closes the film. Introduced twice by a conversation about a ring (clear symbol of circularity) between Uxbal and his daughter Ana, the scene represents Uxbal's first and last,

²⁹⁶ Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*, 47.

albeit repeated, encounter with his dead father. This leads Uxbal into a Janusian journey in which he sees both his past and what lies ahead of him. This forest, situated outside of the linear time of neoliberal 21st century Barcelona within which the rest of the film's scenes are distributed, is where Uxbal can re-order his recent past. Here, his life is represented as an illusion (he has the illusion of living his life in the vestibule of death); here, outside of the time of his own biography, he can plan his own redemption, and enable the redemption of his children.

These heterotopias are not only the spaces where “other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted,” but also the spaces where utopia and dystopia meet, but which neither word can describe accurately. If, as Bauman claims, the difference between modernity and post-modernity is that “[I]n the case of identity [...] the catchword of modernity was creation; the catchword of postmodernity is recycling,” then the heterotopia is the space where that recycling takes place and the exile appears.²⁹⁷ The places of the migrant, and the citizen, are all represented, contested and inverted, consequently forming the space of the exile. But this does not mean heterotopian and exilic identity formation is a purely *postmodern* operation, proper to the time and place of postnational, neoliberal Europe. On the contrary, as I argued at the outset of this dissertation, modernity is characterized by a “compression of time and space”—precisely the procedure that makes the emergence of heterotopias possible in the first place. Therefore, this understanding of heterotopias as contributing to the recycling of identity positions in postmodernity, presents recycling just another mode of creation, as a part of modernity and the exile as the quintessential subject of this late phase of modernity.

²⁹⁷ Bauman, 18.

Commenting on the difficulty of establishing a clear differentiation between modernity and postmodernity in the field of aesthetics, Rancière has stated that “[p]ostmodernism, in a sense, was simply the name under whose guise certain artists and thinkers realized what modernism had been: a desperate attempt to establish a ‘distinctive feature of art’ by linking it to a simple teleology of historical evolution and rupture.”²⁹⁸ This failed attempt to establish a fixed knowledge of reality is based on a false premise, one that Benjamin denounced as connected to historicism. For his part, White linked such a narrativity to the emergence of the study of history as a distinct discipline, with its own epistemology and method. These self-justifying teleological narratives of teleology hold that once the past becomes past, it is done, gone, and unredeemable given the pace of progress. As I have shown, *Non volvas* and *Biutiful* disavow Jameson’s contention that postmodernity has warped our connection with and to history, instead rendering the past as a series of vacant stylizations. Regarding the connection between irony, parody, and history, Hutcheon has proposed that “[t]o include irony and play is *never* necessarily to exclude seriousness and purpose in postmodernist art.”²⁹⁹ In the works analyzed in this chapter, connections are established to historical and personal pasts through a process that is divided into two steps: first, the questioning of the present as the only possible and valid present, and second, the reassessment of the personal past. This process establishes what Moreiras-Menor calls “experience of history as an event.” From this perspective, the temporalities that emerge from them establish “a concept of the present as that of the here-and-now, in which splinters of messianic time are shot through.”³⁰⁰ Accordingly, the narrations of *Non volvas* and *Biutiful* are constructed around the possibilities created by those splinters, breaking the time of progress, and

²⁹⁸ Rancière, 28.

²⁹⁹ Hutcheon, 1987, 186. Italics in the original.

³⁰⁰ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 263.

allowing for a re-evaluation of the past in a present which is no longer the necessary conclusion of history. Furthermore, through its circular narrative structure, *Beautiful* represents the impossibility for the present, exemplified in Uxbal's life, to become the past, as the return to the moment in which his death becomes the redemption of the family's history is constant, and allows this time to re-examine itself critically. Far from being a series of empty, meaningless pastiches, postmodern art assumes the status of the Benjaminian angel, looking back at the storm called Progress.

Chapter 4: Image Index³⁰¹
Figures 4.1-4.4 *Biutiful*



Figure 4.1- *Biutiful* (2010)



Figure 4.2- *Biutiful* (2010)

³⁰¹ All images copyright Alejandro González Iñárritu.



Figure 4.3- *Biutiful* (2010)



Figure 4.4- *Biutiful* (2010)

Conclusion

Six years into the current global economic crisis, the stark predictions about the end of history made by political scientist and economist Francis Fukuyama have been partially discredited, beyond the initial criticism by Derrida.³⁰² On a global scale, the emergence of radical Islam, the resurgence of China and Russia as regional powers as well as challengers to the United States' world hegemony, and the uprising of the Occupy movement all around the world, have asserted their presence in opposition to the liberal principles that Fukuyama argued for. In Spain, the challenges to the uncontested, successive, liberal democratic governments over the past three decades, have emerged through the 15-M movement—a local variant of the Occupy movement—but also, not surprisingly, from the far right, in the shape of neo-Fascist parties like España 2000.³⁰³ Fueled by the dire economic situation caused by the crisis, social tensions have risen in Spain over the past few years. Furthermore, dichotomies, such as monarchy vs. republic, central vs. federal/regionalist government, or the plurinational nature of Spain, represented in the texts I have analyzed in these pages, have emerged with renewed strength in public-political debates. Even the recent death of Adolfo Suárez, first post-Franco Prime Minister, and one of the writers of the current Spanish Constitution, has been politicized in this sense. Cardinal Archbishop Antonio Rouco Varela, during the state funeral mass, linked many of the tensions

³⁰² “What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.” Fukuyama, Francis. “The End of History?” *The National Interest*, Summer 1989.

³⁰³ España 2000's slogan is “Los españoles primero” (Spaniards [come] first), and their symbol is a flame made of the colors of the Spanish flag. They have only been present the 2011 local elections, but have had officials elected into cities and townships in the regions of Comunidad Valencia and Madrid.

currently developing in Spain to those at the beginning of the Civil War. This is, as I would argue, what Benjamin describes as “a moment of danger.” My dissertation, far from adjusting to such fear-mongering with relation to the recent Spanish history as represented through its cultural productions, is intended as a contribution to focus, not on the patterns that can be repeated, but on those that have not been formed, and thus open up the redemptive power of that “moment of danger.”

In the previous pages I have outlined a cultural analysis of Spanish history through a series of texts with different realist approaches to their subject of representation. These texts, representing moments in which an alternative sociopolitical development for Spain was defeated by what became the narrative of the victors, contain, as I argued, keys to undoing and reconstructing Spain as a nation with a different beginning. Unlike other approaches that foster separations among the historic, the cultural, the political, and the aesthetic, my dissertation centers on an understanding of literary realism as a variant form of historiographic realism. This approach draws from discourses within critical theory and philosophy of history, as well as within literary and film theory, creating a working definition of realism as a changing approach to the representation of reality, and of redemption as the possibility to reassess the past for a different interpretation of the present.

The first chapter analyzes three novels, Benito Pérez Galdós’s *La Primera República*, César M. Arconada’s *Reparto de Tierras*, and Ramón J. Sender’s *Mr Witt en el Cantón*, and Luis Buñuel’s film *Las Hurdes; Tierra sin Pan* which cast different lights on the two periods of republican governance in Spain, in the late 19th century, and in the first half of the 20th century. These four works, which I analyze as offering an assessment of those periods which is by no

means idealized or even positive, focus on the mistakes that contributed to the republican sociopolitical breakdown, as much as they present a criticism of the alternatives that took over power. The second chapter examines Carlos Saura's film *La Caza* and Luis Martín-Santos's novel *Tiempo de Silencio*, particularly how both works highlight the failure of Francoism through the representation of individuals who had not been assimilated by the pervasive narrative of the regime, leading to discontent towards the dictatorship not only at the social, but also at the personal level. The third chapter questions the unresolved problems generated throughout the Civil War and Francoism, and that the Transición tried to sweep under the rug. By focusing on repressed memories as represented in Suso de Toro's novel *Non Volvas*, and the social exclusion generated throughout the post-Franco years in Alejandro González Iñárritu's film *Biutiful* my analysis engages with the unsettled past, upon which a shaken present has been built.

Throughout the three chapters, my analysis has foregrounded the aesthetic strategies writers and filmmakers use in order to represent the changing realities they are immersed in. These different modes of representation, as I have shown, contribute in turn to establishing temporalities in these texts that differ from the hegemonic temporality of historicism, which is central to the development of Spain as a modern nation it is today. Finally, through these varying temporalities, those past elements, which the hegemonic temporality and narrative had discarded, can be redeemed for the present, and with them, a completely new relationship with the past is established. As a result, the Benjaminian "moment of danger" points towards the danger that fascism, social democracy, or, in this case, neoliberalism, will once again control the narrative, and cancel the new relationship of past and present. Therefore, I have argued that realism, as the most apt style for the representation of the tensions inherent to society, and the dialectical relationship established between those in power and the oppressed, has as its task to lay bare

the processes by which the “moment of danger” can be prolonged, and redemption made feasible.

The next step of this project will be twofold: first, I will further investigate the concept of redemption, by examining it in the context of Catholicism. Secondly, I will investigate the contribution that the intersection of exile studies and psychoanalysis can offer to my study of realism and redemption. As my analysis has shown, whether in the 19th century, 20th century, or now at the beginning of the 21st century, the role of the Catholic Church has been pervasive in both the social and political life in Spain. Consequently, the consideration of Catholicism, following a line of work began by Noël Valis’s in *Sacred Realism* (2010), could provide a deeper insight into these texts, and lead to the development of a synthesis of Catholic redemption through dialectical materialism.

Moreover, I will pay close attention to the role of exile within Spanish culture, and in relation to my cultural producers and products. Although generally recognized as a central part of Spanish culture and history due to the forced mass exile that followed the Civil War, the condition of exile has been so far understudied from a theoretical point of view. Most of the authors and filmmakers considered in this dissertation lived in, or produced works on, exile. In the case of Buñuel and Saura exile even enabled exchanges among artists. Additionally, my analysis of the interconnection between realism and exile, will be strengthened by the inclusion of concepts from psychoanalysis: trauma and latency. I will examine how, trauma, specifically the significance a study of trauma and representation can bear vis-a-vis De Certeau’s exaltation to psychoanalyze history. At the same time, I will investigate the role of latency in the development of these separate moments of resistance in which an artistic engagement with

reality is fueled by a desire to transform the latter, or to establish Benjamin's "secret appointment between the generations of the past and that of our own."³⁰⁴ Furthermore, both exile as a condition and theoretical approach, and De Certeau's approach to the psychoanalysis of history entail a reassessment from a distance, which can be real or construed, and temporal or geographic.

The connection between elements that are expelled, but which, through redemption, can be recuperated, has been crucial for my project, and will be reinforced by these juxtaposed theoretical approaches. Returning to my sources with these additional tools will result in a better understanding of the relationship between realism, temporalities, and redemption, their interaction in literary and filmic production, and their potentiality to transform reality and history. Ultimately, this dissertation represents a starting point for the study of how the convergence of realist narratives can open up a field where the confluence of the real and the possible, politics and culture, and past and present, can be contested.

³⁰⁴ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 254

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